

FAST FRAME-UP



Alameda Street scene: Corten-finned tower rising behind space-framed conference complex

Chile has good cause to be proud of its new 39 000 m² conference centre in Santiago. Not only is it a splendid building, but it was erected in just eleven months.

The reason for the hurry was that Chile had agreed to be host in early April 1972 to the third United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, but had nowhere suitable to house 2 500 delegates. Also the programme for the new building was not completed until the end of April 1971.

But now it exists, known by the name UNCTAD, the initials of the conference which spawned it. It stands

in such a key position, facing the principal street — the Alameda Bernardo O'Higgins — that most of the current big political demonstrations seem to occur in front of or near it.

Eric Hogsbawn could probably explain this fact; though it could never have been part of the original intention when it was decided that the building be conceived as a symbol of the UP Government's decision to make culture available to the people.

It is a very striking building complex — notable for the massive Corten steel space-frame roof floating over the main building, independently supported on free-standing columns, and providing shelter all round.

Set back underneath are the steel-clad conference rooms. Two floors of the building are below ground, three above.

The front is broken by a great ceremonial entrance plaza topped by a stained glass skylight. Access is from here to all levels; up wide stairs to the main conference level; straight ahead to the lower conference level; right through to the other side of the building; and (one day in the dim future) down to a Metro station.

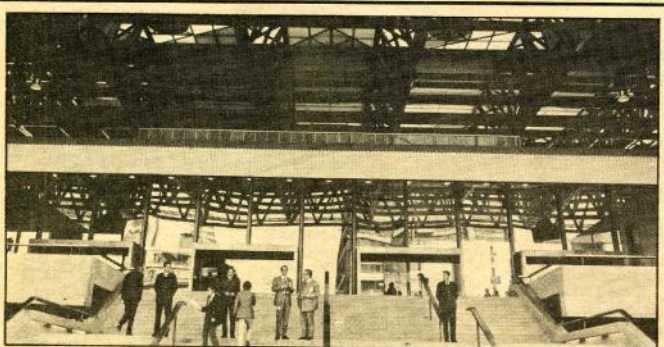
In a quiet, carefully-landscaped plaza behind the conference building, and connected to it by a three-level service bridge, stands the UNCTAD tower secretariat — originally designed



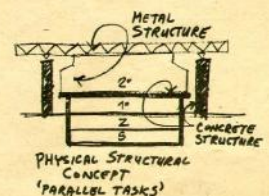
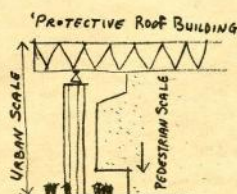
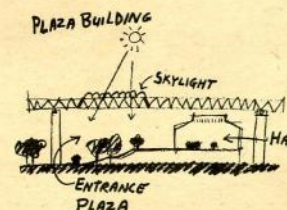
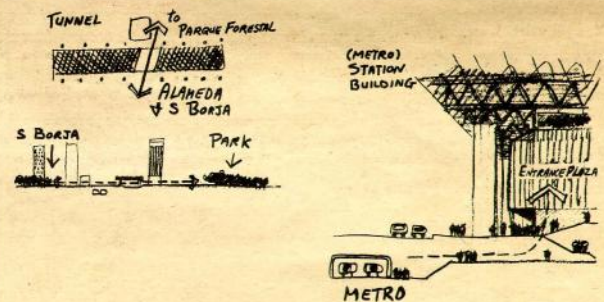
With the wrapping still on — the main conference hall has Chilean furniture and fittings



Main conference lobby looks like airports should: simple volumes; large-scale decorations



Atop the stairs and under the space frame is the full ceremony of main conference hall



Sketching the UNCTAD tower and conference buildings into downtown Santiago setting

IN CHILE

as a block of flats (President Allende has a pied-à-terre at the top) but incorporated into the scheme to save time and money.

A concrete structure, the tower has a Corten steel brise-soleil covering all its faces. Visually it is a pity that this was not carried right to the ground instead of stopping at the fifth floor.

Speed of erection being essential, the design of the main building enabled the contractor to work on three separate "fronts" at once: the steel roof; the concrete structure up to first-floor level; and the conference floors in prefabricated dry-construction with metal panels on shaped steel supports resting on the concrete slab

and suspended from the roof.

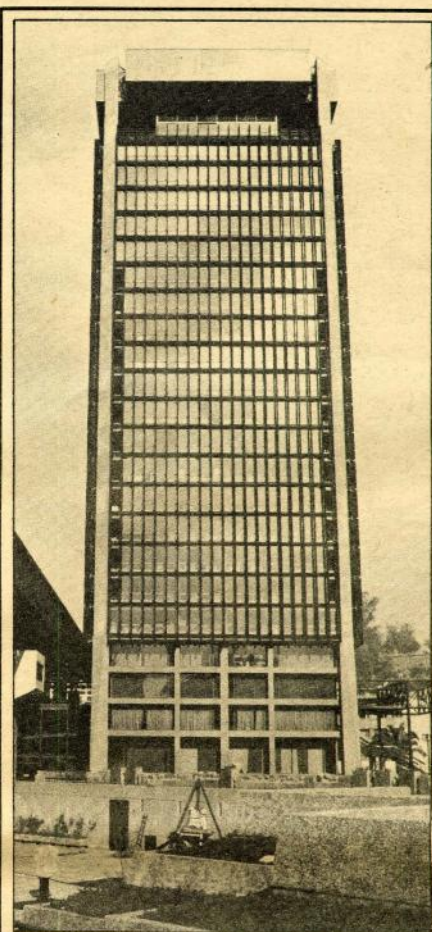
The site is about 200 m long by 50 m deep. The designers had to consider the relation of a multi-functional building to the Alameda, to the newly-developing San Borja area south of the Alameda, and to the city itself which is planning an underground railway under the length of the Alameda. The city also wanted a north-south parkway link established with the existing park to the north and, across the river, the hill San Cristobal which is a national park.

Chile is a poor country with dwindling resources. Not much external economic assistance was forthcoming for the UNCTAD

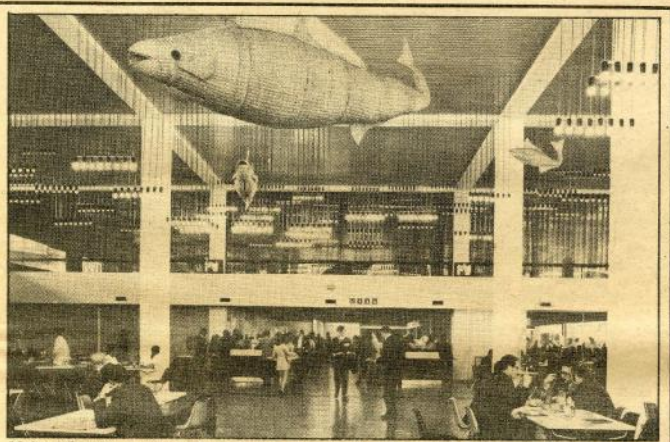
buildings. Yet they were built (according to Sergio Gonzalez, one of the architects) for less per square metre (including air-conditioning and all furnishing) than the new blocks of middle-income flats immediately opposite.

Architects: José Covacevich, Juan Echeñique, Hugo Gaggero, Sergio González and José Medina; **consulting architects for the tower:** Alberto Sandoval, Alberto Vives and Francisco Decolomansy; **structural engineers:** Carlos Sandoz, Miguel Sandoz and Omega Ingeniería de Proyectos; **structural engineers for the tower:** Asto, Cofré y De la Cerda and Alfonso Salinas; **artistic consultant:** Eduardo Martínez Bonatti; **furnishing:** Carlos Garretón; **contractor:** Desco SA; **contractor for the tower:** Belli

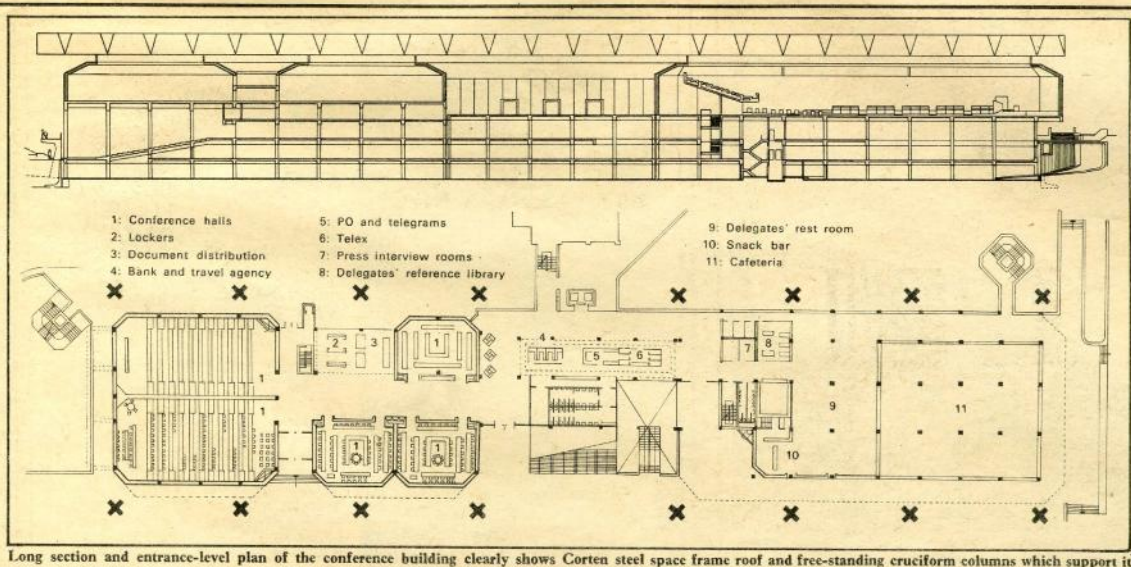
Only one problem arose when Chile agreed to host the April 1972 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development — there was nowhere suitable to house the 2 500 delegates. Undeterred, the Chileans built a 39 000 m² conference centre in the record time of 11 months and built it for less per m² than the middle income flats it faces



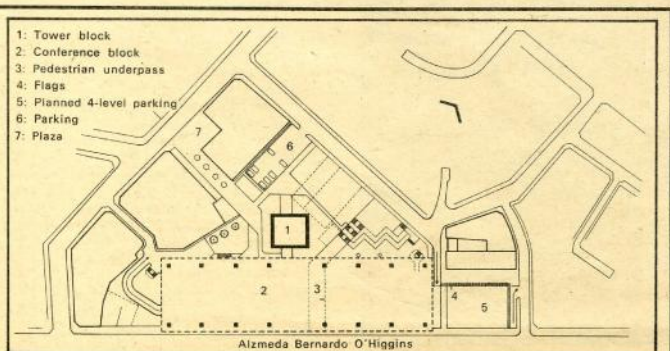
Tower is russet-clay tiled where brise-soleil stop short



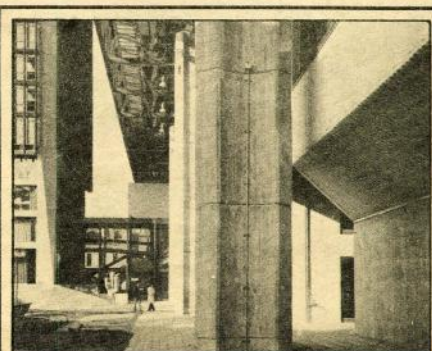
Main cafeteria: a simply framed area stalactited with myriad lights and flights of fish



Long section and entrance-level plan of the conference building clearly shows Corten steel space frame roof and free-standing cruciform columns which support it



Site plan for a 39 000 m² complex of buildings constructed in record time of 11 months

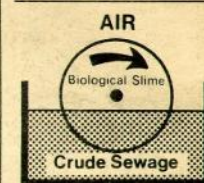


Down scale three-level link joins tower to conference centre

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