In October 1940, the long-time president of the League of Nations’ International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (CICI), retired Oxford professor Gilbert Murray, was contending with the rigours and limitations of living in a country at war, while at the same time attempting to rally colleagues and political exiles in England to action, in defence of intellectual cooperation and education. Henri Bonnet, French diplomat and long-time director of the League of Nations’ International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI), had closed down the Institute and escaped his native France in June 1940. Soon after, he found himself in the United States, absorbed by his work for de Gaulle’s Free France. Gonzague de Reynold, the conservative Swiss who had acted as vice-president of the CICI was gloomy – if comfortable – in his residence in Switzerland, his main concern being to keep his country out of the war. The three were the highest ranked officials of the League’s Intellectual Cooperation Organisation, yet contact between them had broken off. By the fall of 1940, the League’s grandiose buildings in Geneva were almost empty, with a skeleton staff attending to the dwindling business of the organisation and attempting to demonstrate its continued usefulness. One year of war had already managed to fray the transnational networks of the organisations of intellectual cooperation that the League had built since 1922. But in the midst of the brutal war, activities and, crucially, the planning for intellectual cooperation in the post-war period resumed, even if it was in fits and starts, in different places, with shifting networks and allegiances.

This article inserts itself into the recent re-evaluation of the League of Nations, which has stressed the important role its technical organisations have played, also in shaping the post-war international order. Not impressed by the vociferous claims that the United Nations system started from a clean slate and marked a «new beginning» after the failure of the League of Nations, many scholars are starting to emphasise the connections – ideologically as well as institutionally – between pre- and post-war organisations.¹ A few League organisations, such as the ILO or the Economic and Financial Organisation, had found refuge in North America and
remained active throughout the war years.\(^2\) The Food and Agriculture Organisation, at first sight the new creation of the young United Nations, emerged as a direct consequence of projects developed at the League.\(^3\) Yet during the war, it was far from clear how the various technical bodies established by the League would fare in the post-war world, despite much discussion.\(^4\) Rather than the result of carefully planned war-time transitions, each re-emerging international organisation had its own trajectory. This article will explore the fate of the League’s International Cooperation Organisation during the war.

Intellectual Cooperation came as an afterthought to the League, in the hope that cultural, scientific, and up to a point educational exchanges would foster international understanding and thus make an important contribution to the cause of peace. A commission of twelve prominent intellectuals – among them luminaries such as Henri Bergson, Marie Curie and Albert Einstein – was set up to discuss programmes and projects worth undertaking, but it was only in 1926, after the French government established the IICI as executive organ of the CICI, that the impact of the Intellectual Cooperation Organisation (ICO) began to be felt. While the ICO was conceived of as «universal» organisation, a zone of encounters not only between different national cultures, but also different civilisations, its agenda was strongly shaped by European problems.\(^5\) During the 1930s, however, the Japanese, quite a few Latin American republics,\(^6\) as well as the US Americans increasingly asserted themselves in the work of the ICO. Indeed, unlike the League as a whole, the ICO was in its most productive phase in the mid- to late 1930s and, in the case of the Americas, even into the 1940s, before it was supplanted by UNESCO in 1945.

In recent years, scholars have advanced the claim that the United Nations and its technical organisations were «quickly rebuilt on League foundations».\(^7\) Also the League’s ICO has been interpreted as the direct precursor or the «forgotten» UNESCO.\(^8\)

6 The use of the collective term «Latin American» in this article does not mean to imply homogeneity or that all countries were equally engaged in the ICO. Particularly active in the late 1930s were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, and Mexico, however, intellectuals and diplomats from many other countries participated on an individual basis.
7 Pedersen, «Back to the League», 1112.
While it is important to acknowledge the significance of the League’s work and the continuities – in this particular case, UNESCO inherited archives, library and quite some personnel from the League organisation –, there were also important institutional breaks, power shifts as well as changing visions. This makes it necessary to examine the developments during the crucial war years, when discussions on the future of intellectual cooperation were intense on both sides of the Atlantic. The article follows the major protagonists, among them Gilbert Murray, Henri Bonnet and the American James T. Shotwell in their attempt to chart a course towards a post-war future for intellectual cooperation under great logistical difficulties, while contending with changing political alliances and exigencies. I will particularly consider the efforts of the National Committees of Intellectual Cooperation in the Americas, which, in contrast to the activities of the London-based Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME), have been mostly ignored by historical scholarship. For a few years, it looked indeed as if the Western hemisphere, the Cuban city of Havana, was going to become an important centre for intellectual cooperation. The United States seemed willing to accept demands of the Latin American intellectuals to organise temporary headquarters of the League’s intellectual cooperation in the Caribbean; however, given the war-time US strategy and the close alliance with Great Britain, such plans turned out to be a dead alley.

1. Ignoring the War

Delusional – this is how F.P. Walters’ classic history of the League has described the attitude prevailing in Geneva when Europe slid into war in September 1939. Continually reducing staff members, the League secretariat attempted to keep working. A similar head-in-the-sand policy was evident at the last pre-war CICI meeting in Geneva in July 1939. The tone of the meeting was set by chair Gilbert Murray: Though he admitted that chances were high that «the worst came to the worst» and a war would break out, he was nevertheless «optimistic» as the services of the ICO had been much sought recently. CICI members could also console themselves with the knowledge that intellectual cooperation would protect «the civilised world». After this prelude, the CICI went on to discuss the usual matters such as future round-table discussions, the setting up of a commission on social sciences, or the agenda of the meeting of National Committees planned for 1940. There was no


discussion about the measures that the CICI would adopt in case of war and its members dispersed, apparently expecting to meet again in July 1940.\textsuperscript{11}

Even though directly touched by war, the IICI in Paris also kept up its activities in the autumn of 1939. There were no plans for closure or for relocation, on the contrary: the announcement that the IICI was continuing its activities in Paris generated «hundreds» of positive reactions.\textsuperscript{12} Preparations for war had not gone beyond giving the Institute’s director expanded powers in case that he could not communicate with the IICI board. A few cautious staff members decided not to prolong their contracts and returned to their home countries, but otherwise the IICI carried on, chronicling its doings in the bi-monthly \textit{Informations sur la Coopération Intellectuelle} right up to May 1940. However, the war did have an impact on the topics the institute addressed. The IICI started a series of letters for publication on the role of intellectual cooperation during the war. The first letter in the series, penned by the Brazilian CICI member Miguel Ozorio de Almeida in December 1939, clearly situated the IICI as a voice of the «free countries» which, he implied, had remained true to their pacifist convictions for too long.\textsuperscript{13} The IICI also attempted to shore up solidarity by publishing the reports and appeals of diverse international student organisations, and made the public aware of the deportations of Polish intellectuals to an uncertain fate.\textsuperscript{14} In discussing the war-time plans of great libraries and universities, the IICI all but implied that the German aggression was an act of barbarism. Indeed, as the German forces were closing in on Paris, IICI director Henri Bonnet packed the last few things on Monday, 10 June 1940, to leave the city the same afternoon. A core group of the IICI staff, in possession of the archives of the Institute, left as well.\textsuperscript{15}

Would the IICI be transferred abroad? After all, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University and the Rockefeller Foundation approached the Secretary General Joseph Avenol and his faltering League in Geneva with the offer to move some of its technical services to the United States. However, while the Economic and Financial Organisation seized the opportunity and was sent «on mission» in the United States, neither the secretariat of the ICO nor the IICI were included in the plan.\textsuperscript{16} The reasons for this were complex. During the 1930s, the IICI in Paris was engaged in manifold activities, such as the International Studies Conference or the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} League of Nations Archive, CICI /21st session/ P.V.1–10.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Anonymous, «Note», in: \textit{Informations sur La Coopération Intellectuelle} (1939) 1–2.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Johan Huizinga and the Chilean Gabriela Mistral were the first respondents to Ozorio’s statement, but the exchange was never published in book form. A few years earlier, the IICI had published a similar exchange between Einstein and Freud: A. Einstein / S. Freud / S. Gilbert, \textit{Why War?}, Paris 1933. See M. Ozorio de Almeida, \textit{Ambiente de guerra na Europa}, Rio de Janeiro 1943, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Informations sur la Coopération Intellectuelle}, 1–2 (1939), 23–25, 26–27, 34–35: 3–4 (January–February 1940) 78; 5 (March 1940), 143.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ozorio de Almeida, \textit{Ambiente de guerra}, 166–167.
\item \textsuperscript{16} The dramatic confrontations with the increasingly erratic Avenol are examined in detail in Clavin, \textit{Securing the World Economy}, 260–265.
\end{itemize}
publication of Latin American and Japanese classics and had increasingly asserted a measure of independence. When Avenol attempted to impose stronger control, the IICI countered and put itself on a new basis with the International Act Concerning Intellectual Cooperation that was signed by 45 states in 1938. While not severing the links between the IICI and the League of Nations completely, it did have the effect of loosening them. As Avenol’s political stance increasingly clashed with the IICI’s siding with the «free» countries, it is not surprising that he did not want to relinquish control completely by seeking to transfer the institute abroad. Moreover, as pointed by Ludovic Tournès in this issue, Henri Bonnet, Director of the IICI and Secretary-General of the International Studies Conference (ISC), had not been able to interest the Americans in transferring the ISC to the United States, let alone the whole IICI. US perceptions of the ICO as Eurocentric and elitist played into these choices, as did the fact that cultural policy of the United States was only just emerging and mostly oriented towards Latin America. So the IICI remained in Paris.

The fate of similar institutions under German occupation reminds us of what was at stake. The Union of International Associations (UIA) head-quartered in Brussels, for instance, was put under German administration, which confiscated books, files and archival material while the SS harassed its ageing director, Paul Otlet. In Paris, the International Association of Criminal Law and the International Geographical Union were also raided, and part of their archives and papers transported to Berlin. The IICI did not suffer to the same extent, in part because the personnel had fled Paris with the archives. Before leaving France, Henri Bonnet left instructions that since the evacuation of the IICI did not seem feasible, the staff should return to Paris «as soon as the circumstances permit». This ambiguous wording meant that the staff, without funds at their disposition, returned to Paris in July 1940, finding the Institute occupied by the German police. Though the Germans at first seemed intent on actively using the IICI, they lost interest in December 1940. For the remainder of the war, the IICI in Paris adhered mostly to the mandated strategy of dormancy. When the IICI re-opened its doors in early 1945, its interim director argued that it was possible to «go in a straight line from

17 The Act was a move to separate the IICI from League politics and to enable full participation – also financial – of non-League members. While some hoped that this would attract the United States and its rich foundations, others like Gonzague de Reynold hoped that this would keep the IICI open to German and Italian collaboration. It is also likely that Bonnet, as a good Frenchman, was at first reluctant to transfer the Institute, which, after all, had served to establish Paris as a beacon of civilisation.

18 US perceptions of the ICO as Eurocentric and elitist played into these choices, as did the fact that cultural policy of the United States was only just emerging and mostly oriented towards Latin America. So the IICI remained in Paris.


20 LONA, R 4017, 5B/39241/2741, Rapport du Directeur par interim.

21 Renollet, L’Unesco, 151–158.
i8 June 1940 to 1 February 1945». He was wrong: the world around the IICI had not stopped turning and the developments of the war years had made the institute obsolete.

2. Against the Trend: Keeping Intellectual Cooperation alive in the Western Hemisphere

The League of Nations had opened up a new international arena to the Latin American republics, in which they hoped to escape the overbearing US influence. The same was true for the League’s efforts in the field of intellectual cooperation, which Latin American delegates supported from its very beginnings in 1922. Though they might have been frequently frustrated with the Eurocentric approaches, they accepted the League’s ICO as a legitimate actor in the field. From the late 1920s onwards, there was a fruitful exchange of initiatives and ideas between the League and Inter-American institutions (the Conferences of American States and the Pan American Union), ranging from the revision of text books to the protection of archaeological patrimony. As the League became increasingly pressed to prove its relevance and universal appeal during the 1930s, Latin American delegates managed to convince the ICO to hold two conferences outside Europe: a round-table discussion in Buenos Aires (1936) and a regional conference of American National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation in Santiago (1939). The perception that the League was responding better to their needs tightened the connection.

Though a famous non-member of the League, the United States participated in the League’s intellectual cooperation as both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment contributed considerable sums to specific IICI projects. The United States also boasted an active National Committee (US NCIC), strictly based on civil society organisations. It was headed by James T. Shotwell, the prominent internationalists who was well-connected to powerful foundations and political circles. He had been instrumental in raising the foundations’ interest in the League and also pushed for more engagement by the US government.

The creation of the so-called Division of Cultural Relations in the State Department in July 1938 was in part Shotwell’s doing, and it carried considerable conse-

22 LONA, R 4017, 5B/39241/2741, rapport du Directeur par interim.
26 He headed the Carnegie Endowment’s Division of Economics and History. 
quences for the League’s ICO.\textsuperscript{27} As the State Department became a player in cultural policy, the most urgent priority was to bolster the Good Neighbour Policy and foster unity in the Americas.\textsuperscript{28} In late March 1939, Shotwell made a first attempt to coax the Cultural Division out of this «regional straightjacket» and consider supporting the League’s ICO. In the presence of representatives of Carnegie Endowment and the Rockefeller Foundation, he suggested that the government consider the possibility of moving «the more important international functions in the scientific and intellectual field» of the League Secretariat as well as the IICI to the United States in the case of war in Europe. But his plea did not fall on fertile ground, as the foundations merely stated that they would consider «suggestions» from the State Department if financing for such matters was needed.\textsuperscript{29} Three weeks into the war, the Cultural Division asked the European Affairs counterpart if they should assist «cultural and intellectual interests», but nothing came of this initiative. Indeed, the Cultural Division noted with barely concealed satisfaction that «the retirement of the principal European states from many phases of cultural relations in this hemisphere gives the United States an extraordinary opportunity», namely, to consolidate relations with Latin America and to «fill as effectively as possible the gaps which have been created by the forced abandonment by the European powers».\textsuperscript{30} The State Department was intent on replacing Europe, and not interested in supporting the League’s intellectual cooperation – an attitude that even crept into the US NCIC.

The arrival of Henri Bonnet in the United States did not change matters much. Bonnet, who received financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation, focused on his work for the Free French Government in Exile and for the Chicago-based World Citizens Association, of which he was executive secretary from 1941 to June 1943.\textsuperscript{31} He was then called to Algiers by de Gaulle, serving as Information Officer, and returned to Washington in December 1944 as the first post-Vichy French Ambassador.\textsuperscript{32} During the first two years in the United States, Bonnet did not maintain communication with the League Secretariat in Geneva, which as late as 1942 did not even have a mailing address for him.\textsuperscript{33} He did, however, bring his


\textsuperscript{29} US National Archives, RG 59.111 Box 236.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid. Box 237, Memorandum Ben Cherrington, 19 September 1939.


\textsuperscript{32} The World Citizens Association was an attempt to bring Salvador de Madariaga’s World Foundation to the United States. A. Derungs, «Un europeo olvidado? Salvador de Madariaga y la integración europea», in: RIPS. Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas 8 (2009) 1, 127–143.

\textsuperscript{33} LONA, R 3977, 5B/41160/318, Peter Anker to A. Rosengberg, 23 June 1942.
IICI experiences into the discussions and publications of the World Citizens Association, which was concerned with fostering dialogue on the post-war international order.

Bonnet was conflicted on what to do with the League's ICO. On the one hand, he held up the ICO as a positive force which had «explored the right direction» and contributed to enhancing international experience, «perhaps incompletely, but usefully».

He insisted that a new body that was «stronger, larger, and well-financed» would have to take over in the post-war period, but his priority was to defeat fascism, to regain «the atmosphere and facilities which will permit the establishment of intellectual foundations of future world cooperation».

3. The «Shangri-La of the Occident»: Dreaming of Havana as the Centre of Intellectual Cooperation

In February of 1942, the US American Journal of Higher Education published an enthusiastic article about a conference that had taken place in Havana in November 1941. The Second Pan-American Conference on Intellectual and Cultural Cooperation, with nineteen participating countries, was presented as a flowering of inter-American cultural and university exchanges, undergirded by a firm commitment that all American Republics would stand together and fight for democracy. Moreover, the article announced a number of resolutions that would turn Havana into the «Shangri-La of the Occident»: Havana was going to be the site of the IICI in exile under Henri Bonnet's leadership. There were plans to move the International Union of Academies, the International Bureau of Education and the International Association of Historical Sciences to Havana as well – all proof that the West was now «the custodian of world culture».

Though the hyperbole of the article was going to become painfully evident over the next months, the conference was remarkable indeed. Technically, it was a follow-up event of the League's First Conference of American Committees on Intellectual Cooperation (Santiago, January 1939). In Santiago, numerous participants had argued that the Western hemisphere was called upon to save «the holy inheritance of occidental culture and civilization».

In 1941, the even more desperate international

36 H. Bonnet, Outlines of the Future: World Organization Emerging from the War, Chicago, Ill. 1943, 2, 85.
38 The League had sponsored the meeting to consolidate the considerable Latin American engagement with the IICI and Secretariat's work and to advance a number of projects and conventions in the Americas. Comisión Chilena de Cooperación Intelectual, Primera conferencia americana de comisiones nacionales de cooperación intelectual. Actas e informes, Santiago 1939, 20.
situation confirmed such appreciations and lent weight to the Havana conference. The accredited US delegation to the conference read like the Who-is-Who of cultural policy at the time: Accompanying James Shotwell were Virginia Gildersleeve (Dean of Barnard College), William Berrien (American Council of Learned Societies), Malcolm Davis (Associate Director of the Carnegie Endowment), Stephen Duggan (Institute of International Education), and William Sanders (Pan American Union) as well as observers of the US State Department and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Finally, Henri Bonnet was also accredited as an observer.39

The thematic scope of the Havana conference reflected the ambivalent stance of certain participants. While it was a meeting of the League's National Committees on Intellectual Cooperation, much time was spent discussing specific projects of intellectual cooperation that were exclusively Pan-American, from the reduction of postal rates and tariffs for book shipments within the Americas, to student exchanges and the teaching of history that would emphasise the commonalities of the American experience, without any reference to the League.40 Strengthening this impression were the concurrent exhibitions of Cuban and American modern art and of Venezuelan books.41 The delegates passed a great number of resolutions which condemned the persecution of intellectuals in totalitarian countries, emphasised the need for American solidarity and reaffirmed a commitment to democracy.

Those participants with close ties to the League's ICO attempted to link this inter-American cooperation with the League. Mariano Brull, a Cuban who had collaborated with the IICI's Ibero-American Collection, insisted that the meeting in Havana proved the validity and vitality of the League's approach. Francisco Walker Linares, one of the most ardent League supporters in Latin America and president of the Chilean NCIC, invoked not only Paul Valéry's «society of the spirit» but also wished to affirm «the international character of intellectual cooperation in all its integrity.»42 Cosme de la Torriente, a Cuban independence hero who had served as League delegate and president of the Assembly, and the Brazilian Miguel Ozorio de Almeida, a CICI member, also formed part of the group which proposed that for the duration of the war, a temporary Centre of Intellectual Cooperation should be set up in the Americas. The resolution asked that member governments pay a part of their

41 A meeting of the International Federation of University Women, attended by delegates from seven American countries, added a further inter-American touch. Ware, Second American Conference, 42–43.
42 Ware, Second American Conference, 11, 15–16.
League dues to this proposed institute, as they did for the ILO and the other League organisations that had been moved abroad – a suggestion that probably came from Bonnet. The resolution was passed with great enthusiasm and amidst votes of appreciation for the League, the IICI and CICI President Gilbert Murray. As Ozorio de Almeida pointed out, these American initiatives were but the branches of a universalist tree trunk which they tried to save. Regional organisations were a matter of efficiency, but not the final end.

Edith Ware, secretary of the US NCIC, remarked rather cuttingly after the conference that while this had been a «praiseworthy gesture of loyalty», it was not clear how it would advance inter-American relations. She worried that the adherence to a «universalist» framework of intellectual cooperation would lead to problems in accommodating «purely inter-American interests». Other members of the US NCIC also harboured a strong dislike of «the whole Paris gang». A Norwegian participant reported that neither the US government agencies nor private organisations were ready «to participate in international organization of a universal character». Indeed, the US delegation tried hard to re-launch the notion of an inter-American committee on intellectual cooperation. The Latin Americans, however, remained deeply attached to the League and its bodies of intellectual cooperation. Apart from the deeply engrained respect for European culture, the attractiveness of re-affirming the League system lay exactly in the possibility to counter-balance US power.

While Ware prioritised inter-American solidarity, preferably under US leadership, and the Latin American delegates wanted to hold on to the «universal» ICO, Shotwell emphasised the long-term perspectives and urged the delegates to look beyond the moribund League. Acknowledging that the League’s ICO had been a pioneering force, he argued that it had been far from been successful and suggested that after the war, «[there shall be set up] an organisation for cultural relations and intellectual cooperation much stronger, much more capable of measuring up to its great opportunity and duty [...].» Quite apart from any personal opinions he might have held, Shotwell was fully aware – through his involvement in planning commissions at the highest level – that the White House was loath to consider «anything like a revival of the League of Nations». Arguing for a new blueprint to organise intellectual cooperation was perhaps the most that this internationalist could do.

The fate of the «Shangri-La of the Occident» remained uncertain.
4. From the Dead Alley of Havana to the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education in London

Some of the delegates to the Havana conference were still on their way home when Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor. The gritty reality of war set in for the United States. Not only for the State Department, but also for many non-governmental organisations, immediate priorities shifted towards shoring up hemispheric unity and winning the support of the Latin Americans. In the midst of the war, a stunning variety of organisations, both public and private, engaged in scientific, cultural and educational exchanges with Latin America. Maintaining or recreating a League organisation was not a main concern, even if the project of opening a centre of intellectual cooperation in Cuba officially remained on the books.

Meanwhile, the rump League Secretariat in Geneva did not have any inkling of the intellectual cooperation initiatives in the Americas. When queried about the Havana conference, the staff had to admit they knew nothing about it and complained that they were completely cut off. Not receiving any information from League officials in Princeton, nor from the US NCIC, the staff had to piece together information from the available US press until they received more substantive reports from Julián Nogueira, an Uruguayan who had worked at the League for years, and from the Chilean Walker Linares. Nogueira sent newspaper clippings and declarations of the Havana Conference, but with mounting irritation, since postage costs were high. He suggested that the Secretariat contact the people «in Princeton and Montreal» to find out more, indirectly criticising the latter for their negligence. Nogueira’s efforts at least allowed League Secretary General Sean Lester to write up the conference in the yearly reports of activities that he still published.

After the upheaval of the United States’ entry into the war had passed, the Cubans presented their proposal for the temporary institute. The Carnegie Endowment financed a meeting of the seven men who were supposed to organise the Institute, but it was delayed until October 1943, when Bonnet had already left. They confirmed Havana as the seat of the temporary IICI and within three months, Cosme de la Torriente had obtained the facilities and credits from the Cuban government to set up the Centre. However, matters did not move forward and Torrien-

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51 LONA, R 3977, 5B/41160/318, Thanasssis Aghnides to Nogueira, 18 March 1942.
52 LONA, R 3977, 5B/41160/318, Telegram Lester to Sweetser, 29 August 1941, Telegram Sweetser to Lester, 3 September 1941, Aghnides to Nogueira, 18 March 1942; Memorandum of Peter Anker, 5 May 1942.
53 LONA R 3977, 5B/41160/318, Nogueira to Aghnides, 22 April 1942.

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te's letters to the US NCIC were answered with great delays. By April 1944, it was clear that neither the US government nor private foundations intended to contribute the needed 25,000 US Dollars towards the first yearly budget of 60,000 US Dollars. The US NCIC’s claims that they still supported the idea rang hollow. When Paris was liberated in August 1944, even those most in favour of the Centre realised that it was too late to open it. In letters criss-crossing the Americas, they looked for ways to save face – but it was clear to all that they had missed the chance to put Havana on the map.

The change of mind of the US actors and the callous attitude with which they consigned the «Shangri-La of the Occident» to the dustbin did not earn them any sympathy in the Southern hemisphere and raised questions as to their intentions for the post-war organisation. The likes of Ozario, Walker Linares or Torriente followed developments at Dumbarton Oaks very closely, and when the plans for the United Nations were made public in October 1944, they were dismayed that they did not contain any stipulations about intellectual cooperation. At the contentious Inter-American Conference on War and Peace, which took place in Mexico City in February 1945 and served to consolidate Latin American points of view before the San Francisco Conference, their delegates were adamant that the United Nations create a special organisation to promote intellectual and cultural cooperation. At San Francisco they were vigilant that «small countries» should not be disadvantaged and they vigorously defended such positions at the founding conference of UNESCO in London as well, in November 1945.

Had the Cubans and their allies been able to read the countless studies on the post-war order conducted in the United States (quite a few of them published during the war), they might have been less surprised by the turn of events. The League was a moot institution for the United States government – and only select bits and pieces were kept going. The ICO had not been identified as such during the critical summer of 1940, and the efforts of the Latin American NCICs did not garner full support of the US NCIC and even less of the US government. At first the US actors saw the «universal» approach and the ties to the League as an obstacle to the desired, intensified inter-American relations. By October 1943, however, planning for the post-war organisation was firmly under the State Depart-

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55 Centro Internacional de Cooperación intelectual, Informes y Documentos sobre la creación del centro internacional provisional de cooperación intelectual de América, La Habana 1945, 58–59; Waldo Leland to Luis A. Baralt, 28 April 1944.

56 Centro Internacional, Informes, 48–56.


ment’s control. At that point, it did have to seriously consider the option of a global organisation in the field of educational and cultural cooperation – because such discussions were already taking place at the CAME in London. The US engagement with CAME led to a re-articulation of the networks of intellectual cooperation, which shifted from the Western hemisphere to the North Atlantic just as the «special relationship» between Britain and the United States became the subject of intense propaganda on both sides of the Atlantic.59

5. Twists and Turns to the North Atlantic: Intellectual Cooperation and the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME)

The standard accounts of the CAME and how it contributed to the establishment of UNESCO usually focus only on the last phase of the process, when the United States became an official participant in the Conference, and on the rivalry between an «Anglo-Saxon» and the French visions for a permanent post-war organisation.60

The point here, however, is to elucidate how the CAME even arrived at the point of envisioning a permanent organisation – rather than one for reconstruction – and to reflect on the role of League actors in these dynamics.

Living in England for the duration of the war, the CICI President Gilbert Murray made no attempt to keep the CICI active, for the simple reason that he knew that the British government was «not willing to put up money for it».61 Indeed, official Britain had been unfriendly towards the ICO from its inception, and in wartime it had even less sympathy for internationalist ventures. But Murray was not inclined to let intellectual cooperation fall by the wayside completely. Through the Council for Education in World Citizenship (a close ally of the British League of Nations Union) and the London International Assembly,62 he attempted to maintain interest in collaboration across national boundaries to foster mutual understanding. Like Bonnet, he engaged in a «critical examination of what had been attempted, what more might have been attempted» at the League and tried to incorporate these lessons into the building of a new organisation.63 Murray’s target audience was the CAME, which

59 NARA, RG 59, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1939–1945, Box 17; Clavin, Securing the World Economy, 279–280.
61 NARA; RG 59, Records of Harley A. Notter, 1939–1945, Box 17, Report by Virginia Gildersleeve, October 1943.
62 The London International Assembly was an unofficial group of representatives of Allied countries, established in September 1941 to «a) understand more fully each other’s history, economic development, institutions, way of life and national aspirations, and b) to consider the principles of post-war policy», thus functioning as a think tank that elaborated proposals for the Allied governments. Joint Commission of the Council for Education in World Citizenship and the London International Assembly and American Council on Public Affairs, Education and the United Nations: a Report 1943, 7–9.
63 Other contributors to these discussions had worked with the League, including Maxwell Gar-

https://doi.org/10.17104/1611-8944_2014_3_342
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Das Erstellen und Weitergeben von Kopien dieses PDFs ist nicht zulässig.
had started to meet regularly in London in October 1942 at the invitation of the President of Britain’s Board of Education. The CAME had so far discussed «very definite practical worries» about the maintenance or rebuilding of schools, the rationing of paper and the distribution of books, and made lists of the European research institutions and libraries destroyed by the war. When, during 1943, the subject of possible longer-term educational and cultural collaboration first came up, it was discussed as a subject of bilateral conventions, and not as a field of activity for an international organisation. The League’s ICO was not mentioned at all.

Murray and his internationalist colleagues set out to change that when they presented their contribution on how the Allied forces could «win the peace» to the CAME and the Allied governments in early 1943. The result of a year of deliberations, The United Nations and Education, went far beyond reconstruction. Murray suggested that new «international arrangements» for educational and cultural interchange were necessary to build «solid foundations of education for world citizenship». While the report devoted several chapters to reconstruction and to the «extirpation of Nazi education», it warned of short-sightedness. The League had failed with its emphasis on security matters, so education should be taken seriously, lest «once the urgent tasks of reconstruction have been completed, our countries may once more drift asunder». The report also invoked René Cassin’s passionate pleas for moral disarmament at the League. Human solidarity, brought about by better education for all, including adults, and deeper understanding of the world, was the only basis for lasting peace.

The CAME was receptive to the report and appointed a commission that promptly elaborated plans for a permanent organisation of the United Nations that would engage the field of education and learning. But at the same time, the report made waves in the United States, where it was reprinted in 1943 with prefaces by two leading figures in US educational policy (Grayson Kefauver and George Zook). Kefauver and the American Council of Learned Societies were lobbying for a UN associated international cultural and educational agency, a project that was then supported by both the Carnegie Endowment and the Rockefeller Foundation as well as many leading intellectuals. When the US government realised that CAME was indeed inching towards a potential new UN body, and that the Soviet Union as well as China had already sent observers, the whole panorama changed. Intent on build-
ing closer relations with Britain and keeping tabs on the CAME, the State Department first sent one observer to the CAME conference in December 1943, and then returned with a high-powered official delegation of five in April 1944.\footnote{71} This put into motion the dynamic process of planning the new United Nations organisation for intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange – a process from which the Latin American proponents of the League model were excluded until the subject came up at the San Francisco conference and was brought into final form at the founding conference of UNESCO in November 1945.

The French made one last attempt to re-position the IICI in early 1945 by reopening it with great fanfare. Interim director Jean-Jacques Mayoux tried to rally support so that the French could pitch the IICI at the San Francisco conference as a functioning, active centre of intellectual cooperation that could be gainfully incorporated into the United Nations. Indeed, it was Henri Bonnet himself, who, as part of the French delegation, introduced a motion in San Francisco that an intergovernmental conference should be called to set up a new organisation of intellectual cooperation.\footnote{72} Not all of the ICO actors were content with the tendencies evident in San Francisco, even in the French proposal. ICO veteran de Reynold, who had steered clear of any involvement during the war, was shocked: not only did the Anglo-Saxons challenge French superiority in intellectual matters, the French proposal itself, he deplored, «reeked of scientific materialism».\footnote{73}

When the contours of UNESCO emerged at the London conference in November 1945, it was a very different institution than the League’s ICO had been. In London, the delegates sent by member states of the United Nations debated two drafts for the new organisation: one elaborated by CAME, arguing for a strong intergovernmental organisation with pragmatic, short-term goals, and a French draft which embraced long-term objectives and pleaded for universal participation as well as a certain autonomy from the United Nations. Under pressure from their Latin American supporters, the French proposal included education as a major field of activity and accepted a certain decentralisation of the organisation. Both proposals included major changes from the League institutions as a result of critical reflections on the past activities and priorities of the ICO as well as the geopolitical shifts brought about by the war. In the heated discussions, the Anglo-Saxon draft won and became the basis of the newly founded UNESCO.

For the French and their Latin American allies, there were some minor satisfactions. The votes of appreciation extended to them for their war-time efforts might have been mostly symbolic – but the decision to make Paris the headquarters of the new organisation amounted to a compromise, an attempt to keep «the Latins»

\footnote{71}{Krill de Capello, «The Creation», 8.}
\footnote{72}{Ibid., 15–16.}
\footnote{73}{Swiss National Archive, Literature Archive, Fonds}

Gonzague de Reynold, Correspondance XII, Letter to Alexandre Cingria, 16 May 1945.
on board with UNESCO. While the IICI closed its doors forever in 1946, its papers, archives and some personnel carried over into the new organisation, but much more research needs to be done to study how League projects were taken up or ignored – by UNESCO, and to examine the group who made the transition from working in the League's ICO to working at UNESCO.

6. Conclusions

Though there had been a project of safe-guarding the League's intellectual cooperation organisations, the war years with their logistical hardships and political shifts had made this impossible. For almost five years, the IICI had been under locks in Paris and the League secretariat severely hampered. Still, even without these focal points, the League's ICO did not simply go into hibernation. Across the Atlantic and across the Channel, League actors remained active. Gilbert Murray successfully brought his reflections to the CAME, adapting them to this audience. In the Americas, there was a collective effort to continue intellectual cooperation activities within a League framework. The Havana conference united ICO protagonists from several countries and affirmed common visions and plans, especially among exiled European and Latin American actors. The implementation of their plans, however, was hampered first by the US preference for an inter-American solution and then by the emergence of the «special relationship» between Britain and the United States.

Indeed, the ICO advocates faced a paradoxical problem during the war. From 1939 onwards, ICO leaders Bonnet, Murray and Shotwell had formulated their critical evaluations of the League in public. These criticisms included «weakness», lack of capacity to implement, elitism, lack of funding – but at the same time, these men insisted on the continued necessity of such an organisation and called on their governments to show commitment to intellectual cooperation. When the Allied governments took such calls seriously during 1943, the re-organisation of intellectual cooperation turned into a governmental issue, dealt with at the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education. This constrained the influence of civil society ICO activists, while the strengthened alliance between Britain and the United States left the French and Latin American protagonists out in the cold at first. Yet UNESCO was not set in stone at the London conference of 1945, and continued to be the site of vigorous debates about ways and means of intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange.


75 Among them, for instance, the Mexican Jaime Torres Bodet, who became the second Secretary General of UNESCO.
Twists, Turns and Dead Alleys: 
The League of Nations and Intellectual Cooperation in Times of War

In recent years, historians of international organisations have asserted a strong continuity between pre- and post-war organisations. This article examines the wartime transitions in the field of intellectual cooperation and traces the fate of the League’s International Commission on Intellectual Cooperation (CICI) and its executive arm, the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IICI) in Paris. Even though both the CICI and the IICI were officially dormant after 1940, representatives of intellectual cooperation such as Henri Bonnet, James T. Shotwell and Gilbert Murray sought ways to continue their work. During the war, such initiatives seemed most promising in the Western hemisphere, where Latin American and US American protagonists planned to continue the League’s work in Havana. Paradoxically, the increased importance of intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange and especially the engagement of the US and the British governments towards 1945 led to a break with the League’s institutions, which were perceived as too weak. The post-war organisation UNESCO was in fact built on a different, more strictly inter-governmental basis than the League’s ICO and also pursued different aims that reflected the shifts in global alliances.

Windungen, Kehren und Sackgassen: Der Völkerbund und die intellektuelle Zusammenarbeit in den Kriegsjahren


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