



**HAL**  
open science

# Chilean Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Internationalisms: An Entangled History (1927–1940s)

Juliette Dumont

► **To cite this version:**

Juliette Dumont. Chilean Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Internationalisms: An Entangled History (1927–1940s). Culture as Soft Power: Bridging Cultural Relations, Intellectual Cooperation, and Cultural Diplomacy, edited by Carbó-Catalan, Elisabet and Roig Sanz, Diana., De Gruyter, pp.99-120, 2022, 9783110744040. 10.1515/9783110744552-005 . halshs-03761757

**HAL Id: halshs-03761757**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03761757>**

Submitted on 30 Dec 2022

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.



Distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial - NoDerivatives 4.0 International License

Juliette Dumont

# Chilean Cultural Diplomacy and Cultural Internationalisms: An Entangled History (1927–1940s)

In 1940, Chilean diplomat Francisco Walker Linares argued that, “intellectual cooperation is, by nature, international as well as national; its generous aims, which tend to make culture a heritage of humanity, are not incompatible with the mission of exalting local spiritual values” (Hernandez, Walker Linares 1940, 15). He thus highlighted the interconnections between the disinterested and long-term objectives of international cultural relations and the more concrete objectives of policies aimed at serving the interests (cultural, but also commercial and diplomatic) of the state.

The emergence of Argentinian, Brazilian and Chilean cultural diplomacy in the interwar period was closely correlated to the institutionalisation of what was then called “intellectual cooperation” (Dumont 2018). With the creation of the International Organisation for Intellectual Cooperation,<sup>1</sup> under the aegis of the League of Nations, and the transformation of the Education Section (which had existed since 1917) of the Pan-American Union into the Division of Intellectual Cooperation, led to the establishment of structures, networks and practices that these three countries, considered peripheral, mobilised to make their voices heard in the concert of nations and to make their names known to public opinion in other countries. Although Argentina, Brazil and Chile began to set up their cultural diplomacy at the end of the 1920s, it was during the 1930s that they were really consolidated their positions and begun to participate in a dynamic that saw nationalisms – defined by Daniel Laqua (2018, 60) as “a belief in the existence and importance of nationhood” – and cultural internationalisms fuel one another (Iriye 1997; Sluga 2013; Laqua 2018). If internationalism refers to “an idea, movement or institution that seeks to reformulate the nature of relations between nations through transnational cooperation and exchange,” then cultural internationalism is “the promotion of international cooperation through cultural

---

**1** This article focuses on the International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC, established in Geneva in 1922) and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), which was founded in Paris in 1926.

---

**Note:** The Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur les Amériques (CREDA) financed the translation of this chapter.

activities across national boundaries” through “exchanges of ideas and people, through academic cooperation, or through efforts to facilitate transnational understanding” (Iriye 1997, 3).

The Chilean case is of particular interest insofar as its cultural diplomacy best illustrates how, in Latin America, Geneva internationalism and Pan-Americanism were intertwined in a history that played out as much on the regional as on the continental and international level. This article thus argues that Santiago de Chile may not have rivalled the great cultural capitals of the time (Paris, London, and New York), but nonetheless can be considered an active centre of the cultural internationalism that unfolded in the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s. At the foot of the Andes Mountains, Santiago became a meeting point during this troubled period for (Latin) Americans and Europeans in a synthesis of the Old and New Worlds. To do this, Chileans had to make their country known to the outside world and to demonstrate how Chile was both unique and universal.

To this end, the first two sections of this chapter highlight the structures and actors involved in Chilean cultural diplomacy, while the third is devoted to the main instrument of cultural diplomacy during this period: educational exchanges. This analysis covers the late 1920s to the end of the Second World War and is based on sources from the Chilean Ministry of External Relations, held at the Archive Centre of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (La Courneuve) and at La Contemporaine (Nanterre), and on publications by the Chilean Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, available at the Biblioteca Nacional de Chile and the Archivo Andrés Bello (University of Chile), as well as the archives of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), held at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

## **1 The New Deal of the Chilean “Diplomatic Machinery”**

### **1.1 Reforming and Modernising Chile’s Diplomacy**

1927 marked a turning point in the history of the Chilean Ministry of External Relations and of the Chilean “diplomatic machinery” (Frank 2003). Conrado Ríos Gallardo, then head of the Ministry, promulgated an “Organic Statute of the Ministry” that established the Foreign Service School and the Information Service. At the same time, 30 circulars were sent to personnel posted abroad to inform all Chilean diplomatic actors. Circular No. 14, dated 25 March 1927, specified what was expected of a diplomat posted abroad, emphasising the professional and not just

honorary nature of the position of foreign representative and, above all, insisting on the role of culture and its actors in building a positive image on the international stage:

The Chilean diplomat must understand that his usual environment is not only the narrow circle of the high social classes which may have constituted the ordinary sphere of his personal relations in other times. The sociability of a country, and consequently the various environments in which effective diplomatic action must be carried out, must be known and approached in its richest, most interesting and significant aspects. It is therefore essential for the diplomat to make himself known and appreciated by intellectuals, university professors, writers, artists, press people, in short, by all the elements that have an influence in the formation of public opinion. In this way, it will be easy to rectify the false or biased ideas that are being circulated to discredit our country.

In the spirit that inspires the actions of the Government, it is also my duty to suggest to diplomatic agents that they extend their activity to ever wider circles. Chile needs its representatives to penetrate very deeply into the soul of the peoples where they are in office, and for this reason it is recommended that they familiarise themselves with the centres of culture, artistic and literary circles, the great workers' organisations, scientific and sporting institutions. To all these bodies, which are generally ignored by Chilean diplomats, we wish to provide an accurate knowledge of what Chile is, and to draw from them useful ideas that will nourish reciprocal experience and make it possible to consolidate and understand the good relations that our country wishes to maintain with all peoples. (Van Buren 1991, 72–73)

In this text, the establishment of networks, solid social contacts and a working knowledge of the host country appear as the pivot of all diplomatic activity – the basis upon which foreign policy objectives can be achieved. The emphasis placed on the world of culture as the best vehicle for conveying “the exact knowledge of what Chile is” undoubtedly constituted a paradigm shift in the way diplomatic action was conceived. Conrado Ríos Gallardo, a former journalist, was thus part of an international movement of “open diplomacy,” born in the aftermath of the First World War, in which chancelleries were no longer the only places of action, but should “follow with the greatest attention all the movements of public opinion and discover all the great currents of popular instinct and national feeling.”<sup>2</sup> This emergence of a Chilean cultural diplomacy

---

<sup>2</sup> Parliamentary report nr. 6339 for the 1919 budget, by Raiberti, 19/06/1918 (Vaisse 1985, 146–147).

demonstrates that the incorporation of culture into the international agenda was not only a matter for central and globally powerful states.

According to Mario Barros Van Buren, this reform was also part of a modernisation of the Chilean state, in which existing structures were adapted to a new and changing world, with a new foreign policy marked by the seal of internationalism – an internationalism “that sought to strengthen national identity, creating the conditions for internal peace and peace with its neighbours, so as to be able to act in the international arena without the fear of being absorbed by [a] great power” (Van Buren 1984, 41).

## 1.2 The Information Mission and its Instruments

In order to engage in this internationalism, the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs implemented a systematic information policy about Chile by providing Chilean diplomatic missions with appropriate informational material. The ambitious objectives of Information Service were described in the pages of the magazine *Chile*, published by the Ministry since 1925: “It contributes to raising the name and the idea of the nation in definitive and reliable terms, destroying at once the erroneous and biased judgments that have been maintained by an old inertia linked to indifference, which fortunately no longer exists.”<sup>3</sup> To carry out this informational mission, the Section sent out newspapers, publications from various ministries, university and scientific publications, and newsletters reporting on the activities of various ministries and public bodies. Officials in the Ministry of External Relations also produced material, including “synoptic brochures” published in Spanish, English, French and German that covered “all the economic, cultural and social aspects of the country” and were “based on perfectly accurate figures,” to be distributed “widely”.<sup>4</sup> It was the responsibility of diplomatic agents to select the most interesting information, translate it and ensure that it was published in the media outlets of their host country. Two magazines, *Chile* and *Información Económica de Chile*,<sup>5</sup> completed the informational package.

---

3 *Chile. Boletín consular del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, año III, vol. 3, nr. 43, September 1928, 31.

4 “La propaganda del país en el extranjero”, *Chile. Boletín consular del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, año III, vol. 3, nr. 43, September 1928, 12.

5 The latter was also published in English as the *Monthly Economic Survey of Chile*.

*Chile* was presented as a “national organ of economic expansion” and as the “consular bulletin of the Ministry of External Relations.” It predated the reform of the Information Service, which, from 1927 onwards, lent it “firm moral support.” The magazine was conceived as a means to regularly draw up a complete panorama of Chile:

In its pages, all the national activities, magnificently illustrated, pass by in a pleasant and varied way, from those related to mining, industrial, agricultural and commercial activities, the foundation of the economic progress of the peoples, to those related to intellectual and spiritual fermentations and which reside in the field of science and letters where we count literary values that stand out in the world intelligence of the nations.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to note that the magazine circulated not only abroad but also inside Chile,<sup>7</sup> aimed at both a Chilean and a foreign audience, underlining the fact that foreign policy is always conceived for internal as well as external purposes. In the case of Chile, as for other Latin American countries in the 1920s and the 1930s, the process of creating “an identity for the outside world” occurred concurrently with the (re)definition of national identity (Dumont 2018).

### 1.3 Promoting a Modern and Authentic Nation

The magazine pages devoted to the Chilean pavilion at the Ibero-American Exhibition in Seville (1929) reveal the image of Chile that cultural diplomacy actors wished to project abroad:

Over there, the Chilean pavilion with its three floors and a tower, harmoniously evoking the glories of the past and the impulses of progress, between massive, arrogant walls, decorated by the brush and chisel of our artists. Looking at the façade, the main entrance appears, with a stylised stone condor on the pediment, which seems to symbolise the majesty of our mountain range. This façade, with its sober profiles in the style of America, is a dominant motif. And this sturdy base, also made of dark stone, stands out clearly

---

<sup>6</sup> Archives of the Chilean Ministry of External Relations (ACMER), *Memorias*, 1927, 629.

<sup>7</sup> “It circulates widely in the Ministries, in the National Congress and in the Official Services; in the Legations and Consulates, in the Chambers of Commerce, in the Industrial and Financial Companies; in the Libraries, in the Hotels, in the Steamboat Companies, in the Railroads; among the merchants, the Importers, the Exporters, the Farmers and in the main magazines and daily newspapers of the Republic and abroad.” (ACMER, *Memorias*, 1927, 628).

against the fresh luminosity of these simple walls that embrace the sky with our country tiles.<sup>8</sup>

Past and future, modernity and tradition, “*americanidad*” and “*chilenidad*,” art and nature: these were the themes that the architecture and decoration of the Chilean pavilion were expected to highlight. In the wake of the intense debates on national identity that emerged during the commemorations of the Centenaries of Independence and intensified following the rupture sparked by the First World War, the Seville exhibition was an opportunity for Chile, as for other Latin American countries, to present itself to the outside world in a way that did not imitate Europe (Compagnon 2014), but revealed a Chile that was attractive to foreign investors, importers and potential qualified candidates for emigration. It was also hoped that “Chile would not only be represented by its participation in this international event, but would also be embodied” (Dümmer Scheel 2010, 89). Indeed, both the organisers and the Chilean press argued that the pavilion symbolised the “national soul” and brought something “truly [Chilean],” “completely intimate and indigenous” to Seville (Dümmer Scheel 2012, 3).

The emphasis placed on the dissemination of economic information in the Chilean information campaigns was mirrored in the material produced by the Argentinian government (Dumont 2016): It was of vital importance for both countries, their economies highly dependent on the export of raw materials, to publicise their production and demonstrate the efficiency and innovation of their infrastructure and institutions. The materials also reveal an insistence on the truthfulness of the information provided: In the game of promoting itself on the world stage, Chile presented itself as a country that did not put on a show, but played the transparency card, thus constructing a specific image of itself for the outside world, but also, as in the pages *Chile* and its multiple audience, both internal and external, for its own citizens.

Ultimately, the world economic crisis and the political upheavals that shook the Chilean political scene in 1931 and 1932 undermined the country’s international ambitions. The 1929 crisis had a lasting effect on the finances of the Chilean state and thus on the budget allocated to foreign policy. The Information Service suffered significant staff cuts and was threatened with closure. There is no mention of the Service in the 1932 *Memorias* and only very brief ones in those of 1933 and 1934, except to mention the lack of resources. Only in 1936 was the question of information on Chile mentioned again, before the Service reappeared in 1937 as the Information and Propaganda Service.

---

<sup>8</sup> Luis Harding Carrasco, “El pabellón chileno en Sevilla”, *Chile. Boletín consular del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, año III, vol. 3, nr. 43, September 1928, 43.

## 2 Chile at the Crossroads of (Latin) America and Europe: A Meeting of Cultural Diplomacy and Internationalisms

### 2.1 The Chilean Commission of Intellectual Cooperation or the Intersection of the League of Nations and the Pan-American System

In the 1943 *Memorias*, reference was made to “the importance finally acquired by international activities of intellectual cooperation” which “placed a greater responsibility on [the] Section” and to “the thirst for cultural progress which animates the peoples of the whole world,<sup>9</sup>” which mainly took place at that time within the Pan-American framework. That being said, the history of Chilean cultural diplomacy was also closely linked to intellectual cooperation promoted from Geneva (ICIC) and Paris (IIIC).

In September 1923, the Council and Assembly of the League of Nations passed resolutions to encourage the creation of national commissions in countries wishing to participate in the work of the ICIC. The aim was both to make relations with each country more effective and to encourage the organisation of intellectual life by promoting bilateral and multilateral relations. As early as 1925, Chile showed an interest in intellectual cooperation as it was being established in Geneva and then in Paris. Emilio Belo Codecido, President of the Chilean Delegation to the Sixth Assembly, argued that, “Chile attaches great importance to the work of the Commission on Intellectual Cooperation, which is now taking on greater importance thanks to the generous contribution of the French government, which has made possible the creation in Paris of the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation.”<sup>10</sup> In his speech, Emilio Bello Codecido pointed to the aspects of intellectual cooperation that were of particular interest to Chile: inter-university relations, student and professorial exchanges, and educational reforms. These aspects were therefore at the heart of Chilean interest in the Organisation of Intellectual Cooperation (OIC) in 1925, but also, as we shall see, at the centre of the activities of the Chilean Commission for Intellectual Cooperation. This commission was, however, not created until 1930; until that year, as in the majority of Latin American states, Chilean participation at the OCI was limited to the

---

<sup>9</sup> ACMER, *Memorias*, 1943, 892.

<sup>10</sup> Archives of the UNESCO (AUN), A III 46, Report by Francisco Walker Linares presented to the Ministry of Public Education and the University of Chile to promote the creation of a Chilean commission, June 1930.



appointment of a delegate – usually a diplomat already in post in Paris or in Europe<sup>11</sup> – to the IIIC.

The constitution of the Chilean Commission for Intellectual Cooperation (CCIC) was a two-stage story, closely linked to the trajectory of Chilean national history. The first steps were taken by Francisco Walker Linares,<sup>12</sup> Chile's delegate to the League's Secretariat, who sent a report to the Ministry of Public Education and to the University of Chile in June 1930, in which he described the work of the OIC and the IIIC and advocated for the creation of a Chilean commission:

It is essential that a National Commission for Intellectual Cooperation be created in Chile in order to bring the intellectual community of our country into contact with the outside world and thus make our literary, artistic and scientific production known beyond our borders; this will enable us to break our isolation, to combat ignorance about our culture and, in the academic and educational fields, to participate in the inter-university work established by the IIIC in Paris.<sup>13</sup>

In an article on 24 June 1930 announcing the constitution of a Chilean commission, the author described the steps taken by Walker Linares and pointed out that the Dean of the Faculty of Law, who had attended the (Pan American) Congress of Deans and Rectors of Havana (1930) as a delegate for the University of Chile, was analysing the implementation of the principles adopted at the 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-American Conference (Havana, 1928) in the field of intellectual cooperation.<sup>14</sup> He concluded: "This double action in the field of International Cooperation can only have the best effects and Chile welcomes the efforts being made in this direction."<sup>15</sup> It was thus under the dual auspices of Genevan internationalism and Pan-Americanism that the CCIC was born. In a speech given in 1940, Juvenal Hernández, rector of the University of Chile from 1933 to 1953, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Commission declared that,

---

**11** The first Chilean delegate was Joaquín Edwards Bello (1926–1927), a member of the Chilean Delegation to the General Assembly of the League of Nations. Gabriela Mistral, a member of the commission in charge of the Ibero-American collection launched by the IIIC, replaced him in 1927. Her duties as consul of Chile in France, Italy and Spain from 1932 onwards left her little time to dedicate herself to the work of the IIIC.

**12** On Francisco Walker Linares, see Wehrli 2013.

**13** AUN, A III 46, Report by Francisco Walker Linares presented to the Ministry of Public Education and the University of Chile to promote the creation of a Chilean commission, June 1930.

**14** This conference precipitated the foundation of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History and a resolution for the proposed creation of an Inter-American Institute of Intellectual Cooperation. On this –failed– project, see Dumont (2015).

**15** AUN III 46, Translation and summary of an article published in *El Mercurio*, 24/06/1930.

Following the same principles as those of the IIIC, our commission hopes to make its contribution to the construction of a common consciousness among the 21 brother peoples; it seeks to eliminate the obstacles that stand in the way of mutual understanding, to lay the foundations of an education inspired by Americanism, to erect everywhere monuments that remind future generations of the common heritage of the race [. . .]. (Hernandez, Walker Linares 1940, 11)

Here, as on other occasions, Juvenal Hernández took up the rhetoric of commonality specific to Pan-Americanism. This internationalism, which Richard Candida-Smith defines as “an unstable synthesis of utopian ideals and the rise of the United States as a world power” (2017, 3), underwent a “cultural turn” with, on the one hand, the transformation of the Education Section of the Pan American Union into the Division of Intellectual Cooperation in 1928, and on the other hand, the Good Neighbour Diplomacy launched by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which was intent on building a solid basis for continental solidarity in the face of the rising perils in Europe. In this dual movement, Latin Americans were far from passive and participated fully in making intellectual cooperation and cultural exchanges an essential part of the Pan-American agenda (Dumont 2020, 2022), culminating in the adoption of the “Convention for the Promotion of Inter-American Cultural Relations” in 1936 at the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Peace (Buenos Aires), one of 21 resolutions and recommendations on the subject of intellectual cooperation.

The 1930s were thus for Chile, as for the other Latin American countries, a decade marked by the entanglement of two cultural internationalisms during which some tried to create a synthesis of regionalism and universalism. Chile is perhaps the most successful example of this process, welcoming not only the First Inter-American Conference of American National Commissions in 1939 but also the first regional conference of the International Labour Office in 1936 (Plata-Stengler 2015).

## 2.2 Rebirth and Expansion of the CCIC

The CCIC was however not able to expand its activities due to the political, social and economic situation in Chile. Only in September 1935 was a meeting held, during which the University of Chile, and its activities in the direction of an intellectual rapprochement with other Latin American countries, was placed at the centre of the re-founding of the CCIC – as can be seen in the list of participants, the majority of whom were linked to the University. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs nonetheless remained a central player, as its contribution constituted the bulk of the commission’s budget. The CCIC also received occasional subsidies

from the Ministry of Education and “permanent assistance” from the University, which produced its publications, provided conference rooms and a working room that served as its headquarters.<sup>16</sup> The commission was chaired by Juvenal Hernández and managed by an executive committee made up of the pedagogue Amanda Labarca, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a representative of the Ministry of Public Education, a member of the Rotary Club, and a general secretary (Francisco Walker Linares).

Several documents emphasise the autonomy of the commission; the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of Foreign Relations in no way signified its instrumentalisation by the government: its activities were “inspired by the great ideals of intellectual cooperation” and it was the responsibility of the commission “to coordinate the work of intellectuals, to publicise it, to support it and to encourage it by all the means at its disposal.”<sup>17</sup> While the aim, as with any commission for intellectual cooperation, was to “establish contacts and coordinate the country’s various cultural activities, to create spiritual links with the outside world, to make Chilean culture known abroad and foreign cultures known in Chile” (CCIC 1953, 5), the interweaving of the disinterested aims of intellectual cooperation and national interests was nonetheless apparent. The CCIC became not only a cog in the wheel of international and inter-American intellectual cooperation, but also a real “centralising department of national culture” (CCIC 1953, 14). For this purpose, it could rely, from December 1935, on the Office of Intellectual Cooperation created by the University of Chile, whose main function was to serve as an interlocutor for all those, individuals or organisations, Chilean or foreign, who requested information on the country’s cultural activities.

## 2.3 The Work of the CCIC: An Abundance of Activity at Multiple Levels

The CCIC quickly became the heart of a group of organisations dedicated to intellectual cooperation. Thus, in 1937, the Institute of Higher International Studies was founded under its authority, whose aim was “the disinterested study of problems of international interest” and the participation in the Permanent

---

<sup>16</sup> In 1939, its budget was \$81,178, with the Department of External Relations contributing \$75,000. (Comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual 1939, 24–25).

<sup>17</sup> AUN, A III 46, undated, “La comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual”, Informe colectivo del Comité ejecutivo de la comisión de cooperación intelectual.

Conference of Higher International Studies. The CCIC also founded autonomous institutes to develop cultural relations between Chile and many countries in Latin America, as well as Europe.<sup>18</sup>

This group of organisations engaged in a plethora of activities, on a national, inter-American and international scale, recorded in a number of the reports and publications already mentioned, as well as the *Boletín Bimestral*, published by the commission from 1937 onwards, which noted all the facts of any cultural significance: the creation of libraries, the organisation of new scientific, literary or artistic institutions, the renewal of their management; a chronicle of art exhibitions; a summary of the conferences held during the six-month period; the mention of journalists, writers, artists and scientists who visit our country; a bibliography and many other sections whose aim is to provide other peoples with a panorama of our culture. In other sections, mention is made of facts relating to American intellectual life and documents relating to international cooperation are inserted.<sup>19</sup>

This bulletin was sent to other national commissions for intellectual cooperation, Chilean and foreign personalities, and various cultural, scientific and academic institutions, both in Chile and abroad. The Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs also delivered it to its embassies, legations and consulates.

All of this documentation shows that the Americas, and in particular South America, were the prime audience for the CCIC's activities, even if it took to heart its relations with the institutions of intellectual cooperation in Geneva and Paris. Its main achievement, in connection with the IIC, was the organisation, in January 1939, of the First Inter-American Conference of American National Commissions. This initiative, which the Commission accompanied with *Entretiens* on the theme of "America's cultural mission as a factor of peace," revealed a desire to appear as the link between Europe and America, thus reinforcing its moral prestige in the eyes of neighbouring countries (Dumont, 2019).

In a book published in 1953 that reviewed the work of the CCIC, the author argued that the Commission and its Office constituted the centre of the Chilean intellectual cooperation system:

---

**18** In 1943, 14 bi-national institutes existed under the aegis of the Chilean commission, two linked to European countries (France and Great Britain), one to the United States, and 11 to other Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Cuba, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela). (*Boletín Bimestral*, nr. 35, July-September 1943, 62–63).

**19** AUN, A III 46, n.d., "La comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual", Informe colectivo del Comité ejecutivo de la comisión de cooperación intelectual.

International relations in favour of the rapprochement of cultures constitute one of the fundamental aims of the Commission, and for this reason it works intensively with foreign countries, producing innumerable studies, providing information on many subjects, sending out books, publications and curricula. The Government of Chile, especially the Ministry of Foreign Relations, the University of Chile and other entities constantly request information on cultural matters of an international nature. (CCIC 1953, 6–7)

There was therefore a real complementarity between the Ministry on the one hand and the CCIC, closely linked to the University, on the other. Two factors help explain this state of affairs: one, the role of Francisco Walker Linares as a link between the diplomatic and academic spheres,<sup>20</sup> and two, the significance of the University of Chile in Chilean state building processes beginning in the nineteenth century (Jaksic and Serrano 1990). In the 1930s, the University was a linchpin for the construction of Chilean nationalism, and thus played a leading role in the development of Chile's "identity for the outside world." The participation of Chilean intellectual and academics as actors of cultural diplomacy was not unique to Chile (see for example the French, but also Mexico, Argentina or Brazil), but the key participation of a university – as an institution – in the conceptualisation and development of such a policy is distinctive and deeply intertwined with the history of this institution itself. This specific configuration, which closely entangled diplomatic and academic spheres, was a particularly fertile and efficient means to serve both national interests and cultural internationalisms.

## 3 Making Chile a Great Nation: The Role of the University of Chile

### 3.1 Presenting Chile as an Educational Model: Goals and Issues

The Commission devoted a large part of its activities to academic exchanges: half of its budget went to scholarships for Latin American students who wished to

---

<sup>20</sup> Appointed in 1929 (a position he held until the dissolution of the League in 1946), Walker Linares, former delegate to the International Labour Conferences, former head of the potassium nitrate lobby in France and Belgium, lawyer and professor of social economics at the University of Chile, enjoyed a positive intellectual and social reputation in Chile, maintaining relationships with politicians and the press across the political spectrum.

come to Chile.<sup>21</sup> It also organised trips for Chilean students to universities on the continent.<sup>22</sup> Gradually, the commission became the central body for managing university exchanges and the distribution of scholarships. The Commission's eagerness to attract foreign students and professors to Chile under favourable conditions stemmed from the conviction that the latter were "the best agents for international collaboration and for the dissemination of Chilean culture."<sup>23</sup> On the occasion of the Second Conference of American Commissions for Intellectual Cooperation in Havana in 1941, Walker Linares stated that,

Chilean educational institutions have always welcomed foreign students, and countless young people from American countries, especially from the Pacific coast, have taken courses there. [ . . . ] Chilean university graduates have held high positions in their respective countries, and in our American wanderings we have had the good fortune to meet some of these graduates who remember Chile with the sweet nostalgia that one feels for the pleasant hours of student life.<sup>24</sup>

He reiterated this image in a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1942, in which he mentioned a delegation from the Liceo de Niñas de Antofagasta in Northern Chile, consisting of four teachers and 25 students, who had traveled to Bolivia together. The trip was marked by a series of cultural lectures given by the teachers. From this experience, he concluded: "This Commission believes that well-funded and organised student and teacher trips are cultural embassies that contribute to [Chile's] prestige." [ . . . ]<sup>25</sup>

Thus, for Walker Linares, university and school exchanges were an undeniable asset for Chile's national prestige and for its reputation as an expert in the field of education. However, these "tours" must be "well financed and well organised." The Chilean diplomatic archives contain letters exchanged by the CCIC and the Ministry of External Relations, and between the latter and the Ministry of Public Education, that list the conditions under which such initiatives could be truly beneficial to Chile. One of these letters drew lessons from a Chilean educational mission to Venezuela:

---

**21** AUN, A III 46, n.d., "La comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual", Informe colectivo del Comité ejecutivo de la comisión de cooperación intelectual.

**22** Although the Commission did not finance these trips completely, it worked to facilitate them by taking care of consular formalities and attempting to obtain reductions in transport costs. It was forced to deal with various difficulties, including a lack of funds from the universities, exchange rate problems, etc.

**23** *Boletín Bimestral*, nr. 33, January-March 1943, 29.

**24** Speech reprinted in *Boletín Bimestral*, nr. 28, 1941, 65–66.

**25** ACMER, Ministerios Chile, 1942, Santiago, 16/06/1942, Letter from Francisco Walker Linares to the Minister for External Relations.

As you know, the previous educational mission was not as successful as had been hoped, because the professors, a group composed of individuals of different social status who did not know each other well enough in Chile, brought their ideological and professional rivalries to Venezuela, did not present themselves to this country with the required cohesion, and perhaps were not sufficiently concerned with representing Chile and its intellectual life. Some of them allowed themselves to be involved in polemics in the press on matters of an internal nature.

[. . .] Moreover, it is appropriate that the person who comes to this country takes into account two things: On the one hand, Venezuelan pride based on its historical tradition, which is currently one of the ideas developed by the Government presided over by General López Contreras; on the other hand, despite the disorganisation of Venezuelan public education, there is a large educated class of professionals and families here who, thanks to their numerous trips to Europe and the United States, have a general understanding of the problems and a great liveliness that prevents them from being deceived. Venezuelans will not accept a foreigner pointing out their shortcomings in public, and wanting to treat them as a backward nation. It is probably the most thorny country in this part of America. Therefore, this requires skilled people.<sup>26</sup>

The letter thus underlined two important aspects of cultural diplomacy: those acting as representatives of Chilean culture, in this case teachers, were to be carefully selected so as not to damage the image of their country, and were also to be familiar with the public they were addressing so as not to offend.

In parallel, Ernesto Barros Jarpa, Minister of Foreign Relations,<sup>27</sup> warned of another issue, namely the competition Chile faced in the area of university exchanges: the flow of students coming to Chile had to be greater than the flow of Chilean students to other countries, in order for Chile not to stand in a position of “intellectual vassalage.”<sup>28</sup> The Chilean case thus reinforces Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith’s arguments about exchange programs during the internationalist moment from the late 1910s to the end of the Second World War: “exchange” means “reciprocity” and exchange programs “were conceived [. . .] to demonstrate national prowess and strength” (2017, 14–15). In line with Alex Fortes, Chile was also forced to confront the external as well as internal purpose of

---

<sup>26</sup> ACMER, Ministerios Chile, 1938, file 1700, Santiago, 06/09/1938, Letter from Gallardo to the Minister of External Relations.

<sup>27</sup> He held this position from 2 April to 20 October 1942.

<sup>28</sup> ACMER, Ministerios Chile, 1942, Santiago, 29/08/1942, Letter from Ernesto Barros Jarpa to Juvenal Hernández.

(cultural) diplomacy: “One of the fundamental aspects of nation building is the definition of the place it claims to occupy on the international scene” (2003, 3).

### 3.2 Making the University of Chile into the “University of America”

The *Memorias* record a panorama of foreign students at the University of Chile in 1940: of 617 foreign students, 141 (22,8 percent) came from Europe, 455 from Latin America (73,7 percent), 12 from the United States (1,9 percent)<sup>29</sup> and 9 from “other countries” (1,45 percent).<sup>30</sup> The number of Europeans may come as a surprise. Germans (35) and Spaniards (26) were the most numerous to come from the Old Continent, revealing privileged relations with these two countries. As far as Latin Americans were concerned, the number of Bolivians (104), Peruvians (107) and Colombians (83) highlights the Chilean sphere of influence in South America. Finally, the fact that 50 Argentinian students were included in this total can be seen as the result of the various intellectual cooperation agreements signed between the two countries in 1935 and 1938.<sup>31</sup>

Only one Brazilian appears on this list however, a fact deplored by Francisco Walker Linares, who replied to a letter from the Ministry in 1942 about the offer by the Brazilian government of scholarships for Chilean students. He considered this initiative to be particularly opportune “in view of the industrial and commercial power of that country and the relations that should in all probability be strengthened [with Chile].” He listed the fields that would be interesting for Chilean scholarship holders to study in Brazil: tropical medicine, rural medicine, “modern industries” and commerce. The study of physiology was also to be encouraged, “because Brazil has excellent laboratories in this scientific field.” In order for this exchange to be successful, the CCIC believed that a Portuguese language course should be offered at the University of Chile, “because Brazil’s industrial growth and its current international situation, as well as the post-war context, requires a greater cultural and commercial understanding with that country.”<sup>32</sup> These considerations are evidence that academic exchanges, and

---

<sup>29</sup> With Manuel Suzarte (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle/CREDA), the author is currently developing a research project on academic exchanges between Chile and the United States from the late 1920s to the early 1960s.

<sup>30</sup> According to the figures in the *Memorias* (1940, 459–460).

<sup>31</sup> The list of these agreements is included in the *Memorias* (1935–1936; 1938–1939) of the Argentinian Ministry of External Relations.

<sup>32</sup> ACMER, Ministerios Chile, 1942, Santiago, 21/12/1942.



cultural diplomacy more broadly, was able to support the objectives of “classical” diplomacy, and that economic interests were far from absent from the ways in which intellectual cooperation was engaged in. Chile was also active in the field of exchange agreements, such as the one signed with Bolivia in 1941, despite a serious territorial dispute that had poisoned their relations since the War of the Pacific (1879–1884): the promotion of student exchanges was clearly a tool at the service of Chilean diplomacy. Internationalist ideals of mutual understanding were, as we can see, complementary to the country’s “functional agenda” (Iriye 1997, 34).

According to a text produced and circulated, likely in the late 1930s or early 1940s, by the Information and Propaganda Service, no less than 5,000 students from Central and South America had attended the University of Chile in the previous forty years. The institution had undoubtedly become key to Chilean cultural diplomacy and to the country’s openness to the world – at least in its continental dimensions. The text ends with an anecdote that highlights the centrality of the University of Chile in America: “Out of 25 students grouped around a microscope in a medical laboratory, 14 were foreigners, which led the distinguished North American educator Mr. Waldo Leland, who witnessed this, to exclaim ‘The University of Chile’ can call itself the ‘American University par excellence.’ This is the pride of the institution.<sup>33</sup>” In his 1953 consideration of the “Escuelas de Verano” (summer schools) launched in 1936, Juvenal Hernández echoed these sentiments:

Soon these courses, whose level was rising, ended up filling a higher national and international mission for a better knowledge of Chile. Scholarships were created, and American governments were encouraged to send graduates for further training. And so Santiago was filled with Americans for whom Chile was their destiny, and our university was named ‘University of America.’ The country is better known thanks to this attractive, cultured and influential element, which is the most effective agent for our cultural interests. Invitations are exchanged and organisations are created to ensure reciprocity and interrelation in the other countries of the continent [. . .] The Chilean Commission for Intellectual Cooperation, also an American model, with its bi-national institutes, still in full operation, performs the same function (Hernández 1953, 9).

---

33 ACMER, Información y Propaganda, Conferencias de divulgación, nr. 1, “La Universidad de Chile”.

### 3.3 All Roads Lead to Santiago de Chile?

“And so Santiago was filled with Americans for whom Chile was their destiny”: the academic diplomacy of the University of Chile was not the only element that explains the attractiveness of the Chilean capital. From the late 1930s onwards, the city was no longer just a university centre, but became the “restless and cosmopolitan Santiago of the Popular Front.” Within an international context marked by Italian fascism, Nazism and the Spanish Civil War, Santiago took its place in the network of anti-fascist movements. Bernardo Subercaseaux notes that, in addition to Spanish republicans, many Latin American intellectuals left countries marked by authoritarian regimes and “went to Chile as if to a South American France” (2008, 224).

Moreover, as part of a nationalist modernisation project, the leaders and intellectuals of the Popular Front emphasised the role of culture in the building of a more inclusive and genuinely Chilean national identity (Pernet, 2004, 257). This process became intertwined with a Pan-American dynamic that valorised folklore – nurtured by the Good Neighbour Policy of the United States, which aimed to develop “a consciousness of a Pan-American identity” and “to assert independence from Europe” (Pernet 2004, 255; 2008). The University of Chile and the CCIC participated in this national/American dynamic with an inaugural event in 1938 during which the commission organised an exhibition of Chilean folk art. The success of the event led the University of Chile to set up a Chilean Institute of Popular Art. A few years later, on the occasion of the centenary of the university’s founding, this institute curated an exhibition of American popular art, thereby continuing the work of the University and the CCIC in making Chile a cultural centre of the Americas (Dumont, 2019). In the light of the international context of the Second World War, the foundations of *chilenidad* thus became not only the expression of a broader American culture, but also the guarantee, in the face of the collapse of *Madre Europa*, of the preservation of the identity of (Latin) American nations. (CCIC 1943, 7). As Juvenal Hernández, in his preface to the exhibition catalogue, put it:

In accepting the idea of staging this exhibition of Popular Arts as American, the University of Chile largely took into account the significance of an exhibition of this nature at the present time. With the direct links with the living centres of European civilisation suspended – links of which we, the peoples of America, are the heirs – an examination of our vital resources is necessary. More than that, it is necessary to stimulate a will to assert our existence by returning to ourselves and our past. Once we have gone beyond the stage of political independence, which involves an attitude of rupture with that past, we

must now recover the heritage that is inseparable from our own way of being in order to assume the responsibility that is incumbent upon us. (CCIC 1943, 7)

After the Second World War, a new stage was reached with the establishment of the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo at the University of Chile in 1947, the first “contemporary art” museum in America, whose mission Juvenal Hernández described as “catching up with time and overcoming tradition.”<sup>34</sup>

In short, the “academic diplomacy” of the University of Chile was part of a broader movement that involved national, regional and international dynamics and made the University, through its educational exchanges and cultural events and institutions, into a major player both in building an “identity for the outside world” as part of Chilean cultural diplomacy and in redefining the contours of national identity as the concepts of modernity and tradition evolved from the late 1920s to the late 1940s.

## 4 Conclusions

The emergence of Chilean cultural diplomacy clearly took place in two stages. The first, at the end of the 1920s, occurred under the exclusive aegis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and appeared to be far more developed than the activities of its Argentine and Brazilian neighbours. This precociousness is underlined in the pages of *Chile*: “There is probably no department in America, with the exception of the United States, that is better organised technically and exercises its functions with greater efficiency and dynamism than the Information and Propaganda Section of the Ministry of External Relations of Chile.”<sup>35</sup> The need to resolve the disputes with Chile and Peru and the desire to play a substantial role in the League of Nations were undoubtedly not incidental to this state of affairs. But above all, even more than the conquering Argentina and the gigantic Brazil, Chile needed to assert its existence and its singularity in order to find its place in the concert of nations and to look after its national, in particular economic, interests. It was precisely its economic weakness, however, that made it – even more so than Argentina or Brazil – vulnerable to the 1929 crisis and consequently reinforced the precarity of the Ministry’s activities, which would resume several

---

<sup>34</sup> These elements were provided by Matías Allende Contador who is currently completing a dissertation on this Museum at the University of Chile (Santiago, Caracas y París. Derroteros del concepto de arte contemporáneo en América Latina entre 1930–1948).

<sup>35</sup> “Chile se está dando a conocer universalmente por medios activos y profusos”, *Chile. Boletín consular del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, año III, vol. 3, nr. 43, September 1928, 12.

years later, but in a different form. Within this new partnership between the diplomatic and academic spheres, the University of Chile was central to the promotion of Chile abroad. Indeed, Ruth McMurry's typology of the different national modalities of cultural diplomacy, published in 1947, devoted the chapter on Chile to "Chile: An Approach Through Schools and Universities" (1947, 182).

As culture became a central element in the ideological battles between democracy and totalitarianism during the 1930s, states that had not engaged in the field of cultural diplomacy (the United States, Great Britain) or had done little (Argentina, Brazil, Chile) began to change course, provoking two developments: "cultural relations are no longer so much moored to representations based on the idea of the international community as they are anchored in formulations of national interests" (Irye 1997, 92), which ultimately strengthened the dynamics of cultural internationalism. The case of Chilean cultural diplomacy not only perfectly illustrates Akira Irye's argument, but also provides non-European or non-US answers to Daniel Laqua's introductory questions in an article dedicated to the dialectics of nationalism and internationalism in the interwar period: "How did agents of intellectual cooperation confirm or reinforce national categories, even when ostensibly doing something very different, namely promoting transnational exchange? And how did they reconcile the tensions that were intrinsic to their endeavours?" (2018, 61–62). This analysis of the Chilean case demonstrates that cultural internationalism was, in fact, a necessary requirement for the establishment of cultural diplomacy. While, within Latin America, this is not unique to Chile (Dumont, 2018), no other country engaged in such efforts to articulate its national interests with not one, but two cultural internationalisms – perhaps because it was faced with the challenge of making Santiago not the capital of an "end-of-the-world country,"<sup>36</sup> but a cultural crossroads able to assert its existence as a nation both inside and outside its frontiers.

## Reference List

- Bandeira Jerónimo, Miguel, and José Pedro Monteiro, eds. "Pasts to be Unveiled: The Interconnections Between the International and the Imperial." *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World. The Pasts and Presents*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 1–29.
- Barros Van Buren, Mario. *Realismo e idealismo en la política exterior de Chile*. Santiago: Cuadernos de Ciencia política, Universidad de Chile, 1984.
- Barros Van Buren, Mario. *El Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*. Santiago: Arquen, 1991.

---

<sup>36</sup> From the title of a book by Joaquín Fernandois (2005).

- Cándida Smith, Richard. *Improvised Continent. Pan-Americanism and Cultural Exchange*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.
- Compagnon, Olivier. *América Latina y la Gran Guerra. El adiós a Europa (Argentina y Brasil, 1914–1939)*. Buenos Aires: Crítica, 2014.
- Dümmer Scheel, Sylvia. “Los desafíos de escenificar el ‘alma nacional.’ Chile en la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla (1929).” *História Crítica* 42 (2010): 84–111.
- Dümmer Scheel, Sylvia. *Sin tropicalismos ni exageraciones. La construcción de la imagen de Chile para la Exposición Iberoamericana de Sevilla en 1929*. Santiago: RIL Editores, 2012.
- Dumont, Juliette. “Latin America at the Crossroads: The Inter-American Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations and the Pan American Union.” *Beyond Geopolitics. New Histories of Latin America at the League of Nations*. Eds. Alan McPherson and Yannick Wehrli. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. 155–167.
- Dumont, Juliette. “Informaciones Argentinas. Une revue au service de la diplomatie culturelle argentine (1938–1947).” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps* 119–120 (2016): 48–53.
- Dumont, Juliette. *Diplomaties culturelles et fabrique des identités. Argentine, Brésil, Chili (1919–1946)*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018.
- Dumont, Juliette. “La Comisión Chilena de Cooperación Intelectual, actriz de la (latino) americanización de la cooperación intelectual.” *América Latina y el internacionalismo ginebrino de entreguerras: implicaciones y resonancias*. Eds. Fabián Herrera León and Yannick Wehrli. México: Dirección General del Acervo Histórico Diplomático de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 2019. 277–300.
- Dumont, Juliette. “Education et panaméricanisme: entre construction de l’empire informel des Etats-Unis et affirmation de l’Amérique latine.” <http://www.histoire-politique.fr/index.php?numero=41&rub=dossier&item=382>. Paris: Centre d’histoire de Sciences Po, 2020.
- Dumont, Juliette. “Pan-American Intellectual Cooperation: Emergence, Institutionalization, and Fields of Action.” *The New Pan-Americanism and the Structuring of Inter-American Relations*. Ed. Juan Pablo Scarfi and David Sheinin. New York: Routledge, 2022. 65–89.
- Fernandois, Joaquín. *Mundo y fin de mundo. Chile en la política mundial 1900–2004*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2005.
- Fortes, Alex. “Preface.” Paulo Fagundes Vizontini. *Relações internacionais do Brasil: de Vargas a Lula*. São Paulo: Ed. Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2003.
- Frank, Robert. “La machine diplomatique culturelle française après 1945.” *Relations internationales* 115 (2003): 325–348.
- Hernández, Juvenal. *La luminosa trayectoria de Amanda Labarca*. Santiago de Chile: Publicaciones Museo Pedagógico, 1953.
- Iriye, Akira. *Cultural Internationalism and World Order*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Jaksic, Ivan, and Sol Serrano. “In the Service of the Nation: the Establishment and Consolidation of the Universidad de Chile, 1842–1879.” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 70.1 (1990): 139–171.
- Laqua, Daniel. “Internationalism and Nationalism in the League of Nations’ work for Intellectual Cooperation.” *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World. The Pasts and Presents*. Eds. Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 59–86.
- McMurry, Ruth. *The Cultural Approach: Another Way in International Relations*. Kingsport: University of North Carolina Press, 1947.

- Pernet, Corinne. "The Popular Fronts and Folklore: Chilean Cultural Institutions, Nationalism and Pan-Americanism, 1936–1938." *North Americanization of Latin America? Culture, Gender, and Nation in the Americas*. Eds. Hans-Joachim König and Stephan Rinke. Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 2004. 253–278.
- Pernet, Corinne. "'For the Genuine Culture of the Americas.' Musical Folklore and the Cultural Politics of Pan-Americanism." *De-centering America*. Ed. Jessica Gienow-Hecht. New York: Berghahn, 2008. 132–168.
- Plata-Stengler, Véronique. "'To Raise Awareness of Difficulties and to Assert their Opinion': The International Labour Office and the Regionalization of International Cooperation in the 1930s." *Beyond Geopolitics. New Histories of Latin America at the League of Nations*. Eds. Alan McPherson, Yannick Wehrli. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. 97–113.
- Vaïsse, Maurice. "L'adaptation du Quai d'Orsay aux nouvelles conditions diplomatiques (1919–1939)." *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 32.1 (1985): 145–162.
- Sluga, Glenda. *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2013.
- Subercaseaux, Bernardo. "Editoriales y círculos intelectuales en Chile 1930–1950." *Revista chilena de Literatura* 72 (2008): 221–233.
- Tournès, Ludovic, and Scott-Smith, Giles. "Introduction. A World of Exchanges. Conceptualizing the History of International Scholarship Programs (Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries)." *Global Exchanges. Scholarships and Transnational Circulations in the Modern World*. Eds. Ludovic Tournès and Giles Scott-Smith. New York: Berghahn, 2017. 1–29.
- Wehrli, Yannick. "Francisco Walker Linares: un actor del internacionalismo ginebrino en Chile, 1927–1946." *América Latina y la Organización Internacional del Trabajo: Redes, cooperación técnica e institucionalidad social, 1919–1950*. Eds. Fabián Herrera León and Patricio Herrera González. Morelia: Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 2013. 63–97.

## Published Sources

- Comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual. *Memoria de 1938*. Santiago: Imprenta El esfuerzo, 1939.
- Hernández, Juvenal, and Walker Linares, Francisco. *La Cooperación intelectual. Sus antecedentes, su fundación en Chile, su acción*. Santiago: Ediciones de las prensas de la Universidad de Chile, 1940.
- Comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual. *Catálogo de la exposición de artes populares Americanos*. Santiago: Universidad de Chile/Museo de Bellas Artes, 1943.
- Comisión chilena de cooperación intelectual. *22 años de labor (1930–1952)*. Santiago: Ed. Universitaria, 1953.

