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Morales Carrión Speaks

MAN ALSO LIVES BY BREAD

Economic Progress is Necessary for the Development of Human Resources

Punta del Este, August 14, 1961. (Special for El Día.)

Arturo Morales Carrión, member of the United States Delegation to the Special Meeting of the IA ECOSOC at Punta del Este, is one of a number of Puerto Ricans appointed by President John F. Kennedy to high posts in his Administration. He is a specific example of the special interest in Latin American felt by the present Government of the United States, an interest, as Mr. Morales explained to us, that dates back to the election period. In fact, during his campaign for the presidency Mr. Kennedy repeatedly announced his purpose of giving new life to inter-American relations and after his election one of his first acts was to appoint an advisory committee on this matter. That committee worked under the chairmanship of Adolph Berle, and three members of the United States Delegation to this conference were members of it: Mr. Morales Carrión himself, Dr. Lincoln Gordon, and Richard Goodwin, who at present is on President Kennedy's staff of advisers.

"In the report," Mr. Morales Carrión told us, "we tried to incorporate the ideals of the Act of Bogotá and of three inter-American conferences in which ways and means were sought to give strong impetus to the social and economic development of Latin America. In his now famous speech of March 13, delivered before the Latin American Ambassadors in Washington, President Kennedy proposed the Alliance for Progress plan, which is based on the report in question and which reflects his sincere and profound personal interest in the problems of the Hemisphere. That interest has certainly been demonstrated in many other ways, such as the numerous missions which our Government has sent to South America to discuss various matters of common interest, and the great number of personal interviews which President Kennedy has held at the White House with prominent Latin Americans."

Legislative Support

"Can it be assured that the Congress of the United States will support the Chief Executive's foreign policy with respect to Latin America?" we asked him.

"Yes, of course. A highly sympathetic feeling exists in the United States Congress with respect to Latin America's social and economic development. There is also the desire that the peoples and governments of Latin America themselves be the ones to determine the changes that must be made to attain a higher state of well-being for all. The greatest concern of the Congress is that the financial assistance offered to Latin America, regardless of what kind it is, should effectively reach the most needy. Naturally, this presents a problem that we cannot resolve. The answer lies in Latin America, and it has much to do with the mobilization of public opinion in favor of economic and social progress."

"The task of developing the human and material resources of Latin America," continued Mr. Morales Carrión, "embraces all elements of the community. Although, indeed, at the beginning, in the planning of projects, the work of the technicians must naturally predominate, all the forces that help to form and direct public opinion must make themselves felt in the implementation of those plans. Only in this way, will it be possible to inspire the people and awaken their enthusiasm to cooperate effectively in the great task of raising their own standards of living."

Economics and Culture

"It is a mistake to conceive of this program as something limited exclusively to the realm of the economists. In Latin America we have a tendency to underestimate material problems, in line with the saying that 'Man does not live by bread alone.' But it must be remembered that man does also live by bread; in other words, to achieve full development of his spiritual potentialities, man first must have bread for himself and his family. One of the basic motivations of the Alliance for Progress is the desire to provide maximum opportunity for the talents of Latin America, without restrictions of any kind. Fundamentally, it concerns a great investment in the human resources of the Hemisphere. Let us think, for example, of how many scientists, how many artists, how many philosophers are lost to society in those unfortunate countries where there are high rates of infant mortality. We cannot continue to waste that wealth of human values."

"Can the example of Puerto Rico be cited to illustrate the influence of economic progress on culture?"

"Puerto Rico is not seeking to be a model for anyone. Each country must solve its problems according to its own circumstances. But there is no doubt that Puerto Rico can be held up as an example of a process of rapid social change running parallel to an increase in income and a broad spread of the wealth among all levels of the population. Since 1947, which marked the beginning of Operation Bootstrap, designed to attract industries and create sources of employment in Puerto Rico, the improvement in economic conditions has been reflected in a genuine flowering of culture. Today the University of Puerto Rico has prestige throughout the Hemisphere, and so does the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. There is an intensive theatre, literary, art, and musical movement; in this connection it will be sufficient to recall the Casals Festival, which is held annually under the direction of the celebrated Catalan violoncellist. Folklore and handicrafts have been revived and a new architecture is burgeoning. It may even be said that there is a resurgence of Puerto Rico's great historic tradition, through a project now under way for the reconstruction of the old city of San Juan. Relics of the Spanish colonial period (fortresses, churches, and private homes) are being restored, the idea being that before long old San Juan will become a museum city showing exactly how a Spanish city of the 17th century looked."

The final words of Arturo Morales Carrión about the Alliance for Progress were as follows:

"The Government of the United States is keeping itself alert to the economic and social problems of Latin America and it is ready to cooperate with technical and financial assistance. The hope in the United States is that Latin America will make a great effort to help itself, carrying out the indispensable basic reforms needed to achieve the greatest possible development of its material and human resources during the next ten years."