

The United Nations, which officially came into existence on October 24, 1945, was built on universal values of peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, along with justice, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility. These reflect the fundamental principles of the Theosophical Society since its inception in 1875.

The third purpose of the United Nations: – *To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion* – is aligned with the Theosophical Society's first object: *To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.*

Several international presidents of the Theosophical Society were staunch supporters of the United Nations and its precursor, the League of Nations.



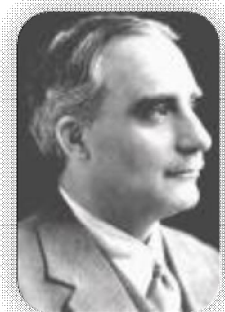
Annie Besant, who served as president from 1907 to 1933, became one of the first members of the League of Nations Union in England. In a series of lectures on ***The Great Plan***<sup>1</sup>,

Annie Besant wrote of how the next stage of the Plan would be the building up of a free Commonwealth of Nations. She believed the Theosophical Society had a significant role to play in helping create "the true Spiritual League of All the Nations". Without spiritual

inspiration, she felt that the merely political League could never achieve its purpose.

Magazine issues of the *Theosophist* from the early 1900s, show that the Theosophical Society was indeed a leader in sowing seeds of internationalism and world brotherhood on a multitude of fronts.

Mrs. Besant's successor, George Arundale, was also a staunch supporter of the League of Nations. In Australia, where he served in the late 1920s as General Secretary of the TS, Mr. Arundale joined the League of Nations Union and edited an Australia-India League Bulletin. During the 1930s he took up the theme of a plan, launching a campaign entitled "There is a Plan". He wrote, "**Every nation is a word in the world-song of Life, a class in the world-school. Every citizen must learn to speak the word and to master the lesson of his class.**"<sup>2</sup>



George Arundale served as president during the difficult time of the pre-war and war years. Actively devoted to the cause of peace, he set up a Peace and Reconstruction Department of the TS in 1940 to contribute to a Charter for World

Peace to be ready when the Second World War came to an end.

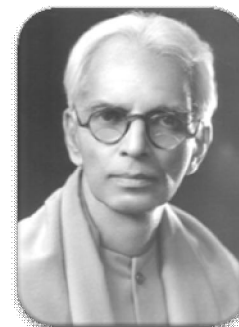
C. Jinarajadasa took over as international president in 1948 and showed great dynamism regarding the TS and the UN. In his first year as president, the following resolution was passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (Adyar).

Advisory rather than mandatory, it points to real support and commitment on the part of the Theosophical Society:



***As all members of the Theosophical Society desire earnestly to establish World Peace as a realization of Universal Brotherhood, the General Council of the Theosophical Society recommends all Lodges throughout the world to be informed of the work of the United Nations. And the Council further suggests that one meeting each year be devoted to describing the work of the United Nations towards ushering in the era of World Peace and Brotherhood.***

During the late 1940s, Mr. Jinarajadasa worked tirelessly to obtain TS consultative status with the UN.<sup>3</sup> When observer status was finally granted, an invitation was received to send representatives to conferences held by the UN Department of Public Information.



When N. Sri Ram took over as international president in 1953, he carried the torch forward, writing about the United Nations in several *On The Watch-Tower* articles. In the June 1953 issue of *The Theosophist*<sup>4</sup> he wrote:

***Those who condemn the United Nations and would fain throw it on the scrap-heap, have not so far offered a practical alternative. . . . . I feel, therefore, that in spite of every defect, every weakness and short-coming that we may find in the existing organism, the way of practical action is to infuse into it or into the***

*minds of people in regard to it more of the life and spirit that is needed. If the United Nations were to cease to exist this moment, there would be a vacuum ready to be occupied by those forces which would much rather operate in isolation or through private compacts than in a medium where their motives and actions can at least be criticized, where they have to justify themselves in some manner at the bar of world opinion.*

In May 1957, N. Sri Ram made these comments in his column *On the Watch-Tower*.

*The United Nations is an organisation which is obviously meant to develop into a bone-frame for a new body of humanity. The whole of humanity has to be organized in such a way that it can function as one body, though divided into different States, and this new body has to be upheld by a structure which will express its common will and purpose.*

The history of TS support spills over to the work of the Theosophical Order of Service in its worldwide efforts to alleviate suffering and to promote peace, development and quality of life for all.

In keeping with the spirit and intent of the 1948 Resolution, TOS members and groups may continue to support the work of the United Nations. Throughout the year, special UN days can be recognized in TOS programmes or projects through presentations, articles, exhibits and debates. United Nations Day – October 24 – can be set aside and celebrated with a special programme of meditation and readings interspersed with discussion. Practical ideas like these will be described in future brochures published by the International TOS UN Committee.

***Theosophists believe that the nations of the world constitute a single humanity  
– a single human community.  
The United Nations is but the physical demonstration of our concept of Universal Brotherhood.***

*Diana Gracey Winslow<sup>5</sup>*

***The Theosophical Society and the United Nations***, printed in October 2011, is the first in a series of brochures published by the International TOS UN Committee.

#### **End Notes**

- <sup>1</sup> ***The T.S. and the League of Nations*** by Bhagavan-Das – Excerpts from Adyar Pamphlets, 1934 - Nos 190-91
- <sup>2</sup> ***There is a Plan for the Nations*** – a booklet printed by the Vasanta Press, Adyar, Madras in the 1930s
- <sup>3</sup> ***A Summary of C. Jinarajadasa's Correspondence and TS Activity with the United Nations from 1948 to 1949*** compiled by Ananya Rajan, April 2011
- <sup>4</sup> ***On the Watch Tower – Selections from the Theosophist*** by N. Sri Ram – Theosophical Publishing House, 1966
- <sup>5</sup> ***A Theosophist Looks at the United Nations Organization*** by Diana Gracey Winslow, Chief Brother, the Theosophical Order of Service, USA – from an article featured in the November 1953 issue of *The Theosophist*



## **THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND THE UNITED NATIONS**

### **A History of Support**

Theosophists wishing to see spiritual principles permeate and uplift society will be interested to know that presidents of the Theosophical Society have actively supported the United Nations (and its predecessor, the League of Nations) since its inception. They have always believed in its potential as a vehicle for spiritual forces and global transformation.

In this leaflet published by the Theosophical Order of Service, the history of the Theosophical Society's support for the UN is outlined and some suggestions made for practical action in continuing this support. Since the TS is strictly neutral in political matters, activities focus on support for the UN's aspirations in the realm of world peace, unity and relief of suffering.