

The outstanding issues of the eleventh session were, of course, the Middle East and Hungary. The outbreak of fighting in the Middle East late in October confronted the United Nations with its most serious crisis since the Korean war. Combined with the violence and suffering in Hungary, the armed action in Egypt produced a degree of tension which, for a time, seemed in danger of developing into a larger conflict. In the months before the fighting began, the Security Council had been trying with no appreciable success to check a steady deterioration in conditions along the demarcation lines between Israel and its Arab neighbours. These efforts were made all the more difficult after the Suez Canal question became acute. The interaction of the Palestine and the canal issues was detrimental to both, and this became all too apparent once the armed intervention had begun. The complexity of these matters, together with the emotional response they evoked both in Europe and Asia, added greatly to the problems which the Security Council and the General Assembly had to handle.

The immediate task was to stop the fighting and then to secure the cease-fire and withdrawal. The action taken by the Assembly, and particularly the establishment of the United Nations Emergency Force, served these purposes well, although there were contributing developments outside the United Nations. This dual approach was developed in the first emergency special session and was intended to ensure that after the cease-fire and withdrawal there would be no return to the unhappy conditions which led to the explosion of October. While it may be said that this process of improvement has been started, it would be a grave mistake to assume that the relative quiet of the present can be maintained for long without some additional action by the United Nations to resolve the fundamental sources of conflict in the area. In all probability the pragmatic approach, which the large majority of members endorsed at the eleventh session, should be continued, but not without a serious effort to deal with issues of principle. Although the note of urgency which called forth prompt action last autumn may be subdued at the twelfth session, it will be no less important then for the Assembly to deal with the Palestine problems vigorously and with realism.

The very important disarmament discussions have gone on almost continuously in the United Nations since the organization was founded. Judging by the record of the past it might be concluded that disarmament negotiations between rival world powers such as the United States and the Soviet Union are inherently futile and might as well be abandoned. This view springs in part from a misunderstanding of the essential nature of current disarmament proposals. No government seriously proposes that major powers should dispense completely with armaments and armed forces and thus leave themselves at the mercy of any power which secretly violates the agreement. What is proposed is some carefully balanced and adequately inspected reduction of forces and armaments. No major power can be expected to take disarmament action which would seriously reduce its strength relative to other major powers. But balanced and safeguarded measures of limited disarmament would do something to reduce the burden of armaments and would contribute substantially to reducing world tension and improving the international outlook. The necessary co-operation between great powers in carrying out such a programme could itself bring