

SPEECH DELIVERED

BY THE

Hon. RAFAEL MARTINEZ NADAL

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

OF

PUERTO RICO

ON OCCASSION OF THE CELEBRATION

OF THE

4th OF JULY, 1933

## SPEECH OF THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1933

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Our Nation celebrates today the 157th anniversary of its Independence and of its having joined the international concert of civilized countries of the World, in the midst of the great uncertainty and unrest caused by the world depression and by the conflict of interests which fill with worry and bitterness the human soul because of the delay and uncertainty in finding a satisfactory solution, and a means of escape from this economic labyrinth and return to normalcy and behold again the quiet, happy and prosperous days of yesteryear.

We have before us the dramatic spectacle of revolutionary world happenings all with opposite political tendencies born out of hysteria and paroxysm caused by a desperate condition of wretchedness and misery to which the economic system of several nations had been driven by the aftermath of the World War.

In Russia, for instance, the people have given themselves up to Bolshevism, the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, under the iron fist of the relentless Stalin; in other countries, as in Italy and Germany they have placed their fate in the rigid hands of steel of Mussolini and Hitler. Dictatorships, they are. Born perhaps of different origin and with different aims, but all equal in their attainments and alike in their methods of curtailing personal liberty and stifling the freedom of the people as a whole. Dictatorships upheld by the bayonets of the Red Army, of the Steel Helmets, of the Fascist Militia.

The tragedy in which the people of these countries live should serve as a warning to the people of the other countries, to the people of our Nation who wish to preserve untarnished the pure traditions of democracy and the allegiance due to the sovereignty of the will of the people.

It is the duty of every American citizen to be on guard and zealously protect the magnificent civic legacy handed down to us by the noble, brave,

and heroic fathers of our country who, after long years of struggle, and dipping their pens in the blood of generous Sons of the Revolution that died on the battlefield, wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Let the immortal names of Washington and Jefferson live forever in our hearts, and also the memory of their self-denials and heroic lives, the example of their efforts, their devotion to the cause of the people and to their country, and the consideration and moral gentility of their thoughts and deeds.

We must per force defend the spiritual and political inheritance bequeathed to us by these illustrious men, and now during these painful and tragic days when people in despair offer fruitful field for sowing the seed of violence and anarchy, it becomes more imperative than ever before that we conscientiously submit to economic privation and to gather around our national and insular leaders in authority and help them nobly and whole-heartedly to solve our economic difficulties, to be just and humane to the people and provide a lenitive to the grief of the people that will relieve their minds, troubled by their wretched condition, and that will at the same time turn them into the staunchest supporters of their leaders and the principles of democracy.

Puerto Rico will do her duty at this time as she has always done when faced by grave crises in the past and with her mind set upon the wisdom of the Almighty, she has faith in her future destiny, a firm hope in the wisdom and justice, soundness of judgment, forcefulness and integrity of President Roosevelt, a worthy successor to the fathers of the Nation, and she has also great faith in the high moral purpose of Governor Gore and expects that he will be the leader who will help us to return to prosperity, with love and justice for all, and with reverence for the true principles of democracy whose birth we now celebrate.

The people of Puerto Rico through their legitimate and popular representatives will unhesitatingly cooperate in bringing about our financial reconstruction and the upkeeping of democracy because we wish to enjoy for

ever the gifts of liberty, of that liberty which give us the freedom of discussing all public policies and all political, economic, and social ideals, no matter how disagreeable the former may be to the Administration, and how antagonistic the latter may be to the fundamental principles of the Government.

It is the ambition of Puerto Rico to participate fully in the dignity of either her American citizenship as a State of the Union or of her own sovereignty in the international concert of nations.

It is on these two issues that public opinion is divided in the island as regards the final solution of our political status with a great majority of the people advocating Statehood.

What Puerto Rico haughtily rejects is the idea of being indefinitely kept in a state of servitude as a colony which degrades us and lessens the prestige of the democratic traditions of the United States of America.

But for all our future achievements we must be sincere and above all, we must be faithful to our principles and ideals.

Those who take sides for either of these two issues must be loyal without equivocation or mental reservation because the standard set up by those who falsely pretend to love our Nation, solely for purpose of personal gain, influence and social standing, while they really are discontented with the Nation and its institutions in our island, is neither honorable nor edifying.

Man's greatest virtue is to be loyal without mental reservation when he promises under oath to be faithful, and to renounce everything in a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial to defend his ideal for his country and for its people.

We must all be ready to give willingly whatever may be required of us to give in order to attain the happiness of our people and of our Nation which will soon emerge from the economic nightmare in which we now live, thanks to the ability and integrity of the great national leader, His Excellency, Franklin Delano Roosevelt in whose strong and able hands is our future destiny.

All our legislators will cooperate with Governor Gore, the poor people

and the laborers will give him their good will and moral support, men of all professions and financiers will help him with advice, and those who are rich should not hamper him in his generous efforts, because if Lincoln went down through martyrdom and gave his blood for the abolition of slavery, those favored by Fortune can well afford to give a few dollars, which is far less than giving life and blood, to attain a little comfort for those who in Puerto Rico are the slaves of labor, of sickness, and of misery.

Mr. Governor GORE, as representative of our National Executive, the people of Puerto Rico join you whole-heartedly and with all their love in the celebration of this anniversary of the birth of the freedom of your country which is also our country. We do so without mental reservation of any kind with joy in our hearts and hope in our souls, trusting that the spirit of justice of the people of the United States, as it has already granted us our personal liberty, will also grant us full liberty as a commonwealth giving us Statehood.

Such is the request of the good, honest, hospitable people of Puerto Rico: the descendants of an exalted race, highly and spiritually civilized; with five centuries of civilization, and among whose ancestors is to be found the heroic and romantic conqueror Juan Ponce de León, whose wanderings in search of the Fountain of Eternal Youth took him to your beloved State of Florida.

If you will help us to achieve our goal which to us means honor, uprightness and liberty, just as in Florida is revered through the years the memory of Juan Ponce de León, so also our great-grand-children will reverence yours in Puerto Rico, with love, gratitude and admiration.

We hope that good times for the United States and for Puerto Rico are near at hand, and that very soon our days will be bright again with happiness and prosperity and the great principles of democracy as they were gloriously conceived in the mind of Thomas Jefferson and ably set down by his hand, shall have survived.

God save the Nation and God save Puerto Rico.