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## GENERAL SURVEY

During 1963, most developments at the United Nations reflected the noticeable improvement which occurred in the climate of international relations. A mood of guarded optimism developed with the easing of the cold war. In general, there was far less tension in the air than in late 1962, when fighting raged on the Sino-Indian border and the situations in the Caribbean and in the Congo seemed on the point of violent eruption. By contrast, in the summer of 1963 increasing East-West contacts, especially the limited nuclear test-ban treaty, gave promise of some improvement in relations between the Western powers and the Soviet bloc. The continuing deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and Communist China added yet another dimension to Soviet policies towards the West and the rest of the world.

This is not to suggest that great strides were made toward the solution of international differences. The basic issues seemed as intractable as ever. There was little sign of a disposition to make major concessions—for example on Berlin, on Laos or on disarmament. Events along the *Autobahn* in Germany, off the coast of Cuba and in Indochina showed that these continued to be areas of dangerous friction. The Chinese Communists continued to speak aggressively, as the Sino-Soviet rift widened and the Sino-Indian dispute reached stalemate. Tension in Southeast Asia continued, especially in Vietnam and over Malaysia.

There was room for hope, however, that in their relations the principal powers wished to avoid sharper conflicts, to draw back from the brink of nuclear war and to negotiate a way out of their differences, no matter how long that process might take. There was a growing interest in trade and in cultural exchanges. The propaganda on both sides was in a relatively low key.

This calmer political atmosphere was reflected in United Nations affairs, and principally in the proceedings of the General Assembly. The tone of debate was moderate and attitudes on the whole were constructive. The relaxation in major-power tension seemed to have a calming effect on the behaviour of other power groupings pursuing interests of their own.

Disarmament was the broad heading under which most issues arose between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. The negotiations which continued in the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee in Geneva were