

FOREWORD

This volume of *Canada and the United Nations* reviews the work of the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies during the calendar year 1961.

The year began with disturbing memories of a stormy fifteenth session of the General Assembly which had brought together an impressive number of Heads of Government. The first part of the session had been characterized by excesses and confusion in a prolonged debate embittered by violent Soviet propaganda. Instead of relieving the international tension which had developed during the summer of 1960, the Assembly proceedings tended to make matters worse. One result was that the General Assembly was unable to deal conclusively with many of the important items on its agenda, in particular disarmament, which were held over for a resumed session in March, 1961.

At the resumed session, the situation began to improve. The atmosphere in the Assembly was more conducive to orderly business. By agreement, many of the most contentious issues were postponed. Significantly, the United States and the Soviet Union began bilateral discussions about the resumption of disarmament negotiations. This move was welcomed by the General Assembly because, together with other developments, it offered promise that with perseverance the crisis of confidence within the United Nations could be eased.

Throughout 1961, the United Nations continued to be handicapped by the failure to bring about reconciliation in the Congo. This, added to the many other responsibilities of the Organization, placed a severe strain on its material and moral resources. The prolonged Soviet attack on the Secretariat and the growing financial deficit undermined the United Nations at a time when stability was very desirable because of mounting tension in Berlin, South-East Asia and the Caribbean.

The prospects appeared very dark on September 18 when Mr. Dag Hammarskjold died while on a mission of peace in Africa. This tragic event filled member states with a deep sense of loss. Mr. Hammarskjold's steady hand had kept the Organization on a safe course in spite of stormy criticism and solid difficulties.

The Congo situation alone demanded that the Secretariat should have authoritative direction and inspired leadership. The vast majority of members quickly realized that the United Nations could not allow the sudden tragedy at Ndola to set back the great cause which Dag Hammarskjold had courageously and tirelessly pursued. In selecting U Thant as an interim successor, without derogating from the principle of independence of the office of Secretary-General, the United Nations reached an important landmark in its political development. The Organization demonstrated an earnest desire and a capacity to survive.