

ICAO TAKES FLIGHT AT THE CHICAGO CONFERENCE

"As we begin to write a new chapter in the fundamental law of the air, let us all remember that we are engaged in a great attempt to build enduring institutions of peace.

"These peace settlements cannot be endangered by petty considerations or weakened by groundless fears. Rather, with full recognition of the sovereignty and judicial equality of all nations, let us work together so that the air may be used by humanity, to serve humanity."

*President Franklin D. Roosevelt
In a message to the
Opening Plenary Session
of the Chicago Conference*

It is early September, 1944. World War II is still raging and fighter planes and bombers rule the skies. In Washington, D.C. and at the express request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an urgent invitation is delivered to 55 governments. All are members of the United Nations*, countries associ-

* The name "United Nations" was adopted during World War II to denote the nations allied in opposition to the so-called Axis powers. The term was first used in 1942.

ated with the UN during the War, or European and Asiatic neutral nations.

It is to attend an international aviation Conference dedicated, not as might be expected to the mechanisms of war. But rather to the peace that will inevitably follow and the future role that civil aviation will play once the skies are free again.

All but three accept. And on a sunny, late autumn day, some 700 participants check into the Stevens Hotel in Chicago, the "Windy City". Facing Lake Michigan, it becomes immediately obvious that it is hardly the most idyllic of settings for such a distinguished gathering of senior government representatives. A gathering that is to become forever known in the world of civil aviation as the Chicago Conference.

For while one of the city's grandest hotels, it is already aging and frayed around the edges. Accommodations are not as commodious as expected. Nor is it the type of accommodation that will compensate for the intensities, fatigue and frustrations of what turns out to be a

super-charged 37-day conference, as opposed to the 25 days originally planned.

If there is a single precept, a single conceptual talisman, that is the key to ICAO's past successes and future prospects, it is that the Organization has retained its technical orientation. It has eschewed political intrusions and pressures at every turn.

Each Council President and every elected Council has acknowledged the validity of this precept and has coveted this proven approach to success.

Diplomatic storm clouds also hover over the Conference. For example, a delegation of six Soviet officials reach Winnipeg en route to Chicago, only to be summoned back to Moscow. An official announcement from the Soviet Union states only that the action is taken because three participating countries "have for many years maintained an inimical pro-fascist policy toward the Soviet Union."

"This is the first post-war functional organization of the United Nations to get underway."

*Mr. C.D. Howe
Canadian Minister of
Reconstruction, later to be
known as "the father of Canada's
wartime and post-war aircraft
industry", officially welcoming
Interim Council to Canada
August 15, 1945*

It is now midway through the Conference. Partisan delegates appear to be hopelessly deadlocked on air-transport economic issues, particularly regarding the extent of multilateral governmental control to be exercised over routes, rates, fares and frequencies. Frustration sets in