

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Culture, Politics and the Cold War: The Sociedad de Escritores de Chile in the 1950s

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Abstract

In the 1950s, the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile experienced bitter disputes caused by the efforts of the Chilean Committee for Cultural Freedom, the local branch of a major institution in the US cultural Cold War, to gain control of the association. These disputes reveal the role played by the cultural Cold War in the breakdown of older political and intellectual alliances in Chile. They also highlight the transnational networks that connected Chilean writers during the Cold War, and the complex articulation of local and international contexts and agendas that influenced Chilean cultural and political groups.

Keywords: Chile; Cold War; culture; politics; Congress for Cultural Freedom; Sociedad de Escritores de Chile

In July 1958, Carlos de Baráibar sent a letter from Santiago, Chile, to the Parisian headquarters of the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), an international organisation linked to the US cultural Cold War against similar Soviet-sponsored efforts in the cultural field. Baráibar, an exiled Spanish politician and journalist and the main figure in the CCF's Chilean branch, the Chilean Committee for Cultural Freedom (ChCCF), was explaining his and the Committee's actions to gain control of the Sociedad de Escritores de Chile (Chilean Society of Writers, SECH), the national organisation of writers. He detailed how they had secured the resignation of several members of the SECH's board of directors headed by Pablo Neruda, the distinguished communist writer and the ChCCF's main enemy. Baráibar noted that the ultimate goal was to mobilise support among SECH members for 'a general assembly and to provoke the fall of the board presided over by Neruda'.¹

Baráibar's letter highlights conflicts among writers at the SECH in the 1950s within the context of the Cold War. Originally established as an organisation in

¹Carlos de Baráibar to Michael Josselson, Santiago, 3 July 1958, International Association for Cultural Freedom (hereafter IACF) records, University of Chicago, Joseph Regenstein Library's Special Collections Research Center, series 2, box 217, folder 6. Unless otherwise indicated, IACF location numbers refer to the post-2013 catalogue. Records referring to the pre-2013 ('old') catalogue will be noted with 'OC' after the box number.

1931 to defend the professional interests of Chilean writers, by the 1950s politics and ideology divided the SECH. Specifically, this article explores the tensions and clashes generated by the ChCCF's efforts to control the SECH. ChCCF-affiliated writers and politicians engaged in a series of high-profile disputes with communist and leftist writers led by Neruda, echoing the broader struggles between communists and anti-communists in Chile and elsewhere during this decade. Simultaneously, their attempts to influence and control the SECH's board of directors must also be understood within a broader history of both institutions in Chile, the dense web of relations that linked them dating back to the 1930s, and the polarising political and ideological context of Chilean politics and the Cold War. Although the Chilean Committee finally gained control of the SECH's board in 1959–60, it lost it again in 1961 in a context of crisis for the CCF in Chile and Latin America following the Cuban Revolution.

This article offers several historiographical and theoretical contributions to the history of both the SECH and the cultural Cold War, based on the analysis of records from the meetings of the SECH's board of directors and the CCF's archives, letters by Chilean writers, and cultural and political publications from Chile and the CCF. First, it provides a significant addition to the almost non-existent scholarship on the history of SECH² and to the broader literature on culture and politics in Chile between the 1930s and the 1950s.³ Second, the conflicts at SECH highlight the interrelated national and transnational dimensions of Chilean political and cultural developments during the Cold War, revealing their deeper roots in older intellectual networks that fractured as the Cold War emerged in Chile and abroad. In this sense, the article engages with the broader scholarship on the Cold War in Latin America that analyses it as an overlapping series of conflicts, not just one that takes place between nation-states and along clearly delineated national boundaries, and in which anti-communism had diverse sources.⁴

In relation to the previous point, the article also shows how the cultural Cold War, with its US- and Soviet-sponsored networks, acted as general 'dreamworlds' providing sense to Chilean intellectuals and politicising local spaces such as the

²Oscar Aguilera and Julia Antivilo, *Historia de la Sociedad de Escritores de Chile. Los diez primeros años de la SECH y visión general 1931–2001* (Santiago: Sociedad de Escritores de Chile, 2002). For specific references to conflicts between communists and anti-communists in the association during the 1950s, see Jorge A. Nállim, 'Intelectuales y Guerra Fría. El Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura en Argentina y Chile, 1950–1964', *Anuario del Instituto de Historia Argentina*, 14 (2014), and Karina C. Janello, 'Los intelectuales de la Guerra Fría. Una cartografía latinoamericana (1953–1962)', *Políticas de la Memoria*, 14 (2013–14), pp. 79–101.

³Bernardo Subercaseaux, *Historia de las ideas y de la cultura en Chile*, vol. 3, book 5: *Política y cultura* (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 2011); Germán Albuquerque F., *La trinchera letrada. Intelectuales latinoamericanos y Guerra Fría* (Santiago: Ariadna, 2011); Fabio Moraga Valle and Carla Peñaloza Palma, 'España en el corazón de los chilenos. La Alianza de Intelectuales y la revista *Aurora de Chile*, 1937–1939', *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 38: 2 (2011), pp. 55–81.

⁴Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 7; Tanya Harmer, 'The Cold War in Latin America', in Artemy M. Kalinovsky and Craig Daigle (eds.), *The Routledge History of the Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 133–48; Alan McPherson, 'Afterword. The Paradox of Latin American Cold War Studies', in Virginia Garrard-Burnett, Mark Atwood Lawrence and Julio E. Moreno (eds.), *Beyond the Eagle's Shadow: New Histories of Latin America's Cold War* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2013), pp. 307–15.

SECH.⁵ However, the ChCCF's international agenda partially explains its efforts to control the SECH, given that the agendas of local groups that were part of the ChCCF, such as the Christian Democrats, were equally important. By paying attention to these developments, the article not only displays the SECH's unexplored political and ideological history and articulates the different levels of the cultural Cold War in Chile and the region; it also contributes to a body of scholarship that explores the US cultural Cold War in Latin America as a general framework to investigate the multiple areas of engagement, conflict, and negotiation between US hegemonic international cultural processes and their reception, adaptation, and appropriation by Latin American actors⁶ – a perspective that informs the most recent scholarship on the CCF in Chile and Latin America.⁷ Finally, this study of the intersection of culture, politics and the Cold War in Chile opens interesting comparative perspectives with similar associations of writers in other Latin American countries such as Argentina and Mexico.⁸

The ChCCF, the SECH, and the Roots of the Cultural Cold War in Chile, 1930s–50s

The ChCCF's efforts to control the SECH in the 1950s must be understood within the context of the transformations of Chilean politics and the emergence of the Cold War in the period of the 1930s–50s, the role of both institutions as local and international intellectual networks, and their specific goals, trajectories and linkages.

The origins of the Cold War and its effects in polarising politics and culture in Chile are rooted in long-term processes originating in the 1930s. New political forces and coalitions appeared in the wake of the deep impact of the Great Depression on Chile. The first was the Falange Nacional, which seceded from the

⁵Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal, 'Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West', in Peter Romijn, Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal (eds.), *Divided Dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 1–9.

⁶Jadwiga Pieper Mooney and Fabio Lanza (eds.), *De-centering Cold War History. Local and Global Change* (New York: Routledge 2013); Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser (eds.), *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2008).

⁷Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace nor Freedom. The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Olga Glondys, *La guerra fría cultural y el exilio republicano español. Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura, 1953–1965* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2012); Benedetta Calandra and Marina Franco (eds.), *La guerra fría cultural en América Latina. Desafíos y límites para una nueva mirada de las relaciones interamericanas* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2012); Jorge A. Nállim, 'Intelectuales y Guerra Fría' and 'Local Struggles, Transnational Connections: Latin American Intellectuals and the Congress for Cultural Freedom', in Tina Mai Chen and David S. Churchill (eds.), *The Material of World History* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 106–31; Karina C. Janello, 'Intelectuales de la Guerra Fría' and 'El Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura: El caso chileno y la disputa por las "ideas fuerza" de la Guerra Fría', *Revista Izquierdas*, 14 (2012), pp. 14–52.

⁸Jorge A. Nállim, 'De los intereses gremiales a la lucha política: La Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE), 1928–1946', *Prismas. Revista de Historia Intelectual*, 7 (2003), pp. 117–38; Flavia Fiorucci, 'Between Institutional Survival and Intellectual Commitment: The Case of the Argentine Society of Writers during Perón's Rule (1945–1955)', *The Americas*, 62: 4 (2006), pp. 591–622; Patrick Iber, 'The Cold War Politics of Literature and the Centro Mexicano de Escritores', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 48: 2 (2016), pp. 247–72.

Conservative Party in 1938 and gathered reformist Catholics of a Christian Democratic orientation who were disaffected with rigid political, economic and traditional socially conservative platforms. The second was the emergence of Popular Front governments which, in the context of the rise of national and international anti-fascism and that ruled Chile between 1938 and 1952, gathered together the Radical, Socialist and Communist parties under the umbrella of a reformist agenda for Chile.⁹

In the cultural field, Popular Front governments were mirrored by the rise of anti-fascism in the late 1930s–early 1940s that brought together Chilean intellectuals and artists of diverse traditions within the Centre–Left spectrum. Some Chileans, such as the writers Gabriela Mistral and the Radical feminist Amanda Labarca, already participated in international networks of Latin American intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s that found expression in the magazines *Repertorio Americano* and *Amauta* and this also included those who would join or be close to the CCF in the 1950s.¹⁰ The international anti-fascist struggle, more specifically the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9 and the arrival of Spanish Republican exiles, further politicised Chilean intellectuals and brought them within new international networks. The Chilean writers Pablo Neruda, Vicente Huidobro and Alberto Romero participated in the international Congress of Anti-fascism in Valencia in 1937 that led to the foundation in November 1937 of the anti-fascist Chilean branch, the Alianza de los Intelectuales por la Defensa de la Cultura (Alliance of Intellectuals for the Defence of Culture, hereafter Alianza). Presided over by Neruda, with Romero as vice-president, the Alianza included a broad spectrum of politicians and intellectuals from communists to liberals, including several writers who were active in the SECH.¹¹

However, the unity of the Centre–Left, represented politically by the Popular Front and intellectually by the Alianza, would not last. Affected by tensions among its different constitutive forces, the Chilean Popular Front administrations eventually veered to the Right. Within the international context of the impact of the Cold War and as part of the anti-communist turn of the Popular Front President Gabriel González Videla severed diplomatic relations with communist countries and repressed communist labour unions (in 1947), and, finally, in 1948, outlawed the Communist party with the Law for the Permanent Defence of Democracy – popularly known as the *Ley Maldita*.¹² In the ensuing repression against communist leaders, members and sympathisers, Pablo Neruda was deprived

⁹Michael Fleet, *The Rise and Fall of Chilean Christian Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 45–8; Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808–2002* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 24.

¹⁰They included the Colombian Germán Arciniegas, the Argentines Alfredo Palacios and Américo Ghioldi, the Cuban Jorge Mañach, the Venezuelan Rómulo Betancourt, and the prominent intellectuals and leaders of the Peruvian Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, APRA) Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre and Luis Alberto Sánchez. Eduardo Devés-Valdés, *El pensamiento latinoamericano en el siglo XX. Entre la modernización y la identidad*, vol. 1: *Del Ariel de Rodó a la CEPAL (1900–1950)* (Buenos Aires: Biblos–Centro de Investigaciones Diego Barros de Arana, 2000), pp. 163–78.

¹¹Such was the case of Francisco Coloane, Luis David Cruz Ocampo and Carlos Préndez Saldías. Moraga Valle and Peñaloza Palma, ‘España’, pp. 73–4.

¹²‘Ley de Defensa Permanente de la Democracia’, Law no. 8987.

of his status as a member of the national congress and fled the country.¹³ In the 1950s, under the administration of Carlos Ibáñez del Campo (1952–8), the political system would progressively reorganise along three ideological groupings that dominated Chilean politics until the 1973 military coup and that competed for the first time in the presidential election of 1958. On the Left, communists and socialists would coalesce in the Popular Action Front (Frente de Acción Popular, FRAP). At the Centre, the decline of the Radical party was compensated for by the increasing importance of the Falange Nacional, which, in 1957, became the Christian Democratic party (Partido Demócrata Cristiano, PDC). The rightist end of the spectrum would be maintained by the old Conservative and Liberal parties. Within the context of the Cold War, the leftist coalition would align with the Soviet Union, whereas the Right and the Centre, particularly the Christian Democrats, sided with the United States.

The polarising environment of Chilean politics and the Cold War also divided anti-fascist intellectuals, with rival international organisations having an impact in Latin America and Chile. On the Left, the pro-Soviet, communist-supported international peace movement established branches in different Latin American countries and organised conferences such as the Continental Congress for Peace in Mexico in 1949 and the Continental Congress of Culture in Santiago in 1953. Neruda became one of the key leaders of this national and international network.¹⁴ On the pro-US side, the most important institution in the US cultural Cold War was the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its Chilean branch, the ChCCF. Founded in Berlin in 1950, the CCF funded international meetings, arts exhibitions and cultural activities, with the goal of organising support from intellectuals and artists around the world for the cause of freedom, identified with Western liberal democracies led by the United States. In addition to the problems created by the intrinsic contradiction of spreading propaganda in the name of freedom, the heterogeneous composition and international scope of the CCF caused many internal conflicts in the 1950s and 1960s. Revelations in 1966 of the involvement of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in its activities eventually led to its demise in 1967 and replacement by the International Association for Cultural Freedom, which finally closed in 1977.¹⁵

The Chilean Committee for Cultural Freedom was part of the CCF's strategy to expand its operations to Latin America. It was the first branch in the region in June 1953, followed by others in Uruguay (1953), Mexico (1954), Argentina (1955), Cuba (1955), Peru (1957) and Brazil (1958) – those that were launched in Honduras, Costa Rica and Nicaragua in 1953 and in Colombia in 1958 failed.¹⁶

¹³Collier and Sater, *Chile*, pp. 246–51; Volodia Teitelboim, *Neruda: La biografía* (La Roda, Albacete: Ediciones Merán, 2003), pp. 281–3.

¹⁴Iber, *Neither Peace*, pp. 56–82.

¹⁵On the CCF, see Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 2000); Volker R. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Pierre Grémion, *Intelligence de l'anticommunisme. Le Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture à Paris, 1950–1975* (Paris: Fayard, 1995).

¹⁶Glondys, *Guerra fría*, pp. 80–4; 'Vida del Congreso', *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura*, 5 (1954), pp. 108–9; Julián Gorkin, 'Rapport sur ma dernière tournée en Amérique latine (du 13 mars au 11 mai)' [1958], IACF records, series 2, box 1310C, folder 3.

The ChCCF, which in 1953 also launched its Spanish-speaking journal, *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (hereafter *Cuadernos*), thus provided a network that connected Chilean writers, politicians and intellectuals both nationally and internationally. With Neruda and local communists as the ChCCF's main enemies, the diverse political and ideological affiliations of the ChCCF's members highlight an anti-fascist past, represented by the presence of exiled Spanish Republicans and European anti-fascists along with socialists and Radicals, whose parties had been part of the Popular Front administrations. Its main organising force was Julián Gorkin: a former Spanish communist, a member of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, POUM) during the Spanish Civil War and the director of *Cuadernos* 1953–63, he was in charge of supervising the CCF's Latin American branches until their reorganisation in 1963–5. The ChCCF's main figure was the exiled Spanish socialist Baráibar – who was its representative to the CCF's World Committee – and it also included writers connected to newspapers and several cultural institutions.¹⁷ The ChCCF's anti-communist stance was strengthened by the critical role played by important intellectuals and politicians affiliated with the Falange Nacional, such as Jaime Castillo Velasco, Alejandro Magnet and Andrés Santa Cruz, who were all linked to the magazine *Política y Espíritu* and Editorial del Pacífico.¹⁸

Regarding the SECH, its history reveals how it also provided an intellectual network for Chilean writers with roots in important broader anti-fascist milieus. The Sociedad de Escritores de Chile was founded during a meeting of 30 writers in November 1931 as the official institution to represent Chilean writers, and it celebrated its inaugural session in January 1932.¹⁹ Governed by an 11-member board of directors elected annually by the general assembly of members, the association's general goals were to consolidate 'ties of unity, help, and mutual defence among Chilean writers' and to promote 'national literature' and 'the country's general culture'.²⁰ The SECH's self-proclaimed national scope and goals related to the protection of writers' rights and interests distinguished it from earlier institutional and cultural circles devoted to literary and intellectual discussions. As board meetings became more regular by March 1935, the association secured temporary headquarters in *El Mercurio*, the leading national newspaper and, in June 1936, it published its magazine's first issue.²¹

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, board meeting records show that the SECH experienced a process of politicisation in defence of writers' freedoms and linked to anti-fascist groups and regional and international networks. At the national

¹⁷Baráibar to Josselson, Santiago, 5 July 1953, IACF records, series 2, box 204OC, folder 6; Janello, 'Intelectuales de la Guerra Fría', pp. 79–83.

¹⁸Other renowned *falangistas* who would develop important political careers in the following decades, such as Eduardo Frei and Radomiro Tomic, were close to the committee and participated in its activities during the 1950s.

¹⁹SECH, *Libro de Actas No. 1 – Actas – Estatutos – Julio 1933–Noviembre 1941* (hereafter *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*), pp. 1–3.

²⁰SECH, 'Estatutos', *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, pp. 5–15.

²¹SECH, board meetings of 12 May 1934 and 20 June 1936, *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, pp. 125–8 and 135 respectively.

level, it defended editors and publishers from official censorship regarding works deemed pornographic.²² In 1936, following a strike by railway workers, President Arturo Alessandri sent in the army, closed down the national congress and decreed a three-month state of siege. The SECH joined other organisations in defence of 'freedom of opinion' and launched a campaign in the press to demand the release of imprisoned writers and politicians.²³ At the regional level, the SECH's board also approved statements in defence of foreign leftist and anti-imperialist writers who were suffering persecution and imprisonment, such as Peruvian writers linked to the Peruvian APRA, Bolivian writers imprisoned during the Chaco War, and communist intellectuals and activists Tristán Marof and Héctor Agosti, imprisoned in Bolivia and Argentina respectively.²⁴

These pronouncements revealed both the SECH's degree of politicisation and the broader regional networks with which Chilean writers participated by the second half of the 1930s. The Association's connection to international anti-fascism is also demonstrated by its unequivocal position regarding the Spanish Civil War, in which it opposed General Francisco Franco's uprising and his subsequent dictatorial government. The SECH's board approved messages of support for the Spanish Republic and deplored the killing of the poet Federico García Lorca by *franquistas*.²⁵ Its first Congress of Chilean Writers, held in Santiago in March/April 1937, approved many resolutions and statements against imperialism, in solidarity with persecuted Chilean and foreign writers, and in defence of democracy and freedoms.²⁶ When the SECH's vice-president Romero attended the Second International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers in Valencia in 1937, he took a message of support on behalf of the institution; upon his return, he informed the board about the conference and his participation.²⁷ Romero went on to become vice-president of the Alianza, and, as the SECH's president in 1938, he promoted a 'strong collaboration' with the Alianza, presided over by Neruda. This collaboration materialised in, among other decisions, the SECH's support for the Congress of Chilean Culture that the Alianza organised in 1939.²⁸ The SECH maintained its criticisms of the Franco regime, and, among many statements over the years, it extended honorary membership to Rodrigo Soriano, the former Spanish Republican ambassador to Chile, and expressed solidarity with Spanish intellectuals persecuted by fascism and imprisoned in France.²⁹

²²SECH, board meetings of 12 June 1935 and 23 July, 1935, *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, pp. 76 and 85–6 respectively.

²³Collier and Sater, *Chile*, p. 228; SECH, board meeting, 6 March 1936, *Libro de Actas 1931–1941*, p. 111; SECH, Junta General Ordinaria, 6 April 1936, *Libro de Actas 1931–1941*, p. 117.

²⁴SECH board meetings, all in *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, of 16 July 1935, p. 84; 26 Nov. 1935, p. 102; 10 Dec. 1935, p. 107; 24 March 1936, p. 112; 5 May 1936, p. 123. Bolivia and Paraguay disputed the Chaco region, thought to be rich in oil, during the Chaco War of 1932–5.

²⁵SECH, board meeting, 28 July 1936, *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, p. 144; 'Federico García Lorca', *Revista de la SECH*, 3 (1936), p. 2.

²⁶'Primer Congreso de Escritores de Chile', *Revista de la SECH*, 5 (1937), pp. 44–55.

²⁷SECH, board meeting of 21 April and 28 April 1937, *Libro de Actas 1931–1941*, pp. 165 and 168 respectively; SECH, board meeting, 29 Sept. 1937, *Libro de Actas 1931–1941*, pp. 183–5.

²⁸SECH, board meetings of 8 May 1939 and 17 July 1939, *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, pp. 268 and 286 respectively.

²⁹SECH, Asamblea General, 3 April 1939, *Libro de Actas 1933–1941*, p. 260.

The history of both the ChCCF and the SECH, with their common roots in anti-fascism and as networks for Chilean writers and intellectuals, is key to explaining the interest of the former in controlling the latter. First, consistent with the CCF's global campaign, the participation of ChCCF's members in the SECH and in a wide range of newspapers, radio stations, the University of Chile, the PEN Club, labour unions, student organisations and political parties was ideal, in Baráibar's words, for the ChCCF's plans of 'penetration' into Chilean arts, unions and universities to counter communist activism in those fields.³⁰ Moreover, the fact that the SECH included writers of diverse and political backgrounds was important for the CCF's efforts to disingenuously present itself as an apolitical, non-partisan group, not supported by the United States and committed only to defending freedom of culture against any totalitarianism. Baráibar candidly highlighted this point to the Parisian headquarters when he noted that he had carefully made sure to keep 'a certain "balance" in the Committee' among people of different orientations.³¹

Additionally, the relationship between the ChCCF and the SECH in the 1950s was cemented by deep personal ties, given that several writers who would be prominent in the ChCCF later in the 1950s played an active role in the SECH's boards in the 1930s and 1940s.³² As the ChCCF stepped up its efforts to take over the SECH in the 1950s, several of its members were active in the SECH, as was the case of the *falangistas*/Christian Democrats Alejandro Magnet and Jaime Castillo and the writers Carmen Castillo and Chela Reyes. In addition, the SECH's anti-fascist past established another compatibility with the CCF, given that many of its European and US intellectuals were former communists and leftists who had participated in the anti-fascist struggle in the 1930s and 1940s and had become disillusioned with Stalin's Soviet Union. Thus, the CCF and its Chilean branch presented themselves as embodying a democratic, reformist, non-communist Left.³³ In the Chilean branch, disillusioned communists and anti-communist leftists found a common ground with centrists such as *falangistas* and Radicals. Participation in the Alianza and the anti-fascist intellectual front of the 1930s–40s by Chilean writers who were also active in both the ChCCF and the SECH³⁴ provided further personal, institutional and ideological links that explain the conflicts at the latter in the 1950s.

Finally, institutional and personal factors also explain the conflict between communists and anti-communists in the wake of the breakdown of the anti-fascist front in the late 1940s. If for the Argentine and Mexican CCF branches the enemies were

³⁰Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 1 Sept. 1954, IACF records, series 2, box 2040C, folder 8.

³¹Baráibar to Michael Joselsson, Santiago, 5 July 1953, IACF records, series 2, box 20140C, folder 6. In addition to leftists such as Romero and José Santos González Vera, SECH's boards in the 1930s included conservatives such as Agustín Edwards and Juanuario Espinosa.

³²Such was the case of Amanda Labarca, eventually ChCCF's president in the late 1950s, Marta Brunet, who participated actively in the Chilean PEN Club in the 1950s, and Eduardo Barrios, SECH's vice-president in 1944 and president in 1945 and 1946.

³³Stonor Saunders, *Cultural Cold War*, pp. 62–6; Iber, *Neither Peace*, pp. 95–9; Janello, 'El Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura', pp. 30–2.

³⁴This was the case of Julio Barrenechea, Marta Brunet and Amanda Labarca. Subercaseaux, *Política y cultura*, p. 63; Moraga Valle and Peñaloza Palma, 'España', p. 73; Mariano Ruperthutz Honorato, '¡Salvemos a Freud! Juan Marín, Pablo Neruda, la Alianza de Intelectuales y las vicisitudes de un intento de asilo político al creador del psicoanálisis en Chile (1938)', *Nuevo Mundo. Mundos Nuevos* (2014), online at <https://nuevomundo.revues.org/67241> (last access 2 Aug. 2018).

Peronism and the Mexican muralists, then Neruda and the communists played that role for the ChCCF. As Spanish leftists who had become viscerally anti-communist during the Spanish Civil War, Gorkin and Baráibar's hatred for Neruda was deep and personal. Already in 1939, Baráibar had joined in with widespread criticism against Neruda for having prioritised communists over Spanish Republicans of other tendencies as he worked from a diplomatic post to help Spanish refugees travel to Chile.³⁵ Baráibar's anti-communism was deepened by his close relation with the US embassy and his association with the conservative *El Mercurio*, to which by the 1950s he was a frequent contributor. Certainly, local reasons played a role for *falangistas* such as Magnet and Castillo, who were active in the SECH's conflicts against Neruda and communists in the 1950s. The *falangistas'* political goals and their blend of Christian reformism, anti-communism and capitalism explain their opposition to both traditional conservatism and communism.³⁶

Coincidences, Frictions, and Conflicts: The ChCCF, the SECH, and the Cold War, 1953–8

The historical and ideological background of a dense network of personal and institutional relations set the stage for the conflicts as the ChCCF's anti-communist intellectuals sought to control the SECH in the 1950s in a sinuous, not always successful campaign. In 1953–5, the clash between pro-Soviet and pro-American cultural international networks in Santiago generated the first references and reactions at the SECH. As Julián Gorkin, the CCF's officer in charge of Latin America, arrived in Santiago in April 1953 to launch *Cuadernos* and to organise the local branch, Neruda was organising the Continental Congress of Culture (CCC). Baráibar and the members of the soon-to-be ChCCF – particularly *falangistas* such as Jaime Castillo – denounced it for its communist orientation and interests, while writers participated along with other intellectuals and politicians in an open letter published in the Chilean press demanding that the CCC discuss the topic of cultural freedom more broadly.³⁷ Additionally, Gorkin and Baráibar attended a SECH board meeting in May 1953 in which Gorkin explained the CCF's anti-totalitarian and apolitical nature and its goal of gathering 'free intellectuals, thinkers and artists around the world to defend creative and critical thought'. Board members 'unanimously applauded in principle this initiative' and agreed to study the pamphlet on the Congress left by Gorkin. A board member appointed to attend the dinner hosted by Gorkin for Chilean intellectuals subsequently reported that

³⁵Moraga Valle and Peñaloza Palma, 'España', pp. 67–71; Adam Feinstein, *Pablo Neruda: A Passion for Life* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2004), pp. 140–7; Subercaseaux, *Política y cultura*, pp. 63–4. Baráibar's criticism is in 'Los principales responsables del drama de nuestra emigración', *Revista Timón*, segunda época, 1 (1939), pp. 135–8.

³⁶Iber, *Neither Peace*, p. 91; Fleet, *Rise and Fall*, pp. 40–7; Alfredo Riquelme Segovia, 'La Guerra Fría en Chile: Los intrincados nexos entre lo nacional y lo global', in Tanya Harmer and Alfredo Riquelme Segovia (eds.), *Chile y la Guerra Fría global* (Santiago: RIL Editores, 2014), p. 14.

³⁷Jaime Castillo Velasco, 'El Congreso Continental de la Cultura en Santiago de Chile', *Cuadernos*, 2 (1953), pp. 84–5. Details on the confrontation regarding the Continental Congress of Culture are available in Iber, *Neither Peace*, pp. 93–4; Janello, 'El Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura', pp. 35–6; Albuquerque F., *Trinchera*, pp. 51–60.

he had been 'very well impressed by the movement in favour of freedom of culture'.³⁸ Seeking to consolidate ties, in September Castillo invited the SECH's board to the cocktail party with which the ChCCF inaugurated a new conference space.³⁹

Although these moves are consistent with the view of the ChCCF as a part of a US-oriented, top-down manipulative scheme by a Chilean cultural institution, the reality is more complex, given that the US cultural Cold War included different groups and agendas that might converge for different reasons. This is clear, for example, regarding the criticisms of the regime of Juan Perón (1946–55) in Argentina due to his repression of intellectuals and abrogation of liberal democratic freedoms. This criticism, which was heating up precisely in 1953, was shared by the SECH, the ChCCF, and the *falangistas* who played a critical role in both institutions. For the SECH, it was based on professional and personal ties with Argentine writers – a transnational network operating independently from the Cold War – and its tradition of freedom of expression. In 1950, the SECH expressed its support to the anti-Peronist conservative newspapers in Buenos Aires, *La Prensa* and *La Nación*, for defending 'freedom of press and, in general, democratic institutions'.⁴⁰ Then, when in 1951 the Argentine government expropriated *La Prensa*, the board published a public statement in Chilean and other Latin American newspapers against 'the tyranny of the Argentine government', protesting both against the persecution of newspapers and *La Prensa's* expropriation as an 'inexcusable attack against freedom of the press'.⁴¹

This criticism dovetailed nicely with the CCF, which had opposed Peronism since its beginning and whose Argentine branch, established in December 1955 after Perón's overthrow, was composed of the anti-Peronist intellectual and political establishment marginalised, if not repressed, by the government in 1946–55. For the CCF, Peronism represented a traditional Latin American authoritarian dictatorship that facilitated communist penetration. Finally, Chilean individuals and parties affiliated with the ChCCF such as the *falangistas* had their own domestic reasons for opposing Perón: criticisms of the Argentine president were linked to widespread concerns about Argentine influence in Chilean politics and to attacks by those close to the ChCCF on President Ibáñez del Campo, whom they deemed to be close to Perón in ideas, behaviour and political goals.⁴²

These agendas converged in 1953, helping cement ties between the ChCCF and the SECH. The *falangistas* harshly criticised Ibáñez del Campo for signing economic agreements with Perón that, they argued, were contrary to Chilean interests – a point made by Radomiro Tomic in the Senate and by editorials in the party magazine, *Política y Espíritu*, whose director was Jaime Castillo. Alejandro Magnet – who, along with Tomic, Castillo and future President Eduardo Frei,

³⁸SECH, board meeting of 28 Sept. 1953, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, p. 15.

³⁹SECH, board meeting of 4 May and 11 May 1953, *Libro de Actas 1951–1953*, pp. 188–9 and 191 respectively.

⁴⁰SECH, board meetings of 12 March 1951, *Libro de Actas 1948–1951*, p. 117.

⁴¹SECH, board meeting of 12 March 1951 and Asamblea General de Miembros, 16 April 1951, *Libro de Actas 1948–1951*, pp. 153 and 164 respectively.

⁴²Loris Zanatta, *La internacional justicialista. Auge y ocaso de los sueños imperiales de Perón* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2013).

signed the open letter against Neruda's CCC – published his book, *Nuestros vecinos justicialistas*, attacking Argentine long-term goals against Chile and labelling Perón and his movement totalitarian and expansionist.⁴³ Meanwhile, the ChCCF and the SECH also made clear their positions. In April 1953, the Peronist government reacted to a bomb attack in downtown Buenos Aires by jailing numerous intellectuals and politicians who would be the future members of the CCF's Argentine branch, while Peronist mobs destroyed the headquarters of the opposition parties. The CCF immediately launched a major international campaign demanding the release of the intellectuals and politicians, while the SECH's board unanimously agreed to contact the Chilean ambassador in Argentina to secure the release of its Argentine colleagues.⁴⁴ Subsequently, in November, the ChCCF organised a discussion forum on Magnet's book,⁴⁵ and the SECH became involved when the literary critic of the Chilean newspaper *La Nación* was fired for his positive review of the book in the newspaper. The SECH's board declared this action 'an attack against freedom and expression' and denounced the newspaper for its 'unconditional support ... to a foreign regime', a decision commented on in the newspapers and radio stations over which the ChCCF had influence.⁴⁶

Therefore, in 1953 institutional, personal, ideological and political ties offered reasonable hopes of success for the ChCCF's attempts at securing influence over and control of the SECH. However, these expectations did not mean that the ChCCF controlled the SECH or that the former's political and ideological positions were the only positions or went unchallenged, as the effects of the Cold War were increasingly felt in Chilean political and cultural debates. In June 1954, the CCF organised a conference of its Latin American branches in Santiago, a clear counterpoint to Neruda's 1953 CCC; it was met with harsh attacks from the communist newspaper *El Siglo* against Gorokin, Baráibar and the CCF, branded as tools of American imperialism. During the event, in collaboration with the PEN Club, the SECH organised a banquet to honour 'the group of Hispano-American writers currently visiting Santiago, strictly in their character as writers and without taking into account their political ideas'. In fact, in the SECH's discussion regarding the banquet, the writer Tomás Lago, Neruda's friend, had argued that the clarification about politics should set a precedent for the board to avoid situations that had arisen in the past, when 'it engaged in politics in analogous circumstances', a proposal supported by the attending members.⁴⁷

The clarification about politics and Lago's words indicate the increasing concerns that ideological differences among writers outside the association might divide it and affect its work. This was not an imaginary threat, given that the unity of

⁴³Nállim, 'Intelectuales y Guerra Fría'; Alejandro Magnet, *Nuestros vecinos justicialistas* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial del Pacífico, 1953), pp. 207–8.

⁴⁴Nállim, 'Local Struggles', pp. 119–20; SECH, board meeting of 26 May 1954, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, p. 195.

⁴⁵Baráibar, 'Desarrollo del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura en Chile', 1956, IACF records, series 2, box 216, folder 9; 'A propósito de "Nuestros Vecinos Justicialistas"', *Política y Espíritu*, 104 (1953), pp. 10–12.

⁴⁶SECH, extraordinary board meeting, 27 Nov. 1953, and board meeting, 7 Dec. 1953, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, pp. 25–6 and 28 respectively.

⁴⁷SECH, board meeting of 7 June 1954, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, pp. 66–7.

the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (Argentine Association of Writers, SADE), with which the SECH maintained regular communication, was affected in 1952–3 by the breakdown in the anti-Peronist front between communists and anti-communists – a reason why SADE, controlled by the latter, rejected the invitation to Neruda's CCC.⁴⁸ Thus, in April 1955, the board declined a CCF invitation to participate in an event in memory of Albert Einstein, persuaded once again by Lago's warnings that the CCF 'has a political character and is in open belligerence with other institutions' and that by accepting the invitation, the SECH could 'compromise its freedom' and would be pressured to take part in similar events in the future.⁴⁹

A few months later, the ChCCF suffered another setback in its attempts to influence the positions of the SECH. In 1955, communists sponsored two other international meetings in Santiago, the Festival de la Juventud Latinoamericana (Festival of Latin American Youth) in January and the Conferencia Latinoamericana sobre las Libertades Públicas (Latin American Conference on Public Freedoms) in August. The ChCCF undertook an active campaign denouncing the Communist role in organising and infiltrating both events.⁵⁰ The SECH decided to participate in the Conference on Public Freedoms after hearing the report of a delegation sent to a preparatory meeting. The board asked its president to deliver a presentation on the 'situation of the writer vis-à-vis Latin American dictatorships' and appointed three delegates to the Conference's organising committee, including Alejandro Magnet, the *jalangista* and active member of the ChCCF.⁵¹ Magnet reported on his work in the committee but resigned from the SECH's delegation, arguing that 'there was communist influence in such an organisation' and that only rescheduling the Conference would ensure 'broadening its democratic basis' – the official position of the ChCCF. Unpersuaded by Magnet's arguments, the board accepted his resignation, replaced him, and decided to participate in the Conference.⁵²

Thus, frictions and ambiguities characterised the relationship between the ChCCF and the SECH, as the latter became increasingly aware of the former's intentions and sought to avoid being dragged into the conflict between communists and anti-communists. Nevertheless, the SECH's concerns with defending general ideas of freedom, consistent with its tradition and of relevance to writers, explain its support for Latin American authors facing persecution that could, in some particular cases, align it with the CCF. Revealing the networks that connected Chilean writers to the region, in August 1955 the board established a committee for

⁴⁸Karina C. Janello, 'Redes intelectuales y guerra fría: La agenda argentina del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura', *Revista de la Red Intercatedras de Historia de América Latina Contemporánea*, 1 (2014), pp. 64–7.

⁴⁹SECH, board meetings of 23 April and 2 May, 1955, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, pp. 142–4.

⁵⁰Baráibar, 'Desarrollo del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura en Chile', 1956, IACF records, series 2, box 216, folder 3, pp. 3–4; 'La Conferencia Latinoamericana por las Libertades', *Cultura y Libertad*, 3 (1955), pp. 19–23; 'La Conferencia Latinoamericana "por las libertades"', *Cultura y Libertad*, 4 (1955), pp. 17–19; *Informe sobre la Conferencia Latinoamericana por las Libertades* (Santiago: Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura, 1955).

⁵¹SECH, board meetings of 16 May and 30 May, 1955, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, pp. 149–50.

⁵²SECH, board meeting of 20 June 1955, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, p. 154.

receiving complaints by 'writers exiled in different countries of the continent', reaffirmed its decision 'to intervene constantly in defence of public liberties, threatened by different regimes in the [American] continent', and asked the Paraguayan president to release 'political prisoners'.⁵³ One month later, when Perón was overthrown, the SECH sent a telegram congratulating the new president, General Eduardo Lonardi. Meanwhile, the CCF celebrated the fall of Perón with articles in the magazines published by the ChCCF – *Cultura y Libertad* – and the CCF – *Cuadernos* – and, in December 1955, Gorkin presided over the foundation of the Argentine Association for Cultural Freedom, which included the most renowned Argentine SADE members who had opposed Perón.⁵⁴

The conflict between the ChCCF and Neruda and the Communists intensified as Cold War events impacted Chilean politics and culture and more directly threatened the unity of the SECH. When Soviet forces repressed the Hungarian uprising in October–November 1956, the CCF launched its most important international campaign against the Soviet Union and communism and in defence of Hungarian intellectuals. The ChCCF joined in, seeking to organise an event in the labour movement against 'Russian intervention and deportations in Hungary'.⁵⁵ Between December 1956 and February 1957, Baráibar launched a campaign in Chilean newspapers to support Hungarian 'democratic intellectuals', followed by a petition in favour of Hungary signed by Chilean 'democratic' intellectuals. An open public challenge to Neruda and the Communists to publicly state their position gave way to a 'violent polemic in the press' and the literary magazine *Ercilla* between Baráibar and Castillo on behalf of the ChCCF and the Communist writers and intellectuals Neruda, Pablo de Rokha and Juan de Luigi.⁵⁶ The ChCCF also attacked Neruda and other Chilean communists and socialists by publishing in 1956 a small book titled *Así veían a Stalin* ('This is How they Saw Stalin'), with their transcribed texts praising Stalin which Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism in 1953 had rendered embarrassing. Neruda sarcastically responded in a letter to the director of *El Mercurio*, challenging the ChCCF to publicly state what it thought about 'North American domination of Puerto Rico', 'the participation of American troops, weapons and diplomats' in the overthrow of the Guatemalan government in 1954, and 'the Panamanian sovereign rights to the Panama Canal'.⁵⁷ Castillo responded to the attacks against the ChCCF with a lawsuit against the communist newspaper *El Siglo*, while a report back to Paris noted that the ChCCF had forced Neruda's response on 'the massacres in Hungary', allowing intellectuals to denounce him as 'an accomplice of Moscow's satraps'.⁵⁸

⁵³SECH, board meeting of 1 August 1955, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, p. 160.

⁵⁴SECH, board meeting of 26 Sept. 1955, *Libro de Actas 1953–1956*, p. 168; *Cultura y Libertad*, 5 (1955), n.p.; 'La Argentina en la hora de libertad', Roberto Giusti, 'Los intelectuales bajo el peronismo' and Juan Antonio Solari, 'Proceso y fin de una dictadura', *Cuadernos*, 15 (1955), pp. 6, 17–21, and 22–30 respectively.

⁵⁵André Germain to Joselsson, 22 Nov. 1956, IACF records, series 2, box 204OC, folder 10.

⁵⁶Germain, 'Compte-Rendu des activités du Comité Chilien du Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture pendant l'année 1957', IACF records, series 2, box 131OC, folder 2.

⁵⁷Pablo Neruda to the Director of *El Mercurio*, Santiago, 22 Dec. 1956, National Library of Chile, Santiago, Colección Archivo del Escritor-Manuscritos (hereafter CAE-M), Neruda 076.

⁵⁸Germain to John Hunt, Santiago, 24 Jan. 1957, IACF records, series 2, box 204OC, folder 10.

The board of the SECH sought to maintain its neutrality in this fight, which nonetheless surfaced when, in November 1956, an approved motion demanded ‘an official statement’ on Hungary and the intervention of Western powers in Egypt. After discussion, the board issued a press release stating that as ‘world opinion currently faces armed interventions in Hungary and Egypt’, the SECH, encompassing ‘writers of every ideology’, protested against ‘those interventions and any similar occurrences’ that generated ‘an environment of war’ if not war itself. The short text ended expressing the SECH’s desire for ‘the best international conditions for maintaining world peace’.⁵⁹ This carefully balanced statement could hardly satisfy the ChCCF, which, by 1957, was deeply worried that communists would control the SECH. Indeed, the new board elected in April 1957 included communists such as Neruda and Armando Cassigoli and other leftists and made Neruda the association’s ‘honorary director’.⁶⁰ Baráibar, for whom the new board was the result of a ‘communist trap’ disguised as a ‘board of unity’,⁶¹ could only see his suspicions confirmed when, in a board meeting in July 1957, Cassigoli read out a letter written by Neruda and sent from Colombo, Ceylon – where he was participating in one of the international Soviet-sponsored Peace Festivals – calling for the end of ‘atomic experimentation’. The SECH’s board agreed to send a note to the Chilean delegation at the United Nations, as the competent body for addressing matters of nuclear weapons,⁶² but the letter could not but increase the ChCCF’s anxiety over communist influence at the SECH.

In summary, in the 1953–7 period, the efforts by the ChCCF to control the SECH must be understood at multiple levels. A dense network of personal, ideological and institutional links, rooted in the anti-fascist movement of the 1930s–40s and the defence of ideas of freedom in general, connected writers and politicians at the two organisations. The impact of the Cold War certainly divided writers and intellectuals along pro-Soviet and pro-US international networks, and explains the ChCCF’s plans to influence the SECH as part of the former’s goals of propaganda and penetration in the name of freedom. Simultaneously, as criticisms against Peronism show, the cultural Cold War could mask converging agendas that reveal other national, regional and international networks and agendas. After 1955, the SECH clearly attempted to steer away from ideological positions that could divide writers, but doing so became increasingly difficult as Cold War cultural and political events in Chile and elsewhere unfolded.

Failure, Success, and the Decline of the ChCCF’s Control of the SECH, 1958–61

From 1958 on, the ChCCF stepped up its efforts to gain control of the board of the SECH. The most intense disputes relate to a more politicised environment, given that 1958 was a year of presidential elections in Chile with the participation of

⁵⁹SECH, board meeting of 29 Nov. 1956, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 22.

⁶⁰SECH, Junta Ordinaria Anual de Socios, 9 April 1957 and board meeting of 22 April 1957, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 29–30 and 31–2 respectively.

⁶¹Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 16 April 1957, IACF records, series, 2, box 216, folder 3.

⁶²SECH, board meeting, 1 July, 1957, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 56; Feinstein, *Neruda*, p. 310.

two political forces that had been involved in the conflicts surrounding the SECH: the Christian Democratic party, created in 1957 from the Falange Nacional; and the FRAP, which brought together socialists and communists. In this sense, the conflict at the SECH concerned not only the international Cold War but also the fact that *falangistas*/Christian Democrats such as Jaime Castillo and Alejandro Magnet, who were active in the ChCCF, and Neruda and the leftists, who were aligned with the FRAP, made the SECH and other cultural institutions into spaces for their agendas and confrontations.

The SECH's board elections in April 1958, already burdened by the struggle in the previous years between the ChCCF and Neruda, were indeed far more intense than those that had taken place in the past. The CCF's supervisor of the Latin American branches, Julián Gorkin, was in Chile between 26 March and 2 April and engaged in a virulent dispute in the newspapers with Neruda and the communist *El Siglo*, condemning Stalin as 'a madman to whom Neruda dedicated his poems' and denouncing Neruda for his 'profane and slanderous language'. *El Siglo* counter-attacked by praising Neruda as a 'man belonging to world culture' who was 'honourably serving his country' and opposed him to Gorkin, a 'scoundrel', 'FBI agent', 'informer', 'snitch', 'confused and creator of confusion like the well-paid, well-fed, and *dolarizado* [paid for in US dollars] "Congress for Cultural Freedom"'.⁶³ The confrontation preceded the SECH's elections, in which, according to Baráibar, the ChCCF worked very hard to avoid the election of a board of 'false unity' presided over by Neruda and whose secret goal was to create a sort of Confederation of National Societies of Latin American writers. To prevent this, in March, Magnet had 33 people – the majority of whom were Christian Democrats, including Jaime Castillo – accepted as new members who could then vote in the election.⁶⁴ *El Siglo* vigorously denounced the manoeuvre, defended the outgoing board as composed of writers from 'all trends' who had worked in the service of all writers, and argued that the attempt to 'divide writers' would certainly fail and become 'an unforgettable lesson to the servants of the Vatican and the Yankee embassy'.⁶⁵

To the ChCCF's dismay, Neruda was not only re-elected to the board but also elected as its president, despite a failed last-minute motion according to which the new president should not be someone who 'raises suspicions because of his political activity'.⁶⁶ For the Christian Democratic magazine *Política y Espíritu*, directed by the ChCCF's Castillo, Neruda's election occurred 'against the opinion of numerous members' who feared that people 'of known militancy in the Communist party' in his list would bring 'a certain political spirit to the SECH'. Although Neruda's merits as 'a great poet' justified his election, his 'complicity in crimes against humanity' was 'an obstacle to presiding over a writers' organisation'.⁶⁷ From

⁶³Gorkin ataca: Stalin era un loco al que Neruda dedicó sus poemas', *Las Noticias de Última Hora*, 4 April 1958, n.p.; *El Siglo*, 5 April 1958, p. 3, both in IACF records, series 2, box 205OC, folder 3.

⁶⁴Baráibar to Joselsson, 7 April 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 112, folder 1; SECH, Asamblea Ordinaria de Socios, 31 March 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 115.

⁶⁵Juan de Sur, 'Mr. Gorkin y la SECH', *El Siglo*, 6 April 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 205, folder 3.

⁶⁶SECH, Junta Ordinaria Anual de Socios and board meeting, 14 April 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 117–21.

⁶⁷'Puntos de Vista', *Política y Espíritu*, 198 (1958), p. 4.

another perspective, the new board's elected secretary, in a private letter, denied the charge, arguing that her and Neruda's 'list of unity' included reactionary, Marxist, communist and independent members. She put the blame squarely on Magnet, the ChCCF and Christian Democrats for the problems, as 'a group of "reactionary", mostly Christian and Catholic *señorones* [bigwigs] who wanted to take over the board with the tired excuse that our group was "red"'.⁶⁸

Despite its failure, the ChCCF kept up the pressure on the SECH and maintained its attacks against Neruda, while seeking to expand its influence in other Chilean cultural institutions. It succeeded in the Chilean branch of the PEN Club, in which the new board elected in 1958 included several members who were active in the ChCCF or who had a good working relationship with it.⁶⁹ From Paris, several articles on *Cuadernos* attacked Neruda as an ideological poet-aester.⁷⁰ In this context, Neruda sought, at the first meeting of the SECH's new board of 21 April, to calm people's spirits. He gained the board's unanimous approval for a declaration reaffirming the SECH as a 'professional organisation [*organización gremial*] that draws together writers of different political and religious ideas' and that the 'personal activities of its members, performed outside the institution, did not compromise it in any manner and are beyond its scope'.⁷¹

Nevertheless, wounds remained open. An open letter by the Christian Democrat Magnet in the press attacking Neruda led the board to issue a public statement, disavowing 'writings against the SECH and some of its members' in newspapers and demanding that the press show 'the respect due to Chilean writers'.⁷² In June, the communist board member Armando Cassigoli demanded that the SECH respond to other attacks from *El Mercurio*, but Neruda considered this 'unnecessary' and asked him 'not to insist on it'.⁷³ In June confrontations among writers in the press because of their opinions or over the SECH's public positions reached such a point that the board reiterated its statement of 21 April, adding that no board member 'could claim [to represent] the Society of Writers' for his/her public declarations or activities beyond what the board decided.⁷⁴

Within this context, once again, the Hungarian situation impacted on the SECH. Citing precedents based on the SECH's declarations the board, in July 1958, considered a motion proposing a 'vote of protest against the execution of Hungarian politicians' such as Imre Nagy and against the 'treacherous murder of Hungarian intellectuals [and] journalists by a dictatorial government under foreign Soviet

⁶⁸Matilde Ladrón de Guevara to Hugo Emilio Pedemonte, Santiago, 23 April 1958, CAE-M, Ladrón de Guevara 0236.

⁶⁹Those active in the ChCCF included the re-elected secretary-general of the PEN Club, Chela Reyes, her husband, Luis Meléndez, and Amanda Labarca, who was the ChCCF vice-president. Marta Brunet and Hernán Poblete, also elected to the PEN Club board, were very close to and participated in ChCCF activities. Baráibar to Gorkin, 25 Aug. 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 217, folder 6.

⁷⁰Ricardo Paseyro, 'El mito Neruda', *Cuadernos*, 28 (1958), pp. 37–48; Juan Ramón Jiménez, 'Un gran mal poeta', *Cuadernos*, 30 (1958), p. 59.

⁷¹SECH, board meeting, 21 April 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 122.

⁷²SECH, board meeting, 28 April 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 127–8.

⁷³SECH, board meeting, 2 June 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 149. The denounced texts were signed 'H.D.A.', who was most likely the fierce anti-communist literary critic and ChCCF member Hernán Díaz Arrieta.

⁷⁴SECH, board meeting, 16 June 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 158–9.

control, in violation of human rights and subjugating oral and written thought, sources of spiritual forces'. The proposal led to a heated and bitter exchange. Considering the statement too strong, another proposal omitted explicit references to the Soviet Union or Hungary. Other writers noted that as an apolitical and professional organisation, the SECH should not devote itself to issues that 'divide writers without achieving anything positive' and that writers who felt passionately about the Hungarian situation 'have already and publicly manifested their protest'. Meanwhile, the communist Cassigoli furiously demanded the addition of several points to the original proposed statement against 'French machine-gunning in Tunisia' and the 'British execution of Greek teenagers in Cyprus', demanding the freedom of a student imprisoned by Fulgencio Batista's regime in Cuba and protesting against the trial and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the United States and the government repression of the massive demonstrations of April 1957 in Santiago. Eventually, an alternative declaration was discussed, while a weary Neruda cautioned that 'the environment of provocation, fuelled by very well-known sectors', would result in the election of 'a new board of anti-communist phobia' that, 'in turn, will provoke a reaction'; if this environment continued, then he would resign. The new declaration, approved by a narrow margin, stated that the SECH, 'respectful of its members' ideologies and religious beliefs and on behalf of the association's fraternal ties, reiterates its previous agreements regarding its abstention from statements of a political character'.⁷⁵

The consequences were important for both the SECH and the ChCCF. Reporting to Paris, Baráibar labelled the approved statement 'absurd' and criticised Neruda's 'unique hypocrisy' while he mobilised attacks in the media against the declaration. *El Mercurio*, to which Baráibar was a frequent contributor, attacked the SECH's vote and reminded the association about its previous statements on Hungary and Egypt in 1956 and other events. The campaign was followed by Jaime Castillo in the Christian Democrat newspaper *La Libertad*. More to the point, Baráibar and the ChCCF then met with several board members and achieved the resignations of the SECH's vice-president, David Cruz Ocampo, and of Ricardo Latcham. As Baráibar explained to the CCF headquarters, the ChCCF's ultimate goal was to provoke, through the work of the Christian Democrat Magnet, the fall of the board presided over by Neruda.⁷⁶

The entire episode is another example of the capacity of the international Cold War to further politicise local situations and institutions such as the SECH, in which personal and partisan animosities had already generated divisions. Between the discussions of July 1958 and the board elections of April 1959, board meetings focused on professional issues, probably seeking to avoid ideological and political debates that could re-open divisions. However, the ChCCF and its allied intellectual and political groups kept up the pressure, using the case of Boris Pasternak, the Soviet writer who in late 1958 was awarded the

⁷⁵SECH, board meeting, 30 June 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 160–6.

⁷⁶Baráibar to Josselson, Santiago, 3 July 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 217, folder 6. The resignations of Latcham and Cruz Ocampo were dealt with on 7 July, but there is no mention of the reasons that they offered or of any repercussions that they might have given rise to. SECH, board meeting, 7 July, 1958, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 167. For Castillo's criticisms in *La Libertad*, see Jaime Castillo, 'La responsabilidad de los escritores', *La Libertad*, 3 July 1958, p. 4.

Nobel Prize for Literature but then turned it down due to the pressure of the Soviet government. As in the case of Hungary, the CCF mounted an international campaign presenting Pasternak as an example of international communism's attacks on the freedoms of thought and expression. In Chile, the ChCCF launched a press campaign and sent telegrams to the United Nations and the Organization of American States demanding their involvement to secure Pasternak's life and freedom of expression.⁷⁷ Using its influence in the PEN Club – whose president, Marta Bunet, vice-president, Alejandro Magnet, and secretary, Chela Reyes, were also ChCCF members – a letter on the Pasternak case was written and sent to 50 organisations and renowned Chilean intellectuals, including the SECH.

Displaying the deception used by the ChCCF since its inception, Baráibar stated that although everyone knew that the ChCCF was behind the campaign, it was better, for 'tactical reasons', to act through the PEN Club and 'groups of writers' so that 'it does not seem that we exercise an effective general control over *las gentes de letras* [the literary people]'.⁷⁸ In line with the ChCCF's goal of making 'Neruda break his silence', and 'denouncing the SECH's servile attitude',⁷⁹ the Christian Democratic magazine *Política y Espiritu* presented the Pasternak affair as being characteristic of 'Stalin's age', noting that Chilean 'leftist intellectuals', particularly Neruda, would once again dishonour themselves and talk about Pasternak 'as a free writer to whom nothing has happened'.⁸⁰ The SECH's secretary blamed Christian Democrats for tensions in the SECH's board meetings and for using Pasternak as 'their banner of opposition against our president, Neruda'.⁸¹ However, there are no records that the SECH's board ever discussed the affair. Neruda, who had welcomed the decision to grant Pasternak the Nobel Prize, reversed his position and then maintained an uncomfortable silence.⁸²

The ChCCF finally succeeded in the board elections of April 1959, in which it 'discreetly' supported the Christian Democrat Magnet to get a 'brilliant' list elected against 'the Chinese [communist] list sponsored by Neruda'.⁸³ The newly elected board was full of ChCCF members and writers close to it, including the president, Julio Barrenechea, and the secretary, Magnet, who were also the ChCCF's president and secretary respectively.⁸⁴ For the Christian Democratic newspaper *La Libertad*, the new board wanted 'to renovate and change the SECH's path' along freedom and without the moral abdication of its silence over Pasternak.⁸⁵ Although an exultant

⁷⁷ André Germain, 'Compte-Rendu des principales activités du Comité de Santiago de Chile depuis janvier 1958', Santiago, 10 Nov. 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 217, folder 6.

⁷⁸ Baráibar to Gorkin, 31 Oct. 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 217, folder 6.

⁷⁹ Germain to Gorkin, Santiago, 1 Nov. 1958, IACF records, series 2, box 217, folder 6.

⁸⁰ 'Puntos de vista', in *Política y Espiritu*, 15 Nov. 1958, pp. 1–2.

⁸¹ Matilde Ladrón de Guevara to Carlos Sabat Encasty, Santiago, 9 Nov. 1958, CAE-M, Ladrón de Guevara 0250.

⁸² David Schidlowsky, 'Extractos de un *racconto* biográfico. El itinerario político de Pablo Neruda entre 1937 y 1966', *Políticas de la Memoria*, 15 (2014–15), p. 208; Jorge Edwards quoted by Feinstein, *Neruda*, p. 319.

⁸³ Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 6 April 1959, IACF records, series 2, box 218, folder 3.

⁸⁴ Other newly-elected board members close to the ChCCF were Marta Brunet (vice-president), Hernán Poblete (treasurer), and Carmen Castillo (assistant treasurer). SECH, Asamblea General de Socios, 13 April 1959, and board meeting of 20 April 1959, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 258–60 and 261–2 respectively.

⁸⁵ 'Elecciones en la Sociedad de Escritores', *La Libertad*, 7 April, 1959, p. 3.

Baráibar credited the victory to the extraordinary efforts by Magnet, his fellow Christian Democrat Jaime Castillo, and other elected board members, he complained that many writers 'almost needed to be dragged to vote' and that he had even had to pay 'their annual membership fees' so they could cast their ballots.⁸⁶ Baráibar's candid statement is further proof of the ChCCF manipulations behind the Pasternak affair, the 1959 board elections, and its overall operations, which flagrantly displayed the inconsistency of protesting in the name of freedom of expression and thought while, precisely, consciously manipulating intellectuals – an inherent contradiction in the entire enterprise of the CCF as an institution in the service of the US cultural Cold War.

However, the expected alignment of the new board with the ChCCF did not actually occur. At the new board's inauguration, Barrenechea agreed to demands to avoid 'international declarations' such as that on Nagy in order to 'calm the spirits' and to bridge the 'differences between the two sectors [which were] opposed during the election'.⁸⁷ Indeed, the board meeting records in 1959–60 show no real alignment with the ChCCF or its initiatives, with the exception of the ChCCF's project to foster Latin American economic and cultural integration. Barrenechea delivered a lecture on the latter at the University of Chile in July 1959, and, eventually, the SECH's board sent a motion to the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Americas supporting 'Latin American cultural integration' but without further discussion or details.⁸⁸

What had happened? This anti-climactic outcome most probably concerned the shifting environment of both Chilean politics and the US cultural Cold War in Latin America: several factors conspired against the desired results of the ChCCF's control of the SECH and the very existence of the CCF in Latin America. Concerning Chilean politics, the three-way political confrontation which opened up in 1958 between the Christian Democrats, the FRAP leftist coalition and the Right dominated Chilean politics to a greater and greater extent until the 1973 military coup. It seems that the rising power of Christian Democrats at the national level, culminating in their victory in the presidential elections of 1964, increasingly absorbed party members such as Alejandro Magnet and Jaime Castillo, who had played a critical role in both the ChCCF and the SECH and now devoted less time to them. Tellingly, after the comments on the board elections of 1959, the Christian Democratic magazine *Política y Espíritu* did not publish anything more on the SECH or the events surrounding the board elections of 1960 and 1961 detailed below.

Simultaneously, the Cuban Revolution in January 1959, which re-energised intellectual and political struggles in Latin America, also led the CCF to re-evaluate its operations in the region. Given that its Latin American branches' excessive focus on anti-communism and a conservative critique of democracy had achieved no real impact on society, the CCF underwent a process of reform. In 1963, Julián Gorkin left his positions as the head of the Latin American secretariat and editor of *Cuadernos*, which would close in 1965 to be replaced with new publications for

⁸⁶Baráibar to Gorkin, 14 April 1959, IACF records, series 2, box 218, folder 3.

⁸⁷SECH, board meeting of 20 April 1959, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 261–2.

⁸⁸SECH, board meeting of 24 Aug. 1959, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, p. 322.

the region. The Latin American branches were reorganised and their leaders – including the ChCCF's – replaced. In 1965, they were placed under the aegis of the Instituto Latinoamericano de Relaciones Internacionales (Latin American Institute of International Relations, ILARI). At the same time, the appearance of a specific Cuban-inspired cultural project and the rise of the new Left in the 1960s opened out new and more attractive fora for many Latin American intellectuals.⁸⁹

In this context of national and international change, the decreasing ability of the ChCCF to influence Chilean cultural institutions began, paradoxically, immediately after its victory at the SECH. This decline was reflected in the failure to extend the control that it had achieved at the SECH and the PEN Club to Chile's professional organisation of journalists, the *Círculo de Periodistas*, in which the ChCCF-sponsored, multi-party list collapsed as it failed to attract support.⁹⁰ At the SECH, the board elected in April 1960 included ChCCF members such as the president, Brunet, and the secretary, Magnet.⁹¹ However, the ChCCF lamented that Barrenechea's outgoing 'democratic board' failed to ensure the re-election of a board with 'complete superiority of democratic writers', given that the communists, working with independents, had gained four seats against seven won by the 'democratic candidates'. According to the disappointed organisers of the democratic list, they failed because of 'the lack of interests of many of the Society's members who did not even bother to vote' and thus decided the election's result.⁹²

The ChCCF's appeal and influence only diminished in 1960–1, as the organisation was also distracted by crisis within the CCF following the Cuban Revolution. In contrast to previous years, ChCCF's records have very few references to the SECH, which seems to have been very active – although this is difficult to evaluate because of missing board meeting records between May 1960 and April 1961.⁹³ Nevertheless, the evidence shows that the ChCCF was still concerned about communist activities in the SECH. In November 1960, the ChCCF board, having been warned that the SECH's communist and socialist writers were actively registering new members 'with the clear goal of gaining control again of the institution in the next election', urged its members to contact authors of books and literary articles and to encourage them to become members 'as soon as possible to prevent the SECH from falling again into communist hands'.⁹⁴ The effort failed, and the

⁸⁹On the Cuban Revolution and the reorganisation of the CCF's Latin American branches, see Iber, *Neither Peace; Glondys, Guerra fría*; María Eugenia Mudrovic, *Mundo Nuevo. Cultura y guerra fría en la década del 60* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1997).

⁹⁰Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 14 April 1959, IACF records, series 2, box 218, folder 3; Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 19 May 1959, IACF records, series 2, box 218, folder 3.

⁹¹SECH, board meeting, 25 April 1960, *Libro de Actas 1956–1960*, pp. 370–2.

⁹²'Elecciones en la Sociedad de Escritores de Chile', n.d., IACF records, series 2, box 219, folder 4.

⁹³The *Libro de Actas 1956–1961*, numbered '6' and ending with the board meeting of 9 May, 1960, is followed by the *Libro de Actas 1961–1962*, numbered '7' and beginning with the General Assembly of Members of 17 April, 1961. The missing records could not be found during research at the SECH's offices. At that General Assembly, a document regarding 'the main events that have happened' in 1960–1 was presented, but the records do not provide further details. *Asamblea General de Socios*, 17 April 1961, *Libro de Actas 1961–1962*, pp. 1–3.

⁹⁴Acta de la sesión ordinaria del Comité Chileno del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura realizada el martes 29 de noviembre de 1960', IACF records, series 2, box 219, folder 3.

candidates sponsored by the ChCCF in the board elections of April 1961 were defeated by a list headed by the leftist Rubén Azócar. Because the board election occurred only days after the failed CIA-sponsored Bays of Pigs invasion, Azócar took care to express in his first speech, in line with declarations by past presidents, that the association was 'an apolitical organisation' working 'on behalf of Chilean writers'. The board had not been elected for its ideology; it would address everything related to important cultural matters and the cause of writers but not 'matters that are properly of [interest to] political parties'.⁹⁵

In a report sent to Gorkin, Baráibar bitterly commented on 'the complete defeat of the true democratic' candidates, the 'most regretful proof of Chilean intellectuals' lack of interests and deep convictions regarding an active defence of freedom'. The communists won due to their activism in registering new members, the collaboration of 'weak democratic' writers, and, mainly, the apathy of democratic writers. The Christian Democrat Magnet had rejected participating in the elections, and a last-minute unity list, headed by Barrenechea, was defeated by a list of communists and independents. According to Baráibar, this could have been prevented if democratic writers had voted. Magnet agreed with Baráibar in his analysis of the elections presented to the ChCCF board, adding that the failure showed that 'democratic members' were 'not interested in fighting against communists'.⁹⁶

The comments on the 1961 board elections are the last reference to the ChCCF's attempts to control the SECH. The ChCCF's defeat in those elections reflects its broader problem of diminished relevance in the then highly-polarised national and international contexts. Its lack of appeal among writers also stemmed from the fact that calls to freedom and democracy by now rang hollow, given the ChCCF's explicit anti-communist agenda and its overt and covert manipulations to achieve influence at the SECH and elsewhere. The CCF headquarters implicitly recognised this when it launched the reorganisations of its Latin American operations that impacted on the ChCCF and, eventually, terminated it in December 1963.

Conclusion

The conflictive history of the ChCCF's attempts to control the SECH in the 1950s reveals important aspects of the history of both the SECH and the cultural Cold War in Chile and elsewhere. This article not only provides an empirically grounded history of the SECH based on records previously unexplored; it also shows, at a methodological level, that the ChCCF's efforts to control the association cannot be fully understood without considering the SECH's records along with those from the ChCCF, letters by Chilean writers, and a range of cultural and political publications. Only by considering these different sources and then placing them within the national and international frameworks of the 1950s does a clearer picture of the cultural Cold War in Chile emerge.

The article also confirms the blurred boundaries of the Cold War in Latin America: the conflict between pro-Soviet and pro-US Chilean writers did not

⁹⁵SECH, board meeting of 2 May 1961, *Libro de Actas 1961–1962*, pp. 4–8.

⁹⁶Baráibar to Gorkin, Santiago, 19 April 1961, and 'Acta de la Sesión del Comité Chileno del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura Realizada el Martes 18 de abril de 1961,' both in IACF records, series 2, box 220, folder 9.

begin after the end of the Second World War nor were they derivative of the bipolar confrontation. Rather, these conflicts were rooted in earlier political and intellectual developments, at the national and international levels, that had affected Chilean writers since the 1930s. Both communist writers and those who would join the ChCCF had a common past in the anti-fascist movement, reflected in the SECH's history in defence of intellectual freedom and of the Spanish Republic and in the Society's relations with the Alianza. Although the impact of the Cold War in Chile in the late 1940s shattered the anti-fascist front and divided it into communist and anti-communist camps, this article is proof of the need to revise the chronological endpoints of the Cold War and the role of cultural and political entrepreneurs on both sides in the origins and evolution of the cultural Cold War in Latin America and elsewhere.⁹⁷

In addition, the conflictive history of the ChCCF's campaign regarding the SECH demonstrates the multiple scales of the cultural Cold War. The international level of the Cold War and 'big politics' provide a way to understand the conflicts at the SECH, showing the peculiar capacity of the Cold War to politicise dynamics at the local level. Simultaneously, other, more local factors and agendas beyond the Cold War were at play in these conflicts, from the previous anti-fascist tradition of the SECH to personal animosities among writers and specific political agendas such as that of the Christian Democrats. Thus, and in line with the current scholarship on the cultural Cold War, this article rejects a top-down, hierarchical order originating in the United States and the Soviet Union as the exclusive framework of analysis. Instead, it argues that a more accurate approach must de-centre the cultural Cold War along different levels, networks and actors in unstable and shifting relations, in which local factors, relations and events are as relevant as foreign influences. The article reconstructs those linkages, for example, by noting the presence of writers affiliated with the ChCCF not only in the SECH but also in the PEN Club, the Christian Democratic party, newspapers, and other cultural institutions.

Finally, the article's balanced evaluation of the ChCCF's impact in Chile additionally demonstrates the importance of the cultural Cold War approach. The ChCCF's limited and short-term success in controlling the SECH was not for lack of trying. Rather, its campaign in the name of democracy and freedom could not hide the contradiction with its political and ideological agenda, and its actions at the SECH could not avoid the problems ultimately faced by the CCF by the late 1950s and that would lead to its demise. On the other hand, the ChCCF was undoubtedly relevant in mobilising political and cultural actors, not only regarding control of the SECH but also by forcing discussions and statements on relevant issues connected to national and international events. In this sense, using the theoretical insights of the cultural Cold War to study the ChCCF and similar organisations offers an important analytical tool for exploring broader and deeper processes that go beyond narrow frameworks and narratives.

⁹⁷Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph, *A Century of Revolution. Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence during Latin America's Long Cold War* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2010); Patrick Iber, 'Anti-Communist Entrepreneurs and the Origins of the Cultural Cold War in Latin America', in Pieper Mooney and Lanza (eds.), *De-centering*, pp. 167–86.

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Spanish abstract

En la década de 1950, la Sociedad de Escritores de Chile atravesó un período de duras disputas causadas por los intentos de ganar el control de la asociación por parte del Comité Chileno por la Libertad de la Cultura, la filial local de una organización central en la Guerra Fría cultural estadounidense. Estas disputas revelan el papel que jugó la Guerra Fría cultural en el quiebre de antiguas alianzas políticas e intelectuales en Chile. Asimismo, los conflictos echan luz sobre las redes transnacionales que vincularon a los escritores chilenos durante la Guerra Fría y sobre la compleja articulación de contextos y agendas locales e internacionales que influyeron sobre grupos culturales y políticos chilenos.

Spanish keywords: Chile; Guerra Fría; cultura; política; Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura; Sociedad de Escritores de Chile

Portuguese abstract

Durante a década de 1950, a Sociedade de Escritores do Chile enfrentou disputas intensas com o Comitê pela Liberdade Cultural do Chile – o braço local de uma grande instituição da Guerra Fria cultural estado-unidense – que tentava ganhar o controle da associação. Estas disputas revelam o papel que desempenhou a Guerra Fria cultural na quebra de velhas alianças políticas e culturais no Chile. Também destacam as redes transnacionais que conectavam os escritores chilenos durante a Guerra Fria, a articulação complexa de contextos locais e internacionais e as agendas que influenciavam grupos culturais e políticos.

Portuguese keywords: Chile; Guerra Fria; cultura; política; Congresso pela Liberdade Cultural; Sociedade de Escritores do Chile

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