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BERTRAND RUSSELL: THE IDEA OF A WORLD GOVERNMENT

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1. *The British Debate on the League of Nations*

The idea of a world government represented one of the most relevant and recurring aspects of Bertrand Russell's political thought since the First World War. In 1916 (he was then a philosophy lecturer at Trinity College, Cambridge) Russell published an article entitled "War as an Institution": a lasting peace – he pointed out – could be ensured only by establishing a "world-federation" because so long as there were many sovereign States, each with its own army, there would be war; at the same time, he was realistically aware that this idea was remote, so much so that – he further argued – "devotion to the nation" was perhaps "the deepest and most widespread religion of the present age"[1]. The following year, in the article "National Independence and Internationalism" published by the American magazine *The Atlantic Monthly*, he criticized the concept of "absolute [national] sovereignty", namely the main cause of international anarchy. Hence the need to transfer the traditional model of natural law from the individual level to the interstate one through the establishment of an international government, as individual countries would still be in a sort of belligerent state of nature. "The claim to absolute sovereignty" – wrote Russell – entailed that "all external affairs" were to be regulated "purely by force" and this was nothing but "the war of all against all which Hobbes [had] asserted to

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[1] B. Russell, *War as an Institution*, in "The Atlantic Monthly", May 1916, vol. 117, pp. 603-613 (for the quotation see p. 610 and p. 613).

be the original state of mankind"; there could not be secure peace in the world until states were willing to part with "their absolute sovereignty as regards their external relations" and leave their decisions to an "international government" which had to be "legislative as well as judicial"[2].

A lively debate on the League of Nations developed on the other side of the Channel. In the first half of the 1920s, some of the most authoritative leftist intellectuals, such as Leonard Trelawny Hobhouse and Harold Joseph Laski, put forward economic reasons for a reform of international relations. In *Social Development: Its Nature and Conditions* (1924), Hobhouse advocated a supranational institution because of the growing economic and political interdependence among states; it was necessary to extend the rule of law to an international level in order to put an end to authoritarian and militaristic tendencies. He believed that the League of Nations could not be effective and, therefore, it was necessary to pass from an international body with limited functions of interstate coordination to a true federation[3]. In his *A Grammar of Politics* (1925), Laski emphasized that political and economic interests were strongly interconnected on a global level; no state could be left free to pursue its own goals without the control of a superior international authority: "the League of Nations [was] not likely to become a State in the normal sense of the word"[4]. In contrast to these criticisms, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald expressed confidence towards the League of Nations; as proof of the MacDonald government's commitment to peace, the report of the 1924 Labour Party conference specified: "Peace has its own natural policy and organization, its own method of handling questions, its own mentality, its own standards of justice"[5]. Russell made his voice heard on the League of Nations; if within an international body (with reference to the Genevan institution) each member represented his country – he affirmed in *The Prospects*

[2] B. Russell, *National Independence and Internationalism*, in "The Atlantic Monthly", May 1917, vol. 119, pp. 622-628 (for the quotation see p. 624).

[3] L.T. Hobhouse, *Social Development. Its Nature and Conditions*, London-New York, Routledge, 1996, pp. 292-293.

[4] H.J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1925, p. 589.

[5] The Labour Party, *Report of the 24th Annual Conference held in the Queen's Hall, London, on 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th 1924*, London, Labour Party, w.d., p. 108.

of Industrial Civilization (1923) – it was likely to reproduce in its debates "the diplomatic tug of war between the nations"[6].

In the spring of 1920, Russell highlighted the historical importance of the Russian Revolution: "The Bolsheviks [...] had at any rate proved that Socialism [was] compatible with vigorous and successful State" and what they were doing was of "even greater importance for the future of the world than what [had been] accomplished in France by the Jacobins" because their operations were "on a wider scale" and their theory was "a more fundamental novel"[7]. Despite his progressive criticism of Bolshevism, Russell believed that the Great War had signaled the end of traditional European liberalism and had made clear the need to replace capitalism, with its inherent competition and strife, with international socialism. Therefore, in 1923 he moved towards the Labour Party, which had supported the peace negotiations, and this decision marked his separation from the Liberals, the party that his grandfather, John Russell, had twice led as Prime Minister. In the first half of the 1920s, his idea of a world government was influenced more by socialist internationalism than by federalist thought; international socialism could have favoured the establishment of a "world government" by which to pursue two fundamental aims: "the prevention of war" and "the securing of economic justice between different nations and different populations"[8]. On 3 April 1924, at the League for Industrial Democracy (New York), he argued that a "world government" could be formed not by a "voluntary federation", but through "an extension of the US financial empire" over the American continent, the whole of Western Europe and also the Near East; however, this would have been "illiberal and cruel" since it crushed trade unionism[9]. Moreover, in a series of four writings published by the *Jewish Daily Forward* in the summer of 1927, he hoped for a "central authority to control the whole world", an achievable aim initially through the power of American fi-

6 B. Russell, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, in collaboration with Dora Russell, London, Allen & Unwin, 1923, p. 231.

7 B. Russell, *Socialism and Liberal Ideals*, in "The English Review", May-June 1920, vol. 30, pp. 449-455 and pp. 499-508 (for the quotations see p. 454).

8 B. Russell, *The Prospects of Industrial Civilization*, cit., p. 84.

9 The 3 April 1924 lecture held to the League for Industrial Democracy was published with the title "What is Wrong with Western Civilization?" in *The New York Times*.

nance and then the ideals of socialism; once world unity was realized, socialism would become inevitable, since the alternative was the destruction of mankind: "If our civilisation continues for much longer to pursue the interests of the rich, it is doomed"; and he argued further: "I do not desire the collapse of civilisation, because I am socialist"[10].

From the point of view of international relations, the second half of the 1920s was very significant: the Treaty of Locarno was signed in October 1925 and Germany was admitted to the League of Nations in 1926; on 27 August 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed in Paris, and in 1929, Great Britain resumed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Labour government, once again led by James Ramsay MacDonald (1929-1935), assumed a pro-German position; it was thought that once the last remnants of the "Carthaginian Peace"[11] of Versailles – as it was defined by Keynes in *The Economic Consequences of Peace* – were left behind, Europe and the world could pave the way for peace under the aegis of the League of Nations. Despite this new political scenario, Russell continued to stress the growing political-institutional weakness of the Genevan institution; in the 1 September 1935 article entitled "Keep Out of War!" he emphasized that the League of Nations had not solved the problem of international anarchy: as conceived by the US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson – he wrote – it had been a "potentially beneficent idea", but its "lack of universality" had made it "unable to ensure peace"[12]. The event that followed immediately proved Russell right: in October 1935 Mussolini invaded Abyssinia, in March 1936 Hitler occupied the Rhineland, and in June there was the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; all this determined the end of the 'spirit of Locarno' and the failure of the Genevan institution. This induced two British liberals, Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr) and Lionel Robbins, to explore further their federalist hypotheses. In his *Pacifism is not Enough, nor Patriotism Either* (1935), Lothian developed his theory of federalism: "The ending of war" – he stated – "can only be established by bringing the whole world under the reign of law". Moreover, he criticized the idea held by many socialists that the cause of war was capitalism; instead, conflicts arose from the

[10] B. Russell, *The Future*, in "Jewish Daily Forward", 26 June - 3, 10, 17 July 1927.

[11] J.M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, London, Macmillan, 1920, p. 56.

[12] B. Russell, *Keep Out of War!*, in "Sunday Referee", 1 September 1935, p. 10.

"division of the world into an anarchy of sovereign states"[13]. In *Economic Planning and International Order* (1937), Robbins argued that the market could not operate unless there was a structure in place to ensure the necessary rules for a peaceful coexistence; hence the need for "national states to surrender certain rights to an international authority […]. There must be neither alliance nor complete unification, but Federation"[14].

In the late 1930s, the idea of a world government was supported by the British and American federalists. In Great Britain Charles Kimber, Patrick Ransome, and Derek Rawnsley created the "Federal Union" (1938); the general idea of this movement was that the absolute sovereignty of nation-states, the fundamental cause of international anarchy, had to be replaced by a federal government capable of guaranteeing a lasting peace. This view found expression in the pamphlet written by Clarence Kirshman Streit *Union Now* (1939)[15]; owing to the failure of the League of Nations and the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, the American journalist[16] advocated a federation of the main fifteen democracies of North America, North-West Europe and Australasia. However, British federalists rarely argued for a union that would be primarily European because they perceived themselves to be citizens of a self-sufficient empire; they remained tied to the British Commonwealth of Nations by their common past, similar institutions, and convergent economic interests. In this context, the idea of a world federation was conceived as a global project with a real purpose for political action; moreover, some of its supporters drew inspiration from Fabian ideology, according to which economic forces were to be adjusted to avoid conflicts among themselves. This world perspective was confirmed by Herbert George Wells, who published *The Rights of Man* with a committee of experts that included Barbara Wootton and Norman Angell. Wells stated that a true British federalist should be ready to accept the dissolution of the Empire and the reduction of the monarchy to a purely formal institution;

[13] Lord Lothian (Philip Kerr), *Pacifism is not Enough, nor Patriotism Either*, Oxford, The Clarendon Press, 1935, p. 10 and p. 13.

[14] L. Robbins, *Economic Planning and International Order*, London, Macmillan, 1937, p. 245.

[15] C.K. Streit, *Union Now. A Proposal for a Federal Union of the Democracies of the North Atlantic*, London-New York, Cape and Harper, 1939.

[16] Streit was a correspondent in Geneva for *The New York Times* from 1929 to 1939.

the federation should be extended to the whole world, since a United States of Europe would again raise the problem of international anarchy on a larger scale[17].

2. *The Futility of War and the Need for a Federal World Order*

The idea of a world authority capable of ensuring a lasting peace was shared by some prestigious intellectuals in the aftermath of the Second World War. On the other side of the Atlantic, Albert Einstein (he had been working at Princeton University since 1933) emphasized the need to defeat the nuclear threat; in a November 1945 interview published by *The Atlantic Monthly*, he argued that the secret of the atomic bomb could be entrusted not to the United Nations but to "a world government" initially composed of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, namely the three Powers which possessed the main military force. Furthermore, since only the first two states had the secret of the new weapon, they had to invite the Soviet Union to prepare "the first draft of a Constitution" to dispel the Russians' distrust; afterward, this supranational authority would exercise "jurisdiction over all military matters" on the smaller countries as well[18]. Also in the US, a "Committee to Frame a World Constitution" composed of eleven university professors, among them six from the University of Chicago[19], produced *The Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution* (1948). In its preamble we read: "The age of nations must end, and the era of humanity begin"; the individual countries had to surrender "their separate sovereignties" to a world government whose main aim was "the maintenance of peace"[20]. It was an idea

[17] H.G. Wells (and others), *The Rights of Man*, London, Penguin, 1940, pp. 109-110.

[18] A. Einstein, *On the Atomic Bomb, as Told to Raymond Swing, before 1 October 1945*, in "The Atlantic Monthly", November 1945, vol. 176, no. 5, pp. 43-45.

[19] This Committee consisted of six professors from the University of Chicago (Chancellor Robert Maynard Hutchins, Dean of the Law School Wilber Griffith Katz, Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Mortimer Adler, Robert Redfield and Rexford Guy Tugwell); four professors from other American Universities (Stringfellow Barr, former President of St. John's College; Albert Léon Guérard, Stanford University; Erich Kahler, Cornell University; and Charles H. McIlwain, Harvard University); finally, Professor Harold Innis from the University of Toronto.

[20] See Committee to Frame a World Constitution, *The Preliminary Draft of a World Constitution*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 5.

– as we read in *The Preliminary Draft* – closely related to the fear of a nuclear conflict.

After the December 1946 Soviet rejection of the "Baruch Plan", which had proposed to internationalize fission energy through an International Atomic Development Authority, Russell's articles and lectures focused on the danger of nuclear war. In his 1947 pamphlet entitled *Towards World Government*, Russell stated that "the only way to prevent great wars […] was the creation of an international authority for the control of atomic energy"; if Soviet resistance had been overcome by "diplomatic pressure" – he added – "the international government" would have been established "peacefully by gradual degrees". On the contrary, war would have been "inevitable", although it would have been "less destructive" for mankind since the Soviet Union did not as yet have the atomic weapon[21]. On 30 April 1947, he made a statement in the House of Lords[22] on the issue of atomic energy; he stated that "to preserve the peace of the world beyond the time when America [would have] ceased to have a monopoly of the bomb", it was necessary to establish "international control over atomic energy". Since he had not "much faith in the United Nations", he advocated a "real international government" composed of states which were prepared to forego the power of the veto[23]. In 1947 in England there was the establishment of the "Crusade for World Government"; it was supported by more than eighty members of the British Parliament whose main exponents were the Labour MPs Gordon Lang (chairman) and Henry Charles Usborne (secretary), and Wing Commander Ernest Millington. This movement hoped for a constituent procedure; indeed, its fundamental proposal was that "representatives of all countries", more precisely "one for every million of inhabitants", had to form a single Constituent Assembly to draw up "the Charter of the World Government"[24]. In the November 1947 essay "Still Time for Good Sense", submitted to Einstein for comment, Russell wrote that "the

[21] B. Russell, *Towards World Government*, London, New Commonwealth, 1948, pp. 11-12.

[22] Russell had sat in the House of Lords since 1931, because he became the third Earl Russell upon the death of his brother.

[23] B. Russell, *Atomic Energy Control*, Parliamentary Debates (Lords), 30 April 1947, (5), vol. 147, cols. 272-276 (for the quotations see cols. 273-275).

[24] Crusade for World Government, The British Parliamentary Committee, *Crusade for World Government: The Plan in Outline*, London, The Committee, 1947, p. 11.

human race [...] must alter its political habits or perish"; the main safeguard against possible mass destruction was a world government capable of maintaining control over nuclear weapons and, in this regard, he considered the "Baruch Plan an "enormously important first step"[25]. Einstein replied on 19 November; referring to Russell's "brilliant article" for "world government propaganda", he argued that "it was very difficult for the Russians to agree on the [Baruch] Plan", despite being "sensible" and "carefully worked out", because it was asymmetric as to demands placed on the Soviets owing to the Western presence in their country[26].

To promote "control of atomic energy", Einstein specified in an "Open Letter to the General Assembly" dated October 1947 that it was necessary for the UN General Assembly to increase its authority so that the Security Council, paralyzed by the veto power of individual states, was subordinated to it. Secondly, it was necessary to modify the UN representation method because the appointment procedures by national governments did not allow the appointees to act according to their convictions. Thirdly, the General Assembly could create the foundations for a "real world government" composed of "at least two-thirds of the major industrial and economic areas" of the planet, and he recommended that "the doors" remain wide open particularly to Russia for participation on "the basis of complete equality"[27]. The Soviets made their voices heard the following month through an "Open Letter to Dr. Einstein" signed by four leading scientists: Abram Fedorovich Ioffe, Alexander Naumovich Frumkin, Nikolay Nikolayevich Semyonov and Sergej Vavilov. They argued that Einstein's appeal for a world government echoed merely the interests of the capitalist monopolies that could function only in the framework of the "world markets and sources of raw materials"[28]. This exchange of letters highlighted that the Soviet Union – as feared by Russell – was not available to join any suprana-

[25] B. RUSSELL, *Still Time for Good Sense*, in "'47: The Magazine of the Year", November 1947, vol. 1, no. 9, pp. 56-63 (for the quotations see p. 56 and p. 59).

[26] Letter from Albert Einstein to Bertrand Russell, "The Lilienthal-Baruch proposal was a sensible and carefully worked", 19 November 1947, in Albert Einstein Archives 33-189, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

[27] A. EINSTEIN, *Open Letter to the General Assembly of the United Nations*, in "United Nations World", October 1947, no. 8, pp. 13-14.

[28] *Open Letter to Dr. Einstein from Four Soviet Scientist*, in "Bulletin of Atomic Scientists", February 1948, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 34.

tional organization capable of managing nuclear power because it wanted to build the atomic bomb on its own (on 29 August 1949, the Soviets would detonate their first atomic bomb); its rejection of the Baruch Plan had been the evidence.

Russell shared the idea of a world government above all in the mid-1950s. The discovery of the hydrogen bomb, tested for the first time by the United States and the Soviet Union between 1952 and 1953, raised the nuclear peril to a new level. In June 1954, the UK Defence Policy Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Winston Churchill, declared: "We must maintain and strengthen our position as a world power so that Her Majesty's Government can exercise a powerful influence in the counsels of the world"[29]; the British Government thus decided to develop the H bomb. In this period, Russell explored in depth the concept of the "futility" of war according to a utilitarian logic based on the absolute need to avoid nuclear conflict between the two Superpowers; just remember his November 1954 article "What Neutrals Can Do to Save the World" published in *Britain To-day*, and his 23 June 1955 address at the "World Assembly for Peace" in Helsinki. On the first occasion, he examined the concept of the "futility" of war owing to the destructiveness of the H-bomb by highlighting the role of the neutral countries: more precisely, he affirmed that "Clausewitz's dictum that war [was] the continuation of policy by other means […] was no longer true"; unlike Communist or anti-Communist countries, the neutral states could dialogue with Governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain without being influenced by bias. The first step was to be the appointment of a "Commission" composed of military, naval, and air experts, a nuclear physicist, a bacteriologist, an economist, and an expert in international politics; it was to draw up a report to underline "the futility of world war"[30]. On the second occasion, he once again criticized Carl von Clausewitz's assertion; in the face of the danger of "annihilation of the human race", the governments on either side of the Iron Curtain could simultaneously admit that "war [could] no longer serve a continuation of policy". Since mankind formed "one family", international anarchy could be overcome through "the creation of a

[29] L. Arnold, K. Pyne, *Britain and the H-Bomb*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2001, p. 53.

[30] B. Russell, *What Neutrals Can Do to Save the World*, in "Britain To-day", November 1954, no. 223, pp. 6-10.

World Authority", which had already been attempted twice, "first by the League of Nations and then by UNO"[31].

His idea of a world government took on increasingly federal connotations. In "The Hydrogen Bomb and World Government", which was broadcast on 13 July 1954 on the BBC's European Service and published in *The Listener*, Russell pointed out that the "essence" of a world government ("the only long-run alternative to the extinction of the human race") involved a "coercive power" unlike the UNO, which had been deprived of it due to veto power that could be exercised within the Security Council. The world government was to be a "world federation" composed of "large federations", such as the Western Hemisphere, the British Commonwealth, and the Communist world. This was to hold the "monopoly of armed force" (except for such minor weapons as might be necessary for police action), the power to ratify the international treaties between "national States or federation of States" and, in the event of a dispute between national states or between federations, it had "to pronounce a decision of arbitration"; furthermore "all mining of fissionable material" was to be managed by this "international authority"[32]. On the same wavelength, we can consider his 28 August 1954 article "A Prescription for the World" in *The Saturday Review*; he hoped for a world government with "the monopoly of armed force" (by leaving to national states "only such forces necessary for internal police purposes") and the "control over treaties". The "Central Government" was to take the form of a "Federal Authority" with powers defined by a "written constitution". The "world federation" was to be composed not of national states but of "subordinate federations of States" capable of deciding "matters concerning States"; it could investigate "every dispute between States belonging to different subordinate federations" and also among states of the same subordinate federation if the latter was not able to impose a solution[33].

He further analyzed the idea of a world government in "The Road to Peace" (1955), published in a collection of essays entitled *The Bomb:*

[31] B. RUSSELL, *Creating Climate of Peace*, in "The Manchester Guardian", 27 June 1955, p. 7.

[32] B. RUSSELL, *The Hydrogen Bomb and World Government*, in "The Listener", 22 July 1954, vol. 52, pp. 133-134.

[33] B. RUSSELL, *A Prescription for the World*, in "The Saturday Review", 28 August 1954, vol. 37, no. 35, pp. 9-11 and pp. 38-40.

Challenge and Answer; it had been commissioned by Gilbert McAllister, the secretary-general of the World Association of Parliamentarians for World Government (WAPWG). Since mankind was to face the risks of a thermonuclear war, he proposed the establishment of a "World Authority" conceived as a "World Federation" composed of eight "subordinate federations" closely similar – as pointed out by Russell – to one suggested by Ely Culbertson[34], whose "plan for World Government was ingenious, but it never received as much attention as it deserved because the world persisted in classifying him as only a bridge expert". The World Federation envisaged by Russell was to be made up of the United States, the USSR and its European satellites, the British Commonwealth, China, Latin America, Latin Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium), the Mohammedan World, and Germany, together with Scandinavia, Austria, Switzerland, and Holland. Africa could not yet be included due to the presence of the colonial empires of Great Britain, France, Belgium and Portugal. The "World Authority" was to possess "legal powers" defined by a "Federal Constitution", first and foremost "the power required for the preservation of peace" involving the "monopoly" of nuclear weapons and the possibility to "revise or abrogate treaties". It was to allow "each national State and each subordinate Federation complete freedom in everything not affecting the peace of the world"[35]. Through these last writings and speeches, the British intellectual seemed to tolerate a potential degree of coercion deriving from the establishment of a world government as an acceptable price for ending international anarchy. In this regard, Mark Lippincott of Toronto University highlighted "Russell's appropriation of elements from Thomas Hobbes' theory of do-

[34] In 1943 Culbertson had proposed a World Federation composed of eleven "Regional Federations", each of which was an economic unit bound by a common heritage of history, culture, law, psychology and language. They were: America (the United States and the Latin-American republics), the British Commonwealth (the United Kingdom and the British Dominions), Latin Europe (France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium), Northern Europe (Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Finland), Middle Europe (Poland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Balkans), the Middle East (Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, Syria, Arabia, a sovereign Jewish state of Palestine, and Egypt), the Soviet Union, China, Japan, India and Malaysia. See E. CULBERTSON, *Summary of the World Federation Plan*, New York, Garden City, 1943.

[35] B. RUSSELL, *The Road to Peace*, in G. MCALLISTER (ed.), "The Bomb: Challenge and Answer", London, Batsford, 1955, pp. 47-68.

mestic peace", in particular "the image of a rational Leviathan wielding an awe-inspiring monopoly of armed forces"[36].

3. *Beyond the United Nations Security Council*

On 11 February 1955, Russell wrote a letter to Einstein in which he proposed to him that "six men of the very highest scientific repute, headed by yourself", free from pro-Communist or anti-Communist bias, could make "a very solemn statement about the imperative necessity of avoiding war"[37]. More precisely, such a commission had to be composed of a nuclear physicist, a bacteriologist, a geneticist, an authority on air warfare, a person with international experience matured in the United Nations, and a chairman identifiable as a person possessing a broad culture. Einstein reacted enthusiastically to this proposal; a few days later, he wrote to advocate a "public declaration" signed by "a small number of people" to "make an impression on the general public as well as on political leaders"[38]. Even if it could be helpful to propose signatories in the US and in the Soviet Union, he counseled Russell on the opportunity to involve neutral countries because it was fundamental to emphasize "the neutral character of the whole project"[39]; nine other scientists signed the declaration[40]. Russell presented the statement at a press conference in London on 9 July 1955. The Russell-Einstein Manifesto described the potential scenario resulting from the use of the H-bomb; faced with "the tragic situation which confronted humanity" – we read in this document – scientists had to assemble in conference to appraise the perils arising from the developments of the new weapon

[36] M. Lippincott, *Russell's Leviathan*, in "Russell: the Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies", 1990, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 6-29 (for the quotation see p. 8).

[37] B. Russell, *In common with every other thinking person*, 11 February 1955, in "Albert Einstein Archives", 33-199, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

[38] *Letter from Albert Einstein to Bertrand Russell, 16 February 1955*, in "Albert Einstein Archives", 33-201, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem.

[39] *Letter from Albert Einstein to Bertrand Russell, 16 February 1955*, cit..

[40] They were the Americans Percy Williams Bridgman, Herman Joseph Muller and Linus Carl Pauling, the British Cecil Frank Powell and Joseph Rotblat, the French Jean Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the Polish Leopold Infeld, the Japanese Hideki Yukawa, and the German Max Born.

of mass destruction and to discuss a resolution, not "as members of this or that nation, continent or creed, but as human beings, […] whose existence [was] in doubt"[41]. A single H-bomb could be thousands of times more powerful than the nuclear bombs which had destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki; by annihilating cities such as London, New York and Moscow, it could "put an end to the human race". Despite this, the Manifesto declared that there was not a real understanding of the gravity of the situation because the concept of "mankind [was felt] vague and abstract". Emphasizing the goal of bridging the ideological gap between Communists and anti-Communists, the document called for the governments of the world to publicly acknowledge that "their purposes [could not] be furthered by a world war" and, at the same time, to find "peaceful means for the settlement of all matters of dispute between them"[42].

The Suez crisis and the Hungarian revolution further convinced Russell of the urgent need for more effective mechanisms of international governance. Most of the Labour parliamentary opposition hesitated to rule out the use of force; in the Commons debate on Suez, which began on 2 August 1956, Hugh Gaitskell echoed Eden's comparison of Nasser with the fascist dictators of the 1930s, pointing out that it was possible to justify "in no way Colonel Nasser's action in seizing the Canal"[43]. Russell's public reaction to the Suez Crisis appeared on 11 August in *The Manchester Guardian*: with implicit reference to the institutional weakness of the UN Security Council, he argued that a "constructive internationalism" demanded the creation of "an authority" capable of taking "enforceable decisions by a majority" when "unanimity [was] unattainable"[44]. Russell did not fail to make his voice heard on the occasion of the Hungarian revolution; on 29 November, some three weeks after the Red Army had entered Budapest, he wrote that it was a "disaster to mankind" that, while the Soviet Government was displaying its

[41] *Russell's declaration dated 9 July 1955* was published in "The New York Times" on 10 July 1955.

[42] *Russell's declaration dated 9 July 1955*, cit..

[43] H. GAITSKELL, *Suez Canal*, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 2 August 1956, vol. 557, cols. 1609-1617 (for the quotation see col. 1609).

[44] B. RUSSELL, *Letter to the Editor*, in "The Manchester Guardian", 11 August 1956, p. 4; this document can also be found in "Bertrand Russell Archives", 9 August 1956, Class no. 220, Box no. 3.58, Document no. 022082, McMaster University Library, Hamilton.

"ruthless imperialism", Britain and France had chosen to embark upon an "illegal war of aggression" against Egypt; humanity could be saved from this disaster only by "substituting law for force in international affairs"[45]. A reform of the United Nations, conceived as a premise for the establishment of a world government, was supported by Russell in June 1957, when he was chosen by the Hugo Grotius Foundation as the recipient of its award dedicated to the ideals of international law and human rights. The "first step" – he stated – was to increase "the authority" of the United Nations, more precisely of its Assembly compared to the Security Council, which could not have become the "germ of a world government" due to its power of the veto. He pointed out that "unrestricted nationalism" was "incompatible" with world peace; "the rights of nations" must not be regarded as "absolute", since the result would be "international anarchy"; however, the pursuit of "national interests" could coexist under a "world government", as the pursuit of "sectional interests" in a "democracy" within "the limits of law"[46].

In his *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare* (1959) – at that time Russell was president of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) – he supported once again the idea of a world federation, even though he highlighted a preliminary "difficulty" facing any federal organization; since some member states could be "more powerful" or "more populous" than others, they could refuse to have "equal weight". In this regard – he argued – the framers of the US Constitution had adopted a "compromise solution": in the Senate, all states had been equally represented, but in the House of Representatives their weight had been proportional to their population. In contrast, inside the UN General Assembly all states counted "equally", while the five member states of the Security Council had a "veto power"; a "World-wide Federation" (in his mind a sort of reconstituted UNO) could be divided into "subordinate Federations" framed in accordance with two principles: they were to be "approximately equal in population" and with "internal in-

[45] *Letter from Bertrand Russell to Central Office of Information*, in "Bertrand Russell Archives", 29 November 1956, Class no. 410, Box no. 1.21, McMaster University Library, Hamilton.

[46] This paper has been published with the title *The Next Steps in International Relations*, in A.G. BONE (ed.), "The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell", vol. 29, "Détente or Destruction, 1955-57", London-New York, Routledge, 2005, pp. 319-322.

terests outweighing those concerning its external relations". Due to the power of the veto of its Security Council, the United Nations lacked an "essential characteristic of any Government"; indeed an "International Authority" could not be penalized by the unanimity vote since, otherwise, it was "unable to settle any dispute"; a "well-defined Constitution" should have decided the federal powers involving the "prevention of war", without any interference with the "religion or economic structure" of its member states. The "International Authority" should have been free to create the "armed forces" and "impose taxation", with the "legal right" to "limit the armed forces of national States"[47]; its "ultimate aim" was to preserve the world from the disasters of nuclear war.

In this way, Russell implicitly espoused the theory of *The Federalist* (1788) developed by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, who had made a clear distinction between interstate collaborations and forms of true unification, by underlining the superiority of the federal model over the confederal one[48]. Russell hoped for UN institutional reform, since the Security Council could not have become a world government *in nuce* owing to the power of the veto of its member states. As in the case of the crisis of the League of Nations, in the 1950s Russell confirmed the ideas of those who, over the century, had interpreted international relations starting from the analogy that states could be considered as citizens belonging to the same community and, therefore, it was necessary to transfer the traditional model of natural law from the individual level to the interstate one, as individual countries were still in a sort of belligerent and potentially unsafe state of nature. Thus, he applied Hobbesian contractualism in the Kantian sense; he gave it a cosmopolitan value through the concept of a world government with at least the legitimate monopoly of the international force. However, while Kant's analysis was purely structural and his federalism an abstract model, Russell's reflections constituted not only an idea of reason but a distinct political proposal. However, Russell's proposal could also be traced back to the Federal Union (although he never joined it), more

[47] B. Russell, *Common Sense and Nuclear Warfare*, New York, Simon & Schuster, pp. 66-69.

[48] A. Hamilton, J. Jay, J. Madison, *The Federalist Papers*, New York, MacLean's Editions, 1788.

precisely to that part of the British movement which had advocated a "world federation" to overcome the absolute sovereignty of nation-states, the main cause of the international anarchy, and secure a lasting peace. Russell's idea of a federal world government could be considered a model to legalize international relations; not surprisingly, from the very earliest years of the establishment of the United Nations, he had predicted its endemic institutional weakness.

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Riassunto - L'idea di un governo mondiale fu approfondita da Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) soprattutto negli anni Cinquanta, in concomitanza con l'escalation della Guerra Fredda, anche se essa affondò le sue radici in alcuni scritti pubblicati durante il primo conflitto mondiale. Se escludiamo il breve periodo successivo alla Rivoluzione russa, in cui egli sposò la causa dell'internazionalismo socialista, tale idea assunse una connotazione marcatamente federale; il suo modello di Federazione mondiale fu riconducibile soprattutto al progetto di Ely Culbertson (1943), ma altrettanto evidente fu l'influenza esercitata dagli autori de *The Federalist Papers* (1788). Fin dai primi anni Cinquanta, Russell auspicò una riforma istituzionale dell'ONU, dal momento che il Consiglio di Sicurezza non avrebbe potuto diventare il germe di un governo mondiale a causa del potere di veto dei suoi Stati membri; come in occasione della sua critica alla Società delle Nazioni, il filosofo britannico sostenne le idee di quanti, nel corso dei secoli, avevano interpretato le relazioni internazionali a partire dall'analogia secondo cui gli Stati potevano essere considerati come cittadini appartenenti a una medesima comunità; da qui la necessità di trasferire il tradizionale modello giusnaturalistico dal livello individuale a quello interstatale, poiché i singoli Paesi si trovavano ancora in una sorta di stato di natura potenzialmente bellicoso. Attraverso la sua idea del governo mondiale, egli applicò il contrattualismo hobbesiano in senso kantiano attribuendogli un valore cosmopolita.