



History of the Charter

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The Declaration of St. James Palace

On June 12th 1941 Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Union of South Africa, the exiled governments of Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Yugoslavia and General de Gaulle of France met in London. They signed a declaration, which comprised their idea that nations and people have to work together for peace.

The Atlantic Charter

On August 14th 1941 President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill issued a declaration, which they had worked out onboard the U.S.S. Augusta near Newfoundland. It consisted of eight points: freedom of the seas, no aggrandizement, no territorial changes without the accordance of the people affected, right for all people to choose their own form of government, access to raw materials for all people, collaboration in the economic field. Two points aimed at a world organisation. The first one called for peace for all people of all nations. The second called for a general disarmament and the control over countries that threaten world peace. The Atlantic Charter had no legal validity, but it showed the support of the United States for the other countries and it gave hope to those nations that were occupied or fighting against Germany.

The United Nations Declaration

On January 1st 1943 the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China signed a declaration of the United Nations. It pledged the countries to the maximum war effort and prevented them from making a separate peace with Germany. The next day 22 other countries also signed. This declaration was a direct descendant of the Atlantic Charter.

The Moscow Conference

On October 30th 1943 the foreign ministers of the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and China met in Moscow and agreed on the need to build an international organisation to ensure peace in the world.

The Teheran Conference

In December 1943 President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the Soviet leader Stalin met for the first time. In Teheran they made final plans for the defeat of Germany. Here again the role of the United Nations for peace in the world is mentioned.

The Meeting at Dumbarton Oaks

The meeting took place from August 21st until October 7th 1944. Dumbarton Oaks is a private mansion in Georgetown in Washington D.C. The United States and Great Britain met with the Soviet Union and afterwards with China, since the Soviet Union was still a neutral state in the pacific conflict. Here the structure of the international organisation was laid out. The plans were submitted to all countries. The proposal was discussed widely among the allied nations. The United States distributed 1.9 million copies to radio stations, news papers and other organisations to make it public. The proposal provided for four main bodies: a General Assembly, with an Economic and a Social Council, a Security Council, an International Court of Justice and a Secretariat.

The Yalta Conference

In February 1945 the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union met to resolve political questions. A very important one was the voting process in the Security Council of the United Nations. This point was left open at Dumbarton Oaks, since no conciliation had been found. Stalin accepted the Anglo-American proposal. It said that if a state was a party of a dispute that was being voted on in the Security Council, this state should be excluded from voting. As a compromise, the United States and Great Britain accepted the membership of the Byelorussian and Ukrainian republic. At Dumbarton Oaks Stalin had demanded membership for all 16 Soviet republics.

The San Francisco Conference

On April 25th 1945 the opening conference for the United Nations took place in San Francisco. Here the precise charter of the organisation was prepared, along the lines proposed at Dumbarton Oaks.

Roosevelt's "One-World" Theory

Instead of the nationalism that had dominated international politics until then, Roosevelt saw the interdependence of all nations. He wanted an international system of cooperation and not rivalry. In his mind even American banks and companies had to subordinate their interests to this cooperation. He called this his "One-World" idea. In his opinion, it is the only way that mankind can live together in peace and prosperity.

Resources

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