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## GENERAL SURVEY

At the beginning of 1959 the activities of the United Nations were overshadowed by the strains and tensions apparent at the last General Assembly (XIII), and by mounting anxiety over German questions, especially Berlin. Thus, although it remained clear that the Organization was not equipped to solve major disputes directly involving the interests of great powers, prospects improved for the United Nations to play a useful role both in facilitating agreement between the great powers and in protecting the interests of other states. By mid-year the proposed visits of Mr. Khrushchov to the United States and of President Eisenhower to the USSR had signalled a relaxation in relations between the Soviet and Western powers, and an apparent desire to negotiate had replaced Soviet emphasis on threats and propaganda charges.

Canada was a member of the Security Council during the period under review; a period in which very few major complaints were tabled. The most important one concerned allegations that North Vietnamese forces were involved in aggressive action against Laos. It was a situation of particular interest to Canada, as one of the three members of the International Supervisory Commissions for the Indo-Chinese states. Canada therefore supported a Security Council resolution to set up a sub-committee to investigate and report. It was satisfying to note that the subsequent arrival of the sub-committee in Laos had produced the desired calming effect.

On a number of occasions the Security Council had also to consider Jordanian and Israeli complaints about incidents on their borders. Canadian concern for stability in the Middle East was reflected in her participation in the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF). Serious difficulties have been met in the General Assembly regarding the financing of UNEF, and once again, at the fourteenth session, there was opposition to the principle that expenses should be assessed against all member states. A resolution co-sponsored by Canada was finally adopted by which the principle of collective responsibility was reaffirmed, while the United States and the United Kingdom agreed to make in the coming year voluntary contributions which would reduce by 50 per cent assessments of members outside the Security Council.

The fourteenth session of the General Assembly opened in September 1959 in a noticeable atmosphere of relaxed tension, of moderation and conciliation. The President, Mr. Belaunde of Peru, characterized the session as the "Assembly of Peace", which the Secretary-General later defined as a "peaceful assembly notable for a new spirit, a new sense of responsibilities, a new will to listen to arguments, to seek out a basis for agreement and to take a more realistic view of the problems which arise in the political as well as the economic field".

These opinions seemed to be borne out by indications of certain departures from what had come to be regarded as normal group voting patterns. Undoubtedly the admission of new states—mainly Asian and African—has changed the composition of the Assembly and expanded the range of international problems beyond the "cold war" and the colonial struggle.