

Concurrently, the sentiment about colonial issues and racial discrimination ran strong. The attitude and influence of the African states, the largest single group in the Assembly, was unknown and at times unpredictable. This gave added urgency to the need for adjustments within the United Nations to meet the pressures of greatly enlarged membership.

It also gave new significance to the number of questions which had eluded answer. The positions of South Africa and Portugal had become increasingly at variance with the strong views of most of the other member states. The Algerian problem remained of grave concern, while the eruption of French-Tunisian difficulties over Bizerta made it necessary to hold a special session of the General Assembly. The uneasiness about developments in South-East Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean also had an unsettling effect. Many observers expressed pessimism about the prospects for peace and for the future of the United Nations.

During the course of the sixteenth session, most members seemed to recover from the initial shock which the potential dangers of the late summer produced. The actual crisis appeared to recede a little and the atmosphere at the Assembly steadily improved. This was partly due to vigorous efforts made by Canada and other countries to focus the Assembly's attention on the most pressing issues before the United Nations.

The sudden death of the Secretary-General had come as a profound shock and it was obviously desirable to resolve the problem of appointing a successor. Without authorized direction to the Secretariat, there was a serious risk of paralysis in the activities of the United Nations and particularly in the Congo, where a firm hand was needed. The Secretary of State for External Affairs emphasized this point in his statement in the general debate on October 3. A sense of urgency encouraged intensive diplomatic activity in New York and this resulted in the unanimous approval for the appointment of U Thant as Acting Secretary-General for the unexpired period of Mr. Hammarskjöld's term of office. This appointment, which Canada supported warmly from the first, injected new vigour into the sixteenth session, especially since the new chief administrator was able to assume office without sacrificing any of the authority required for discharging his heavy responsibilities. This was perhaps the most notable achievement at the first part of the session and it was particularly significant, in view of the difficulties which the Soviet bloc had created in pressing its troika approach.

Early in the session, the great majority of member states expressed their concern about the sharp increases in radio-active fall-out, following the resumption of atmospheric tests by the Soviet Union. The Canadian Delegation sought energetically to crystallize this concern by seeking high priority for the consideration of the annual progress report of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation. This move had the overwhelming support of the General Assembly. The resolution adopted gave new urgency to the work of the Scientific Committee and envisaged