of the most experienced UN ambassadors in New York from 1995–2005, affirmed: “Russian diplomacy will continue its policy aimed at enlarging the UN’s role and effectiveness in the today’s world.” (Lavrov 2005, 29) Further on, the political leadership in Russia will support the Russian UN policy — “...today, the UN is as important for Russia as it was 60 years ago” (Zaemsky 2005, 12) — which means that Russian cooperation within the UN is also of use for the national interest of the Russian Federation.

During his visit to Moscow in spring 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon found appreciative words for the position Russia represents at present within the UN: “The Russian principle of a multipolar world is close to the notion of multilateralism – the bedrock of the United Nations.” (UN Press Release SG/SM/11507 of 10 April 2008)

Günther Unser


Internet: Homepage of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the UN: www.un.int/russia.

UN Policy, United Kingdom

The active policy of the United Kingdom with regard to the United Nations dates from before the foundation of the organization when, in 1941, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter together with US President Franklin D. Roosevelt (→ History of the Foundation of the UN). Since then the UK has employed its strong position in the UN to achieve its foreign policy goals. However, the United
Kingdom has in many cases adhered to the principles and decisions of the UN as guiding its foreign policy.

The focal points of the UN policy of the UK were:
- its permanent membership in the Security Council with the right of veto (Veto, Right of Veto);
- since the end of the Cold War, an increasing participation in peacekeeping missions (Peacekeeping; Peacekeeping Operations; Peacekeeping Forces);
- an intensive involvement in the process of decolonization,
- an active role in the reform of the UN.

Additionally, the UK played as co-sponsoring power a decisive role when the General Assembly adopted the Uniting for Peace Resolution in 1951, giving in cases of veto-blockades of the Security Council the General Assembly the right to make recommendations in peacekeeping matters.

It is more or less an ironic turn of the UN history, that the UK had to accept in 1956 during the Suez Crisis, that the USA and the USSR used after the French and British vetoes in the Security Council against a ceasefire resolution the Uniting for Peace Resolution to enable the General Assembly to take over the initiative, including the establishment of the first real peacekeeping mission UNEF I.

I. Britain’s Role in the Founding of the United Nations

In the Atlantic Charter, which contains several principles for the maintenance of international peace and security, the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the Prime Minister of the UK, Winston Churchill, agreed in 1941 on some guiding principles for a post-war world order. At the subsequent conferences in Moscow, Teheran, Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta, Churchill introduced concepts which differed significantly in several points from Roosevelt’s views.

The British position at the negotiations has to be considered from two points of view: Firstly, the UK tried to compensate its declining status as a world power with a strong position in the UN. Secondly, it attempted to draw the main attention of the international community to Europe, because both world wars had their origin in Europe and were also mainly fought there.

Thus the British Prime Minister intended to replace the system of collective security, which had failed already in the League of Nations, by three regional councils to guarantee international peace and security: In 1943 Churchill suggested regional councils for Europe and Asia, and one for the western hemisphere. The great powers would have been represented in each of the councils. These regional councils would have constituted the basis for a global council for the maintenance of international stability (cf. Luard 1982, 19f.). Concerning a possible veto right, the UK tried to restrict the use of the veto to substantive questions touching directly the interests of the great powers.

But in the remaining time till the foundation of the UN in San Francisco President Roosevelt managed to push through in the subsequent negotiations of the four powers almost all of his positions against the opposition of the UK, including the question of the use of the veto. According to Roosevelt’s concept, after World War II only the great powers USA, USSR, UK, China and (later) France should be responsible for international stability.

Another Briton who played a prominent part beside Churchill in the founding of the UN was the economist John Maynard Keynes. He took over the chairmanship of the British delegation for the negotiations on the economic institutions within the UN system, and contributed significantly to its present organizational structure. Keynes was very critical of the Treaty of Versailles and saw, after World War II, an opportunity to contribute to world peace by establishing a stable economic and currency system. The suggestions he made at the conference in Dumbarton Oaks were based on three principles: firstly, a