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GENERAL SURVEY

At the beginning of 1960 the atmosphere of detente prevailing in international relations had given rise to the hope that at long last progress would be made on some of the important political questions which had divided the East and West. The announcement that the four great powers—the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France—had decided to hold a summit conference in Paris in May opened the possibility of a useful exchange of views. At the same time, detailed disarmament negotiations which began in March in the Ten-Nation Committee offered encouragement that a renewed and serious approach would be made to problems of disarmament.

These promising developments were abruptly reversed, however, following the U-2 incident and the collapse of the summit conference. The Soviet Union launched a bitter propaganda campaign against the United States. In June, mainly as a result of increasing friction within the Soviet bloc, communist representatives were withdrawn from the ten power disarmament negotiations in Geneva. During the summer, other events, notably the shooting down of a United States RB-47 aircraft, which the Russians claimed had violated their airspace, and the developing crises in the Congo and in Cuba, contributed to a further worsening of East-West relations.

The renewed tensions between the great powers were quickly reflected in the Security Council, when it came to deal with the Cuban complaint against the United States and the Congo crisis in July, and later in virtually all discussions at the fifteenth session of the General Assembly.

By far the most difficult issue before the United Nations in the year and the one which has perhaps had the greatest impact on the Organization was the Congo crisis, which was first brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary-General. In the initial stage of the crisis, the great powers agreed to set in motion a United Nations operation designed primarily to assist in maintaining internal order and to provide economic assistance to the new republic. Subsequently, when domestic political conflict developed in the Congo, disagreement about the functioning of the United Nations in the strife-torn country led to the immobilization of the Security Council and the convening of the General Assembly in its fourth emergency special session in early September.

The Assembly's consideration of the Congo situation was continued in the fifteenth regular session. From the outset, its proceedings were disrupted by Soviet insistence on dealing, frequently in disorderly plenary sessions, with