

Of course, that just could not be. The Versailles decisions were far from perfect, as wise men were pointing out even before the Peace Conference adjourned. There was too much ferment in the new nations, too many old nations believed they were victims of a raw deal, too many yellow and brown and black men were fed up with the idea of a world run by whites. History is a powerful brew. It blew the decisions of the Treaty of Versailles sky-high, and in so doing it blew the League of Nations out of existence.

That brought World War II. Again, the President of the United States, as he saw this nation being drawn into a conflict which almost every American wanted desperately to keep out of, proclaimed the need for an organization of the nations where they would sit together, negotiate together, work together, continuously and by all pacific means, to maintain peace.

The first outline of the ends such an organization should seek came in the Atlantic Charter, which President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill drew up in August 1941 - four months before Pearl Harbor. Not long ago a writer working on this study was talking with one of the officers of the U.N. in his office high in its glass-walled skyscraper in New York. "When I find myself wondering whether the United Nations is keeping on the right track," he said, "I turn back to those provisions of the Atlantic Charter and check what we are doing against them. The essence of the purpose of the U.N. is all right there."⁴

Well, that was in August 1941. On January 1, 1942, 26 nations signed a declaration saying that they subscribed to the terms of the Atlantic Charter. (Later 21 more signed this declaration.) Then, on October 30, 1943, the governments of the "Big Four" fighting the Axis put their names to a promise to establish "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 to all such states, large and small, for the maintenance of international peace and security."

That, of course, was the key promise to establish the United Nations, as it was already being called. The governments who made that promise called such an organization "a necessity." The promise was fulfilled on June 26, 1945, when 50 nations signed the Charter of the United Nations at the organizing conference in San Francisco. Today, there are 60 nations in the membership. No nation has ever tried to give up its membership. There are 21 nations applying for membership today. That, by the way, is something to think about. If the U.N. is a failure, as charged, it is a peculiar sort of failure while nations keep clamoring to be admitted so that they can assume the obligations and costs of membership!

Why the United Nations? This, in brief, is the way in which it came to be. The U.N. was formed because the nations which had been scourged by two global wars within a single generation were driven by their losses and their fears for the future to agree that such an organization had to be formed. They had to have some regular, permanent, continuous way to consult together, work together, search together for peaceful ways of conducting the affairs of nations. So, eight years ago, they made that promise to mankind which, as it opens the Charter of the U.N., is worth reading again, when one is trying to determine what to think of this organization: