Summary

During the decade from 1955 to 1964, the United Nations Organization quite changed its character. By 1965, there were 121 member states, or double the membership of 1955; the majority were African and Asian countries. Consequently, the United States lost its almost automatic majority in the General Assembly and assumed a more wary attitude towards the organization. Paul Martin tells how he helped to break the deadlock over admission of new members in 1956. At the time, 10 of the 16 states admitted in the package deal that he put together were from Europe; it was only later that the full effect of his move was seen, when many African countries gained independence.

Certainly the second half of this decade was crowded with African issues for the United Nations. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 aroused world concern about South Africa, which the new group of independent African states naturally enlarged. At the same time, the United Nations became deeply embroiled in the problems of the Congo. J. King Gordon writes about the lesser-known side of the UN operation in the Congo: the job done in maintaining essential services after the Belgians had fled, and in training Congolese to take these services over.

In the early years of the decade, the United Nations was faced with the crisis over Suez. Three contributions in this section touch on this crisis. The extracts from Lester Pearson's memoirs point up his hope that a long-term peace settlement might be forged during the "red-hot" period of tense negotiations. General Burns' skill in securing the withdrawal of the combatants is described by King Gordon. And Stewart Sutton tells about an embarrassing incident the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) overcame when bringing relief supplies to Egypt. In another story about UNICEF, Adelaide Sinclair tells how the agency kept an evenhanded approach despite U.S. pressure in a politically charged situation.

The decade saw the start of the period of détente, despite (or to a degree prompted by) the 1962 missile crisis. The extracts from Howard Green's speeches in Geneva give a flavour of the urgent appeals for disarmament he was making on behalf of Canada. The United Nations also moved into the expensive business of providing peacekeeping contingents, first in the Middle East and later in the Congo and in Cyprus; it was expensive, that is, for member states that assumed the responsibility—because two permanent members of the Council, France and the Soviet Union, led the way in disclaiming responsibility during the Congo operation.

It was also the dawning of the space age: both outer space after the 1957 flight of Sputnik and "inner space" after the International Geophysical Year led to discoveries in the deep oceans. The United Nations promptly began to discuss the peaceful uses of outer space, but took another 10 years to focus on the seabed.

The advent of more member states that were at an early stage of economic development triggered the creation of two new UN bodies: the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and the World Food Programme. Frank Shefrin writes about Canada's part in helping launch the World Food Programme in 1963 as a joint venture between the UN and the