

Date:1941

Annotation: Roosevelt and Churchill release the Atlantic Charter.

Although the United States would not enter World War II until after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Congress and the president had begun to approve measures to protect its neutrality and in anticipation of the role America might play in the war and for post-World War II. In the spring of 1941, the Lend Lease program had been established and the U.S. was providing aid to Great Britain. The Soviet Union had just been attacked by Germany, and the Atlantic Charter outlined the criteria for war, which would also serve as principles for peace after the war.

Document: The Atlantic Charter

The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Winston S. Churchill

<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/53.htm>

Additional information: Samuel Rosenman, ed., Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, vol.10 (1938-1950), 314.