
Interview: General Assembly President Jorge Illueca



‘Debtor nations must coordinate their attitudes and actions’

Dr. Jorge Illueca, president of the 38th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, gave the following interview on Oct. 7, 1983 at the United Nations' headquarters in New York to Dennis Small, Executive Intelligence Review's Ibero-American Editor and to Carlos J. Wesley of EIR and Analisis magazine of Panama.

EIR: Some have identified the lack of economic and social development as one of the principal problems of world peace today. How would you analyze the problem of the foreign debt and its relation to development at this time, and in particular the proposals of institutions like the International Monetary Fund for solving this crisis?

Illueca: In the statements that I made to the General Assembly on the day of my election, I made reference to these matters you mention, which in my judgement are vital ones. There is no doubt that the fundamental concern of humanity is its aspiration to live in peace, to be able to resolve its economic and social problems, and to be able to provide for itself the elementary satisfactions that the human being needs for a dignified existence.

In recent years there has been a great battle on the part of the developing countries, the Third World, the Group of 77, to try to establish more just economic relations between the developed and the developing countries. Nevertheless, the highly developed nations have lacked the political will to enter into global negotiations, or multilateral negotiations, to put these aspirations of humanity into practice.

I do not believe that humanity must be parceled into different worlds in order to accomplish this, because this hope for development belongs to all of humanity, not just development which reaches the poor countries but also the most highly developed countries. One may note that there are important sectors of the population [of the highly developed countries], as in the case of the agricultural sector here in the United States, which are going through a serious crisis. Thus the United Nations, in harmony with its great mission, evolved its international strategy for development during the

decade of 1980. This is an aspiration which I believe is a general one, belonging to the human race and to all communities.

Nonetheless, there is a lack of political will. Political will, in my judgment, is lacking because of the rivalries among the powers, and also because of international tensions. And, as I have already said, I see a relationship between the existence of these international tensions and the lack of action in getting global negotiations for an economic recovery in the real sense under way.

Also, it is the customary language of the United Nations to speak of a direct relationship between disarmament and development. If it is the case that something on the order of \$800 billion are spent annually for weapons even a reasonable percentage of this amount were dedicated to development programs, the needs of a great majority of human communities could be satisfied.

In my judgment, one of the priorities of the member states of the United Nations should be, on the one hand, to achieve a reduction in international tensions and, on the other hand, to try to do everything possible to bring about successful negotiations for nuclear disarmament.

Every day we see the statements of great world personalities, whom we view with much respect, involved in a battle of newspaper headlines. Where our task lies is to pressure the leaders of the two superpowers, President Reagan and President Andropov, to sit down at a table, not to repeat what one has already said and reject what the other has said, but rather to say: We have before us a serious responsibility and solutions must be negotiated. Because one must realize that nuclear war can only be won if it prevents it from ever beginning, because there is no future for humanity in that.

EIR: Several innovative options for ending the “balance of nuclear terror” under which humanity lives have been proposed. Last August, several of the most eminent scientists of the United States, the Soviet Union, and Europe met in Erice,

Italy, and in a joint communiqué declared: "We propose to establish a joint European-U.S.-U.S.S.R. investigative group for collaborative study to . . . find a way out of the present balance of terror; and, in particular, to determine if it is possible to conceive of a new defense system against nuclear destruction." Do you think that such collaboration between the superpowers could contribute to the reduction of the danger of a thermonuclear conflagration?

Illueca: Let us clarify one point of your question: There is no possible "defense" against nuclear destruction. What is decisive and necessary is to avoid the use of any nuclear weapon whatsoever. Hence the urgency that the great powers reach an accord that puts them and, as a result, the rest of humanity, out of the danger of this horrendous possibility. As for the final part of your question, I must tell you that such collaboration can not only contribute to, but is the decisive way of halting, the danger of a thermonuclear conflagration.

EIR: Is the problem of foreign debt an obstacle to the development of peoples? What connection do you see between this debt and national sovereignty?

Illueca: We know this problem very well in the developing countries, and for us the closest example is that of the region to which I belong, Latin America. In a certain way, all kinds of stimuli and incentives were offered to the countries to get into debt, including for some kinds of projects which were not even the highest priority projects for their respective populations. And in effect the loan contracts contain a series of clauses [about] which I would dare to say that, in one way or another, they interfere with the countries' sovereignty.

The indebtedness has reached such a serious level that in recent years it has become an obligatory topic at the meetings of the Group of 77, and also the meetings of the Non-Aligned countries, the Third World countries. Nor have the forums of the United Nations been free from the discussion of this topic.

You mentioned the International Monetary Fund, which was created more as an institution to help stabilize the finances of countries. But it turns out that, in the face of the gravity of the situation, its resources have not been sufficient. It is necessary then that the countries with greater financial capabilities strengthen these institutions, such as the Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and that such institutions be modernized to respond to the needs of our time.

But there is definitely a direct relationship between debt and sovereignty. The countries in need have had to enter into a series of contracts which, presumably, have met all the constitutional and legal formalities of each country. However, as the situation has deteriorated, all kinds of conflicts have arisen and situations have come to light that are not the most useful, I would say, to try to find a real solution to the problem.

I think that in Latin America, for example, an effort is being made—and this was mentioned here by President Hur-

tado of Ecuador, President Betancur of Colombia, and also at the summit which took place here at the initiative of the prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi—to stress the necessity for these countries, either at the regional or world level, above all the indebted countries, to coordinate their efforts; not so much to achieve collective negotiations, because we know that is very difficult, but at least to coordinate their attitudes and actions.

EIR: One of the problems that most affect world peace, and where it is most in danger, is in Central America. What is your opinion of the situation there, especially in view of the setting up of Condeca, the Central American Defense Council?

Illueca: Because of the very position that I presently occupy, the presidency of the Assembly, and furthermore because my country is a member of the Contadora Group, I wish to be not only objective but very prudent in what I say to you.

In the North American press itself, in very reputable dailies, we have seen in the past few days information indicating that there is indeed a very serious situation in Central America, which is worrisome because, of course, it threatens international peace and security.

Now, the fundamental mission of the United Nations is to maintain international peace and security. Part of the institutional crisis of the United Nations—and this is not to say that the United Nations is not really an organization of fundamental importance for humanity's existence—but part of this institutional crisis is due to the fact that member countries are not using the mechanisms that the founders of the U.N. created to maintain the peace. The problems, both of Central America, and the Middle East, and those of southern Africa, to cite a few, should be resolved within those mechanisms of the United Nations. But, the resolutions of the Security Council and the resolutions of the Assembly—of course those of the Council are obligatory and compulsive, and those of the Assembly are recommendations—are not being heeded.

In Central America, the mission of Contadora has been fundamentally that of presenting options to seek political solutions, negotiated solutions, not solutions which were the result of a military imposition, or a military victory. I believe that any solution on the basis of a military imposition is not lasting, that what it does is sow seeds of rancor, hatred, and resentments, which sooner or later will come to the surface. I don't want to refer to particular countries, but one only has to examine on the Central American map the history of the last 30 years to realize that situations which were the result of military impositions had no lasting effect, because they always arose again with greater intensity.

We have to appeal to all parties in the Central American conflict, in the region as well as outside the region, to make efforts to find a solution within the order of law, within the principles of the United Nations, and within the principles which here on the American continent have been considered the traditional bulwarks of democratic coexistence.