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THE UNITED NATIONS — WHAT IT IS

BY DAVID CUSHMAN COYLE

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PAMPHLET No. 319

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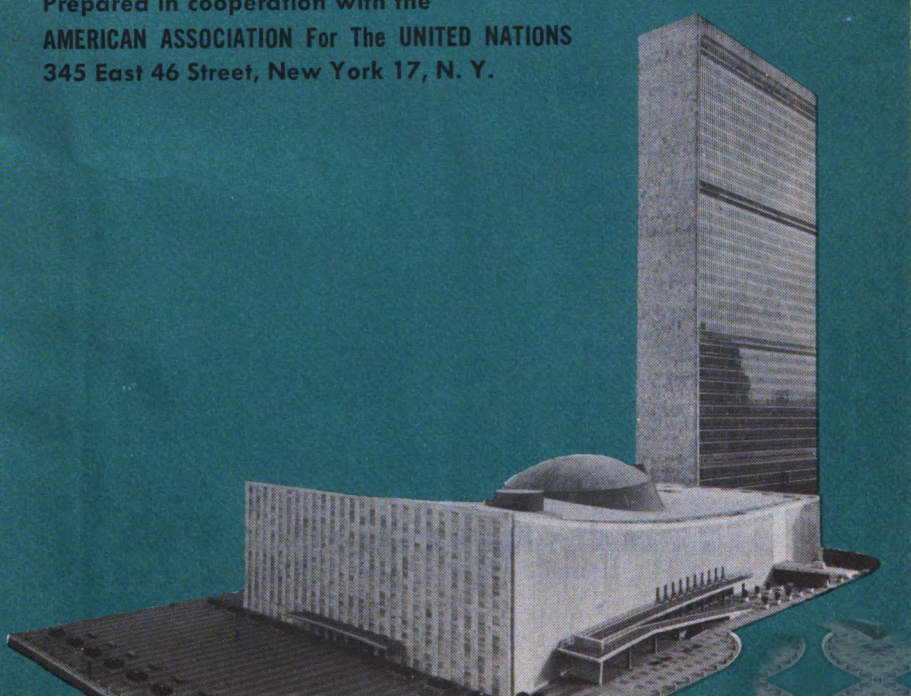

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This pamphlet and its companion, *The UN — What It Does,* have been prepared by David Cushman Coyle on special request. So far as possible, the features of the UN that do not usually change much from year to year are outlined here. Some of the current problems that will face the UN during 1962 are reported in the other pamphlet as they looked in July, 1961.

the public affairs committee

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THE UNITED NATIONS – WHAT IT IS

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BY DAVID CUSHMAN COYLE

Mr. Coyle, civil engineer and writer, is the author of The United Nations and How It Works, *published by The New American Library. In it the material outlined in this pamphlet is described in fuller detail. . . . The art work is by Visual Services, Inc.*

THE UNITED NATIONS is a direct descendant of the League of Nations that was founded immediately after the first World War. During that war ex-President William Howard Taft and other leading Americans had proposed a League to Enforce Peace. When President Woodrow Wilson went to Europe to take part in writing the peace treaty, he was determined to have a world organization set up as part of the peace settlement. Mainly through Wilson's influence, the Treaty of Versailles that ended the war also had incorporated in it the Covenant of the League of Nations.

There is good evidence that a majority of the American people wanted to join the League, but Wilson was unable to get the U. S. Senate to ratify the Treaty by the necessary two-thirds vote. Though it cooperated in many ways, the United States never joined the League. During World War II, when the League was inactive, people here had no doubt that it would be set up again in one form or another, and that the United States would be a member.

In fact, the opening moves for a new organization were made even before this country was in the war, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill met on August 14, 1941, and proclaimed the "Atlantic Charter." This was a

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can see what it does and say what they think in open meeting. For even the most violent nation is anxious to get world opinion on its side. There is much to be said for the idea that the UN is not an exclusive club open only to good nations but a worldwide community where conflicts are exposed to the moral judgment of all.

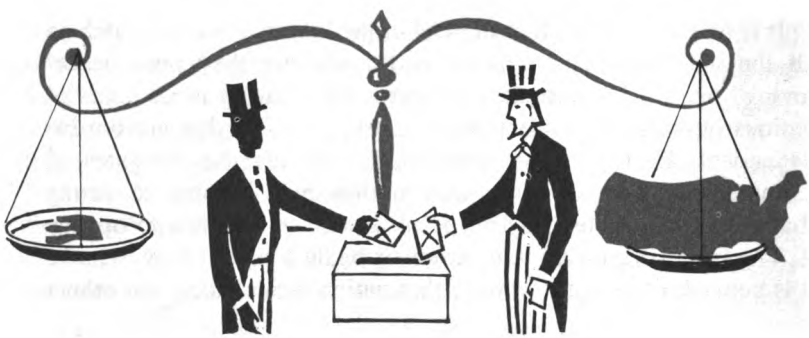
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is the main body of the UN, to which all other UN agencies report. All UN members send delegations to the Assembly, and each nation has one vote regardless of size.

People often criticize the UN for giving as much voting power to Haiti and Laos as to Britain and the U. S. They say it is not democratic, and would like to see the Charter amended to give more weight to the nations with more people. It is unlikely that the Assembly would vote for such an amendment; so it is important to understand why the voting system is set up as it is.

In the Articles of Confederation, the first United States Constitution, the federal government consisted of a Congress with a single assembly, where each state had one vote. This Congress, however, had practically no power to govern. It could only advise the states and beg them for money to support the Army.

When our present Constitution was written, the purpose was to set up a real federal government with power to tax, to punish citizens for federal crimes, to prohibit tariff barriers between states, and in foreign affairs to act as a unified nation. The big states re-



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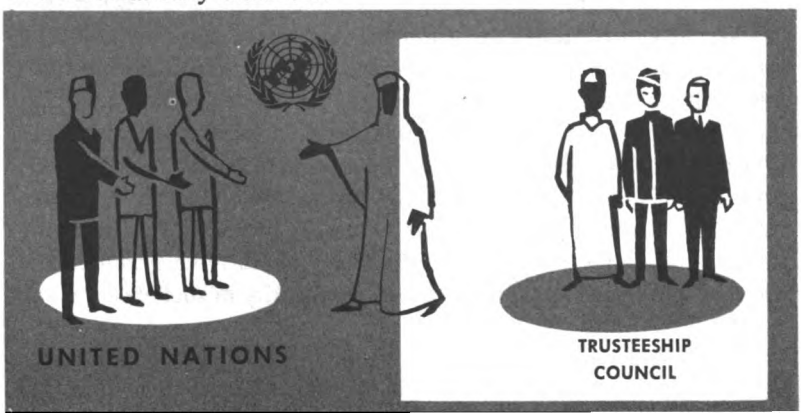
ECOSOC makes arrangements for the cooperation of private organizations that can contribute technical knowledge useful to the UN. There are hundreds of these cooperating organizations, ranging from the International Association of Juvenile Court Judges to the Salvation Army and the International Islamic Economic Organization. Some international organizations qualify for a special status and are invited to send observers to open meetings of ECOSOC and its commissions. Some of these observers are allowed to speak and to submit papers, which become part of the printed record.

THE TRUSTEESHIP COUNCIL

After World War I, Germany was deprived of its colonies. They were taken by the League of Nations and handed over to various countries for administration. They were no longer regarded as colonies but were known as "mandates." The administering country promised to rule fairly and to report regularly to the League. After World War II most mandates were transferred to the UN as trust territories. Japan's mandate in the Pacific Islands was turned over in trust to the United States.

The UN Charter established a Trusteeship Council to oversee the management of the trust territories, with the special duty of preparing them for independence. The Council is composed of all the countries that administer trust territories and an equal number of countries that do not. Permanent members of the Security Council are automatically members.



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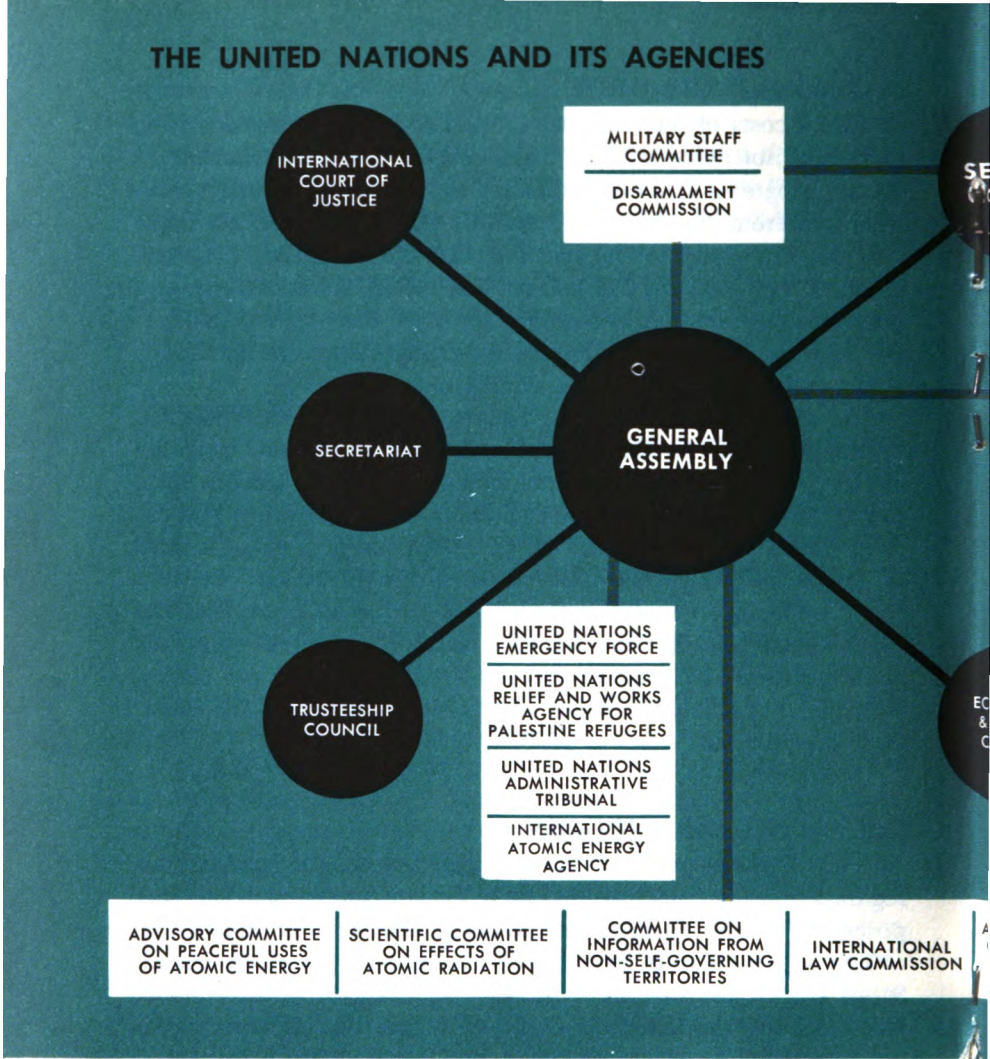

north atlantic treaty organization

In 1948, after Czechoslovakia became Communist, Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg signed a Western Union Defense Treaty. President Truman immediately welcomed this move and said the United States would like to cooperate. The

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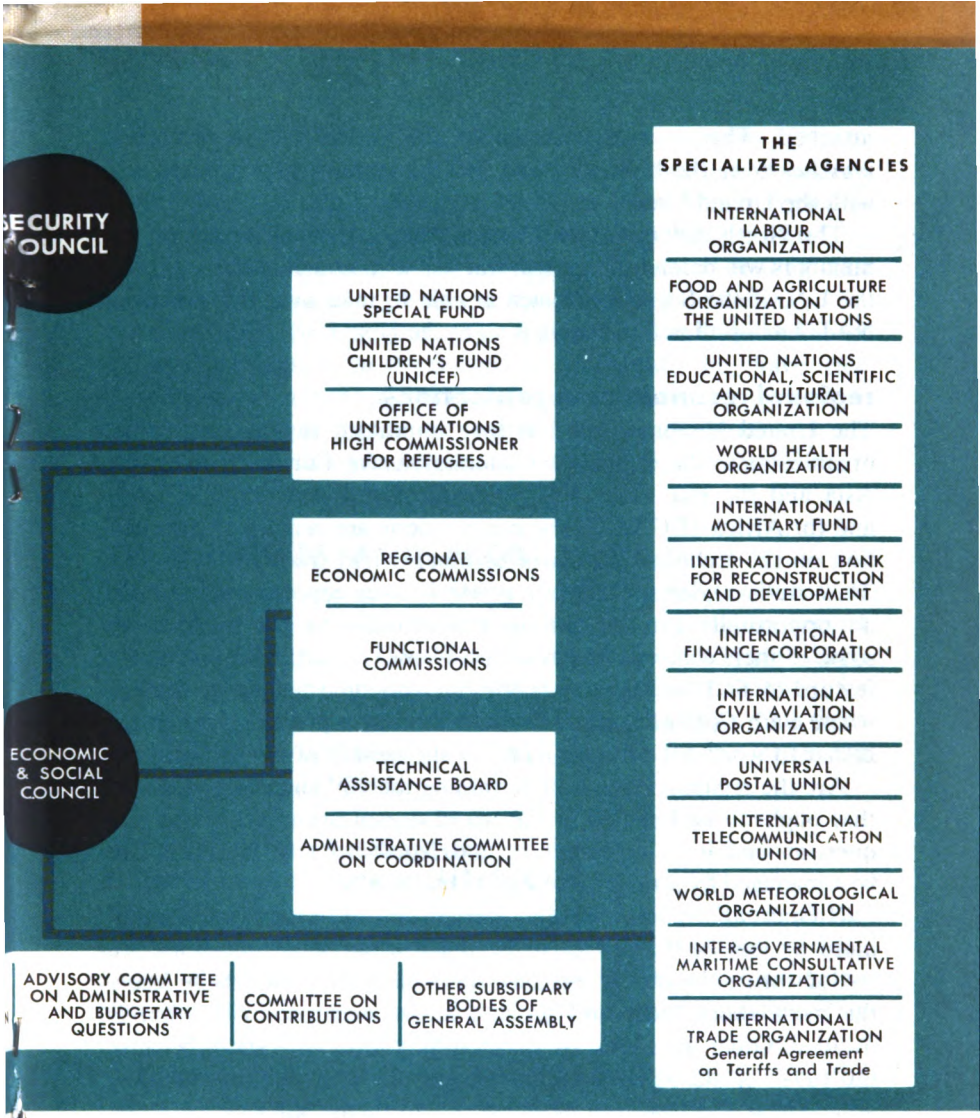

result was the North Atlantic Treaty, signed April 12, 1949. The original NATO members included Canada, the U. S., Iceland, and nine West European countries. Greece, Turkey, and West Germany joined NATO later. The main part of the Treaty is the clause pledging all members to join the defense if any one of them is

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