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Inside the United Nations

The American Struggle Against Human Rights

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INSIDE THE UNITED NATIONS

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

For many months past the United Nations has been called an arm of the American State Department. Many observers would agree that this is so, and would accept the situation as inevitable in a world where so many countries are clients (or satellites) of the United States. There are others, however, who do not accept the reasoning implicit in this last sentence, and they want to be shown.

I believe they can be shown.

The Environment

Let us first consider the environment in which the UN, its Secretariat, and the national delegations work.

There are, apart from the United States, 59 countries in the UN. These countries have embassies or legations in Washington, with permanent staffs living in the capital. These embassies are accredited to the American government and are not generally supposed to represent their respective governments at the UN. However, at the General Assembly or at other meetings of the UN, there will be some embassy staff from Washington attending the sessions in New York. Most of these men (and women) have lived for some time in the United States.

The work of the UN is such that it is necessary for each country to maintain, in addition, a special staff; and, in fact, most countries do have a Permanent Delegation in New York, which for this reason has become a diplomatic center rivalling Washington in importance. Thus, for example, Mrs. Pandit is the Ambassador of India to the United States. Her offices are in Washington. But the head of the Indian Permanent Delegation is Sir Benegal Rau, who is stationed in New York.

A Pliant Majority

The 60 countries making up the UN do not all actively take part in the organization's work. They are participants only at the General Assembly. The great mass of work and decisions comes from

The author has been a close observer of the United Nations since its inception.

the more easily controlled small UN bodies such as the Security Council (11 members), the Trusteeship Council (12), the Economic and Social Council (18), and this latter Council's eight advisory commissions (15 to 18 members each). The five permanent members of the Security Council sit on all of these bodies. The rest of the membership rotates, and the procedure has been to stress balanced geographical representation. In practice this means devising a pliant majority for the United States. (Eastern Europe is, of course, always in the minority.) The majority of these key UN bodies consists of the economically developed Marshall Plan nations (including the "mature" Commonwealth countries—Canada, Australia, New Zealand) plus obvious satellites who understand quickly how to vote—countries like Ecuador, the Philippines, and Turkey. One principle seems to have taken priority over all others: there must never be a majority of underdeveloped countries.

Control of Important Committees

One result of the narrow control of UN organs is that many delegations hardly know what goes on: they are lost in a sea of paper the contents of which are quite unfamiliar, and are actually eager to be told how to vote in order not to make a mistake. Incidentally, the United States makes very sure it controls the office-holders of the more important committees of the General Assembly. For example, the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Political Committee are at present from Colombia and Belgium, those of the Special Ad Hoc Political Committee from Peru and Greece.

Most of the Permanent Delegations have two or three diplomatic people and an equal number of office staff. The larger countries have larger delegations; for example, Britain or France or the USSR might have a permanent staff of say 20 professional people plus office staff. The United States also maintains a permanent force in New York to attend to day-to-day matters. This group, the United States Mission to the UN, has an authorized staff of 190 persons. The Mission does a certain amount of protocol work, but in the main its duty is to service the work at Lake Success and to keep in touch with the foreign delegations.

Network of International Contacts

To complete the picture of the international machinery, it must be remembered, and indeed emphasized, that the United States keeps large diplomatic establishments in other countries; that its ECA representatives are, in addition, in daily touch with the Marshall Plan governments of Europe; that ECA representatives are now in Southeast Asia and the Far East; and that the United States is a

member of such regional groups as the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, the South Pacific Regional Commission, the Caribbean Commission, the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau, and various other inter-American agencies. On the side of war preparations and war coordination, the United States works closely with the Atlantic Pact countries, the British Commonwealth, and Latin America. No other country has anything approaching this broad network of international contacts.

At the national level, the United States also has unique advantages. The State Department (that is, the American foreign office) is not more than two hours away from Lake Success by plane. The State Department's tickertape and telephone connections with New York are superior to the facilities of any other foreign office trying to keep in touch with its delegation, and the American delegation has the advantage of privacy in its telephone conversations. In the case of some specialized agencies of the UN, the physical pressure of American official policy is even greater—the International Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Food and Agricultural Organization all have their headquarters in Washington; while the International Civil Aviation Organization is not far away in Montreal.

When the General Assembly convenes in New York, the picture becomes more crowded. Each UN delegation to the Assembly is allowed five delegates, five alternates, and as many advisers and experts as it cares to pay for. Some of the smaller countries cannot afford to have five delegates even when they draw on their permanent diplomatic offices in the United States—and they may have no advisers or alternates whatsoever. The United States delegation on any one day may, on the other hand, amount to as many as 100 people (with reserve echelons of advisers, experts, consultants, and translators in Washington). The practice is to have a separate team for each major subject. In other delegations, one man may have to handle all the subjects coming before his committee, or he may even have to sit on two committees at once. (In addition to plenary sessions, the UN Assembly has seven committees: Political, Special Political, Economic, Social, Trusteeship, Budgetary, and Legal.)

Hand-In-The-Velvet-Glove Men

Not only does the picture become more crowded when the General Assembly is in session, it becomes more complex. The delegates who represent the United States and speak in the committees are usually political appointees—one must be a Republican, one a woman, one a national figure to impress the floating vote at election times or to impress the overseas newspaper reader at all times. Usually the

most able of the delegation are not in the front seat. They seldom speak. They are the "negotiators," the speech writers, the ears-to-the-grounders, the hand-in-the-velvet-glove men. The actual American spokesman at the UN says what he is told to say, not by the President or Congress, but by the State Department's experts. The "negotiators" deal with the major countries that need attention and whose national prestige is important; in short, they deal with the United Kingdom, France, India, and to some extent with the more stubborn smaller Commonwealth countries. Each of the hand-in-velvet-glove men has a small group of delegations which are his responsibility. They know him and he knows them, their personal idiosyncracies, their power and the power behind them. For example, one man will handle the delegates of, say Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru; another will handle Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt; and so on.

The American Way . . .

One of the most powerful influences on UN delegations and on the Secretariat is the United States scene itself. The language spoken is an American form of English, and English is not the mother tongue of most delegations. All problems discussed in the press are discussed in English and in American concepts. Delegations and UN Secretariat get their daily news and their daily impressions of what is important in the world from the New York press, the American radio and television. Their leisure reading is most probably *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Reader's Digest*, and the Sunday papers. Religious influences are mainly conservative Christian from churches supported by self-confident capitalism. The UN worships a God who is a Christian American with Roman Catholic leanings. Moslems, Buddhists, atheists, agnostics, who are much more representative of the world than capitalist Christians, get very little attention in New York. Movies are American; social life is largely American; sports meetings, law courts, loyalty tests, witch-hunts, mechanical gadgets are all American. And they all have an effect. The dishonest headlines, the statements of Republican and Democratic politicians, the speeches of Mrs. Roosevelt, the intemperate outbursts on international affairs, the writings of George Sokolsky and his ilk are conditioning the UN delegate and the UN staff member just as much as they are conditioning the remainder of the captive audience in the United States.

In sharp contrast to the League of Nations buildings in Geneva, at Lake Success one sees the American way of life on all sides—the cafeteria with its loudspeakers, the Coca Cola vending machines in the corridors, the newsstand with its *Daily News*, its glamor magazines, and its costume jewelry display, the Western Union office, the United

States Post Office, the Chemical and Trust Bank. The chauffeurs are American citizens, as are most of the guards; the audience attending the conferences, or following them on radio or television, and the newspaper men who report them, are mainly Americans; the remarks made by delegates are said with an eye on an inch or two of space in the *New York Times* or the *Herald Tribune*. The delegates and staff live in American apartments, served by American telephones, with wire-tapping accepted as a necessary part of living. This, then, is the atmosphere of the United Nations.

. . . Becomes the Delegates' Way

To live at the level of the New York middle class, delegation and Secretariat members must receive incomes much higher than they need or would get in other countries. They begin to accept the automobile as part of life, the refrigerator and its frozen foods, the supermarket with its shiny packages, the washing machine and television. All this saps at their own cultural inheritance, and most of them succumb. They gradually begin to like being here and—this is important—they don't want to go home. This influence of Americanism can be as insidious as the headlines and the advertisements.

The chauffeurs and guards are not the only natives working for the UN; at least two out of every three of the Secretariat staff are American citizens. The lower grades (secretarial, clerical, and so on) are locally recruited. This group is soon to be expanded. But let us look at the higher grades, at section heads and higher. There are 332 persons in these controlling categories. Of these, 83 are Americans, 47 are Britons, 35 are French, 41 come from northwest Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands), 35 from the Commonwealth outside the United Kingdom, 28 from Latin America, 18 from China, 11 from Poland, 5 from Czechoslovakia, 5 from the USSR, and the remainder come in ones and twos from other countries. The United States, the British Commonwealth, and northwest Europe (including France) thus supply three-quarters of the senior staff. In addition, there are others who would normally be expected to support the United States politically—Peronistas, White Russians, London Poles, Austrians. Thus the fact that there are eleven Poles and five Czechoslovaks on the senior staff does not mean that they are all supporters of the existing regimes in their respective countries.

It should be added that the members of the staff from the United States are not all in favor of the State Department line. Some are old New Dealers, some are liberals, a few may even be socialists. But

these people are being weeded out; the point to be stressed here is that the key men go down the line with the State Department.

Americans Hold Top Positions

The most important post in the UN is that of Assistant Secretary General in charge of Administration and Financial Services. The holder is Byron Price, former head of United States war censorship. He controls the Bureau of Personnel which does all the screening, hiring, and firing of staff; he controls the Bureau of the Budget which sets up and determines every established post in the UN; he controls the Bureau of Finance which looks after the spending of the money and has a strong influence on what is done by the non-administrative departments such as Trusteeship, Economic Affairs, and Social Affairs. In his domain are also the Buildings Management Service, Headquarters Planning Service, the Inspection Service (for staff and operation), and the Field Service which covers UN offices overseas, UN guards, and any UN missions which may be sent to the Balkans, the Middle East, Korea, or other trouble spots. In parentheses it should be noted that the Director of the Bureau of Personnel is a Vichy Frenchman.

Another almost equally important post is that of Executive Assistant to the Secretary General. He is the man who does the work for Trygve Lie (whose main function is to make public appearances and public utterances). The Executive Assistant is another American, Andrew Cordier. It is Cordier who runs the General Assembly; it is Cordier who supervises the execution of all political policy; it was Cordier rather than the Korean experts in the Department of Security Council Affairs who handled the Korean business.

A third very important post is that of Legal Counsel to the Secretary General. He is the man who tells Trygve Lie how to make it legal, how to draft loopholes, how, for example, to use language which to the uninitiated made the Korean business appear in accordance with the Charter. His name is Abe Feller, another American.

Who Are the Insiders?

The UN Secretariat could be analyzed in another way—by answering the question: Who are the “insiders”? What American on the UN staff represents Tammany Hall? Who makes sure that the electrical equipment and maintenance contracts go to the right American firms? Who handles the enormous orders for printing? Who gets tickets for the ball game when even diplomatic pressure fails? Who gets in touch with the New York police when a staff member gets too many “tickets”? Who lets the cafeteria contract, the car contracts,

the cleaning contract (worth \$788,000)? Who lets the wire-tappers work without interference? Who lets FBI agents question staff members about fellow workers? Who are straight representatives of the State Department? Who, finally, are the FBI agents themselves? The answers to these questions would take another article. They are posed here to emphasize that Lake Success is in the United States, and to suggest that the oath of loyalty to the UN is often signed with mental reservations.

Other evidences of Americanism on the staff of the UN are a lack of understanding of human and civil rights, and the fact that no attempt seems ever to have been made to orient the staff on what should be their basic approach to international problems. There is color prejudice at the UN; there is anti-semitism; there is pressure to conform. Senator McCarthy has his sympathizers in the UN administration. Any American or non-American who is judged "un-American" may quickly find his job gone. Byron Price, who presumably has signed an international loyalty oath, tells American audiences that Communism degrades the individual and ruthlessly disregards human life. (*New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 19, 1950) Apparently he has no idea of the international gravity of his offense. But the UN Secretariat knows what the boss means: they must hew to the United States line. For example, on November 1, 1950, Price issued a circular to all staff members announcing that arrangements were being made to donate blood for the forces in Korea. The last sentence of the circular reads: "I want you all to remember that this program is only a small part of our total effort in Korea, and I would like to see an enthusiastic response." It is, of course, no part of the duty of an international civil servant to accept what might be acceptable to an American. But the atmosphere at Lake Success is not only American in a general sense, it is American in the McCarran-Hickenlooper-Mundt sense.

If the UN Were in Moscow

Imagine what the UN would be like if its headquarters were in Moscow, with sixty delegations permanently there, with two-thirds of the staff Russians, with three-quarters of the senior staff Russians, Poles, and Czechoslovaks, with Soviet telephone and cable systems, with no representative of Tammany Hall but only of the Communist Party, with only Russian radio and television, with only Russian ballet, opera, and theatre, with *Izvestia* and *Pravda* to read and messages from Tass, with no ball game, and a subway without advertisements, with Mr. Stalin making a policy speech from the General Assembly rostrum on the fifth anniversary of the UN, and no Coca Cola. And,

as an afterthought, the contract for operating the elevators at the new UN building would not be let to a man who, with the agreement of a Tammany representative, underlines the menial nature of the job by employing only Negroes.

So much for penetration of the UN by the American environment. Now for the dynamics of United States control.

The American Line . . .

Briefly, this is how it works. Weeks before each General Assembly, the State Department will have established its position on the main questions on the agenda. These will be cabled or sent through the diplomatic pouch to all American embassies abroad. In each capital, except in eastern Europe and those countries not deemed worth cultivating or consulting, the ambassador and his military, economic, agricultural, labor, and educational attachés will get to work. At official meetings or on social occasions the line will be put across to the local departmental officials, cabinet ministers, or business bigwigs.

At the same time, all the embassies in Washington will be given the American line so that the foreign officials in Washington can answer cabled inquiries from their governments and at the same time become more familiar with the Washington approach. As a parallel process, the American Mission to the UN in New York will work on the Permanent Delegations—by official visits, social occasions, and sometimes joint conferences. For example, the American Mission will invite all the Latin Americans to a conference. The next day it will be the turn of the northwest Europeans. Or, if it is during the General Assembly, there may be a few parties held at the Roosevelt home in Hyde Park.

. . . Is Put Across

Everything said by any delegate is reported back in memo form to the American Mission. In this way the United States can assess the amount of unanimity in the various delegations, the objections, and—this is important—the status of the objecting delegates. Very soon, the American government will know which ones need further working over. An invariable practice is to approach the recalcitrant delegation at a higher level. If the adviser is making objections to the American line, the approach will be to the chief delegate. If *he* objects, the approach will be to his government. The superior officer will reverse the line for the sake of his own popularity, or to stop the pressure, or not to become the target for complaints himself. If the dissent from American policy arises from his instructions, he will try to get his instructions reversed.

This process goes on right through the General Assembly. It is particularly maintained on the major political questions; but because the United States, being immature in international affairs, hates defeat even on points of minor importance, no delegate and no committee can hope to escape pressure. In private conversation, delegates will bitterly tell how the Americans have gone to their ambassador, or to their government, complained of their position, and succeeded in getting it reversed. There is no face-saving. The reversed delegate must be made to look like a punished schoolboy.

Why Offend?

The ambassador likes living at the embassy; the delegate likes the honor and emoluments of his job. Nobody wants to be recalled, especially if the recall is due to American hints that the representative is "uncooperative." Many countries do not have a career service, and a recalled diplomat may really be losing a job. In sum, there are only two things that will offset American pressure—government policy and human dignity. And what is the value of human dignity if one gets recalled for offending the United States?

The process of bringing delegations into line is known as "arm-twisting." This generally occurs when a new situation arises and there is insufficient time to build up pressure on national governments. It occurs because some delegates are permitted to use their own judgment on some things. They are of course bound on a "political" matter. A "political" matter is anything that is against the USSR. On this question, the Latin Americans and most other countries are solidly with the United States. This is not necessarily because the delegations or governments think the United States is always right and the USSR always wrong. Many governments would lose office at election time if their opponents called them Communist sympathizers. (Another strong force in this direction is the Roman Catholic Church which largely dominates the vote of the twenty-one Latin American countries, of the Philippines, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, Belgium, Luxembourg. In this, the Church and United States foreign policy run parallel.) The anti-Soviet propaganda that pours around the world has so convinced the middle group of voters that put governments in and out of office that, for domestic political reasons alone, they cannot vote with the USSR. The very existence of this situation must be counted as a real victory for American foreign policy.

Play Ball—Or Else

A powerful American weapon is the threat of the anger of Congress and the withholding of funds. This weapon is so strong that

it automatically secures the vote of many countries on 95 percent of the issues. Thus, for most purposes, the following Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine countries have no independent voice in the UN: the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Greece, Turkey. For Commonwealth and other reasons, the following countries stick by the American and British position: Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Pakistan. India is an interesting case of a country that has on occasion taken an initial stand against the United States (on Korea, for example) and has subsequently been pressured into reversing its position. Several times during the current General Assembly, the Indian delegation has appeared to its own people in a progressive light. But by the time an Indian resolution had come through the process of editing at the hands of American and British experts, it had lost its teeth—and the Indians acquiesced.

American control of the International Bank and the Monetary Fund also plays a role. For example, the long-maintained assault by the United States on the economic and social life of the United Kingdom was stepped up in a recent pronouncement of the Fund that Britain no longer needs to control its foreign exchanges. The British have in recent years introduced progressive legislation, improved social security, given free medical service, promoted full employment, controlled prices, allocated raw materials, selected the imports they required from the countries they could afford to buy from, and continued their policy of bilateral trade agreements. The success of these policies is tied in with the control of foreign exchange. Break this control and you break the progressive side of British domestic policy. International finance could then repeat the job it did on Ramsay MacDonald in 1931.

American pressure through the Bank is obvious. Countries have to wait around a long time before they get their loans. If they get into line, the loan is there. Poland has not got its loan. Yugoslavia has. Australia has. Holland has.

Satellites in Latin America . . .

Most of the Latin American countries are direct satellites of the United States and need not be discussed separately. If any of them attempts to show independence, it is soon stamped upon. It must be remembered that the United States has been acting in Latin America in a unilateral way for years. Every year funds are allotted to each country by the State Department or by other Washington agencies. The Truman Doctrine was not really invented for Greece and Turkey—it had existed for years in the Western Hemisphere.

. . . Asia, The Middle East, Africa

The Philippines and Thailand and the Formosan Chinese are also direct satellites of the United States. During recent months, millions of ECA dollars have been spent in Indonesia, Burma, and Indo-China. Burma and Indonesia may therefore soon be added to the satellite list. In the Middle East, the United States is also finally in control, though this group of countries has been rebellious during the current Assembly. The United States has given no Marshall aid and little "Truman" money to this area, and the countries concerned are very dissatisfied about it. They do not favor the USSR, but they are willing to play off the USSR against the United States unless more aid and trade come their way. At the commercial and general business level, of course, the United States is firmly in control, and its pressures are exerted as often through oil companies as through embassies. This group of countries consists of Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Egypt, Iraq (a partial British dependency), Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. For purposes of classification, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Liberia (Firestone Rubber) may also be included in this group.

One interesting aspect of American control is that it firmly covers the progressive "western" parliamentary democracies of northwestern Europe and the Commonwealth. This not only has international political and economic implications; it also explains why the UN has great difficulties in writing conventions on human rights, freedom of information, rights of children, and so forth; why its economic and social work is so sterile. The United States is the most socially backward of the western democracies, and therefore American influence in the UN prevents the codification or advocacy of social practices accepted in such countries as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and the Scandinavian countries. That is why the UN does not come out for full social security, free medical care, Keynesian economics, price control, exchange control. But the development of this subject would take a book.

United States Casts 53 Votes for Lie

A good example of American control is to be seen in the recent struggle over the UN Secretary-Generalship. The USSR had successfully maneuvered until Lie became the candidate of the United States only. He was not the candidate of the British, Chinese, French, or Russians. Very few countries wanted him. The UN Charter said that the Secretary General had to be recommended by the Security Council. That meant that there had to be unanimity among the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and China. There were at least two candidates (from India and Mexico respectively)

acceptable to all but the United States. To keep Trygve Lie in the job, the Americans would have to veto every candidate put up and do this until it had worn the others down. And the spectacle would have made the United States the laughing stock of the world. The United States therefore decided to go over the heads of the Security Council and ask the General Assembly to endorse Lie. This was an illegal act, and all delegations knew it. The United States had to prevent candidates from coming forward and get the greatest possible majority in the General Assembly to agree to the illegal reappointment of Lie. Warren Austin (American chief delegate) therefore issued a press statement saying that Lie's appointment was essential to the security of the United States, that the United States would veto any other candidate, that any man allowing his name to go forward would be regarded as opposed to Lie's position on Korea, and that 53 nations had agreed with Lie's stand on Korea. This statement served notice that the issue was a high political and military one and therefore part of the cold war, that any opposing candidate was automatically pro-Communist, that even if 100,000 candidates were named the United States would veto the lot, and that the 53 nations had better do something about it.

The Mexican and Indian names were thereupon withdrawn, the United States did not have to use its veto, and the General Assembly dutifully—and illegally—gave the United States 53 votes for Lie.

THE AMERICAN STRUGGLE AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS

BY A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A widely-held belief in the United States is that Americans lead the world in social, humanitarian, and even egalitarian thinking. More specifically, Mrs. Roosevelt and other United States representatives at the UN are thought to have extended the frontiers of human rights on the international plane.

The opposite is true. The influence of the State Department and of the American delegates at the UN has been to limit and restrict. Examples could be given from several economic and social fields. It is proposed here to show American behavior in one field only, that of Human Rights.

In December, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," which was to be a beacon light to the world—a guide to wider freedoms and a better life. Observers who watched the UN Committee work on this Declaration in the Palais de Chaillot in Paris will remember the recriminations, the intrigue, and the bitter discussions on the articles, the sentences, the words, and even the commas. For while the Declaration was to have no legal authority, no binding force, it was to be a political and social manifesto which might give governments and businessmen and church leaders some uncomfortable moments.

A Revolutionary Document

The document was to be revolutionary, but whose revolution would it reflect? Would the Declaration reflect the English revolution of the seventeenth century, the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century, or the Russian revolution of the twentieth century? Would it reflect Buddha, Christ, or Mohammed; Bolivar, Gandhi, or Lincoln? Would it reflect the feudalism of the Middle East, the economic royalism of the United States, the social democra-

This article is by the author of "Inside the United Nations."

cy of the Scandinavian countries and the British Commonwealth, or the socialism of the USSR? Would it be a composite of all these?

Let us look at the record and see if we can discover the answers to some of these questions.

The UN has an expert body of eighteen members, the Human Rights Commission, which was given the task of getting out the first draft of the document on Human Rights. The original idea was to draw up an International Bill of Rights which every country would sign just as it signs any other international convention. Signature would bind it to carry out the Bill of Rights in its own domestic legislation. At this stage, the Americans displayed a rare example of long term planning on a UN matter. They decided to split the job into two parts. The first would consist of a Declaration of sound and lofty principles which would bind nobody to specific action. The second was to be a Covenant, much more restricted, which would indicate what a (United States) government would be willing to put into its laws. Many countries, however, had populations but recently liberated by war from oppression and colonialism. They had fairly clear ideas of what social justice and human equality and dignity mean, and they wanted to express these clear ideas in one quickly-drafted, legally-binding document which could be signed while the world was still aware of what the UN had fought for and against. But the Americans won the day (Mrs. Roosevelt, incidentally, is Chairman of the Human Rights Commission): there were to be two documents, of which only the second would be legally enforceable.

After this strategic victory of the United States, the eighteen-member Commission began to draft the Declaration—with only the General Assembly to satisfy, for the full Assembly was to have the draft submitted to it for approval.

Unfortunately it is impossible to give in a short space the whole story of American maneuvering. The examples which follow are chosen merely to illustrate the role played by the United States.

Americans Maneuver On Discrimination

The first example deals with discrimination, where the American view was that the less said about it in the Declaration the better. In 1948, the Human Rights Commission was discussing the draft Declaration and had come to the section which stressed that all people should have equality before the law and also have equal protection against discrimination of any kind. Mrs. Roosevelt, speaking for the State Department, wanted the word "arbitrary" inserted in front of the word "discrimination." She was opposed by the French, the Russians, and others, who said that discrimination was bad and that

they should say so with no weasel words. A vote of nine to six eliminated the word "arbitrary."

On much the same point, the Soviet delegate wished to add the phrase "and equality before the courts" to the phrase "equality before the law," thus stressing the aim that rich and poor, white or colored, citizens or foreigners, atheists and religious persons, should all get similar treatment when hailed before the courts. Mrs. Roosevelt opposed the Soviet delegate and this time won her point. She said that equality before the law included equality before the courts. Others took the view that often there was a vast difference between the law and its administration.

In the same discussion, the question arose as to whether "incitement to discrimination" should be specifically condemned. The French, the Chileans, the Soviets, and others said yes. Mrs. Roosevelt said no. On this occasion, the American view was defeated eight to seven; but Mrs. Roosevelt's leadership was sufficient to defeat a Soviet proposal to make it a crime to advocate national, racial, or religious hostility.

. . . On the Slave Trade

In discussing the article condemning slavery, the Soviet representative wanted the slave trade also condemned. American opposition to this secured its defeat. Mrs. Roosevelt said that slavery included the slave trade. Could the United States have been influenced by fear that the recruiting of workers by private interests in neighboring countries to the south might be interpreted as coming within the scope of the "slave trade?" (Incidentally in the Declaration, as finally passed by the General Assembly, both slavery and the slave trade are condemned. This means that the American view which prevailed in the small eighteen-member Commission could not prevail in the Assembly of almost sixty nations where the proportion of under-developed countries is greater than in the Commission.)

For some curious reason, the Americans have consistently opposed a Soviet suggestion that there should be an article to the effect that everyone has the right to participate in the elections of the government of his country.

. . . On Trade Unionism

More explicable was Mrs. Roosevelt's desire to include the words "of his own choice" in the clause providing that everyone had the right to join a trade union. The American proposal was, of course, directed against the closed shop, whereas in the European and Commonwealth countries where trade unionism has been accepted for

so long, trade union solidarity is part of the tradition and it would be an anti-union act to advocate something which might split the workers or allow for scab unions. Mrs. Roosevelt's amendment would have given UN sanction for union-splitting and the formation of company unions. The opposition to her idea was so great that she withdrew it.

When the article on the right to social security was being drafted, the question arose whether this meant security "against the consequences of" or "in the event of" unemployment, sickness, old age, and so on. The French were for the former wording, interpreting it to imply more ample protection. By now it should be obvious that the Americans favored the latter. Nor did the American delegation want to say that everyone has the right to medical care.

(This same attitude could be seen in 1950 when another expert body, the Social Commission, was drafting a Declaration of the Rights of the Child. This time the proposed clause said that every child should be entitled to free education and free medical care. The U.S. delegate fought strongly against such countries as France and New Zealand over the phrase "free medical care." The Americans wanted the word "free" eliminated. They were defeated by one vote, and on this occasion, the Soviet Union and Poland were not even present to swell the opposition total.)

. . . On Rights of National Minorities

A question which has agitated Europe for centuries has been the oppression of national minorities. In fact the Human Rights Commission itself has a Sub-Commission dealing with this phase of the work. However, when the Soviet Union (with first-hand experience) suggested an article guaranteeing the rights of national minorities to the preservation of their culture, their mother tongue, and so on, the American delegation was opposed. Was this solely because it was a Soviet proposal? In the discussion at the UN of any convention or other international instrument, the Americans have never willingly accepted the extension of such conventions to millions of people in colonies or territories held in trust for the United Nations; and when in the Human Rights Commission the Soviet Union proposed that the Declaration of Human Rights should cover the populations of "non-governing" and Trust territories the American delegate voted against it.

When the General Assembly finally adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it asked the Human Rights Commission to give priority to the preparation of a Covenant on Human Rights and to draft measures for implementation. The reason for this was

that since the Declaration itself had no legal standing, it was now necessary to go ahead and prepare a document (the Covenant) which, when signed by a state, would oblige that state to carry out its provisions.

Obviously, this was a horse of another color. As we have already seen, the Declaration, though doubtless having certain moral force, was not legally binding; it did not require the states members of the UN to provide for free speech, fair trials, the right of assembly, the prohibition of the slave trade, free education, the right to rest and leisure, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, the right to security in the event of unemployment or old age, the right to work, protection against interference with home or correspondence, against arbitrary arrest, against discrimination.

Faced with orders to work out a legally binding Covenant, what should the Human Rights Commission do? One of the world's leading authorities on the subject, Professor Lauterpacht, of Cambridge University, England, makes clear what should have been done:

There has been a wide and growing acceptance of the view that personal and political freedom is impaired—if not rendered purely nominal—unless its enjoyment is made practicable by a reasonable guarantee of social and economic freedom. According to that view, which is fully entitled to respect, the precious rights of personal liberty and political freedom may become a hollow mockery for those whom the existing social and economic order leaves starving, insecure in their livelihood, illiterate, and deprived of their just share in the progress and well-being of the society as a whole. An International Bill of Rights which leaves these human claims out of account is incomplete to a degree which, in the view of many, is fatal to the authority and dignity of the enactment as a whole. (H. Lauterpacht, *International Law and Human Rights*, London, 1950, p. 284.)

But the United States did not see it this way. It fought for and won a draft which was “fatal to the authority and dignity of the enactment as a whole.” Mrs. Roosevelt, of course, did not frankly state that the idea was to *eliminate* social and economic rights. One always says it positively if one can. The line was that the Commission should concentrate on producing a “practical” Covenant covering a limited number of civil rights traditionally accepted in the writings of the more advanced capitalist countries. Thus the Covenant would guarantee (with certain limitations) such things as freedom of thought and opinion, fair trials, freedom from arbitrary arrest, freedom of movement, and prohibition of retroactive penal laws. This would achieve several purposes. It was safe; it would promote no revolutions

anywhere; it would require no federal legislation to alter anything in the United States; it could be used as a propaganda weapon—especially with “liberal” intellectuals—in the cold war if the Soviet government should refuse to sign it. And, perhaps most important of all, it would further postpone the preparation of an international instrument which would cover such things as the right to work, the right to social security (including medical care), the right to leisure and culture, the right of self-determination of peoples, the right of minorities to use their own languages, the right to be protected against discrimination or incitement to discrimination—to say nothing of the more “controversial” right to be protected against war propaganda and incitement to enmity among nations.

Americans for Limitation of Rights

When the Americans proposed in effect that the Commission should not carry out the General Assembly's wishes that a Covenant should be drafted to cover all the rights in the Declaration, but instead should commence with a limited number of rights, leaving social, economic, and cultural rights for development in future covenants, there was some indignation. But when the United States succeeded in having even this limited number of civil rights further trimmed and whittled down from the comparable statements in the Declaration, there were bitterness and disillusionment even among delegates who, for political reasons, had to vote with the United States. The Commission was certainly not easily persuaded to take the American line, and it was here that the Marshall-plan countries in the Commission—Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, and Britain—again proved themselves, for whatever reasons in each case, the ultimate allies of the United States. Still, many of those who went along with the Americans felt that the position was a short-sighted one. The UN Secretariat felt that only damage to the work on Human Rights could result from what they privately described as a farce and a travesty. Some felt that it would be better to stop work on the Covenant altogether than to set its standards back several centuries in history.

One of the Secretariat, an honest French intellectual, the Assistant Secretary General in charge of Social Affairs, Henri Laugier, decided he could suffer in silence no longer, and, in an address to certain non-governmental organizations interested in human rights, he raised the question of the present usefulness of the Commission's work, the obligations it had to the UN and the peoples of the world, and the necessity of living up to the Declaration already agreed to by the General Assembly. A large proportion of the journalists accredited to the UN, the Secretariat, and most of the Delegations were

delighted, but Mrs. Roosevelt was not. She called a closed meeting of the Commission and from the chair asked, in effect, that Laugier be condemned for not being a good international civil servant and for speaking on policy matters which were being considered by the Commission. The Commission, however, would not play. Several members said it was Laugier's duty as Assistant Secretary General in charge of social and cultural work to give his views. He was not condemned, he was not compelled to resign, and the Commission went on uneasily with the work of toeing the American line.

Americans Win—Freedoms Slashed

The draft Covenant, finally completed in the spring of 1950, omitted any reference to fundamental social and economic rights and freedoms and, as the Soviet delegate put it, emasculated several rights included by the Commission (in the 1948 Declaration) such as the rights to life, to personal freedom, and to freedom of conscience. It should be added that the draft Covenant also included an escape clause providing that in a state of emergency, none of its obligations would be binding on signatory states. This clause was again a victory for the United States over those who wanted an escape clause only for specific articles.

When the draft Covenant came before the Social Committee of the General Assembly in the fall of 1950 it provided an easy target for the Soviet delegation. The Americans had miscalculated. For the underdeveloped, undernourished, and underprivileged countries also rose up against this highly Americanized document. The right to equality before the law was important, they said, but it was not as important as the right to eat.

The Mexican delegate wondered whether the fine promises made to the world after two terrible wars were no more than empty phrases. In his view, those who had voted for the Declaration of Human Rights had committed themselves to making it a standard for domestic policy. He was strongly in favor of including economic and social rights in the draft first covenant. Those who wished to postpone such action until some unspecified future time, he argued, took as narrow a view of human needs as the Europeans of the Victorian era who had failed to look beyond their tidy world to see the misery and subjection of other peoples.

The Indian delegate said that the draft Covenant placed before them did not adequately guarantee the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Declaration. There was no reference to the right of people to participate in the government of their country. In its present

form, the Covenant promised less than what the constitutions of most countries guaranteed to their peoples.

Revolt Against American Line

The discussion among the sixty delegations at the UN became a demonstration against colonialism, against discrimination, against imperialism. The Social Committee of the General Assembly to which the draft Covenant was referred decided to send it back to the Human Rights Commission and tell it to start over again. And in the accompanying resolution it gave some fairly specific instructions. It was around these instructions that the battle in the Committee was fought.

The United States, taking the fight to the enemy camp, wanted one of the instructions to be the preparation of a federal application clause which would ensure that American signature to the Covenant would be meaningless. Professor Lauterpacht puts it this way:

. . . in its proposals for a "Covenant" of Human Rights the United States insisted on inserting a qualifying provision to the effect that those parties to the Covenant who are Federal States shall assume binding obligations with regard to such matters only as the Federal Government regards as appropriate under its constitutional system for federal action, and that with regard to other articles the obligations of the party to the Covenant shall be limited to bringing its provisions, with a favorable recommendation, to the notice of the states or provinces. As in the United States the bulk of the provisions of an International Bill of Rights fall, according to the Constitution, within the province of the states, the effect of that clause would be to render the obligations of the United States largely nominal. (*International Law and Human Rights*, p. 302.)

The fight over this federal application clause took two days. The Colombian delegate said the clause would be discriminatory against unitary states, since if they signed the Covenant they would have to put it into law, whereas a federal state could escape this obligation. Even the Danish delegate thought the clause would favor federal states. The Egyptian delegate thought that they were dealing with a lot of "legal algebra," full of equations and unknown factors. Perhaps they might search for the unknown factors. The Polish delegate was less diplomatic. He said that one of the unknown quantities was the southern states of the United States. It was, for example, highly desirable, when the Americans signed the Covenant, that they should sign for Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina, states known for their racial legislation and racial discrimination. The Indian delegate said that her country had a federal constitution largely based

on that of the United States and that her government's view was that a federal clause was neither necessary nor advisable since it would not be conducive to the promotion of human rights and of international cooperation.

Americans Win Crucial Victory . . .

The Lebanese delegate finally saved the day for the United States by providing some words acceptable both to Mrs. Roosevelt and to some waverers. He moved that any federal clause to be drafted by the Human Rights Commission should have as its purpose "securing the maximum extension of the Covenant to the constituent units of federal states." This change enabled ten underdeveloped countries to vote with the United States and its Marshall allies. About a dozen delegates of underdeveloped countries stayed away, and the Lebanese amendment got the necessary majority. Thus the Human Rights Commission is now instructed to write a federal clause. For the Americans, this was a crucial victory and was probably worth all their subsequent defeats in the Committee.

A second heated discussion took place on the colonial application clause. This provided that the Covenant should extend to a signatory metropolitan power as well as to the colonial, non-self-governing, or trust territories it administers. This amendment was aimed at the colonial powers, including the United States. If this clause is part of the Covenant, and a colonial or trust power such as the United Kingdom or the United States signs it, it is then applicable to Tanganyika, Nigeria, and to trust territories in the Pacific. On this question, the United States was heavily defeated by a combination of Latin America, the Far East, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The minority, most of whom were once thought to be progressive, were Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Greece, Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom, United States. Denmark, France, Norway, and Sweden abstained: they probably could not face their liberal electorates back home, and in any case, the French have an idea that the French Union is a federal state and that they are therefore protected by the federal escape clause which the Americans had already secured.

. . . But Suffer Several Defeats

Another defeat for the United States position in the Human Rights Commission was a Yugoslav amendment saying that the Covenant which the Commission had drafted "does not contain certain of the most elementary rights." These words were adopted by 25 to 16.

Then followed an amendment put forward by Afghanistan and

Saudi Arabia telling the Human Rights Commission to study ways and means to "ensure the right of peoples and nations to self-determination" so that its recommendations can be studied by the General Assembly in 1951. The United States voted against this and was again defeated. America's allies in defeat were the "white" part of the British Commonwealth, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Sweden, and Turkey.

Next came the real substance. Was the first Covenant to contain cultural, economic, and social rights? On the one hand, there was the view that work on these subjects should be postponed. This was put into words by an amendment sponsored by two United States satellites, Greece and New Zealand. On the other hand, there were separate and detailed amendments drafted by the USSR and the rival Yugoslavs which spelled out instructions to the Commission to include economic, cultural, and social rights in the first Covenant.

The Soviet amendment must have been drafted to meet the needs of the social democratic and parliamentary capitalist world, for there is no doubt that, without the Soviet tag, it would have got a majority of votes. However, it was defeated. The Yugoslav alternative was adopted by 23 votes to 17, with the United States and its reliable supporters in the minority. Parts of the preamble of the Yugoslav draft read as follows:

Whereas the enjoyment of civic and political freedoms and that of economic, social, and cultural freedoms are inter-connected and interdependent;

Whereas when deprived of economic, social, and cultural rights man does not represent the human person whom the Universal Declaration regards as the ideal of the free man;

the amendment proceeds to

request the Commission on Human Rights, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to include in the Covenant a clear expression of economic, social, and cultural rights in a manner which relates them to the civic and political freedoms to be proclaimed by the Covenant.

Americans Fight Against Human Rights

It was this that the Americans voted against. And when the Social Committee's recommendations came before the General Assembly, Mrs. Roosevelt stated her "serious concern about the practicability of including economic and social rights in the first draft covenant. Her delegation would naturally have to reserve its position on the inclusion of such rights in the first covenant."

Thus did the United States serve notice that the fight is still on. In the Human Rights Commission in 1951, the Americans will do all they can to eliminate, and in any case to whittle down, social and economic rights—the right to work, the right to social security, the right to join a trade union, the right to protection from discrimination, the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being. Thus, again to quote Professor Lauterpacht, the dominant tendency will be “to adjust the level of the International Bill of Human Rights—a basic international instrument—to the urgent domestic requirements of the United States.”

The Americans at the United Nations will continue to lead the fight to limit political rights and to prevent social and economic rights from becoming legally enforceable.

MONTHLY REVIEW

is a strictly non-profit undertaking, entirely independent of partisan or political control. Its objectives are the dissemination of a true understanding of socialism, and the reporting of unbiased, dependable news of the movement toward a socialist society which is steadily spreading over the face of the globe. We call your attention to the accompanying statement of policy which appeared in Vol. I, No. I. We earnestly invite your co-operation.

WHERE WE STAND

During the early years of the 20th century the subject of socialism was widely and eagerly discussed in the United States. Eugene V. Debs, socialist candidate for president, polled close to 1,000,000 votes in 1912—the equivalent of approximately 3,000,000 votes in the 1948 election. The popular interest in socialism was reflected in an enormous sale of socialist literature. *The Appeal to Reason*, a weekly, had a circulation of more than 300,000 for several years; pamphlets by Oscar Ameringer were printed in editions of hundreds of thousands; books by Bellamy, Upton Sinclair, and Jack London ranked with the best-sellers of the day.

This widespread interest in socialism has declined to such an extent that today it would probably not be an exaggeration to say that for the great majority of Americans "socialism" is little more than a dirty word. This is an extraordinary situation because it occurs at the very moment that a large proportion of the rest of the world is moving toward socialism at an unprecedentedly rapid rate. It is a deeply disturbing situation because there are still many Americans who believe with us that, in the long run, socialism will prove to be the only solution to the increasingly serious economic and social problems that face the United States.

It is because we hold firmly to this belief that we are founding *Monthly Review*, an independent magazine devoted to analyzing, from a socialist point of view, the most significant trends in domestic and foreign affairs.

By "socialism" we mean a system of society with two fundamental characteristics: first, public ownership of the decisive sectors of the economy, and, second, comprehensive planning of production for the benefit of the producers themselves.

The possibility and workability of such a system of society are no longer open to doubt. Socialism became a reality with the introduction of the first Five Year Plan in Soviet Russia in 1928; its power to survive was demonstrated by the subsequent economic achievements of the USSR during the '30's and finally, once and for all, in the war against Nazi Germany. These facts—and they are facts which no amount of wishful thinking can conjure away—give to the USSR a unique importance in the development of socialism and in the history of our time.

We find completely unrealistic the view of those who call themselves socialists, yet imagine that socialism can be built on an international scale by fighting it where it already exists. This is the road to war, not to socialism. On the other hand, we do not accept the view that the USSR is above criticism simply because it is socialist. We believe in, and shall be guided by, the principle that the cause of socialism has everything to gain and nothing to lose from a full and frank discussion of shortcomings, as well as accomplishments, of socialist countries and socialist parties everywhere.

We shall follow the development of socialism all over the world, but we want to emphasize that our major concern is less with socialism abroad than with socialism at home. We are convinced that, the sooner the United States is transformed from a capitalist to a socialist society, the better it will be, not only for Americans, but for all mankind.

We believe that there are already many Americans who share this attitude with us and that their number will steadily increase. We ask their financial support, their assistance in extending our circulation, and their advice as to how *Monthly Review* can best serve the cause of socialism in the United States.

LEO HUBERMAN

May 1949

PAUL M. SWEEZY

THE EDITORS

LEO HUBERMAN was formerly Chairman of the Department of Social Science at New College, Columbia University, columnist on the magazine *US Week*, and the first labor editor of the newspaper *PM*. He was Education Director of the National Maritime Union from 1942 to 1945 and later an editor with Reynal & Hitchcock. His books and pamphlets in the fields of economic history and labor have sold nearly half a million copies. Among his books are *We, the People* (a choice of the Left Book Club in England and the Book Find Club in America), *Man's Worldly Goods*, *The Labor Spy Racket*, *The Truth About Unions*, *The Truth About Socialism*.

PAUL M. SWEEZY was for more than ten years a member of the Harvard University Economics Department, where he taught courses on American corporations and socialism. During the New Deal period he worked for the National Resources Planning Board, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Temporary National Economic Committee, especially investigating American Big Business and monopoly. From 1943 to 1945, he served with the OSS in England, France, and Germany. He is a frequent contributor of articles and reviews to scholarly magazines and popular journals. His books include *The Theory of Capitalist Development* and *Socialism*.

Professor Einstein in his article "Why Socialism?" in Vol. I, No. 1:

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

READERS' COMMENTS ON MONTHLY REVIEW

Edward H. Zabriskie, Professor of History, Newark Colleges,
Rutgers University:

"*Monthly Review* is an organ of substance, independent, scholarly, and objective in its analyses of domestic and world events. It is a much-needed corrective to the distortions and suppressions of the daily press and the radio."

A new subscriber, February, 1950:

Last night for the first time I saw a copy of your publication and was amazed to find that there is a writer who can write about "leftist" matters in a calm, judicial, and seemingly impartial manner. I am myself a native born American who loves his country beyond every other consideration. I am a Republican and instinctively fearful of anything which smacks of communism—whatever that is—or socialism. But somehow your September MR shows me that there is a possibility of discussing "liberal" views without insulting the intelligence of the readers. Strangely, I found myself reading articles masterfully written in which were expressed the same thoughts I have myself frequently expressed lately in my amateurish way—but they never occurred to me as ever being shared by any person or any publication confessing to be "socialist".

I wonder if many of us don't vehemently condemn things by names instead of principles and often thereby shut ourselves out from acquiring knowledge which might give us much consolation?

I hope my subscription to your skillfully edited paper does not make me a "subversive"—but in my America, at least prior to the last decade, we were taught to want information on all sides of questions and not to have our opinions formed for us by powerful, conscienceless propaganda fitted to the exigencies of a current political situation!

John Jenkins, a graduate student at a college abroad,
writes to his mother:

There is another periodical you should look into, *Monthly Review*. Excellent. The language is superb, the ideas and thoughts first-rate. The most outstanding features of the magazine are clarity and simplicity of style and no mincing of words—they say what they want, don't insinuate, hint, hedge about, but go directly to the root. It is by far the best thing I have seen. . . .

New Subscribers

A one-year subscription to MR costs \$3.

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Single copies of the magazine cost 35c.

Back issues are available at that price except for Vol. I, No. 1 (containing the Einstein article) which has become a collector's item and is now priced at \$1 per copy; also priced at \$1 is Vol. II, No. 6, the Matthiessen Memorial Issue, dedicated to the late Professor F. O. Matthiessen of Harvard, whose initial support made possible the founding of MR. That issue, entitled "F. O. Matthiessen, A Collective Portrait," has been published as a book by Henry Schuman, Inc. The book sells for \$2.50.

New subscribers may obtain a complete file of MR by dating their subscription back to Vol. I, No. 1. This will enable them to secure all the back issues of Volume I and Volume II for the special price of \$3.75 each volume, or \$7.50 for the two.

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