

26th September, 1949

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

WORKING PARTY 10

Remarks by the representative of Czechoslovakia on the Draft  
Memorandum on Tariff Negotiations (GATT/CP3/WP10/4 Rev.1)

The Draft Memorandum on Tariff Negotiations, in Section IV "Timetable for the Negotiations", paragraph 1, requires each participating government to send to each other participating government, as well as to the Secretariat, before November 22nd, 1949, copies of its customs tariff and of its annual trade statistics for postwar years and for the years 1936, 1937 and 1938. In this way each government should be informed about customs duties, past and present, on goods exported to the country with which it intends to negotiate for tariff concessions. This provision is intended to assist each country in determining the kinds of goods on which it intends to request concessions (in accordance with Section IV, para.2) and also to provide a basis for the calculations provided for in Section III, para.1(b), and para.3. For these purposes, however, these provisions are insufficient for the following reasons:

- (a) The statistics of foreign trade of very few countries are compiled in relation to their customs tariffs. Usually it cannot be reliably ascertained from these statistics to which customs duties the different statistical items are subject, even if one has both the customs tariff and the statistics of external trade. (These difficulties are encountered even in national customs administrations; the task being often impossible without consulting explanatory notes to the customs tariff. These difficulties are even greater when dealing with foreign customs tariffs).
- (b) Many countries are publishing their annual import surveys by statistical items but not by countries of origin, though we may assume that they have this classification for their own use. Some countries do publish the import details classified according to the exporting countries, but the further classification is made only by whole categories of goods not by statistical items. In both cases the compiling of a complete list of imported goods from one country, according to the statistical items, on the basis of the above mentioned documents, is very difficult and inaccurate: difficult - because we have to extract from all statistical items the data relating to the exporting country concerned, inaccurate - because many smaller imports are usually comprised under the heading "Other countries".
- (c) Some customs tariffs contain only general (autonomous) rates but no conventional rates. There are customs tariffs so complicated that without special instructions - which generally do not accompany the tariffs - it is impossible to calculate the actual customs duties for the different items.
- (d) The texts of many statistical and customs publications

in original languages, without translations into one of the world languages, are intelligible in other countries only to a very few experts who are charged with preparatory work for the negotiations during the conference. This makes the whole work very slow and difficult.

All these difficulties could be avoided if each participating government were obliged to submit on request to any other participating country a detailed extract from its import statistics. In order that this extract could be used not only for the analysis necessary to the choice of items and concessions required but for the calculations provided for in Section III of the Memorandum. It should contain for each statistical item also the data required in the annexed draft.

Ad column 3. The item of the international (Geneva) classification corresponding to a certain statistical item is well known to the Statistical Office of the country concerned, but it is difficult to ascertain it in a foreign country. It is necessary to know the item of the international classification as it helps to classify each statistical item into the whole system of classification according to the use which would be made of the particular commodity (e.g. raw material for industry, foodstuffs, consumer goods, manufactured goods for investments, etc.). It can be assumed that for the calculations of concessions provided for, but not yet exactly determined, (Section III, para.1(b)) and for the calculations of the tariff incidence (Section III, para.3) it would be necessary to distinguish between the assessment of duties on raw materials and on manufactured goods.

Ad column 4. The description of goods in English or French languages would greatly facilitate the preparatory work for negotiations with countries using in their publications less known languages.

The information about the rate of exchange of the USA dollar in the years 1937, 1946, 1947, 1948 and 1949 is very useful in examining the customs duties and the tariff incidence in the cases where there are specific duties. This point would be very important during the next conference as so many countries have recently devalued their currencies.

The government requesting from each other participating government the extracts as described above would have to ask for them before November 22nd, 1949 - the date fixed in Section IV for despatching the publications. The other government should send back the established lists, according to this suggestion, not later than January 1st, 1950, as each participating and acceding government is bound to despatch its lists of requests before January 15th, 1950.

The preparation of such extracts should be considered an obligation for each participating and acceding government (even for a later date, e.g. July 1st, 1950). In this way valuable material would be gathered for the valuation of the actual lowering of the whole level of customs duties attained at the Geneva and Annecy conferences, and as a basis for the similar valuation for the next conference beginning in September, 1950.

