

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND EMPLOYMENT
Department of Public Information
Havana, Cuba

HOLD FOR RELEASE

Press Release ITC/218
23 March 1948

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF EL SALVADOR

Mr. President:

I must begin these few remarks with a reference to the hospitality of the Cuban people. I am swayed by two feelings: one springs from the fact that I am a Salvadorian and a guest of this courteous, beautiful and rhythmic city, the other from the fact that I am a Latin American. The first feeling is one of gratitude, deep gratitude to the Government, the delegation and this brilliant people of Cuba, of this happy country whose noble and generous spirit has given the name of Latin America so high a place among the nations and has so well deserved the place it has conquered in the hearts of you all.

It would be unjust if I failed to extend my gratitude as a Salvadorian and my pride as a Latin American to you, Mr. President, for what you have done, and also to the magnificent work of the Cuban Press and the distinguished journalists who write and edit it. I have been deeply moved to find that Martí and Maceo, two great men who are an honour to humanity, are genuinely representative of this magnificent people. Cuba is worthy of them as they are worthy of Cuba, and all are an honour to Latin America.

Mr. President, I do not know how to express these sentiments. It would give me pleasure if you would accept as my modest tribute to your great country the efforts made by my delegation to ensure that the language of Martí should be included among the working languages of this Conference.

I belong to a small country whose conduct is inspired by the simple and profound saying of that great Mexican, Benito Juárez, distinguished son of the Americas. "Peace is to respect the rights of others."

It was for this reason that, together with the other Latin American delegations, we did our best to see that the principles of the Charter were equitable and recognized fully the equality of all nations whatever their size and importance.

It was not any selfish feeling which impelled us to uphold the thesis that, in order to achieve the objectives which this Charter set itself, it is of fundamental importance to apply ourselves to finding a solution of the problems implicit in the need to develop those wide regions of the world which do not yet fully benefit from the achievement of mankind. It was not only economic history which afforded us arguments in support of this thesis. Statistics also provided us with irrefutable data proving that the volume of trade is an effect rather than a cause of a country's economic development. Thus, during the debates we pointed out that in 1938 for example, the external

/trade

trade of Belgium and Luxemburg reached \$1,325,000,000, notwithstanding its population of only 6,700,000 inhabitants, while on the other hand, the trade of China, excluding trade with Manchuria, was hardly \$450,000,000, although the population of China in the same year reached 450,000,000 inhabitants.

Nevertheless our attitude was never at any time rigid or narrow. We never under-estimated the importance of eliminating the unnecessary, unjustifiable and often one-sided barriers which have prejudiced trade and damaged the potential economic expansion of the world. What we sought was that in trying to eliminate trade barriers we did not go so far that we set barriers in the way of the economic development of the nations. It was for this reason that we enthusiastically and sincerely joined in the campaign of the delegations of Latin America and the other under-developed countries on behalf of those interests which for reasons made clear were also the interests of mankind. No region has a greater interest than Central America in the economic development of all countries and in reasonable freedom for world trade.

Our geographical position is a privileged one. We are the bridge joining the continental masses of America. Through our territory there already runs a canal linking the two great oceans, and natural conditions are suitable for the relatively easy construction of another canal greater than the existing one. The reconstruction of Europe and the development of West Africa on the Atlantic side, the development of the Far East, Australia, New Zealand and the other islands of the Pacific on the other, we regard with lively interest, for it would bring about an immense volume of trade, and the logical route from ocean to ocean of that trade would be via Central America.

For this reason we did our utmost to secure the recognition of our right to grant mutual preferences designed to achieve a political union of the countries making up Central America. Historical circumstances have kept us apart, and a series of obstacles have arisen to prevent our developing to the extent we would wish. A union of Central America will create conditions in which our countries, organized in a single body, can play that historic role in world trade, which is marked out for them by their privileged geographical position.

This privileged position is a kind of symbol for our slogan: everything for world trade through the economic development of the nations of the world.

Mr. President and Gentlemen: Our ardent defence of Central America's right to preferences, a right fully in accordance with the objectives of the Charter, was not intransigent.

We withdraw the amendment we proposed to Article 16, as a fourth exception to paragraph 1, in order to co-operate in securing the successful conclusion of this Conference. We agree with the amendments made to Article 15 and

/Article 42

Article 42 and in particular we welcome the inclusion of the Central American-Ottoman clause in paragraph 6 (d) of Article 15.

We did this because we were anxious not to weaken in any way the principle established in the Charter directed against preferences prejudicial to the expansion of trade, a principle which many countries have championed and from which the world expects great results. We tried - and I am pleased that, thanks to your competence, gentlemen, we largely succeeded in doing so - to reconcile our right to preferential systems in Central America, systems not prejudicial to world trade and of great advantage to our development, with the rights of every country to which we hope at a not too distant date the most-favoured-nation clause will be extended and fully accepted.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I should like to pay a tribute to the democratic attitude of the great powers represented here, and especially of the United States, which has made possible the astonishing spectacle of a tiny country like the one I represent debating on equal terms with the great powers and even having the opportunity of occupying a post of such great importance as that which, thanks to your generosity, my country occupies on the provisional Executive Board of this Organization.

I take this opportunity of expressing my most profound gratitude, on behalf of my country, my government and myself, for this great distinction and also of saying how impressed I am by the extent to which democratic ideas have grown. It only remains for me to withdraw the two or three reservations maintained by my delegation, and to say that I find the compromise we have achieved a satisfactory one, more particularly because the spirit of the discussions which led up to it is favourable to the development of the under-developed countries and has found a place in all the working documents. Thank you, Mr. President.
