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GENERAL SURVEY

Members of the United Nations have opportunities in their day-to-day activities to relate their policies to the principles of the Charter and to cooperate in carrying out programmes sponsored by the United Nations. The sessions of the General Assembly readily provide indications of their general approach as well as of the measure and quality of their desire to implement the code of conduct which they agreed to at San Francisco in 1945. From the Canadian point of view, the last two sessions of the General Assembly provided some encouraging support for the hope that the United Nations is a living, not moribund, organization; that constructive solutions to the problems which threaten international peace and security can be resolved within the United Nations given time and patience; and that in the grim realities of our time the United Nations can devise ways and means of limited, international co-operation.

For the Canadian Delegation, the ninth session of the General Assembly was more hopeful than others of recent years. After the rather stultifying eighth session, it had seemed as if nothing of importance could be negotiated in the United Nations, at least not until the problem of Chinese representation had been solved and the United Nations had become much more nearly universal in membership. In 1954, at Berlin and Geneva, the United Nations had been by-passed; public opinion in some countries was becoming increasingly critical of it. Then, between June and September 1954, a break in these ominous clouds occurred: the fighting in Indochina was stopped: for the first time, a session of the General Assembly met in a world at peace—or at least in a world where there was no war.

Unknown to each other, both sides in the cold war were preparing peaceful initiatives for the ninth session of the Assembly. President Eisenhower was determined to press ahead in carrying his "Atoms for Peace" plan a step further towards the establishment of an International Atomic Energy Agency under the aegis of the United Nations. At the same time the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was preparing a new disarmament proposal to present to the Assembly. From these two initiatives of the Great Powers the Assembly drew hope—hope that was later consolidated by the not inconsiderable achievement of unanimous resolutions on both these subjects, disarmament and "atoms for peace". Though much of the rest of the ninth session was routine, and there were times when it seemed to be back at "cold-war-as-usual", these two items gave the United Nations a stimulus that it badly needed. No doubt these two unanimous resolutions may have encouraged certain wishful hopes of an approaching golden age of co-existence; nevertheless, even the most conservative assessments conceded that there were sufficient grounds to go on trying to secure Soviet co-operation in a United Nations atomic energy agency, in disarmament, and in other efforts to lessen international tension.

Taken as a whole then, the ninth session seemed to reflect an encouraging slackening of tension and a real desire on both sides to proceed step by step towards mutual accommodation so that the nations of the world might gradually move to surer ground instead, as Sir Winston Churchill put it, of "roaming and peering around the brim of hell".