

Canada and the United Nations

The Middle East Crisis

WHEN the General Assembly of the United Nations met on November 12 to commence its 11th regular session, one of the most urgent problems before it was the crisis in the Middle East. The Special Emergency Session of the Assembly, at its concluding meeting two days earlier, had adopted a resolution placing the Middle East question on the provisional agenda of the regular session as a matter of priority.(1)

While the crisis was among the issues being most actively discussed by the delegates during the opening days of the 11th session, no further formal action was taken by the Assembly until November 24. In the interim the Secretary-General had visited Cairo to discuss with Egyptian authorities arrangements for implementation of the resolutions passed by the Special Emergency Session on November 2, 4 and 7 regarding the United Nations Emergency Force and the re-opening of the Suez Canal. Meanwhile the Commander of the Force, Major-General E. L. M. Burns, had been proceeding with the organization of the United Nations Emergency Force. The first advance units of the Emergency Force arrived in the Canal zone near Ismailia on November 15, and thereafter its growth progressed rapidly.

On November 20 the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly a report on the UN Emergency Force outlining the discussions he had held in Cairo with the Egyptian Government. This report set forth in an aide-memoire the principal results of these discussions, amounting to an understanding with the Egyptian authorities on the basis for the presence and functioning of UNEF in Egypt. It also gave some details of the build-up of the Force up to that time.

On the same date Mr. Hammarskjold placed before the Assembly a report on the implementation of that part of the cease-fire resolution passed by the Special Emergency Session on November 2 which has urged, *inter alia*, that as soon as the cease-fire became effective, steps should be taken to restore freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal. The Secretary-General had discussed this matter with Egyptian authorities in Cairo and had given them an assurance that the United Nations would seek to provide assistance in clearing the Canal. Mr. Hammarskjold asked the General Assembly to give him authority to negotiate agreements with salvage firms in countries "outside the present conflict", and proposed that a survey of the work required should be undertaken without delay by experts within the United Nations technical assistance programme, in conjunction with representatives of the firms approached.

(1) A report on the Special Emergency Session is given in "External Affairs" for November 1956.