

UNITED NATIONS
Department of Public Information
Press and Publications Bureau
Lake Success, New York

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FOURTH REGULAR SESSION
18th Plenary Meeting

Press Release GA/264
24 October 1949

CORNERSTONE OF UN PERMANENT HEADQUARTERS
LAID DURING OPEN AIR ASSEMBLY PLENARY

President Truman Heads Speakers at Dedication Ceremony

Today, the fourth anniversary of the coming into force of the United Nations Charter, the cornerstone of the new Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations was laid by the Secretary-General, Mr. Trygve Lie, at a special plenary meeting of the General Assembly held in the open air on the headquarters site, Manhattan.

The ceremony, presided over by Ambassador Carlos P. Romulo, President of the General Assembly, was performed in the presence of the President of the United States, principal speaker at this plenary meeting, the seven Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, Ambassador Warren R. Austin, Chairman of the Headquarters Advisory Committee of the UN, Mayor William O'Dwyer of New York City, Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York State, Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., donor of the headquarters site, and the assembled delegates of the 59 Member nations.

In all, ten thousand people witnessed the ceremony from the temporary amphitheater in 42nd Street between First Avenue and the East River. Among these were 500 workers engaged in the construction of the building, who had been especially invited by the Secretary-General. Radio, television and press carried the story to millions of others throughout the world.

It was 12:07 p.m. when the President of the Assembly, Ambassador Romulo of the Philippines, called the meeting to order. Beside him on the rostrum were Mr. Trygve Lie, Secretary-General of the UN, and Mr. Andrew Cordier, Executive Assistant to Mr. Lie.

Immediately below them on the speakers' dais were: President Harry S. Truman, Ambassador Warren R. Austin, Governor Thomas E. Dewey, Mayor William O'Dwyer, Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., the seven Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly, (Ambassador M. C. de Freitas-Valle of Brazil, Ambassador Dr. T. F. Tsiang of China, Ambassador Jean Chauvel of France, ^{Foreign Minister} Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan of Pakistan, Foreign Minister Andrei Y. Vyshinsky of the USSR, Sir Hartley Shawcross of the United Kingdom, and Secretary of State Dean Acheson of the United States).

Below the rostrum, which was backed by a large emblem of the United Nations, delegates were seated in alphabetical order as in other meetings of the Assembly.

(more)

The President of the United States, HARRY S. TRUMAN, today's principal speaker, declared that the buildings of the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations, were "the most important buildings in the world," for they were "the center of man's hope for peace and a better life." This was the place where the nations of the world would work together to make that hope a reality.

Mr. TRUMAN declared that the people of the United States were deeply conscious of the honor of having the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations in this country. But they felt it appropriate, too, that the Organization hold meetings from time to time in other countries so that the people of other nations could come to know at first hand the work of the United Nations.

It was fitting, he said, that this ceremony take place on United Nations Day, the fourth anniversary of the day the Charter entered into effect. During the four years of its existence, the United Nations had become a powerful force for promoting peace and friendship among the peoples of the world. The construction of this Headquarters was tangible proof of their faith in the Organization.

The buildings were not, he admitted, a monument to the unanimous agreement of all nations on all things. The controversies dividing the nations were still very deep. But the buildings did signify "one new and important fact"--"that the people of the world are of one mind in their determination to solve their common problems by working together."

Mr. TRUMAN spoke of the progress of the United Nations in human rights, in the economic and social field, in economic development.

He described the work done so far on a detailed program for technical assistance to under-developed areas, and expressed the hope that the Member states--who had voted unanimously in the Economic and Financial Committee--for this "common cause" would remain unanimous "in their determination to raise the standards of living of the less fortunate members of the human family."

The PRESIDENT of the United States also spoke of another problem "of major concern"--the control of atomic energy.

He referred to the plan of control adopted by the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission and "overwhelmingly" approved by the General Assembly on 4 November 1948.

This plan, he said, was a good plan. "It is a plan that can work and, more important, it is a plan that can be effective in accomplishing its purpose. It is the only plan so far developed that will meet the technical requirements of control, make prohibition of atomic weapons effective, and at the same time promote the peaceful development of atomic energy on a cooperative basis."

"We support this plan," Mr. TRUMAN declared, "and will continue to support it unless and until a better and more effective plan is put forward."

(more)

Embassies

manence to

supreme du

Nations "

The laying of this cornerstone was "an act of faith," he said, "that the United Nations will succeed in accomplishing the great tasks for which it was created." But faith without works was not enough. They had to make their devotion to the ideals of the Charter as strong as the steel in the building, with resolution as firm as the rock on which it rests. They had to conduct their affairs foursquare with the Charter, in terms as true as the cornerstone. And if they did these things, said the PRESIDENT of the United States, the United Nations would endure and would bring peace and well-being to mankind.

Ambassador ROMULO had begun his opening address by declaring that America has given much to the United Nations. He recalled that the late President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, "the greatest American of our time," was one of the founding fathers of the Organization and that his concept of the Four Freedoms defined in terms of mankind's need for indivisible unity, the basic human aspirations now embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

He referred to the decision to build the permanent headquarters in the United States and paid tribute to the United States Congress, which, "in one of the most heartening evidences of its bi-partisan policy in support of the United Nations" granted a loan without interest for the construction of the permanent headquarters on a site generously donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

The United States Government, he said, "by this symbolic act of giving the United Nations a permanent home on American soil, yielded a bit of its sovereignty to the world organization. This ground, a part of America, now belongs to the world. It is dedicated ground."

Referring to the fact that copies of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were to be encased in the cornerstone, Ambassador ROMULO said that one could wish that other documents, "hardly less historic and universal in their appeal might receive the same reverential treatment." He referred, he said, to the resolutions of the General Assembly calling for the control of atomic energy, the prohibition of atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; to its resolution condemning all forms of propaganda for a new war; and to its resolution appealing to the Great Powers to renew their efforts to compose their differences and establish a lasting peace.

These solemn declarations, he declared, bespoke humanity's insatiable yearning for peace. "I make them again today on behalf of all the plain and humble people of all lands, and pray that their voice may be heard before it is too late."

Declaring that "goodwill is the real cornerstone of the United Nations," Ambassador ROMULO emphasized that steel and stone alone could not give permanence to the home of the United Nations. We shall have failed in our supreme duty to mankind if we do not make the permanent home of the United

After recalling President Abraham Lincoln's words at the time of the American Civil War -- "We are not enemies, but friends; we must not be enemies," Ambassador ROMULO said these words have a timely significance today. "War has become a luxury we can no longer afford, and peace a necessity we cannot do without." He concluded by declaring that "the United Nations is the last sacred temple for the rediscovery of human brotherhood. We must remain at peace with one another -- or die."

The Assembly President then called upon Ambassador Warren R. Austin (US), Chairman of the Headquarters Advisory Committee to address the Assembly.

Ambassador WARREN R. AUSTIN first stressed two points which he said added to an understanding of the achievement marked by today's ceremony. First, that men and women of goodwill have demonstrated their interest in the United Nations by very substantial acts of generosity; second, that "this home-building enterprise" has been carried out by remarkable unanimity among the Members of the UN. He paid tribute also to the magnificent benevolence" of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in donating the site.

Speaking of the new headquarters, which he called "a unique house of the nations", Ambassador AUSTIN pointed out that it had more windowed surface than any other building in New York. Both the east and west are open to the light, "a happy symbolism of the hopes of peace-loving people everywhere," he observed.

"As we dedicate the cornerstone on this anniversary," concluded Ambassador AUSTIN, "we re-dedicate ourselves to the high purposes for which these buildings are erected. We realize that in order to achieve these purposes, men of good will must continue to demonstrate their confidence, and continue to harmonize their differing views in the search for universal accord."

Mayor WILLIAM O'DWYER began by declaring he was proud to be Mayor of the City of New York at a time when a great building was being dedicated to a great purpose. "No event of greater importance has ever happened in the history of our City than its selection as the permanent home of the United Nations," Mayor O'DWYER declared.

The experience of New York, he said, citing the varied nature of its people, their origin and culture, had shown that the basic unity of human beings, the basic likeness of human beings, was more vital than their differences.

The differences which exist among the various nations and races of the world have always been over-emphasized, Mr. O'DWYER observed. "The base upon which all nations rest and depend is the human being. He is common to all nations. His basic needs, ambitions, joys and hopes are the same the world over."

(more)

In another passage the MAYOR declared: "We are not impatient with the United Nations because it has failed immediately to solve all the problems of the world. We know that progress is a slow process. We know that the chosen representatives of the nations must devote their hearts and minds to the task of bringing the human family together."

Mayor O'Dwyer concluded with the fervent wish that the efforts of the United Nations be crowned with success, and that it grow into an enduring establishment for world peace and security.

US), The next speaker, THOMAS E. DEWEY, Governor of New York State, said that it was important that the United Nations be in New York, the "fairest meeting ground for all the associations, the views and the aspirations of all the peoples of the world."

Governor DEWEY paid particular tribute to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. a "great and good man whose generosity and quick action saved the United Nations for New York and New York for the United Nations." He also praised the work of United Nations delegates and staff "for their labors in our common cause." The people of every nation, he said, owed them gratitude "for the measure of peace to the extent we now enjoy it."

"From a fragile beginning, through perilous tests the United Nations has weathered every storm," Governor DEWEY concluded. "It is stronger today than ever before."

Now came the moment for the actual laying of the cornerstone. Escorted by Wallace K. Harrison, Director of Planning, the SECRETARY-GENERAL, MR. TRYGVE LIE, left the rostrum and mounted to where the south side of the permanent buildings will stand and where, some 25 feet above the present street level, the two-ton cornerstone of New Hampshire granite hung suspended from a crane.

Mr. LIE dedicated the cornerstone and placed into a metal container an exact copy of the original Charter of the United Nations, as signed at San Francisco, a true copy of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a copy of the program of today's ceremony.

He said it was with "a profound sense of the historic significance of this occasion" that he dedicated the cornerstone and, in the name of the peoples of the United Nations, placed for deposit in it copies of the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"May the United Nations Charter be the foundation for as strong and true a structure of world peace as the building that rises high above us here today," he declared.

He then gave the signal for the lowering of the specially cut cornerstone into place so that it encased the steel container in which the documents had been deposited.

Mr. LIE then voiced his gratitude to all those whose devotion to the United Nations had made it possible to proceed so far with the Permanent

(more)

Headquarters. He mentioned in particular Mr. Wallace K. Harrison, the Director of Planning; the building workers; the contractors; the city officials; Mr. Rockefeller; Ambassador Austin and the members of the Headquarters Advisory Committee; Mayor O'Dwyer and Governor Dewey. To President Truman he expressed special thanks for the many things that the United States, as host country, had done for the United Nations.

Mr. LIE declared that he believed profoundly that only the success of the United Nations could prevent a third world war and achieve a lasting peace.

"The United Nations has not yet succeeded; nor has it failed," he declared. "It is an unfinished structure. Many years will be needed to complete it... We shall have peace in proportion to the amount of hard work and strong faith the peoples of the world give to making the UN work."

Every day in the year must be a United Nations day, Mr. LIE stated in conclusion, until the peace of the world is made secure.

The Secretary-General, accompanied by Mr. Harrison, then returned to the rostrum and the President of the Assembly declared the meeting adjourned.

At 1:05 P.M. the plenary meeting and the cornerstone ceremony were completed.

#