

United Nations General Assembly

SIXTEENTH SESSION — FINAL REPORT*

DURING the course of the session, the Assembly succeeded in dealing with most of the items on the heaviest agenda (96 items) of its history. Despite earlier fears that the worsening international climate would hamper constructive action by the Assembly, the members showed a surprising degree of unanimity on many of the resolutions adopted. Most significant, perhaps, was the unanimous appointment of an interim replacement for the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, whose tragic death on the eve of the session created uncertainty and concern about the future of the United Nations.

The appointment of U Thant on November 3 as Acting Secretary-General reflected the determination of members to maintain the effectiveness of the organization. In keeping with this spirit, the new Secretary-General immediately began the difficult task of directing the United Nations operations in the Congo and dealing with the financial crisis facing the United Nations.

As the session progressed, the atmosphere of tension created by the Berlin crisis and the resumption of nuclear-weapons testing in the atmosphere by the Soviet Union abated as Assembly opinion was brought to bear on these and other issues. While there was no item on the Berlin problem, delegations were able in the general debate to express their concern. Anxiety over the dangers to peace and the health of mankind led the Assembly to give priority to those items dealing with disarmament, nuclear-weapons testing and radiation hazards. The Canadian Delegation played a leading role in focusing attention on these problems and in working for urgent Assembly action. It was with particular satisfaction that Canada welcomed the agreement by the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union to resume the Geneva talks on the cessation of nuclear-weapons testing and the agreement reached to resume disarmament negotiations in a new 38-member Disarmament Committee.

Among the important decisions taken by the Assembly at this session, those relating to radiation hazards and outer space, which Canada actively promoted, have far-reaching significance. One of these placed firmly on record the Assembly's view that the principles of international law and the concern for the future of mankind imposed responsibilities on any state whose actions could have harmful biological consequences for existing and future generations in other states by increasing the levels of radioactive fallout. Another decision endorsed the principles that international law, including the United Nations Charter, applied to outer space and celestial bodies and that these were not subject to national appropriation.

*The first and second months of the session were reported on in the November issue of the *Bulletin* (p. 370) and the December issue (p. 411).