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Pan-Americanism and Cultural Exchange

Richard Cándida Smith

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UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS

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Published by  
University of Pennsylvania Press  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-4112  
[www.upenn.edu/pennpress](http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress)

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
ISBN 978-0-8122-4942-2

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Ya que no hablamos para ser escuchados  
Sino para que los demás hablen  
—Nicanor Parra

Now that we do not speak solely to be heard  
But so that others may speak  
—translation by William Carlos Williams

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## Introduction

In March 1945, Brazilian novelist Érico Veríssimo stopped in Abilene, Texas, as part of a three-week tour of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Kentucky, where he spoke at nineteen locations about the place of pan-American unity in the global fight against fascism and militarism.<sup>1</sup> Abilene was then a medium-sized town of fifty thousand in the middle of the cattle and petroleum country of northwest Texas. Some six hundred people showed up for an afternoon's activities at Abilene Christian College. The meeting ground was decorated with U.S. and Brazilian flags, as well as cowboy gear from Texas and Brazil. After singing the "Star Spangled Banner," the audience was led in singing the Brazilian national anthem in English translation. A program of North American and Brazilian folk songs followed. Once again the audience sang along with translated lyrics projected onto a screen. Two songs were performed in Portuguese, so the audience could hear how they sounded in the original language.

After the cultural program, Érico Veríssimo presented a fifty-minute talk with slides entitled "Brazil, the Gentle Giant."<sup>2</sup> Veríssimo's talks were humorous, but he also used the opportunity and the goodwill he seemed to generate from his listeners to present them with his friendly criticisms of the United States. He insisted on talking about the country's long history of racial hatred and the damage that segregation laws did to the quality of human relationships within the United States. He confessed that he always had trouble filling out official forms in North America that required him to check the appropriate box for his race. He told his U.S. audiences, "In a melting pot like Brazil (and let it be said in passing, the same is true for the United States), none of us know for sure the lines of blood running in our veins." He decided to respond to such questions by writing in the only reply that he could say with certainty: "I am a human being."<sup>3</sup> He compared the situation in the United States with his own country's legacy of racial mingling, though he frankly admitted, unlike official representatives of his government, that Brazil needed to do much more to assure that all citizens enjoyed full equality. He also talked about misinformation in the U.S. media about Latin America, using examples of recent portrayals of Brazil in movies and the press. He hoped that communication between the two countries, such as represented by the day's event, would increase, and

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Americans would quickly become as familiar with Brazil as they were with England or France.

At the end of his talk he received a thundering ovation from the crowd. The event concluded with a buffet of “typical Brazilian food” (menu not identified, but *churrascaria*, Brazilian barbecue typical of the southern region that was Veríssimo’s home, would have been comfortably similar to Texas barbecue), and a chance for conversation with the speaker. The president of the college rushed up to him after the talk with an invitation to spend a year in Abilene as a visiting professor. It was a proposal that other academic hosts across the United States often made him after his appearances. The success of Veríssimo’s first English-language publication, the novel *Crossroads*, had made him the most widely read Latin American writer in the United States, a position he maintained for the next two decades as eight more books appeared to critical and commercial success. Like many other writers and artists from Latin America, he had accepted a proposal from the U.S. State Department that he live in the United States “for the duration” and contribute to the wartime alliance by giving average U.S. citizens a sense of personal connection with Brazil, a country about which most knew very little.

Veríssimo’s talks were part of a massive program the federal government sponsored through the course of the war utilizing speakers and media to introduce U.S. citizens to the many countries in the United Nations alliance. Latin Americans were, by far, the most frequently employed allied speakers because, for the previous thirty years, private organizations in the United States had already been promoting closer cultural interaction between the United States and the twenty other countries in the Pan American Union. The first formal cultural exchange programs between the United States and Latin American countries were launched in 1912 with pilot funding from the Carnegie Corporation, and then significantly expanded in 1916. Other philanthropies joined in, as did educational institutions, museums, libraries, and commercial publishing and media companies, plus of course the government, for which both pan-Americanism and cultural exchange had important roles to play in the country’s broadest foreign policy objectives. An extensive network of personal and institutional relations took shape before World War II that allowed a select group of Latin American writers and artists to enter U.S. cultural markets and speak directly to the U.S. public.<sup>4</sup> For a few, like Érico Veríssimo or the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, participation in U.S. cultural life was a critical turning point in their careers. For most, the connection was secondary or momentary. Some, like the Mexican painter Diego Rivera or Colombian historian and essayist Germán Arciniegas, embraced the goal of pan-American unity with enthusiasm, tempered with reasonable skepticism about how committed U.S. leaders were to interna-

tional equality. Others, like Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros or Brazilian historian Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, wondered how a country as deeply racist as the United States could have become the leader of a global alliance fighting to end racism. Many more were like Argentinean writer María Rosa Oliver, who thought that the United States, like most places, was a mix of things positive and negative. The international responsibilities the United States had assumed made it imperative that any writer or artist who could address the U.S. public take advantage of the opportunities pan-Americanism offered. The writers and artists featured in this book were a diverse group, whose differences and disagreements were more important than the commonality they shared within the United States as representatives of a region. Even so, they understood that their ability to speak directly to people in the United States was a privilege that came with obligations to help whoever encountered their work see inter-American, and ultimately global, relations from the perspective of an intellectual from another country. What they had to say was often critical, but like Érico Veríssimo's public appearances, generally aimed to help people in the United States become better global citizens.

This would never be an easy task, given that both pan-Americanism and cultural exchange rested on an unstable synthesis of utopian ideals and the rise of the United States as a world power. The Pan American Union, founded in 1890, was the first institutional expression of a new vision of global organization that the United States vigorously promoted throughout the twentieth century. For the next seventy-five years, pan-Americanism provided U.S. leaders with a test case for developing an international system consonant with their country's distinctive institutions.<sup>5</sup> However much driven by considerations inside the United States of how to expand the nation's international power and influence, pan-Americanism as a policy linking twenty-one sovereign nations could not have endured if it had not expressed an idealistic, in many ways utopian vision of nations, big and small, rich and poor, equally submitting to a formal system of international law that resolved disputes through fair and disinterested procedures.<sup>6</sup> In particular, pan-Americanism drew upon preexisting liberal ideas that the American nations had a special place in history as the home of liberty.<sup>7</sup>

The union appealed to many across the western hemisphere because it addressed widespread hopes that international relations could be reformed around enforceable principles of equality, mutuality, and community. Given the discrepancy in resources and wealth, none of the other twenty republics in the Pan American Union could enjoy anything more than formal equality. Whenever joint action occurred, somebody from the United States organized it and provided money, at times the government, very frequently philanthropies and

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other private institutions. Equality often felt in practice very much like genteel servitude. A resistant understanding of pan-Americanism was ready at hand: it was the Trojan horse by which the United States delegated the administration of its empire to dependent but notionally sovereign governments. Private citizens involved in pan-American activities were being seduced into taking for granted that U.S. ways of doing things were always the best. Pan-Americanism invoked, and continues to invoke for many, a project for world domination that began with a campaign to absorb Latin America into a U.S. empire without borders. The noted Argentinean historian Tulio Halperín Donghi stressed that a distinctive feature of U.S. dominance was reliance on cultural conversion, with the assumptions of the more powerful partner presumed to reflect a “natural law” that the weaker had to respect, even if they did not particularly like the consequences for their countries. Integration required implementing the logic of the U.S. approach to business, politics, and culture, which forced the elites of client states to operate more like their counterparts to the north did. Even when disagreements arose, rupture was unthinkable, which tended to make ruptures that did occur particularly violent.<sup>8</sup> Halperín Donghi’s astute analysis of the contradiction underlying the multilateral international organizations that the United States preferred during the twentieth century explains why in fact resistance was very thinkable and acted on continuously, a major factor in the continuing international instability that has marked the U.S. rise to global leadership.

If the confusion of power and ideals has been a defining feature of the U.S. relationship with other countries, activities where the two have been most inseparable offer particularly important entry points. As part of a formal commitment to reimagining international relations on republican and democratic principles, the American nations pledged to increase cultural interaction and promote a new pan-American identity that in an ideal world could transform state-to-state relations. Regularized citizen-to-citizen contacts, including increased exchange of intellectual and cultural work, would lead to the citizens of American nations forming a shared public opinion monitoring and guiding their governments’ foreign policy choices as effectively as opinion within each nation shaped domestic politics. Programs organized under the rubric of “cultural exchange” had the formal charge of exposing citizens of other countries to U.S. writers, artists, and composers, while introducing foreign creative figures to the citizens of the United States. Interpretations of what these two broad goals meant shifted dramatically across the period covered in the book as the international situation and domestic politics within the United States changed.

“Cultural exchange,” no less than pan-Americanism, invokes equally contradictory abstractions. Culture that has become an instrument of official

policy cannot, by definition, offer critical frameworks for experiencing the complexities of the world in new, possibly uncomfortable ways. Even if the form appears innovative, as say with abstract expressionistic painting that the State Department exhibited abroad in the early years of the Cold War, the work is reduced to a form of propaganda, intended to extract conformist consent to policies serving the interests of those in power.<sup>9</sup> Participating artists, however, many enthusiastic to contribute to the cause of global understanding, brought their own concerns and causes to the program. They offered foreign publics messages about life in the United States that went far beyond what diplomatic patrons wanted. One of the most compelling examples of how difficult it has been for official cultural exchange programs to control the contributions of participating artists can be found in Penny Von Eschen's landmark study of African American jazz musicians whom the State Department recruited as cultural ambassadors during the Cold War. Forced to confront the absurdity of their touring the world as representatives of American freedom when they were second-class citizens at home, many of the musicians Von Eschen studied became more vocal activists for civil rights and black liberation.<sup>10</sup> The State Department often found that the political independence of U.S. artists, writers, musicians, and performers it drafted into foreign tours embroiled it in domestic political disputes. Anti-New Deal conservatives, in alliance with southern Democrats anxious to limit criticism of racial segregation from any source, foreign as well as domestic, argued that cultural exchange programs invited international public opinion to interfere in the internal affairs of the United States. However, even if domestic politics made many international programs unstable, cultural exchange staff had learned that outspoken cultural figures generated positive results overseas. Foreign audiences liked what they heard, and criticisms of the United States from U.S. artists on tour effectively countered widespread claims on the left and the right that the world's wealthiest power was materialist, machine driven, and conformist. Jazz musicians, as well as beat poets, rock musicians, and method actors, reinforced the image of the United States as a place where many social and cultural movements challenged entrenched custom and authority.<sup>11</sup>

“Exchange” is a word that logically implies two-way interaction. In principle, the impact of cultural exchange programs within the United States should be a topic of importance, but previous studies have primarily focused on how the U.S. government deployed cultural programs to influence public opinion in other countries.<sup>12</sup> As the evidence presented in this book suggests, the story within the United States may even be of paramount importance. How does a society in the process of becoming a world power prepare its citizens for the responsibilities and often-exorbitant costs of global leadership? Can they develop a sense of connection with the citizens of other countries independent from the

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strategic considerations guiding their government's foreign policy? Do they have the insight they need to ensure that government foreign actions are accountable to democratic oversight?

The mixture of ideals and the exercise of power made both pan-Americanism and cultural exchange “fields of opportunities,” to borrow German historian Reinhart Koselleck’s term, that attracted social democrats and liberals who saw possibilities for realizing their ideals. Koselleck noted that beckoning utopias and the dystopias they simultaneously invoke provide crucial evidence of “hope and memory” shaping the forms and possibilities of action. Koselleck added that hope and memory, or in more abstract and generalized language expectation and experience, “simultaneously constitute history and its cognition,” that is, what people did and then the debates that follow over how to interpret those actions, their sources, and their consequences.<sup>13</sup> Both pan-Americanism and cultural exchange expressed an effort across the twentieth century to reconcile profound change with liberal, democratic ideals. Peoples thrown together in a tragic history of invasion, genocide, and slavery promised to work together to achieve a peaceful, stable, and prosperous future. As a result, pan-Americanism can still be an object for nostalgia, surprisingly to a greater extent outside the United States than within. It recalls a past when the power of the United States appeared as if it would be used for the common good of all peoples. There was as well a hope that a regard for opinion in other countries might keep a tendency toward unilateral action in check. During that brief moment, ideals associated with the United States could be and often were emblematic of popular aspirations internationally even though they were inseparable from the growth of U.S. national power.

If pan-Americanism was the trial run for a specifically U.S. vision of global governance, it is equally true that liberal ideas had deep roots in the Latin American struggle for independence, roots that explain the generally positive response given to U.S. proposals for greater hemispheric cooperation. When in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó, the Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña, the Brazilian Oswald de Andrade, the Chilean Gabriela Mistral, or the Mexican Carlos Pellicer each spoke of an “American ideal,” they invoked images of opportunity, openness to change, personal freedom, individuality, and self-governance that many U.S. citizens may think of as uniquely belonging to their own country. The Americanism of these and other writers proclaiming America’s mission in the world did not derive from U.S. ideas or U.S. practices. Indeed each of these figures wrote of the United States as a threat to the “American ideal,” even if on other occasions, they also wrote of the United States as a caretaker of humanity’s hopes. What U.S. journalists and historians have often described as nationalist resistance to imperi-

alism might in other countries be viewed as a defense of “universal” values that people in the United States have not understood deeply enough and have often betrayed.<sup>14</sup>

Consistent with Koselleck’s model, pan-Americanism acted as a “horizon of expectation,” within which hopes and fears jostled as Americans from many nations tried to envision what the future would bring their peoples. Expressions of expectation take shape within the practical “spaces of experience” that develop within societies over time. For writers, artists, filmmakers, and their patrons, those spaces were not determined by geopolitics, nor even by national politics. Political goals helped establish an expectation of a future community of nations, while providing resources for promoting cultural interaction between the United States and other American nations. The people who had to do the work, however, followed their personal interests and the requirements of the institutions that made it possible for them to reach a public.<sup>15</sup> The practical conditions shaping what any cultural worker can say or do are a central part of the story that follows, for they clarify the restraints, both external and internal, shaping the production and distribution of cultural work.<sup>16</sup> Writing and art are meaningful when they can be scheduled into the practices that institutions foster to assure the continuity of their activities. The everyday practices of book publishing, of organizing exhibits and tours, or of releasing subtitled or dubbed films involve thousands of discrete activities requiring an experienced support staff. The availability of material presupposes volume, routines, and schedules that are comfortable for the people who must do the work. Satisfying the demands of organizational routine is a minimal requirement for any given work creating or finding its public. The practical disjunctions between how different countries organized the production and distribution of culture continuously proved to be among the most difficult obstacles to broadening cultural exchange. One of the key conclusions I have drawn in the course of this study is that practical “necessities” (which might better be thought of as organized routines that create a set of habits for everybody involved, including creative personnel) often lead to significant ideological results, which, however, cannot be understood, much less explained, by recourse to the ideological predispositions of the people involved.<sup>17</sup> By insisting that ideology is only one element in any given historically situated practice, we can escape the teleologies inherent to polemics and clarify the fractures that accompany any ostensibly utopian project without being trapped inside the emotionally intense political debates of the past.

Despite the importance given to practical matters, the narrative that follows does not utilize the methods of sociology of culture. Instead, the book presents a series of exemplary characters who took on the role of cultural ambassador,

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many (though not all) operating from a conviction that if citizens of different countries better understood each other, they would act to limit the evil their governments do. Érico Veríssimo has a particularly important role in the story of pan-American cultural exchange. The State Department brought him to the United States in 1941 because cultural affairs staff believed that he had a special talent for communication across cultures. They introduced him to publishers and provided funds for the translation of his first book. Their hunch that he could reach the reading public in the United States proved correct. After nearly three decades of cultural exchange efforts to promote interest within the United States in Latin American writers, Veríssimo was the first to enjoy both critical and commercial success in the United States, with nine titles published between 1943 and 1967. During this time, his only peer in the United States was the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, whose work early gained a stellar position in the smaller but intensely committed poetry market. Today, Veríssimo is unknown in the United States to anyone who is not a specialist in Brazilian literature, though in the Portuguese-language world, he is considered among the most important novelists of the modern era. Veríssimo's personal trajectory made him an exemplary figure for this study. In the 1940s, he was an enthusiastic and popular spokesperson for the Good Neighbor Policy; during the Cold War, he was staunchly anticommunist and worked as director of cultural affairs for the Pan American Union in the mid-1950s; by the 1960s, he had turned critical of U.S. militarism and the propensity of the nation's leaders to respond to political problems with military solutions. In 1967 he published a novel whose central characters were U.S. soldiers fighting in Vietnam, a book that was not, and has not yet been, translated into English. His next and last novel, published in 1971, also never published in an English-language version, addressed the use of torture as an instrument of policy in Brazil. Veríssimo analyzed the social conflicts in the country that culminated in the military seizing control of Brazil in 1964 with the support and blessing of the U.S. government. That Veríssimo was once well known in the United States but has been forgotten raises a historical puzzle central to understanding how and why publishers, critics, and readers in the United States selected the foreign writers they absorbed into their own culture. For the writers and artists discussed in this book, a passionate effort to make a difference and leave the world a better place for the next generation is the heart of each story. The bodies of work produced vary in quality and effectiveness, reflecting the limitations of the creator's imagination and skill as well as the ideological and practical restrictions he or she faced on what could be said. The lives glimpsed inevitably were tragic as hopes collided with the fissures deeply rooted in the times and places in which they operated. Nonetheless, moving across borders often proved liberating because for a brief period rou-

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tines were broken and new ways of understanding the world emerged in work that traveling made possible.<sup>18</sup>

The contradictions inherent to the emergence of pan-Americanism exemplify the political definition of community formation that Hannah Arendt developed in *The Human Condition*.<sup>19</sup> “Community” suggests ideas of sharing and cooperation, but Arendt offered her readers a darker vision, stripped of the illusions that ideals provide but more consistent with the historical lessons to be found in the experiences of people living and acting together. Arendt contended that political community forms primarily through the contention of different groups and individuals vying to recreate the world around one’s “sovereign mastery.” A clear example of what she meant can be found in U.S. secretary of state Richard Olney’s declaration to the British government in 1895 that no other power was in a position to challenge U.S. interests in the western hemisphere. In fact, Olney presented an expectation as already accomplished fact. A determination to make the wish reality quickened the efforts of successive U.S. administrations to convince and coerce others into an international community based on U.S. ideas of a well-run society. But even if U.S. leaders assumed their own values were universal, they operated within a highly partisan, competitive political world. As practical politicians, they knew that communities do not grow from “shared values” but from an often reluctantly embraced necessity to understand what opponents are trying to say and then search for a way to reconcile disagreements—with weaker parties having to decide the balance of adaptation and resistance most realistic for the given situation. The goal of communication in a situation of potential violence is not the promotion of “good will,” but to put opposing parties into a relationship that requires both to change as a result of interaction. Communication always raises fundamental existential issues. In the process of trying to decode and interpret what an opponent demands, an inward process that opens as recognition of differences leads to questions central to self-understanding: who am I, what do I want, how should I act now, how might *we* act if we were to act in concert, what conditions allow groups that historically encountered each other as opponents to become a “we”?

Arendt, in her discussion of the political, conflict-based nature of community, proposed a model for understanding the critical role that cultural work can play. The results of actions are often unpredictable, Arendt noted, and in many situations losses are irreversible, particularly once opponents turn to violence to achieve their goals in preference to dialogue. Cultural work, perhaps particularly fictional work or the visual arts because they present worlds of “as if,” offers a domain where issues can be addressed with relative safety because the ideas and feelings to be exchanged and examined do not require public action of any sort. Nothing is asked of the recipient beyond reflection on what one has

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seen. Writing, art, and other cultural products can play an important role in community-formation processes because solitude, Arendt insisted, is necessary for communication to be digested. Communication must include moments when retreat into one's own interiority is an appropriate response, a situation that corresponds well with the anonymity of twentieth-century mass media. But even if reading a novel, viewing a film, or walking through an art exhibit provide relatively safe spaces for absorbing different points of view, the process remains uncomfortable, even if not directly threatening. For there to be an exchange that can be called communication, change must remain a possible outcome. Pondering what they have seen or heard, recipients evaluate the differences revealed and what they require. A successful communication makes recipients vulnerable, potentially aware of their own failings (typical absences in perspectives) and of their own failures (specific acts). In the process of self-recognition growing from communication across differences comes an availability to change. Whether the end result is some form of cooperation or more sharply defined hostility, repertoires of identity and collectivity are thrown into play. This was the possibility that motivated the men and women whose hopes constitute the narrative of this book.<sup>20</sup>

Diego Rivera in 1943 wrote an article for a Mexican journal in which he explained why he remained convinced that pan-Americanism would eventually overcome national chauvinism and convince the people of the United States to enter into a fuller political community with the citizens of other American countries. The logic of their own national ideals projected into hemispheric and, as a result of the war with Germany and Japan, global arenas would lead U.S. citizens to abide by the will of the world's majority if decisions emerged from free, open debate, rather than the dictates of corrupt leaders. Rivera was not so naïve as to believe that the time had arrived for equality between citizens of rich countries and those of much poorer countries. Mexicans still needed to be vigilant in protecting their interests. One of the best ways to do that, however, was to leap across the border and engage people in the United States, as he had done with great success. He took a leap of faith, typical of many who found the opportunities that pan-Americanism provided them mysteriously exciting. Rivera argued that pan-Americanism made U.S. society more available to the logic of international engagement, but only to the degree that it was connected to an international movement to expand democratic participation in governance. The desire to prevent another war potentially more horrifying than World War II might push the citizens of rich countries like the United States to broaden their understanding of fellowship. As long as pan-Americanism remained limited to negotiating over trade and security issues, the countries would be trapped in what made them most unequal. Equality would emerge only to the degree that

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developing a shared imagination had priority, and toward that aspiration, not surprisingly Rivera thought that creative workers such as he had an indispensable role. To explore the foundations and the possibilities of Rivera's expectation, let us turn now to the beginning of the twentieth century as efforts to create a new pan-American culture got under way.



## Chapter 6

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### Making Latin American Allies Visible

Following the fall of France, the White House assumed direct supervision of relations with Latin America by creating the Office for the Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics (later renamed the Office of Inter-American Affairs).<sup>1</sup> The president appointed Nelson Rockefeller, the thirty-two-year-old scion of the Standard Oil dynasty, to lead the office. He and his staff enjoyed a sizable budget to spend on programs directly serving presidential priorities. (The Division of Cultural Relations continued within the State Department under its existing charge and considerably more limited budget to assist private groups active in cultural exchange.)

The OIAA had a broad, ambitious range of responsibilities, but its most important assignments were to facilitate U.S. military expansion into Latin America. One of the largest programs the new office undertook was the development of a network of airfields across the continent, linking the United States to Chile on the Pacific and Brazil on the Atlantic. Since the American republics, the United States included, were all officially neutral and popular opinion in every Latin American country without exception identified any U.S. military presence with intervention, development of the airfields needed to appear solely the result of private initiative. Pan-American Airlines received a secret contract to manage a massive multinational development project that the U.S. government funded in its entirety. For the airfields to function properly in the event of war, radio communications had to expand as well, and the Office of Inter-American Affairs funded work for a new U.S.-controlled radio network, ostensibly privately owned, that was to replace existing German and British systems.<sup>2</sup>

Rockefeller's office invested as well in medical care, clean water systems, and sewers in the communities where new facilities were built. Latin American governments were well aware that the airfield and radio network projects were not private investments, but the subterfuge served their needs to limit domestic criticism. In addition, each country had priorities unrelated to the war effort that entered into the negotiations over allowing the projects to move forward.

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In Brazil, for example, development aid included funding for a massive new steel foundry complex outside Rio de Janeiro that the government had made a centerpiece of its economic development strategy.<sup>3</sup>

The rationale for cultural exchange funded by Rockefeller's office was consistent with the underlying purposes of putting the continent on a war footing, while simultaneously facilitating U.S. economic penetration of countries like Brazil that had previously had closer trade and investment ties with Europe. Governments had to be convinced that they wanted to be U.S. allies, and this often meant propaganda campaigns aimed at a much wider segment of the population than previous efforts, either private or governmental, had tried to reach. In defining its public relations objectives, staff at the OIAA, who were more likely to come from private industry rather than from universities as was the case with the Division of Cultural Affairs, developed a set of "credos" that the citizens of the Americas should accept as a result of having been the recipients of information about the importance of pan-Americanism in the fight against fascism. The "Credo for the Individual Citizen of Latin America" read:

- I. I believe my best interests are linked with the U.S. . . .
- II. I believe my best interests will be harmed by the Axis . . .
- III. I believe that the U.S. is going to win the war, although it will be a difficult struggle . . .
- IV. Therefore, I am supporting the U.S. and stand ready to cooperate with the Americas and to make additional personal sacrifices along with the American people so that I can help the U.S. win the war and establish a better world.

The U.S. public also had to understand that its country needed its Latin American allies. The "Credo for the Individual U.S. Citizen" had four parallel points that OIAA information and cultural programs were charged to "sell" on the home front:

- I. I believe that Latin America has much to offer me not only economically; but also socially, esthetically, and spiritually.
- II. I believe that the Axis wishes not only eventually to conquer Latin America but also more immediately to use certain of the Republics as bases from which to attack the U.S.
- III. I believe that active cooperation from Latin America in all ways is essential if the U.S. is to win the war.
- IV. I believe that, therefore, Latin America should be assisted by the U.S. in order to enable her to assist us and also herself.<sup>4</sup>

While the credos reflected the influence of advertising and public relations experts, practical applications usually reaffirmed the liberal, humanist perspectives that had motivated the Division of Cultural Affairs.<sup>5</sup> When programs related directly to U.S. strategic interests, the OIAA funded cultural exchange directly, including an ambitious film and radio show production program. The new office also suggested projects to universities, private philanthropies, and private companies while offering pilot funding or guarantees to compensate businesses for any losses they incurred. The bureaucratic relationship between the OIAA and the Division of Cultural Affairs in the State Department was often rocky as the OIAA's determination to focus on what was needed immediately to secure U.S. dominance in the western hemisphere conflicted with the division's longer-term vision of broader, deeper relations between institutions with shared interests developing over time.<sup>6</sup> The OIAA emphasis on cultural exchange programs more directly serving administration international priorities prefigured broader changes that would come at the end of the war when "exchange" gave way to a new "public information" approach educating foreigners about their relationship to U.S. society.

No country was unaffected by the campaign to solidify the pan-American alliance around U.S. goals, but Brazil was particularly important in the plans the Roosevelt administration developed for hemispheric defense.<sup>7</sup> Were the Germans to secure control over North Africa, northeast Brazil was the most probable location for a German incursion into the western hemisphere. Beyond the threat of a potential German invasion, which diminished significantly in May 1943 with the surrender of German and Italian forces in Tunisia, Brazil was a country with strategic economic importance. The United States imported most of its rubber from Southeast Asia, but those sources were expected to be lost if the war in Asia expanded. Brazil offered an alternative source for rubber and other resources imported from Africa and Asia.<sup>8</sup> How were people in the United States to be convinced that significant involvement and investment were required in a country few Americans knew? Articles in *Time*, *Life*, and other illustrated mass-circulation magazines were particularly important for introducing Brazil as a potential ally to readers in the United States. Funding from the OIAA assisted the publication and marketing of two books on Brazil with strong reviews and sales, Vera Kelsey's *Seven Keys to Brazil* (1940) and Stefan Zweig's *Brazil, Land of the Future* (1942).<sup>9</sup>

In late 1940, the Office of the Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs hired three photographers to travel to Brazil and send back images that could help Americans become more familiar with the country and its potential. Their photographs were used in government press releases and publications; the images were also distributed free of charge to U.S. newspapers and magazines.

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George Kidder Smith, the most senior of the photographers, focused on architecture, both colonial and modern. The Museum of Modern Art curated a traveling exhibition of his work, *Brazil Builds*. Smith's photographs showed Brazil as a progressive, modern country with ambitious plans for the future already well under way.<sup>10</sup> Alan Fisher, a seasoned photojournalist on loan from the New York City daily newspaper *PM*, documented U.S.-funded projects across Brazil. Fisher was also responsible for photographing visits of U.S. officials and celebrities.<sup>11</sup> The youngest of the three, Genevieve Naylor, had just turned twenty-five when she arrived in Brazil. She had experience as a freelance photographer for *Time* and *Fortune* magazines, but her work as a staff photojournalist at the Associated Press news agency had brought her to the OIAA's attention, that and the fact that the OIAA had hired Naylor's fiancé, the painter Misha Reznikoff, to go to Rio de Janeiro to help the Brazilians found a new museum of modern art (Figure 11).<sup>12</sup> Her focus was capturing the everyday lives of Brazilians.<sup>13</sup> The couple found an apartment in Rio, where the dynamic literary and cultural communities welcomed them with enthusiasm. Poet and playwright Vinícius de Moraes noted in his column for the daily newspaper *A Manhã* ("Morning") that he recently had the pleasure of getting to know a photographer who had worked for *Life* magazine: "Genevieve is her name, the wife of the grand Misha who has conquered the artists of our city with his warm personality and educated eye. Genevieve looks like she's stepped out of the pages of a Robin Hood story, with her look of a young page, her colorful elegance, and a feather always stuck boldly in her hat. Nothing escapes our bewitching visitor's camera. She glimpses a possible photographic moment, and she makes it hers. Genevieve gives a little click, and she captures a fleeting bit of life on film."<sup>14</sup> Aníbal Machado, a prominent critic at the time in Rio de Janeiro, was also taken by the work: "More than her technical skill, what is most striking in Miss Genevieve's work is the sociological insight of how she uses the lens, revealing a brave and sincere spirit moved by what she has seen of Brazilian reality. . . . The humble places and activities of everyday life, framing the faces of our people, spill out of the images of this 'Good Neighbor' photographer. There is nothing monumental in the reality she captures. No waterfalls, no monumental buildings, no idyllic landscapes."<sup>15</sup>

As with Smith's more impersonal photographs, the Museum of Modern Art organized a traveling exhibition of fifty of Naylor's Brazilian pictures after she returned home, *Faces and Places in Brazil*. The critic at the *New York Times* praised the work and wrote that Naylor's eye revealed that Brazilians loved playing football, rode crowded streetcars, enjoyed lively holidays, and made sure that their children received a free lunch every day in school. Brazilian women seemed to be exceptionally beautiful, which made Naylor's photographs highly



Figure 11. Genevieve Naylor (right) with Misha Reznikoff, 1941. Courtesy Peter Reznikoff. © Reznikoff Artistic Partnership.

enjoyable, but beyond that, the critic found the most striking aspect of Naylor's pictures was how much everyday life in Brazil was remarkably familiar and ordinary. Naylor gave her American viewers a glimpse into the privileged lives of the glamorous and wealthy, but most of her pictures presented men and women with modest but pleasant lives that did not appear "burdened with too much drama." The scenery was different from the United States, the reviewer noted, the people dressed a little differently, but Naylor's scenes should help most people in the United States see Brazil as a country much like their own.<sup>16</sup> Both U.S. and Brazilian officials worried that she was taking too many pictures of working people. The OIAA wanted to show Latin American countries as modern nations, whose citizens were industrious and eager for progress. The

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Figure 12. Genevieve Naylor, *Newspaper Vendor in Rio de Janeiro, 1941–1943*. Courtesy Peter Reznikoff. © Reznikoff Artistic Partnership.

Brazilian government wanted Naylor to highlight industry, its large urban planning projects, and life in more affluent neighborhoods. Naylor located her subjects in a variety of social landscapes that distinguished the Brazil of wealthy elites from that of the urban working class as well as from the very different life in the impoverished countryside.<sup>17</sup> Her photographs offered a more varied feel for Brazil than what was shown in *Life* magazine at the time, but her style overall was consistent with the cheerful, if sentimental populism of mass-circulation journals, particularly when magazines hired photographers to capture the struggles of working people during the Depression (Figure 12).

As a result, viewers and critics in the United States, like the critic for the *New York Times* reviewing her show at the Museum of Modern Art, could look at images of Brazilian life and feel that even with the differences, average Americans and Brazilians did have much in common. Naylor served the larger war effort by applying photographic principles with relatively clear meaning in the United States to the specific conditions in Brazil, showing Brazilians in everyday activities and poses that would be recognizable to most in the United States instead of being subjects of exotic or ethnographic fascination. Naylor suc-



ceeded in satisfying Good Neighbor goals of developing mutual understanding between allied peoples. Her decisions demonstrated good intuitive sense of the kinds of images needed for North Americans to feel a sympathetic connection with their Brazilian allies.

Citizenship can be seen as a pact for shared security. For citizens in the United States to imagine that there could be pan-American citizenship required belief that Latin American allies had the capacity to protect themselves, at least with the help of a richer country such as the United States. Citizens in Latin American countries would need to believe that the powerful ally with a long history of aggression in Mexico and the Caribbean basin would furnish assistance without undermining national sovereignty. As long as a German offensive into the western hemisphere remained a credible possibility, both the Brazilian and the U.S. governments were committed to promoting the confidence of their respective publics in the alliance. The U.S. government needed images of Brazil on the way to becoming a fully modern and progressive nation, whose likable citizenry was as fully capable of becoming global citizens as the people of the United States. Naylor's work, produced for publication primarily in the United States, is further evidence that interpretations of the Good Neighbor Policy as an effort by U.S. policymakers to influence the publics of other nations obscure deeply rooted conflicts within the United States. Influencing public opinion in Latin America was an important objective, but shaping public opinion in the United States had greater priority, particularly in 1940 and 1941, when sentiments against involvement in the European war were widespread. Given that Naylor's photographs from Brazil were produced for distribution in the United States, they served a government effort to convince average citizens in the United States that Brazil would be an important and reliable ally, well worth the expensive investments that some conservatives in Congress found questionable.<sup>18</sup> Naylor shot the lives of the poor as well as the rich, but she showed the poor as contemporary, urban people trying to better their lives.

To understand Naylor's success as an artist and as an advocate for a U.S.-Brazilian alliance against fascism, one needs to place her photographs within visual conventions pioneered by Lewis Hine during the first three decades of the twentieth century for representing the working class in the United States, an approach that a group of younger photographers in the 1930s—most prominently, Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Margaret Bourke-White, Ben Shahn, John Vachon, and Roy DeCarava—adapted and developed into a movement to use photography for social documentation. In the depths of the 1930s Depression, the federal government employed photographers to document the difficulties that the government was trying to address through New Deal programs. The Farm Security Administration developed the largest photography department, with

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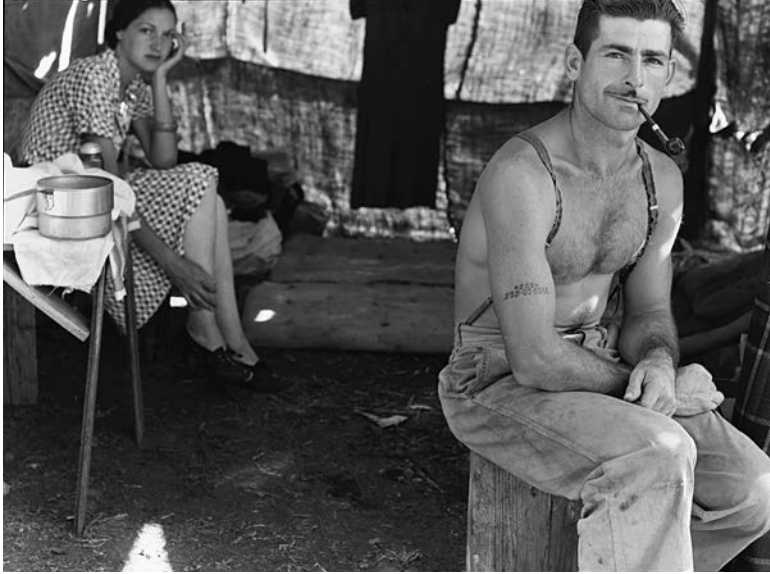


Figure 13. Dorothea Lange, *Lumber Worker and his Wife, Oregon, 1939*.  
 Courtesy Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Farm  
 Security Administration Collection.

several dozen men and women whose work became at the time the classic representation of the effects of the Great Depression on rural Americans (Figure 13).<sup>19</sup> The codes to represent U.S. workers often stressed the disciplined masculine independence that had developed for a cultural identity appropriate for a modern, industrial society that was also democratic. Subjects confronted the camera full face and gazed directly into the lens, challenging the viewer to recognize the person in the picture as a fully equal citizen, rather than as an indigent in need of charity. The preferred attitude for seasoned male workers was daringly defiant. The superior worker was convinced of his own skills and knowledge; he took pride in getting his job done well—if he had a job, which was the justification for government programs to get the nation moving again. The workingman who has work and money gains self-sufficiency, as well as a respectability potentially more profound than that of the middle-class viewers who are, ostensibly, the primary recipients of photographic documentation of fellow citizens whose lives are not as comfortable or privileged. A defiant attitude was a sign of determination to prevail, a perspective that in nationalist terms could be the foundation of reimagining the United States as a workingman's republic. The Farm Security Administration and other government agencies adopted the conventions of social documentation for extensive photographic projects commis-





Figure 14. Genevieve Naylor, *Men by Favela Restaurant*, 1941–1943. Courtesy Peter Reznikoff. © Reznikoff Artistic Partnership.

sioned to link New Deal programs to an idea of citizenship as a social compact. When the United States entered World War II, the self-confident defiance of the U.S. worker was applied to photographs and posters created for recruiting purposes and for building home front morale.

The photography program that the Office of Inter-American Affairs developed followed the model of the Farm Security Administration, shifting the focus to present free citizens in the western hemisphere uniting together in response to global political crisis. Social documentation conventions adapted to another country allowed Naylor to rise above the ethnographic presentation of Brazil as a land of curious differences. Instead, she represented Brazil as a fully contemporary society, somewhat poorer than the United States, but still a place where everyday life was understandable to North Americans because even

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if people and places were different from their U.S. counterparts in specifics, they were similar in kind. People in the United States understood that Brazil was a poorer nation. They often heard that a privileged elite with excessive, concentrated wealth had retarded the development of the country. The reality of social and income disparity was the basis for several of the most powerful stereotypes of Latin America common in the United States. The more immediate question, given the war and its demands, was whether the people of Brazil were in a position to overcome national poverty, whether like their counterparts in the Depression-era United States, they refused to let economic difficulties prevent them from acting as free men and women. The suits, neckties, and sporty hats Naylor presents in a photograph she took of working-class men in a favela responded to that concern with an affirmative answer (Figure 14). The men's clothing, relatively equivalent to what workingmen in the United States wore at the time, neutralized the poverty of the neighborhood where the photograph was taken. Instead of showing the favela as a place of exotic difference, the image functioned as a sign that Brazil was in the midst of a transformation that would make it a more progressive place, a message that the government of Getúlio Vargas wanted to convey to Brazilian citizens, many of whom were suspicious for good reason that the political system would never diminish the privileges that the national elites enjoyed.<sup>20</sup>

Photographs of packed streetcars and trains emphasized the daily discipline of Brazilian workers, confronting everyday situations that their peers in the United States knew only too well every rush hour, but in a form that underscored the somewhat earlier position of Brazil on a presumed ladder to progress (Figure 15). Determination to get to work revealed that Brazilian citizens merited the assistance their country needed to contribute to the defense of western civilization. The presence of so many men in uniform among the passengers showed as well that this ally was already, like the United States, building a citizen army for national self-defense. The iconicity of the image, however, derives from its synthesis of everyday routines and the carnivalesque.

In the United States, the symbol without equal of social progress was the image of the modern workingwoman, usually referred to in the press and movies as "working girls," female archetypes that moved through the world with effervescent freedom.<sup>21</sup> Images of women war workers expressed the defiant determination of the modern U.S. worker but with an additional touch of humor. Images of perky, self-sufficient women rely on stereotypes no less than images of women as passive. The particular stereotype authorizes women to act for themselves and for others, instead of accepting subordination. Nonetheless it rests on a reduction of complex social and psychological realities into a story that in this case is likable, perhaps especially likable because ideals of women as perky



Figure 15. Genevieve Naylor, *Streetcar in Rio de Janeiro*, 1941–1943. Courtesy Peter Reznikoff. © Reznikoff Artistic Partnership. Original caption from *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph*, 29 January 1943: “*FARES, PLEASE*—So you think Pittsburgh street cars and buses are crowded? Here is a street car during the rush hour in Rio, Brazil, another country in which President Roosevelt stopped on his return from Casablanca.”

“companions” enhanced rather than challenged the institution of marriage. All stereotypes convey a sense of the world that gives structure and reduces ambiguity, and the recipients use stereotypes to help define themselves and their own capabilities, sometimes in contrast to negatively connoted images; but often more positive yet stereotypical images promote identification and even imitation. During the war, government and industry encouraged women to serve the nation by working, but women who took traditionally male jobs often faced deeply rooted prejudice and, no doubt at times, lack of self-confidence, both of

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Figure 16. Genevieve Naylor, *Women in the Door of a Restaurant*, 1941–1943. Courtesy Peter Reznikoff. © Reznikoff Artistic Partnership.

which were to be overcome. Naylor's images of poorer women in Brazil could suggest to U.S. readers that the status of Brazilian women was moving in the same direction as that of women in the United States.

The simple but well-groomed clothes and hair dressing express the dignity and independence of the women in a picture taken in a poor neighborhood (Figure 16). The expressions and postures of the women suggest that these Brazilian women enjoy a sense of self-sufficiency comparable to that of their North American counterparts. Naylor's photographs often emphasized the energy and the faith in one's own capacities that were signs of the fully modern citizen. A progressive democratic faith, as articulated in the photographic tradition within which Naylor worked, identified work as the source of progress and the diversity and continuous remixing of a pluralist society as the driving force for deeper democracy. Economic democracy had pushed the United States into global leadership, but its continuing failure to see a diverse citizenry as a source of national power remained a potentially fatal weakness. Photographs commissioned to develop support for a U.S.-led global alliance needed to go beyond the immediate goal of saying here are your allies. They had to help U.S. citizens accept that connections with citizens of other American countries were real and positive. Differences could not be avoided, but viewers needed to recognize themselves and see Brazilians occupying a world that was similar if not identical. The same longings moved Brazilians that moved Americans.

Naylor's photographs stand out among OIAA-funded work for their resistance to stereotypes, an accomplishment that may well be because of their sym-

pathetic and at times romantic observation of what she saw in Brazil. They stood out because her sympathetic gaze at everyday life in an important ally did not avoid the difficulties many Brazilians faced. Naylor's pictures did not exaggerate the situation in Brazil, but her willingness to look at the difficult lives of the urban and rural poor made both OIAA and Brazilian government officials nervous, the latter probably because they did not want wartime alliance leading to U.S. meddling in Brazil's internal affairs.<sup>22</sup>

The OIAA did not want the programming it funded to antagonize allied governments, and in general the agency preferred simplistic presentations of allied countries, as if stereotypes could assure U.S. viewers that they remained in familiar, easily comprehensible territory. The short informational films on life in Latin America that the OIAA funded for showing in movie theaters as short subjects accompanying feature films provide a good example of genre formulas deployed to imbue a complex foreign social environment with a sense of familiarity that many in the audience must have intuited was false. In ten minutes, Julien Bryan's *Lima Family* (1944) offered American audiences a glimpse into the life of a surgeon in Peru and his family.<sup>23</sup> The doctor is seen as a benevolent master of a family of fourteen, but also as dutifully fulfilling his responsibilities to his patients. His sons, all studying professions, demonstrate affection for popular American culture, suggesting that Peru's conservative, patriarchal culture will change as the country absorbs U.S. mores. Looking at how Peru's support for the war was transforming the lives of the doctor's daughters reinforced the theme of convergence toward U.S.-defined gender norms. The narrator informs us that prior to the war, women were trained to run a house and manage a staff of servants. One of the doctor's daughters was somewhat "rebellious" and had taken a part-time job teaching ballet in a progressive girl's school run by nuns from the United States and Canada. After Peru joined the allied effort, however, the doctor's wife and her daughters started going to the presidential palace twice a week, where under the patronage of the president's wife, they and other society women roll bandages for the Red Cross. This kind of imagery was likely what the OIAA and the Brazilian government expected from Naylor. It is hard to imagine that U.S. audiences, most of whom were working people, would have found much in common with the privileged elites featured in *Lima Family*, or even have found it credible that the doctor and his family were on their way to lives more like their own.

Bryan's *São Paulo* (1943) presented a more impersonal if frenetic overview of "the fastest growing city in the world . . . the leading industrial city in South America," using language to describe Brazil's major industrial and financial center typical of patriotic, boosterist descriptions of Anytown, USA.<sup>24</sup> Founded by "hardy pioneers," São Paulo has long been a city "dedicated to freedom," and

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the city was even where Brazil declared its independence in 1822. With a temperate climate, its inhabitants are “highly energetic, enterprising, productive people.” A quick succession of shots demonstrates the plenty Paulistanos produced: coffee, cotton, wire and cable, automobiles (made in modern factories “now totally devoted to making and assembling military vehicles”), tires, steel. And as in any city in the United States, the energetic citizens enjoy good public transportation, excellent schools for their children, and many parks.

Filmmakers from Latin America also worked for the OIAA. Their work more typically was shown in Latin America, but Agustín F. Delgado, a Mexican newsreel producer, made the first OIAA film for U.S. film audiences, *The Day Is New: Dawn to Darkness in Mexico City* (1940).<sup>25</sup> The film opens with a montage of Mexicans awakening in the morning as a milkman does his delivery rounds. Families have breakfast, some go to church, but soon the whole city is on its way to work or school. Mexico City transforms into a bustling metropolis of busy offices, factories, and stores. In the evening, as people get off work, the pace slows down. Young couples stroll in the park, mothers prepare dinner, families get ready for bed, and in the closing shots, a police officer patrols silent, empty streets. The narrator concludes the film with the declaration that “Mexico is an old country that is new, a poor country that is rich, a strong country that has more freedom than it has ever had before.”

The OIAA sent Walt Disney on a tour of South America and subsidized a feature-length animated film, *Saludos, Amigos* (1942). Disney claimed he made the trip and the film solely to help his country win the war. He never expected the film to do well, but audiences in both the United States and Latin America loved it. He made a more expensive sequel, *The Three Caballeros*, featuring Donald Duck; José Carioca, a samba-dancing Brazilian parrot; and Panchito Pistoles, a Mexican rooster, who given his name always has his guns ready at hand to avenge insults to his honor. The Latin American friends have arrived to celebrate Donald’s birthday. Panchito gives Donald a piñata and explains the Mexican custom of children breaking open piñatas at their birthday to discover their presents. The seven segments of the film explore different parts of America, leaping from Patagonia in the far south to the pampas of Argentina and Uruguay, to Brazil, and far north to Mexico. Carmen Miranda’s sister Aurora introduces Donald to samba by teaching him Ary Barroso’s “Bahia,” which like Barroso’s earlier “Aquarela do Brasil,” recorded by Jimmy Dorsey and his orchestra, was a hit on U.S. record charts.

Orson Welles, fresh from his triumph with *Citizen Kane*, developed what was to be the OIAA’s most ambitious and expensive film project, a commercial feature that Welles titled *It’s All True*. The Brazilian government initially suggested to the OIAA that it would like Orson Welles, whose *Citizen Kane* had

enjoyed enormous success in Brazil, to make a film set in the country's annual Carnival celebrations. The OIAA passed the suggestion onto Welles and RKO Studios, his employer, but the agency wanted the film set in several Pan American Union member states, not just Brazil. If RKO agreed to produce the film as a commercial project, the OIAA guaranteed to cover up to \$300,000 of costs were the film to lose money. With Nelson Rockefeller one of the largest investors in RKO and an active member of the board of directors, the arrangement illustrated how during the war distinctions between government and private enterprise blurred. Welles proposed a film with four stories each based on actual events, hence the working title *It's All True*. One of the four segments was set in Mexico, two in Brazil. Welles had two ideas in mind for the fourth episode. He sketched out a story of New Orleans jazz roughly based on Louis Armstrong's career, a musical history that would complement the story of samba told in his episode on Carnival in Brazil. But he was also taken with having the fourth segment set during the Spanish conquest of Peru, a story that would foreground Native American perspectives on the meaning of liberty and equality. Both the OIAA and RKO were excited about the project. Welles went to Mexico to shoot the episode there, a sentimental story of a small boy in a rural village who raised a young bull, whose courage in the ring led the audience in Mexico City watching him fight to ask that his life be spared.<sup>26</sup>

In February 1942 Welles headed to Rio de Janeiro to begin planning how he would shoot the history of samba. He arrived in Brazil a celebrity. Government officials greeted him at the airport and escorted him to his hotel in the center of Rio de Janeiro in an official motorcade. His presence was important for presentations of the alliance in the United States. When Brazil declared war on Germany, Italy, and Japan in August 1942, Welles was placed next to Brazilian foreign minister Oswaldo Aranha for the minister's official signing of the declaration. His radio broadcasts from Brazil and other Latin American countries provided humorous and music-filled introductions to the other American nations that pleased the OIAA because they were so popular in the United States. He scripted and shot the film's longest episode, the re-creation of the voyage on a flimsy raft of four impoverished fisherman from the far northern city of Fortaleza over sixteen hundred miles south to Rio de Janeiro. They came to present the grievances of fishermen and farmworkers who had been excluded from the protections and benefits of labor and social security legislation that President Vargas had promulgated. The men became national heroes for their heroic effort, and the story about their journey and their cause that appeared in *Time* magazine inspired Welles to make their search for justice and equality the pivot of the film as a whole.<sup>27</sup> He re-created their journey, using the four men and their families as his actors. In the most tragic of the many problems plaguing

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the film, one of the four fishermen from Fortaleza drowned when an accident occurred during filming in the Rio de Janeiro harbor.

The film project fell apart in 1943, while Welles was still shooting. RKO canceled all of Welles's projects and ejected his company from the studio lot. Nelson Rockefeller had recently resigned from the RKO board of directors during a dispute over the direction of the studio. New management came on board with new priorities: instead of prestige films, the studio would produce a larger number of less expensive comedies and thrillers. RKO locked the raw footage for *It's All True* in its vaults. Welles tried to interest other studios in his pan-American project, without any success. The new RKO management complained that Welles's projects were all excessively over budget, though film historian Catherine Benamou has argued that this was not the case but a pretext used to justify the decision to terminate the studio's relation with Welles. There is evidence suggesting that Brazilian officials had also soured on Welles, in their case because he showed far too much interest in the lives of poor black Brazilians. The OIAA, for its part, no longer was prepared to guarantee that the project be protected against financial loss, and as U.S. troops began fighting in Italy and preparing for the invasion of France, Hollywood film executives must have thought that audiences no longer would be interested in a film focused on Latin America.<sup>28</sup>

During the course of the war, hundreds of writers, musicians, and artists worked to promote pan-American unity. Almost all of them were, like Genevieve Naylor, less well known than Orson Welles or Walt Disney. They served the pan-American cause by getting out the message one photograph, one newsreel, one radio broadcast, one concert, one magazine article at a time. The ability to communicate a message rested on satisfying the expectations within any given genre and medium. The immediate task for all involved was to help develop ties between the peoples of the United States and the member states of the Pan American Union so that governments could respond to the global crisis in concert with minimal internal dissent. In the process, progressive people could form transnational identities that were hemispheric in the pan-American context, but ultimately pointed toward the United Nations as the culmination of humanity's quest for democracy, justice, and prosperity. Naylor's activities bridged contemporary social realities with utopian ideals that perhaps in fact were vital primarily for liberal and progressive intellectuals, but the work served the interests of both governments, even with qualms that some functionaries expressed about some of Naylor's choices. For very different reasons, both the Roosevelt and the Vargas administrations wanted to project the image of a special relation that could be confused with the human condition in general. Progressive cultural workers in both countries were needed to tell that story, and in general they were allowed to do so in their own ways.



Naylor could synthesize Good Neighbor politics with her own cultural and intellectual priorities, in part because she was a superb photographer, but also because the genre of social documentation had an established place within photojournalism. Naylor's Brazilian photographs may have pushed against the boundaries of what her Brazilian and U.S. overseers preferred for the representation of one of the most important allies the United States had at the beginning of the war. Nonetheless, newspaper and magazine editors published her pictures, and the Museum of Modern Art curated a show, because her work fit its criteria for photography that should attract and hold the attention of the public. To that degree, her work relied on tried and true formulas that, in this particular genre, demanded photographers challenge stereotypes and politicize how people looked at the world.<sup>29</sup> In most other media and genres, whatever the artist's intentions, stereotypes were difficult, perhaps impossible, to avoid or to transform.

Not all photojournalists sent to Brazil worked within a social documentation framework. Before and during the war, *Life* magazine, whose editors were deeply committed to a more robust role for the United States around the world, also sent photographers to Brazil. In May 1939, a multipage spread devoted to the country focused on the country's economic potential and its growing importance on the world stage.<sup>30</sup> The magazine noted that the British, German, and Japanese governments were actively seeking to influence Brazilian society, but the United States had the advantage of having been Brazil's most important customer for its products since the middle of the nineteenth century. U.S. businessmen, *Life's* writers complained, were more arrogant than their foreign competitors. Nonetheless, if they reflected on the determination in Brazil to industrialize, U.S. businesses had an important advantage because they were already investing in Brazil's industrial development while competitors remained interested only in importing agricultural commodities or raw natural resources such as rubber, lumber, or mineral ores. The photographs chosen to illustrate U.S. involvement in Brazil emphasized the massive automobile assembly plants that both the Ford Motor Company and General Motors built in São Paulo. The country wanted to modernize, the text emphasizes, but "without interfering too much with its leisure."<sup>31</sup> One photograph showed idle wealthy women on their way to the beach, an image that contrasts sharply with Naylor's more self-sufficient, hard-working women (Figure 17). While *Life* published a few photographs portraying the quaint backwardness of working conditions in some sectors, in general the images selected showed Brazilians as hard workers (Figure 18). In marked contrast to Naylor's, *Life* magazine images primarily focused on white Brazilians, nor did they foreground the everyday, casual mixture of Brazilians of different races at school, at work, or on the street. When Brazil entered the war as an ally in August 1942, *Life* emphasized

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Figure 17. *Life* magazine, *Women on Their Way to Copacabana Beach*, 22 May 1939. Photograph by John Phillips, Getty Images. Original caption: “Shapely Cariocas (citizens of Rio) walk down to the endless beaches that line Rio’s shore, in bathing suits. Cariocas are among the world’s pleasantest, gayest, friendliest, and most relaxed people. These girls are pure white and proud of their blood. But they are careful to treat mulatto fellow citizens as equals. The language and heritage of Brazil are Portuguese.”

the determination of the people and its president, Getúlio Vargas, to work with the United States for Hitler’s defeat.

In most respects, *Life* repeated the preferred messages of the Vargas regime. In the magazine’s discussion of Brazil as an important member of the alliance for democracy, the fact that the country had been a dictatorship since 1937 was a detail that faded away lest it conflict with the strategic goals of the economic and political alliance. Brazil was progressive because it was opening up to U.S. industrial investment and had signed up to help the United States in the campaign against fascism. Vargas was in any event a popular president whose policies, while authoritarian, were in line with the preferences of a majority of Brazilians, preferences that supposedly were found at all levels of society. Brazilian productivity remained the theme *Life* magazine stressed about the country throughout the war, but with increased emphasis on the importance of the country’s vast natural resources. The magazine saluted as well the valor of Brazil’s military forces during the Italian campaign, “who fought with a curiously impromptu gallantry and gave the Allied armies a new piece of slang, ‘the

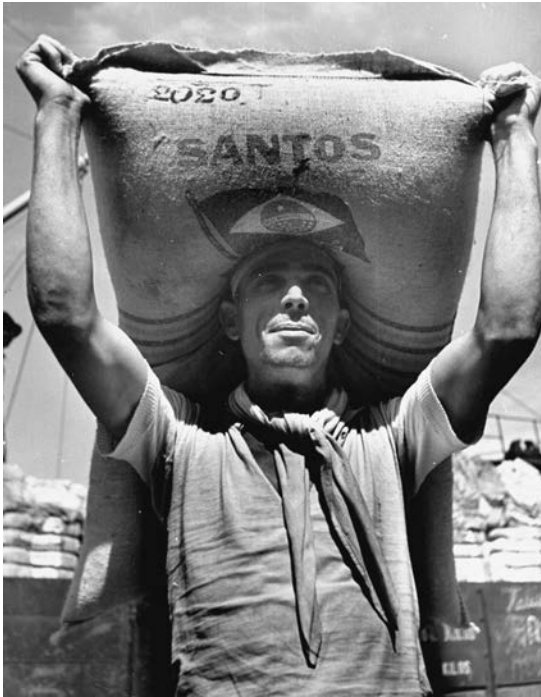


Figure 18. *Life* magazine, *Stevedore in Santos*, 22 May 1939. Photograph by John Phillips, Getty Images. Original caption: “Brazil— A sweaty worker loading sacks onto the McCormack line boat.”

snake is smoking,’ meaning, ‘things are getting rugged.’”<sup>32</sup> An article celebrating Brazil’s contribution to victory published only a week before Germany surrendered veered into tropical exoticism with claims that Americans stationed in Brazil were typically seduced into adopting many Brazilian customs because of the sensuous way of life and the tradition of warm human relations linking everybody who worked together. Brazil was a place where people learn to avoid doing anything “the hard way.” A handful of Americans hated being stationed there, the article conceded, but the large majority found it an extraordinarily comfortable place to live and work. Instead of illustrating the article with a photograph, the magazine reproduced a surrealist-inspired watercolor that painter Reginald Marsh created while he was stationed at the U.S. Navy’s facilities in Recife. U.S. military personnel, out for a tour of the city, encounter workers carrying a piano and piano player, both improbably upside down (Figure 19).

Marsh’s image seems more like the Brazil encountered in Carmen Miranda’s Hollywood films *That Night in Rio* or *The Gang’s All Here*. Nonetheless, his Brazil is consistent in tone, imagery, and style with paintings of New York City he had done prior to the war (Figure 20). Marsh was and remains famous for his tawdry but exciting pictures of working people out for a good time. The

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Figure 19. Reginald Marsh, *Heads Up*, watercolor on paper, 1943; published in *Life* magazine, 30 April 1945. Life Collection of Art from World War II, Courtesy of the Army Art Collection, U.S. Army Center of Military History. Original caption: “In Recife, Brazil, the American Army (left) is equally impressed by the universal glamour of the young Brazilian girls and the Brazilian feat of transporting an inverted piano (right) on the heads of the porters. Reginald Marsh has amused himself by adding a piano player, upside down. Some sense of the indescribable Brazilian scene is given by this combination of a baroque 17th Century Portuguese church, a monstrous tropical tree and the three clothes dummies on the store balcony. Notice that even a Brazilian army officer rides on the outside of the São Francisco trolley, which was made in the U.S. a long time ago. Brazil’s trolley cars are nearly always terrible overcrowded. The charmed and bedazzled Americans came to believe that little in Brazil was in dead earnest, that everything was for fun.”

editors at *Life* knew what they would get when they published the Marsh watercolor: a crass, gaudy image, full of glee and sexual energy, focused on the working poor and their cheap entertainments. Choppy brushwork and lightly saturated color helped convey the agitation and fragility of the lives modern cities had conjured. Stereotypes, without a question, but in Marsh’s works applied to both countries with an equivalent heaping of cruel affection.

As we have seen, Hollywood served the effort of pan-American unity, but the mode of production established in the film industry had little capacity for working outside simplistic and stereotypical images, even when the filmmaker



Figure 20. Reginald Marsh, *Twenty-Cent Movie*, 1936. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art.

was someone as gifted and idiosyncratic as Orson Welles. Carmen Miranda, who starred in eight Hollywood musicals and two Broadway musical shows between 1939 and 1944, captured public attention as the image without equal of Latin America. Every one of her productions was a box office success. Even though she was never the headliner and always performed as a supporting character actress, the press reported and the studios believed that the public went to her movies in very large numbers primarily to see her. Miranda was reportedly the highest paid female performer in the United States, and the money she earned for Twentieth Century-Fox stimulated other studios to seek their own “Latin bombshells”—Lina Romay at MGM, Lupe Vélez (most famous for her series of films as the “Mexican Spitfire”) and Margo at RKO, María Montez at Universal. None of them came close to Miranda’s ability to excite the public, and their roles were limited to second-tier horror and adventure movies, or low-budget comedies. Stereotypes of Latin bombshells and spitfires were not in themselves sufficient to grab and hold popular attention.

Miranda’s attraction rested on her ability to perform clichés so that they became funny and exciting. Which is to say, that in her hands, stereotypes turned into the opposite of clichés even if they never let go of familiar, predictable

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routines. The pattern of transfiguring stereotypes began when she was a young singer in Brazil, where in her rise to stardom, she, a young white woman, an immigrant from Portugal no less, adopted the clothes and mannerisms of black Bahian women. Her routines invoked stereotypes analogous to the Mammy and Aunt Jemima images in the United States, but somehow in the racial masquerade Miranda escaped ridiculing the symbols she performed. Intellectuals in both the United States and Brazil disapproved of her image, derided as ludicrous and, in Brazil after Miranda's success as a global star, as "Americanized."<sup>33</sup>

The critical accusations were accurate, but popular audiences in both countries nonetheless adored her, suggesting that they experienced something that the more refined did not, or that their interaction with stereotypes operated at a different level, perhaps because popular audiences in both countries experienced their own identities as already deeply stereotyped for reasons of race, gender, ethnicity, education, social position, or class. Miranda exemplified the ridiculous nature of self-images working people had to live with, while simultaneously skewering the pointlessness of the public language that elites used to maintain their power and privileges. Miranda performed her first successful record in the United States, "The South American Way," in Portuguese, except for the repeated choruses of the heavily accented title words. The lyrics of "Chica Chica Boom Chick" consisted solely of nonsense syllables sung over samba rhythms, a musical approach paralleling the simultaneous development of scat singing in U.S. jazz. As her motion picture career developed, humor surrounding her persona frequently involved her mangled English syntax and her mispronunciation of simple words. In the first feature written about her for a U.S. magazine, Miranda described her knowledge of English with self-deprecating phrases that can signal "I'm one with you, I've been through what you've been through" to readers who have shared her experience in being underestimated: "I say monee, monee, monee,' she told an amazed group on the boat before a single question had been asked. 'I say twenty words of English. I say yes and no. I say hot dog! I say turkey sandwich and I say grapefruit. . . . I know tomato juice, apple pie and thank you,' she says brightly. 'De American mens is like potatoes.'"<sup>34</sup>

Criticisms of Miranda during her lifetime point to the limits constraining a humanist conception of cultural exchange. Once cultural exchange became democratic, the problematics of difference assumed new dimensions. Often, understanding differences is less important than maintaining that a shared "human condition" is what counts if people are to work together. Whether differences were superficial or fundamental need not be examined. For the purposes of the war, citizens of many countries were enlisted in the same cause, and they needed to know each other only to the degree that they actually had to work together. Cooperation need go no further. North Americans need not give up their stereo-

types of Latin Americans as impulsive, sensuous, and unreflective. Nor did Latin Americans have to abandon assumptions that the United States was a place of human potatoes without an ounce of culture. Those who fell into the role of cultural bridges were likely to be locked into these images. Carmen Miranda could not expand the roles she played in the United States, and indeed her talents as a musician were sacrificed so that audiences could revel in her abilities as a comedian. At the same time, when she returned home in 1940, stony silence greeted her performance at the Urca Casino. She responded with a samba recording, “Disseram que eu voltei americanizada” (“They Say I Returned Americanized”), an angry song that rejected the charges against her in the Brazilian press, a song that quickly became a hit within Brazil with the working-class public that still loved her. “Americanized,” she asked, because she returned home with money and was “very rich,” because they said she ran around like a crazy woman with her hands waving, because she had “no sauce, no pace, no nothing, no magic”? No, no, no, she responded, those “above her, filled with so much poison,” they wanted out of Brazil, they despised the thoughts and feelings of the Brazilian people. She who was born with the samba still lived with its rhythms, she still said “eu te amo” and never “I love you.” As long as there was a Brazil, she would still look forward to eating the simple shrimp and vegetable stew that she loved as a child. Everyone knew that those who criticized her success abroad were also those who looked down on average Brazilians as uneducated children, and Miranda’s response played with stereotypes to retain the affection of her fans who like her grew up in the slums.

Vinícius de Moraes in reviewing the Brazilian premiere of *That Night in Rio* took an understanding approach to the work that popular entertainers like Miranda did. The film, he noted, was “a friendly gesture from Hollywood in our direction.” Brazilians liked slapstick, they liked looking at pretty images of Rio de Janeiro, they were eager to see Carmen Miranda. The music was agreeable, and American dancers performing samba as if it were a cabaret number were grotesquely fascinating to watch. In the end, of course, “the film as such is worthless.” The story had been done before, on stage and in film, with Maurice Chevalier. The setting had been switched from Paris to Rio, but for all practical purposes Rio was a name for sets and situations that could be Paris. Miranda was the only part of the film that had anything Brazilian about it, and she jumped around like a schizophrenic. On second thought, de Moraes decided, Carmen Miranda looked more Hindu than Brazilian, with her succession of colorful turbans, her arms waving like snakes, her hands turning into hooded cobra heads. Had Hollywood made her a yoga adept, for whom imitating a snake is a sign of spiritual mastery? De Moraes had to conclude that *That Night in Rio* failed as publicity for Brazil, but was a personal success for its star.<sup>35</sup>

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Consistent with Hollywood's efforts to incorporate inter-American relations into its highly reductive, if commercially successful conception of the human condition were the various Latin American fairs and fiestas that the OIAA encouraged department stores in the United States to organize. Tropical plants and booths designed to look like pre-Columbian temple ruins and Spanish colonial churches provided a "fun" environment for offering customers food and clothing with a "Latin" theme. In this case, in addition to promoting "understanding" of other American cultures, the fairs provided customers with imports of products not available from American producers because their facilities were dedicated to war production. Speaking at the opening of a Latin American fair at the Macy's store in midtown Manhattan, Nelson Rockefeller observed, "We in the United States, must, for a long time, devote ourselves militantly to the production of the weapons and munitions of war and we will need—and need increasingly—from our neighbors, not raw materials for war alone, but these products of their crafts and industries for our basic living requirements."<sup>36</sup> Latin American countries had lost their European markets, and stimulating consumer demand in the United States could compensate Latin American companies hurt by the war and solidify integration of the pan-American countries into a more unified, single market. The fairs became a major site for the exhibition of Latin American art, just as many U.S. department stores in the 1940s mounted shows of U.S. artists.<sup>37</sup>

That department stores and motion picture companies operated as commercial entities, even when acting to assist strategic government goals, should be no surprise. The worlds created in such activities had to conform to predictably limited frameworks for what would be interesting to customers. That they relied on iconic stereotypes should also not be surprising, as there were no representations independent of the well-developed repertoire of stereotypes and clichés that formed the "common sense" of consumers. Even with those limitations, at least one Hollywood film, Howard Hawks's *Only Angels Have Wings* (1939), starring Cary Grant and Jean Arthur, provides evidence that a commercial product unambiguously reliant on cultural stereotypes could successfully imagine a shared affective universe linking Americans from the United States with the people of a Spanish-speaking country. Set in an unnamed country roughly geographically equivalent to Colombia or Venezuela, the film depicts U.S. aviators who have started mail service into the Andes, connecting their headquarters at a coastal port to mining communities in the deep interior. The film treats jazz and Latino popular music as equivalent. Musicians from both cultures proficiently play the music from the "other America" and enjoy doing it, just as musicians were actually doing in clubs across the hemisphere.

Stereotypes abound, but the film at several points suddenly goes against the grain of a cliché. Perhaps, the best example is the small town's medical doctor,

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whose untranslated flowery speeches in Spanish provide a comic relief to the main story with a condescending stereotype of Latin men as blustery talkers, all hot air and no action. However, later in the story, the doctor is needed to fly into a mining community where there has been a serious accident. The flight is difficult, possibly very dangerous depending on unpredictable turns of weather. He replies to the request with his longest speech, which the other characters openly mock as an effort to get out of the trip. However, when his words are translated, they prove entirely apropos to the situation. The doctor has responded to the request with a quotation from Shakespeare's *Henry IV*—"a man can die but once; we owe God a death and let it go which way it will, he that dies this year is quit for the next." The Anglophone characters' mocking attitude disappears instantly. They grasp that what they assumed to be nonsense actually articulated the heart of their own code of honor. "He's no fool," one of them says simply. The filmmakers have acknowledged that they had deliberately set up the doctor to appear as a fool to the audience, but then turned the tables so that the audience would recognize their connection to a man historical convention told them to despise. Suddenly, the doctor has transformed into the pivot of the film's obligatory scene, the moment in a story that articulates in crystal-clear form the theme of the film. He proves to be the character who states the principle with which the characters must live if they are to be true to themselves. Stereotypes abound throughout the film, but that the treatment of the Yankee characters was no less dependent on clichéd conventions might remind us of the well-known fact that humor in the United States has long depended on self-deprecating stereotypes. Nobody is exempt because the defiant self-reliance of the American worker comes from not taking oneself too seriously, a theme noted by some of the Latin Americans who visited the United States during the Good Neighbor period.<sup>38</sup>

The irony of the pan-American moment, and a key theme of this book, is that the vision of a fuller intersubjective communication collided against the necessity of formulas, even of stereotypes, to present comprehensible social messages. They were needed by all, those seeking more agency as well as those maintaining power. Naylor did not escape the tyranny of stereotypes, but the social documentary tradition offered a complex mosaic of stereotypes, so complex that the ambiguities of social realities and the individuality of each situation could at times become visible in the excess of images produced and selected for distribution. It was only a stepping-stone to something further, but it marks a point at which the power of stereotypes begins to dissolve in the continuous flow of images that the mass media needed for the thousands of pages printed and the hundreds of hours of film produced every month. The culture industries wanted predictable effects and turned to stereotypes, but capturing the

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attention of audiences, however briefly, required novelty and therefore the presentation of variation after variation. A generous and thoughtful observer, Naylor produced images that revealed the ambiguities present in the scenes she represented but reaffirmed the liberal and humanist ideals for which the United States and its many allies claimed to defend. That the pan-American moment grew out of a colossal will to power, a movement to transform one nation into the cynosure of the world, should not surprise, for only such colossal hubris could overcome the resistance to complex thinking embedded in stereotypes.

The rediscovery of Naylor's Brazilian photographs came after the end of the Cold War. Renewed interest reflected a resurgence of liberal ideas that could neutralize the failed dichotomies that had molded most political utopias during the twentieth century. Liberal utopias were not as dramatic or heroic as those motivating Marxists, but they were often grounded in consideration of everyday life and supported faith that social divisions could heal without violent upheaval. The diversity of Brazil shown in Naylor's work offered valued clues of an older way of thinking about difference that could be resuscitated for the twenty-first century. It is necessary, however, to keep in mind that the defense of pluralism and the hope that the abysses that set different peoples against each other could be bridged helped justify the expansion of U.S. economic and military power to every part of the globe. For many of the artists and writers who dedicated their talents to the war effort, the project of people-to-people communication was not an illusion. Nor was the utopian dream that local, national, and global cultures could be harmonized without anybody having to abandon their own roots. Érico Veríssimo, whose participation in wartime cultural exchange programs led to him becoming the first Latin American author to enjoy commercial success in the United States, discovered how difficult global politics made it to remain in the dream, but it was global politics that provided him an opportunity to speak to North American readers, and through them to readers around the world. Within that inescapable contradiction, the liberal effort had yet to find a way to build a society where people could stand before each other face to face and recognize what they shared as the basis for working together to solve common problems.