

An emergency session of the General Assembly had already been called because of the inability of the Security Council to deal with the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East in the face of vetoes by permanent members. For the first time the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution of 1950 was invoked, allowing the Assembly to be convened and to consider the critical situation that had arisen. Thus, throughout November and December the Assembly, first in special and then in regular session, devoted a great deal of time to these matters. On the Middle East rapid action was taken. Arrangements were made for a cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign forces from Egyptian territory, the establishment of a United Nations Emergency Force, and the clearance of the Suez Canal. No comparable progress was made in respect of the situation in Hungary. The efforts of the General Assembly to send observers to Hungary to examine the position at first hand were frustrated by the refusal of the Soviet Government and the Hungarian Government to allow either the Secretary-General or his representatives to make such an investigation. Similarly the Soviet Government brusquely ignored requests that its troops should be withdrawn from Hungarian territory. The Assembly had, perforce, to restrict its activities to debate in which the situation, in so far as it was known, was described before the world in all its grim tragedy. For Canada, as for other individual countries, it remained during 1956 only to assist the political refugees who daily streamed into Austria, both by public and private financial aid and by accepting a share of them as immigrants.

Thus, as the year drew toward its end, the two situations most threatening to peace had—with a host of other complicated problems—been brought before the organization set up, above all, to preserve peace. That the United Nations was only partly successful does not remove the significance of what it did accomplish. In terms of the hopes and ideals of 1945, neither the limited degree of success nor the means by which it was achieved would have been expected; but in terms of the disappointments in subsequent years the record of the United Nations in 1956 gives some cause for encouragement.

During the year the Government welcomed to Canada the Crown Prince of Laos, the President of Indonesia, the President of Italy, and the Vice-President of Brazil. Amongst other distinguished visitors were the Prime Ministers of Australia, Ceylon, India, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and the Deputy Prime Minister of Laos; the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom, and the Ministers of External Affairs of Australia and New Zealand; Ministers of cabinet rank from thirteen countries; the retiring Supreme Allied Commander in Europe; and a large number of senior government officials and representatives of international organizations. Thus were afforded many opportunities of discussions on international questions of common concern, complementary to those conducted through regular diplomatic channels and in international organizations of which Canada is a member.