

Making a Difference: AJC's Advocacy for Human Rights in the United Nations Charter

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I. Introduction

In 2020, we mark the 75th anniversary of the United Nations Charter. The world is commemorating many milestones this year. Among them are the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps, beginning with Auschwitz in January.

In April 1945, as word of the liberation of Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Ravensbruck concentration camps were reaching Americans, revealing atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis of a gravity nearly incomprehensible to the human mind, diplomats from 50 nations were meeting in San Francisco, finalizing plans to create a new world organization, the United Nations, and discussing whether it should explicitly address human rights. The representatives of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), present in San Francisco as consultants to the US delegation, played a major role in insisting that the safeguarding of human rights for all persons must be a part of any future world order.

AJC's commitment to the idea of universal human rights and to promoting American leadership in pursuit of their realization, and the skill employed by its representatives in realizing these goals, were noted by observers of the San Francisco Conference. Columbia University Professor James Shotwell, America's foremost expert on international organizations at the time and a participant in the San Francisco Conference, later recalled that AJC leaders did "the major and strenuous part of the thinking" that led to the human rights provisions in the UN Charter.¹ Author William Korey concluded that the "historic breakthrough" of the inclusion of human rights in the UN Charter "never would have taken place without the commitment, determination and pressure of a group of American NGOs," citing Judge Joseph Proskauer and Jacob Blaustein as the "sparkplugs" whose initiative was decisive.²

AJC's historic achievement at San Francisco serves as a testament to the organization's effectiveness and the universal resonance of the values that informed its advocacy. The legacies of their achievement are a United Nations that, while imperfect, produced the foundational sources of international human rights law as well as monitoring mechanisms that have aided countless victims of human rights violations worldwide, and widespread recognition that the fate of individuals can be the subject of international law and of international concern.

The pages that follow describe how this incredible achievement came about.

II. Before San Francisco: AJC and the Idea of International Human Rights

In the years that preceded the San Francisco Conference, many individuals and organizations had been seeking to identify ways that a future world order could reflect and implement human rights principles.³ AJC made a significant contribution to these efforts by commissioning a landmark study, *An International Bill of the Rights of Man*, by the eminent British legal scholar Hersch Lauterpacht,⁴ and in December 1944 publishing a declaration signed by over 1300 distinguished Americans calling for an International Bill of Rights. AJC also published and distributed a booklet, *To the Counselors of Peace*, which, *inter alia*, proposed making human rights one of the purposes of the new world organization and called for establishing a Commission on Human Rights.

Unfortunately, the 1944 Dumbarton Oaks Conference outcome, which was the draft for the UN Charter, failed to reflect these points. “Human rights” appeared in Dumbarton Oaks only as “an incidental reference” late in the draft, seeming like an afterthought.⁵ Word leaked out that the British and Soviet delegations had rejected anything more. Years of efforts seemed to be failing.

On March 21, 1945, Joseph Proskauer and Jacob Blaustein, respectively President and Chair of AJC’s Executive Committee, met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and pressed for the United States to take a leadership role in advancing the idea of human rights in the new world organization. Proskauer was a lawyer, had served as a judge in New York state, and was an eloquent speaker. Blaustein was a businessman, the founder of Amoco Oil, and known for being practical and outcome oriented. Both were committed to seeing incorporation of human rights for all in a new world order, and they wanted the international organization to draft an International Bill of Rights to provide protection to all people. As Blaustein put it, “A fundamental tenet for the Committee has been the conviction that equality and security cannot be assured for Jews unless ensured for all.”

President Roosevelt wanted to create a global organization through which the great powers could ensure peace and security after the trauma of conflict and depredation during World War II. Earlier, in his January 1941 State of the Union address, he had spoken about a world founded on “four essential freedoms” to apply “everywhere in the world.” These ideas came through later in the Atlantic Charter. Many thought that a new global organization for collective security created after World War II could also advance those freedoms and others.

Proskauer and Blaustein reminded President Roosevelt that Jews had been the principal victims of Hitler’s persecution, and their primary objective in San Francisco was “to establish a world order that is just to every human being, irrespective of race, creed, or nationality.” In particular, they stressed the need for the Charter to create a UN Commission on Human Rights that would draft an International Bill of Human Rights applicable to every person.

Blaustein reported that the President responded positively to this, saying such provisions “would be of the greatest significance, because they go to the very root of what is fundamental to the well-being and the very lives of all people, namely respect for the dignity of the human being and protection of the human rights of each individual...”⁶ According to their report, the President had authorized them to say he was “profoundly interested in the establishment of an International Bill of Rights as well as in other suggestions contained in the Interim Report of the American Jewish Committee.”⁷

President Roosevelt also wanted to be certain that the new organization would not be rejected by the Senate, as had happened with the League of Nations. The US sent a 7-person delegation to the San Francisco Conference, carefully constructed to enhance the possibility of popular support for, and Senate ratification of, the new international body. To further mobilize popular support, on April 9, 1945, three days before President Roosevelt’s sudden death, US Secretary of State Edward Stettinius invited 42 consultants to be “affiliated” to the US delegation. The consultants represented major sectors of American life: farmers, businessmen, educators, labor leaders, lawyers, foreign policy experts, women, veterans, Christian and Jewish groups, African Americans and representatives of civic organizations.⁸ Proskauer and Blaustein represented AJC.

III. At San Francisco: AJC’s Fight to Include Human Rights in the UN Charter

The San Francisco Conference began on April 25, 1945. Upon assuming office on April 12, President Harry S. Truman confirmed that the arrangements for the San Francisco Conference, including the

appointment of consultants to the US delegation from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), would continue as planned. However, the consultants' role had not been clearly specified in advance,⁹ and during the conference, some consultants reportedly felt left out.¹⁰ Prominent Americans from all walks of life had traveled to San Francisco with high hopes but were not assigned any specific role. Many felt frustrated. To be fair, the State Department officials really did not know what to do with the consultants. They had never brought so many private individuals to such a negotiation.

Eventually, a plan was agreed whereby Secretary of State Edward Stettinius or Harold Stassen, a delegation member, regularly met with and briefed the consultants. The consultants also conducted their advocacy through informal meetings, using their access to various State Department officials who were present to assist US delegation members.¹¹ AJC's representatives played an important role in bringing about these working arrangements. Jacob Blaustein reported to the AJC Administrative Committee in early June: "We made it clear to the State Department that... it was important that they actually consult with the consultants and give serious consideration to their views" and keep the consultants informed.¹² Proskauer remarked that regular meetings were set up during each week of the conference.¹³ As a result, according to Blaustein, the consultants were really utilized fully... Their opinion was were sought... [and] some of the suggestions were adopted." This arrangement set the stage for many future delegations to UN events with "public members," appointments that engaged experts in the day-to-day diplomacy of the US at the UN.¹⁴

The AJC consultants arrived in San Francisco focused on persuading the US delegation to seek to amend the Dumbarton Oaks outcome so that the Charter would refer prominently to human rights. In a letter to AJC members from San Francisco, Jacob Blaustein wrote: "We have realized right along that unless the American Delegation would take the lead in this matter of promoting and protecting human rights, no commission with that as its aim would be established. Accordingly, ground work was laid – in the conference Joseph Proskauer and I had with our late President... in discussions with various officials of our State Dept. and some of the American delegates, and by the submittal to them of the brief of our Committee on Peace Problems, embodying that recommendation."¹⁵ On April 28, Blaustein and Proskauer also issued a press statement launching a campaign calling for an International Bill of Rights.

While the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) noted their enthusiastic focus on human rights, it also described the obstacles they would need to overcome in order to secure agreement to add references to an International Bill of Rights to the Charter. First, it noted a "very suspicious" Soviet delegation "likely to take a very cool attitude" to an International Bill of Rights that might examine treatment of its many nationalities, and then it pointed to a British delegation fearful of enabling Indian "irredentists" and others.¹⁶ Finally, JTA noted that both the US State Department and the US delegation sent to San Francisco were divided about including more human rights language in the Charter.¹⁷

However, on May 2, US delegation member Virginia Gildersleeve informed one of the consultants that they should expect no amendment referring to a Commission on Human Rights, as "the delegates, in order to shorten the Charter, would omit many details. Instead of providing specifically for a Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council would be empowered to appoint whatever commissions would be necessary."¹⁸

The consultants were deeply "disturbed" to receive this news, so much so that they decided it was "necessary to convince the American Delegation promptly" that incorporating a Commission on Human Rights was essential.¹⁹ Proskauer recalled that "The one thing above all else" on which the consultants agreed was "the conviction that the Charter of the United Nations... could not be merely a skeleton

without flesh and blood; that it was especially vital to create a commission on human rights to enforce fundamental human freedoms.”²⁰

Because May 2 was the last day on which amendments could be presented, a sense of urgency prevailed. A small group of consultants prepared an appeal: Proskauer and Blaustein for AJC, O. Frederick Nolde of the Federal Council of Churches, Clark Eichelberger of the American Association for the United Nations, James Shotwell of the Commission on the Study of the Peace, and Jane Evans of the National Peace Conference. Judge Proskauer dictated a text, asking for four specific changes to the Charter, and according to Blaustein “a small group of us worked it into final shape” on the same day.²¹ The four specific proposals for Charter amendments were: to add human rights as a purpose of the world organization; to add respect for human rights to the ‘principles’ section of the Charter; to add human rights to the functions of the General Assembly; and to ensure that a Commission on Human Rights would be mentioned by name in the Charter.²²

The resultant memorandum urged the American delegation to take “a position of leadership” on the human rights issue. It reminded Secretary of State Stettinius that “The assurance to every human being of the fundamental rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is essential not only to domestic but also to international peace.” And while the purpose of the San Francisco Conference was to devise the structure of a new world organization, “it would come as a grievous shock if the constitutional framework of the new organization would fail to make adequate provision for the ultimate achievement of human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The NGOs asked for an in-person meeting with Stettinius and rallied the other consultant organizations present in San Francisco to sign their memorandum. By 5:00 pm, when the meeting with the Secretary of State began, they had 21 signatures.²³ “Nobody refused to sign; we were merely unable to reach more than that in the short time allotted to us,” Proskauer wrote.²⁴

Behind the scenes, Jacob Blaustein also lobbied directly with the US delegation: he sought out Isaiah Bowman, a fellow Baltimorean, and an adviser to Stettinius. He pressed him on the need to include formation of an expert Commission on Human Rights and urged Bowman to brief Stettinius about the consultants' concerns. In his draft report to the AJC dated June 2, 1945, Blaustein said that Bowman was “discouraging” and “sort of a wet blanket,” agreeing with “the desirability” of adding human rights but stressing the “practical difficulties” of getting delegates to accept specific language. Bowman reminded him that the US had failed with such concepts at the League of Nations negotiations and at Dumbarton Oaks, where the US had gotten into “snarls” and “wrangles” on such specifics. Blaustein wrote that he encouraged the US delegation to make an effort to include language in the Charter on human rights despite these challenges because of the great American public demand for it. He suggested that the delegation could avoid proposing the inclusion of controversial words if they limited their proposals to “setting up a Commission on Human Rights as such.” This seemed to make an impression, Blaustein wrote, and in a private talk after the meeting, Bowman told Blaustein that he had “hit the nail on the head” and that Bowman would fight for adding references to human rights and a Commission on Human Rights to the Charter.²⁵

At the 5:00 pm meeting with Secretary of State Stettinius, O. Frederick Nolde spoke first, summarizing the memorandum. Next was “an eloquent appeal that combined logic and deep concern” by Joseph Proskauer. James Shotwell and Clark Eichelberger followed.

Much admiration has been expressed for the compelling message conveyed by Proskauer at the May 2 meeting. In his memoirs, Proskauer summarized his remarks as an argument ten minutes long, with the last point being the most important:

I said that the voice of America was speaking in this room as it had never spoken before in any international gathering; that that voice was saying to the American delegation: If you make a fight for these human rights proposals and win, there will be glory for all. If you make a fight for it and lose, we will back you up to the limit. If you fail to make a fight for it, you will have lost the support of American opinion and justly lost it. In that event, you will never get the Charter ratified.²⁶

When Proskauer finished, he reportedly asked anyone who disagreed to speak out. There was tension and silence when Philip Murray, president of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, stood up and pointed at Stettinius, and then relief, as he declared:

Mr. Secretary, I didn't sign that paper. The only reason ... was that they didn't get it to me. I am here to tell you that I believe I am speaking not only for the CIO but for all labor when I say that we are 100 percent behind the argument that has just been made.²⁷

Proskauer recalled, “Mr. Stettinius rose to his feet impulsively and exclaimed that he had no idea of the intensity of the feeling on this subject and would immediately put the matter to a meeting of the American delegation.”²⁸ That meeting began at 5:30 pm.

Professor James Shotwell lauded Judge Proskauer’s argument on the political necessity of American leadership for including human rights in the Charter, calling it “the most eloquent and convincing argument that I have ever listened to in my life.” Moreover, “he completely won over the meeting and Secretary Stettinius instantly promised that he would do all he could to have the human rights clauses inserted in the Charter... It was a magnificent victory for freedom and human rights.”²⁹

While much has been written about the May 2 consultants meeting and Proskauer’s speech, little has been said about what took place afterwards among the members of the US delegation and in their communications with Washington. The official minutes of the May 2 US delegation meeting at 5:30pm reveal that Stettinius reported quite thoroughly about the meeting with the consultants and rallied his colleagues to agree to demand amendments on human rights. He offered a detailed account of the appeal he had just received, and told delegation members that “he had been deeply impressed by the discussion” with the consultants who were “especially concerned about the expansion of references to human rights and fundamental freedoms.” He even read out their full memorandum, emphasizing “that the consultants thought this a matter of tremendous importance.” Stettinius encouraged the US to try to get agreement on proposing additional human rights language “even if there was some risk of failure.” They could at least explain they had tried, even if the result was failure, and “this would carry a great weight with American public opinion,” a key point made in both the letter and Proskauer’s speech.³⁰

Another member of the US delegation, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, remarked that two of the four measures proposed by the consultants were already among the proposed amendments that the delegation had communicated to President Truman in an April 19 memorandum.³¹ The Senator, who had previously asked for additional language in the Charter about establishing justice, now expressed concerns that if it pressed for human rights language, the US delegation would be pressed to accept the many amendments proposed by the Soviets referencing to the right to work and the right to education, and to human rights “without distinction as to race, language, religion or sex.” Representative Sol Bloom, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the only Jewish member of the US delegation, argued that it would be

better to talk about “equal rights” than about “human rights,” since in his opinion, the term “human rights” “meant nothing.”³²

Secretary Stettinius cut the conversation short, having stated that he would inform President Truman about all four of the consultants’ proposals on human rights, their views on the risk of failure, and that he would propose making public the fact that the US favored these proposals.³³

Once Stettinius left to phone the president, Senator Tom Connally asked if the US delegation actually agreed on proposing a reference to a Commission on Human Rights, and if so to reference “human rights” earlier in the Charter. No one now objected, even though they had not included these amendments in their April 19 list. Leo Pasvolosky from the State Department suggested that specific language could be considered later.³⁴

Before the meeting concluded, the US delegation reviewed other amendments to the Charter proposed by other members of the so-called ‘Big Four,’ consisting of the UK, USSR, and China alongside the US. The members returned to some of the contentious issues which troubled some of them on enumerating human rights, beginning with the Soviet proposal for a reference to “respect for human rights, in particular the right to work and the right to education and also for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, language, religion or sex.” Bowman, in the only statement attributed to him in the minutes on human rights issues discussed that evening, remarked snidely that the Soviet proposal “contained everything but the right to be assassinated.” A lively discussion followed in which other members of the delegation kept adding references to rights, such as to free expression, assembly, freedom of religion, and so on, that would need to be enumerated in order for the US to agree to the Soviet demands to include references to the rights to education, work, and “non-distinction.”³⁵

These issues came up later that evening at the first meeting convened between the members of the Big Four to discuss their proposed amendments to the Charter. An agreement was reached to avoid mentioning the rights to work and education, after Senator Vandenberg and others in the US delegation pointed out other rights that would have to be added, for example, from the US Bill of Rights. However, the US accepted the USSR’s proposal to incorporate the phrase “without distinction as to race, language, religion or sex.”³⁶

The next morning, the Big Four discussed the establishment of commissions under the Economic and Social Council, and the US proposed adding a reference to a Commission on Human Rights. The UK again indicated it preferred a vague reference – ‘such commissions as may be required’ – and the USSR supported this proposal. Virginia Gildersleeve expressed a clear US preference for a specific reference to a human rights commission. A subcommittee was appointed to resolve this issue, on which the US was represented by Isaiah Bowman. That evening, Isaiah Bowman reported to the American delegation members that the Subcommittee had agreed on the vague language proposed by the UK. Delegation member Harold Stassen disagreed, and called for the US to continue to press hard for creating a human rights commission. Secretary Stettinius told Stassen to do so himself at the next meeting of the Big Four later that same evening.³⁷

The minutes show that Bowman presented the results of the subcommittee meeting and then that he (not Stassen) pointed out that the US wanted more – namely, a direct reference to a Commission on Human Rights. Clement Atlee, representing the UK, examined the proposed text, concluding that despite his preference for general language, he agreed to the text specifying a Commission on Human Rights. Once he did so, everyone else agreed.³⁸

And so, by May 5, the Americans had reached an agreement with the other members of the Big Four to propose amendments to the draft Charter that “met the spirit” of the consultants’ suggestions.³⁹ The UN Charter as adopted calls for the creation of a Commission on Human Rights by name, cites the promotion of human rights as one of the four purposes of the organization, and indicates that promoting respect for human rights is a responsibility of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Charter repeatedly affirms “human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.”⁴⁰ On the same day Blaustein wrote to AJC members, Stettinius advised the consultants that the other members of the Big Four had concurred with their proposals.⁴¹ In addition, the Secretary publicly gave credit for the inclusion of the Commission on Human Rights to the consultants.⁴²

Alice McDiarmid, a State Department official who had worked behind the scenes after Dumbarton Oaks on refining the human rights language, called the Charter “a bold experiment” which for the first time, “embodies in a general international agreement the principle that there are human rights so basic and so universal that they are not only the heritage of all men and the responsibility of all governments, but also the concern of an international organization to preserve peace and security.”⁴³

Jacob Blaustein assessed its significance similarly, stating: “The establishment of a Commission on Human Rights is a great step forward because in it, we have the actual international machinery for creating a new world order...For the first time in history, the question of human rights and the treatment of individuals has been officially recognized as being of vital international concern. That recognition is one of the great achievements that has come out of San Francisco.”⁴⁴

IV. Assessing AJC’s Impact on US Policy on Human Rights and the United Nations

At the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, there is a plaque outside the wall of the Garden Room that reads:

25 April - 26 June 1945

In this room met the Consultants of forty-two national organizations assigned to the United States Delegation at the Conference on International Organization in which the United Nations Charter was drafted. Their contribution is particularly reflected in the Charter provisions for human rights and United Nations consultation with private organizations.

Recently, some have questioned whether the role of the consultants in San Francisco was as decisive in changing US policy as AJC’s representatives felt it had been. Since the US delegation had been exploring proposing human rights amendments already, did a half-hour meeting with the consultants really make a difference? Further, Stettinius later stated that since the provisions in the Charter were not enforceable, this achievement was “only a beginning.”⁴⁵ Was securing a UN Charter that only included generalities about human rights, without defining what this meant, really progress?

Clearly, the AJC representatives at San Francisco had access to high ranking US government officials including the Secretary of State before and during the conference. The AJC representatives saw this familiarity and access as a source of influence, not as problematic. AJC had pushed for a Commission on Human Rights and an International Bill of Rights to be recognized in the new international organization long before the San Francisco conference. Its representatives were concerned that Dumbarton Oaks barely referenced human rights at all, and they had heard excuses from the US officials as to why this happened.

When US delegate Virginia Gildersleeve came to alert the NGOs that the amendments being proposed by the US at San Francisco wouldn’t include anything more specific about human rights or a human rights

commission, she appeared to be doing so as a favor to tip off the delegates and reflect her shared sense of disappointment. The record shows that in earlier US delegation meetings, Gildersleeve proposed amendments dealing with education and with equality of opportunity for women in the Secretariat of the new world organization, but that these were brushed aside by her colleagues. Moreover, she had been told that amendments had to be kept to a minimum. A sense of pessimistic realism may have motivated her tipoff to the NGOs, rather than any attempt at manipulation. The NGOs, as Blaustein wrote, considered the information she conveyed as “shocking” and turned it into an energizing advocacy moment.

Yet, as Blaustein also wrote, State Department official Isaiah Bowman was quite discouraging. The consultants’ feared that there was only a remote possibility that the Charter would be amended to include prominent references to human rights and to a commission to define and monitor them. What could be done? Blaustein acknowledges that as a practical matter he pushed for the US to press for the inclusion of a reference to a human rights commission in the Charter, but not for further details about the specific rights to be ensured. Blaustein was above all else a practical businessman, a realist, and neither a lawyer nor an idealist. He and Proskauer sought to come out of San Francisco with something tangible. By working closely with the US delegation, preparing a timely and strong appeal in solidarity with other NGOs, and making it known to the public that they had done so, they brought pressure on the Secretary of State who, in turn, cited the strong views of the consultants in his argument with the skeptics inside the US delegation. Stettinius also communicated his concerns directly to the President. Despite this, the US delegation still nearly capitulated to the preference of the UK and USSR to make no reference to an intergovernmental body that would actually work on human rights issues. In the end, however, with Stettinius’s backing, the US pressed successfully for the human rights references the consultants had proposed and obtained support for them from the other Big Four powers and later from the other governments present at the conference.

As John Humphrey, the first head of the UN’s human rights office pointed out: “NGOs played a pivotal role in securing the inclusion of human rights language in the final UN charter. ...[They] conducted a lobby in favor of human rights for which there is no parallel in the history of international relations, and which was largely responsible for the human rights provisions of the Charter.”⁴⁶

Truly, if not for the coordination, engagement, and persuasive advocacy by the consultants at the San Francisco conference, and by AJC’s representatives in particular, it seems clear that the UN Charter would not have enshrined human rights as the preeminent multilateral organization’s ‘Third Pillar’ (alongside international peace and security and development) or laid the institutional groundwork for the subsequent development of international human rights law. Their timely and influential advocacy demanding that the new world body incorporate more about human rights and fundamental freedoms changed the views of the US delegation and the assembled diplomats, and indeed, changed history.

V. Conclusion

The horrors of the liberated Nazi concentration camps became more and more visible in the days and months that followed the San Francisco Conference. At the signing of the Charter on June 26, 1945, President Harry Truman remarked that the Charter gave us “good reason to expect” the framing of an International Bill of Rights, the long-sought goal of the AJC consultants and others in San Francisco. And Truman explained the value of this as well:

Hitler is finished – but the seeds spread by his disordered mind have firm root in too many fanatical brains. It is easier to remove tyrants and destroy concentration camps than it is to kill

*the ideas which gave them birth and strength. Victory on the battlefield was essential, but it was not enough. For a good peace, a lasting peace, the decent peoples of the earth must remain determined to strike down the evil spirit which has hung over the world for the last decade. ...*⁴⁷

The efforts of the AJC consultants to the Conference on International Organizations in San Francisco to strike down that “evil spirit” are memorialized today not just in the plaque on the wall in the Fairmont Hotel. They are memorialized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the first element in a bill of rights that the consultants were seeking), which was soon drafted by the Commission on Human Rights which they had insisted be mentioned by name. They are memorialized in the nine core human rights treaties and other UN human rights mechanisms that were subsequently created, and which have been incredibly influential in protecting human rights at the national and international levels.

Moreover, while the UN’s performance on human rights issues has been imperfect in many respects, countless victims of human rights atrocities and abuses have been aided by the world’s recognition that individuals can be the subject of international law – and of international concern. This is perhaps the greatest legacy of AJC’s advocacy at the San Francisco conference.

Beyond ensuring the creation of a multilateral architecture for the elaboration and promotion of respect for international human rights, the consultants to the US delegation to the San Francisco Conference also demonstrated the potential for citizen action to impact both US foreign policy and the structure, functions, and actions of multilateral organizations.⁴⁸ AJC’s actions and impact at San Francisco reflect its longstanding commitment to the idea of universal human rights and to promoting American leadership in pursuit of their realization, as well as its unique capacity to achieve its objectives through resonant, effective, strategic advocacy.

There remained – and still remains – much more to be done to achieve the protection of human rights in fact. AJC’s Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, which will mark its 50th anniversary in 2021, continues to advocate in pursuit of their realization to this day. But we all owe and should acknowledge our appreciation of the timely and effective advocacy of Joseph Proskauer, Jacob Blaustein and the other NGO consultants in San Francisco who made the issue of respect for the human rights of all persons into one of the prominent outcomes not just of the San Francisco conference, but of the twentieth century itself.

¹ James Shotwell, “Tribute”, American Jewish Committee, *A World Charter for Human Rights*, (undated), available at http://www.ajcarchives.org/AJC_DATA/Files/HR5.PDF (Hereafter, “AJC, *A World Charter*”)

² William Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: NY: St Martin’s Press, 1998, pp. 29, 33.

³ Jan Herman Burgers, “The Road to San Francisco: The Revival of the Human Rights Idea in the 20th Century,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 14, 1992, pp.447-477.

⁴ New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.

⁵ Korey, pp. 33-4.

⁶ Jacob Blaustein, Dinner Observance of the 10th Anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 9, 1958.

⁷ “Foreword,” AJC, *A World Charter*.

⁸ Organizations that were invited and sent consultants to the US delegation included Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*(CSOP), American Assn. for the UN*, American Assn. of University Women*, American Bar Assn.*, American Council for Education, American Jewish Committee*, American Jewish Conference*, American Legion, American Section of the International Chamber of Commerce, Americans United for World Organization*, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Federation of Labor, American Veteran’s Committee*, Catholic Assn. for International Peace*, US Chamber of Commerce*, Church Peace Union*, Council of Industrial Organizations**, Council on Foreign Relations, Disabled American Veterans, Federal Council of Churches of Christ*, Foreign Policy Association, General Federation of Women’s Clubs*, Kiwanis, Lions, NAACP*, National Assn. of Manufacturers*, National Catholic Welfare Conference*, National Conference of Parents and Teachers, National Assn. of Farm Cooperatives*, National Education Assn., National Exchange Club, National Farmers’ Union,

National Federation of Women’s Clubs*, National Foreign Trade Council, National Grange, National League of Women Voters*, National Lawyers Guild, National Peace Conference*, Railway Labor Executives’ Assn.*, Rotary International, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Women’s Action Committee for Victory. Note that * indicates the organization was a signatory to the May 2 letter described later. **CIO joined in signing the May 2 letter during the meeting at 5:30pm.

⁹ In his April 9 telegram inviting individuals to serve in this capacity, Secretary Stettinius offered no clarity on the role, simply stating that “Consultants representing organizations will be available for consultation at the request of the delegation and will be kept as closely informed of the work of the conference as possible.” Telegram from ER Stettinius to Joseph Proskauer, 9 April 1945, copy available in AJC archives at YIVO. Stettinius initially told the members of the US delegation that the consultants would not be official delegates, but there would be a system “to keep them closely in touch with the progress of the work.” They would be “consulted from time to time as appropriate.” Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the United States Delegation, 23 March 1945, 10:00 am. Days later, he said that President Roosevelt “felt it would do considerable harm if no recognition was given to the leading national organizations” and encouraged facilitating the consultants’ presence at plenary sessions and commission meetings. Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the United States Delegation, 30 March 1945, 11:00 am. Archibald MacLeish, Assistant Secretary of State for Public and Cultural Relations, assured delegation members that the large number of organizations to be designated as consultants would not interfere with their duties, but also cautioned, “It was important to prepare for the presentation of the work of the Conference to the American public.” Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the United States Delegation, 3 April 1945, 10:00 am.

¹⁰ On April 27 Secretary Stettinius told the US delegation that the consultants “were in a rather uneasy frame of mind since they felt that the delegation was not paying them the proper attention.” Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Minutes of the 21st meeting of the US Delegation, 27 April 1945, 8:30 pm.

¹¹ Proskauer, *A Segment of My Times*, New York: Farrar, Strauss & Co, 1950, p. 219.

¹² 5 June 1945 Report to AJC Administrative Committee, Blaustein speech, pp. 7-8, American Jewish Committee Records, MS-780, Box B9, Folder 29, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹³ *Id.*, p. 19.

¹⁴ Korey, pp. 32-33.

¹⁵ Jacob Blaustein, Second Letter from San Francisco to AJC members, May 8, 1945, “Dear Friend.”

¹⁶ Jewish Telegraphic Agency, April 26, reprinted in AJC, *A World Charter*.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Clark Eichelberger, *Organizing for Peace: A Personal History of the Founding of the United Nations*, New York: Harper & Row, 1977, p. 269.

¹⁹ Jacob Blaustein, Second Letter from San Francisco to AJC members, May 8, 1945, “Dear Friend.”

²⁰ Proskauer, p. 221.

²¹ Blaustein draft report, 6-2-1945, handwritten. AJC archives.

²² The text of the memorandum is published in Proskauer, pp.221-224 and in Eichelberger, pp.270-272.

²³ See organizations marked by an asterisk in footnote 8. As described in the text, CIO signed during the meeting.

²⁴ Proskauer, pp. 216-228, (UN Conference at San Francisco). See page 224.

²⁵ Jacob Blaustein archives, Johns Hopkins University, File A-2-6 AJC Special – JB to San Francisco 1945. There are both handwritten and typed drafts.

²⁶ Proskauer, p. 225.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.* According to Proskauer, Stettinius spoke personally to him as he completed his speech, “Joe, I’m sold. I will go up and try to sell it to the Delegation.” Letter of Joseph Proskauer to John Slawson, May 3, 1945. AJC archives at YIVO.

²⁹ J.T. Shotwell, “Tribute,” AJC, *A World Charter*.

³⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General; The United Nations, Volume 1, Minutes of the 26th Meeting of the United States Delegation, Held at San Francisco, Wednesday, May 2, 1945, 5:30pm, (Hereafter, “May 2 meeting”), p.4.

³¹ Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Memorandum by the Secretary of State to President Truman, April 19, 1945. This document contains the ‘few alterations’ to the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals that the American delegation unanimously had agreed upon as of April 19th, namely to add a statement on the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms to the purposes of the UN; and to add a recommendation to the powers of the General Assembly to include “to establish justice, to foster the observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms...” The amendments also included a proposal to exclude matters within the domestic jurisdiction of a state from the scope of the Security Council in peaceful settlements.

³² May 2 meeting, p. 6.

³³ May 2 meeting., p. 5.

³⁴ May 2 meeting, p. 6.

³⁵ May 2 meeting, p. 15.

³⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945, General: The United Nations, Volume 1, Memorandum Minutes of the First Four-Power Consultative Meeting on Charter Proposals, Held at San Francisco, May 2, 1945, 9 p.m.

³⁷ At the same US delegation meeting, John Foster Dulles, a State Dept adviser to the delegation, proposed new language be added to the Charter “Nothing contained in this Charter shall authorize the Organization to interfere with matters which [by international law] are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of the State concerned or shall require the members to submit such matters to settlement under this Charter...” In the days that followed, a variation of this language was agreed to and incorporated into the Charter. It is not known whether the NGO consultants knew about this.

³⁸ Minutes of the Third Four-Power Consultative Meeting on Charter Proposals, Held at San Francisco, May 3, 1945, 9:40 p.m.

³⁹ Alice McDiarmid, “The Charter and the Promotion of Human Rights,” in Department of State Publication 2573, “Organizing the United Nations...”, US-UN Information Series 6, p. 41. The Secretary publicly gave credit for the inclusion of the Commission on Human Rights to the consultants.

⁴⁰ Id.

⁴¹ Jacob Blaustein letter from San Francisco, “Dear Friend,” May 8, 1945.

⁴² Id.

⁴³ McDiarmid, p. 41.

⁴⁴ Quoted in AJC, *A World Charter*.

⁴⁵ Quoted in AJC, *A World Charter*.

⁴⁶ John Humphrey, *Human Rights and the United Nations: A Great Adventure* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transactional Publishers, 1984), p. 13 as cited in Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 85.

⁴⁷ President Harry S Truman, Address in San Francisco at the Closing Session of the United Nations Conference in San Francisco, June 26, 1945.

⁴⁸ Korey, p. 29. Korey cites John Humphrey, first head of the UN’s human rights office, affirming that, without these non-governmental organizations, there would be “only a passing reference” to human rights in the Charter.