Dismissals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s representatives in Latin America as part of the strategy of “Opening to the Left” (1961-1964)

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ABSTRACT: This article reconstructs the history and the polemics surrounding an operation of dismissals of the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s [CCF] local representatives in Latin America carried out between 1961 and 1964. The operation was a consequence of adoption of the new guidelines -“Opening to the Left”- implemented as a basis of the new Latin American program in response to the Cuban Revolution by the CCF’s executives. The process of dismissals in the local Committees dismantled the original Latin American program of the CCF and affected mainly representatives proceeding from the Spanish exile diaspora. In fact, the operation became a culmination of a process of marginalization of the Spanish exiles within the CCF structures. The study highlights the CCF’s politics of limiting of the personal political and cultural agendas of those of its employees who entered into collision with the Congress’s general ideological changing strategies.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Cold War; Congress for Cultural Freedom; Spanish exiles; Mexico; Chile; Argentina; Brazil; Pragmatism; Strategy.


RESUMEN: Despidos de los representantes del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura en América Latina como parte de la estrategia de «Apertura a la Izquierda» (1961-1964).- Este artículo reconstruye la historia y la polémica en torno a una operación de despidos de los representantes locales del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura [CLC] en América Latina realizada entre 1961 y 1964. La operación fue consecuencia de la adopción de las nuevas directrices -«Apertura a la Izquierda»- implementadas como base del nuevo programa latinoamericano en respuesta a la Revolución Cubana por parte de los ejecutivos del CLC. El proceso de despidos en los comités locales de América Latina desmanteló el programa latinoamericano original del CLC y afectó principalmente a los representantes procedentes del exilio español. De hecho, la operación se convirtió en la culminación de un proceso de marginación de los exiliados españoles dentro de las estructuras del CLC. El estudio destaca la política del CCF de limitar las agendas políticas y culturales personales de aquellos de sus empleados que entraron en colisión con las cambiantes estrategias ideológicas generales del Congreso.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Guerra fría cultural; Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura; Exiliados españoles; México; Chile; Argentina; Brasil; Pragmatismo; Estrategia.

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The cultural cold war in Latin America is a field explored with ever-growing interest by historians. However, problems with the periodization and the terminology, along with issues regarding methodological frameworks, continue to challenge the scientific community (Calandra and Franco, 2012: 9-32; Niño and Montero, 2012). In the cultural and intellectual realm, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) (1950-1967), an international association which brought together dozens of prestigious intellectuals in the postwar period, was the most important US and Western covert endeavour in the battle of ideas. During the Cold War, it was also a fundamental organisation devoted to the defence of individual liberties and the anti-totalitarian cause (Coleman, 1989; Grémion, 1995; Mudroveci, 1997; Hochgeschwender, 1998; Saunders, 2001; Scott-Smith, 2002; Wilford, 2003, 2008). The CCF was funded by American private foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller and also by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) which used private foundations as a cover (e.g. Fairfield). Apart from the early doctoral thesis of Russell Cobb (2007), with regard to the Latin American context, in recent years two monographs, both resulting from doctoral research and including unpublished sources, addressed the work of the Congress for Cultural Freedom on the continent (Glon dys, 2012; Iber, 2015). Olga Glondys focused on the intellectual community gathered around the CCF’s journal, *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (1953-1965), and analysed the ideological transformations of the Latin American program, reflected on the problem of its weaknesses, and highlighted the Spanish exiles’ contribution. Patrick Iber’s book offered a general approximation reflecting on all major aspects of the Cultural Cold War in Latin America, dealing especially with the cases of Mexico and Cuba (Casa de las Américas), and pairing his research on the CCF with the analysis of the Peace offensive led by the Soviet Union.

The CCF carried out most of its activity in Latin America with the decisive involvement of Spanish Republic exiles, both in the design of the local program and in the composition of its leadership structures. The Spanish political émigrés, since 1939 interlinked by means of trans-American cultural, political and academic networks, were fundamental for the CCF’s purposes when it came to implementing its agenda, with its simultaneous local, national and transnational approach. When it came to targeting supporters of the Latin American socialist parties, the CCF was artificial or in some cases by political orientation of the Latin American elites. As a consequence, the CCF’s executives in the intellectual capacity and political orientation of the Latin American elites. For all these reasons, throughout the 1950s, the organisation failed to overcome a certain “resistance” of Latin American elites to its activities, and this bad reception was aggravated by the common suspicion that the CCF was a US propaganda organization. The isolation from youth sectors, from left-wing currents and from the liveliest debates on culture and Latin American politics in the 1950s had made it impossible for the CCF to be effective when targeting supporters of the Latin American socialist “third way”. This situation became evident to the executives in Paris after the Cuban Revolution, when the very limited local support for the organisation became painfully obvious. The crisis gave rise to the re-launch of the Latin American program and, in the framework of those deep transformations, the Spanish exiles were to be progressively marginalised and eliminated from the CCF.
The mission of redesigning the Latin American program in a new continental context following the Cuban Revolution was assigned to two special representatives. These were the American literary critic Keith Botsford, a long-standing personal friend of the CCF executive, CIA agent and novelist John Hunt, and Luis Mercier Vega, as previously mentioned one of the main driving forces behind the first Latin American program, who on 15th October 1961 replaced Gorkin as head of the Latin American Secretariat. Not long after, the lengthy reports and letters sent by Botsford and Mercier to Paris made it clear that the dominant role of the Spanish exiles in the CCF’s structures was proving to be harmful for the organisation. Both advisors associated the excessive politicisation of the CCF’s local delegations with their leaders’ tendency to conduct a constant anti-Communist crusade, to serve their own political goals and personal priorities and also to violate the CCF’s statutes by linking the organisation to the political parties.

To counter the CCF’s bad reputation as a Cold War propaganda organisation, and in order to work with effectiveness among left-wing circles and revolutionary tendencies, a new strategy for penetrating the continent was designed. It had to be based on what Josselson called Fidelism without Fidel, a new leftist approach to be launched in parallel from Cuadernos and from the CCF local branches (Coleman, 1989: 193; Iber, 2012: 126-127; Glondys, 2012: 129-130). In the new political coordinates of the continent, where Cuba and its Casa de las Américas was already playing a hegemonic role, the organisation needed to explore all existing possibilities for establishing an intellectual dialogue and collaboration with local left-wing sectors. Following the “anti-ideological” course adopted in the late 50s by the CCF in its contacts with the Communist intellectuals of Eastern Europe, the new modus operandi in Latin America should be as the CCF’s General Secretary Nicolás Nabokov put it: an Apertura a Sinistra i.e. an “Opening to the Left.” Following that new pragmatic approach, the simple anti-Communist line was now rejected as not only inadequate but also undesirable.

The need to radically “depoliticise” the CCF’s activities and establish contacts with young Latin American intellectuals, without excluding the pro-Castroist sectors, meant not only attempting to influence the local Left but also getting rid of old collaborators (Glondys, 2012: 168-183; Iber, 2015: 177-186). With that purpose, Botsford and Mercier undertook a broad operation of dismissals in local Latin American committees.

THE DISMISSALS IN URUGUAY, PERU AND MEXICO (1961-1962)

First dismissals, however, were not due to the political aspect of the local CCF branches, but to its bad management or lack of activity. This was the case of the Uruguayan Committee, created in Montevideo in 1954 and supervised by the Spanish exile Francisco Ferrándiz Alborz. In September 1960, in a friendly tone, Gorkin informed Ferrándiz Alborz of his dismissal, offering him in exchange the possibility of joining the editorial team of Cuadernos and offering his help in any way possible. Soon after, in March 1961, Mercier pointed to another Spaniard albeit from the younger generation, Benito Mil-la, as an “énimence grise” in Uruguayan literary circles and a reliable man for the CCF’s activity in Uruguay (Glondys, 2012: 315-316). Finally, the CCF was to participate in the founding of Mila’s ephemeral magazine Letras 62 (1962), as well as subsidising the magazine Temas (1965-1968), which he also edited.

Also in Peru, the CCF suffered from a complete lack of activity of its local branch. Gorkin’s close friend Luis Alberto Sánchez, rector of the National University of San Marcos and head of the CCF Peruvian Committee since 1955, was an example of those well-established liberal elites on which the CCF constructed its first program. Sanchez who was a leading critic of the Spanish domination in the CCF, was actually responsible for the fact that the Peruvian Committee had been inactive for years and its structures had become bloated. When Paris decided to shut it down, Sánchez, far from exercising any kind of self-criticism, adopted an entirely combative attitude and in his letter to Gorkin, dated 1st February 1961, made allusions to the CCF’s funding: “it was you who convinced me that [the CCF] was not what it has so often been said to be”. Sánchez also considered that the CCF had failed to show “basic consideration for one of its leading members”, with that “unusual attitude of dismissing [me] as one would a domestic servant”, an issue about which he also complained to the director of the CCF Publications François Bondy. In the bitter correspondence with the Paris headquarters after his dismissal, he described the CCF’s methods as anti-democratic and even considered the way John Hunt had gone about matters as a “certain mental totalitarianism.” Yet even after he was dismissed, Sánchez, who left debts pending from the Committee’s operations, and who had hired five employees of whose presence and obligations the head office in France had never been informed, continued to request money from the CCF to pay his travel expenses. In spite of all his criticism, Luis Alberto Sánchez would therefore clearly continue to benefit from remaining within the CCF’s orbit, and although he told Salvador de Madariaga in July 1965, “I understand that our Congress for Culture is foundering. I’m considering resigning from the Committee for a thousand reasons, including its lack of courtesy”, he eventually never did.

In the first wave of transformations of the CCF’s local branches, the Mexican Association occupies a special position as a powerful entity with around one hundred members in the capital alone, including Juan José Areolea, Víctor Alba, Mauricio Gómez Mayorga, Francisco Monterde, Carlos A. Echanove, Guadalupe Amor, Felipe Cossío del Pomar, Salvador Pineda, Mauricio Magdalenó, as well as an additional Committee in Puebla. The Mexican Committee edited the journals Letras por la Libertad (1957) and Examen (1959) (Glondys, 2012: 83; Jannello, Summer 2013/2014: 15-16), organised art exhi-
bitions at the Excélsior Gallery and published pamphlets on some highly sensitive issues (for example, Pablo Neruda or the Boris Pasternak case). Yet, despite its broad activity, its supervisor Rodrigo García Treviño, an old friend of Gorkin and former collaborator of León Trotsky in Mexico, had never enjoyed the trust of Michael Josselson. As early as 1954, Treviño had clashed with the Executive Secretary of the CCF when he openly criticised the publication in Cuadernos of an article by Eudocio Rivas, who -according to Treviño- had “strong connections” with the CIA. Josselson, “extremely angry”, wrote a letter to Gorkin in which he called Treviño “imbécile”, adding: “it’s certainly the first time that anyone has dared to tell us who can and who can’t write in our journals (...),”16 and ended up suggesting that Treviño should be replaced as the head of the Mexican representation.

Over time it became clear for the Paris headquarters that the Mexican Committee had become a shelter for the local anti-Communist right and Treviño’s violent anti-Communist militancy stood in complete contrast to the moderate theory of the “end of ideologies” which prevailed in the CCF during the Peaceful Coexistence. Even Gorkin himself had to admit that Treviño had “an excessively militant and closed mentality”, while the CCF’s work was about “understanding and solving problems and not about propaganda and counter-propaganda.”17 In the last attempt to correct the line followed by Treviño, Mercier Vega wrote to him a long letter, in which he stressed that the Congress for Cultural Freedom was not, and could not be, “a contra-Kominform” and what the Congress intended to do was to “immunize intellectuals against totalitarian gangrene and stimulate them to think for themselves” by favoring confrontations and improving information, as well as encouraging them to assume their responsibilities.18 Yet, on his part, in the same month of November 1961, Josselson decided it was necessary to “free the Congress from Mr. Treviño” and find a way to prohibit “this small Mexican McCarthyist” from using the name of the organization.19 The transfers to Treviño from Paris ended completely in June 1962, given that no report had been presented for the previous two years regarding the Committee’s accounts, and neither had any reply been received to the letters sent by CCF officials.20

In order to fill the gap left by the closing of the Mexican Committee, Mercier initially accepted the proposal of the Spanish exile Manuel Torres Campaña to found the group “Friends of Cuadernos”. The idea consisted of relaunching work in Mexico on the basis of an association of liberal Spanish exiles (“España en América”) and later, “extending the propaganda of liberal and democratic tendencies of the Congress” beyond the Spanish community.21 Torres Campaña insisted once again on the need to rely on the Spanish community to conduct the CCF’s work (as “European, more dynamic, more suitable”), although he stressed that this was not particularly motivat-
ed by his personal interests: “Long ago the devotion of the Spaniards was cleansed of personal ambitions. Like Saint John of the Cross, we aspire to higher glories and pursue more important aims for the good of America and of Spain”.22

However, Spanish domination in the Latin American branch of the CCF was clearly coming to an end. In the autumn of 1962, John Hunt instructed Gorkin that Torres Campaña should restrict himself only to distributing Cuadernos and abstain completely from any tasks of representation.23 On his part, Josselson expressed his unease with Torres Campaña’s efforts as aimed exclusively at “the old guard” both among Latin Americans and Spanish exiles, concluding that he was simply not “suitable” for the CCF’s tasks, which was worsened by the fact he was Spanish.24 With the mission of promoting “foundations which we can build upon in the future”, Keith Botsford himself moved to Mexico in 1964, being told by Hunt: “I want you to dig deeply and well into Mexican intellectual life and find those people and institutions which we can build upon and through whom we can work.”25 As the base for his activities, Botsford used the Mexican Writers’ Centre (“Centro Mexicano de Escritores”), fuelled with money from the CIA, and the team from the Revista Mexicana de Literatura (Jannello, Summer 2013/2014: 93-94; Iber, 2015: 186-189). He would soon observe a conflict between Mexicans and Spaniards in all sectors of Mexican cultural society, which, in Botsford’s opinion, was the result of the “narrow-minded nationalism” of the local elites.26

The dismissal of Luis Alberto Sánchez, a relevant member of that liberal intelligentsia upon which the CCF had built most of its local support, and the fall from grace of Treviño, due to his excessively anti-Communist orientation, provided paradigmatic examples of the kind of opening which the CCF was pursuing in the continent: to Latin American youth and left-wing sectors. Yet the transformations of the Latin American program aroused protests and criticism not only among those who were the direct victims of the new course, but also among their staunchest defenders: the Spanish exiles. The biggest controversy surrounding the “Apertura a Sinistra” strategy involved the CCF’s Honorary President Salvador de Madariaga, who decided to personally intervene before the CCF’s executives in relation to the closing of the Brazilian committee.

**SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA AND THE CONTROVERSY ARISING FROM THE “APERUTRA A SINISTA”**

From 18th to 26th September 1956, the CCF organised a major Inter-American Conference in Mexico, which served as an impetus for founding the Brazilian Committee, coordinated by a Rumanian exile couple Mira and Stefan Baciu, who were soon to edit the magazine Cadernos Brasileiros (1959-1970) (Vanden Berghe, 1997). The Mexico Conference served to strengthen bonds with Latin American intellectuals, but it also provided them with the opportunity to establish contacts and alliances under the auspices of the CCF, an aspect for which the Ecuadorian Benjamín Carrión thanked Gorkin after the meeting in the following terms:
Even you yourself cannot imagine the extent of the service you have provided and continue to provide to universal culture, especially to continental American culture. People who meet each other, relationships which are established, fertile reencounters you, friend Iulian Gorkin, have done what few people, perhaps nobody, has done for the solidarity of culture and for its freedom.27

Without doubt, Gorkin’s management encountered strong support on the continent among the sectors that directly benefited from the CCF’s activity, but this would soon prove to be insufficient. As in Mexico and Peru, organised according to the priorities of the Spanish exiles, the reputation of the Brazilian Committee was clearly that of a right-wing organisation. In the spring of 1961, Mercier pointed out the need to radically depoliticise the local Committee and fill its ranks with young people.28 After Keith Botsford’s controversial management, which caused an open conflict with the Bacius, in Spring 1962 Hunt personally undertook efforts to make the Rumanian couple understand that the CCF “is not purely an organisation which has assumed the sole task of systematically fighting against Communism”. Therefore, what also should be done was to stimulate a vast, frank and free intellectual and ideological debate in Brazil and search for a positive program for the country.29 Hunt even travelled personally to Brazil in an attempt to alleviate the conflict, but his position was perceived by the Bacius as crypto-Communist.

A serious difficulty to find appropriate substitutes for the Bacius30 led to further interventions on the part of the CCF’s executives in a desperate attempt to save the situation. A special role was played by Nicolás Nabokov who tried to calm tensions and reorient the CCF’s activity in Brazil in a long and very important letter written in April 1962 to Stefan Baciu:

I think you should trust the judgement of those here in the Central [sic] Secretariat. The Congress is not, and should not be, an organisation fighting the “cold war” and should not be perceived as such. This, I believe, is a fundamental fact and is perhaps, if I may say so, the point you have failed to understand. We are a very heterogeneous organisation and the active members of our Executive Committee are becoming increasingly aware that the strategy the Congress should adopt in this changing world needs to be varied and very flexible. Above all, I feel that, while often adopting firm positions regarding different aspects of totalitarianism, we should not charge at all the problems it poses like an angry bull. Our work calls for us, most importantly, to win friends and to win them in what is now referred to in Italy as the “Opening to the Left”. I must confess that when I was in São Paulo and when I spoke to different people in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, I was astonished to see that in certain circles, not in the least Communist [underlying sic], the Congress is seen as a right-wing American organisation whose only mission is the open, militant fight against Communism. I found this depressing and still do, as it limits our opportunities to work positively in defense of intellectual freedom and win the sympathy and support of non-Communist left-wing circles via free discussion and persuasion. I think that Brazil is one of those countries where the intellectual climate obliges us to adopt this flexible position and concern ourselves with what are essentially Brazilian problems, “depolitise” many of our activities and maximise the possibility of dialogue with those on the left, as Silone does in Italy and as we try to do through the mediation of our friends in Poland and Yugoslavia.31

To better illustrate his thesis, Nabokov went on to quote a confidential internal CCF document, written by Edward Shils, which described the CCF as an organisation of post-ideological influence, whose principal objective, rather than fighting against Communism, should be attracting Communists and their fellow travellers and sympathisers into a dialogue, into an “understanding” (“entente”), which was the “objective and the instrument of our activities.”32 The new main goal was to discover common ground between the CCF’s community and Communist intellectuals and establish relations within the framework of an open debate, about which Nabokov added:

If we do not agree, it does not matter. (...) I believe that in view of the immense misery of our time we must try all the options available to us, especially those appealing to people’s spiritual and emotional ability to understand complicated situations, and not fall back on the outmoded slogans of what is known in English as “profit-less partisanship”.33

Predictably, for the Bacius, the ideological transformations taking place in the CCF were endangering its basic ideals. As a consequence, on 2nd August 1962, the Romanian couple sent a telegram with their resignation to Nabokov, stating that they had been victims of “humiliation, unfairness and slander”, and in protest at the “terror” exercised by Botsford and his methods, which, in their view, were at odds with the defence of cultural freedom.34

Warned by Baciu that the CCF’s new political line in Latin America would no longer have anything to do with anti-Communism35 and very concerned about the gradual dismantling of the original structures and by the “Opening to the Left”, Salvador de Madariaga decided to intervene in defence of those marginalised or dismissed on behalf of the new strategy. In his role as Honorary President, he officially protested to Michael Josselson about the CCF’s new ideological line, which he considered “radically different from that which has been followed up until now.”36 In his replies, Josselson stated that there were no grounds for interpreting the CCF’s transformation “as a change of direction regarding the fundamental question”, but rather that it was a purely tactical change. Josselson also defended the strategy of “opening” with the idea that “an open society” was better prepared to counter the perils represented by the communism that a “closed one.”37 On 26th of October 1962, Josselson asked explicitly for Madariaga’s trust in his leadership in the CCF’s affairs and defended the “Apertura a Sinistra” as a strategy meant to influence the people the CCF aimed to influence (and not talking to the already convinced…).38
Yet Josselson’s arguments proved useless to counter the rumours that fed Madariaga’s suspicions, and as a result of his increasing dissent, the Spaniard himself would also ultimately be ousted from the new Latin American program and his collaboration in Cuadernos (in 1962 Madariaga’s articles were vetoed by Josselson and Nabokov on at least two occasions) (Glondys, 2012: 172-176). As for the Brazilian Committee, its presidency would eventually be assumed by Baciu’s former collaborator, Alfaro Coutinho, and its general secretariat by Vicente Barretto. Nevertheless, none of those transformations would improve the CCF’s situation in Brazil and the rest of the continent. Not long afterwards, a new wave of attacks was unleashed against CCF circles as a result of the “Apertura a Sinistra”, this time not promoted by the Cuban Regime, but by Baciu, Treviño and their fellow travelers now actively spreading accusations that the CCF was acting on Communist inspiration.

CARLOS P. CARRANZA AND CARLOS BARAIBAR: THE LAST DISMISSALS

The last bastions of Spanish influence in the local CCF structures corresponded to the Argentinean and Chilean Committees. The former was set up after the fall of Perón, during Gorkin and Luis Alberto Sánchez’s trip to Buenos Aires at the end of 1955, and its honorary presidents were Bernardo Houssay and Alfredo L. Palacios; the president of its Executive Committee, Roberto F. Giusti; its vice-presidents, Victoria Ocampo and Francisco Romero, its general secretary, Juan A. Solari, and its secretary of relations, Guillermo de Torre. Its many members included the writer Ernesto Sábado. The delegate of the CCF Executive Committee Carlos P. Carranza acted as the supervisor of the Argentinian local structures. Although Josselson himself praised the work of the Argentinian Committee in early 1961 (“He even said to me that I deserve the Legion of Honour of the Congress for Cultural Freedom”), Carranza told Gorkin), at around that same time Mercier already suggested downgrading Carranza’s role to that of administrator. Furthermore, on 6th July 1961 Josselson considered that the tour undertaken by Carranza for the purpose of attracting more subscribers to Cuadernos had been a failure, which added to the highly disappointing results obtained in the period following the transformation of the magazine into a monthly publication. Visibly angry, Josselson insisted that the campaign to increase subscriptions had to be carried out from then on by the “l’Avenue de l’Opera team” i.e. Iglesias, Baeza Flores and Guibert. In 1962, Mercier warned the CCF’s executives that the Argentinian Committee signified nothing in the intellectual life of the country, with its reputation of an anti-Communist organisation filled with members subservient to militaristic-nationalistic tendencies and completely closed to left-wing sectors and to young people. It was necessary to counteract that “awful reputation” in the country’s intellectual circles and also to regain control of the series “Biblioteca de Libertad”, whose recent works were “reactionary in spirit and intellectually mediocre”.

For example, according to Mercier, the book La garra comunista en América Latina by Pedro de Basaldúa, published in 1962, was just the kind of work that the CCF should never have published, given that it consisted of “more or less debatable information on the Communist danger in Latin America, with a preface written by a person known for his socially conservative ideas.” In the letter dated 16th April 1963, Mercier stated to Iglesias, concerning the same editorial series:

The latest stupidity which I discovered recently is that of Gilberto Freyre’s prologue to Strachey’s pamphlet. This prologue, which practically compromises the Congress, is nothing less than a defence of the methods of Portuguese colonisation and the present-day policies of Salazar. Coming after Carranza’s pamphlet about agrarian reform and Dussault’s little book on university reform, I think we have reached the peak of idiocy.

Moreover, it can be deduced from Mercier’s correspondence that Carranza had also taken advantage of his position in the CCF to enrich himself personally. The decision to dismiss him was taken in the spring of 1963. In May, Mercier confirmed his view of the Argentinian Association as a “foyer” for “right-wing democratic elements of the old generations”; even Solari acknowledged that the Committee was not working well and Guillermo de Torre considered it “a failure.” Finally, in June 1963, the Sur team took over the distribution of Cuadernos in Argentina and Óscar Serrat assumed the administrative side. Careful in his criticism of Solari and Carranza, in a personal letter announcing their dismissal, Mercier pointed to the “generational debilitation” and the distancing of the Sur group as well as major figures such as Jorge Luis Borges and Bernardo Houssay. On 30th December 1963, Carranza received a letter from Hunt thanking him for his work, and this marked the beginning of the incident-ridden process which, in the face of Carranza’s refusal to hand over the premises, went as far as forcing the new team to change the locks (Glondys, 2012: 173). In the end, the leadership of the new Argentinian Committee was to be as follows: Horacio Rodríguez as general secretary; Óscar Serrat, administrator; and Héctor Murena, in charge of Fine Arts and Literature. It was agreed that the Argentinian centre would initially receive 5,000 dollars every quarter, although by November 1964, the amount had risen to 30,000 annually.

The Chilean Committee was established as early as July 1953, with sections in Valparaiso and Concepción. After the resignation of George Nicolai, its first president, the tasks of representation fell to Carlos de Baraibar, the representative of the CCF Executive Committee in Chile, known in Paris for systematically calling for proper renumeration for the work done in the continent (Glondys, 2012: 309). The Chilean Committee had two vice-presidents, Ramón Cortez and the poet Julio Barrenechea—-who was also a member of the General Assembly of the CCF in 1956-, two secretaries, Alejandro Magnet and
Pedro Guglielmetti, and its members included Jaime Castillo, Miguel Bravo, Chela Reyes, Amanda Labarca and André Germain.

According to a report written by Mercier in March 1961, it was the only Committee which functioned well. Yet already one year later, in his correspondence with Paris, Botsford mocked Baraibar and his collaborator Germain as “a pair of pessimistic gentlemen”, who felt “surrounded by sinister forces” (referring to Salvador Allende’s growing political strength). Very soon, in the context of the new prerogatives resulting from the “Opening to the Left”, Michael Josselson himself assumed the task of persuading Baraibar to follow the new policy of ideological relaxation and sent him a letter, full of irony, the most significant part of which stated:

The most terrible thing about all of that is that if Chile really does fall into the Communist abyss, it wouldn’t be due to the attractiveness of Communism or Castroism per se, but because of the tardiness in your country when it came to thinking about the need for agrarian and fiscal reforms. I sometimes ask myself if, instead of investing so much energy in the fight against the Communist Party and its fellow travellers, our Committees in Latin America shouldn’t have attacked with greater vigour the feudal and other forces which have for so long opposed economic and social reforms of any kind.

However, the CCF could not reasonably expect that anti-Communism as a political line would be readily abandoned by those old Europeans who, in the decades of exile following their defeat in the Spanish Civil War, dedicated all their efforts to fight against the Soviet Communism. Faced with Baraibar’s inflexibility, as early as September 1963 Josselson came to the conclusion that all “those Baraibars, Treviños, Bacius, etc., have the same worth” and on 28th December Mercer informed Baraibar of his dismissal. The main pretext was that he continued to publish under the CCF logo propaganda leaflets with texts issued by embassy services or combat associations and carried on with other political activities that were contrary to the CCF’s statutes. Also the desire, previously expressed by Baraibar, to retire from active life in Chile, together with Germain’s health problems, provided ideal arguments for dismissing both. The economic effects of this dismissal were alleviated, in Baraibar’s case, by the granting of a two-year scholarship for the preparation of a book, and with a financial compensation for Germain. Despite Baraibar’s appalling reputation in Chile, it was important to do as much as possible to maintain good relations with these two “excellent friends”, as John Hunt stated to Luis Mercier. In the end, Juan Holenderski was named administrator of the new Chilean branch; Miguel Arteche responsible for the general contents; and Victor Carvacho for the Fine Arts program.

The CCF still had to face a group solidarity of the members of the Chilean Committee who defended Baraibar and Germain through Amanda Labarca in a letter sent to Paris signed by all of them. Among the Spanish exiles, a role of their principal defender corresponded to Salvador de Madariaga, who on 9th August 1964, in a new letter to Hunt, protested about the dismissals and, with regard to the “Apertura a sinistra”, stressed what follows:

Concrete data which have come to me from my friends in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Chile lead me to think that in actual fact if not in the theory or even the wish of the leadership of our Congress, this Apertura a sinistra is far reaching enough to go beyond Ibero-American Nennis so as to include Ibero-American Togliatti. This in itself is serious enough. As a result, friends whose services to our Congress are invaluable, men such as Carranza, Baraibar and Solari, are either leaving or being dropped. This disquiets me considerably, not for the sake of those men themselves but for the sake of our Congress, since such a waste of human material can but have most deplorable effects in public opinion overseas.

Madariaga’s conviction that the CCF started to include “down-right Communists” coincided fully with the radical idea taken by Rodrigo García Treviño and the French socialist Suzanne Labin, who considered the CCF, by that stage, as an organisation infiltrated by the Soviets. Even Gorkin himself informed Madariaga of his supposed doubts as to whether or not to abandon the CCF and of his concerns about the new orientation which “many people consider to be in line with popular front thinking.” In fact, like other Spaniards, also Gorkin had been increasingly marginalised in the Congress - in 1961, he was replaced by Mercier Vega in the Latin American Secretariat; and in January 1963, as Cuadernos editor, by the Colombian intellectual and diplomat Germán Arciniegas (Glyodys, 2012: 175). Also, after his gradual elimination from the Latin American structures, all the help provided by the CCF for his political projects geared towards Spain came to an end in Autumn of 1966, and only the Iberian program run by the French poet Pierre Emmanuel was maintained (Glondys, 2012: 258-260; Glyodys, 2014). Significantly, after Cuadernos’ steady decline and its closure in 1965, an anthology of its best texts was published and an initially planned section called “Spain and the Spaniards” was eliminated on the personal decision of Michael Josselson.

Satisfied at having successfully eliminated the undesirable collaborators, in April 1964 John Hunt wrote to Mercier about the imperative need to launch in Latin America a new political activity on the part of the CCF, which now should be carried out in an appropriate manner:

I should like to emphasize the fact (…) that our new groups and representatives in Latin America should continue to give a certain portion of their attention and effort to the international scene in keeping with the international character of the political and cultural aim of the Congress. We have certainly succeeded in putting the accent where it belongs, namely on local problems of particular interest to local intellectuals, but we should not get so wholly submerged in local questions that we forget the larger ideological and political issues which
are at the heart of the Congress as an international movement. In addition to the long range of activities upon which we have now embarked, surely some of our activities must be designed for the short run with the idea of doing all possible to resist totalitarian solutions in Latin America. In short, what I am wondering about is the political profile of our Latin American work now that we have addressed ourselves largely to local problems.65

The extract quoted shows that Hunt considered continuing the work of political influence to be necessary and unavoidable in order to prevent the political extremism, or in his own words, to “resist totalitarian solutions in Latin America”. Therefore, the main reason for the dismissals of the old collaborators was not the politicisation of the CCF’s local branches itself, but rather that this politicisation was inadequate from the point of view of Paris, because its radical anti-Communist tone was ineffective for the strategy of influence carried out in the concrete political landscape after the Cuban Revolution.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has focused on a personal dimension of the decline of the CCF’s first Latin American program, which to large extent was designed and implemented by a group of Spanish exiles. In the early 1950s, the CCF would benefit greatly from the experience of the Spaniards in the ideological struggle, their political reliability based on unwavering anti-Communism and, finally, their symbolic significance as the incarnation of anti-Fascist ideas (Glondys, 2012: 76-78). However, they became progressively problematic for the CCF’s purposes in a new context after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Obsessed with the relentless fight against Communism, the Spanish exiles proved to be ineffective when choosing suitable local collaborators, while interacting with supporters of the “third way” and offering a positive, ambitious and long-term program for the Latin American Left and especially for its youth. Furthermore, with the passing of the years, and as a consequence of the emergence of new local elites, the presence of the Spaniards in the main Latin American centres of cultural and intellectual life gave rise to ever increasing conflict and rivalry with the autochthonous sectors, fanned by local nationalist and anti-imperialist currents. Finally, an evident deterioration of the relationship between the Spanish contributors and the CCF’s executives took place when the CCF assumed its new strategy of “Apertura a Sinistra” at the beginning of the 1960s.

One of the conclusions of this study is that the International Secretariat found it difficult to control local sections in developing countries, which were far removed from Paris. In spite of the fact that the formula of “democratic centralism” became the maxim around which Josselson sought to organise the international work of the CCF, in the case of Latin America that tactic proved very difficult to apply. This was mainly because communication between Latin American intellectual circles and the head office in Paris was carried out by Spanish exiles and local liberal elites, who did not hesitate to misinform about the real results of their work on the continent -for which they got paid- or to use the CCF mainly to further their own political agendas. That situation became unsustainable after the Cuban Revolution, when the CCF’s position on the continent clearly emerged as isolated and weak. This was also the time at which the attitude of the CCF’s leaders towards the Latin American contributors became painfully pragmatic. The individual priorities of the Spanish and the Latin American intellectuals in charge of the local representations proved irrelevant as soon as they clashed with the general interests of the organisation. In fact, the dismissals in Latin America recall a similar episode in the history of the Congress when, after the founding conference in Berlin in 1950, the entire right wing of the nascent organisation, pertaining to the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, was marginalised.

Ex-Communists who were founding intellectuals of the CCF, such as James Burnham and Arthur Koestler, were at that time rejected in the context of the emerging strategy of the CCF, which consisted of basing its philosophy of action on the ideology of the non-Communist left (Coleman, 1989: 34; Grémion, 1995: 50; Saunders, 2001: 144).

The changing ideological line adopted by the CCF in Latin America reveals the CCF as a versatile organisation which did not have just a single, permanent strategy, but rather that it chose to adapt it according to the changing political context. In the Latin American case, the CCF’s shift to the left was a pragmatic decision aimed at attracting intellectuals who sympathised with Castroism. Direct attack was replaced by an attitude of dialogue and personal contacts, with the aim of creating the possibility of a rational, “not political” debate. Yet, at the same time, this change of strategy -from attack to debate- in dealing with Communism and Castroism aroused suspicion and controversy among fundamental collaborators which proved impossible to overcome. Moreover the new CCF’s delegations turned out to be unable to fulfil the hopes that had been placed in them, and the CCF had to face a widespread smear campaign unleashed by those who had been dismissed. Relevant ex contributors such as Sánchez, Treviño or Gorkin were convinced that the CCF, once funded to “help democratic intellectuals”, now “has turned into a den where Communists are treated like nice girls”2 (Glondys, 2017: 199-200).

We cannot exclude the possibility that the operation of dismissals, carried out against Gorkin’s judgement and of which he was also a casualty, may have annoyed some influential sectors in the US with which he maintained excellent contacts. What the victims of the dismissals interpreted as a shift on the part of the Congress towards pro-Communist positions may easily have been interpreted in the same way by certain sectors of the United States establishment, who had been opposed to the CCF’s left-wing strategy for many years (Wilford, 2006: 198-200). Indeed, Saunders (2001: 545-566) and Wilford (2008:
206) have pointed to the hypothesis that, in 1967, it was in reality the CIA itself that allowed the CCF to fall, along with other covertly financed organisations, because of the increasing discomfort with the financing of left-wing intellectuals and activists. We should therefore not exclude the possibility that the unease caused by the wave of dismissals in Latin America and the alleged opening of the CCF to Castroist sympathisers was one of the final straws for the CCF’s sponsors, who were probably unhappy with the excessively left-wing policies pursued by the organisation after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. 6

NOTES

1 Letter from Michael Josselson to Keith Botsford, 13/04/1962. Congress for Cultural Freedom and the International Association for Cultural Freedom [hereafter IACF] Papers. Special Collections Research Center; Regenstein Library. University of Chicago; IACF; Series II; box 2, f. 2.


3 Letter from Nicolás Nabokov to Stefán and Mira Baciú, 02/04/1962. Salvador de Madariaga Papers [hereafter APSM]; Instituto José Comide, A Coruña; C163/1; C1.

4 Letter from John Hunt to Keith Botsford, 29/01/1962. IACF; Series II; box 31, f. 5.

5 Letter from Keith Botsford to John Hunt, 10/02/1961. IACF; Series II; box 46, f. 3.

6 Letter from Gorkin to “Paco” [Francisco Ferrándiz Alborz], 18/09/1960. AJGG; 559-10.

7 Letter from Mercier to Hunt, 03/09/1961. IACF; Series II; box 227, f. 4.

8 With positions filled by numerous collaborators such as Carlos Monje, Godofredo García, Enrique López Albújar, Raúl Porras, Luis E. Valcárcel (Honorary presidents); Fortunato Carranza, Rosa Arciniegas, Macedonio La Torre, José Jiménez Borja (vice-presidents); Jorge Pacinelli, Carlos Melvit (secretaries); and Ramón Velasco and Jesús Vélez Lizarraga (executive secretaries).

9 Letter from Luis Alberto Sánchez to Julián Gorkin, 09/02/1961. IACF; Series II; box 63, f. 2.

10 Letter from Luis Alberto Sánchez to François Bondy, 18/02/1961. IACF; Series II; box 63, f. 7.

11 Letter from Luis Alberto Sánchez to John Hunt, 28/02/1961. IACF; Series II; box 285, f. 5.

12 Letter from Luis Alberto Sánchez to Julián Gorkin, 09/02/1961. IACF; Series II; box 63, f. 7.

13 Letter from John Hunt to Luis Alberto Sánchez, 17/02/1961. IACF; Series I; box 30, f. 4.

14 Hunt informed Josselson about this in his letter from 28/03/1962. IACF; Serie II; box 146, f. 1.

15 Letter from Luis Alberto Sánchez to Salvador de Madariaga, 20/07/1965. APSM; C163/2; C4.

16 “(…) c’est bien la première fois que quelqu’un osa nous dicter qui doit et ne doit pas écrire dans nos revues et que c’est une nullité comme M. Treviño qui appuie une pareille démarche. Vive la dictature!” Letter from Josselson to Gorkin, 26/05/1954. IACF; Series I; box 2, f. 5.

17 Letter from Julián Gorkin to Carlos P. Carranza, 16/05/1961. IACF; Series II; box 210, f. 6.

18 “El Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura no es, y no puede ser, un contra-Kominform. (…) Imaginar un contra-Kominform sería suponer que existe una fuerza mundial, un grupo de potencias, un Estado en medida de concebir una estrategia mundial oponiéndose a la estrategia soviética, y esto no solo sobre el terreno militar, sino también en los dominios políticos y sociales. Eso no es. Eso no será probablemente nunca. Y, por parte

mía, no estoy convencido de que las democracias podrían asegurar su supervivencia al afirmar su superioridad si adoptaran los métodos totalitarianos para volverlos contra el totalitarismo. En cambio, el Congreso puede, e intenta hacerlo, inmunizar los intelectuales contra la gangrena totalitaria, estimulándolos a pensar por sí mismos, y favoreciendo las confrontaciones, mejorando la información, insistiendo sobre sus responsabilidades propias. Se trata solo de un sector, pero es un sector esencial. Y es sobre este terreno que hemos de librar nuestro combate, como otros libran el suyo en otros sectores”. Letter from Luis Mercier to Rodrigo García Treviño, 02/11/1961. IACF; Series VI; box 1, f. 14. I am using Patrick Iber’s translation of an extract of this letter quoted in his book (2015: 185-186).

19 “Il faut trouver un moyen de débarrasser le Congrès de Monsieur Treviño, c’est-à-dire qu’il faut trouver une façon de lui interdire l’utilisation de notre nom, même sous forme d’un Comité Mexicain. Certes, cela pourrait provoquer un certain émoi dans le petit groupe de Treviño, mais à la longue il serait certainement bien d’être débarrassé de ce petit macCarthyiste mexicain”. Letter from Michael Josselson to Julián Gorkin, 15/11/1961. IACF; Series II; box 131, f. 4.


22 Letter from Manuel Torres Campaña to Luis Mercier, 25/08/1962. IACF; Series VI; box 2, f. 2.

23 Letter from John Hunt to Julián Gorkin, 17/10/1962. IACF; Series II; box 131, f. 4.

24 Letter from Michael Josselson to John Hunt, 28/01/1963. IACF; Series II; box 187, f. 6.

25 Letter from John Hunt to Keith Botsford, 31/12/1963. IACF; Series I; box 35, f. 6.

26 Keith Botsford, “Report on Mexico” (1964). IACF; Series II; box 9, f. 5.

27 “Usted mismo no se imagina toda la amplitud del servicio que usted ha prestado y está prestado a la cultura universal, a la continental americana en especial. Gentes que se conocen, relaciones que se traban, reencontrenecidos: usted, amigo Julián Gorkin, ha hecho lo que pocas gentes, acaso nadie, por la solidaridad de la cultura y por su libertad”. Letter from Benjamín Carrión to Julián Gorkin, 03/11/1956. IACF; Series II; box 53, f. 4.

28 Letter from Keith Botsford to John Hunt and Michael Josselson, 23/02/1962. IACF; Series II; box 46, f. 6.

29 Letter from John Hunt to Stefan Baciú, 05/03/1962. IACF; Series I; box 31, f. 5.

30 In his letter to Botsford, of 06/03/1962, Josselson reminded him that the first director of the Brazilian Committee was Nobrega da Cunha, who, during the 18 months in which he perceived salary, never responded to any of the faxes nor letters sent from Paris. Gorkin apparently lost completely his faith in Brazilian intellectuals after that experience. IACF; Series II; box 188, f. 3.

31 “Il me semble que vous devriez avoir confiance dans le juge ment ici au Secrétariat Central. Le Congrès n’est pas et ne devrait pas être une organisation de lutte de ‘guerre froide’ et ne devrait pas être considérée comme telle. Ceci, je crois, est un fait basé, et peut être est-ce le point qui est, si je me permets de le dire, mal compris par vous. Nous sommes une association très hétérogène et de plus en plus les membres actifs de notre Comité Exécutif réalisent que la tactique que doit adopter le Congrès dans le monde changeant doit être variée et très élastique. Il me semble surtout que, tout en prenant des positions parfois définitives vis-à-vis des divers aspects du totalitarisme, nous ne devons pas nous laisser mener par le terme des espèces de taur eaux violents, à tous les problèmes que pose le totalitarisme. Notre travail nous appelle surtout à gagner des amis et à les gagner dans ce que l’on appelle maintenant en Italie ‘l’Apertura a Sinistra’. Je ne vous chercherai pas que, lorsque j’étais à Sao Paulo et lorsque je parlais à différentes personnes à Rio de Janeiro et à Bahia, j’étais étonné de voir que l’impression que donne le

32 "Le Congrès ne cherche pas à obtenir l’adhésion à une idéologie. Il ne cherche pas à éloigner les intellectuels des devoirs qu’ils ont envers leurs pays ou a les rendre favorables ou hostiles aux partis et aux courants politiques agissants dans leurs pays. Le Congrès cherche, cependant, à accroître leur attachement aux normes universelles de dévotion à la vérité, la curiosité intellectuelle et au respect du travail créateur. Il a pour but de cultiver la largeur d’esprit, la tendance à faire proﬁter autrui des connaissances et des expériences acquises. (...) Nous avons grand besoin d’une entente intellectuelle, d’une entente qui rend possibles les explorations faites en commun, dans une atmosphère de bonne foi et d’amitié profonde. Cette entente est, à la fois, le but et l’instrument de nos activités”. Letter from Nicolas Nabokov to Stefan Baciu, 02/04/1962. APSM; C163/1; C1.

33 "Si nous ne sommes d’accord, peu importe. (...) je crois que dans l’immense misère de notre époque il faut essayer tous les chemins et surtout ceux de l’esprit et de capacités du cœur pour comprendre les situations compliquées et ne pas se rabattre sur les slogans périmés de ce qu’on appelle en anglais ‘pro-ﬁt-less partisanship’. “Letter from Nicolaï Nabokov to Stefan Baciu 02/04/1962. APSM; C163/1; C1.

34 Letter from Stefan Baciu to Alfaro Coutinho, 10/08/1962. APSM; C163/1; C1.

35 Letter from Stefan Baciu to Salvador de Madariaga, 16/03/1962. APSM; C163/2; C2.

36 Letter from Salvador de Madariaga to Michael Josselson, 03/09/1962. APSM; C163/1; C1

37 Letter from Michael Josselson to Salvador de Madariaga, 13/09/1962. APSM; C163/2; C1.

38 "Sonme toute, il ne s’agit nullement d’une nouvelle orientation et la nécessite tacticque de mettre plus d’accent sur des program- mises positives, n’implique pas autre chose que la recherche de méthodes permettant d’attirer vers nous les gens que nous espérons inﬂuencre”. Letter from Michael Josselson to Salvador de Madariaga, 26/10/1962. IACF; Series II, box 224, f. 9.

39 "Notes on structure of South American Committees”, 02/04/1958. IACF; Series II, box 248, f. 5.

40 Letter from Carlos P. Carranza to Julián Gorkin, 09/01/1961. IACF; Series II, box 210, f. 6.

41 Letter from Michael Josselson to Ignacio Iglesias, 13/07/1961. IACF; Series II, box 187, f. 11.


43 Luis Mercier. “Plan de travail inmediato”. 02/03/1961. IACF; Series VI; box 1, f. 17. About the Argentinian Committee, see Jorge Nállim’s monograph (2012a) and article (2012b: 121-141) and Jannello’s articles: (2013: 212-247; Summer 2013/2014: 85-91).

44 Letter from Luis Mercier to John Hunt. IACF; Series II; box 227, f. 6.

45 "La última tontería que descubrí hace poco es la del prólogo de Gilberto Freyre al folleto de Strachey. Este prólogo, que prácticamente compromete el Congreso, no es otra cosa que una de- fensa de los métodos de colonización portuguesa y de la actual política de Salazar. Llegando después del folleto de Carranza sobre la reforma agraria y el libro de Dussault sobre la reforma universitaria, creo que hemos alcanzado al [sic] vértice de la idiotez”. Letter from Luis Mercier to Ignacio Iglesias. IACF; Series VI; box 3, f. 3.

46 Letter from Luis Mercier to Ignacio Iglesias, 16/04/1963. IACF; Series VI; box 3, f. 3.

47 Letter from Luis Mercier to John Hunt, 26/05/1963. IACF; Series VI; box 2, f. 10.

48 Letter from Luis Mercier to Juan Antonio Solari, 23/09/1963. IACF; Series VI; box 2, f. 10.

49 Letter from John Hunt to Carlos P. Carranza, 30/12/1963. IACF; Series I; box 36, f. 2.

50 Letter from Keith Botsford to John Hunt and Michael Josselson, 17/06/1962. IACF; Series II; box 46, f. 4.

51 “Le plus terrible de tout ceci est que si le Chili devait vraiment tomber dans l’âme Communiste, ce ne serait pas à cause de l’attrait du Communisme ou du Castrisme par se, mais à cause du retard avec lequel on a pensé dans votre pays à la nécessité des réformes agraires et fiscales. Je me demande parfois, si au lieu d’avoir mis tant d’énergie dans la lutte contre le parti Communiste et ses compagnons de route, nos comités en Amérique Latine n’auraient pas dû s’attaquer avec plus de vigueur aux forces fédérales et autres qui s’opposent et depuis toujours à tout genre de réformes économiques et sociales”. Letter from Michael Josselson to Carlos de Baraibar, 06/06/1962. IACF; Series II; box 73, f.

52 Letter from Michael Josselson to Ignacio Iglesias, 13/09/1962. IACF; Series II; box 189, f. 1.

53 Letter from Luis Mercier to Carlos de Baraibar, 28/12/1963. IACF; Series II; box 227, f. 5.

54 Letter from Luis Mercier to John Hunt, 22/04/1964. IACF; Series II; box 227, f. 9.

55 Letter from John Hunt to Luis Mercier, 04/10/1963. IACF; Series I; box 37, f. 6.

56 Compare, about the Chilean case, Jannello (2012: 14-52).

57 Letter from Amanda Labarca and the Chilean Committee to John Hunt, 30/12/1963. IACF; Series II; box 73, f.

58 Letter from Salvador de Madariaga to John Hunt. IACF; Series II; box 224, f. 9.

59 Letter from Julián Gorkin to Salvador de Madariaga, 27/12/1963. APSM; C138; C5.

60 Letter from Julián Gorkin to Salvador de Madariaga, 08/01/1964. APSM; C139; C7.

61 Letter from John Hunt to Luis Mercier, 20/04/1964. IACF; Series II; box 227, f. 9.

62 Letter from José Luis Recavarren to Luis Mercier Vega, 30/04/1964. IACF; Series VI; box 4, f. 3.

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