

The French representative also found the proposal unsatisfactory and repeated his Government's view that, whatever the machinery employed, no government was bound by obligations arising out of recommendations from the Council or the Assembly unless it specifically agreed with those recommendations and accepted the obligations which flowed from them.

In these circumstances, the non-aligned members of the Working Group were unwilling to join in putting forward a majority plan. They were not prepared to contemplate voting against the Soviet Union and France on an issue which might result in two great powers walking out of the General Assembly and possibly quitting the United Nations as well. The Working Group recessed at the conclusion of its general debate without agreeing on any recommendations for action. Its session was the last concerted effort made in 1964 to find a solution on future arrangements which might bring a settlement of past difficulties in its train.

Meanwhile the Committee on Contributions formally reported to the General Assembly that ten member states were in arrears in excess of the limits stipulated in Article 19. Although the Committee report was limited to stating facts and made no recommendations for Assembly action, it was not unanimous: the representatives of Poland, the Soviet Union, France and India dissented. Under such inauspicious circumstances, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the majority of member states, again postponed the opening of the General Assembly until December 1. The objective was simply to buy time in the hope that last-minute negotiations would bring about an agreed compromise on the payment of arrears which would avert direct confrontation between East and West over Soviet-bloc voting rights.

Nineteenth Session of the General Assembly

The immediate problem confronting the General Assembly on December 1 was the exact interpretation to be placed on Article 19. Canada, with most Western governments, had long maintained that the loss-of-vote penalty was mandatory once the permissible level of arrears had been exceeded, and that the Article was relevant to arrears owed to the peace-keeping accounts as well as arrears owed to the regular budget. France, because it regarded the peace-keeping assessments as optional, and the Soviet Union, because it regarded them as illegal, rejected the Articles' relevance to peace-keeping arrears. The developing countries, split amongst themselves on interpretation, were reluctant to take sides in what they increasingly regarded as a straight cold-war clash between East and