

United Nations Oral History Project

**President Galo Plaza Lasso
28 March 1984**

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Table Of Contents

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Subject Index

UN/SA COLLECTION

Argentina; 19, 21.
Bretton Woods; 19.
Charter; 17, 27-29.
Congo; 4.
Cyprus; 5-6.
Dumbarton Oaks; 21, 23.
Economic and Social Council; 14, 17-18, 26.
Economic Commission - Latin America; 11-14.
Ecuador; 6-7, 12-13, 19, 22-23.
Greece; 5-6.
Hungary; 1.
Latin America; 19- 27.
Lebanon; 1-2.
OAS; 10, 21,
San Fransisco; 7, 16-17, 19-20, 22, 24-28.
Security Council; 17-18.
Syria; 2.
UNDP; 7, 13-14, 26.
U.S.A.; 2-3, 16, 19, 24, 27.
U.S.S.R.; 1, 24, 26-27.

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RADIO INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT GALO PLAZA - *Cassio*

QUESTION: President Plaza, I would now like to refer to some of the missions that you have undertaken on behalf of the United Nations and for the United Nations. I believe the first one, which did not actually materialize, was in 1956, when the General Assembly, meeting in an emergency special session, requested the Secretary-General to observe the situation in Hungary. The Secretary-General then asked Judge Sandstrom of Sweden, Alberto Jerez of Colombia, Judge Guderson of Norway and you to constitute an observer group. What happened then?

ANSWER: At that time, shortly before that, I had met casually with the Secretary-General and he thought that he would like to have me involve in some peace-keeping operations of this kind and before long he asked me to go to Hungary. I accepted that assignment, but it never materialized because the Government of Hungary refused to receive the observers group once it happened - this is after the Russian invasion of Hungary. So that was the end of that.

QUESTION: The fact that the Secretary-General had you very much in mind to serve the United Nations is proof of the fact that shortly after he appointed you chairman of the observer group in Lebanon in 1958. The other two members were Ambassador Dayal and General Odd Bull of Norway. Could you tell us first how that mission came about, what was the situation and how you were approached by the Secretary-General?

ANSWER: The Secretary-General asked me to be chairman of that group to go to Lebanon and he told me about a problem that endangered the peace of the world in Lebanon. After all the information I received here at Headquarters, when we went to Lebanon I realized that that was not the case and that it was President Chamoun of Lebanon who for political reasons had asked for this UN presence. So I asked the Secretary-General to come and see for himself, which he did. We had a meeting with Chamoun and he realized that that was not the case and that the

situation was different, but we acted there with a military group from about 12 different countries, missions of unarmed officers, which did an outstanding job. And while we were there, successfully solving the internal problems of that country, all of a sudden out of a clear sky on the beaches of Beirut one lovely morning the American military and fleet landed. The world was surprised. We were all surprised. We didn't know what it meant. The Secretary-General protested. We received instructions not to establish any kind of contact with the American military presence there and a withdrawal was negotiated. So they left the country in about three weeks. They didn't do a thing, they just left. And the Organization completed its mission; it was the first international mission that was completed successfully. We completed our mission and left the country, demonstrating how useful the United Nations could be in problems of that kind.

QUESTION: Would you say that there was a certain tension and irritation between the group and the Government of President Chamoun, and was that tension really dissolved when the Secretary-General arrived? I understand that there was a dinner with the Secretary-General that was very crucial in that respect. Could you tell us a little about that?

ANSWER: As a matter of fact, there was a dinner, the Secretary-General was at the dinner and the Secretary-General was convinced after speaking with Chamoun and being at the dinner that my position, my interpretation of the situation was right. That was contrary to what President Chamoun had told him. But there were other tensions that came from the neighbouring country, Syria, and again problems with the different religious groups within the country. As a matter of fact, I managed then to establish a close friendship with the heads of the Church, the Christian Church, in Lebanon - in particular with the number two man - and we managed to solve a political crisis that really had no religious implications whatsoever, the same sort of problem that brought about these very

serious problems that have the country in the sad situation it is in today. Then we managed to solve the problems with the understanding of the religious leaders. That was the one operation, the first operation, that the Organization got involved in that ended successfully.

QUESTION: At the time that press and reports from the area indicated that when the American Marines landed in Beirut you and the other members of the observer group had considered resigning. Is that accurate?

ANSWER: Well, we would have resigned if the United Nations had not acted the way it did following instructions from the Secretary-General, that is, backing the Organization's not accepting that presence that was really unexplainable. I must underscore the word "unexplainable". As a matter of fact, there is nothing the United States did - the military mission - while they were there. They kept them around the country in olive groves counting olives until they left.

QUESTION: In terms of the operational arrangements for the mission, how did you maintain contact with the Secretary-General and how did you operate on the ground when the Secretary-General was not there?

ANSWER: Of course we had a military presence there too. It was unarmed officers from major up from about 12 different countries. But we kept continuously in contact with the Secretary-General, continuously in contact, and received instructions from him. We had a plan for action. Everything was planned in advance and we did not take any step outside the plans, and if there was any change whatsoever we consulted with Headquarters.

QUESTION: You have said that the mission was a success, but are there other memories, other reflections, that you would like to make concerning that mission? And of your own involvement, of course.

ANSWER: Regarding my own involvement I would say that a personal fact was that I became a friend of the number two man, Monsignor Marun. It was a very

interesting case. Monsignor Marun, the number two man of the Maronite Church in Lebanon, was a first cousin of the leader of the Communist Party in Ecuador who was of Lebanese descent and he introduced me to that man; and that personal connection was very helpful in solving many problems. Absolutely.

QUESTION: Going ahead to the situation in the Congo, in 1960 the Secretary-General again requested you to lend your services to the UN and your specific assignment was to recommend what might be done with the former Belgian military bases of Kamina and Kitona. Could you tell is a little bit about your assignment?

ANSWER: Yes, as a matter of fact it was Ralph Bunche, the Under-Secretary, who was in charge of the situation in the Congo then, and I replaced him. The problem was not only what to do with those two big military bases of Kamina and Kitona, but also the withdrawal of the last Belgian paratroopers. That was an operation that was organized very successfully by the Secretary-General on an emergency basis. He managed to get more than 20,000 military men from about 20 countries from all over under General Rikki, an Indian general, and the peaceful takeover by the natives of the Congos and the withdrawal of the Belgians in that colony was very important to Belgium in which the Congolese themselves had really no experience whatsoever. The way the Belgians had organized their colony was in a way in which the people of the Congo were better treated than many people in other colonies. They were well-trained, they were well-educated, they had good living conditions. But it was all done in a way that they could never have any experience running their own affairs. So when they took over they were absolutely.... they didn't know exactly what to do. At first the Belgians left in a hurry. As a matter of fact, one of my tasks was to round up cars that had been abandoned by Belgians at the different airports. But while I was there, they started returning and many Belgians who may have been born in the Congo

eventually went back and they are still there to this day. It was another successful operation by the Organization that made it possible for that country to become independent. It was an interesting experience for me, and of course it was the last of the experiences the Secretary-General had because he died in plane accident precisely in the Congo.

QUESTION: Your next mission was, of course, under a new Secretary-General, U Thant. He asked you to go to Cyprus as his Special Representative. How did that come about?

ANSWER: I must tell you before that, when I ended my mission in the Congo I received a cabled letter from the Secretary-General just before he died explaining the situation - he was satisfied with the way I had managed the situation - and what he was planning on doing from then on. It was very impressive to me because it was a kind of farewell letter, as if he was expecting something to happen in the very near future. That was the end. When U Thant asked me to become his representative in Cyprus, just then the man who had been mediator died and I was appointed mediator in Cyprus with Archbishop Makarios, who was President. A very fascinating character, a man who, because of his very special position, kept the peace in that country. The country is made up of about 80 to 82 per cent Greeks and 18 to 20 per cent Turks, but the Greeks have always thought in terms of what they called enosis, uniting the island with Greece. Now Greece is about a thousand miles away while the coast of Turkey is in sight - you can see it on a clear day - and the Turks have always been against that possibility. Now of course the Turks were satisfied with the presence of Makarios as President because they knew that he would rather be President of a country than the bishop of a distant island in Greece. So when he was overthrown that was the end of the situation in balance, more or less, in Cyprus and brought about the Turkish invasion. Before I left I wrote a report on what I thought was a way to solve the problem between the

two communities and hence between the two countries. That report is valid up to this day and has been used at the different meetings at the UN anytime the Cyprus problem has come up. I resigned at the time I submitted that report because at the time the Greek Government, for internal political reasons, did not agree with the report. But they have agreed since. Both communities have agreed with the report, but at the time they did not and I thought it was a delicate position for me, having been mediator, for one of the parties not approving the report. That is the reason I resigned in 1965 from my mission in Cyprus.

QUESTION: Would you tell us briefly what were the main recommendations you made in the report. Just briefly.

ANSWER: Briefly, in the first place the Greeks should not have had, in spite of the fact there was a greater number of Greeks, total control of the country. The idea was to give the Turks a greater hand in the government of the country and also a greater presence in the area that they occupied themselves. So it would give them greater participation in government and they did not think of themselves as being totally controlled and absorbed by the Greeks to a position where they might eventually become the owners of the country and the country added to Greece in what they called enosis; that is something the Greeks never accepted. So that report, because of this reason, in spite of changing situations - because the presence of Turkish troops, and the takeover of a lot of territory is now in the hands of this minority, much more than in the past, has brought about a situation that cannot continue this way. It has to be solved sooner or later some way and more or less along the lines of my recommendations.

QUESTION: President Plaza, we have been speaking of you as a delegate to San Francisco and then as a representative of the Secretary-General and a mediator. In the meantime you have been President of your own country. I would like to have some observations from you as President of Ecuador towards the United

Nations. What was your attitude, what was the attitude of your Government towards the United Nations?

ANSWER: Because of the fact that I had inside information as to what the United Nations was I thought that my country should take advantage of the fact that it was a Member of the Organization. I thought that all the countries should back the Organization, should strengthen the Organization, should act within the Organization and take advantage of the Organization, and this is what I did. For instance, I had been very active with my country's delegation at San Francisco in the economic and social issues - the UNDP activities, for instance - and I took advantage, my country was one of the first countries that took advantage of technical assistance from the Organization in several fields, and they were tremendously useful, but tremendously useful, and many countries followed later on. My representative at the UN was a top-level official. My contacts with the UN were permanent backing all decisions that would strengthen the Organization, and that was my role during all presidencies and I thought that was the role that corresponded to all the Members of the Organization.

QUESTION: Now, only the other day I realized, talking with you, that your Minister for Foreign Affairs was also a participant at the San Francisco conference, Neftali Ponce.

ANSWER: Yes, he was.

QUESTION: So here you had a Government which was headed by somebody who had drafted the Charter and whose Minister for Foreign Affairs had also participated at San Francisco. Did you at any time encounter difficulties as President with situations, particularly in the political field, which arose in the United Nations: sometimes the public, the press cannot understand a particular vote by a Government in the United Nations. It is difficult for a Government to explain certain attitudes. Did you encounter any difficulty in that respect?

ANSWER: I am afraid that I wouldn't remember. I'm sure there was nothing really serious because I would have remembered, but I don't remember anything.

QUESTION: Would you say that in many ways the policy you followed in the United Nations was an integral part of the foreign policy of the country, was full consistent with that?

ANSWER: As a matter of fact, strengthening the Organization and using the Organization and taking advantage of the Organization was part of the foreign policy of my country.

QUESTION:.. What is your feeling, going a little bit back to your functions as mediator, about the potential of the good offices of the Secretary-General or a representative of the Secretary-General, in particular in political situations, on the basis of your experience?

ANSWER: I think that so many things can be done that without the existence of the Organization could not be done. The presence of armed forces, the presence of foreigners involved in dealing with problems within a country, if it is done by any country is intervention. If it is done by an international organization it is not intervention. It is a new concept of sovereignty that has to be taken into consideration with the existence of the international organizations. That is what makes it possible for the international organizations to operate without the limitations that individual countries logically have within international law.

QUESTION: Did you perceive that the Governments with which you dealt believed that the United Nations was an impartial mediator at all times, not you personally but the fact that you represented the UN?

ANSWER: Absolutely, absolutely. Another what I would call interesting fact was that in all those missions there was a presence of military forces,

peacekeeping forces, and the fact that they represented the Organization and not individual countries did not create any problems, did not bother any countries at all. There was a logical understanding that they belonged there, that they could be there, because the country was a Member of the Organization.

QUESTION: If I may turn a little bit to the personalities of the Secretary-General with whom you dealt, you met the first Secretary-General of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, when you came here as President and then of course you served the Organization under Hammarskjold and U Thant. Could you tell us a little bit about their personalities, as you perceived them?

ANSWER: In the case of Trygve Lie, he first came when I was President - on a visit to Latin America he visited me in Quito, and then when I came to this country on an official visit I visited the United Nations, and he was then Secretary-General. He was friendly to me; I had a good opinion of him, but I didn't know too much of what went on at the time in the Organization. It was in the process of really getting organized.

My impression of Dag Hammarskjold is of someone dedicated, but dedicated in every way, his whole life dedicated to serving the Organization. He had a conviction that that was the way to solve the problems of the world, to keep the world in peace, and he dedicated his life entirely to the Organization to a point that I couldn't imagine him not being Secretary-General. He was very capable. I would say - and I told him several times - I was a bit concerned when he went into details and he didn't delegate authority where he could. He was really doing too much. He could in many cases have delegated authority which he didn't, but he dedicated all his time, all his life. He was heart and soul the Organization himself, and I'm sure that a great satisfaction to him was to die at the service of the Organization.

Now, my next experience, with U Thant: he was an entirely different man. The other one was a Nordic European, U Thant was a typical oriental. But also with the philosophy of the orientals that comes in very useful when dealing with decisions, with actions that need cool thinking and responsible resolutions. I think he was a good Secretary-General, I think he was a responsible Secretary-General, but looked at things from a different world. One was from the Nordic area of Europe, and the other one was from the Eastern world. But they were both good international public servants.

QUESTION: Then you dealt with Secretary-General Waldheim, mostly with you as Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and he as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Could you tell us a little bit first about the relationship between the two organizations when you were Secretary-General of the OAS and then your personal relationship with Waldheim?

ANSWER: Well, as you know, I had to do with the very beginning of that relationship between the regional organization and the world Organization. I had to do with the resolutions of the United Nations in salvaging the regional organization, making use of the regional organization, using what could be done - what had been done successfully there - and using it world wide. So I thought that my obligation, once I was at the OAS as Secretary-General, was to maintain and improve relations between the regional organization and the world Organization.

As a matter of fact I established - I visited the Secretary-General several times. We can continuous talks. I had a representative here. I had contacts with him in the way we established the ground rules for seeking our employees, our experts, so we would find people of the same level and we wouldn't be fighting each other for personnel. We established exactly the same conditions so that expert personnel could be found at the same level and of the same quality in both

organizations. I was convinced that there was no rivalry, but, on the contrary, they both complemented each other. If I had said these things when I fought for the organization of this relationship there was every reason to believe that when I had a chance of putting it into effect I did it, and this is what I did.

QUESTION: Now, the relationship of the United Nations with the OAS is of course a subject of some controversy. But did Waldheim recognize fully the role of the regional organization in his conversations -

ANSWER: He had no problems with me. No problem with me.

QUESTION: And what would you say about his personality and his performance as Secretary-General?

ANSWER: Well, I - he carried on from what his predecessors had done, and I wasn't close enough to be in a position to give my opinion as to his personal qualifications, how he acted personally. But I don't think the Organization lost ground while he was here; on the contrary I think it moved along.

QUESTION: Thank you. Now, besides the political missions that we have mentioned you have also been involved in and participated in the economic and social activities of the United Nations, particularly in Latin America. The Economic Commission for Latin America has played a very important role in the development of that area and you, at a certain point, were Chairman of the Economic Commission for Latin America. But mainly you participated actively in certain missions and projects of ECLA - I believe in co-operation with the then Executive Secretary of ECLA, Dr. Prebisch. Would you tell us a little bit about that part of your -

ANSWER: As a matter of fact my activities with the United Nations have no end. I found myself acting as Chairman of a very interesting group organized by ECLA that had meetings in Santiago, Chile, and then in Mexico City to establish the basis and principles for a Latin America foreign market. The idea was to set up a

market for the whole region, and during our study we reached the conclusion that the region was not ready for such an economic development, that there was no tradition in economic exchanges, that the needs of the different countries according to the size of the countries were at different levels. But the important thing was to establish the ground rules for the game so that we could establish subregional groups and that these subregional groups would be organized according to the general rule so that when eventually it would be possible to set up a continental organization the rules would be the same. The Central American common market was organized, the but most important one and the most successful one in which I had to do myself, because I represented the President of Ecuador at the meeting in Bogota and then in Cartagena, was the Andean Group, which was a group of middle-sized countries - Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Chile. Chile did not continue because of certain restrictions that they considered exaggerated concerning foreign investment. But the other countries have continued, and there is a possibility that Chile might return. And it has been successful. It's having problems, this common-market situation, as the situation in Europe today is having its very serious problems, but it has served to develop the industries of these countries. These countries had no way of developing their industrial capabilities for a small market, but a market that included all the countries within the subregion was large enough to justify the existence of industries.

So the experience has corrected several situations that were suggested originally by Mr. Prebisch, but he has also changed his points of view. But it has been a useful and successful operation. Outside of that, outside of the Common Market, ECLA has been successful in preparing studies, plans - for instance, now that Latin America finds itself in a very difficult over-indebtedness and that the countries met in Quito not too long ago and agreed upon a plan for action, the fact that they found the proper terms for understanding and agreement is thanks to the

fact of the participation of an international organization like ECLA. ECLA played a main part in preparing the basic papers that were technical, more technical and less political, more in accordance with realities than with hopes and aspirations. But it's a document that has made possible a declaration that the world will have to face sooner or later in problems of solving the situation, the economic situation, in which Latin America finds itself today. That's another very fine contribution of the economic and social role that the United Nations plays, in this case with its regional organization, ECLA.

QUESTION: Well, in this connection, in connection with the Quito Declaration, the President of Ecuador requested you to deliver the text of the Declaration to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. When you met with the Secretary-General did you discuss the contents of the Declaration and, in particular, the question of the follow-up of the agreements contained in that Declaration?

ANSWER: Yes, I talked with him, and he was well informed. I gave him a copy of the document, and I met with several groups, including the Group of 77, which is important, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) people, and different groups that had to do with this document. I would say that I was optimistic as to the results of my mission with the international organizations, because they understood the problem, they realized what had to be done, they accepted the tone of the document - the fact that it isn't a protest, it isn't any extreme position or a moratorium or anything of the sort, but on the contrary it's recognizing responsibilities, it's hoping that problems can be solved without too high a social cost so it won't have political implications. I think this is something that is going to become more and more evident as we go along. If you read the papers today you can see what's happening in Argentina, and similar situations will happen throughout the area.

So I was satisfied with my presentation at the United Nations, starting with my visit to the Secretary-General.

QUESTION: So you feel that ECLA will play an important role in this, in the follow-up?

ANSWER: I think not only the follow-up. ECLA plays a very important role in training personnel, in preparing personnel, in informing Latin America of its resources, of its possibilities. I think all these studies are tremendously useful. It's quite different to be doing these things on a country basis, separately, than doing it on a continental basis, looked at from an angle of all the countries involved. So this regional organization that represents in the region the Economic and Social Council is lending a very constructive service to the area.

QUESTION: Do you feel that the United Nations as an institution - I mean generally - has become conscious of the importance of economic and social matters which, as you said, in San Francisco was a contribution of the Latin American countries and something that was not perceived then by the industrialized countries as being very important? Do you feel that the importance of the subject has changed?

ANSWER: I have been in contact several times and for several reasons with people like Paul Hoffman, David Owen in the UNDP, that realized what could be done, the importance of all these problems, and really got things moving. I believe that the usefulness of these international services by the Organization is tremendous, but what worries me somewhat is that they don't get the publicity they deserve. Even to this day, when nations all over the world are taking advantage of these very useful assistances in the field of economic and social affairs, yet the world doesn't know too much about it. Not even the Organization says too much about something that is so important. Political issues take the whole scene.

QUESTION: Well, I was going to refer to that precisely in connection with your perception of whether the Secretaries-General with whom you dealt gave appropriate importance to economic and social matters. I think that Mr. Hammarskjöld came here - he was basically an economist - with great interest in that part of the work of the Organization, but he was then absorbed by the political problems. Did you feel over the years that the Secretaries-General were conscious of the importance of this in the work of the Organization?

ANSWER: It's understandable that the very nature of the problems make political issues; problems in which peace and security are involved make more news, make the front page, more than the successful work of a mission in charge of technical assistance from the Organization. But it's more a matter of the press not mentioning it, and maybe I would say that the Organization should pay more attention in promoting this type of work, work that isn't spectacular, that doesn't gain the front page, but is tremendously valuable.

QUESTION: Thank you. To conclude, President Plaza, I would like to ask you to make certain general observations and reflections about the United Nations. I've already asked you whether the Charter, in your view, had been able to stand the test of time. Now, obviously the founding fathers of the Organization, and you were one of them, had a certain vision of the future. You had a perception of how the Organization would evolve and how it would perform its task. Looking back and looking at the way the Organization has evolved, could you tell us a little bit of your reflections and thoughts?

ANSWER: I think the Organization is more useful than ever, more needed than ever. We have examples every day where international problems that are many times handled outside the Organization have failed and a clear indication that if they had been handled within the Organization by the same countries, countries that are Members of the Organization so they could have acted within the Organization,

they would have been solved successfully. " This is a reason why the Organization should be used more successfully in all these types of problems.

Furthermore, with the atom bomb, with the great insecurity that all this means, with the fact that there is an arms race that hasn't been solved to this day, the only possible way of reaching an understanding, of solving the problems, of trying to find security - we're further away from security than ever, and that's one of the great goals of the Organization - it's through the Organization. I think that if the Organization disappeared, if it was weakened and disappeared, we'd find ourselves in a very very dangerous situation, not knowing what would happen tomorrow. So I would say, in a very convincing way, that the problems of insecurity today, because of the frightful armaments that have been developed over the years and the incredible arms race that the leading Powers have dedicated all their energy to - the only way we can control that, we can reduce that, we can return to a sense of security and understanding and peace, is through the world Organization. So I believe in it now more than ever.

QUESTION: Now, in San Francisco you worked very closely with the American delegation. You knew what the United States expected from this Organization. What is the reason for this disappointment that prevails now in the United States concerning the United Nations, in your view and from your conversation with American personalities and members of the Government?

ANSWER: My belief is that the kind of crisis, I would say, in relations between the United States and the Organization is transitory. I think it's a matter that has to do with this Government, and if now, during this year of elections, we see that candidates are speaking of the need to strengthen their relationship with other nations through the Organization. So I think this situation that we're living through now - this crisis that we're having, all the statements that have been made criticizing the Organization, some at official levels - is transitory, and we shouldn't pay too much attention to it.

QUESTION: Do you think that the decision to establish the United Nations in New York was wise?

ANSWER: I think it was very wise. I think it was wide indeed. That's another solution offered by the Rockefeller families, through Nelson Rockefeller himself, a great vision that made it possible to build this building we have here today.

QUESTION: And finally, one important subject which is always mentioned in connection with any evaluation of the United Nations is the role of the third world. Now, you mentioned a number of countries that participated in San Francisco and the number of developing countries that were present there and the large number that have become independent since then. What do you think is the role that those countries have played and what should be the role that they should play in the future?

ANSWER: Well, in the first place, I under quite understood or accepted the definition of a third world. If there's a third world there's a fourth world, because many of the countries of the third world don't belong in the third world but in the fourth world. This is why at some of the meetings that they've had in the past they never agreed, because what might be interesting to some of the countries in this group is too sophisticated for the others, and vice versa. So what all these developing countries need is precisely an Organization, an international Organization, so that they can be present and act in the Organization. They would find themselves at a total loss if the Organization did not exist.

QUESTION: The Charter envisages the possibility of amendment, and as a matter of fact the idea was that there would be a conference to consider amendments to the Charter. Since then there have been only minor amendments, basically in connection with the number of the members of the Security Council and the Economic

and Social Council. Do you think that there are certain provisions that should be amended, and do you think that there are certain aspects that should be looked into in connection with a possible reform of the Organization?

ANSWER: I didn't know you were going to ask me that question, that's why I'm not prepared to answer you. But I do think that amendments are necessary for any organization to bring it up to date with the times. For instance, one of the situations that must demand some kind of an amendment is the fact that there are so many new Members and of such different sizes, and how to deal with these countries, how to help them, their influence and what they mean and what they can do and what they weigh within the Organization should have some relation to their size.

QUESTION: Thank you.



UNITED NATIONS

Dag Hammarskjöld
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FILM INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT GALO PLAZA

QUESTION: President Plaza, you have been associated with the United Nations in a number of ways for almost 40 years - as a delegate to the San Francisco Conference, as President of Ecuador and also on special political assignments by the Secretary-General. We will be asking you a number of questions on your experience. You have been an actor and a witness, and in many ways you have participated in making the history of the United Nations.

I would like first to ask you about the period preceding the San Francisco Conference, and I would like to know in what way the Latin American countries were informed about the preparations for the Conference. You were then the Ecuadorian Ambassador in Washington, and I would like to know, first, when you were informed about the preparations for the Conference?

ANSWER: President Roosevelt was dedicated to the good-neighbour policy, and he was promoting the good-neighbour policy through his Under Secretary of State for Latin America, Sumner Welles. The Secretary of State was Cordell Hull. But there were some misunderstandings between Sumner Welles and Cordell Hull, and Sumner Welles resigned; Mr. Hull introduced certain ideas of his own concerning Latin American relations in which he insisted on certain requirements that he thought the Latin American countries should meet before they were recognized by the United States.

The first country that found itself with this problem was Argentina, the Peron Government in Argentina. Again, while this was going on - this problem with Argentina not being recognized by the United States - he also was in the preliminary work at Bretton Woods in preparing the future world conference for the United Nations, without bringing in the Latin American countries at all. This was a motive of resentment, of deep preoccupation, and at one point Mr. Hull, to

correct this situation, planned to promote a meeting in Mexico City of the Latin American countries before the San Francisco Conference.

Just then, Mr. Hull resigned, and Ed Stettinius became the Secretary of State, and Nelson Rockefeller the Under Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs. Well, he not only put into effect Mr. Hull's plan for the Mexico City conference, but he gave the Mexico City conference a much greater scope of action. It was a tremendous step forward in inter-American relations, as far as several basic principles, particularly the basic principle of American relations with the outside world that had to do with the Monroe Doctrine. It made it multilateral - not only the United States but the other countries within the hemisphere also acted in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine. And many other principles of inter-American relations that were something interesting for the world behold, undoubtedly.

That conference was resumed in what was called the Act of Chapultapec. This was just before the Conference at San Francisco. This came about in February and March of 1945. Then President Roosevelt died in April of 1945, and Vice-President Truman took over. So he was the President at the time that the Conference at San Francisco convened.

QUESTION: But before we go into San Francisco, could we focus a little bit on the Chapultapec meeting? As I understand it, there was then some resentment on the part of the Latin Americans because they had not been fully consulted, and as I understand you the Chapultapec conference was convened in a way to reverse a little bit the attitudes of the Latin Americans. As I understand it, Secretary Stettinius flew from Yalta to Mexico City to participate in the conference, and the main concern there - and you have already referred to that in passing - was that the principles of the inter-American system should be introduced into the proposals for the San Francisco Conference and for the draft charter.

ANSWER: Yes; as a matter of fact, the Chapultepec Act was a previous step to what took place later on and converted what was then the Pan American Union into the Organization of American States (OAS). It was a tremendous step forward in strengthening the regional organization. The President was very much in favour of all this, and furthermore, at Chapultepec they tried to do away with this resentment of not including Latin America in the previous study and plans for the pre document of Dumbarton Oaks.

So what actually happened then was that the country was given the Dumbarton Oaks Act, and all the countries in Latin America instructed their delegations to act at San Francisco based on the Dumbarton Oaks original papers.

QUESTION: You already mentioned the case of Argentina. I understand that that was also a subject of discussion in Mexico City. How was the problem of Argentina, which had remained neutral during the war, settled?

ANSWER: As you know - as a matter of fact I am one of the signees of the document, the United Nations document, by which the countries that signed the document qualified to become the founding Members of the Organization by lining up with the countries that had participated in the war against the Axis. So this was a document of 1 January of 1944, I think; Argentina had not signed that document, and this is where the problem came in with Mr. Hull. Finally, at Chapultepec, the United States agreed with the Latin American countries in bringing in Argentina, and Argentina signed the document, and it was brought into the Organization, because we didn't want to wait for the country to qualify within the Charter whether it could be a member or not, but include it before the Charter was approved. And this is what happened at Chapultepec.

QUESTION: Could you tell us briefly what was your personal role in Mexico City and the conference in Chapultepec?

ANSWER: Well, the fact that I had a very close connection from way back with Nelson Rockefeller, and I happened to know him before he became Secretary of State Edward Stettinius. I also knew very well Senators Vandenberg and then Commander Stassen, who was also a member at San Francisco. So these connections converted me into kind of a co-ordinator between the Latin American countries and the United States. And Nelson Rockefeller, who was instructed by the President personally to improve these relations with Latin America, to settle these problems, he played a very important role, because at one point, before San Francisco, when the United States seemed to be going to be the dominating power in San Francisco, there was a certain inclination to not continue within the organization, abandoning this plan for a regional organization, because there was a thought it was in conflict with the world Organization and it might come in between with its obligations as a world Organization. Here is where the Latin American countries came in and acted at San Francisco to save the regional organization, and Nelson Rockefeller played a very very important role in convincing the American delegation, which was split on this issue at one point - I'll talk about that when we talk about San Francisco.

QUESTION: And you think that the Latin Americans left the Chapultepec meeting satisfied that their concerns had been taken into account?

ANSWER: Yes, I think the meeting at Chapultepec corrected many of the problems that were appearing during the last months of Mr. Hull's presence in the State Department and satisfied the Latin Americans that everything that was being done was entirely in accordance with the good-neighbour policy that President Roosevelt had put into effect.

QUESTION: Let us move then to the San Francisco Conference, where you were a delegate of Ecuador. And if I may, could we touch briefly on how the delegation of Ecuador - and I suppose that the way the delegation of Ecuador

operated was a good reflection of how other delegations from developing countries worked? You were a member of that delegation, which was headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Camillo Ponce.

I would like to know how the delegation of a developing country like Ecuador worked on a day-to-day basis. Communications in those days were not as good as they are today and perhaps consultation with the Government was not that easy. Could you tell us a little bit of how the delegation worked?

ANSWER: I don't think that there was much daily connection or consultations with the Governments directly. What each country brought with them was the country's views and the country's comments and plans for correcting this, that or the other, from the original project that came out of Dumbarton Oaks. So during the different meetings at the committees in San Francisco, as different subjects came up and the Dumbarton Oaks project was being discussed, each country brought its own points of view and its own arguments that were discussed previously by the Governments.

QUESTION: Did you work as a group with the Latin American delegations? How much consultation was there with the other Latin American delegations?

ANSWER: Well, as a matter of fact let's not forget that out of 51 Charter Members, 20 were from Latin America. And we worked very closely, because as I told you before there was danger of the regional organization disappearing and being replaced by the world Organization. So we were very much together in fighting that idea and defending it and succeeding, and we saw each other, we were always in contact.

Furthermore, that extraordinary statesman that Nelson Rockefeller was - I don't know of anyone else who understood better the relations between the United States and its neighbours to the south and did more to strengthen those relations than this man, Nelson Rockefeller. He was a representative of the United States,

always in contact with the Latin Americans - as a matter of fact a small group of us - I think I can remember the names of those that were present - had breakfast together every morning at San Francisco. They were Victor Andrade from Bolivia, Pedro Beltran from Peru, Alberto Giras from Colombia, Guillermo Belt from Cuba. We met every morning at breakfast, and Nelson of course had direct contact with the United States delegation, where he had a lot to do in several issues where the delegation had been split. So this was useful in strengthening the United States position - and the OAS too - having the backing of 20 neighbours that thought in the same terms of all the problems of the hemisphere.

QUESTION: But what would you say was the main concern of the Latin American countries in San Francisco?

ANSWER: There were several concerns. One that has seldom been mentioned should be underscored. When President Roosevelt died and Vice-President Truman took over, he decided to bring in the international consultants from the two major parties so that they would meet in San Francisco previous to each meeting, discuss the different point, reach an agreement, and on what they agreed upon the United States delegation would act. It sounded very logical, but practically it was highly impractical, because it delayed the action of the United States delegation. Here was the United States that was the most powerful country present and had no blueprint - while the Soviet Union had a blueprint, the United States had no blueprint. It was acting according to this situation because of the very special circumstances, but the backing of the 20 Latin American countries that knew what they wanted and were backing the United States on many fundamental, key issues - much of what was interesting to the West - helped in the programmes at San Francisco.

Another matter, as I said before, was convincing the United States that the regional organization was not incompatible with a world Organization, but that, on

the contrary, what we wanted to do is to organize world wide what had been successful in a regional organization. That was what we tried to do. And we succeeded. We succeeded, and there are several Articles within the Charter that specify exactly the role of the regional organizations within the world Organization, for the United Nations then and for other regional organizations later on.

Then again, the Latin American countries played an important role in the colonial countries. They were very interested in converting these countries eventually into independent nations, and they played an important role in the provisions of the Charter for the procedure to be taken in these countries from the colonial world moving over into free countries, to the point that since the San Francisco Conference to date 94 countries have become independent and become Members of the Organization. So these were the most important roles that the Latin American countries played at the United Nations as a group. They also acted in a way that wouldn't appear they were trying to show their weight around because of their unanimity on many issues.

There were many problems; the situation after World War One was such that things were happening that the world did not expect. Many things were happening. Here, the United States, for instance was going through a process that the American people didn't quite realize yet. This great country had lived protected by two great ocean barriers. That, because of the new advances in aeronavigation, had disappeared. The atom bomb had changed the sense of security this country lived in, so this country could not live alone without concerning itself with what happened in the rest of the world, and these things had changed. The dream of peace and security in one world disappeared with the position of the Soviet Union. So all these realities were evident and came out in the Charter.

QUESTION: I will refer later - the reference to the Soviet delegation is very interesting, but talking now about the provisions of the Charter, I believe you also played a very prominent role in connection with the economic and social provisions of the Charter, the establishment of the Economic and Social Council as a principal organ. Could you refer briefly to that?

ANSWER: Yes. As a matter of fact - and explainably - the great Powers were more concerned with peace and security. But the Latin American countries were interested in how to solve problems of an economic nature and also matters of improving the way of life of the people and education, and they were responsible for all the provisions within the Charter that had to do with economy, with education, with all these technical services that have been so useful throughout the world. The Latin American countries played a very important role in developing all those, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and so on.

QUESTION: You referred to the concern of the great Powers for the problems of security. At San Francisco, obviously, the question of the veto was a very fundamental issue. Could you refer to the position of the Latin American countries and to your own position on that question - which has, as a matter of fact, remained controversial over the years?

ANSWER: Yes; as a matter of fact, while the Latin American countries were conquering their own rights as members of the community within the hemisphere and doing away with exclusive rights that the United States had given itself, like the Monroe Doctrine and so on, the veto was exactly the opposite. So that was the logical reason why the Latin American group as a group opposed the veto. Now, looked at then it appeared as if it was a mistake, as if it was a step backwards. But if one looks at reality, the way things are today, with the number of States involved, with a vote per State and all that, without the veto the Organization would not be possible.

QUESTION: Now, you referred to the Soviet delegation. Could you tell us a little bit of the relations between the Latin American delegations on the one side and the Soviet delegation, and your own contacts with members of the Soviet delegation and certain personalities, like Mr. Molotov or Kuznetsov or Gromyko, were prominent members of the Soviet delegation?

ANSWER: As the United States came into the Conference, as I said before, without a blueprint, the Soviet Union did have a blueprint. They were concerned with security above all, security and the possibility of a zone of influence to protect themselves, and their preoccupation with what the rest of the world thought of them. They were successful in meeting their aspirations with the countries that belonged to their world.

Now, I had special contacts with Mr. Gromyko, who was the Ambassador to the United States, and I presented my credentials about the same time as he did, so that's why when I met him there we already knew each other.

We did have one experience - and this anecdote, I think, is worth telling - at one of the first meetings we had there, one of the previous meetings presided over by Mr. Stettinius. The Russian delegation proposed that the international labour unions should become also members of the Organization. The head of my delegation from Ecuador opposed this plan, as did others, and Ecuador presented a motion that was seconded by Mexico against this proposal, saying that only nations should belong to the Organization. That was the first motion that was presented at the first meeting of any of the groups in the Organization, and Ecuador won, and Mr. Stettinius called attention to its being historically quite an event because Ecuador had won the first motion at the discussions at the formation of the United Nations. So that was our first contact with the Russians.

QUESTION: Could you mention other personalities that played a prominent role in San Francisco, in your opinion?

ANSWER: I would say that with regard to prominent roles on a personal basis there was General Smuts from South Africa, an extraordinary personality. Another person that hasn't been mentioned as much as he should is Monsieur Roland from Belgium; he played a very important role. I was on two committees, with him, Committees One and Two, and he played a very important role. General Romulo from the Philippines was outstanding. From Latin America there was Zuleta Angel. He I would say was a very juridically minded man, well oriented, well prepared and very helpful. I would say those were the outstanding characters.

QUESTION: Now, every conference goes through several stages. There are stagestages where people feel optimistic, there are stages where people feel pessimistic. Did you at any point during the Conference - you personally and most of the delegates - feel that the Conference of San Francisco might fail, that it might not be able to conclude successfully the drafting of the Charter?

ANSWER: No. No, and that was amazing, because it all happened in a way where the United States, because of the death of President Roosevelt, who had been such a leading personality, because of the problems that had come about in the State Department when Mr. Hull left and Mr. Welles left and a new team coming up, and Mr. Truman very wisely put it in the hands of the leaders of the two major parties - all this, plus the opposing interests of the Soviet Union and the rather indefinite situation of some of the European countries after their tremendous experience during the war - one would think that it would have been far more difficult to reach an understanding as far as the Charter was concerned. But it succeeded. It went to show how the world was convinced that some kind of an organization was indispensable for the peace, for security, for the future, and they found ways and means to solve the different problems, that none was unsurmountable, none. And the Charter was approved in the time that had been planned for the operation.

QUESTION: Now, if I may ask you to look back, do you feel that the Charter has over the last 38 years been able to stand the test of time, that it has really served the purposes for which it was drafted?

ANSWER: I think it has. I think it has in every way. I think when problems have failed, when international crises have appeared, it is because nations have not used the Charter; they have acted without the Organization. I have myself been a personal witness to several missions with the presence of the United Nations that have made possible a presence without being an interference. I have been a witness to many situations in which the United Nations has participated in very difficult situations successfully - successfully. I think that many other situations world-wide; if they had been handled in the same way, would have been solved successfully too. The problem is not in the Charter; many times it is the attitude of the nations. Member nations have not taken advantage of the Charter and have acted outside the Organization and have gotten themselves into problems. So I do sincerely believe that the Organization has been a success and will continue to be a success and that some of the failures outside the Organization will be a lesson to many that the next time they deal with affairs of that kind they do them within the Organization and not without.

QUESTION: Now, if I may ask you to go back and to look back as one who drafted the Charter and has since been associated with the United Nations over many years, do you feel that the Charter has been able to stand the test of time? Has it fulfilled the purposes for which it was drafted?