

Pearl S. Buck
Pottsville, Pa.
U.S.A. 3

January 16, 1948

Mr. Joaquín Edwards-Bello
La Nación
Santiago, Chile

Dear Mr. Edwards-Bello:

As you may know I have, together with Gabriela Mistral, Sigrid Undset, Alfonso Reyes, Sanin Cano, Maurias, Steward Merriot and other friends, started a campaign for the adoption of an international treaty for the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, meaning the destruction of national, religious, racial and other human groups. The concept of genocide envisages the human group as an organic living entity with body and soul. The draft treaty on genocide which the Secretary General of the United Nations has circulated among governments aims at the protection of human groups from physical, biological and cultural destruction. The concept of genocide goes to the very roots of international and inter-group relations and tries to make the world safe for a diversity of races, cultures and creeds.

Many distinguished world leaders have already joined our campaign which found its expression in an appeal addressed to the General Assembly of the UN urging the adoption of a convention on the crime of genocide. The response from Latin-American countries was most heartening. Presidents of Parliaments, writers and great jurists of many Latin-American countries joined us in signing this appeal. This did not come as a surprise to me, as I am aware of the warm humanitarian spirit and great intellectual generosity of the Latin American peoples. The delegations of all Latin American countries at the UN supported our action and I wish to express, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, my deepest appreciation of this generous attitude.

However, our appeal reached the Assembly too late to achieve immediate results. Under these circumstances, the draft treaty on genocide was referred by the General Assembly to the Economic and Social Council for submission of a final draft to the next General Assembly.

In February, the Economic and Social Council will meet at Lake Success and will start debate on genocide. However, we need more support and especially leadership in the Council on this issue. The basic resolution on genocide of December 11, 1946 which called for a genocide convention is considered largely a Latin American achievement, since it was sponsored at that Assembly by Cuba, Panama, with India joining in. Therefore, and because of the continued interest by the Latin American countries, I hope the Latin American members of the Economic and Social Council will be willing to assume leadership in furthering this cause.

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