

The quest for peace yesterday and today [continuation]

Autor(en): [s.n.]

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - (1954)

Heft 1239

PDF erstellt am: **20.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-693844>

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THE QUEST FOR PEACE YESTERDAY AND TODAY.

Memorial Lecture given by Professor William E. Rappard, of the University of Geneva, Director, Graduate Institute of International Studies, at the David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies, April, 1954.

(Continuation)

These conclusions are all the more certain as they are confirmed by Mr. Sumner Welles. After the recital of the events which we have just recalled, Mr. Welles, who was not only President Roosevelt's closest collaborator in the course of the whole negotiation, but also one of his earliest and most intimate personal friends, gave the following rather apologetic explanation of his attitude:

"At the time of the Atlantic meeting, President Roosevelt was primarily concerned with the dangers which he saw rapidly approaching the country that he loved. He was concentrating to the best of his great ability upon the need for defence.

I remember that a good many months later, at a time when I was urging him, as others were, to speak to the people of the United States of their need to prepare for the peacemaking task, and to consider the means by which this country could best play its full part in preventing new world wars, he said to me that he believed his primary obligation was to concentrate the attention of public opinion upon the winning of the war. He was convinced that if he spoke to the American people, under the conditions which then existed, of postwar problems, they might be distracted from the cardinal objective of victory, and controversies might develop which would jeopardize national unity. He also, he said, believed that it was imperative that he should do nothing and say nothing which would make the people feel that he was not dedicated exclusively to his responsibility as Commander-in-Chief.

Franklin Roosevelt had by no means that 'one track mind,' which Woodrow Wilson once insisted he himself possessed. But he was always inclined to segregate the urgent from the not-so-urgent. He always preferred to devote himself to the task which was immediate rather than to the task which could be undertaken later on. It was, I think, only in that sense that during the Atlantic meeting he refused to consider urgent the need to reach a decision as to the precise kind of international organization to be created after the defeat of the Axis powers. After this country had become involved in the war, he never faltered in his conviction, as I will later show, that every effort should be made to obtain an agreement between the major powers upon the main lines of an international organization, and to have such an organization functioning, in at least provisional form, before the conclusion of the war.

The next documentary landmark in the historical genesis of the United Nations was the famous declaration of January 1, 1942. Of this Mr. Sumner Welles says, in his above-quoted book:

"The only instrument which welded the wartime alliance between the Soviet Union and these English-speaking powers, as well as with the other countries joined with them in the struggle against the Axis —

the United Nations Declaration — was based upon the Atlantic Charter. Every member of the United Nations thereby subscribed to its provisions. The Atlantic Charter was the beacon which the English-speaking democracies held aloft to the peoples struggling for liberty, to light them forward to peace, to human progress, and to a free world."

The Declaration of January 1, 1942, in contradistinction to the Atlantic Charter, was essentially an American document. It was imagined and first drafted by Secretary of State Hull and approved in its final form by President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill in Washington during one of the visits of the latter to the White House. Mr. Hull's original hope was that it would:

"Bind all the nations fighting the Axis to the acceptance of certain principles already stated in the Atlantic Charter. These were the right of peoples to choose their own form of government; no aggrandizement; no territorial changes opposed by the peoples concerned; access to trade and raw materials; improved labour standards, economic advancement, and social security; international security; freedom of the seas; and disarmament.

Our Government, on entering the First World War, had not endeavoured to bind the Allies to any war aims...

This time I felt that the Allies should all be committed in advance to certain principles..."

The development of events was to show that this hope, as well as Mr. Sumner Welles' above-quoted



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opinion, was far too ambitious. As a matter of fact, the Declaration was in truth nothing but a war-time statement in which the belligerent allies — at that date twenty-six in number — pledged themselves to fight to a finish “in the struggle for victory over Hitlerism”. The main reason why it is mentioned here is its preamble, in which its signatories, including the U.S.S.R., declare that they have subscribed “to a common programme of purposes and principles embodied in the Joint Declaration of the President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland dated August 14, 1941, known as the Atlantic Charter”. It is true that in the latter half of the same preamble they declare themselves:

“Convinced that complete victory over their enemies is essential to defend life, liberty, independence and religious freedom, and to preserve human rights and justice in their own lands as well as in other lands...”

Apparently there was some difficulty in getting Mr. Litvinov, then Soviet Ambassador in the United States, to solicit Stalin's approval of the reference to “religious freedom” in the above text. The fact that that approval was promptly granted shows the true nature of the document. It was obviously in no way considered as a programme of peace terms binding upon its belligerent signatories and limiting their future freedom.

A secondary reason why the Declaration deserves a place in any investigation into the origins of the

United Nations, may be deduced from the following quotation from Hull's *Memoirs*:

“On the morning of December 31, while Prime Minister Churchill was having a bath in the White House, the President came to him and suggested that the Joint Declaration carry the title, ‘Declaration of United Nations’. The distinguished bather agreed, and thus the term ‘United Nations’ came into being.”

The next important diplomatic step towards the establishment of the United Nations was the “Declaration of Four Nations on General Security” of October 30, 1943. This document was signed in Moscow by Messrs. Molotov, Eden and Hull on behalf of their respective governments, and by the Chinese ambassador on behalf of his country.

Secretary of State Hull, who was the author and the prime mover of this Declaration, traces its origin to a speech he had delivered in Washington on July 23, 1943. With the full approval of Roosevelt, he had on that occasion, as he relates in his *Memoirs*, “come out flatly for the creation of an international security organization, of which the United States of course must be a member”. He added:

“This was the first time that I publicly stated my position on this point, although I had often expressed it in conversations with foreign ambassadors and, during the conferences leading up to the United Nations Declaration, with my associates.”

At the Quebec Conference on August 21, 1943, Mr. Hull produced a draft of the Four-Nations Declaration which was to be submitted to the Moscow Conference in the autumn of that year. He writes in his *Memoirs*:

“By this declaration the four powers would agree to establish at the earliest practicable date a general international organization based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all nations, and open to membership by all nations, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

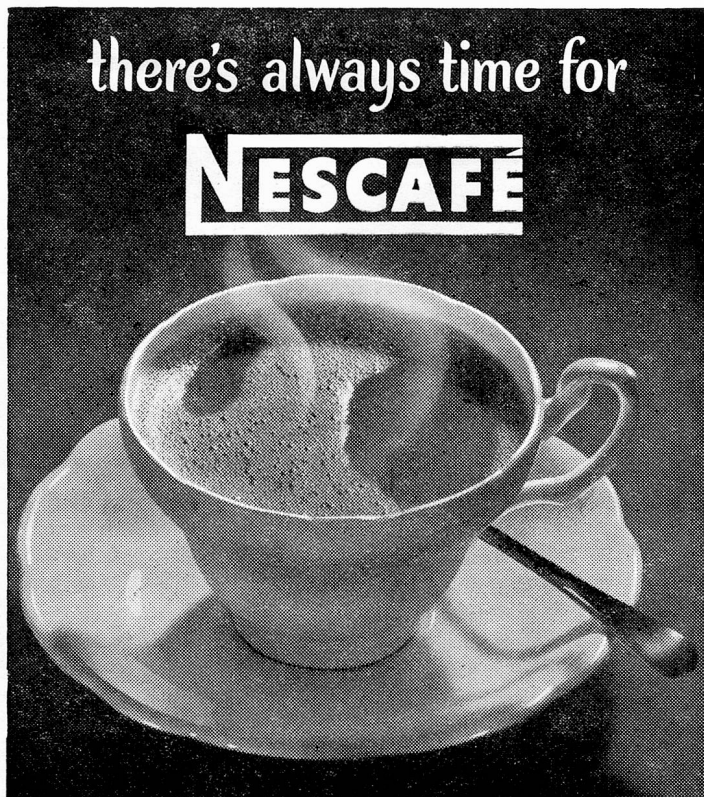
This draft statement, into which its author had inserted the phrase of the “sovereign equality of all nations” of which he was obviously proud, was approved both by President Roosevelt and by Messrs. Churchill and Eden.

He then sent his draft on to Moscow. Much to his disappointment, however, it was at first deemed unacceptable, especially, it would seem, on account of its proposed inclusion of China as one of the four signatories.

When the representatives of the United Kingdom, the United States and the U.S.S.R. met in Moscow on October, 1943, Mr. Hull was shocked to find that the consideration of the Four-Nations Declaration, which he had placed first on a previous draft agenda, was entirely omitted from that distributed by Mr. Molotov. However there was no stubborn opposition to its being reinstated. From Mr. Hull's own record of what happened in the course of the Moscow Conference, one cannot escape the impression that his colleagues were far from sharing his opinion of the importance of his Declaration.

Mr. Eden, to be sure, never failed to support his advocacy of it. Had he not received from Mr. Churchill a note dated October 11, 1943, in which the Prime Minister had written:

“We hold strongly to a system of a League of Nations, which will include a Council of Europe, with



ANOTHER OF NESTLÉ'S GOOD THINGS

an International Court and an armed Power capable of enforcing its decisions."

There were, however, many so much more urgent matters to be settled at Moscow that even the British delegate does not seem to have spent much energy in supporting his American colleague's motion in favour of the Declaration.

As for Mr. Molotov, his absolute opposition to it seems to have faded first into a more conciliatory reluctance and finally into a resigned acceptance of it, when once he had convinced himself both of the price his American colleague attached to it and of the real innocuousness of its terms for Soviet Russia.

Thus, on October 30, 1943, at the final session of the Conference, the document was signed by the three foreign ministers and by the Chinese ambassador to Russia.

In his *Memoirs* Mr. Hull devotes a whole chapter, entitled "The Birth of the United Nations Organization", to the discussion of the Four-Nations Declaration. He concludes it by the following confession of his personal feelings on this occasion:

"I was truly thrilled as I saw the signatures affixed. Now there was no longer any doubt that an international organization to keep the peace, by force if necessary, would be set up after the war. As I signed, I could not but recall my long personal battles on behalf of the old League of Nations. Now it was probable that the United States would be a member of a new security organization. It was equally probable that the Soviet Union would be one of the principle members. And China, too, would be one of the charter members by virtue of her signature of the Four-Nation Declaration. Had I not persisted in the effort to get China in as one of the original signatories, her claim to permanent membership on the Security Council of the United Nations would not have been so solid.

As Soviet newsreel cameramen took motion pictures of the signing of the Four-Nation Declaration, I could not help feeling that they were recording an historic event."

The text of the Declaration is too long to be reproduced here. In its preamble, much to Mr. Hull's regret, he had been obliged to insert an allusion to the "basis of unconditional surrender" that had been added after the momentous Casablanca Conference, to which President Roosevelt had failed to invite him. What Mr. Hull had been able to save of his original draft were points four and five, which explain although they would hardly seem to justify his enthusiasm. They read as follows:

"The Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China...

jointly declare...

4. That they recognize the necessity of establishing at the earliest practicable date a general international organization, based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states, and open to membership by all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security.

5. That for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security pending the re-establishment of law and order and the inauguration of a system of general security, they will consult with one another

and as occasion requires with other members of the United Nations with a view to joint action on behalf of the community of nations."

With the adoption of the Four-Nation Declaration at Moscow on October 30, 1943, the idea of the United Nations may be said to have been fairly conceived.

In view of the disastrous turn world events have taken since, this statement may seem surprising and indeed brazenly challenging. Has not the evolution of the last ten years sadly belied the hopes of the Atlantic Charter of 1941, of the United Nations Declaration of 1942, and of the Four-Nation Declaration of 1943? Does not the Charter of 1945 in its main provisions if not in its pseudo-juridical verbiage, itself already betray these hopes? And is not the general peace settlement, or rather its absence under which Europe groans today, more than a decade after the Moscow Conference, the very denial of the Wilsonian ideals of the American Secretary of State who, as we have seen, recalled with emotion his "long personal battles on behalf of the old League of Nations"? No one feels the force and the relevance of these excruciating questions more clearly than the present writer. Still he maintains that the idea of the United Nations Organization was fairly conceived at the end of 1943. And to whom can this conception be attributed? To Mr. Cordell Hull himself, to whom President Roosevelt, on receiving his letter of resignation as Secretary of State on November 21, 1944, wrote:

"I shall continue to pray that you, as the father

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of the United Nations, may preside over its first session. That has nothing to do with whether you are Secretary of State or not at the time, but should go to you as the one person in all the world who has done the most to make this great plan for peace an effective fact."

In closing this hasty recital of the origins of the United Nations ideal, I shall quote from a public address delivered by Mr. Hull on April 9, 1944. On this date, about half a year after his return from Moscow and about half a year also before his age and his health obliged him to leave the State Department, he said:

"However difficult the road may be...there is no hope of turning victory into enduring peace unless the real interests of this country, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, and China are harmonized and unless they agree and act together. This is the solid framework upon which all future policy and international organization must be built... It offers the fullest opportunity for the development of institutions in which all free nations may participate democratically, through which a reign of law and morality may arise, and through which the material interests of all may be advanced. But *without an enduring understanding between these four nations upon their fundamental purposes, interests, and obligations to one another, all organizations to preserve peace are creations on paper and the path is wide open again for the rise of a new aggressor.*"

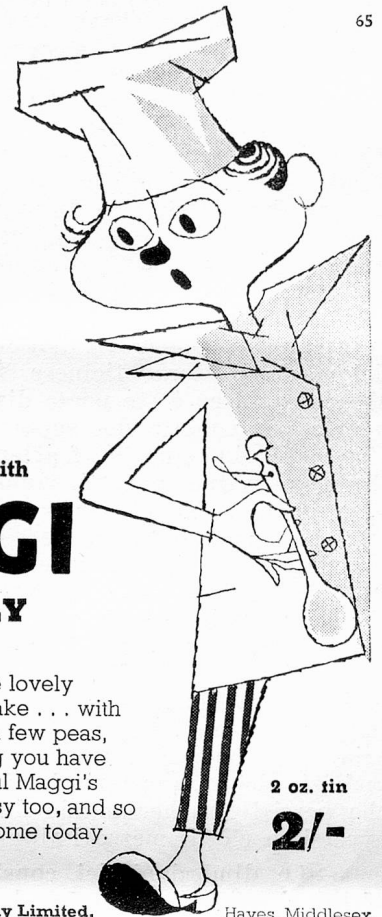
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