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## THE MAKING OF WORLD GOVERNMENT

A radio discussion with Mortimer Adler,  
G. A. Borgese and Rexford Tugwell

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(Part I of II)

### *Around the Round Table...*



**Mortimer J. Adler**, professor of the philosophy of law at the Law School of the University of Chicago, studied at Columbia University and received his Ph.D. degree there in 1928. Before coming to the University of Chicago in 1930, he taught psychology at Columbia University and served as assistant director of the People's Institute of New York. He is the author of *Dialectic* (1927); *Crime Law and Social Science* (with Jerome Michael) (1933); *Diagrammatics* (with Maude Phelps Hutchins) (1935); *Art and Prudence* (1937); *What Man Has Made of Man* (1938); *St. Thomas and the Gentiles* (1938); *How To Read a Book* (1940); *Problems for Thomists: The Problems of Species* (1940); *A Dialectic of Morals* (1940); and *How To Think about War and Peace* (1944).



**Giuseppe Antonio Borgese**, who is serving at the present time as secretary of the Committee To Frame a World Constitution, is a member of the faculty of the Humanities Division of the University of Chicago. Professor Borgese was born in Italy, educated at the University of Florence, where he received his Ph.D. degree in 1903, and taught at the universities of Rome and Milan in Italy. Professor Borgese, as a leader of democratic opinion in Italy, was active in Italian politics in opposition to the Fascist movement. He served in the government of Orlando and was head of the Italian delegation to the Interallied Conference in London in 1918. Refusing to take the Fascist oath, he left Italy in 1931 and came to the United States, where in 1938 he became a citizen. Since coming to this country, he has taught at the University of California, the New School for Social Research, Smith College, and, since 1936, at the University of Chicago. He is the author of many books in Italian and, in English, of *Goliath: The March of Fascism* (1937); *The City of Man* (in collaboration) (1940); and *Common Cause* (1943).



**Rexford Guy Tugwell** recently joined the faculty of the University of Chicago as a professor of political science. Tugwell studied at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania, where he received his B.S., A.M., and Ph.D. degrees. He taught economics at the universities of Pennsylvania and Washington; and from 1920 to 1937 he was a member of the economics department of Columbia University. From 1933 to 1937 he served in the United States Department of Agriculture as assistant secretary and undersecretary. He was appointed chairman and head of the planning department of the New York City Planning Commission in 1938. In 1941 he was appointed governor of Puerto Rico and served until he joined the staff of the University of Chicago. He is the author of many books, among which are: *The Economic Basis of Public Interest* (1922); *Industry's Coming of Age* (1927); *The Industrial Discipline* (1933); *Battle for Democracy* (1935); *The Fourth Power* (1939); *The Superpolitical* (1940); *The Directive* (1941); and *Changing the Colonial Climate* (1942).

## THE MAKING OF WORLD GOVERNMENT

**ADLER:** Tomorrow is Armistice Day. Shall there always be armistice? Shall it ever be peace? With this question in mind, let us note that the people of Massachusetts last week voted nine to one in favor of world government. Today we propose to discuss how the world government which they want will be formed.

Some Americans believe that world government is the only way to avoid war in the atomic age. Many other Americans believe world government is impossible and undesirable. Both groups argue about world government. Is that how we should approach the problem? Do you think that we should debate whether we can get world government?

**TUGWELL:** For the most part, no. Other ROUND TABLES have recently debated that question. We might better spend most of our time, I think, considering what world government has to be.

**ADLER:** How should we approach the question of world government?

**BORGESSE:** The issues involved are complicated. They should be analyzed. We all three have been working as members of the Committee To Frame a World Constitution;<sup>1</sup> and this the analytical approach—has been our approach. We have been trying to see how the idea of world government would work out in an exact and organic pattern of world law.

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee To Frame a World Constitution was planned in September, 1945, soon after Hiroshima. President of the Committee is Robert M. Hutchins; chairman, Richard P. McKeon; secretary, G. A. Borgese. Other members at this date are: Mortimer J. Adler, Stringfellow Barr, Albert Guérard, Harold A. Iris, Erich Kahler, Wilber G. Katz, James M. Landis, Charles H. McIlwain, Robert Redfield, and R. G. Tugwell. Ten Committee meetings have been held, from November, 1945, to October, 1946, in New York and Chicago. The Office of the Secretary (975 E. Sixtieth St., Chicago) was opened in February, 1946. Its staff is engaged in historical, political, and juridical research and in the coordination of the Committee's work. An index of one hundred and five documents, including voluminous stenotyped reports of Committee meetings, summarizes the work accomplished so far. It is expected that the preliminary constitution in process of elaboration should be ready in the first half of 1947. A monthly *Bulletin* has been announced, the first issue of which should be published next January. As soon as a draft constitution is ready, the Committee plans to call an Advisory Council of about fifty for critical discussion and cooperation in further work.

**ADLER:** Let us start with a series of questions. The first one which any listener would ask is why we discuss world government with the United Nations now in existence.

**BORGESE:** We do so because the United Nations is not world government. We have seen and are seeing what has happened and is happening among the great powers and among the fifty-one—today fifty-four—self-styled United Nations. Are they united? Even those who are working in the United Nations, the most optimistic among its actors and observers, are nearly unanimous in considering the United Nations as a transient and very imperfect compromise between the warring anarchy of nations and the world organization to come.

**ADLER:** Tugwell, do you agree that the United Nations is not world government?

**TUGWELL:** The United Nations is clearly not world government. It is simply periodic meetings among entirely sovereign nations. For anyone with imagination, the ticking of the atomic bomb is as loud as doom itself today; and the only way to make sure that it will not explode is to get it into the control of a real world government which unites people so that groups of them will not use it against each other.

**ADLER:** But many argue that we cannot get world government now. Is world government possible?

**BORGESE:** It is necessary; therefore, it is possible.

**ADLER:** Let me see now, world government is not impossible; it is necessary, but what is it? That is the sixty-four-dollar question.

**TUGWELL:** To begin with, it has to be democratic—that is, democratic both politically and economically. Also, it has to be a federal government with assemblies for legislation and with an executive and with a court. It probably will not be so very different in fact, when it arrives, from the structure of the United States or of Switzerland. It would be directly representative of all the peoples of the world and elected by them. In other respects, of course, it might be quite different.

**ADLER:** But some people say that the United Nations can be transformed by amendment into world government. Is that so? Can world government emerge from changes made within the structure of the United Nations?

**BORGESSE:** If the United Nations should prove to be a bridge instead of a gap on the road to world government, nobody would be happier than I. But I believe that the amendments which have now been proposed are insufficient, weak entering wedges toward world government, if they ever enter. These amendments in general amount only to implementing the United Nations with a legislative assembly. The United Nations obviously lacks a legislature, but it also lacks many other things which are necessary to world government.

**ADLER:** The proposal of amendments of the sort to which you refer seems to me to reveal a basic misunderstanding of the very nature of government. A legislature cannot function without an executive and a judicial branch of government. But, what is much more important, it is absolutely impossible to add a legislative body to the UN without amending the UN out of existence. Only a government can make laws. If the United Nations organization could make laws, it would be a government, and it would cease to be a mere league of nations.

**TUGWELL:** The use to which the veto power would be put would mean that these amendments would never pass.

**ADLER:** Your remark about the veto power leads me to ask you about the charge that Russia would never join a world government.

**TUGWELL:** I do not think that we know what reference to the people who make and support world government would reveal. The governments of both the United States and Russia have supported the veto.

**ADLER:** In answer to my questions, you both have made a number of important propositions. Let us now get behind these statements to see if we can explain what they mean. The three of us have been working as members of the Committee To Frame a World Constitution for more than a year now. We have been trying to answer these important questions. Let us look at them more closely.

Tugwell, you said a moment ago that the United Nations is not government. Precisely what do you mean?

**TUGWELL:** I should say that the UN is not government; it does not represent the people of the world; its assembly, for instance, is not elected; and, in it, the nations are only represented in those aspects usually called foreign relations. It cannot be said to be much more

than a very distinguished discussion group which may make recommendations.

**ADLER:** I gather, then, that the United Nations, not being government, will fail us in more ways than its predictable failure to prevent the next war. It will fail us in every way in which it falls short of being world government, because it is not set up to do the positive things which only government can do for the peoples of the world.

**TUGWELL:** Precisely and for this reason: A world government would have to come out of a constitutional convention of the world's people, not out of a meeting of delegates severely limited in their terms of reference and without fundamental power to change the constitutions of the nations which they represent. The delegates to the UN simply cannot be given power enough to form a world government. That would have to come out of the same sources from which the UN came, unless, of course, the UN should be designated as a convention; and for this it would seem to me to be unsuitable.

**ADLER:** In other words, if I understand the drift of the discussion so far, the United Nations is a creature of the present sovereign states, a combination or a coalition or clearing-house or battlefield of their disunited and competitive sovereign power politics. It was not created by the peoples of the world; therefore, the United Nations cannot be amended. It can only be abolished and replaced by another institution.

**TUGWELL:** It can, of course, look toward cooperation among the peoples of the world, and it can help to prepare an atmosphere in which world government can suggest itself and can ultimately become a reality.

**BORGESE:** The replacement, however, might happen by radical and total transformation, not necessarily by scrapping and overthrow. Do you grant this, Tugwell?

**TUGWELL:** Theoretically, if you wish.

**ADLER:** But, in either case, it is a total transformation or a total overthrow.

Our problem today is to state clearly what world government is and how it differs radically from the United Nations, which we think it must replace. For example, in a world government could

the laws of that government be in any way vetoed or modified by any of the constituent states of the world union?

**BORGESE:** I certainly would not say so.

**TUGWELL:** Laws can be enforced only upon men; they cannot be enforced upon governments. As Hamilton said, such enforcement would be an act of war.

**ADLER:** And must laws be binding on the people directly?

**TUGWELL:** They must be binding on people directly, of course.

**ADLER:** That being so, we have come to the conclusion, I think, that there is one irreducible difference between the old League of Nations, the present United Nations, or any similar organization of sovereign states—between all these—and the true federal union constituting world government. Only through federal union can the peoples of the world acquire the power of making laws for the world—laws which apply directly to the world's people and not through the mediation of sovereign states.

**TUGWELL:** Laws made must also be enforced, or they are merely pieces of paper; and decisions made must be adjudicated if there is any question about them, or else they merely hang in the air.

**BORGESE:** Even where there is theoretically, or in writing, a legislative and a judicial power, there is no law or justice worth mentioning if there is not a sheriff. There must be the force for actual enforcement.

**ADLER:** There is another consideration. Emergencies always arise in which critical social or economic problems cannot be solved by existing law but must be dealt with by administrative decrees and administration. Must not the executive department of a government do more than enforce the law? Must it not regulate administratively matters not regulated by law?

**TUGWELL:** Yes, especially in so highly technological a world as we have today, administrative law becomes more and more important.

There is something else about the executive which ought to be mentioned. The presidency as an institution would serve not only as an executor of laws and a participant in their making but also as a chief of state. The chief of a world state would be something dif-

ferent from anything we are used to in a nationalist world. He would, in a sense, be the repository and guardian of the world's conscience and, perhaps, of its hopes.

**BORGESE:** The problem of the executive is very alive in every country in the world at this moment. We know it is alive in America; but let us take France and De Gaulle as a dramatic instance. The French people are voting today, as a matter of fact, for or against De Gaulle. We may think, and may think correctly, that De Gaulle is wrong in his political and social motivations. Perhaps if we were French, we would vote against him. But he is right in the assumption that an absolute parliamentary organization, with a legislative power very strong and with the executive power at the mercy of impulsive and changing majorities, which would be legislative in name and irresponsibly executive in fact, does not work any more in our world.

The problem of the executive, therefore, must be faced. The executive of a world government must be strong though responsible, responsible but strong.

**ADLER:** As I see it, then, there are four essential elements of world government—as a matter of fact, of any government, for in its essence world government does not differ from any other kind of government: first, making law; second, applying laws in courts; third, enforcing law; and, finally, administering matters unregulated by law.

Our listeners might want to know in the case of world government how these basic elements would be set up. How far, for example, would world government resemble the government of the United States?

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

For more about the Committee to Frame a World Constitution:

<http://ead.lib.uchicago.edu/view.xqy?id=ICU.SPCL.CFWC&c=c>

Preliminary Draft of A World Constitution (1947-1948), prepared by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler.

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WELCOME NEW MEMBER

**Justin O'Donnell**

*We welcome your comments, questions or suggestions.*

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