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# The creation *of the United Nations* and ECLAC

Hernán Santa Cruz

## I

### The birth and first infant steps of the United Nations Organization

When the countries which fought in the 1914-1918 war—considered at that time to be the most brutal conflict in human history—signed the Versailles peace accords, it was said that nothing like it could ever happen again. Seventeen years later, however, a second world war broke out which was truly universal and ten times bloodier than its predecessor.

What had gone wrong to allow this to happen? Winston Churchill, who took part in both conflicts and was one of the architects of the Allied victory, said very rightly that the Second World War took place because of the lunacy of the victors of the First World War.<sup>1</sup>

□ As part of the aim of reviewing the main changes which have taken place since the establishment of the United Nations, and especially of ECLAC, the distinguished Chilean diplomat Hernán Santa Cruz, who personally participated in the creation of these institutions, was invited to contribute this retrospective analysis.

<sup>1</sup> In reality, the Second World War consisted of three conflicts which later merged into a single one: the war by Japan against China, which began in 1931 with the surprise invasion of Manchuria, subsequently spreading to the whole of Southeast Asia and Oceania and culminating with Japan's attack on the United

In the face of this apocalyptic situation, the leaders of the Western democracies—one of which, France, had already been temporarily defeated—began as from 1941 to mobilize the nations which were opposed to the Nazi and Japanese aggression with a view to making plans and adopting measures to establish an international order, once the war was over, that would ensure that all the peoples of the earth could live in dignity and prosperity.

In January of that year, in an address to Congress, the President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, set forth the doctrine of the "Four Freedoms" for which the world should strive: "freedom of speech and expression, ... freedom of every

States, at Pearl Harbor; the ruthless conquest of Ethiopia by Mussolini; and the crazy actions of Adolf Hitler, who invaded Poland after having annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia before the indifferent gaze of the rest of the world, proceeded to attack Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, the Balkans, Finland and the Soviet Union—thus obliging France and the United Kingdom to take up arms in defence of their countries— and allied himself with Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. The three wars thus merged into one, with slight variations in the participants. When the Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan was formed, the last-named country launched an underhand attack on the United States fleet at Pearl Harbor.

person to worship God in his own way, ... freedom from want, ... and freedom from fear ... -everywhere in the world". In August of the same year, President Roosevelt and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, formulated a joint declaration known as the Atlantic Charter, which laid down a number of principles and policies to be put into effect when peace was achieved, so that the peoples of the world could live "free from fear and want". These concepts included -in their broad lines- those that were to be incorporated four years later in the Charter of the United Nations. Five months later, 26 nations -including eight from Central America and the Caribbean- signed a declaration which was to have momentous consequences: the Declaration of the United Nations (thus named at the suggestion of President Roosevelt). This Declaration endorsed the contents of the Atlantic Charter and affirmed the signatories' opposition to the aggression of the Axis. In the course of the period from 10 January 1942, when the Declaration was signed, and the San Francisco Conference, a further 26 States adhered to it, including all the South American countries except Argentina.<sup>2</sup> Chile signed in February 1945.

In October 1943, at Moscow, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union took a more concrete step towards the establishment of a world-wide system of security and cooperation when they adopted the General Security Declaration, whereby they undertook to continue their joint action to organize and maintain peace.

The next step was the Dumbarton Oaks talks, held near Washington, D. C., in which the participants were the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and China. The first two countries had prepared detailed proposals for "the establishment of a General International Organization". These proposals were sent to all the countries which had signed the Declaration of the United Nations and were also sent to the conference on the problems of war and peace held at Chapultepec, Mexico, with the participation of the member nations of the Pan-American Union. This conference was called the Inter-American Conference on War and Peace, and was held from 21 February to 8 March 1945, a few weeks before the San Francisco Conference.

<sup>2</sup> Argentina adhered to the group in the first few days of the Conference.

Problems had already arisen in the preparation of the agenda for the Chapultepec Conference. The United States was extremely interested in reaching agreement with its neighbours on their more active cooperation to end the war. It did not want the Dumbarton Oaks proposals to be debated in depth, because the Yalta Conference between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin had just ended, and the agreements on the veto and other matters concerning the future world organization were kept secret because they might upset the United States' neighbours to the south. The United States was also against the entry of Argentina into the United Nations because it considered it to be a "fascist nation". The Latin American countries favoured its admission, however, on the grounds of universality and because they felt that the reasons put forward by the United States represented interference in Argentina's internal affairs.

During the Conference, the Latin American representatives set forth in writing the main aspects of their concept of international relations.

Furthermore, in the Final Act they included resolution XXX, in which they expressly set forth the general points of view which they wanted to be taken into account at San Francisco and which differed in many respects from the Dumbarton Oaks proposals or proposed new provisions.<sup>3</sup>

In resolution XXX the Latin American nations declared that the Dumbarton Oaks proposals constituted a basis and a valuable contribution for the establishment of the General Organization, but they asked that the World Conference should take account of their views. In other agreements, the Conference reaffirmed the principles of the Atlantic Charter and stressed the importance of freedom to transmit and receive information and of the cooperation of women in international meetings.

<sup>3</sup> The main points in this respect were: a) the desire for universality; b) the need to expand and specify the list of the purposes and principles of the Organization; c) the need to expand and specify the faculties of the General Assembly and harmonize them with the faculties of the Security Council; d) the need to expand the jurisdiction and competence of the International Court of Justice; e) the need to set up an international body specially entrusted with the task of promoting intellectual and moral cooperation among nations; f) the need to settle controversies and issues of an inter-American nature, in line with those of the Organization; and g) the need that Latin America should be adequately represented on the Security Council.

There still remained an episode of capital importance in the preparations for the great event which was to discuss the creation of the United Nations system, however: the Yalta Conference. The most important agreements reached by the Great Powers at this Conference concerned the creation of the United Nations. It was decided to call a "Conference on World Organization", to be held in the United States beginning on 24 April 1945.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. The San Francisco Conference adopts the United Nations Charter and sets up the World Organization.

On 25 April 1945 the Conference on World Organization, convened by the four great powers, began its work in the city of San Francisco. It was at that time, and still is, the most important congress in history. It gave rise to the United Nations Charter, an international treaty of unprecedented scope and significance, to which 184 nations are now parties.

The nations invited to this great event comprised only the 46 countries which had signed the Declaration of the United Nations or adhered to it.<sup>5</sup>

The San Francisco Conference was therefore not an expression of total universality. The losers in the war were not represented at it, and these countries included not only Germany, Italy and Japan but also Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Albania, while Spain was also placed in this category as it was accused by the United Nations of having favoured the Axis countries.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was anxiously awaited by all as the father of the Allied victory and the main architect of the proposed international order for the post-war period, had died thirteen days earlier from a heart attack when he was preparing to travel to San Francisco. The Conference

was therefore opened by the new President of the United States, Harry Truman, who had little experience in international affairs and whom Roosevelt had not had time to initiate in the details of the complex negotiations on the future peace. Nor had he been informed about the construction of the atomic bomb, which was on the point of completion. Nevertheless, this novice Head of State of the mightiest nation in the world behaved from the very first day with dignity, courage and decision in the actions which led to the end of the war with the surrender of Japan.

Paradoxically, it fell to his lot to bring about that surrender by ordering the nuclear bomb attacks which devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The foregoing factors meant that the delegations were made up of the best statesmen that the participating governments had at their disposal in the political and diplomatic fields. Among them were notable personalities who had distinguished themselves during the war and the years before it: Molotov and Eden, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Stalin and Churchill, respectively; Paul-Henri Spaak, the Prime Minister of Belgium; Jan Masaryk, the Chancellor of Czechoslovakia; Georges Bidault and Alexandre Parodi, two leaders of the French Resistance; Roberto Urdaneta and Alberto Lleras Camargo, both ex-Presidents of Colombia (the latter was President on two occasions and played an outstanding role at San Francisco); Camilo Ponce, who was to be President of Ecuador in the 1950s; Dimitri Manuilski of the Ukraine, a veteran of the October Revolution and a former head of the Comintern; Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar from India, a member of Churchill's War Cabinet and brilliant Chairman of the Committee responsible for economic and social matters at the Conference; Edward Stettinius, Roosevelt's last Secretary of State, and Cordell Hull, who had also occupied that post for a long time during the Roosevelt administration; Senators Vandenberg and Connally, respectively leaders of the minority and the majority in the

<sup>4</sup> Agreement was also reached on the voting mechanism to be used in the Security Council: namely, that substantive decisions of the Council must be approved by five of the eleven permanent members: the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, China and France. It was also decided to uphold at the World Conference the right of the Soviet Republics of the Ukraine and Byelorussia to be admitted as members of the United Nations.

<sup>5</sup> The Conference itself decided to admit four more countries: Argentina, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, as a result of the Yalta agreements, and Denmark, after its liberation from Nazi occupation. Thus, a total of 50 States participated in the San Francisco Conference.

<sup>6</sup> Most of the Third World nations were not represented either. Thus, in the case of Africa, which now has a large number of sovereign nations, the only participants were Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa, and the last-named country could hardly be considered as a member of the Third World at that time. Asia and the Far East were represented only by India (which had not at that time been granted independence and included the present nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh), China and the Philippines. Proportionately, the Middle East was better off, as it was represented by Iran, Iraq, the Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

United States Senate and architects of that country's two-party international policy; Sir Alexander Cadoogan, Churchill's Under-Secretary of Foreign Affairs and a participant in all the preparatory meetings, including Yalta; and a host of other illustrious personalities.

Latin America attached such importance to this Conference that of its 20 delegations 17 were headed by Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The delegation of my own country included, in addition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a number of notable politicians and parliamentarians, among them Gabriel González Videla, who was elected President of the Republic a few months later.<sup>7</sup>

The general climate prevailing at the meetings was exceptionally constructive, bearing in mind the final results. Although the Dumbarton Oaks proposals, which formed the basic documents for the Yalta discussions and political agreements, were respected, the Conference amended some of the proposals of its four sponsors.

On the initiative of the developing countries –Latin American for the most part– the Charter expanded and extended the objectives of the United Nations in the economic, social and human rights spheres.

Thus, for example, the Dumbarton Oaks proposals did not include among the "Purposes and Principles of the United Nations" the present paragraph 3 of article 1 of the Charter, which says:

"To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

With regard to economic and social cooperation, the Charter also included among its objectives "the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations" and the promotion of "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development".

The exceptional importance which the Charter attaches to these responsibilities is further accentuated through the institutional change which it introduced. It gave the Economic and Social Council the rank of a main organ of the United Nations –whereas the Dumbarton Oaks proposals only gave it the status of a subsidiary body of the General Assembly– and entrusted it with "Responsibility for the discharge of the functions of the Organization" in the areas in question, under the authority of the General Assembly.

The United Nations Charter was unanimously approved by the participants in the Conference on 26 June 1945, and it came into force on 24 October of the same year, after ratification by the member States.

The Latin American nations maintained progressive positions and did not seek advantages that would serve the special interests of any particular State. In the beginning, they did not seem to be very keenly aware of the geopolitical realities existing at the end of the war, when the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom were already far from coinciding in their interests and were united only by the desire to keep the peace. The Latin American countries, for their part, desired a world order in which there would be strong cooperation in the political and economic fields, within a context of the strictest respect for the principles of equality, non-intervention, freedom of decisions, solidarity and fraternity and other principles which they considered to have been incorporated in international law, which they had helped to improve and sought to strengthen. Thus, when discussing the question of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, the Chilean representative, Gabriel González Videla, said that "since the appearance of the Nazi and fascist systems, it had become necessary to reduce what had traditionally been called the domestic jurisdiction of States, and there were now problems of an internal nature which should be investigated by the World Organization, such as violations of the fundamental freedoms of mankind which tend to endanger the peace of nations".

The majority of the delegations therefore agreed that it was preferable to seek the best Charter that could be achieved under the prevailing circumstances without running the risk of causing the breakdown of the system it was desired to create. Consequently, the system of the veto in the Security Council was ac-

<sup>7</sup> The members of the delegation were Joaquín Fernández, Marcial Mora, Miguel Cruchaga, José Maza, Gabriel González Videla, Carlos Contreras Labarca, Eduardo Cruz-Coke, Félix Nieto del Río, Amílcar Chiorrini, Enrique Alcalde, Guillermo del Pedregal, Oscar Gailardo Villarroel, Germán Vergara Donoso and Julio Escudero.

cepted on the terms agreed at Yalta. The efforts to secure acceptance of the principle that the veto should not be operative in decisions on the peaceful settlement of disputes, in amendments to the Charter, and in the struggle for the effective application of the concept of the self-determination of peoples, by creating mechanisms which really did ensure the independence of former colonies, were defeated. In this respect, the agreement among the big powers demanded by Churchill, to which reference has already been made, proved to be too strong to be overcome. Nor were the Latin American countries successful in their proposals for an explicit definition of the term "aggression" and acceptance of the obligatory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

Nevertheless, the Latin American countries did secure some important triumphs. Perhaps the most important of these were the substantial changes made, with the active collaboration of other countries, in order to significantly transform the United Nations' role in economic, social and humanitarian cooperation. It is thanks to this that matters of human rights and economic and social development have become priority activities of the organizations in the system.

The fervent desire of the Latin American countries to perfect the Charter in its moral and juridical aspects was only partly fulfilled. Nevertheless, at San Francisco the Latin American nations represented in a worthy and admirable manner the interests of a Third World which was almost entirely absent from the deliberations but later on espoused the causes promoted there.

I believe that the United Nations Charter must be seen as a truly transcendental instrument which contains the most fundamental guidelines that needed to be applied in the new world that was arising after the war in order to do away for ever with the horrifying brutality that cost the lives of vast numbers of human beings.

## 2. The United Nations Charter

The United Nations Charter was set forth at the San Francisco Conference on 21 June 1945, at the end of that meeting, and its Preamble reads as follows:

*We the peoples of the United Nations,  
determined*

"to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has

brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

"to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and

"to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom ...".

The novel element which gives the United Nations Charter its historical value and present validity is that it conceives a world order and makes human beings the centre of its interest and action, in their capacity as individuals, citizens, and members of a race governed by principles of equality, justice and solidarity.

According to the United Nations Charter, international economic and social cooperation is one of the central elements of the World Organization's system. This is clear from the contents of the Preamble, the Purposes and Principles set forth in article 1, and the whole of chapter IX, especially articles 55 and 56.

The United Nations Charter not only extended the concept of security to the prevention of conflicts but also considered it indispensable for the system to promote the creation of favourable conditions for peace which were not limited to those of a political nature.

These texts were drafted in the name of the peoples of the world because they undoubtedly did represent the will of a world which was awakening from a horrible nightmare that had lasted 20 years and did not want to see this repeated in its own lifetime or that of future generations.

The truth of this assertion that the Charter is still fully valid is proved by the fact that the appeals by millions of human beings and hundreds of institutions in the world for an end to the oppression of peoples and individuals are based on the provisions of this instrument and its legitimate offspring: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the agreements signed by governments to respect its terms, and the various conventions adopted by the General Assembly in this field. Likewise, for the past fifty years the proposals put forward by the developing countries, who represent two-thirds of all mankind, have been based on articles 1, 55, 56 and 60 of the Charter.

No-one could claim that these mandates have been completely fulfilled, but fortunately the Copenhagen Social Summit has opened up magnificent avenues for us to ensure that all those efforts made over the last 50 years are indeed respected.

It is interesting to note that the provisions of the Charter on international economic and social cooperation (chapter IX) did much to spell out and reflect the right of under-privileged peoples –two-thirds of all the world's inhabitants– to enjoy a decent life, although this did not form part of the draft Charter approved at Dumbarton Oaks in October 1944 by the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and France.

### 3. The Preparatory Commission

The last decision taken by the San Francisco Conference was to designate a Preparatory Commission for the United Nations Organization, in order to make the necessary provisional arrangements. The Commission worked from 27 June to 26 December 1945, and did an excellent job.

Among its tasks was that of deciding where United Nations Headquarters should be located. Lengthy discussions were needed in order to settle this matter. The curious thing is that the Soviet Union fought to have the Organization installed in the United States, whereas other countries wanted it to be located in some European nation. The matter was settled when John D. Rockefeller offered US\$ 8.5 million in order to buy a site in New York and build the handsome edifice which has housed United Nations Headquarters since 1952.

The Organization began its activities in February 1946. The General Assembly –the main organ of the United Nations– was set up immediately, and held its first session that same year in two periods: January and December. The Economic and Social Council was set up in the latter month and carried out very important work at the two meetings it held in 1946.

### 4. My entry into the activities of the United Nations

*i) The stage and its setting.* My first encounter with the United Nations was in early February 1947. The Organization was operating at a place called Lake Success, over 20 miles from New York, while the construction of the great building that was to

house United Nations Headquarters was awaited. The office of the Chilean delegation was on the 62nd floor of the Empire State Building in New York, which was at that time the tallest building in the world, however. The place where the Organization began its work was a big square single-storey industrial building which had been constructed during the war as an arms factory. However, Lake Success was surrounded by beautiful countryside with a number of sumptuous mansions of pre-war millionaires. The General Assembly, for its part, met in a pretty pavilion at Flushing Meadows.

I took up my duties a few days after arriving in New York and was received by the Secretary-General of the Organization, Trygve Lie, a Socialist who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway and had led his country's delegation to the San Francisco Conference. I was to work with him right up to the end of his term as Secretary-General, which coincided with my term as Ambassador.

*ii) The actors.* At that time the Organization had six Departments, all under the direction of excellent officials. Among them, I should like to make special mention of the Chilean Benjamín Cohen, who had been appointed as Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information. He was a many-sided personality with extraordinary political skills and also an excellent journalist who served for a number of years in that post and left behind him the most agreeable memories. Another official whom I cannot fail to mention was Henri Laugier, the Assistant Secretary-General for Social Affairs, who was one of the most intelligent, imaginative and essentially human men I have ever known. He was a Doctor of Medicine and Professor of Physiology at the Sorbonne, and had been appointed as the first Rector of the University of Algiers during the war. He also led the French delegation to the Conference that set up UNESCO.

Another unforgettable personality was Ralph Bunche, a coloured United States citizen who was one of the most brilliant officials of the United Nations and was finally awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950 for his magnificent work for the Organization: the first time that honour had been given to a coloured man.

*iii) The United Nations and the public.* It is interesting to note that nothing better exemplifies the great hopes aroused by the United Nations all over the world than the attitude taken to it by the American man in the street and the Press, especially in New



York. The leading newspapers and news agencies kept some of their top correspondents at Lake Success and Flushing Meadows, where the General Assembly was meeting. All the newspapers reported on the most important matters discussed by the Organization, and the two most influential newspapers in New York and perhaps in the whole country – the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* – devoted at least half a page to the United Nations and printed the main events of the previous day and the agenda for the current day in a highlighted box. The news agencies, for their part, sent off the full text of the most important speeches or of those dealing with particular countries or regions.

The year I became part of the United Nations' activities was an outstanding year in its existence. The truth is that its great efforts to guide joint action by Eastern and Western Europe to rehabilitate the shattered and overturned continent were only initially successful. The outbreak of the Cold War prevented that objective from being achieved in full. Nevertheless, it was possible to vigorously embark on activities which have been and continue to be among the central concerns of the great majority of mankind. Those early years of the World Organization also witnessed the beginning of the Third World's struggle to secure the fulfillment of the commitments contained in the Charter on economic and social development and the definition of the human rights which the Charter ordered to be respected and protected.

##### **5. The Economic and Social Council in 1947: its value and importance**

When the fourth session of the Economic and Social Council opened, I had the privilege of attending it as my country's representative, thanks to the intervention of the Chilean delegates Germán Vergara and Manuel Bianchi, who had succeeded the previous year in obtaining Chile's inclusion in the Council.

I think it would be of interest to recall what the United Nations Economic and Social Council was in that year, what it represented, and how it was made up. At that time – just as it is today – it was the main world institution responsible for guiding international cooperation to solve the great problems of the new era of peace and create suitable conditions to ensure that it lasted, as conceived by the delegates at San Francisco. Its agenda included the most burning questions of the moment, and the interest of most

governments in giving prestige to its work and real weight to its resolutions was reflected in the high quality of the delegates.

Among the members of the Council, I should like to recall in particular Willard Thorpe, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Social Affairs of the United States, who was one of the most capable, well-rounded, balanced and technically skilled United States delegates I have ever known. There was also Pierre Mendès-France, a highly respected politician of the post-war era, who headed the French delegation. He was Minister of the Economy in De Gaulle's first government. His performance as Prime Minister in 1954 was extraordinarily effective, especially because he became the driving force for peace in Indochina and took the decision to grant Tunisia its independence. He was the first European statesman to understand the importance of promoting the economic and social development of the developing countries.

The head of the United Kingdom delegation was Hector McNeil, Minister of State for Foreign Relations, an outstanding debater who died while still a young man.

I must also mention Professor P. C. Chiang, one of the most picturesque delegates, with the most striking personality, who have ever passed through the United Nations. He was a Professor in the University of Chicago and had represented his country in Chile.

Other notable personalities were Charles Malik of the Lebanon, who became President of the United Nations General Assembly, Paul Martin of Canada, who became Prime Minister of his country, and Walter Nash of New Zealand, who had been a member of Churchill's War Cabinet and who later became Prime Minister of New Zealand.

The Latin American members of the Council, in addition to Chile, were Cuba, Peru and Venezuela. The Cuban delegate, Guillermo Belt, who was an excellent lawyer and diplomat, also headed the Cuban delegation at the San Francisco Conference. Carlos Eduardo Stolk of Venezuela, at 34, was the youngest representative on the Council. The Peruvian delegate, Alberto Arca Parró, was one of his country's most distinguished statesmen: a Doctor of Law of the University of San Marcos and the University of Indiana, highly appreciated as a notable statistician and the efficient author of initiatives in favour of the most under-privileged sectors. He was Presi-

dent of the Senate of his country and was elected Vice-President of Peru in 1962.

Czechoslovakia was at that time living through the last few months of its old regime, and time was running out for Benes and Masaryk. Jan Papanek, who had been trained in the disciplines of political science and international law at Paris and The Hague, was the country's first Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The Soviet Union's delegate was an Armenian, Amazasp Arutiunian: a brilliant and keenly intelligent man.

Presiding over this group of aces of international life and dominating them all with his authority and efficiency was a man with the brain of a computer, a will of steel and a heart of gold: Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar from India. I don't know if it was because I was a beginner in these matters, but this man with the scarlet Brahman caste mark on his forehead who hustled through resolutions with unbelievable speed seemed to me like some fabulous Oriental conjuror. He occupied the Presidency of the Council as of right, after already having been Chairman of the commission at the San Francisco Conference which drafted the chapter of the Charter on economic cooperation. Years later, he came back to the Council and consented to be Vice-President under me and to chair the Economic Committee: clear proof of his sterling simplicity and sense of cooperation.

At this session, the Economic and Social Council concentrated almost all its efforts on the task of dealing with the tremendous problems caused by the war. To this end, it set up the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East. These were the first two institutions

of this kind set up by the United Nations and were designed essentially for reconstruction and rehabilitation, so that they were of a transitional nature.

The Economic Commission for Europe was entrusted to Gunnar Myrdal, a notable sociologist and economist and later the winner of the first Nobel Economics Prize. His appointment was extremely valuable, for his fame as an economist extended even to the Soviet bloc, which was just beginning the Cold War. Myrdal himself said: "this was perhaps the last chance to adopt a decision of this nature", and indeed for several years that Commission was the only United Nations body in which the Socialist countries took part, serving as an economic link between East and West.

I should also like to recall that the Council implemented the terms of article 71 of the Charter, which provided for consultation with non-governmental organizations. For this purpose, it approved a list of organizations enjoying consultative status, divided up into various categories according to their importance. Those in the first category were entitled to take part in the Council's debates, without right of vote, if the Council considered this useful.

Finally, with regard to the first meeting of the Economic and Social Council, my personal feeling was that in view of the select and experienced membership of the Council and the fact that its agenda was somewhat outside my own experience, although I had studied the reports carefully, all I could do was to listen and learn.

I continued in the Economic and Social Council for the next four years and acted as its President in 1950, subsequently acting as a member of the Security Council in 1952.

## II

### The establishment of ECLAC

As I analysed the debates and decisions I witnessed in the Economic and Social Council, this confirmed my impression that, in spite of the palpable tensions that existed, there was a strong desire among the Latin American delegates to take advantage of the possibilities that the United Nations system offered to reconstruct and rehabilitate the vast devastated areas.

It was 1947, and the Cold War had not yet reached its height.

I had come to the Economic and Social Council imbued with the idea of doing something useful for my country and for Latin America, where an economic crisis and social tensions stemming from the world conflict were already making themselves felt.

My first experiences at the February 1947 session, however, gave me the feeling that the world of the Great Powers had other concerns –which was understandable– and that Latin America was viewed as a fortunate region which had been spared the horror of bombardment and mass slaughter and the anguish and humiliation of foreign occupation, so that it did not need special attention.

For my own part, however, I mused that in Latin America millions of human beings were living in a state of deprivation comparable with that of the sectors most severely affected by the world catastrophe; that there seemed to be no prospect of improving their lot; and that it was unjust that the world did not even think about them. I also felt that it was a mistake to separate the problems of reconstructing the devastated areas from the development problems of the vast economically backward areas of the world, since it would be a very good idea to raise the consumption capacity of the Latin American countries in order to help rehabilitate the European economy. In Latin America, two-thirds of the population lacked purchasing power and were living outside the trade circuit, whereas before the war this part of Latin America had had flourishing trade relations with the Old World which had now virtually disappeared.

I also felt that the United Nations was obliged under the terms of its Charter to tackle as of now the problem of the economic development of areas with weak and backward economies –which accounted for two-thirds of the world's population– and that Latin America had every right to demand that the organization set up at San Francisco should help it in the difficult task of raising the standard of living of its inhabitants. It therefore seemed to me that the true role of Latin America in the United Nations was to draw attention to these facts and make every effort to ensure that our region too should receive the benefits of international cooperation. I timidly put forward the question of our needs and rights during the discussions on the establishment of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, and on the Report of the Commission on Economic Affairs and Employment.

I did not present any concrete proposals, because I sensed that this would be inopportune at a time when attention was centered on relieving the terrible consequences of the war, but from that moment on I began to think that in July, when the Council met again, it would be necessary to do something to in-

duce the United Nations to deal with the problems of Latin America. However, I had to put off the idea of working on a project of this type, because shortly after the Council session ended I had to take part in the Special Assembly on Palestine and the Ad Hoc Committee to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The fifth session of the Economic and Social Council began on 19 July 1947, with a well-filled agenda. I do not intend to describe the Council's work at each of its sessions in detail. If I did so regarding the previous session it was with the aim of giving an idea of the conceptual and human context that confronted me in my first encounter with the substantive work of the United Nations in the economic and social sphere.

As I already mentioned, I had conceived the idea of proposing the establishment of a commission to deal with the problems of the economic and social under-development of our region. In the Agenda proposed by the Secretary-General for that session, however, there was no item that could cover a proposal for the establishment of a new regional economic body. In order to do so, it was necessary to ask in advance for the inclusion of a new item on the agenda. The time limit for such a request was very close, and there was no time to consult with my Ministry of Foreign Affairs in detail. All I could do was send a cable to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Chile informing him that unless otherwise ordered I was going to put forward within two days a motion for the establishment of an Economic Commission for Latin America. I did not receive any order to the contrary, and neither did I receive any instructions in the matter. In view of this, on 12 July of that year I officially submitted to the United Nations Secretary-General a draft resolution for the establishment of an Economic Commission for Latin America, for him to transmit it to the Programme Committee of the Council. The grounds put forward in the draft resolution were that Latin America had entered into a serious crisis as a result of the economic efforts made in support of the United Nations' cause during the war and the disturbances caused in the world economy by that conflict, so that it was necessary to develop the industries of the Latin American countries and make the fullest use of their enormous natural resources in order to raise the standard of living of their inhabitants, help to solve the economic problems of other continents, secure a better balance in the world economy and further international trade, to which end the

proposed Commission should study the measures needed to facilitate joint action to favour the economic progress of the Latin American countries and raise the level of their economic activity, as well as to maintain and intensify the economic links among them and with the rest of the world and participate in the application of such measures.<sup>8</sup>

In the time between the inscription of the item and its consideration by the Council, my delegation carried out intensive activities to sound out the prevailing atmosphere and promote our draft, seeking to interest the largest possible number of delegations in it and neutralize those that appeared to be opposed to it. Even before the Chilean proposal began to be discussed in the Council, however, it seemed clear that there was little chance of it being approved. The idea that had inspired the proposal ran counter to too many prejudices and deep-rooted mental and ideological schemes for it to be accepted right away without difficulty. Furthermore, it was not in keeping with the system of priorities followed in practice by the Council and meant dragging the latter deep into a new field –the development of countries with weak and backward economies and low standards of living– which the Great Powers were in no hurry to enter. For them, the reference in the San Francisco Charter to the obligation to take individual and collective measures to promote economic and social development all over the world was no more than an expression of distant and rather vague intentions, and the way to put it into practice was merely to bring the situation back to what it had been in 1939.

The soundings made confirmed my fears. The opposition of the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and France had to be taken for granted, and it was also necessary to add to them Canada and New Zealand, in view of their known opposition to any regional approach to the economic problems of the world. In short, from the very beginning eight of the 18 member countries had to be considered as opponents of the project, including the powers without whose consent nothing had yet been approved in the United Nations.

The three Latin American States which, together with Chile, represented the region on the Economic and Social Council could naturally be expected to support our initiative.

In preparing our proposal, I ran into an unexpected obstacle: the United Nations did not have any study, report or analysis of the Latin American economy or of the situation of the individual countries which could serve to back up our demand. Nor was it possible to enjoy the services of the Secretariat of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, although in principle it had been functioning since 1945, when it was set up by the Chapultepec Conference.

Thanks to the assistance of my brother, Alfonso Santa Cruz, who was subsequently a United Nations official and Deputy Principal Director of ECLAC and who had just completed his post-graduate studies in the Economics faculty of Harvard University, I was able to assemble important data on national income, foreign trade, agricultural, mining and industrial production, living standards of the population –wages, nutrition, housing and clothing–, etc.

On 1 August 1947, the day our proposal was due to be discussed, it fell to me to open the debate. In my statement, I set forth a dramatic picture of the economic and social situation of our countries, as reflected in the data I had collected. This was followed with considerable interest: it was the first time the economic and social situation of Latin America had been set forth in the United Nations, and although the information on which it was based was naturally very incomplete it had sufficient impact to convince the members of the Council that our region was suffering from such a state of backwardness and need that it deserved just as much special attention from the United Nations as the continents which had gone through the horrors of the war. I then went on to mention the decisive contribution made by Latin America to the Allied victory because it had supplied them with oil, copper and other minerals, wheat, sugar, coffee, cotton, wool, nitrates, etc. at low, frozen prices, whereas manufactures –including the capital goods which it had not been possible to acquire during the war– were now costing high prices that rose higher every day. I pointed out that the world conflict had seriously affected Latin America because it had prevented it from renewing its industrial plant, which was now obsolescent, and had distorted the direction and rate of its incipient industrialization. I forestalled some of the objections that I foresaw by pointing out that there was no risk of duplication of the functions of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council because the proposed

<sup>8</sup> Official Documents of the Economic and Social Council, second year, fifth session.

Commission would study the problems of our geographical region in the light of the world economy and, moreover, would coordinate its activities with the other regional commissions. I also analysed the possible arguments that the existing commissions represented temporary, transitory exceptions dictated by the need for reconstruction, pointing out that there would be basically no real difference between the terms of reference of those bodies and those proposed for ECLAC, since it was obvious that those other commissions should also seek to promote the economic development of the countries under their jurisdiction because of the inseparable links between actions to promote the economy and actions to repair what had been destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

The representatives of Cuba and Venezuela immediately seconded the Chilean motion, endorsing the arguments put forward and adding others which were extremely convincing.<sup>10</sup>

The impact produced on the Council by the statements of the three Latin American delegates was obvious when Willard Thorp, the United States representative, said that they had made "a great impression" and that he "did not want to make a pronouncement in favour of the proposal or against it, but merely requested that the decision should be postponed". He based his position on the arguments that the Council had only heard the views of three of the twenty countries of the region; that the Pan-American Conference was to meet in January 1948 to discuss how to organize inter-hemispheric cooperation in the economic and social fields, and that in such circumstances everything made it advisable to wait for the views of that Conference.

<sup>9</sup> As foreseen, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East was turned into a permanent body which, after a few years, dealt fundamentally with development. The Economic Commission for Europe was also given permanent status and proved to be very useful for improving economic and trade relations between Eastern and Western Europe.

<sup>10</sup> Guillermo Belt stated that in two years of operation the Inter-American Economic and Social Council had not been able to do any useful work because it lacked the necessary financial and technical resources. The Venezuelan delegate, Carlos D'Ascoli, -a brilliant politician and an excellent economist- drew attention to Latin America's economic dependence, citing his own country and the case of petroleum as an example that showed how urgent it was to diversify production and guarantee commodity-producing countries fair treatment in terms of stable and remunerative prices, which called for intervention by the United Nations.

The Canadian delegate Paul Martin then took the floor to enlarge on the arguments of his United States colleague and to repeat his country's opposition to the regional-level consideration of economic matters. His statement was perhaps the most serious attack on the proposal and at the same time the most subtle.

The Soviet delegate's statement was brief but categorical. He said that "he did not feel that the establishment of an Economic Commission for Latin America was a pressing need" and that in his opinion it was not fair to draw an analogy with the Economic Commissions for Europe and Asia and the Far East, since both those bodies were designed to provide effective aid to countries ravaged by the war. He therefore said that he regretted that he could not support the Chilean representative's proposal.

The debate ended with very eloquent and significant statements by Charles Malik, of the Lebanon, and M. Nehru of India. The first-named delegate expressed his complete agreement with our proposal and also noted the similarity between the problems of Latin America and those of the Middle East. The Indian representative, for his part, said that he unreservedly supported the Chilean representative's proposal and suggested that a working group should be set up to study the matter, if that were acceptable to the Latin American countries.

The first day's debates thus drew to a close in an atmosphere which was markedly favourable to our aspirations. The United Kingdom and France had remained silent, the arguments put forward against the motion by the United States were of a procedural nature, and no-one except the Canadian delegate had rejected the basis of the idea. However, the crafty proposal by the United States delegate that it was necessary to await the views of all the Latin American countries at the Pan-American Conference was quite effective and undoubtedly represented an obstacle as serious as it was unexpected.

When the debates resumed four days later, our hopes began to wane. Although some Latin American countries such as Uruguay and El Salvador had sent communications in favour of our proposal and the Ambassador of Bolivia, Humberto Palza, had made an ardent speech in favour of the establishment of the Commission, the United Kingdom delegate firmly opposed it and other countries proposed compromises that meant its postponement. It was suggested that first of all studies should be made of the Latin American economy: a proposal which I ac-

cepted without prejudice to the establishment of the Commission. I also said that I was in agreement with the discussion, in a small group, of the idea of setting up an Ad Hoc Committee to study our motion in the coming months and submit a report to the sixth session of the Council, scheduled for February 1948. My suggestion was rather coldly received, however.

It was then that the event which was to prove decisive for our proposal took place. The French delegate, Pierre Mendès-France, who had not yet made any official pronouncement on the matter, privately expressed to me his great sympathy for our initiative, adding that he would be willing to ask his Government for authorization to vote in favour of the idea of setting up an Ad Hoc Committee, as proposed by Cuba, with some modifications suggested by me, provided that we accepted European countries among the members of that Committee. I immediately replied that, as I had explained to the Council, our conception of the body we were seeking to establish was as an instrument for cooperation not only among our own countries but also among regions: i.e., among all the different areas of the world. I added that the Inter-American Economic and Social Council already existed for the study of Latin American problems in relation to the United States, but our aim was to open up the Latin American economy to the whole world, which was why we had brought the matter to the United Nations, and in those circumstances we would not only accept the inclusion of European countries in the Ad Hoc Committee but also in the Economic Commission itself, if it was set up.

While I never imagined that my assertion would come as a surprise to Mendès-France, his extremely acute political sense caused him to react with astonishing speed. Without the slightest hesitation he said: "You can count on the support of all the European countries for the establishment of the Commission, and our support will begin by favouring the formation of a drafting group, as you suggested".

That very same day, the Council designated the group in question, which rapidly reached agreement. Three days later, it presented the Council with a draft resolution providing for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee made up of Chile, China, Cuba, France, the Lebanon, Peru, the United Kingdom, the United States and Venezuela, with the mandate of considering the factors that could be of influence in the establishment of an Economic Commission for Latin America. It also authorized the Committee to

begin consultations with interested bodies inside and outside the United Nations and instructed it to seek the views of the Ninth Pan-American Conference, to be held in 1948 in Bogota. In the meantime, the Secretary-General was to initiate a study to define and analyse the economic problems of Latin America "which threaten the stability and development of its economy".

Thus ended the intense and absorbing debate which represented an extremely positive first step. We had not managed to actually set up the Commission, but we had won a very important partial victory by securing the designation of a group, with a majority of members favourable to the Commission's establishment, which was to formulate recommendations to the Council. We had also managed to draw the latter's attention to the economic situation of Latin America, which it spent many hours considering. For the first time, the United Nations Secretariat was to be responsible for going into these problems in depth and allocating special resources for the relevant studies, and the great problem of the economic development of the weaker areas was finally to break out of its previous isolation in specialized libraries and in some forward-looking universities.

The second session of the United Nations General Assembly began in September 1947. Its Second Committee—that responsible for economic and financial questions—, made up of the 55 countries which were then members of the Organization, had on its agenda the consideration of the annual report that the Economic and Social Council had to submit to the Assembly on its activities.

The Chilean delegation, for its part, assumed that there was a tacit commitment among the members of the Council to await the results of the Ad Hoc Committee's examination of the project on the Latin American regional body. This attitude of impartiality was strengthened by the fact that the General Assembly did me the honour of electing me Chairman of the Second Committee, which to some extent obliged my delegation to refrain from taking part in particularly controversial discussions. Unforeseeable events, however, meant that the Assembly dealt with our initiative and adopted a resolution which represented a very timely shot in the arm for us. In the course of the general debate on the report of the Council, almost all the Latin American representatives referred to the proposed Commission, praising the idea and expressing the view that such a body needed to be

established. A dozen countries from other geographical areas expressed similar views and, in general, the delegates of all the economically weak nations spoke of the need for the United Nations to cooperate actively with governments in the promotion of their economic and social development policies, especially through regional bodies such as those that already existed for Europe and for Asia and the Far East.

The Middle Eastern countries, headed by Egypt and the Lebanon, considered that the consensus of views revealed in the general debate should be expressed in a more concrete form. They therefore presented a draft resolution whereby the Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council to study the factors relating to the establishment of an Economic Commission for the Middle East. Among the grounds for this proposal they included two preambular paragraphs which referred to the proposed Economic Commission for Latin America in the following terms:

"3. *Noting with satisfaction* the Council's decision at that session to establish an ad hoc committee to study the factors relating to the establishment of an economic commission for Latin America;

"4. *Noting* the favourable reception given by the Second Committee to the proposal to establish an economic commission for Latin America..."

This resolution was adopted by a large majority, although some countries, especially those of the Communist bloc, unsuccessfully opposed the inclusion of the preambular paragraphs referring to the Economic Commission for Latin America.

When the Report of the Second Committee was dealt with in the Plenary of the Assembly, the Soviet delegate, Amazasp Arutiunian—one of the ablest and most combative representatives that country has had in the United Nations—unexpectedly took the floor and proposed the elimination of the fourth preambular paragraph, arguing that "the question of the establishment of a regional economic commission for Latin America should be objectively analysed by the competent United Nations organ". He added that the adoption of that paragraph would be "tantamount to trying to exert pressure on the Economic and Social Council" and, in order to show that the Soviet Union's position on the matter was clear-cut and final, he said that if preambular paragraph four of the resolution were retained, his delegation would be obliged to abstain in the final vote on the draft.

I immediately asked for the floor in order to reply to the Soviet delegate's statement. I said that Chile had expressly stated in the Committee that it would not present a specific motion for the Assembly to support the establishment of the regional body for Latin America, because the Chilean delegation felt morally committed to respect the understanding reached with the Council, but now, after the persistent attacks made on the preambular paragraph, which merely took note of an actual fact—the "favourable reception given by the Second Committee to the proposal"—, Chile felt obliged to call for its retention, since a negative by the Assembly regarding that paragraph would give the impression that it did not view with sympathy the idea of setting up the Commission. It would mean denying the true and undoubted fact that, in addition to the 20 Latin American countries, eleven other nations had spontaneously offered their support in the Second Committee, and it would amount to rejecting what had already been done by the Economic and Social Council.

There were no further speakers in this controversy, and the President (the Brazilian delegate Oswaldo Aranha) put the resolution to the vote. The result was as follows: the first paragraph was approved by 49 votes in favour, none against, and no abstentions, while the fourth preambular paragraph was approved by 35 votes in favour, seven against (six by the Communist countries and the seventh by an unidentified country), and six abstentions (the United States and some of the British Commonwealth countries). The resolution as a whole was adopted by 43 votes in favour, none against, and the abstentions of the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Yugoslavia.

After that meeting of the General Assembly, the possibilities of setting up the Economic Commission for Latin America were much brighter, and indeed, once the General Assembly had embarked upon its great debate on economic development, this matter became one of the main items of discussion at the annual meetings.

The Ad Hoc Committee designated by the Economic and Social Council held two sets of meetings: one in October of that same year, during the General Assembly session, and the second in January 1948, a few weeks before the opening of the sixth session of the Council. At the first meeting, which dealt with the organization of work, the Ambassador of Venezuela, Carlos Eduardo Stolk, was elected Chairman. The Secretary-General was represented by Harold

Caustin, a British economist who was one of the best-organized men I have met in international economic circles. Together with David Weintraub, Principal Director of the Economics Department, he was an important factor in the creation of ECLAC and watched over its first years of life with an eagle eye. It is only fair to recall that both of them acted under the instructions and with the decided support of David Owen, the Deputy Secretary-General for Economic Affairs.

The four Latin American representatives on the Committee had previously prepared a document on "the main causes of the maladjustments in the Latin American economy". For its part, the Secretariat had completed (under the direction of Weintraub and Caustin) the study requested from it in the July 1947 resolution.

This latter work was as complete as could be expected in the circumstances. Naturally, it was of a very general nature because of the short time available for its preparation and the shortage of statistical information. The Secretariat itself was aware of these limitations and entitled it "Review of economic conditions in Latin America". Nevertheless, it contained a very approximate assessment of the characteristics of agriculture, mining and manufacturing, as well as the factors affecting industrialization, and it concluded with a chapter on the main problems affecting the economic life of the countries in question, including industrial production, external trade and inflationary trends. It was also accompanied by some statistical data on the cost of living, population, per capita exports and imports, roads, railways, etc. This "review" of the economic conditions of the region fully confirmed the picture which the Latin American delegates<sup>11</sup> had drawn for the Council. Its main merit was that it was the first study made at the international level on the Latin American economy as a whole.

The working paper presented by the four Latin American delegates detailed the factors which they considered to be responsible for the serious economic imbalances suffered by the countries of that region and the effects that the war had had on its economy. They went on to formulate conclusions on the basis of the facts set forth, among which it is worth reproducing here one which, in spite of its brevity, is very close in many respects to the current diagnosis of the economic ills of Latin America and the main lines of a policy for eliminating them:

"It is not worth trying any remedy for the economic imbalances (of Latin America) unless it is based on a broad and coordinated policy of economic and social development designed to raise the standard of living of the population, to diversify the economies, to promote foreign trade, to modernize the technology used in agriculture, industry, transport and trade, to make the fullest use of the region's natural resources and promote intra- and inter-regional trade, and to stimulate the formation, availability and proper use of capital".

The document ended by proposing the basic points of the tasks that should be entrusted to the organization which it was desired to set up, which were practically the same as those in Chile's original motion and were later incorporated in the resolution establishing ECLAC.

While the Ad Hoc Committee was still meeting, it became known that the Ninth Pan-American Conference, which was to be consulted as to the advisability of setting up the proposed Commission or not, had been postponed from 17 January to 30 March 1948. On hearing this, the four representatives of Latin America held that such consultation was a purely formal requirement which had now lost all importance, since in the General Assembly all the States of that region had come out in favour of the project, which now had the report of the Ad Hoc Committee as its basis for action. It was necessary to accept a compromise: instead of the views of the Conference, it was decided to request those of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, which was to be sent the provisional report of the Ad Hoc Committee in due course, and the Secretary-General of the Pan-American Union, Dr. Alberto Lleras Camargo, would be invited to attend and give his views.

On Christmas Eve, I travelled to Chile to discuss various matters with my government, including the question of the economic commission. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was Germán Vergara Donoso, a career diplomat with long experience in the foreign service who had been one of the delegates to the San Francisco Conference and also to the Preparatory Commission and the first General Assembly. He had firmly supported my actions in the United Nations, as had President González Videla, but he evidently feared that if there were too much controversy this might adversely affect Chile's position in inter-American circles, and he said something to me which

<sup>11</sup> The representatives of Chile, Cuba, Peru and Venezuela.



faithfully reflected the climate of uncertainty that surrounded the United Nations in those early days: "Take it easy and go very carefully. Remember that the United Nations is a new institution that may end any day, whereas the Pan-American Union has withstood half a century of difficulties and is something solid and permanent that we have the duty to defend and preserve".

On the way back to the United States I stopped over in Peru and Venezuela in order to ensure the firmest support from their governments. In Peru, I talked to Foreign Minister García Sayán, who promised that the Peruvian delegates would take a firm position in favour of the economic commission.

The Ad Hoc Committee met again on about 10 January 1948. It began its work by hearing statements from the representatives of the FAO and the American Federation of Labor, both of whom were openly in favour of the proposal. It then heard Dr. Lleras Camargo, who had accepted the invitation to attend. I remember that I travelled with him from New York to Lake Success and we talked about the matter which had brought him to the United Nations. I was worried that his report might be unfavourable, for I felt that it was only natural that, as the head of an inter-American institution, he might be afraid that the proposed new body might interfere with the work of his own organization and reduce its importance. That would be a serious matter, for Dr. Lleras Camargo was one of the main political figures in the hemisphere. Already, at the San Francisco Conference, which had been attended by the most important statesmen in the world, he had stood out on his own merits. Very soon, however, I understood that my concern showed that I had failed to appreciate his qualities as a true statesman. In the Committee, he confirmed all that we had said about the economic and social conditions of Latin America and declared that it was essential to stimulate international cooperation in order to improve those conditions. He said that it was not for him to say whether the new organization should be set up or not, for that decision belonged solely to the organs of the United Nations, but he categorically asserted that if it was set up, then there was no reason why it should overlap with the functions of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council if precautions were taken to ensure suitable coordination between the two bodies. Dr. Lleras Camargo's statement did away with one of the most serious doubts that had been raised during the pro-

cess of discussion and represented a new and powerful element to help convince the Committee in favour of our proposal.

On 15 May 1947 the Inter-American Economic and Social Council discussed the consultation made to it by the Committee. I was invited to the Council's meeting in Washington and attended in order to explain the project and the reasons underlying it. The only objections raised at that meeting concerned the supposed undesirability of allowing countries from outside the continent, such as the European countries, to take part in the work of economic cooperation bodies for our geographical region. Some delegates thought that this would amount to the unacceptable recognition of colonial interests in America. I replied that I fully shared their anti-colonial feelings and favoured the definitive elimination of colonialism from the whole world and especially from our own hemisphere, but the presence of European countries in the Commission was advisable and even necessary if it would further the strengthening of our countries as part of the world economy and help to restore Latin American-European trade, which had practically disappeared during the war. I also pointed out that the existence of a body of this type within the United Nations would do away with the fears that existed in other areas that Latin America was seeking economic autarky, which would be extremely harmful and contrary to the spirit of universal cooperation. I added that the participation of three European nations in a body where the countries of the Americas were in the overwhelming majority could not represent any danger to the interests of the latter but, on the contrary, would tend to bring a certain degree of balance to the very unequal association between Latin America and its big brother to the North.

Five days later, Dr. Lleras Camargo himself transmitted to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Carlos Eduardo Stolk, the resolution adopted by the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, which stated flatly that that body had decided to support the immediate creation of the proposed Economic Commission for Latin America.

This was the *coup de grâce* for the opponents of the project. The very Council whose existence had been adduced as an argument to prove that it was not necessary to set up a regional commission within the United Nations had now declared that it supported the "immediate creation" of such a body. After this, it was obvious that the Council would be duty bound to

make a recommendation favourable to the establishment of ECLAC, and it therefore made a paragraph-by-paragraph examination of the draft report prepared by the Secretariat (in which the deft hand of Harold Caustin was to be glimpsed), although it never formally discussed the specific point that it was supposed to clarify to the Ad Hoc Committee: whether the new body should be set up or not.

Thus, after the approval of paragraph after paragraph, it came to the last of all, which included nothing less than a draft resolution to be adopted by the Council, establishing the Economic Commission for Latin America and setting out its composition and terms of reference. In reality, every one of the sections of the report, from the first one onwards, inescapably led to this conclusion.

The sixth session of the Economic and Social Council had begun on 2 February 1948, and on 19 February it began the discussion of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee.

After Stolk himself, the speakers were the author, the new and highly competent representative of Peru, Juvenal Monge, who later attended the first sessions of ECLAC and was its first Rapporteur to the Council, and the delegate of Brazil, Ambassador João Carlos Muniz, whose country had been elected to the Council in the place of Cuba.

All of us warmly approved the report and put forward fresh elements to show that the need to set up the new regional cooperation organization had become even more pressing in the months that had elapsed since the matter began to be discussed. I recall that Ambassador Muniz, when presenting the important views of his country, which had not yet been heard in the Council, brought in a concept which was novel then but is now universally accepted and was expressed in the Punta del Este Charter in 1961. He said that Latin America must engage in an exercise of "regional planning" in order to emerge from its backwardness and secure the indispensable economic complementation among all countries, and that could only be done satisfactorily through a United Nations body specializing in the problems of the region.

Afterwards, statements were made in the same sense as our own by the representatives of France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand and China. A surprise to everyone was the fact that similar views were expressed by the representative of Poland, the eminent economist Professor Oscar Lange, who had been a distinguished

member of the international scene for years. It is worth noting that in those days Poland never took a different line from that of the Soviet Union in the United Nations. Canada, the United States and the Soviet Union stated that they had abstained from voting and explained their reasons for doing so. George Davidson, the Under-Secretary of Health of Canada, who was one of the most efficient and ingenious men who were ever on the Council, repeated almost the same arguments put forward six months earlier by Minister Paul Martin: Canada maintained its opposition to the establishment of regional commissions. Willard Thorp obeyed instructions which, I imagine, he did not fully agree with, and his statement was therefore the weakest and shortest possible. His final words summed up his country's position: "The United States will abstain, because voting for the establishment of this Commission could be taken to mean that it is not concerned over the possible duplication of functions with the bodies of the inter-American system, while voting against the motion could appear to indicate that it overlooks the fundamental problems which call for a solution". The Soviet Union was a little more precise. Its delegate, Arutiunian, said that the establishment of this new body seemed "uncalled-for" from the point of view of the "organization" of the Council's work, because there were already bodies which could deal with the problems that it was aimed to solve, and also because "since it is a fact that in Latin America there has not been any destruction caused by the war, there does not appear to be any urgent need, as is the case in the Far East and Europe". He added that "Since the Latin American countries continue to be convinced of the need for the proposed Commission, however, the Soviet Union will withdraw its objections, because it understands the difficulties that are an indirect result of the war, and especially the generally insufficient level of economic development of that region".

When the general debate was closed at the request of the delegate of Canada, the item was transmitted to the Economic Committee of the Council so that it could study in detail the draft resolution proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee. In my capacity of First Vice-President of the Council, I acted as Chairman of the Economic Committee.

No major problems arose, except for the attempts by the Soviet Union to secure its acceptance

as a member of ECLAC and its insistence that Santiago, Chile should not be the location of the new institution. The Soviet delegate argued that there was no reason why his country should not be a member of the Commission when the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands had all been given the right of membership. With regard to the problem of the location of ECLAC Headquarters, the reason for the Soviet Union's opposition—although it refrained from saying so—was none other than the fact that diplomatic relations between the Chilean Government and the Soviet Union had been broken off a few months earlier.

The final stage of this absorbing process took place on 25 February 1948, when, in a few brief words, I informed the Council on behalf of the Economic Committee that the latter body had approved

the text before it, with two or three small drafting changes, and now submitted it to the Council for its final decision. There was a short debate on a Soviet amendment to restore the provision that that country should be a member of the Commission, but the amendment was rejected by 13 votes against it, two in favour, and two abstentions. The resolution itself was then put to the vote, the result being 13 votes in favour, no votes against it, and four abstentions (Byelorussia, Canada, the United States and the Soviet Union).

The Economic Commission for Latin America had been born. Its first session was held in Santiago, Chile, in June 1948, and its first Executive Secretary was the Mexican diplomat Gustavo Martínez Cabañas.

(Original: Spanish)