

UNITED NATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT GRAU SAN MARTIN

OPENING SESSION ITO CONFERENCE

HOLD FOR DELIVERY

Mister President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We deem it a great honor and privilege, to which motives of personal satisfaction have been added, to have been afforded this opportunity of most cordially welcoming the distinguished Plenipotentiaries who are meeting of this crossroad of the World for the purpose of carrying out one of the most important duties of historical responsibility that the human conscience in its anxiety of creating new instruments capable of securing the peace and happiness of men has ever undertaken.

The people of Cuba and its Government, over which I have the honor to preside, feel highly flattered by the fact that under our hospitable skies an assembly of such significant importance should be held, in compliance with the resolutions of the United Nations Organization imbued with the noble effort of propitiating the economic stability of the world, by helping to point out the way in a time which is living under the evident sign of all that is uncertain.

Trade has been man's main peacetime activity almost since the time he began to live in society, which leads us to believe that the success to be attained by the work of this Conference will become an invaluable pillar of that lasting peace that all the peoples of the world are now so anxiously seeking. The specific purposes of this momentous meeting are therefore closely interwoven with that noble aspiration we all have that the unanimous desire for a just and permanent peace shall become a tangible reality.

The solution of the serious social problem of employment depends to a great measure on the more or less propitious conditions under which trade is carried on in the future. This is one of the main aspects which will undoubtedly be the preoccupation of the Plenipotentiaries' meeting here, as it was to those who had the opportunity of co-operating in the work of preparation of the International Trade Charter at the preliminary meetings, which now will be the subject of your intelligent consideration.

/Commercial

Commercial interchange has reached such a degree of development that it has gone way beyond the time in which it merely endeavoured to satisfy the material needs of mankind. It can now be said that trade, besides being the last link in the chain of production and distribution of wares and in the access of the people to prosperity - which will be greater as its development increases - also satisfies desires of a moral order. We are no longer dealing with that primitive relation of material interest since the present concept of trade takes in such a vast sphere that there is room in it for all the initiatives of human thought and energy.

You have before you, Honorable Delegates, the grave responsibility of creating in a world thrown out of balance by the war, conditions of prosperity that should reach all of us. We are aware that you are prepared by the high quality of your minds as well as by the sound orders that you have brought with you from your Governments, fully to undertake this commitment, which allows us to have the assurance that you will overcome such obstacles as may stand in the way of the successful achievement of your undertaking.

Your task is closely linked to the very task of peace. It is well to remember that trade, as an immediate object in the interest of man, has been frequently referred to as the cause of disturbance of good relations among peoples. We have repeatedly heard illustrious thinkers proclaim that wars are nothing save concrete manifestations and fatal consequences of a lack of balance that has come about in the interchange of trade. But those who believe in this philosophic interpretation of conflicts may easily be thwarted if you are able to agree upon a system of international trade which, through its fairness and soundness, may be capable of removing the spectre of war.

It has been Cuba's privilege to have participated in the work preparatory to this meeting and to have belonged to what was called the "Nuclear Group" which had charge of preparing the Draft World Trade Charter. Its delegates to previous meetings had the satisfaction of bringing up the points that we deemed adequate to promote the lawful growth of world trade.

We were then encouraged by the same faith that moves us in this present task. But the hopes we have placed on the objectives of this Conference are still broader, because they involve the ambition that the new standards will serve not only for the immediate purpose of destroying the barriers which hinder the normal functions of commercial interchange, but because we believe that these general rules will be followed by an improvement in the standard of living of countries that are still retarded in their material development.

/We are well

We are well aware that your preoccupation is entirely unselfish and that you are seeking with your altruistic and constructive vision to have this meeting reach agreements that will raise the standard of living of many countries. Those of you who have the good fortune of representing nations that enjoy a high standard of technical and industrial progress should endeavour, without failing further to improve that beneficial evolution, to have all nations succeed in turn in achieving a degree of progress and culture which will make it possible for them to fulfill the objectives that seem essential to every society that is economically well organized: the prosperity and happiness of man and his dignifying position in production and in life. That should be our maximum desire which does not have as its only goal to reach the position of those countries that have achieved a high degree of industrial development, but also contemplates the conditions of other peoples who necessarily must rise to more satisfactory levels

The world today is anxious for a new order in production and trade, a better distribution of materials and products which includes not few corrections and a considerable approach to the supreme dictates of creation and to the principles of justice inherent thereto. Insofar as it may be possible for us, we should prevent man from going against the work of Nature, and on the contrary, we should endeavour to have him follow the routes of Providence that represent, in the last analysis, the soundest essentials, because, otherwise, we would run the risk of contradicting the natural right inherent in all peoples to produce and participate in the commercial interchange with those products which can be produced in the easiest and most spontaneous manner.

Our view of the present problems of the world among which are those submitted to your consideration, naturally includes formulae of a technical order capable of giving sound guidance to economic relations; but it is mainly characterized by the spiritual encouragement that gives it shape and stimulation. We believe that if the economic standard is to be an effective guarantee of the rights it covers, it must be inspired in a deep sentiment of human justice and in a respect for democratic principles. Our activities would be of little use if they were limited to an erection of structures of faultless scientific appearance, but which, in the end, do not seek to meet the legitimate rights and the demands that are honestly founded.

We are seeking an intelligent co-ordination of our different possibilities, which makes it to be assumed that we have reached the necessary understanding that one's own interest is secured in the measure in which we understand the reason of the interest of others, without

/losing sight

losing sight of the fact that such harmonious adjustment should be developed in a democratic atmosphere, such as is offered by the high moral key-note of this meeting.

One of the most fruitful and profitable tasks of this Conference will be that which attempts to prevent fear and suspicion from obstructing the free development of peoples and thus delay their material improvement. On this we base our fervent hope which we are entrusting to your wisdom in order to succeed in creating a system which will destroy every threat to the peaceful and honest exercise of commercial activities and which, in this way, will solemnly consecrate as the golden rule of world economy, the just principle of security in productive activities.

The broadmindedness which inspires this meeting gives us the feeling that it will not be indifferent to the needs of those nations with incipient economies, which, as many of those of America, require financial co-operation for their industrialization as a mean of effectively strengthening that bastion of freedom which is sought to be made impregnable, for the defense and protection to the most cherished of human ideals. At this point, permit me to call the attention of this illustrious assembly to the fact, that the signing of the International Trade Charter, in Havana, - bulwark of the West Indies - which was the last foot-hold of a past which today disappears in order to allow the way to further human conquests, is an unmistakable symptom that America, a tireless struggler for Freedom and Justice, looks with honourable complacency upon the consecration of supreme aspirations that have been its own from the very start of its venturesome existence.

Economy, honourable delegates, has become the very life of the world. Your very presence implies a rotund denial to the erroneous concept that gave but minor importance to the serious dedication to trade. Much to the contrary, the feeling of our times demands that we give a higher rank to these activities, placing them on the highest plane of human purposes and moral nature. We must meet the material demands of existence and unhesitatingly heed the voice of necessity, but we must do so with the highest ethical standards and the most worthy incentive. Let us improve the subtle gears of economy without losing sight of the fact that it will reach its highest degree of perfection the more closely we place it in the service of Peace binding it closely to the triumph of justice and freedom.

In wishing you a pleasant stay in our country, we sincerely hope that your very important work will be most successfully completed. We are fully confident that such generous efforts can result only in a fruitful achievement for the present and a rich endowment for future generations.