

# Canada and the United Nations

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## Assessment of the Tenth Session of the United Nations General Assembly

### Effects of the "Geneva Spirit"

At the opening of the tenth session of the General Assembly, two factors helped to shape the attitude of the majority of delegations. One was the widely-heralded "spirit of Geneva" which had emanated from the meeting in July of the Heads of Government of the United States, U.S.S.R., United Kingdom and France; the other was the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of these four countries which was to be held about the half-way mark in the scheduled timetable for the tenth session. The first factor encouraged the belief that the tenth session would prove to be a turning point in the struggle to achieve the aims and purposes of the United Nations Charter; the second tended to hold in suspense the Assembly's discussion of the clearly controversial items on its agenda. The general desire of delegations seemed to be to preserve the Geneva spirit as long as possible and, in order to do this the Assembly was prepared to postpone discussion of controversial questions until after the Foreign Ministers had had an opportunity to pursue in detail the directives issued in July by their Heads of Government.

Accordingly, statements in the general debate in the Assembly contained many hopeful references to the improved international situation. These speeches were, on the whole, conciliatory in tone though, in many cases, coloured by over-optimism. There was a noticeable absence of propaganda in both Western and Communist speeches and many appeals were made for restraint in expressing strongly held opinions. Except for some discordant notes in the later stages of the session, there was general avoidance of extreme propaganda, which reflected a significant and welcome change from previous sessions. The Soviet delegation in particular seemed at pains not to provoke the acrimony of earlier cold war debates in the United Nations. However, this did not prevent them from pointing out whenever the opportunity arose the superior qualities of Soviet communism and the shortcomings of other ways of life. In the Second Committee for example, they deplored the alleged discriminatory trade-practices of the Western democracies against the countries of Eastern Europe.

The atmosphere of *detente* was of course more pronounced prior to the Foreign Ministers' meeting, which produced no positive results as regards the two most important subjects, on the agenda of the tenth session—disarmament and the admission of new members. After that meeting, however, there was no clearly discernible return to cold war tactics by the major contenders. It became less appropriate, perhaps, to refer to the new air of *rapprochement*. The behaviour of Messrs Bulganin and Krushchev during their Asian tour added to the doubt and dismay about East-West relations but there seemed to be little inclination to draw the lines for a renewed cold-war struggle in the General Assembly. Co-existence—by then clearly recognizable as competitive rather than co-operative co-existence—continued to be the preferred alternative. Exchanges between the United States and Soviet representatives