

Columbia University and Chile

Over 100 Years of History



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Columbia Global Centers | Santiago

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Chief Editor: Carla Magri
Content Editor: Christian Molinari
Art Director: Camila Berger
Designer: Carolina Jarpa

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Columbia Global Centers | Santiago
Dag Hammarskjöld 3269, Vitacura, Santiago
globalcenters.columbia.edu/santiago

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Introduction

The diplomatic relationship between the United States and Chile started early in Chilean republican history, when in 1823 the US Government officially recognized the country's independence from Spain. This connection translated into agreements in several fields, education among them, which led to an enduring relationship between the South American country and Columbia University in New York. The aim of this book is to delve into how this intellectual exchange has developed, and in which ways it has benefited both Chile and Columbia for over a century.

This book's focus was placed on four main areas: Chileans that studied at Columbia and their contributions to the country upon their return; Chilean politicians, academics and artists that spent time at Columbia as lecturers, researchers, visiting professors, or that were invited to campus as special guests; Columbia faculty members that have worked on topics concerning Chile or mentored Chilean students in a wide range of projects and subjects; as well as the University's reaction to the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet that ruled Chile between 1973 and 1990.

When we approached this project, we had some scattered names and dates, but what we discovered along the way was much more than we envisioned. We knew Gabriela Mistral had taught at Columbia's Barnard College in the early 1930s but we never imagined the prevalent role that Columbia played both in the launch of her international career and her personal life. We had records of recent presidents that had visited Columbia in the last decades, but we were unaware of the long democratic tradition between Chilean Heads of State and the University. In other cases, we came across names

unexpectedly during the research process. The latter was the case of Nicanor Parra, Chile's witty, mordant, and politically incorrect poet-antipoet, one of the most brilliant minds in 20th century literature, who in the early 1970s inspired aspiring writers in his creative writing workshop, the first of its kind to be taught at a US university.

One of the first known Chilean students to enter the halls of Columbia did so 112 years ago. It was 1910, her name was Amanda Labarca, and she was there to study Educational Psychology at Teachers College. Though her name did not resonate in Chile yet, she would become a trailblazer in many ways. She was the first female university professor in the country, she founded female 'reading circles' where women were introduced to the academic debate, and she shortly became the most visible face of the movement that advocated for women's political rights. A string of educators and feminists would follow Labarca's steps in the next decades, only to become leaders themselves: the founder of Chile's first openly feminist political party, Latin America's first female university dean, the pioneers of the main educational reforms of the first half of the 20th century, all of whom studied at Columbia. Not only did they benefit from a world-class education, their personal interests and aspirations of what they could accomplish back in their country were certainly shaped by their experiences in a progressive city like New York.

Almost 80 years ago, Columbia professor of Latin American History, Frank Tannenbaum, established the Latin American Seminar – a platform for Columbia faculty and students to engage with intellectuals and democratic leaders from all over the region in the discussion of prevailing issues across the Americas. Among

the first Chileans to attend the seminar in the 1960s were Senators Radomiro Tomic and Eduardo Frei Montalva, the latter of whom would soon become President of Chile. In 1962 Tannenbaum founded Columbia's Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS), consolidating and strengthening the relationship between Chilean academics and the University, paving the way for Columbia to be a safe haven for political exiles during the Pinochet regime. Through its over 250 years of history, Columbia has not only excelled as an academic institution, but also as a place for the free debate of ideas, where both faculty members and students have been historically committed to the values of democracy and freedom.

Over the years, recipients of various National Awards, the leaders of the Chilean suffragist movement, the country's first Nobel laureate, renowned engineers and doctors who have promoted life-changing public policies, leading astronomers, and our very own 'antipoet' have left their imprint both at Columbia and in Chile. Recovering the life stories of these fascinating individuals has served to reinforce how invaluable the co-creation of knowledge across national frontiers can be.

After defining the subjects for this project, came the long and exciting mission of digging through old sources, visiting archives, and reaching out to libraries, family members, friends, editors, and academics, in Chile, the United States, and Europe. This task was eagerly assumed by Carla Magri, a member of the Santiago Center team. A historian and journalist, Carla immersed herself in this project and spent countless hours doing research, reading, interviewing, writing, and complementing the work of other authors. Additionally,

she carefully curated the visual content, personally selecting every picture, letter, and press clipping portrayed in this book, which implied contacting dozens of institutions and individuals, asking them to reach into their memories and search through belongings, to which they kindly agreed.

A decade ago, the fruitful relationship between Chile and Columbia translated into the establishment of a Global Center in Santiago in 2012. Relying on the knowledge and research of numerous Columbia faculty members, schools, centers and labs, in the last decade the Santiago Center has organized more than 300 public programs to address emerging topics and challenges for Chile and the Latin American region. With a multidisciplinary approach, the Center has sponsored research projects that focus on key public policy issues in the fields of earth sciences, culture and the arts, education, political science, and public health, among several others that have had relevant implications in the advancement of knowledge and public debate in the region, promoting collaboration between Columbia researchers and their local counterparts, all the while engaging with the region's students and Chilean alumni, the latter of which surpass 500 since 1990 in Chile alone.

The initial idea for this research was born under the “virtual internship” program that –in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic– the nine Columbia Global Centers launched for Columbia students in the northern hemisphere summer of 2020, which has continued every semester since. Aside from the work done by the students under the internship program and in order to extend the reach of this project, the Santiago Center worked with other academics and researchers. Their time and dedication in searching and

reviewing old and rare material, along with their graceful acceptance of the Santiago Center team's recommendations and edits, are highly appreciated. We are deeply thankful to:

- Paulina Soto, Bachelor of Literature and Journalist, and Carla Magri, Master of Arts in Global History and Journalist, Columbia Global Centers | Santiago: Gabriela Mistral: Poetess in New York.
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- Carla Magri: Nicanor Parra: Unlikely, Unconventional, Antipoet.
- Katherine Wang, Columbia University student of Financial Economics and Political Science, Carla Magri, and Christian Molinari: Chilean Presidents at Columbia: A History of Diplomacy and Democracy.

Additionally, we are grateful for the aid and dedication of Socrates Silva, Latin America Librarian at Columbia University Libraries; Jocelyn Wilk, University Archivist at Columbia; and Nara Milanich, Professor of History at Barnard College and an expert on modern Latin American History, for their advisory role in helping this publication's authors find valuable information and refer them to important sources. A special thanks is also due to Tom Trebat, Director of the Columbia Global Centers | Rio de Janeiro, who led his team in a similar publication for the Rio Center and who kindly shared his insight and recommendations from that experience.

Although by no means does this publication intend to cover the complete history of Chile and Columbia University, we are certain that it is a valuable piece that provides a glimpse of over a century of collaboration. Thanks to the work of all of those who were involved in the production of this book, we now have a better understanding and record of the strong link that brings together the country of Chile with one of the world's leading academic institutions and research centers.

Karen Poniachik

Director

Columbia Global Centers | Santiago

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Gabriela Mistral:

Poetess in New York

By Paulina Soto and Carla Magri

Official portrait of
Gabriela Mistral's
participation in Columbia's
Bicentennial Celebrations.



Source: "Dr. Gabriela Mistral. Author +
Chilean Consul, Doctoris Litteris., Oct 31,
1954," *Rare Book and Manuscript Library*.

This paper reviews how a primary school teacher from rural Chile bloomed into a world-renowned poetess and Nobel laureate, and how the life of this modest woman who shied away from the spotlight and disliked public attention, was forever imprinted by her unexpected, lasting relationship with Columbia and, in consequence, with the city of New York. It was in New York where Lucila Godoy, nom de plume Gabriela Mistral, was first published, it was there where she taught, where she lived, where she loved, and where she died.

But this was highly unlikely to have happened had it not been for a young Spanish Literature professor from Columbia University named Federico de Onís. After noticing the greatness of Godoy's early works, and perceiving her deepness and complex nature, he made her an offer that would set the rest of her life in motion, propelling this unassuming intellectual into the global spotlight.

¹ Volodia Teitelboim, *Gabriela Mistral Pública y Secreta: Truenos y Silencios en la vida del Premio Nobel Latinoamericano* (Santiago, Chile: BAT Ediciones): 17.

² *Obra Reunida de Gabriela Mistral*, Tomo V, Prosa (Santiago: Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional, 2020): 146-147.

Early Life and First Writings

Lucila Godoy was born in 1889 in the town of Vicuña, located in the Elqui Valley of northern Chile, but was raised in the small nearby village of Montegrande. Her father, a teacher, abandoned the family when she was only three and left her to be raised by her mother Petronila and her older sister, Emelina, who taught primary school and was Lucila's first instructor. In spite of the strained relationship with her father, he was a big influence in Godoy's life. While she was still a young girl, she

found several of his poems while looking at his old papers: “I found some very beautiful verses of his that impressed my childish soul in a very vivid way. Those verses of my father, the first ones I read, awakened my poetic passion,” she would write years later.¹

In 1904 Godoy relocated to the nearby city of La Serena, where she started working as a teacher’s assistant and began collaborating with *El Coquimbo* and *La Voz del Elqui*, two secular, liberal newspapers affiliated with the Radical Party, which since its foundation in the 1860’s had cultivated social-liberal and secular ideas and was closely related with Freemasonry. This collaboration allowed her to befriend *El Coquimbo*’s founder, Bernardo Ossandón, who would have a profound influence in her life. Ossandón gave Godoy access to use his personal library, where she could read from his collection as well as develop her

writing skills. “One day an old journalist found me, and I found him. His name was Bernardo Ossandón, and he had a large and excellent library, which was very rare to have in a province [outside of the capital city of Santiago]. I still fail to understand how this good sir opened his treasure to me,” she would say.²

Befriending Ossandón –a Radical and a Freemason– was determinant in Godoy’s thinking and a contribution for her development



Young Gabriela Mistral,
date unknown.

Source: “Gabriela Mistral
en el Norte Chico,”
Flickr Santiago Nostálgico.

both as an educator and a writer. Through his library she could access secular, liberal books that shaped her vision of the world. She would later turn these thoughts into prose, covering a wide range of topics, including gender equality, education, religion, and the American continent, among many others. It was there where she discovered classics from Latin America and the rest of the world, and where she first read French writers Michel de Montaigne and Frédéric Mistral, who would inspire the pen name by which she would become famous worldwide.

Though she was barely 15 when her works started to be published, even the earliest of her writings reveal her strong advocacy for women's education: "The educated woman stops being a helpless being," "To instruct a woman is to make her worthy and lift her up," "Instruct women; there is nothing in them that should position them in a lower place than that of men."³ They also evidence her critical views on religion, specifically of its role in the education of youth: "I would show them the sky of astronomers, not the one of theologians."⁴

But her progressive ideas led her to trouble. In 1905 she was supposed to start formal training as a primary school teacher at an *Escuela Normal* in the northern city of La Serena,⁵ but she was denied entrance based on her controversial writings; she was considered a revolutionary socialist with pagan ideals unfit to teach young people.⁶ Though her prose might have been controversial, she considered herself a Christian who spoke to God regularly, albeit with a very personal conception of religion.⁷

³ Extracts from: Gabriela Mistral, "La Instrucción de la Mujer," *La Voz de Elqui*, March 8, 1906.

⁴ Mistral, "La Instrucción de la Mujer."

⁵ Begun in France and Germany, *Escuelas Normales* were institutions that specifically trained primary school teachers in Chile in other Latin American countries.

⁶ Oriana Mondaca, "Bernardo Ossandón Álvarez y su importancia en la vida de Gabriela Mistral," *La Serena Online*, September 3, 2020.

⁷ Matilde Ladrón de Guevara, *Gabriela Mistral: Rebelde magnífica* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1962): 47.

Mistral in Punta Arenas in 1920 when she was director of the city's *Liceo de Niñas*.

Source: "Retrato de Gabriela Mistral junto a las profesoras del Liceo de Niñas en Punta Arenas," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*.



The Birth of Gabriela Mistral

⁸ "Vida y Obra de Gabriela Mistral," *Camino a Gabriela Mistral*.

⁹ Gabriela Mistral, translation by Amanda Martin Sandino, "The Sonnets of Death," *Alchemy. A Journal of Translation* (Spring 2013).

Until 1908 Godoy signed her publishings with several modified versions of her real name. The first time she used the pen name of Gabriela Mistral was in 1908, under a poem entitled "Rimas" (Rhymes) ⁸. In 1909 she was left heartbroken after her first love, Romelio Ureta, committed suicide, a topic that would be consistently present in her writings during the next few years.

In 1910 Mistral validated her skills at *Escuela Normal N°1* in Santiago and was granted the degree of *Profesora de Estado* (State Teacher) which authorized her to teach secondary students. In the next years she would move around Chile teaching in various cities. While living in Los Andes in 1914, she got news that the Chilean Society of Writers had organized a literary contest entitled *Juegos Florales* (Floral Games). She submitted three poems under the name of "Sonetos de la Muerte" (Sonnets of Death), which spoke of her grief following the death of Ureta. In mid-December that year, she was announced winner of the event, though she was a complete unknown both to the public and the jury. The award ceremony was held in Santiago on December 22 and was attended by Chilean President Ramón Barros Luco and the first lady. But Mistral was too shy to come forward and receive her award, choosing instead to hide in the gallery and quietly watch as someone else read her sonnets out loud:

*From that frozen niche the men have put you,
I will lower you down to the humble, sunny earth.
That I have to sleep there, the men do not know,
and that we must dream on the same pillow.*⁹

Even though she was not publicly recognized, winning the Floral Games secured Mistral a spot in the Chilean literary scene.

At the same time, she had taken incipient first steps towards internationalization. In 1912, she wrote to the Nicaraguan poet and writer Rubén Darío, who at the time lived in Paris, where he directed two magazines: *Elegancias* and *Mundial*.¹⁰ In response, Darío energetically encouraged her to make her writings public, and thus, in 1913 “La Defensa de la Belleza” (The Defense of Beauty) became her first story published outside of Chile.¹¹

While she was still working as a Spanish teacher in Los Andes, Mistral met and befriended Pedro Aguirre Cerda, a member of the Radical Party who would later become Minister of Education and subsequently President of Chile. In 1918, Aguirre Cerda appointed Mistral as director of the all-girls *Liceo Sara Braun* in the southern city of Punta Arenas. Two years later she was relocated to the city of Temuco to direct its *Liceo de Niñas*. In 1921 she arrived in Santiago, where she was named director of the *Liceo N°6*, a new school for girls. Since Mistral had not attended Universidad de Chile’s *Instituto Pedagógico* –where secondary school teachers were trained– her appointment created tension with other female educators, who publicly accused her of being favored by Aguirre Cerda. According to Mistral’s letters to friends, the leaders of the smear campaign against her included the National Teachers Association and Amanda Labarca, a graduate of Columbia’s Teachers College, a renowned teacher and one of the main figures of the female emancipation movement in Chile: “They tolerated my appointment as director of the *liceos* while I lived in the provinces, but not in Santiago. My guild will never forgive me for not having a professional degree. Aguirre Cerda is the sole protector of my career. He knows that, in order to justify my appointment, they even said that I was his mistress. Add to this campaign Mrs. A. L. H. [Amanda Labarca Hubertson], a woman who fans herself with her authority and the power of her insidiousness.”¹²

As she acknowledged in a 1922 letter to her friend and writer Eduardo Barrios, Mistral was disappointed that her 18-year career in education was being questioned because of her lack of formal training. “I am disgusted by my guild in Chile,” she stated, unsure of what her next moves should be. Although her love for teaching was profound, in the early 1920s she was considering early retirement, but was apprehensive over her financial stability, as she was responsible for supporting her mother.¹³

¹⁰ Gabriela Mistral, “Carta de 1912 o 1913 a Rubén Darío,” *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*.

¹¹ “La defensa de la belleza, el notable cuento de Mistral publicado por Darío,” *Alerce* n°. 63 (November 2019).

¹² “La última visita de Gabriela Mistral a Chile,” *Museo Gabriela Mistral de Vicuña*.

¹³ *Obra Reunida de Gabriela Mistral, Tomo VIII, Cartas*. (Santiago: Ediciones Biblioteca Nacional, 2020): 75–81.

Federico de Onís and “Desolación”

¹⁴ Casa Hispánica is a building located on the Morningside Heights campus of Columbia University that houses the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, as well as the Hispanic Institute and *Revista Hispánica Moderna*.

Born in Spain in 1885, Federico de Onís was the son of the main librarian of Universidad de Salamanca. As a child he often interacted with his father's acquaintances, such as the famed novelist and essayist Miguel de Unamuno, under whom he would later study at Universidad de Salamanca and eventually befriend. After receiving his PhD in Literature, at 26 he attained a professorship at Universidad de Oviedo, but four years later, in 1915, he moved back to Salamanca to teach Spanish Literature at his alma mater. A long promising career awaited him there, but in 1916 he was contacted by Nicholas Butler, President of Columbia University, who invited him to join the faculty and establish a program of advanced studies in Spanish.

At 30 years old, de Onís got established in New York, where he took part in the founding of Columbia's Department of Spanish (currently the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures). His appointment was pivotal for the future development of Hispanic studies at the University: for 40 years, de Onís strove to disseminate knowledge on Spain

and Latin America and promote Hispanic culture across the US. In 1920 he created the *Instituto de las Españas* (today's Hispanic Institute); in 1930 he founded *Casa Hispánica*¹⁴, where he organized concerts and lectures, and in 1934 he created *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, an ongoing academic journal focusing on Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian topics.

Five years after his arrival at Columbia, on a January night in 1921, during a lecture at the Hispanic Institute, de Onís read aloud poems written by an unknown school teacher from

Portrait of Federico de Onís in 1910.

Source: “Retrato de Estudio. Federico de Onís, 1910,” *Gredos Principal, Universidad de Salamanca*.



a rural town in Chile who published poems under the pen name of Gabriela Mistral, who he knew because a few of her writings had been published in Spanish newspapers.¹⁵ The over 400 students and faculty present that evening responded to the originality and moral force of the woman's writings. According to de Onís, "The audience was mostly made up of teachers, and they were immediately enthusiastic. Here was one of their own, a teacher, who was also a fine poet. They wanted to know where they could get her poems and all I could give them was a handful of clippings."¹⁶

After that 1921 lecture, de Onís wrote Gabriela Mistral what would be the first of dozens of letters over several decades. In representation of the Spanish teachers of the United States, he asked permission to publish her work in an anthology. At the beginning the poetess reacted in her common shy and reserved nature; she had received previous offers to publish her work but had, until then, been too modest to accept. However, eventually de Onís got her approval. She agreed to gather her writings, which by then were mostly scattered, and send them to New York.¹⁷

In a March 1922 letter, de Onís informed Mistral that as soon as the manuscripts arrived in New York, he shared the information with the more than 300 Spanish teachers living in the city, as well as with the authorities of the Instituto de las Españas, who were delighted to hear the news. He assured her that in editing the book he would ensure that all of her instructions were followed. De Onís also commented that the Hispanic Institute would cover the publishing costs of the book and assured her that her royalties "would be the highest possible, with no doubt higher than what any publishing house would pay."¹⁸

Later that year, Mistral's first book, a collection of poems entitled "Desolación" (Desolation) was published by Columbia's Instituto de las Españas.¹⁹ The author dedicated her first official publication to Pedro Aguirre Cerda and his wife, Juana de Aguirre. A few months after the release of the book, Mistral and de Onís met for the first time in person, at the end of 1922 in Mexico. After retiring from her job as a teacher, Mistral had moved there to assist the Minister of Education José Vasconcelos in the reformation of the primary school system, while de Onís was in the country offering Spanish Literature courses and conferences.²⁰

¹⁵ "Spanish Society Meets Socially," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume XLIV, Number 67, January 11, 1921, 4.

¹⁶ Mildred Adams, "The 1945 Winner of the Nobel Award, Gabriela Mistral," *The New York Times*, December 9, 1945, 111.

¹⁷ Luis de Arrigoitia, "Federico de Onís y Gabriela Mistral: relación literaria y amistad de por vida," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, N°12 (1985): 35.

¹⁸ Arrigoitia, "De Onís y Mistral": 36.

¹⁹ The book was published in Chile the following year.

²⁰ Mistral's time in Mexico had a profound influence in her life and work. From that moment on, the American continent, its people, and its geography, would be a central topic in her work.

²¹ Arrigoitia, "De Onís y Mistral," 37.

²² Arrigoitia, "De Onís y Mistral," 37.

²³ Gabriela Mistral, *Desolación* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Andrés Bello, 2000): 233.

²⁴ Julio Saavedra Molina, "Gabriela Mistral: su vida y su obra," *Anales de la Universidad de Chile* N°63-64 (July-December 1946): 42.

²⁵ Pablo Neruda, "Los sonetos de la muerte," *Boletín Fundación Pablo Neruda* (Winter 1989): 10.

²⁶ Volodia Teitelboim, *Gabriela Mistral pública y secreta* (Santiago, Chile: Ediciones BAT, 1991): 9.

Though there are no records of Mistral and de Onís' encounter in Mexico, six months after, she wrote him letting him know that back in Chile she had seen a copy of "Desolación" for sale at a bookstore, and that she was very pleased with how the book had turned out: "It's sober, serious, and beautiful. I would not have done it differently."²¹ She also had words of gratitude towards the Spanish professor for the preface he had written: "Your opening words are so kind and generous that I don't know how to thank you for them. They seem like the presentation of a true author. There is much tenderness in them and I, who appreciate affections above all admiration, have read them with religious emotion."²²

The volume was divided into five sections: Life, School, Children's Stories, Pain, and Nature, and as the author herself confessed in the very last poem, entitled "Vow," the book is a testimony of Mistral's aches and misfortunes: "In these hundred poems lies bleeding a painful past, in which the song got bloodied to relieve me."²³

From the moment it was published, "Desolación" was a critical success. For Julio Saavedra, literary critic, professor, and Mistral expert, the volume is much more than a book of verses: "Its lyricism is rooted in a lived tragedy and the feelings that arise from it." According to him, the poetess possessed a deep inner world, in which "fantasy, physical and spiritual sensitivity is made one with the ever-pulsating emotion of living amidst a sacred and inexplicable mystery."²⁴ In 1954, fellow Chilean poet Pablo Neruda wrote that the publishing of "Desolación" opened the door to an unparalleled poetic emotion around the American continent. The book contained the "Sonetos de la Muerte," which according to Neruda had such torrential force that they opened the heartbreaking intimate core of its author. "Its introductory stanzas advance like volcanic lava," he wrote.²⁵ In his 1991 biography of Mistral, Chilean writer Volodia Teitelboim remembers that "Desolación" was a fundamental part of his primary education. Born in 1916, Teitelboim recalls having to memorize several poems, such as "Shame," "The Creed," and "Plea." He also claims that "Desolación is the capital book of 20th century Latin American poetry and one of the most singularly tragic."²⁶

Even if de Onís and Mistral had only crossed paths for the publication of her first volume, this action would have sufficed to change the



INSTITUTO DE LAS ESPAÑAS
EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

You are cordially invited to attend
an informal reception in honor of
the distinguished Chilean poetess,

GABRIELA MISTRAL

Author of "Desolación" and other poems

Since the publication of her verses by the Instituto, our members and friends have been anxious to become better acquainted with Gabriela Mistral. It is therefore a privilege to have her as our guest on this occasion during her brief visit to New York. Señorita Mistral will give some of her impressions of Mexico.

Room 301 Philosophy Hall
Columbia University

Friday, May 16
8.15 p. m.

1924 invitation to a reception
held in Mistral's honor
at Instituto de las Españas.

Source: "Invitación a una recepción en
honor a Gabriela Mistral en ocasión
de su visita a New York," *Biblioteca
Nacional Digital de Chile*.

course of Hispanic-American literature forever. In 1924 Mistral's second volume, "Ternura" (Tenderness), was published in Spain. That same year while staying in New York, she visited Columbia to attend a reception organized in her honor by the Instituto de las Españas. A year after, she joined the League of Nations to work in intellectual cooperation, consolidating her international career. Though she would occasionally return to Chile to visit, she never lived in the country again, remaining an expat for the rest of her life.

Source: "Mistral, Gabriela, 1889-1957,
Desolación. title page," *Columbia University
Libraries Online Exhibitions*.

DESOLACION

POEMAS

DE

GABRIELA MISTRAL



INSTITUTO DE LAS ESPAÑAS
EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

NEW YORK, 1922

First Edition of *Desolación*, 1922.

Arrival at Barnard

Mistral's relationship with Columbia resumed the following decade when she received an invitation to teach at Columbia's Barnard College.

As a consequence of de Onís' work at Columbia's Spanish Department, since the early 1920s there had been an increasing interest for Spanish studies among the female students of Barnard. The school offered several opportunities for advanced studies both in Spanish and English: by 1925 there were 22 students majoring in Spanish and a Spanish Club had been founded.²⁷ It was through that club that during her first trip to the United States, Mistral attended a tea held in her honor at Barnard.²⁸

Carolina Marcial Dorado, the head of Barnard's Spanish Department, had heard about Mistral from Federico de Onís. At the time, the Chilean poetess was living in Italy, working for the International Educational Cinematographic Institute at the League of Nations, and had already achieved international fame as a writer: "She is an outstanding figure, not only in the Americas, but in Europe," wrote Marcial Dorado in a January 1930 letter addressed to Barnard's Dean, Virginia Gildersleeve. Citing Mistral's "contribution to education and towards the feminist international movement," she encouraged Gildersleeve to invite her as a visiting professor for the following academic year.²⁹

Mistral agreed to accept the position in a March 1930 letter addressed to Gildersleeve, though she asked to make one adjustment to the proposed plan. Gildersleeve had originally suggested that Mistral teach two classes: Contemporary Movements in Hispanic Literature and History of the Hispano-American Civilization. However, the poetess was concerned that the contents of the latter were too wide for her to cover in one course, since it would entail a comprehensive study of the Hispanic-American culture. Instead, Mistral proposed to teach a class on Women's Hispano-American Literature.³⁰

In her response letter, the poetess is honored by Gildersleeve's proposal: "I deeply, deeply esteem the finesse with which you offer to house me at the school. I will be thrilled to share a bit of your school life, which I have always found admirable [...] I am going to New York

²⁷ "Student Interest in Spanish is Increasing," *Barnard Bulletin*, February 6, 1925, 3.

²⁸ "College Tea Given by Spanish Club," *Barnard Bulletin*, May 2, 1924, 4.

²⁹ Carolina Marcial Dorado and Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve, "Letter to Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve. 1," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*.

³⁰ Gabriela Mistral, "Letter to Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve. 1," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*.

³¹ Gabriela Mistral, "Letter to Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve. 2," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*.

³² Gabriela Mistral, "Letter to Virginia Crocheron Gildersleeve. 1," *Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions*.

³³ "Senorita Mistral Visits Barnard as Member of the Spanish Department," *Barnard Bulletin*, October 10, 1930, 1.

³⁴ "Senorita Mistral Visits Barnard," 3.

³⁵ Carolina Marcial Dorado, "Latin America Comes to Barnard," *Barnard College Alumnae Monthly*, March 1937, 11.

exclusively to teach at Barnard College, and I will be entirely at your service."³¹ In the same document, Mistral mentions that Federico de Onís had also asked for her to hold a conference at the Instituto de las Españas during her time in New York.³²

Mistral's arrival to the University was officially announced in the October 1930 issue of the *Barnard Bulletin* newspaper: "For the last seven years Senorita Mistral has deserted her pedagogical career for literary work [...] She is advisor at the Institute of Intellectual Co-operation of Paris and of the Institute of Cinema Education in Rome."³³ The article mentions that Mistral considered that US academic curriculums should include at least a minimum of Latin American influence. It is also noted that at the beginning of her stay, Mistral found the New York autumn to be too cold to enjoy the city.³⁴

A 1937 issue of the *Barnard College Alumnae Monthly* states that while residing in Hewitt Hall, Mistral made the Barnard dormitories a popular meeting place for Latin Americans. The publication notes that although she deeply disliked social public functions, nothing pleased her more than to sit by the fire, surrounded by students and friends, and read aloud passages from Spanish writers and chapters from her own (at the time) unpublished work. According to the article, these encounters produced a lasting impression on the poetess' listeners: "Gabriela Mistral made Barnard Latin America conscious; her contribution to our intellectual daily life was both unusual and strikingly profound. Those who were privileged to know this great poet and philosopher from Chile will never forget the traditions, the grandeur and the promise which lie in the young countries south of Columbia."³⁵

Announcement of Mistral's arrival at Barnard in the *Barnard Bulletin* issue of October 10, 1930.

Source: "Senorita Mistral Visits Barnard as Member of the Spanish Department," *Barnard Bulletin*, October 10, 1930, 1.



I. ISTITUTO INTERNAZIONALE PER LA CINEMATOGRAFIA EDUCATIVA
 C. INSTITUT INTERNATIONAL DU CINÉMATOGRAPHE ÉDUCATIF
 E. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CINÉMATOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE
 INTERNATIONALES INSTITUT FÜR LEHRFILMWESSEN
 INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL DE CINEMATOGRAFIA EDUCATIVA

ROMA - VILLA MEDIOEVALE TORLONIA
 V. LAZZARO SPALLANZANI
 FRASCATI - VILLA FALCONIERI

Señorita Virginia Gildersleeve,
 Dean de Español del Barnard College,
 N. York.

Mi distinguida señorita:

Por medio de un cablegrama, tuve la hon-
 ra de contestar a Ud. su muy rina invitación para dar dos cur-
 sos en el colegio ^{«La Sigea»} cargo, aceptando el honroso encargo y agrade-
 ciendolo lealmente.

Recibi su carta con mucho atraso, a causa -
 de que me fue enviada a Francia y de que yo me encuentro actual-
 mente en Italia; por esto me pareció conveniente responder a us-
 ted cablegraficamente.

Me impongo por su fina carta de las condi-
 ciones del trabajo. Usted se digna decirme que puedo presen-
 tarle algunas objeciones a su plan. Yo estoy conforme con él en
 todo, excepto en un punto. El tema que me designa para uno de -
 los cursos me parece demasiado vasto e imposible de tratar en -
 dos horas semanales: Historia de la Civilizacion Hisp. Americana."
 Creo que sobrepasa bastante mis conocimientos, porque él compren-
 deria el estudio de nuestra cultura en todos los aspectos: cienti-
 fico, literario, artistico ^{pedagogico} y religioso etc. Una materia de tanta pro-
 fundidad y sobre todo extensión, requiere la preparacion anticipa-
 da de unos dos años, y en la fuente misma de los datos, es decir, en
 la America.

En cambio, el tema del otro curso: Literatura Hisp. Am.,
 lo tengo, no solo preparado, sino con las clases escritas en buena

March 1930 letter
 from Gabriela Mistral
 to Virginia Gildersleeve
 accepting a teaching
 position at Barnard
 College. (Pages 1, 2, and 3).

parte, por si usted quisiera distribuir a los alumnos los capitulos esenciales en copias previas.

Me permito indicarle, con el debido respeto, que cambiemos el rubro tan grave del mencionado curso y que optemos por uno de los temas que le propongo: Si no es posible dar dos cursos de literatura hisp. americana, podria hacerse uno especializado de literatura femenina hisp. americana, que interesaria a las alumnas. Si esto no conviene a los intereses del colegio, podria yo dar un curso de Geografia Hisp. Am., ramo que enseñé varios años. Y, cosa mas practica que todo eso, para los fines de aproximacion de nuestros pueblos, podria hacer ese curso de conferencias-no clases, sobre las tendencias morales y sociales, sobre el caracter de nuestros pueblos, su estado de desarrollo etc., hincando la atencion en la fisonomia espiritual de cada pais, tratando algo sobre los recursos materiales de cada nacion, sobre las diversas razas que pueblan cada uno etc. Podriamos llamar este curso: Estado social de los paises hispano-americanos. (Ver nota al final)

Siempre será conveniente dar una reseña geografica antes de toda otra cosa, porque el conocimiento de nuestros pueblos no se logra sino a base de su fisonomia fisica.

En cuanto al curso de Literatura Hisp. Americano, no tengo reparo que hacer. Naturalmente, me veo obligada a pedirle dos cursos para ir a N. York; no podria ir por uno solo. Por esta razon le he propuesto varios asuntos para sustituir al que usted me ha señalado.

Estimo en mucho, en muchisimo, la fineza con que usted me ofrece albergarme en el Colegio, el ofrecimiento de la comida y el de dos piezas. Presento a usted por estos capitulos mi expresivo agradecimiento. Estaré feliz de compartir un poco la vida escolar de ustedes, que siempre me ha parecido admirable.

Respecto al horario y al ofrecimiento de usted para agruparme las clases en dos dias de la semana, yo no tengo exigencias en este sentido. Voy a N. York exclusivamente por hacer estas clases del Barnard College, y estaré enteramente a las ordenes de usted. Creo que bastaria el agruparmelas en tres dias de la semana.

SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS

LEAGUE OF NATIONS

I. ISTITUTO INTERNAZIONALE PER LA CINEMATOGRAFIA EDUCATIVA
C. INSTITUT INTERNATIONAL DU CINÉMATOGRAPHE EDUCATIF
E. INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHIC INSTITUTE
INTERNATIONALES INSTITUT FÜR LEHRFILMWESEN
E. INSTITUTO INTERNACIONAL DE CINEMATOGRAFIA EDUCATIVA

LI

ROMA - VILLA MEDIOEVALE TORLONIA
VIA LAZZARO SPALLANZANI
FRASCATI - VILLA FALCONIERI

Como nuestro comun amigo don Federico de Onís se ha dignado
hacerme nombrar conferencista del Instituto de las Españas, los -
tres dias libres de la semana que así me quedarian, podran ser des-
tinados al trabajo extraordinario que yo pudiese tener de esa parte.

Deseo saber con precisión en qué dia se abren los cursos y oja-
lá recibiese de la mano de nuestra común amiga la señorita Marcial -
Dorado algunas instrucciones de detalle sobre los metodos del Colegio
en las clases y en los exámenes.

En cuanto al ofrecimiento de usted de una persona que me ayude
a escribir a maquina, no necesito decirle cómo se lo aprecio y con -
qué gratitud lo acepto, desde luego.

Un respetuoso y afectuoso saludo de su servidora y colega,

Gabriela Mistral

Dirección cablegrafica: Mistral, Cavi-Genova.

Id Postal: Cavi-Lavagna, Prov. Genova, Italia.

7 de Marzo de 1930.

Nota.- Si fuera posible dar los dos cursos de Literatura Hisp
Am., eso seria lo mas cómodo para mi, por tratarse de mi especialidad.

Source: Gabriela Mistral,
"Letter to Virginia Crocheron
Gildersleeve. Page 1,"
Columbia University Libraries
Online Exhibitions.

³⁶ The news of her award reached Mistral in the midst of her darkest days. In 1943 Juan Miguel Pablo Godoy, Mistral's nephew, whom she had officially adopted while living in Europe in 1926, committed suicide in Petrópolis, at the age of 18. Yin Yin, as Mistral called him, never got used to life in Brazil and was bullied by his schoolmates. On August 14, 1943, he took his own life by consuming arsenic, leaving Mistral devastated.

³⁷ "Gabriela Mistral Facts," *The Nobel Prize*.

After the end of the 1930-1931 academic year, Mistral left New York and went on to work as a diplomat –the first Chilean woman to do so– for her country's government, serving as consul from 1932 until her death. As she traveled the world, living in Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Mexico, and Brazil, among other countries, her poetry was translated into several languages.

Throughout the years, Mistral cultivated friendships with intellectuals and political leaders around the world. After her third book, "Tala" (Felling), was published in Argentina in 1938, her acquaintances began to promote her as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature. The recognition came in 1945 while she was serving as a consul in Petrópolis, Brazil. The Swedish ambassador in that country informed her of the recognition on November 15.³⁶ Three days later she embarked on a ship to Sweden in order to attend the ceremony, which took place on December 10. As he awarded Gabriela Mistral with her Nobel, King Gustav V expressed: "For her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations

of the entire Latin American world."³⁷ It was the first Nobel granted to a Latin American writer and the fifth Literature Nobel ever awarded to a woman. Seventy-seven years after, Mistral remains the only Latin American woman to have received the prize.



Gabriela Mistral receiving the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945.

Source: "Ceremonia de entrega del Premio Nobel de Literatura a Gabriela Mistral," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*,

Return to Columbia

Two months after receiving the Nobel Prize, Mistral was featured in the Barnard College Alumnae Magazine of February 1946. Written by Harriet Wishnieff, a 1916 Barnard graduate and Federico de Onís' wife, the piece praised her life as a school teacher, her devotion to children, her work as a diplomat, but mostly the deepness and richness of her poetry.³⁸ In May that same year, she returned to Columbia to attend a reception organized in her honor. By then, she was living in California, serving as consul in Los Angeles, but invited by Dean Gildersleeve, Mistral addressed the Spanish Department at a ceremony held on May 7 in Barnard Hall.³⁹

In the weeks prior to Mistral's trip to New York, she exchanged letters with Dean Gildersleeve, in which they discussed the details of her upcoming visit and the role of women in the newly founded United Nations.⁴⁰

It was a high-profile event: "The evening of May 7 saw the College Parlor ablaze with lights, fragrant with flowers and thronged with consuls general, representatives of Latin American countries, members of the University Language departments, and Spanish-speaking students,"⁴¹ during which the author recounted anecdotes from her life in Europe and spoke about xenophobia, stressing that the world was in need of tolerance and love: "She expressed the belief that there cannot be any true cultural development in an atmosphere of hate and misunderstanding and that there should be a synthesis of the cultures of all countries."⁴² After Mistral's speech and a musical number in which students sung in Spanish, guests had the opportunity to meet the Chilean poetess "of whose acquaintance Barnard is so proud,"⁴³ as stated in the school's College Alumnae publication.

Once again, an event occurring at Columbia would be life-changing for Mistral. In addition to university authorities, diplomats, and Latin American personalities, in attendance that day was Doris Dana, the daughter of a wealthy New York family, a recent graduate from Barnard College and a young aspiring writer who had briefly taught at New York University.

³⁸ Harriet Wishnieff de Onís, "Gabriela Mistral," *Barnard College Alumnae Magazine*, February 1946, 5.

³⁹ "Invitation by Dean [Virginia Crocheron] Gildersleeve and the Department of Spanish," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*.

⁴⁰ Virginia C. Gildersleeve, "Letter to Miss Gabriela Mistral," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, April 23, 1946.

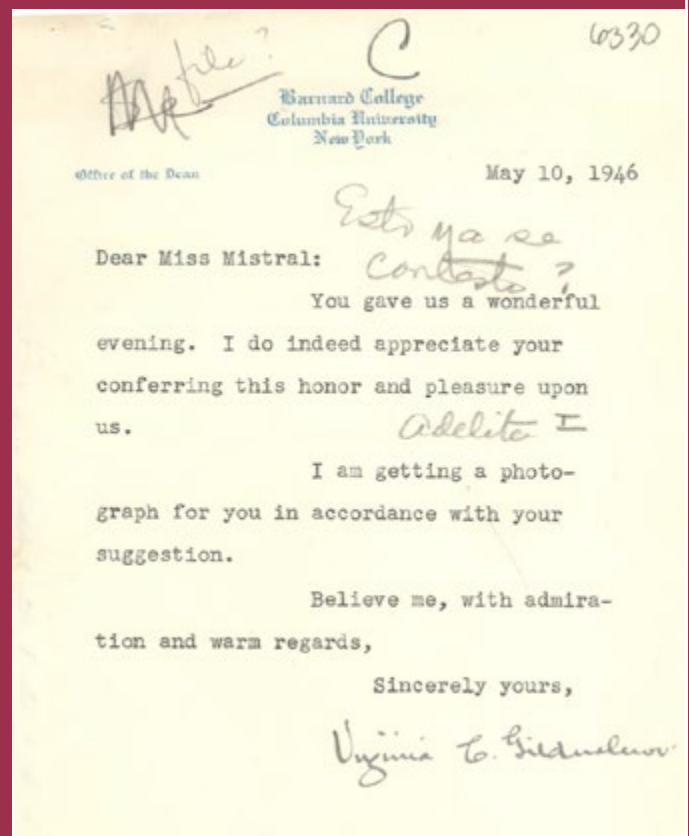
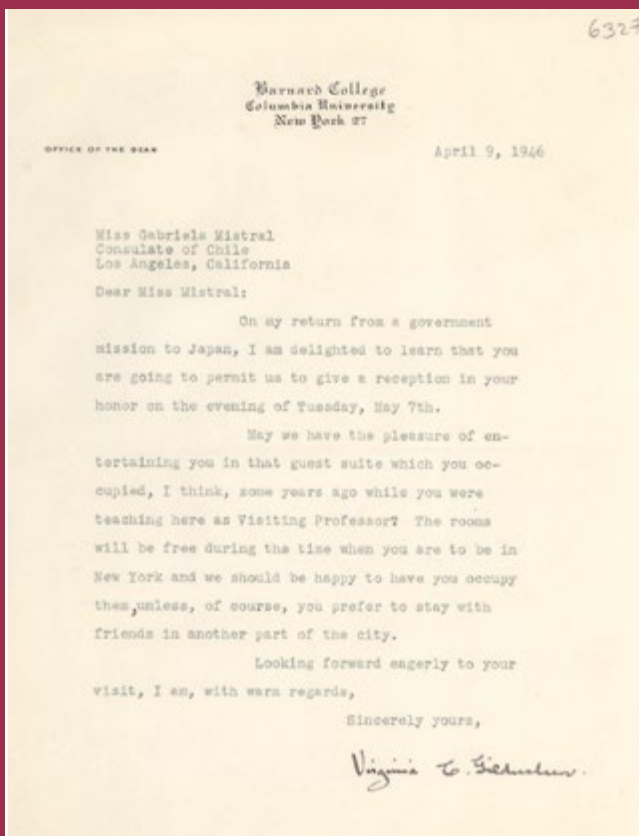
⁴¹ "Milbank Miscellany," *Barnard College Alumnae Magazine*, June 1946, 14.

⁴² "Gabriela Mistral Honored at Reception," *Barnard Bulletin*, May 13, 1946, 4.

⁴³ "Milbank Miscellany," 14.

Letter from Dean Gildersleeve
thanking Mistral for attending the
May 7th reception and promising to
send her a picture of the event.

Source: "[Carta] 1946 mayo 10, New York,
[Estados Unidos] [a] [Gabriela] Mistral
[manuscrito] Virginia C. Gildersleeve,"
Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.



Letter from Barnard Dean Virginia
Gildersleeve to Mistral containing details
regarding the upcoming reception to be
held in her honor at Barnard.

Source: "[Carta] 1946 abr. 9, New York, [EE.
UU.] [a] Gabriela Mistral, Los Angeles, California,
[EE.UU.] [manuscrito] Virginia C. Gildersleeve,"
Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.

Infatuated with the writer, Dana started studying Spanish, leading her to translate an essay the poetess had written about Thomas Mann and for it to be included in a 1948 book published by Dana. Almost two years after Mistral's 1946 visit to Barnard, Dana wrote Mistral the first of many letters, in which she acknowledged that while at Barnard she had been too shy to approach her.⁴⁴ At the time Mistral was living in Santa Barbara, and that same year, Dana drove all the way to California to personally deliver her book. The initial friendly epistolary relationship rapidly evolved into intimacy, closeness, travels through Europe and Latin America, and an eventual life together.

According to their correspondence and to a conversation recorded in 1955, Dana admitted that the two had become a couple on October 1, 1948.⁴⁵ From that time, they lived together in Mexico, Italy, and the United States. Dana would spend long stays in her native New York, which were the source of troubles between her and Mistral since the author preferred to have Dana by her side at all times. This, added to the fact that Dana was not very inclined to writing letters, deeply frustrated Mistral, who was also 31 years older than her partner. Their messages are filled with jealousy and longing, revealing Mistral's anxious nature, since she normally wrote Dana when they were apart.

Though the nature of their bond is clear in the hundreds of letters they wrote to each other over their almost nine-year relationship, in the Chilean public's eyes, Dana was Mistral's secretary. It was only after the poetess' and Dana's death when the true nature of their connection became public knowledge in Chile.

⁴⁴ Velma García-Gorena, ed., *Gabriela Mistral's Letters to Doris Dana* (University of New Mexico Press, 2018): 5.

⁴⁵ García-Gorena, *Gabriela Mistral's Letters*, 6.

Source: "Gabriela Mistral y Doris Dana
en Nueva York," *Biblioteca Nacional
Digital de Chile*.



Gabriela Mistral and Doris Dana
in Long Island, New York, 1955.

BARNARD COLLEGE

ALUMNAE MAGAZINE

GABRIELA MISTRAL

by

Harriet Wishnieff de Onís '16

NOT CHILE ALONE, honored by the honor done its greatest poet through the award of the 1945 Nobel Prize for Literature, nor Latin America, filled with pride that this distinction should have been conferred on the writer who, more than any other today, belongs to the whole continent, but both Americas, North and South, cannot but feel a deep satisfaction that this choice should have fallen on Gabriela Mistral. Her achievements are particularly heart-warming to us in this country where we pay special and added tribute to the self-made man or woman. Moreover, it was in this country and under the auspices of this university that her first book, *Desolación*, was published, by the Hispanic Institute of Columbia University in 1922; and the first foreign college to which she came as Visiting Professor was Barnard, in 1930.

A more completely self-made person than Gabriela it would be hard to imagine. Matthew Arnold's words about Shakespeare could be fittingly applied to her: "Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure." Her parents were poor country folk, and she was born, in 1889, and grew up in a little village lost in the folds of the valley of Elqui in Chile in the shadow of the Andes. At the age of fifteen she began to earn her living as a country school teacher, and her work in subsequent years brought her into contact with different regions of her native land and strengthened her innate sympathy for the children, the lowly, the weak and oppressed

wherever they may be found. In 1914 her three "Sonnets of Death" won her first prize in a poetry contest held in Santiago de Chile, and attracted first the interest of her own countrymen, and quickly after, that of the entire Spanish-speaking world. These poems were the sublimation of a deep personal tragedy: the death by his own hand of the man she had loved. At intervals, and as though reluctantly, she allowed other of her poems to be published in magazines and newspapers of Spanish America, and the timid, withdrawn young school-teacher found herself converted into a figure of continental stature. She has written of herself: "... My slight literary labor . . . has never been an end in my life; what I have done is to teach and live with the children I taught." That is to say, she regarded teaching as her mission in life, and her writing—it should be observed that although her only published work is poetry, she is equally gifted as a writer of prose—has either been a means of giving expression to her intimate emotions, or another of form of teaching.

In 1922 she was invited by the Mexican Minister of Education, José Vasconcelos, to collaborate in the educational reforms that were being instituted in that country after the revolution. From 1926 to 1929 she served on various educational committees of the League of Nations. In 1930 she came to the United States as Visiting Professor of Spanish American Civilization at Barnard, Vassar and Middlebury Colleges. Since

Article by Harriet Wishnieff de Onís published in the Barnard College Alumnae Magazine issue of February 1946.

Source: Harriet Wishnieff de Onís, "Gabriela Mistral," *Barnard College Alumnae Magazine*, February 1946, 3-4.

1932 she has acted as consular representative of the Chilean government in different European and South American countries. On her return from Stockholm she will occupy the post of Chilean consul in Los Angeles.

Probably few, if any, of the recipients of the Nobel Prize have less books to their credit than Gabriela Mistral. In reality there are only two, both verse, *Desolación* (1922) and *Tala* (1938), although there are several pirated editions of her poems that have appeared under different titles. (The proceeds of the sale of *Tala* went to relieve the suffering of the Basque children orphaned by the Spanish Civil War.) But the importance of these two slender volumes can be gauged by the number of critical studies and appreciations of her work that have appeared, not only in her America, but wherever Spanish poetry is known and appreciated. It is not easy to define the qualities that give her work its greatness. There is in it a mixture of virility and feminine tenderness, of protest and resignation, of indignation and compassion, and a passionate faith in God and man. Her language is in part the homely, archaic speech she learned as a child, to a lesser degree the literary language of modern and classic Spanish writers, and all impregnated with a strong Biblical flavor. As the Cuban writer, Jorge Mañach, says: "She is herself one of the living classics of America." An eminent Spanish critic has said: "In everything she does she reveals a natural superiority, and on everything she touches she leaves a profound impress. She moves with an air of timeless repose and serenity. There is a plaintive quality to her voice, unchanging and as though coming from afar, and in it there are shades of harshness and sweetness difficult to imagine. The sad contraction of her mouth can melt into a smile of infinite gentleness. This tremendously impassioned soul, great in everything, after pouring out in a few poems the sorrow of her inner desolation, has filled the void with her concern for the education of children, the redemption of the downtrodden and the destiny of the Hispanic peoples. All this in her is but other ways of expressing the basic emotion of her poetry: an unsatisfied maternal longing which is at one and the same time woman's instinct and a religious aspiring to eternity."

One of the measures of Gabriela Mistral's title to greatness, a common bond between her and the men who laid the foundations of South

America's republican existence. Bolivar, Sarmiento, Martí, is her consciousness of the fact that the destiny of all Hispanic America is one and that none of these nations can be indifferent to the fate of another. In one of the finest examples of her prose writing she exhorts and upbraids them with that same maternal passion that characterizes so many other aspects of her work:

"America, America! Everything for her because everything, misery or well-being, will come to us from her!"

"As yet we are still Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Aztec Spanish, Quichua-Spanish, Araucanian-Spanish; but tomorrow, when we crack in the cruel jaws of misfortune we will be but a single suffering and only one desire."

"Teacher: teach your students the dream of Bolivar, the first to see the great vision. Grapple it to their souls with the sharp irons of conviction. Tell them of America, of its Bello, its Sarmiento, its Lastarria, its Martí. . . . Describe your America. Make them love the luminous upland of Mexico, the green savanna of Venezuela, the dark forests of the south. . . ."

"Journalist: be fair to all your America. Do not belittle Nicaragua to extol Cuba, nor Cuba to exalt Argentina. Remember that the hour will come when we are all one, and your crop of contempt or sarcasm will bury its thorns in your own flesh."

"Artist: let your work reveal the capacity for refinement, for subtlety, for delicacy and depth together that we possess. Extract the substance from your Lugones, your Valencia, your Dario and your Neruo. . . ."

"Let us bend all our efforts like a single arrow toward that certain future: a single Spanish America, united by two great things: the language given it by God and the suffering given it by the North. . . ."

"America and only America! What a dazzling vision for the future, what a thing of beauty,

(Please turn to page 13)

NOTE: Mrs. deOnis, whose husband heads the Spanish Department at Columbia, is a translator and critic of note. She contributes to the *Revista de America*, published in Bogotá, the *Saturday Review of Literature*, and the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune*.

Bicentennial and Honorary Doctorate

Eight years after the event held in her honor at Barnard, Mistral was once again invited to Columbia in 1954, as the University was preparing to commemorate its 200-year anniversary. At the time, Mistral –whose health had significantly deteriorated in the last years– resided with Dana in Roslyn Harbor, Long Island.⁴⁶ The Bicentennial celebrations included a series of conferences on the topic of “Man’s Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof,” which featured prominent intellectuals from around the world. The events took place on October 25-30, 1954.

Mistral was formally invited to speak by University President Grayson Kirk in March of 1954: “On behalf of Columbia University, I extend to you a cordial invitation to become one of the principal participants in this conference and to be the guest of the university at a dinner scheduled for the evening of Saturday, October 30th, and at the convocation of October 31st.”⁴⁷ The following month, Bicentennial Director, Richard B. Powell, assured Mistral that Kirk “has asked me to tell you that we are most anxious to have your presence and as much participation as you can afford to give us in view of the medical treatments which you are now undergoing.”⁴⁸

In a subsequent note from June that year, Kirk informed Mistral that the trustees of Columbia University had voted in favor of conferring her the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. “Nothing will give me more personal satisfaction than to add your name to the distinguished list of Columbia’s honorary alumni,”⁴⁹ he said, to which the author responded with humble gratitude: “I am profoundly thankful for the graciousness received from our illustrious university which I deeply appreciate.”⁵⁰ In August, following a request from Powell, Mistral submitted a manuscript of her upcoming lecture, which she entitled “Image and Word: Film, Radio, and Television in Educational Problems.”⁵¹

During the bicentennial week, Mistral took part in three major events. She delivered the aforementioned lecture in the series of conferences on “Responsible Freedom in the Americas,” which featured

⁴⁶ In 1946 Mistral was diagnosed with diabetes and her health started to significantly deteriorate, suffering from migraines and cardiovascular problems, eventually being diagnosed with cancer in 1952.

⁴⁷ Grayson Kirk, “Letter to the Honorable Gabriela Mistral,” *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, March 2, 1954.

⁴⁸ Richard Powell, “Letter to the Honorable Gabriela Mistral, c/o Miss Dora Dana”, *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, April 14, 1954.

⁴⁹ Grayson Kirk, “Letter to the Honorable Gabriela Mistral, in care of Miss Dora Dana”, *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, June 30, 1954.

⁵⁰ Gabriela Mistral, “Letter to Grayson Kirk, President Columbia University”, *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, July 12, 1954.

⁵¹ Anthony Tudisco, “Letter to Dr. Gabriela Mistral”, *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*, August 19, 1954.



Honorary degree group.
Bicentennial Celebration,
October 31, 1954.

Source: "Honorary Degree Group
Bicentennial Celebration. October 31,
1954." *Rare Book and Manuscript Library*.

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Columbia University
in the City of New York
NEW YORK 27, N. Y.
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

March 2, 1954

The Honorable Gabriela Mistral
Consulate General of Chile
61 Broadway
New York, N. Y.

Dear Dr. Mistral:

The year 1954 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the founding of Columbia University in the City of New York. The University has sought to secure in this year world-wide stress on the Bicentennial theme of "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof." It is our hope thereby to strengthen the bulwarks of freedom throughout the world and to help men everywhere in their struggle to improve the conditions of human living.

On October 31, 1954, a great convocation is to be held in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to which the heads of educational institutions throughout the world (outside the United States) will be invited. The Queen Mother of England has assured us of her presence. We are planning for the preceding week a conference of the leaders of thought in the twenty-one American countries on the problems encountered in promoting freedoms in our respective countries and on the methods which are practically desirable and usable for the minimizing of the obstacles to these freedoms. I am enclosing a preliminary description of the plans for this conference.

On behalf of Columbia University I extend to you a cordial invitation to become one of the principal participants in this Conference and to be the guest of the University at a dinner scheduled for the evening of Saturday, October 30, and at the convocation of October 31st. We hope that you can be present for all the sessions of the conference which will occur from October 25 to October 30th. We shall be grateful for any suggestions which you care to make

16244.2

The Hon. Gabriela Mistral

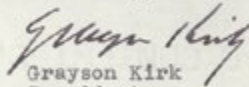
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March 2, 1954

by correspondence as to how the Conference can be made most valuable to the promotion of responsible freedom in our times.

The University is glad to be able to offer to those who become principal participants an honorarium of five hundred dollars plus air travel costs to and from New York City if you are not residing in New York City at the time of the conference. I hope you will let me hear by return mail that we can count on your help in the execution of this enterprise.

Sincerely,


Grayson Kirk
President

jlo
Enclosure

Letter from Columbia
University President
Grayson Kirk to Gabriela
Mistral inviting her to
participate in Columbia's
Bicentennial celebrations.

Source: "Carta. 1954 Mar. 2,
Columbia University in the City
of New York a Gabriela Mistral,"
Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.

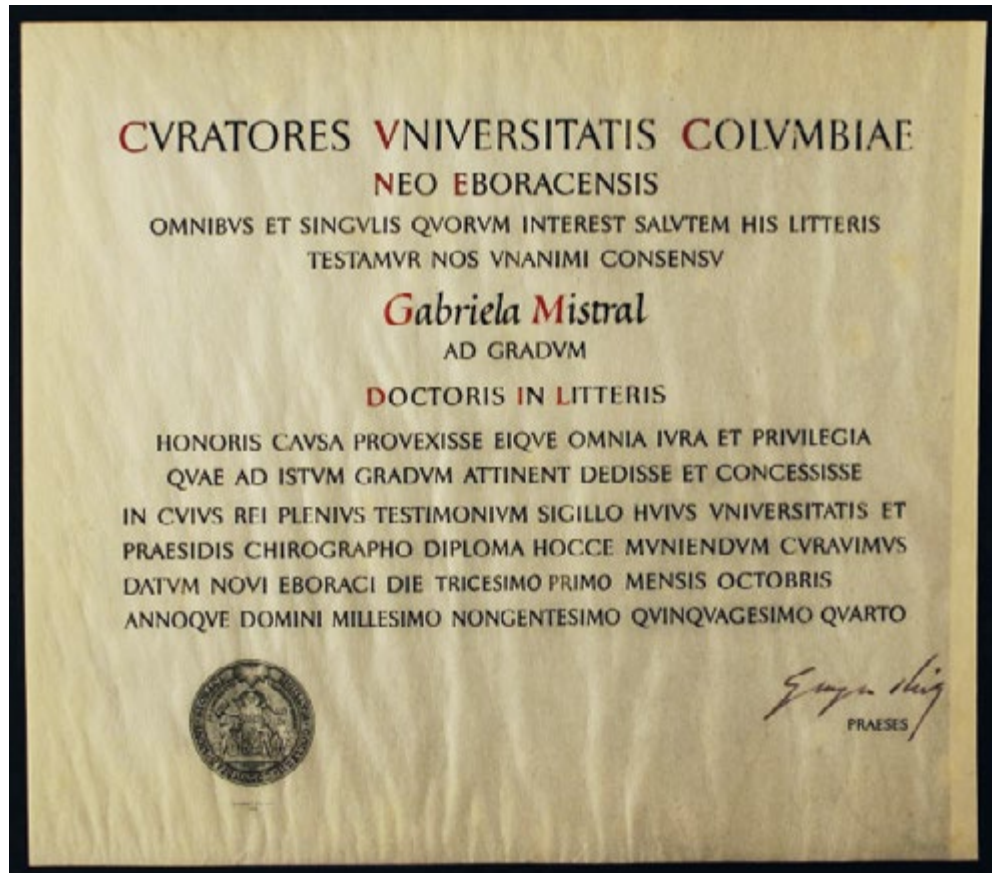
Source: "Honorary Degree
Group Bicentennial
Celebration. October
31, 1954." *Rare Book and
Manuscript Library*.



Overview of the Bicentennial
ceremony at the
Cathedral of St. John the Divine

Gabriela Mistral's
Honorary Doctor of
Literature Degree.

Source: "Diploma 1954 oct. 31,
Nueva York, Estados Unidos
a Gabriela Mistral manuscrito
Universidad de Columbia,"
Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.



prominent Latin American intellectuals. Additionally, on October 30, she participated in a black-tie dinner at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan, organized for “the honorary degree candidates and their wives,” which Mistral attended with Doris Dana. The following day, along with the Queen Mother of England, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, and Vice-President of India Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, among 44 other personalities, Gabriela Mistral, the rural educator and self-taught writer, entered the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, where she was awarded an honorary doctorate, thus crowning over three decades of relationship with Columbia.

Legacy

With Dana by her side, Gabriela Mistral died in January 1957 at Hempstead Hospital, New York. Although the relationship between Mistral and Dana continued to be covered by a halo of mystery in Chile, at the time of the poetess' death, Dana was widely acknowledged as her partner among the international and intellectual community, with people writing to her to express their condolences and treating Dana as Mistral's widow.⁵²

After her passing, Dana became the manager and executor of Mistral's literary rights, which would once again unite the poetess with Columbia. In 1978 Dana decided to donate Mistral's complete book collection to Barnard, her alma mater, and the place where she had first met the poetess. "Above all, in giving this library to Barnard, a college which has done much for the rights of women, it is my hope to call attention to one of the great women of our time," she wrote.⁵³

The collection of over 900 books included titles by José Martí, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Ralph Waldo Emerson, José Vasconcelos, Miguel de Unamuno, Jacques Maritain, Rubén Darío, Chilean President and longtime friend Eduardo Frei Montalva, among several other authors, as well as children's books with which the poetess learned English.

The remainder of Mistral's estate consisted of 168 boxes containing some 10,000 manuscripts, correspondence, unpublished essays, drafts of unknown poems, photographs, in addition to over 200 letters that Dana and Mistral exchanged throughout their relationship, as well as almost 50 hours of recordings in which Mistral can be heard working, reading her writings, talking to friends, and having everyday conversations with Dana, revealing the deep and lasting bond they shared.⁵⁴ The boxes remained with Dana until her death in 2006, when her niece Doris Atkinson was left to execute Mistral's legacy. Aware that over the years her aunt had only allowed a few scholars and researchers to access Mistral's belongings, after her passing, Atkinson decided to donate the complete estate to the National Library of Chile, with the requirement that all of the material be of public access and available online, to which the Chilean government agreed. Today, every piece donated by Atkinson can be accessed through the National Library Digital Archive.⁵⁵

⁵² The Spanish Department of Barnard College expressed their condolences to Doris Dana in a telegram: Amelia del Río, "Telegram 1957, Jan. 10, New York to Doris Dana," Biblioteca Nacional Digital, Gobierno de Chile. Several other letters of condolences addressed to Dana can be found in the Gabriela Mistral section at the Chilean National Library Digital Archive.

⁵³ Maggie Astor, "Archives donates Gabriela Mistral collection to Chile," March 8, 2010, *Barnard Archives and Special Collections*.

⁵⁴ García-Gorena, *Gabriela Mistral's Letters*, 16.

⁵⁵ To see the collection: "Archivo del Escritor, Gabriela Mistral," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*.

Es una prueba muy agria, q.m. la de nuestra separacion. YO SE, SE, que no hay torpez-a tan grande como separarse. Es posible no verse mas y es posible que nuevos intereses del alma penetren en uno de los separados. Eso es lo que, en nuestro caso, puede pasar contigo, contigo, CONMIGO NO, te lo aseguro, D.D.

Yo sé que tú has ido a arreglar cuestiones economicas tuyas y...hasta mia. Pero todo eso, valga lo que valga, no vale la felicidad que se tenia estando juntos y en cambio significa un riesgo enorme: el de perderse, repito.

Yo he quedado en un vivir tan extraño que ni sé contar. (Llevo cuatro dias de vagar como un fantasma, haciendo esfuerzos que nunca hice por salir de la obsesión, de la tristeza, del temor que me trabajan. Miedo es todo esto, puro miedo de perderte.)

Una sola cartatuya he tenido yo, una. Pero es tan hermosa, tan lindamente escrita, que hace 3 o 4 dias la llevo conmigo y no la romperé sin haber copiado las frases de ella que mas me han confortado y removido. Cada vez que la saco de mi bolsillo, la beso, como si se tratase de un documento de vida o muerte. Y es que me aferro a esa lectura por creer, por tener fe, y por esperar. Pero falta, Dios mio, tanto tiempo para que tu vuelvas - si es que vuelves.

Ten fe en mi tu. Yo creo que la tuvieses, pero no hay tal. Hazme esta gracia: crey en qe tu hijito no es un sucio, ni un perverso, ni un mentiroso. A pesar de ser latino....

Estoy escribiendo con una gran torpeza. Duermo muy poco. Caigo al sueño allá por las dos de la manana y despierto muy temprano. Y esto pasa hace ya unos 7 dias talvez. Tomo mis medicinas, pero no quiero doblar la dosis del calmante. Le tengo horror a las drogas..

Manuscript of a letter
from Gabriela Mistral
to Doris Dana,
date unknown.

Source: "[Carta] [1946-1956?]
[a] Doris Dana [manuscrito] /
Gabriela Mistral." Biblioteca
Nacional Digital de Chile.

"It is a very bitter test, that of our separation. I KNOW, I KNOW that there is no awkwardness as great as separating. It is possible for people not to see each other again and it is possible that new interests of the soul may penetrate one of the separated. In our case, this can happen with you, only you, NOT WITH ME, I assure you D.D."

"For four days I've been wandering like a ghost, making efforts that I never made to overcome the obsession, the sadness, the dread that affect me. All of this is fear, pure fear of losing you."

US Premiere of Madwomen in 2012

Source: Columbia Global
Centers | Santiago Archive.



Shortly after Mistral's legacy arrived in Chile, the letters between her and Dana were published in a 2009 book entitled "Niña Errante" (Wondering Girl), causing a stir among Chilean population who until that point had elevated Mistral on a moral pedestal, as an almost nun-like asexual figure who eternally mourned the tragic deaths of her lover and her beloved Yin-Yin.⁵⁶

In 2010 Barnard Library Dean Carol Falcione and Doris Atkinson decided to transfer Mistral's library to Chile. Acknowledging the cultural significance of Mistral's belongings to her native country, Falcione stated: "It is Barnard College's opinion that there is great academic value to consolidating this material to facilitate scholarly research."⁵⁷ In consequence, the complete collection was transferred to the Gabriela Mistral Museum in the author's hometown of Vicuña. In exchange, the National Library of Chile and the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums provided Barnard with microfilm copies of Mistral's complete literary archive.

The last event that would bring Mistral and Dana together was the 2012 US premiere of "Locas Mujeres" (Madwomen), a documentary portraying Mistral and Dana's relationship.⁵⁸ The screening of the film—which is based on Dana's recording of their conversations during the last years of Mistral's life—was held at Barnard College, followed by a discussion between director María Elena Wood and Barnard professors of Latin American history and culture Nara Milanich and Maja Horn. Also in attendance were former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet and Columbia University President, Lee Bollinger.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Gabriela Mistral, *Niña Errante. Cartas a Doris Dana* (Barcelona, Spain: Editorial Lumen, 2010). A second book of letters was released in 2021. See: Gabriela Mistral, *Doris, Vida Mía. Cartas* (Barcelona, Spain: Editorial Lumen; 2021).

⁵⁷ "Gabriela Mistral Collection, 1923-1995," *Barnard Archives & Special Collections*.

⁵⁸ For further information (in Spanish), see: "Locas Mujeres," *Cine Chile. Enciclopedia del Cine Chileno*.

⁵⁹ "U.S. Premiere of Madwomen," *Barnard Center for Research on Women*.

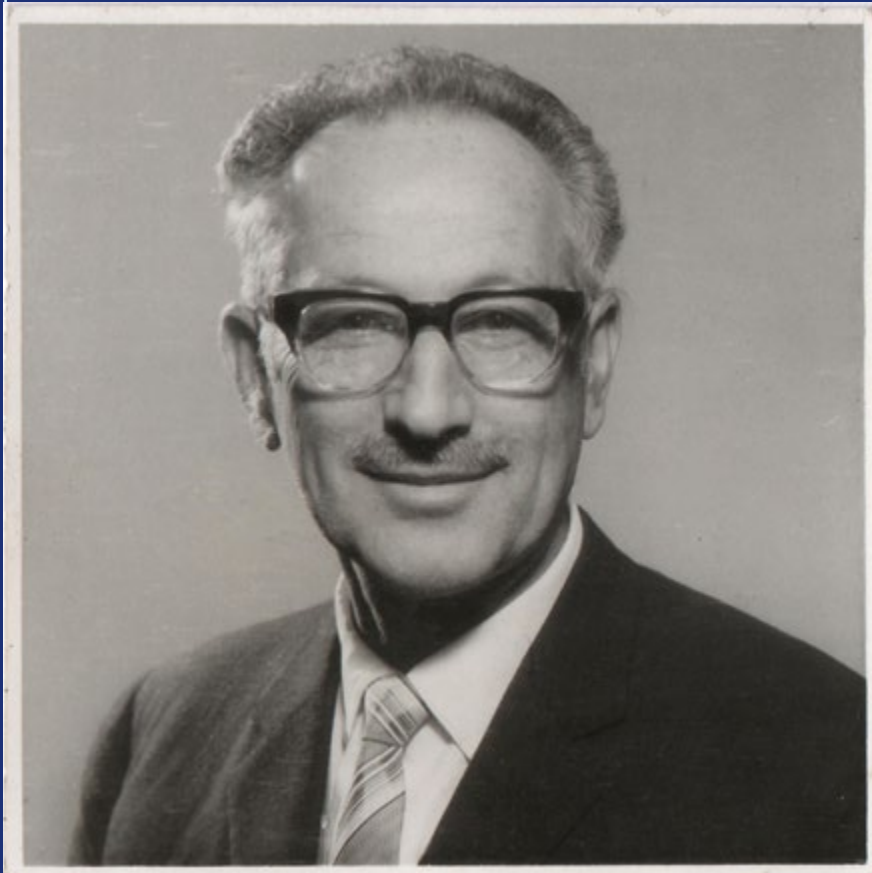


Enrique Kirberg:

A Chilean Political Exile
at Columbia

By Erik Larsson and Carla Magri

Portrait of Enrique
Kirberg in 1968.



Source: Archivo
Patrimonial USACH.

Underneath a bespectacled and austere demeanor, Enrique Kirberg lived a life in which he both bore witness to and took part in some of the most important developments of the second half of the 20th century. He was a strong advocate for the democratization of higher education in Chile, became the first democratically elected president of one of Chile's leading universities, survived two years of political imprisonment, and as an exile became an outspoken critic of the military regime that ruled over Chile for 17 years. This paper tells the story of how a prominent Chilean academic managed to escape the Pinochet regime and get established in the United States for over a decade, following the concerted efforts of Columbia University faculty members who advocated in his name and secured him a teaching position that would allow him to be released from imprisonment and start over as a free man.

Early Years and Student Life

Enrique Kirberg was born to Jewish immigrants in Santiago on July 30, 1915 and raised in the port city of Valparaíso. At age 13 he entered the Escuela de Artes y Oficios (EAO), located in Santiago, where he lived as a boarding student for six years. Politically inclined from a young age, he joined the Communist Youth of Chile at 17. After being wrongly accused of organizing an art exhibit that was considered offensive by the school's authorities, and just one exam short of completing his studies, he was expelled and unable to graduate from EAO. By then,

Young Enrique Kirberg
pictured in 1937.

Source: Archivo
Patrimonial USACH.



¹ This institution preceded the School of Engineering at Universidad Técnica del Estado (UTE).

² The UTE system would bring together the country's main polytechnic schools, looking to democratize higher education for the working class. However, in 1981 the military regime re-ordered the system and UTE was stripped of its regional branches, with the focus concentrated solely on the Metropolitan Region, home to the capital city of Santiago. UTE was consequently renamed Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH).

both of his parents had passed, and a maternal uncle helped him attain a job at the German electricity company AEG, where he worked repairing engines and other electric machinery.

In 1935 he officially joined the Chilean Communist Party (PC). After becoming involved in protest movements, he was imprisoned and, along with other political and union leaders, sent to the town of Puerto Aysén in southern Chile. He was released three months later, but AEG did not accept him

back, after which he worked for the PC in confidential activities. In 1942 he entered the newly founded Escuela de Ingenieros Industriales (EII), where he became student body president and from which he graduated as an electrical engineer in 1947.¹

In 1945 Kirberg was elected president of the first national organization of university students in technical fields, the Federación de Estudiantes Mineros e Industriales de Chile (FEMICH), sparking what would become a lifelong interest in the development of Chile's higher education system. Both Kirberg and the work of FEMICH were decisive in the 1952 foundation of the Universidad Técnica del Estado (UTE), of which he would eventually become president.²

Academic and Political Life

After graduating, Kirberg established his own engineering company and became a teacher at EII and at Universidad de Chile's School of Architecture. For the next few years, his life was divided between academic activities, family³ and his growing participation in the PC. However, the latter would hit an impasse in 1948 due to the enactment of the Permanent Defense of Democracy Law, which banned the Communist Party in the country and called for its members to be persecuted and incarcerated.⁴

At the end of the 1950s, movements started arising within universities pushing for deep reforms, with students demanding more participation in decision-making processes and the election of their teachers and authorities.⁵ Kirberg sympathized with the demands of the movement that would sweep through the country in the following decade. In his own words, the changes were necessary to put universities "in direct contact and at the service of the public, to make them more humanistic."⁶

In the next years, Kirberg would take an increasingly prominent role within the Communist Party. In 1966 he was appointed head of the PC's National University Commission, which oriented the work of militants inside Chilean universities. A year later the student movement within UTE, backed by numerous professors and university staff, achieved an important goal: President Eduardo Frei Montalva approved the creation of a reform committee –integrated by academics and students– to draft a new organic statute for the institution. In Kirberg's words: "Inside UTE the reformist movement was unstoppable. At that point there was considerable support from the teaching staff for student demands, although the most serious proposals for structural and functional reforms came from the student body."⁷ Horacio Aravena, who had been university president for almost a decade, resigned in April 1968 and democratic elections were called for the first time at UTE. Four months later and after an extensive campaign that took him to several UTE campuses throughout the country, Kirberg became the first democratically elected president of the university after attaining a resounding 75% of faculty and student votes.

³ Kirberg married Inés Erazo in 1944. Between 1945 and 1950 they had three children: daughters Lena and Gloria, and son Luis Carlos.

⁴ Approved early in the Cold War, and commonly referred to as "the damned law," it imposed several restrictions to personal, press and union freedom. Members of the PC were fired from their jobs and persecuted. The highly questioned law was abolished in 1958.

⁵ La nota debe quedar: Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad Técnica del Estado (FEUT), "Declaración del 25 de mayo de 1961," *Archivo Patrimonial USACH*.

⁶ Luis Cifuentes, *Kirberg: Testigo y actor del siglo XX* (Santiago: Editorial de la Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 1999), 66. After graduating from Chemical Engineering from UTE, in 1969 Cifuentes joined the University's faculty, playing a key role during the reformation process. After the 1973 coup he was incarcerated and later exiled. Upon his return to Chile he joined Universidad de Chile's faculty and started a career as a writer. In 1991 he conducted a series of interviews with Enrique Kirberg that were published in this book in 1993.

⁷ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 68.

President Kirberg

⁸ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 69-72.

⁹ The reformation period abruptly ended with the 1973 coup, which established a counter-reform in Chilean universities, through the military intervention of institutions, political persecution of students, faculty and staff and the enforcement of new legislation.

¹⁰ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 66.

¹¹ Also see: Enrique Kirberg, *Los Nuevos Profesionales. Educación Universitaria de Trabajadores: Chile, UTE, 1968-1973* (Instituto de Estudios Sociales de la Universidad de Guadalajara, 1981). The book details the goals he had as University President.

¹² For further reading on the 'Kirberg Plan,' see: Kirberg, *Profesionales*, Chapters 4-11.

At the time of his election, Kirberg had been a faculty member for two decades and therefore was well known within the university given his participation in its foundation during his years as a student at the former EII. Although there were only a few members of the PC among the faculty, the Communist Youth was strong among the student body – they presided over the student union– which according to Kirberg, was key in securing his triumph.⁸ He was re-elected in 1969 and again in 1972, the latter for a four-year term that was slated to last until 1976.⁹

In Kirberg's view, "the simple joining of schools had not made the UTE a university. There was no research or university outreach. In my opinion, outreach was the essential ingredient to make a more humanistic university."¹⁰ In consequence, under his leadership, UTE continued its path towards democratization and modernization, which included the establishment of an inclusive co-government (between authorities, faculty, staff, and students), pushing for university autonomy, academic freedom, and outreach activities through an open-door policy that aimed to open up the university to students and non-students alike throughout the country.¹¹ But his most notable achievement was the development of what came to be known as the "Kirberg Plan," an attempt to bring together all Chilean universities to develop institutes and offer technical majors, especially to workers, in order to provide them with better career options.¹²

Another major concern of Kirberg was to promote UTE as a reputable institution on an international level. With this in mind, he hired Jaime Michelow,



Angela Davis, Enrique Kirberg, and First Lady of Chile Hortensia Bussi at UTE in 1972.

Source: "Angela Davis en la UTE (1972)," Archivo Patrimonial USACH.



Herbert Clemens, his son Ben, and Kirberg during a 1972 reception at UTE.

Source: Patrick William Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies: Latin America and the Making of Global Human Rights* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 169.

Chile's first PhD in Mathematics, and Herbert Clemens, who at the time worked as an assistant professor of Mathematics at Columbia University, to create the country's first postgraduate program in the field: the Licenciatura Académica Matemática (LAM), a rigorous curriculum, partly funded by the Ford Foundation, which aimed to form the next generation of Chilean mathematicians. During the northern hemisphere summer recesses of 1972 and 1973, Clemens traveled to UTE to teach and help oversee the program. In Clemens' words, Kirberg supported his work "one hundred per cent, despite political suspicion of Americans in Chile."¹³

¹³ Herbert Clemens, interview with Erik Larsson.

¹⁴ Pauling had been awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1954 and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962.

¹⁵ Allende was elected President of Chile in 1970 representing the *Unidad Popular* (Popular Unity), a coalition of left-wing parties that proposed systematic changes in the country within the constitutional framework, a so-called "Chilean road to socialism," which sparked as much rejection as it did hope among Chileans. At the height of Cold War tensions, the Chilean project was subjected to an economic boycott from the US to "make the economy scream," as then-US President Richard Nixon famously said to CIA Director Richard Helms. The US government cut financial aid to Chile almost immediately after Allende assumed power, internal tensions arose and over the next years inflation and a shortage of products led to a wave of strikes and a situation of ungovernability, culminating in the US backed 1973 coup. Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (New York: New Press, 2016).

¹⁶ "Angela Davis en la UTE (1972)," *Archivo Patrimonial USACH*.

Kirberg's efforts towards internationalization of the university led to very prominent figures visiting UTE during the early 1970s. After meeting him during a trip to the United States the prior year, two-time Nobel laureate Linus Pauling visited UTE in 1970 to conduct a series of seminars and conferences for students and academic authorities.¹⁴

Two years later, political activist, university professor, and US Communist Party member, Angela Davis, visited Chile to attend the 1972 International Congress for Peace taking place in the country. The African American feminist icon landed in Santiago in October in a demonstration of support for socialist President Salvador Allende, who was facing a particularly difficult period of his troubled time in power.¹⁵ After the end of her 16-month long political imprisonment, Davis did an international tour that took her to various socialist countries, including Cuba, the USSR, and the German Democratic Republic. Part of her Chilean agenda included a visit to UTE, where she gave a conference to students, authorities and then First Lady Hortensia Bussi. While in the country, Davis condemned what she said was a US campaign of terror on the Allende administration and committed to defend Chilean interests in her country.¹⁶

Coup and Imprisonment

The morning of September 11, 1973, President Allende was set to speak at UTE to inaugurate the *Campaña por la Vida* (Campaign for Life), a pacifist attempt to decompress the tense social and political situation. However, the day played out differently: the university radio station was attacked, and its communications were shut down. When, looking through the windows, students saw the bombing of the presidential palace and heard what would be Allende's last speech on the radio, they knew a coup was underway. Over a thousand students barricaded at the university's central building in support of the government. By the following morning, all of them had been arrested; many of them would turn up dead in the coming days. A military delegation sent to the school was met by Kirberg at the main entrance,

where he attempted to negotiate a peaceful exit. Kirberg would later recount how he and student body president Osiel Núñez were held at gunpoint against a wall, anticipating being executed.¹⁷ The following morning, all students were transported to Estadio Chile, a stadium rapidly turned into a political prison, where over 5,000 prisoners were tortured and/or executed, including legendary folk singer and theater director at UTE, Víctor Jara, a close acquaintance of Kirberg's. On September 15 Kirberg was moved to Isla Dawson, an island located in Tierra del Fuego, an archipelago at the southernmost tip of the South American continent. Along with other prominent members of the PC and collaborators of the Allende administration, such as Orlando Letelier, former ambassador to the United States and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Interior and Defense, and Sergio Bitar, who had been Minister of Mining, Kirberg spent nine months in this location, where he was subject to forced labor, torture, and surveillance, under a constant fear of death.¹⁸

¹⁷ Daniel Janison, "Kirberg Recounts Ordeal In Chilean Prison System," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 34, October 30, 1975, 1.

¹⁸ For a detailed account of life at this political prison, Sergio Bitar. *Dawson, Isla 10*. (Santiago: Pehuén, 1987).

Campaign for Kirberg's Release and Arrival at Columbia

In May 1974, Kirberg was moved from Isla Dawson to Ritoque, in central Chile, where living conditions were slightly better and access to the outside world was more available. In November that same year, he was relocated to Capuchinos, a prison located in Santiago, where he was reunited with several UTE students.¹⁹

Around this time, the US academic community started organizing to secure Kirberg a job in the country, hoping that this would be his way out of Chile. Over 20 declassified documents from the United States Department of State as well as several articles published in the *Columbia Spectator* student newspaper, evidence both the international campaign put in motion to secure Kirberg's liberation and the Chilean government's efforts to delay it. As it can be read in an October 1974 cable, when Kirberg was still at Isla Dawson, Chilean authorities charged him for tax evasion in relation to an alleged bank account in US

¹⁹ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 102.

²⁰ "GOC Appeals Almeyda Decision," *The Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy*, October 24, 1974.

²¹ "Release of Senior Detainees," *The Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy*, January 20, 1975.

²² At the time, Letelier was living and working in Washington DC, from where he regularly wrote and organized conferences and rallies to inform of the Chilean situation under Pinochet.

²³ Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 169.

²⁴ Nicole Seligman, "Scholars Protest Conditions in Chile," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 14, 1975.

dollars that Kirberg had during the Allende government.²⁰ Even though the charge was appealed, the Chilean court did not dismiss the case, as it stated in a January 1975 document.²¹

At the same time, Orlando Letelier, Kirberg's former inmate at Isla Dawson and Ritoque,²² had reached out to Herbert Clemens at Columbia University's Mathematics Department, urging him to find a position for Kirberg, as he anticipated it was likely that the Chilean authorities would release him if he had an offer to work in another country.²³ Thus, in May 1975, Clemens initiated a campaign which resulted in 57 academics from the universities of Harvard, Massachusetts, Brandeis, Columbia and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, sending a telegram to the Organization of American States' (OAS) Human Rights Commission

"He is being held under inhumane conditions--his basic human and legal rights systematically ignored."

expressing their concerns over reported human rights violations in Chile, specifically within the academic community. In said message they addressed Kirberg's situation, who by then had been imprisoned for 19 months with no trial, stating: "He is being held under inhumane conditions--his basic human and legal rights systematically ignored."²⁴

1974 Letter to Herbert Clemens that Kirberg wrote during his imprisonment in Chile.

Source: Kelly, *Sovereign Emergencies*, 168.

Ritoque, 4 agosto 1974
Querido Dr. Clemens:

Recibí su atenta carta que elevó aún más el ánimo y me reconfortó. Veo que mis buenos amigos no me olvidan y, por mi parte, siempre tengo un buen recuerdo suyo. Mucho me gustaría trabajar en su universidad en N.York, pero aún no sé cuando se pueda normalizar mi situación.

Por ahora reciba todo mi aprecio
Enrique Kirberg

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TO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO



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SUBJECT: ENRIQUE KIRBERG

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT MCGILL HAS WRITTEN TO ROGERS REQUESTING HIS ASSISTANCE IN FACILITATING ENRIQUE KIRBERG'S ACCEPTANCE OF A SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE-SHIP FROM SEPTEMBER 1975 THROUGH MAY, 1976. KIRBERG, FORMER RECTOR OF STATE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER, HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH COLUMBIA OFF AND ON SINCE 1969. DOROTHY MARSHALL, FORD FOUNDATION TRUSTEE AND PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, WILL BE ARRIVING IN SANTIAGO AROUND JUNE 10 AND HOPES TO TALK WITH AMBASSADOR ON THIS SUBJECT. RICHARD DYE OF FORD FOUNDATION MAY HAVE ALREADY ALERTED EMBASSY.

COLUMBIA HOPES THAT WITH FIRM JOB OFFER GOC WILL BE WILLING TO RELEASE KIRBERG ON UNDERSTANDING THAT HE WOULD LEAVE CHILE PROMPTLY. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE U.S. ACADEMIC INTEREST IN KIRBERG. ON FEBRUARY 7 HARVARD INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WROTE ROGERS REQUESTING USG PRESS FOR RELEASE OF HIM AND EIGHT OTHERS. ON MAY 12 DEREK BOK, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MICIANSCABLED GALO PLAZA TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER GOC HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE IN GENERAL AND KIRBERG CASE SPECIFICALLY.

TODAY COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR HERBERT CLEMENS VISITED DEPARTMENT TO SAY HE HAD JUST TALKED WITH AMBASSADOR TRUCCO FOR 45 MINUTES. CLEMENS SAID TRUCCO CALLED SCHWEITZER IN SANTIAGO TO DISCUSS CASE AND THEN TOLD CLEMENS THAT KIRBERG'S "PROCESSING" WOULD SOON BE ENDED AND HE COULD THEN BE EXPELLED ON ONE WAY PASSPORT IF HE HAD SOME DESTINATION. CLEMENS STATED HE POINTED OUT TO TRUCCO THAT KIRBERG HAD ALREADY BEEN IN JAIL LONGER THAN "ANY OTHER TAX CASE".

CLEMENS SAID KIRBERG HAS RELATIVES IN ISRAEL AND INTENDS TO SETTLE THERE NEXT YEAR, FOLLOWING HIS COLUMBIA ASSIGNMENT. ISRAELI EMBASSY SANTIAGO REPORTEDLY PREPARED TO CONFIRM HIS PLANS.

ANY EMBASSY INFORMATION AND COMMENTS INVITED INCLUDING OPINION REGARDING DESIRABILITY OF WAIVER REQUEST. KISSINGER

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US Department of State declassified
cable from June 1975 detailing
Columbia's efforts to
secure Kirberg's liberation.

Source: "Enrique Kirberg,"
*The Wikileaks Public Library of US
Diplomacy*, June 4, 1975.

The following month, Clemens visited the Chilean ambassador to the United States, Manuel Trucco, hoping to expedite Kirberg's liberation, after which he approached the Department of State, as it can be read in a document from June 4: "Today Columbia University professor Herbert Clemens visited department to say he had just talked with ambassador Trucco for 45 minutes. Clemens said Trucco called Schweitzer [Miguel Schweitzer, Chilean ambassador to the United Nations] in Santiago to discuss case and then told Clemens that Kirberg's <<processing>> would soon be ended, and he could then be expelled on one way passport if he had some destination."²⁵ The same document states that Columbia University President William McGill was already requesting assistance in facilitating Kirberg's acceptance of a senior research associateship from September 1975 through May 1976. A following cable, dated June 18, indicates that Chilean Minister of Interior, César Benavides, was aware of the position Kirberg had been offered at Columbia and of the international efforts being made to secure his release. The document also reveals that Trucco believed that because Kirberg was a member of the Communist Party, he would not be eligible for a permanent entry to the United States under a parole program, "but could be admitted for temporary academic employment."²⁶

The campaign for Kirberg's release was covered in depth by the *Columbia Spectator* student newspaper. In several articles published during 1975, the efforts of Clemens, University President William McGill, Associate Dean of the School of General Studies, Ward Dennis, as well as those of Gertrude Rosenblum, Chairwoman of the Stamford, Connecticut chapter of Amnesty International, and of Human Rights Officer of Latin American Affairs at the US Department of State, George Lister, are evidenced. In an article from June that year, which detailed Columbia's offering of a teaching position to Kirberg, Rosenblum stated that "if he gets out it will have been the offer that turned it around." Rosenblum also acknowledged Clemens' personal involvement in the case and his role in gathering support. By then, in addition to the actions taken by the aforementioned academics from east coast universities, over ninety amnesty groups in the United States had also appealed in favor of Kirberg towards the Chilean Junta.²⁷

²⁵ "Enrique Kirberg," *The Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy*, June 4, 1975.

²⁶ "US Parole Program and GOC Detainee Policy," *The Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy*, June 18, 1975.

²⁷ Daniel Janison, "Imprisoned Chilean Offered Post," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume 3, Number 5, June 19, 1975, 1-2. See also: Daniel Janison, "Professor Continues Fight For Release of Chilean," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 1, August 29, 1975, 5.

Imprisoned Chilean Offered Post

By DANIEL JANISON

A prominent Chilean educator imprisoned in that country for almost two years has been offered a teaching position by Columbia's Institute of Latin American Studies.

The move has been widely viewed as aiding the release of Enrique Kirberg Baltiansky, who is currently being detained at the Capuchino Annex to the Santiago Penitentiary.

Sentenced to a year and a half imprisonment after his arrest during the military coup of September 1973, Kirberg, an electrical engineer, had previously been president of the Polytechnical University of Santiago for five years.

Kirberg, 60, is a Communist and was a member of the government of Salvadore

Allende Gossens. He is also Jewish.

Originally arrested and sentenced for "political activities," he has been shifted through various prisons in Chile for the past two years.

Because of Kirberg's Communist ties and the fact that he is a prisoner and therefore has a police record, Kirberg has faced great difficulty in attempting to obtain a visa to emigrate to the United States.

But U.S. State Department Human Rights Officer of Latin American Affairs George Lister said Tuesday that Columbia's offer increases Kirberg's chances of being allowed entry into the United States. Kirberg has been offered posts at several other universities outside of Chile.

Although Lister said that

Kirberg could not be permitted into the country under the present regulation, he explained that a waiver from the State Department could be obtained.

Reflecting on a recent change in the department's policy toward Chilean refugees, Lister added that "several hundred" families, including Kirberg's, would be considered on a "case by case basis" for a "parole program."

Chairwoman of the Stamford, Conn. chapter of Amnesty International, Gertrude Rosenbloom, hailed Columbia's offer as "no doubt, crucial. If he gets out it will have been the offer that turned it around," she said. Amnesty International, a world-wide organization dedicated to helping release

June 1975 edition of the *Columbia Spectator* detailing Columbia University's offer of a teaching position to Enrique Kirberg.

Source: Janison, "Imprisoned Chilean," 1.

Meanwhile, as expected, Kirberg had been charged for tax evasion and sentenced to an additional 18 months in prison. However, by mid-1975 the sentence had not been confirmed. According to the aforementioned June 18 cable, after speaking to the Minister of Interior, Kirberg's defense lawyer was confident that the Chilean government would withdraw the charges.²⁸ A July 10, 1975, document states that Kirberg's wife had visited him in jail the previous day, where he had told her he feared the government "was attempting to pile up fines against him which he cannot pay, and thus have <<excuse>> to continue to hold him." In the comments section of the cable, it reads that Kirberg's

²⁸ "US Parole," Wikileaks.

Imprisoned Chilean Scholar Freed

By DANIEL JANISON

Enrique Kirberg Baltiansky, a prominent Chilean professor imprisoned in that country for two years who has been offered a teaching position at Columbia, has been released from jail and is expected to arrive in New York this week.

According to Associate Dean of the School of General Studies Ward Dennis, Kirberg is scheduled to arrive in New York Thursday and begin teaching the following week at the Institute of Latin American Studies of the School of International Affairs as a senior research associate for a one-year period.

Kirberg, 60, is a communist and was a member of the government of Salvadore



Enrique Kirberg Baltiansky
Allende Gossens.

U.S. State Department Human Rights Officer for Latin American Affairs George Lister said yesterday that Kirberg was released from the Santiago penitentiary

system on or around September 11.

But, Associate Professor of Mathematics Herbert Clemens, who met Kirberg in 1966 while doing graduate work in Santiago and who has headed publicity campaigns to gain Kirberg's release, said yesterday that according to his contacts in Chile, Kirberg is facing difficulty in obtaining a passport from the Chilean government.

Clemens, who is on a one-year leave from Columbia, said in a telephone interview from Salt Lake City that Kirberg's passport was "automatically revoked" upon his imprisonment.

October 1975 edition of the *Columbia Spectator* informing of Kirberg's release.

Source: Daniel Janison, "Imprisoned Chilean Scholar Freed," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 22, October 6, 1975, 1. Number 22 (October 6, 1975): 1.

concerns were understandable given his long imprisonment, and that "it is not inconceivable that GOC [Government of Chile] wants to damage Kirberg's reputation further before releasing him," although it also records that this "conflicts with information from Kirberg's lawyer who has been discussing case with mininterior [Ministry of Interior] and who has felt up to now that GOC planned to release Kirberg soon."²⁹

A month later, one of Kirberg's daughters phoned the US Embassy in Chile after visiting her father in prison. During the call, as it is stated

²⁹ "Chilean National Kirberg-Baltianski, Enrique," *The Wikileaks Public Library of US Diplomacy*, July 10, 1975.

³⁰ "Chilean National," Wikileaks.

³¹ Columbia's School of International Affairs (SIA) is the current School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA).

³² Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 106.

³³ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 102-103.

³⁴ The New York-based National Coordinating Center in Solidarity with Chile, commonly known as the Chile Solidarity Center or Chile Democrático, was founded in 1974 and over 30 organizations participated in it.

³⁵ "Chilean Professor Arrives in US," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 26, October 13, 1975, 1.

in a document from August 25, she mentioned that he seemed to be in good health and in much better spirits than the previous month. It is also noted that, by then, Kirberg's family knew that the tax charges would be dismissed in the following days and that they expected him to be released.³⁰ Two years to the day from his initial imprisonment, Enrique Kirberg was released on September 11, 1975. He was to spend 12 days in freedom in Chile before traveling to New York to begin his teaching position at Columbia's Institute of Latin American Studies (ILAS) in affiliation with the School of International Affairs.³¹

When asked about his impressions of those first days of freedom in Chile, Kirberg stated: "I have the feeling of having been in a dark country, in a heavy night. You couldn't even read the papers because they lied about everything. Every piece of news was censored."³² Before leaving the country, he had to visit the US Consul in Santiago, who informed him that US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, had authorized him to enter the country in spite of his affiliation with the Communist Party and that he had been convicted for tax evasion. "The consul had all the documentation regarding my case. It was clear to him that my process had been fabricated with the sole purpose of convicting me and thus justifying the dictatorship's actions in the public opinion, so he granted me a visa," Kirberg recalled.³³ It was only then that Kirberg could leave the country thanks to a grant provided by the Ford Foundation that covered his airfare.

Upon his arrival in the US, Kirberg was greeted by the National Coordinating Center in Solidarity with Chile at a New York airport.³⁴ Immediately after, he visited Boston, where he met former inmate from Isla Dawson, Sergio Bitar. Around 35 people attended a welcoming reception held in his honor at Harvard University, with the attendance of Amnesty International representatives. Among them was Gertrude Rosenblum who told the *Columbia Spectator* Kirberg was thrilled to be there and aware of the international support he had received in order to attain his freedom.³⁵ Shortly after, he returned to New York to start his work at ILAS, where he was greeted by director Doug Chalmers. The University helped Kirberg rent a small apartment and get settled in the city. While he waited for the arrival of his wife Inés, who landed in New York two months after, he, along with Chalmers, worked closely to devise a curriculum for the seminars he was to teach.

Kirberg's first academic activity at Columbia was a brown bag lunch lecture entitled "El Chile de Hoy" (Chile Today), attended by over 100 professors and students.³⁶ He then taught a class called "Historia Contemporánea de Chile" (Chilean Contemporary History), which covered 1879-1970s. He also gave a lecture at Teachers College on the role of universities in economic development, which he would repeat three times throughout the year. In addition, he started writing a book entitled "*Los Nuevos Profesionales*" (The New Professionals), in which he narrated the reform process at UTE, and the program that

³⁶ "Et cetera," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 50, December 2, 1975, 4.



Kirberg with his wife Inés Erazo.

Source: Corporación Solidaria UTE-USACH.

In 2011 USACH conferred Herbert Clemens with an honorary doctorate degree.

Source: "Herbert Clemens, Dr. Honoris Causa: 'El paso por la USACH ha sido el más bello de mi vida profesional'," *Universidad de Santiago de Chile*, May 23, 2011.



focused on providing university education to workers. During the spring of 1976, he met up with Herbert Clemens, who by then was a professor at the University of Utah.

At the end of the 1975-76 academic year, Chalmers informed Kirberg that ILAS lacked funding to pay for his salary in the upcoming semesters. In response, Kirberg then applied for and was granted funding from the Ford Foundation. In the following years he would receive grants

from the foundations Twinbrook, Rubin, and Kaplan, as well as from the Fund for Tomorrow, which allowed him to remain at Columbia. Additionally, every year, the University maintained that he was a faculty member before Immigration Services so as to secure his stay in the country. Immigration policies became stricter during the Ronald Reagan administration, with authorities demanding the school provide proof of his work with the institute to which he was affiliated. University authorities praised Kirberg's contributions, stating his presence was required at least for the following years.

Apart from his work at ILAS, during his 11 years at Columbia, Kirberg gave several on-campus conferences and lectures on varied topics, including "Nitrate Mines and Worker Organizations" (March 1976);³⁷ "The Popular Front," including repercussions of World War II and the significance of the copper corporations in Chile³⁸ (March 1976); he spoke about the difficulties of the Allende administration, the 1973 coup, the Military Junta ruling over Chile (April 1976)³⁹, and "From Frei to Allende: The Non-Violent Way. Characteristics of the Allende Government" (April 1976)⁴⁰. In addition to his work at Columbia, he taught mathematics courses at Eugenio María de Hostos Community College in the Bronx, and at Essex Community College in New Jersey.⁴¹

³⁷ "The Heights," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 86, March 22, 1976, 3.

³⁸ "The Heights," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 91, March 29, 1976, 5.

³⁹ "The Heights," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 100, April 12, 1976, 4.

⁴⁰ "The Heights," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume C, Number 96, April 5, 1976, 5.

⁴¹ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 111-112.

Political Activities

Along with his academic work, during his years in exile Kirberg played an active role in the solidarity movement with Chile, which included unions, academic associations, churches, synagogues, councils, and other civic organizations that aimed to denounce and create awareness about the country's situation under the Pinochet dictatorship. He also helped to raise funds to support victims of the dictatorship and their families in Chile. "During my 11 years in the United States, I must have given some 80 lectures throughout the country. I collaborated with the National Coordinating Center in Solidarity with Chile, based in New York...We visited universities in Oregon, California, Illinois, and Massachusetts. They covered the expenses of our accommodation and tickets. What the universities paid us –which were significant amounts of money– went to the solidarity movement with Chile," recalled Kirberg.⁴²

These activities were also led by prominent figures of the Chilean opposition such as Orlando Letelier, as well as Cristián Orrego, Juan Gabriel Valdés, and Giorgio Solimano.⁴³ Along with Kirberg, they worked closely with various human rights and solidarity organizations, such as Amnesty International, the Columbia Committee for Human Rights in Chile (CCHRC), the Chile Solidarity Center, and America's Watch. Their work consisted in organizing rallies, conferences, gathering humanitarian support, and using diplomacy to put pressure on Pinochet's regime. Through the Chile Solidarity Center, among other activities they organized visits from Chilean personalities. Through one of these, Jaime Castillo Velasco, Máximo Pacheco Gómez, and Gonzalo Taborga, who were prominent members of the Chilean Human Rights Commission, could attend the United Nations General Assembly, where they raised the issue of the human rights violations in Chile. "All of our activities were centered around the fight against the dictatorship and the freedom of our country," assured Kirberg when remembering those days.⁴⁴

During March 1978, Kirberg organized two activities aimed at the academic community. On March 1, along with Solimano and Claudio Grossman –former president of the Law Student Federation of Chile, who at the time was working at the University of Utrecht in the

⁴² Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 106.

⁴³ Solimano, a pediatrician, was a fellow exile who had worked at the Ministry of Health under Allende and who at the time was also a faculty member at Columbia and close friend of Kirberg. Juan Cristián Orrego Benavente (1944-2018) was a Chilean molecular biologist who during those years worked at Brandeis University (1974-1978), Harvard University (1977-1981), and the National Institute of Health (1982-1984). Juan Gabriel Valdés (b. 1947) is a Chilean politician and academic, who has served as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chilean Ambassador to the United States. During the early Pinochet years, Valdés was a PhD student at Princeton, having also worked as Orlando Letelier's research assistant at the Institute for Policy Studies in DC.

⁴⁴ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 114.

Source: "Marcha de las ollas en New York,"
Fondo Oscar Marchant Céspedes,
Colección Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos.



Enrique Kirberg
during a "Cacerolazo"
protest in New York
circa 1978-1979.

Netherlands– visited Harvard University, where they met with students, as well as President Derek Bok and Henry Rosovsky, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. During the encounter, the Chileans talked about academic repression under Pinochet and asked the Harvard community for support in using all available resources to help find the 2,500 *detenidos desaparecidos* who had been subject of forced disappearances since the 1973 coup.⁴⁵

A similar activity took place two days later at Columbia’s Teachers College. The symposium, entitled “The Chilean University: Education and Political Repression in Chile,”

was organized along with the CCHRC and featured Kirberg, Grossman, and Roberto Belmar, former Chilean National Health

“The Junta has adopted [economist Milton] Friedman’s view that medicine is a marketable commodity, not a right.”

Service worker, then working at Yeshiva University in New York. During the encounter, Kirberg denounced the US’ role in destabilizing the Allende government and in the coup itself. He noted that since 1973 there had been a \$500 million increase in loans and credit to the Chilean government, which, among many other offenses, was rolling back several of the educational reforms he had implemented at UTE. Belmar, on the other hand, was critical of the privatization of public health in the country. “The Junta has adopted [economist Milton] Friedman’s view that medicine is a marketable commodity, not a right,” he pointed out.⁴⁶ The Chileans also urged the audience to contact their legislators to pressure the Chilean authorities into revealing the whereabouts of those who had been forcefully disappeared.⁴⁷

Other actions of solidarity included organizing demonstrations and cultural activities that over the years were attended by relevant Chilean performers like Patricio Manns, Inti Illimani, Quilapayún, and members of the Parra family.⁴⁸ Kirberg recalled the support received by those that were committed to the Chilean cause, highlighting the role of Susan Borenstein, coordinator of the National Coordinating Center in Solidarity with Chile, and of journalist Samuel Chavkin, author of “*The Murder of Chile*” and “*Storm over Chile*”, two books that openly denounced the human rights violations.⁴⁹ Remembering his years in New York and his political activism along with Kirberg,

⁴⁵ Lisa C. Hsia, “Academics Discuss Repression in Chile,” *The Harvard Crimson*, March 1, 1978.

⁴⁶ Adam Shub & David Atkins, “Chilean exiles tell tales of horror,” *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CII, Number 82, March 6, 1978, 2.

⁴⁷ Shub & Atkins, “Chilean exiles tell,” 2.

⁴⁸ The Parra family is a noted Chilean family of artists, famous for the significant contributions its members have made to the country’s cultural and artistic development.

⁴⁹ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 114.

⁵⁰ Giorgio Solimano, Zoom interview with Carla Magri, October 8, 2021.

⁵¹ Giorgio Solimano, Zoom interview with Carla Magri, October 8, 2021.

⁵² Giorgio Solimano, Zoom interview with Carla Magri, October 8, 2021.

⁵³ "Decreto Supremo que priva de la nacionalidad chilena a Orlando Letelier del Solar," *Memoria Chilena*, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile, June 15, 1976.

⁵⁴ Letelier was killed along with his secretary, US citizen Ronni Moffitt who was in the front seat of the car. Her husband, sitting behind her, was able to escape with minor injuries. The attack sparked tensions between the US Justice Department and the Chilean authorities, since the latter were uncooperative in the investigation that ensued, initially denying any involvement in the assassinations.

⁵⁵ Jim Khatami, "From Chile to Columbia: Interview with SIA's Enrique Kirberg," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CIII, Number 17, September 28, 1978, 13.

Giorgio Solimano adds two people to the list of remarkable activists: Aryeh Neier, co-founder of Human Rights Watch, and Cynthia Brown, associate director of America's Watch, who from 1983 took yearly trips to Chile to monitor the human rights situation in the country.⁵⁰

According to Solimano, Columbia University supported the activities he and Kirberg carried out while working in the United States. "We could perform our political actions without any conflicts with our academic work. There were no intentions to limit Enrique's activities because of his affiliation with the Communist Party,"⁵¹ he says, adding that Columbia authorities valued them for their achievements during the Unidad Popular government. "They acknowledged what we had been through in Chile. They respected us and provided the conditions for us to carry out activities against the dictatorship, which at the time were expensive, like using computers and making long distance phone calls."⁵²

These activities were by no means safe. As the main international voice of the Chilean opposition to the dictatorship, Orlando Letelier put significant pressure on the US Congress and European governments to halt financial aid to Pinochet's regime. In retaliation for his public actions, in June 1976, Pinochet responded by stripping him of his Chilean nationality.⁵³ Three months later, Letelier was assassinated in Washington DC, in a September 1976 car bomb operation orchestrated by the dictatorship's secret police, the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA).⁵⁴ In a 1978 interview with the *Columbia Spectator* newspaper, Kirberg was asked if, given his public opposition and criticism of Chile's military Junta, he was afraid of meeting the same fate as Letelier. He responded: "Yes, I did fear for my own life after the assassination of my friend Orlando Letelier. Later, I arrived at the conclusion that the Junta would try to avoid further judicial conflicts with the United States. That idea has made me stop worrying."⁵⁵

Life in New York and Longing for Chile

Although he was forced to live outside his home country, Kirberg was thankful for his life in New York. When asked about his initial feelings in exile, he claimed: “I would say freedom rather than exile. I walked the streets of New York, through Broadway, with a feeling of joy.”⁵⁶ He was also emphatic about expressing his appreciation towards Columbia University: “After two years spent in concentration camps in Chile, my appointment here at Columbia was decisive in obtaining my freedom and permission for me to leave the country.”⁵⁷ However, perhaps his idealistic nature had led him to expect more political compromise within the school, since although he witnessed student activities, he felt these were sporadic and temporary, with only a minority of students taking part in them, and that they were not monitored by the official student organizations. He also noticed that while the faculty was very active in organizing conferences and lectures around political subjects and human rights issues, these discussions tended to be mostly analytical, rarely leading to concrete actions towards solving these problems. But none of this prevented him from expressing his gratitude towards the university: “I am especially grateful to President William McGill and Dean Ward Dennis, and to the large

⁵⁶ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 106.

⁵⁷ Khatami, “From Chile to Columbia,” 8-9.



Cover of the book Kirberg wrote during his years in New York about the university reform at UTE.

number of professors who expressed their solidarity and contributed to my appointment and, therefore to my freedom.”⁵⁸

In Solimano’s view, despite the situation, his friend enjoyed a pleasant and comfortable life in the US. “We lived two blocks away from each other through the Columbia campus. I lived towards the river, and he lived towards the East Side. We were very close and we shared an ideological affinity. I have never been a member of the Communist Party, but while living in the United States we were fighting for the same goal,” he says.⁵⁹ While Kirberg lived with his wife, Solimano, who is significantly younger, was still single and frequently met with the Kirbergs socially. They shared an interest in cultural activities, attended concerts, exhibits, and relished discovering different ethnic restaurants.

“We enjoyed trying Cuban and Dominican food and going to stores that sold foreign products. Columbia also offered a wide range of cultural and sport activities [...] But above all, Enrique was a big reader.”

“We enjoyed trying Cuban and Dominican food and going to stores that sold foreign products. Columbia also offered a wide range of cultural and sport activities,” he recalls. But above all, “Enrique was a big reader.”⁶⁰ Looking back

to those years, Solimano defines his friend as a smart, affable person, with ideological clarity “which earned him the respect of the people who interacted with him. It was important for him to be there [in New York], do his job, and start writing his book [*Los Nuevos Profesionales*].”⁶¹

In the aforementioned September 1978 interview with the *Columbia Spectator*, Kirberg’s eternal optimism is revealed. He was confident that he would be able to return to Chile shortly and work in his profession in his own country since, as he believed, the dictatorship would not last much more. In his view, Chileans would not tolerate for much longer being deprived of democratic freedom, participation, individual and union rights, or the ability to elect their own authorities. He praised the resistance of his people against the dictatorship and held faith that they would reject the imposition of a new constitution, which was already underway: “All this makes me think that the Junta will not last for long... I think that we will soon see changes that will permit the beginning of a democratic reconstruction of the country and the return of the exiled people,” he predicted.⁶²

⁵⁸ Khatami, “From Chile to Columbia”, 8–9.

⁵⁹ Solimano, Zoom interview.

⁶⁰ Solimano, Zoom interview.

⁶¹ Solimano, Zoom interview.

⁶² Khatami, “From Chile to Columbia”, 8–9.

From Chile to Columbia: Interview with SIA's Enrique Kirberg

By JIM KHATAMI

Professor Enrique Kirberg, a former close friend and political associate of President Salvador Allende, is now a senior research associate at the Institute of Latin American Studies at the School of International Affairs. A prominent educator in Chile, Kirberg was President of the Santiago Polytechnic Institute from 1968 to 1973. On September 11, 1973, the day the Allende government was overthrown in a bloody, military coup d'état, Kirberg was arrested and imprisoned by the junta. He was held for two years in various prison camps and only released after a major international campaign directed at Chile's military regime. Today, just five years after the overthrow of the Allende government and three years after his arrival in the United States, Kirberg had these thoughts about his future and the current American approach towards Chile.

Q: How would you compare the attitude and outlook of the Columbia University students you have met with the attitude of the students you were responsible for in Chile?

Kirberg: I must admit that they are quite different. As you know, I was President of

the National Technological University from 1968 to 1973. I was elected by the university community as a whole, including the students. Chilean students have always been interested in national problems and the politics and development of the university. This was especially true at the university over which I presided. In fact, I really found my best collaborators in those students. They built solid and prestigious student organizations. They participated in most of the commissions to examine university curricula and plans for development, and they performed voluntary duties in the mines, factories and in the countryside during the summer.

I can also see student activity at Columbia University. For example, I have witnessed their campaigns to oppose the appointment of Mr. Kissinger, for the divestiture of university funds in enterprises with interests in South Africa, for the restoration of human rights in Chile, and so on.

The difference is that these activities are sporadic and temporary. Only a fraction of the students participate in them, and they are not monitored by the official student organizations. At the same time it does not seem that these organizations are interrelated. Furthermore, most of the

Columbia students—especially incoming students—do not seem to me to be very well informed in political matters, nationally or internationally.

expressed their solidarity and contributed to my appointment and, therefore, to my freedom.

Now, in reply to your question, I have

'... Columbia students especially — incoming students — do not seem to be very well informed in political matters...'

Q: How do you feel about the faculty at Columbia?

Kirberg: Before I answer that I want to emphasize once more my gratitude to Columbia University. After two years spent in concentration camps in Chile, my appointment here at Columbia was decisive in obtaining my freedom and permission for me to leave the country. I am especially grateful to President William McGill and Dean Ward Dennis, and to the large number of professors who

noticed that the professors here do have an interest in political issues. They are constantly organizing lectures, talks, "brown bag lunches," and symposia about political subjects and "human rights." Yet, these encounters have a specific analytical character, and, although some of the problems discussed are critical, the meetings rarely lead to suggestions for ways of directly participating in solving the problems.



Photo by Nick Rosenwald

ENRIQUE KIRBERG
Former political prisoner,
now SIA research associate

But he was wrong. The "heavy night" that he perceived had fallen over Chile when he was released from prison in 1975 would last for yet another 15 years. During his 11 years at Columbia, he visited his country once, in 1980. Technically, when Kirberg first left Chile, he had not been exiled. As such, he could legally enter, but he avoided this for several years because he knew it would be risky. His 1980 trip lasted three weeks. There were no receptions or public gatherings since he had been warned that he might be kidnapped. Moreover, a letter addressed to Kirberg arrived at the house of one of his daughters, warning him that he would meet the same fate as his late friend Orlando Letelier. A second letter addressed to his daughter threatened her and her family if she "continued sheltering a communist."⁶³ A few months after his return to the US, his wife—who was in Chile at the time—let him know that she had been informed the dictatorship had issued a decree forbidding him from re-entering the country. "It was a huge shock. I felt like the monster [the regime] had stepped on me. I was by myself in the US and was depressed for a few days," he said.⁶⁴ Although in 1981 he had to visit the Chilean consulate where the infamous letter "L" was stamped in his passport,⁶⁵ he said that "people at Columbia University were very sensitive about this and expressed their solidarity with me. From then on, I truly felt like I was in forced exile."⁶⁶

His years at Columbia ended abruptly in 1986. He had traveled to Europe to visit one of his daughters but was denied a visa to return

Kirberg featured in a 1978 edition of the *Columbia Spectator* student newspaper.

Source: Khatami, "From Chile to Columbia", 9.

⁶³ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 117.

⁶⁴ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 117.

⁶⁵ The Chilean military regime provided all diplomatic missions with lists of people that were unauthorized to enter the country, whose passports were consequently stamped by Chilean consulates with the letter "L," which meant "limited to circulate."

⁶⁶ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 117.

⁶⁷ Cifuentes, *Kirberg*, 117.

⁶⁸ Enrique Kirberg, *Escritos Escogidos* (Santiago: Ediciones de la Corporación Cultural Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2016), 326.

to the US. The alleged reason was his status as a “visiting” faculty member, a category that could only be held for up to five years, whereas he had been in the country for over a decade. He was then forced to accept a position he had been offered at Universidad de la República in Montevideo, Uruguay. Thanks to diplomatic arrangements made by Chilean friends and fellow academics in New York, the US consulate in Frankfurt granted him a visa to enter the country. He only returned to arrange his belongings before relocating in Uruguay. When consulted on why he never sought political asylum or permanent residency during his 11 years in the United States, Kirberg claimed that he always intended to return to Chile and that because he was known communist, he never initiated the legal procedures to get a Green Card because he thought the possibility of permanent residency was virtually impossible.⁶⁷

By 1987 he had been granted permission to re-enter his home country again, so he traveled to Chile from Uruguay. During that visit, he met with Chilean journalist Mónica González, who inquired about how he felt about his long stay in the US. “I made the most of my time there. I believe that today I would be a better President with everything I learned from North American universities, which complement the good things that Latin American universities have,” he responded. “I learned many things, my horizons widened, and I was able to enjoy the solidarity of the true American people.”⁶⁸



Portrait of Enrique Kirberg in 1988.

Source: Archivo Patrimonial USACH.

Return to Chile and Final Years

After two years in Uruguay, Kirberg finally returned to Chile in May 1989. Seven months prior, Pinochet had been defeated in a referendum over his rule, inaugurating a period of transition to democracy. Presidential and congressional elections were held for the first time in 19 years in December 1989, with Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin winning the presidency. On March 11, 1990, Pinochet left power and democracy was reinstated in Chile.⁶⁹

Kirberg described his first months back in the country as almost euphoric, filled with receptions, parties, and reunions, but once the party—which according to him lasted around two months—was over, the returned exiles faced the hard reality of having no job and no financial security. In consequence, he became very critical of the returnees' difficulties in rejoining the work force, and he was disappointed that the Chilean transition was to a great extent limited by the terms the dictatorship had defined.⁷⁰ In spite of these views, he supported the transitional process, valuing the triumph of democracy, the end of the dictatorship, and the return of the respect for human rights. He was always optimistic about Chile's future, but he warned: "No one is going to grant us democracy. We must build it, demand it, share it, take care of it, and defend it."⁷¹

When Luis Cifuentes conducted the series of interviews with Kirberg that resulted in the publication of a book on the latter's life, Kirberg was 76 years old and had great plans ahead. He had just been awarded an honorary doctorate degree at Universidad de Santiago de Chile (of which UTE was the predecessor) and was offered a position to work with students who were writing their theses.

⁶⁹ Although a new democratic government was instated, Pinochet remained as Commander in Chief of the Army until 1998, when he was appointed senator for life, a privilege that was secured by the 1980 Constitution imposed by his regime, which granted him immunity from being prosecuted for the human rights violations that occurred during his 17-year dictatorship.

⁷⁰ Kirberg, *Escritos*, 326.

⁷¹ Kirberg, *Escritos*, 137.



Receiving an honorary doctorate from Universidad de Santiago in 1991.

Source: Archivo Patrimonial USACH.

Two streets adjacent to Universidad de Santiago's campus have been renamed in honor of Enrique Kirberg and Víctor Jara.



⁷² Kirberg, *Escritos*, 139.

⁷³ Kirberg, *Escritos*, 328.

He had also joined Universidad de Valparaíso, where he was put in charge of a cultural program. He wanted to keep writing and had in mind a new essay on university education and was looking forward to traveling with his wife Inés. Even though by then he had been diagnosed with cancer, he was determined to get healthy and to see his dreams fulfilled: “I dream of the society of the future. A society with no misery or injustice, a society in which children are happy, so that they can later become normal citizens. A society in which the problems of environmental pollution are solved, in which there are no endangered species. I dream that humankind will make this planet one where they can live in peace and joy.”⁷²

Enrique Kirberg passed away on April 23, 1992, and although he did not live to see all of his plans and hopes fulfilled, he was a man that lived life to the fullest. A man that was both a witness to and a leading actor in the tumultuous times of Chile’s 20th century, who is remembered as a tireless fighter for equality and dignity, as a fundamental actor in the democratization of Chilean education, but above all, as an eternal optimist. As he once said: “I do not have resentments nor am I encouraged by revenge. Maybe that’s a flaw of mine, but I don’t hold grudges. I believe that in the end justice prevails, that truth, and happiness will triumph... one day.”⁷³



Mapping our Galaxy:

An Astronomical Collaboration
between Columbia University and Chile

By Pablo Drake

The 1.2 meter
southern telescope.



Source: "Radio Telescopio MINI,"
Facultad de Ciencias Físicas
y Matemáticas Universidad de Chile.

Since 1956, Cerro Calán –one of Chilean capital Santiago’s many hills, located in the borough of Las Condes– has hosted Universidad de Chile’s National Astronomical Observatory. Its telescopes have been operated by many of Chile’s most important astronomers. For example, María Teresa Ruiz¹ first got in touch with the “world” of astronomy precisely at this site. She recalls, in Paula Escobar’s book *“Conversaciones con María Teresa Ruiz,”* that it happened while she was an undergraduate at Universidad de Chile. In Ruiz’s words, “I was looking for a summer internship and I found an ad for an astronomy one at Cerro Calán, which was more or less near my house. So I signed up and started to discover this new world.”² A few years later, she would decide to pursue a Master’s degree in Astronomy, precisely at Cerro Calán. Today, more than 40 years later, Cerro Calán has been steadily surrounded by the busy metropolis of Santiago. However, this has not stopped the flow of astronomy students... or telescopes. In fact, Universidad de Chile’s last acquisition took place in 2009: the 1.2-meter Millimeter Telescope, even though no one calls it that. For both professors and students, the 1.2m telescope is nicknamed “the Mini.”³

The Mini Telescope wasn’t always located in Las Condes. Between 1982 and 2009, it formed part of the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory (CTIO), located close to the northern Chilean city of La Serena. But even before that, that same Mini Telescope was housed at NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS) in New York, right on the corner of Broadway and 112th Street. Some blocks away from there, at the north end of Columbia University’s Morningside Campus, a twin copy of the telescope surveyed the northern skies from Pupin

¹ Recipient of the National Award for Exact Sciences in 1997; Director of the Center for Excellence in Astrophysics and Associated Technologies (CATA); President of the Chilean Academy of Science (2015).

² Paula Escobar Chavarría, *Conversaciones con María Teresa Ruiz. Pionera de la astronomía chilena* (Santiago: Penguin Random House, 2018), 52.

³ “DAS inicia operación de radiotelescopio capaz de trazar la vía láctea,” CATA, January 2011.

Laboratories. The story of these two telescopes, one in New York and one in Chile, is also the story of an international astronomical collaboration between Columbia University and Chilean astronomers. It is the story of a formidable objective: the mapping of our galaxy. And it is also the story of an incredible scientist: Patrick Thaddeus.

But the astronomical connection between Columbia and Chile was established several years before ‘Pat’ Thaddeus traveled to Santiago in 1979. In fact, it dates back to the 1960s.

Photographs of the mini telescope's inauguration at Cerro Calán Observatory in 2011.

Source: Inauguración del Radio-Telescopio MINI," *Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas, Universidad de Chile*, May 2014.



Isadore Epstein

Today, Chile has plans to host around 70% of the world's astronomical facilities within the next decade.⁴ The country has established itself as the international center for observational astrophysics, with research teams from all over the world working there. But this wasn't always the case. Up until the 1990s, the dominance of Chilean facilities was not as pronounced as it is now,⁵ but it demonstrated the potential



Columbia Professor
Isadore Epstein.

Source: "Astronomer Isadore Epstein Dead at 76," *Columbia University Record*, Volume 22, Number 6, October 11, 1996, 7.

to become a premiere site in the Southern Hemisphere thanks in particular to its good atmospheric conditions and the agreements it had established since the 1960s with international organizations from the US and Europe. According to Columbia graduate Leonardo Bronfman,⁶ a renowned Chilean astrophysicist: "Atmospheric conditions [in Chile] are really very special, almost unique. Its only competition is Hawaii, but Hawaii has less space to install a telescope."⁷ The diaphanous Chilean skies also piqued many children's curiosity about astronomy. Mauricio Bitrán, who would later go on to become an astrophysicist as well, remembered: "I was born in La Serena, north of Santiago... When we were little, we would come back from the beach at night, with no lights anywhere, and my father would make us get out of the car and look at the Milky Way."⁸ At that time, in the 1950s, many international institutions were starting to explore the possibility of installing a telescope in Chile. And Columbia University had a leading role, doing so through the figure of Isadore Epstein.

Isadore Epstein (1919–1996) joined Columbia University in 1950, just after obtaining a PhD from Princeton University. He would go on to teach at Columbia for 37 years,⁹ and his relationship with Chile started when he had been at Columbia for just under a decade.

In 1959, Epstein was appointed to run a site testing program with National Science Foundation (NSF) funding. His mission was to get to

⁴ Marcel Agüeros (Professor at Columbia's Department of Astronomy), interview with Pablo Drake, March 22, 2021.

⁵ Agüeros, personal communication.

⁶ M.Sc. in Physics, 1980, Universidad de Chile. PhD in Astrophysics, 1986, Columbia University. Founding President of the Chilean Astronomical Society (2000). Universidad de Chile's Sesquicentennial Prize in Exact Sciences, 1992.

⁷ Leonardo Bronfman, interview by Pablo Drake, March 26, 2021.

⁸ Leonardo Bronfman, interview by Pablo Drake, March 26, 2021.

⁹ N.H. Baker & R.M. Rich, "Isadore Epstein (1919–1996)," *Bulletin of the AAS* 29, n°. 4, (1997).



Jürgen Stock conducting research in Chile circa 1962.

Source: "Jürgen Stock during site search," *European Southern Observatory (ESO)*.

the top of different mountains and analyze the clarity of the night skies. As part of that project, he traveled to Chile, Argentina, Australia and South Africa. In Chile, he joined Jürgen Stock, who was working for the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy, associated in turn with NASA. Together, they surveyed sites such as Cerro Tololo (currently hosting the Inter-American Observatory) and La Silla (currently hosting the European Southern Observatory).¹⁰

Clambering up so many *cerros* was complicated, as Stock recalled in his diaries, later published as "The Stock Reports." In February 1960, he wrote down some thoughts on buying mules for getting the equipment atop many mountains. "We are

¹⁰ Bob Nelson, "Astronomer Isadore Epstein Dead at 76," *Columbia Record*, Volume 22, Number 6, October 11, 1996, 7.

thinking of four animals, \$75 apiece. So the Administration of the University of Chicago may soon find itself in the curious position to have some mules on the staff. I am glad this is a less than 1,000-dollar item. If we had to get approval of such a purchase, I think we



Source: "Astronomers ascending a Chilean mountain in 1959," *European Southern Observatory* (ESO).

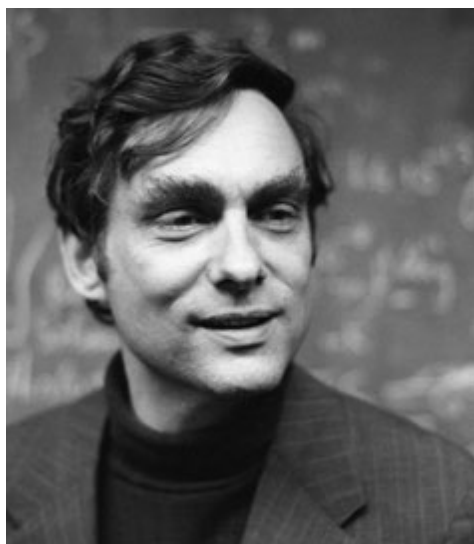
would have plenty of difficulties.”¹¹ Despite the tough conditions, Stock and Epstein were able to complete measurements between 1959 and 1962, and Columbia ended up joining Yale University in creating an astronomical observatory in El Leoncito, Argentina. Despite that, Epstein’s research helped analyze many of the sites that now host important observatories worldwide. And it also served as the cornerstone for what would develop as a fruitful astronomical relationship between Columbia University and Chile.

¹¹ Jürgen Stock, *Chile Site Survey Reports, Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, Coquimbo, Chile* (no date).

Patrick Thaddeus and the Need for a Telescope in Chile

Portrait of Patrick Thaddeus.

Source: James Moran, "Patrick Thaddeus 1932-2017 Biographical Memoirs," *National Academy of Sciences* 2021, 1.



In 1961, while Epstein was surveying the north of Chile, a young scientist named Patrick Thaddeus was completing his PhD at Columbia. 'Pat' Thaddeus was born in Arden, Delaware, in 1932, where he was remembered as a "high-spirited, and mischievous youngster, often suspended from school for truancy."¹² Thaddeus arrived in New York after graduating from Oxford University

in 1955 with a Bachelor of Arts in theoretical physics. Later that year, he would start working on his doctorate at Columbia, as an Assistant in Physics¹³ under the guidance of Charles H. Townes.¹⁴ Thaddeus would end up completing his dissertation in 1961 on the microwave spectrum of various chemical molecules, or, in other words, on identifying different molecules by measuring properties of the light they emit. After completing his PhD, he continued researching in this field, but with a slight twist: instead of finding chemical molecules on Earth, he decided to look for them in space.

In the 1960s, when Thaddeus had just begun in the field, a few scientists were already thinking about doing spatial spectroscopy. One of the most active in this area was Charles Townes, Thaddeus's advisor. Around 1968, Townes discovered the first polyatomic molecules in space: water (H_2O) and ammonia (NH_3). This was quickly followed by the discovery of carbon monoxide (CO) in space, in 1970, by Arno Penzias, Robert Wilson, and Keith Jefferts. These discoveries motivated Thaddeus to investigate the field of spatial microwave spectroscopy, or looking for molecules in outer space. The discovery of CO , in particular, was especially relevant, as Thaddeus and other colleagues realized it was a good indicator of the presence of other molecules, mainly hydrogen,

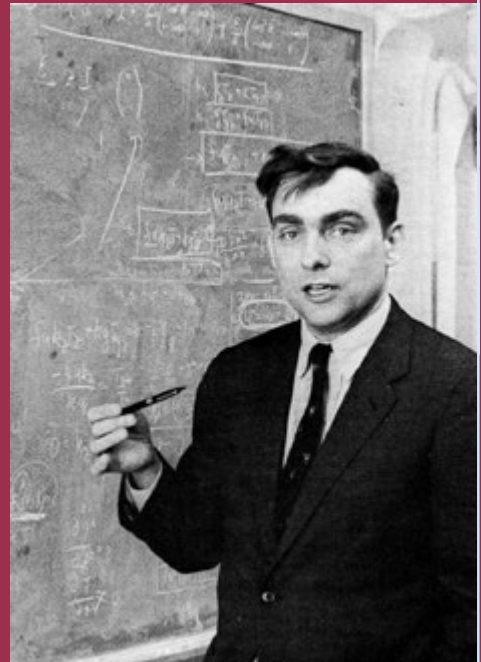
¹² Thomas Dame, Jonathan Grindlay, Robert Wilson, and James Moran, "Patrick Thaddeus, 84," *The Harvard Gazette*, May 9, 2019.

¹³ "Thaddeus, Patrick," Columbia University Appointment Card 1956, Columbia University Libraries.

¹⁴ Townes won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1964 for his role in the invention of the maser and the laser.

Patrick Thaddeus in 1966.

Source: James Moran, "Patrick Thaddeus 1932-2017 Biographical Memoirs," *National Academy of Sciences* (2021): 10.



Professor Charles Townes pictured with his invention, the "atomic clock" at Columbia's physics department in 1955.

Source: "January 25, 1955: Dr. Charles Townes explains his invention, the maser, during a news conference in New York City," *Charles H. Townes, Ph.D. Gallery, Academy of Achievement*.

¹⁵ Marc Kutner would go on to complete a Doctorate at Columbia University in 1972. He also worked as a lecturer at GISS until 1975. Later in his career, he would go on to study the temperature of the Cosmic Background radiation.

¹⁶ Richard Cohen was at the time a graduate student of the Astronomy Department at Columbia University, and he would go on to work at GISS. Through the late 1980s, he conducted his research on CO radio measurements, making use of the two Minis.

¹⁷ Stephen S. Hall, *Mapping the Next Millennium* (Random House New York, 1992), 307.

¹⁸ Michael Thaddeus, email message to Pablo Drake, April 25, 2021.

which is generally undetectable. This meant that finding CO would lead directly to finding hydrogen, the most common molecule in our galaxy. Finding the distribution of CO in our galaxy, Thaddeus realized, was basically equivalent to finding the mass distribution of the Milky Way. And finding the mass distribution meant being able to give an answer to one of the historically unanswered questions in astronomy: what is the shape of our galaxy? As such, Thaddeus initiated two of the most important astronomical quests of the time: finding new molecules in space and mapping our galaxy.

For both these tasks he needed a radio telescope able to collect microwave radiation. Along with Ken Tucker and Marc Kutner,¹⁵ his postdoc students at the time, Thaddeus started using the sixteen-foot radio telescope at the McDonald Observatory in Texas. This allowed them to produce measurements of great quality, but the process was too slow. As the telescope could only look to a very small portion of the sky in each measurement, the process of mapping the galaxy was predicted to take many decades. At that moment, he made a decision that Stephen Hall, in his book *Mapping the Next Millennium*, describes as “shattering centuries of precedent in the field of astronomy.” In 1973, Thaddeus and his colleague Richard S. Cohen¹⁶ decided to build a smaller telescope with a 1.2-meter dish. In Hall’s words: “In an era made conspicuous by bigger, more sophisticated, and (need it be added?) more expensive telescopes, Thaddeus insisted on a small and relatively inexpensive instrument, which he and his colleagues proceeded to build from scratch.”¹⁷ Thaddeus’s son, Michael Thaddeus, explained that the move to build a smaller telescope was greatly influenced by Pat Thaddeus’s personality. In Michael’s words: he “loved to work with his hands and to build machines and apparatus himself. He was proud that his astronomical work was based on observations with [telescopes] built by him and his group. He had a strong preference for small science over large collaborations involving hundreds of researchers, gigantic instruments, and millions of dollars.”¹⁸ Thus, the first 1.2-meter Mini telescope was born.

In 1973, the 1.2m Mini Telescope was installed atop Pupin Labs, a building on the northern part of Columbia's Morningside Campus, giving rise to a quite unusual view: a telescope dome which one could see against the Manhattan skyline. Picturing this image may be puzzling for many, as New York City is known to be especially light polluted. Indeed, New York is highly polluted for optical light, but not in any way for microwaves. Thaddeus explained in an interview for the *Columbia Record* that "the microwave frequency [the telescope] hears is so high on the radio spectrum that there is no interference from the busy city around it... New York is as quiet as the day Henry Hudson came sailing up the river."¹⁹ And having the chance to place the telescope in New York was quite convenient. Sam Palmer, the electrical engineer who helped build the telescope, ironically commented: "It's best to set up your astronomical operations in the 'center of the universe'."²⁰

¹⁹ "Pupin Telescope to be Duplicated," *Columbia Record*, Volume 6, Number 27, April 24, 1981, 1.

²⁰ Tamarleigh Lippegrenfell, "Popular History of the 1.2 m 'Mini' Telescopes," *Center for Astrophysics, Harvard & Smithsonian*.

The 1.2m telescope atop Pupin Labs. NYC, circa 1980.

Source: Moran, "Patrick Thaddeus 1932-2017," 6.





Center applies satellite studies

By JOEY TREVISANI

The many dramatic achievements of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) over the past two decades—the lunar exploration, the Mariner landings, the Venus probes and the Pioneer flyby of Jupiter and Saturn—tell only half the story of NASA's accomplishments. The lesser known and less dramatic side of NASA's work includes extensive scientific research at laboratories.

The Goddard Institute for Space Studies, located on 112th Street at Broadway, a division of the Goddard Space Flight Center of Greenbelt, MD, was one of the earliest of those NASA sponsored research centers.

The Institute was founded by Robert Jastrow, adjunct professor of astronomy and director of the Goddard Institute, in 1961 when the United States saw itself woefully behind in the space race. Its concern, Jastrow said, was to "involve all areas of basic theoretical research which have a bearing on the space program."

Over the years, the center has expanded its program from purely theoretical work into practical fields—especially the applications of technology generated by the space age.

Thus the Institute is a major analyst of photographic data of the earth collected and relayed by the LANDSAT satellite. LANDSAT records light reflected from the earth's surface in the red, green and near-infrared wavelengths.

The LANDSAT system, an outgrowth of heat-sensing scanners used during World War II to spot camouflaged military equipment, monitors worldwide food production and population density, identifies off-shore oil fields and measures off-shore water pollution.

In addition, by devising a computer program which correlates the results of LANDSAT's at-

See GODDARD, 3

Research Watch

1980 picture of the "mini telescope" atop Pupin Hall featured in the *Columbia Spectator* newspaper.

Source: Joey Trevisani, "Center Applies Satellites Studies," *Columbia Spectator*, vol.CIV, n°60, January 24, 1980, p.1.

Columbia in Chile: Pupin Telescope to be Duplicated

For eight years, a 1.2-meter radio telescope designed and built by University scientists has been operating silently and well atop the Pupin Physics Laboratories building, charting the immense clouds of interstellar gas which dot the Milky Way. It soon will have a twin—this one across the Andes Mountains in Chile.

The Columbia instrument has charted much of the galaxy observable from the northern hemisphere. But a good deal of the Milky Way, including the galactic center, is best seen from the southern hemisphere, and recently the National Science Foundation announced a program to install a duplicate of the University's telescope at the Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory, 60 miles east of the sea-coast town of La Serena, Chile.

The new telescope will be operated 24 hours a day by scientists from Columbia, the Goddard Institute for Space Studies and the University of Chile. It is now being built in a Pupin workshop, under the supervision of the same team that built the original in

1973—physicists Patrick Thaddeus and Richard S. Cohen.

According to Cohen, the key to the success of the Columbia telescope is its small size. "We're operating at a very short wave length," he says. Until recently most radio astronomy was done at a wave length of around 21 centimeters, which requires large dish antennas because the size of the dish is proportional to the length of the wave. This telescope works at 2.6 millimeters, which gives it the same resolving power as a 500-foot instrument used at the 21 centimeter wavelength.

"By the standards of radio astronomy," he continues, "this is not a small instrument."

The telescope's four-foot dish is worked by computers from a Pupin laboratory lined with thick foam padding, making it look something like the cockpit of a spacecraft.

The microwave frequency it hears is so high on the radio spectrum that there is no interference from the busy city around it. Says Thaddeus, "At the

(Continued on page 3)



1981 *Columbia Record* article detailing the project that was replicating the 1.2 meter radio telescope to install it in Chile. Pictured are Richard Cohen (part of the team that built the original mini telescope) and graduate assistant John Brock.

Source: "Columbia in Chile," 1.

Once fully set, the 1.2m Mini Telescope, as it was nicknamed, was a scientific success. Between 1973 and 1980, Thaddeus contributed to 28 different papers, both about the search for interstellar molecules and the mapping of our galaxy. A 1980 *Spectator* article summarized the results of the telescope in the following way: “The survey [identified] many gaseous molecules similar to those on earth. Of the fifty molecules discovered and identified, thirty are organic compounds.”²¹ In the words of Michael Thaddeus, Pat was “proud” of “the identification of many organic molecules (alcohols, ethers, mercaptans, polyacetylenes, etc.) in the interstellar gas.” He saw it as a great scientific achievement “but the work on CO was special because it was a survey of the entire galaxy.”²²

The radio measurements from New York were successful, but there was a notable impediment. The sky seen from the Northern Hemisphere is only half of the total. In order to have a complete view of our galaxy, Thaddeus had to find a way to take measurements from the Southern Hemisphere. He explained it in an interview for the *New Yorker*: “Trying to understand the galaxy from observations in the Northern Hemisphere is like a bird trying to fly with one wing ... Also, cloning an instrument ... is a very efficient thing. For these reasons, taking an exact copy of our first telescope to the Southern Hemisphere struck us as a good idea, and the National Science Foundation agreed.”²³ In the Southern Hemisphere, Chile was already one of the most important locations. Thaddeus knew that if he wanted to install a telescope there, he needed to get in contact with the Chilean astronomical community. The opportunity to do so would come unexpectedly in 1978.

²¹ Trevisani, “Center Applies,” 1.

²² Thaddeus, personal communication.

²³ Katherine Bouton, “The View from Broadway,” *The New Yorker*, February 1, 1982, 31.

María Teresa Ruiz

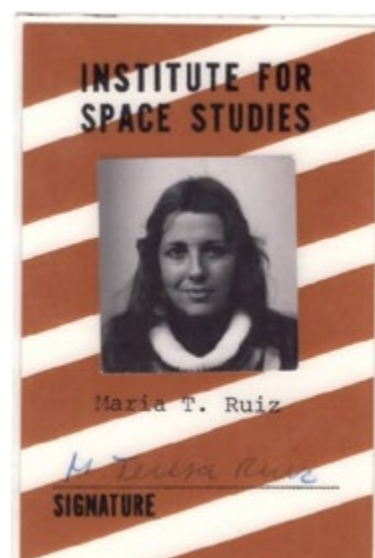
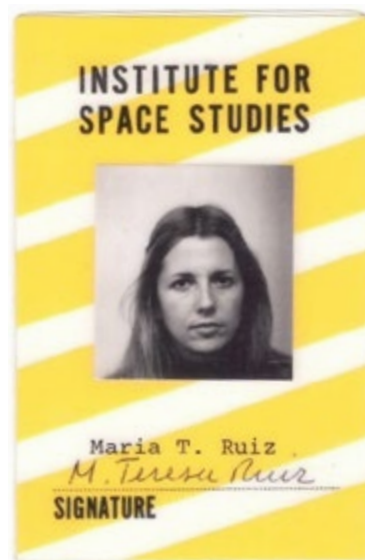
²⁴ María Teresa Ruiz, interview by Pablo Drake, May 19, 2021.

²⁵ Ruiz, personal communication.

²⁶ Ruiz, personal communication.

In 1978, María Teresa Ruiz was not yet publicly recognized as one of the brightest Chilean astronomers. However, in 1975, she had become the first woman to obtain a PhD in Astrophysics at Princeton University. She then went on to complete postgraduate studies at Astronomical Observatory of Trieste, in northern Italy, and to work as a visiting astronomer at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). After completing her time there, Ruiz “decided to go back to Chile, although things at the university were complicated” ²⁴ due

to Chilean isolation during the Pinochet dictatorship. For that reason, Ruiz was eager to pursue opportunities to continue her career abroad. And one of those opportunities came in 1978, when her husband was offered a visiting position at the Courant Institute of Mathematics at New York University.²⁵ At the time, Thaddeus was looking for an astronomer based in Chile with whom to collaborate in the installation of the Southern Mini. Ruiz recalls that “someone who knew Pat and his project to bring the telescope to the Southern Hemisphere must have told him, ‘Hey, there’s this astronomer who wants to come and spend six months in New York, and maybe she can be of help.’... It must have been somewhat like that because I don’t remember directly contacting Thaddeus.”²⁶ Ruiz and Thaddeus got in touch through this intermediary, and Ruiz was hired by Columbia later that year as a visiting researcher based at the Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS).



María Teresa Ruiz's credentials at GISS. 1979-1980.

Source: Courtesy of María Teresa Ruiz.



María Teresa Ruiz
pictured in 2018.

Source: "María Teresa Ruiz,
Premio Nacional de Ciencias
Exactas," *Wikimedia Commons*.

Moving to New York to work with the Mini was a completely new experience for Ruiz. Having been formed as an observational astrophysicist, she had never ventured into radio-frequency observations before. However, she had a clear research idea, and that was enough. In her own words, "I was interested in studying supernova remnants, that is, the remaining gas after a star explodes. That gas also emits in millimeter and submillimeter waves, so I wanted to see if I could detect them... Those were my plans, and Pat allowed me to use his telescope. As you can imagine, having no previous experience, I was really scared to do so!"²⁷

Ruiz recalls with a bit of nostalgia what living in New York was like at the time. She was always allotted late shifts with the Mini, "probably because other people had priority before me."²⁸ And Ruiz clearly remembers taking the subway back at 11:00 PM from Columbia University to Washington Square West, where she was living with her husband. "Our employment contracts were quite fun, because we would stay six months in New York and six months in Chile. At the time, things in Chile were very boring, because we had a curfew, we lived under a dictatorship. One couldn't have parties or anything. Then we traveled to New York, and it was fun and crazy. And when the craziness started to tire us out, we came back [to Chile] to be happy and calm,"²⁹ she adds.

²⁷ Ruiz, personal communication.

²⁸ Ruiz, personal communication.

²⁹ Ruiz, personal communication.

³⁰ Ruiz, personal communication.

³¹ Ruiz, personal communication.

³² "CATA despide a Jorge May Humeres (1936-2011)," CATA, March 8, 2011.

While Ruiz enjoyed New York as an opportunity to learn more about radio astrophysics, Thaddeus looked to utilize her knowledge of Chilean astronomy. He was planning on building the second Mini on Cerro Tololo and wanted Ruiz to oversee it. As she recalls responding at the time: "No way! I am an optical astronomer. I have used telescopes, not antennas,³⁰ and I intended to continue using telescopes, not antennas." Ruiz was not particularly interested in Thaddeus's field of expertise, but she knew people in Chile who were, especially Professor Jorge May. Ruiz remembers that Thaddeus "panicked, as he had never come to Chile," and he probably wasn't expecting to find radio experts. But she told him, "This gentleman understands much more than I do about what you are doing, because he has worked in radio astronomy."³¹ Eventually Thaddeus agreed to meet May, who traveled to New York. There, a "professional marriage" (Ruiz's wording) was born that would translate into fruitful collaboration between the astronomical communities at Universidad de Chile and Columbia University, due in part to Ruiz's skillful diplomacy.

In 1978, May was already one of the most influential figures of Chilean astronomy. In the early 1960s, he had obtained a Master of Science in Astronomy from the University of Florida in Gainesville. In 1967, he returned to Santiago, to Universidad de Chile, and started developing plans for a radio-observatory. That idea would be materialized in the 1970s with the construction of the Maipú Radio Observatory, named after the Santiago borough in which it was located.³² From its very beginning, the first of its kind in Latin America, it started a large-scale collaboration with American researchers, with May maintaining

his relationship with professors at University of Florida. The work being carried out also helped form many Chilean students, both astrophysicists and technical engineers. When May got in touch with Thaddeus, the human and technological infrastructure needed to receive the Mini at Cerro Tololo was already in place. The only thing left was for Thaddeus to explain his project to the Chilean academic community.

Jorge May in Cerro Calán, 2002.

Source: Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas. Universidad de Chile.



Bronfman and Bitrán

In late 1979, Thaddeus visited Chile for a series of talks explaining his work and future project, organized by May. In the audience, two students in particular listened carefully to the Columbia professor. Leonardo Bronfman and Mauricio Bitrán had both graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Physics from Universidad de Chile. They were friends, and while Bitrán was completing a Master in



Astronomy, Bronfman had switched to studying Biophysics, both at Universidad de Chile. The two were quite interested in Thaddeus's work, who in turn was interested in finding Chilean students that could work at Cerro Tololo. Bronfman remembers that experience with the following words: "Professor Thaddeus gave a talk about what I was doing, biophysics and molecular spectroscopy, but he started talking about interstellar molecular spectroscopy. It was what I was studying, but pointing to the sky! ... I went to that talk, I was very interested, I asked questions and then I had an interview with Professor Thaddeus. He made me an offer to spend a few months at Columbia University. It was supposed to be two months, from January to February, but I ended up staying four months, from January to May! [laughs]"³³ Thaddeus understood the benefits of integrating Chilean students, who had quite comprehensive theoretical formations, into his research. He also offered Bitrán an assistantship position at Columbia, but the latter rejected it as he had already accepted to carry out his PhD at the University of Florida.

Bitrán's example shows how May's work directly impacted many astrophysics students. In the late 1970s, he was completing the recently created Master's degree in Astronomy at Universidad de Chile, under

Leonardo Bronfman during a trip to Japan in 2018.

Source: Courtesy of Leonardo Bronfman.

³³ Bronfman, personal communication.

³⁴ Bitrán, personal communication.

³⁵ Bronfman, personal communication.

³⁶ Bronfman, personal communication.

Mauricio Bitrán

Source: Karen Whyllie, "Maurice Bitran, CEO & Chief Science Officer, Ontario Science Centre," CIFAR Facebook, May 17, 2017.



the guidance of May. In fact, he was part of the first class of graduates. He benefited from the newly installed radio telescope at the Santiago borough of Maipú, writing his Master's thesis on the radio observation of the galactic background at 45 MHz. His work as a researcher at Maipú led him on several occasions to get in contact with and collaborate on projects led by University of Florida scholars, with whom May had worked closely while studying his own Master's degree. And precisely for that reason, around 1980, Bitrán decided to join the PhD program there. However, Bitrán was also aware of Thaddeus's research and his interest in observing carbon monoxide from Chile. He thus decided to center his thesis around the study of galactic CO, and in particular, the CO around the galactic center,³⁴ for which he would need to make use of Thaddeus's telescopes. In order to do so, he traveled to New York in 1981, where he also found his colleague Leonardo Bronfman.

Bronfman had joined Thaddeus's team as a research assistant in 1980. He was enthusiastic about the project, but he did not know much

about radio astronomy. In his own words, "I learned to observe with the millimeter telescope they had ... on the 13th floor of Pupin Labs."³⁵ This prompted him to specialize in Radio Astronomy instead of Biophysics. With the research he did for Thaddeus, Bronfman finished his Master's degree at Universidad de Chile. Already living in New York, he decided to apply for a PhD at Columbia University. As he put it, "I took all my papers and my data with me and I was able to apply for a doctorate at Columbia University...I was accepted to return as a graduate student in September 1980."³⁶ On this occasion, it was to work directly



1982 picture of the 1.2m telescope being moved from the Goddard Institute for Space Studies to be sent to Chile. On the left side of the image, Richard Cohen and, next to the tower, Leonardo Bronfman.

Source: Courtesy of Leonardo Bronfman.

under Thaddeus's supervision in the preparation of the second 1.2m Mini Telescope, working atop GISS. This experience, along with his knowledge of Chile, allowed him to be part of the team that in the summer of 1982 installed the second telescope in Chile. He remembered that team: "two engineering technicians, one post-doc and two PhD students, and I was one of them." Bronfman was "in charge of the radio frequency receiver...each one had their own work, for which we had

³⁷ Bronfman, personal communication.

³⁸ Bronfman, personal communication.

³⁹ Bitrán, personal communication.

⁴⁰ Bronfman, personal communication.

prepared at Columbia.” Finally, by the end of the year, the telescope was ready. Its first light was on December 22, 1982.³⁷ In the following years, both Bronfman and Bitrán would carry out their PhD research with the Mini at Cerro Tololo.

Both Bronfman and Bitrán have good memories of those years spent in New York and all the people they met there. Bronfman fondly remembers María Teresa Ruiz. In fact, “at that time, Professor María Teresa Ruiz had already obtained her doctorate ... and since she was involved in the project [researching the CO distribution of the Southern Milky Way], she was the thesis director for my Master’s in Chile.”³⁸ At that time, there were very few Chilean students in the field of astrophysics, so they developed a profound connection that continued through their time in New York. Bitrán recalls “staying in New York in Leo Bronfman’s apartment, playing guitar... [and] going to jazz clubs or concerts at Columbia.”³⁹ Both Chileans remembered those years as both formative and beautiful.

In 1986, after 26 years, Thaddeus decided to leave Columbia and join Harvard’s Center for Astrophysics. And, in the process, he took the 1.2m Mini from Pupin Hall with him. Bronfman remembers that “the laboratory we had there disappeared, it was transported to Harvard. It was a funny situation because either I finished and graduated, or I had no professor and no lab!”⁴⁰ That situation prompted him to accept a teaching position at Universidad de Chile. Bitrán also returned to Chile after completing his PhD. But despite the distance, both Chileans maintained a close relationship with Thaddeus, visiting him often. And they also have fond memories about how Thaddeus treated them when they were in New York.

Remembering Pat

After a long and distinguished career in astrophysics, Patrick Thaddeus passed away in April 2017, but his memory lives strong. Indeed, all Chileans who interacted with him have nothing but kind words about him. Ruiz remembers Thaddeus had “a very strong personality, even explosive. We all had a lot of admiration for him... He had that ability to transmit passion for what he did... and he achieved extraordinary things because he had people who supported him and believed in his projects.”⁴¹ Bronfman states, “my relationship with Professor Thaddeus went beyond academics. He was a very kind person, very warm with international students.”⁴²

Bitrán remembers Thaddeus as “a man of great intellectual curiosity.” In Bitrán’s own words, “I remember going to his cottage and there were always interesting discussions of different topics, not just astronomy... I also remember his office at GISS. He had a big clutter of books on his table but he always said, ‘there is an underlying order, I know where everything is’.”⁴³

Pat Thaddeus also cherished his time in Chile. In his son’s words, Pat “was excited to visit such a faraway place —the first time he had ever been outside North America and Europe— and impressed by the astronomical research that was going on at Cerro Tololo.” Michael also remembered a story his father used to tell “over and over:” while sitting outdoors in Chile Pat was offered a pisco sour for the first time by Leo Bronfman. He “took one sip of the drink, and all the palm trees on the terrace began to sway back and forth. Pat said, ‘Leo, that’s a powerful drink you made me,’ and Leo replied, ‘It’s not the drink! It’s an earthquake!’ Which it was. Not a very big one, fortunately.”⁴⁴

As has been established, in the 1980s, Patrick Thaddeus and Jorge May cemented a strong astronomical and personal link between Columbia University and Chile. At the present time, another Columbia professor has sought to strengthen those links by creating several student exchange programs. Originally financed

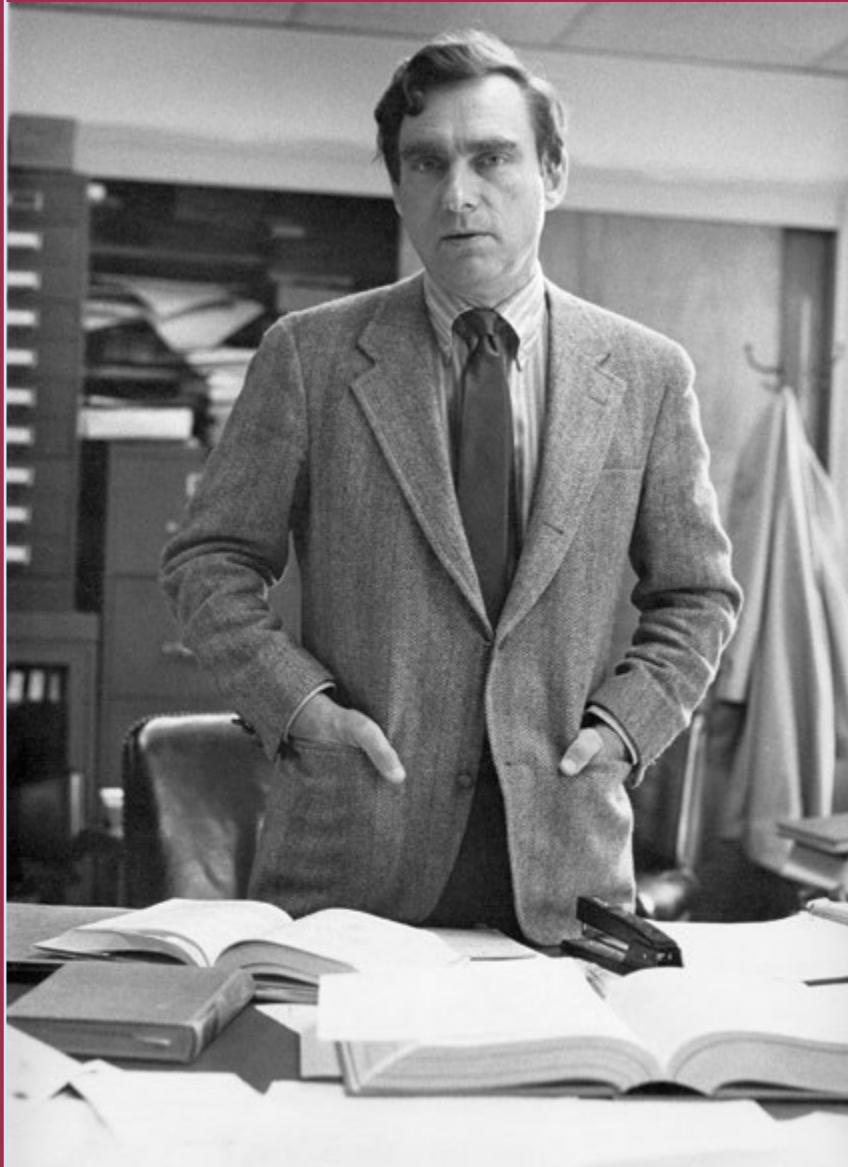
⁴¹ Ruiz, personal communication.

⁴² Bronfman, personal communication.

⁴³ Bitrán, personal communication.

⁴⁴ Thaddeus, personal communication.

Patrick Thaddeus in his office at the
Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS). 1980.



Source: Courtesy of Michael Thaddeus.

In May 2015, a group of five faculty members and six Ph.D. students from Columbia's Department of Astronomy met in Santiago with their counterparts at Universidad Católica's Astrophysics Institute in a joint workshop under the heading "Teaming Up to Prepare for the Next Decade in Time-Domain Astrophysics."



Marcel Agüeros, Associate Professor of Astronomy at Columbia University, presenting at Universidad Católica.



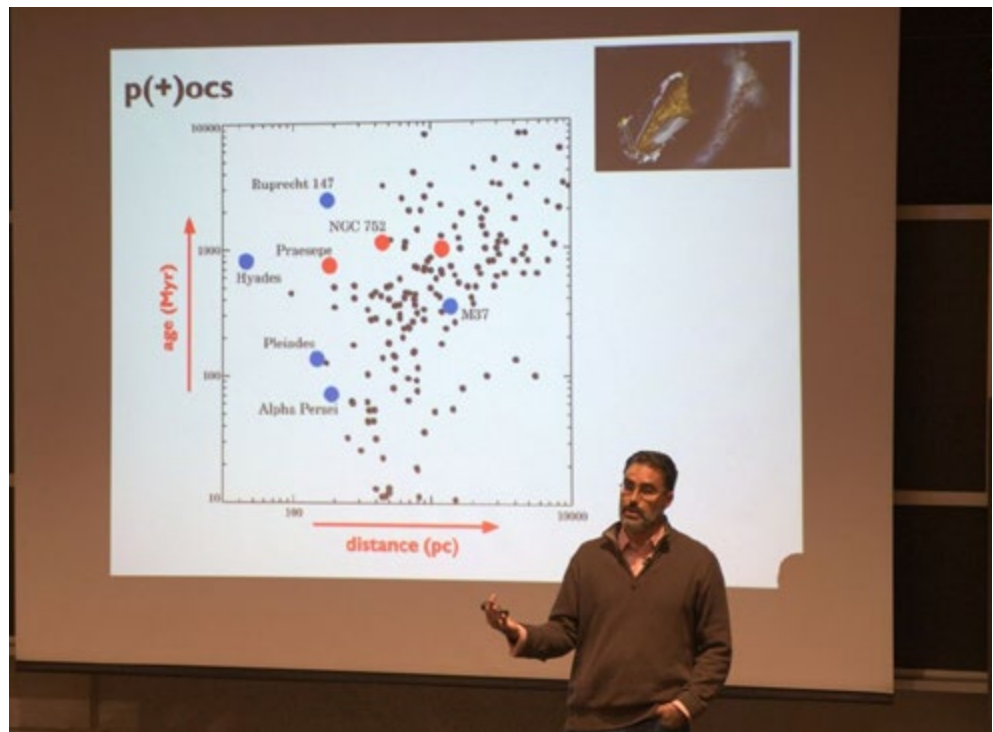
The team of 11 astronomers participating in the workshop.



Strengthening the long-standing relationship in astrophysics between Columbia University and Universidad Católica, Agüeros returned to Chile in May 2019. In the picture, he is next to Thomass Puzia, Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics at Universidad Católica's Institute of Astrophysics.

Agüeros giving a presentation on low-mass stars at Universidad Católica. May, 2019.

Source: Columbia Global Centers | Santiago Photo Archive.



⁴⁵ Launched in March 2013 by President Lee C. Bollinger, the President's Global Innovation Fund offers support for faculty to develop projects and research collaborations within and across the University's nine Columbia Global Centers, to increase global opportunities for research, teaching, and service.

⁴⁶ Agüeros, personal communication.

by the President's Global Innovation Fund and the Santiago Global Center,⁴⁵ Marcel Agüeros established such exchanges in May 2015 between Columbia University and Universidad Católica de Chile (UC). From 2016 onwards, "a half dozen Columbia graduate students went to Santiago and worked with teams there," Agüeros says; the program also supported "two UC visits to New York, an extended one by a UC graduate." However, the program ended up running out of funds: "the reality was it came down to dollars... or pesos."⁴⁶ In 2019, Agüeros designed a program of summer positions for Columbia undergraduates at UC. In his work, Agüeros continues Thaddeus's spirit of integration, collaboration and respect, while at the same time allowing for more Chilean students to follow the steps of Bronfman and Bitrán.

May this essay not only memorialize the achievements of Jorge May, María Teresa Ruiz and Pat Thaddeus, but also demonstrate the benefits of international collaboration.



The Legacy of Teachers College

in Chile's Educational Development

By Martina Majlis

Dodge Hall, Teachers College's main building, circa 1912. The building was named in honor of philanthropist Grace Hoadley Dodge, the School's main funder as well as its first treasurer.



Source: Teachers College
Archive Photograph Collection.

The educational development of Chile has historically been permeated by the trends and successful experiences of other countries with a more developed and innovative educational tradition. Hence, the training of Chileans abroad has had a virtuous impact on the import of knowledge, methods and techniques to consolidate and improve educational models in the country. In fact, Columbia University's Teachers College (TC) has played, and continues to play, a key role in the generation and transmission of knowledge that Chilean professionals with TC training brought back to their homeland.

During the 20th century, TC's international influence was mainly based on the revolutionary ideas of one of its most renowned professors, John Dewey, leader of the Progressive Education movement and advocate of the "New School" educational method. The latter was implemented in the country through the efforts of Chilean educators with postgraduate degrees obtained in the United States, who contributed to the design and implementation of educational policies by Dewey's ideas.¹ For instance, the Secondary Education Congress of 1912, the Asamblea Pedagógica of 1926, the Educational Reform of 1928, the creation of the Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas (Manuel de Salas Experimental Public School) in 1932, and the Gradual Renewal Plan for Secondary Education of 1945 are all examples of the impact of Dewey's ideas in Chilean educational development.²

This article's objective is to offer a brief synthesis of the experience of some notable Chileans that studied in TC throughout the 20th century and their role in the design and development of Chile's educational system during that period. In order to do so, we will first present

¹ Jaime Caiceo, "La Escuela Nueva en Chile: relación con las organizaciones docentes y con la conformación de un sistema educativo público democrático," *Acta Scientiarum. Education* 43, n°. 1 (2021): 2

² Rodrigo Mayorga, "Las grandes reformas pedagógicas," in *Historia de la Educación en Chile (1810-2010). Tomo II. La Educación Nacional (1880-1930)*, ed. Sol Serrano, Macarena Ponce and Francisca Rengifo (Santiago: Taurus 2012), 202.

the history of TC, underlining the work of three of its most iconic academics of the first half of the 20th century. Afterwards, we will review the educational landscape in Chile during the 20th century and the most important educational reforms that were carried out in that period. Finally, we will delve into the influence of TC in the country by analyzing the professional history of some of its former students, to finish emphasizing TC's hallmark and how, with different nuances, it has played a relevant role in the consolidation of the current Chilean educational model.

Liceo Experimental
Manuel de Salas in 1932.

Source: "Casona Torres,
Liceo Manuel de Salas,"
Patrimonio Ñuñoa.



A Brief History of Teachers College

TC was founded in 1887 as a private and independent initiative, and remained so until 1898, when it became part of Columbia University. The institution was created to meet the new challenges brought by industrialization and technology,³ as TC capitalized from the rich dynamics born from the interplay of theory, research and practice, especially in anticipating the needs and challenges of the medium term. This was echoed in the obituary that The New York Tribune published when philanthropist Grace Hoadley Dodge (who was the main source of funds for the creation of TC) died in 1915: “It was said of her that she had the 100-year look—that is, she looked ahead a century and made her plans accordingly.”⁴ Dodge’s contribution was preceded by other efforts to empower working-class women, the pinnacle of which was the creation of TC. Her work during the first half of the 20th century was especially consistent with the experience of Chilean students like Amanda Labarca or Irma Salas at TC, as it shaped an understanding of education from a broader lens, including psychology, social studies and urban education.⁵

Columbia University’s TC was the first graduate school of education in the United States, the first to confer a university status on teacher education, and the first to link teacher education with research. Its early-century study was inspired by innovative ideas such as progressive education, observation and experimenting with learning methods, and the linkages between education and nutrition, physical activity, recreation, and hygiene.⁶ Moreover, during its first 25 years, TC launched the nation’s first programs in education psychology, comparative and international education, nursing education, nutrition education, and special education, all based on four central imperatives: general culture, special scholarship, professional knowledge, and technical skill.⁷ The need for such an institution made TC grow so rapidly that by 1923 it had more than 4,000 students, remarkable growth when compared with the enrollment of the institution the year it was founded: “36 juniors in its inaugural class as well as 86 special students.”⁸ At the time, TC was a magnet for international students, who, in turn, enriched the

³ “A History of Anticipating –and Shaping–the Future,” *Teachers College Website*.

⁴ “History of Anticipating.”

⁵ “History of Anticipating.”

⁶ Sol Serrano, *Introducción a la reedición de “El Problema Nacional” de Darío Salas Díaz*, 1977 (Santiago: Cámara Chilena de la Construcción, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile y Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos, 2011): 16.

⁷ Serrano, *Introducción a la Reedición*, 16.

⁸ Robert McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 191.

⁹ "Teachers College, a World Centre," *The New York Times*, July 17, 1920, 2.

institution's interdisciplinary dialogue through the permanent input that international students provided, and the same rings true to this day. According to the *New York Times*, students had traveled from 31 countries—Chile was one of them—to attend TC in 1920: "Most of these students from foreign lands return to their own countries to fill posts of responsibility in government, church or private school system, as supervisors and teachers in service, or as instructors in training in normal school or college. Their influence and through them the influence of the United States and of American ideals is multiplied."⁹

John Dewey

¹⁰ Luis Rubilar Solís, "El Pedagógico: Educación Superior y los Sectores Populares, 1889-1997", in *Intelectuales y Educación Superior en Chile: de la Independencia a la Democracia Transicional, 1810-2001*, ed. Robert Austin (Santiago: Ediciones CESOC, 2004), 163.

¹¹ Rodrigo Mayorga, "Una Educación Nueva para un Nuevo Individuo," in *Historia de la Educación en Chile (1810-2010). Tomo II. La Educación Nacional (1880-1930)*, ed. Sol Serrano, Macarena Ponce and Francisca Rengifo (Santiago: Taurus 2012), 17.

As mentioned earlier, amongst the US academics from TC whose impact in Chile was the most widespread is John Dewey (1859-1952), arguably the most influential US educational theorist of the 20th century. He was convinced that the role of education was to establish a common belief among people and to build channels of communication and understanding through schools, and that education should consider the student as a social being. Individual consciousness, according to Dewey, is produced through social interaction. In this regard, Amanda Labarca, one of Dewey's Chilean disciples and a distinguished Chilean educator, translated the importance of Dewey's ideas regarding secondary school education into the simple but elegant idea that it is necessary to consider education as a social function at the service of collective progress.¹⁰

Dewey believed that active rather than passive education should be provided to contribute to a more democratic and just social life, encouraging children to experiment and establishing a communitarian rather than individualistic school. He advocated these concepts in his publications, emphasizing the moral and civic character of all experience-based education. His theories were at the heart of the so-called "Progressive Education," which incorporated ideas from a variety of intellectuals, scientific disciplines, and even business concepts.¹¹ In fact, he claimed that the "educational process must be built upon the interest of the child, that it must provide opportunity for the interplay

of thinking and doing in the child's classroom experience, that schools should be organized as a miniature community, that the teacher should be a guide and co-worker with pupils rather than rigid taskmaster assigning a fixed set of lessons and recitations, and that the goal of education is the growth of the child."¹² His most famous work, "Democracy and Education,"¹³ cemented his legacy in American educational history.

¹² Charles Howlett, "John Dewey and Peace Education," *Encyclopedia of Peace Education* 25 (2008): 1.

¹³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1916).

William Heard Kilpatrick

Another of the most influential US academics was William Heard Kilpatrick (1871-1965), one of Dewey's most prominent disciples, who provided a practical perspective on Dewey's ideas. In fact, he is considered a "major figure in the progressive education movement of the early 20th century" and "one of the most popular professors ever at Teachers College."¹⁴ He became a well-known academic in the United States thanks to his famous work "The Project Method,"¹⁵ in which he argued that by employing children's interests as units of study, learning becomes more meaningful and relevant. Additionally, Kilpatrick sought to enable students to solve problems with minimal guidance from teachers,¹⁶ placing the student at the center of the educational process, so that their own interests and experience would guide them in the learning process.

¹⁴ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1916).

¹⁵ Landon E. Beyer, "Kilpatrick, William Heard (1871-1965)," *Performance Magazine Website*.

¹⁶ Jennifer Govan, "Today in History: William Heard Kilpatrick is Born," *Gottesman Libraries Teachers College Website*, November 20, 2017.

¹⁷ W. H. Kilpatrick, "The Project Method: The Use of the Purposeful Act in the Education Process," *Teachers College Record* 19 (1918): 319-335.

¹⁸ Serrano, *Introducción a la Reedición*, 18.

Finally, even though he is considered controversial today,¹⁷ it is important to mention Edward Lee Thorndike (1874-1949), whose ideas cannot be absent in a historical review of the most influential TC scholars. A psychologist by profession and part of TC since 1899, he was a prolific thinker and writer, with more than 500 publications to his credit. His most revolutionary contribution was probably the introduction of the scientific method in learning. Also influential among Thorndike's ideas was the theory that schools can play a role of social efficiency, dynamic and responsive to the needs of the social structure and markets, challenging the "natural order" whereby everyone had his or her own place in society from the moment of birth.¹⁸

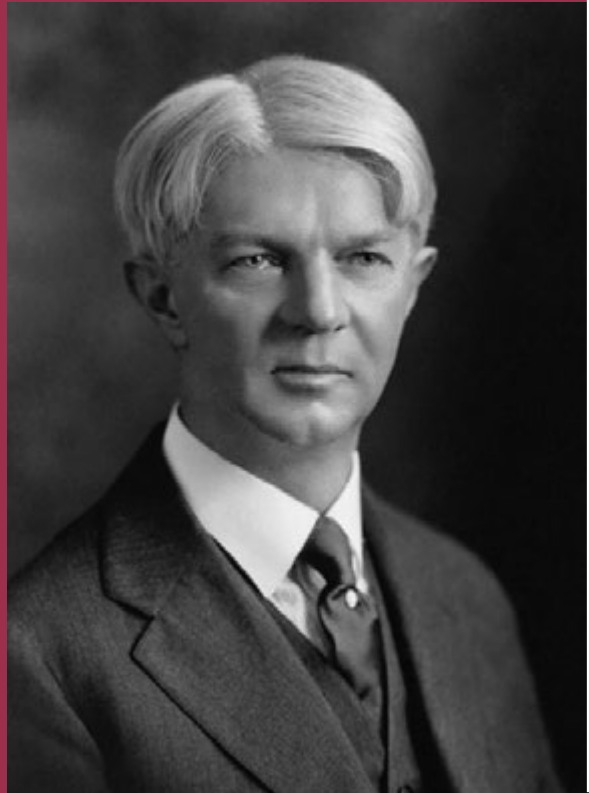
Portrait of William Heard Kilpatrick.

Source: Beyer, *Kilpatrick*.



Portrait of John Dewey.

Source: "John Dewey, 1859-1952,
bust portrait, facing left," Library of Congress.



Education in Chile in the 20th Century

One can say that education in Chile has always followed foreign models. First French (1842-1844), then German (1845-1905) and from 1905 onwards, a mixed model with great US influence, particularly the “New School” and the experimental movement, all under the decisive influence of Dewey. During the first two decades of the 20th century, the most influential educational models in Chile were, in addition to Dewey, Spencer and Montessori.¹⁹

During the 20th century, Chile’s educational system grew significantly. Compulsory primary education was established in 1920, and subsequent reforms tailored the system to the country’s new social, economic, and political circumstances, resulting in the 1960s reform, which aimed to modernize and democratize the educational system. Aside from the expansion in the number of elementary and secondary schools, various university and technical institutions, such as Universidad de Concepción and Universidad Técnica del Estado, were founded. The construction of rural schools and an ambitious literacy strategy reflected the concern for the education of vulnerable sectors.²⁰

Chile’s 1925 Constitution upheld the principle of educational freedom and declared that education was the State’s top priority. The public education system was reorganized toward the end of the 1920s, and the current Ministry of Education was founded. The system’s centralized features were strengthened, and a detailed regulation of its administrative and educational aspects was put in place. During the same period, a scientifically based tendency emerged, which promoted an active and learner-centered education, particularly in primary education. An educational experimentation movement was then launched in the public system, which resulted in the establishment of multiple experimental schools and the approval of numerous curricular reforms. This movement, in line with TC’s and Dewey’s theories, would continue until the early 1970s. Chilean education in the second half of the 20th century can be described as “the expansion of the coverage of the formal system, the diversification of types of institutions and

¹⁹ Fredy Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación Chilena*, (Santiago: Universidad Central de Chile, 2013), 143.

²⁰ Eduardo Devés, Javier Pinedo and Rafael Sagredo, *El pensamiento chileno en el siglo XX* (México, D.F.: F.C.E – IPGH, 1999), 12.

²¹ Iván Núñez, "Historia Reciente de la Educación Chilena," *Unknown Publisher*, (July 1997): 3.

²² Additionally, Salas Marchán also promoted profound transformations in the Chilean educational system, which resulted in the creation of the Superintendence of Education in 1927, of which he was an advisor. He also served as Director of Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico, advisor to Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, vice-president of the Asociación de Educación Nacional, among other positions.

²³ Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 48.

²⁴ Maximiliano Salas Marchán, *Tendencias Actuales de la Educación Norteamericana* (Santiago: Sociedad Imprenta y Litografía Universo, 1923): 447-455.

²⁵ Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 43-44, 136.

Maximiliano Salas around 1940.

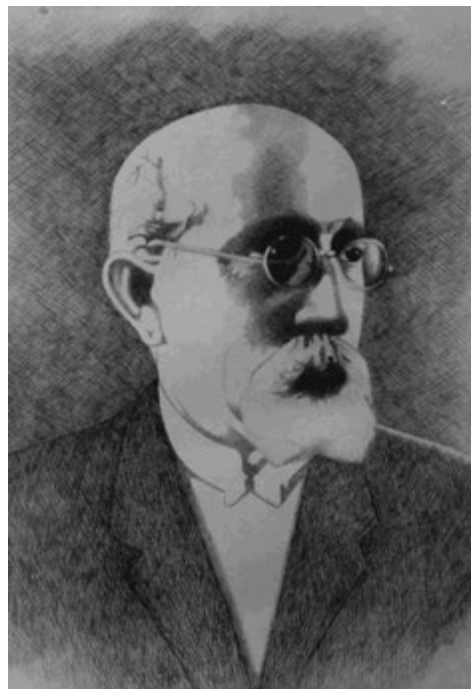
Source: Abel Cortez Ahumada, *Historia del Liceo Maximiliano Salas Marchán, 1904-2004. Un Siglo de Educación Pública en Los Andes*, 23.

educational programs, the trend towards modernization in the curricular aspects, and the succession of educational policies and management reforms of very different types.”²¹

Teachers College's Impact in Chile through its Students

Chile's interest in the North American educational model was such that, in 1918, the Chilean government sent Maximiliano Salas Marchán (1872-1962),²² a renowned Chilean educator, to the United States to study the progressive education movement.²³ In 1923, Salas published *Tendencias Actuales de la Educación Norteamericana* (Current Trends in North American Education), a book that synthesized what he had learned on that trip. It is symbolic that the book's first illustration is entirely a full-page portrait of Dewey, leader of said movement. Moreover, the book has a special chapter dedicated to Teachers College, in which Salas especially recommends that more Chileans be sent to study there.²⁴ This suggestion bore fruit, since throughout the 20th century many Chilean students

traveled to New York to study at TC with scholarships from the Chilean government. For instance, María Cáceres Silva, traveled in 1906 to New York City to study at Columbia University's Kindergarten Department of Teachers College, with a scholarship provided by the Government of Chile.²⁵ There, she learned the fundamentals of Dewey's New School, which she applied in the approach to active education in the work of kindergartens in Chile. The importance of her work is reflected in Chile's legal regulation



that, since 1917, required employers of 50 or more women to provide them with personnel to care for their children up to one year old. This evolved over the years, initially through private initiative, towards the creation of preschool education institutions. In 1930, the Ministry of Education created the position of Inspector of Preschool Education and appointed Cáceres to fill it, so that she could play a role in the massification of this type of institution, whose impact was key in the most vulnerable sectors. This process, with the influence of former TC student Irma Salas, led to the creation, in 1944, of the first Escuela de Educación Parvularia (School of Preschool Education) in the country and in Latin America, whose first director was Amanda Labarca, also a TC alumna, setting the foundation for the creation and national expansion of these institutions.²⁶ The definitive step in this process was taken in 1970, with the creation of the Junta Nacional de Jardines Infantiles (National Board of Preschools, also known as JUNJI by its acronym in Spanish), which brought all the preschools in the country under the same administration, thus guiding and coordinating the institutions that provided this kind of service.²⁷ The importance of the work done by JUNJI continues to be true today, as it is the only national public service in charge of providing free preschool education in most of the country, demonstrating that Cáceres' legacy in this area continues.

To adequately visualize TC's impact in Chile, it is important to review the academic and professional careers of some other notable Chileans who studied there during the 20th century.

Russell Hall is the home of Teachers College's Gottesman Libraries, one of the largest and most comprehensive educational libraries in the United States. The imposing Gothic structure was built in 1924.

Source: "Teachers College, Columbia University," *Wikimedia Commons*.

²⁶ Caiceo, *Escuela Nueva*, 2

²⁷ Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 137.



Amanda Labarca (1886-1975)

Portrait of Amanda Labarca.

Source: Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.



²⁸ Emma Salas Neumann, "La Educación Superior y los Movimientos de Emancipación de la Mujer Chilena, 1877-1950", in *Intelectuales y Educación Superior en Chile: de la Independencia a la Democracia Transicional, 1810-2001*, ed. Robert Austin (Santiago: Ediciones CESOC, 2004), 52.

²⁹ Daniel Casanova Cruz, *Entre el Pago y el Mérito. Admisión Estudiantil e Inclusión Social en las Universidades Chilenas* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2015), 85.

³⁰ Based on the French model of the "Écoles Normales," the "Normal Schools" trained teachers to work in primary education. They existed in Chile between the 19th century and the 1970s.

³¹ The pragmatic method, which considers material conditions for the practical application of ideas, was relevant in the design of educational public policies during the 1900s. Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 153.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Chilean universities had only 86 women in their ranks,²⁸ representing around 5% of all university students during that period.²⁹ One of them was Amanda Labarca, who, at the age of 18, had already become a teacher and quickly occupied prestigious positions, such as Assistant to the Director of the Escuela Normal N°3³⁰ in Santiago, Secretary of the Asociación Nacional de Educación (National Education

Association, also known as AEN by its acronym in Spanish) and Director of the *Revista de Educación* (Education Journal). All this before the age of 22, when she received a scholarship from Columbia University to study at TC between 1910 and 1912. Afterwards, she moved for a year to Paris to continue studying in La Sorbonne. It was during these trips that she first came into contact with new educational trends and currents, represented in the US by William Kilpatrick and John Dewey, who she met in New York. Labarca declared that she owed an important part of her educational and social ideas and tendencies to American pragmatism, and particularly to John Dewey.³¹ Her experiences during these years were then put at the service of the AEN and the country through the lectures she and her husband, Guillermo Labarca (1879-1954), gave as soon as they returned.

In 1922, Amanda Labarca became the first female university professor in Chile, when she started teaching at Universidad de Chile. Her immeasurable contribution to the education of women, connecting them through different spaces of dialogue and transmission of knowledge, especially through the techniques learned during her time in the US, made her a key figure in the women's emancipation



Amanda Labarca Herbertson

Portrait of young Amanda Labarca in 1920.

Source: William Belmont Parker, *Chileans of To-day*
(New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920), 373.



Florencia Barrios Tirado.

Source: "Florencia Barrios Tirado," *Genealogía Chilena en Red*.

³² Salas Neumann, *Educación Superior*, 52.

movement in Chile. In fact, upon her return to the country, one of her first concrete contributions was the creation of the “Círculos de Lectura” which emulated the Reading Circles she experienced in the US. Their purpose was to discuss various academic texts within a small circle of university women, convinced that it could contribute to a general improvement in women’s living conditions through the generation and dissemination of knowledge.³²

Her impact was such that in 1976 Universidad de Chile created the “Amanda Labarca Merit Award” in her memory, aimed at highlighting the work of university women who, like Amanda Labarca, have excelled in the field of their profession, in the field of culture or in the service of Chile. This distinction was awarded to TC alumna Irma Salas in 1976 and to Florencia Barrios Tirado in 1983, among others. Moreover, in homage to Labarca’s impact, there is a public high school named after her and a street located in downtown Santiago, capital of Chile, named Profesora Amanda Labarca.

Corina Vargas (1900-1989)

In 1920, Corina Vargas (1900-1989) started studying to become an English Teacher at the recently created School of Education at Universidad de Concepción, located in the south of Chile. In 1924, when she was only 24 years old and had yet to finish her studies in education, the University granted her a scholarship to study in the United States, with the objective of perfecting her instruction as a teacher, since she was one of the most outstanding students in her program. Thus, Vargas left to study a Master's in Educational Psychology at Teachers College.³³ She described Columbia University the following way:

The traveler visiting New York ascends from the subway at the West 116th Street station; walking a few steps east on Broadway, he feels as if dazzled. But such a dazzle is not only due to the lack of adaptation to daylight, but because he is confronted with an unforgettable spectacle: the statue of the Alma Mater of Columbia University, seated on the slope of a gentle hill reached by a long flight of steps and, behind it, the Greek columns of the temple of knowledge; the Central Library, inside which one feels the need for recollection and meditation. The Alma Mater extends its open arms to the visitor

*as if inviting him to penetrate its treasures, letting him know that everything is ready to receive him: the Institutes of Psychology and Philosophy, those of Foreign Languages and Literature, the Faculties of Law and Political Science; the schools of Fine Arts, Journalism and Economics; Education and those of Medicine and others of technical and practical education. Above all, the most typical: the chapel, where the ceremonies for the conferring of degrees take place, where Theodore and Franklin Delano Roosevelt received their Law degrees.*³⁴



Portrait of Corina Vargas, unknown date.

Source: Muñoz Labraña, Corina Vargas, *Pionera*, Cover.

³³ Carlos Muñoz Labraña, *Corina Vargas. Pionera de la Educación Chilena* (Concepción: Ediciones Facultad de Educación, 2016), 32.

³⁴ Discourse by Corina Vargas, courtesy of Marcelo Medina Vargas.

Corina Vargas featured in a picture of Universidad de Concepción's Board.

Source: Muñoz Labraña, *Corina Vargas, Pionera*, Cover.



³⁵ Marcelo Medina Vargas, Interview with Carla Magri and Martina Majlis, August 4, 2021.

³⁶ "Corina Vargas: 120 Años del Natalicio de la Primera Decana de América Latina," *Universidad de Concepción Website*.

³⁷ Muñoz Labraña, *Corina Vargas*, 35.

³⁸ "Corina Vargas, 120 años."

Corina Vargas' son, Marcelo Medina Vargas,³⁵ recalls his mother's trip to NYC as "...an adventure. She even risked being left at Ellis Island, where they took all immigrants and where they could die of disease. This, because she was single and had no certificate to prove that she could study there. I know that some people who were on the boat helped her and she was able to skip the passage through the island. It was a very difficult trip, she did not have a scholarship (the university supported her with travel money), and she had to work hard to pay for her things. She did have a good level of English."³⁶

The focus of Vargas' studies at TC was oriented towards educational and experimental psychology, which fitted in with the experimental educational model promoted by Dewey. Vargas herself, in line with what other notable Chileans who passed through TC believed, perceived the crucial role of primary instruction as an element of social mobility, and the consequent importance of requiring a university education of those in charge of that instruction.³⁷

Back in Chile, she was hired as a Professor of Psychology for Education students at Universidad de Concepción. Between 1943 and 1955 she occupied the position of Dean of the School of Philosophy and Letters at said University, becoming the first woman to hold this position in Latin America.³⁸

CORINA VARGAS DE MEDINA

Señorita representante de la Embajada de los E.E. U.U., señor Rector de la Universidad, señoras, señores:

El viajero que visita Nueva York y asciende desde el subterráneo en la estación de la calle 116 oeste, caminando unos cuantos pasos hacia el este de Broadway, se siente como deslumbrado. Pero tal deslumbramiento no se debe sólo a la inadaptación a la luz del día, sino a que enfrenta un espectáculo inolvidable: la estatua del ALMA MATER de la Universidad de Columbia, sentada en la falda de una suave colina a la cual se llega por una larga escalinata y, tras ella, las columnas griegas del templo del saber: la Biblioteca Central, en cuyo interior se siente la necesidad de recogimiento y meditación. El ALMA MATER tiende sus brazos abiertos al visitante como invitándolo a penetrar en sus tesoros, haciéndole saber que todo está dispuesto para recibirlo: los Institutos de Psicología y de Filosofía, los de Lenguas y Literaturas Extranjeras, las Facultades de Derecho y Ciencias Políticas; las escuelas de Bellas Artes, Periodismo y Economía; Educación y las de Medicina y otras de enseñanza téc-

Corina Vargas' writings on her years at Columbia University.

Source: Courtesy of Marcelo Medina Vargas.

nica y práctica. Por sobre todo, lo más típico: la capilla, en que se efectúan las ceremonias de colocación de grados, allí donde Teodoro y Franklin Delano Roosevelt recibieron sus títulos de Abogado. Lugar consagrado a ceremonias divinas y humanas, abierto a todos los credos, se abrirá esta vez para otorgar grados honoríficos a personalidades de relieve mundial, entre quienes figura nuestra insigne Gabriela Mistral.

El 31 de octubre se cumplirán doscientos años, desde que el Rey Jorge II de Inglaterra otorgó al King's College la Carta Real que reconocía sus estudios universitarios. Desde el comienzo, la Universidad de Columbia ha realizado una labor importantísima en la formación cultural de la nación y sus proyecciones en el exterior han sido de valor incalculable. Cada año académico sus aulas generosas acogen a más de treinta mil estudiantes de todo el mundo, con el mismo cariño que reciben a sus propios hijos. No hay diferencias en cuanto a las facilidades que se otorgan a unos y otros; todos obtienen igual reconocimiento por la actividad desarrollada

o por la opinión expuesta con originalidad. Asimismo, son atraídos por este espíritu amplísimo investigadores y sabios eminentes nacionales y extranjeros que han encontrado en sus institutos todos los medios necesarios para dar expansión a su poder creador a la vez que mayor brillo a las cátedras. Entre los más conocidos nuestros citaremos a Dewey, Thorndike y Kilpatrick en el campo de la Educación; a Franz Boas en Antropología; a Federico de Onís y Germán Arciniegas en Literatura española e Hispanoamericana; a Urey y Fermi, premios Nobel de Química y de Física. Todas las formas de la ciencia pura y aplicada; del arte, la Filosofía y la Religión tienen posibilidad de ser cultivadas y profundizadas.

Ahora, al llegar a su bicentenario, la Universidad de Columbia envía a todos los confines un cálido mensaje de fraternidad, evidenciando su profundo espíritu democrático que estimula a quien desea manifestarse en su verdadero ser y enaltece a todo aquel que logra penetrar en el valor real del ~~conocimien~~to. Esto hace asomarse a la conciencia del ex-alumno de la Universidad de Columbia la imagen inmarcesible del ALMA MATER, símbolo de todo lo grande y perdu-

rable que ella encierra, y nuestra alma, henchida de gratitud hacia aquella madre espiritual, le rinden hoy el homenaje de su admiración y recuerdo emocionados.

Señoras, señores: la Embajada de los EE.UU. ha elegido esta fausta fecha para enriquecer nuestra biblioteca de Inglés mediante un valioso conjunto de obras literarias. Cúmplase agradecer en nombre de nuestra Facultad a la gentil representante de la Embajada, Srta. Elinor Halle, este bello gesto de amistad. La Universidad de Concepción aprecia en todo su significado el valor de esta importante donación que contribuirá, sin duda, a fortalecer la comprensión entre ambas naciones.

Corina Vargas on the Long Island ferry,
New York, 1926.



Source: Muñoz,
Corina Vargas, Pionera, 32.

Irma Salas (1903-1987)



Irma Salas in 1954 receiving the Teachers College Medal for Distinguished Service.

Source: Emma Salas Neumann, "Irma Salas Incansable Innovadora," *Revista de Educación*, n° 161 (October 1988): 22.

Irma Salas Silva (1903-1987) was the daughter of Chilean educator Darío Salas (1881-1941), who studied at Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico where, in 1904, he obtained the degrees of Professor of Spanish and French. In 1905 he began his studies at New York University, with a scholarship from the Chilean government, where in 1907 he obtained a PhD in Education.³⁹ During his student life in the US, he met important intellectuals in the educational field, among them John Dewey, whose ideas shaped his thinking. He is renowned for advocating and implementing the *Ley de Instrucción Primaria Obligatoria* (Law of Compulsory Primary Education), enacted in 1920, which ensured free public primary education for the entire population and made it compulsory.⁴⁰ This undoubtedly had a deep impact on Irma's outlook on education. She graduated as a teacher from Universidad de Chile in 1920, and, afterwards, she traveled to New York to study at Teachers College from 1926 to 1930,

³⁹ Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 43-44.

⁴⁰ "Darío Salas (1881-1941)," *Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile*.

⁴¹ Mayorga, *Una educación Nueva*, 17.

⁴² See Abelardo Araújo, "The Legacy of John Dewey for School Administration: A Reading of the Work, Life and Education," *Revista de Política e Gestão Educacional* 23 n°2 (2019): 356-369.

⁴³ Luis Celis Muñoz, Andrés Guzmán Traverso and José Miguel Pozo Ruiz, *Educadores ilustres en la historia educacional chilena siglos XVIII-XX* (Santiago: Facultad de Educación de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1998), 187-189.

⁴⁴ Rubilar Solís, *El Pedagógico*, 170.

where she was part of the approximately 10% of students who came from abroad.⁴¹ There, she became the first Chilean woman to get a PhD in Education. Additionally, in New York, she met John Dewey and William Kilpatrick, and studied their educational approaches, which later allowed her to focus on her work with ideas, methods and techniques based on a pragmatic and experimentalist philosophy. The educational conception of the New School⁴² permeated Irma Salas' educational thought and action throughout her life. Her contributions to Chilean education were guided by her conviction

in democracy as a political system and daily attitude; the socialization of children through education and school expansion and decentralization as a means of advancing democracy.⁴³

Back in Chile, she worked in secondary education institutions as a Philosophy and English teacher, although she would return periodically to the US to continue her research. In 1945, she was appointed by Chile's President Juan Antonio Ríos (1942-1946) to be part of and direct the Commission that prepared the Plan de Renovación Gradual de la Educación Secundaria (Plan for the Gradual Renewal of Secondary Education), which was implemented in 1946. She was also instrumental in the creation of state universities in different regions of Chile during the 1960s,⁴⁴ despite the extreme economic and cultural centralization that existed in

Un "7" Internacional para Educadora Chilena Irma Salas,

● Recibió premio "Andrés Bello".

Basta conocer su apellido para comprender el porqué de su vocación: Es hija del destacado educador Darío Salas, cuyo trabajo en pro de la educación nacional le significó dar su nombre a un conocido liceo santiaguino.

E Irma Salas no desmereció ante tan ilustre padre. Ayer se convirtió en la primera mujer que recibe el Premio Interamericano de Educación "Andrés Bello", otorgado anualmente por la OEA a la figura más destacada de la educación escolar en toda América.

Soñadora, porque su única pasión fue la enseñanza. Maestra, porque con dos padres educadores, y con una abuela que abrazó la misma profesión, ser maestra entra ya en el terreno de la genética.

Tomaba desayuno cuando recibió el llamado internacional. Al otro lado del hilo, el propio embajador de Chile ante la OEA, Pedro Daza, intentaba comunicarse por sobre la distancia.

"La verdad es que yo no estaba preparada para recibir una noticia así. Sabía de mi nominación porque me lo había comunicado el Ministerio y debí enviar todos los libros escritos en mi vida. Me avisaron también que el premio querían entregárselo a una mujer este año. Sin embargo, no pude imaginarme que sería yo la premiada".

Seis premios nacionales e internacionales, entre ellos la Orden al Mérito Docente "Gabriela Mistral", nueve libros y otras obras menores, cabeza de toda la renovación educativa iniciada en el liceo Manuel de Salas, directora del Centro Latinoamericano de Especialistas en Educación de la UNESCO. Eso y una inacabable lista de méritos.

"Siempre fui buena alumna. En casi todas las materias me iba bien. Aunque una vez tuve problemas con una profesora que me caía mal. Usted sabe, pasa con todas las maestras. Parece que el sentimiento era recíproco, así es que tenía puros 2 en la libreta. Y me echaba siempre de clases. Claro que, siendo sincera, no me hacía problemas porque me iba a almorzar a la casa de la directora. En vista de la situación, mi padre decidió que estudiara el idioma en forma particular. Cuando me presenté al examen, frente a Hoy. Con un nuevo una comisión de otro liceo, reconocimiento, arrasé con las notas. Tanto, que esos profesores le pidieron explicación a la maestra por mis malas notas anteriores".

Jubiló en 1976. Hoy, es miembro de la junta directiva de la Universidad de La Serena.

Mañana, quizás, sea la nueva Premio Nacional de Educación.




Picture of Irma Salas as a Teachers College graduate.

Source: "Un '7' Internacional para Educadora Chilena Irma Salas," *Las Últimas Noticias*, August 25, 1983, 8.

the Metropolitan Region, home to Chile's capital, Santiago. In 1954, Irma Salas received the Teachers College Medal for Distinguished Service, for her "outstanding contributions to education and human development."⁴⁵ Additionally, she was a university professor at Universidad de Chile, which conferred upon her the degree of *Doctor Honoris Causa*, and she received the "Amanda Labarca Merit Award," whose prestige remains intact to this day.⁴⁶ Irma Salas was one of the founders of the Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas in 1932, and its director for 10 years. She was succeeded by Florencia Barrios, who was one of the founding professors of the Liceo, where she worked until 1970, "with no other scenario for her public professional activity than that of our experimental establishment, in spite of other offers she had, given her Master's degree obtained at Columbia University and her proven professional experience."⁴⁷ In fact, Barrios studied at TC between 1941 and 1943. Afterward, she returned to Chile and became Director of the Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas,⁴⁸ inspired by Dewey's postulates regarding the "New School." It was a new and experimental type of high school, focused on the development of the students' personality, sensitive to the diversity among them and the multiplicity of problems they would face in the world, and which evaluated students based on scientific methods.⁴⁹

In 1945, Irma Salas was appointed president of the commission for the renovation of the secondary school system, in charge of reformulating and rethinking Chilean secondary education. The commission proposed the creation of more experimental high schools, first six, to later extend the reform throughout the country.⁵⁰ In 1953, President Carlos Ibáñez del Campo stopped the reform, so its reach was limited. However, some elements of this reform are still in force today, such as the Student Body Council, the student centers, and the head teachers, which were adopted by the entire Chilean secondary school system. These approaches, typical of the New School –which were practiced in the Manuel de Salas High School and in the six experimental high schools that were created later– are inspired by Dewey's education theories, which seeks to put students and their needs at the center of education, and to make them participants, since one of its focuses is education in democracy.

⁴⁵ "The Teachers College Medal for Distinguished Service," *Teachers College Website*.

⁴⁶ Celis Muñoz et al, *Educadores Ilustres*, 187-189.

⁴⁷ Viola Soto Guzmán, "Florencia Barrios Tirado y el Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas," *Revista Enfoques Educativos* 3 n°1 (2000-2001).

⁴⁸ Mayorga, *Las Grandes Reformas*, 210.

⁴⁹ Florencia Barrios Tirado, *El Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas. Un aporte de la Universidad de Chile a la educación nacional* (Santiago: Ediciones Universidad de Chile, 1982).

⁵⁰ Jaime Caiceo Escudero, "El Instituto Pedagógico y el Sistema Escolar Chileno," *Revista Intramuros* 3, n°10 (December 2002).

Óscar Vera (1909-1971)



Portrait of Oscar Vera.
Source: Courtesy of the
Vera family.

⁵¹ Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 86.

⁵² Hernán Vera and Andrés Guzmán, "Óscar Vera Lamperein: Un Educador de su Tiempo con Proyección de Futuro," *Pensamiento Educativo, Revista De Investigación Latinoamericana* 4, n°1 (2004): 201.

Óscar Vera (1909-1971) is renowned for his contributions to the development of educational planning in Latin America during the 20th century.⁵¹ He studied both primary and secondary education at public schools in the southern Chilean city of Temuco. In 1924, he received his bachelor's degree in Humanities and, afterwards, he completed his academic studies at the Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico, obtaining the title of Professor of French in 1928.⁵²

He later taught French and philosophy at high schools in Ancud and Temuco, and at the Santiago-based Barros Arana National Boarding School. In the mid-1930s, the government of Venezuela recruited a group of exceptional Chilean teachers with the goal of enlisting their help in organizing the country's educational reform. Vera was appointed head of the Chilean teachers mission. His ability and intellectual interests led him to continue his academic education at Teachers College, where from 1942 to 1944, he deepened his knowledge of education and sociology. After his years at TC, he returned to Chile, and taught Sociology, Social Psychology and Philosophy of Education at the Instituto Pedagógico until 1953, with a brief interruption to attend La Sorbonne in Paris between 1948 and 1949.⁵³

In 1953, back in Chile, Vera was appointed Coordinator of the Technical Office of the Superintendence of Education, with the objective of studying how to improve high schools in the country. During the government of President Jorge Alessandri (1958-1964), he took over the coordination of Educational Planning. In addition, he was the coordinator of the Main Education Project N°1 for Latin America,⁵⁴ and head of the Latin American Division of the Education Department of UNESCO in Paris, the latter two positions between 1956 and 1965. From 1966 to 1971, he was head of the Planning Office at Universidad de Chile.⁵⁵

Vera believed that people's freedom and dignity could not be limited by educational planning. In that sense, his thoughts and actions were based on a constant valorization of democracy, which he understood as the ultimate social ideal. One of his core guiding principles was to put science at the service of analysis and educational action. He believed that a proper development of science and its methods would contribute to solve several of society's most pressing issues. Subsequently, his efforts were focused on thinking and acting from a scientific perspective at the educational level.⁵⁶ José Vera Giusti, Óscar Vera's nephew, recalled in an interview how important it was for him the time he lived with his uncle in Santiago in 1969. He described Óscar Vera as "an inspiring man, a man who faced every aspect of his life as an educator."⁵⁷

⁵³ Celis Muñoz et al, *Educadores ilustres*, 202.

⁵⁴ This project's objective was to address and overcome the serious educational deficiencies that Latin America was suffering at the time. It aimed to achieve equality of opportunity; therefore, basic education for all was proposed.

⁵⁵ Celis Muñoz et al, *Educadores ilustres*, 203.

⁵⁶ Celis Muñoz et al, *Educadores ilustres*, 204.

⁵⁷ José Vera Giusti, Interview with Martina Majlis, September 30, 2021.

Luis A. Tirápegui (1890-1964)

⁵⁸ Núñez, *Historia reciente*, 23-24.

⁵⁹ Mayorga, *Una Educación Nueva*, 26.

⁶⁰ Rubilar Solís, "El Pedagógico", 158-159.

⁶¹ Alejandra Falabella and Claudio Ramos, "La Larga Historia de las Evaluaciones Nacionales a Nivel Escolar en Chile," *Cuadernos Chilenos de Historia de la Educación* 1 (2019): 70-71.

⁶² Luis Tirápegui, *Conferencias sobre Psicología Educacional* (Santiago: Publicaciones del Departamento Técnico, 1930), 5.

Luis Alberto Tirápegui (1890-1964) was part of the group of Chileans sent abroad to specialize in subjects related to education.⁵⁸ He earned his PhD at TC in 1924. Afterwards, he directed the Laboratory of Experimental Psychology at Universidad de Chile, in operation since 1923. Thanks to his knowledge of experimental psychology and the experience he obtained at TC, President Carlos Ibáñez (1952-1958) recruited him among the experts who would advise him for the educational reforms that he would implement in 1930.⁵⁹ The reform that Tirápegui helped promote –also called a “counter-reform”– implied replacing the teaching of Latin with two modern languages, the inclusion of technical subjects such as gymnastics, and increasing the hours of study of physical and natural sciences.⁶⁰

Another of Tirápegui’s notable contributions was the adaptation of intelligence tests to Chile –characteristically the Binet-Simon test– to be applied, with the necessary nuances, in local schools. This is an influence of Teachers College, which was a world center for the conformation of educational networks and for the propagation of the use of mental tests. The purpose of the design, implementation and analysis of these intelligence measurement instruments –supported, among others, by Irma Salas– had a specific purpose: that teachers could measure on a large scale the intelligence of their students in order to scientifically classify their intellectual capacities and meet their specific learning needs and requirements.⁶¹

Tirápegui conceived psychology as a discipline whose objective was “to know the mental phenomena and to determine the laws that can serve for the solution of the practical problems that life offers us.”⁶² One can even splice that notion with Dewey’s educational project that sought to prepare children to face the challenges and problems of everyday life.

El Mercurio
17 de julio de 1919

ESTUDIANTE CHILENO
EN ESTADOS UNIDOS



don Luis Tirapegui Leiva

Hace un año que uno de los pedagogos mas célebres de los Estados Unidos, el doctor Paul Monroe, director de la Escuela de Educación en el Teachers College de la Universidad de Columbia, decía: "Tengo el placer de certificar que el señor Luis Tirapegui Leiva ha hecho los estudios completos correspondientes a mi Curso Superior de Historia de la Educación durante el año universitario de 1917 a 1918; que ha asistido con mucha puntualidad durante todo el año; que ha trabajado en forma muy eficiente; que ha obtenido el título de bachiller en Ciencias Educativas y que lo considero en todo sentido digno del apoyo gubernativo".

La Conferencia Comer

La Conferencia Comercial de Washington ha tenido un éxito

Mr. Carlos Schwab, que expresa y elogia la referencia y a las excelentes posibilidades de empresas, dijo, refiriéndose a la fabricación y venta de bienes en los Estados Unidos:

"Debemos ser consecuentes con la prohibición, que a tir que los ricos acapilan en sus nidos, mientras que los pobres sufren la pobreza."

Durante una de las sesiones Panamericanas, se exhibió un Chile, en la que parece se pa nuestro país todo aquello que y haciendo caso omiso de su grado.

En el círculo de los delegados muy mala impresión la gado Gillet contra México.

Entrevistado por mí el Mr. John Barrett, declaró eran sólo el reflejo de la op de ningún modo la opinión o

Agregó que la actitud m señor Rojo, contestando que h siones políticas y que el señ hospitalidad, había recibido

El señor Tirapegui fué comisionado en 1917 para estudiar las Escuelas de Aplicación en Norteamérica. Nuestro Gobierno sólo le dió el pasaje y el buen amigo de Chile, Mr. Peter H. Goldsmith, le consiguió una beca de \$800 dólares, o sea de unos 4,000 pesos chilenos, con lo cual el señor Tirapegui pudo costear en su parte principal los cuantiosos gastos que le originaron los estudios durante todo un año de guerra.

Recientes comunicaciones recibidas en el Ministerio de Instrucción Pública hacen saber que el señor Tirapegui se ha titulado ahora de maestro en Artes Liberales y ha recibido el diploma de Inspector de Escuelas Normales que otorga el primer Departamento Universitario de Educación de los Estados Unidos, obteniendo la más alta votación que se ha concedido a un estudiante extranjero en esa renombrada institución pedagógica, durante los últimos diez años.

Luis Tirápegui featured in *El Mercurio* newspaper in July 1919.

Source: Courtesy of Manuel Tirápegui Rojas.

New York, Diciembre de 1919.

Distinguido señor:

Tengo el agrado de poner en su conocimiento que he obtenido las facilidades necesarias para fundar una *Seccion Chilena* en la Biblioteca del *Teachers College* de la Universidad de Columbia, Nueva York.

Como usted seguramente lo sabe, el *Teachers College* es el centro educacional mas importante de los Estados Unidos, i quizas no sea exajerado asignarle el primer lugar en el mundo entero por la estension de sus cursos i la extraordinaria competencia de su personal docente. A él concurren anualmente miles de profesores de los 48 Estados de la Union; no ménos de seis mil acudieron a los cursos de verano de Julio i Agosto de este año; i mas de treinta paises extranjeros le envian sus estudiantes i profesores a perfeccionar sus métodos, incrementar su saber e inspirarse en los nuevos rumbos que señala a la educacion.

Es, pues, el *Teachers College*, por su fuerza de difusion, un lugar privilegiado para organizar una exhibicion que, por medio de libros, retratos, gráficos, dé a conocer el desarrollo de nuestro pais, su labor para crear la riqueza nacional i cimentar sus instituciones en el órden i el progreso. Está dentro de nuestro interes que Chile sea conocido en sus mas vitales aspectos, porque ésta es una de las maneras de atraer hacia nuestra patria la simpatia i consideracion que merece. Ademias, las autoridades del *Teachers College* han tenido la jentileza de espresar que no sólo permiten sino que ven complacidas que el Establecimiento albergue las obras que representen el esfuerzo i la intelectualidad de Chile. Puede asegurarse que esta instalacion, favorecida ya con la ilustrada opinion de los profesores chilenos que han venido a este pais en comision del Gobierno durante el último tiempo, seria la primera que llevara a cabo Sud América i constituiria un vínculo entre nuestra patria i el *Teachers College*, esta institucion de merecida fama mundial.

Contando con su valiosa cooperacion, como lo espero, podríamos inaugurar la *Seccion Chilena* en el presente año académico de 1919-1920, con los materiales que se alcancen a reunir. Se revestiria el acto de la solemnidad debida, aprovechando la oportunidad para ofrecer al público algunas conferencias sobre Chile. Permitame, por lo tanto, que me atreva a rogarle que contribuya con sus obras a la fundacion i buen nombre de la *Seccion Chilena* de la Biblioteca del *Teachers College*, i se sirva remitirlas a la brevedad posible.

Deseo agregarle que hai algunas jestioness encaminadas en el sentido de obtener en el *Teachers College* una beca permanente para un profesor chileno, que se renovaria anual o bienalmente. En tal caso, dicho profesor seria el jefe de la *Seccion Chilena*.

Agradeciéndole su inestimable concurso a la realizacion de esta idea que tiende a servir los intereses de la Patria, me es honroso saludarlo respetuosamente i suscribirme de usted su Affmo i S. S.

LUIS A. TIRAPEGUI L.

Columbia University

1919 letter from Luis Tirápegui in New York.

Source: Courtesy of Manuel Tirápegui Rojas.

Erika Himmel (1930-2020)

Erika Himmel (1930-2020) began her studies in Mathematics Education at Universidad de Chile in 1949. After graduating, she worked in schools until 1956, when she returned to academia to work as a researcher at the University's Institute of Statistical Research.

From 1958 to 1959, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study Measurement and Evaluation in Psychology and Education at Columbia University's Teachers College. In an interview, Erika Himmel's daughter, Ana Carolina Vivanco, shared that her mother always regretted not having stayed longer in New York to pursue her PhD. However, she did not do so because she had a commitment to Universidad de Chile, which continued to pay her salary. Regarding her experience at TC, Ana Carolina recalls that it was significant for her mother, "because it was of key importance for everything she did after her master's degree."⁶³ In fact, shortly after returning to Chile, she joined a working group that was tasked with analyzing and designing a new test for university selection,⁶⁴ where she was able to put into practice what she had learned at Teachers College. This was the origin of the Prueba de Aptitud Académica (Academic Aptitude Test, also known as PAA by its acronym in Spanish), which started being applied in 1967 and was the first standardized system used in the country. Later, she participated in the development of the Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Educación (System for Measuring Education Quality, or SIMCE) and the Prueba de Selección Universitaria (University Selection Test, or PSU), two of Chile's main educational evaluation tools.⁶⁵

Additionally, she was the academic vice-dean of Universidad de Chile and, afterwards, Dean of the School of Education. She provided advice regarding educational evaluation to several Latin American countries and international organizations and was an active member of numerous national educational organizations (for instance, the Presidential Advisory Council and the Higher Education Council).

⁶³ Ana Carolina Vivanco, Interview with Rafaela Lahore and Carolina Díaz, May 2021.

⁶⁴ The massification of secondary education in Chile made it urgent to have common criteria in the selection process for admission to university education.

⁶⁵ Nicole Saffie, "Erika Himmel König. Una Apasionada por la Enseñanza de Chile," *Revista Visión Universitaria*, n°205 (October 2011): 7.

Source: Courtesy of the Himmel König family.



Erika Himmel in New York.



Portrait of Erika Himmel

Source: "Erika Himmel, un Baluarte
en la Historia de la UC,"
*Pontificia Universidad Católica de
Chile Website*, August 28, 2020. .

Erika Himmel and former Chilean graduates from Teachers College at Universidad Católica during the 2018 visit of former President of Teachers College, Susan Fuhrman.

Source: Columbia Global Centers | Santiago Archive.



⁶⁶ "Past Alumni Award Recipients," *Teachers College Website*.

⁶⁷ "Erika Himmel König. Premio Nacional de Ciencias de la Educación 2011," *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile Website*.

In 2013, she was awarded with TC's Distinguished Alumni Award for her contribution "to the development of standardized assessment procedures that have been a key feature in the operation of the educational system in Chile for close to half a century, including the PAA and the SIMCE. She has also pursued an extensive career in research and teaching and has participated decisively in advancing the capabilities of Chile in social and educational research and evaluation at Universidad de Chile."⁶⁶ In fact, she was widely recognized for her contributions to the development of educational evaluation. Of the many awards she received, those of particular note include the Monseñor Carlos Casanueva Academic Career Award, the Critical Innovators Award, the Women of the 21st Century Award, the Gabriela Mistral Order of Teaching and Cultural Merit in the rank of Commander, and the Medal of Recognition for 50 years of Service to Education from Universidad de Playa Ancha. However, she received the most important recognition in 2011, when she was awarded the National Award of Education Sciences.⁶⁷

A Lasting Influence

Teachers College's influence is not only explained by the striking number of Chileans who studied at it (in addition to those mentioned in this paper, consider Moisés Mussa, Martín Bunster, Margarita Escobedo, Aída Parada and Leopoldo Seguel, among many others)⁶⁸, but also by the impact of Dewey's ideas on Chilean education. Despite the nuances⁶⁹ that must be introduced regarding foreign influences on the design of the Chilean educational system in the 20th century, the figure of Dewey continues to be the most paradigmatic.⁷⁰ In fact, TC's influence in Chile can particularly be seen in the ideas that were developed there which, through Chileans who studied at the college and returned to Chile, permeated in the country during the first part of the 20th century, such as gender equality as a basic tenet; the importance of education as a vehicle for social mobility; the relevance of considering material conditions available when designing and implementing public policies on education (a direct inheritance of the New School movement) and putting students at the center when developing educational strategies, rather than placing the focus on teachers or on abstract educational philosophies. Some of these ideas are still valid a century later, which demonstrates how visionary the professors were of

those who brought TC knowledge to Chile. But it also shows that there are challenges that still need to be overcome to maximize the performance of Chilean educational systems and, judging on its past performance, Teachers College will have a key role to play in this new educational era.

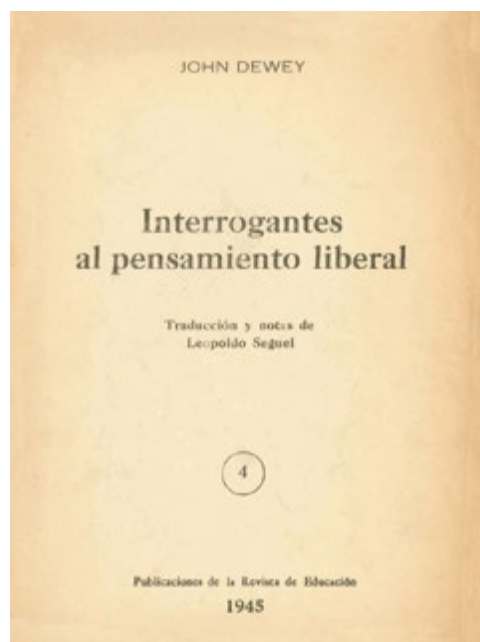
In 1945, Leopoldo Seguel, who graduated from Teachers College in 1942, translated and published one of John Dewey's works about the crisis of education using a liberal philosophical approach.

Source: John Dewey, "Interrogantes al Pensamiento Liberal," tr. Leopoldo Seguel, *Revista de Educación* 4 (1945): 5-10.

⁶⁸ Iván Núñez, "Profesores y Estado: Formación Docente, Condición Funcionaria y Consolidación del Gremio Como Actor Político (1930-1964)," in *Historia de la Educación en Chile (1810-2010). Tomo II. La Educación Nacional (1880-1930)*, ed. Sol Serrano, Macarena Ponce and Francisca Rengifo (Santiago: Taurus 2012), 246.

⁶⁹ Dewey is often singled out as the most influential educational figure of that era. However, in Chile, teachers also followed other romantic educational reformers, as well as scientific ones such as like Montessori, observing also trends from France, Austria, and Germany. See Soto Roa, *Historia de la Educación*, 45.

⁷⁰ Jaime Caiceo Escudero, "Génesis y Desarrollo de la Pedagogía de Dewey en Chile," *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 3 n°2 (2016): 132.



Escobedo attended TC between 1905 and 1906. There, she trained in educational psychology and modern educational trends under professors Edward Thorndike and Frank McMurry.

Source: "Escobedo, Margarita 1930,"
Fotografía Patrimonial Museo Histórico Nacional.



Portrait of Aída Parada. Between 1927 and 1930 Parada attended TC, where she studied under the guidance of John Dewey, graduating with both a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Arts in Elementary Education.

Source: Flora de Oliveira Lima, "The First Conference of the Inter-American Commission of Women," *Bulletin of the Pan American Union*, n°84 (April 1930): 410.





Juan Asenjo, Pedro Pablo Rosso, Giorgio Solimano:

Three Eminent Chileans that
Left their Mark at Columbia

By Kristina Kim and Christian Molinari

Amsterdam Avenue,
Morningside Heights campus
of Columbia University.



Source: Columbia University
Photo Library.

Throughout the history of Columbia University, over 500 Chileans have passed through the halls of this renowned New York institution of higher learning. But not all of them were students; some arrived as fully formed professionals and actually taught and continued their research at the University, leaving their mark in their respective areas of study.

The following paper tells the story of three distinguished Chileans who imparted knowledge at Columbia, based on interviews the author held with each of them: Juan Asenjo, whose studies focused on chemical engineering and biotechnology, especially concerning the applications of enzymes and proteins; Giorgio Solimano, who researched and was a proponent for nutrition and public health, and continues to advocate for human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean; and Pedro Pablo Rosso, whose research concentrated around fetal growth, maternal nutrition, and the placental transfer of nutrients.

This paper does not intend to review all of the myriad academic achievements of these three distinguished Chileans; rather, it proposes to provide a glimpse of their lives during their time at Columbia while also making mention of the significant advances they made in their respective areas of study that not only benefited Columbia University, and Chile upon their return, but the world over.

Juan Asenjo

The Marriage of Chemistry and Biotechnology to Solve Real-Life Issues

Asenjo studied Chemical Engineering at Universidad de Chile, graduating in 1974. He then moved to England to complete a Master's degree at University of Leeds, followed by a PhD at University College London, obtained at the end of 1978.

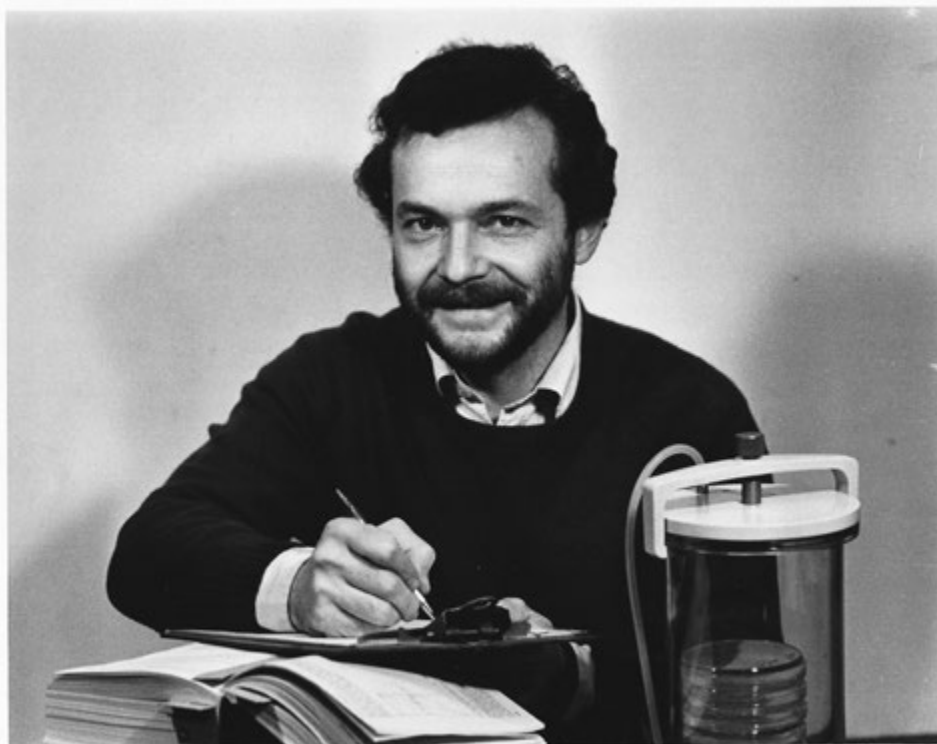
When returning to England from Chile for his wedding in August 1979, Asenjo took advantage of the layover in the United States to participate in an Enzyme Engineering Conference in Henniker, New Hampshire, where he met Professor Harry Gregor from Columbia's School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS). Gregor, the lead chemist and authority on ion exchange and membrane separation technology at the time, was elated to hear that Asenjo had earned his PhD in Biochemical Engineering under the guidance of Malcolm Lilly, a specialist in microbial enzymes and who is considered a pioneer in biotechnology.

Impressed by Asenjo's background, Gregor encouraged him to apply for a position at Columbia SEAS' Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry Department. Asenjo interviewed with the Department Head at the time, Edward Leonard, and was offered an assistant professorship at the University.



Portrait of Juan Asenjo.

Source, "Juan Asenjo: El permanente asombro de descubrir," *Facultad de Ciencias Físicas y Matemáticas Universidad de Chile Website*, March 28, 2018.



Juan Asenjo during his
years at Columbia SEAS'
Department of Chemical
Engineering and
Applied Chemistry.

Source: Courtesy of Juan Asenjo.

Asenjo began working at Columbia in 1980, mentoring PhD students while also teaching undergraduate and graduate chemical engineering courses. He also dedicated much of his time to research, focused primarily on enzymes, often having the opportunity to consult with companies that were working on various applications of enzymes. Most notably, he and his colleagues wrote a patent on enzymes that made holes in the walls of yeast cells, which was significant as those yeast cells were used in a potential AIDS vaccine.

“The biggest lesson I learned from my peers at Columbia was that the quality of work is far more important than the quantity of work.”

His team also developed an efficient method to extract the particles from inside yeast cells (necessary for the development of vaccines), as well as techniques for enzymes to degrade cellulose

in the production of fuels, and systems to turn cellulose sugars into ethanol and citric acid. Further, he pioneered the establishment of an expert system to purify proteins more efficiently. At the time, many biotech companies, were relying on drawn-out procedures to purify proteins, which greatly encumbered their goals of producing recombinant insulin –standard treatment for patients with type 1 and advanced type 2 diabetes– and vaccines.

Asenjo’s expert system served as the gateway to the development of an all-original, coherent method of rationally purifying proteins.

When inquired about his most distinguished publication, Asenjo mentions a paper on methane transformation that he and a PhD student wrote in 1986. It describes the transformation of methane (CH₄) - a natural gas that is primarily utilized as fuel to produce heat and generate electricity - into a carbon source that can be used in fermentation. Despite being written in 1986, the paper is still referred to in scientific literature today because it includes a model of the metabolism that generates Polyhydroxybutyrate (PHB), a biodegradable plastic that is produced by having bacteria grow on methane. The inclusion and discussion of this model were an incredible feat at the time, as there was a lack of widespread recognition and awareness of environmentally friendly materials.

Asenjo's classroom and research diligence and zeal did not go unrecognized by academia. Not only was he invited to give seminars at other prestigious US universities like Cornell, University of Pennsylvania, and UC Berkeley, but he was also promoted to Associate Professor after just four years at Columbia, rather than the standard six.

Despite his individual efforts, however, Asenjo credits his achievements primarily to Columbia and his peers at the school. He believes that regardless of the strong competition, Columbia truly channeled his ambition in a positive direction and motivated him to pursue his academic goals wholeheartedly, concentrating on what is consequential and relevant in his studies. "The biggest lesson I learned from my peers at Columbia was that the quality of work is far more important than the quantity of work," he says.

Furthermore, Asenjo was deeply impressed by the open-mindedness and the level of trust among Columbia faculty. Every professor in the Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry Department held a master key to where all the offices and labs were located, thus having access to any office or laboratory in the department and demonstrating the deep level of trust expected from and afforded to each department member. For Asenjo, this was but one manifestation of Columbia's liberal and forward-looking culture for its time.

His time at Columbia was not restricted solely to classrooms and labs, however. He was able to build special bonds with his colleagues both within and outside his department. Every year, he invited all his colleagues, students, and post-doctorates to a party at his house. Among his most remarkable and memorable colleagues is Cyril M. Harris, Professor of Acoustics at Columbia. Being an acclaimed expert on Roman theaters all around the Mediterranean, he was specially requested to enhance the acoustics of the Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center (the concert hall, currently named David Geffen Hall is located in Manhattan's Upper West Side and is home to the New York Philharmonic). Other notable colleagues include Jordan Spencer, Special Lecturer in Chemical Engineering and currently Professor Emeritus, Chemical Engineering-Applied Chemistry; Harry Gregor, Columbia chemist and a leading authority on ion exchange and

Graduate students at Asenjo's New York home. From left to right: Jean Hunter, Barbara Andrews (and young Daniel Asenjo), Julie Suk, Jeff Enzminger and Juan Asenjo.

Source: Courtesy of Juan Asenjo.

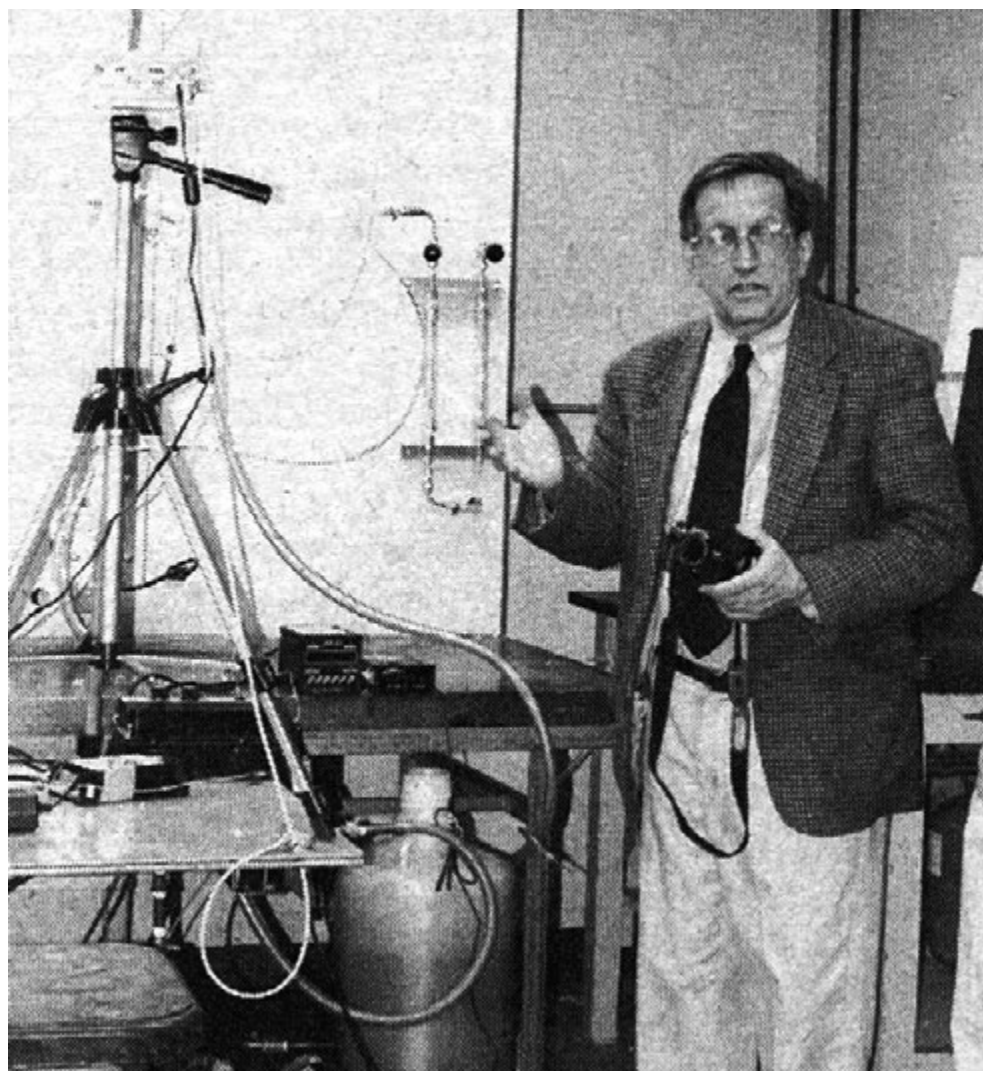


Former Research Assistant and Ph.D. student Barbara Andrews, and Asenjo's first son, Daniel.

Source: Courtesy of Juan Asenjo.

membrane separation technology; Edward Leonard, Professor of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering at SEAS; and George Prokopakis, Professor of Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry. Asenjo cherished everyone he met at Columbia as a valuable role model and friend, and the bonds that he formed with them encouraged him to continue the tradition of the annual party wherever he lived, be that in England or Chile.

Outside of Columbia, Asenjo immersed himself in all that New York City had to offer. “From museums to ballet and operas, I was grateful that I could be in the city where it seemed to be all happening,” he notes. His favorite performance at the Metropolitan Opera was *L’elisir d’amore* by Donizetti, performed by Luciano Pavarotti, and



Jordan Spencer,
Former Special Lecturer
in Chemical Engineering
and current Professor
Emeritus at SEAS.

Source: Ariele Morkovitz,
“Learning Over
a Distance, Experiments Can
Now Be Conducted Over the
World Wide Web,” *Columbia
Spectator*, Volume CXXIII,
Number 42, March 31, 1999, 3.

¹ "Juan Asenjo De Leuze De Lancizolle. Premio Nacional de Ciencias Aplicadas y Tecnológicas 2004," *Universidad de Chile Website*

also watching ballet by Mikhail Baryshnikov. He also frequented the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Cloisters. As a lover of music and a beginner trumpet and clarinet player himself, Asenjo was also ecstatic to witness Benny Goodman, a renowned American jazz clarinetist, receive an honorary degree from Columbia at a graduation ceremony.

For Asenjo, Columbia was a place of both academic and personal growth. His academic accomplishments during his time there served as the basis for his future studies, and the connections made with colleagues at the school helped him form the belief that colleagues are the best role models and friends.

In 1986, Asenjo moved back to England to create and organize the Biochemical Engineering Laboratory at the University of Reading. In 1995, he returned to Chile to create the PhD in Biotechnology program at Universidad de Chile's School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and the Center for Biochemical Engineering and Biotechnology, which started with three scientists he brought with him from England and two

PhD students that came to Reading for a year and a half to be trained in all the advanced techniques at his laboratory. By then his Reading Laboratory had achieved widespread prestige in Europe.

In 2004 he was awarded Chile's National Prize for Applied and Technological Sciences,¹ and between 2010 and 2016 he was elected president of the Chilean Academy of Sciences. Between 2013 and 2019 he was elected co-chair of IANAS, the InterAmerican Network of Academies of Science, a position he held together with Mike Clegg, Foreign Officer of the US National Academy of Sciences, and in 2018, he was

Harry Gregor is among Asenjo's most notable colleagues during his six years at Columbia.

Source: Bob Nelson, "Chemist Harry P. Gregor Dies at 81," *University Record*, Volume 23, Number 23, May 20, 1998, 10.





From left to right: Former PhD student Jean Hunter (now an Associate Professor in the Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University), Juan Asenjo, Professor Ulrich Stimming, and Professor George Prokopakis.

Source: Courtesy of Juan Asenjo.

elected a member of the US National Academy of Engineering thanks to his contributions to protein separations and to his biotechnology research, development, and entrepreneurship in Chile.²

Besides the achievements recognized by Asenjo himself, some of his more widely regarded scientific contributions relate to three international patents on novel cold-active enzymes from Antarctica for the development of laundry detergents that can work at low temperatures, thereby driving energy savings as households are able to wash with cold rather than hot water, and also with applications in medicine and biofuels.³ He also developed a vaccine designed to make people feel nauseous upon consumption of alcohol, expected to help against alcoholism.⁴

² "Professor Juan A. Asenjo," *National Academy of Engineering Website*.

³ "Juan Asenjo, Premio Nacional de Ciencias Aplicadas 2004: 'Las Algas son Recursos Naturales Poco Explotados'," *Aqua*, April 8, 2004.

⁴ John Lavitt, "Alcohol Vaccine: A True Advance in the Treatment of Alcoholism?," *Recovery View*, November 4, 2013.

Giorgio Solimano

A Champion of Public Health, Nutrition and Human Rights

Before leaving Chile to become a research associate at the Department of Nutrition at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Solimano was imprisoned for six months following the military coup in September 1973. He was tortured and interrogated for having worked for Chile's Ministry of Health in Chile during the government of President Salvador Allende.

Thankfully, many notable public health scholars in the US, including Professors Nevin Scrimshaw from MIT and Myron Winick from the Institute of Human Nutrition at Columbia University, placed great pressure on the Chilean regime to release Solimano and were able to free him, at which point he moved to the United States. In September 1976, after two years at MIT, Solimano moved to New York as an associate professor at the Institute of Human Nutrition at Columbia, where he would teach and continue his research on public health nutrition.

During Solimano's 12 years at Columbia, he devoted himself to the Institute of Human Nutrition and the Center for Population and

Family Health at the Mailman School of Public Health. As a faculty member of both departments, Solimano taught numerous health science courses and undertook multiple research projects, spanning a myriad of topics ranging in substance and



Giorgio Solimano.

Source: Source: Felipe Ramírez, "Medio Litro de Leche para Todos los Chilenos: La Historia de una Política Pública que se Extiende por más de Cuatro Décadas," *Universidad de Chile Website*, March 26, 2019.

geography. They included: mortality from diarrhea in Cuba, low birth weight in New York City, the influence of early malnutrition on subsequent behavioral development in Barbadian children, as well as studies on malnutrition in Chile before the 1973 military coup.

In fact, before leaving the country, under the government of Allende's Unidad Popular (UP) coalition, Solimano worked at the National Health Service (SNS per the acronym in Spanish) and was responsible for implementing the Medio Litro de Leche (Half Liter of Milk) program to combat malnutrition in Chile. Under the program, all children under 15 years of age, as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women, benefited from one of the UP's most emblematic public policies. At the end of the 1960s, malnutrition was endemic in Chile, affecting people's livelihood and economic and intellectual development. By 1970, 650,000 people were receiving free milk, most of them children, and this figure jumped to 3.6 million by 1973. The measure made it possible to "combat poor nutrition that produced serious levels of malnutrition, affecting children's growth and learning," says Solimano, adding that milk was chosen because it was widely available, and its consumption was an already established habit in the population.

The measure had nearly immediate effect: if in January 1971 60% of children under two years of age admitted to Santiago's Roberto del Río public hospital presented some degree of malnutrition, by June of the same year that figure had dropped to 12%.⁵ Such was the success that the program continued during the Pinochet dictatorship and is still in place to this day.

Before joining the government, he studied subjects such as alteration of local immunity in malnourished children, use of chickpea formula in feeding infants with prolonged diarrhea associated with severe malnutrition, and levels of disaccharidases in the intestinal mucosa of infants with severe protein-calorie malnutrition.

While at Columbia University, in addition to conducting research, Solimano served as a public health advisor to the governments of Argentina, Panama, and Peru and became a member of prominent US academic societies, including the National Academy of Science and the American Public Health Association. "I was able to work as an

⁵ Ramírez, "Medio Litro de Leche."



Solimano led Chile's National Milk Program during the Allende government.

Source: "¿Por qué el Medio Litro de Leche?",
Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.

advisor to the Pan American Health Organization and UNICEF, and I was recruited because these governments wanted to know about the Chilean experience, in order to implement similar programs to face the nutritional and health problems they had,” he says.

Furthermore, as much as he was involved in the study of public health policies, Solimano was equally invested in human rights activism. With the approval and support of Alfred Stepan, then Dean at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Solimano and his colleagues spearheaded the founding of the Social Policy Center for Latin America as a joint endeavor among the Institute of Human Nutrition, the Mailman School of Public Health, and SIPA. As the primary director of the Center, along with a colleague from the School of Urban Studies, Solimano pivoted his work to focus on consultancy work in Latin America and the attraction of Latin American students to Columbia University.

“I had a very intense schedule. I collaborated with Amnesty International and participated in their activities, including as a speaker. I participated in a human rights organization called Chile Democrático [an international organization that advocated for the return of democracy during



Giorgio Solimano in 1991.

Source: Patricia Verdugo, "Doctor Giorgio Solimano y su Prisión en Tejas Verdes. Entre la Miseria y el Asombro," *Revista Apsi*, May-June 1991, 39.

the dictatorship], and we organized the Pablo Neruda Cultural Center, which held numerous events. We brought [musical performers] Inti-Illimani, Quilapayún, El Temucano, Isabel Aldunate, los Hermanos Parra, Patricio Manns, Piojo Salinas, Payo Grondona and other artists to the US. It goes without saying that the proceeds from these acts were sent to Chile to help the victims of the dictatorship and their families,” he says.

In addition to being an active member of Chile Democrático, Solimano later became a member of the board at America’s Watch, an international human rights organization. As he undertook such endeavors, he was

“I consider raising awareness of the public health issues in Latin America and the Caribbean to be one of my greatest achievements at Columbia.”

grateful for the full support he received from Columbia, including President Michael I. Sovern and other prominent faculty members.

“I participated in several rallies,” Solimano adds. “We held a big, noisy pot-banging march in 1983 or 1984 that went through downtown Manhattan with a large crowd and were well guarded by the police. We also ran a campaign denouncing torture in Chile. We were successful, as it was covered in the New York Times, while former detainees and tortured people were interviewed on TV, with [reporting] teams sent to Israel and California to obtain these testimonies. That exposure impacted millions of people.”

Solimano was and continues to be an avid advocate of public health and human rights, and “I consider raising awareness of the public health issues in Latin America and the Caribbean to be one of my greatest achievements at Columbia,” he says. During his 12 years at the University, he was able to successfully attract the interest of faculty members and graduate students to the health and nutrition issues in Latin American countries where inequality was (and continues to be) prevalent. Solimano’s efforts influenced not only the Columbia community; they also reached diverse academic spheres through scientific publications and seminars. These accomplishments are a few of the reasons why he was promoted to full professorship after only four years at Columbia, forming part of the leadership at both the Institute of Human Nutrition and the Center for Population and Family Health.

Team Begins Cuba Project

Columbia has received a \$284,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to study Cuba's success in reducing infant mortality rates from diarrheal diseases, the principal killer of young children in the world.

A team of four health experts from Columbia, led by Giorgio Solimano, professor of public health and nutrition in the School of Public Health and the Institute of Human Nutrition, will perform the three-year study with a team of four scientists from Cuba, led by José A. Gutierrez Muñiz, former Minister of Health. Each team includes pediatricians, epidemiologists and statisticians. They will measure the relative contribution of medical and non-medical interventions to the decline of mortality in children who died of infectious diarrheal diseases over a ten-year period in eight provinces in Cuba.

"For infants up to one month old," explains Solimano, "mortality is affected most strongly by prenatal factors and medical conditions at birth. But for infants between the ages of one and twelve months, the mortality rate is strongly affected by environmental factors other than the place and time of delivery." The Columbia and Cuban teams will attempt to pinpoint which factors (such as demographic variables related to women's reproductive history and family structure, changes in health services, educational opportunities and standards of living) are responsible for the country's dramatic reduction in infant deaths from diarrheal diseases.

"We devised and developed this project with the full participation of the Cuban researchers," says Solimano. "At Columbia we are very interested in learning how relevant the improvements in Cuba's health program might be to other countries. Although not an industrialized country, Cuba has greatly improved the health status of its population over a short period of time. Perhaps some of their approaches could be applied in other developing countries."



Giorgio Solimano

"Our Cuban co-workers," he continues, "know that much work still remains to be done in their own country. They want to assess the relative impact on infant mortality of the different social and economic changes, including health and educational programs, which have been implemented over the past 20 years. A collaboration with Columbia University is considered important to accomplish this."

Diarrhea kills about five million children in the world each year, says James P. Grant, executive director of UNICEF. It is the first or second most common cause of infant death in most Latin American countries, where it claims the lives of approximately 300,000 children each year.

Work on the project has begun. The Columbia team includes Solimano; Nigel Paneth, assistant professor of epidemiology and pediatrics at the Gertrude S. Sergievsky Center; Mervyn Susser, the Gertrude S. Sergievsky Professor of Epidemiology and director of the Sergievsky Center, Faculty of Medicine, and Sara Santana, doctoral candidate in epidemiology and project coordinator.

Starting in 1983 and for three years, Solimano led a team of Columbia experts that researched Cuba's success in reducing infant mortality from diarrheal diseases. .

Source: Source: "Team Begins Cuba Project," *University Record*, Volume 8, Number 18, February 4, 1983, 6.

6 "Giorgio Solimano Cantuarias," *Escuela de Salud Pública Universidad de Chile Website*.

Solimano remembers New York as a city full of life. As a former basketball player and an avid fan of the sport, he comments that there is "no better place to watch NBA games" than New York. He also attended concerts regularly in the city, but laments that "it is simply impossible to list all the locations with incredible music in New York." He still remembers colleagues such as Nevin Scrimshaw, Myron Winick, Allan Rosenfield, Stephen Isaacs, Jonathan Fine, Mervin Susser, Victor Seidel, Jack Geiger and others as some of his dearest friends, most of them colleagues at Columbia University or Human Rights advocates, and he misses his neighbors both at the main campus and the local Cuban and Dominican restaurants in Morningside Heights.

Solimano decided to return to Chile in 1988 to be closer to his family and participate more directly in the fight for human rights, assuming as one of the board members of the Chilean Commission on Human Rights.

Despite the more than 8,000 kilometers that separated Santiago and New York, he would maintain strong ties with the University, becoming an advisory board member of the Columbia Global Centers | Santiago. He served for a twelve-year tenure after being appointed the Universidad de Chile's Director of the School of Public Health in 1999, after which he was named a Visiting Professor at the Mailman School of Public Health between 2013 and 2018. He has collaborated with Columbia for several years in different capacities, undertaking joint projects.

Solimano remains a full professor at Universidad de Chile to this day. Besides the previously mentioned positions he held, he was the Ministry of Health's Planning and Budget Division Head in 1990-1991. In recent years he has served in important positions at Universidad de Chile, the last one as Director of Strategic Planning in 2014-2018, being a member of the University Council on behalf of the President of the Republic from 2007 to 2010 and a member of the University Senate. He was a member of the School of Medicine's Board and Head of Universidad de Chile's Global Health Program from 2011 to 2018.⁶

"I cherish my 12 years at Columbia dearly and am grateful that I can continue my academic endeavors and engage more directly in greater missions back home in Chile," he says.

It was in fact in New York that Solimano met back up with a fellow Chilean and the third subject of this paper, Pedro Rosso. "My relationship



From left to right:
Professor Stephen Isaacs,
Denise Pascal, Giorgio
Solimano, Professor Mervin
Susser, Professor Zena
Stein, colleague (name
unknown), and Ava Swartz
Isaacs in New York.

Source: Courtesy of
Giorgio Solimano.

with Pedro began when he was a medical student, demonstrating an interest in child nutrition at the Roberto del Río hospital where I was the head of the Nutrition Unit,” Solimano says.

The two established a scientific collaboration agreement with the group led by Myron Winick, professor at Cornell University at the time, to research on the effects of childhood malnutrition on brain growth, and which led Rosso to move to the US to work with Winick (see next chapter).

“In July 1974, after six months in prison, I traveled to the United States to join MIT as an associate researcher and Pedro greeted me at the New York airport, a warm reunion after several years. Two years later, after I accepted a position at Columbia’s Institute of Human Nutrition, and as colleagues we shared several years teaching and researching at the institute – beautiful and fruitful years of friendship and academic coexistence,” Solimano said.

Pedro Pablo Rosso

Groundbreaking Research on Pediatric Nutrition and Brain Growth

Pedro Rosso's ties with Columbia began rather unexpectedly during his postdoctoral fellowship studying Growth, Child Development and Nutrition at the Department of Pediatrics of Cornell University's Medical College under Dr. Myron Winick. When the latter decided to transfer from Cornell to Columbia, he invited Rosso to join him, to which he agreed, thus beginning a twelve-year stint at Columbia's Pediatrics Department.

Between 1972 and 1984 Rosso was based at the Institute of Human Nutrition, directed by Winick, where he started off as an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, working his way up to tenure as Associate Professor. His research at Columbia focused on fetal growth, maternal nutrition, and the placental transfer of nutrients. Unprecedented evidence from South Africa made available at the time, showed that early malnutrition could affect brain growth and consequently people's IQ, and consequently academics were particularly focused on researching the relationship between nutrition and brain development. Although Rosso was completing his residency in pediatrics in Chile

during the time Winick was directing his study on the effect of early malnutrition in rats, they later published several papers together. In fact, one of Rosso's very first publications, "The Effect of Severe Early Malnutrition on Cellular Growth of Human Brain,"



Pedro Rosso worked at Columbia's Institute of Human Nutrition between 1972 and 1984.

Source: "Rector Rosso," Flickr Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

was written together with Winick. It was published in 1969 in *Pediatric Research* -a monthly peer-reviewed medical journal and the official publication of the American Pediatric Society, the European Society for Paediatric Research, and the Society for Pediatric Research- and is still cited to date. “This study ... establishes that cell division is curtailed in human brain by severe early malnutrition. The data provides yet another link in the ever-lengthening chain of evidence linking malnutrition to faulty brain growth and development,” it reads.⁷

During his time at Columbia, Rosso became Chief of the Division of Growth and Development at the Institute of Human Nutrition and also director of the PhD program in Nutritional Biochemistry.

Rosso vividly remembers his life outside of school in New York as well. Upon his arrival in the city, he lived in the Cornell University medical school housing on East 68th Street and York Avenue

until moving to one of Columbia’s three towers on 100 Haven Avenue. “I absolutely adored my apartment on the 26th floor of the third tower, with a gorgeous view overlooking the Hudson River, George Washington Bridge, and the Palisades,” he says.

Rosso also keenly sought out opportunities for further cultural endeavors throughout his busy academic career. He would frequent the Museum of Natural History, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Frick collection with his children. For Rosso, it was immensely important that they also learnt while engaging in entertaining activities. Thus, during weekends, he and his family went to not only museums, but also parks, operas, musicals and plays. In addition, Rosso traveled outside of the city at least once a month to give lectures at different universities. His favorite location was Montreal; he would schedule his lectures for Friday mornings so that he and his family could spend the weekend exploring the city. “My children, who were five and ten years old⁸ at the time, still happily remember the family trips to this day,” he says.

The city also posed some dangers at times, however, and Rosso always stayed vigilant of his surroundings lest he encounter a robbery. When returning home late from school, he kept only one 20-dollar bill in his

“I credit my time at Columbia for the exposure to great interpersonal dynamics and work ethics that helped me understand the qualities of an outstanding academic institution.”

⁷ Myron Winick & Pedro Rosso, “The Effect of Severe Early Malnutrition on Cellular Growth of Human Brain,” *Pediatric Research* 3 (March 1969): 181-184.

⁸ Rosso had two children at the time; a third would come later.

Pediat. Res. 3: 181-184 (1969)

Brain cells
central nervous system
fetus

malnutrition
neurochemistry
newborn infant

The Effect of Severe Early Malnutrition on Cellular Growth of Human Brain

MYRON WINICK^[12] and PEDRO ROSSO

Department of Pediatrics, Cornell University Medical College, New York, N.Y., USA;
and University of Chile, Santiago, Chile

Extract

In ten 'normal' brains, obtained from well-nourished Chilean children who died accidentally, weight, protein, and DNA and RNA content were all normal when compared with those values derived from similar children in the United States. Table I demonstrates the values obtained in these children. In nine infants who died of severe malnutrition during the first year of life, there was a proportional reduction in weight, protein, and RNA and DNA content. The actual values for these determinations are given in table II. The number of cells was reduced but the weight or protein per cell was unchanged. Three infants who weighed less than 2,000 grams at birth (Infants 2, 3, and 4, table II) were the most severely affected. These data are similar to previous data in animals and demonstrate that in children, severe early malnutrition can result in curtailment of the normal increase in brain cellularity with increase in age.

Speculation

At present there is growing concern that malnutrition early in life may retard normal development. Studies conducted in Africa, in South America, in Mexico, in Guatemala, and in our own country suggest that this is true. Retarded brain growth has also been suspected in malnourished children. The decreased head circumference often noted has been cited as evidence for retardation in brain growth. Although numerous chemical changes secondary to undernutrition have been shown in brain of animals, similar studies have not been available in human brain. This study demonstrates such changes and establishes that cell division is curtailed in human brain by severe early malnutrition. The data provide yet another link in the ever lengthening chain of evidence linking malnutrition to faulty brain growth and development.

Introduction

Total content of DNA reflects cell number in any organ made up primarily of diploid cells [2]. Although some tetraploidy has been reported in brain [5], the overwhelming majority of both neurones and glia are diploid. Total brain DNA reflects the total number of brain cells, and the ratio of protein to DNA or that of

RNA to DNA reflects the average amount of protein or RNA per cell.

In rats, malnutrition at a time when brain cells are actively dividing curtails cell division and results in an ultimate reduction in total brain cell number [13]. This reduction in cell number will occur if the rats are malnourished from birth or if their mothers are malnourished during pregnancy [17], and will persist even

12 Pediat. Res., Vol. 3, No. 2 (1969)

One of Rosso's first publications (co-authored with Myron Winick) featured in a 1969 edition of the official journal of the American Pediatric Society. The paper provided evidence that related early malnutrition to faulty brain growth and development.



After 12 years at Columbia, Pedro Rosso returned to Chile in 1984. Prior to his departure, a farewell party was held in his honor at the Institute of Human Nutrition's Library.



Top left: Pedro Rosso and his assistant, Ms. Sally Silver.

Bottom left: Myron Winick, director of Columbia's Institute of Human Nutrition between 1971 and 1988.

Bottom right: Pedro Rosso and Myron Winick.

Source: Courtesy of Pedro Rosso.

pocket and the rest of his cash in the bottom of his shoe. Rosso jokes with an air of seriousness, “I would sprint from 168th and Fort Washington Avenue to the George Washington bus terminal to catch the bus home.”

Rosso’s fears were not unfounded. One time, someone broke into the trunk of his car and stole a briefcase that contained a draft paper he had been hoping to publish. Drafts were commonly written on yellow pads at the time, so he was devastated by what the robbery meant in terms of lost time, dedication and work. “About 10 days later, while on the subway, I saw the person sitting next to me reading that exact paper! But the stranger only had three or four pages and claimed that he bought the pages from a homeless person for a few cents. Although very upsetting at the time, looking back, I can now say this incident was the most incredible event that has ever happened to me,” he recalls.

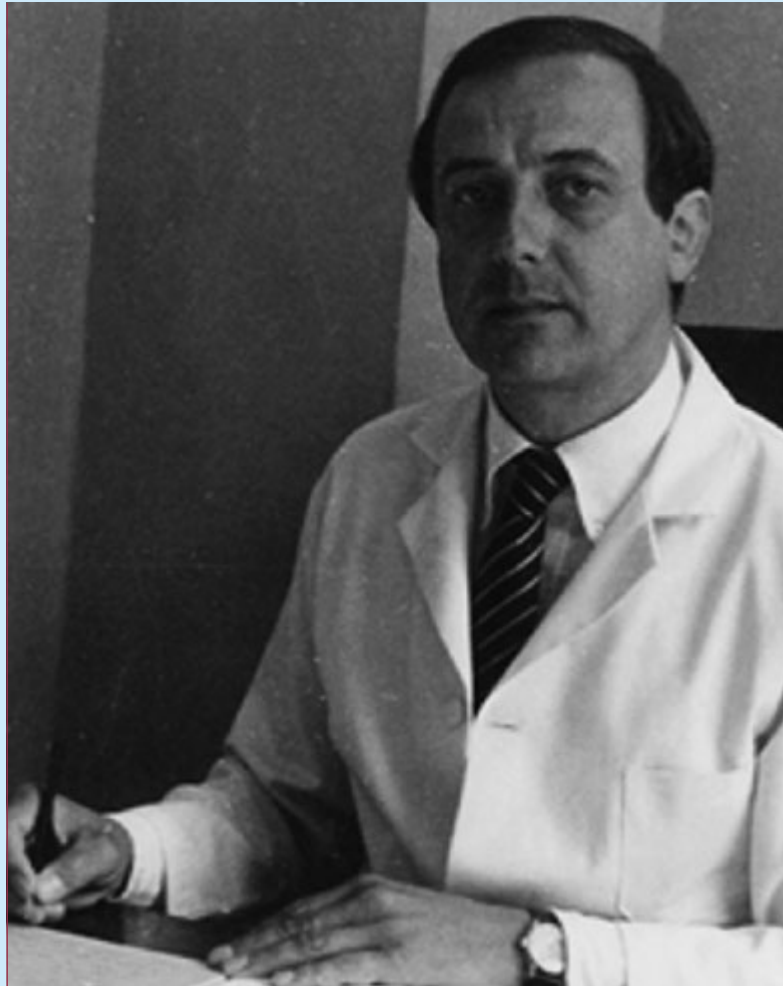
As much as he loved the city, Rosso decided to return to Chile in 1984 to be closer to his parents, who were beginning to age. He and his family returned to Santiago before his children entered college, as the move would be more difficult had the children started university. Despite the move, however, Rosso and his wife remain connected to New York and visit periodically.

Rosso says that his experiences at Columbia were important assets for his academic career in Chile. “I credit my time at Columbia for the exposure to great interpersonal dynamics and work ethics that helped me understand the qualities of an outstanding academic institution,” he notes. Upon his return to Chile, he joined Universidad Católica’s School of Medicine and would develop a fruitful career at that school of higher learning. In 1992 Rosso took over as Dean at the School of Medicine and served in that position for two four-year periods, after which he was appointed President of the University, remaining in the position until 2010. He was named Professor Emeritus in 2012, and currently he is executive secretary at the Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Catholic Universities.⁹

Throughout his career he received a number of awards, including the National Science Foundation’s Future Leader Award; the March of Dimes’ Agnes Higgins Award for service to the cause of improved maternal nutrition; the American Institute of Nutrition’s McCollum Award, in recognition of distinctive research in clinical nutrition; and the Special Award of the American College of Nutrition.¹⁰

⁹ “Estructura Directiva,” *Organización de Universidades Católicas de América Latina y el Caribe Website*.

¹⁰ “Pedro Rosso,” *Friends UC website*.



Rosso as Dean of Universidad Católica's School of Medicine during the 1990s.

Source: "¿Sabía Usted Qué? Dr. Pedro Pablo Rosso," *Medicina UC Website*, November 18, 2015.



Giorgio Solimano, John Coatsworth (Provost Emeritus of Columbia University and former Dean of SIPA), and Pedro Rosso during the official inauguration of the Columbia Global Centers | Santiago in March 2012.

Source: Jesús Inostroza (Photographer), Columbia Global Centers | Santiago Photo Archive.

6

The Chilean Suffragist Movement:

The Decisive Influence
of Columbia's Teachers College

By Francisca Elgueta

Chilean women
voted in a presidential election
for the first time in 1952.



Source: "Mesa de votación de mujeres en La Serena, año 1952. AMG, Fondo Olga Poblete, caja 4," *La Lucha por el Sufragio y la Conquista de Nuevos Espacios Públicos*, Archivo Nacional de Chile.

On January 8, 1949, the President of Chile, Gabriel González Videla, signed the bill granting full voting rights to Chilean women – the culmination of a heroic, historical 50-year struggle in the suffragist movement.¹ During her speech as part of a solemn act to mark the occasion, Ana Figueroa –a 1947 graduate of Columbia's Teachers College (TC) and president of the Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (Chilean Federation of Women Institutions, or FECHIF)– addressed an audience that included ministers, the president of the senate, members of the parliament, feminist leaders and others that

During the ceremony in which the female suffrage was legalized in Chile, Ana Figueroa (TC'47), president of the FECHIF said: "Paying off this internal and external debt by bringing two and a half million women in Chile into life as citizens has not been short or easy, nor is it the result of a period of isolated efforts. It is the common sum of efforts, it is the continuity of action..."

Source: "U.N. Committee Head," *The New York Times*, November 17, 1951, 4.



¹ Edda Gaviola Artigas et al, *Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones: historia del movimiento femenino chileno 1913-1952* (Santiago: Centro de Análisis y Difusión de la Condición de la Mujer, 1986), 77.

² "En acto histórico S.E. promulgará hoy ley de voto femenino," *La Nación*, January 9, 1949, 1.

³ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 78.

filled the Municipal Theater of Santiago. "Paying off this internal and external debt by bringing two and a half million women in Chile into life as citizens has not been short or easy, nor is it the result of a period of isolated efforts. It is the common sum of efforts, it is the continuity of action, it is the fire of faith lit in the spirit of some women who were passing the flame of tenacity to others," she said.²

With her words, Figueroa paid homage to all those women who had fought for female emancipation, commemorating those who began conquering public space at the end of the 19th century, obtaining the right to university education. Her words also honored those who organized the first women's labor organizations of the early 20th century, as well as the groups and clubs formed by middle- and upper-class women to discuss their situation in society. Finally, she explicitly referred to those women who from the 1920s fought for female political participation, moving towards the vindication of civil and political rights, and culminating in obtaining the right to vote.³

Some of the most prominent feminists of this period include Teachers College alumnae Amanda Labarca (TC'12), Graciela Mandujano (TC'17), Irma Salas (TC'30 and recipient of the TC Medal in 1954), Olga Poblete (TC'40), and Ana Figueroa (TC'47). They share a number of characteristics, one of the most salient being the impact that their time at Columbia University had on their ideals and their firm conviction for women's emancipation. The joint experiences of these TC alumnae are woven into the historical journey of Chilean suffragists, making apparent these luminaries' great legacy in the acquisition of political rights for all women.

Women in Chile in the 19th Century

Chilean society in the first half of the 19th century was based on a relatively hegemonic norm that came from the domain of conservative-Catholic thought.⁴ Women's place in society was reduced to the family sphere –as daughter, mother, wife– and it was in that restricted social domain where they would exercise and develop their capacities.⁵ The Political Constitution of 1833 was a symbolic structure that clearly established a woman's standing during this time. The law granted the husband broad powers over the property, body and the physical integrity of his wife, while women were barred from performing any commercial activities, unless legally and expressly authorized by the husband. In addition to this restrictive legal framework, women were prevented from voting.⁶

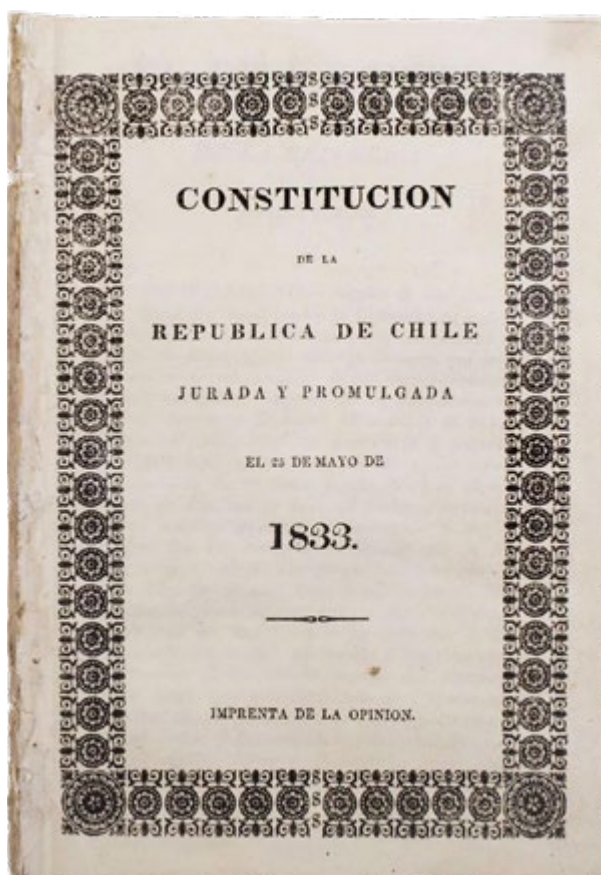
In this scenario, the slow yet sustained implementation of universal public education started to spark change. Access to education became the fundamental instrument that expanded social spheres for females. While marked by inequality, formal education would still intellectually empower women, instilling in them the thought of gaining political rights.⁷

⁴ Richard J. Evans, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America and Australia 1840-1920* (London: Crom Helm, 1977).

⁵ Erika Maza Valenzuela, *Catolicismo, anticlericalismo y extensión del sufragio a la mujer en Chile* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos, 1995): 58.

⁶ Diamela Eltit, *Crónica del Sufragio Femenino en Chile* (Servicio Nacional de la Mujer-SERNAM, 1994), 21.

⁷ Eltit, *Crónica del Sufragio Femenino*, 18.



The 1833 Constitution imposed a restrictive legal framework to Chilean women.

Source: "Constitución de la República de Chile de 1833," *Archivo Central Andrés Bello*, January 3, 2018. .

The Impact of the Global Feminist Movement

The First World War was one of the factors that had the greatest influence, albeit indirectly, in the awakening of female consciousness in Chile. In the countries involved in the conflict, men were sent off to war, and in their place, women were incorporated into productive jobs on a mass level, working in various areas such as commerce and industry, and taking on jobs as barbers, loaders, mechanics, and weapon producers, while also becoming members of non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross.⁸

The fact that women participated in areas that until then were reserved for men, led to a profound debate worldwide regarding women's legal standing, forcing countries in Europe and North America to respect their political rights. While Chile lived very tangentially through the conflict, barely incorporating women into the productive sector, the ramifications of the war were still felt. First, women in Chile increasingly began to organize charity and cultural institutions, which resulted in awakening an associative spirit in them.⁹ Second, regarding rights, the war brought to light the fact that women in other countries –including Norway, Denmark, Canada, Russia, and some US states– had already achieved the right to vote and that Chile was far behind in this matter.¹⁰

Reviewing the history of the extension of suffrage in Europe and the Americas reveals that granting women the right to vote occurred earlier in Protestant countries than in those with more Catholic foundations. The former established the female vote around the 1920s, while the latter began to grant it only in the 1930s, mostly after the Second World War.¹¹ Certain specialists on women's right to vote, such as Richard J. Evans, attribute that difference to the way in which the two religions shaped the culture and political life of each respective nation. Protestantism led to an emphasis on individual rights rather than duties and was more conducive to liberalism. On the other hand, Catholic adherents stuck to the idea that women's participation in politics was inappropriate.¹² As such, suffragists from Protestant countries became a source of inspiration for Chilean women in their struggle for emancipation.

⁸ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 28.

⁹ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 28.

¹⁰ Maza Valenzuela, "Catolicismo, anticlericalismo", 136.

¹¹ Maza Valenzuela, "Catolicismo, anticlericalismo", 138.

¹² Evans, *The Feminists*.

Columbia, Suffragettes, and Chilean Women

At the beginning of the 20th century, while in Chile women had yet to organize to claim their political rights, in the United States, feminist waves were already in the making. For more than 60 years, suffragists had been demanding the emancipation of women in the US. But progress had been painfully slow: by the spring of 1912, only five states, all on the West Coast, had given women the right to vote. However, during that decade women in the United States would see the situation change forever, with multiple demonstrations along the East Coast, where no state had approved the female vote.¹⁴

It was in this context that a number of Columbia suffragettes played a key role in the fight for women's right to vote. From Wisconsin, Crystal Eastman, a Columbia alumna from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS'04), helped organize the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). In New York, Alice Paul, a 1908 graduate from Columbia's School of Social Work (SW) and Lucy Burns (who studied at Columbia for a short period of time) campaigned for a constitutional amendment affording women the right to vote.¹⁵ Lucy Diggs Slowe (TC'15) –founding member of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the first sorority for Black university women– played an active role as an officer in the Baltimore chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and advocated for the inclusion of Black women in the suffrage movement, which had historically excluded them.¹⁶ Bettina Borrmann Wells (GSAS'15) created a stir with her more radical suffragette position and extreme tactics, arguing that “years of peaceful methods had accomplished nothing.”¹⁷ For her part, Mabel P. Lee (Barnard'17, TC'18, GSAS'21) fought for the Chinese-American right to vote. In turn, Mabel Vernon (GSAS'23), secretary of the National Woman's Party, played an important role organizing parades and receptions for the movement in different states, in order to present a petition for women's right to vote to President Woodrow Wilson. Likewise, male Columbians, including the renowned Philosophy professor John Dewey, Economics professor Vladimir Simkhovitch and the writer and activist Max Eastman (who studied Philosophy at Columbia and was

¹³ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 33.

¹⁴ Paul Hond, “How Columbia Suffragists Fought for the Right of Women to Vote,” *Columbia Magazine Website*.

¹⁵ Hond, “How Columbia Suffragists.”

¹⁶ Morgan Gilbard, “The Unsung Suffragist: Lucy Diggs Slowe, Who Studied at Teachers College, is Remembered in The New York Times,” *Teachers College Website*, October 7, 2020.

¹⁷ Hond, “How Columbia Suffragists.”

Mabel P. Lee

Source: "Dr. Mabel P. Lee,"
Library of Congress.



Lucy Diggs Slowe

Source: "Lucy Diggs Slowe,"
Wikimedia Commons.



Crystal Eastman's brother), actively supported women in their public manifestations for the right to vote.¹⁸

On October 20, 1917, in New York City, women held a march in support of a suffrage amendment to the state constitution. Later that year, New York males returned to the polls to vote on this bill that had been defeated repeatedly in the past. However, on November 6, 1917, the law passed and New York became the first eastern state the vote for women, which served to add national pressure for the federal amendment. On June 4, 1919, after decades of struggle, congress passed the 19th Amendment which guaranteed the right of US women to vote. On August 18, 1920, the states ratified the amendment by a small margin.¹⁹

It is no coincidence, then, that among the Chilean feminists most recognized for their role in obtaining civil rights for women in their country, there are five notable women who studied at Columbia University during the first half of the 20th century. The impact of these experiences was crucial to their formation. As the Chilean historian Dalmela Eltit notes: "It is during these journeys that women are confronted with the international discussion around the issue of women, in a historical moment of great effervescence in relation to the subject."²⁰ The interwoven experiences of Labarca, Mandujano, Salas, Poblete, and Figueroa, form a significant part in the history of the women's suffragist and feminist movement in Chile.

¹⁸ Hond, "How Columbia Suffragists."

¹⁹ Hond, "How Columbia Suffragists."

²⁰ Eltit, *Crónica del Sufragio Femenino*, 20.



After the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that allowed female suffrage was approved in June 2019, 26 million women were eligible to vote in the 1920 presidential election.

Source: Source: Kim Bubello, "See Vintage Pictures of Female Voters in the Early Years of Suffrage," *Time Magazine*, November 3, 2016.

From Reading Circles to Modifying the Civil Code

²¹ Eltit, *Crónica del Sufragio Femenino*, 22

²² A. Guil Bozal & S. Vera Gil, "Amanda Labarca, pionera de la educación y la política de las mujeres en Chile," *Revista Historia de la Educación Colombiana*, 13 (2010): 46.

Women's struggles to conquer public space began in Chile at the end of the 19th century, when a group of well-known educators began to question the marginalization of women in higher education. In response to this pressure, on February 6, 1877, a decree known as the Decreto Amunátegui (named after its signee, Miguel Luis Amunátegui, Minister of Justice and Public Instruction) was issued, enabling women to enter college.²¹ At the same time, the first workers' unions composed exclusively of women were formed. Middle –and upper–class women also organized in solidarity to address their condition, giving rise in the 1910s to a series of groups and clubs that, while not outright feminist or suffragist, emphasized women's rights to freedom, culture and education.²² These organizations would later evolve to become the first feminist movements in the struggle for Chilean women's civil rights.

The founder of the first *Círculo de Lectura* (which emulated the Reading Circles in the US), and without a doubt one of the most recognized feminists in the history of Chile, was Amanda Labarca. Born

into a humble family in Santiago in 1887, Labarca completed her studies in education in 1905 at a time when the first professional women were being formed, despite the fact that more than 25 years had passed since the issuing



Portrait of Amanda Labarca.

Source: "Distinción universitaria. Profesora Kemy Oyarzún se adjudicó la Condecoración al mérito Amanda Labarca," *Universidad de Chile*, July 26, 2021.

of the Decreto Amunátegui.²³ Labarca's first year of studies was difficult. The fact that she had to be accompanied by a chaperone every time she attended college bothered her tremendously, and the following year she announced that she would not accept being sent to college with a chaperone.²⁴ Her family acquiesced, and she was allowed to attend school by herself.

After working at a normal school in Santiago and taking part in the foundation of the Sociedad Nacional de Profesores (National Teachers Association), in 1910 she traveled with her husband to the United States, where she studied at Columbia University's Teachers College. John Dewey was one of her professors, and exerted great influence on her political-educational stance and practice, as can be observed, for example, in her idea that by reinforcing education, democracy would be reinforced. "Democracy is cooperation and not subjugation"²⁵ she stated, emphasizing: "The work of the republic should tend more and more to the incorporation into true democracy, of the greatest number of men and women, enabling them to understand the vital problems of the country and take part in [solving] them."²⁶ Likewise, Dewey's support of the feminist movement in New York undoubtedly marked her time while at Columbia. In 1912 she traveled to France where she continued her studies at the University of La Sorbonne.²⁷

The impact that these experiences abroad had on Labarca's beliefs regarding women in society began to manifest itself as soon as she returned to Chile in 1915. That year she began a series of lectures at Universidad de Chile on the difference that existed between the role of women in Chile and their peers in the United States and Europe. That same year, inspired by the Reading Circles of the United States, she formed the *Círculo de Lectura Femenino* (Women's Reading Circle), a center of education for the development and formation of Chilean women coming from all social classes. This marked a radical change in feminist movements in Chile. Until then, women were grouped around charitable work in organizations such as the Red Cross or the Fundación Gota de Leche, which helped those most in need. Also, the *Círculo de Lectura Femenino* strove to further women's cultural education on contemporary issues through talks and conferences. These meetings were attended by women belonging to Santiago's middle –and upper– class sectors.²⁸

²³ Emma Salas, *Amanda Labarca: dos dimensiones de la personalidad de una visionaria mujer chilena* (Santiago: Ediciones Mar del Plata, 1996), 20.

²⁴ Salas, *Amanda Labarca: dos dimensiones*, 20.

²⁵ Amanda Labarca, *Feminismo Contemporáneo* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Zig-Zag, 1947), 144.

²⁶ Amanda Labarca, *¿A Dónde va la Mujer?* (Santiago, Chile: Editorial Extra, 1934), 52.

²⁷ "Amanda Labarca: Educadora, Feminista y Embajadora Chilena," *Revista de Educación* Website, April 12, 2016.

²⁸ Felicitas Klimpel, *La mujer chilena (el aporte femenino al progreso de Chile) 1910-1960* (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1962), 150.

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Nº 517

Vina del Mar, febrero 6 de 1877.

Nº 517 Considerando:

1º Que conviene estimular a las mujeres a que hagan estudios serios i sólidos;

2º Que ellas puedan ejercer con ventaja algunas de las profesiones denominadas científicas; i

3º Que importa facilitarles los medios de que puedan ganar la subsistencia por sí mismas.

Decreto:

Se declara que las mujeres deben ser admitidas a rendir exámenes válidos para obtener títulos profesionales con tal que ellas se sometan para ello a las mismas disposiciones a que están sujetos los hombres.

Comuníquese i publíquese.

Pinto

Miguel Luis Amunátegui

The Amunátegui Decree,
issued in 1877, enabled Chilean
women to attend university.

Source: "Decreto Amunátegui,"
Wikimedia Commons.

The *Círculo de Lectura Femenino* would incorporate previously unpublished topics on women's organizations, such as concern for the specific conditions in which women developed and inequality under the prevailing law.²⁹ In response to the criticism that this organization received for its "radical" ideas, its members responded that "women, in addition to being wife and mother, have the freedom to individually pursue their aspirations and to function collectively in an intellectual and moral way, without needing a man in a cassock to lead their meetings, supervising their activities."³⁰

In 1919, the organization divided into two: the *Círculo Femenino de Estudios* and the *Consejo Nacional de Mujeres* (National Women's Council), the latter chaired by Amanda Labarca. The central concern of the *Consejo Nacional de Mujeres* was obtaining greater social justice for women, and its main goal was to achieve the first civil and political rights for women: suffrage, divorce, birth control and access to the labor market.³¹ Three years after its foundation, the council presented a bill on civil, political and legal rights. These negotiations culminated in 1925 with Law Decree No. 321, known as the Ley Maza, which recognized the first civil rights of women, enabling them to serve as witnesses and authorizing married women to administer the fruit of their labor. It also abolished some of the laws that relegated women to the same condition as minors.³²

In her position as president of the Consejo Nacional de Mujeres, Labarca spoke the following words to a group of female students: "Have faith and be yourselves. Temper your spirit in science, art, and philosophy, so that it is aware of your faith in the triumph of the spirit over all.... In that faith, unite in great flocks and, beating the wings of your best dreams, guide this world on clearer paths. And be yourselves. Do not imitate anyone, least of all, man. We are not the same: we are two beings that complement each other; leave his lot to him; discover yours."³³

²⁹ Paz Covarrubias, "El Movimiento Feminista Chileno," in *Chile: Mujer y Sociedad*, comps. Paz Covarrubias and Rolando Franco (Santiago: UNICEF, 1978): 615-648.

³⁰ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 34.

³¹ Romina Oñate Berríos, "Ser Mujer y Educadora, Análisis del Discurso Educativo de Amanda Labarca, Olga Poblete e Irma Salas entre 1930 y 1950" (Undergraduate Thesis, Universidad de Chile, 2017), 19.

³² "Defensores y Defensoras de Derechos Humanos," *Instituto Nacional de Derechos Humanos Website*.

³³ Amanda Labarca, *Nuevas Orientaciones de la Enseñanza* (Santiago: Imprenta Santiago, 1927).

The Politicizing of the Feminist Movement

The 1920s saw a barrage of female political participation as organized women's groups worked to vindicate civil and political rights. In 1922 Graciela Mandujano was one of the founding members of the Partido Cívico Femenino (Women's Civic Party), the first Chilean party to be considered openly feminist and a clear example of the politicization of the feminist movement.

Mandujano studied Education at Universidad de Chile, from where she graduated in 1914. The following year, she relocated to New York and entered Columbia University, where she studied until 1917, while also working as editor of the *Pan-American Magazine* in New York City.³⁴ In 1919 she was appointed as the official Chilean delegate to the Pan-American Conference of Women that the National League of Women Voters had organized in Baltimore.³⁵ These experiences deeply influenced Mandujano's feminist ideals. Impressed with the job opportunities that were available to women in New York, she exclaimed: "Women can actually go into business in New York! There are so many things that they can do; nothing seems to be closed to them. In my country there are no women clerks in stores and no women working in offices. Men do not like them very much, and no woman will work unless she has to."³⁶

Mandujano was also interested in recreational facilities for female workers: "Our women who work in the factories or in their homes have such hard lives. Nothing is done for them. If only I could start leisure areas and gymnasiums for them such as you [Americans] have... They never go into our fine parks, and there is no place where they may have healthful exercise. There are no social settlements in the city. Of course, the church works in our bad slums, but that work is purely charitable and religious. I would like to organize the women workers; organize them for play and recreation. They don't know how to do anything together, they don't understand 'teamwork' as you call it."³⁷ In this sense, Mandujano wanted to replicate in Chile the work and recreational opportunities of US women. But this meant changing Chilean women's way of thinking: "What I want most to take back to our women... is a change of ideas. My ideas about what women can do have changed completely since I came to this wonderful city [New York]. I never imagined anything like New York and its

³⁴ Corinne A. Pernet, "Chilean Feminists, the International Women's Movement, and Suffrage, 1915-1950," *Pacific Historical Review* 69, n°4 (2000): 667.

³⁵ *Pan-American Magazine* 29 (1919): 22.

³⁶ *Pan-American Magazine* 29 (1919): 22.

³⁷ H. Jenkins, "Transplanting Opportunities for Women," *World Outlook* 3 (1917): 18.



In 1922, Graciela Mandujano was the Chilean delegate to the 1922 Pan-American Conference of Women held in Baltimore.

Source: John Dickinson Sherman, "Twelve Greatest American Women. Senorita Graciela Mandujano of Chile Asks A Big Question," *The Pueblo Indicator*, August 5, 1922, 6.

³⁸ Jenkins, "Transplanting Opportunities," 18.

³⁹ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 36–37.

⁴⁰ "La Lucha por el Sufragio y la Conquista de Nuevos Espacios Públicos (1877-1953)," *Archivo Nacional Website*.

⁴¹ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 42.

⁴² "La Lucha por el Sufragio."

⁴³ Oñate Berríos, *Ser Mujer y Educadora*, 33.

⁴⁴ Jaime Caiceo Escudero, "Amanda Labarca: Su Preocupación por la Literatura, la Educación y la Mujer," *Revista HISTEDBR* 15, n°64 (2015): 4–20.

opportunities. I want to wake up the women of Chile for them to see that work is fine; to make them ambitious to go on, to always do a better work as [US] women do, and to be of service to their communities."³⁸

After Mandujano returned to Chile, inspired by her experience in New York, she became involved in many activities for women's rights which led her and other women to create the Partido Cívico Femenino, advocating for female social, economic, political, and civil rights.³⁹ In late 1922, the Partido Cívico Femenino vowed to get a law passed regulating the labor, political and civil rights of women.⁴⁰ To this end, the party exchanged information with various women's movements and organizations from Spanish-speaking countries such as Uruguay, Spain, and Argentina, in order to draft statutes advocating political and civil rights for women, as well as child and maternity protection.⁴¹

The publication of *Acción Femenina* magazine is considered to be one of the main works of the party, which during its 17 years of operation printed over 10,000 copies. In this space, Mandujano had the opportunity to work with Labarca, who also wrote for the magazine. Their writings defended women's right to obtain the municipal vote, arguing that municipal affairs were linked to the family and the domestic sphere. In cultural and educational matters, they argued in favor of a mixed-gender education, the economic independence and professional training of women. They were also outspoken advocates for the needs of lower-income women, and organized lectures in which they taught female workers how to demand labor rights.⁴²

Although the magazine served as propaganda for the party and defended women's right to vote, the ideas were presented with discretion, with statements such as: "Feminism does not want violence. The modern woman does not ask for anything unfair or abusive. We want women to be known as something more than an object of luxury and pleasure."⁴³ This same discretion was observed in Labarca's magazine publications. Although she demanded fair and equal treatment for women at work, the right to vote, sexual education and the protection of mother and child, she was quite conservative when it came to the realm of the private sex life, promoting virginity and a patriarchal home, as well as the denial of sex and female pleasure, in stark opposition to the majority of those involved in the women's liberation movement at the time.⁴⁴

Source: Las Portadas de tu Vida Twitter.



January 8, 1949 edition of
La Nación newspaper
announcing the approval of
the law that allowed universal
suffrage to women in Chile.

The Association of University Women

Nine years after the creation of the Partido Cívico Femenino, the Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias (Association of University Women) was constituted. In another important manifestation of the politicization of the feminist movement in Chile, the organization had a very similar objective to the previous group: “to extend and improve the cultural, economic, civic and social opportunities of professional women and to raise the status of women in general.”⁴⁵ Its founders included Amanda Labarca and Irma Salas, who had a close relationship since Labarca had been the latter’s high school teacher and had not only inspired Salas to study Education, but also encouraged her to attend Teachers College and lastly, to become an advocate for women’s political rights.

Born in Santiago, Salas attended high school at the Liceo No. 5 para Niñas, where Labarca was director and teacher.⁴⁶ This is why Salas’ decision to study education is largely attributed to her mentor: “I remember [Labarca] as the most interesting teacher I ever had. She wanted to meet her students, to know their concerns and difficulties. She made us think, asked us for opinions, made us feel important ... She spoke to us about aspirations and ideals, helped us to define ourselves and took us to action. She pushed several of us to do great things, then and later in life. Labarca was essentially a youth teacher, a discoverer of vocations and talents and a noble inspiration of the highest human values.”⁴⁷

In 1924, with the support of her father Darío Salas - a renowned Chilean teacher who fought for the approval of the compulsory primary education law, she enrolled at Universidad de Chile’s Instituto Pedagógico (a school of education, similar to Columbia’s TC) to become an English teacher. After some time working in girls’ high schools, she was encouraged, both by Labarca and her father, to study at Columbia University where she obtained the degree of Doctor of Education in 1930, becoming the first Chilean person to receive such a title. Columbia was the ideal environment for Salas to polish her thesis on education, and for her to receive the degree of Doctor of Philosophy specializing in Education.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 34.

⁴⁶ Claudia Palacios, “FECSH Conmemora el día Internacional de la Mujer Trabajadora Recordando a Irma Salas,” *Universidad de la Frontera Website*, October 17, 2020.

⁴⁷ Emma Salas, *Irma Salas: educación e innovación en Chile* (Santiago: Corporación Cultural Rector Juvenal Hernández Jaque, 2008), 16-17.

⁴⁸ Oñate Berríos, *Ser Mujer y Educadora*, 34.

Irma Salas in 1949
addressing the audience
at the ceremony
celebrating the approval
of the female suffrage
in Chile.

Source: "Irma Salas, pedagoga,
en ceremonia de promulgación
del derecho a sufragio
femenino, enero 1949,"
Memoria Chilena,
Biblioteca Nacional de Chile.



⁴⁹ Salas, *Irma Salas: educación e innovación en Chile*, 9.

⁵⁰ Irma Salas, "Algunos Aspectos de la Educación en los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica," *Anales de la Universidad de Chile*, n° 4 (1941).

Upon her return to Chile in 1931, Salas contributed to the founding of the Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias where she served as the secretary to the board of directors. The organization was established to enhance and expand social, economic, and political opportunities for women. She worked with Labarca to strengthen this institution by putting the talent of its members to the service of women who lacked equal opportunities, through talks, forums, and professional training.⁴⁹

Irma Salas also made a significant contribution to Chilean women via education. In 1932, Labarca commissioned Salas to create the Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas, a groundbreaking school that facilitated access to laboratories and cultivated innovative experiments and techniques. It was the first mixed-gender high school, undeniably providing many young women with educational opportunities.⁵⁰

The Path to Obtaining the Female Right to Vote

If the period up to the 1920s was characterized by the awakening of the associative spirit of Chilean women and by the emergence of an incipient awareness of shared issues, the decades of 1930 and 1940 were marked by the creation of the most important female organizations in the history of Chile: the Movimiento Pro-Emancipación de las Mujeres de Chile (Chilean Women's Pro-Emancipation Movement, MEMCH) and the Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (Chilean Federation of Women's Institutions, FECHIF). Both were the result of a growing mobilization of women around their demands, whose main objective was to win the right to vote.⁵¹

By 1931 women's collectives had multiplied and began to press for female municipal suffrage. In 1933 Labarca, along with other female leaders, participated in the creation of the *Comité Nacional pro Derechos de la Mujer* (Women's Rights National Committee), a body that obtained the passage of Law No. 5,357 the following year, providing women the right to vote and be elected in municipal elections.⁵²

⁵¹ "MEMCH (1935-1953)," *Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile*.

⁵² Eltit, *Crónica Sufragio*, 55.



Portrait of Olga Poblete, 1950s.

Source: "Olga Poblete: paz, autodeterminación y cooperación entre los pueblos," *Archivo Nacional de Chile*.



Olga Poblete attending a session of the World Peace Council Plenary Assembly held in Chile in October, 1972.

Source: "Olga Poblete: redes internacionales por la defensa de la paz y la autonomía de los pueblos," *Archivo Nacional de Chile*.

MEMCH was founded two years later, which stood out for its multi-class composition, national scope, and the breadth of its demands. Indeed, the so-called memchistas fought not only for the right to vote, but also mobilized against the high cost of living, for equal pay, divorce, abortion, sex education and the widespread distribution of contraceptives.⁵³ Among its most prominent leaders were Elena Caffarena, Graciela Mandujano –who served as general secretary of the MEMCH between 1944 and 1945– and Olga Poblete.

Poblete was born on May 21, 1908, in Tacna, which at that time was still under Chilean control.⁵⁴ She was the daughter of a single mother, who managed to educate her while working as a seamstress. Ever mindful of her mother's efforts, Poblete was a model student and decided to become a teacher.⁵⁵ In 1915 she moved with her mother to Santiago, where she studied at Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico and became a professor of History, Geography and Civic Instruction in 1928.⁵⁶

After working as a teacher in a couple of different institutions, she came to lead the Social Sciences Department at the Liceo Experimental Manuel de Salas (as noted in the previous section, created in 1932 by Irma Salas). She was also professor of History and Geography at Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico and became the first female teacher in Latin America in charge of a university chair.⁵⁷ In 1945 she traveled to the United States with a Teacher's College scholarship, obtaining a Master's degree in Art in Education following a year of studies.⁵⁸

Her arrival at Columbia, a mere three days after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, also shaped her commitment to peace in later years.⁵⁹ In fact, she returned to Chile as an anti-imperialist and a tireless worker for peace, resuming her teaching responsibilities and feminist ideals with greater force. In the following years she was an active participant and organizer of meetings for the pacifist struggle and in 1962 she received the Lenin Peace Prize, the equivalent of the Nobel Prize awarded annually by the Soviet Union.⁶⁰

Following her return to Chile from Columbia, Poblete played an active role in MEMCH and in 1947 became the organization's national secretary.⁶¹ MEMCH had a significant presence throughout the country, with more than 40 local committees from Arica in the north to Valdivia in the south.⁶² What distinguished MEMCH from

⁵³ Olga Poblete, "El MEMCH, un Capítulo del Militantismo Femenino Chileno," *Araucanía de Chile*, n°24 (October-December 1983).

⁵⁴ Won by Chile in the War of the Pacific against Peru in 1883, the province of Tacna was returned to Peru in 1929.

⁵⁵ "Olga Poblete, "¿Qué es el MEMCH?," *La Mujer Nueva*, n°26, November 1940, 2.

⁵⁶ Humberto Espinosa Poblete, "Homenaje a Olga Poblete Poblete," *Club Andino de Chile Website*.

⁵⁷ María Teresa Larraín, "Olga Poblete: La Mujer aún no Levanta la Mano," *La Época*, June 30, 1990, 11-14.

⁵⁸ "Olga Poblete," *Punto Final*, n° 832, July, 2015.

⁵⁹ Larraín, "Olga Poblete: La mujer aún no," 11-14.

⁶⁰ Poblete, "¿Qué es el MEMCH?," 2.

⁶¹ Larraín, "Olga Poblete: La Mujer aún no," 11-14.

⁶² Espinosa Poblete, "Homenaje a Olga Poblete Poblete."

⁶³ Eltit, *Crónica Sufragio*.

⁶⁴ "Olga Poblete," *Punto Final*.

⁶⁵ Luis Alberto Mancilla, "Olga Poblete: su larga marcha," *Gente del siglo XX: crónicas culturales* (Santiago: LOM, 2010).

⁶⁶ Espinosa Poblete, "Homenaje a Olga Poblete Poblete."

the various female organizations of the time, was the effective incorporation of women belonging to various social strata in order to address the specific situation of each group according to their particular problems.⁶³ Through the newspaper *La Mujer Nueva* and in multiple public meetings, MEMCH spoke out for the protection of the mother and defense of the child, so that women could occupy any paid position and have equal salaries with men. Chilean society still held the view that paid work for women was accidental, semi-clandestine, and generally accepted so that "she could help herself with her expenses."⁶⁴ MEMCH advocated for the defense of the democratic regime and for peace. It also promoted "biological emancipation," that is, against forced motherhood, proposing the state distribution of contraceptive devices. The organization raised the issues of clandestine abortion, prostitution, single motherhood, legalizing divorce, etc. Such was the impact that these ideas created in Chilean society that the traditional press called for its readers "not to be surprised: they are communists who are against the family, morals and nature and who pursue absurd goals."⁶⁵

Poblete cooperated in the exhibition *Actividades Femeninas* (Women's Activities), in the Second Congress of MEMCH in 1940 where she taught a course entitled *Evolución Política y Social en Chile* (Political and Social Evolution in Chile). In her lectures she emphasized the educational work of the organization, whose purpose was for women, through training, to become aware of their subordinate situation in all areas of life so that they could demand their rights and achieve liberation. In relation to this, she would say: "Until then I was only interested in my professional work, and although I was a professor of History and also of Civic Education, I had practically not recognized the complex socio-political reality of my own country. In fairness I can assure you that MEMCH was my true civics class. From that existential encounter I committed myself forever to the emancipation of women."⁶⁶

The Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (FECHIF)

With municipal voting rights and the multiplication of women's associations, the 1930s and 1940s were the scene of repeated mass women's mobilizations, peaking in 1944. That year the Primer Congreso Nacional de Mujeres (First National Congress of Women) was held in Santiago where various women's organizations participated, such as MEMCH, the Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias and the Acción Cívica Femenina. It was chaired by Amanda Labarca, who in representation of the campaign, presented a bill to the senate regarding the female vote. This conference culminated in the agreement to create the Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (Chilean Federation of Women's Institutions, FECHIF), the most powerful in the history of the women's movement in Chile, whose motto was "We want to vote in the next elections."⁶⁷ Its first president was Amanda Labarca, while Graciela Mandujano served as secretary of international affairs and Irma Salas participated as leader of the organization. From the beginning, FECHIF worked towards obtaining the right to vote for women in presidential elections. Ana Figueroa, who presided over the federation in 1949, played a key role in obtaining the long-awaited right.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ "La Lucha por el Sufragio," *Archivo Nacional Website*.

⁶⁸ Eltit, *Crónica Sufragio*, 59.



FECHIF Congress at Universidad Federico Santa María in Valparaíso, 1947.

Source: "Delegadas del Congreso de la Federación Chilena de Instituciones Femeninas (FECHIF), en la Universidad Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, 17 de septiembre de 1947," *Memoria Chilena, Biblioteca Nacional de Chile*.

⁶⁹ Karen L. Kinnear, *Women in Developing Countries: A Reference Handbook* (California: ABC-CLIO: 2011).

⁷⁰ Ana Figueroa, *La Mujer Ciudadana; Sugestiones para la Educación Cívica de la Mujer* (Paris: UNESCO, 1954).

Born in Santiago on June 19, 1907, Figueroa graduated from Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico in 1928 and became a high school English teacher. She served as the director of Liceo San Felipe, a secondary school in Chile. Between 1945 and 1947 she pursued her studies at Teachers College.⁶⁹ This experience would have a profound impact on her feminist ideals, especially on the idea of educating women for their political participation. With this in mind, upon returning to Chile, Figueroa took over the position of general inspector of secondary education at the Ministry of Education and worked as a supervisor of Chile's high school system from 1947 to 1949. There, she implemented aspects of US school systems from what she had observed abroad and

published several books regarding education. One of her most outstanding works is *La Mujer Ciudadana: Sugestiones para la Educación Cívica de la Mujer* (The Woman Citizen: Suggestions for Women's Civic Education) which specifically emphasized the need for expansion and greater focus on women's education.⁷⁰ In 1948 she became president of FECHIF, in which she actively endorsed universal suffrage.

Chilean Teacher-Envoy Gets High Post in I.L.O.



United Nations
Señora Ana Figueroa

Ana Figueroa had a prominent career in the United Nations, conquering several "firsts." She was the first woman to chair a committee of the General Assembly, the first woman appointed to the Security Council, to the Office for Disarmament Affairs, and the first woman named Assistant Director General of the International Labor Organization.

Source: "Chilean Teacher-Envoy Gets High Post in I.L.O.," *The New York Times*, October 31, 1959, 8.

Promulgation of the Law on Female Suffrage

The year 1946 marked the beginning of an intense discussion in the senate over women's right to vote. FECHIF had worked hard towards obtaining women's suffrage for presidential elections, but the bill moved slowly through all the bureaucratic obstacles. However, women's conferences, conventions, and lectures given in different venues as well as on radio stations in the capital and provinces, exerted pressure on lawmakers and demonstrated the great interest that existed in this initiative.⁷¹ One of the arguments most used by senators who supported the law was Chile's position in the international arena. In this way, the cables that parliament received from abroad helped to convince the most reticent. Two cables reached the senate on July 16 of that year. One of them was signed by Ambrose Niehl, president of the National Council of Women of the United States, in which she expressed "her satisfaction with the discussion of the bill" and stated her wish that it would be "soon a reality." The other cable came from the president of the World Women's Party, Alice Paul (SW'08) –an alumna of Columbia's School of Social Work and an activist in the struggle for constitutional amendment affording women the right to vote in the US⁷²– who also expressed her satisfaction at the discussion of the bill.⁷³

It is curious that the bill was not signed until 1949, considering that its discussion in the lower house of congress began two years earlier, that President Gabriel González Videla (1946-1952) had committed to support the bill during his electoral campaign with the women who backed him, and that Chile had adhered to the United Nations Charter to not discriminate on the basis of gender.⁷⁴ Congressmen, on the other hand, ignored the urgency request twice, delaying the discussion and approval of the bill, which in Amanda Labarca's opinion was due to fear "that their own electoral map will be modified with the female intervention; that their field of electors, so carefully studied, may vary and they run the risk of losing or diminishing their position. Personal fear and selfishness are deep down. Then there is laziness and indifference. The human justice of the petition, the international commitment, does not matter to them."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Figueroa, "La Mujer Ciudadana."

⁷² Debra Michals, "Alice Paul," *National Women's History Museum*, 2015.

⁷³ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 69-70.

⁷⁴ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 69-70.

⁷⁵ *Boletín FECHIF*, n°4, September 1947.

The popularity of González Videla's government had deteriorated since the promulgation of the law that outlawed the Communist Party, which was widely condemned by society. The explanation of González Videla granting women the right to vote was two-fold: it honored his commitment made with women, international organizations, and senators of the republic, while also helping to dilute accusations over the deterioration of democracy, opening the way to a new and supposedly pure political force. In addition, the executive branch could not continue denying the weight that women's organizations had in internal politics. As such, on January 8, 1949, the President of the Republic finally signed the text granting full political rights to Chilean women.⁷⁶

Ana Figueroa, as the national president of the FECHIF, was equanimous in saying that the ceremony taking place “culminated a tenacious, silent and heroic struggle of Chilean women throughout the last 50 years” because although the FECHIF received the honors, the merit went to all the women of Chile who had organized and fought for their rights.⁷⁷ On September 4, 1952, with the backing of Law N° 9,292, women in Chile voted for the first time in presidential elections. By incorporating women's suffrage, the electoral register had doubled when compared to the previous election.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 77.

⁷⁷ Gaviola Artigas, *Queremos votar*, 77.

⁷⁸ “Fotos de archivo: 1952, la primera vez que las mujeres votaron en una elección presidencial en Chile,” *Emol*, January 8, 2019.

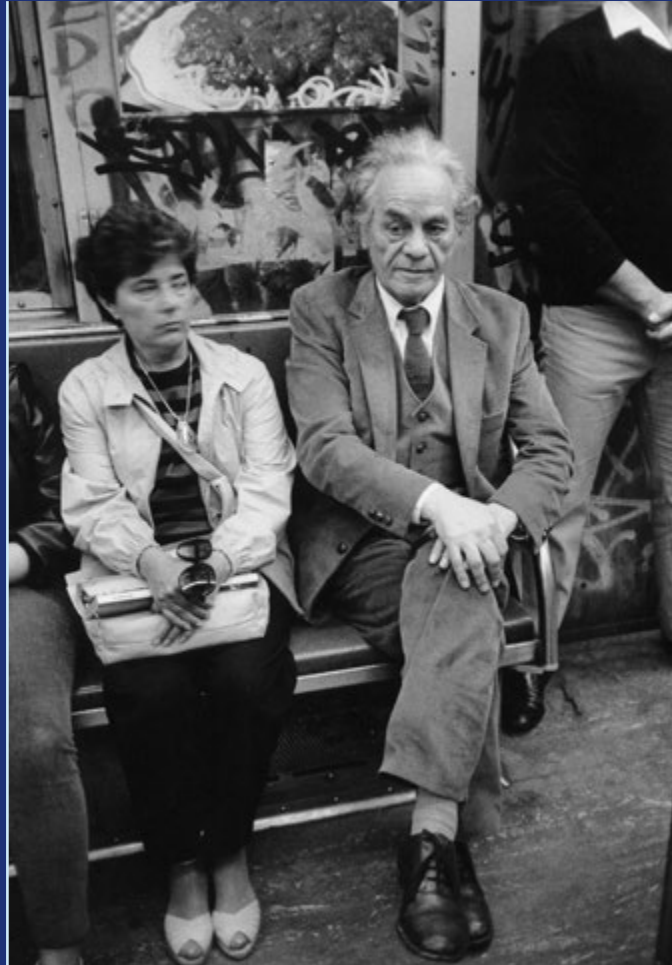


Nicanor Parra:

Unlikely, Unconventional, Antipoet

By Carla Magri

Source: Photo by Allen Ginsberg,
courtesy of the Allen Ginsberg Estate.



Nicanor Parra riding the
New York subway in 1984.

During a 1938 event held in her honor in the Chilean city of Chillán, famed poet Gabriela Mistral claimed that a 24-year-old mathematics teacher, who had just recited a poem dedicated to her, would be the country's future leading poet. The young man, Nicanor Parra, had just read out loud "Canto a la Escuela" (Song to the School), one of his many unpublished poems, and Mistral was not mistaken. Mathematician, physicist, academic, intellectual, poet, and antipoet, Parra possessed one of the most prolific minds of the 20th century. The following is the story of how in the early 1970s, this irreverent, groundbreaking, singular man landed at Columbia University to lead the first creative writing workshop offered in Spanish at a US university.

Early life and education

Parra was born in 1914 in the central-southern town of San Fabián de Alico, the eldest of nine siblings. His parents were Nicanor Parra, a bohemian primary school teacher and musician, and Rosa Clarisa Sandoval, a seamstress and occasional folk singer. While it was a family of modest means, the Parra household became the grounds for the raising of artists and intellectuals that would transcend Chilean frontiers with their creations and interpretations of popular art. Nicanor's sister, Violeta, was born three years after him and would blossom into a songwriter, singer, ethnomusicologist, and ceramist,

¹ For a complete genealogy of the Parra family, see: Felipe Vásquez N., José Manuel Vilches and Thomas Heselaars, "El árbol de los Parra: Los hijos, hermanos y sobrinos de Nicanor," *Emol*, January 26, 2018.

becoming a pioneer in the New Chilean Song movement which forever changed the country's folk music. Other siblings include Roberto and Eduardo ("Lalo"), who formed the successful Los Hermanos Parra (The Parra Brothers) duet that toured several countries, positioning Chilean music throughout the southern cone of Latin America.¹

During Nicanor's early childhood, the family moved between several cities in the south of Chile and when he was 12 years old they settled in Chillán, where he started writing his first poems. At the age of 17 he left the family home and moved to Santiago on a scholarship from the Liga Protectora de Estudiantes Pobres (Poor Students Protective League), a masonic initiative that allowed Parra to complete his high school education at the prestigious Internado Nacional Barros



Arana (INBA), a boarding school where he befriended classmates Luis Oyarzún and Jorge Millas, who eventually became well-known authors, as well as Carlos Pedraza, who would become a renowned painter. According to Parra, his experience at INBA was fundamental in the molding of his

Nicanor Parra at age 17.

Source: Courtesy of the Nicanor Parra Foundation.

intellectual thought and the future development of his world-famous *antipoesía* (anti-poetry), a literary movement that diverted from the style and conventions of the genre's traditional expressions. It was at INBA where he came in contact with the influence of the latest literary trends of Chilean poets Pablo Neruda, Vicente Huidobro, and Pablo de Rokha, Spanish writers such as Federico García Lorca and José María Souvirón, and European avant-garde authors of the Dada and Surrealist movements.

After graduating from high school in 1933, he enrolled at Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico to study Education in Mathematics and Physics.² To support himself while studying, along with his former classmates Millas and Pedraza, Parra worked as a school inspector at INBA. In 1935 the three friends founded the short-lived *Revista Nueva* (New Magazine) for the school's staff, faculty, and students. Though only two issues were printed, it was there that Parra's first verses were published. According to Parra, at INBA, school athletes were considered heroes while intellectuals such as he and his friends were nicknamed "the philosophers." "According to jocks, 'philosopher' was a synonym for jerk. This was the classic rivalry between Spartans and Athenians," he explained.³ In response, and seeking acceptance, they decided to create a type of humorous literature full of jokes that the student body would accept. "A clash between pedantry and vulgarity took place; we were the pedants, they were the vulgar ones, and the dialectical synthesis between the two is anti-poetry," he said in 2002.⁴

After graduating from Universidad de Chile in 1937, Parra started teaching in different high schools in Santiago. That same year he published his first volume, *Cancionero sin Nombre* (Songbook without a Name), a collection of 29 poems influenced by García Lorca's *Romancero Gitano* (Gypsy Ballads), that won him the Santiago Municipal Poetry Award. In 1938 he briefly returned to teach in Chillán, where the aforementioned encounter, in which Gabriela Mistral predicted Parra's bright future, took place. The following year he moved back to Santiago to teach Mathematics at INBA and Physics at the Escuela de Artes y Oficios. In 1940, he and his partner, Ana Troncoso, had their first daughter, Catalina. Francisca would follow three years later.⁵ As the family expanded and Parra continued teaching, his poems were

² The *Instituto Pedagógico* (1889-1981) was a school of education similar to Columbia's Teachers College.

³ "Colegio Internado Barros Arana cumple 103 años," *Emol*, May 12, 2005.

⁴ "Colegio Internado Barros Arana cumple 103 años."

⁵ Parra fathered Catalina, Francisca and Alberto Parra Troncoso with Ana Troncoso; Ricardo "Chamaco" Parra Muñoz with Rosa Muñoz; and Colombina and Juan de Dios "Barraco" Parra Tuca with Nury Tuca.

⁶ Rafael Gumucio, *Nicanor Parra, Rey y Mendigo*, ed. Leila Guerreiro (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, 2018), 133-137.

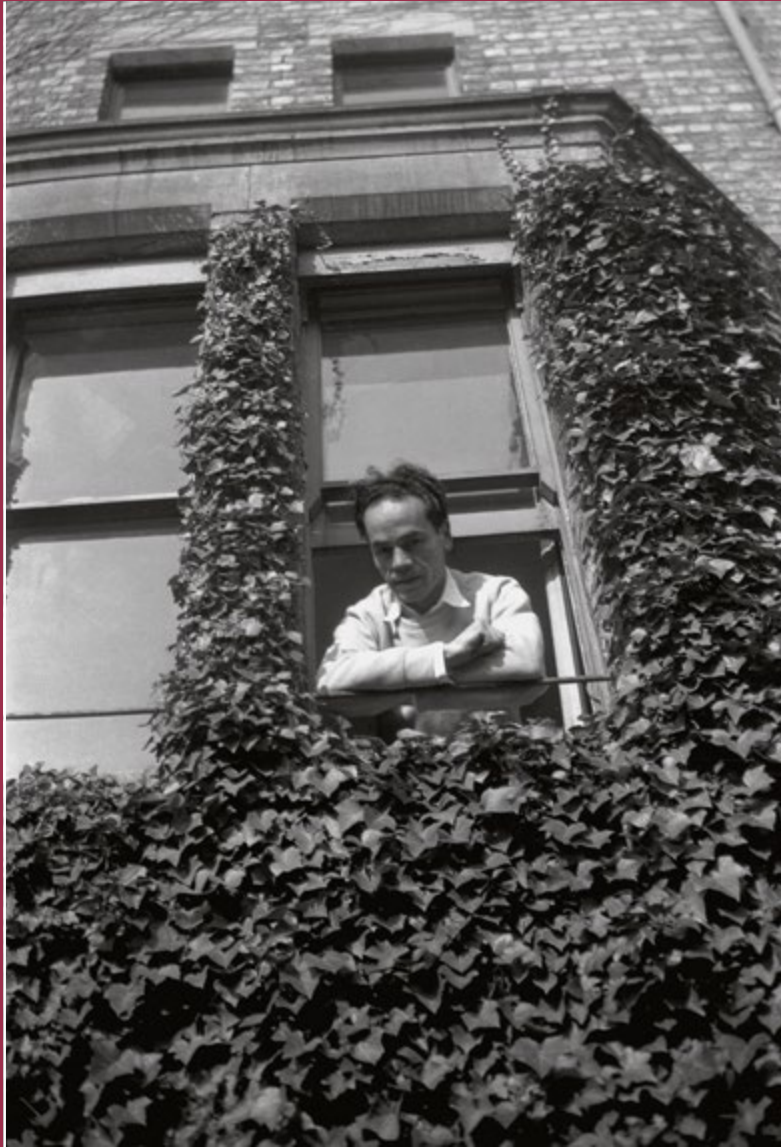
⁷ Sofía Le Foulon ed., *Parra a la Vista* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Aifos, 2014): 34.

published in several anthologies, such as *Ocho Poetas Chilenos* (1939), *Poetas y Poesía de Chile* (1941), and *Tres Poetas Chilenos* (1942).

In 1943 Parra left the country for the first time. Thanks to a grant from the Institute of International Education, he moved to Rhode Island to study a Master's in Advanced Mechanics at Brown University, while his family remained in Chile. "I was there for two years, in which I could grasp this and that, because the training that theoretical physicists received in Chile at the time was practically nil, so what I accomplished in those years was quite a lot, because having arrived there as a total illiterate, I earned a Masters," he recalled.⁶ Besides his formal studies, Parra had an ulterior interest in moving to the US: "The purpose for my first trip to the United States was to access Walt Whitman's sources," he admitted to fellow writer and professor Leonidas Morales in 1970.⁷ He had read Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" a few years earlier and although the book had impressed him, Parra was disappointed by what he said was narcissism and a lacking sense of humor in Whitman's work.

Having specialized in the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle and relativity, he returned to Chile in 1945 and was appointed professor of Rational Mechanics at Universidad de Chile, where he would work during the next five decades. Three years later he was appointed interim director of the University's School of Engineering, a position he held for 20 years. By the late 1940s, Parra was already part of the Chilean literary scene and frequently attended social gatherings at Pablo Neruda's house. In 1949 his son Alberto was born, and after over a decade of relationship, he married Ana Troncoso, although he would once again leave the family behind to pursue further studies.

Source: Courtesy of the
Nicanor Parra Foundation.



Nicanor Parra in his residence while living in
Oxford, UK between 1949 and 1951.

Between Newton and Shakespeare

⁸ Manuel Jofré, "Poeta Nicanor Entrevista a Parra Antipoeta," *nicanorparra.uchile.cl*.

⁹ Gumucio, *Rey y Mendigo*, 156-162.

¹⁰ Marcelo Porta, *Antiprofesor. 60 Años de Poemas y Antipoemas, Archivo Fotográfico y Visual de Marcelo Porta en torno a Nicanor Parra (1993-2012)* (Santiago: Biblioteca Nicanor Parra, Universidad Diego Portales).

¹¹ *Le Foulon, Parra a la Vista*, 36.

Thanks to a scholarship from the British Council, Nicanor Parra moved to the UK to pursue a PhD in Cosmology at the University of Oxford, under the guidance of renowned astrophysicist and mathematician Edward Arthur Milne. Once there, the poet found himself trapped between two very different sets of interests: "I got to Oxford, and I felt something in the atmosphere, I felt two kinds of forces. I perceived Shakespeare on the one hand and Newton on the other, and one of the first things that occurred to me was to memorize Hamlet's monologue, and I pounded the streets of Oxford, repeating ad infinitum 'to be or not to be, that is the question'."⁸

He visited Shakespeare's home in Stratford-upon-Avon and as he delved into the works of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, and Franz Kafka, he stopped attending classes on a regular basis. Milne was aware of Parra's activities. The poet had told him such during a meeting in the professor's office. "In the middle of the semester, he told me that he was using his time to write poetry because Oxford inspires him... he is not taking part in the discussions of my seminars, and I don't think he intends to finish his thesis," Milne reported to the school's authorities. "I suggested that he do what is pertinent to take advantage of the opportunities of Oxford, and not be pressured to follow the courses."⁹ Soon after, officials from the British Council visited Parra to inquire about his studies. After he told them about the "two forces" and recited *Hamlet*, they warned him that his scholarship could be revoked, but according to Parra, after one of the university deans claimed that "Oxford was made to waste time, though in the most fruitful way possible,"¹⁰ his grant was extended for an additional year.

Parra returned to Chile in 1951, having not only changed physics for poetry and Newton for Shakespeare. He arrived in Santiago with a young Swedish woman by his side. Her name was Inga Palmen, and after meeting while she was visiting Oxford, they abruptly got married in London. In Chile, Parra had to annul his marriage with Ana Troncoso before validating his new one before the local authorities.¹¹

Poetry for the Common People

Oxford changed Nicanor Parra in more than one way. While there, he wrote a significant portion of the book that would rocket him to international fame. He published it in 1954, and though he considered calling it *Oxford 1950*, he finally decided on the name *Poemas y Antipoemas* (Poems and Antipoems). “I began writing the book in 1938, but I came across the title in the UK in 1949 or 50. I was walking through a bookstore and noticed the book *Apoèmes* by the French poet Henry Pichette,”¹² he said in a 1971 interview with Patricio Lerzundi, who at the time was one of his students at Columbia.¹³

Although Parra always claimed that he did not write the book with an articulate theory in mind, in the same 1971 conversation, he told Lerzundi that during the 1930s, questions regarding poetry kept coming to his mind. “It seemed to me then that poetry as we understood it did not function one hundred percent... there seemed to be an inexplicable distancing between poetry and life,” he noted. “As a matter of preference the poetry of that period operated in the literary spaces, while the problems of the life we were actually living didn’t show up anywhere.”¹⁴ And so Parra examined his own conscience and reached back in time, revisiting the Renaissance, the Middle Ages and ancient Greek poetry, only to find that the roots of the antipoetry he was developing could be traced back to the 7th century BC, when poets like Archilochos defied the lyrical norms of the time.¹⁵

Poemas y Antipoemas revolutionized Hispanic American literature and became a fundamental piece in 20th century poetry, positioning Parra among the most select of world literature. Universities and literary organizations from around the world extended invitations to him to attend conferences, seminars and lectures. As such, in the midst of the Cold War, Parra traveled through China, the USSR, Cuba, Sweden, and the United States, capturing the attention and acclaim from critics and fellow poets, befriending writers and intellectuals.

In January 1960, Chilean poet Gonzalo Rojas organized the First Encounter of American Writers, which took place at Universidad de Concepción, in the center-south of Chile. In addition to prominent

¹² Patricio Lerzundi, “In Defense of Antipoetry: An Interview with Nicanor Parra,” *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas* 4, n°4-5 (1971-1972): 65. During the late 1960s Patricio Lerzundi was an undergraduate student at Columbia University, who later attended Parra’s workshop.

¹³ Iván Carrasco, *Para leer a Nicanor Parra* (Santiago: Universidad Nacional Andrés Bello, 1999): 41.

¹⁴ Lerzundi, “In Defense of Antipoetry,” 65-70.

¹⁵ Lerzundi, “In Defense of Antipoetry,” 67.

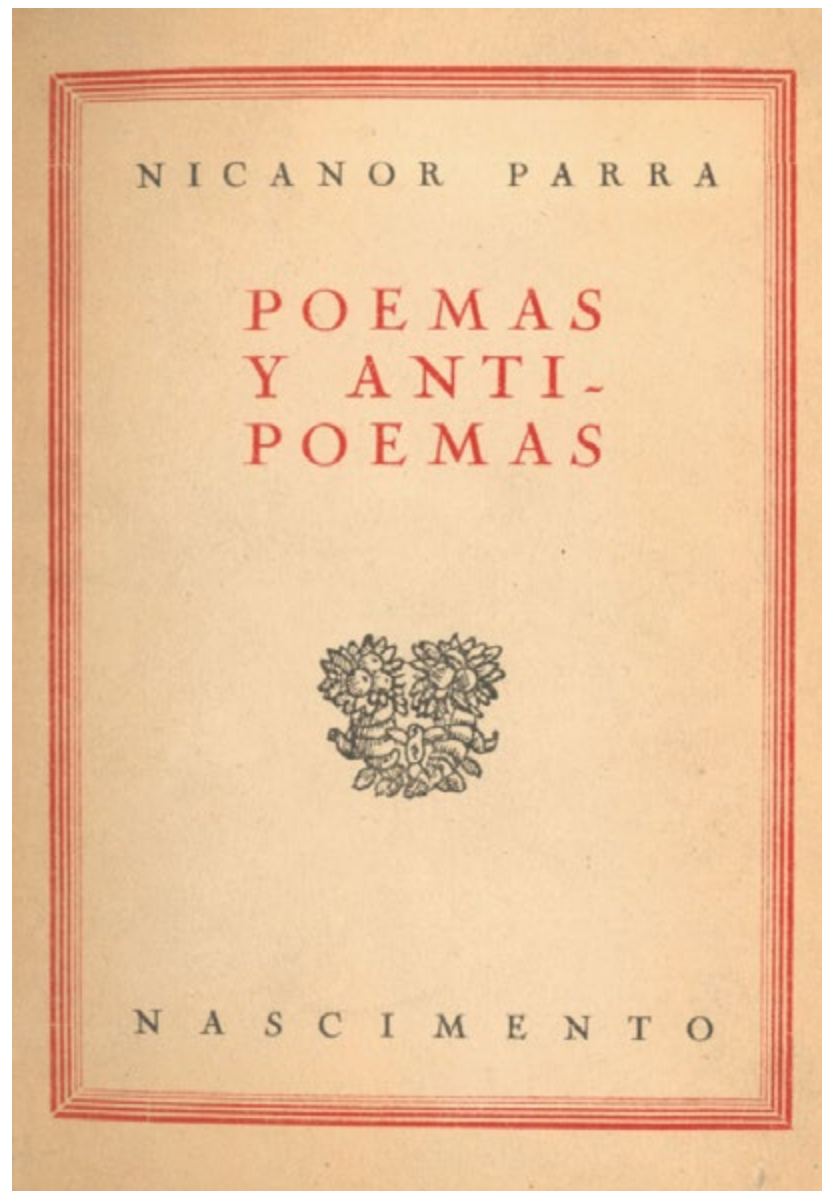
¹⁶ The Beat Generation was a literary movement that, influenced by post World War II politics, defied traditional literary narrative, rejected mass consumerism and traditional values. Beat authors include Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs. Though the movement started around Columbia University, where Kerouac and Ginsberg studied and met, during the mid-1950s, its main figures relocated to San Francisco.

¹⁷ City Lights is a San Francisco cultural landmark that for almost seven decades has served as an independent bookstore as well as a publisher for innovative, socially and politically inclined texts, authors of color as well as members of the LGBT community. See: "A Short History of City Lights" in citylights.com.

Poemas y Antipoemas (Poems and Antipoems) was published in 1954.

Source: Nicanor Parra, *Poemas y Antipoemas* (Santiago: Nascimento, 1954) Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile.

Latin American authors, the event was attended by Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, leading figures of the Beat Generation, who garnered most of the attention from the press and with whom Parra bonded immediately.¹⁶ After the conference in Concepción, Ginsberg remained in Chile for several weeks and spent a month in Santiago as Parra's guest before continuing on to Peru and Bolivia. Later that same year, Parra's work was first printed in English by City Lights, a publishing house and bookstore located in San Francisco that Ferlinghetti had founded in 1953. The book, entitled simply *Antipoemas*, was made available under the now world-famous *Pocket Poets* series.¹⁷



The World, New York and Columbia

The 1962 publishing of *Versos de Salón*, a parody of the double standard of the modern bourgeois, marked another turning point in Parra's career. Due to its ideological content as well as its style, Parra gained both admirers and detractors. While some praised the originality of the poems, others considered the book "insane garbage" and "satanic work," condemning the author's lack of political commitment.¹⁸ In spite of the critiques the book received, it had an undeniable impact that continued to drive Parra's rise as a relevant international literary figure. Following an invitation from the World Peace Council, in 1963 Parra traveled to the Soviet Union, where he remained for six months working on a Spanish translation of Russian poets. During the following years, as he continued to teach at Universidad de Chile, he visited Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Czechoslovakia, and the United States. During 1966 he was a visiting professor at Louisiana State University, and he spoke at the University of California, Berkeley as well as at the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Club of New York.

¹⁸ Le Foulon, *Parra a la Vista*, 64.



One of Parra's Artefactos that reads "Left and right united will never be defeated"

Source: Centro Virtual Cervantes.

¹⁹ A fundamental part of Parra's work are the *Artefactos* (Artifacts), which Parra described as the explosion of antipoems. A form of conceptual art that can be described as visual poems, they usually criticize or ironize about a topic by intersecting words, images, and objects. In 1972, Parra published a collection of them in a box entitled *Artefactos*, containing 242 postcards illustrated by the Chilean visual artist Juan Guillermo Tejada.

²⁰ That same year, while visiting New York to read his poems at Lincoln Center, he told *The New York Times* he had resigned because "the students had put the university into a state of chaos," and although he agreed with the student's demands of co-government of the university, he felt they sometimes went "a little beyond the line." Harry Gilroy, "Chilean Physicist Reads his Poetry," *The New York Times*, June 27, 1968, 49.

²¹ Le Foulon, *Parra a la Vista*, 128.

The controversial image of Nicanor Parra and US First Lady "Pat" Nixon was promptly condemned by the Latin American left.

Source: *Parra a la Vista*, 138-139..

But with Cold War tensions on the rise, between the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolutionary forces in Cuba and the 1962 Missile Crisis, Parra's unwillingness to position himself on either side of the iron curtain began to take a toll. Chilean writers and intellectuals grew suspicious and started calling him a "clown of the bourgeois," and a "useful fool of the left," to which he responded by releasing his first *Artefactos*,¹⁹ which read: "Cuba sí, yankis también" (Cuba yes, yankees too) and "La izquierda y la derecha unidas jamás serán vencidas" (left and right united will never be defeated). The political and social situation became increasingly tense in Chile as well, and in the midst of the Chilean university reform process, in 1968 Parra resigned as director of Universidad de Chile's Physics Department, although he continued teaching.²⁰

In 1969, after being repeatedly proposed as a candidate, Parra was finally awarded the National Prize for Literature for his role in "providing Chilean poetry with new international appreciation."²¹ Two years before, in 1967, New York-based publishing company New Directions Books had printed *Poems and Antipoems*, which Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti had translated. The publication contributed to consolidate Parra's name in the United States and the English-speaking world, leading to



his receiving several invitations to events in the country. One of those trips occurred in April 1970, when along with a dozen other poets, he was invited to take part in an International Poetry Festival organized by the Library of Congress in Washington.²² While in the capital, the group visited the White House, where they were greeted by then First Lady Thelma Catherine “Pat” Nixon, who invited the group for tea. The resulting pictures of Parra shaking Pat Nixon’s hand, at a time when the US was in the middle of the Vietnam War, brought swift condemnation from the Chilean left and the Cuban government, with whom Parra had maintained a friendly relationship up until that point.²³ During that same trip he visited New York to attend a poetry reading in Bryant Park organized by the City Department of Cultural Affairs,²⁴ and took part in a conference of South American authors at Columbia University organized by the University’s School of the Arts. There, he met Frank MacShane, founder of the Writing Division at Columbia’s School of the Arts, who regarded Parra as “one of the two or three most distinguished poets in South America,” inviting him to teach at Columbia during the next academic year.²⁵

²² “World Poetry Festival Set for Library of Congress,” *The New York Times*, March 28, 1970, 35.

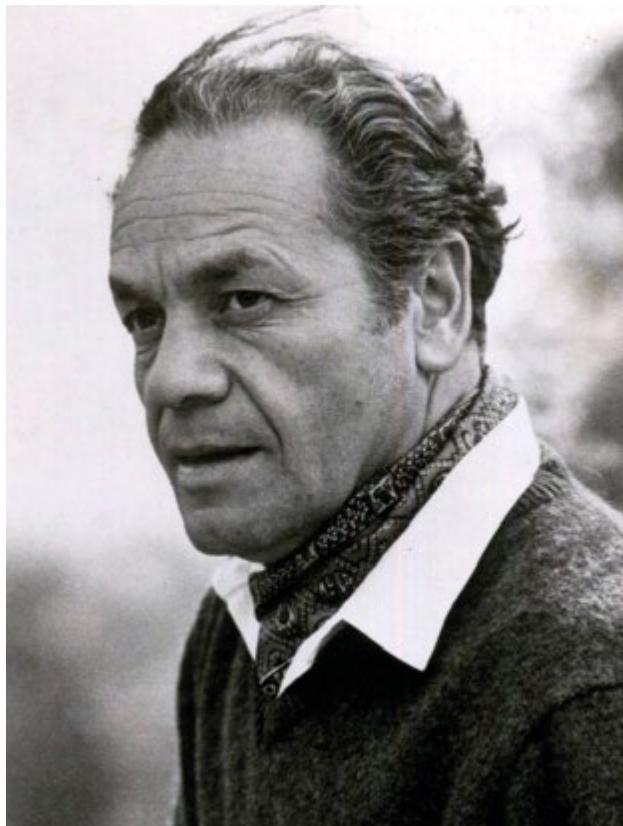
²³ Le Foulon, *Parra a la Vista*, 136-137.

²⁴ McCandlish Phillips, “Amid City’s Hum, Poetry,” *The New York Times*, May 14, 1970, 43.

²⁵ “Parra, South American Poet, Giving Course at Arts School,” *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CXVI, Number 11, October 14, 1971, 3. MacShane founded the Graduate Writing Division at Columbia’s School of the Arts in 1967. He served as school Dean between 1971 and 1973, after which he resumed his teaching role in the Writing Division of which he was also Chairman.

When he started teaching at Columbia, Parra was 57 years old, he had been awarded the National Literary Prize, and was a world-renowned literary figure.

Source: Nicanor Parra; Columbia Spectator Photograph Collection, 1950-1999; Box 17; Columbia University Archives, Columbia University Library.



Source: "Parra, South American Poet."

Parra, South American Poet, Giving Course at Arts School

Nicanor Parra, a renowned South American poet and the author of *Poems and Antipoems*, is teaching the first Spanish creative writing course given in the United States on the university level, according to Frank S. MacShane, dean of the School of the Arts.

Dean MacShane described Professor Parra's course as "an effort to reach out to Spanish-speaking people in this part of the world" as it is "open to people in the community."

The three-point writing seminar is offered for credit to students in all divisions of the university who have a writing knowledge of Spanish. According to Dean MacShane, a majority of the dozen students currently enrolled in the course are Puerto Rican, South

American, or of Spanish-speaking origin.

Dean MacShane explained that he first prevailed upon Dr. Parra, a professor of mathematics and physics in his native Chile, to give the course when the Latin American scholar attended a conference of South American authors at the arts school last year.

Professor Parra, who was described by Dean MacShane as "one of the two or three most distinguished poets in South America," teaches the seminar on Wednesday nights.

In addition, Dean MacShane also announced that W.H. Auden, the distinguished American poet, will give a seminar once a week for four weeks, from mid-November to mid-December.

The dean explained that while the course is primarily for poets in the School of the Arts, he expects many others in the university community to seek admission.

Noting that "we'll probably, as in most things, compromise," Dean MacShane added that he might be convinced to open at least one of Mr. Auden's seminars to members of the university community.

Mr. Auden, author of *The Dyer's Hand* and other works, lives in Austria during the summer months, but Dean MacShane expects to contact him soon to make the final plans for the seminar.

Four Departments Share Some Classes With Other Colleges

(Continued from Page 1)

students in graduate mathematics have been able to receive departmental credit for those courses which they have participated in at NYU, although they may not receive credit from the registrar.

The broadest co-operation with other schools has been in the department of psychology, where for several years there has been a

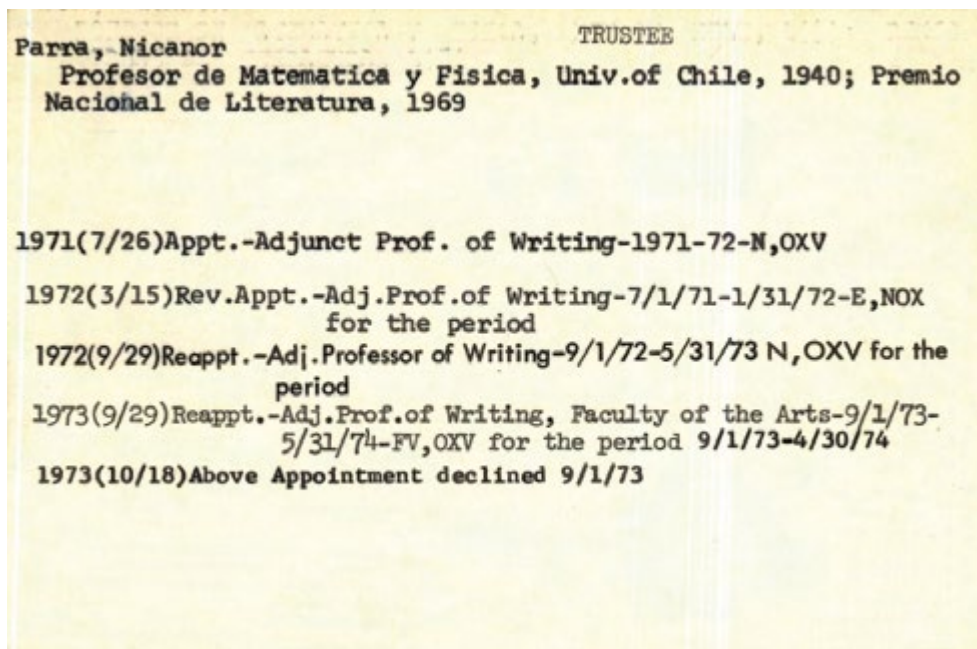
Columbia Spectator issue
informing of Parra's appointment
at the School of the Arts.

The Parra Workshop

As can be read in his Columbia faculty file, Parra was named Adjunct Professor of Writing at the beginning of the 1971-1972 academic year. Prior to his official appointment, during April 1971, he had been taking part in a series of conferences at Columbia entitled "Society and the Arts in Latin America," although they were invitation-only events that only a handful of students could attend. But MacShane, who by then was Dean of the School of the Arts, had something else in mind: he wanted Parra to teach a creative writing workshop in Spanish, in an effort to reach out to Spanish-speaking people both within Columbia as well as outside of the University. The workshop would be open to anyone with a writing knowledge of Spanish, regardless if they were tuition-paying students or members of the New York community, who could attend at no cost.²⁶ "Finally, Nicanor at everyone's reach, without any other requisite, without a price to pay beyond having an interest in writing," Elena Jordana, one of his first students, wrote in excitement as she heard the news.²⁷ It wasn't the first time that Parra was teaching at a New York university, but it was the first time that an institution

²⁶ "Parra, South American Poet."

²⁷ Elena Jordana et al., *El Taller con Nicanor Parra* (Antiediciones Villa Miseria: New York, 1972), 4.



Parra's official academic appointment card as Adjunct Professor of Writing.

Source: Parra, Nicanor; Historical Biographical Files; Box 44; Columbia University Archives, Columbia University Library.

Source: Le Foulon,
Parra a la Vista, 149.



Nicanor Parra teaching
at Columbia University
in the early 1970s.

was doing what MacShane had proposed. That same summer, Parra was teaching a course on antipoetry at New York University, but the school was charging US\$ 300 to enroll, which, for many students, was an impossible amount to pay.²⁸

El Taller con Nicanor Parra (The Workshop with Nicanor Parra) was the first Spanish creative writing course offered in the United States on the university level. Its initial cohort consisted of around 20 students—most of whom were from Puerto Rico, South America, or other Spanish-speaking origins—in addition to faculty members and several spontaneous visitors who would stop by to greet him. After selecting his students based on the texts that they had submitted for revision, the class gathered for one semester every Wednesday at the School of the Arts' Writing Division.²⁹

Venezuelan journalist Elizabeth Pérez-Luna, who had arrived in New York almost at the same time as Parra, interviewed him in a conversation in which they talked about his life in the city, both as a poetry professor and as a foreigner. His interests were wide and varied and so were his activities; he attended Bobby Seale's³⁰ birthday party, he would travel to Connecticut to teach contemporary Cuban poetry at Yale, he regularly met with young aspiring poets in coffee shops, and did reading tours through different states. He always walked around the city carrying a book under his arm, in which he would write his thoughts. In his own words, he was living "a real poet's life."³¹

Prior to leading the poetry workshop at Columbia, Parra had led similar courses a couple of times in Chile, as they were a new trend. In every session of the workshop each student read one or two pieces out loud, which the rest commented and criticized, with Parra normally acting as a moderator: "I think that's the only possible role. I am not fabricating tiny 'Nicanores Parras'. The important thing is for each student to develop on their own and for me to try to create the appropriate atmosphere. Actually, the main idea of a workshop is to give young writers the opportunity to read. When I was 20 years old, I would have gladly attended a literary workshop to read my *mamotretos* [hefty books]."³²

According to Jordana, Parra's workshop was about breaking down communication barriers, about learning how to listen to peers and how

²⁸ Jordana, Jordana, *El Taller con Nicanor Parra*, 6-7. (In purchasing power, US\$300 in 1971 is equivalent to some US\$2,100 in 2022).

²⁹ "Parra, South American Poet."

³⁰ Seale was one of the founders of the Black Panthers Party, a Marxist-Leninist political organization founded in 1966 that was part of the Black Power movement.

³¹ Elizabeth Pérez-Luna, "Nicanor Parra: un año en Nueva York," in *Aproximaciones a la poesía de Nicanor Parra*, A. Flores and D. Medina (Guadalajara: EDUG, 1991), 25-27.

³² Pérez-Luna, *Un Año en Nueva York*, 28-29.

to face a room full of people and make them interested and moved by each of their words. But it was also a lesson in freedom, since Parra allowed them to write in every imaginable tone and form, using humor, satire, rage, prose, verse or sonnets. The only rule that Parra seemed to rigorously apply while teaching them can be found in his own words:

*“Youth
Write what you want
In the style that seems best to you
Too much blood has passed under the bridges
To keep believing - I believe
That there’s only one path to be followed:
In poetry everything is allowed.”*³³

After a successful first version, the Parra workshop resumed in September 1972, now as a full-year course thanks to a grant from the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, as stated in a press release published by Columbia’s Office of Public Information.³⁴

Over the summer break, a group of students from the workshop’s first cohort had been working on a project which they were going to present to Parra during the first class of the new academic year. Motivated by the antipoet’s encouragement, they had been gathering for several weeks at Jordana’s apartment to produce an anthology of the poems they had worked on during the previous semester. Elena Jordana was an aspiring Argentinian poet who had attended the workshop as a Columbia graduate, after finishing a Masters in Hispanic Literature. At the time the workshop began, she was eager to publish her poems, although doubtful of her chances of being noticed by a publishing house. One day as she walked around New York City she found a small printing machine laying wet in the middle of a street. She took it with her, waited until it dried, and made a copy of one of her poems. She was thinking about sending it to a publishing company when Parra gave her a piece of advice: “You already have your publishing house. Print your poems just like you wrote them on your typewriter,” and so she did.³⁵ She called her project *Antiediciones Villa Miseria*, representing her rejection of traditional printing and in allusion to the slums that are

³³ Pérez-Luna, “El Taller con Nicanor Parra,” 7. Translation from Spanish by Carla Magri.

³⁴ El Taller con Nicanor Parra, Office of Public Information; September 18, 1972; Historical Biographical Files; Box 238 Folder 9; Columbia University Archives, Columbia University Library.

³⁵ Alfredo Montaña, “Escribimos más por el Amor Contrariado: Elena Jordana,” *Diario Colima*, July 1, 1984, 2-3.

commonly found on the outskirts of Latin America's major cities, which in Argentina are known as "misery villages."³⁶ Parra liked the project and during that same year, *Villa Miseria* published 250 signed copies of his antipoem "Los Profesores" (The Teachers). The 22-page booklet contained 158 verses in which Parra criticized the educational system.³⁷

After meeting for several evenings, Parra's students produced a 44-page book containing 32 poems, the first of which, called *De Acuerdo* (Agreed), was authored by him. They used only reused materials: the pages were made of brown wrapping paper, it had cardboard covers, and was bound with twine. Jordana liked the idea of creating something using materials that the people had disposed of and the city had left behind. They handmade 400 copies, which they decided to sell for US\$3 each among their friends, in Spanish and literature departments of other colleges, also trying to convince foreign-language bookstores in New York to stock the book. The idea behind the anthology was to leave a testimony of the opportunity the class had provided them, as well as the effort each of them had put into it. They dedicated it to Parra, MacShane and everyone else who made the workshop a reality.³⁸

Jordana's appreciation for the class and the professor was reciprocated, as can be witnessed in the aforementioned interview with Pérez-Luna. When the journalist inquired about Parra's opinion regarding the future of Latin American poetry, he answered: "The Argentinian Elena Jordana, creator of *Villa Miseria* editions, where I published my last poem, *Los Profesores*, has some poems full of strength, and a Chilean writer, Patricio Lerzundi, are both well oriented."³⁹

³⁶ "El Taller con Nicanor Parra, Office of Public Information."

³⁷ Nicanor Parra, "Los Profesores," in *El Taller con Nicanor Parra*, 2.

³⁸ Jordana, *El Taller con Nicanor Parra*, 6-7.

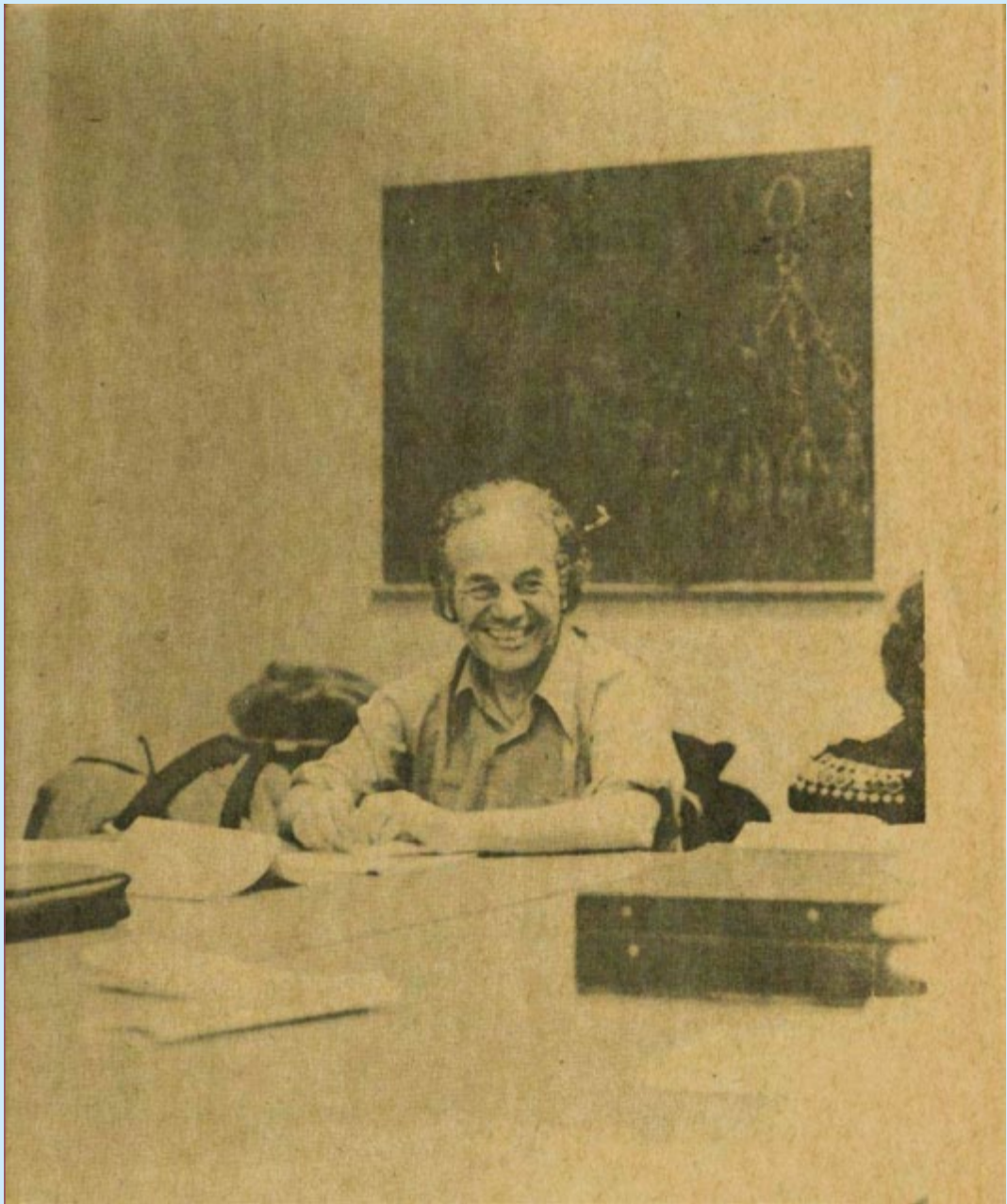
³⁹ Pérez-Luna, *Un Año en Nueva York*, 33.

⁴⁰ Pérez-Luna, *Un Año en Nueva York*, 26.



Cover of the book produced
by Parra's students.

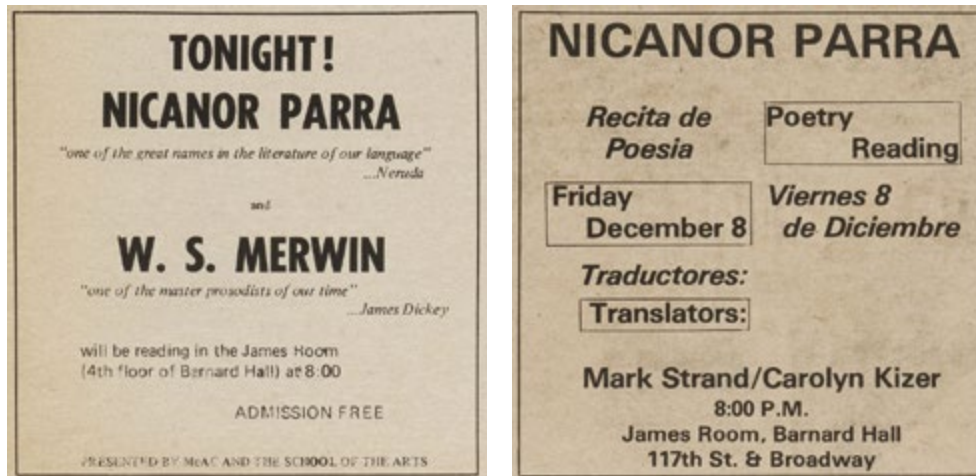
Source: *El Taller con Nicanor Parra*; 1972;
Central Files (Office of the President Records);
Box 697 Folder 13; Columbia University
Archives, Columbia University Library.



Nicanor Parra and his students
pictured during a session of the
creative writing workshop
he led at Columbia.



Source: *El Taller con Nicanor Parra*; 1972; Central Files (Office of the President Records); Box 697 Folder 13; Columbia University Archives, Columbia University Library. Pages 2 and 3.



Advertisements of Parra's poetry readings on campus featured in the *Columbia Spectator* newspaper.

Sources: *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CXVI, Number 22, November 3, 1971, 7 and *Columbia Spectator*, Volume XCVII, Number 54, December 7, 1972, 7.

Aware that the fact that he was teaching in the United States could seem problematic given the Cold War context and the rise of the left throughout Latin America, Parra did not see any contradiction between his political views and his work in the country. He was pleased with the reaction that US universities had to his work, where he had encountered "a very human and cordial environment," as he told Pérez-Luna, adding that "being here is not a surrender of principles in any way."⁴⁰ And although his infamous visit to the White House still lingered among the Chilean left, he considered himself a socialist and a supporter of the Allende project: "I declared myself a supporter of the Unidad Popular and I voted for Allende. I'm a moderate *Allendista*. I support the Chilean revolution although I have some critiques. [...] Look, it's impossible to please everyone. It can't be done and I don't intend to either."⁴¹

In parallel to teaching, during his time at Columbia, Parra also took part in outreach activities, such as poetry readings on campus, as can be seen in advertisements published in the *Columbia Spectator* student newspaper from 1971 and 1972.⁴² The second version of the creative writing workshop concluded in May, at the end of the 1972-1973 academic year. According to his file, he was appointed for a third consecutive year, which was scheduled to run from September 1973 through April 1974. He was set to continue with the creative writing workshop, as well as teach a graduate seminar in contemporary Latin American poetry, but the events that were developing in Chile at the time would not allow this to happen.

⁴¹ Pérez-Luna, *Un Año en Nueva York*, 27. Salvador Allende was elected President of Chile in 1970 representing the *Unidad Popular*, a coalition of left-wing parties that proposed a democratic way to a socialist system within the constitutional framework. At the height of Cold War tensions, the Chilean project was subjected to an economic boycott from the US. In consequence, internal tensions arose and over the next years inflation and a shortage of products led to a wave of strikes and ungovernability, culminating in a US-backed 1973 coup.

⁴² *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CXVI, Number 22, November 3, 1971, 7, and *Columbia Spectator*, Volume XCVII, Number 54, December 7, 1972, 7.

⁴³ "Carta 1973, EE.UU. a Doris Dana manuscrito

Julia M. Blanco," *Biblioteca Nacional Digital de Chile*.

⁴⁴ Vicent Briccetti, "Former Diplomat from Chile Accepts Post at Arts School," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume XCVIII, Number 14, September 25, 1973, 1.

⁴⁵ Briccetti, "Former Diplomat from Chile", 1.

⁴⁶ Ana María Larraín, "Nicanor Parra: ¿Oíste

The evening of May 11, 1973, the Iberoamerican Circle at Columbia University hosted a farewell party for Nicanor Parra and Mario Meza-Flores, another Chilean professor that was going back to the country.⁴³ Parra returned home when social and political unrest under the Salvador Allende government was at its worst, and he was still there when the September 11, 1973, coup d'état took place. News that the Armed Forces had taken over the government and that a dictatorship had been installed reached Columbia almost immediately, but two weeks after the coup there was still no news of Parra at the University. As is stated in the September 25, 1973, edition of the *Columbia Spectator*, Frank MacShane was still hopeful that the poet would return to New York and resume his work: "Professor Parra is expected to return, [but] we haven't been able to reach him and we're not sure of his whereabouts," he stated at the time.⁴⁴

In the end, Parra decided to stay in Chile and thus declined the appointment offered for the 1973-1974 academic year. Looking for a replacement, MacShane reached out to Humberto Díaz-Casanueva, who had been the Chilean ambassador to the United Nations during

the Allende government. Besides being an experienced diplomat, Díaz-Casanueva was also an accomplished poet both in Chile and in South America –he had been awarded the National Prize for Literature in 1971, just two years after Parra– so he agreed to take over as a temporary replacement.⁴⁵

Former Diplomat From Chile Accepts Post at Arts School

By VINCENT BRICCETTI

The former Chilean ambassador to the United Nations during the Allende administration has temporarily assumed the teaching responsibilities of Adjunct Professor of Writing Nicanor Parra who is stranded in Chile because of last week's military coup.

Professor of Writing Frank S. McShane, chairman of the writing division, announced last week that Umberto Diaz-Cassanueva will teach two courses in the School of the Arts this semester, one a graduate course in Latin American Poetry and the other, a seminar in creative writing in Spanish.

Professor McShane stated that although Professor Parra is "expected to return we haven't been able to reach him and we're not sure of his whereabouts."

Noting that Mr. Diaz-Casanueva is well known as an "ac-

complished" poet in his native Chile and throughout South America, Professor McShane commented that it was "very decent of him (Mr. Diaz-Casanueva)" to substitute for Professor Parra.

The course in contemporary Latin-American poetry (R4905x) is open to graduate students and will be given on Wednesday afternoons. The writing seminar in Spanish (R4903x) is open to "anyone who comes along who shows some talent for writing in Spanish" and will be given free of charge, Professor McShane added.

Mr. Diaz-Casanueva had been a lifetime Chilean diplomat and became the Chilean ambassador to the United Nations when Salvador Allende came to power in 1970.

Mr. Diaz-Casanueva was unavailable for comment last week.

Spectator article informing that Humberto Díaz-Casanueva, former Chilean ambassador to the US, would take over Parra's classes at Columbia.

Source: Vicent Briccetti, "Former Diplomat," 1.

Antipoet in the city

Although Nicanor Parra did not teach at Columbia again, his workshop left a mark on both his students and at the University. But the city also left an imprint on him, as he would return to New York dozens of times to teach, read, visit friends and family, take part in conferences, and attend the launching of his translated works. While teaching at Columbia, Parra lived in an apartment located at the intersection of West 110th St. and Broadway in Manhattan, a short walk from the Morningside Heights campus. He would return many times to that place, which he bought during the 1970s, since Catalina, his oldest daughter and a visual artist, got established in the city in 1980 and has resided there ever since. Nicanor would stop by to visit her as well as his grandchildren and great grandchildren, “the branch of the family that resides among the skyscrapers,” as he said in a 1992 interview.⁴⁶

The previously mentioned interview is entitled “Do you hear New York? Someday I will take revenge on you,” and it references one of Parra’s *Artefactos*, which he had shown and read in 1986, when he visited the city to attend the second version of the Latin American Book Fair. But as he clarified in the cited publication, it was a fictional creation that had nothing to do with his relationship with New York: “I have nothing to take revenge for, I am referring to the people that have not had the same luck that I have had in New York, because antipoetry doesn’t have to be autobiographical,” on the contrary, adding that: “On the contrary, New York has been extremely generous with me [...] I have worked in New York University and at Columbia University.” He also highlighted the strong literary ties he had there: “My publishing house is New Directions and several of my translators are New Yorkers. As if that were not enough, I have lots of friends there, both *gringos* and *sudacas* [slang for US Americans and South Americans, respectively]. I am especially committed to the New York Times, which has given me more attention than I deserve.”⁴⁷ During Parra’s 1986 visit to New York, he also visited the Columbia campus to recite his poetry,⁴⁸ but there was one more reason for his trip: New Directions had just released an anthology of his works entitled *Antipoems: New and Selected*, with an introduction written by

Nueva York? ¡Alguna vez me vengaré de tí!,” *Revista del Domingo, El Mercurio*, June 14, 1992, 16-17.

⁴⁷ Larraín, “¿Oíste Nueva York?,” 16-17.

⁴⁸ Le Foulon, *Parra a la Vista*, 209.

⁴⁹ Larraín, “¿Oíste Nueva York?,” 16-17.

Nicanor Parra and Allen Ginsberg at a poetry reading in East Village, Manhattan in 1987.

Source: Photo by Vivian Selbo, courtesy of the Allen Ginsberg Collection.



⁵⁰ Nicanor Parra, *Poems and Antipoems* (New York: New York, 1967). Accessed through: Miguel-Angel Zapata, "Nicanor Parra and the Chaos of Postmodernity," *Hofstra University News*, May 9, 2006.

⁵¹ *Le Foulon, Parra a la Vista*, 224.

Columbia Dean and a longtime Parra enthusiast, Frank MacShane. As can be seen, Parra may have left New York, but the city where he lived for a handful of years remained a huge part of his life, both personally and professionally, and in many ways shaped him as a writer.

One of the the things that Parra found fascinating about New York were the written instructions and warnings that were visible all around the city and which regulated almost every possible activity a person could do. He found these texts to be "very authoritarian, because virtually the ultimate voice is that of Uncle Sam, who is trying to bring order to the jungle."⁴⁹ He even wrote an antipoem about them, which he originally composed in English, and entitled *WARNINGS*. By juxtaposing a variety of phrases he had read passing through the subway, restaurants, public restrooms, airports, stations, hospitals, and even churches, he created a text filled with irony and humor that mocked that public discourse.

*In case of fire
do not use elevators
use stairways
unless otherwise instructed*

*No smoking
No littering
No shitting
No radio playing
unless otherwise instructed*

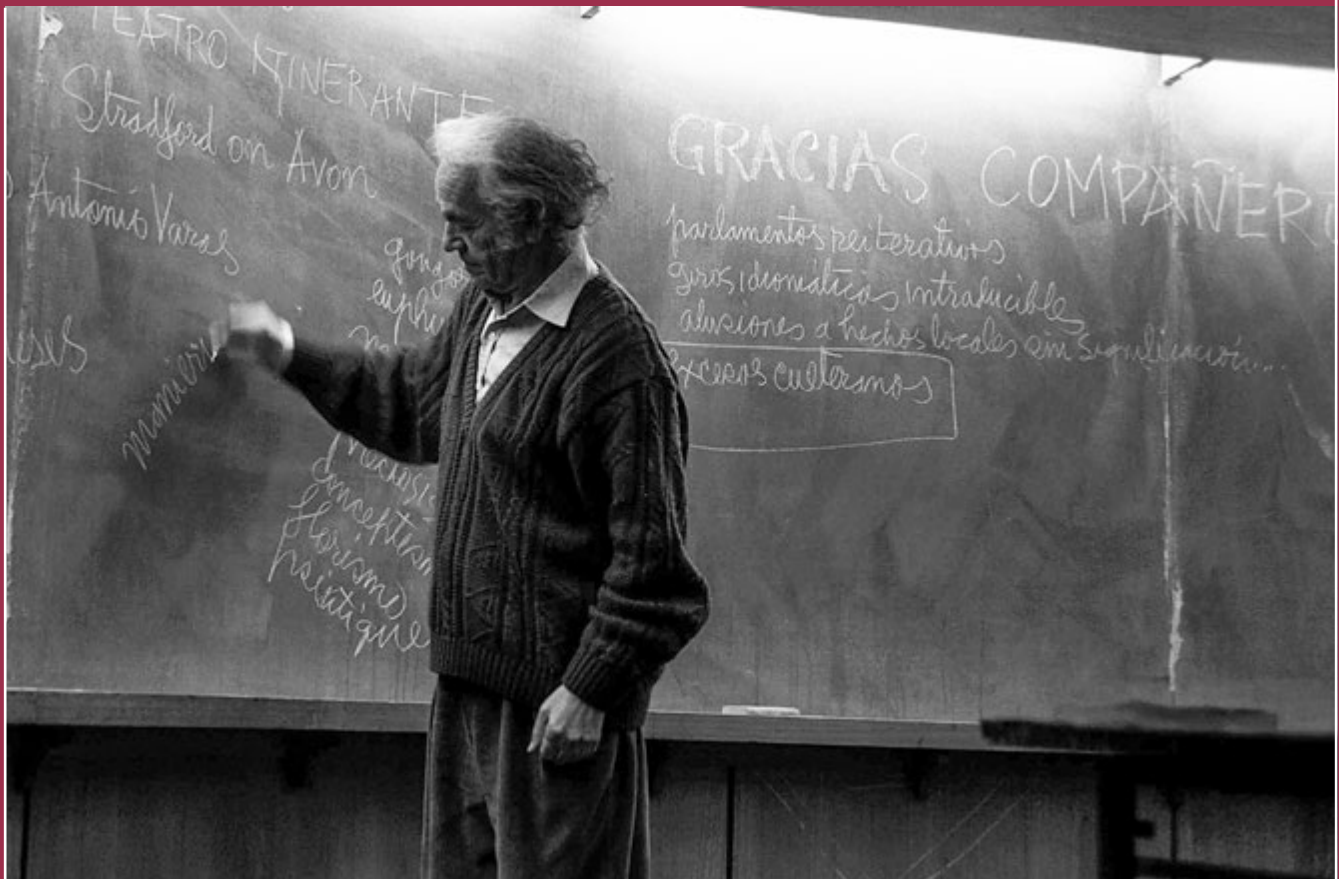
*Please Flush Toilet
After Each Use
Except When Train
Is Standing At Station
Be Thoughtful
Of The Next Passenger*

*Onward Christian Soldiers
Workers of the World unite
we have nothing to lose but our life
Glory be to the Father
..... & to the Son
to the Holy Ghost
unless otherwise instructed*

*By the way
we also hold these truths to be self evident
that all men are created equal
that they have been endowed by their creator
with certain inalienable rights
that among these are Life
Liberty
..... & the pursuit of Happiness*

*& last but not least
that 2 + 2 makes 4
unless otherwise instructed.⁵⁰*

Source: Porta, Antiprofesor.



For over 20 years, Parra taught literature and poetry to Engineering students at Universidad de Chile.

Life Back in Chile and the Elusive Nobel Prize

Upon his return to Chile, Parra secured a position as one of the directors of Universidad de Chile's Instituto Pedagógico, but he quickly resigned because the new military authorities expected him to fire the left-wing members of the faculty, which he was unwilling to do. He then joined the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University's School of Physics and Mathematics, where he taught Literature to Engineering students. Because he was not formally persecuted by the dictatorship, during the bulk of the dictatorship he was allowed to publish, travel, teach, and take part in the few literary activities allowed by the regime.⁵¹

After a decade of Pinochet in power, Chileans started organizing the first massive protests against the dictatorship, while at the same time Parra started creating poems and Artefactos that subtly and slyly opposed the regime. Significantly ahead of his time, by the early 1980s he was certain that the planet was in danger, and that the world was clearly moving towards overpopulation and ecological disaster. In 1982 he published *Ecopoemas* (Ecopoems), a series of antipoems in which he criticized the excesses of consumer society and was concerned for the environmental situation of the

⁵² "Ecopoemas,"
nicanorparra.uchile.cl.

Parra's *Ecopoems*, published in 1982, criticized the excesses of consumer society and showed concern for the environmental situation of the planet.

Source: Nicanor Parra, *Ecopoemas* (Gráfica Marginal: Valparaíso, 1982).



planet.⁵² His views were incompatible with the neoliberal system that the Pinochet regime had imposed in the country. He thought that “Consumerism is synonymous with turning the planet into junk,” and was convinced that humankind needed a new approach in which “profit is not the driving force of the community.”⁵³ These topics were also present in Parra’s next book: *Poesía Política* (Political Poetry), which after being released in 1983, was censored and banned by the regime’s National Division of Social Communication because of its “controversial” nature.⁵⁴

As the country returned to democracy in 1990, Parra continued writing, inaugurating exhibitions, and traveling the world receiving awards, such as the Juan Rulfo Prize for Latin American and Caribbean Literature, the biggest recognition in Latin American literature, which he received in 1991,⁵⁵ as well as honorary degrees from several institutions, including his alma maters Brown and Oxford.⁵⁶ His five decades as a faculty member at Universidad de Chile came to an end in 1993; a year later he celebrated his 80th birthday and the following year, he was officially nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature before the Swedish Academy. The 1995 nomination wasn’t Parra’s first shot at a Nobel; his name had been proposed decades before with the support of Columbia affiliates in New York. It was 1969 and his works were well known in the United States because of the English translations published by City Lights and New Directions. Parra’s affiliation with the Beat poets had contributed to disseminating his writings among academic circles and literature students, several of whom began campaigning for the Chilean antipoet to be considered for the award. However, according to Patricio Lertzundi, “It really was a low-level campaign.”⁵⁷

At the time, Lertzundi was an undergrad at Columbia, and even before becoming Parra’s student at the workshop, he wrote a piece for the *Columbia Review* magazine in support the poet. Although the Nobel nomination was supported by the Hispanoamerican Society of New York, in the end Parra was overshadowed. “We made efforts to contact students from other universities in the United States and well-known people in Latin America, but at that time the campaign for Pablo Neruda had already started and that spoiled the party a bit,” Lertzundi recalled in 2012.⁵⁸

⁵³ Verónica Nieto, “Incredulidad, Ecología y Antipoemas: Nicanor Parra,” *Liberoamericana*, December 12, 2017.

⁵⁴ See: “Poesía Política,” in *Colección Libros Destruídos y Prohibidos en Dictadura 1973-1989*, librosprohibidos.cl.

⁵⁵ Manuel Délano, “El poeta chileno Nicanor Parra gana el premio Juan Rulfo,” *El País*, July 2, 1991. (The award was originally named in honor of renowned Mexican writer Juan Rulfo, but in 2006 was renamed FIL Literary Award in Romance Languages).

⁵⁶ See: “Honorary Fellow Nicanor Parra dies at 103,” *St Catherine’s College Oxford Website*, and “2,068 Receive Degrees at Brown University,” *The New York Times*, May 28, 1991, 17.

⁵⁷ Antonio Díaz Oliva, “Las Campañas por Parra,” *Qué Pasa*, January 19, 2012.

⁵⁸ Díaz Oliva, “Campañas por Parra.” Pablo Neruda won the award in 1971.



Nicanor Parra in 2006.

Source: Le Foulon, *Parra a la Vista*, 252.

⁵⁹ "Carta de Postulación al Premio Nobel de Literatura de Nicanor Parra 1995," *nicanorparra.uchile.cl*, January 25, 1995.

⁶⁰ "Carta de Postulación al Premio Nobel."

⁶¹ "El Poeta Chileno Nicanor Parra, Premio Cervantes," *El País*, December 1, 2011.

⁶² "Nicanor Parra por el Premio Nobel. Si no se lo dieron a Rulfo no veo por qué me lo van a dar a mi," *24horas.cl*.

In turn, the 1995 campaign was much larger and better organized than the one from decades before. Leading the application process was Marlene Gottlieb, Professor of Spanish and Literature, who at the time worked at City University of New York's Lehman College Graduate School. She had followed Parra's career and studied antipoetry, and was the coordinator of the committee that submitted the application. The letter, written in the name of Literature professors of various universities in the United States, urged the Swedish Academy to acknowledge Parra's "significant contributions to world literature," arguing that: "Not only has his influence been felt in Chile (where he has replaced Neruda as the yardstick against which all poetry is measured) and throughout Latin America (in the colloquial, conversational poetry of linguistic collage of such poets as the Nicaraguan Ernesto Cardenal, the Peruvian Carlos Germán Belli, the Argentine Juan Gelman, and numerous others), but in the United States, especially in the work of the so-called Beat Generation (cf. Ferlinghetti, Ginsberg, Corso)."⁵⁹ Frank MacShane, who was responsible for bringing Parra to Columbia some 25 years prior, also participated in the nomination, stating: "Nicanor Parra is unquestionably one of the most influential and accomplished poets in Latin America, heir to the position long held by his countryman, Pablo Neruda. As an exponent of 'antipoetry', Parra has revolutionized literary expression not only in Chile but all over the globe."⁶⁰

The campaign did not succeed; two other nominations followed in 1997 and 2001 but were equally ineffective. On the eve of his 100th birthday, Parra received the most prestigious recognition in the Hispanic world, the Miguel de Cervantes Prize, awarded annually by Spain's Ministry of Culture to honor the achievements of an outstanding writer.⁶¹ After the Cervantes, rumors had it that Parra's time for the elusive Nobel had definitely come, but it never did. He wasn't expecting it either. As he said in a 1999 interview: "If they didn't give it to Rulfo, I don't see why they would give it to me. If they didn't give it to Borges, I don't see why they would give it to me. If they didn't give it to Vallejo, to Huidobro, I would find it difficult to understand if they gave it to me."⁶² For many critics and fellow writers, the reason was simple: Chile already had two Nobel laureates in Literature (Mistral and Neruda), and considering other Latin American countries, like Argentina or Brazil,

had none, the Swedish Academy would not select Parra. In the words of Literature professor and influential literary critic Harold Bloom: “They won’t give it to him because Mistral and Neruda received it. I don’t think they will award a third Chilean poet. But he deserves it. His poetry is vibrant and interesting. But he won’t get it.”⁶³

The antipoet lived an unusually long life, turning 100 in 2014. Among the many events organized in Chile and abroad to celebrate his centennial, there was a special one prepared at the Instituto Cervantes in Manhattan, which was attended by his daughter Catalina and granddaughter Isabel Soler Parra. “He has come to New York many times, he lived here for a while and every time he came back, he wrote lots of things with the slang he heard in the streets,” said Soler during the event, recalling her grandfather’s links to Columbia and NYU as well as the great friends he made in a city that: “in some ways forms part of his development as a writer, because he is a man who adores American culture and loves the English language.” Catalina –Isabel’s mother– agreed: “He spent many seasons in New York, a city where he lived and taught. That’s why it seems totally natural to us that the celebration is taking place here.”⁶⁴

Parra’s last affiliation with Columbia was in 2015, when the unit of Global Studies at Columbia University Libraries launched an exhibit entitled “Imagining the World: Unexplored Global Collections at Columbia,” portraying several of Parra’s *Artefactos* that had been published in 1972 by Universidad Católica. The display –which featured a selection of rare items that belong to the libraries’ special collections– intended to expand scholarly horizons by portraying critical and dissenting voices as well as micro-histories from around the globe.⁶⁵ The pieces featured in the exhibit were made rare soon after the 1973 coup, when Vice Admiral Jorge Swett –who had been appointed as president of Universidad Católica by the military junta– ordered that the boxes of *Artefactos* that remained within the university to be requisitioned because they represented a “deterioration of democracy.”⁶⁶ Although for several years the boxes remained in a storage room, they eventually disappeared.

On January 23, 2018, at the age of 103, the seemingly immortal Nicanor Parra died peacefully at his home in Santiago. By then, Chile and the rest

⁶³ Paula Escobar Chavarría, “Harold Bloom: «El valor literario nunca es establecido por un crítico»,” *El Mercurio*, October 14, 2014.

⁶⁴ “La ‘antipoesía’ de Nicanor Parra resuena en Nueva York en su centenario,” *San Diego Tribune*, September 5, 2014.

⁶⁵ “Imagining the World: Unexplored Global Collections at Columbia,” *Columbia University Libraries*.

⁶⁶ Juan Guillermo Tejeda, “Anónimos Artefactos,” *Qué Pasa*, August 2014, 54–58.

Parra's public funeral was attended by thousands of people. His coffin was decorated with one of his Artefactos that says "Voy & vuelvo" (I'll be right back).

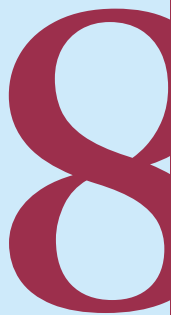
Source: "Veto eclesiástico a Violeta Parra," *El País*, January 25, 2018.



of the world had grown used to his ever-present existence. He had turned into a living legend. He was honored in a public funeral held at Chile's main cathedral that was attended by thousands of people, among them the main authorities in the country, including then President Michelle Bachelet. The simple wooden coffin was surrounded by branches of laurel, covered with a patchwork blanket handmade by his mother and decorated with one of his Artefactos that says "Voy & vuelvo" (I'll be right back). With the government's authorization and honoring his wish, he was buried in the yard of his house in the coastal town of Las Cruces, 120 km from capital Santiago, where he spent the last two decades of his life.

Perhaps the words that best describe Parra's legacy are the ones written by professor Niall Binns, one of the world's foremost experts on the poet: "Poets die every day. Anti-poets, however, die once every century. Or once every geological age. The reason is simple: poets have always existed and will always exist, but anti-poets, there has only been one, Nicanor Parra."⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Javier Rodríguez Marcos, "Nicanor Parra, el Último Antipoeta (y el Primero)," *El País*, January 25, 2018.



Chilean Presidents at Columbia:

A History of Diplomacy and Democracy

By Katherine Z. Wang,
Carla Magri, and Christian Molinari

Ricardo Lagos, Patricio Aylwin, Michelle Bachelet, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, and Sebastián Piñera in 2014.



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

For over two centuries, Chile and the United States have enjoyed a strong and lasting relationship, collaborating on foreign trade, science, multilateral diplomacy, and academic exchange, among many other relevant fields. The diplomatic relation between both countries started with the 1823 recognition of Chile's independence by the US Government. The following year, a plenipotentiary minister was sent from Washington to get established in Santiago. In 1827, Chile retributed by sending a delegate with the same credentials. This connection soon spilled over into the academic field, leading to the establishment of agreements for the development of science, technology, and the latest trends in education.¹

Said agreements allowed for Chile to establish a longstanding relationship with Columbia University, which in recent years translated into the establishment of a Global Center in Santiago in 2012 and the 2013 signing of a cooperation agreement between the University and then Chilean President Sebastián Piñera. However, the connection between Chilean presidents and Columbia long predates these formal establishments. Of Chile's 30 heads of state who have served between the 20th and early 21st centuries, about half of them have visited New York to address the United Nations General Assembly, attend world fairs and take part in other global events. Of them, eight have visited Columbia's Morningside Heights campus either to lecture, receive honorary degrees, speak at commencement ceremonies, or take part in the World Leaders Forum.² In chronological order, they are: Juan Antonio Ríos, Gabriel González Videla, Eduardo Frei Montalva, Patricio Aylwin, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, Ricardo Lagos, Michelle Bachelet, and Sebastián Piñera.

¹ "A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Chile," *Office of the Historian, US Department of State*.

² The Columbia World Leaders Forum was established by Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger in 2003 as a space to gain first-hand knowledge of global issues from world leaders.

³ Since its foundation in the 1860s, the Chilean Radical Party has held social-liberal and secular positions and has had a close relationship with Freemasonry.

This chapter examines the relationship between these eight heads of state and Columbia University, highlighting Chile's commitment to democracy, its position in international politics, and its quest to define itself as a free nation of democratic credentials and global aspirations.

Juan Antonio Ríos, 1942-1946

Official portrait
of President
Juan Antonio Ríos.

Source: Ríos, Juan Antonio;
Historical Photograph
Collection; Box 100; Columbia
University Archives; Columbia
University Libraries.



Juan Antonio Ríos (1888-1946) was the second of the three subsequent “Radical presidents” that led Chile between 1938 and 1952. Their radicalism was not related to their political views, but to their affiliation with the Radical Party, which first rose to power in 1938 with the election of Pedro Aguirre Cerda as president.³ His administration was cut short when he became ill and rapidly died in 1941. Ríos ran for office and was elected president at the beginning of the following year.

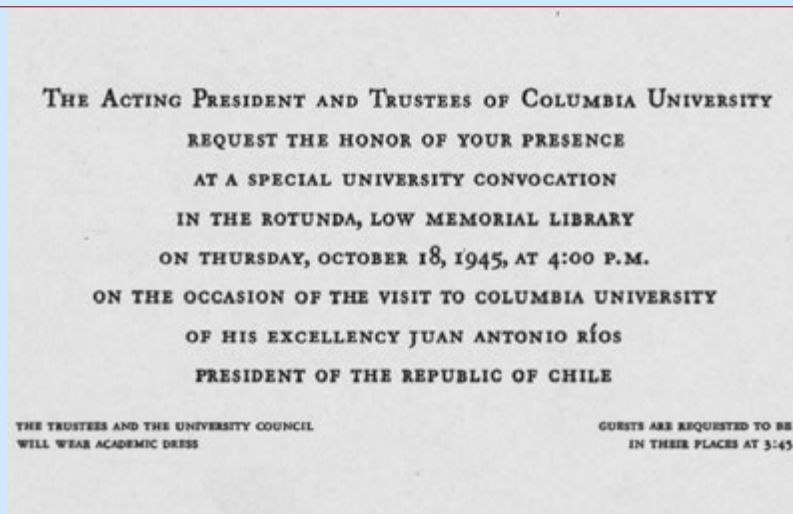
Ríos had been a member of the Radical Party since he was a high school student, although he positioned himself in the more conservative wing of the group. After being appointed consul to Panama in 1921 during the presidency of the conservative Arturo Alessandri, which lasted until 1923, he was elected to Chile's lower chamber of congress in 1924 and was reelected two years later. During his second term, he was a member of the commission that drafted the country's new constitution, which was approved in 1925. By then, Ríos presided his party, but because he cooperated with the authoritarian administration of colonel Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1923-1931), after the latter's period came to an end, he was expelled from it. His political comeback materialized during the 1930s, when he independently ran in the congressional election of 1933 and was elected congressman for a third time. After rejoining the party in 1935, during Aguirre Cerda's government, Ríos was named president of the country's state-owned bank, Caja de Crédito Hipotecario.

In the international arena, up until 1943, Ríos (and previously Aguirre Cerda) had refused to break off relations with the Axis powers. Although initially his Alianza Democrática (Democratic Alliance) coalition - comprised of the Socialist, Communist and Radical Parties, as well as the Falange Nacional⁴ Party and part of the Liberal Party that was loyal to Alessandri - had agreed to remain neutral, the more left-leaning parties started pushing for a rupture, for a clear condemnation of the fascist ideologies, and for the Chilean government to officially recognize the Soviet Union. Following diplomatic and economic pressure from the United States, Ríos broke relations with Germany and Italy in January 1943. He only declared war on Japan in the conflict's final months, but once the war was over, Chile had secured a spot in the new and reconfigured post-war international arena. In consequence, between April and June 1945, a Chilean delegation participated in the United Nations Conference on International Organization, commonly known as the San Francisco Conference, in which the United Nations Charter was drafted, thus becoming one of the 50 founding members of the new agency.

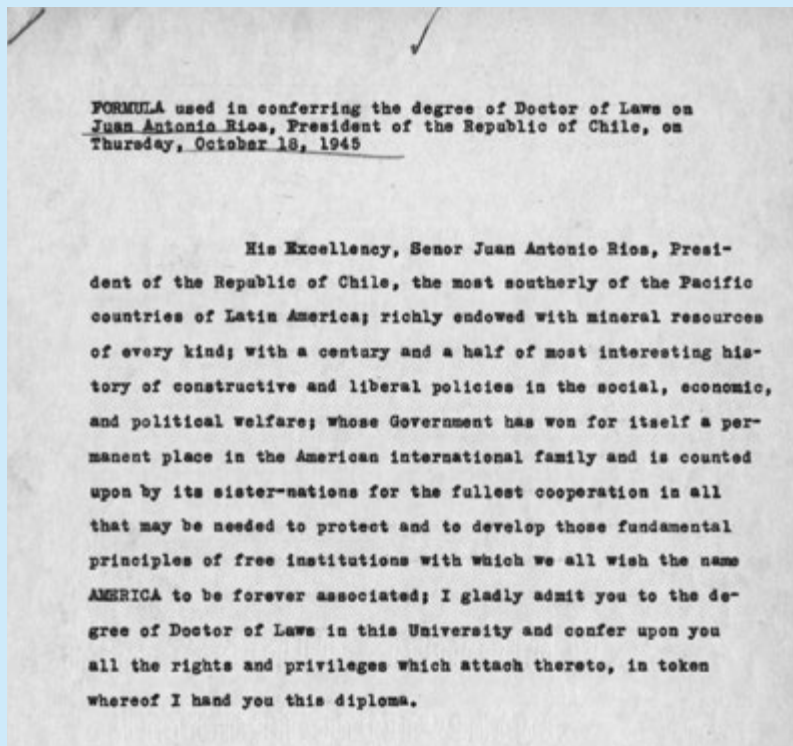
Four months after the San Francisco Conference, Ríos traveled to the United States for an official visit following an invitation from President

⁴ The *Falange Nacional* was a social Christian party that preceded the Christian Democrat Party.

Official invitation to the university convocation in honor of President Ríos at Columbia's Low Memorial Library on October 18, 1945.



Speech delivered by Frank D. Fackenthal, then acting President of Columbia University, during the conferral of the Doctor of Laws degree upon Ríos.



Source: Juan Antonio Rios, President of Chile; October 18, 1945; Historical Subject Files, Series VIII: Events, 1810s-2000s; Box 131 Folder 6; Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Columbia University Library.

Harry Truman. The trip had been long postponed, since former President Franklin D. Roosevelt had invited him to the US back in 1942.⁵ When Truman received Ríos at the north portico of the White House on October 11, 1945, it was his first time welcoming a Latin American head of government in the official residence. On the occasion, Ríos presented Truman with the document of Chile's ratification of the United Nations Charter. That same night, an event was held in his honor.⁶

After a stay in the US capital, Ríos and his delegation arrived in New York on October 15, where he was met by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia. The following day, a gala organized in his honor by the Pan American Society and the Chile-American Association was attended by over 1,000 guests.⁷ During the event, Pan American Society president Frederick Hasler celebrated Ríos' visit, the first of a Chilean president to the United States during his time in office, calling him "a true friend of democracy and Pan-American solidarity" and a "vigorous supporter of the planning for an enduring peace throughout the world."⁸

⁵ "Statement by the President on the Forthcoming Visit of President Ríos of Chile," *Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum*, June 8, 1945.

⁶ "Truman Receives Chile's President," *The New York Times*, October 12, 1945, 13.

⁷ Established in 1910 in New York, the Pan American Society of the United States was created to cultivate a relationship between the US and republics of Central and South America. The Chile-American Association was the Chilean chamber of commerce in the US at the time.

⁸ "Chile's President Welcomed to City," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1945, 5.



President Ríos was honored at a gala held by the Pan American Society and the Chile-American Association at the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York.

Source: "Homenajes al Presidente Ríos en su visita a Estados Unidos," *Revista Zig-Zag*, October 25, 1945, 13.

From left to right
 Marcial Mora, Chilean
 Ambassador to the
 United States at the time;
 President Emeritus of
 Columbia, Dr. Nicholas
 M. Butler; Chilean
 President Juan Antonio
 Ríos; and Dr. Frank D.
 Fackenthal, then acting
 President of Columbia.

Source: 5191 Juan Antonio Ríos,
 President of Chile; October
 18, 1945; Historical Subject
 Files, Series VIII: Events,
 1810s-2000s; Box 131 Folder
 6; Rare Book and Manuscript
 Library; Columbia University
 Library.



⁹ "Columbia Confers Degree on Dr. Ríos," *The New York Times*, October 19, 1945, 5.

¹⁰ "Columbia Confers," 5.

While in New York, Ríos visited Columbia University to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws degree conferred by University President Emeritus of Columbia, Nicholas Butler, and then acting President Frank D. Fackenthal. On October 18, he arrived at the Morningside Heights campus to attend the ceremony held at the rotunda of the Low Memorial Library. Upon his arrival, the university's Naval Reserve Midshipmen's School played the Chilean national anthem.

During the ceremony, Butler highlighted Ríos' statesmanship and praised him as one of the hemisphere's most outstanding political leaders, calling him a "true representative of Latin-American liberalism, which this University delights in honoring."⁹ Butler also added that the last barrier between the nations of the Americas was language, and that when the educational systems overcame it, then "the American republics would be able to move forward together in defense of the fundamental principles of democracy."¹⁰

Source: 5190 Juan Antonio Ríos, President of Chile;
October 18, 1945; Historical Subject Files, Series VIII:
Events, 1810s-2000s; Box 131 Folder 6; Rare Book
and Manuscript Library; Columbia University Library.



While accepting his degree,
President Ríos highlighted Columbia's
prestige as a leading world-class
institution and its role in the advancement
of civilization and the welfare of humanity.

¹¹ "Columbia Confers," 5.

¹² "Rios is Back in Office," *The New York Times*, December 4, 1945, 10.

¹³ "President of Chile, Long Ill, Dies at 58," *The New York Times*, June 28, 1946, 21.

While accepting his award, Ríos referred to Butler as "a torch for the youth of all the world," highlighting Columbia's prestige as a leading world-class institution. "My country is small but our interest in culture is very great, and we know, as the whole world knows, this school's reputation as well as that of Dr. Butler. For many years I have followed their combined activities for the advancement of civilization and the welfare of humanity," he said.¹¹

At the end of his state visit, President Ríos reciprocated and officially invited Harry Truman to visit Chile, assuring him that "the sentiment and consciousness of American unity and community are unanimous among the peoples of our hemisphere."¹² But that encounter in Chile would never occur. After a six-week-long tour of 15 countries around North, Central and South America, Juan Antonio Ríos returned to Chile in early December 1945. However, the long trip had greatly deteriorated his already weakened health and he soon retired. Two years prior to his continental tour, during an unrelated surgery, Ríos had been diagnosed with cancer which by the end of 1945, was in its terminal phase. In January 1946, Interior Minister Alfredo Duhalde was promoted to vice-president and Ríos retired to his private estate, where he died the next June, before the end of his six-year presidential period, making him the second consecutive president to pass on before the end of his term in office.¹³

Presidential elections were held in September 1946, which resulted in the election of a third Radical president. His name was Gabriel González Videla.



PRESIDENT TRUMAN welcoming PRESIDENT RIOS of Chile at the White House. SECRETARY OF STATE BYRNES, center; DR. ELEODORO DOMÍNGUEZ, Chilean Senator, right.

"Upon the Threshold of the Transition"

By DR. JUAN ANTONIO RIOS
President, Republic of Chile

THE position of Latin American countries today compared with that of the United States eighty years ago.

(From address at dinner tendered Dr. Rios by the Pan American Society and the Chile-American Association, in New York.)

I COME from Washington, where I felt in the kindnesses of President Truman, the Congress, and all the public officials there, something more than the courtesy of amiable hosts, the warmth of a century-old friendship of peoples and governments.

This has become more deeply rooted through a long history of similarity of ideals and action, seeking the noble solutions of democracy and liberty to create the unmistakable atmosphere of the way of life of the Americas.

Here, in this representative and cordial assemblage, I come in touch with private activities, the vital sap which nourished the energies of the most enterprising of nations. This is a moment which will leave indelible marks of gratitude and pleasure in the book of my life. . . .

Mention has been made of failures which "should not be permitted to occur" in Latin America, of "moral obligations" involved in this purpose, and of "low standards of living" in which hunger may be a dangerous counselor. . . .

Yes, there are disagreeable corners behind the manorial front of our plethoric lands.

The potential wealth of our countries is a well intentioned, fabulous gift of nature, which we have not known how, or been able to translate, as yet, into the American promise of general welfare.

We have attained many liberties, but it remains for us to storm this bulwark mentioned in the Atlantic Charter: "Freedom from Want." Crouching in the forest of our economy there is always lying in ambush, for the better part of our fellow citizens, the tiger of poverty. . . .

Our countries are today at the point at which this country was to be seen some eighty years ago: a semi-colonial, complementary economy, depending upon



PRESIDENT RIOS addressing the Board of Governors, Pan American Union, during his visit to Washington.

the exportation of a few raw materials to distant, uncertain and uncontrollable markets; living on imported manufactures and the flow of foreign capital.

We are upon the threshold of the transition in which this country found itself more than a half century ago; it will be long and painful, as it was here, if we must accomplish it alone; it will be short if we may count upon your assistance. Until now we have had this, and it has been mutually profitable; it will be more so in the future.

The time has come for a closer and organized business of mutual welfare and benefit, to which you bring your capital and technical wealth, and we our capital and natural resources.

Latin America depends and will depend more on the economy of this country than is generally

Left: Laying a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington Cemetery. With him is his son, LT. CARLOS RIOS.



THINK

Nov. 1945

President Rios' account of his state visit to the US.

Below: At luncheon honoring PRES. RIOS in New York. L. to r.: DR. NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER; DR. RIOS; THOS. J. WATSON, host; CHILEAN AMBASS. MORA; NELSON ROCKEFELLER.



Above: At dinner given by Pan American Society and Chile-American Assn. L. to r.: DR. DOMINGUEZ; FRED. E. HASLER, Society Pres.; PRES. RIOS; MAYOR LA GUARDIA; JOHN T. KIRBY, Assn. Cbm.

thought. In the system of connected vessels of the social structure of this hemisphere, there exists the logical danger that the lowest standard may predominate. My Government is dedicating its efforts to strengthening the economic platform of the nation. With a national income of 450 dollars per inhabitant it is clear that our problem is not in the distribution of wealth but in increasing it. That is why I have repeatedly admonished my fellow citizens that "to govern is to produce." You can hardly conceive, you who export between 5 to 8 per cent of your production, of a country that exports, as mine does, more than 50 per cent.

We sell to the United States almost 70 per cent of our export, and we buy here perhaps 40 per cent of our imports. Two products, nitrate of soda and copper, together represent 80 per cent of our exportation, and both are in the hands of Chilean-American



Left: Inspecting Cadet Corps at West Point.

firms, in which both our countries have for years equitably participated in profits and hazards. Seventy-five per cent of the foreign capital invested in Chile is from the United States and forms the largest investment made of such capital in any country of South America.

Other natural treasures in my country await businessmen, and our capital is now ready to associate with that from abroad. A Scandinavian expert said that there was no reason whatever why the southern part of Chile should not become another Norway with industries of wood, fisheries and marine transportation. The Executive is authorized to sign with foreign investors contracts which guarantee, against any eventuality, the total export of annual (Continued on page 32)



PRESIDENT RIOS (left) inspecting the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall during visit to Philadelphia; MAYOR BERNARD SAMUEL, at right.



Below: Columbia University confers degree of Doctor of Laws on Pres. Rios. L. to r.: AMBASSADOR MARCIAL MORA; DR. NICHOLAS MURRAY BUTLER; PRES. RIOS, and DR. FRANK D. FACKENTHAL, acting President of University.

Gabriel González Videla, 1946-1952

Before becoming president, Gabriel González Videla (1898-1980) had studied law and worked for La Nación newspaper, which allowed him to interact with Chile's leading political figures early on in his career.¹⁴ Influenced by his high school teachers, he joined the Radical Party in 1915 and by the time he was elected president in 1946, he was a skilled politician, having served in the lower chamber of congress between 1930 and 1941. He had also built a diplomatic career, acting as ambassador in several European countries under Pedro Aguirre Cerda, during the early World War II years. Later on, Juan Antonio Ríos appointed González Videla ambassador to Brazil, a position from which he resigned three years later to run in the 1945 congressional election, in which he was elected senator. As a Radical Party congressman, he was part of the committees of trade and foreign relations, which allowed him to join the Chilean delegation that traveled to the aforementioned San Francisco Conference.

In addition to his own party's backing, González Videla won the presidency supported by the socialists and the communists. If the alliance with the Communist Party had already become tense during the previous administration, it reached a whole new level during the González Videla period. Although his first cabinets included communist ministers, given the context of the global Cold War, Chile's relationship with the Western bloc, and the country's position in the newly formed United Nations, the president soon turned towards the right. Two years into his term, he severed relations with the Soviet Union, removed communists from his cabinet and in 1948 outlawed the party through the enforcement of the Permanent Defense of Democracy Law. Commonly known as Ley Maldita (the Damned Law) that removed some 26,000 militants from the electoral registry, denying them the right to vote. It also allowed for communist representatives that had been elected by popular vote to be removed from their positions, for militants to be persecuted and incarcerated, and for protests and demonstrations to be repressed. Many communists left the country, such as the poet Pablo Neruda, by then a member of the senate, who fled the country in early 1949 and spent the next three years in exile.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gabriel González Videla, *Memorias* (Santiago de Chile: Editora Nacional Gabriela Mistral, 1975).

¹⁵ See Carlos Huneeus, *La Guerra Fría Chilena: Gabriel González Videla y la Ley Maldita* (Santiago: Editorial Debate, 2009).

US President Harry Truman and Chilean President Gabriel González Videla upon his arrival to the United States on April 12, 1950.



Source: "Photograph of President Truman with President Gabriel Gonzalez Videla of Chile, at Washington National Airport, during the Chilean President's visit to the United States," *National Archives and Records Administration. Office of Presidential Libraries. Harry S. Truman Library.*

After the break with the Communist Party, González Videla's administration was backed by socialists and radicals along with two right-wing parties, whose representatives became part of the government. However, after further repression against protests continued during 1950, González Videla's own party withdrew its support of government. Soon after, the right wing followed, causing him to lose majority support in congress, thus hindering the passing of laws to materialize his program.

Although González Videla's administration was predominantly characterized by its controversial suppression of the Communist Party and the persecution of its members and sympathizers, significant advances in women's rights were accomplished during his administration. Four months after the "Damned Law" was approved, and following decades of activism, a law granting women full democratic rights was approved in January 1949, allowing them to participate in all elections subject to popular vote.¹⁶ First Lady Rosa Markmann was a firm advocate for women's rights and a strong supporter of the campaign that allowed women's suffrage.¹⁷ Additionally, in 1952 González Videla named the first Chilean and Latin American female minister, appointing Adriana Olguín as Minister of Justice.¹⁸

González Videla was also the second consecutive Chilean president to pay an official visit to the United States and to be awarded an honorary degree at Columbia University. Accompanied by his wife, their daughter Silvia and her husband, as well as Chilean Minister of Foreign Affairs Horacio Walker, Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Manuel Trucco, and chief Chilean delegate to the United Nations, Hernán Santa Cruz, he arrived in Washington, DC on April 12, 1950, aboard the "Independence," the US presidential airplane sent to Chile exclusively to transport the presidential committee. The group was greeted at the airport by President Harry Truman, First Lady Bess Truman, their daughter Margaret, and members of the cabinet.

The Chilean president's official welcome to the United States included a 21-gun salute and a parade through Washington, DC. González Videla spent three days on official business in the country's capital, during which he met with Latin American, civic and business organizations,

¹⁶ Female members of the Communist Party as well as suspected communists were not allowed to vote until the derogation of the law in 1958.

¹⁷ "El sufragio femenino se convierte en realidad," *Vinculación Ciudadana, Archivo del Senado*, April 17, 2020.

¹⁸ "Día Internacional de la Mujer: Justicia y Derechos Humanos destaca a Adriana Olguín, primera ministra de Estado en Chile y Latinoamérica," *Ministerio de Justicia y Derechos Humanos*, March 8, 2019.

and visited the Capitol, where he spoke before the US Senate, addressing the ban on the Communist Party that he had imposed in Chile.¹⁹

On April 15, González Videla arrived in New York, where he was met by John Coleman, former president of the New York Stock Exchange, and escorted to the Plaza Hotel. The next day, an official reception was headed by Mayor William O'Dwyer at City Hall, followed by a luncheon in his honor, a press conference, and a formal dinner. On April 18, González Videla met at the Plaza with Chileans residing in New York.²⁰

That same afternoon, González Videla arrived at Morningside Heights to receive an honorary PhD in an event that took place at the rotunda of Low Memorial Library, the same location where his predecessor had stood five years earlier. As he arrived to campus, González Videla was met by a crowd of over 3,000 people, including around 100 demonstrators, members of the Labor Youth League from Columbia, Barnard, City College and New York University, who held signs that read "Who shakes the hand of Videla shakes the hand of a butcher" and "Videla murders students." According to the April 19, 1950 editions of the *Columbia Spectator* and the *New York Times*, the pickets were led by Columbia Labor Youth leader, student Arthur A. Savage, who distributed leaflets protesting against the conferring of the degree. Citing writings by poet Pablo Neruda, the Labor Youth League denounced that backed by the United States, the Chilean president had established a reign of terror that had led to a dictatorship that had closed newspapers and persecuted writers as well as Jews, among others.²¹

The ceremony, held inside the library, was attended by 700 people. In absence of university president Dwight D. Eisenhower—who would soon become US president—provost Grayson L. Kirk read the citation of the degree, which praised González Videla as a public administrator "who has shown through his fearlessness, plain speaking and actions in high office that personal liberty can be maintained if those who love it are determined to do so," adding that his "long career has been marked by repeated demonstrations of great personal courage that are an inspiration, not only to his own people but to all Americans."²²

¹⁹ "Chilean President Cites Ban on Reds," *The New York Times*, April 14, 1950, 5.

²⁰ "Chile's President Arrives for Visit," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1950, 27.

²¹ Martin L. Katz, "Honor Chilean President Here with Doctor of Laws Degree," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume LXXII, n°106, April 19, 1950, 1-2. According to the *New York Times*, the Columbia Labor Youth was a Marxist study group, which Savage had defined as a "pro-labor group interested in studying scientific socialism." See: Richard H. Parke, "Chile's President Disdains Pickets," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1950, 7.

²² Parke, "Chile's President Disdains," 7.

Source: 5138, Videla Convocation Crowd; April 18, 1950; Columbia University Office of Public Affairs Photograph Collection; Series II: Negatives; Columbia University Archives; Columbia University Libraries.



President González Videla approaching the front of Low Memorial Library at Columbia University on April 18, 1950.

Source: 5137, Videla, González; April 18, 1950; Columbia University Office of Public Affairs Photograph Collection; Series II: Negatives; Columbia University Archives; Columbia University Libraries.



President González Videla receiving his honorary Doctor of Law degree at Columbia University in April 1950.

Article published in the Columbia Spectator about González Videla's convocation and the student protesters that met him outside Columbia's Low Memorial Library.

Honor Chilean President Here With Doctor of Laws Degree

'Viva Gonzalez!' (The Butcher?)

100 Pickets Berate Gonzalez As 3,000 Mingle Outside Low

By Martin L. Katz '51

Gabriel Gonzalez Videla, president of Chile, was honored here yesterday with a Doctor of Laws degree at a one-hour ceremony in the rotunda of Low Memorial Library while a crowd of 3,000, including 100 vociferous pickets, kept vigil outside.

The South American diplomat, who is in this country for a two-week "good will" visit, was acclaimed or berated by various excited groups around the campus, while at the staid academic ceremony in the library Vice-President George B. Pegram presented him with Columbia laurels. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was away on vacation in Augusta, Ga.



Source: Katz,
"Honor Chilean President," 1.

²³ Katz, "Honor Chilean President," 1.

²⁴ Katz, "Honor Chilean President," 1.

In true Cold War discourse, during his acceptance speech, the Chilean president thanked the university and lauded Columbia's universal spirit and its mission in the dissemination of principles like dignity and democratic freedom, especially at a time when they were in danger of being destroyed. "Thousands of young men and women from all parts of the earth come to your university to be taught democracy and freedom, ideas which are breathed in the very air of your country and formulated in your classrooms," he said.²³

The following day, the *New York Times* reported that González Videla was able to turn "what could have turned into an ugly situation into a personal triumph," since as he left Low Memorial Library and walked to his car, he skillfully avoided the protesters and instead mingled with supporters, whose cheers eventually drowned out the dissent. According to the *Columbia Spectator*, he approached one of them and said: "I am a democratic president."²⁴

In spite of his successful state visit to the United States, back in Chile, González Videla's personal image was forever damaged by the repressive traits of his administration. Not even accomplishments such as the legalization of female suffrage, the creation of a national oil company, which allowed for the export of crude, or the inauguration of the Chilean research station in Antarctica, could salvage his reputation in the eyes of the public. After leaving office in 1952, González Videla had sporadic political appearances, mainly supporting radical candidates running for the presidency, but had no significant public roles. After his party supported the election of Salvador Allende in 1970, he resigned and took an active role in opposing the socialist government, even supporting the 1973 military coup. He published his memoirs in 1975, and the following year and until his death, he collaborated with the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1989) as a member of the Council of State, an advisory body to the military junta.

He died in August 1980 at the age of 81.

Eduardo Frei Montalva, 1964-1970

After studying law at Chile's Universidad Católica and following a brief affiliation with the Chilean Conservative Party, Eduardo Frei Montalva (1911-1982) took part in the foundation of the Falange Nacional in 1935, a party inspired by social Christianity and influenced by the ideas of French philosopher and Christian humanist Jacques Maritain.

His first political appointment was in 1945, when he briefly acted as minister of public works under Juan Antonio Ríos, but because he disagreed with the government's repression of worker protests he resigned eight months into the job. In 1949 he was elected senator, a position he held for 15 years. In parallel with his political career, in 1950, President González Videla named him as Chile's representative to the United Nations. The following year he became part the United Nations Economic and Social Council.²⁵

He first ran for president in 1952, but he lost to Carlos Ibáñez del Campo. Five years later, when in 1957 the Falange evolved into the Christian Democratic Party, Frei emerged as its natural leader, so he ran for office again in the 1958 election, coming in third after conservative Jorge Alessandri and socialist Salvador Allende. A prolific reader and writer, during the next few years, Frei Montalva published several books, consolidating his academic and international career.

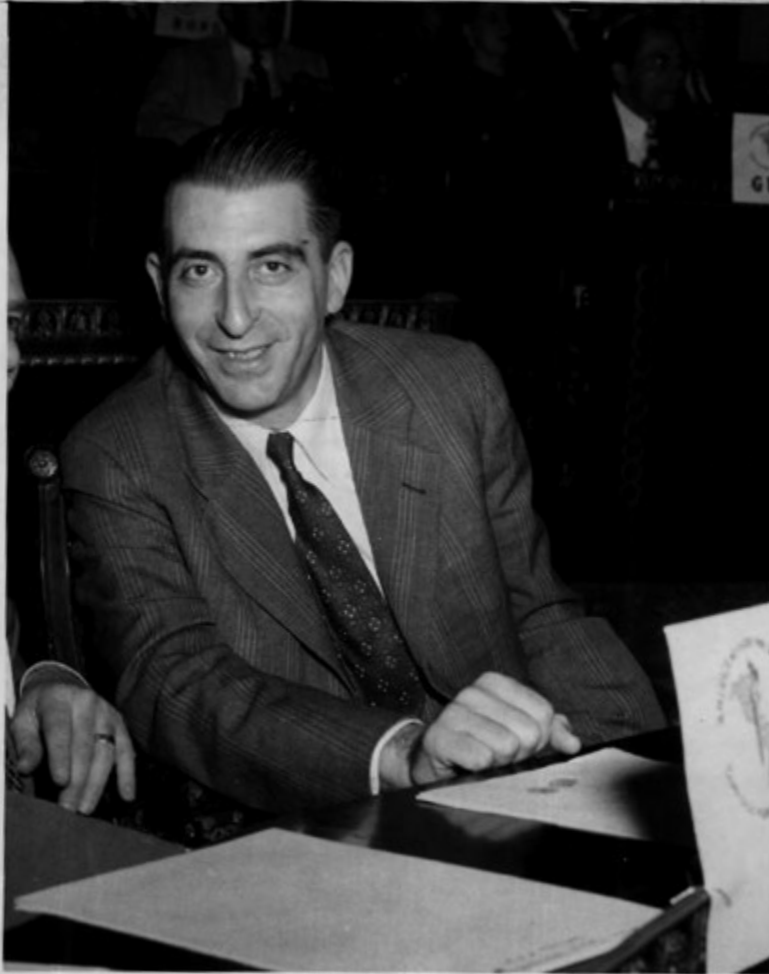
Over the course of the next decade, the senator lectured at several universities across South and North America, cementing an international image as a major figure among democratic Latin American leaders.²⁶ It was around that time that his connection to Columbia began, when in 1961, he was invited to participate in Frank Tannenbaum's University Seminars.

An Austrian-born professor of Latin American History and a 1921 graduate of Columbia College, Tannenbaum joined the university's faculty in 1935. Almost a decade later, as the world was still learning of the atrocities of World War II, he, along with Columbia President Frank Fackenthal, founded the University Seminars. Beginning during the 1944-1945 academic year, the seminars intended to delve into the problems that emerged in a global post-war scenario. The goal was to

²⁵ "Eduardo Frei Montalva", *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

²⁶ "Eduardo Frei, Ex-President of Chile, Is Dead At 71," *The New York Times*, January 23, 1982, 21.

Portrait of Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva in 1950.



Source: Senator Eduardo Frei of Chile; May 13, 1950; New Leader records, 1895-2008; Box 180 Folder 119, Rare Book and Manuscript Library; Columbia University Library.

transcend the boundaries of the university and for Columbia faculty and students to engage with international leaders in matters of global concern. According to a *New York Times* article, despite the lack of formal organization or funding, during their first 20 years the seminars grew from five to 31, “merely because they are a good idea.”²⁷ It is difficult to understate Tannenbaum’s achievement in offering a platform from which prevailing issues across the Americas could be discussed by major democratic-minded intellectuals.

When Tannenbaum died in 1969, there were 50 ongoing seminars. Nowadays there are over 90, with some of the original still active.²⁸ One of these ongoing forums is dedicated to the study and discussion of Latin America. Since the mid-1940s, presidents, diplomats, academics, journalists, writers, and poets from all over the region have gathered once a month in invitation-only, informal meetings. Because of how Tannenbaum envisioned the Latin American Seminar, the reunions are generally held in Spanish, which in Tannenbaum’s view helped give the attendees “a feeling of being at home,” and a place where they could “speak critically not only about their own country but ours as well.”²⁹

The Latin American Seminar advisory committee included at that time prominent regional figures, such as former Colombian

²⁷ “Seminars at Columbia Are in Their 20th Year,” *The New York Times*, January 16, 1964, 89.

²⁸ The University Seminars are an ongoing initiative, gathering monthly at invitation-only events.

²⁹ “Columbia Forum Ending 20 Years,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 1963, 127.



Portrait of Frank Tannenbaum.

Source: “Photographs, Frank Tannenbaum Memorial Lecture. Memorial Meeting, 1963–1964,” *The University Seminars Digital Archive*, Columbia University Libraries.

³⁰ "Tannenbaum Set to Retire at Term's End. Hanke To Teach Here on Latin America," *Columbia Spectator*, Volume CV N° 62, February 10, 1961, 1.

³¹ *Frank Tannenbaum to David Smith* (October 3, 1961). Letter from *Frank Tannenbaum Papers*, 1915-1969, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

³² *Frank Tannenbaum to Dr. Arturo Uslar Pietri* (May 10, 1961). Letter from *Frank Tannenbaum Papers*, 1915-1969, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

³³ *Frank Tannenbaum to Dr. Arturo Uslar Pietri* (June 10, 1961). Letter from *Frank Tannenbaum Papers*, 1915-1969, Columbia University Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

³⁴ *Frank Tannenbaum to Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva* (November 8, 1961). Archive, Casa Museo Frei Montalva.

³⁵ *Richard B. Myer to Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva* (November 30, 1961). Archive, Casa Museo Frei Montalva.

President Eduardo Santos, Brazilian historian and sociologist Gilberto Freyre, Mexican diplomat Daniel Cosío Villegas, and Venezuelan writer and senator Arturo Uslar Pietri, who nominated Latin American leaders to attend the sessions. According to Tannenbaum, by the early 1960s 75-90% of Latin America's intellectuals, including many ex-presidents and diplomats, had spoken at the meetings.³⁰ It was at that time that as "the leader of the Christian Democratic movement in Latin America, candidate for the presidency in Chile in 1958, member of the Chilean Senate, and Professor of Law at the Catholic University," Senator Frei Montalva was first invited to speak about the region's problems and perspectives.³¹ As stated in a letter from May 1961, he had been nominated by Daniel Cosío Villegas, who was then serving as the Mexican ambassador to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.³²

The following month, Tannenbaum wrote Uslar and the rest of the committee: "I am glad to be able to tell you that Eduardo Frei has accepted to come for half a year."³³ Later that year, in a letter addressed to Frei in Chile, Tannenbaum informed him that he would soon have news from the Institute of International Education (IIE) with details of his trip to New York and wished him "a happy experience both at the University and in the United States."³⁴ A few weeks after that, Richard B. Myer, Director of Special Projects and Arts Department at the IIE, wrote Frei to discuss the details of the Ford Foundation grant that was financing his trip to the US and his participation in the Latin American Seminar at Columbia "for a three month period beginning on approximately February 1, 1962."³⁵

As stated in further correspondence, as the leaders of the Christian Democratic Party of Chile, Frei Montalva along with fellow Senator Radomiro Tomic were scheduled to attend the Seminar on April 5, 1962 to speak about the "Present Political Situation in Chile." As Cold War tensions were on the rise during the second year of the Kennedy administration, Frei also took part in a series of seminars that focused on the recently launched Alliance for Progress. Created mainly to counter the 1959 triumph of the revolutionary forces in Cuba, the Alliance was a 10-year assistance program for economic cooperation between Latin America and the US.

Source: Casa Museo Eduardo
Frei Montalva Archive.

Columbia University in the City of New York | New York 27, N.Y.

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
Latin American Seminar

409 West 117th Street

November 8, 1961.

Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva
Hindenburg 683
Santiago, Chile

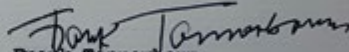
Dear Dr. Frei:

You will be hearing from the Institute of
International Education within a few days on
the details of your trip to the United States.

I hope, you will have a happy experience
both at the University and in the United States.

We are looking forward to your coming with
the greatest of pleasure.


Cordially,


Frank Tannenbaum
Director,
University Seminars

FT:ahm

Letter from Frank Tannenbaum to
Eduardo Frei Montalva regarding his
participation in the University Seminars.

Source: Casa Museo Eduardo Frei Montalva Archive.


November 30, 1961

Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva
Hindenburg 683
Santiago, Chile

Dear Dr. Frei:

Further to my letter of November 17, I wish to outline herein the financial details of the grant which the Ford Foundation has made to you to enable you to participate in the Latin American Seminar at Columbia University for a three month period beginning on approximately February 1, 1962.

Your grant provides first class round trip air travel between Santiago and New York for you and for your family, in the event that they accompany you to the States. As mentioned in my previous letter, IIR will be happy to purchase your international air ticket for you; or if you prefer to make your travel arrangements locally, we will reimburse you or pay your travel agency directly for the expenses incurred. You will receive \$50 to cover the cost of your passport, visas, medical examinations and inoculations. If you are accompanied by your family, that allowance will be increased to \$100. In addition, \$24 is provided to cover expenses which may occur during normal stopovers en route from Santiago to New York. A similar allowance will be provided in connection with your return to Chile.

You will receive an allowance of \$40 per day while in the United States to cover the cost of your living expenses. This figure is based on the assumption that you will be accompanied by your wife. The grant also provides an honorarium of \$300 per month. Costs of local travel connected with your visits to various universities and international affairs centers in New York and surrounding areas will be covered by your grant.

The Institute will obtain, at no cost to you, insurance policies for the duration of your program as follows: accident and sickness insurance up to \$1,000; accidental death and dismemberment insurance on your life with a face value of \$30,000 plus \$5,000 for each dependent child under the age of 21, up to a maximum of \$50,000. (So that we may initiate these policies, we would appreciate knowing the names and ages of your dependents.) Individual health and accident insurance policies will also be provided for your wife and children if they accompany you to the U. S.

Letter from Richard B. Myer, Director of Special Projects of Columbia's Art Department, outlining financial details of Frei Montalva's upcoming trip to the United States.

November 30, 1961

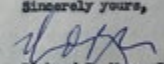
-2-

Senator Eduardo Frei Montalva

Enclosed is a visa application form DSP-66 accepting you on the Institute's Exchange Visitor Visa Program number P-III-6 for the duration of your stay in this country. You may present this form along with your passport to the U.S. Consulate in Santiago in order to obtain a visa to enter the United States.

If you have any questions concerning the terms of the grant as outlined above, please let me know. If the terms are acceptable to you, would you kindly sign and return to me the enclosed copy of this letter.

We shall be happy to assist you with preparations for your trip and with any phase of your program in the U.S. I look forward with pleasure to meeting you upon your arrival in New York.

Sincerely yours,

Richard B. Myer, Director
Special Projects and Arts
Department

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Its main goals were for Latin American nations to achieve political freedom, material progress, an equitable distribution of income, land reform, and free trade. However, by the early 1970s it was mainly seen as a failed initiative and its funding was cut off. Although Frei Montalva's position at Columbia was temporary, his role as the leader of the Christian Democratic movement and his political experience provided him with the insight and experience in which fellow Seminar participants were interested.³⁶

Though in 1964 he was once again invited to take part in the Seminars, he declined. That same year he was elected president after defeating Salvador Allende in the November general election. Tannenbaum died in 1969 and five years later, Alice Maier, his longtime assistant, who by then was the associate director of the Seminars, reached out to Columbia's Institute of Latin American Studies, asking for help regarding the upcoming publishing of a biographical essay on the deceased professor. She wanted to send copies of the publication to Tannenbaum's former students and friends and needed their addresses. Among them was Frei Montalva.³⁷ During his six-year presidency, Frei pushed an agenda of radical reforms to counter underdevelopment, poverty, and income inequality, albeit through a peaceful and free process, under the motto of "*Revolución en Libertad*" (Revolution in Freedom) that guaranteed the liberties of democratic systems.³⁸ His term ended in 1970, following the presidential election in which his party's candidate, former senator and fellow participant in the Latin American Seminar, Radomiro Tomic, was defeated by Salvador Allende, who became the world's first democratically elected Marxist president. During the next years, Frei was an outspoken critic of Allende's aspirations and traveled around the United States openly denouncing his project at several conferences.

In September 1973 Allende was overthrown by a military coup, giving rise to the infamous 17-year long dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Although his party backed the coup, Frei soon realized that Pinochet had no desire for reinstating democracy, intending to stay in power at all costs, becoming openly critical of the regime and its practices. In 1980 he was the lead speaker at the *Caupolicanazo*, the first massive political event that occurred in Chile in the seven years that had passed since the military coup.³⁹ Many figures among the Christian Democracy and

³⁶ In his 1967 article "The Alliance that Lost its Way," Frei was openly critical of the Alliance mainly because in his view it had been unsuccessful in securing democracies throughout the region. See: Eduardo Frei Montalva, "The Alliance That Lost Its Way," *Foreign Affairs* 45, no. 3 (April 1967): 437-448.

³⁷ Alice H. Maier, "Alice H. Maier to Mrs. Patricia Nagykerly," *The University Seminars Digital Archive*, Columbia University Libraries (May 6, 1974).

³⁸ For further reading on Frei Montalva's presidency, see: Sebastián Torres Hurtado, *The Gathering Storm: Eduardo Frei's Revolution in Liberty and Chile's Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020).

³⁹ "Objeto del mes: El discurso más mediático de Frei Montalva," *Casa Museo Eduardo Frei Montalva Website*, August 1, 2011.

Picture of a session of the Latin American Seminar in 1965. Pictured are Raúl Irarrázaval, member of the Foreign Relations Commission of the Chilean Congress, and Frank Tannenbaum, among others.

Source: "Photographs, 1965-01-14. Frank Tannenbaum Memorial Lecture. Memorial Meeting, 1964-1965," *The University Seminars Digital Archive*, Columbia University Libraries.



⁴⁰ The Frei family has consistently affirmed that because the former president had become a problem for the dictatorship, he was deliberately poisoned to death by medical staff with the use of chemical weapons. See: Carmen Frei, *Magnicidio: La historia del crimen de mi padre* (Santiago: Editorial Aguilar, 2017).

⁴¹ Carlos Reyes, "Caso Frei: Corte de Apelaciones revoca fallo en primera instancia y absuelve a todos los acusados," *La Tercera*, January 25, 2021.

other center-left parties in Chile, as well as the Frei Montalva family, agree that the former president's destiny was sealed when he publicly opposed Pinochet on that symbolic and fateful day.

In January 1982 –a year and a half after the *Caupolicanazo*– he died after two fairly routine surgeries. Although at the time his demise was attributed to a bacterial infection that had led to septic shock and death, Frei's family always suspected that because of his public opposition to the dictatorship, he had been murdered by the regime's political police and medical staff.⁴⁰ Thirty-five years later, his death was ruled a homicide by poisoning and six people were sentenced to prison. However, in January 2021 the Santiago Court of Appeals revoked the sentence and the condemned were absolved of all charges, as the court found that the evidence provided had failed to prove that the former president's death was attributable to the actions of third parties. The family announced they would appeal the ruling.⁴¹

As a central figure in Chile's 20th century political history, Frei Montalva's death continues to be a subject of great interest in the country.

Patricio Aylwin, 1990-1994

A longtime political ally of Eduardo Frei Montalva, Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin (1918-2016) was the first democratically elected President of Chile after almost 17 years of dictatorship. As the leading figure of the country's transition to democracy, he garnered considerable attention from the international community and media, as well as from the academic world; Columbia was no exception.

After studying law at Universidad de Chile, Aylwin was among the founders of the Christian Democrat party, leading the party between 1958 and 1964. He was a senator between 1965 and 1973, and was a close collaborator in the Frei Montalva presidency. Though he initially supported a military intervention to put an end to the political, social, and economic crisis that the country experienced during the last months of the Allende administration, he became critical of Pinochet and his regime soon after the dictatorship was established. After Frei Montalva's death he became the moderate opposition's natural leader against Pinochet and a key player in the peaceful transition that allowed for a democratic outing. When presidential elections were called in 1989, he was nominated as the candidate for the Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Coalition of Parties for Democracy), winning the election at the end of that year and becoming president the following March.⁴²

The milestones of Aylwin's presidency included the establishment of the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (which exposed thousands of murders and forced disappearances under the previous regime) the materialization of Chile's commercial opening through the signing of economic agreements, as well the re-instatement and strengthening of the country's participation in the international sphere.

After several years of diplomatic isolation, the Chilean transition to democracy brought substantial changes in diplomacy and international relations, which naturally put Aylwin in the world spotlight.

Throughout his presidency, Aylwin took various state visits abroad, including one to the US six months after taking office. Having arrived in New York on September 26, 1990, the following day he had meetings with the Council of Foreign Relations, the New York Times' editorial

⁴² Although democracy was reinstated, both Pinochet and the Armed Forces remained in positions of power during the Aylwin administration. This made it difficult for the new government to meet part of Aylwin's program and persecute Pinochet and other former state agents for the human rights violations perpetrated during the dictatorship.

Source: 5135. Aylwin And Sovern; September 1990;
Office of Public Affairs Photograph Collection; Series
II; Box 101; Roll 2; Columbia University Archives;
Columbia University Libraries.



President Aylwin, then Columbia SIPA
Dean Alfred C. Stepan, and then
University President Michael Sovern.

AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Friday, September 28, 1990

THE NEW CHILE

The Kellogg Center, Room 1501
The International Affairs Building
118th Street & Amsterdam Avenue

Sponsored by

The School of International and Public Affairs
The Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies

11 AM to 12:30 PM

A Look at the Chilean Transition

Speakers

ALEJANDRO FOXLEY
Minister of Finance
Chile

ARTURO VALENZUELA
Director, Latin American
Program
Georgetown University

Moderator

ALFRED C. STEPAN
Dean, School of International
& Public Affairs
Columbia University

12:45 PM to 2:00 PM

MICHAEL SOVERN, President, Columbia University
will award a **Presidential Citation** to

His Excellency

PATRICIO AYLWIN
President of Chile

who will address the assembled guests

Vino de Honor to follow

Admission by reservation only. Telephone 854-4643

Invitation to Patricio Aylwin's Presidential Citation at Columbia SIPA on September 28, 1990.

Source: The New Chile; 1990-1991; Central Files (Office of the President Records); Box 1081; Columbia University Archives; Columbia University Libraries.

⁴³ Patricio Aylwin Azócar, "Discurso de S.E. El Presidente de la República, D. Patricio Aylwin Azócar ante la Organización de Naciones Unidas," *Fundación Patricio Aylwin Website*, September 28, 1990.

⁴⁴ "Chile President Honored Here for Leadership," *University Record*, Volume 16, N°6, October 5, 1990, 1.

⁴⁵ Presidential Citation, Patricio Aylwin Azócar; September 28, 1990; Central Files (Office of the President Records); Box 1081; *Columbia University Archives*, Columbia University Libraries.

⁴⁶ Presidential Citation Patricio Aylwin Azócar.

⁴⁷ Presidential Citation Patricio Aylwin Azócar.

⁴⁸ Aylwin, "Discurso de S.E."

board, and the America's Society. The morning of September 28, he attended the United Nations General Assembly, where he addressed the audience with a speech about the peaceful democratic transition in Chile. He said that the country looked towards the future with a sense of hope and national reconciliation, emphasizing Chile's commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which it had subscribed as a founding member of the United Nations.⁴³

Later that day, Aylwin arrived at Morningside Heights to receive the University's Presidential Citation in recognition of his role in the democratization of his country. The event started with a forum entitled "The New Chile," organized by Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies. It included a panel about the Chilean transition, moderated by SIPA's then Dean Alfred Stepan, and featuring Alejandro Foxley, Aylwin's Finance Minister, and Arturo Valenzuela, director of the Latin American Program at Georgetown University.⁴⁴

The forum was followed by an intervention by University president Michael Sovern who awarded Aylwin with the citation and delivered a speech in which he praised the Chilean president's role as a democratic leader. "Aristotle wisely observed that the man who is isolated - who is unable to share in the benefits of political association, or who has no need to share because he is self-sufficient - is no part of the polis, and must therefore be either a beast or a god,"⁴⁵ he said. "Don Patricio Aylwin, when Chile had no polis, when Chile had no political association, you dedicated your spirit, energy, imagination and life to the foundational project of creating Chilean democracy anew."⁴⁶ President Sovern also noted that Aylwin's actions were "being studied throughout the world for the insights it provides for the theory and practice of democracy."⁴⁷

Afterwards, Aylwin addressed the audience of over 200 guests present that day at the Kellogg Center in the International Affairs Building. He started by highlighting the role of universities in society as well as his admiration for Columbia: "It is my great honor to be received in one of the United States' oldest and most prestigious universities, and it is a responsibility to be invited as President of the Republic of Chile,"⁴⁸ he claimed. Next, he delivered an extensive presentation about Chile's long democratic tradition, emphasizing

that the greatest value of the Chilean process did not lie in being an interesting model for the study of transitions to democracy, but “in the ethical and moral option that our people have taken for peace, justice, and freedom,”⁴⁹ adding that the reestablishment of Chilean democracy had neither been a stroke of luck nor the work of a few people, but rather a process guided by the defense of human rights and was thus “the result of pain, perseverance and the maturity of a people backed by a longstanding tradition.”

President Aylwin’s first official trip to the United States concluded in Washington with a meeting with President George H.W. Bush. They convened at the Oval Office of the White House on October 2, 1990, and in the presence of several ministers, advisors and translators, they discussed matters concerning free trade agreements between the countries and the US government’s support for Chilean democracy, while also conferring over President Bush’s upcoming trip to Chile in December that same year.⁵⁰

After leaving office in March 1994, Aylwin had an active political and public life. He founded and presided the Corporación Justicia y Democracia (Corporation for Democracy and Justice), a non-profit that promoted youth training programs and academic research regarding development, presided over the Latin American and Caribbean Commission of Social Development, and was awarded 13 honorary doctorates from Chilean and foreign universities. In 1998 he was recognized with the J. William Fulbright award for International Understanding, and between 2000 and 2001 he briefly acted as president of the Christian Democratic party, before retiring from politics in 2002.

When he passed away in 2016 at 97, three days of national mourning were declared for Chileans to honor and remember the president of the transition to democracy.

⁴⁹ Aylwin, “Discurso de S.E.”

⁵⁰ “Memorandum of Conversation with President Patricio Aylwin of Chile,” The White House Website, October 2, 1990.

Source: 5136 Aylwin and Others;
September 1990; Office of Public Affairs
Photograph Collection; Series II; Box 101;
Roll 2; Columbia University Archives;
Columbia University Libraries.



President Aylwin holding
up his Presidential Citation
award standing next
to Columbia University
President Michael Sovern.

Portrait of President
Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, 1999.



Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle, 1994-2000

Eduardo Frei Montalva's son, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle (b. 1942), may not have followed his father's footsteps by attending law school, but he did in his political career, becoming president of Chile 30 years after him. Having worked on his father's campaigns when he was running for the senate, Frei Ruiz-Tagle had an early start in politics. He joined the newly founded Christian Democracy party in 1958, while he was still a high school student. Later, while studying civil hydraulic engineering at Universidad de Chile, he was a member of the student union, but after graduating he abandoned his political activities and in 1967 moved to Italy where he studied and worked, returning to Chile during his father's presidency. He worked in engineering in the private sector for nearly 20 years, only coming back to politics after his father's death, when he established the Eduardo Frei Montalva foundation in his honor. During the last years of the Pinochet dictatorship, he was a strong advocate for the return of democracy. He ran for senator and won in the 1989 election, also serving as president of his party between 1991 and 1993. By then, he had become a natural leader in his sector, and as such, he succeeded Aylwin as president of Chile during the 1994-2000 period.

Frei Ruiz-Tagle won the 1993 presidential election with a six-point program that had a strong focus on economic development, the reduction of poverty, the strengthening of the health system and of Chile's international relations, and an educational reform, which was the reason behind his trip to Columbia four years into his administration. Just as his father had done three decades earlier, the reform of the school system was one of Frei Ruiz-Tagle's priorities as a basis for the country's development. While in the 1960s, Frei Montalva was responsible for carrying out a plan that trained 5,000 new teachers, built 6,000 classrooms and saw the beginning of experimental research in education in Chile,⁵¹ in the mid-1990s the younger Frei aimed to guarantee equal opportunities for students across Chile through the modernization of the school system. At the same time, his government also put special focus on the teachers, since many of them lacked

⁵¹ "Frei y la Reforma Educacional de 1965," *Revista de Educación* 381 (November 2017): 11-12.

specialization and suffered from poor wages. Responding to their low morale, the Frei administration looked to provide them the opportunity to study abroad at academic centers of excellence, creating “an impactful and sustainable education system.”⁵²

In consequence, the president traveled to Columbia in September 1998, not to speak, but to formally arrange a collaboration between the Chilean Ministry of Education and Columbia’s Teachers College (TC). Through a cooperative training program, Teachers College agreed to develop a series of pre-service and in-service training programs for Chilean teachers as well as exchange programs with college faculty. Since its foundation in 1887 –making it the United States’ oldest and largest graduate school of education, health and psychology– Teachers College has advocated that education alone cannot correct social inequalities. As such, a comprehensive approach that includes nutrition, psychology and physical health, is required to improve people’s lives.⁵³

The fact that the Chilean government picked Columbia’s TC to collaborate in educational matters is not coincidental; the country had a nearly century-long relationship with the school. Since the beginning of the 1900s, dozens of Chilean educators traveled to New York for graduate studies at TC, who then returned to Chile and played key roles in educational reforms, in the foundation of schools and in conducting educational research.⁵⁴

Following negotiations between representatives of Chile’s Ministry of Education and TC’s Associate Director of the Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation, Peter Comeau, Frei Ruiz-Tagle visited Columbia to hold a press conference at TC’s Grace Dodge Hall. At the event, TC President Arthur Levine praised Chile as “one of the most visionary countries in the world in bringing about reforms,” highlighting that the nation’s spending on social programs since the return of democracy had significantly improved Chilean’s quality of life. During the event, Frei Ruiz-Tagle emphasized that his intentions were to build upon the progress that the country had already realized, and that particularly in the field of education, his government wanted to focus on the academic training of educators. “That is why we are sending them to centers of excellence in teacher’s education in North America, South America, Europe and Asia,” the president said, adding

⁵² Mary Crystal Cage, “Teachers College Launches Cooperative Training Programs with Chilean Public Schools,” *Columbia University Record*, September 11, 1998, 7.

⁵³ “About Teachers College,” *Teachers College Website*.

⁵⁴ For a detailed overview of the relationship between Teachers College and Chile, see chapter 4: “The Legacy of Columbia University’s Teachers College in Chile’s Educational Development.”

Teachers College Launches Cooperative Training Programs With Chilean Public Schools

By MARY CRYSTAL CAGE

The Chilean Ministry of Education and Teachers College (TC) have agreed to develop a series of pre-service and in-service training programs for Chilean teachers and exchange programs with college faculty.

At a recent press conference in Grace Dodge Hall, Eduardo Frei, the president of Chile, said that the agreement with TC could play an important role in education reform in his country.

The agreement was the product of negotiations coordinated by Peter Comeau, Associate Director of the Center for Educational Outreach and Innovation and representatives of the Chilean Ministry of Education.

Said TC President Arthur Levine: "Chile has been one of the most visionary countries in the world in bringing about reforms."

The quality of education and access to education have become important issues in Chile. Since 1990, government spending on social programs, primarily health and education, has doubled. At the same time, the proportion of Chileans living in poverty has declined by almost 50 percent to one in four people.

Under Frei, Chile has lengthened the school year, has linked nearly 3,000 schools to the Internet, and has increasingly turned control of schools to local communities. But the Chilean leader wants to build upon the progress his country has already made.

"All the efforts for these reforms take place in the classroom," he said. Now, it is time for those reform efforts to focus on the teachers themselves. Too many teachers lack specialization and suffer from low wages and low morale. "That is why we are sending them to centers of excellence in teachers education in North America, South America, Europe and Asia."

Although he is sending teachers to some of the best schools of education in the world, he is especially pleased that TC is going to play a key role because of TC's long history with Chile.

Indeed, Frei left Teachers College with more than a pledge to provide further assistance. Dean Karen Zinswiler presented Frei a bound copy of the dissertation written by the first Chilean graduate of Teachers College, Irma Salas.

Her 1930 dissertation was about the need to develop a high school curriculum to serve the children of common and skilled laborers. Secondary schools were geared to stu-

dents from educated and wealthy families. The children of working class parents often dropped out and there was no network of vocational programs to train them for commercial or industrial jobs.

The Chilean government was so impressed by her work that it encouraged the private publication of her dissertation.

She returned to her homeland after graduation and became an advocate for education, using John Dewey's philosophy as a guide. In the 1960s, she designed a regional "community" college system for Chile to increase educational opportunities for Chileans. The regional college system was adopted during the presidency of Eduardo Frei's father.

Today, one of the greatest educational challenges in Chile — and in the United States — is giving school children the skills they need to participate in a modern economy. Mott Hall School, located on the edge of Washington Heights and Harlem in Manhattan, is an example of how to accomplish that. Students and administrators from the school made a presentation to Frei.

Dr. Marian Acosta-Sing, principal of Mott Hall, explained that it is a science, technology and math magnet school with the largest proportion of bilingual students of any school in New York State—90 percent. The students learn how to use computers as creative research tools and use them routinely for course assignments.

For example, this year students started using laptop computers for mathematics projects. For one project, Kelvin Then, a sixth grader, asked his classmates to complete a survey — pick one of five colors as their favorite color. After he compiled his results, he used Microsoft PowerPoint software to make a multimedia presentation that featured bar charts, graphs, pie charts and text to explain what proportion of the students liked which colors.

Frei was so intrigued by the students' presentation that he told his staff to wait a little longer than scheduled before they whisked him off to his next meeting.

The technology program at Mott Hall was developed with the assistance of the Institute for Learning Technologies at TC. The Chilean government is interested in placing apprentices to work with "master" teachers at the school.

Acosta-Sing understands Chile's interest in training teachers and students to use technology in the classroom. She said: "We feel it is a very important way to enrich the curriculum."

Article published in the Columbia University Record newspaper about Frei Ruiz-Tagle's visit to Teachers College in September 1998.

Source: Cage, "Teachers College Launches."

that he was pleased of the role that TC would play in his reformation process given the school's long history with Chile.⁵⁵

During Frei's meeting with TC authorities, Dean Karen Zumwalt presented him with a bound copy of the dissertation of Irma Salas, who in 1930 became the first Chilean woman in achieving a PhD in Education, which she accomplished at Teachers College with a thesis entitled "The socio-economic composition of the secondary school population of Chile."⁵⁶ One of the most prominent educators in the country, during the 1960s, Salas designed a regional community college system to increase educational opportunities for Chilean students, which was coincidentally adopted during the educational reform conducted during the Frei Montalva presidency.⁵⁷

The educational reform promoted by the Frei Ruiz-Tagle administration introduced significant and lasting changes in the school system in Chile, which included infrastructure improvements, the modification of the school curriculum, an increase in teacher's salaries, access to new information technologies for students, and the increase in the amount of hours that children attended school.⁵⁸

After leaving office, Frei served as senator for eight years, being elected president of the upper house in 2006. In 2009 he once again ran for the presidency, but he failed to win the majority vote and conceded defeat to the center-right candidate Sebastián Piñera. In 2014, President Michelle Bachelet appointed him extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador on a special mission for the Asia-Pacific region. He lives in Santiago and is still a member of the Christian Democracy party.

⁵⁵ Cage, "Teachers College Launches."

⁵⁶ Cage, "Teachers College Launches."

⁵⁷ For further reading about Irma Salas and her contributions to Chilean education, see chapter 4.

⁵⁸ "Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle," *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.



Left: TC Dean Karen Zumwalt presented Frei Ruiz-Tagle with a copy of the dissertation of Chilean educator, Irma Salas (TC'30).

Source: "Launching Careers and Widening the Discourse: TC's Minority Postdoctoral Program at 20," *Teachers College Website*, Columbia University.

Right: TC President Arthur Levine highlighted Chile as one of the most visionary countries in educational reforms.

Source: "Arthur Levine," *Education Writers Association Website*.

Ricardo Lagos, 2000-2006

Ricardo Lagos (b. 1938) studied law at Universidad de Chile and went on to receive a PhD in Economics from Duke University in 1966. Upon his return to his home country, he worked in academia at Universidad de Chile. During the early 1970s, he took over as secretary general of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and participated in the creation of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).⁵⁹ In 1972, President Allende appointed him as ambassador to the USSR, but the senate delayed its approval and the process came to an abrupt end with the military coup of September 11, 1973 and the subsequent dissolving of congress. In February 1974, he went into exile with his family to Buenos Aires, where he worked with international organizations such as FLACSO Argentina and the UN Development Program (UNDP). In 1974, he accepted an invitation

as visiting professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he organized the seminar “Chile 1970-1973: Lessons from Experience.” He returned to Buenos Aires in 1975, and worked with international organizations until April 1978, when he returned to Chile.

Arriving in his homeland, he worked for an agency associated with the UN’s International Labor Organization. He was an active participant in organizations that



Portrait of Ricardo Lagos, President of Chile between 2000 and 2006.

Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

opposed the dictatorship, founding the Vector Center for Economic and Social Studies which brought together intellectuals from the socialist world. He also became president of the Alianza Democrática (Democratic Alliance),⁶⁰ a political pact of parties of the left, center and right; as well as the president of the Comité de Izquierda por las Elecciones Libres (Committee of the Left for Free Elections). Further, as a member of the Socialist Party he helped to found the Partido por la Democracia (Party for Democracy, PPD), whose goal was to have democracy return to Chile.⁶¹

In 1988 he became known for accusingly pointing his index finger directly into the camera during the television show “De Cara al País,” admonishing Pinochet for not keeping his promise to step down, clinging to power instead. “He now promises the country another eight years, with torture, assassinations, and human rights violations. It is inadmissible that a Chilean is so power hungry that he wants to stay in office for 25 years,” Lagos said on air in what is now known as “the finger of Lagos” event.⁶²

Upon the return of democracy and the election of Patricio Aylwin to the presidency, Lagos was named Minister of Education. He was also the Minister of Public Works for four years under the administration of Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle. In 2000, he was elected President, becoming the first socialist to take office since Salvador Allende.

Lagos’ program proposed a reorganization of the state, job creation, economic growth, and reincorporation of the country in the international context, among others.⁶³ During his administration, he oversaw the enactment of a law to combat tax evasion, measures to help find victims that were detained and/or disappeared under the dictatorship, with compensation for the victims or their surviving

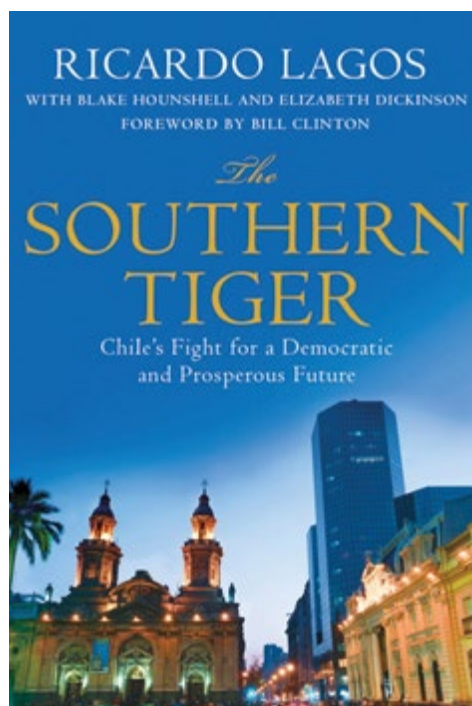
⁵⁹ “Ricardo Lagos Escobar,” *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

⁶⁰ Ricardo Lagos Escobar, *Mi vida. De la infancia a la lucha contra la dictadura* (Santiago: Random House, 2013).

⁶¹ Partido por la Democracia, *¿Qué es el PPD?* (Santiago: Editorial Antor, 1989).

⁶² Momentos REC, “El dedo de Lagos en De Cara al País,” retrieved from YouTube.

⁶³ Ricardo Lagos, “Programa de Gobierno para Crecer con Igualdad,” *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.



"The Southern Tiger: Chile's Fight for a Democratic and Prosperous Future," delves into Lagos' opposition to the Pinochet regime and his role in the country's recovery from the dictatorship's economic and political policies.

Source: Columbia Global Centers | Santiago Photo Archive.

family members; public policies to improve government probity and transparency; improved health coverage; put in place a private concessions policy that drove the construction of large public works; signing of a number of free trade agreements with the US, the EU and Asian countries.

In 2012, Lagos co-authored “The Southern Tiger: Chile’s Fight for a Peaceful and Democratic Future,” which chronicled Chile’s ascent from a country struggling with poverty and military authoritarianism to one that became economically prosperous and democratic.⁶⁴ In the US, he launched the book at Columbia University, where he was introduced by then-Interim Provost and Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), John Coatsworth. Over 100 students and faculty attended the talk, sponsored by the Columbia Global Centers | Santiago and the Latin American Student Association (LASA).⁶⁵

During his presentation, the ex-president reviewed his efforts to implement social programs while also attracting private investment, noting that a country’s success depended on three pillars: democracy, economic growth and social equality.⁶⁶ Part of that process was to search for a compromise between militant leftists and hardline right-wingers. “Allende’s widow and Pinochet [in the same room together]... that’s what the transition was,” he said in his talk.⁶⁷

However, two areas where Lagos’ government was less successful were energy and equality, and that was one of the areas of focus with questions from the public during the book launch. In 2011, environmental protests over the HidroAysén hydroelectric project –which would have involved flooding about 6,000 hectares of pristine land in southern Chile to build five dams with total expected installed power of 2,750 MW⁶⁸– quickly escalated into wider demonstrations from different parts of society.

Those protestors “are the sons and daughters of democratic Chile,” Lagos noted. “The citizens [are trying to] give the orders to the market.”

Following Lagos’ presentation, Cristian Salas, the Chilean then-Vice President of LASA, explained that the protests in his home country came from a “new middle class [that] is demanding higher quality education and a more equal political and economic system.”⁶⁹

Also after the presentation, Lagos met with the Columbia Global Centers Latin America Faculty Advisory Committee.

⁶⁴ Ricardo Lagos, Blake Hounshell, and Elizabeth Dickinson, *The Southern Tiger: Chile’s Fight for a Democratic and Prosperous Future* (New York: St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2012).

⁶⁵ “Book Launch: The Southern Tiger,” *Columbia Global Centers | Santiago Website*.

⁶⁶ Robert Funk, “The Southern Tiger: Chile’s Fight for a Democratic and Prosperous Future by Ricardo Lagos,” *Americas Quarterly*, January 24, 2012.

⁶⁷ Nathaniel Parish Flannery, “How Anti-Dam Protests in Chile Present a Conflict for Socially Responsible Investors,” *Forbes*, January 31, 2012.

⁶⁸ The project was eventually called off due to social protest. See: “Colbún y ENEL ponen fin al proyecto Hidroaysén,” *Cooperativa Website*, November 17, 2017.

⁶⁹ Parish Flannery, “Anti-Dam Protests.”



Former President Lagos and Tom Trebat, Director of Columbia Global Centers | Rio de Janeiro.



Lagos and a group of Chilean students at Columbia who attended the launch of his book on campus.

Source: Columbia Global Centers | Santiago
Photo Archive.



Ricardo Lagos and members
of the Columbia Global
Centers Faculty
Advisory Committee.

Michelle Bachelet, 2006-2010 and 2014-2018

President Michelle Bachelet (b.1951) is not only Chile's first female president, but she also holds the distinction of having visited Columbia University the most times.

Her father was an air force general under Allende, and after the fall of the democratic government in 1973, both Bachelet and her father were detained and tortured. Her father died in prison in 1974 and she was exiled. Bachelet first moved to Australia and then to East Germany, where she continued her medical studies which she was able to wrap up in Chile after having returned to the country in 1979.⁷⁰

Her medical background as a pediatrician led her to work closely with the World Health Organization, the Pan-American Health Organization, and the German development agency GIZ as a consultant.

Bachelet also worked as Chile's Minister of Health under the Ricardo Lagos administration from 2000 until 2002, when she was appointed Minister of Defense, the first woman in South America to hold such a position.⁷¹

She was elected president of Chile in 2006. A total of 31 world leaders and delegates from 100 countries attended her swearing-in ceremony on March 11.⁷² Bachelet was in office for four years and was succeeded by Sebastián Piñera, as presidents in Chile are not allowed by law to serve in consecutive periods. She ran again in 2014 and won with over 63% of the vote, bettering her result in the 2006 election when she garnered 53.5% of the ballots.⁷³

Since her first presidency, Bachelet advocated for decreasing economic inequalities while advancing social issues. For senior citizens, she implemented free public health care and a solidarity pension system while adjusting basic pensions. She was responsible for creating an intersectoral system of social protection, composed mainly of the Chile Crece Contigo child protection program and the Chile Solidario benefit program for the most vulnerable.⁷⁴

In between her two terms of presidency, the UN's Ban Ki-moon appointed her as Executive Director of the newly-created entity

⁷⁰ "Biografía Presidenta Michelle Bachelet," *Gobierno de Chile via Way Back Machine*.

⁷¹ "Primera Ministra de Defensa Nacional en Sudamérica, Michelle Bachelet Jeria," *Ministerio de Defensa Nacional*, retrieved from YouTube.

⁷² "Michelle Bachelet asume como Presidenta en histórico cambio de mando," *Emol*, March 11, 2006.

⁷³ Eduardo Woo, "Michelle Bachelet: primera mujer presidenta y primer presidente reelecto desde 1932," *Bióbio Chile*, December 16, 2013.

⁷⁴ "Michelle Bachelet Jeria," *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

Source: Columbia University
Office of Public Affairs
Photograph Collection.



President Michelle Bachelet
attending the World Leaders
Forum on September 26, 2007.

UN Women, which looked to promote gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women.⁷⁵

During her second term (2014-2018), some of her more notable initiatives included promulgating the law that created the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity. She also implemented educational reforms that centralized education (changing from the former municipal-centered system), eliminated co-payments in subsidized private education, provided for progressively free university education, created two new regional universities (O'Higgins and Aysén) and 15 regional technical training centers.⁷⁶

Regarding her interactions with Columbia, Bachelet first spoke at the University as a lecturer at the World Leaders Forum in 2007. Stressing the importance of what she called "civic friendship," she shared the need to alleviate citizens' dissatisfaction with government, with a healthy democracy being a balance of tolerance and understanding.⁷⁷ She also addressed the difficulties that arise from being a woman in the male-dominated political arena and acknowledged how far women have come and how much further they will need to go for equity. The Columbia crowd was reportedly "charmed" by her speech and presence.⁷⁸

In her role as executive director of UN Women, in March 2011 Bachelet was invited to speak on campus to celebrate International Women's Day. In advance of that presentation, she met with a number of Chilean students at Columbia and participated in a question-and-answer session with Elisabeth Lindenmayer, then director of SIPA's United Nations Studies Program. "It's so important to put women in interesting, powerful positions," Bachelet said during the encounter. "Society learns that women can do it."⁷⁹

In 2012, she addressed the recent graduates of Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health at their commencement speech. Here, she spoke of the parallels between health and politics and of the need to both uphold the Hippocratic oath ("do no harm") and make an impact: "in public health, you look at how the body works and how the society works. You ask, 'what are the changes that we have to produce to improve the body's condition and what are those to improve the condition of society.'"⁸⁰ Applauding the graduates on their achievements thus far, Bachelet encouraged them to never give up on their dreams and to "be

⁷⁵ "Former Chilean President to Head New High-Profile UN Women's Agency," *UN News*, September 14, 2010.

⁷⁶ "Bachelet detalla Reforma Educacional," *Radio Tierra*, May 19, 2014, retrieved from YouTube.

⁷⁷ Betsy Morais, "Chilean Leader Michelle Bachelet Charms Crowd at Forum," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, September 25, 2007.

⁷⁸ Morais, "Chilean Leader."

⁷⁹ Alex Burnett and Sara Ray, "Powerful Policymakers Headline at SIPA," *SIPA News XXIV* n°2 (May 2011): 28.

⁸⁰ Michelle Bachelet, "2012 Commencement Speech at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health," *UN Women*, May 16, 2012.

⁸¹ Bachelet,
"Commencement Speech."

⁸² "Columbia Announces
2012 Honorary Degree
Recipients," *Columbia News*,
April 11, 2012.

Michelle Bachelet
and Chilean students
at Columbia SIPA
during an event held
in commemoration of
International Women's
Day in 2015.

Source: Columbia
Global Centers I
Santiago Photo Archive.

a part of something larger than yourself and wholeheartedly embrace and engage in our incredible world."⁸¹

In the same month, Bachelet was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws by the University. While the emphasis was on her work during her time as Chile's president, where she promoted social protection programs and women's empowerment, the commendation also noted her efforts to promote gender equality across her entire career. Bachelet was (and still is) considered an international leader in women's rights.⁸²

During her second term as President, Bachelet spoke again at the World Leaders Forum in 2015 with a lecture entitled "Challenges of Our Democracy, 25 Years After." Her speech echoed much of what President Aylwin had mentioned in 1990, with the shared need to overcome extreme poverty and economic, political, and social inequalities. While acknowledging what she and her predecessors had done to restore the country's democratic tradition, Bachelet also noted that there were



new challenges facing the nation considering its advancements and changing global environment. These challenges, she said, should be seen as an opportunity and not a deterrent to keep pursuing change because change is important and remarkable for people who had lived parts of their lives without experiencing democracy. While some issues have prevailed in all stages of democracy, Bachelet spoke of Chile's special attention to "eliminate the incestuous relationship between business and politics," with measures to increase government transparency and reduce corruption.⁸³

Adding that emerging democracies often have increased accountability of government officials and greater mobilization of the public to criticize parties and political leaders, Bachelet expressed confidence in Chile's journey while stressing the need to act now. A healthy democracy, she claimed, rested on "better effective representation," which involves an active desire to overcome the traumas and fears of the past and seek solutions to prevailing inequalities, not only amongst economic and social classes but also across different cultures and ethnic groups within Chile.⁸⁴

Bachelet also gave the commencement speech at SIPA in 2019, after she had left government and had been appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Acknowledging the difficulties that may crop up in life, she urged graduates to stay true to their core personal values as well as the core values of democracy, which is safeguarded by every citizen that upholds them.⁸⁵ She called on them to spend their lives protecting these values because they go beyond the individual and apply to the world's future, which is entrusted in their care: "with dialogue, cooperation, and respect, [the principles of human rights] are a detailed guide through the unpredictable challenges of future events... as you look forward to what is to come, I suggest you live with your great-grandchildren in mind... you can work for all of them."⁸⁶ As of 2022, she continued to serve as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

⁸³ "President Michelle Bachelet of the Republic of Chile," *Columbia University World Leaders Forum Website*, September 26, 2015.

⁸⁴ "President Michelle Bachelet of the Republic of Chile."

⁸⁵ Michelle Bachelet, "Commencement Ceremony at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University," *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*, May 19, 2019.

⁸⁶ Bachelet, "Commencement Ceremony."

Sebastian Piñera, 2010-2014 and 2018-2022

⁸⁷ "Presidentes de la República de Chile," *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

⁸⁸ "World Leaders Forum: Sebastián Piñera, President of the Republic of Chile," *Columbia University*, September 23, 2013, retrieved from YouTube.

⁸⁹ "Sebastián Piñera Echenique," *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

⁹⁰ Richard Pallardy, "Chile earthquake of 2010," *Britannica*, March 2, 2010.

⁹¹ "Sebastián Piñera Echenique," *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile*.

Sebastian Piñera (b. 1949) was the first right-wing head of state since Pinochet, and the first democratically elected conservative president since Jorge Alessandri in 1958.⁸⁷ After studying business at Universidad Católica, he obtained his master's and PhD in Economics from Harvard - an area of focus that has been evident in his commitment to furthering Chile's journey from a developing nation to a developed country.⁸⁸

Early in his career, he worked in academia in Chile and with international organizations such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank and the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. He then moved on to business, finding success in the areas of banking, finance, construction and investments.⁸⁹ In the 1990s he became involved in politics, getting elected as senator, and in 2001 he became president of his political party, Renovación Nacional.

Piñera ran for president in 2005 but was defeated by Michelle Bachelet; he ran again the 2009-2010 election, winning against the senator and ex-president, Eduardo Frei Ruiz-Tagle. His first few months of presidency were marked by disaster, having to respond to an 8.8-magnitude earthquake that had occurred in February 2010 (in the final days of the Bachelet administration) and resulting tsunami that devastated some coastal towns in the south-center of the country, taking the lives of over 500 people.⁹⁰ He was forced to put his government plan on hold, instead focusing efforts and funds on a housing and public infrastructure reconstruction plan. Later in the year, in August, 33 miners got trapped 2,300 feet deep inside a mine in the Atacama Desert; their unlikely rescue 69 days later by a government-led team was a source of inspiration throughout the world.

During his term, with respect to education, Piñera oversaw increases in school subsidies, the creation of the teacher vocation scholarship for education students, the conception of 60 high schools of excellence, and increases in tuition credits and scholarships for higher education.⁹¹ In health, the public coverage of specific diseases

Source: Columbia University Office of
Public Affairs Photograph Collection.



President Sebastián Piñera
addressing the World Leaders
Forum at Columbia University
on September 23, 2013.

⁹² "Sebastián Piñera Echeñique," *Gobierno de Chile Website*.

⁹³ "World Leaders Forum: Sebastián Piñera."

increased, 27 hospitals were inaugurated. From the economic point of view, during his administration the country experienced an average annual growth of 5.3%, creating more than one million new jobs.⁹²

His appearance at Columbia's World Leaders Forum in 2013 provided an opportunity for Provost John Coatsworth to reflect on Chile's progress after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship, as well as on the country's cooperation with the university to advance knowledge, especially in the fields of science and technology. Piñera began his lecture, entitled "Chile's Way to Development," with an overview of developmental economics and how the technological advancements of the last century have contributed to economic successes for some but not all countries. Reflecting on Chile's comparably stable democracy and its relative economic prowess, he commented on the problem of the middle-income development trap, where it is not enough to simply have the basic characteristics of a developed nation. He used a mountaineering simile: "the second half of the ascent to the summit is definitely the most beautiful... and the most difficult, and the toughest one."⁹³

Audience present at President Sebastián Piñera's conference at the World Leaders Forum.

Source: Courtesy of Prensa Presidencia.



Sharing Chile's pillars of development with the crowd, Piñera emphasized the need for dramatic increases in the quality of human capital, acknowledging the formal cooperation agreement with Columbia, as well as boosts in innovation, entrepreneurship, and measures to decrease poverty, crime, and trafficking.⁹⁴ While recent events, including the global financial crisis in 2008 and the 2010 earthquake in Chile, had hampered progress, Piñera nevertheless remained confident that the country would proceed towards these goals; he also shared the need to address other elements beyond economics that improve quality of life. His message echoed those of presidents past and, like all of them, carried a tone of hope for Chile's future progress.

⁹⁴ "World Leaders Forum: Sebastián Piñera."

As previously noted, in Chile, presidents are forbidden by law from serving in consecutive terms. After the end of Sebastián Piñera's presidency in 2014, Michelle Bachelet assumed for a second four-year term, which ended in March 2018, with Piñera receiving the presidential sash once again from Bachelet. His second term was not short of difficulties. A year and a half into his second presidency, he faced a social and political crisis that lasted for months until the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country in March 2020, which took up most of the government's efforts for the next two years.

Sebastián Piñera's second term ended on March 11, 2022, giving way to a new era in Chilean politics. After serving two periods in the lower chamber of congress, 36 year-old former student leader Gabriel Boric, swore in as the youngest President in Chilean history.



Eight Chilean presidents in the 20th and 21st centuries have interacted significantly with Columbia, and their time at the University (and in New York City) offers a glimpse of the story of Chile: a nation that overcame obstacles to become one of the most stable democracies and economies of Latin America, that faced setbacks and stuck to its core beliefs of freedom and liberty to continue forward, that learned from the past and kept objectives in mind for future successes.





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the diplomatic relationship between the United States and Chile started early in Chilean republican history, when in 1823 the US Government officially recognized the country's independence from Spain. This connection translated into agreements in several fields, education among them, which gave way for an enduring relation between the South American country and Columbia University in New York. The aim of this book is to delve into how this intellectual exchange has developed since, and in which ways it has benefited both Chile and Columbia for over a century.

