

1494

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE
GEORGE S. MESSERSMITH, AMERICAN
AMBASSADOR TO MEXICO, AT THE LUNCHEON
OF THE PAN AMERICAN ROUND TABLE ON
APRIL 14, 1942.

Mr. Minister, my Colleagues of the Diplomatic Corps
of the American Republics, members of the Pan American
Round Table in Mexico City, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I know that you will forgive me if I talk to you to-
day in this informal way rather than deliver a prepared
address. I am not so much a believer in words as I am
in deeds. In these days of crisis it is a source of
satisfaction for all of us to know that the countries
of this hemisphere are a unit in their determination to
maintain their liberties and their sovereignty and their
institutions. The only safety of the Americas lies in
this complete unity and there must be among us unity of
action. Panamericanism has resolved itself into a reality.
It is like a delicate flower which requires careful nur-
turing but now it is in its full bloom.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the
members of the Panamerican Round Table in Mexico City
on their initiative. Your work is not new. For many
years you have been laboring industriously and fruit-
fully in this field. It must be and should be a source
of very proper pride and satisfaction to all of you in
the Round Table group to know that you have been pioneers
in the work of inter-American understanding and unity.
You have fostered friendly understanding and compre-
hension through sympathetic contact and associations
long before and during these trying times.

Our

Our republics in the Americas won their sovereignty and their independence and their political freedom by the sacrifices of our ancestors. We have learned to cherish these liberties and sovereignty to the degree that we are determined to fight for them once again, realizing that that which is worth conserving is worth fighting for.

The responsibility for all that has happened and for the war which we are in and for the sacrifices which we must make must not be placed on the governments of the democracies. It is my opinion that governments are not so much to blame as are our own people themselves. In a democracy the people rule and are responsible for their government. Officials in high place in more than one country realized in the late twenties the possibilities of a future conflict. By the middle thirties they had come to the conclusion that it was almost inevitable, and a few years later and before the actual break of the war they knew that it was certain, but public opinion, in spite of the efforts to enlighten it, due to lack of understanding, would not permit those responsible in government to take the steps in defense and of a preventive character which were so necessary and which those officials realized were imperative. We as a people saw others preparing for war, but were complacent and thought that which was happening elsewhere in the world could not touch us. We rested under the delusion that for us, whatever might happen elsewhere, there was a certainty of peace. The result was that not only did we not prepare for our own defense, but by our inertia helped the enemy to prepare against us.

I was

I was in Germany from 1930 to 1934 and in Austria for nearly three years more. I saw the industrial and economic machinery of that highly industrialized country being turned into a potent instrument of war. I saw the preparation of troops and the training of youth for war. In the forests of that country I saw the secret training of men and the building of barracks. I saw the tremendous development of the air force which could have only one objective. All this was an open book to the world but we paid no heed.

What happened in Belgium, in France and in other countries of Europe happened because, like us, they did not wish to read the facts. It happened because clearly threatened countries would not unite against a common danger. If we in the Americas were late in recognizing the danger and our sacrifices and effort have to be the greater for not having done so, that recognition is now complete.

Today in our country our huge industrial machinery is being turned into an instrument of aggressive warfare. This cannot be the work of a day or of a month. The transformation of our factories alone is an incredibly difficult task. The automotive industry is an example. To turn this one industry into a war production instrument means the transformation and replacement of machinery and this alone is an enormous task. I am glad to be able to tell you that this transformation of industry from a peacetime to a wartime basis is rapidly approaching its completion. When this is accomplished the news that we read in our papers in the morning will be changed and when we listen to the radio we will hear of the progress of our forces and the approach of the victory.

But

But we must realize that the production machinery alone will not be sufficient. Machines and money and all forms of economic sacrifices will play a preponderant role in the war and in the winning of the victory, but it will be the intelligence and industry and effort of those who man the machines which will win the war. We cannot even foresee today all of the sacrifices which we will be called upon to make to win the war. In the United States, in Mexico, in Canada and in every country of this Continent, maximum effort must be made, since we are facing the result of our inaction of the past. Never before has there been such a call on the full efforts of the American democracies as that which they face in this crisis.

We do not know how long the war will last nor the sacrifices which we shall have to make nor what the world will be like after it is over. We know that we shall have to win the victory, that we shall have to make great sacrifices, and that the post-war world will in many respects, at the best, be different from the one we now live in. The length of the war will depend very largely upon the effort we put forward. The sacrifices will not be our own alone, but those of our children and perhaps our childrens' children, but they, as we, will also reap the fruits of victory in the form of individual and political freedom and an opportunity to lead reasonable lives.

The cementing of this unity among the American Republics is an essential factor toward the achievement of the goal we are seeking. They are making their contribution and I wish to take this opportunity to say that the Government and people of Mexico have won the admiration of my countrymen by the manner in which they are meeting their responsibilities in these fateful days. It is one of the best auguries of the future that

Mexico

Mexico and the United States should be collaborating in every field with each other and with the Americas so fully.

The problems of the peace after the victory is achieved may, in some respects, be even greater than those of the war. This time it will be the responsibility for the democracies to assure themselves with the appropriate means that their peace and security will not again be threatened as they are now. In the problems of the post-war period the Americas are prepared, I am sure, to play their part and to assume their responsibilities. As free and sovereign states collaborating in the victory they will be prepared for the leadership in a post-war world of free and sovereign states cooperating mutually with each other.