

Jorge J. Locane

On the World Peace Movement and the Early Internationalisation of Latin American Literature

1 Introduction. Beyond the Boom, Beyond the Metropolises

According to widespread ideas, Latin American literature entered the international market and debates in the early 1960s (see e.g. Terrones 2019, 73). An episode that is often invoked as a key instance in this process is the Biblioteca Breve prize awarded in 1962 to Mario Vargas Llosa for *La ciudad y los perros* (1963) [*The Time of the Hero*]. From then on, the successes that marked the Boom are well known: *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* [*The Death of Artemio Cruz*] was published in 1962; *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*], in 1963; *Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*] and *Tres tristes tigres* [*Three Trapped Tigers*], in 1967, etc. According to well-known essays by Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and particularly José Donoso, the previous Latin American novel would not have received international attention because of its eminently backward character in relation to the modern Western novel. It is true that these approaches focus on the novel and that their authors do not provide further details about poetry or essays,¹ but the arguments tend to be generalised and projected to the “literature” in a general sense. For a moment, the novel seems to take the place of literature. In any case, even when the claim is confined to the novel, it can be argued that this design of literary history is reductive, biased and ideological. It has already been discussed by scholars like Doris Sommer (1991, 1) and Eduardo Bécerra (2008, 17) with different kinds of arguments.² On my side, I have been trying to develop a line of research that highlights alternative or dissident international circuits, that

¹ Mario Vargas Llosa opposes the “creative novel” to the “primitive novel”. The former would be characteristic of the Boom and Latin America’s first authentic contribution to world literature. According to Vargas Llosa, before the creative novel emerged, “our best creators were poets, such as José Hernández, the author of *Martín Fierro*, or essayists, such as Sarmiento and Martí” (1969, 29). For a critique of novel-centred theoretical models that highlights the relevance of poetry in the Latin American tradition, see Kristal (2002).

² Already in a 1977 review of the translation of Donoso’s book about the Boom, *The Boom in Spanish American Literature. A Personal History* (1977), Dick Gerdes noted that “Much of Donoso’s account rings true, but he does not adequately take into account the 1946–51 period when

is, literary flows that problematise the conventional centre-periphery scheme as posited by Pascale Casanova, Franco Moretti and the Warwick Research Collective following Immanuel Wallerstein and the legacy of dependency theory. Seen from this critical point of view, the story of the Boom is organised around an axis that links the (ex)colonies to the metropolises. And, although it argues for a periphery-centre pattern, the criterion of validation is defined in the metropolises. Simply put, a book that sells well in the big capitals of Western capitalism is a book that is automatically considered successful without any evaluation of what is happening in other areas of the world, that is, in other peripheries. According to this logic, metropolitan recognition acquires universal validity. And any kind of peripheral recognition is always local and therefore neglected. The following pages echo Diana Roig-Sanz and Reine Meylaerts' call "to abandon the focus on innovative centres and imitative peripheries" (2018, 6) and, fundamentally, the claim that "there is still a lot of research to be done with regard to inter-peripheral literary exchanges" (2018, 2).

With these ideas as a theoretical background, my most recent research (2021, 2022, among others) has been oriented towards accounting for the flows that connect Latin America with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the People's Republic of China. I have been interested in investigating the transfer of Latin American literature to these political-cultural domains. I have asked myself what kind and how much Latin American literature has found a reception among Chinese and East German readers. Thus, to my surprise, I have seen how other canons, other preferences and other protagonists take shape. Where the capitalist world says Isabel Allende, for example, the communist world says Jorge Amado. Where the West, for instance, West Germany, speaks of a best seller, Chinese reception has not even discovered the title. And absolutely ignored or forgotten figures in the Western metropolises, such as Agustín Cuzzani or Alfredo Varela, acquire a prominent position in some peripheral receptions. From this, we can conclude that world literature is actually relative, contingent and variable in time. As suggested by Karima Laachir, Sara Marzagora, and Francesca Orsini (2018), each local node tends to configure, ultimately, its own corpus and canon of world literature, but only the Western hegemonic localities are able to project itself to the world as universally valid.

This contribution focuses on the World Peace Movement (WPM) and in particular its formal and administrative bodies, such as the World Peace Council (WPC). The WPM is interesting because in its heyday, during the early Cold War

Asturias, Carpentier, Yáñez, Sábato, Marechal and Rojas made important contributions to the universalization of the regional novel" (1977, 445).

and before the Boom began to show signs of existence, it functioned as an umbrella institution, or *cultural organisation*, for intellectuals and writers from all over the world where Latin America was particularly well represented. Certainly, the general objective, that is, to explore the extent to which this space of intellectual interaction affected the international circulation of Latin American literature, exceeds what I can develop in these pages. As some historians have noted, research on the institutional mechanisms, meetings and conferences of the WPM are scarce.³ In principle, this can be explained by the lack of documents or the inaccessibility of some archives. Interestingly, one of the sources available for the research is the declassified archives of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), which did not spare any effort to spy on peace activists and demonise the WPM in front of public opinion (Fig. 1). It is true, on the other hand, that there are previous platforms of interaction where some of the Latin American writers who will engage in the WPM were already present. One of those platforms is the International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture that was held in 1935 in Paris and in 1937 in Valencia, Madrid and Barcelona. Both meetings took place, however, in Europe; and Latin American participants, including Vicente Huidobro, César Vallejo, Alejo Carpentier, and Octavio Paz, were not yet particularly relevant. The International Brigades or, in more general terms, the Republican front and the anti-fascist movement is another space where Latin American writers, such as the above mentioned or Pablo Neruda and Nicolás Guillén, converge

³ The little academic literature that has addressed the WPM insists on the scarcity of information and the lack of research on the historical relevance of the WPM, on the intellectual networks it generated and the activities to which it gave rise. Rachel Leow, for instance, has recently researched the Asia-Pacific Peace Conference, held in Beijing in 1952. With special attention to the important Latin American participation, she notes that in that conference, “There were also, curiously for the age, over a hundred from Latin America, including Chile, Colombia and Mexico, the latter from whence was borne the Rivera copy in the hands of Mexican philosopher-logician Eli de Gortari. Their presence defies conventional historical trajectories of Third World internationalism, which typically trace the inclusion of Latin America to the Tricontinental in Havana, 1966; the APC thus suggests a different lineage, one that has received too little attention to date. [. . .] the WPC itself has also largely vanished from histories of world peace movements, from whose Euro-American historiography the APC is also absent. An organisation widely perceived to be little more than an arm of Soviet foreign policy, the WPC has a scant historiography which tends to adopt either a critical or vindictory register” (2019, 24) (see also Iber 2015, 50). The reasons for this neglect lie in the stigmatisation of the WPC in the West and in specific political motives related to the Cold War context. Nor should we exclude the dictatorships in Latin America as a mechanism that contributed to the elimination of WPC memories. The decentralised character of the WPM, or at least with alternative centres to those of Western modernity, may be another factor that has disadvantaged unbiased research in the Western centres of knowledge production.

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| Date | Meeting | Place | Delegates | Remarks |
|--------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| 21 Aug 48 | Executive Council of WFDY | Warsaw | Austriatic - Williams, Bert | It was reported that the WFDY convened the Executive Committee immediately after the closing of the International Conference. Bert Williams was reported to be presiding but no other information has been received. |
| 19 Aug 48 | Rumored Cominform Meeting | Iregue | | Allegedly present were: Austria - Fuernberg, Friedl Hornack, Otto Others unidentified USSR - Vishinsky Unidentified delegates from eastern and southeastern countries. No confirmation available. Meeting allegedly postponed. |
| 25-28 Aug 48 | World Congress of Intellectuals | Breslau, Poland | Argentina - Varela, Alfredo (Communist Journalist) Austria - Eisler, Johannes Eisler, Louise Fischer, Ernst Frey, Dr. Bruno (philosopher) Wolff, Professor Karl | The Congress which, as advance publicity stated, was organized "to discuss ways of maintaining peace" followed actually the Party line. Several non-Communists who attended were outnumbered and never really had a chance to swing the Congress to the non-Communist side. The meeting was |

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Fig. 1: Declassified CIA File: International Communist Movements — Document No. CIA-RDP78-00915R000100190001-9, p. 24.

with figures like Ilya Ehrenburg, Ernest Hemingway or George Orwell.⁴ But again, the presence of Latin American writers here is not as significant as in the WPM. On the other hand, unlike the latter, the International Brigades were circumstantial, sporadic and not institutional.

It can be argued that the anti-fascist movement of the 1930s evolved into the anti-imperialist movement in the 1950s. Writers like Anna Seghers or Ehrenburg were actively present in both scenarios and act, therefore, not only as significant “cultural mediators” (Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts 2018) but also as key articulators between the two networks. Without losing sight of the clear connections between anti-fascism and anti-imperialism, this chapter focuses, however, on the WPM as a vast platform of intellectual interaction, marked by the anti-imperialist ideology, where Latin American writers and intellectuals occupied particularly relevant positions. Conceived as the institutional form of that intellectual intercultural network, the WPC would have functioned as the most material support point for an early internationalisation of Latin American literature far beyond the centres of Western modernity and capitalism.

2 The World Peace Movement

Recognising a common base between anti-fascism and later anti-imperialism implies accepting the communist imprint of the WPM. Denying it would be a vain task, but even so, it is convenient to introduce some nuances. Regardless of the level of truthfulness, the CIA at the time was concerned with spreading the idea that the WPM was nothing more than a Moscow-controlled communist propaganda tool. Many of the intellectuals who participated in the movement in the 1950s were of communist extraction, but several others not or not so much. Marc Becker, in a recent article, writes that, “While Soviet leaders may have intended to use the WPC as a foreign policy instrument to advance their own geo-political interests, local activists around the world demonstrated that they could also use it to promote their own concerns and objectives. As such, they were not acting as mere pawns of the Soviet Union as some critics have assumed” (2020, 3). From my point of view, the signifier *peace* operated as an

⁴ On the intellectual networks in the International Brigades and the anti-fascist movement, see the works of Manuel Aznar Soler (in particular, 2003). See also Ehrenburg’s memoirs (2014) and McLachlan (1951, 10). On Latin American writers in the Civil War, see Binns (2004, 261 ff.).

effective tool to wash Stalinism's face during the early Cold War⁵ and, at the same time, to summon adherents to a fundamentally anti-capitalist front, but also in favour of arms disarmament in general.⁶ The adherences were honest:⁷ beyond the greater or lesser sympathy for communism of the members of the movement, the pacifist arguments were indeed present; they committed the United States but also the Soviet Union and, in fact, had a high power of interpellation. Mexican writer Fernando Benítez explained it as follows:

I have often been asked why I am a member of a movement blatantly sponsored by the Communists, and I have simply replied: "I am a supporter of that movement because I know of no other movement which works so vigorously and effectively for peace. If the United States fought the war as we fight it, I would not hesitate for a moment to support them."⁸

As mentioned, the CIA took on the task of demonstrating that the WPM was nothing more than a propaganda tool, but what the American intelligence service did

⁵ In this regard, Adriana Petra writes that "many Western intellectuals were willing to forget the purges and labour camps in order to put their name and prestige at the disposal of the pacifist crusade" / "muchos intelectuales occidentales estuvieron dispuestos a olvidar las purgas y los campos de trabajo para poner su nombre y prestigio a disposición de la cruzada pacifista" (2013, 105).

⁶ On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the birth of the WPM, Pablo Neruda called for the disarmament of the "great powers". Regarding this call, Germán Alburquerque points out that "It is intriguing that Neruda implicitly includes the USSR in his aspiration, especially since he always identified the Soviets with peace and disarmament. The explanation must be sought in what the movement wants to project, which is not precisely the glorification of the Soviet Union but the universality of its aims and political independence, a strategy aimed at opening the doors of the organisation to the greatest number of people. Neruda's is – or wants to be – an invitation without sectarianism" / "es intrigante que Neruda incluya de manera implícita a la URSS en su aspiración, sobre todo porque siempre identificó a los soviéticos con la paz y el desarme. La explicación hay que buscarla en lo que el movimiento quiere proyectar, que no es precisamente la glorificación de la Unión Soviética sino la universalidad de sus fines y la prescindencia política, estrategia dirigida a abrir las puertas de la organización al mayor número de gentes. Lo de Neruda es –o quiere ser– una invitación sin sectarismos" (2011, 48).

⁷ Even Donald McLachlan, an analyst at early WPM who does not disguise his dislike of Moscow, wrote: "I consider that there lies in this peace campaign a great deal of sincerity, even though much of it is diverted into the wrong political channels" (1951, 16).

⁸ "Muchas veces se me ha preguntado por qué milito en un movimiento auspiciado descaradamente por los comunistas y yo me he limitado a responder: 'Soy partidario de ese movimiento porque no conozco a otro que trabaje tan vigorosa y eficazmente a favor de la paz. Si los Estados Unidos combatieran la guerra como nosotros la combatimos, no vacilaría un momento en prestarles mi apoyo'" (in Fernández Montes 2014, 23). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

not do was to show that within the WPM the differences were significant and that the ups and downs of history constantly brought them to the fore. A quick historical review shows that the WPM was forged in the heat of the early Cold War and had a moment of apogee in the context of the Korean War (1950–1953). For a while, a certain consensus was maintained, but Nikita Khrushchev's report, the intervention of Hungary and the subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia, as well as the Sino-Soviet split were some of the episodes that revealed the strong internal differences. These internal conflicts make evident that not all WPM adherents were communists, or at least that not all were communists in the same way. For example, in reference to the events in Hungary in 1956, Günter Wernicke comments that

the Presidium conceded that on Hungary “there are serious differences of opinion, both within the World Peace Council and within the national peace movements, and that opposing views have not permitted the formulation of a common assessment.” It called for: “1) Withdrawal of the Soviet troops as soon as this is the subject of agreement between Hungary and the USSR; 2) Full exercise of Hungarian sovereignty.”

The immediate consequence for the WPC was a huge international exodus of non-communist peace activists. (2001, 336)

For my purposes, the argument that the WPM was a body entirely controlled by Moscow, the counterargument and all its possible variations are of little relevance. Because the truth is that, with more or less communism, the WPM, already from the end of the 1940s – 12 or 15 years before the Boom – contributed to insert many Latin American writers in international networks and projected them strongly towards *the world*, a wider one, in fact, than that one represented by the Western metropolises. In this light, it may have been an alternative circuit, but it cannot be considered “less” international as that of the Boom.

The movement begins to take shape in the immediate post-war period. Reconstructing its history is something I cannot do here, nor is it of greater importance now.⁹ Research owes to Germán Alburquerque (2011, 40) a detailed list of the conventions held by the WPM since its founding in the second half of the 1940s.

1947 Congress of Writers, East Berlin.

1948 World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace, Wrocław.

1949 Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, New York.

⁹ For a history of the WPM, see Wernicke (2001), and, from a partial US-centred perspective, Wittner (1993, 171–190).

- 1949 American Continental Congress for Peace, Mexico.
- 1949 First World Congress of Supporters of Peace, Paris and Prague.
- 1950 Second World Congress of Supporters of Peace, Warsaw.
- 1951 First Mexican National Congress for Peace, Mexico.
- 1952 Congress of the Peoples for Peace, Vienna.
- 1953 Continental Congress of Culture, Santiago de Chile.
- 1955 World Peace Assembly, Helsinki.
- 1957 World Congress of the Supporters of Peace, Colombo.
- 1958 Congress for Disarmament and International Cooperation, Stockholm.
- 1959 World Congress of the Supporters of Peace, Beijing.
- 1962 World Congress for General Disarmament and Peace, Moscow.
- 1972 World Peace Congress, Santiago de Chile.
- 1974 World Peace Congress, Moscow.
- 1976 World Peace Congress, Cuba.
- 1977 International Meeting of Writers for Peace, Sofia.
- 1979 World Peace Congress, East Berlin.
- 1983 Conference for Culture and Peace, Sofia.
- 1987 Continental Conference of National Peace Movements of Latin America and the Caribbean, Guayaquil.

As it can be seen, up until 1962 the frequency of these meetings was especially intense. Only in 1949, Albuquerque records no more and no less than three major conventions. Thousands of participants from all over the world attended these events, and during their campaigns for disarmament, the movement gathered millions of signatures from all countries. During the early years, the WPM did not stop to grow and gain supporters. Surprised by the phenomenon, McLachlan wrote in 1951: “I want to emphasise the skill and persistence and industry with which a movement which started two years ago in a relatively small congress in Poland has become a movement of world-wide ramifications which is regularly referred to, regularly written about, regularly discussed, in every country under and outside Communist influence” (1951, 13). The management effort that those huge convocations implied at a time when the digital social networks that we know today did not exist cannot be underestimated, but these numbers of people also speak of the power of interpellation that the signifier peace had in the context of the immediate post-war period. It is also noteworthy that, except for Africa, meetings of greater or lesser scale were held on all continents, including North America.

The founding act was the 1948 World Congress of Intellectuals in Defence of Peace. At that meeting, the WPC was created, and it was decided to hold the World Peace Congress. The first of these congresses was held in Paris and Prague. The second was planned for Sheffield, England, but the British government managed to prevent it, so the organisers decided to move it to territory in

the orbit of Moscow, to Warsaw.¹⁰ The list of participants was conceived as a real bank of symbolic and social capital, which includes from Nobel Prize winners in Chemistry to plastic artists like Picasso or writers like Bertolt Brecht or Anna Seghers, as well as backings of Einstein or Chaplin. About the animators of the first period, Germán Alburquerque writes:

Among the leading intellectuals who gave life to the Council, i.e. those of the first generation, two sectors can be distinguished: the militant, pro-Soviet communists, and the rest: sympathisers of socialism and/or the Soviet cause, independents, anti-imperialists and the occasional naïve person. Among the former: [Alexander Alexandrovich] Fadeyev, [Dmitri Dmitriyevich] Shostakovich, Ilya Ehrenburg, Frederic and Irene Joliot-Curie, Kuo-Mo-Jo, Anna Seghers, Louis Aragon, Pablo Picasso, Rafael Alberti, Nâzım Hikmet, György Lukács, Juan Marinello, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Amado, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and Paul Robeson. Among the latter: Jan Mukařovský, Henry Matisse, Alberto Moravia, Luis Buñuel, Gabriela Mistral, Joaquín García Monge, Daniel Cosío Villegas (Alburquerque 2011, 39).¹¹

The participation of Latin American writers in the Congress and in its executive body, the Council, will be intense and systematic, particularly with regard to the early Cold War period, before Stalin's public image collapsed and before the Cuban Revolution shifted attention to other latitudes and issues. If at the congress in Wrocław, Jorge Amado, who was in exile in Paris,¹² shared the limelight with Ilya Ehrenburg and Pablo Picasso, who demanded an end to the persecution of Pablo Neruda, soon after, in Paris,¹³ the great figure, the last speaker, would be the future Nobel Prize winner who had left Chile clandestinely, via Buenos Aires. According to Alburquerque,

10 In reference to this second World Peace Congress, Phillip Deery writes that, "Despite extensive comment and assessment at the time, and despite its contemporary significance, this event has generally escaped scholarly attention" (2002, 450).

11 "Entre los intelectuales de renombre que le dieron vida al Consejo, o sea, los de la primera generación, pueden distinguirse dos sectores: los comunistas militantes y prosoviéticos, y el resto: simpatizantes del socialismo y/o de la causa soviética, independientes, antiimperialistas y uno que otro ingenuo. Entre los primeros: Fadéiev, Shostakóvich, Illia Ehrenburg, Frederic e Irene Joliot-Curie, Kuo-Mo-Jo, Anna Seghers, Louis Aragón, Pablo Picasso, Rafael Alberti, Nazim Hikmet, György Lukács, Juan Marinello, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Amado, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros y Paul Robeson. Entre los segundos: Jan Mukarovski, Henry Matisse, Alberto Moravia, Luis Buñuel, Gabriela Mistral, Joaquín García Monge, Daniel Cosío Villegas" (Alburquerque 2011, 39).

12 "When the Communist Party was outlawed in 1948, Amado left for self-imposed exile, travelling on behalf of the Partisans of Peace."

13 Teitelboim (2003, 327) reminds that "There were many of the most famous artists and writers on Earth" / "Allí estaban muchos de los artistas y escritores más famosos de la Tierra" (Teitelboim 2003, 327).

Marinello, Neruda, Oliver, Amado, Zalamea, Varela: All of them reached high executive positions in the World Peace Council or other related entities, confirming that the Latin American intellectual achieved leadership within a global movement that was in direct communication with the Soviet Union, which was synonymous with territorial reach, economic resources, public resonance, and media visibility (Alburquerque 2011, 42).¹⁴

In that vast structure of truly global reach, Latin Americans not only had an undisputed presence, but also a leadership role: the Colombian Jorge Zalamea, for example, was Secretary of the World Peace Council between 1952 and 1959, and the Argentinian writer María Rosa Oliver was its Vice President between 1953 and 1962.¹⁵

3 The World Peace Movement as a Platform. The Latin American Literature in the World

The active and leading participation of Latin American writers in the WPM is a proven historical fact. Therefore, the main question that I am interested in addressing here is how the insertion of these Latin American writers into this vast international intellectual network affected Latin American literature. I argue that the effect was a strong process of internationalisation, that is, that readers in many regions of the world – though not necessarily in the metropolises of Western capitalism – began to access Latin American literature and through it to take an increasingly interest in what the (former) American colonies south of the Rio Grande had to say. In other words, through their participation in the WPM, many writers would have taken advantage of the symbolic and social capital provided by it to promote their personal projects on a global scale.

From 1950 to 1990, Moscow awarded the Stalin Peace Prize, renamed Lenin in 1956, after Nikita Khrushchev's denunciations. The Latin American writers

14 “Marinello, Neruda, Oliver, Amado, Zalamea, Varela: todos ellos llegaron a ejercer cargos directivos en el Consejo Mundial de la Paz o en otras entidades afines, refrendando que el intelectual latinoamericano logró un liderazgo al interior de un movimiento global que estaba en comunicación directa con la Unión Soviética, lo cual era sinónimo de alcance territorial, de recursos económicos, de resonancia pública y de figuración en los medios” (2011, 42).

15 For more details on the leading involvement of Latin American writers in the WPM, see Alburquerque (2011, 43–46). Although it is beyond the scope of this contribution, the participation of women and their prominent role deserves a mention. Regarding the exemplary case of María Rosa Oliver, see Fernández Bravo (2017) and Petra (2020).

who received it in the first twenty years are Jorge Amado (1951), Pablo Neruda (1953), Nicolás Guillén (1954), María Rosa Oliver (1957), Olga Poblete de Espinosa (1962), Miguel Ángel Asturias (1965) and Alfredo Varela (1970–71).¹⁶ Two of them would later receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. All of them were translated and recognised in particular in the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the People's Republic of China, or Eastern Europe.

Varela's case deserves special attention¹⁷ because, although he was a "passionate anti-Stalinist" (Rupprecht 2015, 85) and received the prize relatively late, his activity in the WPM was particularly prominent, even from the very early days when the World Congress of Intellectuals was held in Wrocław (see Petra 2013, 119). His novel *El río oscuro* (1943) [The Dark River] was translated into 15 (Petra 2013, 126) or perhaps 16 languages (Boido and Schuliaquer 2018, 219), in any case a considerable number even for the best sellers of today's global capitalism. What is remarkable about the translations is that they are carried out in parallel to Varela's participation in the WPM. The Russian translation appeared in 1946, the Slovak translation in 1951¹⁸ and the German translation in 1952 in the

16 The WPC also awarded a prize to personalities from all over the world who had distinguished themselves in the struggle for peace. According to David Schidlowsky, "For Neruda, these prizes will be of great importance. He will receive them or be part of the respective jury. This will allow him to make trips to Europe and the Soviet Union and also improve his income" / "Para Neruda, estos premios serán de gran importancia. Los recibirá o será parte del jurado respectivo. Esto le permitirá hacer viajes a Europa y la Unión Soviética y además mejorar sus entradas económicas" (2008, 809). For a more detailed list of the awarded Latin American personalities and a broader analysis of the soviet cultural diplomacy, see Rupprecht (2015).

17 According to Federico Boido and Tomás Schuliaquer, "Although he occupied a marginal place within the Argentine cultural field – probably this condition has postponed the systematic analysis of his work – the prolific network of relationships he maintained during his long years of militancy, as well as the particularities of his work and the way in which it circulated nationally and internationally, make Varela's figure acquire heuristic value in relation to the understanding of the political, cultural and social ideas of the central decades of the twentieth century" / "Si bien ocupó un lugar marginal dentro del campo cultural argentino –probablemente esta condición haya postergado los análisis sistemáticos de su obra–, la prolífica red de relaciones que mantuvo durante sus largos años de militancia, así como también las particularidades de su obra y la forma en la que ésta circuló en el plano nacional e internacional, hacen que la figura de Varela adquiera valor heurístico en relación a la comprensión de las ideas políticas, culturales y sociales de las décadas centrales del siglo XX" (2018, 218).

18 Regarding this translation, Eva Palkovičová writes that "An important milestone in the process of penetration of works of Spanish-American literature into the Slovak reading consciousness was the publication of the novel *The Dark River* (*Temná rieka* 1951, 1968), by the Argentinean author Alfredo Varela" / "Un importante hito en el proceso de penetración de obras de la literatura hispanoamericana en la conciencia lectora eslovaca fue la publicación de la novela *El río oscuro* (*Temná rieka* 1951, 1968), del autor argentino Alfredo Varela" (2018, 74).

GDR's publishing house Volk und Welt.¹⁹ The success of the novel was followed by that of the film, directed by Hugo del Carril under the title *Las aguas bajan turbias* (1952) [*River of Blood*]. From this case, it can therefore be concluded that the active engagement in the movement gave place to advantages, both symbolic and economic. According to Federico Boido and Tomás Schuliaquer (2018, 220), "Thanks to the WPC [Alfredo Varela] travelled the world and forged relationships in different countries".²⁰ In a similar vein, Patrick Iber points out that

Neruda's and Amado's artistic participation in the peace movement was primarily driven by moral considerations, but there were material benefits as well. Travel junkets were a not-inconsiderable compensation, particularly for the less famous, allowing beneficiaries to travel at virtually no cost to themselves and enjoy the best luxuries that the hosting societies had to offer. Especially favoured authors who were selected by the Soviet government for translation and distribution (like Amado and Neruda) could accumulate significant wealth that could be accessed only on trips to the Eastern bloc because of inconvertible currency. Whether work selected for translation was simply pirated or whether its author would receive royalties was similarly a political decision used to reward favoured authors. (Iber 2015, 78)

The concept of *peace*, on the other hand, would become a major signifier and one of intense circulation. Publications dedicated to the cause multiplied, writers – and also plastic artists such as Frida Kahlo (Fig. 2), Diego Rivera, and, in the first term, Picasso – made their contributions, were translated and thus became known to foreign readers. Individual books that in one way or another invoke peace follow one another and not a few are translated into different languages. Some of them are: *El mundo de la paz* (1952), by Jorge Amado; *La cultura y la paz* (1952), by Juan Marinello; *Reunión en Pekín* (1952), by Jorge Zalamea; *Todos los hombres del mundo son hermanos* (1954), by Raúl González Tuñón; *Las uvas y el viento* (1954), by Pablo Neruda; *Un mes en la China Roja* (1957), by Costa Rican Carlos Luis Fallas, and *La paloma de vuelo popular* (1958), by Nicolás Guillén (see Fernández Montes 2014).

The issue of translation deserves a separate paragraph. The importance of translation for the WPM is evident not only in the translation of writers' work, but also in the efforts that were invested in it at the various meetings and congresses. In regard to the Sheffield congress, later held in Warsaw, Phillip Deery, for example, writes: "The biggest job involved wiring the large oval hall for the

¹⁹ For more information on this publishing house and the publication of Latin American literature in the GDR during this period, see Locane 2022.

²⁰ "Por el CMP [Alfredo Varela] recorrió el mundo y forjó relaciones en diferentes países" (2018, 220).



Fig. 2: Frida Kahlo, “Congreso de los pueblos por la paz” (1952). Public domain; via Public Domain Museum (<https://en.600dpi.net/frida-kahlo-0000705/>).

simultaneous translation into six languages – unprecedented in England – of all the speeches. A team of electricians installed 2845 pairs of earphones to enable access to the words of thirty-seven translators working in relays under the platform” (2002, 453). Translation, therefore, will constitute a key and necessary articulator of the movement which, in turn, will serve the writers to project their work onto the international circuit.

From its specific front, poetry contributes to the cause and, both in original and in translation, seeks to interpellate audiences. Gabriela Mistral, who had already been awarded the Nobel Prize, writes a famous note, “La palabra maldita” (1950),²¹ in which she assigns a sacred character to the word *peace*. Among the Mexican supporters to the WPM is Efraín Huerta, who was general secretary of the National Council of Mexico. Written in 1952 and included in *Los poemas de viaje (1949–1953)* (1956) [The Travel Poems], his poem “Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz” [Today I gave my signature for Peace] is a kind of homage

²¹ The essay was translated into English under the title “The Forbidden Word” (Mistral 2004). See also Teitelboim 2003, 345–346.

to the world-wide campaigns for peace of the time that managed to gather more than 500 million signatures.²²

This poem by Huerta informs not only about the active participation in the WPM and the enthusiasm it aroused in a poet, but also about the strongly transnational and massive character of the movement and, therefore, about the vast networks of potential readers towards which the poem was oriented as a mechanism of dialectical interpellation.

Pablo Neruda, for his part, closed his speeches at the Congresses with a commemorative poem written ad hoc and read in translation, for example, by Louis Aragon. In 1949 he attends, in Mexico, the American Continental Congress for Peace, where he reads for the first time the poem “Que despierte el leñador” (1948) [“Let the Rail Splitter awake”], for which he was later awarded the Stalin Peace Prize. The poem, which in some of its passages augured peace for the world and thus operates as a transnational and cosmopolitan *dispositif* of enunciation, later became part of his fundamental *Canto general* (1950) (see Fernández Montes 2014, 19–20).

Peace for the twilights to come,
 peace for the bridge, peace for the wine,
 peace for the stanzas which pursue me
 and in my blood uprising entangling
 my earlier songs with earth and loves,
 peace for the city in the morning
 when bread wakes up, peace for the Mississippi,
 source of rivers,
 peace for my brother's shirt,
 peace for books like a seal of air,
 peace for the great kolkhoz of Kiev,
 peace for the ashes of those dead
 and of these other dead, peace for the grimy
 iron of Brooklyn, peace for the letter-carrier
 who from house to house goes like the day,
 peace for the choreographer who shouts
 through a funnel to the honeysuckle vine,
 peace for my own right hand
 that wants to write only Rosario,
 peace for the Bolivian, secretive
 as a lump of tin, peace
 so that you may marry, peace for all
 the saw-mills of Bio-Bio,

²² As far as I know, there is no English translation of the poem. For the Spanish version, see Appendix.

peace for the torn heart of guerilla Spain,
 peace for the little museum in Wyoming
 where the most lovely thing
 is a pillow embroidered with a heart,
 peace for the baker and his loaves,
 and peace for the flour, peace
 for all the wheat to be born,
 for all the love which will seek its tasselled shelter,
 peace for all those alive: peace
 for all lands and all waters.²³

(1950, 38–39)

Both *Canto general* and the poem separately were quickly translated into different languages. In the GDR, for example, *Canto general* appeared in 1953, translated by Erich Arendt under the title *Der große Gesang*. The poem, in turn, was published in English in the USA, translated by the renowned dancer Waldeen von Falkenstein (see Cohen), and in India, translated by Jayant Bhatt. Both publications are from 1950. Also that year, the Chinese translation by Yuan Shuipai (袁水拍) appeared, followed by the 1951 volume *Selected Works of Neruda*. According to Wei Teng, “‘Que despierte el leñador’ and *Selected Works of Neruda* were among the most popular books of foreign poems translated and published in the 1950s in China” (2018, 180). Yuan Shuipai also published the article “Fighter for Peace – Neruda the Poet” (1950), which contributed to Neruda being recognised not only as an important poet but also as “a soldier for peace” (Teng 2018, 180).²⁴

Poetry becomes instrumental; it aims to convey a message with a global reach. Thus, it transcends national borders and, together with it, Latin American literature. Nicanor Parra also became involved in the WPM; in 1959, he participated in the World Congress of the Supporters of Peace in Beijing. In 1963, in turn, he would travel for six months to the Soviet Union at the invitation of the Society of Writers. The result of that trip is his anthology of Russian poetry and the poetry book *Canciones rusas* (1967) [*Russian songs*], which includes the poem “Pan caliente” [“Hot bread”].²⁵

The poem is interesting to me because, regardless of the level of veracity that one wants to give it, it obliquely informs about the international reception of Latin American literature around the beginning of the 1960s. Only that the key words are different from those that articulate the story of the Boom: not novel,

²³ Spanish version: see Appendix.

²⁴ Into Romanian, under the title *Să se trezească pădurarul*, the poem was translated as early as 1948 (for more on this, see Ilian 2021).

²⁵ Spanish version: see Appendix.

but poetry; not Barcelona, Paris, or New York, but Moscow; not 1967, but 1963. Considering the facts presented before, the WPM and the visibility that, through it, Latin American literature had already achieved by that time may explain, at least in part (together with communist, anti-fascist and anti-imperialist networks), the phenomenon portrayed by “Pan caliente”.

4 Towards a (Still Partial) Conclusion

In the paper “How Do Literary Works Cross Borders (or Not)? A Sociological Approach to World Literature” (2016), Gisèle Sapiró examines the factors which may favour or hinder the international circulation of literature. According to her proposal, these factors can be classified into four types: political, cultural, economic, and social. Considering these ideas, the Boom would have been a phenomenon of international propagation attributable to the mechanisms of the liberal market. The WPM, on the contrary, was a political phenomenon that nevertheless operated as a platform for the publication and recognition of Latin American writers in the world. Germán Alburquerque concludes that, through the Peace Movement,

Latin American intellectuals came into contact with personalities from all over the world, from rich and poor countries, from the powerful and the weak; they came into contact with the political power of many nations through their contact with the congressmen present; they interacted with people who were in an executive and not a contemplative stage of life. For all these reasons, it can be said that through this congress and all those related to the peace movement, the world was opening up to our intellectuals in various ways, just as the world was opening up to the possibility of getting to know the cultural agents of this part of the planet (2011, 43).²⁶

On the level of intellectual networks this has been demonstrated by Alburquerque. According to my observations, it should also be added that, for Latin American writers, access to this important bank of social capital gave place to a hitherto unusual international circulation of their literature. The collection and

26 “los intelectuales latinoamericanos entraban en contacto con personalidades de todo el mundo, de los países ricos y pobres, de los poderosos y débiles; que se acercaban al poder político de muchas naciones por el trato con los congresistas presentes; que se relacionaban con gente que transitaba por una etapa ejecutiva y no contemplativa de la vida. Por todo lo anterior puede aseverarse que mediante este congreso y de todos los emparentados con el movimiento por la paz, a nuestros intelectuales se les abría el mundo en varios sentidos, así como al mundo se le abría la posibilidad de conocer a los agentes culturales de esta parte del planeta” (2011, 43).

reappreciation of the historical information related to the WPM leads, therefore, to a critical review of the Boom narrative, particularly with regard to the internationalisation of Latin American literature. In the capitals of Western capitalism, Latin American literature gained presence in the 1960s with the well-known Seix Barral operation and also with the intervention of institutions such as Casa de las Américas. However, at least since the immediate post-war period there were alternative channels of circulation, different from those offered by the liberal market, but not for that reason negligible. These channels, that linked peripheral nodes of literary production, had already created an international public for Latin American literature. The protagonists of this counter-narrative are others; writers, who in some cases, like Pablo Neruda, María Rosa Oliver, or Jorge Amado, were for a time supporters of the Moscow' or, later, the Beijing' political project. In any case, they were always less digestible to Western capitalism than the liberal progressives of the Boom (see Rojas 2018). Later, once these writers became more moderate, the centre would also have come to recognise some of them: Neruda and Asturias, even, with the Nobel Prize. Others, like Amado, with market success.

Appendix

Efraín Huerta, “Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz” (1956, 25–26):

Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz.
 Bajo los altos árboles de la Alameda
 y a una joven con ojos de esperanza.
 Junto a ella otras jóvenes pedían más firmas
 y aquella hora fue como una encendida patria
 de amor al amor, de gracia por la gracia,
 de una luz a otra luz.
 Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz.
 Y conmigo, en cien países, cien millones de firmas,
 cien orquestas del mundo, una sinfonía universal,
 un solo canto por la Paz en el mundo.
 Hoy no he firmado el poema ni los pequeños artículos,
 ni el documento que te esclaviza,
 no he firmado la carta que no siente
 ni el mensaje que durará un segundo.
 Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz.
 Para que el tiempo no se detenga,
 para que el sueño no se inmovilice,
 para que la sonrisa sea alta y clara,
 para que una mujer aprenda a ver crecer a su hijo

y las pupilas del hijo vean cómo su madre es cada día más joven.
 Hoy he dado una firma, la mía, para la Paz.
 Un mar de firmas que ahogan y aturden
 al industrial y al político de la guerra.
 Una gigantesca oleada de gigantescas firmas:
 la temblorosa del niño que apenas balbucea la palabra,
 la que es una rosa de llanto de la madre,
 la firma de humildad —la firma del poeta.
 Hoy he elevado en una el número mundial de firmas por la Paz.
 Y estoy contento como un adolescente enamorado,
 como un árbol de pie,
 como el inagotable manantial
 y como el río con su canción de soberbios cristales.
 Hoy parece que no he hecho nada
 y sin embargo, he dado mi firma para la Paz.
 La joven me sonrió y en sus labios había una paloma viva,
 y me dio las gracias con sus ojos de esperanza
 y yo seguí mi camino en busca de un libro para mis hijos.
 Pues ahí estaba mi firma, precisa y diáfana,
 al pie del Llamamiento de Berlín.
 Parece que no he hecho nada
 y sin embargo, creo haber multiplicado mi vida
 y multiplicado los más sanos deseos.
 Hoy he dado mi firma para la Paz.

Pablo Neruda, “Que despierte el leñador” (1981 [1950], 251–252):

Paz para los crepúsculos que vienen,
 paz para el puente, paz para el vino,
 paz para las letras que me buscan
 y que en mi sangre suben enredando
 el viejo canto con tierra y amores,
 paz para la ciudad en la mañana
 cuando despierta el pan, paz para el río
 Mississippi, río de las raíces:
 paz para la camisa de mi hermano,
 paz en el libro como un sello de aire,
 paz para el gran koljós de Kiev,
 paz para las cenizas de estos muertos
 y de estos otros muertos, paz para el hierro
 negro de Brooklyn, paz para el cartero
 de casa en casa como el día,
 paz para el coreógrafo que grita
 con un embudo a las enredaderas,
 paz para mi mano derecha,
 que sólo sabe escribir Rosario:
 paz para el boliviano secreto

como una piedra de estaño, paz
 para que tú te cases, paz para todos
 los aserraderos de Bío Bío,
 paz para el corazón desgarrado
 de España guerrillera:
 paz para el pequeño Museo de Wyoming
 en donde lo más dulce
 es una almohada con un corazón bordado,
 paz para el panadero y sus amores
 y paz para la harina: paz
 para todo el trigo que debe nacer,
 para todo el amor que buscará follaje,
 paz para todos los que viven:
 paz para todas las tierras y las aguas.

Nicanor Parra, “Pan caliente” (1969, 155–156):

Me llama la atención
 El siguiente fenómeno
 Para nosotros completamente desconocido:
 Una cola de cien metros de largo
 Cerca del Metropol
 A pesar de los grados bajo cero.
 Dentro de sus enormes abrigo
 Y de sus densos gorros de pieles
 Que sólo dejan libres la nariz y los ojos
 Todos los moscovitas
 Parecen buzos interplanetarios
 O cosmonautas del fondo del mar.
 Me cuesta abrirme paso
 Para llegar al núcleo
 De ese cometa de seres humanos.
 Describo lo que veo:
 Una mujer detrás de una mesa
 Entrada en carnes como todas las rusas
 —Seguramente madre varias veces—
 Con la cabeza envuelta en un pañuelo
 Rojo
 de listas verdes y amarillas.
 Y qué creen ustedes que vende
 Esa mujer heroica
 En pleno mes de enero
 En su pequeño bar improvisado
 En plena vía pública
 Sin importarle la nieve que cae.
 Pan caliente
 ¿verdad?

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