

United Nations Origins 1938-1942

Roosevelt and Churchill Mold a New World Peace Organization

Introduction

This thematic exhibit focuses on world events and the actions of President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill which influenced the Allied nations' plans for establishment of a new international peace organization to replace a failing League of Nations.



Normal



Error

Certificate VSPV 4'028

1938 Overprinted Swiss issue for exclusive use of the League of Nations

Overprint rotated 180° error

100 printed

The exhibit development proceeds chronologically from the political rise of Adolf Hitler and the Axis powers, through meetings and declarations by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and other allied world leaders, culminating in the 1942 creation of the **United Nations Information Office**.



United Nations, New York

First printing with margin inscription

Items with less than 10 reported / recorded have **bold, italicized descriptive text** and **dark blue mat**

Exhibit Plan

0 Prelude

Leading into 1938

The League of Nations' ability to maintain world peace is severely compromised by inaction as Roosevelt and Churchill express grave concerns regarding Hitler's political aims, territorial expansionist ideals as well as Japanese and German resignations from League membership. Germany's 'Pro-Aryan (Nürenberg) laws' result in political refugees fleeing to other nations.

1 Political Climate Change

January 1938 - August 1939

German 'Annexation' of German speaking areas in neighboring countries raises alarms. Hitler's ideology ignites German nationalism, triggering increasing numbers of political refugees.

2 Catalyst for Action

September 1939 - September 1940

German 'Invasion' of surrounding European countries and an alliance with Italy and Japan to form the Axis Powers act as a tipping point for free nations, spurring defensive actions.

3 A Plea and a Plan

May 1940 - June 1941

The League becomes politically fragmented and ineffective. The 'Inter-Allied Information Center' is established as Churchill pleads for assistance. Roosevelt reacts cautiously with the 'Four Freedoms Speech' and actions to sway American public opinion to support Britain.

4 A New Hope

June - August 1941

Churchill rallies Commonwealth nations and remaining free countries to join Great Britain in fighting the Axis powers in the 'Declaration of St. James Palace' as he plans a top secret meeting with Roosevelt in an attempt to bring the U.S. into the war on the side of the allies.

5 Two Journeys

2 - 8 August 1941

Churchill and Roosevelt plan covert ocean voyages to a top secret meeting venue 'Somewhere at Sea', actually Argentia Bay in Newfoundland, to confer on U.S. support for the Allies.

6 The First Summit

9 - 12 August 1941

Attendees discuss the war and support for Britain and Russia. A resulting 'Joint Statement' (Atlantic Charter) outlines war and peace aims and includes the Four Freedoms as a basis for future conferences on international organization and the United Nations Charter of 1945.

7 Homeward Bound

12 - 16 August 1941

As Churchill and Roosevelt journey home, the 'Atlantic Charter' is announced while they are still at sea. Churchill visits Iceland to speak with leaders and review British and American forces there.

8 America Joins the War

October - December 1941

German submarines attack the U.S.S. Greer and sink the U.S.S. Reuben James while the U.S. is neutral. The Japanese 'Attack on Pearl Harbor' pushes the U.S. into WWII. America joins the Allied forces and increases production of war materials to become Roosevelt's Arsenal of Democracy.

9 A New Beginning

December 1941 - November 1942

A 'Declaration by United Nations', signed by 26 nations, unites the allies in their goal of a new peace organization. This results in creation of the 'United Nations Information Office', the earliest embodiment of the United Nations, more than 2 years before the 1945 conference in San Francisco.