

CANADA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The Tunisian Question*

On June 20, 1952, in a joint communication to the Secretary-General, thirteen African and Asian states — Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, the Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen — requested that a special session of the General Assembly be summoned to give urgent consideration to the Tunisian problem.

The communication of the thirteen states and its annexed memorandum recalled that no action had been taken on a letter in January from the Prime Minister of Tunisia to the President of the Security Council, and that in April the Security Council had refused to include the Tunisian question on its agenda, although eleven African and Asian countries had requested it to do so. It was further asserted that the situation in Tunisia had continued to deteriorate since April, and that in spite of the hopes expressed by some members of the Council at that time, no negotiations between the French and the Tunisians had taken place. The message concluded that the refusal of the Security Council to entertain the Tunisian question had created profound and far-reaching repercussions and that a further delay by the United Nations in giving the problem the attention it demanded would seriously impair the authority of the Organization as a forum for the discussion and peaceful settlement of international problems.

A communication from the Acting Secretary-General transmitting the request of the thirteen states was sent to all member nations on the day the request was received. Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly provides that a special session of the Assembly shall be summoned if a majority of member states concur in the request within thirty days of the date on which the Secretary-General forwards his communication. In addition to the thirteen sponsoring states, ten member nations — Bolivia, Byelorussia, China, Czechoslovakia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Poland, the Ukraine, the U.S.S.R., and Yugoslavia — had concurred by July 20, the final date for replies to be received. Twenty-seven states — Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Sweden, Turkey, the Union of South Africa, the United States, the United Kingdom and Uruguay — did not favour the summoning of a special session. Two states — Thailand and Ethiopia — formally abstained on the issue, while eight states — Argentina, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Israel, Liberia, Mexico, Panama and Venezuela — did not reply to the Secretary-General's communication. As the necessary majority of thirty-one states did not concur in the request, a special session was not called. The Canadian reply, which was delivered on July 16, expressed the view that circumstances did not warrant the convocation of a special session at that time.

*For background information on this subject see *External Affairs* Volume IV, No. 5 of May, 1952, pp. 186-7.