GATEWAYS TO LATIN AMERICA: PAN AMERICANISM AS A BUSINESS STRATEGY IN GULF SOUTH PORT CITIES, 1940-1970

AN ABSTRACT

SUBMITTED ON THE TWENTY-SECOND DAY OF MARCH 2017

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The arrival of World War II triggered significant disturbances in global trade, forcing U.S. importers and exporters to find alternative sources of business to make up for lost markets in Europe and Asia. This study traces the efforts of business and civic leaders in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami to increase trade, transportation, and tourism income from Latin America and the Caribbean by adopting Pan Americanism as a business strategy. Businessmen and local civic officials believed they could combine new trade promotion institutions with a carefully cultivated Pan American civic identity to establish their cities as "gateways" to the Americas. This framework became a key component of the regional competition between Houston, New Orleans, and Miami in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The implications for these Pan American business strategies stretched far beyond the Gulf South, however. Business and civic leaders often described their activities within the context of U.S.-Latin American diplomacy, connecting trade promotion and international relationship-building with broader national objectives of hemispheric cooperation and anticommunism. This connection attracted the interest of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations, whose officials hoped to leverage the influence of private enterprise to achieve Latin American economic development and discourage anti-foreign investment policies without significant government funding. Both local business communities and federal agencies used this harmony of vision to their advantage. Washington found ways to co-opt the Pan American business strategies of the Gulf South

while local civic and business leaders drew legitimacy and sometimes even financial support for their programs from the federal government.

Ultimately, for a variety of reasons, Pan Americanism eventually became unprofitable as a business strategy, and most of the institutions Houston, New Orleans, and Miami had established either failed or changed considerably by the 1970s. The lasting legacy of this phenomenon, however, lies in the frameworks these cities helped establish for reimagining the port city as a diplomatic space and business communities as diplomatic agents.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS …….. ii

INTRODUCTION …….…… 1

CHAPTER 1: CHOOSING PAN-AMERICANISM …… 30

BECOMING A GOOD NEIGHBOR …….……. 37

THE COMPETITIVE GULF SOUTH …… 48

WORLD WAR II CHANGES THE GAME …… 66

CHAPTER 2: AN ENLIGHTENED FORM OF SELFISHNESS: NEW ORLEANS' POSTWAR PAN-AMERICAN BUSINESS STRATEGY…… 83

NEW ORLEANS BUILDS A WINNING PROTOTYPE …… 92

THE NEW ORLEANS GATEWAY IN A NATIONAL CONTEXT ….. 131

LIMITATIONS OF THE STRATEGY ……. 157

CHAPTER 3: MAKING PAN-AMERICANISM CONSUMABLE: THE MIAMI APPROACH ……. 176

KEEPING UP WITH NEW ORLEANS …… 181

PAN-AMERICANISM FOR THE MASSES: INTERAMA ……. 197

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND THE REALIZATION OF THE MIAMI GATEWAY …….. 221

CHAPTER 4: OIL AND SKEPTICISM: HOUSTON'S TEPID PAN-AMERICANIST IDENTITY …… 248

GATEWAY BY THE NUMBERS …… 255

A PAN-AMERICAN TURN? …… 269

GATEWAY BY DEFAULT …….. 289

CONCLUSION …….. 299

BIBLIOGRAPHY …….. 312

INTRODUCTION

On April 4, 1948, Rafael Ordorica arrived in Balboa, Panama, his first stop on a lengthy official mission. He spent three months touring Latin America, visiting major cities and meeting with leaders in both politics and business. In Colombia alone he met with two Latin American foreign ministers, a U.S. ambassador, over a dozen press agents, and heads of some of the nation's largest industries. He moved easily in these circles, having been a lifelong speaker of Spanish born in Mexico and educated in the United States. He had also spent 18 years in Latin America working for the Associated Press. As he traveled from country to country, Ordorica discussed avenues for inter-American trade expansion with his contacts, and he compiled summaries of local political and economic trends to share with his superiors back in the U.S. By the time he returned home in August, he had certainly earned the title those superiors had given him – "special envoy."[1]

Despite the diplomatic ring of the term, Rafael Ordorica was the employee of a consortium of public and private trade promotion agencies in New Orleans, not the United States government. His job was to represent these organizations as a commercial diplomat and search for opportunities to advance the city's trade prospects in Central and South America. This mission extended beyond merely selling New Orleans' port

[1] For a description or Ordorica's appointment and mission, see "Latin America Envoy is Named," *Times-Picayune*, 18 Dec 1947; and "Ordorica to Latin America as N.O. Envoy," *Times-Picayune,* 15 Apr 1948. For Ordorica's findings while in South America, see "South America Likes U.S. Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 4 Aug 1948; and letter from Ordorica to deLesseps Morrison, A.E. Hegewisch, and Clay Shaw, 11 Aug 1948 in Box 41, deLesseps S. Morrison Papers (MC-270), Louisiana Research Collection.

facilities to exporters and importers, however. Ordorica aimed to sell the city itself as a space for solving a wide range of problems in international commerce, ranging from financing trade to stimulating U.S. capital investment in Latin American projects. Above all, he wanted to build a sense of trust between his Latin contacts and the business and civic leaders of New Orleans. He wanted Latin businessmen to think of New Orleans as a place uniquely dedicated to facilitating better inter-American relations. To borrow the prevailing contemporary term, Ordorica wanted his Latin American acquaintances to think of New Orleans as the "gateway to the Americas."[2]

New Orleans was not the only Gulf South city claiming this designation. While Rafael Ordorica was touring the South American continent, the city of Houston played host to Rómulo Gallegos, president of Venezuela, for a day's visit and a tour of the local port facilities. Hoping to chip away at New Orleans' lead in handling Venezuelan trade, local leaders arranged an elaborate reception with greetings in Spanish, an honor guard, and tokens of friendship. Gallegos' had to cut his sojourn short because he was due back in New Orleans for another event, which cannily represented the state of rivalry that existed between the two ports. "It is very interesting to notice the spirit of competition between New Orleans and Houston," he told reporters during a press conference. "Undoubtedly we shall benefit from it."[3]

Miami was also angling to be recognized as the gateway to the Americas at this time. Three days after Rafael Ordorica embarked on his trade mission, a delegation of eighteen Miami business leaders took their own flight to New Orleans, where they

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[2] Chapter 2 examines the New Orleans business community's conception of the city's "gateway identity" in detail. A useful example of Mayor deLesseps Morrison's interpretation of the concept appears in "Morrison Cites Opportunities," *Times-Picayune*, 3 Apr 1946.

[3] "Venezuelan Trade Will Go To High Bidder," *Houston Press*, 13 July 1948; "Venezuelan President July Houston Visitor," *Houston*, Aug. 1948.

studied the city's international program in order to set up something similar back home. Miami lacked New Orleans' long career in hemispheric trade, but its popularity as a major international air hub and tourist destination was considerable and growing. Local boosters hoped this would help them convince Latin Americans to visualize Miami as their "gateway" for doing business with the United States rather than New Orleans. A cluster of businessmen and public officials would ultimately spend decades and millions of dollars in public funds to support this effort.[4]

Regional historians have long referenced this rivalry between New Orleans, Houston, and Miami, but almost invariably without considering how the competition fits into the broader story of U.S.-Latin American relations during and after World War II. This was a time when worldwide economic and geopolitical circumstances made good commercial relations between the U.S. and Latin America especially attractive, both to the United States government and to local business leaders in the Gulf South. World War II was a decisive factor, combining a serious disruption in worldwide markets and concerns for the perpetuation of U.S. hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. Anxious business leaders hoped Latin American countries would be able to absorb some of the trade lost to the war, while Washington hoped to stimulate raw material exports while immunizing Latin governments and people against influences from the Axis Powers.[5]

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[4] "Miami Delegation Inspects International Trade Setup," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Apr 1948. Miami's reaction to New Orleans' Pan American business strategy is treated at length in Chapter 3, but for a basic sense, see "Trade Center," *Miami News*, 21 May 1946; "Latin American Tourist Plum Seen Ripe for Plucking," *Evening Independent*, 10 Jun 1948; and "Trade Center to Close, Not So in New Orleans," *Miami News*, 8 Jul 1948.

[5] For examples of earlier local and regional histories documenting the rivalry between Houston, New Orleans, and Miami, see Arthur E. Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas: New Orleans's Quest for Latin American Trade, 1900-1970" (Ph.D., Tulane University, 1987); Earl Charles Thibodeaux, "The New Orleans – Houston Port Rivalry" (Ph.D., Columbia University, 1951); and Bethany Comboy, "Trade Relations between Southern U.S. Cities and Latin America: A Study of How the Port Cities of New Orleans, Houston, and Miami Fare Against One Another Amid Increasing Competition for Trade with

Inter-American stability and economic integrity remained a primary concern for both the U.S. government and the private sector in the dawning years of the Cold War. Latin American countries generally emerged from World War II with large dollar reserves and booming export industries, but the challenge was keeping this up amid rampant inflation and decreasing demand for raw materials. Latin American leaders asked for U.S. help in growing the export industries it was so vigorously exploiting, but as the war wound down, U.S. officials increasingly advised their Latin neighbors to rely less on loans and more on trade liberalization and foreign private investment. Gulf South port cities saw this as a prime opportunity to grow their own foreign trade. Between Washington's struggle for a cohesive Latin American economic policy and the strong desire to crush any sign of communist influence, government and business leaders alike aimed to generate as much hemispheric trade and private investment as possible.[6]

The approach Houston, New Orleans, and Miami took to attracting Latin American trade went beyond mere self-advertisement. The business communities in these ports – especially importers, exporters, bankers, shipping companies, manufacturers, and local government officials – invested heavily in promoting their cities as uniquely inter-American spaces. They desired not only to be centers of hemispheric trade but also to

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Latin America" (M.A., University of New Orleans, 2006). The conditions making better Latin American trade connections especially attractive in the 1930s and 40s are discussed at length in Chapter 1. T.L. Evans, a prominent port official and businessman in Houston, publicly stated he expected Latin America to absorb about 35% of the trade lost to the war, of which the Gulf coast ports would receive about ten percent. See "Gulf Is Turning t Latin Nations as Trade Source," *Times-Picayune*, 23 June 1940. For another contemporary observation, see "Wallets Stung, Gulf Coast Turns to South," *Washington Post*, 23 Jun 1940. For an example of why Gulf South leaders believed relationship-building was a significant part of the answer, see Hubert Herring, "Making Friends with Latin America," *Harper's Magazine* 179 (June 1, 1939), 360-375.

[6] David Rock, "War and Postwar Intersections: Latin America and the United States," in *Latin America in the 1940s: War and Postwar Transitions*, edited by David Rock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 15-40. For predictions by Gulf South business leaders about what postwar trade will mean for their local economies, see "Nutter Sees Big Role for 'House,'" *Times-Picayune*, 11 Jan 1946; "Houston's Future in Aviation," *Houston*, April 1945; "To Revive To Port," *Houston Post*, 13 Mar 1945; and "This is for Keeps," *Miami News*, 19 Mar 1943.

cultivate the psychological conditions they believed would best facilitate that trade. Building on existing Pan American and Good Neighbor tropes, these gatekeepers of local commerce and civic authority measured their hemispheric trade relations not only in tonnage, dollars, and exchange rates, but also in such subjective terms as "friendship," "understanding," and "cooperation." They believed improving these qualitative elements was crucial to achieving more concrete success in inter-American commerce. As one Florida businessman put it, "We trade with our friends, not our enemies." To get more Latin American business, then, port leaders would have to establish the right friendships. With this mindset, the major port cities of the Gulf South adopted Pan Americanism as more than just a slogan. It was a business strategy.[7]

The terms "Latin American" and "Pan American" deserve a bit of clarification here. The business and civic leaders pursuing these "Pan American" business strategies generally identified "Latin America" as their primary target, but their definitions of these concepts were somewhat imprecise. Very seldom did a trade promotion institution examined in this study concentrate evenly on the entirety of Central and South America. Instead, "Latin America" demarcated whatever portions of the hemisphere formed the city's most likely trade hinterland. For Houston, this typically meant Mexico, Venezuela, and some of the Central American nations. For New Orleans, "Latin America" had a broader reach, but the focus was on Central America and Cuba. For Miami, whose

[7] This study makes frequent use of the term "Pan American business strategy" in referring to both the institutionalization of trade and the hemispheric identity business leaders in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami often sought to cultivate during and after World War II. Nathan Connolly has coined a similar term – "Pan American business ethos" – to describe Miami's concerted effort to attract Latin American tourism and business in the postwar years. Connolly argues that Miami's urban planners used the public interest in Pan Americanist projects as a cover for slum clearance and marginalization of African-Americans. See Nathan Connolly, "By Eminent Domain: Race and Capital in the Building of an American South Florida" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2008), chapter 4. S. Kendrick Guernsey is the Florida businessman quoted; see memo regarding a proposed trade mart at Miami, 6 Dec 1949 in Box 46, folder 5, Fuller Warren Correspondence (S 235), State Archives of Florida.

commerce with Central and South America was for many years mainly by air, Cuba remained paramount, but Panama, Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico were also key contacts.

Each business community also had a limited conception of "Pan American," again defining it in terms of interest. In theory and in public pronouncements, Houston, New Orleans, and Miami claimed to be spaces imbued with a "Pan American" identity. In practice, however, their business communities typically reserved the "friendliness," "understanding," and "cooperation" they so frequently invoked for Latin Americans whose friendship, understanding, and cooperation were beneficial for the bottom line, generally powerful and influential male elites. Vaughn Bryant, an architect of Pan American business strategies in both New Orleans and Houston, put a fine point on this pattern in a 1956 article explaining Houston's advertising efforts in the Western Hemisphere. The city's promotional campaign, he declared, had established the Port of Houston "firmly in the minds of the men who count in the Latin American trade picture." Each of the following chapters describes a variety of promotional programs that appear to have touched citizens at many levels of society in the Gulf South and abroad. At bottom, however, it is clear the "men who count" were always the ultimate targets of these efforts. [8]

For Houston, New Orleans, and Miami, implementing a Pan American business strategy generally involved both a diplomatic component abroad and an educational mission aimed at the local population. Each city developed new institutions and policies

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[8] For Bryant's quote, see "Port of Houston Will See Greater Increase in Trade with Latin America," *Houston Port Book*, Sept. 1956. New Orleans' Director of International Relations Rafael Urruela establishes his own "men who count" doctrine in a 1946 interview about the city's new goodwill ambassador program. Urruela explains that he plans to target "men of wealth and influence in their countries" for these positions. See "Ambassadors of Good Will, Trade Work for New Orleans," *Milwaukee Journal*, 27 May 1946.

in the 1940s and 1950s designed to convince Latin American visitors and customers of a desire for their "friendship" as well as their business. This took varying forms in each city, but in all three cases millions of dollars went toward erecting new institutions to facilitate trade, tourism, cultural exchanges, and foreign investment. So-called trade marts and international centers appeared, envoys like Rafael Ordorica toured Central and South America, and visits from even minor Latin American dignitaries became outsized occasions marked with bands, speeches, and other fanfare. Simultaneously, these same institutions also prepared local citizens to play their part. Business and civic leaders in each city co-opted the schools, civic clubs, celebrations like Pan American Day, and even public spaces to give a broad base to their claim as keepers of the gateway to the Americas. In all three cities, they asked families to host exchange students, socialites to entertain distinguished Latin American visitors, and businesses to use Latin-inspired decorations on special occasions.[9]

On the surface, the concept of a Pan American business strategy comes across merely as a colorful variant of classic boosterism, and indeed its primary function was exactly that. The business leaders who led these efforts to make their cities seem friendlier to Latin American customers did so because they wanted to make money and attract industry, investments, and commerce. In 1945, trade between the U.S. and Latin

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[9] The annual celebration of Pan American Day (or Pan American Week in some years) offers an excellent opportunity to see how deeply Pan American business strategies penetrated into the civic life of a city. These programs were usually coordinated by the business community, but could involve dozens of other local organizations. In 1949, for example, the itinerary for Pan American Week in Miami included an art exhibit, a book exhibit sponsored by the local university, so-called inter-American invitational tournaments in golf and tennis, movies, radio programs, displays of Latin American flags in local hotels and other businesses, and educational programs in the public schools. See "Pan American Week Program Grows," *Miami Business*, Feb. 1949. The City of New Orleans' International Committee's plan to use local elites as hosts and hostesses for visiting Latin American dignitaries is another useful example. See minutes of the Committee's Executive Committee, 23 Sept 1963 in Box 1, Records of the Mayor's Office of International Relations, New Orleans Public Library.

America was valued at just over three billion dollars. Increased air travel and disposable income provided an additional boon. Gulf South port leaders wanted a share of this pie, and they did not mind saying so. Not only were they competing with one another, but also with the nation's giant northeastern ports like New York and Philadelphia, which despite their distance generally handled the greatest share of Latin American trade prior to the war.[10]

Executing these strategies, however, had significant consequences that reverberated both locally and in broader regional and national contexts. Local port officials during this era, for example, increasingly explained regional competition for Latin American trade both in the quantitative language of tonnage and the qualitative lexicon of inter-American friendship and understanding. As chapters 3 and 4 will explain, once New Orleans rolled out an effective Pan American business strategy, business leaders in both Houston and Miami often measured their own successes and failures against the activities of their neighbor along the Mississippi River. In a sense, the quest for Latin American trade became something of a hemispheric popularity contest.[11]

The reaction of federal officials toward the Gulf South's competing Pan-American business strategies is especially significant. As numerous historians have explained, the United States government struggled during the Truman and Eisenhower

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[10] Trade statistics are from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States*, 1941-1945.

[11] The sincerity of a business community's commitment to the "Pan American" portion of the Pan American business strategy often comes to light in discussions away from the public eye. In one meeting, for example, Miami Chamber of Commerce officials agreed that while they serious wanted to erect a trade promotion institution to rival that of New Orleans, they preferred for the "cultural" arm of that institution to be delegated to another organization, such as the local university. See the minutes of the Chamber's Pan American Action Group meeting, 4 Apr 1944, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Records, HistoryMiami. For an example of port leaders characterizing future competition for trade as a battle between the Latin American promotion programs, see "Spur to Postwar Trade Predicted," *Times-Picayune*, 9 Feb 1944;

administrations to strike a balance between Good Neighbor idealism and strict limitations on public aid for Latin American economic development. Truman set the tone in the late 1940s by announcing there would be no Marshall Plan for Latin America, despite several years of vague U.S. commitments to stabilizing and boosting the region's war-rocked economies. Eisenhower put a sharper point on Washington's official position by identifying "trade, not aid" as the government's preferred method for Latin America's economic salvation. Mid-level officials in the State and Commerce departments chattered nervously to one another that this policy would surely sour relations with the Latin republics unless U.S. private enterprise could be persuaded to fill enough of the gap with private investments.[12]

These were pressing concerns in Washington at exactly the moment New Orleans, Houston, and Miami were ramping up their competing efforts to maximize their shares of inter-American trade and investment. The resonance between the federal government's dilemma and the mutual desires of the Gulf South ports was clear to contemporaries at both the local and federal level, which inspired a number of collaborative efforts. Washington policymakers and port leaders alike lauded the concept of the Pan American business strategy because it represented a kind of unofficial diplomacy the federal government could not easily conduct on its own. "The Good Neighbor Policy cannot be

[12] Stephen Rabe, for example, has referred to the Truman and Eisenhower years as "an unhappy, dull, and insignificant interregnum between the Good Neighbor and the Alliance for Progress." See Stephen G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anticommunism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 1-4. There is significant evidence to show, however, that State and Commerce officials actively searched for policy solutions that would stimulate Latin American economic development and push back against the idea of US neglect in the region. Thomas C. Mann, for example, a leading Latin American hand in the Eisenhower era, once explained to a colleague that "one of our most important tasks is to help Latin Americans acquire the dollars they need to increase productivity." See Thomas Tunstall Allcock, "Becoming 'Mr. Latin America': Thomas C. Mann Reconsidered," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 5 (Nov 2014), 1017-1045. Other officials at State valued "understanding" as the keystone to political and economic cooperation with Latin American states. See, for example, planning memos relating to the Inter-American Development Commission (1944) in Box 47, International Trade Organization Subject Files (RG 43), National Archives.

expressed by words alone, nor can it be expressed by governments alone," one official told a New Orleans audience in 1945. Ambassadors and consuls could profess the nation's commitment to hemispheric unity in a multitude of symbolic gestures, but business communities in port cities like Houston, New Orleans, and Miami possessed the physical space and freedom to translate those ideals into meaningful action. Their Pan American business strategies shifted attention away from state-based solutions for economic development and emphasized freer trade and private investment. To be clear, no one seriously believed these cities could entirely replace public aid to Latin America, but the example they were setting struck federal officials as a helpful step in the right direction, and, crucially, one for which they did not have to pay.[13]

The result, as this study describes, was an era of experimentation in which local business communities and federal officials worked together to harness the power of private enterprise to increase the volume of inter-American commerce and investment, and also to cultivate a positive, cooperative atmosphere conducive to those transactions. Both the federal government and each of the Gulf South port cities sought at times to use their unity of purpose to advance their own agendas. Most commonly, port leaders used the connections between their work and broader national and inter-American interests to legitimize their Pan American business strategies and attract support from locals and potential Latin American trade partners. At times, especially in the late stages of World War II, these leaders depicted better local relations with Latin American visitors and

[13] Walter W. Hecht, an operative of Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs, made this statement; quoted in "Good Neighbor Sincerity Urged," *Times-Picayune*, 1 May 1945. Speaker of the House Joseph W. Martin, Jr. made a more general statement explaining the value of private sector involvement in international relations. "Business men approach their problems in a more practical way," he told a Chicago audience in 1948. "They patch up the bad holes in the road and get traffic moving. Government programs too often abandon the old road and the people are left with no thoroughfare whatever while a new one is being debated and designed." Martin quoted in "Asks End of Bars to Capital Flow," *New York Times*, 23 Sept 1948.

customers as a patriotic duty. Later, as the Cold War set in, they pronounced their work a critical contribution toward keeping Latin America oriented away from the Soviet Union. Miami, as Chapter 3 will explain, even used this conception of the city's "duty" to try to convince the federal government to bankroll its scheme for expanding its trade promotion institutions.[14]

In Washington, officials recognized the potential power of the diplomacy involved in the Gulf South's Pan American business strategies. Several bureaus, offices, and boards aiming to co-opt the efforts of U.S. private enterprise sought help from key institutions and leaders in these port cities. The State Department's Private Enterprise Cooperation unit, for example, collaborated with local officials in both Houston and New Orleans to pursue projects of mutual interest. The International Development Advisory Board also used New Orleans and Miami to promote private U.S. investment in Latin American industries. In addition to these concrete examples of collaboration, presidents, diplomats, and other officials frequently praised the Gulf South's competing inter-American business strategies for embodying the sense of hemispheric unity they wanted so much to cultivate. They had all the right ingredients – private investment and trade promotion, freer exchanges of people and ideas, an anticommunist outlook, and deferential – if somewhat patronizing – displays of respect for Latin American culture and traditions. Houston, New Orleans, and Miami were excellent spaces for acting out U.S.-Latin American economic and cultural relations, even as the business communities doing so were acting in their own interests.

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[14] This scheme was Miami's ill-fated Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center, nicknamed Interama. For a sense of how the project's leaders sought to gain federal support by merging its local objectives with the broader national interest, see William H. Walker to Fuller Warren, 6 Oct 1950 in Box 46, folder 5, Fuller Warren Correspondence, State Archives of Florida.

There were limits to the attractiveness of this approach, as both the federal government and the business communities of the Gulf South ports demonstrated over time. This was not because the desire for revenue from Latin American trade, travel, and tourism lessened, or because the competition between the major Gulf South ports ever stopped. Circumstances, however, changed the way business and civic leaders in each city envisioned their respective pathways to success.

During the geopolitical tumult of World War II and the early onset of the Cold War, a deferential attitude toward Latin American traders at the community level appeared to pay healthy dividends. Not only did such a policy ingratiate a port to a set of likely customers; it had the added benefit of dovetailing nicely with national objectives in the hemisphere and the presumed desires of Latin American business leaders themselves to promote two-way trade. Crucially, furthermore, business leaders were convinced that Latin America was destined to be a lucrative market for some time to come. Between the massive dollar reserves built up during the war, the extension of free trade agreements, and the anticipated pent-up demand for U.S. consumer goods, most Gulf South traders expected Latin Americans to be their finest customers in the postwar era.[15]

As the cases of each individual Gulf South port reveal, however, it was possible for the local commitment to hemispheric unity to outrun its perceived profitability. Business leaders in Miami and New Orleans ran into this problem, for example, when their Pan American business strategies began to dabble more in anticommunism and cultural exchanges than they did in trade development. In Houston, where the profitable oil and petrochemical industries commanded the port's attention, a Pan Americanist

[15] J. Russell Wait, director of the Port of Houston, articulated this line of reasoning with great clarity in a 1945 document explaining the program for the Foreign Trade Department of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, in Box 5, folder 2, J. Russell Wait Papers (MS 346), Fondren Library, Rice University.

business strategy barely even registered as worth the funds and effort until the late 1950s, and even then the final product ended up much more global in scope, which reflected the business community's realistic assessment of where their investment would earn the highest return. In short, Middle Eastern crude oil was simply more profitable than Brazilian coffee.

Outside forces also conspired to render the Pan American business strategy less viable. In Miami, for example, the sudden influx of refugees fleeing Fidel Castro's 1959 rise to power in Cuba completely restructured the local economy and the city's relations with Latin America. Anglo-American Miamians had tried for decades to bolster the city's image as being more to Latin Americans than just a convenient airport. Their success was negligible, but when middle and upper-class Cubans brought their business acumen, capital, and hemispheric connections into the equation, Miami began to blossom as a major center of inter-American commerce and banking. The old Pan Americanist song and dance was hardly necessary; Latin Americans themselves were increasingly at the helm.

New Orleans, whose promotional techniques had served as a model for Miami and Houston, held out the longest. Even though Houston eclipsed its seasoned Louisiana neighbor in total trade tonnage early in the 1950s, New Orleans continued to maintain a significant edge in direct foreign trade, mainly through its successful Pan American business strategy. A combination of factors, including a decline in the relative value of the city's Latin American trade, the rise of the oil industry in South Louisiana, and the inability of the port to keep up with new shipping technologies eventually led local leaders to abandon the focus on attracting Latin American commerce. In all three cities,

some vestiges of Pan Americanism remained in the form of educational organizations, honorary citizen programs, and other elements, but responsibility for these initiatives had shifted away from the business communities by the end of the 1970s.

Given these outcomes, we must evaluate the Pan-American business strategies pursued by Houston, New Orleans, and Miami more broadly than just by measuring how much trade they brought in. They were the basis on which three of the Gulf South's most significant port cities competed for more than twenty years. They were the impetus for changes in both the physical and cultural landscapes of these cities, some evidence of which is still visible today. Perhaps most significantly, these promotional efforts helped inscribe Houston, New Orleans, and Miami with a source of civic identity and a sense of purpose, helping to define the cities both locally and within the broader context of the United States relationship with its Latin American neighbors. Institutionalizing Pan Americanism and trade promotion had a far-reaching effect, as a number of other cities around the United States modeled similar strategies after what was happening in the Gulf South, especially in New Orleans.[16]

Historiographical Grounding

Locating Houston, New Orleans, and Miami within the realm of inter-American diplomacy was the study's earliest objective. The original inspiration for this focus was the widespread availability of source material illustrating the desire of both local government officials and business leaders to actively cultivate relationships with a broad range of potential Latin American customers and visitors. Interrogating the meaning of

[16] Chapter 2 identifies a number of cases in which representatives from other cities around the United States visited New Orleans to study its foreign trade promotion institutions in order to recreate the system in their own communities.

this internationalist impulse helped situate the study within ongoing debates about the role of non-state actors in international relations. Inspired in part by the cultural turn, a number of diplomatic historians have turned their focus away from the embassies, credentialed envoys, and other traditional vessels of diplomatic authority, finding meaningful interactions between U.S. nationals and their foreign counterparts at all levels of society.[17]

One of the main challenges of that effort has been to explain how historical actors with little or no direct ties to the power of the state have actually been able to wield influence worthy of the name 'diplomacy.' The concept of soft power has emerged as one framework for understanding this activity. Political scientist Joseph Nye has defined soft power as "the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than by coercion or payment." Nye is one of several scholars with recent studies exploring the exercise of soft power through public diplomacy, or diplomatic overtures aimed directly at foreign publics rather than political elites. He locates the origin of the United States government's use of public diplomacy during World War I, when President Woodrow Wilson established the Committee on Public Information to sell his conception of the war to the American public and others abroad. Historians Matt Loayza and Justin Hart have added context to Washington's use of public diplomacy, arguing that World War II and the onset of the Cold War forced federal officials to think seriously about the nation's image abroad, not just the realities of U.S. power. Using exchange programs and

[17] One of the most influential bodies of work in this vein is Amy Kaplan's studies of the cultural manifestations of empire. See Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 3-21. See also Kaplan, "Commentary: Domesticating Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1994), 97-105. See also Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (Dec., 2001), 829-865.

Hollywood films as examples, Loayza and Hart demonstrate that while government initiative may have controlled public diplomacy, Washington often leaned on the aid of private enterprise to project a positive view of U.S. policy abroad. Dennis Merrill has recently published a study of U.S. tourism that takes more of a bottom-up approach, describing tourists as agents of soft-power imperialism. Even without the direction of the state, he argues, tourists have exerted meaningful cultural and economic influences in the Latin American destinations they have visited, and that historians should take this into account in describing the contours of U.S. empire.[18]

Some scholars remain skeptical of this cultural approach to understanding the history of international relations. Robert Buzzanco, for example, has argued that while studying cultural contacts undoubtedly contributes to the total substance of diplomacy, it does very little to supersede traditional narratives about how states interact. Citing the work of Dennis Merrill, Andrew Rotter, and Robert McMahon dealing with the influence of cultural values on U.S. policy in South Asia, Buzzanco questions whether "influence" alone says anything decisive about the history of foreign policymaking. He asks, "Don't a good many factors 'in part' influence policymakers' perceptions? Aren't there many ideas that 'had influence' in the formulation of policy?" For Buzzanco, focusing on

[18] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (Mar., 2008), 94-109; Matt Loayza, "'A Curative and Creative Force': The Exchange of Persons Program and Eisenhower's Inter-American Policies, 1953-1961," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (Nov. 2013), 946-970; Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), passim; Dennis Merrill, *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), passim. For another example of public diplomacy as a partnership between government and private enterprise, see Kornel Chang, "Muted Reception: U.S. Propaganda and the Construction of Mexican Popular Opinion during the Second World War," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 3 (Jun 2014), 569-598.

culture to the exclusion of "material interests and information" produces incomplete histories.[19]

Jeffrey Taffet has applied a similar critique to Dennis Merrill's more recent work on U.S. tourism in Latin America. Taffet applauds Merrill's presentation of tourism as an illustration of imperialism via the politics of the mundane, but he argues that divorcing tourism from the presence of a "hegemonic interventionist state" disconnects Merrill's work from key realities of empire. Referring to Merrill's categorization of tourism as a form of soft power, Taffet asks, "Is soft power a meaningful concept without a state organizing that power?" Like Buzzanco, Taffet acknowledges the value of a counterweight to explanations of U.S. foreign policy that rely solely on the actions of the state, but not as a complete replacement for those traditional narratives.[20]

In this study, I present non-state actors, not as an alternative to state power, but as its willing and influential adjuncts. Each chapter explores cases in which the business communities of Houston, New Orleans, and Miami consciously defined themselves as diplomatic actors exerting influence over the United States' relationship with Latin America, mainly through interpersonal contact. In some cases, especially in New Orleans and Miami, they did so in direct collaboration with the federal government, usually in the form of commercial conferences or public diplomacy schemes. In other instances, business communities acted on their own account, designing self-promotional strategies with their own interests at the forefront. In these latter cases, however, there still existed a strong link between the desires of the Gulf South business communities and the federal

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[19] I grant, of course, that the opposite could also be true, that political histories without culture could also be incomplete. See Robert Buzzanco, "Commentary: Where's the Beef? Culture without Power in the Study of U.S. Foreign Relations," *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2000), 623-632.

[20] Mariola Espinosa, et al., "A Roundtable Discussion of Dennis Merrill's *Negotiating Paradise: U.S. Tourism and Empire in Twentieth-Century Latin America*," *Passport* 41, no. 3 (Jan 2011), 12-19.

government's hemispheric agenda. Dwight Eisenhower highlighted this link and its desirability during a 1952 speech in which re referred to New Orleans' Pan American business strategy as "community relations without government money." To be clear, the business communities of the Gulf South examined here retained significant control over their own diplomacy, but in many cases they were willing agents of state power, often because their interests and those of the U.S. government overlapped, which they used to their own advantage.[21]

This symbiotic relationship between the business communities of the Gulf South and Washington also brings the study into contact with a rich historical conversation that has long straddled or blurred the line between the sub-disciplines of diplomatic and business history. In the 1970s and early 1980s, scholars such as Ellis W. Hawley, Thomas J. McCormick, and Michael J. Hogan adopted the term "corporatism" to describe the pattern they collectively saw as the key to understanding the relationship between government and private enterprise in the United States for much of the twentieth century, especially in the realm of international relations. The corporatist model of U.S. political economy posited that elites in both the public and private sectors have collaborated on a multitude of issues in order to guarantee stability and harmony. Moreover, in such a system, this collaboration has often created a pattern of interpenetration and power sharing that makes it difficult to see where one sector stops and the other begins.[22]

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[21] Eisenhower is quoted in "Text of General Eisenhower's Address," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Oct 1952.
[22] For more on the historiographical genealogy and varying definitions of the corporatist model, see Michael J. Hogan, "Corporatism," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990), 153-160; Ellis W. Hawley, "The Discovery and Study of a 'Corporate Liberalism,'" *Business History Review* 52 (Autumn 1978), 309-320; Thomas J. McCormick, "Drift or Mastery? A Corporate Synthesis for American Diplomatic History," *Reviews in American History* 10 (Dec. 1982), 318-330.

Much of the recent historiography of U.S. diplomatic history touching on the relationship between business and the state descends in some way from this framework. One of the earliest and most influential elaborations on the corporatist model was Emily Rosenberg's *Spreading the American Dream*, which depicted American corporations as the main purveyors of American values, culture, and ideology abroad. According to Rosenberg, government and private enterprise shared a determined faith in the superiority of U.S. culture, the nation's responsibility to share it, and the wisdom of other countries to imitate it. These assumptions formed the basis of what Rosenberg called "liberal developmentalism," a bundle of related beliefs underlying the United States' insistence on free trade, free exchange of ideas, and the interest of government in assisting U.S. business in the international economy.[23]

Since the 1980s, corporatist histories of U.S. diplomatic relations have taken several interesting directions. Thomas O'Brien and Cyrus Veeser have, for example, examined limitations of the corporatist consensus between government and private enterprise. O'Brien's study of U.S. corporations in Latin America reveals that they have often been imperfect vectors of American soft power, facing significant local resistance to their efforts to propagate U.S. culture and values. Veeser's examination of U.S. business involvement in the Dominican Republic reveals that businesses have at times imperiled Washington's foreign policy objectives, forcing government to pull back the reins on their liberal outlook.[24]

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[23] Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), passim.

[24] Thomas O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999); Thomas O'Brien, *The Revolutionary Mission: American Enterprise in Latin America, 1900-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Cyrus Veeser, *A World Safe for Capitalism: Dollar Diplomacy and America's Rise to Global Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

Elizabeth Cobbs and Julio Moreno have suggested that U.S. businessmen were sometimes not only the lynchpin to inter-American relations, but also the most adept at improving them. Taking companies such as Nelson Rockefeller's International Basic Economy Corporation in Venezuela and Sears in Mexico as their examples, Cobbs and Moreno posit that some U.S. business leaders realized in the 1930s and 1940s that the older missionary attitude of corporate diplomacy was harming both commercial and political relations with Latin America. Cognizant of threats from the Axis Powers and later international communism, they sought to implement a new "progressive diplomacy" that emphasized respect for Latin culture and interests while expressing U.S. economic and political goals as harmonious with those of their Latin neighbors. These were timely gestures, for as Cobbs explains, the United States government did little in the first decade after World War II to address Latin American concerns regarding economic development and trade.[25]

This study complicates the traditional corporatist model in two key ways. First, it uses business communities as a unit of analysis, as opposed to individual firms or entrepreneurs, which continue to dominate the field. Powerful, activist coalitions of businessmen and local government officials drove the formation of Pan American business strategies and other trade promotion efforts in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami. By examining in detail how these coalitions institutionalized trade promotion and their own unique forms of diplomacy, these chapters trace the interplay of private enterprise and the resources of public institutions at both the local and national level.

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[25] Elizabeth A. Cobbs, *The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home!: Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

Similar analyses have recently emerged from historians studying relationships between the state and business communities delineated by industry or nationality. The twist in this approach is to examine business communities whose identities were linked with a very localized center, the port city. This is critical, because as the following chapters will demonstrate, local governments often have resources and powers just as useful for private enterprise as the state. Partnerships between trade-oriented businesses and local officials smoothed the way for Pan Americanism and commercial awareness to be woven into the identity of the city itself.[26]

Secondly, this study seeks to use the setting of the port city to demonstrate how this particular flavor of corporatist business diplomacy mapped onto the physical and cultural landscapes of the Gulf South. Business historians working in this vein have typically focused heavily on the ideas, power, and interactions of historical actors without much regard to the physical spaces in which they functioned. To do so in this narrative would be impossible; the very purpose of the Pan American business strategy as developed by the business communities of Houston, New Orleans, and Miami was to transform the port city itself into a Pan American space, a gateway to the Americas that would be recognizable as such by foreigners and locals alike. Moreover, as chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate in particular, this was a critical factor that tied these Gulf South port cities closer to Washington. While both national and local actors saw value in the idea of a Pan American business strategy, the local business communities were the ones with the actual means at their disposal to build them. The combination of public diplomacy and

[26] Recent studies with the most similar approach to the one in this narrative include Giles Scott-Smith and David J. Snyder, "'A Test of Sentiments': Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics, and the KLM Challenge in Dutch-American Relations," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 5 (2013), 917-945; and Medha Kudaisya,"'The Promise of Partnership': Indian Business, the State, and the Bombay Plan of 1944," *Business History Review* 88, no. 1 (Spring 2014), 97-131.

commercial promotion taking place in these cities was an approach Washington admired but could not fully reproduce on its own. Local leaders, especially private businessmen, could dispense with diplomatic formalities and interact more freely with their foreign colleagues in trying to solve problems of mutual interest. Cities could also do much more to reinforce the theme of hemispheric cooperation and "understanding," as local leaders frequently called it. A Gulf South port city could produce tangible symbols of inter-American unity with statues, celebrations, displays, and educational programs, while dramatizing its importance by drawing a very real correlation between the quality of its Latin American contacts and its livelihood. Finally, the volume of Latin American citizens passing through these spaces was simply greater. If the United States wanted to make a good impression on Latin American visitors, focusing on popular ports of entry and places of international business appeared to be a wise investment. While local leaders intended these promotional activities primarily to serve their own interests, they attracted the attention of both federal officials and Latin Americans, thus making meaningful partnerships possible.

The third and final historiographical objective of this study is to situate the gateway-building activities of Houston, New Orleans, and Miami within a broadened view of U.S.-Latin American relations in the early post-World War II era. Stephen Rabe wrote in the introduction to his 1988 work on Dwight Eisenhower's Latin American policy that historians too frequently considered the years from 1945 to 1960 "an unhappy, dull, and insignificant interregnum between the Good Neighbor Policy and the Alliance for Progress."[27] Numerous studies of this period have been published in the decades since Rabe's book appeared, some with significantly brighter evaluations of Eisenhower,

[27] Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America*, 1-4.

but the old characterization of his administration's approach to the Western Hemisphere remains much the same. Historians typically claim the U.S. all but ignored Latin America in the 1950s, since the region appeared then to lie beyond the reach of Soviet military power, and threats in Europe and Asia seemed more pressing. As long as Latin American countries remained anti-communist and stable, the theory goes, Washington was content to take minimal action, especially regarding funding for economic development. Only when Fidel Castro arrived on the scene in 1959 was the United States shaken from its complacency regarding its southern neighbors.[28]

That Washington fidgeted in practically every possible way to avoid a large-scale economic aid commitment to Latin America during the late 1940s and 1950s is irrefutable.[29] Whether that constitutes evidence of a meaningless interregnum between the Good Neighbor Policy and the Alliance for Progress, however, depends on what historians choose to count as the substance of inter-American economic relations during that period. If direct action by the United States government in the area of foreign aid is

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[28] One of the most recent and most forceful reinforcements of the "unhappy interregnum" interpretation comes from Jeffrey Taffet in the introduction to his work on the Alliance for Progress. Taffet reports that prior to the Cuban Revolution, "the United States did not focus much attention on Latin America," because the countries of Latin America were "seemingly stable and anti-communist." See Taffet, *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy: The Alliance for Progress in Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 5-6. Similarly, Gaddis Smith wrote in 1994 that a defining characteristic of the Eisenhower administration was the lack among its leaders of a good understanding of Latin America, and a consequential ignorance of Latin American problems. Mark Gilderhus found that as the Cold War initially unfolded, the U.S. took the Western Hemisphere for granted. Latin America appeared to be of peripheral importance, and consequently Washington placed decreased attention of economic development and modernization. Alan McPherson has noted that the U.S. appeared to ignore Latin America during this period, because even aggressive policymakers prescribed only "tepid reforms" in Latin American policy that did little to address the problems of the region. Elizabeth Anne Cobbs' work on Nelson Rockefeller and Henry Kaiser in Latin America reinforced this interpretation by arguing that these businessmen filled a vacuum created by a lack of interest on the part of Washington. See Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945*-1993 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 3-19; Gilderhus, *The Second Century*, 113-114; Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), 20-43; Cobbs, *Rich Neighbor Policy*, introduction.

[29] The most cogently argued treatment of this issue is still Stephen Rabe, "The Elusive Conference: United States Economic Relations with Latin America, 1945-1952," *Diplomatic History* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1978), 279-294.

the primary criterion, the interpretation stands up to evidence. If one changes the question a bit, however, new perspectives emerge. This study takes for granted that the United States was doing more in other parts of the world to bolster economies with public loans and grants and direct assistance. Rather than accept the relative inattention to Latin America in the area of foreign aid as direct evidence of neglect, however, it asks what the U.S. *was* doing in Latin America during the Truman-Eisenhower era.[30]

Answering that question through the lens of Gulf South business communities yields evidence of a variety of public-private initiatives that deserve consideration in evaluating inter-American relations during this period. In the chapters that follow, this study outlines ways in which federal agencies collaborated with a host of public and private entities across the Gulf South to take positive steps toward improving the relationship between the U.S. and its southern neighbors. Some programs were intensely technical, concerned with the nuts and bolts of tariffs and other terms of trade and investment. Others focused more on improving inter-American cultural contacts and impressing upon the American public the value of good relations with their fellow citizens of the Western Hemisphere. All represent active diplomacy, although the majority of the actual activity involved policy actors far outside of Washington. This interpretation does not necessarily get the Truman or Eisenhower administrations out of trouble for their choices regarding Latin American economic development. It does, however, suggest that federal authorities experimented during this era with a diplomatic

[30] Kevin Casey also takes this approach by examining collaborative work between government officials and prominent bankers, economists, and finance experts. See Casey, *Saving International Capitalism during the Early Truman Presidency: The National Advisory Council on international Monetary and Financial Problems* (New York: Routledge, 2001), passim.

division of labor, one in which all good diplomacy did not have to originate in Washington.

Sources and Structure

Gathering the sources for this study involved tracing the voices of stakeholders in the development of Pan American business strategies in the Gulf South at the local, national, and international level. The most critical of these were the voices of the local business communities in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami – importers, exporters, freight forwarders, port officials, corporate presidents and managers, trade analysts, and other professionals whose most vital interest was to increase the flow of trade, tourism, and transportation through their cities. In some ways, these voices were the easiest to find. As trade promoters, these business leaders wanted their efforts to be highly visible to a very broad audience. Consequently, they shared many details about the ongoing institutionalization of trade promotion with local newspapers, business newsletters, regional and national magazines, trade periodicals, and other public forms of communication. Moreover, because this self-promotion usually involved highly public ceremonies, displays, and even new buildings and public spaces, the publicity often originated from interest outside the business community. National publications like *Life* magazine, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and newspapers like the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* frequently reported on the Pan American business strategies taking shape across the Gulf South.

Understanding the public face of the Pan American business strategy was simple enough; tracing the planning and spadework that happened behind closed doors was more

difficult. In some cases, particularly with New Orleans and Miami, collections of papers belonging to a city's trade promotion institutions were easily available. For New Orleans, papers belonging to International House, the International Trade Mart, the Mayor's Office of International Relations, and many of the people associated with these entities have been preserved in local archives. The Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center, while based in Miami and envisioned by Miamians, was technically a state government entity, which has luckily landed hundreds of cubic feet of documentation in the State Archives of Florida in Tallahassee. The papers of the local Chamber of Commerce, including minutes from many of the meetings where Miami's civic and business leaders hashed out their strategy to compete with New Orleans, are also available.

Houston's business community proved to be the most difficult to source. This is in part because the city did not create as many new trade promotion institutions as Miami and New Orleans in the 1940s and 50s, but there is also a dearth of documentation for the traditional business entities that proved so useful in other cities. For example, no extensive manuscript collections exist documenting the Port of Houston, the local Chamber of Commerce, or the Houston Foreign Trade Association. The narrative consequently leans heavily on publications from these organizations, plus the manuscript collections of key individuals, including longtime port official J. Russell Wait and businessman William L. Clayton. Crucial insights also came from the papers of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission, a state agency organized during World War II to smooth over relations between Texas and neighboring Mexico. The agency later dabbled in hemispheric trade promotion, which brought it into close contact with Houston's business community.

The study also features documentation tracing the interplay between the three port cities and various federal agencies interested in promoting trade with and private investment in Latin America. Various bureaus of the State and Commerce departments, as well as special entities like the International Development Advisory Board and the National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Problems, kept in regular contact with local business elites and often collaborated directly on projects. Correspondence and memoranda from these organizations aid in explaining how federal officials envisioned the efforts of Gulf South business communities as part of a broader economic policy strategy toward Latin America and the Caribbean. They also, especially in the case of Miami, help explain how Gulf South port leaders often sought to associate their projects with federal objectives in order to strengthen their legitimacy or attract funding.

Business and political leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean comprise the final category of voices necessary for this project. While the project does not draw on material from foreign archives, it makes use of English and Spanish language sources available in federal records and local archives. Reactions and commentary from Latin American elites concerning the various Pan American business strategies appears in local newspapers across the Gulf South. Correspondence between trade promotion institutions and Latin American business elites was also helpful, as were private letters between these same Latin Americans and key officials like the energetic Mayor deLesseps Morrison of New Orleans. In some cases, State Department officials or special envoys like New Orleans' Rafael Ordorica or Miami's Constantin de Stackelberg submitted extensive

reports describing the reactions of Latin American business communities to the Gulf South ports' Pan American business strategies.

The study is organized partly by geography, and partly by chronology. The first chapter lays the groundwork for the postwar involvement of Houston, New Orleans, and Miami in inter-American economic relations by explaining how the three ports became so competitive, and how they came to envision Pan Americanism as a profitable business strategy. The next three chapters examine the stories of each city in detail, describing how each port's unique set of circumstances, interests, and personalities combined to produce distinctive projects for improving inter-American economic relations in the decades following World War II.

New Orleans comes first in this series, because it was the first of the three cities to build a cohesive inter-American strategy sufficiently successful to be recognized as a model by other ports in the Gulf South and elsewhere. The internationalist posture New Orleans developed in the late 1940s earned the Crescent City far-reaching attention, as well as the highest form of flattery, imitation. Indeed, the next city examined is Miami because, as Miamians themselves would admit, their greatest anxiety in the 1940s and 50s was losing ground to New Orleans in the business of attracting Latin American commerce. As a result, much of the effort Miamians put into building their own international program took the form of trying to beat New Orleans at its own game. Houston, the final of the three ports examined, exhibited less interest in the competition to attract Latin American business per se, at least at first. For most of the 1940s and early 1950s its leaders focused on less internationalist forms of trade promotion, particularly freight traffic patterns and rate equalization for the railroads and wharves. Toward the

end of the 1950s, however, the success of internationalist programs in New Orleans and elsewhere led local Houstonians to believe that it had to give at least some attention to institutionalizing its inter-American business, lest it fall behind in expanding the value of its foreign trade.

There is no single endpoint for this narrative; each port city's experimentation with Pan Americanism as a business strategy was governed by a unique set of local circumstances. In general, the concept of a Pan American business strategy as Gulf South business and civic leaders conceived it in the 1940s ultimately became unprofitable, which led to diminishing involvement and investment from private enterprise over time. In Miami and Houston, profound events transformed the local economy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, thereby also prompting local leaders to rethink the way they promoted their cities in the international arena. New Orleans did not experience quite so sudden a transition, but a combination of factors made the city's traditional Latin trade focus pay decreasing dividends over time. In all cities, as will be seen, changes in the standard methods for conducting international business also had an effect, as did the socio-economic conditions affecting the various Latin American countries. Years of high tariffs and import substitution industrialization policies diminished inter-American trade, while rampant government borrowing sent these countries spiraling into debt in the 1970s. Historians often refer to the 1980s as the "lost decade" in Latin America because of the severity of economic conditions during that period. Enthusiasm for trade and investment in Latin America remained fairly subdued across much of the Gulf South until the arrival of the North American Free Trade Agreement, where the story will close.[31]

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[31] Gregory Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations* (New York: Pearson, 2008), 169-193.

CHAPTER 1:
CHOOSING PAN-AMERICANISM

By the end of World War II, it appeared that Houston, New Orleans, and Miami were emerging from one cataclysmic conflict only to fall into a new contest, this time against one another. Editors, mayors, and civic clubs railed against what they perceived as the crafty and underhanded business tactics of neighboring port cities, while also prodding local business leaders to do more to catch up. Foreign trade experts in Houston accused New Orleans of using political influence to siphon off an unfair share of wartime shipping business. New Orleans' press countered these claims by reminding readers that Houston owed its very existence as a port to federal largesse. "New Orleans was a great seaport when the places now occupied by the Texas ports were mere wastes in a trackless wilderness," spat the *New Orleans Item* in 1944. Across the Gulf of Mexico, anxious Miamians warned that New Orleans was trying to usurp their prosperity and potential as a gateway to Latin America, particularly in air transportation. "An energetic New Orleans can beat out a slothful Miami and will do it if given the slightest opening," one editor wrote. "Miami is going to lose out unless it gets into action quickly, intensively, and on a broad and imaginative front." Increasingly, opinions in all three cities coalesced around the idea that the future of the region in the postwar world would be defined by how well each city performed in foreign trade, particularly with Latin America. Miami's city

manager, A.B. Curry, spoke of a "fight for our aviation life after the war," while the editor of the *Houston Post* predicted a "battle royal" between the Gulf ports for trade.[1]

Rivalry between ports is routine business in market economies, but what set this contest apart from so many others was the way in which the business leaders of these three Gulf South cities framed their competition. Certainly, officials measured their progress in traditional terms such as import and export tonnage, the value of freight shipped, and passengers handled at the local airport or ship terminal. These were solid indicators of the kinds of activities that brought money into a port and distributed it among the various services required to process and ship cargo. As the 1940s progressed, however, leaders in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami placed increasing emphasis on improving the *quality* of their interactions with their customers, especially business and political elites in Latin America. They invested a tremendous amount of public and private resources in developing holistic programs of trade promotion that stressed attention to Latin American problems, conditions, interests, and culture. Profits remained paramount, but the captains of business and shipping in these cities became preoccupied with cultivating friendships and finding ways to foster a sense of collegiality between themselves and their Latin trading partners. By doing this, they believed they could refocus the attention of Latin American importers and exports on the Gulf South and their respective cities. By the late 1940s, as this and subsequent chapters will explain, these ports had adopted a fervent Pan Americanism as their business mantra, and their

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[1] These are just a few of the numerous examples of language used by city officials and the press in the Gulf South to describe the intense competition they felt themselves to be heading toward. For these quotes and others, see "New Orleans Port Sophistry," *Houston Post*, 10 Jan 1945; "This Port – And Others," *New Orleans Item*, 28 Dec 1944; "Another for New Orleans," *Miami News,* 11 Aug 1944; "Miami Now Foremost Air 'Port': Plans Fight to Hold Position," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 Nov 1944; "To Revive to Port," *Houston Post*, 13 Mar 1945; "New Orleans Achieves Airport Miracle Despite Wartime Handicaps," *Miami News,* 11 May 1945.

competition with one another was as much about how well they could facilitate hemispheric trade as it was about the trade itself.[2]

Houston, New Orleans, and Miami had been sites of commercial and cultural contact between the U.S. and Latin America well before World War II, but their extremely public embrace of Pan Americanism in the 1940s would have been unrecognizable in an earlier era. Some of the U.S.-sponsored activities most often complained of by Latin American business elites had strong ties to the Gulf South, particularly New Orleans. For many years, the Latin countries had been the playground of both political and economic opportunists from the United States, and they often used the banking and shipping facilities of the Gulf South as a base of operations. At best, Houston, New Orleans, and Miami had been cities in which North Americans and Latin American elites were often friendly with one another, mostly for the sake of getting mutually beneficial business accomplished. The kind of hospitality and enthusiasm with which Gulf South business leaders met their Latin customers in the 1940s was a significantly more activist form of trade promotion, a sort of Pan Americanist turn in which business leaders consciously chose to wrap their baser considerations of profit-making within a broad program of energetic commercial diplomacy.[3]

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[2] The terms "friendship" and "understanding" appear frequently in speeches, editorials, and other rhetoric dealing with the question of how the Gulf South and the U.S. more broadly ought best to cultivate better relationships with Latin American countries. Businessmen and civic leaders widely believed that better hospitality toward Latin customers and a genuine interest in their problems and preferences would generate more profitable relations, both for the cities themselves and the United States more broadly. For examples of how contemporaries defined "friendship" and "understanding," see Hubert Herring, "Making Friends with Latin America," *Harper's Magazine*, 1 Jun 1939, 360-375; letter from Salvadorian consul Luis Rodriguez to T.L. Evans of the Houston Chamber of Commerce reprinted in *Houston Magazine*, 21 Jan 1941; and "Practical Good Neighborship," *Times-Picayune*, 18 Nov 1943.

[3] The historic role of the Gulf South ports, particularly New Orleans, as bases of operation for intrigue in Latin America and the Caribbean is well-documented. The exploits of filibusters like William Walker and attempts to bring Southern-style slavery into the tropics serve as perhaps the best examples from the 19th century. See Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Tom Chaffin, *Fatal Glory: Narciso López and the First*

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze this shift in trade promotion strategy and explain how it shaped the relationships Houston, New Orleans, and Miami had with one another, with their Latin American customers, and with broader problems of hemispheric relations in general. The changing global and regional circumstances of the 1930s made the old way of doing business with Latin America ineffective at best, and at worst it diminished the United States' ability to deflect political and economic influence from Europe and elsewhere, which had been the entire point of more robust diplomatic dictums such as the Monroe Doctrine. The United States government determined, particularly during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, that it had much to gain by exhibiting respect for Latin American sovereignty and avoiding inflammatory interventionism south of the Rio Grande. This was a far cry from what Assistant Secretary of State Francis Sayre in 1934 called the nation's "mistaken policy of aggression" from the past, a blunder he estimated had cost the U.S. countless millions of dollars in lucrative commerce. Gulf South businessmen and civic boosters similarly realized that by treating Latin American business contacts as commercial partners rather than merely markets to exploit, they could extract better results in terms of cooperation and increased business. Over the course of the 1930s, words like "friendship," "understanding," and "mutual

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Clandestine U.S. War against Cuba (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Frederic Rosengarten, *Freebooters Must Die!: The Life and Death of William Walker, The Most Notorious Filibuster of the Nineteenth Century* (Wayne, Pa: Haverford House, 1976). Twentieth century examples tend to involve corporations and economic penetration more than filibustering. For examples of Gulf South port involvement in exploitative economic expansion into Latin America, such as the New Orleans-based Emery Corporation's shipping of arms into Nicaragua to help depose Jose Santos Zelaya, see Thomas O'Brien, *The Revolutionary Mission: American Enterprise in Latin America, 1900-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), especially pp. 60-66.

benefit" became commonplace in the rhetoric of civic boosters and planners of trade promotion strategy.[4]

To explain how Pan Americanism became such a dominant theme in planning the future of the principal Gulf South ports, this chapter explores three critical factors. The first is the halting but significant shift in messaging that characterized U.S.-Latin American relations in the 1930s. At the end of World War I, the U.S. had emerged as the world's creditor and Latin America's biggest trading partner. Neglect of basic courtesies and continuous political and military intervention prevented these circumstances from improving hemispheric relations, however. By 1930, virtually all of U.S. commercial gains from World War I in Latin America were lost. U.S. exports to the region fell off by 78 percent between 1929 and 1932, in part because of the worldwide depression but also because Latin Americans continued to seek trade with European countries instead of the U.S.[5] Indeed, many North Americans became alarmed that the vacuum was filling up with the influence of other countries whose intentions appeared inimical to U.S. security. Germany and Japan both made significant inroads into Latin American markets during

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[4] Francis Sayre's speech containing these ideas is discussed in "'Bullying' Policy in South America Renounced by U.S.," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Jan 1934. Two excellent and succinct explanations of the logic behind the Good Neighbor Policy as it was adopted by the United States government come from historian Robert Dallek and political scientist Peter H. Smith. See Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 38-39; Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Dynamics of U.S.-Foreign Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 65-87. Manifestations of the same logic at the local level in the Gulf South may be seen in "Latin American Friendship with Orleans Pledged," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Oct 1930; "Ideal of Pan-Americanism Glorified; Tribute Paid to Patriots of New World," *Times-Picayune*, 15 Apr 1932; "Cozatt Heads Pan-American Relations Body," *Miami News*, 23 Jan 1936; "Pan American Movement Spreads," *Miami News*, 31 Dec 1939.

[5] At the height of the United States' pre-World War II commercial relationship with Latin America, which peaked in 1920 while European markets remained in turmoil following World War I, the U.S. imported nearly 1.6 billion dollars' worth of Latin American raw materials and other products. Latin America in turn imported just over 1.8 billion dollars' worth of U.S. products. Although the end of the war emergency caused a natural decline in these figures, U.S.-Latin American trade held fairly steady throughout the 1920s, but declined sharply after 1929. See U.S. Department of Commerce, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States* for the years 1914-1938.

this time, raising the specter of fascist cells and anti-U.S. propaganda within the New World. As one observer put it, Germany's efforts to block U.S. trade expansion in Latin America were worse than if it had established a military base in the region. At the national level, the Roosevelt administration's Good Neighbor Policy and the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act helped considerably, but contemporaries recognized that Latin Americans had soured on the United States for reasons transcending national policy. Increasingly, business leaders, including many in the Gulf South, recognized that to improve the United States' relationship with Latin America, and in so doing ensure the highest possible profits, businessmen dealing with Latin Americans on a daily basis at home and abroad would have to modify their approach as well.[6]

The second factor, one local to the Gulf South, was the juncture reached by Houston, New Orleans, and Miami in their relationships with one another in the late 1930s, just as this new attitude toward Latin American trade was taking hold. New Orleans had enjoyed a strong lead as the principal commercial center of the Gulf South for over a century by 1930, situated as it was at the mouth of North America's most extensive river system. But by the 1930s a number of other ports had emerged as worthy competitors. Houston and Miami, owing to their strengths in trade and transportation, were the most serious contenders that aroused New Orleans' concern. Each of these three ports possessed distinct advantages in the contest to attract Latin American business, but none could yet claim absolute superiority. Self-promotion, then, became critical for asserting each city's claim as the logical center for hemispheric commerce.

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[6] Nazi Germany aggressively promoted the sale of German industrial products in exchange for Latin American raw materials during the 1930s, particularly in Brazil. The quote comparing this activity to the construction of military bases came from Roger Ward Babson, founder of several colleges and an prolific writer and speaker on business theory. See "Nazi Influence Spreads Apace in South America, Babson Says," *Washington Post*, 19 Dec 1938; and Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 75-76.

Consequently, a number of schemes began appearing across the region to promote one city or another as the rightful "gateway" between the United States and Latin America. Most of these ideas, while they became vital sources of inspiration later on, never came to complete fruition in the 1930s. Many businessmen and civic leaders agreed that increased Latin American business represented a great opportunity for growth, but investing large amounts of money and time in institutions promoting Pan Americanism as a strategy for obtaining it seemed unnecessary or impractical.[7]

The arrival of World War II, the third factor, would seriously alter this attitude. The global conflict acted as a catalyst for both the use of Pan Americanism as a business strategy and the competition between the Gulf South ports to extract the most benefit from that strategy. The war cut off traditional export markets in Europe and Asia for both the U.S. and Latin American countries, which dramatically increased the Gulf South's reliance on its southern neighbors for business. The need to make up for the tremendous losses accruing from the war's economic dislocations redefined Gulf South – Latin American relations as a matter of survival. Business and civic leaders warned that becoming the "gateway to the Americas" was no longer just a promotional stunt. It was essential for growth and competitiveness.[8]

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[7] Chapters 2-4 will provide more information about these early Pan American schemes, but notable examples include attempts by New Orleans and Miami to build Pan American "marts" or exhibition centers for displaying merchandise to potential importers. Houston's business community did not exhibit much of an interest in such an institution, although key leaders informed the federal government that they would expect federal assistance in establishing one if New Orleans received such assistance. For more information about New Orleans' earliest attempts at trade institutions based on Pan Americanist principles, see Arthur E. Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas: New Orleans's Quest for Latin American Trade, 1900-1970 (Ph.D., Tulane University, 1987), 32-63; and "Pan-American Mart at Miami, Which Will House Great International Exhibit," *Miami Herald*, 8 Sept 1935. Houston's attitude toward such developments is best illustrated by correspondence between the Department of Commerce and its representative in Houston, Ernest Tutt in 1930, found in Box 2906, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce (RG 151), National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

[8] Harry Tipper of the American Manufacturers' Export Association reported as early as 1935 that troubles in Europe were going to route more U.S. export business to Latin America. U.S. exports to China began

World War II also helped to forge a connection between the local interests of the Gulf South ports and the national interests pursued by the United States government in Latin America. Washington officials regarded the political, economic, and even cultural unity of the Western Hemisphere as absolutely essential to victory and U.S. security. The desire of the Gulf South ports to improve their own contacts with Latin American customers resonated with this policy, and consequently both local and national officials found it worthwhile to cooperate and therefore benefit from one another's ideas and resources.[9]

Becoming a Good Neighbor

The "Pan American turn" in U.S.-Latin American relations began in earnest in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Political and business leaders across the country observed reactions to U.S. policy in Latin America, and began to wonder if it ought not be revised. Throughout the early twentieth century, the United States had become increasingly involved in the internal affairs of several nations in Latin America and the Caribbean, ostensibly to head off political instability and prevent intervention from outside the hemisphere, which Washington officials had long deemed inimical to U.S. interests. Generations of leaders leaned on the Monroe Doctrine and claimed for the United States

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dropping as well, with exporters looking to Latin America to take up the slack. See "Heavier Buying Here by Latin-Americans," *New York Times*, 14 Oct 1935; and "Exporters Retire from China Trade," *New York Times*, 14 Sept 1937. For an example of how these conditions affected the Gulf South more specifically, see "Gulf is Turning to Latin Nations as Trade Source," *Times-Picayune*, 23 Jun 1940.

[9] Numerous examples of this consonance of interests between the federal government and the Gulf South follow in this and subsequent chapters, but one succinct instance emerges from the Pan American Center established at Miami during World War II as a joint outpost of the State Department and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs. Miami campaigned for the center and eventually convinced the government to establish it owing to Miami's role as a major aerial gateway, one which so many foreign visitors would pass through. See "Miami Office to Aid South Americans," *Baltimore Sun*, 24 Aug 1942; also the May and November editions of the Miami Chamber of Commerce newsletter *Miami Business*.

the right to protect its citizens and their property, even when located on foreign soil. In Cuba, this meant a protectorate empowered by the Platt Amendment. In Colombia, it meant warships aiding a revolution calculated to benefit the U.S. and its interest in building an isthmian canal. In the Dominican Republic, it meant U.S. control of the customs houses, so that the North Americans could school the Dominicans in good government. In numerous cases all over the region, it meant the presence of armed Marines guarding North American interests at the expense of Latin American sovereignty.[10]

Observers in both Latin America and elsewhere around the world denounced the United States' policies as "dollar diplomacy," "Yankee imperialism," and the bully tactics of a great "Colossus of the North." Among Latin American workers frustrated with U.S. corporations' attempts to thrust North American values and lifeways upon them, resistance manifested as popular protests and increased nationalism. In Nicaragua, where the U.S. had almost steadily kept Marines on local soil since 1912, Augusto César Sandino and a band of his followers initiated a sustained harassment of U.S. personnel. Sandino was assassinated by the henchmen of Nicaraguan National Guard leader Anastasio Somoza García, but his struggle became a rallying inspiration for anti-U.S. movements throughout Latin America.[11]

Among Latin elites and government officials, resistance took the form of bitter recriminations in speeches, literature, and in the press, as well as protests at Pan

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[10] A good summary of the United States' activities in Latin America and the Caribbean is contained in the first two chapters of Gilderhus, *The Second Century*. Scholars typically refer to interventions in customs collection and loan repayment such as what occurred in the Dominican Republic as "dollar diplomacy." For an excellent survey of this subject, see Veeser, *A World Safe for Capitalism*, passim.

[11] For more on popular resistance to U.S. corporate proselytizing, see O'Brien, *Revolutionary Mission*, chapters 2-4. See also Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations*, 75-77.

American conferences held over the years. Following the United States' refusal to recognize the revolutionary Mexican government under Alvaro Obregón, Mexico outright refused to participate in one such conference in 1923. The Mexican press blasted the U.S. as an "unscrupulous potentate," and called Pan Americanism "nothing more than a flock of sheep watched over by a wolf."[12]

Indeed the U.S.-sponsored version of a Pan American system, which had been developing for decades, particularly after it was formalized by Secretary of State James G. Blaine in the late 1800s, was quickly being revealed as a total farce to Latin Americans. Despite high-sounding pronouncements celebrating the unity of interests among the nations of the Western Hemisphere, North American actions spoke far louder. Moreover, Latin American intellectuals questioned whether the point of Pan Americanism ought to even be based on a sense of hemispheric sameness. Harmodio Arias, a newly accredited minister of Panama speaking before a U.S. group in 1931, declared that the biggest problem with Pan Americanism as most North Americans tried to deploy it was that it overemphasized how much Latin American countries and the U.S. were alike. "We have a difference of races, customs, and traditions, and therefore a difference of ideals and aspirations," he said. To deny this was to arouse suspicion among Latins that Pan Americanism was nothing more than a "cloak for United States imperialism." William Shepherd, a law professor at Columbia University, noted that the

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[12] José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel*, a defense of Latin American spirituality against North American materialism, is a prime example of the literary critique of U.S. policy in the region. The United States' decision not to recognize the government of Alvaro Obregón rested on the recently concluded Constitution of 1917, which included a provision that reserved subsoil mineral rights strictly for the Mexican nation. For more on this incident, see Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy since 1900* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 81-83. For the Mexican critique of Washington's non-recognition of the Obregón government quoted here, plus others, see "Mexican Press Vituperative," *New York Times*, 13 Jan 1923. For more on Latin American intellectuals' resistance to U.S. imperialism, see Gilderhus, *The Second Century*, 30-31.

paternalistic pallor of Pan Americanism was also rankling to Latin Americans, who saw North American protection mostly as a means for North American domination. "Appreciative though they may be of our proffered protection," he wrote in 1927, "the Latin American Republics … perceive no good reason for our holding an umbrella when it isn't raining."[13]

By the late 1920s, the U.S. government appeared to be taking the hint, or at least it was willing to make some cosmetic changes for the sake of appearances. Shortly after he was elected to the presidency in 1928, Herbert Hoover sailed from California on a hemispheric goodwill tour, which he later described as "the first step in what was to be a reorientation of policy toward Latin America." Speaking to crowds in ten countries, he disavowed the United States' condescending attitude toward Latin countries and pledged his administration to the principle of equality between states. Once in office, Hoover did refuse requests from private interests for military intervention, and along with his Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson directed U.S. citizens and diplomats to avoid entangling themselves in Latin American political disputes.[14]

Hoover's efforts to rein in North American interventionism laid the groundwork for what would become the Good Neighbor Policy under his successor, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Historians disagree as to whether this shift denoted an actual attempt to abrogate U.S. hegemony in the hemisphere, but in any event its pursuit did yield some significant changes. Roosevelt, along with Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Assistant Secretary Sumner Welles, enacted policies that established many of Hoover's earlier

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[13] "Warns of Fallacies on Latin America," *New York Times*, 7 May 1931; "America Again Rouses Her Latin Neighbors," *New York Times*, 23 Jan 1927; and Joan Hoff Wilson, *American Business & Foreign Policy, 1920-1933* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971), 161-162.
[14] Gilderhus, *The Second Century*, 72-75; Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 70; Wilson, *American Business & Foreign Policy*, 165-166.

pronouncements in practice. The administration avoided new military interventions and reduced the U.S. presence where those intrusions had already taken place, including Haiti. In 1934, the administration revoked the Platt Amendment, by which the United States had retained a protectorate over Cuba for more than thirty years, and in 1936 Roosevelt himself traveled to Buenos Aires to announce the United States' acceptance of the principle of nonintervention in the affairs of sovereign states. On the economic front, Hull, a staunch advocate of free trade, led a campaign to reduce the United States' high tariff walls and establish reciprocal trade agreements with countries in Latin America and elsewhere.[15]

Although these were critical steps toward improving hemispheric relations, there were some areas of U.S.-Latin American contact that government policy simply could not reach from Washington. Business leaders hailed the Good Neighbor Policy as a tremendous boon to hemispheric trade, but many argued that traders, shippers, salesmen, and others involved in the everyday business of commercial relations had much work left to do before the U.S. could reap all the potential benefits of this new attitude. "The way to get business is to understand your customers and try to please them in the way that will be most helpful to them," explained one foreign trade advocate from Miami in 1929. In a

[15] The debate over just how "good" the Good neighbor Policy was can be illustrated by a comparison between the approaches of Frank Ninkovich and Peter Smith toward the matter. Ninkovich argues that with the exception of a few "opening-night jitters" over its handling of the unacceptable presence of a left-wing Cuban government led by Ramon Grau San Martìn, the Roosevelt administration stuck to its pledge to stay out of Latin American internal affairs. Ninkovich argues that the best test case was the administration's handling of the Mexican oil expropriation crisis of 1938, when President Lazaro Cárdenas nationalized the oil industry. Despite the clamoring for intervention from North American oil companies, the administration was measured in its response. Peter Smith, conversely, suggests that the Good Neighbor Policy can be seen as a sort of *realpolitik* in which Roosevelt backed off on the United States' overt forms of hegemonic domination so it could more easily proceed with using economic means to do the same job. For these and other perspectives on the Good Neighbor Policy, see Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, 111-113; Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 65-87; Gilderhus, *The Second Century*, 72-97.

sense, businessmen needed to adopt the same respect for Latin American trading partners that government officials in Washington were trying to convey.[16]

Unfortunately, the record of North American businesses in commercial relations with Latin America was largely a private-sector reflection of the paternalistic and condescending attitude that had long prevailed in the realm of high diplomacy. North American companies seldom adopted much of a customer service-minded attitude in dealing with Latin American traders. They often sold their goods from catalogs printed in English in North American units of measurement rather than the metric system used in the Latin countries. Salesmen who traveled to the region seldom spoke fluent Spanish, and even those who did were often unfamiliar with local customs for conducting business. Experienced businessmen noted that Latins frequently preferred to mix business with pleasure, so that the actual act of concluding a deal often seemed more like an afterthought. "The Latin American does not want to talk business and nothing else," one successful international banker noted. "The business part of a conversation in Latin America is generally to talking what a postscript is to a letter." A salesman who did not know much about the region's culture, issues, or pastimes, then, would find it difficult to make much headway.[17]

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[16] This quote comes from an address by Charles Franklin Jones, general manager of the newly formed Miami Board of Foreign Commerce. As this and Chapter 3 will demonstrate, Jones believed Miami was in an excellent position to train businessmen in the customer service-minded attitude he advocated. See his address, "Miami's Development from a Garden of Eden to a Beehive of Industry," 30 Sept 1929, Box 2792, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. See also "American Trade Success Traced to Fact Finding," *Christian Science Monitor*, 1 Oct 1930.

[17] Other complaints included inadequate packing, poor credit terms, and a number of behaviors that amounted essentially to a lack of courtesy. The banker quoted here is Bundy Cole of Los Angeles, who represented a number of U.S. banking institutions in Latin America during the early twentieth century. See "Opportunities in Latin America Cited by Former Banker in Urging Aggressive Trade Development," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1938; John B. Glenn, "The Future of Pan-Americanism Based on Financial Relations," *Bankers' Magazine* 136, no. 3 (March 1938), 225-230; Frank V. Dunham, *New Orleans Trade*

The darkening world situation in the mid-1930s deepened the concerns of business and political leaders in the U.S. about these deficiencies in hemispheric trade practices. Countries under totalitarian rule, especially Germany and Japan, were pursuing aggressive nationalist policies at home, and increasingly extending their influence into the Western Hemisphere through trade. In 1934, Germany began issuing a special trading currency called the "aski mark," which could only be used in transactions involving specific commodities moving in and out of Germany. The ostensible goal of this system was to stimulate German trade, but U.S. traders argued it was cutting into their sales to Latin America, as well as those of their British colleagues. U.S. press correspondents filed numerous stories nervously announcing that German and Japanese goodwill missions and trade commissioners were circulating throughout the region, making reciprocal trade deals wherever possible to enhance their countries' commercial relations.[18]

Observers found the anti-U.S. propaganda that accompanied these overtures particularly alarming. Reports emerged claiming that the Japanese were attempting to claim common racial ancestry with the native elements of the Latin American population, and that they were depicting themselves as the "big brother to all oppressed peoples." Nazi propaganda streaming from trans-Atlantic shortwave radio signals and publications trumpeted the supremacy of fascist ideology while warning the Latin Americans of the

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Relations with Spanish America, Present and Future (n.p., 1931), passim; "The Foreign Field," *Dallas Morning News*, 25 Jan 1939.

[18] "Japan Seeks Trade," *New York Times*, 28 Nov 1937; "Nazi Influence Spreads Apace in Latin America, Babson Says," *Washington Post*, 19 Dec 1938; "Latin America: Challenge for Democracy," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 May 1938; "Japan Pushes Trade with Latin America," *Baltimore Sun*, 31 July 1935; "Japan Grabs at Latin American Export Business," *Chicago Tribune*, 2 Mar 1934; "Reich Seeks Salvador's Trade," *New York Times*, 28 Apr 1938; "German-Latin American Trade Fostered by 'Aski' Mark System," *Christian Science Monitor*, 24 Sept 1936; "Reich Outpaces U.S. for Brazil Trade," *New York Times*, 7 Dec 1936.

machinations of the "Colossus of the North." New York City's Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia declared that the United States was on the verge of losing its trade leadership in Latin America if it did not act quickly to counteract the efforts of the totalitarian countries in the hemisphere. In one highly publicized radio address, he advocated a similar approach to that of Nazi Germany, using subsidies to stimulate more trade with the region. Leaders of the U.S. business community and the Roosevelt administration rejected LaGuardia's suggestions as needlessly alarmist, but all agreed that the United States had to do something to counteract the possible ill effects of hostile propaganda.[19]

The prescriptions most commonly offered by businessmen familiar with Latin America were simple. North American exporters, they argued, simply had to become better, more courteous, more knowledgeable salesmen. They needed to do more than hustle business; they needed to "cultivate" it with "tact, honesty, and full appreciation of obligations as well as advantages." Karl Bickel of the United Press succinctly captured the new situation in a 1942 New Orleans speech. "The days of going down there, taking out a lot of money and beating it, are gone forever," he said. "It must be a two-way traffic, mutually advantageous to both sides." If U.S. exporters wanted to sell in a country where Spanish or Portuguese was the primary language, they would need to employ agents speaking those languages. If they wanted to avoid misunderstandings and

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[19] Reports of Nazi propaganda ranged in tone from sober to hysterically panicked during the mid to late 1930s. For a selection of these reports, see "Japan Pushes Trade with Latin America," *Baltimore Sun*, 31 July 1935; "Democracy's Retreat," *Washington Post*, 22 Nov 1937; "Fascism Held Real Menace in Latin America," *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Mar 1938; "Nazi Propaganda Drive Widened in Mexico; Campaign to Be Pushed in All Latin America," *New York Times*, 16 Oct 1938; and especially Carleton Beals, "Totalitarian Inroads in Latin America," *Foreign Affairs* 17, no. 1 (1 Jan 1938), 78-89. LaGuardia's speech featuring his call for subsidized trade with Latin America is provided in "LaGuardia Offers a Recovery Plan," *New York Times*, 12 Apr 1938. For business and Roosevelt administration responses to the idea of subsidized trade, see "Hull Answers LaGuardia's Cry of Lost Trade," *Washington Post*, 13 Apr 1938; "Dislikes LaGuardia Plan," *New York Times*, 14 Apr 1938; "Doubts Trade Loss in Latin America," *New York Times*, 9 Dec 1938.

strained relations with their customers, they would need to learn more about Latin American business culture and the expectations their customers would have. If traders in the U.S. wanted to stop losing business to other countries, they would need to stop demanding special privileges for themselves and start extending to their Latin customers the same privileges offered by competing exporters from outside the hemisphere. As an example, one observer noted that European firms tended to give Latin American buyers good credit terms, whereas North Americans often demanded cash on delivery. This was ridiculous, he said, in an age when the credit history of Latin American import firms could be easily determined.[20]

Back of all these technical foibles, however, was a more profound problem that needed to be addressed. Scholars, businessmen, and politicians generally agreed during this period that a significant source of ill will between North Americans and Latin Americans was that they barely knew each other outside of counterproductive stereotypes. "We don't really like the Argentines, the Peruvians, the Brazilians," Latin American historian Hubert Herring wrote in 1939. "How can we? We don't know them. We scarcely ever see them, and when we do see them we do not understand them. They speak strange languages and do not behave as we do. The people of the United States are indifferent to the Latin Americans. The Latin Americans reciprocate."[21]

Latin observers also pointed to this deep lack of understanding at the heart of their grievances with North Americans. "The average American shows an amazing ignorance

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[20] The quote regarding the "cultivation" of Latin business as opposed to older methods comes from "U.S. Concerns Urged to Foster Huge market in Latin America," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 Dec 1937. Karl Bickel's quote comes from "Bickel Stresses Need for Latin American Ties," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Jun 1942. For other pronouncements from U.S. business leaders regarding the kind of behavioral changes necessary for repairing commercial relations between the U.S. and Latin America, see Glenn, "The Future of Pan-Americanism Based on Financial Relations," 225-230; "Opportunities in Latin America Cited by Former Banker in Urging Aggressive Trade Development," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1938.

[21] Hubert Herring, "Making Friends with Latin America," *Harper's Magazine* 179 (1 Jun 1939), 360-375.

of the geography, history, race psychology and actual problems of Latin America," wrote Salvadorian scholar Manuel Barba Salinas in 1935. "We need the respect of the United States for the Latin American independence and civilization and instead of hate we need love; instead of imperialism we need cooperation; instead of jealousy we need friendship." Cultivating a better sense of "understanding," then, was critical before relations could be improved on a variety of levels. Having a Good Neighbor Policy was essential, but the most effective elixir would be action from the ground up. "If the United States wants to guarantee that no fascist nations will be set up on or near its borders," warned one journalist, "the way to do this lies through a multitude of simple, friendly, neighborly acts."[22]

Business and civic leaders in the Gulf South recognized an opportunity in this situation. In Houston, New Orleans, and Miami, as well as other cities of the region, many believed they possessed the best geography, experience, resources, and contacts to do exactly what so many in the national discourse thought was necessary to save U.S.-Latin American relations. "There is, it seems to me," one New Orleans businessman suggested, "an unusual opportunity for our ports to cash in on their advantages and to play a very important part in the development of a national plan to further expand our export and import business with Latin America." In advertising themselves to potential customers at home and in Latin America, each city's leaders used maps and descriptive language that represented their ports as funnel points for trade and transport business between North and South America. "Today, we are what Singapore is to India, China,

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[22] Manuel Barba Salinas' quote comes from "Why We Hate Americans!," *Los Angeles Times,* 31 Mar 1935. Also quoted here is Roland Hall Sharp in "Fascists Bidding for Latin America by Streamlined Arts of Propaganda," *Christian Science Monitor,* 2 May 1938.

and Asia," boasted one Miami advertisement. "Miami will become the logical commercial hub of future Pan-American trade!"[23]

Moreover, these businessmen felt they were the best equipped to help their nationwide colleagues navigate the breach that separated them from their Latin American counterparts. New Orleans' International House and the program of Miami's Board of Foreign Commerce, for example, were conceived largely to solve this problem. This confidence rested on the widespread belief that the contact they had had so far with their Latin neighbors could become the germ of whatever level of cooperation was needed to serve both local and national objectives in the region. "We here in Louisiana," explained that state's Governor Sam Houston Jones in 1940, "rather better than most, know, or know about, these regions southward. We have the convinced belief that this port of New Orleans has a great role to play in that time beyond the current wars." Certainly, self-interest was the dominating force at play here in the Gulf South as its business communities prepared to invest in massive new Pan American projects. It was convenient and profitable, however, for them to depict this work as beneficial to the entire nation, indeed the entire hemisphere. William G. Zetzmann aptly drew the connection in his remarks upon his election as the first president of New Orleans' International House in 1944. "As an American city, within whose limits thousands of foreign strangers will receive their first impression of us and our country, we shall

[23] The New Orleans businessman quoted was J.M. Monasterio, vice president of the Hibernia National Bank headquartered in the Crescent City. See "Gulf Ports Held Able to 'Cash In' on Latin Trading," *Times-Picayune*, 26 May 1939. The quote regarding Miami as the Singapore of the Western Hemisphere comes from "Handed Us on a Platter," *Miami Herald*, 1 Sept 1935. It was used in one of a series of advertisements soliciting public support of the proposed Pan American Exhibition at Miami. More on that abortive project follows in the next section of this chapter.

endeavor … to make their welcome so sincere and helpful that the United States and some other country will be drawn closer together with each human contact."[24]

The Competitive Gulf South

While widespread national concern over the relationship between business practices and hemispheric unity inspired business leaders in the Gulf South, local circumstances supplied an element of urgency to the call for better relationships with Latin American customers. Until the early twentieth century, New Orleans was the unquestioned leader of the region in terms of foreign commerce. In 1911, when it was the fifteenth largest city in the United States, it serviced nearly twice as many ocean-going vessels as its closest Southern competitor, Mobile, and processed more net cargo tonnage than the ports of Tampa, Galveston, Houston, and Mobile combined. By the 1930s, however, Galveston and Houston were leading the Texas ports in a drive to chip away at this commercial supremacy using their growing power as exporters of cotton and petroleum products. Across the Gulf of Mexico at the southern tip of Florida, Miami was carving out a niche of its own by cultivating a leading international tourism business and a near monopoly on international aviation. Other ports in the region continued to hold their own, but Houston and Miami remained the most dynamic, which increasingly allowed them to share the playing field with New Orleans.[25]

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[24] New Orleans' International House and the enormous foreign trade promotion infrastructure that grew up around it is treated in depth in Chapter 2. For Governor Sam Houston Jones' quote, see "Jones Envisions Broad Advances in Latin America," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Dec 1940. For the Zetzmann speech quoted here, see "Zetzmann Heads House of Amity," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Jan 1944.

[25] See also Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 55.

Houston experienced a meteoric rise as a seaport despite staggering geographic disadvantages. By 1900, it had long enjoyed a position as a major railway hub for southern Texas, but in terms of maritime trade it was hindered by the fifty-mile stretch of Buffalo Bayou that separated it from the Gulf of Mexico. Galveston, located on the coast not far from where Buffalo Bayou emptied into the bay, served the ocean-going vessels, and fiercely defended its control over maritime shipping to and from Texas. Known as the "Octopus of the Gulf," the Galveston Wharf Company held a monopoly over the waterfront facilities of the island town and exacted a high price from Houstonians for handling their cargo. In the 1870s, local businessmen went so far as to build a new railroad to Fort Worth that completely bypassed Houston and Harris County.[26]

Galveston's competitive tactics led Houston's business community to seek outside help in making their city into a deep water port in its own right. On several occasions in the ensuing decades, Houston's representatives lobbied the federal government for assistance with dredging and improving the Buffalo Bayou channel. Although Congress appropriated money here and there for widening and deepening the stream, the project was hamstrung by the financial uncertainty surrounding the Panic of 1873, as well as the preference of federal engineers for Galveston as the main port to serve the trans-Mississippi West.[27]

All of this changed in September 1900 when Galveston was struck by a devastating hurricane. The fierce winds and high water practically flattened the town and badly damaged the port's infrastructure. Estimates of the death toll remain sketchy even today, but reputable scholars put the number at around 6,000 lost in the city alone.

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[26] Marilyn McAdams Sibley, *The Port of Houston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), 79-85.
[27] Ibid., 84-125.

Another 2,000 people were estimated to have moved away after the storm passed.[28] The Galveston Hurricane was a pivotal moment, not only for the city itself, but also for the commercial patterns of southern Texas. The people of Galveston had barely had time to clear away the storm debris before Houston's political representatives redoubled their efforts to enlist Washington's aid in making Buffalo Bayou passable for ocean-going vessels. Citing the recent destruction of Galveston and its wharves, Houston's supporters emphasized the value of a deep-water port far removed from the potential fury of the Gulf. The effort paid off. In addition to voting funds for Galveston's rehabilitation, Congress appropriated one million dollars toward improving Buffalo Bayou for deep-water service.[29]

Another twist of fate did just as much to prepare the way for Houston's arrival as a major Gulf South port. On January 10, 1901, an experimental oil well called Spindletop, located about three miles southeast of nearby Beaumont, struck oil with such force that it shot mud, rocks, and sections of drill pipe over a hundred feet skyward. The gusher expelled an estimated 100,000 barrels of oil daily until workers could cap it and begin normal pumping operations. Almost overnight, southern Texas was transformed into a prosperous oil-producing area. Beaumont's population exploded with people coming to seek their fortune in oil discovery. Port Arthur became a buzzing refinery center, and Houston became the primary shipping point for a new Texas commodity whose value would only grow with time. Oil companies began opening offices in Houston to take advantage of its easy access to all phases of the production process, and

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[28] David G. McComb, *Galveston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 121-149.
[29] Ibid., 125-126.

by 1910 about 11,000 tons of oil were passing through the fledgling port. Galveston's share of new business from this wave of activity was comparatively small.[30]

Both Texans and the federal government continued to support Houston's growth during the early decades of the twentieth century. After obtaining assurances that Congress would provide matching funds, representatives from Harris County coaxed their voters into approving the creation of a special navigation district to issue bonds and raise the money necessary to finish deepening and widening the passage. After a little wrangling to get the bonds sold, the Harris County Houston Ship Navigation District began work, finishing in the fall of 1914. On the morning of November 10th, President Woodrow Wilson pushed a small button in Washington that activated a cannon blast over the new harbor, officially opening the port for business.[31]

Galveston citizens viewed all of this with considerable frustration, and at times attempted to reclaim some of their city's former advantages. On several occasions during the late 1920s and early 1930s, city leaders complained to the Interstate Commerce Commission that Houston and New Orleans were receiving preferential railroad freight rates that hurt Galveston's port business. The Commission took up the complaint and ruled in Galveston's favor on the basis that where Galveston was closer to a shipper the freight rates ought to be less than those on cargo destined for New Orleans. This decision had unintended consequences, however. For many shippers in the northern part of Texas,

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[30] Boyce House, "Spindletop," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (Jul., 1946), 36-43; Sibley, *The Port of Houston*, 132; McComb, *Galveston*, 150-151.
[31] Sibley, *The Port of Houston*, 133-145.

Houston worked out to be closer than Galveston, and consequently by Galveston's own logic a number of freight rates to Houston were justified.[32]

Feeling slighted, Galveston's leaders protested that a port created virtually from nothing using taxpayer funds ought not be given advantages over a "natural" seaport. The city eventually won its case for equal freight rates to Houston and Galveston, but by then it was simply too late. Increasingly large shipments of oil and cotton were swelling Houston's economy, lending the port a great deal of respect and legitimacy. In response to one editorial complaining that Galveston's federal taxes were helping to support the maintenance of the same ship channel that was competing against it, the manager of Houston's Chamber of Commerce retorted that Houston's federal taxes went into the same fund, and therefore went toward maintaining ports at Galveston and elsewhere. "To deprecate the Port of Houston because it is artificial," he wrote, "simply suggests that American business aggression, efficiency and enterprise are unimportant and that communities which display these characteristics are not entitled to any regard for their constructive tendencies. Surely that is not your intent."[33]

Aggression, efficiency, and enterprise were apt descriptors for Houston during the 1930s, as the port grew by leaps and bounds despite the onset of the Great Depression. Its leaders continued to seek assistance from the federal government in improving the ship channel, and by 1935 they had convinced Congress to fund projects to deepen it to thirty-six feet. In the private sector, local promoters succeeded in attracting a wide

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[32] "Galveston to Renew Freight Rate Contest, *Dallas Morning News*, 17 Mar 1930; "Galveston Dissatisfied," *Times-Picayune*, 27 Sept 1930.

[33] This quote comes from Chamber of Commerce manager and vice-president William N. Blanton. See "Houston Chamber Manager Replies to Editorial," *Dallas Morning News*, 29 May 1935. For more on Galveston's fight against federal favor for the Port of Houston, see "In the Fullness of Time," *Dallas Morning News*, 19 Dec 1930; and "Texas Rate Plea to I.C.C. Acted Upon Favorably," *Times-Picayune*, 22 Nov 1935.

variety of businesses to relocate along the banks of Buffalo Bayou, where they could enjoy easy access to the ever-deepening ship route. This would prove to be a crucial advantage for Houston in the future; Buffalo Bayou traversed a region much drier and more conducive to industrial plants than was the case in the areas surrounding other major Gulf South ports. Shipyards, shell grinding plants, cement mills, oil refineries, and fertilizer works sprang up along the waterway, increasing Houston's wealth and attractiveness as a commercial center. By the end of the decade, the cargo tonnage flowing in and out of Houston was on par with and occasionally exceeding that of New Orleans.[34]

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Miami's prospects as a major port were perhaps even more doubtful than Houston's when it was first carved out of the South Florida wilderness toward the end of the nineteenth century. Certainly, its location on the Atlantic coast gave it some advantages in terms of the relatively low cost of dredging an outlet into open water. Other factors, however, were not so favorable, or at least they seemed dubious early on. Miami was located practically at the tip of the Florida peninsula, far removed from all of the major commercial centers of the South, let alone those of the rest of the country. To the south and west lie the Everglades, a swampy "river of grass" that posed daunting challenges for engineers seeking to convert the land into a state of civilization. The

[34] "Modern Houston Port Serves Many Industries," *El Heraldo de Brownsville*, 26 Apr 1938. Cargo tonnage data was obtained from the *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1920-1943 editions. See also Sibley, *Port of Houston*, 171-192.

territory immediately northward was little better. The town itself stood on slightly higher ground, but outlets to the sea were shallow and hazardous.[35]

These conditions limited early Miami's prospects as a commercial port, but the young settlement found success in other areas. Florida had already become a major center of citrus production, but even as far south as the upper peninsula the orange trees were susceptible to frost. Miami's location at the bottom of the state gave it the optimum climate for avoiding this problem, and consequently citrus became one of its most lucrative products. Julia Tuttle, one of the pioneer residents of the town and an owner of hundreds of acres of citrus groves, allegedly pressed this advantage by sending a box of fresh oranges to Henry Flagler in 1894, just after a bitter frost destroyed virtually the state's entire crop. With this demonstration of Miami's marketable climate and pledges of free land, Tuttle convinced Flagler to extend his railroad south from its earlier planned terminus near Palm Beach to Miami in 1896. It would later extend all the way to Key West, and Miami would become a critical waypoint for tourists and for loading agricultural products for shipment north. Flagler further invested in Miami by laying out its first street grid, installing electrical and water systems, financing the town's first newspaper, and constructing the luxurious Royal Palm Hotel, which opened in 1897.[36]

Flagler and other civic leaders advertised Miami as an ideal tourist haven, especially for those seeking to avoid the blustery northern winter climate. Everest G. Sewell, who had moved to Miami with his brother John and gotten into the retail business before the railroad came through, founded the original Miami Chamber of Commerce and made Miami's year-round favorable weather its theme. He kept his store open twelve

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[35] Jan Nijman, *Miami: Mistress of the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 1-21.
[36] Ibid., 11-12.

months out of the year while other merchants often closed for the summer, and he was rarely ever seen without his Panama hat and light-colored tropical clothing. Sewell would later become a major figure in the push to make Miami a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean, but he always kept the value of Miami's location at the center of his promotional efforts. "Miami: Where Summer Spends the Winter" was his slogan.[37]

Although tourism proved a good source of income for the growing young resort town, local leaders also recognized its potential as a seaport. When Henry Flagler first arrived in the 1890s, the channel in Biscayne Bay was unsafe for any vessel drawing more than about six feet of water. Anticipating the need for future shipping, Flagler dredged it to a depth of twelve to fifteen feet. Congress later approved a plan to further deepen the channel and shorten the trip to the nearby Atlantic by cutting across the narrow barrier island that separated the two. Completed in 1905, this new channel was called "Government Cut." To facilitate trade through the new route, Flagler teamed up with fellow railroad giant Henry Plant to develop a steamship line connecting Miami with Granada and Nassau. Further improvements to the channel and more docking facilities followed in the coming decades, so that by 1930 the port was doing a respectable amount of business, although its trade hinterland remained limited. At no point from 1921 to 1935 did Miami's combined cargo tonnage of imports and exports exceed one million tons, which put it behind all of the other principal Gulf South ports, including Tampa and Mobile.[38]

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[37] Historian Francis J. Sicius credits Sewell with practicing "relentless boosterism" to promote Miami. See Sicius, "The Miami-Havana Connection: The First Seventy-Five Years," Tequesta no. 58 (1998), 5-45. See also John Sewell, *Miami Memoirs*, 2nd ed. (Miami: Arva Parks & Co., 1987), xi-xiii and an undated biographical sketch of E.G. Sewell by architect Harold D. Steward, folder "Sewell, E.G.," Vertical File, HistoryMiami, Miami, Florida.

[38] Trade data obtained from *Statistical Abstracts of the United States.* See also Arthur Chapman, "'Watch the Port of Miami,'" *Tequesta*, no. 53 (1993), 7-30, and Sewell, *Miami Memoirs*, 185-189.

The most critical event in Miami's early commercial history arrived not by sea or by train, but by air, when Juan Trippe decided to locate the headquarters of his fledgling Pan American Airways there in 1928. Trippe had begun his company only a year before, with a single 110-mile route between Key West and Havana delivering mail. By 1932, Pan American Airways was the United States' largest airline with more than 20,000 miles of airways linking the major commercial centers of the Western Hemisphere. Miami benefitted from the company's virtual monopoly over international aviation, since it was the busiest of only two gateways used by Pan American to reach foreign destinations in the hemisphere. Local leaders immediately recognized the potential value of branding Miami as the air gateway to and from the United States, and began promoting the city accordingly. Pan American executives took the lead in this capacity, especially Arthur Curtis, who handled a variety of public relations functions for the company over several decades. He helped establish an early aeronautics club for local businessmen, and spoke frequently about Miami's future as an air hub.[39]

More so than Houston's civic leaders during this area, Miamians heavily emphasized their city's advantages as a potential center for U.S.-Latin American trade. Although by most metrics Miami's foreign trade barely registered a pulse in the early 1930s, its leaders saw no reason why that situation could not be speedily improved with a bit of marketing. They emphasized "natural" advantages, using imagery that placed

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[39] For more on the history of Pan American Airways and its growth, see Marilyn Bender, *The Chosen Instrument: Pan Am, Juan Trippe, and the Rise and Fall of an American Entrepreneur* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), and Robert Daley, *An American Saga: Juan Trippe and His Pan Am Empire* (New York: Random House, 1980). See also "Pan American Airways Builds for the Future," *Barron's*, 6 Jun 1932; "Pan American Airways," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 Dec 1928; and "Aviation," *Wall Street Journal*, 12 Jul 1935. For examples of Miami's business community's efforts to promote the city as an air gateway, see "Miami Future as Air Center Told to Club," *Miami News*, 19 Jun 1929; "Miami is Hailed Leading Air Depot," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 6 May 1937; "Form Miami Aero Chapter," *Miami News*, 25 Jun 1924; and "Miami Warned to Plan Future," *Miami News*, 12 Aug 1942.

Miami at the geographic center of the Western Hemisphere. "If you will look at the map of the United States," one promoter noted in an address, "you will note that four cities are located at the corners, like four posts of a great bed." Miami, one of the posts, was the logical southeastern anchor point in this conception, a strategic arm reaching out into the Caribbean basin to gather its trade. "Natural climatic and geographical conditions," he said, "are beckoning Miami to her rightful place as third, if not the second city, of importance in the United States, seeking friendly relations with foreign countries."[40]

To hasten Miami's fulfillment of this destiny, local business and civic leaders began organizing to cultivate better relationships with Latin Americans and lobby for their business. A Board of Foreign Commerce emerged in the late 1920s to press the federal government for special foreign trade privileges and educate local businessmen. It extended its reach over time to include businessmen and trade officials in nearby states, hoping to ally them with Miami's mission to become a regional trading center. Representatives from the Department of Commerce took time to visit Miami and speak with the Board's members about the possibility for increased Latin American trade, which locals took as a sign of Washington's approval of their efforts. On the cultural side, the wife of one of the Board's founding members started an organization called the Pan American League, whose mission was to promote a better understanding of Latin American language and traditions. Like the Board, this organization also aimed to make

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[40] See Jones, "Miami's Development from a Garden of Eden to a Beehive of Industry," 30 Sept 1929 in Box 2792, Records of the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce (RG 151), National Archives. This sort of language is found in much of the promotional language used by Miami's business community and civic leadership during the 1930s. Ruth Bryan Owen, legislator for the Miami area, once told Miami's Board of Foreign Commerce that "we are standing at the place on the map at which the greatest future prosperity is due, and even if we did not have the advantage of climate, this would spell our certain growth." See "Plan for Free Port Favored by Mrs. Owen," *Miami News*, 24 Sep 1929.

Miami the center of a broader national network, and by 1941 the League had chapters as far away as Maine and California.[41]

The effort to establish Miami as a critical U.S.-Latin American trade center culminated in a campaign by several prominent local leaders to establish a permanent Pan American exposition in the city during the 1930s. What the city lacked in traditional advantages for a commercial port, they reasoned, Miami could compensate for by marketing its other numerous qualities. Ideas for such a center began appearing in the 1920s, but serious action began under the supervision of Everest G. Sewell, the prominent early settler who had long promoted Miami as a year-round tourist destination. After visiting the successful Century of Progress exhibition in Chicago in 1933, Sewell returned to Miami convinced that the city could host a similar event to brand itself as an attractive place to do business. Rather than ending after a year or two, however, Sewell proposed that Miami's exhibition morph into a permanent institution that would continue to facilitate increased commerce between the U.S. and Latin America, with Miami itself as the conduit.[42]

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[41] One of the Board of Foreign Trade's primary goals in the late 1920s was to acquire for Miami a "foreign trade zone," a special area where goods could be brought into the U.S. from foreign countries and processed, stored, or repackaged before officially entering the country and incurring duties. For more about the Board's purposes and activities, see "Aid in Foreign Trade Pledged," *Miami News,* 24 Jul 1929; and "Latin-American Trade is Topic for Miami Meet," *Miami News,* 15 Oct 1929. The Board published a newsletter called *The Miami Booster*, at least one issue of which can be found in Box 2792 of the Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce (RG 151), National Archives. For more information about the Pan American League, see "Pan American League Grows; Headquarters Are in Miami," *Christian Science Monitor,* 7 Jan 1941.

[42] Both the Miami Board of Foreign Trade and the Chamber of Commerce made calls for some kind of Pan American Trade Mart or Exposition during the 1920s. The Chamber called for a "Pan American Forum where the mutual trade relationships between the United States and Latin America shall be promoted, with the end of making the City of Miami in a real sense the Pan-American capital of the Western Hemisphere." The Board included such an organization as the third point in its mission statement, namely "to establish in Miami a great international show room of merchandise where all the United States and all Foreign Countries can display samples of their products and trade with one another under the most favorable conditions." See "Forward Miami!," *Miami News,* 9 Feb 1927 and Jones, "Miami's Development from a Garden of Eden to a Beehive of Industry." For more regarding Sewell's early ideas regarding the proposed

Over the next several years, Sewell and a cadre of Miami's staunchest promoters laid out their vision for a Pan American Exposition. The primary component was a permanent trade mart where U.S. and Latin American producers would display their products and buyers from around the hemisphere would come to view them and arrange purchases. From the beginning, however, the project's sponsors emphasized its potential for broader benefits in hemispheric relations. "It is our purpose," the group declared in a full-page advertisement, "to make this great Business Mart the common meeting place for the interchange of ideas and business transactions, the cementing of friendly relations between the business leaders and nations of North, Central, and South America."[43]

Although the proposal appeared to offer tremendous benefits for Miami, it would require an equally tremendous investment, which Sewell found difficult to raise in the midst of the Great Depression. Project proponents claimed that the Pan American Exposition would bring billions of dollars into Miami and do more for the city than any other activity to facilitate recovery, but local financing proved woefully inadequate even to get started. Undaunted, Sewell cast a wider net for support. Citing the Exposition's benefits for both Miami and the nation, he laid a proposal before the newly-created Public Works Administration (PWA) in 1933, calling for that agency to jumpstart the project with a grant of two million dollars. The Technical Review Board set up to review such applications did not immediately reject the idea, but to Sewell's dismay it also did not take action for the remainder of the year. Fearing that federal officials had failed to see the merits of his proposal, he appealed to prominent leaders in both Miami and

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Pan American Exhibition, see "Agricultural Exhibit for Park Planned," *Miami News*, 31 Mar 1929; and "Pan-American Trade Mart One of Mayor Sewell's Projects," *Miami News*, 1 Apr 1940.

[43] "Pan American Mart at Miami – Which Will House Great International Exhibit," *Miami Herald*, 8 Sep 1935.

around the country to lend their support to the Exposition in order to gain Washington's speedy approval. Locally, Sewell depicted the project as a boon to Miami, a creator of jobs and a catalyst for developing the city as a major commercial port. For everyone else, he emphasized the widespread benefits of increased trade with Latin America, claiming that the Pan American Exposition would generate twenty five million dollars in new trade with the region, which would accrue to all cities involved.[44]

Whatever enthusiasm Sewell might have generated in this campaign, it did not sway the administrators of the PWA. Rather than kill the plan outright, they chose to delay by asking for more information about what industries were interested in renting space in the proposed trade mart. Sewell tried in vain to convince the city commission to send a representative north to interest manufacturers in the project and satisfy this requirement, but to no avail. With no clear sign of enthusiastic support from Washington and little in the way of local private interest, the city commission had no appetite to stretch its meager resources any further to support this grand scheme.[45]

Everest Sewell died in 1940 with the prospects of a Pan American Exposition no further along than they had been when he began agitating for the plan a decade earlier. What survived from that effort, however, would be a critical component of Miami's ongoing effort to lead the Gulf South as a "gateway to the Americas." This was the idea

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[44] Sewell's tenacity for promoting the Pan American Exposition idea at this stage was incredible. He used both the resources of the city government and prominent "old timers" in Miami to inundate newspapers and the mailboxes of leaders nationwide with appeals for support. See "Gas Rate Cut Law Up Nov. 1," *Miami News,* 13 Aug 1934; "Bradford to Talk of City's Future," *Miami News,* 16 Apr 1935; "Why We Must Have a Permanent Merchandise Mart at Miami," *Miami Herald,* 25 Aug 1935; "We Want 10,000 Loyal Miamians to Go to Bat and Hit for Miami," *Miami Herald*, 15 Sep 1935; "$25,000,000 in Trade Predicted by Sewell," *Miami Herald,* 20 Nov 1935; "Sewell Still Talks of Fund for Exposition," *Miami News,* 19 Nov 1935. For details on Sewell's dealings with the Public Works Administration, see "Sewell Off Tonight for Bond Discussion," *Miami News*, 21 Jun 1933; "Sewell Arrives in Washington," *Miami News,* 29 Dec 1933; and "Refunding Plan Ready for Miami," *Wall Street Journal*, 28 Sep 1934.

[45] "Sewell's Proposal Dies in Commission," *Miami News,* 19 Nov 1936.

that Miami did not have to be a commercial seaport to compete with the established ports of the region for prestige and increased business with Latin American customers. Not to start out, at least. Rather, as Sewell had envisioned, Miami could press its other advantages as a well-placed, comfortable, and hospitable venue for commercial dealings with excellent transportation infrastructure. Improvements in the city's commercial facilities would naturally follow. While in the 1930s too few Miamians could justify the expenditures necessary to build the institutions Sewell had prescribed to realize this vision, interest would reemerge during and after World War II, as Chapter 3 will demonstrate. In the meantime, tourism and air travel continued to sustain the city's growth.[46]

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New Orleanians were hardly ignorant of these precipitous developments on their flanks. In the 1930s, however, the city's most active business leaders began to sense that their colleagues might have become a bit too complacent. One 1930 memorandum declared that the port was in a state of "retrogression," and that the local business community's failure to develop the Mississippi River system as a commercial corridor was allowing ports like Mobile and Galveston and Houston to siphon off business that would otherwise have gone to New Orleans. If there had been a "logical and coordinated rail-and-water transportation development through the years" instead of such an intense focus on the railroads, the author argued, New Orleans could easily have become the second or third city in the U.S. by this point.[47] The energy of the Texas ports,

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[46] "Miami is Growing as U.S. Gateway to Latin America," *Washington Post*, 12 Jun 1938.
[47] The authorship of this memorandum is uncertain, but its tone suggests it was written by a New Orleans businessperson. It ended up, however, in the papers of J. Russell Wait of Houston, who doubtless would have been pleased that the author saw Houston and Galveston as serious threats to New Orleans'

particularly Houston, was at once both inspiring and threatening. As John A. Fox of the Mississippi Valley Association, a regional trade promotion group, explained to the local Young Men's Business Club in 1930, Houston had been able to triple its population and become the gateway for thirteen million tons of shipping annually in three decades' time. The city's success had rested upon the "hearty cooperation" of the local business community, a model New Orleans' own leaders would do well to emulate.[48]

This is not to say, of course, that no efforts at all went into improving the port's infrastructure or promoting its advantages to potential customers in the Mississippi Valley or abroad. The New Orleans Association of Commerce and the Mississippi Valley Association, the two principal trade promotion institutions in the city prior to World War II, took this task very seriously. In the 1920s, these organizations had attempted to build a trade promotion institution similar to Miami's abortive Pan American Exhibition, complete with space for manufacturers to display their goods and discuss problems of mutual interest. The project fizzled after a short career, but several of the businessmen who headed the project would later borrow from their experiences in the 1920s to build the trade promotion institutions that brought New Orleans such success after World War II.[49]

One of the most vexing questions for New Orleans' business community during the 1920s and 1930s was why distant New York City continued to absorb well over half of Latin America's commercial trade while New Orleans only handled a little over ten

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commercial prominence. See Untitled Memorandum, 21 Apr 1930, in Box 17, J. Russell Wait Papers, Fondren Library, Rice University, Houston, Texas.

[48] "Support Urged for Waterway," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Apr 1930.

[49] Arthur Carpenter's dissertation on the trade expansion movement in New Orleans in the twentieth century is the most comprehensive source on the attempts in the 1920s and the 1930s to build an international trade exposition. See Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 32-63. See also "Trade Mart to Aid Worldwide Barter," *New York Times*, 24 May 1925.

percent. This seemed strange, contemporaries thought, considering the vast difference in distance and the many ways in which New Orleans was tied culturally and historically to the region. A necessary element of any program to shore up the city's position within the Gulf South would be luring away part of the Latin American trade flowing across New York's wharves. To survey the situation in Latin America and suggest ways of attracting more business with the region, the New Orleans Association of Commerce sent a representative in 1930 to visit several countries and report on problems and possibilities in Latin trade. Frank V. Dunham, who had worked as a trade consultant for nearly two decades in the New Orleans area, conducted the survey. He found that most Latin importers and exporters liked doing business in the Crescent City, but he noted that some were forced to do so at a greater cost for some commodities, and that some importers found New Orleanians to be careless with paperwork and unfamiliar with Latin American trading conditions, whereas their New York counterparts were more knowledgeable and dependable.[50]

As mentioned above, this issue of business competency and service-mindedness was already beginning to circulate in the broader national discourse. Between these larger concerns and Dunham's findings, local business leaders realized New Orleans had much to improve if it was to maintain its position in the Gulf South and recapture some of the Latin American business flowing in and out of other ports. The Association of Commerce spearheaded several efforts to address the problems Frank Dunham's mission to Latin America had uncovered, including goodwill missions to the region and a renewed emphasis on teaching Spanish in local high schools. It partnered with the

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[50] Frank V. Dunham, *New Orleans Trade Relations with Spanish America, Present and Future* (n.p., 1931), passim.

steamship companies based in New Orleans to provide free travel opportunities for students who performed exceptionally well in these studies. Private businesses complemented these efforts by participating in the goodwill missions and pledging to learn more about best practices for conducting Latin American trade. Andres Horcasitas, for example, who had come to New Orleans from Mexico in the 1920s as an agent for the Mexican National Railways, attempted to aid this movement by opening an information clearinghouse for U.S. businessmen looking to buy or sell elsewhere in the hemisphere.[51]

Despite some promising responses to these promotional efforts, the Crescent City was suffering from problems that struck much deeper into the core of the port's ability to function than its image at home and abroad. While the Association of Commerce and the Mississippi Valley Association were free to promote the port however their members deemed prudent, the actual operation of the port facilities was the responsibility of a state government agency known as the Board of Commissioners of the Port of New Orleans, or simply the "Dock Board." The members of this body were appointed by Louisiana's governor in Baton Rouge, and frequently received their commissions as political favors rather than because of any knowledge of port operations. The result was a Dock Board that was often inefficient and uninformed at best, and at worst astonishingly corrupt.[52]

As was the case with many Louisiana state agencies in the 1930s, the Dock Board became an arm of the political machine built by Governor Huey Long and politically active members of his family. While he reigned in Baton Rouge, the payroll of the Dock

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[51] For more information about the efforts of the Association of Commerce to train New Orleanians in Spanish and better business practices for foreign trade, see "Good Will Tour to Mexico City Planned by New Committee," *Association of Commerce Bulletin,* 19 Jan 1937; "Mexican Good Will Delegation Returns Home; Chairman Hails Tour as 'Business Success,'" *Association of Commerce Bulletin*, 13 Apr 1937; "Spanish Award Contests to Be Held for 5th Year in High Schools," *Association of Commerce Bulletin*, 27 Apr 1937. For more on Andres' Horcasitas' information service, see "New Type of International Business Service Opens," *Association of Commerce Bulletin*, 20 Apr 1937.
[52] Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 67-68.

Board swelled with mysterious employees who rarely if ever were found anywhere near the port. As reformist mayor deLesseps Morrison would later put it, "Huey Long had put three thousand rat catchers on the payroll." Morrison's quip was only barely an exaggeration; a 1939 investigation revealed that numerous state and local political officials were on the Dock Board's payroll for such cryptic tasks as "inspector" and "special investigator." At least one state senator and multiple members of the governor's staff belonged to this group, as well as a former football coach of Loyola University, who was reputedly serving the Dock Board as a "special representative" at the rate of $350 per month. The local press was outraged when the rolls were revealed; how could the port's payroll continue to grow when its business had for several years been on the decline? [53]

Federal officials stationed in the New Orleans area confirmed the lethargic effect this corruption had on the Crescent City's management of its foreign trade affairs. In a report to his superiors in Washington, J.E. Edmonds of the New Orleans field office of the Department of Commerce lamented that export business in the city was being controlled by agents of the transportation interests, and that the Dock Board's employees who ran the port were completely beholden to the whims of politicians. Although the Commerce Department tried throughout the 1930s to stoke local interest in developing New Orleans' commercial potential, representatives reported finding it difficult just to get committees together to discuss the most basic issues involved. The apathy that business leaders had warned about at the start of the decade and hoped to extinguish was clearly

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[53] Mayor Morrison's quote came from a conversation he had with several Miami businessmen in 1959. See "Sore Sight for Eyes," *Miami News*, 17 Jun 1959. Following the 1939 investigation, the *Times-Picayune* published the Dock Board's payroll in full, along with a scathing editorial that prompted considerable concern among local business leaders not associated directly with the Dock Board. See "Names Prominent in Politics on Dock Board Pay Roll," *Times-Picayune*, 28 Aug 1939; and "Dock Board Pay Roll," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Aug 1939.

still in play at the end of the decade, despite the burgeoning success of nearby Gulf South ports and the declining fortunes of New Orleans itself. Indifference was not universal, of course; some observers found the state of affairs in the Crescent City bewildering or even alarming. "The advantages that the port of New Orleans has to offer should enable it to do a world business," said A.W. Parry of the Association of Commerce in 1937. "New Orleans, for some mysterious reason has never really cashed in on the advantages it possesses."[54]

World War II Changes the Game

By the end of the 1930s, then, the leadership of the Gulf South as a nexus between the U.S. and Latin America had become increasingly contested. Houston, New Orleans, and Miami all possessed advantages that, if properly cultivated and marketed, could become the basis for regional leadership in commercial relations with Latin American countries. Attempts to institutionalize Pan Americanism and make it a defining principle for these relations had met with mixed success. Groups of businessmen and civic promoters who saw better commercial ties with Latin America as their cities' best chance for growth were able to establish a few programs and organizations, develop some goodwill, and at least raise public awareness about the opportunities at hand. The larger projects, such as the permanent trade exhibits envisioned by businessmen in Miami and New Orleans, had failed to stimulate sufficient

[54] Correspondence between the New Orleans field office of the Department of Commerce and its Washington supervisors reveals the daily frustrations of the agents who attempted to interest local business leaders in meeting to discuss strategies for turning the port's fortunes around. See especially John H. Farrell to Lacey C. Zapf, 30 Nov 1934, C.P. Persons to Lacey C. Zapf, 19 Jul 1935, and Lacey C. Zapf to John Abbink (Chairman of the National Federation of Foreign Trade Associations), 10 Feb 1936, all in Box 387, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce (RG 151), National Archives. For A.W. Parry's quote, see "A.W. Parry Explains Port Advantage to 101 Group," *Association of Commerce Bulletin*, 16 Mar 1937.

interest. As tensions in Europe and Asia increased and the United States prepared for a likely response, however, the prominence of Latin America in the strategic thinking of leaders in both Washington and the Gulf South began to change rapidly.

The Roosevelt administration was by no means assured of the security of the hemisphere merely on account of its successes earlier in the decade. Despite the goodwill generated by the United States' acceptance of the principle of nonintervention, efforts at liberalizing trade relations, and other Good Neighbor gestures, the ongoing German and Italian presence in Latin America was still a cause for concern. By 1938, the governments of these countries had established fascist political parties, dispatched military missions, expanded trade, and kept up a steady stream of propaganda designed to undermine U.S. influence in the region.[55]

Diplomatic crises also tested the limits of the Good Neighbor Policy. One of the most serious instances emerged in March 1938, when Mexican president Lázaro Cardenas announced the nationalization of the oil industry. This entailed expropriating a significant amount of property belonging to North American oil companies, which promptly addressed outraged appeals to Washington for retaliation. The Roosevelt administration found itself in a tough position. Denouncing Cardenas and demanding full compensation for the North American companies' losses could poison U.S.-Mexican relations at a moment when Mexican oil resources were likely to prove vital for a North American war effort. Equally problematic, however, were the potential consequences of

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[55] U.S. fears of a German-driven Axis conspiracy became the pretext for a number of counter-propaganda and anti-German policies imposed by the United States upon Latin American countries, including a deportation program to eliminate as many ethnic Germans from the region as possible. See Max Paul Friedman, *Nazis & Good Neighbors: The United States Campaign against the Germans of Latin America in World War* II (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1-12. See also Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 175.

being too lenient. U.S. companies were heavily invested in oil production in Venezuela and Colombia, whose leaders might interpret a lenient U.S. response to Cardenas' actions as a green light to nationalize their own oil industries. In the end, Roosevelt pursued a policy designed to preserve hemispheric unity. After a few terse diplomatic exchanges and protracted disagreement over how to arbitrate the dispute, the U.S. and Mexico agreed on a formula for partial compensation that saved face, ended the controversy, and kept the Mexican oil industry pumping.[56]

As the global situation deteriorated, Washington took unprecedented steps to reorganize the hemispheric economy for war, counteract unfavorable propaganda, and refocus Latin Americans' attention on positive aspects of their relationship with the U.S. Prior to this period, the United States had used economic assistance as more of a carrot-and-stick tool, only extending loans as rewards for compliance with Washington's expectations. With the threat of approaching war, however, hemispheric unity became more valuable than for the U.S. to insist on righteous principles regarding liberal trade concessions and the treatment of private investors.

The U.S. pursued several strategies to shore up the Latin American economies ahead of the impending conflict. In 1939, at a meeting of the American foreign ministers in Panama, the U.S. and the Latin American countries created the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee to investigate methods of stabilizing currencies and offsetting the shock of losing European trade by increasing hemispheric

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[56] Josephus Daniels, the U.S. ambassador to Mexico during the Mexican oil crisis, captured the crux of the issue well in a message to President Roosevelt. "This Mexican situation will test our Good Neighbor Policy," he wrote. "The upholding of that policy, however, is of the highest consideration in a mad world where Pan American solidarity may save democracy. Oil ought not to smear it." See Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 175-176. Daniels' position would prove to be wise; the Germans wasted little time in attempting to exploit the U.S.-Mexican rift by developing a barter agreement to obtain newly nationalized Mexican oil. See "Germany Gets Trade Chance in Mexico," *Dallas Morning News*, 1 Mar 1939. See also Smith, *Talons of the Eagle*, 78-80.

commerce. The Export-Import Bank, which Roosevelt had created in 1934 to facilitate better inter-American commerce, stepped up its lending in Latin countries, granting generous sums to projects that would accelerate Latin American industrialization. The President and the State Department toyed with the idea of a cartel to alleviate trade deficits in the region, although this scheme eventually proved unworkable. The administration did, however, buy up enormous quantities of Latin American raw materials, which had much the same effect in terms of commodity prices. The 1940 Inter-American Coffee Agreement, for example, committed both the U.S. and the coffee-producing countries in Latin America to quotas that helped regulate the coffee supply and prevent individual countries from torpedoing the price of coffee by dumping large quantities on the market. The U.S. further intervened by cooperating with Latin American governments to create large-scale programs to develop production capacity in strategic commodities such as rubber, industrial metals, and foodstuffs.[57]

The benefits of granting liberal economic aid in this particular moment were numerous. Officials expected that if the U.S. assisted Latin Americans with industrialization projects, it would foster better cooperation with those countries, while also generating new sources of needed products for U.S. manufacturing and consumption.

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[57] By the end of the war, the Export-Import Bank had loaned two million dollars to Nicaragua, five million each to Chile and Uruguay, and forty five million dollars to Brazil. See *Smith, Talons of the Eagle*, 80-82; Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 205; and O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America*, 103. For the text of the Inter-American Coffee Agreement, see Treaty No. 970 in U.S. Department of State, *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America*, vol. 3 (Washington: GPO, 1968), 671-682. A good example of one of the United States' projects to foment higher and more efficient production was the Haitian Development Corporation, a semi-government entity designed to establish Haiti as a producer of natural rubber and other essential commodities. The project was financed by U.S. credits and Export-Import Bank funds, and was jointly managed by Haitian and U.S. individuals. See John E. Lockwood and Luther Ely Smith, "Intra-Governmental Activities of the United States to Foster Hemispheric Trade," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 8, no. 4 (Autumn 1941), 669-683; and "Haitian-U.S. Long-Term Agreement is Reached," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, 17 May 1941. The Rubber Reserve Company, a subsidiary of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, provides another good example. See Paul Wendt, "The Control of Rubber in World War II," *The Southern Economic Journal* 8, no. 3 (Jan. 1947), 203-227.

The raw materials alone would be essential, since sources in the Far East were now off limits due to the war. The investment would bear geopolitical dividends as well. North American economic assistance would replace German capital and theoretically render the region less vulnerable to instability brought on by economic sluggishness. As one press report described it in 1942, the strategy was designed to "take away whatever glamour Fascism and Nazism may have for 'have nots'" in the region.[58]

At a meeting of the American foreign ministers held at Rio de Janeiro just after that report, Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles called on the American republics to coordinate their economies to meet the needs of the North American war machine. In return, Welles promised that the U.S. would clean up any economic messes created in the process. "The Government of the United States is prepared to cooperate whole-heartedly with the other American republics in handling the problems arising out of these economic warfare measures," he said in a plenary session. "It stands prepared to render financial and technical assistance, where needed, to alleviate injury to the domestic economy of any of the American republics which results from the control and curbing of alien economic activities inimical to our common defense."[59] Crucially, Welles depicted the U.S. attitude toward its assistance to Latin America as a policy that would outlive the war. "Obviously our greatest efforts must be extended toward victory," he told the assembled dignitaries. "Nevertheless, the full consummation of victory must include the building of an economic and social order in which all of our citizens may subsequently enjoy the blessings of peace." Pronouncements such as this, along with promises to hold

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[58] The quote comes from "Giant Hemisphere Industry is Aim of Conference," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Jan 1942. See also R. Harrison Wagner, *United States Policy Toward Latin America: A Study in Domestic and International Politics* (Stanford University Press, 1970), 14-15.

[59] Address by Sumner Welles to a Plenary Session of the Third Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics in Rio de Janiero, *Department of State Bulletin* 6, no. 134 (17 Jan 1942), 55-62.

a technical economic conference once victory was assured, helped generate high expectations in Latin America about U.S. postwar economic policy. This would become a critical factor in drawing the federal government and the Gulf South ports closer together later on, as Washington began searching for ways to satisfy these expectations without broad commitments of public aid.[60]

Alongside its efforts to bring Latin American economies into alignment with U.S. needs, the Roosevelt administration also took steps to mold Latin public opinion and impress upon them at a cultural level the sincerity of the United States' intentions and its desire to act as a partner in the common defense and welfare of the hemisphere. Washington officials recognized early on that the cooperative effort would suffer if Latin Americans thought the U.S. was merely exploiting the wartime emergency for its own gain. To prevent this impression, officials urged citizens in both the public and private sectors to situate their relations with Latin Americans on a basis of trust and respect.[61]

Most of the tasks associated with cultivating a good image in this regard fell to the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (OCIAA), an agency conceived and lobbied into existence by the energetic oil tycoon Nelson A. Rockefeller in 1940. Rockefeller had taken an immense interest in Latin America over the preceding years, and had experimented with several quasi-private initiatives to develop the economies of

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[60] Ibid; Chapter 2 provides a full treatment of Washington's struggle to meet the obligations it set for itself in Latin America during the war, and how the Gulf South became a factor in meeting those obligations. Stephen Rabe's explanation of the federal government's quandary over how to handle the promised technical economic conference is also useful. See Rabe, "The Elusive Conference," 279-294.

[61] Examples of this sentiment include a warning by Undersecretary of Commerce Edward J. Noble to businessmen in 1939 against abusing this opportunity to build inter-American solidarity, as well as the approach of the State Department's Cultural Affairs Division to altering its programs in Latin America to accommodate the urgency of the war situation. Officials in that department warned against making radical changes to programs in the region, fearing that to do so would confirm to skeptical Latins that the U.S. that the emerging new U.S.-Latin relationship was merely a passing phase. See "Latin-American Future," *Times-Picayune*, 6 Oct 1939; and J. Manuel Espinosas, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy* (Washington: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State, 1976), 191-193.

countries where his companies were invested. His arrival in Washington as Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs proceeded from his effort to impress upon the administration the importance of adopting the same attitude officially, as he felt the region had been neglected. Others in the administration shared Rockefeller's concerns about doing more to infuse the Good Neighbor Policy with action, but it was the arrival of this office that initiated the administration's boldest programs.[62]

The Office of the Coordinator bore much of the responsibility for improving U.S.-Latin American relations during the war and ensuring hemispheric unity against infiltration by Axis propaganda or economic influence. The agency began funneling money into the film industry, promoting movies with themes of inter-American harmony. It also censored films with content deemed potentially offensive to Latins. The agency expanded the broadcasting of U.S. programming over radio, and worked to overwhelm and stifle Axis propaganda in the region. It also helped prop up Latin American trade and business. Rockefeller was instrumental in developing solutions for unsnaring shipping problems and getting U.S. businesses to cooperate with the federal government.[63]

Even with all of these programs in place, however, old concerns about how Latin Americans experienced contacts with the United States on a daily basis continued to surface in Washington. To have comprehensive hemispheric unity, Rockefeller and others believed, it would be necessary to mold North American public opinion and

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[62] Although Nelson Rockefeller was already engaged in a number of tasks managing his family's various investments, he craved the opportunity to put some of his ideas into public service. For more information about how Rockefeller convinced the Roosevelt administration to create the office, see Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer, 1908-1958* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 174-188. For more information about the public-private development projects Rockefeller developed in Brazil and Venezuela before and after the war, see Cobbs, *The Rich Neighbor Policy*, passim.

[63] Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 189-209; O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America*, 103-104.

behavior along with the attitudes of the federal government toward Latin America. The U.S. needed everyday citizens to project the Good Neighbor Policy by cultivating responsible public opinion among themselves and in the presence of Latin American visitors. It needed for the average U.S. citizen to understand the value of Latin American cooperation in the war, and to respect cultural differences rather than deride them through old stereotypes. It needed businessmen to be courteous and patient in their dealings with Latin American clients. Perhaps most of all, it needed a small army of citizens across the nation to organize this effort to educate the public about hemispheric solidarity and make it a reality. In justifying his requests for funding, Rockefeller said, "To the other American republics, and their people, the most tangible and practical evidence that we mean what we say regarding the good-neighbor policy, is what we actually do in this country; what we actually do toward developing so deep an understanding of our neighbors, and of our interdependence, that the good neighbor policy will receive permanent popular support."[64]

The business communities of the Gulf South believed they were in the perfect position to answer this call, not least because they themselves were sorely in need of better relations with Latin Americans as the war unfolded. Much as the loss of traditional markets in Europe and Asia had caused significant economic disruptions in Latin America, U.S. commerce had also taken a hit, Gulf South ports included. Because of the Neutrality Acts passed during the late 1930s, the initial onset of World War II closed off

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[64] The desire of the OCIAA to decentralize its effort to shape public opinion on Latin America is reflected in memoranda dealing with the agency's establishment of Pan American community centers across the U.S. Based on a model adopted from a privately developed center of this kind in Toledo, Ohio, the OCIAA began laying plans in 1942 to partner with private organizations to establish similar centers from Spokane to Tulsa to Salt Lake City to Little Rock. See Memo to Walter Laves from Louise Wright and Helen Louise Johnstone regarding proposed community projects, 8 May 1942 in Box 1, OCIAA Central Files (RG 229), National Archives. Rockefeller is quoted here in "Censorship Office Will Employ 2,396 in Miami," *Miami News*, 20 Jun 1943.

the belligerent countries to trading with United States ports. As more countries became entangled in the conflict, the trade situation deteriorated even further. Moreover, local leaders did not expect the end of the war to improve the trade situation with Europe. The war effort was requiring European countries to spend massive amounts of gold, which would greatly diminish their purchasing power after the conflict ended, especially for the raw materials produced in the South. Even if this situation were to resolve itself, Europe's track record in the twentieth century up to the 1940s was less than encouraging. Despite its history as a lucrative market for investment and trade, political instability was becoming the rule rather than the exception. Amid all of these disturbances and with little hope for immediate improvement, Latin America appeared to be the safest bet for maintaining the commercial power of the Gulf South. Conveniently enough, it was also the region with which these ports felt they operated with the greatest advantages.[65]

For some trade experts in the Gulf South, this situation provoked a bit of déjà vu. T.L. Evans, a prominent member of Houston's foreign trade community, remarked at one conference in 1939 that the United States had once been handed the trade of Latin America on a silver platter after World War I, which had prostrated the region's traditional trade partners in Europe. The U.S. chose, however, not to take advantage of that situation and develop better trade relations on a permanent basis. Others around the

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[65] Shipping magnate R.S. Hecht aptly captured this sentiment in a 1944 speech: "The prospects for resuming our former international trade as soon as peace comes look very different if we turn our eyes from battle-scarred continents of Europe and Asia to South and West Africa, and especially to our own Western Hemisphere." See R.S. Hecht address to the Chicago World Trade Conference, 14 Feb 1944, *Vital Speeches of the Day* 10 (1944), 396-401. See also the minutes of a meeting of local citizens interested in foreign trade held in New Orleans, 3 Mar 1941 in Box 2807, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce (RG 151), National Archives; "Business Chance for U.S. Seen in Latin Americas," *Times-Picayune*, 1 Oct 1939; "Jones Envisions Broad Advances in Latin America," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Dec 1940; "Wallets Stung, U.S. Gulf Coast Turns to South," *Washington Post*, 23 Jun 1940; "Miami Urged to Increase South American Friendship," *Miami News*, 24 Nov 1942; "Miami, with Eye on Trade with Latin Americans, Plans Combined Sea, Air Port," *St. Petersburg Times*, 10 Sept 1943.

region agreed; World War II was an opportunity to correct the mistakes U.S. business and government alike had made in the 1920s.[66]

Indeed, it would be different this time. As Gulf South leaders began planning for how they would restructure their commercial strategies around the wartime emergency, they also considered how the actions they took in this moment could help ensure a beneficial long-term trade relationship with Latin America after victory. In a speech before the Chicago World Trade Conference in 1944, New Orleans shipping magnate R.S. Hecht argued that much of the Latin trade lost by the U.S. after World War I had gone to European competitors, who had sent representatives to the region and given the buyers exactly the sort of attention they wanted. "We must profit by this past experience," he said, "and right now send men who speak their language to our customers abroad so as to learn firsthand what their markets and requirements are and comply with all their reasonable requests so that they may not again be tempted to later divert their business elsewhere."[67]

The harmony between national and regional objectives in this moment could hardly have been closer. Consequently, the war years witnessed a thriving collaborative effort between the federal government and the port cities of the Gulf South to develop the latter as sites for promulgating better U.S.-Latin American commerce and, more broadly, U.S.-Latin American relations in general. Houston, New Orleans, and Miami all sent representatives to Washington to lobby for their respective interests and to discuss

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[66] "Huge Economic Union Seen as War's Outgrowth," *Dallas Morning News*, 6 Dec 1939; "Opportunity Knocks a Second Time," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Mar 1941; "Spur to Postwar Trade Predicted," *Times-Picayune*, 9 Feb 1944.

[67] R.S. Hecht address to the Chicago World Trade Conference, 14 Feb 1944. Houston's business leaders also recognized this opportunity and took steps to draw Latin American importers and exporters into their orbit. See, for example, "Wings over Latin America," *Houston Port Book*, May 1940.

strategies for maximizing hemispheric trade. Houston and New Orleans campaigned to become centers for war-related shipping, while Miami focused on consolidating its role as an air transportation hub.[68]

New Orleans' abortive Pan American Fiesta of 1942 was an illustrative example of local attempts to capitalize on this harmony of interests between Washington and the Gulf South. Charles Nutter, the head of the Associated Press bureau in the Crescent City, proposed a plan shortly after his arrival in 1939 to attract a wide audience and sell them on the idea of New Orleans as the premier gateway to the Americas. The 450th anniversary of Christopher Columbus' first voyage to the Western Hemisphere would be coming up in 1942. Nutter envisioned a "Pan American Fiesta" program that would open on Columbus Day in October 1942 and remain open through Pan American Day in April 1943. The exhibition would promote Pan Americanism and hemispheric solidarity, but it would also emphasize the centrality of New Orleans to trade between the Mississippi Valley and Latin America.[69]

Even as a newcomer, Nutter had entrée as a press representative with some of the city's leading businessmen. He promptly arranged several meetings to try to drum up support for his idea. He captured the interest and endorsement of two well-connected men, Rudolf Hecht of the locally powerful Hibernia National Bank and soft drink tycoon

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[68] For more regarding New Orleans' efforts to become a major war shipping port, see the minutes of a meeting of local citizens interested in foreign trade held in New Orleans, 3 Mar 1941 in Box 2807, Records of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce (RG 151), National Archives, as well as "Three New Ships Bought for Runs from This Port," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Nov 1941. For information on Houston's efforts in the same vein, see William L. Clayton to J. Russell Wait, 9 Dec 1941; J. Russell Wait to J.W. Evans, 11 Sep 1941; and William L. Clayton to H. Harris Robson, 9 Dec 1941, all in Box 24, J. Russell Wait Papers, Foundren Library, Rice University. For more on Miami's efforts to obtain wartime business and a reception center for international visitors, see "Miami Business Shows Remarkable Increase through Graham's Efforts in Washington," *Miami News*, 5 Dec 1942; as well as the May and November 1942 editions of the local Chamber of Commerce's newsletter entitled *Miami Business.*

[69] Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 69-70.

William G. Zetzmann, who in turn began seeking additional help from within their own circles and in Washington. Hecht, who enjoyed access to the ears of numerous operatives in the federal government, used his influence to get endorsements for the Pan American Fiesta idea from Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Under-Secretary Sumner Welles.[70]

From here, however, it was slow going. After submitting a prospectus to the State Department and the Louisiana Legislature in the spring of 1940, interest on the project lagged, and Nutter was unable to get all the pieces moving to make the Fiesta program a reality. "I have placed my Pan American Fiesta file in the 'Opportunities Blowed' drawer," he fumed to Congressman F. Edward Hebert. "This town needs a million tons of TNT. Why don't you come down here and raise hell. You're a hot shot now and maybe they'd listen." Nutter would be disappointed. Although the Pan American Fiesta committee formed a corporation in 1941, the project was scrapped after the attack on Pearl Harbor rearranged the city's priorities.[71]

Across the Gulf of Mexico in Miami, local leaders had better luck in trying to combine federal and local resources for the good of Pan Americanism. Eager to revive the city's aging plan for a Pan American Exposition and receptive to the OCIAA's call for Pan Americanism among the citizenry, a core group of Miami boosters and business leaders sensed an opportunity. Through their Congressional delegation and special representatives sent to Washington, they lobbied the government to use Miami as a site for federal programs aimed at coordinating inter-American relations. Citing their transportation advantages and excellent climate, Miamians declared themselves ready to

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[70] Ibid., 69-71; Alonzo G. Ensenat, *The Story of International House and International Trade Mart* (n.p., 1974).
[71] Nutter is quoted in Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 70-71. See also "Exposition of 21 Nations Here is Off Indefinitely," *Times Picayune*, 21 Dec 1941.

support whatever sort of agency Washington saw fit to create, be it a trade mart, a reception center, or even a branch of the OCIAA itself.[72]

Deciding that Miami's resources indeed matched their needs, the State Department and the OCIAA jointly announced in August 1942 that the two agencies would open a reception center in the city. This agency would welcome and entertain foreign visitors, and assist them in making their way through the U.S. Although the center was operated by the United States government, from the beginning it was more of a partnership with local groups that recognized the value of making Miami into a cooperative Pan American space. The staff of the center integrated their work with the existing Pan American-minded organizations of the city, including the Pan American League and the Chamber of Commerce.[73]

Mrs. Clark Stearns and the Pan American League had arranged much of the hospitality in Miami for visiting Latins before the arrival of the center, and the new office worked closely with her organization to take full advantage of its connections all over town. The Chamber of Commerce helped by mobilizing the city's business community to help welcome Latin visitors. For example, the reception center and the Chamber set up a program in which arriving Latin business leaders would be met and entertained by Miamians of the same profession. The Chamber urged its members to sign up for

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[72] The local Chamber of Commerce and civic leaders lobbied the federal government for this and other favors, as did members of the Florida Congressional delegation, especially Ernest Graham. See "Miami Business Shows Remarkable Increase through Graham's Efforts in Washington," *Miami News*, 5 Dec 1942; and the May 1942 edition of *Miami Business*, the Chamber's monthly newsletter.

[73] "Latin American Center in Miami will Open Soon," *Miami News*, 2 Aug 1942; "Center Plans Are Announced," *Miami News*, 6 Aug 1942; "Reception Center Aids 'Neighbors,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 Dec 1942; "Crow Named Head of Pan Am Group," *Miami News*, 9 Nov 1942.

intimate diplomatic activities of every kind, from taking a Latin American visitor to dinner, to hosting him or her in their home, to a round of golf.[74]

In cases like these, officials at local and national levels were satisfied that cooperation between the Gulf South ports and the federal government could serve the objectives of everyone involved. "We believe that we can and are destined to be of great importance to the whole country in Latin America," said chairman Leslie Buswell at a meeting of the Pan American Relations committee of the Miami Chamber of Commerce in 1942. "If we can be of service in the development of Pan Americanism to the nation, fine. Here we are, lending our efforts."[75]

There was plenty of work to be done by all of the Gulf port cities, but local leaders could not help but think about the future. Strengthening Latin American ties in the name of hemispheric unity and national defense was honorable and profitable, but the relationships formed during the war would certainly govern to some degree how these cities stacked up against one another after the war was over. And, as observers were quick to point out, the competition was already underway even as business leaders argued that their efforts were geared toward rendering the best possible service to the war effort. Houston's port officials were alarmed at New Orleans' dexterity at convincing federal officials to route wartime shipping through that port. J. Russell Wait, the port director at Houston during this period, feared as early as 1941 that the city might not be able to get enough business to keep all of the railroad and shipping companies going through the conflict. Miamians also sensed danger, as Houston and New Orleans had both submitted

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[74] "Miami Business Men to Greet Latin Guests," *Miami News*, 18 Aug 1942.
[75] Buswell is quoted in the minutes of a special meeting of the Pan American Relations Committee of the Miami Chamber of Commerce, 18 Sept 1942, Miami Chamber of Commerce Minute Books, HistoryMiami Museum and Archives.

applications to the Civil Aeronautics Board for direct commercial air routes to Latin America. This was a perilous threat to Miami's greatest advantage over these cities in cultivating Latin American business.[76]

Civic leaders in all three cities warned that the war had permanently altered the playing field for hemispheric commerce through the Gulf South. Relationships with Latin America through trade, transportation, and tourism had become more vital than ever, as trade and business figures demonstrated. In 1939, for example, Latin American countries had purchased only 34% of New Orleans' exports, and had sent back a little over 62% of the city's imports. By 1945, Latin America accounted for 95% of New Orleans' imports while absorbing over half of its exports. Miami's commodity freight trade was still comparatively minuscule, but its role as an international air hub was undeniable. From July 1942 to April 1943, the city handled 46.5 of all civilian air departures and arrivals to and from the United States, the majority going to Latin America. The value of this connection for inter-American business, even without the advantage in commodity freight, was clear. Sixteen Latin American and Caribbean countries maintained consulates in Miami as of 1943. Houston's business community did not enjoy as significant an uptick in Latin American business during the war as New Orleans, but its leaders nonetheless focused on future possibilities. U.S. exports to Latin

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[76] J. Russell Wait frequently expressed intense frustration during the war over what he perceived as the neglect of Houston in the federal government's plans for wartime shipping and commercial planning. See memorandum from Wait to C.J. Crampton, 3 Sep 1941; E.J. Luhn to several railroad agents in Houston, 3 Sep 1941; and J. Russell Wait to J.W. Evans, 15 Sep 1941, all from Box 24, J. Russell Wait Papers, Fondren Library, Rice University. Houston and New Orleans had been lobbying for direct flights into Latin America since the 1930s, but World War II was the catalyst that brought the case before the Civil Aeronautics Board. See "Hearing Opened on Air Line Plans for Gulf Service," *Times-Picayune*, 3 May 1941; "Holland Urges More Airports in Miami Area," *Miami News*, 16 Nov 1941; "U.S. Air Transport: Braniff Banks on Texas' Future as a Center of Industry and Gateway to Latin America," *Wall Street Journal*, 3 Feb 1944; "South Claims Role as Air Gateway to Latin America," *New York Times*, 19 Sept 1944; "Latin Air Travel from Texas Urged," *New York Times*, 28 Sept 1944.

American had doubled in value during the war, making it a billion dollar business. Houston's business leaders made attracting a share of that commerce moving forward a high priority.[77]

The comparatively complacent approach that was prevalent before the war would no longer be sufficient to maintain growth and prestige. Also, long-standing advantages that had propped up these attitudes could no longer be relied upon, as New Orleans mayor-elect deLesseps Morrison explained in a 1946 speech. "New Orleans has greater natural advantages than has Miami as far as trade and travel between the United States and [Latin America] is concerned," he said. "But Miami has gone after that business and is going to town in a big way." New Orleanians had to be ready to contend with that competition. Miamians felt much the same way. In a fiery editorial, the *Miami News* declared that the city was changing rapidly for the better as a result of the war, retooling its resources and energy toward making itself into much more than a tourist attraction. "Never again will Miami be content to put all its eggs in one basket," the author wrote. Instead, it would have tourism, industry, thriving aviation, and shipping, just like its competitors.[78]

By the end of the war, the groundwork had been laid for the competition that would take place between Houston, New Orleans, and Miami during the ensuing decades to serve as the gateway to the Americas. As wartime restrictions eased off and local business and civic leaders were able to focus strictly on local objectives once again, they began stepping up their efforts to institutionalize Pan Americanism as a strategy for

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[77] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States*, 1939-1940; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States*, 1941-1946.

[78] For Morrison's quote, see "Morrison Aims at Latin Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 24 Feb 1946. For the Miami editorial, see "The War and Miami," *Miami News*, 5 Dec 1942.

expanding their business relations with Latin America. The federal government, which had found this trend so useful during World War II, continued to support these projects, and at times drew upon the resources of these cities to solve problems of mutual concern in hemispheric relations. Each city provides a unique perspective as to how this collaboration between the public and private, local and national, played out, and it is to these cases that this study now turns.

CHAPTER 2:
"AN ENLIGHTENED FORM OF SELFISHNESS": NEW ORLEANS' POSTWAR PAN-AMERICAN BUSINESS STRATEGY[1]

As clocks across New Orleans struck noon on May 6, 1946, a colorful parade began winding its way through the downtown business district, to the delight of a large and enthusiastic crowd. Perhaps no city finds as many reasons to hold parades as New Orleans does each year, but this one was in some ways quite unusual, even for such an unusual city. From the decorations adorning the parade route to the participants themselves, the procession was symbolic of a new direction in the civic identity of New Orleans.

Over twenty open cars carried the parade's smiling and waving dignitaries, many of whom the majority of the crowd would not have recognized. Among them were Mauricio Diaz, the mayor of Panama City, Panama, Manuel Rodó, governor of San Juan province in Costa Rica, and General Andrés Murillo, a member of the Nicaraguan executive cabinet. Two foreign chiefs of protocol, Oscar Sevilla Sacasa from Nicaragua and Garcia Galvez from Guatemala, also joined the procession. Sacasa was attending on behalf of President Anastasio Somoza García to present Nicaragua's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Order of Merit, to an American citizen. Galvez planned to present a Guatemalan flag to the same individual. In total, over 200 distinguished Latin American guests would partake in the events of this day, mostly municipal and regional

[1] The *Kansas City Star* used this apt phrase to describe International House, one of the three main trade promotion institutions that drove New Orleans' Pan American business strategy. See "National Press Comment," *Times-Picayune*, 18 Dec 1943.

officials from the Central American countries with which New Orleans traded with heavily. It was a spectacle observers proudly interpreted as a sign of strong solidarity between the United States and its hemispheric neighbors.[2]

This was not, however, a diplomatic occasion, at least not from the perspective of the United States government, which was not officially represented at this impressive gathering. It was the inauguration of New Orleans' fortieth mayor, deLesseps Story "Chep" Morrison, who had recently won election over an entrenched political machine that had made a mockery of democratic government in the city since 1920. Morrison was the very picture of renewal for his constituents. He was handsome, thirty-four years old, and had only recently returned from Europe, where he had attained the rank of full colonel while serving in the Army Transportation Corps. To many in the crowds, he represented the merciful death of an older era, and the promise of new life for the city of New Orleans.[3]

For some of the businessmen watching from their office windows or from the VIP bandstand, and for the Latin American dignitaries, Chep's arrival in the mayor's office had additional implications. The pomp and Latin American emphasis of the celebration illustrated an emerging re-imagination of New Orleans' identity as a port. Building on themes of Pan Americanism and the city's long career as a hemispheric trading post, a number of New Orleans' civic leaders were in the process of launching an extensive program to rebrand the city as "the gateway to the Americas," a focal point of inter-American trade, tourism, and transportation. The "city that care forgot" would not

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[2] "Morrison to Take Office at Gala Ceremony Today," *Times-Picayune*, 6 May 1946.
[3] Morrison took over the office of mayor from Robert S. Maestri, a crony of the infamous former Louisiana governor and senator Huey P. Long. For more on the tumultuous electoral contest between Maestri and Morrison, see Edward F. Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform: New Orleans Politics, 1946-1961* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 7-40.

necessarily fade from view, but Morrison and key leaders in the business community were determined that the city would now be defined primarily by its Pan American orientation.[4]

New Orleans had been a crucial link between the U.S. South and Latin America and the Caribbean for almost two centuries by the 1940s. Large companies in the banana, mahogany, and coffee industries, among others, had used the city for decades as a base for their inter-American operations. Middle and upper class Latin Americans often visited New Orleans for shopping, medical care, or for educational purposes. By 1940, over 1,600 foreign-born Latin Americans resided in New Orleans, most from Central America, one of the city's critical trade regions. Many of these New Orleanians of Latin American birth were themselves involved in inter-American commerce.[5]

These circumstances helped build New Orleans' reputation for being a welcoming place for elite Latin American visitors, but some local businessmen believed that with the right promotion the city could be much more. Many of these men were already closely associated with New Orleans' Latin trade. Some were business owners, others were freight forwarders or manufacturers, and some were involved in banking, finance, or insurance. They were deeply interested in the development of Latin America as a lucrative trading territory after World War II. Over the late 1940s and early 1950s, these

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[4] J. Mark Souther has written extensively about New Orleans' changing identity throughout the twentieth century. See Souther, "The Disneyfication of New Orleans: The French Quarter as Façade in a Divided City," *Journal of American History* 94, special Katrina issue (Dec. 2007), 804-811. For contemporary observations of this desire to overcome old obstacles and remake New Orleans' identity, see "Louisiana Port Points to Shipping Facilities," *Christian Science Monitor*, 9 Nov 1946; and "'New' New Orleans," *Wall Street Journal*, 4 Apr 1947.

[5] One of the most extensive studies of New Orleans' Latin population was done in the late 1940s by Norman W. Painter, a sociology student at Tulane University. His research produced a series of interviews that are now held by the Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane. Painter also published his findings in his M.A. thesis. See Painter, "The Assimilation of Latin Americans in New Orleans, Louisiana" (M.A., Tulane University, 1949).

businessmen recruited customers and spent millions of dollars erecting unique institutions to promote the Crescent City as the meeting ground of the hemisphere for products, ideas, and people.[6]

Collectively, the foreign trade leaders of New Orleans supported a comprehensive Pan American business strategy. The ultimate object of this approach was to increase trade, but to achieve this they attempted to influence far more than just the operations of the port itself. They changed street names and erected monuments to commemorate the lives of Latin American heroes like Simón Bolívar and Benito Juárez. They cooperated with educators to train local students in foreign languages and make them aware of Latin America, its problems, its culture, and its relationship to local prosperity. New Orleans' traditional reputation for ease and decadence remained in play, but trade leaders were eager to demonstrate their ability to take inter-American business very seriously. The physical and cultural environment they attempted to sculpt after the war suggested a new image, one of professionalism, responsibility, knowledge, and experience. Perhaps most appealing to Latin observers, this "new" New Orleans also purported to be a space in which Latin Americans could visit and do business as equals with their U.S. counterparts. New Orleanians and outside observers alike often used the words "fraternity,"

[6] In less than one year from its inception, the New Orleans business community contributed over $350,000 to jumpstart International House, one of the principal elements of the city's international program. The International Trade Mart, another key component, cost over a million dollars to construct. The Pan American Life Insurance Company lent the directors half that amount at an excellent rate, while the rest was subscribed to through bonds. In the early 1960s, the City of New Orleans itself allocated $750,000 to purchase land along the Mississippi to assist the International Trade Mart. See Alonzo G. Ensenat, *The Story of International House and International Trade Mart* (n.p., 1974); and "Better Budget, More Building," *Times-Picayune*, 1 Dec 1961.

"brotherhood," and "cooperation" to describe the atmosphere they saw taking shape in the Crescent City.[7]

The primary goal of this movement was profit. Even in the brightest moments of Pan American sentiment it was clear that New Orleans' foreign trade leaders expected their investment in gateway-building to yield tremendous dividends. In crafting their strategy, however, they took a holistic view of the conditions necessary for success, both for the city of New Orleans and for the United States more broadly. It would not do simply to have the most wharves, the fastest ships, or the best rail service to offer. Highways, thriving local industry, and banking facilities might appeal to a future customer's sense of practicality, but New Orleans' traders believed they could do even more to make New Orleans attractive to prospective Latin American customers. They imagined a city that exuded a Pan American identity, a city whose nationality was eclipsed in some ways by its internationality. This meant building not only the best possible infrastructure to handle trade, but also the best promotional devices to attract it, and the best attitude with which to impress their clientele. They committed themselves fully to the belief that a broad program of Pan Americanism would bear significant fruit, and thus it became a predominant theme of New Orleans' postwar strategy.[8]

From its inception, this local Pan American business model integrated New Orleans and its foreign trade authorities into a hemispheric network of public and private

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[7] For examples of this fraternal rhetoric, see "Pan-Americanism of City is Lauded," *Times-Picayune*, 16 Apr 1952; Virginius Dabeny, "What's Happened to Old New Orleans," *Saturday Evening Post*, 10 Oct 1953; "Practical Good Neighborship," *Times-Picayune*, 18 Nov 1943.

[8] This sentiment is perhaps best captured in a quote from New Orleans banker and shipping magnate Rudolf Hecht, who explained the relationship between New Orleans' self-interest and its interest in the broader success of U.S.-Latin American relations in a 1940 statement. "It would be foolish for us not to frankly state that we are anxious to secure our fair share of the trade with Latin-American countries and that we want to participate in the development of their rich natural resources both now and when the war is over," he said, "but at the moment our interest in American solidarity goes much deeper than that." See Hecht, *New Impressions of Our Good Neighbors* (New Orleans, n.p., 1940), 26.

actors highly concerned with economic relations between the U.S. and Latin America. In part, this occurred because local trade promoters realized their success was dependent on how broader economic issues were resolved. Commodity price agreements, debates over foreign aid, geopolitical strife, and other hemispheric affairs reverberated through the world of trade and shaped the decisions of shippers, exporters, importers, and others in New Orleans and around the globe. Naturally, then, these local traders maintained close communication with policymakers, and sought representation for the city's interests wherever possible. Moreover, as New Orleans' Pan American business strategy matured, its resources and its emphasis on inter-American cooperation became attractive to officials in both the U.S. and Latin America. Because they were funded and governed by private enterprise, the city's trade promotion institutions could conduct diplomacy in a way that governments and ambassadors and official conferences could not. Even more appealing for US officials, the money New Orleans was helping to channel into Latin America came from private coffers.

For Washington, New Orleans represented the hope that private enterprise could come to the aid of government in the difficult moment it faced in hemispheric diplomacy at the end of World War II. With the Axis threat neutralized and new strategic challenges surfacing around the globe, U.S. policymakers lost nearly all enthusiasm for the promises they had made to their "Good Neighbors" during the war to support Latin American economic development and stability. Eager to avoid a so-called Marshall Plan for Latin America, Washington prescribed free trade principles and openness to foreign investment in place of direct infusions of public U.S. capital. Latin American governments, whose economies endured a roller-coaster ride of price fluctuations and inflation thanks to the

rise and crash of wartime demand, had believed their cooperation with the US would be rewarded with more sympathy. As North American officials began planning for the European Recovery Program, however, it was clear they preferred for the Latin countries to either stick to their traditional raw material exports or industrialize with private funding only.[9]

Latin frustration set in as time moved forward and the North Americans continued to drag their feet on helping to steady the hemispheric economy and support continued development. Meanwhile, federal representatives frequently praised New Orleans' internationalist program, not only for helping Latins make more money through private channels, but also for doing so in an atmosphere that was genuinely cooperative and friendly. As several officials put it, what Washington had only been able to proclaim in theory through the Good Neighbor Policy, New Orleans was able to realize through action. Dwight Eisenhower himself referred to the city's international program as an example of "community action without government money."[10]

The Latin American businessmen and government officials who visited New Orleans in no way expected the city's trade leaders to single-handedly make their countries' economic problems go away. Nonetheless, they found the city's postwar international program positive and well worth encouraging for several reasons. In practical terms, the inter-American trade and investment New Orleanians were promoting

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[9] U.S. policymakers even went so far as to insist that the Marshall Plan would indirectly benefit Latin America by stimulating European buying power, hence the decision against a similar recovery program for the Latin countries. See Wagner, *United States Policy toward Latin America*, 47-54.

[10] Walter W. Hecht of the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs alluded to this in a speech to New Orleanian businessmen in 1945. "The Good Neighbor Policy cannot be expressed by words alone … nor can it be expressed by governments alone," he said. "[It] must be expressed in action programs carried on privately by private individuals and organizations. New Orleans, I think, has been outstanding in the nation in recognizing this fact." See "Good Neighbor Sincerity Urged," *Times-Picayune*, 1 May 1945. President Dwight Eisenhower's quote comes from a New Orleans campaign speech delivered in 1952. See "Text of General Eisenhower's Address." *Times-Picayune*, 14 Oct 1952.

could potentially provide much-needed foreign exchange and help counteract the economic contractions stemming from the end of World War II. In 1939, the Crescent City had imported about $61 million worth of goods from Latin America. By 1952, when the international program was in full stride, New Orleans was importing over $465 million worth of goods from the region. Furthermore, despite widespread distrust of U.S. corporations in Latin America, a number of Latin elites saw North American investment as the answer to faster industrialization. Consequently, New Orleans' efforts to facilitate deals between Latin and North American businessmen were attractive to these leaders.[11]

Latin American observers also lauded the more intangible benefits of the city's Pan American business strategy. New Orleans already enjoyed a reputation for having a certain Latin cultural flair, but the city's Pan American business strategy promised to extend that positive ambience into the realm of commerce. "We seem to find here a better understanding of our problems, a new sympathy," remarked one Costa Rican visitor after meeting with local business leaders. After one conference on private investment in 1955, two Argentinian delegates wrote to the editor of the *Times-Picayune* in glowing terms about the positive atmosphere created by the city's Pan American stance. "New Orleans is truly the bridge between your country and the nations of the Antilles and South and Central America," they wrote. "We feel at home here [in part because] we feel that here,

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[11] A good illustration of the elite Latin viewpoint on New Orleans' international program can be found in Venezuelan president Rómulo Gallegos' remarks at a banquet given in his honor by International House in 1948. He used the occasion as an opportunity to repeatedly assert the receptiveness of his country toward foreign investment, and said US investors should have no reason to fear government expropriations. In this context, he praised New Orleans' efforts to bring businessmen of the hemisphere together, saying the city's trade leaders had reached the "apex of true friendship and hospitality." My translation. See "Venezuela Invita a los Capitalistas Americanos," *La Prensa*, 17 Jul 1948. Regarding elite Latin desires for US foreign investment, see O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America*, 125-126. For statistics describing New Orleans' foreign trade during this period, see U.S. Department of Commerce, *Foreign Commerce and Navigation of the United States*, 1939-1940; Port of New Orleans, *Statistics Covering Import-Export Commerce of the Port of New Orleans*, 1952-1959.

among the people of New Orleans, we are most welcome." Whether these sentiments were genuine or merely a courtesy to a benevolent buyer is difficult to generalize upon, but either way, Latin visitors frequently felt disposed to encourage the city's international program.[12]

New Orleans' Pan American business strategy was both a promotional success and an economic success in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As chapters 3 and 4 will explain, contemporaries in Miami and Houston studied the Crescent City's international program very carefully and attempted to reproduce the city's new trade promotion institutions in their own ways. Other cities around the country did the same. On the balance sheet, New Orleans' investment in a Pan American identity appeared to pay financial dividends as well. The Crescent City led the Gulf South in commodity trade with Latin America throughout this era (tonnage and value), which also helped it maintain its position as the nation's second leading port in terms of foreign trade value, a distinction it retained into the 1970s.[13]

Despite these advantages, however, the city's Pan American business strategy was not invulnerable to the changing world surrounding New Orleans. Even as the city put up impressive records in foreign trade and attracted significant attention for its unique approach to commercial diplomacy, the late 1950s and early 1960s saw its various trade promotion institutions come under considerable strain. The causes for this were both

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[12] "Como Viven Los Latinoamericanos en Nueva Orleans," *La Prensa*, 26 Jun 1949; "Latin Has High Hopes for Road Funds," *Times-Picayune*, 5 Jun 1946; and "Pan-American Bridge," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Mar 1955. See also Salvadoran ambassador Hector David Castro's remarks on the subject in "Visitors to City Sense Hospitality," *Times Picayune*, 5 Jul 1948.

[13] New Orleans finally lost its distinction as the second leading port by foreign trade value in the 1970s, when wheat and petroleum sales pushed Houston past it. See Chapter 4 for details, as well as "N.O. Remains No. 2 Port, But…," *Times-Picayune*, 15 May 1976. Regarding Miami and Houston emulating New Orleans' Pan American business strategy, see "Houston Points with Envy to New Orleans," *Trade Winds*, 5 Jan 1949; "Miami Delegation Inspects International Trade Setup," *Times Picayune*, 8 Apr 1948.

external and internal, as the chapter explains, but ultimately profitability was a decisive factor in eventually diminishing New Orleans' role as a gateway to the Americas. Between the shrinking value of the city's Latin American trade, stiff competition from other regional ports, and institutional dysfunction among the organizations that had been so critical in the 1940s and 1950s, a Pan Americanist orientation for the city's business community simply was not paying the bills by the end of the 1960s.[14]

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part describes the development of New Orleans' Pan American business strategy and its effects on the physical and cultural landscapes of the city. The second section explores how and why Washington and the local business community were able to connect the city's Pan American business strategy with broader problems in U.S.-Latin American relations. Finally, the third part addresses both the internal and external reasons for New Orleans' ultimate decline as a gateway to the Americas.

New Orleans Builds a Winning Prototype

As Chapter 1 explained, World War II provided a powerful impetus for port cities like New Orleans to reach out to Latin Americans as trade partners. Local leaders in the Crescent City realized that the economic dislocations of the war had profoundly altered traditional trade patterns. Europe and Asia were likely to become stable trading markets again at some point, but not for a while. The Latin countries, however, had not been destroyed by the war, and had in fact emerged with new manufacturing and commercial capacities owing to their participation in the Allied war effort. Louisiana Governor Sam

[14] From the 1950s to the early 1970s, New Orleans was the nation's second leading port in terms of foreign trade value. It was also second only to New York in total foreign trade tonnage for most of this period. See *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1950-1978.

Houston Jones alluded to this as early as 1940 when describing the trade pattern with Europe that had done so much to enrich the United States in earlier years. "That cycle is ended," he declared. "Hereafter, within the [Mississippi] Valley, our future growth depends on industrial progress, and that, in turn, depends on increased interchanges of goods with other regions and other peoples."[15]

Business leaders in New Orleans were eager to demonstrate that their city had the right resources, personnel, and drive to become the leading port of the Gulf South. World War II had brought an immense amount of new industry to the Gulf South and to the Mississippi Valley stretching outward from it. As numerous historians of the "Sunbelt" have explained, wartime demands led the federal government to invest extensively in both productive industry and military installations all around the South and West, where the climate was favorable and the land was plentiful. About 60% of the nation's new bases and training centers were located in the South, and about two fifths of wartime military expenditures entered the region as well. The result was an increase in population and productive capacity that far outlasted the war itself. New Orleans, situated as it was on the Mississippi River with a series of rail and highway connections serving it, stood to profit from the entire region's good fortune. If properly cultivated, local leaders believed, the shipping and transportation business created by this upsurge in industrial activity could be channeled through the Crescent City.[16]

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[15] "Nutter Sees Big Role for 'House,'" *Times Picayune*, 11 Jan 1946. Governor Jones would go on to become one of New Orleans' greatest spokesmen in terms of promoting foreign trade. See "Jones Envisions Broad Advances in Latin America," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Dec 1940; and "Bids Midwest Grasp Chance at Latin Trade," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 Mar 1943.

[16] For more on the rise of the Sunbelt and the role of World War II in making it possible, see Dewey W. Grantham, *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), especially 170-193; and Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), introduction.

Thoughtful businessmen realized, however, that their geography and transportation infrastructure alone would not draw commerce to the port. "Make no mistake," said Rudolf Hecht of the local Hibernia National Bank in 1943, "these natural advantages mean little unless we have a keen, wide-awake business community to develop them and bring them to fruition." What the city needed, Hecht and others believed, was both an effort to develop the port's foreign trade capacity and a parallel campaign to promote New Orleans as the logical place for doing inter-American business.[17]

Some of the necessary changes were logistical. One of the most pressing issues local business leaders recognized early on was the need for better air transportation facilities. Businessmen from the local Association of Commerce and the Mississippi Valley Association had already been pressuring Washington for a decade about granting New Orleans the right to fly planes directly to and from Latin American cities. The Civil Aeronautics Board, however, had thus far been content to allow Pan American Airways a virtual monopoly over these flights, using Miami, Florida and Brownsville, Texas as their air hubs.[18]

The expanded demand for air travel created by World War II helped New Orleans' leaders make a case for expanding the number of routes between the U.S. and Latin America, using the Crescent City as a new hub. Local Congressman Hale Boggs, for example, applied pressure by publishing an open letter to Inter-American Affairs Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller on the matter in 1941. "Had volume of commerce been considered [New Orleans] would have been the first point granted air service to Latin

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[17] Hecht's quote comes from "City May Reap Big Benefit by Trade Gains, says Hecht," *Times-Picayune*, 15 Apr 1943.
[18] "Trans-Gulf Air Service is Result of 10 Years' Activity," *Times-Picayune*, 12 Jun 1943.

America," he argued. "Despite the fact that applications for such service have been pending for years, none has been granted." This, Boggs wrote, denied New Orleans the opportunity to serve the national interest by building better trade relations with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. "You will recall the remark," he wrote, "that had the railroads of the United States run north and south in 1860 instead of east and west, the War between the States would never have occurred. This principle applies to the attitude of our neighbors toward us."[19]

By 1943, the volume of air freight and passenger service required between the U.S. and points southward led the Civil Aeronautics Board to assign temporary routes to cities outside the old Miami-Brownsville monopoly. The agency granted Pan American Airways a three-year contract to fly planes between New Orleans and Guatemala City via Merida in the Yucatan. New Orleanians had aimed for a greater victory than this, but local leaders hailed the temporary contract as a significant breakthrough. As the war moved forward, New Orleans continued to press for more routes, and for existing routes to be made permanent. Pan American Airways, which stood to gain even if Miami lost its dominance over inter-American air travel since it operated flights from New Orleans as well, led the charge. In 1944, the airline began a new push for international air service rights, using the Crescent City's postwar potential as a critical "resort city and the natural gateway for traffic from the entire Mississippi Valley" as pretext.[20]

Paralleling the challenge of acquiring more international flights for New Orleans was the problem of building facilities to serve the airlines and passengers. This would

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[19] For the text of Boggs' letter, see "Boggs Asks View of Rockefeller on Air-Line Need," *Times-Picayune*, 6 Aug 1941.
[20] "New Orleans Gets Direct Plane Service to Spanish America," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Mar 1943; "Asks New Latin Airline Service," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Oct 1944.

have been difficult enough during peacetime, but wartime restrictions on labor and materials made a new commercial, non-military airport almost impossible to construct. Claiming again that a new facility would enhance New Orleans' ability to fulfill the needs of international travelers, and by extension the war effort, the city's representatives in Washington were able to obtain priorities on necessary construction materials and the new airport was born. Moisant Airport opened in 1946, was served by six airlines, and was used by local leaders to declare that the "Air Hub of the Americas" would now be located at New Orleans, a clear challenge to Miami's earlier role in aviation.[21]

Local leaders were also eager to step up the physical plant of the Port of New Orleans, the space in which trade items flowing to and from the Mississippi Valley would actually be handled. One of the most significant additions came in 1946 with the opening of the United States' second "foreign trade zone." Foreign trade zones, still in use today, are special areas where both domestic and foreign goods can be brought in without any payment of customs duty and be stored, manipulated, repackaged, or otherwise processed. This facility was of tremendous use for companies engaged in foreign trade, especially re-exports to other countries. Depending on the goods involved, sometimes a company could reduce the amount of duty charged on a product by changing what it actually was before officially bringing it into the U.S. or shipping it elsewhere. Sears & Roebuck, for example, rented space in the New Orleans zone to bring in and store

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[21] The construction of Moisant Airport in New Orleans despite wartime restrictions proved irritating to competing Gulf South ports such as Houston and Miami. For details on the airport's development and these outsider sentiments, see an untitled news article in Box 17, J. Russell Wait Papers, Fondren Library, Rice University. See also "Business, Civic Leaders See Moisant as Great Aero Step," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Jan 1946. To underscore New Orleans' claim to gateway status, local officials invited a number of Latin American journalists, businessmen, and dignitaries to the dedication of the airport. Seven countries were ultimately represented, in addition to the Consular Corps. See "Siete Paises en una Ceremonia Importante," *La Prensa*, 7 Jan 1946.

bicycles, motorcycles, clocks, flashlights, and other imports, which were then shipped as needed to other points.[22]

On another front, local business leaders recognized the need to go out and attract customers to use the facilities they were so busily constructing. The last grand idea in this vein, Charles Nutter's Pan American Fiesta (see Chapter 1), had been shut down by the urgency of war after Pearl Harbor. Many local businessmen still thought the city ought to do something to promote itself as the gateway it was so sure it would become. The program that ultimately issued from this belief began in 1943 with a speech before the local Toastmaster's Club by E.O. "Archie" Jewell, who at the time was General Manager of the Port of New Orleans. In his talk, Jewell called for "a plan to consolidate the interest of all interested parties by forming an organization that would coordinate the cultural, social, and commercial relationship between the people of our country with the people of other countries of the world, particularly the other American republics." More than just an exhibition or fair such as the Pan American Fiesta, Jewell's idea was to create an organization whose sole purpose would be to promote better hemispheric relations using the resources of New Orleans.[23]

The organization that resulted from this effort was International House, one of three entities that would coordinate New Orleans' Pan American business strategy in the postwar era. As Rudolf Hecht described it, it would be a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to promoting both trade and the social and cultural contacts necessary to facilitate that trade. Lindy Boggs, wife of New Orleans' Congressman Hale

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[22] "New Orleans International," *Americas,* Sept 1950; Memorandum by Mark J. Trazivuk entitled "Competition in the Proposed International Mart – New Orleans, Louisiana," Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University; "Sears Planning Trade Zone Use," *Times-Picayune*, 26 May 1954.
[23] Alonzo G. Enseñat, *The Story of International House and International Trade Mart* (n.p., 1974).

Boggs, who was an avid supporter of the new organization, neatly summarized the mission of International House in a slogan, "Dedicated to world peace, trade, and understanding." In only a short time, it would become the cornerstone of New Orleans' bid to become the preeminent port of the Gulf South and the gateway to the Americas.[24]

International House had two major tasks. The first was to make doing international business easier for both U.S. businessmen and their counterparts in other countries. To achieve this, the founders designed International House as an exclusive businessman's club with everything necessary to complete international transactions centralized in one location. The *New York Times* described the facility as the businessman's "office away from his office." For a flat membership fee, any visiting businessman could have access to office space, a multilingual secretarial service and typing pool, and knowledgeable staff familiar with inter-American trade. The building contained conference rooms and dining rooms where meetings could be conducted and deals reached in a private and inviting setting.[25]

The organization also focused on making itself a clearinghouse for the latest and most accurate trading information. In an era before fax machines and the Internet, trade data, business contacts, and other information were all maintained in hard copy. Without a way to transmit this information quickly across space, International House expanded its niche by becoming a repository for every kind of material relative to inter-American trade. The Thomas Cunningham Library collected numerous trade journals, newspapers from the U.S. and abroad, business directories, and the latest trade statistics. The staff of the research and world trade development departments was also available for

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[24] Ibid.; "Plans for International House in City are Devised," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Nov 1943.
[25] "World Fete Opens in New Orleans," *New York Times*, 15 Nov 1946.

troubleshooting the needs of individual members. By 1950, the organization boasted over 50,000 business contacts, both in the Mississippi Valley and abroad. International House trade experts found markets for everything from Honduran lobsters to orchids, and maintained a list of buying and selling opportunities that they published in the organization's newsletter.[26]

The second task of International House, arguably the most novel to outside observers, was cultivating a sense of Pan Americanism among businessmen and the general public. The founders believed from the beginning that inter-American business would thrive in the Crescent City if foreign customers identified it as a welcoming, friendly, and understanding place, rather than one solely given over to profit. As the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta put it in a news story describing International House, "Economic relations are, at bottom, only relations of men to one another." If this were so, New Orleans' business community was intent that those relations be as friendly as possible. "We deal with those we like, those who seem to understand us, who make allowances for our foibles, show their appreciation of our good points, and laugh at our jests," one editorial explained. "It is this vital promotion of familiarity, of mutual esteem and goodwill, which International House … can make possible."[27]

Within the institution itself, this meant convincing foreign customers that New Orleanians, and at some level the U.S., appreciated their business and wanted to treat them as equals. Most foreigners came to International House for the first time as a guest

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[26] "New Orleans International," *Americas,* Sept 1950; "International House Elects 100 Members as Directors," *Times-Picayune,* 8 Jun 1950.

[27] The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta made this statement in an article in its *Monthly Review.* The article was reprinted in "Aims of International House," *Times-Picayune,* 25 Jul 1945. The editorial quoted is from an undated clipping of the *New Orleans States* contained in one of International House's first promotional folders. See folder entitled "International House: A Center for Interchange of Culture and Trade," in folder "International House, 1969 and before" in Vertical File, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

of one of the members. Merchants, journalists, and trade officials were the organization's most frequent visitors, since members hoped to sell these people on the organization and the city. In 1947, for example, one month's guest list included an importer from Panama, a petroleum company representative from Ecuador, a Brazilian publisher, and reporters from *National Geographic*.[28]

International House opened its facilities for inspection, offered tours of the port, and even had a staff member on hand to take visitors' photographs and publish their names in the organization's newsletter and press releases. The facility in which International House operated was designed to convey a sense of exclusivity and prestige, something that would capture the attention and business of visitors, particularly Latin American visitors. The building, located at the busy corner of Camp and Gravier streets in New Orleans' central business district, featured high ceilings, marble staircases, handmade furniture, luxurious tapestries and paintings, wood paneling, and all the trappings of a gentleman's social club.

Although the aim of International House was to convey a sense of welcoming openness, its leaders accomplished this in part through a kind of fraternal exclusivity. The institution was highly gendered. Although director J. Stanton Robbins appealed to women to assist with the hospitality functions of the organization, part of the allure of International House was that it virtually sealed businessmen off from wives, families, and other persons not focused on business. The point of all of this was to impress visitors with the feeling that New Orleans was serious about becoming the gateway to the

[28] This example was drawn from the "Guest Book" segment of *Trade Winds*, 28 Mar 1947.

Americas, that it considered them to be among the men who counted in their strategy for conducting foreign trade.[29]

International House also pursued a Pan American business strategy outside its walls by bringing people from the U.S. and neighboring countries together through exchange programs, education, and cultural activities. Student and professor exchanges were a staple from the earliest days. In 1944, the organization launched its program to bring Latin American students into the U.S. with 300 participants. By 1951, International House and its partners had 900 Latin American students studying in universities across Mississippi and Louisiana. The organization also sent U.S. students into Latin America, mostly to Central American universities. Proponents argued that student exchanges were critical to avoiding the perpetuation of attitudes that had poisoned U.S.-Latin American relations in bygone decades. As one writer put it, "In the unprejudiced minds of young Americans such schooling is developing an understanding that will unquestionably prove a decisive bulwark in hemispheric and world peace."[30]

International House further participated in public education by sponsoring training in foreign languages and best practices for foreign trade work. The organization offered periodic language classes in Spanish and Portuguese, taught by members of the International House staff. The idea was to teach businessmen and others who interacted regularly with Latin Americans the basics, plus phrases and customs specifically tailored to business negotiations. The institution also sponsored and helped found the Foreign

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[29] Women, for example, were only permitted in the organization's dining rooms at certain times. See International House Elects 100 Members as Directors," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Jun 1950; "All Nations Head Appeals for Aid," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Jun 1945; "International House to Open Today, after Week's Events," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Jun 1945. See also "Ladies Have Important Role in I-H Activities," *Trade Winds*, 25 Sept 1951.

[30] "Students Make Good Neighbors," *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 Jul 1951.

Trade Institute operated by the Orleans Parish School Board. This unique training center was conceived as a way to get returning soldiers acquainted with foreign trade business methods and get them into the workforce as quickly as possible. The adult students attended classes in Latin languages, business methods, and Latin American culture and customs, and they heard lectures from local businessmen. Observers saw this as a win-win situation; the students were getting excellent job training, and New Orleans was getting a steady supply of talent to feed its international program.[31]

Community-wide cultural events were a final tactic International House used to involve the public in its Pan American business strategy. The organization worked closely with the city government, schools, and other groups to coordinate celebrations of Latin American holidays, Pan American Day festivities, and displays of Latin American culture. International House made space in its own building for some of these programs, while musical performances and larger events were often held elsewhere around the city.[32]

Widespread recognition of the organization's uniqueness and utility were evident early on. During the opening ceremonies on January 28, 1944, Inter-American Affairs Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller and U.S. Ambassador to Mexico George Messersmith spoke over an international radio hookup about the value of an organization like International House to the broader goals of U.S.-Latin American relations. Messersmith's message in particular drove home the idea that International House was well-suited to take on aspects of inter-American relations better left to private enterprise

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[31] "Latin Language Classes Slated," *Times Picayune*, 10 Jan 1947; Foreign Trade Institute Opens," *Times-Picayune*, 28 Jan 1947; "International House Wins Fame," *Times Picayune*, 5 Jul 1948.

[32] Sometimes exhibits would be sponsored by foreign governments. One such display came from Honduras in 1946 as a gift following a visit from then-Mayor-elect deLesseps S. Morrison. See "Honduras Sends Good Will Party," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Nov 1946.

than to the diplomatic establishment in Washington. "Business and social intercourse among the citizens of different countries is a closer bond than that attained by the making of [the] most solemn treaties," he said. "Declarations and treaties are binding upon [the] governments which have made them and serve to further the collective common aim, but that aim is strengthened and implemented by the friendly relations established among the people themselves." This was precisely what the business leaders of New Orleans intended to do.[33]

Latin Americans also expressed their pleasure with the organization, noting that its approach was a distinct break from the often unamiable business climate of the past in New Orleans. Said Colombian Ambassador Gonzalo Restrepo-Jaramilla in 1948, "New Orleans' campaign here is one of the best demonstrations of the Good Neighbor Policy. It shows that the people here have understood the full meaning of the policy, and your International House is one of the best agencies in the country for promoting friendship." Indeed, Latin American visitors often commented that the services available through International House were not available in other major trading centers, not even New York. The republic of Ecuador went so far as to award the organization its prestigious "Orden al Merito" in 1948 for its efforts to develop better relationships between U.S. and Latin American business leaders.[34]

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[33] For the highlights of Rockefeller's address, see "Zetzmann Heads Center of Amity," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Jan 1944. For the full text of Messersmith's speech, see *Department of State Bulletin*, 29 Jan 1944, 133-134.

[34] For Restrepo-Jaramilla's remarks, see "High-Ranking Diplomats Praise International Trade Mart Idea," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Nov 1948. See also "Guatemalan Envoy Lauds Port, International House," *Times-Picayune*, 12 Feb 1948; "Latin Likes Port Trade Facilities," *Times-Picayune*, 10 Aug 1946; "I-H Receives Ecuadorean Merit Award for Service," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Aug 1948.

Although International House was the lynchpin for much of New Orleans' Pan American business strategy, leaders recognized even before the organization opened its doors that they would need an additional facility for displaying and marketing goods to buyers and sellers throughout the hemisphere. The idea for this institution, which would eventually be called the International Trade Mart, was related to the vision for International House, but had a more practical purpose. Whereas International House was designed to build good relationships between businessmen, the trade mart would provide a space for doing the actual buying and selling.

The idea for a trade mart was an older one, based in part on European semi-permanent trade fairs located at Vienna, Leipzig, Brussels, Lyon, Birmingham, and other major manufacturing centers. The purpose of these fairs was to provide samples of manufactured goods and bring potential buyers and sellers together in person to do business. In the case of the Leipzig fair, about 85% of the samples were of German manufactured goods, the rest foreign-made. Businessmen and their families would visit from around the world, stay a week or two, and enjoy both a relaxed centralized buying experience and the cultural entertainments provided by the surrounding city. Mark Trazivuk, an early consultant for the New Orleans trade mart, noted that many Latin American importers did their European buying this way, and thus they might be willing to buy this way from producers in the U.S. The late 1940s was a particularly good opportunity to build this sort of facility, because several of the European fairs had been all but wiped out by the war, and almost nothing like it existed yet in the United States.[35]

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[35] This is not to say, of course, that the trade mart concept had not been attempted. Both Miami and New Orleans tried unsuccessfully to start trade marts during the inter-war period, as Chapter 1 indicates. Chicago and San Francisco each had a Merchandise Mart that served a similar purpose, although these focused heavily on domestic goods. See report by Mark Trazivuk entitled "Inter-American Permanent

Local business leaders, many from the same group that had brought International House into reality, began planning for an organization that would reproduce this model in New Orleans. Their goal was to cut out the expensive traditional "buying tour" method of purchasing, and instead concentrate as many businesses as possible in a single space where buyers and sellers could peruse samples, negotiate, finalize deals, and arrange for shipping and finance. The trade mart would operate in tandem with International House to attract businessmen from the Mississippi Valley and foreign countries and promote mutually profitable commerce.[36]

Here New Orleans leaned heavily on its geography to plot out a plan for success. The idea was that both domestic and foreign manufacturers would display their goods in the mart. U.S. producers could show off industrial machinery and construction tools that Latin American buyers were accustomed to purchasing in the States. Latin American producers would show varieties of the products they typically sold to U.S. buyers already, plus manufactured goods as they became available. In marketing this approach, business leaders imagined the Americas in an hourglass shape, with New Orleans as the double funnel at the center.

The Trade Mart was crucial to fulfilling one of the most critical elements of the city's Pan American business strategy, and one that would ultimately prove most attractive to observers in Washington. Business leaders emphasized early on that for International House or the trade mart to have any success expanding U.S. exports to Latin America, buyers in the Mississippi Valley would have learn to buy Latin American goods

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Fair," 21 May 1945 in Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University; and "Prospectus," undated, Box 11, International Trade Mart Papers.

[36] "New Trade Mart Opens This Week," *New York Times*, 27 Jun 1948.

as well. A country needed dollars before it could import U.S. products, and dollars came from the country's ability to export to the United States.

Because of the nature of its work, the International Trade Mart project began contributing to New Orleans' Pan American business strategy long before its doors opened in 1948. Its first task was to interest business owners in either renting space in the mart or making use of its facilities for uniting buyer and seller for deals. The staff, led by Managing Director Clay Shaw, cast a wide net, contacting businessmen engaged in everything from furniture manufacturing to fruit imports to shipping automotive parts in all corners of the United States and Latin America. Consulates, Chambers of Commerce and other merchant associations were also critical points of communication. Even when a contact did not result in a new tenant for the mart, the connections made in the process increased the widespread familiarity of the business world with New Orleans' international program, and sometimes led to more commerce down the road.[37]

Mark Trazivuk's 1946 trip to Cuba to drum up business for the mart aptly illustrates these connections. During his four-week stay in Havana, he visited the city's leading newspapers, the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, the Cuban National Association of Industrialists, the local branch of the American Chamber of Commerce, and the U.S. Embassy and Havana consulate. Trazivuk's main goal was to get companies to commit to renting space in the new trade mart, but in the process he managed to do much more. He recommended a list of influential local industrialists and bankers who the trade mart leaders ought to invite to New Orleans. He also noted that during his stay he had yet to

[37] The early papers of the International Trade Mart contain boxes of letters sent to thousands of businesses and business organizations across the U.S. and parts of Latin America. Most explained the purpose of the mart and cited statistics to promote New Orleans as the premier port of the Gulf South. See especially boxes 15-19, International Trade Mart Papers.

pay for any advertisements he placed in the local newspapers. The Cuban business community was sufficiently impressed with the concept of the fledgling trade mart that the newspapers ran stories about the organization for free.[38]

Indeed, the mart was particularly useful to importers and exporters from other countries, who sometimes faced immense difficulties finding reliable sources of goods or places to ship their own products. The trade mart facilitated this process by providing a space in which foreign visitors could make a sale, arrange for shipment, and get leads on financing all in one location. Some Latin American governments themselves became tenants of the trade mart, using the space as a means to promote both trade and tourism between their country and the United States. Colombia, for example, planned an exhibit that included gems and relics unearthed from ancient tombs, as well as examples of goods available for export. Guatemala created a similar exhibit, using paintings of its beautiful mountain scenery to attract visitors. A Guatemalan woman was hired to serve Guatemalan coffee to the exhibit's visitors, drawing attention to one of the country's principal export industries.[39]

Much like International House, the physical plant of the International Trade Mart was designed to impress. Its original facility, located at the corner of Camp and Common streets not far from International House in New Orleans' central business district,

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[38] Mark Trazivuk, "Report on My Trip to Cuba," prepared for Clay Shaw and the International Trade Mart, 10 Dec 1946 in Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers. The impression the International Trade Mart made on Latin Americans was also evident in the discussions that emerged regarding building similar institutions in Central or South America. See, for example, "Argentines Cite N.O. Port," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Sept 1948.

[39] "Colombia to Open Mart Exhibit in September," *Trade Winds*, 24 Aug 1950; "Colombia Plans Exhibit at Mart," *Times-Picayune*, 12 Sept 1950; "Guatemala to Have Mart Exhibit," *Trade Winds*, 1 Nov 1948; "Cuba Exhibit Opens in New Orleans Mart," *Trade Winds*, 9 Apr 1951; "El Salvador to Open Mart Display," *Trade Winds*, 18 Apr 1952; and "[Casa Internacional]," *La Prensa*, 23 May 1952. Countries outside Latin America also got into the country-wide exhibit business. For more on Belgium's exhibit at the International Trade Mart, see "Expects Orleans to Play Big Role," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Aug 1948.

contained five floors and about 80,000 square feet of exhibit space. The first floor was reserved for displays too heavy or bulky to transport upstairs. The second floor was devoted to office space, and the remaining floors were dedicated to displays. The architects used glass, indirect lighting, and tall ceilings to give the visitor a sense of the institution's grandiosity. By 1949, less than a year after opening, the mart was exhibiting 700 products from 32 U.S. states and 26 foreign countries. Eventually, it was forced to begin turning vendors away, which prompted its board of directors to begin planning for expansion. The ultimate result was an impressive 33-story building at the foot of Canal Street designed by famed architect Edward Durell Stone. This second mart building was formally dedicated in 1968 in conjunction with celebrations of the 250th anniversary of New Orleans' founding.[40]

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The final element in New Orleans' international program arrived in 1946 with Chep Morrison's inauguration, which marked a watershed moment in the role of city government in promoting New Orleans as a gateway to the Americas. Although private initiative had done most of the heavy lifting in constructing International House and the International Trade Mart, New Orleans' Pan American business strategy benefitted from the contributions of the new mayor. Working closely with the city's business leaders, Morrison channeled public resources to complement the work being done by International House and the trade mart.

Until 1946, the presence of municipal government in these matters had been cordial and comparatively minuscule. Robert Maestri, mayor when International House

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[40] Enseñat, *The Story of International House and International Trade Mart*; "Exhibits Impress Visitors," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3 Jan 1949.

was founded in 1944, gave tacit approval to the project but did little to promote it. In fact, this was Maestri's attitude toward most promotional matters of this kind. As the potential of the city's Pan American business strategy became more apparent, however, candidates for public office began using it as a campaign tool. Politicians such as Chep Morrison and city commissioner Bernard McCloskey faced a difficult path to victory because they were up against a long-standing political machine that had governed New Orleans for decades. The business promotion angle proved to be of some use in this situation, owing mainly to the apathy of the city's entrenched ruling elites toward innovation. Morrison and McCloskey garnered attention for their candidacies by raising awareness of what the city risked losing by perpetuating such a sclerotic attitude and failing to do more to attract Latin American business.[41]

The leaders of New Orleans' business community could not have asked for a better or more cooperative mayor in 1946 than Chep Morrison. Although he is most often remembered by historians and local citizens as an energetic reformer of local politics, his internationalist fervor was equally strong. "I consider the mayor of New Orleans the chief salesman for the city and its port," he said shortly before his 1946 inauguration, and indeed he lived that belief. No previous mayor of New Orleans had ever done as much to make the mayor's office into a diplomatic institution. Morrison was and is remembered for having brought great energy to this and many other civic projects of his term. As one city hall worker put it, "What's all this talk about atomic energy? Why don't they just rig up some cogwheels and things on Chep Morrison?"[42]

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[41] "Trade Chances Ignored, Charge," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Dec 1945; "Morrison Cites Gamblers' Power," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Jan 1946.
[42] "Morrison Urges Fair Play in Dealing with Latin Lands," *Times-Picayune*, 16 Apr 1946; "New Orleans Mayor Rivals Atomic Energy," *Nashua Telegraph*, 19 Sept 1946.

Mayor Morrison's main contribution to the city's Pan American business strategy was to establish the mayor's office as a source of diplomatic authority in relationships between the city of New Orleans and Latin American cities and countries. The city's business community played a role in guiding Morrison toward this project. Not long after his election in 1946, Rudolf Hecht invited him to lunch, where he described the opportunity inherent in Morrison's arrival as mayor at the same moment that International House and the International Trade Mart were just coming online. In his memoirs, Morrison recalled Hecht's lament that for half a century New Orleans had operated under a corrupt regime that took little interest in the future. The city was considered "outside the mainstream of American business and industrial activity," but all of this could be reversed. Morrison was excited by the prospect of using the mayor's office to strengthen the city's trade relationships abroad, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean. After leaving his meeting with Hecht, he said, "My foot was placed directly on the road to Latin America."[43]

Morrison's contribution to the city's Pan American business strategy manifested in an Office of International Relations at City Hall. The idea for this office came long before Chep had even taken the oath of office himself. It was inspired partly by the local business community's encouragement and partly by the experiences Chep had during two goodwill expeditions to Latin America as mayor-elect in early 1946. To publicize New Orleans' emerging Pan American gateway identity, Morrison toured several countries, including Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. In each of these countries, the mayor-elect was received officially,

[43] deLesseps S. Morrison, *Latin American Mission: An Adventure in Hemispheric Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 55-56.

and with a degree of protocol and fanfare usually reserved for diplomats. In his memoirs, Morrison described marimba bands playing patriotic American songs, motorcycle escorts, and personal receptions by mayors and other dignitaries. He had audiences with several Caribbean and Central American officials interested in trade promotion, including Mexican Foreign Minister Francisco Castillo Nájera and Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, who decorated Morrison with the Order of Duarte, Sánchez, and Mella. After these trips, Morrison was convinced that the mayor's role in New Orleans' Pan American business strategy ought to be providing this kind of experience for Latin visitors to the United States.[44]

Accordingly, Morrison announced upon his return that his first appointment as mayor would be a Director of International Affairs. This person would coordinate a new executive office responsible for representing the city government to foreign visitors and in programs pertaining to international relations. From the outset, the office was geared especially toward relations with Latin America. "The people of Latin America look to New Orleans as an economic and cultural beachhead in the United States," Morrison explained. "We must encourage them to feel that way." The Office of International Affairs was designed to reciprocate in many ways what Chep had experienced in Latin America. Its officers coordinated the details of most international visits, taking special care to respect foreign traditions and protocol. Details down to the arrangement of seating were handled with the dexterity of a State Department detachment, all using the resources of City Hall and the collaboration of International House and the trade mart. In addition, the staff answered a multitude of inquiries from foreign correspondents asking about

[44] "Morrison Begins Latin Trip Today," *Times-Picayune*, 4 Feb 1946; "Morrisons Include San Salvador Visit," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Feb 1946; "Morrison Meets Mexico Secretary," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Feb 1946; Morrison, *Latin American Mission*, 57-59.

everything from trade opportunities to help finding jobs and placement in Louisiana universities.[45]

Each of the men Chep Morrison tapped to head this office over the years worked very closely with the other elements of the city's international program to make sure the local government was adequately represented at everything involving Latin American officials and business deals of any magnitude. Moreover, they were often Latin Americans themselves, middle to upper class, fluent in Spanish, and knowledgeable about the region. Rafael Urruela, for example, who was the original director of the office, was native to Guatemala and had moved to New Orleans as a press agent. He had connections with newspapers all over the hemisphere and proved useful for helping to raise Latin awareness of the Crescent City's international program. Rafael Goyeneche, another director, had been an intelligence officer during World War II, and was a polyglot. According to the press release announcing his appointment as Urruela's assistant in 1947, he spoke Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German in addition to English. By employing persons with such abilities and histories, the city of New

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[45] "Morrison Aims at Latin Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 24 Feb 1946; "City Facilities Are Dedicated to Aiding Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Nov 1946. One telling description of the department's attention to protocol may be seen in a communication between Director of International Relations Mario Bermudez and Mayor Morrison from 1957. A number of Venezuelan dignitaries were slated to receive the New Orleans Order of Merit (described below) and Bermudez stressed the importance of giving the awards in a specific order. The files of the Office of International Relations are replete with similar examples. See Bermudez to Morrison, 20 Nov 1957 in Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Relations Collection, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. For examples of correspondence between Latin Americans and the Office of International Relations, see Herman Fais (Colombian student) to deLesseps S. Morrison, 9 Jul 1946; Carlos Castro to Rafel Urruela, 25 Oct 1946; and Juan Carlos Buceta Basigalup (of *La Tribuna* in Buenos Aires) to Morrison, 20 May 1946, in Box 40, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection. For an example of Morrison or his Director of International Relations intervening directly in a case, see Rafael Urruela to J.F. Delaney (U.S. Department of Immigration) putting in a good word for a person who had written in and explained his case, 9 Apr 1947 in Box 41, Morrison Papers. For examples of U.S. citizens calling on New Orleans' Office of International Relations with questions regarding Latin America, see Elizabeth L. Barnett (Acadia Parish Chamber of Commerce) to Rafael Urruela, 8 Jul 1946, Box 40, Morrison Papers; Roy Reich to deLesseps S. Morrison, 5 Feb 1947, Box 41, Morrison Papers; and William Curran, Jr. (St. Louis Council on World Affairs) to Mario Bermudez, 31 Mar 1952, Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Relations Papers, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

Orleans was better equipped to develop regular and profitable communications with allies in foreign countries, and thus promote the city and its resources.[46]

Along with building up the city's international program at home, the Office of International Affairs also helped develop a network of business and political contacts throughout the world, particularly in the Western Hemisphere. Starting with the Latin American dignitaries who attended Mayor Morrison's inauguration in 1946, the office appointed honorary ambassadors for the city of New Orleans in numerous Latin American capitals and trade centers. These representatives were generally chosen for their influence and knowledge of local trade and political conditions in their home countries, as well as their familiarity with New Orleans and their willingness to cooperate with its Pan American business strategy. Most of these ambassadors were Latin Americans, not U.S. citizens. They served without pay, although they received fine treatment when visiting the Crescent City. Some of the first ambassadors included Victor Suárez, a banker in Merida; Carlos Martinez Aparicio, editor of *La Prensa* in Barranquilla, Colombia; and Ramiro Samayoa, president of Guatemala's Department of Tourism.[47]

The program's success was uneven, but overall it was effective. Probably its greatest value was the publicity New Orleans received for its novel approach to trade promotion. The ambassadors also sometimes provided the mayor's office with helpful

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[46] "Latin-American Director Named," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Mar 1946; "Name Goyeneche Aid to Urruela," *Times-Picayune*, 22 Apr 1947.

[47] For an early list of honorary New Orleans representatives, see an undated memorandum entitled "Office Representatives in Latin America," Box 40, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection. See also "'Ambassadors' of Goodwill, Trade Work for New Orleans," *Milwaukee Journal*, 27 May 1946; "La Ciudad de Nueva Orleans Tendra Representantes en Latinoamerica," *La Prensa*, 20 Apr 1946; and a news circular released by Kris Kraeger of the Associated Press entitled "New Orleans is Building Trade and Good Will with City State Department," 24 Mar 1947 in Box 40, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.

commercial intelligence. Ruben Hernandez, for example, informed the office not long after his appointment as an honorary ambassador that the city of Miami was distributing promotional information in San Jose with the assistance of Pan American Airways. He suggested that Mayor Morrison send similar information so as to keep New Orleans' advantages before the public. One newspaper editor in Buenos Aires published a double-page spread in *VERITAS* about his appointment, calling on his readers to consider using New Orleans more often as a commercial partner. This honorary ambassador system continued into the 1960s, providing the triumvirate of New Orleans' international organizations with a network of contacts throughout the hemisphere.[48]

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Although these three organizations – International House, the International Trade Mart, and the city's Office of International Relations – were the driving force behind the city's Pan American business strategy, they depended on the help of numerous public and private entities around the city and region to function. This central triumvirate had their own staffs, but nowhere near the manpower or funding to do all of the promotion necessary to realize their vision of making New Orleans into a gateway to the Americas. Longstanding organizations like the New Orleans Association of Commerce helped, as did local service clubs like Rotary International and the Lions. Rotary members were natural allies to the international trade program, since they frequently made goodwill

[48] Ruben Hernandez to deLesseps S. Morrison, 4 Nov 1946, and Morrison to M.A. Castro Cerazo (secretary of the Rotary Club of San Jose, Costa Rica), 30 Sept 1946, in Box 40, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection; "Argentine Magazine Advises N.O. Study," *Trade Winds*, 30 Apr 1947. The honorary ambassador system allowed New Orleans trade promotion organizations to easily and quickly advertise events they were planning and get input and assistance from Latin American contacts. See, for example, minutes of a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Valley World Trade Council, 12 Jul 1957, Box 2, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.

visits to other countries, and arranged for contingents from those countries to do the same.[49]

The city's universities also became heavily involved in promoting New Orleans' Pan American business strategy. All three branches of the city's international program maintained close connections with Loyola and Tulane universities through their faculties and administrations. Both of these schools had special administrative assistants for Latin American relations who cooperated with the city's plans. Loyola and Tulane offered special programming that connected New Orleans' diplomatic role with the new area studies programs developing on their campuses, and donated scholarships to International House and its Latin American contacts to encourage more student and teacher exchange.[50]

The opportunities for networking were good in these educational settings. Many Latin American students attended these and other regional universities because of their parents' familiarity with New Orleans and various people in it. International House and the Office of International Relations worked to provide programs that would expose these students to the city's international program and develop a favorable impression that the students would carry back to their home countries along with their education. One representative example was the "weekend in New Orleans" program prepared by International House for a group of Latin American students attending Louisiana State

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[49] "Says Trade Zone to Help Yucatan," *Times-Picayune*, 7 Dec 1948.

[50] For more on the developing relationship between the Office of International Relations and the universities, see Rafael Urruela to J.O. Monasterio (director of Ibero-American Affairs department at Loyola University), 28 May 1946; and Urruela to Andres Horcasitas (special assistant to the president of Tulane University for Inter-American Affairs), 28 May 1946, Box 40, Morrison Papers. For examples of the universities' contributions to the city's international program, see "Schools Move to Develop Closer Latin American Relations," *Trade Winds*, 8 Jul 1948; and memo from Vaughn Bryant to John Begg (both of the Private Enterprise Cooperation office of the State Department), 24 Sept 1951, Box 6, Private Enterprise Cooperation staff subject files (RG 59), National Archives.

University in neighboring Baton Rouge in 1946. While much of the weekend was given over to entertainment, such as walking and motor tours of the city, generous dinners, and a river cruise, the city's international program interspersed several talks from local business leaders about international trade and the advantages of conducting it in New Orleans.[51]

Public entities became involved where they could. The Dock Board, the state commission governing the Port of New Orleans, was naturally very interested in having a strong internationalist program for the city. Its officials were usually represented in any major reception for international dignitaries. The port's inspection yacht, aptly titled "Good Neighbor," was also virtually at the disposal of International House and the city's Office of International Relations. The New Orleans Police Department and local military establishments played a role as well. They provided both security and pageantry to the international programs, serving as escorts and guards for high-profile visitors and lending bands and uniformed prestige to parades and ceremonies.[52]

Private corporations were indispensable to the city's international program. They footed the bill for many of the ceremonies, dinners, receptions, conferences, educational programs, and other tactics used to impress both Latin American and U.S. visitors. The mayor's office and the leaders of International House and the trade mart called regularly on the big shipping companies, freight forwarders, and other major businesses to sponsor these events. Generally, this was not a hard sell. A number of companies willingly participated over the years, as their directors shared the belief that this was less a

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[51] For the itinerary of this program, see "Weekend in New Orleans," 23 Aug 1946, Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.
[52] For an illustrative example, see the description of Argentinian President Arturo Frondizi's reception in New Orleans in "Frondizi Sees Liberty, Democracy Success," *Times-Picayune*, 24 Dec 1961.

donation than an investment in the continued growth of New Orleans as a gateway to the Americas. They demonstrated their vested interest in these matters by giving not only of their resources, but also of their time, serving on the committees that planned these promotional programs.[53]

In some cases, the businesses themselves changed in order to better resonate with New Orleans' Pan American theme. The popular Maison Blanche department store, for example, opened a division in 1953 specifically targeted at Latin American visitors. This "Centro de las Americas," as it was called, catered to Latin visitors, offering Spanish-speaking clerks and city guidebooks printed in Spanish. By 1959, six major New Orleans retailers offered this sort of service.[54]

The result was a tremendous boost in the presence of New Orleans' international program in the inter-American spotlight. The city government could never have afforded to do this alone, even with the cooperation of International House and the International Trade Mart. Because private companies invested in the city's international program, it was able to offer free hotel accommodations and meals to visiting dignitaries, scholarships to Latin American students and professors with free airfare included, and other programs. Even companies outside New Orleans contributed, especially Time-Life International, which funded several inter-American initiatives based in the Crescent City.[55]

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[53] These contributions could take many forms. Local business owners served on committees planning everything from award banquets to Pan American Week celebrations to essay contests. See, for example, W.J. Bennett (United Fruit Company) to Lloyd Cobb (International House), 17 Mar 1950; and Mario Bermudez to Robert L. Young (C&S Airlines), 17 Mar 1952, Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Affairs Papers, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.
[54] Souther, *New Orleans on Parade*, 21.
[55] For information about the city's educational exchange programs and the contributions of private corporations, see "Students Make Good Neighbors," *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 Jul 1951. Time-Life International bankrolled much of the planning and staging for the 1955 Inter-American Investment

Private assistance for the city's Pan American business strategy sometimes came from less intuitive quarters. One of the finest contributors to New Orleans' personal rapport with Latin Americans, for example, was the Ochsner Clinic, founded in 1942 by Alton Ochsner, a rising star of a surgeon in New Orleans and Southeastern medical circles. Dr. Ochsner's medical connections with Latin America were far-reaching and pre-dated the broader internationalist push that followed World War II. As a young doctor associated with Tulane University's hospital and medical school, he had helped to establish regular exchanges of information and expertise with hospitals and doctors in South and Central America. He traveled to the region frequently, making an estimated one hundred trips during his lifetime.[56]

The relationship between Ochsner and the city's internationalist-minded business leaders was mutually beneficial. The young surgeon had wanted to start his own clinic since the 1930s, but the economic challenges of the period had proven insurmountable for him and his colleagues. Luckily, Ochsner's line of work brought him into regular contact with families who had access to the levers of power in New Orleans. Shortly before the U.S. joined World War II, Ochsner made a house call on Mrs. Lynne Hecht, wife of banker and International House founder Rudolf Hecht, in which the matter arose and Mr. Hecht took an interest. At a subsequent lunch meeting, Ochsner and Hecht agreed that a good clinic combined with the young surgeon's growing international reputation could do

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Conference, as well as a series of advertisements on the importance of internationalism and one abortive conference called the World Forum. See "Forum to Invite Europe Leaders," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Jan 1948; Clay Shaw (International Trade Mart) to C.D. Jackson (Time-Life International), 8 Nov 1946, Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.

[56] John Wilds and Ira Harkey, *Alton Ochsner: Surgeon of the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 121-124. Ochsner's renown in Latin America is aptly illustrated by the number of honors he received and memberships he held in Latin American medical societies. For a list of these honors and memberships compiled when Ochsner won the *Times-Picayune*'s Loving Cup Award in 1945, see "Dr. Ochsner is Awarded '45 Times-Picayune Cup," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Nov 1946.

a lot to draw Latin American visitors to New Orleans. Hecht, operating in his capacity as a director of the Hibernia National Bank, arranged for Ochsner and his colleagues to borrow up to half a million dollars with no collateral. Before the group could act, the war again stalled the clinic project, but opportunities arose once again as wartime restrictions began receding. As victory approached, the federal government began disposing of its surplus property in the New Orleans area. Ochsner and his allies petitioned for one of the Army hospitals to be transferred to his foundation, on the pretext that the bed capacity was badly needed to serve Latin Americans who were accustomed to coming to New Orleans for their medical treatment. The strategy worked, and the clinic was opened in January 1947.[57]

The clinic was everything Ochsner and Hecht had imagined it would be in terms of enhancing the connection between New Orleans and Latin America. Numerous wealthy Latin Americans, including a few heads of state and other high government officials, came to Ochsner and his staff for treatment. These Latin American patients made up between ten and fifteen percent of the hospital's total patient load by 1950. Surgeons from Central and South America also frequently visited New Orleans for medical conferences or to work with Dr. Ochsner in studying new surgical techniques. This constant interchange of medical professionals complemented the work of International House, the trade mart, and the Office of International Relations. Visiting Latin doctors often became new allies for the international program and gave the city another opportunity to impress more guests with its Pan American hospitality.[58]

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[57] Wilds and Harkey, *Alton Ochsner*, 144-145; "MacLean to Aid Lagarde Survey," *Times-Picayune*, 30 Nov 1945.

[58] Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza and Argentinian dictator Juan Perón were among Ochsner's patients over the years, along with a host of other Latin American officials. See Wilds and Harkey, *Alton*

Ochsner's contributions to the Pan American business strategy of New Orleans also included personal service. He was elected president of the Cordell Hull Foundation in 1956, and served a term as president of International House in the 1960s. He remained actively interested in these and other branches of the international program, especially elements concerned with anticommunism.[59]

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Collectively, the three pillars of New Orleans' international program and their partners in both public and private sectors invested an enormous amount of time and money in shaping the city's Pan American identity in the post-war world. They aimed not only to make New Orleans appear to be a welcoming place for foreign visitors, especially Latin Americans, but also to make New Orleanians appear to be a welcoming people. Looking to combine business with intimate diplomacy, they developed a protocol for receiving foreigners that emphasized pomp and formality along with fraternity and conviviality. Certainly, there were proper meetings and speeches and deliberations over seating arrangements. But there were also cocktail parties, dinners at French Quarter restaurants, Mardi Gras outings, and cigars in the lounges of the city's finest clubs and hotels. Salutations were polite and respectful, but were often dispensed with quickly in

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Ochsner, 121-124; transcript of radio broadcast of conversation between Andres Horcasitas and Colonel Luis Manuel DeBayle (Minister of Health of Nicaragua), 31 Aug 1946, Box 40, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection; "Medical Facilities of City Praised by Chile Surgeons," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Oct 1949.

[59] Ochsner's continued interest in the Pan American business strategy of New Orleans was well-rewarded by the business community. A number of executives in the shipping and related industries supported the Ochsner Clinic. Theodore Brent of the Mississippi Shipping Company, for example, left the clinic its first major gift of over a million dollars. See Wilds and Harkey, *Alton Ochsner*, 152. See also "Hull Foundation Gets New Chief," *Times-Picayune*, 29 Jan 1956; and Arthur E. Carpenter, "Social Origins of Anticommunism: The Information Council of the Americas," *Louisiana History* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 117-143.

favor of more intimate familiarity, of a kind difficult to imagine in the United States' diplomatic establishment.

Making New Orleans a welcoming place for Latin visitors involved promoting the city and providing excellent service when dignitaries or businessmen came to visit. By 1946, the three major components of the city's international program had worked out a system for receiving and entertaining these visitors that ensured they would quickly feel the extent of the city's desire to have their business and friendship. From the moment a Latin American visitor of any consequence arrived by ship or airplane, they were welcomed with the same characteristic warmth and fanfare that Chep Morrison remembered from his pre-inauguration trips to Latin America. Typically, these visitors could expect to be met at the airport by the mayor, the Director of International Relations, or a representative, along with the mayor's car. On some occasions, such as when Argentinian President Arturo Frondizi arrived in New Orleans in December 1961, a military unit would welcome the visitor with a salute. Often, if the visitor did not have hotel accommodations arranged in advance, the mayor would provide the use of his suite at the Roosevelt Hotel, which the city kept on reserve for such purposes.[60]

Often, the Latin American visitor would have business of his or her own to conduct, such as trade negotiations at the International Trade Mart, an appointment at the Ochsner Clinic, or a lecture to give at one of the universities. The local business community generally tried to find some time to entertain in between these engagements. Most visitors were invited to tour the Port of New Orleans aboard the Dock Board's yacht "Good Neighbor," often accompanied by a contingent of local businessmen.

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[60] "Gallegos and Staff Visit New Orleans," *Times-Picayune*, 22 Jul 1948; "El Salvador Leader Greeted," *Times-Picayune,* 20 Mar 1959; "Frondizi Lands in California," *Times-Picayune*, 23 Dec 1961; "Frondizi Sees Liberty, Democracy Success," *Times-Picayune,* 24 Dec 1961.

Depending on the visitor, he or she might be escorted on a tour of the French Quarter or other neighborhoods of the city, and few visits concluded without a meal at Arnaud's, Antoine's, or one of the city's other famed restaurants.[61]

Formal symbols of recognition played a crucial role in the international program's effort to ingratiate the city to its Latin visitors. Mayor Morrison and his successor Victor Schiro liberally presented certificates of honorary citizenship and keys to the city to Latin American businessmen and government officials. Morrison's liberality with this practice earned him a lot of press, but at times it went to extremes. On more than one occasion, the Director of International Affairs warned him that giving out so many keys and certificates would diminish their value and prestige. Nonetheless, the city of New Orleans built up a remarkable collection of honorary citizens over the years, including Latin American musicians and artists, diplomats, and several heads of state, including Mexico's Miguel Aleman, Venezuela's Rómulo Gallegos, and the Guatemalan dictator Carlos Castillo Armas. The city also developed an International Order of Merit, which it presented to distinguished visitors from abroad and around the U.S. Recipients included Governor Averell Harriman of New York, President Arturo Frondizi of Argentina, and presidents of Honduras and El Salvador.[62]

In several cases, the city used more durable monuments to establish the city as a distinctly Pan American space. Statues of Latin American heroes were a common theme.

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[61] For examples, see the program for the New Orleans visit of Justo Carrillo (Ambassador at Large and Director of the Economic Board of Cuba), 9 Dec 1949, Box 20, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection; "Plane Will Hop to San Salvador," *Times-Picayune*, 7 May 1947.

[62] For more on the concerns of the Office of International Relations that the mayor might have been getting a bit carried away with his honorary citizenships and city keys, see Mario Bermudez to deLesseps S. Morrison, 18 Mar 1952, and Bermudez to Morrison, 6 Aug 1952, Box 41, Morrison Papers. For examples of presentations of the keys, honorary citizenship, and International Order of Merit, see "Investments from Outside Encouraged by Venezuela, *Times-Picayune*, 13 Jul 1948; "Castillo Armas Sees Grid Game," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Nov 1955; "Frondizi Lands in California," *Times-Picayune*, 23 Dec 1961.

For example, Mayor Morrison and the leaders of International House and the International Trade Mart whipped up a tremendous amount of publicity over the city's acquisition of a statue of Simón Bolívar, erected at the corner of Canal and Basin streets in 1957. The monument was given by the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, and Panama as a gift to the city of New Orleans. To commemorate the unveiling and maximize its contribution to New Orleans' role as a Pan American space, International Relations Director Mario Bermudez personally went to Washington to invite the ambassadors of these countries to attend the event. The ceremony itself was extravagant, with a parade featuring Latin American flags, national anthems, dress, and traditional themes. Mayor Morrison and the Office of International Relations worked closely with the schools to get them involved in the event, and the entire city was invited to see the statue unveiled on November 24, 1957. Similar ceremonies, although not as elaborate, attended the unveiling of statues dedicated to the Central American patriot Francisco Morazán (1960), and Mexican revolutionary hero Benito Juárez (1965).[63]

The city government also renamed and reimagined a number of streets and public spaces to convey a sense of solidarity between New Orleans and its Latin neighbors. In 1954, the city designated a section of the roadway in its widely acclaimed Audubon Park to be the Joseph Gumbel International Drive, named for one of the early directors of International House and a fervent advocate for the city's international program. The

[63] The planning process reveals the importance attached to this event by leaders of the international program, as well as the attention paid to making the ceremony a spectacle reinforcing New Orleans' role as the gateway to the Americas. See Marcel Gomez (Office of International Relations) to deLesseps Morrison, 7 Oct 1957; Victor Andrade (Bolivian Ambassador to U.S.) to Mario Bermudez, 24 Oct 1957; Mario Bermudez to General Raymond Huft, 29 Oct 1957; and memo from Mario Bermudez to Mayor Morrison, 29 Oct 1957, Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Relations Papers, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. See also the program for the unveiling ceremony, Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Relations Papers, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library. Regarding the statue of Francisco Morazán, see "Latin Leader Arrives Today," *Times-Picayune*, 2 Jun 1960; "Visitor Urges Stronger Bond," *Times-Picayune*, 4 Jun 1960.

drive, which still exists in part, was lined with trees from over forty countries planted with the assistance of their consuls in New Orleans. In May 1957, as part of a celebration of New Orleans' progress, the city designated the neutral ground (median) of Basin Street from Canal to Toulouse as the "Garden of the Americas." The idea was that the statue of Simón Bolívar would be the first of numerous monuments to the city's Pan American solidarity to be placed here.[64]

Representatives also took to the road to promote the city and its advantages, covering wide territory in the United States and Latin America. The placement of local businessmen and city officials on regional and national committees acting in both the private and public sectors was helpful in this regard. Rudolf Hecht, for example, represented New Orleans as a delegate to banking conferences and world trade organizations such as the Inter-American Council on Commerce and Production and the International Chamber of Commerce. E.O. Jewell and other port officials represented the city's interests on the Gulf Ports Association and similar groups. When a major world fair or trade association meeting was held someplace in the U.S. or Latin America, International House or the trade mart would often send an emissary. These connections helped with both networking and representing New Orleans' interest in the policymaking process for international trade practices.[65]

Goodwill tours and dedicated fact-finding trips complemented these more official excursions. Goodwill missions sponsored by chambers of commerce and other civic organizations had long been a mainstay of port cities, but New Orleans was able to add

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[64] "Roadway Gets New Name as Consuls Set Out Trees," *Times-Picayune*, 25 Jan 1954; "Basin St. Area Name Proposed," *Times-Picayune*, 19 Apr 1957; "History Making Day Monday," *Times-Picayune*, 5 May 1957.

[65] "Hecht Represents I-H at Two World Meets," *Times-Picayune*, 28 Mar 1947; "City Leaders to Go to Chicago Today," *Times-Picayune*, 17 Aug 1950.

the prestige of its international program to such trips to maximize their promotional value. In 1948, a contingent from the Crescent City toured Argentina, and was given a state dinner in their honor by President and Mrs. Juan Perón. International House and the city press naturally highlighted this event as evidence of New Orleans' growing prestige in Latin American circles.[66]

Whereas making New Orleans a welcoming space for Latin American visitors involved hospitality, communication, and visible symbols of solidarity, making New Orleanians into a welcoming people required other strategies, especially education. Moreover, the target of this component of the international program was the citizens of New Orleans itself rather than Latin Americans.

By comparison, this task was easier for New Orleans' civic leaders than their counterparts in other Southern cities. Unlike Houston and Miami, New Orleans had played host to a large and diverse number of Latin American visitors for centuries. Many of these Latin visitors had been wealthy and well-connected, which helped them to blend more easily into the city's social and professional landscape. A number of influential Latins either lived or owned homes in the Crescent City, and were members of its business associations and social clubs. Their children often attended the numerous Catholic boarding schools in the New Orleans area, and many went on to attend college at Tulane, Loyola, Louisiana State University, or other local institutions of higher learning. Latin American men and women alike were patrons of the retail centers in downtown New Orleans, some of which catered to this population by hiring bilingual

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[66] Between August 1946 and July 1965 International House alone sponsored over 50 trade and cultural missions abroad. See memo entitled "Trade and Cultural Missions Abroad Sponsored by International House," [1955], Box 16 in International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection. For details regarding the 1948 trip to Argentina, see "Business Leaders Leave for Argentina," *Trade Winds*, 15 May 1948; *Trade Winds*, 21 Jun 1948.

clerks. As one writer for *Time* put it in 1946, New Orleans had long been "*muy simpatico*" to the needs and desires of Latin Americans.[67]

This is not to suggest that New Orleans had none of the race-related problems of Miami and Houston with which to contend. Like most of the U.S. South, New Orleans was no stranger to Jim Crow, and segregation remained in effect in the city's schools into the 1960s, to say nothing of discrimination in businesses and public facilities. Although Latins were generally treated as whites by the city's residents, this was not a uniform practice, and as the composition of New Orleans' Latin population changed over time, a number of its members experienced racial discrimination. This was particularly of the postwar era, when New Orleans' Latin American population increased dramatically owing to immigration from Central America, particularly Honduras. The newcomers were often not as wealthy or highly connected as the sort that frequented International House and the International Trade Mart, and many had darker skin. A recent study of New Orleans' Honduran community suggests that these attributes contributed to the discrimination.[68]

Even with these factors considered, New Orleans' relationship with its Latin American residents has historically been much less contentious than that existing in the

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[67] "South to the Future," *Time*, 1 Apr 1946. Historian Julie Weise has written recently on New Orleans' comparative lack of racial discrimination against Mexicans. In her study, she argues that Mexicans in New Orleans did not experience the same negative racialization as they did in other parts of the U.S. South in the 20th century because New Orleanians did not see them as interlopers. They were simply part of the mix of foreigners who came in via the port, and some even considered them to be partially European because of Mexico's history as a Spanish colony. See Weise, "Fighting for Their Place: Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the U.S. South, 1910-2008" (Ph.D., Yale University, 2009), 27-66.

[68] "'Honduran Memories': Identity, Race, Place, and Memory in New Orleans, Louisiana" (M.A., Louisiana State University, 2004. A high-profile case in which the city's internationalist emphasis was not enough to overcome local racism occurred in 1954 when Emperor Haile Selassie visited New Orleans. Although Selassie was treated to numerous honors and receptions at International House, some whites boycotted the event, and while the Roosevelt Hotel reluctantly allowed the foreign leader to stay, they banned him from entering the restaurant or bar. See Haas, *DeLesseps S. Morrison and the Image of Reform*, 250-251.

other two cities in this study. This relatively harmonious cordiality squared well with the desires of the business leaders heading the city's international program, who wanted to establish New Orleans as a distinctly Pan American space. It was not enough, however, for New Orleanians merely to tolerate the presence of Latins among them. These leaders wanted New Orleans' citizens to embrace their Latin American customers, to actively welcome them, study them, and interact with them. To achieve this, business leaders designed programs to humanize Latin America and educate the public on how critical its people were to the economic livelihood of the Crescent City as a port.

A favorite tactic of both International House and the Office of International Relations was to normalize Latin American culture by offering themed dances, essay contests, and exhibitions. The organizations often invited Latin musicians and artists to come to New Orleans to perform and teach about their crafts. The programs were especially directed at school-age children. The organizations also encouraged tourism between New Orleans and Latin countries, believing that exposing Latin Americans and U.S. citizens to one another's cultures would allay mutual suspicions and break down old stereotypes.[69]

In addition to these more robust approaches, the leaders of the city's international program engaged in subtle fine tuning, all the way down to encouraging slight changes in the language local citizens used to describe their relationship with people from other countries. As early as 1946, International House and trade mart officials launched a campaign to replace the term "foreign" with "international" in describing trade with other countries. In one letter explaining this approach, trade mart director Clay Shaw argued

[69] "New Orleans Bids for Latins' Trade," *New York Times*, 21 Mar 1949.

that in his experience using the term "foreign trade" tended to arouse suspicion among uninformed U.S. citizens.[70]

Probably the greatest effort to enlist the public in the city's Pan American business strategy came each year during Pan American Week. Cities across the U.S. had already been giving polite nods to Pan American Day each April 14th for years, the first having been celebrated around the hemisphere in 1931. The April date was selected by the American Republics in part to commemorate the date of the resolution creating the Pan American Union, and also because it was a time when school was in session and students could learn about Pan American unity.[71]

Since the tradition of celebrating Pan American Day had begun, New Orleans business leaders had participated dutifully, citing the city's long-standing cultural and historical ties to the Caribbean and Central America. As Pan Americanism became an all-out business promotion strategy during the 1940s, however, the celebrations transformed from formality to festivity. In 1945, for example, Pan American Day in New Orleans consisted of a few Latin-themed dance programs, speeches, and a few themed decorations. By 1946, with mayor-elect Chep Morrison and the city's quickly developing international program in place, Pan American Day became an entire Pan American Week. Ceremonies and programs were held across the community, incorporating public spaces, schools, and even churches. The business community invited Latin American dignitaries to participate fully in these events in order to lend them a sense of prestige.[72]

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[70] "New Orleans Sets Out to Grab Leadership in International Trade," *Houston Press*, 6 May 1946; Clay Shaw to C.D. Jackson (Time-Life International), 8 Nov 1946, and C.D. Jackson to Clay Shaw, 26 Nov 1946, Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers.

[71] Memo entitled "The Meaning of Pan American Day," 14 Apr 1944, Box 5, J. Russell Wait Papers, Fondren Library, Rice University.

[72] For examples of typical Pan American festivities and the efforts to plan them, see Mario Bermudez (Office of International Relations) to Guillermo Belt (Cuban businessman), 23 Mar 1950; Belt to

Although some of the events were clearly intended to reach mainly the power brokers within the business community, leaders of the international program strove to find ways to include the public as much as possible. After all, as Mario Bermudez once explained, the city's power brokers already understood the point of Pan Americanism. The purpose of Pan American Week ought then to be to encourage New Orleanians to recognize their own interest in Latin American affairs. "If political and economic conditions in some of the Latin American countries are unstable," one editorial argued, "that should be of interest and concern to the American people, and especially those groups in New Orleans, which seek to establish the kind of good relations that flourish and develop under stable and peaceful conditions." Radio spots and advertisements emphasizing this logic often used major trade commodities as an illustration of New Orleans' commercial reliance on the Latin countries. One public service announcement, for example, reminded listeners that one of every four cups of coffee consumed in the U.S. passed through New Orleans after having been grown in Latin America.[73]

Even in periods of great tension between the U.S. and the countries of Latin America, numerous Latin observers praised New Orleans' international program, citing its contributions toward a true realization of the ideals of the Good Neighbor Policy. On a practical level, diplomats and commercial officials noted that the city's efforts to facilitate better international trade were working. Manuel Saenz, a treasury official from

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Bermudez, 24 Mar 1950; Carmen Anguis (Bermudez's secretary) to Belt, 28 Mar 1950; Belt to Bermudez, 3 Apr 1950; Bermudez to Belt, 5 Apr 1950; and the agenda of a 23 Mar 1952 meeting of the Pan American Day committee of International House, all in Box 1, New Orleans Office of International Relations Papers, Louisiana Division, New Orleans, Public Library. For an explanation of the decision to turn Pan American Day into Pan American Week, see "Pan American Days," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Apr 1946.

[73] Bermudez's philosophy on the need for public participation in Pan American Week is revealed in a letter to then-City Councilman Victor Schiro, 10 Mar 1955, Box 1, New Orleans OIR Papers, NOPL. The quote admonishing local citizens to take an interest in Latin American economic and political conditions comes from "Pan-American Day Aims," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Apr 1949. For the script of the public service announcement about coffee, see Box 1, New Orleans OIR Papers, NOPL.

Costa Rica, explained in 1946 that whereas New Orleans had previously only been one of the country's export markets, it was now the only market the country really needed. Ambassador Ismael Gonzalez from Guatemala said much the same for his own country in 1948. New Orleanians who traveled for business or pleasure in Latin America reported that news of International House and the trade mart was moving quickly across the hemisphere, and receiving warm approval from Latin businessmen.[74]

Statistics suggest New Orleans' Pan American business strategy paid off economically. During the 1930s, 63.2% of New Orleans' imports came from Latin America, and 27.8% of its exports had Latin countries as their destination. Wartime era numbers are a bit misleading because of the unusual circumstances, but the 1950s showed a marked improvement over the pre-war decade. In 1952, just over 74% of New Orleans' imports came from Latin America, and 40.8% of the city's exports were shipped to Latin countries.[75]

It is worth noting that these increases were uneven across the region. Central American countries saw the greatest increase in total trade volume through New Orleans. Others farther south did not experience this, although their business leaders still often praised the city's Pan American business strategy. Indeed, the most impressive element of the international program for Latin American visitors tended to be its emphasis on cooperation, respect, and equality for international trade partners. This conciliatory attitude earned New Orleans a great deal of publicity as what Honduran editor Vicente Machado Valle called the "best friend" of Latin America. Others, including Cuban

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[74] "New Orleans Fete to Mark Latin-American Trade," *New York Times*, 17 Nov 1946; "Guatemalan Envoy Lauds Port, International House," *Times-Picayune*, 12 Feb 1948; "Air, Sea Service Expected by Cuba," *Times-Picayune*, 3 Nov 1945.

[75] For a series of compiled trade data tables for New Orleans, see Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 352-374.

businessman and commerce official Guillermo Belt, affirmed that New Orleans' Pan Americanism was promoting better understanding between the peoples of the U.S. and the rest of the hemisphere.[76]

The New Orleans Gateway in the National Context

New Orleans' growing international program was a local affair, and not sponsored by any particular government agency in Washington. Nonetheless, plenty of contact emerged between the Crescent City and the federal government in the postwar years, as both local and national leaders found ways to cooperate for their mutual benefit. Frequent communication played a key role in growing this relationship. Businessmen associated with International House, particularly Rudolph Hecht, kept in touch with high officials in the State Department and the OCIAA, which helped to harmonize local and national ideas about building better relations with Latin American countries. In return, officials in the State Department and other interested agencies kept abreast of what was happening in the Crescent City.[77]

Government agents frequently and publicly praised the international program developing in New Orleans, observing that its objectives dovetailed with those of the nation's broader foreign policy, especially toward Latin America. As Ambassador George Messersmith explained in his remarks at the dedication of International House,

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[76] For Latin American observations of the more intangible benefits of New Orleans' Pan American attitude, see "City is Called Best Friend of Latin America," *Times-Picayune*, 4 Oct 1943; and Guillermo Belt to Mario Bermudez, 17 Apr 1950 in Box 1, OIR Records, New Orleans Public Library.

[77] The State Department's reception center in New Orleans was one principal avenue of communication. On some occasions, State Department officials established more direct contacts with city leaders. See, for example, Dave McGuire to Rafael Urruela, 17 Mar 1947 in Box 41, Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.

New Orleans was taking on foreign policy tasks that the federal government simply was not well-equipped to tackle on its own.[78]

Indeed, one of the most attractive reasons the federal government had for encouraging the Crescent City's international program was that it was taking concrete action rather than merely expounding on ideals. In describing the work of International House in a 1945 article, for example, one official remarked, "Here if anywhere business men will have an opportunity to help convert the so-called 'good-neighbor policy' from an abstraction of government policy into the living tissue of human relations.'" This is not to say, of course, that New Orleanians were never given over to moments of rhetorical flourish. What attracted so many government officials to their international program was that as businessmen they focused intently on translating ideas into action.[79]

The availability of private money added another attractive dimension. Even if the State Department had wanted to extend the kind of warm greetings New Orleans was putting on for so many Latin American visitors, they would not have had the budget or the facilities to do it. This was illustrated quite regularly in correspondence between the city's Office of International Relations and the State Department's satellite reception office in New Orleans. When a visitor of any distinction was on the way, the reception office would usually call on the city to get involved. Upon learning that a contingent of eleven Argentinian senators was en route, for example, the head of the center asked the city to find someone to give a dinner in their honor. "A group of this importance is

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[78] Messersmith's address was reported in the 29 Jan 1944 edition of the *Department of State Bulletin.*
[79] These remarks came from an official at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, whose article was quoted in the local newspaper. See "Aims of International House," *Times-Picayune*, 25 Jul 1945.

always of some concern to us because it should receive some entertainment," the official explained. "We can only turn to civic or private groups for assistance."[80]

After World War II, leaders in Washington and New Orleans became interested in one another for what they believed they could do together in the realm of U.S.-Latin American economic relations, where circumstances were quite bad. As the previous chapter explained, the United States had gone to considerable lengths during the war to secure inter-American solidarity and reorganize the hemispheric economy to suit the needs of the U.S. war machine. Latin American countries had, with some exceptions, cooperated, consenting to U.S.-led programs that manipulated their economies. After the war, furthermore, Latin leaders agreed to back the U.S.-preferred position that inter-American grievances ought to be settled within a regional organization before allowing the United Nations to get involved.[81]

In return for all this wartime Latin American cooperation, the U.S. had promised to clean up any economic messes it made along the way. It also committed itself, if somewhat vaguely, to assisting Latin American economic development. Franklin Roosevelt had set the tone for this policy in 1939 by promising aid from the U.S. to keep any Latin American country from having to surrender its sovereignty to one of the belligerents in World War II. Sumner Welles' promises at the 1942 Rio Conference had reinforced the idea that the U.S. would sponsor Latin development projects even after the war. Pronouncements at subsequent conferences continued to sustain the impression that

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[80] Letter from John R. Bietz to Mario Bermudez, 14 Apr 1964 in Box 2, Records of the Mayor's Office of International Relations, Louisiana Division, New Orleans Public Library.

[81] The U.S. favored this hemisphere-first method of dealing with regional grievances because it prevented the U.S. from having to contend with the Soviet Union's veto in the U.N. Security Council. See McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles*, 22.

the U.S. was vitally interested in assisting the economic development of the entire hemisphere.[82]

The expectations among Latin American business and political leaders created by these pronouncements were high, especially in light of the dislocations that wartime mobilization had brought to the region. Growing pains brought on by rapid industrialization and wartime restrictions on personal freedom had created a widespread desire for major social and political changes. Inflation and the hardships it wrought resulted in people calling for more citizen-directed decision-making about economic policy, a move toward more democratic government, and economic independence for Latin states. Latin leaders like Brazil's Valentim Boucas predicted that if the U.S. did not cooperate with the Latin countries to plan out an orderly transition to a peacetime economy, the Latin countries would experience a crippling economic downturn that would destabilize the region.[83]

In virtually every Pan-American conference since the late 1930s, the U.S. had stressed its eagerness to cooperate with its Latin neighbors on economic problems, but as peace approached the Latins became anxious for specifics. Some called for an inter-American bank, respect for tariffs to protect fledgling industries, a carefully orchestrated effort to slowly back off purchasing agreements once raw materials were no longer

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[82] For Roosevelt's sentiments, see his address to the Governing Board of the Pan American Union, 14 Apr 1939. When Latin American governments began chafing at the United States' lack of attention to economic problems within the hemisphere in the late 1940s, State Department officials admitted that the U.S. had in some ways led the Latins to believe it would do more. See memo entitled "United States Development Policy for Latin America," 29 Jan 1948 in Box 22, Subject Files of the State Department's Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (RG 43), National Archives.

[83] David Rock, "War and Postwar Intersections: Latin America and the United States," in *Latin America in the 1940s: War and Postwar Transitions*, ed. David Rock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 15-40; Address of Valentim Boucas to the Conference of Commissions on Inter-American Development, 9 May 1944 in Inter-American Development Commission, *Proceedings of the Conference of Commissions of Inter-American Development* (Washington, 1944), hereinafter called *Conference Proceedings*; Rabe, "The Elusive Conference."

needed in wartime quantities, and more deals like the Inter-American Coffee Agreement, which had proven so useful during the war. Even if these measures required Washington to deviate slightly from its touchstone of free trade, the argument went, in the long run to do so would serve the broader goal of an enduring peace. Valentim Bouças noted that U.S. officials had frequently identified this idea of an enduring peace as their ultimate goal in the war. He reminded his U.S. colleagues, however that "this enduring peace can only exist in a world made free from fear, starvation, and misery."[84]

As the war came to a close, U.S. policymakers found themselves in a conundrum. By manipulating the economies of Latin countries to obtain raw materials and maintain their loyalty during the war, they had created exactly the kind of economic mess they had promised they would clean up. Meeting the Latins' expectations, however, would likely require the U.S. to commit to some form of direct public aid, something many officials were loath to consider. They carefully avoided rejecting public aid outright, and tried to argue that the U.S. was doing everything possible to support Latin industrialization. In reality, many officials hoped they would not have to do much at all. Much more preferable would be for private enterprise to take charge of bankrolling Latin America's economic development, and for the Latin countries to facilitate this by committing themselves to free trade principles and investor-friendly policies. As one historian has put it, it was almost as though the U.S. government wanted to turn back the clock to the 1920s and have private enterprise take care of all capital-intensive foreign policy.[85]

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[84] Bouças address, 9 May 1944, *Conference Proceedings*.
[85] Statement by Assistant Secretary of State William L. Clayton at Chapultepec, *Department of State Bulletin*, 4 Mar 1945, pp. 334-338. The historian is Thomas V. DiBacco. See DiBacco, "American Business and Foreign Aid: The Eisenhower Years," *Business History Review* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1967), 21-35.

New Orleans' international program was exactly the kind of private-sector initiative Washington officials felt could help them square the circle regarding economic development in Latin America. As a cluster of public and private entities looking mainly to increase their own port business, the leaders of this program were free from many of the difficulties the federal government experienced in trying to achieve the same objectives. New Orleanian businessmen could, for example, advocate for more trade in raw material exports from Latin America without appearing to hope that Latin American countries would remain locked in as producers of solely raw materials. They could also make policy suggestions and downplay the utility of public loans.[86]

New Orleanians could also use their influence to promote U.S. consumption of Latin American imports, a touchy subject for the federal government to handle. Whereas U.S. business leaders might accuse Washington of selling out its own if federal officials were to take this stance on Latin American imports, New Orleans' internationalist trade program had the advantage of honestly wanting imports for the sake of local benefit. As officials from International House frequently put it, the United States could either increase exports via the expensive method of issuing credits to potential buyers, or U.S. importers could buy their goods instead, and thereby create a real exchange. New Orleans, they said, preferred the latter method.[87]

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[86] One of the most telling illustrations of the federal government's frustration with its inability to actively cultivate more private investment in Latin America comes from the minutes of an early meeting of the International Development Advisory Board. The Board was set up by President Harry Truman to troubleshoot private funding sources for the Point Four initiative. At one meeting, Chairman Eric Johnston said, "I don't want anybody to get the impression or to say I mean to use a club, to say if they don't do this we will do that. That would be the worst thing to do, in my opinion, but in some way, either in this Board or this Government we have got to develop some sort of mechanism to get the same type and kind of treatment for American capital they give to their own capital." In a word, Johnston wanted to be able to do business with the Latins. See transcript of the International Development Advisory Board's 21 Apr 1952 meeting in Box 23, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives.

[87] "Fresh Approach," *Trade Winds*, 31 Oct 1947.

Essentially, New Orleans' business community was simply able to behave in ways that a national government could not. While State Department officials debated over the optics of even the smallest policy movements, private businessmen and city officials in New Orleans were free to engage their Latin American trade partners in a more relaxed and collegial manner. Certainly, there was a protocol of respect, and formalities were observed where they suited the occasion. The city's prestige, however, would be built on its leaders' ability to provide economic solutions, not how well they adhered to the dictates of any particular international code of conduct. As the *Times-Picayune* explained in 1948 in speaking of International House, New Orleans' business community emphasized "real American service to business men of the United States and other countries," and helped them to "cut through the difficulties and governmental red tape that tends to discourage international business deals."[88]

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The seeds of cooperation between Washington and New Orleans were planted during the war, when leaders in the U.S. and Latin America were both beginning to think about the hemispheric economy after victory. Since 1942, the U.S. had been on record as favoring a comprehensive economic conference to discuss the technical problems facing the hemisphere after the war. Latin Americans viewed the prospect of this conference with great enthusiasm, as it seemed an opportune moment for the U.S. to roll out its plan

[88] "Public Relations Group Honors 1947 Activities," *Times-Picayune*, 5 Jun 1948. There is also something to be said for New Orleans' ability to deal with individual countries rather than Latin America as a whole when planning business deals of mutual interest. Washington officials charged with steering Latin American policies at times complained of the tendency for one Latin country to complain of neglect when the U.S. concluded a trade agreement with some other nearby nation. The result, as State Department official Edwin Keeler wrote in a 1944 memo to William Fowler of the Division of Commercial Policy, was that the U.S. did best to adopt a multi-lateral approach when extending public aid to Latin America. See Keeler to Fowler, 9 May 1944, Box 2, General Records of the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee (RG 43), National Archives.

for setting the hemispheric economy on a footing for postwar development. The Pan American Union, in which all of the Latin countries were represented, was the agency charged with convening the conference at the appropriate time. By December 1943, the Governing Board of the organization resolved itself in favor of calling the conference at the earliest possible date, preferably during September 1944.[89]

The Pan American Union's resolution met with a divided Washington. Sumner Welles had barely returned from giving his message of economic hope to the Latins at the Rio Conference of 1942 before serious disagreements surfaced over just how much economic hope the U.S. really ought to extend. Welles and his allies in the State Department advocated an early date for a technical economic conference, and as early as October 1942 Welles asked various agencies to begin preparing their thoughts on what such a conference would entail. Frank Waring of Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs also seriously advocated for the conference, and for direct U.S. aid to Latin American industrialization. He and others at OIAA argued that Latin America would become a vital export market after the war, but to buy U.S. goods the Latins would need dollars.[90]

Others throughout the State Department and executive branch were less enthusiastic about the U.S. diving headlong into propping up Latin American economic development by holding a technical economic conference so soon. If the conference were to take place, some believed, the Latin countries might make specific requests of the

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[89] Resolution of the Pan American Union calling for the Inter-American Technical Economic Conference to be convened at an early date, 24 Nov 1943, Box 1, General Records of the Inter-American Technical Economic Conference (RG 43), National Archives.

[90] Sumner Welles to Nelson Rockefeller, 26 Oct 1942, Box 3, General Records of the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee (RG 43), National Archives); and Edwin Keeler to Harry Hawkins, 25 Aug 1944, Box 2, ibid., plus three enclosed memos between OIAA officials. See also Wagner, *United States Policy toward Latin America*, 16.

United States that would require a specific response. In some cases or even most cases, the U.S. might then find itself constrained to give answers the Latins would not like. As Emilio Collado of the State Department's Office of Financial and Development Policy put it, holding such a conference without significant planning and precise goals could "upset the broad commercial policy applecart" and leave the U.S. scrambling to save face rather than holding the strategic high ground.[91]

Initially, Collado and likeminded officials sought to kill the conference by delaying it. In giving their thoughts to the Pan American Union and other interested Latin Americans, the economic policy chiefs at the State Department such as Harry Hawkins and H. Gerald Smith did as much as they could to drag out the process of preparing for the meeting. They ordered a veritable mountain of studies under the pretext that they would help the countries make more informed decisions once the conference was in session. Secretary of State Hull was more direct. When the Pan American Union pressed him to select a date for the conference, he simply said it was too soon.[92]

Circumstances were handily available to back up this tactic. Argentina, as a member of the Pan American Union in good standing, would likely have to be invited to any conference held under the auspices of the Union, even if it was held in Washington. This was highly objectionable to many, since Argentina had refused to declare war against Nazi Germany. Cordell Hull could not be expected to hold a conference in which

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[91] Emilio Collado to Assistant Secretary of State William L. Clayton, 12 Sept 1945, *FRUS* (1945 ed.), vol. 9, 178.

[92] The State Department's delay tactics are best explained in Stephen Rabe, "The Elusive Conference," 279-294. See also Luis Delgado Gardel (Secretary General of the Pan American Union) to Harry Hawkins, 12 Jan 1943, Box 3, General Records of the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee (RG 43), National Archives; and a memo entitled "Inter-American Post-War Problems," Box 4, ibid. For Cordell Hull's response to the Pan American Union's call for the conference to be scheduled, see Hull to Leo S. Rowe, 18 Jan 1944 in Box 1, General Records of the Inter-American Technical Economic Conference (RG 43), National Archives.

Argentina would have a part to play. There was also the question of how the conference might appear to nations outside the Western Hemisphere. Plans were in the works at this time for establishing the United Nations, and any economic conference called by the U.S. right before its organization might come across as an attempt to set up some kind of voting bloc in the new General Assembly. Given the sensitivity of these issues, opponents of a technical economic conference had little trouble pleading for more time to "wait and see."[93]

Simultaneously, a wide range of U.S. policymakers urged a private sector solution that would undercut the necessity for a broad economic conference in the first place. The Truman administration looked to the nation's financiers to encourage private investment in foreign economic development. In May 1946, Truman created a committee staffed by the deans of Wall Street and some of its biggest clients. Winthrop Aldrich, chairman of Chase National Bank, headed the committee, which quickly became known as the "Aldrich Committee." The presidents or chairmen of the Pullman Corporation, World Harvester, Bank of America, and National City Bank were among the most notable members. The committee strongly favored multilateral guarantees on foreign investment as part of treaties between the U.S. and other countries, but such proposals were yet a bridge too far. The committee's usefulness in practice lie mostly in helping to advertise and sell World Bank bonds.[94]

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[93] Rabe, "The Elusive Conference," 280; memo entitled "Date for Proposed Inter-American Technical Economic Conference," 8 Aug 1944 in Box 47, International Trade Organization Subject Files (RG 43), National Archives; and H. Gerald Smith to Emilio Collado and Spruille Braden, 17 Jan 1946 in Box 57, ibid.

[94] Kevin M. Casey, *Saving International Capitalism during the Early Truman Presidency: The National Advisory Council on International Monetary and Financial Problems* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 165-170.

Another promising avenue was an organization called the Inter-American Development Commission, which had existed mostly on paper since 1940. The agency had been an idea of the Inter-American Financial and Economic Advisory Committee, which had emerged at the first meeting of the Inter-American foreign ministers in 1939. The Inter-American Development Commission was supposed to "stimulate new lines of economic development in the American republics," mainly by encouraging Latin American countries to diversify their economies. Each inter-American country, including the U.S., had its own development council. All of these national councils would then meet periodically to coordinate. Early on the commission promoted a few helpful projects, such as a mandioca processing plant in Brazil and a drive to stimulate U.S. imports of Latin American-produced consumer goods. The war stifled further action for several years, but in 1944 the national commissions managed to arrange a meeting to draw up a program for the consideration of their respective governments.[95]

Although at some level U.S. participation in the conference signaled a genuine interest in improving the Latin American economic situation, the diverging opinions of the speakers about a viable plan of action reiterated how little the U.S. was prepared to do in the public sector. U.S. speakers professed the country's unyielding interest in Latin American economic health, but continued to stress the old refrain about the virtues of free trade and attracting private investment by easing regulation. Arbitrary labor laws, discriminatory taxation, currency depreciation, and the looming possibility of expropriation were formidable bugaboos to potential investors, and Latin countries would

[95] "Background Statement on the Inter-American Development Commission," 1 May 1944 in Box 47, International Trade Organization Subject Files (RG 43), National Archives.

have to address these if they expected to have more private U.S. dollars flowing their way.[96]

Latin economic leaders at the conference such as Valentim Bouças of Brazil and Alejandro Shaw of Argentina did not dispute the idea that private investment would be of great use for bankrolling their countries' economic development, nor were they ideologically opposed to free trade. They protested, however, that the U.S. did not appear to realize the seriousness of the economic landscape in most Latin countries as they faced the postwar era. The development of synthetic replacements for Latin exports like nitrates and rubber threatened to undermine the few industries in which some countries were able to effectively compete. New industries had to compete against goods produced and exported from larger, more developed countries. Free trade might be virtuous, but for a developing country it was often an unaffordable luxury. As the Latin delegates saw it, tariffs were entirely necessary to protect new industries as they matured enough to compete in world markets. The Cuban delegation added that in a country such as theirs, tariffs were a critical source of government revenue. Without this, the government would be forced to raise taxes, which could contribute to political unrest and instability. The solution was some kind of serious infusion of capital.[97]

The position of the United States regarding Latin American economic development remained relatively unchanged during much of the Eisenhower administration. Shortly after Eisenhower took office in 1953, the National Security

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[96] The addresses of Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, William Benton of the University of Chicago, and W.W. Cumberland of Wellington and Company are particularly illustrative. See Inter-American Development Commission, *Proceedings of the Conference of Commissions of Inter-American Development* (Washington: IADC, 1944).

[97] See addresses by Valentim Boucas and Alejandro Shaw and a resolution from the Cuban delegation relating to tariffs in Ibid.

Council outlined the core of U.S. policy toward Latin America in its directive entitled NSC 144. The document admitted that Latin American governments were under "intense domestic political pressures to increase production and to diversity their economies," and that alleviating this pressure was essential to deterring radicalism in the region. The Council's preferred course of action, however, was to encourage the Latin countries to maintain a hospitable climate for attracting foreign investment. If the U.S. was to do anything within its own borders, it was to make it "easy for Latin American countries to sell their products" to North American buyers.[98]

It was against this contentious background that cooperation between Washington and the New Orleans business community began to take shape in the 1940s. As New Orleans' internationalist institutions began coming online in 1944 and beyond, they became involved in a number of initiatives to get at the problem of stimulating foreign trade and investment without using government money. Two points of collaboration stand out as particularly illustrative, namely the development of a New Orleans branch of the State Department's Private Enterprise Cooperation bureau in 1950, and an innovative Inter-American investment conference in 1955.

The Private Enterprise Cooperation bureau of the State Department developed in 1948 as a way to enlist private sector support for the ongoing effort to combat Soviet propaganda and demonstrate the virtues of international capitalism. Starting with only a few staff members and limited resources, the bureau began building programs to disseminate information abroad through educational exchanges, sponsored tours, and other methods. A branch office quickly opened in New York to facilitate better

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[98] See NSC 144/1 (an updated version of the directive approved 18 Mar 1953), printed in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, vol. 4, 1952-54 edition, 6-10.

collaboration with businesses there, and by 1951 the organization began investigating the possibility of starting a branch in New Orleans.

Bureau officials chose the Crescent City because of its internationalist orientation and its relationship with the Latin American countries. Edward Barrett, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, noted that the State Department considered New Orleans "the gateway between the vast mid-Continent area of the United States and the rest of the world, particularly Latin America." Using the New Orleans office as a base, the bureau would seek out assistance from corporations and agencies like International House and local chambers of commerce to carry out information and exchange programs aimed at Latin students and businessmen.[99]

Upon learning of the bureau's interest, International House pledged its full cooperation, including helping the State Department identify a local New Orleanian to head the new office. On the suggestion of International House president Charles Nutter, the State Department tapped Vaughn Bryant, International House's publicity director, to take the job. Bryant had been a journalist in Latin America during World War II and worked for the Associated Press. He was fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, perfect for the kind of relationship-building International House had needed and the State Department would now need.[100]

In operating the branch, Bryant tried to combine New Orleans' approach to business hospitality to the federal government's goals of winning Latin American hearts and minds through international exchange. He worked with local businesses and the city's internationalist coalition to bankroll trips to the U.S. for foreign business leaders.

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[99] "Regional Office of Private Enterprise Cooperation Opens," *Department of State Bulletin*, 16 Jul 1951.
[100] Charles Nutter to John Begg (Private Enterprise Cooperation bureau in Washington), 6 Nov 1950 in Box 15, Private Enterprise Cooperation Staff Subject Files (RG 59), National Archives.

On one such exchange, forty Colombian industrialists and businessmen came to the United States, where they were received in New Orleans and accommodated free of charge for five days at local expense. From there, the arrangements committee in New Orleans accompanied their guests on a tour of major industrial U.S. cities such as Memphis, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, and New York. Bryant also arranged for the Colombians to visit Washington, where they were greeted by government officials, including President Truman.[101]

Everywhere the Colombians traveled, publicity agents from the Private Enterprise Cooperation bureau recorded their speeches and photographed their meetings with U.S. business leaders. News of the tour and some of the group members' speeches were broadcast over Voice of America, a shortwave radio station designed to distribute positive news stories and other information about the United States to other parts of the world to counteract opposing propaganda. In several cities, the Colombians secured promises for the local business communities to send delegations to Colombia, creating what appeared to be the beginning of a real exchange.[102]

These connections are an excellent example of how the federal-New Orleans partnership was able to work to the benefit of all parties involved. New Orleans' internationalist coalition invested a great deal of time and money in the program, but it believed it would benefit from the business contacts made with both the Colombians and the U.S. business communities who received them. The U.S. government invested relatively little money in the program, yet it benefitted from the positive publicity for what appeared to be a very practical gesture of goodwill. The enthusiasm of the visiting

[101] Memos from Vaughn Bryant to John Begg, 24 Oct 1951 and 6 Nov 1951 in Box 6, ibid.
[102] Memos from Vaughn Bryant to John Begg, 24 Sept 1951, 8 Oct 1951, and 11 Oct 1951 in Box 6, ibid.

Colombian businessmen underscored both the virtue of international capitalism and the potential power of private enterprise in driving Latin American economic development. The Colombians, for their part, benefitted from the business contacts they made and from their opportunity to discuss their interests directly with U.S. officials outside the strict protocol-laden atmosphere of inter-American conferences or other diplomatic meetings. Vaughn Bryant and the Private Enterprise Cooperation unit would go on to promote a number of similar exchanges modeled after the Colombian visit. Often using International House as an intermediary, the federal government worked with private corporations and universities to bring Latin Americans into the U.S. and send U.S. citizens to Latin America. Many of these exchanges were directly related to promoting inter-American business, but others reached into the cultural and intellectual realms as well. In addition, when New Orleans officials began planning for the Louisiana Purchase Sesquicentennial to be held in 1953, the Private Enterprise Cooperation staff met with them to explore ways in which federal foreign policy objectives could be blended into the programming.[103]

Probably the most significant event in the cooperative relationship between New Orleans and Washington during this period was the Inter-American Investment Conference, sponsored jointly by International House and Time-Life International in 1955. The International Development Advisory Board, a component of President Truman's Point Four program for technical assistance to developing countries, acted as a sort of shadow sponsor behind the scenes. The conference drew over 800 political and

[103] For more on PEC programs involving universities, see Bartow H. Underhill (PEC) to Mario Bermudez, 7 Aug 1952 in Box 15, Ibid.; and Vaughn Bryant to John Begg, 20 Sept 1951 in Box 13, Ibid. For more on how the PEC sought to merge federal foreign policy objectives into the Louisiana Purchase Sesquicentennial, see Joe Rummel (PEC) to John Begg, 23 Dec 1952 in Box 17, Ibid.

business leaders from around the Western Hemisphere. In addition to providing a venue for discussing specific investment proposals, it facilitated dialogue between Latin Americans and private U.S. investors about what it would take to draw more North American capital into economic development projects. Observers regarded the conference as unique and innovative because it aimed to tackle an economic policy problem without using traditional methods for foreign policymaking. "The idea is to tackle the investment problem from the ground up instead of from the top down," the *New York Times* reported. "Instead of formulating abstract programs requiring inter-Government negotiation or legislation, the conferees will discuss specific business proposals face to face."[104]

Impetus for the conference had grown out of the Truman administration's desire to substitute technical assistance for outright public grants in helping developing countries regain their economic footing in the postwar era. Truman acknowledged the tremendous problems facing these countries in his 1949 inaugural address, but he insisted that the U.S. was limited in how much of its material resources it could offer. "But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge," he added, "are constantly growing and are inexhaustible." The Point Four program, which took its name from its position in Truman's speech, would attempt to help countries with struggling economies implement this technical knowledge.[105]

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[104] Quoted from "Fresh Tack in Investing Planned," *New York Times*, 27 Feb 1955. For more general information about the Inter-American Investment Conference, see "Stakes in Latin America," *New York Times*, 2 Mar 1955; "Business Welds Americas," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 Mar 1955; and "US to Invest Increasing Amounts in Latin America," *Times-Picayune*, 6 Mar 1955.

[105] See Truman's inaugural address, 20 Jan 1949 in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman*, vol. 5 (Washington: GPO, 1999), 112-116.

Technical assistance was useless without money to fund the work. Accordingly, the administration built in a mechanism called the International Development Advisory Board (IDAB) for finding ways to bankroll new projects. The organization was designed to cultivate and harness the assistance of the United States' top business professionals and financiers to get more private U.S. capital invested in foreign economic development. Publisher Gardner Cowles, Nelson Rockefeller, rubber baron Harvey Firestone, and shipping magnate Joseph Grace all sat on the board at times, and for much of its life it was chaired by Eric Johnston, longtime president of the Motion Picture Association of America and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.[106]

At first, IDAB got no farther with drumming up private funding for economic development than anyone else had previously done. The old essential problems remained; investors were unwilling to risk their capital in markets that appeared volatile, and developing countries felt strongly that tariffs and laws regulating foreign investors were necessary for their protection. A lack of information was hardly the problem. U.S. officials and businessmen alike had been preaching free trade, low taxes on foreign capital investment, and easy regulations for years as the recipe for attracting private capital. Likewise, leaders in Latin America and other regions had made it abundantly clear they needed the money. A whole series of inter-American conferences had yielded some fine resolutions on the subject, but very little action.

In an effort to break the impasse, IDAB and its private sector partners in the San Francisco area experimented with a conference to bring potential investors together with

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[106] President Truman created the International Development Advisory Board by executive order on 8 September 1950. Nelson Rockefeller was the first chairman of IDAB, although he was soon replaced by Eric Johnston. See Reich, *Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 449-467; and "New Plan to Spur Foreign Investing," *New York Times*, 12 Mar 1953.

business and political leaders from countries with developing economies for a frank discussion of their mutual interests. The meeting, held in 1952, was poorly attended, and turned into more of a ceremonial reaffirmation of the United States' belief in development as an antidote to communism. IDAB Chairman Eric Johnston vaguely admonished the conference participants to "starve" communism to death through "progress" in all corners of the globe. The delegates passed resounding resolutions of agreement, and then departed with little else to show for their time.[107]

Part of the problem, the planners decided, had been that the focus of the program had been too ambiguous. President Dwight Eisenhower, whose "trade, not aid" mantra depended on the kinds of relationships IDAB was trying to build, suggested giving the conference method a second try, but focusing specifically on Latin America. Limiting the scope of the conference to one particular region might yield more precise solutions, and choosing Latin America would militate against complaints of U.S. economic neglect in the region.[108]

The next consideration for IDAB was where to hold the conference. Location was significant for logistical reasons, and also because the board members wanted to emphasize the primacy of the private sector in solving economic problems. They needed a host city whose business community could make the project their own. Perhaps most critical of all, they would also need to fund it. Rollin Atwood, a former University of Florida professor and more recently a State Department official working on Latin America, recommended the board contact the Florida State Chamber of Commerce. The

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[107] Summary of discussions at the Pacific Coast Conference on Private Investment in International Development, 24 Sept 1952; address by Eric Johnston at the conference, 24 Sept 1952; and an undated attendance list for the conference, all in Box 21, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives.
[108] Outline of IDAB Proposal for a Conference on Opportunities for Investment in Latin America, 19 Jul 1954 in Box 20, Ibid.

Chamber had expressed great interest in becoming involved, and Miami's civic leaders were eager to use the meeting to validate their own bid to be the preferred gateway to Latin America. IDAB looked into hosting an inter-American investment conference at Miami in late 1954 or early 1955, but Miami's civic leaders were unable to guarantee the necessary facilities at the times the federal government requested. [109]

Sam Anderson and Joseph Marrone, two officials from the Department of Commerce, suggested New Orleans as an alternative location. Marrone had been a banker in New Orleans before moving to Washington, which likely played a role in his endorsement. IDAB correspondence indicates the board was familiar with International House and considered the city's international program compatible with the kind of conference they hoped to present. Frank Kimball, executive director of IDAB, initiated contact with Rudolf Hecht of International House to explore the possibilities for collaboration.[110]

Hecht's response was swift and enthusiastic; New Orleans would gladly host a conference on inter-American private investment. The executive board of International House quickly approved the conference idea in principle and began seeking support from local businesses and the city government. Meanwhile, Hecht continued to work with IDAB to develop the conference strategy. He was familiar with the lukewarm San Francisco conference and its shortcomings. He made clear from the beginning that he was not interested in helping to organize another "talk fest." If New Orleans was to host this

[109] Memo entitled "Origin and Development of the Idea and Plan for the Inter-American Investment Conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana," in Box 20, Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

sequel event, the program would have to be attractive, practical, and people with real influence in the private sector would have to participate.[111]

The conference planners took full advantage of the complementary resources of the New Orleans business community and the United States government. They also demonstrated the degree to which local and national goals in Latin America were closely linked. Both sides were eager for the conference to be prestigious, to attract attention and participation from leaders with the means to take action. Crucially, both sides were careful to make sure private enterprise came across as the focal point of the project. Washington wanted to promote the ability of the private sector to satisfy economic development concerns in Latin America. New Orleans' leaders shared this vision, and hoped they could convince both Latin and U.S. attendees that their city was the right staging ground for any new efforts that emerged from the conference. Frank Kimball also noted that billing foreign trade promotion as a private sector task rather than a government function undercut communist accusations that the U.S. only wanted to tout foreign investment so as to extend its hegemonic grasp in the region. "We will avoid on every hand," he wrote in one memo, "any suggestion that the United States is too eager to invest abroad."[112]

In keeping with the theme of private sector primacy, IDAB did a great deal of orchestration from Washington, but allowed International House and its private sector co-sponsors to have the limelight as plans for the conference developed. IDAB rounded up

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[111] Rudolf Hecht to Frank Kimball, 7 Jul 1954; Rudolf Hecht to Frank Kimball (IDAB), 15 Jul 1954; and Rudolf Hecht and C.C. Walther to Eric Johnston, 13 Jul 1954 in Box 20, Ibid.

[112] Quote is from Frank Kimball to Sam Anderson (Dept. of Commerce), 21 Jul 1954 in Box 20, Ibid. George Barnes of IDAB also explained the federal government's preferred way of billing the conference in a letter to the publicity director at International House. He said, "It is our hope that the Board [IDAB] – and the U.S. Government – will remain in the background of the Conference, as a cooperator and active participant, but not as a prime mover." See Barnes to McDuffy, 2 Aug 1954 in Box 20, Ibid. See also Frank Kimball to John H. Stambaugh (Foreign Operations Administration), 22 Jul 1954 in Box 20, Ibid.

support for the conference from government entities, while International House used its own network of contacts to drum up interest among U.S. business leaders. The pattern repeated in Latin America. IDAB sent executive director Frank Kimball on a tour of major cities in Central and South America to promote the conference, while International House and the city's Office of International Affairs conducted their own campaign.

The response from the Latin business communities was enthusiastic; every Latin country pledged to send delegates to the conference. Many of the leaders Frank Kimball spoke to while on his tour viewed the meeting as an opportunity to work with private U.S. capitalists on a more even playing field. In Bolivia, where overemphasis on the tin industry had left other sectors of the national economy lagging, businessmen told Kimball they felt the government was ready to make major changes in the way it dealt with foreign investors, and that expropriation would go by the wayside. Government officials, although unnamed in Kimball's dispatches back to Washington, apparently confirmed this and went so far as to offer to prepare an official statement welcoming private investment in the mineral and oil industries and read it at the conference. Guatemalan officials saw the conference as a way to kick off their renewed drive for economic development following the political unrest that had surrounded the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz earlier that year.[113]

IDAB and International House both aimed to bring U.S. investors and Latin American business and political leaders together on a basis of equality as much as possible. The conference planners partnered with organizations in each country interested

[113] For Frank Kimball's report on enthusiasm for the conference and local business conditions there, see airgram from Kimball to the Department of State, 25 Aug 1954 in Box 21, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives; and Kimball to Rudolf Hecht, 3 Nov 1954 in Box 20, Ibid. Mexican officials' enthusiasm for the conference's potential is apparent in "Entendimiento entre los Hombres de Negocios de Todas las Americas," *La Prensa*, 6 Feb 1955.

in economic development, which would then carry out much of the promotional work and the business of preparing investment proposals. In Argentina, for example, the Confederacion General de Comerciantes, a national association of businessmen, took the lead as conference promoter. Bolivia was represented by the president of the Congress of Mining and leaders from the national chamber of commerce.[114]

Latin leaders who worked with Kimball and International House reiterated what Hecht had already made clear, that the conference could not become another round of fine-sounding resolutions with no hope of real action. The success of the meeting would depend on the willingness of both U.S. investors and Latin American representatives to come prepared to do business. At the same time, conference planners tempered their enthusiasm by cautioning their Latin American partners not to expect miracles. The format of this conference was, after all, somewhat experimental.[115]

By the time the conference opened in February 1955, it was clear that Latin and U.S. leaders alike were hopeful about the possibilities for meaningful action. Attendance was higher than expected; the planners had to write to their partner organizations in the Latin countries to limit the number of delegates so as not to overflow the hotel capacity of New Orleans. Over 800 attended; about half were U.S. businessmen and government officials, while the rest were Latin American industrialists, businessmen, and government officials interested in economic development. Twenty-two Latin countries were represented. The program itself was not so revolutionary. Plenary sessions featured accomplished business leaders from both the U.S. and the Latin countries as speakers. The usual refrains about free trade and sovereignty emerged at times, although the

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[114] "Progress Report Concerning the Inter-American Conference on Opportunities for Private Capital Investment in Latin America," 1 Sept 1954 in Box 21, Ibid.
[115] See Frank Kimball's airgram from Venezuela, 4 Sept 1954 in Box 21, Ibid.

conferees tried to focus on realistic strategies for moving private U.S. capital into Latin America. "We have not come here to study and discuss theoretical or general problems," cautioned Venezuelan businessman Eugenio Mendoza in his opening remarks. "We must try to carry out our plans under existing conditions – we cannot postpone action in the hope of obtaining more favorable circumstances."[116]

The most promising moments of the conference came in between these plenary sessions, when investors and Latin American representatives broke out into groups by country. Before the event began, each country worked up a list of potential investment projects that were circulated to all participants. The proposals ran the gamut from infrastructure, housing, and utility projects to new plants for manufacturing cars, soap, canned food, and plywood. During the breakout sessions, interested investors could visit the headquarters of the country advertising any particular investment opportunity and get more information. By the end of the conference, U.S. investors had pledged an estimated $100 million in funding for new projects in Latin America. Over sixty percent of this amount was pledged to specific programs. W.R. Grace, a shipping company, announced plans to build a $6 million plant in Sao Paolo, Brazil for manufacturing insecticides, solvents, and detergents. The Texas International Fund planned to invest $300,000 in Venezuela. The Food Chemical Company, Inc. of Chicago pledged one million dollars

[116] Letter from organizers of the Inter-American Investment Conference to the Latin American co-sponsor organizations, 27 Oct 1954 in Box 20, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives. Mendoza's speech, along with most other speeches given at the conference and a full list of attendees, can be found in the transcript, which was published by Time-Life International after the meeting was over. See *Proceedings of the Inter-American Investment Conference* (Time-Life International, 1955).

for equipment for an Argentinian chemical company. A multitude of other projects were either matched with an investor or a potential investor.[117]

Two institutional advancements emerged from the conference as well. Several of the wealthier U.S. business interests in attendance formed the Inter-American Capital Corporation, an entity for pooling capital to invest in Latin American securities. The South American Gold & Platinum Company of New York took charge of managing the company's investment portfolio, Lehman Brothers managed the financing, and Rudolf Hecht of New Orleans would be chairman of the board. The founders expressed their hope that the company would in time have an international board of directors.[118]

The leaders of New Orleans' international program also moved to convert the conference's investment announcement system into a permanent institution called the Inter-American Investment Opportunity Service. A few weeks after the conference adjourned, Frank Kimball of IDAB met with Rudolf Hecht, E.O. Jewell, and Charles Nutter of International House, along with Mario Bermudez and McFadden Duffy from the New Orleans city government at Hecht's home in Pass Christian, Mississippi. Together, they envisioned a sort of information clearinghouse for would-be investors looking to tap into the Latin American market. The conference delegates had resolved to set up committees in their home countries that would screen investment proposals and pass along viable candidates to a central organization in the U.S. for review and advertisement. International House offered to house the central organization in New Orleans as a department of its broader organization. E.O. Jewell, director of world trade

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[117] Over 300 specific investment proposals were put forward. See "Summary Report to the President on the New Orleans Inter-American Investment Conference," 8 Mar 1955 in Box 21, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives.

[118] "Capital Venture for Americas Set," *New York Times*, 13 May 1955; "New Latin Investment Firm Slated," *New York Herald Tribune*, 15 May 1955.

development at International House, would manage the daily operations, and Hecht would be in charge of policy. As the men laid out their ideas, the New Orleanians left little doubt their objective was to fold the Investment Opportunity Service inextricably into the existing mission of International House. IDAB officials were concerned at first that International House did not have the correct staff in place to realize the new institution's potential. The Investment Opportunity Service remained, however, at New Orleans for a number of years.[119]

The spirit of frankness and openness with which the Inter-American Investment Conference was conducted was perhaps what most satisfied its participants. Many of the Latin delegates remarked that the tone of the meeting was considerably more practical than similar ones run by governments. One Venezuelan delegate said he felt for the first time there was a change in the way U.S. businessmen approached their Latin trade partners. "Some new and more substantial relationship is taking form," he said.[120] Tulio José Jacovella, an Argentinian publisher, joined a representative of the Argentinian Press Association in writing an editorial praising the conference. "It is our feeling," they wrote, "that this historic conference is the start of a new era in hemispheric relations."[121]

The State Department and IDAB agreed that the conference had been very fruitful. Frank Kimball kept in contact with interested members of the United States' diplomatic missions in each of the Latin countries, each of which shared a variety of positive reactions from local business and political leaders. Kimball himself observed that

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[119] For details regarding the initial uneasiness between IDAB and International House concerning the Investment Opportunity Service, first see the minutes of the private meeting at which its post-conference future was discussed, 28 Mar 1955 in Box 20, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives. See also Frank Kimball and George Barnes to Eric Johnston, 21 Apr 1955 in Box 11, Ibid.; and a separate memo from Frank Kimball and George Barnes to Eric Johnston of the same date in Box 20, Ibid. See also Frank Kimball to Edgar Baker of Time-Life International, 31 Mar 1955 in Box 20, Ibid.
[120] "Americas Drawn Closer by Parley," *New York Times*, 6 Mar 1955.
[121] "Pan-American Bridge," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Mar 1955.

the Latin American delegates seemed to "rejoice in the fact that they were accepted on an equal basis into the inter-American business fraternity."[122] When a small selection of conference delegates met in Washington in September 1955 to decide how to continue the work they began the previous March, they referred often to the "spirit" of the New Orleans meeting as the most helpful aspect to perpetuate.[123]

Limitations of the Strategy

New Orleans' international program attracted a great deal of attention from other U.S. ports, potential customers, and from Washington in the 1940s and 1950s. Outwardly, the city's circle of inter-American trade promoters appeared to command a successful formula for encouraging Latin American trade and economic development driven by the private sector. The Crescent City, in turn, appeared poised to reap tremendous benefits from the institutions its leaders had built. A steady stream of self-promotion and apparent victories, especially the congratulations of Latin American leaders themselves, appeared to support the idea that New Orleans was indeed building a lasting infrastructure for profitable inter-American exchange. And, as a number of observers explained, the city's Pan American business strategy was calculated to have a positive psychological effect on hemispheric relations. Caffey Robertson, president of the Memphis Chamber of Commerce, put it this way: "Undoubtedly New Orleans is doing

[122] Frank Kimball to J. Peter Grace, Jr. (IDAB), 4 Mar 1955 in Box 6, IDAB Administrative Files (RG 469), National Archives.
[123] Summary of minutes of the post-conference meeting of the conference's policy committee, 19 Sept 1955 in Box 20, Ibid.

something which will be quickly recognized by the world as one of the greatest contributions to world trade and through that medium to lasting world peace."[124]

By the early 1960s, however, the certainty of New Orleans' trade leadership in the Gulf South was in question. The city could still be proud of some very significant statistics. Between the end of World War II and 1970, New Orleans never lost its edge to Houston in total foreign export and import tonnage. The problem, however, was that it was not growing as quickly as Houston, or Miami for that matter. From 1955 to 1964, for example, New Orleans' share of total U.S. exports barely budged, and its share of the nation's imports actually dropped. Houston's share of the nation's foreign trade, meanwhile, increased over the same period. The Crescent City was also losing badly in other areas, such as its number of international air routes, its banking and finance capacity, and the pace of its industrial development. By 1969, New Orleans was only the seventh most important port of entry for temporary visitors coming from Latin America. Miami and New York were getting the lion's share of those visitors. Even in terms of population growth, the Crescent City was falling behind its regional competitors. Over the course of the 1950s, Miami nearly doubled its population, and Houston's grew by 54%. New Orleans grew by a comparatively paltry 27%.[125]

A combination of factors caused the decline of New Orleans as a major trade center and a widely recognized gateway to the Americas. Some of these developments

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[124] For Caffey Robertson's quote, see "Says Trade Mart Promoting Peace," *Times Picayune*, 17 July 1948. For more examples of other port cities' evaluations of New Orleans' international program, see "New Orleans Turns Energy to World Trade Promotion," *Dallas Morning News*, 29 Sept 1946; "Texas Cities Look to International House," *Trade Winds*, 30 Apr 1947; "Baltimore Group Studies Own I-H Plan," *Trade Winds*, 30 Apr 1947; and "New Orleans' Rise in Trade Reviewed," *New York Times*, 14 Jun 1947.

[125] Foreign export and import statistics from United States Army Corps of Engineers, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1946-1970. See also "Houston Overshadows New Orleans Port Gains," *Times-Picayune*, 2 July 1968; and "Orleans Drawing Meager Portion of Latins – View," *Times-Picayune*, 20 Feb 1971. For population figures, see Table 1.2 in Rice and Bernard, eds., *Sunbelt Cities*, 8-9.

were external, including macroeconomic factors in Latin America and the rest of the world, not to mention developments in other U.S. ports. There were internal problems as well. The city had expanded its port infrastructure considerably during World War II, but since then it had fallen behind. Furthermore, as the leadership of the international program moved into successive rounds of new personalities and ideas, the unity of purpose and action that had characterized the early years of International House, the Trade Mart, and the city's international relations office was greatly diminished. Whereas in the 1940s Rudolf Hecht and his associates had had little trouble in raising money among shippers and forwarders to bankroll the city's Pan American business strategy, the 1960s were marked by tight budgets and tough decisions. There were disagreements, as this section will explain, but what hurt the most was the general malaise of even the most essential cogs in the city's trade promotion machine. The Pan American business strategy simply did not inspire the confidence it once did.

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New Orleans' Pan American business strategy was implemented at a time when external conditions highly favored its initial success. European and Asian markets had been badly disrupted by World War II, while the Western Hemisphere was largely intact. Moreover, Latin American countries had racked up considerable dollar reserves, and there was evidence of considerable pent-up demand for U.S. consumer goods. These factors made a hemispheric trade focus seem calculated for profit. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, as this study has explained, the model worked fairly well, and earned the city a great deal of prestige internationally and within the U.S. By the 1960s, however, the

conditions that had made the city's Pan American business strategy seem so likely to turn a profit were slipping away.

One profound element of this reality was that Latin America was not turning out to be the bonanza trade leaders had thought it would be in the postwar era. Before and during World War II, Latin America's primary role in the hemispheric economy was to produce raw materials and export them to industrialized nations for processing. As Latin American nations underwent partial industrialization and realized the potential benefits of more comprehensive economic development, a spirit of economic nationalism took hold across the region. The United States, as we have seen, proved reluctant to commit itself to any systematic program of aid for Latin American development. In this situation, Latin leaders continued to seek concessions from the U.S. while adopting strategies at home to help their own cause. A number of countries invested in import substitution industrialization, while others sought regional economic integration. The Central American Common Market and the Latin American Free Trade Association were examples of this effort. These measures stimulated intraregional trade while attempting to stabilize prices and diminish Latin dependence on the industrialized nations.[126]

This trend affected New Orleans in several ways. First off, the Latin countries' desire to industrialize created a demand for foreign investment capital. As we have seen, New Orleanian businessmen supported this and sponsored programs like the 1955 Inter-American Investment Conference to facilitate North American capital moving into Latin America. The problem is that when such capital investments actually occurred, New Orleans seldom reaped any sort of profit, even when it had helped make the transactions

[126] Atkins, *Encyclopedia of the Inter-American System*, 304-305; E.V.K. FitzGerald, "ECLA and the Formation of Latin American Economic Doctrine," in *Latin America in the 1940s*, edited by David Rock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 89-108.

possible. Its credit and capital resources were woefully inadequate to bankroll many of the kinds of investment projects Latin American industrialists hoped to build. That money came from investment firms, banks, and corporations in other places, many of which were already multinational concerns and had little need of the services of an International House or a trade mart.

New Orleans could still have profited from the ultimate results of this Latin American program of economic nationalism had it proven successful. Success would have meant more and better jobs supporting Latin American industries, therefore greater purchasing power and a larger volume of imports from countries like the United States. By 1960, however, U.S. economists were not optimistic about the forecast for growth in Latin America. The Inter-American Research Committee of the National Planning Association, for example, predicted less than two percent economic growth average across the entire region over the next decade. Latin American industries simply lacked the credit and foreign exchange necessary to import capital goods into their countries to finish the job of industrialization. Consequentially, their national economies continued to turn on the volatile prices of about a dozen raw material exports like coffee, copper, and tin. Even with boosted credit and grants under the Alliance for Progress, Latin America as a region bore out the National Planning Association's predictions. Average growth amount to only about 1.5%, while unemployment increased from 18 to 25 million persons during the 1960s.[127]

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[127] Louis O. Delwart, *The Future of Latin American Exports to the United States: 1965 and 1970* (Washington: National Planning Association, 1960), passim. See also "Coffee is Believed Major Factor in U.S.-Latin Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 1 Apr 1961; and Alan McPherson, *Intimate Ties, Bitter Struggles: The United States and Latin America since 1945* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), 52.

New Orleans' Pan American business strategy also suffered from a case of burned fingers in the more psychological aspects of doing business with Latin American countries. The novelty of the city's international program turned on the cultivation of a collegial atmosphere of cooperation and understanding between the businessmen of New Orleans and their customers, plus a shared interest in the success of expanded trade and investment. In the early postwar era, as we have seen, local business leaders and Latin American visitors alike believed this sort of business diplomacy could produce mutually beneficial dividends. By the 1960s, however, even the profession of goodwill seemed a bit out of step with reality.

When Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba in 1959, for example, Chep Morrison led the way in trying to use New Orleans' Pan Americanist institutions to help the city maintain a positive relationship with the island nation, one of its key trading partners. The city officially invited Castro to visit New Orleans during his U.S. tour, which he declined. Undaunted, Morrison led a large New Orleans delegation to Havana to take part in the culminating festivities of a four-week Cuban carnival celebration in May. Jazz musicians, Southern belles decked out in antebellum costumes, and three floats from the famous Mardi Gras "krewe" of Rex paraded down the streets of the Cuban capital. At the official reviewing stand, City Councilman and future mayor Victor Schiro dismounted his horse and carried a Cuban flag to Mayor deLesseps Morrison, who in turn gave it to Cuban president Manuel Urrutia. The ceremony referenced Narciso López, a Venezuelan filibuster who had sailed to Cuba from New Orleans in 1850 under the flag that became the flag of modern Cuba. Morrison told the crowd in Spanish that it was his honor to symbolically bring the Cuban flag once again to the Cuban people on behalf of the people

of New Orleans. The analogy was tragically appropriate; Morrison was about as successful in 1959 as López had been in 1850, meaning not at all. By the end of the summer, Manuel Urrutia had resigned and immigrated to the United States. Over the next two years, Fidel Castro expropriated the property of U.S. corporations, while the U.S. responded by imposing an embargo on Cuban exports. New Orleans took blows on all sides in this exchange of economic fire; it lost a valuable trade market and several local firms lost their investments in Cuba.[128]

The Cuban Revolution set the tone in many ways for the ensuing decade. Businessmen in New Orleans feared communism was likely to spread through Latin America and endanger their extensive investments and connections there. Charles Nutter, a key figure in the early days of the city's Pan American business strategy, lamented to one audience that it looked as though the Monroe Doctrine might really be dead in the Western Hemisphere. "It is possible," he said in 1960, "that one half of Latin America could be Communist within five years if the Red advance isn't stopped."[129]

Nutter's prediction may have been a bit overblown, but his concerns about the degree to which communism would dominate the conversation in U.S.-Latin American relations was well placed. While "big-C" Communism did not spread as rapidly as he envisioned, leftist regimes did emerge in Chile and Peru, resulting in expropriations of U.S. corporate property. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, Cuban agents attempted to export their revolution to other Latin American countries, including Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Colombia. John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress

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[128] Memo from Mario Bermudez to deLesseps S. Morrison, 5 Mar 1959 in Box 1, OIR Papers; "Castro Declines N.O. Invitation," *Times-Picayune*, 24 Apr 1959; "N.O. Has Major Role in Havana," *Times-Picayune*, 3 May 1959.
[129] "Grim Picture Given on Cuba," *Times-Picayune*, 25 Aug 1960.

aimed to impose a positive theme of mutually beneficial economic development on the situation, but in practice the system was driven by Cold War objectives that cut out the benefits for most Latin American citizens. In these circumstances, the positive Pan Americanist message that had characterized New Orleans' earlier efforts rang somewhat hollow. During the 1960s, anticommunism became a much more prevalent theme in the city's international program.[130]

While Latin America's volatility dampened enthusiasm for New Orleans' Pan Americanist stance, trade in other parts of the world was simultaneously increasing in overall value for the port. In 1953, the peak of New Orleans' postwar trade boom with Latin America and the peak of its Pan American business strategy, Latin America accounted for 81% of the city's total imports and 26% of its exports by volume. By 1970, Latin America only accounted for 56% of the city's imports and 19% of the exports. The bulk of the city's trade was moving through Western Europe and Asia, especially Japan. Local businessmen invested their attention and their promotion budgets accordingly. This did not necessarily threaten the life of organizations like International House or the International Trade Mart, but it did alter their former emphasis on Latin America. For those executives who had become accustomed to such a strong Latin American focus, this change proved somewhat disorienting.[131]

Business structures also changed during this period in ways that did not favor New Orleans' international program. Large multinational corporations began absorbing many of the smaller companies that had been the lynchpin holding New Orleans' local

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[130] Weeks, *U.S. and Latin American Relations*, 132-133.
[131] John Foster, "New Orleans' Own 'Alliance for Progress,'" *Dixie* (8 Dec 1963), 7-9; James B. Kenyon, "Elements in Inter-Port Competition in the United States," *Economic Geography* 46, no. 1 (Jan. 1970), 1 - 24. For relevant trade statistics, see Port of New Orleans, *Statistics Covering Import-Export Commerce of the Port of New Orleans*, 1952-1959.

economy together, especially from the 1960s onward. Freiburg Mahogany, one of the city's largest mahogany processing plants, sold out to Texas Industries, Inc. of Dallas in 1955. The Standard Fruit Company sold a controlling interest in its corporation to Hawaii-based food giant Castle & Cooke in 1964. Transcontinental Bus Systems of Dallas acquired an overwhelming majority of the stock of the Mississippi Shipping Company by 1968. These mergers and acquisitions weakened New Orleans' control over its own industries, and decreased the amount of capital readily available to invest in local projects, including the international program. Some corporations simply decided to leave New Orleans altogether. Standard Fruit and United Fruit both quit the Crescent City in 1967 and 1975, respectively, so that the city's long-standing role as a major banana import center came to a fairly sudden halt.[132]

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The internal problems at home were the most apparent to contemporary observers. Even as New Orleans' star was rising in the realm of international trade, its position relative to its Gulf South competitors was the subject of constant scrutiny. Chep Morrison frequently reminded his constituents that Miami and Houston were moving steadily ahead with their own plans to increase their share of the region's Latin American trade. "We have got to step up our program here," he said in 1952, "because we are falling behind Florida and Texas business interests. We cannot continue to take it easy as we are doing now."[133] Local citizens familiar with the broader picture of Gulf South trade also sensed trouble from time to time. Businessman Paul M. White, Jr. complained in a 1956 editorial that the Crescent City was giving away its bid for gateway status to Miami by

[132] Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 318-338.
[133] "Mayor Suggests Trade Fair Site," *Times-Picayune*, 7 May 1952.

neglecting basic steps to attract Latin visitors. "My business trips," he wrote, "find more emphasis on doing business in Florida. Each year more Central and South American people enter through Miami." The average Latin American might be drawn to New Orleans for cultural and traditional reasons, he argued, but as far as business was concerned, the city's inadequate banking and airport facilities were a turn-off.[134]

White also observed that International House did not seem to be doing anything to change the status quo. Indeed, the organization's *Trade Winds* publication from this period bears little evidence of concern among the leadership that New Orleans' future was anything but bright. This is not to say no concern existed; only that the leaders of the city's international program appeared unable or unwilling to execute plans to alleviate it.

One considerable factor lie in the fact that the personnel of the international program changed a great deal over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s. Rudolf Hecht, the dynamic banking and shipping executive who had attracted so much money and celebrity for International House in the 1940s, died in 1956. William Zetzmann, who had been International House's first president and an active shaper of New Orleans' Pan American business strategy, died in 1962. Chep Morrison remained mayor until 1961, although his time had to be divided between international pursuits and the myriad other tasks associated with his office. He also ran two unsuccessful campaigns for the governorship of Louisiana in 1956 and 1959, which occupied a considerable amount of time. The final blow came in 1961, when President John F. Kennedy tapped Morrison to become Ambassador to the Organization of American States. The ex-mayor found ways to support the city's international program even in absentia, and his successor Victor Schiro was no stranger to Latin America, but Morrison's departure deprived the

[134] "Raps Loss of Latin American Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 25 Dec 1956.

international program of one of its most dynamic supporters. In an interview with historian Arthur Carpenter, International House's early managing director Charles Nutter recalled that when leaders like Hecht and Morrison left the picture, it was as though their team had lost its quarterback. With them gone, the work of the organization "disintegrated."[135]

The organization of New Orleans' international program also contributed to its problems. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, International House and the trade mart had operated in almost seamless harmony, sharing a common vision and strategic plan of action. In fact, toward the mid-1950s their respective boards had considered merging the two institutions together. Over time, however, changes in leadership and circumstances began pushing them apart. Interpersonal rivalries played some part, as veterans of the international program later recalled. Perhaps more damaging, however, was a growing divergence in focus for the two entities. The International Trade Mart began looking to expand, partly so it could merge with International House and unite the city's international program under one roof. International House agreed in principle to some sort of merger, but as the search for a new space got underway, members began backing away from the idea. Ultimately, the trade mart ended up building a new edifice at the foot of Poydras Street without a great deal of input from its sister organization. International House, in turn, began renovating its existing building rather than make plans to move into the mart's new tower. Each institution read the other's actions as competitive and disastrous to the original vision of the international program's founders. Trade mart officials argued that the idea all along had been for the organizations to merge, while International House leaders insisted the international program was best served by a

[135] Nutter is quoted in Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 309-310.

division of labor. In 1963 these tensions boiled over in a feud that ended in the resignations of several officials.[136]

Even had the institutional mechanisms of the international program remained in better humor, the canon of ideas about New Orleans' role in the world of international trade was also increasingly under debate. International House's decision to hire Paul Fabry as its managing director in 1962 was demonstrative of this. Fabry's resume was studded with international public relations experience, but he openly challenged the city's traditional orientation toward Latin America, arguing that new trade opportunities in the region were scarce. International House's energies, he argued, would be better spent in other regions, particularly Europe and Japan. The new director faced considerable criticism from veteran trade promoters like Chep Morrison and Captain John W. Clark, but he backed up his opinions with statistics. In a July 1962 edition of *Trade Winds*, Fabry noted that the relative positions of Europe and Latin America in New Orleans' trade portfolio had flip-flopped in the past decade. Whereas trade with Latin America had fallen from $826 million in 1952 to $600 million in 1962, trade with both Europe and Japan had almost doubled over the same period. Collectively, these latter trade partners accounted for about 60 percent of the city's waterborne commerce. Faced with these numbers, some members of the international program took heed. International House, for

[136]The opinions of International House members about a potential merger with the International Trade Mart were surveyed by a marketing research firm in 1959. For results, see "International House Survey of Opinion Among Resident Members," June 1959 in Box 16, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection. Lloyd Cobb of the International Trade Mart resigned his position on International House's board of directors in 1963. Mario Bermudez resigned as international relations director for International House shortly thereafter, although he eventually withdrew his action. See Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 277-294.

example, chose to cancel its trade mission to Central America shortly after Fabry came on board, owing much to his advice.[137]

Shifting ideas and strained interpersonal relations translated into confusion, duplication of effort, and overall malaise in the city's international program. International House, for example, failed to grasp an excellent opportunity to cooperate with the federal government in a Latin American project in 1962. Chep Morrison, then serving in Washington as Ambassador to the OAS, informed International House leaders that the OAS had just received $6 million to promote the ideals of the Alliance for Progress throughout the hemisphere. He urged the directors to propose a contract with the OAS, whereby International House would administrate a broad program to stimulate interest in the "private enterprise aspect" of the Alliance, and use its connections to mobilize other civic bodies for additional support. The board of directors, with a few members dissenting, expressed interest, and director of international relations Mario Bermudez went to Washington to explore possible details with OAS officials. Ultimately, however, the board failed to take action. Bermudez ended up supervising a smaller pilot program strictly aimed at promoting the Alliance for Progress in Colombia, but the broader partnership between the OAS and International House never materialized. For many New Orleans trade promoters this appeared to be a significant opportunity lost. Lloyd Cobb, president of the trade mart, used this episode as ammunition in the unrest between his organization and International House.[138]

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[137] "Europe Replaces Latin America as Port's Leading Customer," *Trade Winds*, July-August 1962. See also "Fabry Advises Broader Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 2 Aug 1962; and "Europe Leading in Port Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 4 Aug 1962.

[138] "Plan for Latin Drive is Told," *Times-Picayune*, 11 Apr 1962; Carpenter, "Gateways to the Americas," 282-283; 292-293.

Cobb's organization had its own problems, however. As the International Trade Mart began laying out large sums of money to construct its tower at the foot of Poydras Street, its attention was absorbed in finding tenants for the new space and planning the accommodations that would induce international businessmen to visit. The minutes of the mart's executive committee reflect this shift of attention. As early as 1962, Cobb complained that board members were missing too many meetings and failing to help make critical decisions about the mart's future. In July 1967 Cobb expressed his concern that the mart was building facilities and contemplating new initiatives without much thought as to what they were meant to achieve. He said he had been trying for weeks to develop a long-range plan for the organization, but as yet only one other director had offered his input.[139]

To balance these examples of inaction, there were also cases of duplication of effort. An announcement in 1962 that a new Pan-American cultural center would open in the International Trade Mart prompted a discussion of the issue in the city's editorial pages. An anonymous author, almost certainly associated with International House, pointed out the number of local, state, and federal institutions already operating in New Orleans with the same goal: to expand trade between New Orleans and Latin America. With so many organizations already in the field, what could yet another Pan-American entity hope to accomplish? William Cuthbert Brady, a director of the new center, refuted the critique, but in doing so affirmed the broader aspect of the anonymous writer's argument. Brady wrote in his own editorial that if the Pan-American center was duplicating a field of activity already covered by multiple organizations, the duplication

[139] See, for example, minutes of the International Trade Mart executive committee, 30 Apr 1962 in the Vertical File of the Louisiana Research Collection; and the minutes of that body's 27 Jul 1967 meeting in Box 7, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection.

problem must be far larger than his own group. Perhaps all of the overlapping groups should be combined into one, he suggested. Whether he meant to or not, Brady underscored a critical reality: the individual components of New Orleans' international program were not acting in step as they did in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Lloyd Cobb shared similar sentiments with the executive committee of the trade mart in 1970. Despite the troubles that had accompanied constructing and leasing its new building, Cobb argued, the organization's biggest problems weren't money, but a lack of distinctiveness. The mart, he argued, needed to "generate objectives which are separate and distinct and completely unrelated to work being performed in the City of New Orleans by other civic organizations."[140]

Apart from the promotional side of matters, New Orleans was also encountering trouble on its logistical front. Even with the construction of Moisant Airport and the stimulus of new wartime international routes, for example, the aviation picture remained a constant source of concern for trade promoters. In 1946, when Chep Morrison had first become mayor and began harping on the importance of acquiring more international air routes, Miami had been running 34 daily flights to Latin American cities versus the Crescent City's two. In 1966, New Orleans still only had 30 total flights going into Latin America each day, and this amid a score of new competitors. In addition to Miami's Latin American flights, Houston was flying eight Latin American flights weekly. San Antonio ran an additional 26 flights per week with Latin American destinations.[141]

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[140] "Duplication," *Times-Picayune*, 15 Jun 1962; "Pan-Am Center," *Times-Picayune*, 14 Jul 1962; Minutes of the Executive Committee of the International Trade Mart, 27 Jul 1962 in Box 7, International Trade Mart Papers.

[141] "Morrison Urges Fair Play in Dealing with Latin Lands," *Times-Picayune*, 16 Apr 1946; "Airports to Serve Supersonic Planes," *Times-Picayune*, 23 Feb 1966.

The physical plant of the port presented its own problems. Many of the sheds and dock facilities, which had last been updated before or during World War II, were becoming increasingly outmoded by the mid-1950s. Congress provided assistance by agreeing in 1956 to fund a new Mississippi-to-Gulf outlet for the port, which cut forty miles off the normal 110-mile trip between sea and seaport. The Dock Board, however, was slow to update the equipment at the port itself. Although it made a few halting improvements in the late 1950s, including upgrades to the city's lucrative public grain elevators, equipment in other areas began to fall behind, particularly that serving the banana industry. Moreover, New Orleans failed to conform to the nationwide trend toward containerized shipping until very late in the game. The Dock Board authorized a $64 million project to begin building container ship berths in 1969, but by this point other ports were already taking the lead.[142]

These problems posed a difficult problem for New Orleans' international program because its leaders were caught between the need to promote the city as an ideal trading center while simultaneously urging drastic improvements to prevent businesses from moving elsewhere. The loss of old stand-by port customers in the fruit, coffee, and mahogany industries was alarming to many observers. "It is difficult for us here at the Mart," Lloyd Cobb said in one 1969 meeting, "to endeavor to sell our Port to the people of the world, telling them of its potentialities and inviting them to come here when we know it is going down the drain."[143]

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[142] "New Orleans Sets Project for Port," *New York Times*, 25 Jan 1959; Hirsch, "New Orleans: Sunbelt in the Swamp," 112-113; "Port of New Orleans to Build 9 Berths for Container Ships," *Wall Street Journal*, 23 Jun 1969; Carpenter, "Gateway to the Americas," 322. See also "GSRI Endorses Help for Port," *Times-Picayune*, 27 Mar 1968.

[143] Minutes of the Executive Committee of the International Trade Mart, Vertical File, Louisiana Research Collection.

Together, these adverse economic forces and the organizational problems experienced by the trade promoters themselves made the international program increasingly difficult to operate. In fact, given the circumstances, the value of such a program in this changed economic scenario was dubious. Latin American trade was not doing for New Orleans in the 1960s what it had done for the city in the 1940s. It brought business to the port, but not as much as it once had. Furthermore, too much of the profit was going to corporations whose goals were not geographically centered in the Crescent City. The New Orleanians who remained were still dedicated to preserving their city's role as a gateway to Latin America, of course, but over time this vision became increasingly out of step with economic reality..

Given these reverses, what can be said of the impact of New Orleans' international program in the broader picture of U.S.-Latin American relations, and on the city's competitiveness within the Gulf South? Clearly the Crescent City did not emerge from the 1960s a victorious commander of the inter-American trade situation as its leaders hoped it would. Nor would the situation get much better in the ensuing years. By the end of the 1970s, the city's population was still declining, unemployment was still high, and sluggish improvements to the port were costing it more and more corporate customers. The silver lining, albeit one trade promoters would have considered a paltry consolation, was that the oil and tourism industries appeared poised to keep the local economy afloat. In 1980, petroleum-related businesses were employing nearly 35,000 people, to the tune of a payroll totaling around $814 million. In New Orleans proper, attention turned increasingly toward hawking the city's distinctive culture and traditions

to visitors, which brought both profits and significant changes to local governmental priorities.[144]

The economic failures of New Orleans' international program should not, however, overshadow a qualitative evaluation of its effects within the context of the Gulf South or of the inter-American community more broadly. The city's Pan-American business strategy and the institutions that practiced it were copied time and again in cities across the United States. Their early successes evoked frustration and envy among trade promoters and boosters in other ports of the Gulf South, and shaped the parameters of the competition that followed. In Washington, New Orleans' example inspired hope that private enterprise might yet be able to save the United States government from committing itself to heavy public support for Latin American economic development. The Inter-American Investment Conference, the close collaboration between the city and the State Department, and local participation in projects designed by the Private Enterprise Cooperation unit were all examples of ways New Orleans and Washington found to work together. At the very least, by supporting trade and investment promotion programs such as those in New Orleans, the United States appeared interested in doing something to help Latin American countries earn dollars beyond preaching free trade principles and anticommunism.[145]

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[144] J. Mark Souther's research is the principal work on New Orleans' turn to tourism as an economic savior. For a succinct statement of this transition, see Souther, *New Orleans on Parade,* 25-26; Hirsch, "New Orleans," 111-113; James K. Glassman, "New Orleans: I Have Seen the Future, and It's Houston," *The Atlantic*, July 1978.

[145] Cities that studied the New Orleans model over the course of the 1940s through the 1960s included Miami, Houston, Baltimore, New York, Tampa, Mobile, Gulfport, and San Francisco. See "Baltimore Group Studies Own I-H Plan," *Trade Winds*, 30 Apr 1947; "Sale of Virginia Key Opposed, Plan for Pan Am Center Okd," *Miami News*, 4 Aug 1948; "Rival Ports Aim at Latin Trade," *Times-Picayune*, 23 Dec 1955; and "Miss. Governor Has Trade Plan," *Times-Picayune*, 30 Nov 1960.

In short, regardless of its ultimate economic fate, New Orleans significantly influenced what it meant for a port city to participate in U.S.-Latin American economic relations in the postwar era. The businessmen and public officials who designed the city's Pan American business strategy demonstrated that a city could conduct its own diplomacy, and in so doing accomplish objectives with both local and national benefits. From a regional standpoint, New Orleans' early successes with its international program established this local diplomacy as a key to success in the inter-American trade game. Even as their trade volumes were rising, Houston and Miami often evaluated their own trade promotion efforts in terms of how they compared with those of the Crescent City. Naturally, of course, these ports had unique circumstances to contend with, and neither would develop programs exactly like those found in New Orleans. The influence was there, however, as the next two chapters will reveal. Probably no city was more eager to beat New Orleans at its own game than Miami, and it is to that city's postwar trade promotion efforts that we now turn.[146]

[146] New Orleans' successes during this period were even an inspiration to itself. At numerous points in recent decades, civic boosters in the Crescent City have evoked New Orleans' gateway heritage to inspire new efforts to promote trade with Latin America. See, for example, "Courting Latin America," *New Orleans CityBusiness*, 5 Oct 1992; and "New Orleans Hitches Future to Latin American Trade," *Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 1996.

CHAPTER 3:
MAKING PAN-AMERICANISM CONSUMABLE: THE MIAMI APPROACH

Miami has an unmistakable knack for reinventing itself. From its earliest days through the drama of hurricanes, the rise of aviation, and new groups of residents, the city seems to take "change" as its watchword. Promoters have captured this essence of the city in a marketable nickname by referring to Miami as the "Magic City." This theme of change applies also when discussing the city's relationship with the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. From its inception as a permanent municipality in the late 19th century, local leaders have been eager to capitalize on Miami's geographic centrality within the Western Hemisphere. Although geography would ultimately prove very decisive in defining Miami's relationship to Latin America during the Cuban Revolution, earlier attempts to build that connection through a Pan American business strategy took a variety of forms.[1]

As late as the 1950s, Miami's business and civic leaders remained palpably frustrated at their inability to make any headway on becoming the commercial crossroads of the Americas. In 1959, Miami was still exporting and importing less than ten percent of the goods being handled by either one of its two major Gulf South rivals, New Orleans and Houston. Latin Americans seemed eager to visit the city for a vacation or some shopping, but for business Miami was seldom more than a waypoint for airline transportation. "We have been penny wise and pound foolish," said Mayor Robert King High following a goodwill mission to Central America in 1958. "Our real friends and

[1] See Nijman, *Miami: Mistress of the Americas*, vii-ix.

neighbors lie to the south and we had to travel there to find out they go to New Orleans because they don't know we want them here."[2]

By the 1990s, circumstances had drastically changed. Forty percent of the working population of Miami-Dade County was involved in some industry related to international trade. Almost a quarter of the $80 billion dollars' worth of exports traveling to Latin America from the United States was leaving through Miami. Transportation and tourism numbers were up as well. In 1993, Miami International Airport served 28.7 million passengers, 12.4 million of which were international travelers, most flying to or from Latin America and the Caribbean. The old "gateway" trope barely seemed adequate to describe what was happening. As several observers put it in the 1980s and 1990s, Miami and its suburbs were quickly becoming the *capital* of the Americas.[3]

This chapter explores two key aspects of the Magic City's transition to hemispheric prominence in the second half of the twentieth century. The first is the way in which Miami's leaders attempted to craft a Pan American business strategy that would vault the city past its regional rivals even without the benefit of their far superior circumstances in terms of capital, experience, and favorable social landscape. Like their counterparts in New Orleans, Miami's civic and business leaders considered a conciliatory, ostensibly Pan Americanist approach essential for earning the trust and

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[2] According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, Miami's total trade volume amounted to around 957,000 short tons in 1959. New Orleans' total trade volume for the same period reached over 24 million short tons, while Houston shipped over 39 million short tons. These figures count domestic coastwise shipping. Mayor Robert King High's quote comes from "$20,000 Set Up to Lure Latins," *Miami News*, 28 Apr 1958.

[3] One of the earlier notables to make this observation was Jaime Roldos, president of Ecuador. He referred to Miami as the "Capital of Latin America" at a trade conference held in Miami in 1979. See Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 172. See also "Miami Airport in Growth Spurt," *Sun-Sentinel*, 5 May 1994; "Miami Suburb is Center of Latin American Business," *Miami News*, 19 Sept 1994; "Coral Gables, U.S.A., Has Become Latin America's Business Capital," *Los Angeles Times*, 2 Jan 1976.

commerce of their neighbors to the south, and for winning the support of the federal government in Washington. They recognized the value of advertising their city as a space dedicated to solving inter-American problems. Unlike New Orleans, however, Miami lacked the local capital to leverage this approach competitively in the early years of the postwar era, at least on its own.

After several years of abortive attempts to copy the Crescent City's model, a subset of Miami's civic leadership pursued a new approach that turned New Orleans' Pan American business strategy on its head. New Orleans' business community had used private money to institutionalize local trade and investment promotion, which had attracted the interest of the federal government once the system appeared to be working. This group of Miami business and civic leaders went the opposite route, imagining Miami first and foremost as the ideal space in which to actualize national foreign policy objectives regarding Latin America. Expressing the deepest Pan American sentiments and invoking the gravest inter-American geopolitical concerns, they then encouraged the federal government to help Miami become a hemispheric hub by funding the construction of an unprecedented center for inter-American trade and cultural exchange.

The institution, called the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center or "Interama," was designed to sidestep Miami's commercial shortcomings as a gateway city by playing on its strengths as a center of transportation and tourism. Whereas New Orleans had aimed to foster inter-American goodwill through commerce, Miami planned to make Pan Americanism something for visitors to consume. Promotional materials pitched Interama as the "meeting place of the Americas," a sort of permanent hemispheric exposition whose purpose would be to entertain and educate while

reinforcing the ideals of inter-American unity and cooperation. Culture and interpersonal exchanges would be the focus, but the goodwill created in the process would in turn inspire better commercial relations as well. It was, in a sense, a theme park embodying the United States' principal Cold War objectives in the Western Hemisphere – freer trade, international collaboration and stability, and widespread economic development with minimal government funding. In time, Interama's directors expected their enterprise to be both self-sufficient and just as useful for improving inter-American relations as New Orleans' Pan American strategy was proving to be. All they asked of Washington was to recognize the *potential* of the project and help supply the seed capital.

The Interama project dominated Miami's Pan American business strategy for over a decade, and yet the city drew almost none of its current rapport with Latin America and the Caribbean from that effort. Instead, as the second half of this chapter explains, Latin Americans themselves took charge of reshaping Miami into a real gateway to the Americas. Following Fidel Castro's rise to power in Cuba in 1959, wave after wave of Cubans immigrated to the United States, many settling in Miami and its suburbs. Among the exiles were some of Cuba's wealthiest and most powerful business leaders, men and women with extensive networks of contacts throughout the Western Hemisphere. As a speedy end to Castro's rule became less likely, these Cuban émigrés began reactivating their networks, only with Miami as the center instead of Havana.

Cuban-led business relations merged with a pervasive infusion of Latin culture into Miami's social fabric to make the Magic City an increasingly attractive haven for hemispheric commerce. Multinational corporations that had once spent millions to maintain branches offices in Latin American countries began relocating their operations

to South Florida. Miami offered cheaper travel costs, greater political and financial stability, and more familiar business practices to North American firms while still possessing enough Latin gravitas to put their South and Central American partners and customers at ease. Latin American business leaders also began favoring Miami for its relative stability in an otherwise volatile field of operations in the hemispheric business arena. So attractive was the relative security of Miami banks that several Latin American countries began placing restrictions on international capital transfers to stop "capital flight" to cities like Miami.

In this latter phase of Miami's evolution as a gateway to the Americas, the city's place in the broader scheme of hemispheric relations began to look more like that of New Orleans in the 1950s. Both local and national leaders praised Miami's accommodation of the Cuban exiles as an example of a local community enacting in deed what the federal government could only promise in theory. Perhaps even more critical was the widespread characterization of Miami as a bastion of anticommunism. The decision by so many Cubans to leave their homeland for South Florida and in some cases to use Miami as a base for attacking the Castro regime made the Magic City an unusual resource for the Cold War.

Miami still faced challenges as a gateway city, but they were altogether different from the economic doldrums the native business community had faced before the Cuban Revolution began. The problem was no longer attracting Latin Americans to Miami, but rather to manage the city's new circumstances. The rapid infusion of new Latin American residents – from Cuba, Haiti, and elsewhere – strained local resources, destabilized the city's political landscape, and complicated Miami's existing problems with race and

class. The task for local leaders, both natives and newcomers, was to preserve the city's gateway successes by steering it through these difficulties.

Keeping Up with New Orleans

Miami emerged from World War II with a growing economy. The permanent population rose from 173,065 in 1940 to 192,122 in 1945, but even more critical was the temporary rush of military personnel and trainees sent in to occupy the city's finest hotels and beaches as they prepared for deployment overseas. This and other military necessities stimulated local industries, such as shipbuilding, fiber processing, optical works, and of course aviation. Less than a year after Pearl Harbor, Pan American Airways announced a million-dollar expansion project at Miami's 36th Street Airport. Miami's four major airlines combined were shipping nearly 100,000 inter-continental passengers in and out of the city annually, a rate greater than all other U.S. ports of entry combined. The presence of so much activity boosted the local economy, and inspired many young soldiers to return with their families once the war ended.[4]

The city's relationship with Latin America grew during this period as well. As the principal port of entry linking the United States and its southern neighbors, Miami played host to a constant stream of Latin military, business, and political officials en route to Washington or elsewhere on war business. As described in an earlier chapter, Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs recognized this special role for Miami by opening a branch office in the city. Local business and civic leaders cooperated with this agency, but also kept an eye out for the future. The Chamber of Commerce, for

[4] "Greater Miami Makes Determined Bid for Diversified Industry," *Miami News,* 5 Dec 1942; "The War and Miami," *Miami News*, 5 Dec 1942; Gary R. Mormino, "World War II," in *The New History of Florida,* edited by Michael Gannon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 323-343.

example, intended not only to promote the city's wartime contributions to inter-American unity, but to perpetuate that role into the postwar era. Chamber staff prepared a booklet in Spanish that depicted Miami as the "American Riviera," a "meeting place for business between the two Americas and the spot where Pan-Americans can send their children to universities and schools." By the end of 1942, a citywide Pan American committee was meeting regularly to discuss strategies for cultivating Latin American interest in the Magic City.[5]

Publicly, these efforts were described in the broadest shades of Pan-American friendship, but in practice the work was directed almost entirely at the Latin American business and political elite. When the Chamber proposed to station greeters in the hotels where many of the city's Central and South American visitors stayed, their plans focused intently on securing the friendship of Latin businessmen. Efforts to make Spanish language training compulsory in local schools and encourage the University of Miami to expand its Spanish Studies programs were aimed at retooling the workforce to cater to hemispheric commerce. In light of the wartime environment, business leaders were sensitive to the charge that they were exploiting the circumstances of the moment to boost Miami's fortunes. "There are those who impute a selfish purpose to our efforts," chairman Leslie Buswell told the Chamber of Commerce's Pan American Relations Committee in 1942. He expressed the belief, however, that Miami was both practical and

[5] "Reception Center Aids 'Neighbors,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, 12 Dec 1942; *Miami Business*, July 1943; Minutes of the 4 Dec 1942 meeting of the Miami Chamber of Commerce's Pan American Committee meeting, Miami Chamber of Commerce Collection, HistoryMiami Research Center.

patriotic – that the city's Pan American business strategy would serve both South Florida and the United States.[6]

Furthermore, the outward signals coming from Miami's Latin trade partners and the city's main contacts with the federal government suggested they approved of this logic. William C. Burdett, a State Department official who supervised the Office of Inter-American Affairs' Miami reception center, addressed the subject directly during a joint meeting of the Chamber's Pan American Committee and the city planning board. He called on local leaders to "cultivate the friendship" of their Latin counterparts, advertise for Miami in Latin America, expedite port expansion projects wherever possible, and expand inter-American cultural exchanges. Burdett believed "most factors" pointed toward Miami becoming the nexus between the United States and Latin America after the war, in place of New York.[7]

The Latin business class appeared to support Miami's bid for hemispheric trade as well. Twelve Latin American nations had erected consulates in the city by 1945. The society sections of the local newspapers reported regularly on the large volume of Latin visitors who passed through Miami to conduct business or relax. In 1950, some 75 Latin American delegates attending a foreign trade forum in Miami adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a Chamber of Commerce of the Americas, with permanent headquarters in the Magic City. Miami was becoming the "center of the hemisphere," as

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[6] Ibid.; Minutes of the Miami Chamber of Commerce's Committee on Pan American Relations, 18 Sept 1942; and Minutes of the Miami Chamber of Commerce's Coordinated Pan American Committee, 11 Aug 1944, all from Miami Chamber of Commerce Collection, HistoryMiami Research Center.
[7] "Miami Urged to Increase South American Friendship," *Miami News*, 24 Nov 1942.

director Julian Arroyo of the Venezuelan Chamber of Commerce explained, which made it the logical choice for the headquarters of a new inter-American business network.[8]

Serious concerns about Miami's competitiveness among the Gulf South ports underlay this enthusiasm, however, especially toward the end of the war. Despite Miami's early lead in inter-American aviation, for example, that leadership was challenged as a by-product of World War II. To facilitate more efficient air transportation between the nations of the Western Hemisphere, the federal Civil Aeronautics Board decided to end the city's near monopoly on flights between the United States and Latin America. The board granted temporary permits to airlines operating out of cities like New Orleans and Houston, allowing them to schedule inter-American flights for the first time.

Had this truly been temporary and tied solely to wartime conditions, it might not have posed such a threat. In 1946, however, the Civil Aeronautics Board decided to make some of those temporary routes permanent. In one decision, the board authorized 16 new air routes between the U.S. and Latin America. Miami gained new routes to San Juan and Havana, but New Orleans and Houston received new permanent routes as well. New York received a route to San Juan that bypassed Miami completely for the first time.[9]

Miami's business leaders viewed the dismantling of the city's air monopoly as a threat to its future. City Manager A.B. Curry, Eddie Rickenbacker, president and general manager of Eastern Airlines, and others advised that Miami would have to fight to keep its status as a leading transportation gateway. "Miami can have greatness and prosperity

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[8] In the 1940s, the *Miami News* published a segment called "Our Good Neighbors" that commented on the activities of Latin visitors and residents. "Latin America Endorses Chamber of Commerce Plan," *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 May 1950.
[9] "16 New Routes to Americas Hit Miami Air Rule," *Miami News*, 22 May 1946.

in the postwar world," warned one editorial, "but it cannot have them for the asking. It must earn its opportunity."[10]

The rise of New Orleans as a center of inter-American commerce was also troubling to Miami's business community. The Crescent City's new International House and International Trade Mart were founded on precisely the same principles former Miami Mayor Everest Sewell had advocated for in pushing for his Pan American Trade Center in Miami in the 1930s. The leaders who succeeded Sewell in Miami had failed, however, to unite behind a workable program. The war offered a handy scapegoat, but many of Miami's boosters knew better. New Orleans appeared to be successfully cultivating exactly the kind of Pan American branding Miami's business and civic leaders had long wanted for their own city. The result was a palpable sentiment of frustration. "If Miami is to retain its figurative place in the sun," worried the *Miami News*, [and] if this city is to continue to grow and to increase its economic opportunities in keeping with its population growth, a trade center similar to that existing in Chicago and planned for New Orleans would be well worth encouraging."[11]

To remedy what they viewed as an alarming achievement gap between their own city and New Orleans, a number of Miami's civic and business leaders prescribed crash programs to assert their city's regional leadership in hemispheric trade, transportation, and tourism. In many cases, their stated purpose was not only to boost Miami's visibility and credibility as the foremost gateway to the Americas, but also to deny this status to New Orleans. The local newspapers dramatized this regional rivalry through editorials and anxious reporting of the Crescent City's achievements, but at times beating New

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[10] "This is for Keeps," *Miami News*, 10 Sept 1943.
[11] "Trade Center," *Miami News*, 21 May 1946.

Orleans at its own game served as an actual point of policy for local leaders. Some of them said as much in public meetings, and outside observers picked up on it in their conversations with Miami's business and civic organizations. A group of Miami leaders even traveled to New Orleans to inspect the Crescent City's trade mart and International House in 1948.[12]

This competitive approach lent a sense of urgency to the construction of Miami's Pan American business strategy, but in some ways it also made the project more difficult. Some of the major players concerned about Miami's relationship with Latin America believed the only way to lead the Gulf South in terms of inter-American commerce was to beat New Orleans at its own game. This meant focusing heavily on interpersonal relationships between local business leaders and their Latin American counterparts, to be facilitated by erecting a Pan American Trade Center similar to New Orleans' International House, the trade mart, and the vision put forward by the late Mayor Sewell. Chamber of Commerce leaders and businessmen involved with the air and public relations industries tended to fall into this category. Exporters, importers, and others associated with the day to day business of the port, however, tended to have a more grounded view of how Miami should cultivate Latin American business. They focused on improving the port and expanding trade services. There were further divisions over how Miami's Pan American business strategy ought to be funded and who should control it.

[12] A. Curtis Wilgus noted while surveying inter-American institutions in Florida that "[Miamians] view the rise of air travel in and out of New Orleans with alarm. They believe they should act before New Orleans goes too far with its plans." See Wilgus' "Summary Report on Inter-American Center Activities in Florida," 1946 in Box 56, A. Curtis Wilgus Papers, Special Collections – University of Miami. See also "Miami Plans Great Tribute to Solidarity of the Americas," *St. Petersburg Times*, 14 Jun 1946; and "Miami Delegation Inspects International Trade Setup," *Times-Picayune*, 8 Apr 1948.

These conflicting visions were one of several factors at play in the 1940s that ultimately prevented Miami from developing a Pan American business strategy that could effectively compete with that of New Orleans. International House and the trade mart had sprung from the handiwork of a small number of wealthy, well-connected New Orleanians with considerable influence over both the port and the conduct of the city government itself, especially once Chep Morrison was in office. They secured most of their funding from corporate donors who stood to benefit from an improved Pan American business strategy, and they faced very little opposition to their plans because no other civic entity had the means or influence to promote inter-American trade on the same scale.

Miami had a lengthy history of inter-American interaction, but the engines driving that relationship were much smaller and diffused across a broad field of organizations and personalities. The Chamber of Commerce, for instance, was a leading force for developing better inter-American business relations, but the Pan American League had done much more to encourage cultural contacts in Miami and abroad. It was well-established, patronized by wealthy Miamians, and it consequently tended to keep to its own programs. The University of Miami cooperated with these entities, but also had its own schemes for improving the city's image in Latin America. The Dade County commission and the city council often ended up funding those few programs that did move past the planning stages, but their own fiscal limitations ensured that none of those schemes were ever large enough to fulfill the goal of helping Miami supplant New Orleans as the primary Gulf South nexus between the U.S. and Latin America.[13]

[13] A. Curtis Wilgus' 1946 report on inter-American activities describes this confusion of influences in Miami's business community.

The diffused nature of Miami's business community played a role as well. The city was growing in the 1940s, but its gains were spread out among the tourist industry, international trade, financing, the garment industry, and especially the service sector. No single industry or company was large, interested, or influential enough to decisively guide Miami's Pan American business strategy. Even had the steamship lines, exporters, importers, and shippers been able to agree on a trade promotion model as their New Orleanian counterparts had done, the amount of money available for the project would have been significantly smaller. Bank deposits in Miami amounted only to about half those of New Orleans in 1945. Foreign imports and exports were nowhere close. Miami was served by nine steamship companies and a host of related trade enterprises, but none of these had the volume of business to invest heavily in trade promotion institutions.[14]

Finances and leadership structure aside, Miami's Pan American business strategy was also hindered in no small way by the city's steadfast adherence to Jim Crow. Despite the profusion of Pan American sentiment, the parades, the language training, and every effort by Miami's business elite to portray the Magic City as a haven of inter-American cooperation and respect, the fact remained that dark-skinned Latins were frequently barred from entry into hotels, restaurants, clubs, public transportation, and even waiting areas in the airport.[15]

The experiences of the federal officials running the inter-American reception center during World War II had underscored the problem. Shortly after the center opened, the local staff reported back to Washington that dark-skinned Latin American dignitaries generally did not remain overnight in Miami unless they were taken into the homes of

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[14] See *Statistical Abstracts of the United States*, 1945 edition; and Polk's city directories for New Orleans and Miami for 1945.
[15] "Mutual Prejudices Are Found Hindering Union of Americas," *Christian Science Monitor*, 29 Jan 1941.

their countrymen. Two hotels, the Columbus and the Miami Colonial, had agreed to accept "colored people of distinction," but only if the Department of State, Pan American Airways, or the reception center staff specifically requested it. The center contemplated several tactics to avoid the embarrassment of subjecting foreign guests to the realities of Miami's segregated facilities, including driving them around Miami while they waited for connecting flights, or whisking them away to one of the few hotels that would accept them.[16]

This state of affairs became uncomfortably public in 1943 when President Élie Lescot of Haiti scheduled a stop in Miami during his trip north to visit President Roosevelt and accept an honorary degree from Laval University in Quebec. Lescot, a mulatto, was unwelcome in those of Miami's hotels fit to host a head of state. With considerable frustration, H. Charles Spruks of the State Department hurriedly rented out a large, richly furnished house to receive President Lescot. Observers who appreciated the absurdity of the situation lost no time in pointing out that Miami's racist customs had cost the American taxpayers $8,000 in a single night.[17]

Local leaders recognized the problem, but were divided over how to handle it. Action-minded promoters like Arthur Curtis of Pan American Airways and operatives from the city's Pan American League worked closely with local hotels to accommodate as many dark-skinned Latin American guests as possible. Local Catholic clergymen stepped in to help as well. Others, even many on the Chamber of Commerce's Pan American committee, believed this was a matter for Washington to handle, since it was

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[16] Memo from Don Francisco to W.H.C. Laves, 17 Apr 1942 in Box 46, OCIAA Central Files, 1941-45 (RG 229), National Archives.
[17] "Haiti President Pauses Here On Way to Canada," *Miami News*, 29 Sept 1943; "Jim Crow Camouflaged for Haitians at Miami," *Baltimore Afro-American*, 23 Oct 1943.

federal operatives who insisted on inviting many of the dark-skinned Latin dignitaries whose presence caused so much controversy. At one meeting, the Chamber's Pan American Committee voted unanimously to contact the OCIAA reception center with the sentiment that "the State Department should consider this a government problem and should do something toward solving it as rapidly as possible."[18]

In a striking twist of irony, these same leaders even considered establishing a Pan Americanist institution similar to New Orleans' International House in part to help enshrine segregation rather than to promote inclusivity in the case of darker-skinned Latino visitors. The idea was that if Miami began receiving its foreign guests in an institution removed from the general public, unpleasant brushes with the city's color line would be less likely to occur. However disingenuous it might have been, this plan gained a great deal of currency across the various factions debating Miami's Pan American future. As one Chamber-led action group determined, some kind of Pan American Club, International House, or similar facility was necessary as "an insurance against embarrassment many times during the course of a year as this city is called upon more and more to act as host to our South American, Egyptian, and other friends of darker skins."[19]

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These circumstances dogged Miami's attempts to jumpstart a Pan American business strategy in the postwar years, starting with the long-awaited Pan American

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[18] A Curtis Wilgus memo entitled "Opinions of Leading Individuals in Florida," 1946 in Box 56, Wilgus Papers, Special Collections – University of Miami; Minutes of the Coordinated Pan American Committee of the Miami Chamber of Commerce, 5 Feb 1942 in the Chamber of Commerce Collection, HistoryMiami. The sentiment regarding the State Department's responsibility for solving Miami's uncomfortable racial situation was expressed in the minutes of an undated meeting of the same committee, likely in late 1943 or early 1944.

[19] Minutes of the Pan American Center Action Council, 11 Apr 1944 in the Chamber of Commerce Collection, HistoryMiami.

Center. By the end of World War II a few halting steps had been taken toward building such a center on an island just off the Macarthur Causeway crossing Biscayne Bay. City Commissioner Clifford Reeder took the lead, claiming that between the existing landmass and some modest fill work, a total of 120 acres could be secured for the project. He called for each Latin American country to have its own building, plus access to a large common building for exhibitions and other purposes. Reeder based his plans on designs from the New York World's Fair.[20]

The early stages of the project were promising. Frank Stearns of the Miami Planning Board sent a circular to OCIAA representatives stationed in Latin America asking for their input and the names of Latin American businessmen they should contact. In 1945, the City of Miami resolved to offer space in the proposed complex free to consuls from Latin American governments, so long as they paid for the construction of their own buildings. The city also applied for funding from the Federal Works Agency to build the common area facilities. The Dade County Coordinating and Planning Committee gave the plan their blessing, calling the center "a progressive step toward furtherance of Dade County as the logical gateway to the Pan American countries."[21]

As the war ended and restrictions on travel and construction lifted, trade promoters in Miami and its competitor ports felt even more pressure to go after Latin American business. As the Magic City's Pan American Center plans took shape, plans for the Macarthur Causeway complex grew more intricate. By mid-1946, the *St. Petersburg Times* was reporting that the plans called for a "Tower of Peace" featuring carillons

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[20] *Miami Business*, February 1944.
[21] *Miami Business*, November 1945; "Pan American Center Okehed," *Miami News*, 29 May 1945; Frank Stearns to OCIAA Coordinating Committees in Latin America, 16 Feb 1943 in Box 51, OCIAA Central Files (RG 229), National Archives.

similar to those used at the popular Bok Singing Tower in nearby Lake Wales. The stones for the tower's base would be brought in from each of the 21 Latin American republics, symbolizing hemispheric unity. The Pan Americanist theme of these plans was pervasive, but neither locals nor outside observers could deny that the Center was directed as much toward Latin America as it was against New Orleans.[22]

Miami's business and civic leaders generally applauded the Center conceptually, but the project's funding proved too tenuous for early success. A council of civic organizations gave the project a theoretical thumbs-up, but disagreed over whether the Center ought to be primarily cultural or commercial in function, and none of the organizations committed to contributing financial support. The city and county had already voiced their approval, although their participation in funding the venture depended greatly on the authorization of federal grants. Unfortunately, by the time the City of Miami filed its application with the Federal Works Administration in 1945, that agency's budget had been depleted and no money was available. The Latin Americans, whom the Miamians had hoped would invest eagerly in the program, had praised the plans but opened no pocketbooks to get the Center started. By 1946, only Colombia had publicly stated it would relocate its consulate to the new Pan American Center when it was completed.[23]

Interested private business owners might have stepped in at this juncture, but the handful of relevant industries capable of helping the Center along failed to do anything

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[22] New Orleans even kept tabs on the project periodically. Mark Trazivuk, a consultant to Rudolf Hecht and International House wrote Hecht in 1945 describing the project. He deemed it "entirely too big" at the time, foreshadowing a chronic flaw in Miami's numerous attempts to build an answer to International House and the International Trade Mart. See Trazivuk to Hecht, 31 May 1945 in Box 17, International Trade Mart Papers, Louisiana Research Collection. See also "Miami Plans Great Tribute to Solidarity of the Americas," *Miami News*, 14 Jun 1946.

[23] "Civic Club Heads Back Center Plan," *Miami News*, 1 Apr 1944; *Miami Business*, November 1945.

substantial. Pan American Airways had often encouraged Miamians to take steps to seize their own destiny as a gateway city, yet they shied away from offering to help bankroll this effort to do just that. Shipper Earle Albury, exporter Philip de la Rosa, and others of their stripe served on the planning committees yet wrote no checks. The Greater Miami Port Authority, which might have used its influence to draw private investors into the project, was bogged down in the search for better airport and seaport facilities, finding neither one. A hotel developer named William Liebow suggested perhaps the most advanced scheme for privately funding the Center in 1946. He offered to build a Pan American Center at the Macarthur Causeway site and rent it back to the City of Miami on a fifty-year basis. The Chamber of Commerce endorsed the plan and local editors urged the city fathers to snatch the chance at progress. The city dithered, however, over whether it could lease public land to a private corporation, and whether doing so might expose the land to condemnation proceedings by the state. There was also some concern that Liebow's interest had less to do with Pan Americanism and trade promotion as it did with the possibility of attaching a profitable new hotel property to the complex. In the end, Liebow's plan came to nothing.[24]

Delays bred frustration, which in turn motivated some officials to act, even if they were constrained to do so in a limited way. The Dade County Commission voted in mid-1946 to appropriate $25,000 toward housing and entertaining Latin American guests. Up to this point, the Commission had considered this a matter for the city to work out, but

[24] "Positive Plans," *Miami News*, 12 Dec 1946; resolution by the Miami Chamber of Commerce endorsing the Liebow plan, in *Miami Business*, January 1947; "Pan-American Mart Is Urged by Miami Group," *Palm Beach Daily News*, 31 Dec 1946; Minutes of the "Pan American Mart Luncheon," 19 July 1948, Chamber of Commerce Collection, HistoryMiami.

Chairman Charles Crandon urged his fellow commissioners to vote the money now, since the need was urgent and the city had yet to take action.[25]

The fund was modest, and accordingly so was the result. In January 1947, the County Commission opened the Dade County International Center at 327 Flagler Street. It had only three employees at first, one of whom was stationed at the airport to greet distinguished Latin American guests. Arthur Curtis, longtime Pan American Airways public relations head, directed the center. Its primary function was to handle business inquiries from Latin American visitors, who had previously been relying mostly on hotel staff members to answer their questions. Local editors admitted it was an inauspicious start, but a positive step nonetheless. By the end of its first year, the Dade County International Center would average about a thousand inquiries per month.[26]

As the city's business and political heads struggled to institutionalize their Pan American business strategy, the most successful contact between locals and Latin Americans was taking place at the grassroots level. Influential Latin business and political leaders often stopped over in Miami for a day or two in between flights to shop, socialize, and relax. In one week in 1947, for example, Miami played host to two Colombian diplomats, the Cuban ambassador to the U.S., a publicity agent from Venezuela, the Dominican Republic's Secretary of the Interior, and a Peruvian general.[27]

Miami leaders recognized these brief visits from the Latin American elite to be excellent opportunities to network and sell Miami as a center for increased inter-

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[25] "County Board Votes Fund for Latin Guests," *Miami News*, 20 May 1946.
[26] "Dade Officials Will Inspect New Causeway," *Miami News*, 31 Dec 1946; *Miami Business*, January 1947; "Officials Inspect New Latin Center," *Miami News*, 27 Jan 1947; "International center Open for Business," *Miami News*, 31 Jan 1947; "International Center Hears Reports on Year," *Miami News*, 1 Feb 1948.
[27] The local newspapers often ran stories describing the week's Latin American arrivals. For the 1947 example used here, see "Good Neighbors," *Miami News*, 14 Sept 1947.

American trade, cultural exchange, and tourism. Local newspapers published special sections in Spanish with advertising aimed at enticing Latin visitors. The Dade County International Center adopted and extended the coffee hour program that had been so successful during World War II, which brought Latin elites into contact with one another and with their Miamian counterparts. Members of the Consular Corps often contributed by entertaining guests from their home countries at concerts, exhibits, and other elite social events.

Local business leaders also tried their hand at creating special events to draw Latin Americans to Miami for more than just a momentary visit. In 1947, a subset of the Chamber of Commerce formed a company to put on a "Fiesta of the Americas" in the city. The program included a performance in the Orange Bowl stadium featuring traditional Latin American music and dancing on a revolving stage, along with a "market of the Americas," which would feature a combination of Latin handicrafts and Miami-manufactured goods. Local schoolchildren exchanged letters and posters with their counterparts in Guatemala to learn about one another's cultures. In a sense, the point of the Fiesta was to help normalize the juxtaposition of Latin culture in Miami's public spaces, although the promoters did lean a bit on Latin exoticism to dramatize the event. They enticed local potential visitors by promising to recreate the "color and confusion of the Latin marketplace," "tantalizing rhythms," "gorgeous costumes," and "breath-taking settings." The Fiesta was also clearly intended to demonstrate that Miami could promote itself as a Pan American space like its rival New Orleans. The local media certainly

perceived the program in this way; one editor ended an article describing preparations for the event by asking, "How do you like them apples, New Orleans?"[28]

If the Fiesta was about creating cross-cultural familiarity, the Miami Foreign Trade Forum was all about getting down to brass tacks in the realm of commerce. In 1947, the local Chamber of Commerce formed another non-profit sub-organization designed to plan a meeting of Latin businessmen and trade experts in Miami. Shippers Earle Albury and P.A. Jossberger and Robert Forrest of Pan American Airways led the new entity. The Forum's format would be that of a professional trade conference – essentially a combination of panel discussions on trade problems and an exhibit of manufactured goods from both the Latin countries and South Florida. The Forum planners sent invitations to Latin chambers of commerce, civic organizations, and businessmen through U.S. diplomatic posts in Latin America. The invitation list did not include representatives from other major U.S. cities involved in hemispheric trade, however. The idea was to solve inter-American trade problems through the good offices of Miami and not its competitors. The success of these events is difficult to judge. Miami's foreign trade volume grew slowly in the 1940s when these events were most popular, and a number of articles produced in the southeastern United States continued to be shipped out of other ports, even when Miami was closer. Miami leaders and Latin American observers alike recognized these problems, but never quite aligned behind an adequate solution.[29]

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[28] *Miami Business*, March 1947; "Bond Sale Planned by Fiesta Leaders," *Miami News*, 11 Feb 1947; "'Fiesta of the Americas' Due to Open April 17," *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 Apr 1947; "Miami Wins Round in Good Will Fight with New Orleans," *Miami News*, 13 Apr 1947.
[29] See the *United States Statistical Abstract* for the years 1948-1952 for an idea of how Miami's trade volume progressed between the end of World War II and 1950.

As 1950 approached, Miami had experimented with a few tactics for attracting Latin business, but lacked an organized Pan American business strategy that could compete with that of its regional rivals. The city's foreign trade volume was barely any higher than it had been at the end of the war. The Fiesta of the Americas and the Miami Foreign Trade Forum helped establish the idea of Miami as a Pan American space, but Latin visitors still tended to be just that – visitors who enjoyed Miami's beaches, hospitality, and convenient transportation facilities. For more serious commercial business, they tended to go elsewhere. David Clark, a diplomat attached to the U.S. embassy in Buenos Aires, stated the case succinctly in 1947 while being interviewed by the *Miami News.* Apparently unaware of the city's struggle to institutionalize its Pan American business strategy, Clark suggested Miami ought to look to New Orleans' International House for inspiration. "I do not know what you have here," he said, "so I cannot say how this port stacks up against others I have visited."[30]

Pan-Americanism for the Masses: Interama

A shift in strategy came with the arrival of Dr. William H. Walker as the president of the Miami Chamber of Commerce in 1949. Walker was a banker by trade, having founded the First Federal Savings & Loan Association in Miami in 1934, the first such association in the United States. He was something of a Miami outsider, having made a name for himself in finance in Pennsylvania in the 1910s. Walker founded Duquesne University's school of business administration in 1913, and served as its dean until his retirement in 1926. During his tenure, he authored three textbooks on business

[30] "Miami Gets Commerce Tip," *Miami News*, 11 Sept 1947. For relevant trade data, see *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1945-1950.

organization, corporations, and finance, and organized several major bond campaigns in Pennsylvania during World War I.[31]

Dr. Walker became a director of the Miami Chamber of Commerce in 1947, and was elected president in 1949. The city's lack of an answer to New Orleans' growing Pan American business strategy was a top priority at this time. The Chamber's new president was enthusiastic about the idea of building some kind of hemispheric trade promotion institution, but he quickly diagnosed Miami's business community as insufficiently moneyed or enthused to achieve the goal alone. Walker insisted from the beginning that while Miami was the logical gateway to the Americas, corporations and leaders from across Florida and nationwide would have to invest in a new trade center for it to be competitive.[32]

Walker believed he could generate nationwide interest in a Miami-based project by realigning the city's Pan American business strategy to more closely adhere to national and international interests. From the beginning of his time at the head of the project, he insisted that publicity for the Pan American Center avoid characterizing it as a local or even a statewide undertaking. It would have to be coordinated with the broader foreign policy of the Truman administration if it was to succeed. "The project is planned to fit directly into the foreign relations and international trade program of the present Administration in Washington," Walker told state officials in December 1949. It would be located in Miami only because South Florida was the most appropriate location for what Walker and his planners had in mind to build.[33]

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[31] "You Know This Man," *Miami News*, 22 Jun 1958.
[32] "Pan Am Mart Planners Work Hard for Success," *Miami News*, 1 Sept 1949.
[33] Organization Committee of the Inter-American Cultural Center and Trade Fair to State Comptroller C.M. Gay, 2 Dec 1949 in Box 46, folder 2, Fuller Warren Correspondence (S 235), State Archives of Florida.

The plans further reflected a shift in strategy toward a project that would answer national and international circumstances more than local desires for merely better trade. A commercial mart for buyers and sellers across the hemisphere was part of the proposal, but Walker also envisioned components that would draw in a much broader crowd. The Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center at Miami was to become a major tourist attraction, drawing millions of visitors per year. People from across the Americas would come, not only to view the trade exhibits, but also to "enjoy educational and cultural exhibits, performances, and attractions featuring the traditions and culture of the Latin American countries." There would be art galleries, a music hall, and a "club of the Americas," all set in a beautiful tropical park with wide plazas and waterways. Again, on paper it also seemed like the prototype of a Cold War theme park, Western Hemisphere edition.[34]

The object of all of this, Walker and his team suggested, was to go beyond the basics of trade promotion to do a more profound kind of interpersonal outreach. The Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center would focus on building a "solid structure of Inter-American understanding and good will" by dramatizing the theme of hemispheric unity for visitors, who would themselves support the program by paying for the privilege of participating. In a word, Walker and his associates intended to make internationalism consumable.[35]

By making consumable internationalism the focal point of this expanded Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center, Walker intended to capture some of the same unity of purpose that had generated so much of Washington's enthusiasm over International

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[34] Prospectus of the Inter-American Cultural Center and Trade Fair, enclosed in Ibid.
[35] Ibid.

House and the trade mart in New Orleans. Locally, he pitched the Center as a way of allowing Miami to play to its strengths in carrying out its Pan American business strategy. The city had excellent year-round climate, a comparatively large Latin American population, adequate hotel facilities, and was the principal port of entry for Latin American visitors. Making the project as much of a tourist attraction as it was a commercial center helped establish it in the local imagination as something that could actually be accomplished.[36]

Nationally, the Center idea corresponded closely with the Truman administration's stated desire to improve international relations and repel the advance of Communism by improving standards of living in underdeveloped areas. Walker particularly linked the Center with President Truman's Point Four program, which had emerged from part of his 1949 inaugural address. The basic concept of Point Four was to stimulate the economies of underdeveloped countries by sharing scientific and technical information that would improve their performance in agriculture and industry. Walker insisted that the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center could play a vital role in implementing this strategy in Latin America by providing an attractive meeting ground at the center of the hemisphere for this informational exchange to take place.[37]

The Center would also provide another way for the United States government to move the Good Neighbor Policy out of the realm of rhetoric and into action. Much as New Orleans had found a way to give substance to the policy for Latin American businessmen, Walker saw the Center as a way to provide the same experience for everyday Latin American visitors. That the vast majority of Latin Americans would have

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[36] Ibid.
[37] For more on the background of the Point Four program, see Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller*, 427-430.

been unable to afford the journey to Miami to see the Center did not appear to matter. In his proposals, Walker insisted that the institution would be able to build the inter-American goodwill that diplomatic and trade missions simply could not do. A "large scale intermingling" of people from North and South America would bear fruit in the form of mutual understanding and a willingness to cooperate in improving trade, production, and living standards.

Crucially, Walker and the other planners of the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center were looking for more than just moral support from Washington. By weaving the project so tightly into the narrative of Point Four and the United States' relationship with Latin America, they hoped to establish the Miami center as thoroughly dedicated to the public interest, and therefore deserving of public assistance to get the ball rolling. When Walker and his committee first presented the project to the state governor and cabinet in 1949, they estimated the project would cost around fifty million dollars. That number would swell over time. Nonetheless, Walker insisted that the Center would ultimately be self-sustaining and self-liquidating soon after completion, and it would ultimately result in a $300 million annual increase of tourist revenue. Public investment in the program would merely get it past the hurdles it was unable to jump using local resources alone.[38]

Walker's team mounted a two-phase strategy to secure public funding for the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center in Miami. The first step was to establish a broad base of support from local, regional, and national authorities. In mid-summer 1949, Dr. Walker assembled a Citizens' Organization of 22 to take over the business of

[38] See Walker's prospectus for the Inter-American Cultural Center and Trade Fair, 2 Dec 1949 in Box 46, folder 5, Fuller Warren Correspondence (S 235), State Archives of Florida.

planning the Center from the Miami Chamber of Commerce. Miami was still well represented on the committee by Mayor Robert Floyd, local newspapermen Daniel Mahoney and Lee Hills, and former Mayor Frank Katzentine. Walker reached out, however, to include men from other major cities in Florida whose influence would be vital in securing assistance for the project. From Jacksonville alone, Walker recruited Mayor and future Florida governor Haydon Burns, prominent businessman Kendrick Guernsey, and Edward Ball, executor of the Alfred DuPont trust and a major force in Florida commerce. The committee also included William Pawley, a former U.S. ambassador to Peru and Brazil based out of Miami. Pawley's foreign policy expertise and Washington connections were expected to lend the Center project credibility and make it more marketable. Finally, the committee sought members from the neighboring states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. These committee members were never very active; their purpose was to give the project a more regional character and avoid the impression that Florida alone was to benefit from it.[39]

Then came the endorsements. Walker and his committee put the Center idea before Florida Governor Fuller Warren and his Cabinet, asking only for their approval of the idea, not an appropriation. Noting the potential gains in tourist revenue and national and international character of the undertaking, the members of the Cabinet wholeheartedly backed the plan. Warren himself pledged the support of the various state agencies he was able to speak for, promising assistance with access roads, advertising, and other forms of public aid.[40]

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[39] William Walker to George Smathers, 25 May 1950 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers, University of Florida Special Collections.
[40] Unofficial minutes of Cabinet meeting, 6 Dec 1949 in Box 46, folder 2, Fuller Warren Correspondence (S 235), State Archives of Florida.

Walker then looked to Washington. Shortly after receiving the Florida Cabinet's blessing for the Center, he approached two of Florida's most powerful Congressmen, Representative George Smathers and Senator Spessard Holland, for assistance. In pitching the project to Smathers, Walker reiterated the logic that his team could build a Pan American business strategy that would benefit everyone involved. Based on the economic studies commissioned by the planners, Florida could expect three to five million dollars in extra tourist income annually. The internationalists, bankers, and industrialists whom Walker and his associates had consulted on the project were enthusiastic. The Center would not be a drain on the taxpayers; it merely needed a well-secured public loan.[41]

Smathers and Senator Holland responded by giving the project a boost in Washington and to a broader audience through national publicity in the press and on the radio. The attention could not have come at a better time. The Korean War had gotten underway in June 1950, leaving many in doubt as to whether a project like the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center stood any chance of receiving federal assistance when those dollars might be needed for military purposes.[42]

Walker, the committee, and their Washington partners used the Korean War as a way to double down on their insistence that the Inter-American Center was needed to shore up the United States' relations with its Latin American neighbors. With Communism on the march in Asia, the theory went, it was more critical than ever that projects like Point Four and the Inter-American Center be directed toward keeping Latin

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[41] William Walker to George Smathers, 25 May 1950 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers, University of Florida Special Collections.
[42] See, for example, "Trade Mart Nears Reality," *Miami News*, 10 Aug 1950. See also Spessard Holland to William H. Walker, 24 Aug 1950 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.

American countries oriented toward the West. In an interview with Ted Granik on the popular radio program *American Forum of the Air*, Senator Holland explained exactly how the Center factored into this overarching goal. "We want to encourage Latin Americans to visit this country," he said, "to find an outlet here for their raw materials. We want them to send their students here, to learn our way of life first hand. Above all, we want Latin America to know that we have the interest of our good neighbors uppermost in our minds. Completion of the [Center] will put our relations with Latin America into sharp focus."[43]

Washington appeared willing to back the project on this basis. In September 1950, Senator Holland shepherded through Congress a joint resolution endorsing the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center, and authorizing the President to recognize it as well. The resolution focused on the Center's role in fulfilling the national interest, linking it with the United States' desire to build lasting hemispheric trade connections and solidarity and prevent "the infiltration of undemocratic philosophies in Latin America." The resolution passed unanimously, not least because no part of the text implied any sort of financial obligation on the part of the United States government. Of all the resolution's high-sounding language, this had been the main preoccupation of the lawmakers who examined the bill during the committee stage.[44]

The Truman administration appeared enthusiastic about the project as well. Truman himself did not give his personal endorsement until later, but other executive branch officials were more active in praising the Center concept. Dr. Walker made

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[43] Transcript of *American Forum of the Air* program with Theodore Granik, George Smathers, and Spessard Holland, [Aug 1950] in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.

[44] For the text of the resolution as it was approved 27 Sept 1950, see Public Law 853, *United States Statutes at Large* 64, 1075. See also the transcript of the Executive Session of the Foreign Relations Committee regarding H.J. Resolution 511, 12 Sept 1950.

particularly good headway with Secretary of Commerce Charles Sawyer, who hinted at the administration's favor in a Columbus Day speech in Miami in October 1950. Citing at length the ways in which the U.S. and the neighboring Latin American states shared a common past, Sawyer emphasized the degree to which the destinies of these countries were intertwined. Projects like the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center planned for Miami, he explained, helped build the sense of hemispheric community that made cooperation possible in other, more serious areas. "In the years ahead," he said, "it may well be that much of our resources, private and public, will be marshalled to defend ourselves. We must not fail, however, to provide also for building understanding and friendship among the nations of the Western Hemisphere which must stand or fall together." Sawyer would later back up his theoretical endorsement of the Center with action by assisting Dr. Walker and his associates with the process of securing federal grants.[45]

One crucial tier of support was clearly missing at this stage. Despite the fact that the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center owed its existence as a concept to the United States' need to improve relations with Latin American countries, no Latin American governments or business leaders had yet been asked to pledge their support for the project. Indeed, Walker and his associates had no plans to do so at this point. When Frank Katzentine, one of the Miami-based members of the early planning committee, asked about the matter, the other members argued it would be better to wait until the project had something more concrete to offer before securing Latin American endorsements. This decision did not immediately affect the Center's fortunes, although

[45] For the full text of Sawyer's address, see "Sawyer Appeals for Trade, Sacrifice by All to Preserve Freedom of Americas," *Miami News*, 13 Oct 1950.

the lack of Latin involvement in the projects early phases would ultimately lead to some confusion over how exactly Latin American countries were expected to participate.[46]

Once a broad base of regional and national support was in place, the Center's organizers turned their attention to applying for the necessary seed capital to get the project off the ground. Walker insisted the Center would be self-liquidating if only it could receive a large infusion of cash at the outset to get the attractive displays and programs constructed. His initial plan was to avoid seeking an appropriation and instead go for a federal loan through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. The RFC had been established in 1932 by President Herbert Hoover to make loans to struggling banks and other businesses. The Roosevelt administration expanded the role of the corporation to provide financing for local governments, relief programs, and defense-related projects. During World War II, the RFC established its own series of companies to manage production of key materials like tin, rubber, and abaca fiber. These operations ceased after the war ended in 1945, but the corporation retained its authority to invest in a broad range of projects calculated to benefit the public. Walker believed the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center would easily be approved for a loan from the RFC.[47]

To give the project the proper standing to receive federal funding, Walker and the organizational committee took two critical administrative steps that would have significant impact on the future of the Center. First, the project had to be incorporated into some kind of government entity so local, state, and federal agencies could legally do

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[46] Frank Katzentine's question about involving the Latin Americans in the Center plans came after the initial organizing committee had been reconstituted into a state agency called the Inter-American Center Authority. For his question and the Authority's discussion of the matter, see Minutes of the Inter-American Center Authority, 14 Sept 1951 (Series 470), State Archives of Florida.

[47] For more on the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, see James S. Olson, *Saving Capitalism: The Reconstruction Finance Corporation and the New Deal, 1933-1940* (Princeton University Press, 1988); and Arthur Herman, *Freedom's Forge: How American Business Produced Victory in World War II* (New York: Random House, 2012).

business with it. After conversations between the various government officials from whom the Center organizers hoped to receive assistance, Walker decided to try for a new state authority that would operate directly under the Governor. Given the enthusiastic support of Governor Warren and his Cabinet, plus the widespread belief that the Center would benefit the entire state, the legislation creating this new authority passed easily. In 1951, the Florida Legislature established the Inter-American Center Authority (IACA), empowering it to act essentially as a state corporation, taking out loans, accepting land, and making contracts.[48]

The establishment of IACA allowed the next phases of planning for the Center to move much faster. At the end of 1951, the Authority approved an option agreement on a 1,600-acres parcel of land north of Miami known as the Graves Tract. The land had been donated to the City of Miami some years before with the understanding that it would be used for some public project. Miami had considered using the land to expand its port facilities or to establish a new airport, but neither of those projects appeared eminent. Moreover, if the Inter-American Trade and Cultural Center proved half as successful as its backers claimed it would be, the Center would make for a much more profitable use of the land.[49]

IACA also proceeded with its plan to ask the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for a loan to cover the initial costs of designing and constructing the Center. In February 1952, Dr. Walker submitted an application to the RFC for a loan of 35 million dollars, reciting the project's lengthy list of endorsements and reemphasizing its ties to the

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[48] Alfred McKethan (State Road Department of Florida) to Governor Fuller Warren, 18 Jul 1950 in Box 46, folder 5, Fuller Warren Correspondence; William Walker to George Smathers, 5 Aug 1950 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.
[49] "$1,000,000 Offered for Graves Tract," *Miami News*, 24 Aug 1948.

national interest. Walker noted that the RFC generally loaned money to projects relating to single industries, but that funding the Center would give the corporation the opportunity to benefit U.S. industry large and small in a much more profound way. The Center would aid all industries in all sections of the United States by giving them a space in which to interact more closely with potential trade partners from Latin American countries. Walker also made sure to once again invoke the consonance between the Center's objectives and President Truman's Point Four program, noting that closer relationships between the people of the United States and its Latin American neighbors was an "absolute requirement of national defense and the maintenance of world peace."[50]

Dr. Walker and the Inter-American Center Authority did not wait for the RFC to respond to the application before launching into other sectors of the project. They began printing up brochures and booklets explaining in colorful detail their plans for the Center, and spreading the word to potential participants. Some of these contacts were in Latin America, although there was no concerted drive to secure the endorsement or participation of Latin American businesses or governments just yet. The branding of the project became better developed during the remainder of 1952, and by the end of the year the project had a new, snappier name: "Interama." Promotional materials focused on its role as a "living exhibit" and a "meeting place for the people of the Americas."

No amount of colorful diagrams and high-sounding rhetoric was able to save Interama from the rough road it ended up traveling in the 1950s. The project endured a variety of challenges over the next few years that demonstrated the limitations of faith placed in its value. Some of these challenges were entirely external and had much more

[50] Cover letter of IACA's official application to the RFC, 15 Feb 1952 in Box 46, folder 4, Fuller Warren Correspondence.

to do with the changing face of American politics in the early fifties, while others were direct results of the methods by which Interama had gotten so far in the planning.

First, and most pressing, the Reconstruction Finance Corporation ended up not being the guaranteed ally it had once appeared to be. Walker had done much of his preliminary groundwork to facilitate approval of the Center's RFC loan by working with W. Stuart Symington, administrator of the RFC. Symington, who had become head of the RFC during a rough patch in its existence and had never intended to stay for long, decided to resign at the start of 1952, just as the Inter-American Center Authority was passing along its application for an unprecedented project loan. The timing was unfortunate; Walker would now have to retrace his steps in winning over Symington's successor, Harry MacDonald.[51]

IACA's troubles with the RFC continued to deepen as the political landscape in Washington shifted with the election of Dwight Eisenhower as President in 1952. The Republicans had a target on the Corporation even before Eisenhower took office, charging that its administrators had practiced favoritism in making decisions on loans. Furthermore, Eisenhower campaigned on promises to cut back government spending and shift more responsibility for economic development over to the private sector. The RFC, with its broad authority to invest government funds into a variety of projects and companies, could not have easily been spared under the circumstances. Almost immediately after Eisenhower took office, the new administration imposed a rule capping all RFC loans to one million dollars. When the Corporation informed IACA of this turn of events, Dr. Walker immediately protested, arguing that the Authority's application had

[51] For more on Stuart Symington's work as head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, see James C. Olson, *Stuart Symington: A Life* (London: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 222-231.

been made under the old rules, and ought to be considered on that basis. Thanks in part to considerable pressure from Florida's Congressional delegation, the RFC ultimately decided to set aside the new restriction for this particular application and consider IACA's loan request strictly on its merits. Before a decision could be reached, however, Harry Macdonald was replaced as RFC administrator by Kenneth Cravens, who rejected the application entirely.[52]

This returned IACA once again to the same profound problem that had plagued Miami's efforts to build a Pan American Center since the days of Everest Sewell, a glaring lack of startup capital. The remaining best options for Walker and the Authority appeared to be either switching to private financing through bonds or seeking an outright Congressional appropriation for the Center. At one point Frank Katzentine of Miami went so far as to say he would even be willing for the United States government to hold title to the Center so long as it would be built in South Florida. The most daunting aspect of this shift in strategy was that IACA would now have to do considerably more groundwork to secure support for the Center, regardless of whether of it was funded by private investors or public money. The RFC route had only required Walker and his allies in Washington to convince a small number of loan administrators of the project's merits, something Walker had been doing for decades in his own work. By the very nature of the task, neither Congressmen nor prospective bondholders would be as easy to win over.[53]

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[52] Memo from William H. Walker to IACA members, 17 Apr 1953 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers. Walker handled the rejection badly, and made public statements about the RFC that drew criticism even from his allies in Miami. See, for example, 25 May 1953.

[53] The RFC rejection led a number of individuals connected with IACA to conclude that private financing through bonds was the only logical answer. Harry MacDonald, whose departure from the RFC had helped precipitate the crisis, held this view as well. Coincidentally, he spent a few years in the employ of IACA. For his thoughts on private financing for Interama, see the minutes for the 25 Mar 1954 meeting of IACA, State Archives of Florida. See also Frank Katzentine to George Smathers, 17 Feb 1954 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.

In some ways, casting a broader net for funding was beneficial in that it forced Interama's backers to expand beyond their traditional supporters, which so far had been almost completely concentrated in the United States and overwhelmingly Democratic in political orientation. Spessard Holland and George Smathers, for example, reached across the aisle to try to interest Senator Homer Capehart, a Republican from Indiana, in the project. Capehart had shared the Truman administration's concerns about ensuring economic development in Latin America, but he opposed Point Four and any direct infusion of public capital into the region on the basis that these methods had the color of socialism. Now that the Republican Party had a better footing in Washington, Capehart hoped to replace parts of Point Four with some method of financing Latin American trade with the United States, almost like a limited version of the now-crippled RFC. Holland and Smathers seized on this interest, promising their support for the Senator's program while pitching Interama as part of the same project. If Senator Capehart wanted private enterprise to take the lead in shoring up U.S.-Latin American trade, perhaps government's role could be limited to providing a space like Interama for that process to take place.[54]

Interama's expanding search for aid also forced IACA to finally put real effort into making the project international in scope. The Authority's earlier strategy to wait until more definite plan existed to seek Latin American support was a luxury they could no longer afford. IACA sent its executive director, George Tayloe Ross, and an acidic Washington consultant named Constantine de Stackelberg on the hunt for Latin American endorsements for Interama. The idea was that these endorsements would help

[54] Ibid.; Spessard Holland to Frank Katzentine, 22 Feb 1954 and George Smathers to Frank Katzentine, 23 Feb 1954 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.

IACA justify the costs of the project, whether it was a Congressman, a federal official, or a potential bondholder who needed convincing.[55]

This effort helped familiarize key Latin political and business leaders with Interama, but the approach employed was an odd one. Stackelberg made no effort to disguise the fact that his primary purpose in making calls on the various Latin American ambassadors and business leaders was to get exactly the statements he needed to turn the heads of bondholders and underwriters, not necessarily to make Latin Americans part of the planning for Interama. If an official equivocated about endorsing the project, Stackelberg often assured him that the endorsement was merely a trivial matter. "All I need is the expression of your support in a few beautiful phrases," he wrote to Roberto Huertematte, Ambassador from Panama to the U.S. "You should ask me to keep you informed about the further progress of the Center," Stackelberg continued, "so that at the opportune time your Government could enter into discussions with the Center as to their assistance and participation in this project." Sometimes, Stackelberg simply dictated letters to Latin officials and requested they retype them onto their own letterhead, sign them, and send them back. This practice was certainly not unheard of, but in this context it suggests a rather limited relationship between IACA and the countries whose business it would ultimately depend upon.[56]

Seeking a broader base of support for Interama also exposed some of the project's most profound flaws. Chief among these was the difficulty Dr. Walker and IACA had in trying to explain exactly what Interama planned to do on a daily basis and how that daily

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[55] See the minutes of the Inter-American Center Authority for 27 Aug 1954, State Archives of Florida.
[56] See Constantine de Stackelberg to Roberto Huertematte, 18 Oct 1954 and Stackelberg to Fernando Berckemeyer (Ambassador from Peru to the U.S.), 25 Sept 1954 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files (Series 477), State Archives of Florida.

operation would benefit each of the groups whose support the project so desperately needed. When considered on its broadest merits, Interama's goals were virtually unimpeachable. No one had a bad word to say about the ideals of better hemispheric cooperation, cultural exchanges, or facilitating more inter-American trade. In pitching the specifics, however, IACA operatives became ensnared by the wide range of desires and interests they were trying to represent in the project's design. As various elements were emphasized to accommodate these competing interests, the overall concept became more confusing and the price tag shot up. By 1954, IACA had increased its estimated funding requirements from forty to seventy-eight million dollars. By 1956, officials estimated the total amount of capital investment would top two hundred million dollars.[57]

State and federal authorities pulled the project in one direction. For Interama to qualify for public support, it had to demonstrate its benefit to the public interest. The greater the support in question, the more specific IACA had to be in making its case that Interama was a viable solution to a public problem. In advertising the project to members of Congress, federal and state officials, and other public operatives, Walker and his associates focused on Interama's diplomatic value, and leaned heavily on Cold War rhetoric to tie the project closely to the United States' need to win Latin American "hearts and minds." The completed center would have no midway attractions; it would be an entertaining but ultimately informative and educational center for introducing U.S. and Latin American visitors to the various cultures of the hemisphere. U.S. and Latin

[57] "Center for Miami Again is Pressed," *New York Times*, 21 Nov 1954; IACA meeting minutes for 3 Jan 1956, State Archives of Florida.

American industries would also benefit by using Interama as a space for displaying their products and meeting with potential customers from across North and South America.[58]

That vision may have theoretically satisfied the question of Interama's public value, but bond underwriters were much more concerned with the project's profitability. Such ethereal concepts as "understanding" and "goodwill" and "relations" did carry weight in Washington during the Cold War, but they made for a tougher sell at the bond houses. In dealing with potential underwriters, IACA officials were forced to develop more concrete explanations of what Interama would be and how it would turn a profit. The underwriters also demanded to see some gestures of good faith support from either the federal or state government. As time moved forward, the Authority increasingly added more marketable amusement components to the plan to shore up confidence in the large numbers of tourists it claimed it could attract.[59]

Balancing the expectations of public officials and would-be bondholders was one challenge; convincing Latin Americans to buy into the project had its own problems. Stackelberg had had no trouble getting Latin American ambassadors to endorse Interama in theory, but convincing the Latin American governments to spend any sort of money on the project would require it to have a clearer benefit. Alejandro Orfila, public relations director for the Organization of American States, illustrated this succinctly in a meeting with George Tayloe Ross of IACA in 1955. Ross was meeting with Orfila and several

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[58] For additional examples of Interama's Cold War value, see William Walker to LeRoy Collins, 17 Feb 1955 in Box 41, George Smathers Papers.

[59] The split in Interama's identity between being a hemispheric meeting ground and a colossal amusement park is hinted at in a 1954 report by the consulting firm EBASCO Services. See "Digest of Report by EBASCO Services, Inc., February 1956 in Box 8, IACA Reference Files (Series 482), State Archives of Florida. See also "Interama: Boondoggle? Or Fine Civic Project?" *Miami News*, 28 Jul 1957; and William Walker to Spessard Holland, 21 Mar 1955 in Box 41, George Smathers Papers. At one point, there was even some half-serious discussion of capitalizing on the accelerating interest in satellites and space exploration by building a planetarium as part of Interama. See "Miami Answer: Cosmorama," *St. Petersburg Times*, 4 Aug 1955.

others to discuss strategies for attracting Latin American investment in Interama. Orfila wanted to help Interama by putting Ross before the influential Inter-American Economic and Social Council, but he cautioned Ross to focus on the economic benefits Latin countries would receive from participation. Council members might reject the project's cultural aspects if they detected anything patronizing or desirous of promoting Latin America's Spanish heritage. Aid to Latin American industries, however, would be far less controversial.[60]

Therein lay the rub, however. From the time Ross began prodding for firmer commitments from Latin American governments for participation, there was confusion as to what that participation would look like, and how it would redound to the Latins' benefit. Because Dr. Walker's initial strategy had been to wait until after Interama was funded to seek partnerships with Latin American governments, the only substantial knowledge Latin American diplomats and other government officials had of the project came from the "grapevine" and the press. No one very far outside the inner planning circle could tell whether the Inter-American Cultural and Trade Center would ultimately end up as a trade mart, an amusement park, a free port, or a concert hall. Luis Machado, a Cuban economist and diplomat, observed that this uncertainty over Interama's mission relative to Latin America was driving Latin indifference to the project. If, however, IACA would return to the older idea for Interama to be more of a trade mart, he believed the Latin countries would support it. Constantine de Stackelberg, at the end of his mission

[60] Transcript of an informal conference between George Tayloe Ross, Alejandro Orfila, et al, 30 Aug 1955 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files.

to drum up Latin American support for Interama, made the same suggestion, and later advocated for a free trade zone like New Orleans' as part of the project.[61]

IACA could not, of course, so easily jettison the other elements of Interama just to emphasize its role as a promoter of trade. Stackelberg pressured the Authority to draft more definite statements explaining how Interama would encourage inter-American trade and investment, but IACA officials sensed they were getting in over their heads. Stackelberg's insistence was partly driven by events, since New Orleans was at this time getting tremendous praise from business leaders across the hemisphere for its Inter-American Investment Conference. IACA needed time, however, if it was to find a way to incorporate trade and investment promotion into Interama's already bulging, nebulous identity. The project was clearly weighed down by the need to be about trade, culture, profit-making, and inter-American solidarity all at once.[62]

The very structure of the project and its leadership also posed major challenges. The decision to move Interama away from the direct control of Miami's business community and into a broader state agency was made for the sake of convenience, to help tap into sufficient funding and support, which had never been forthcoming locally. William Walker always believed IACA would eventually be superseded by a more

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[61] For an overview of the confusion of objectives in IACA's game plan for Interama, see a series of transcripts of speeches by George Smathers and William Lantaff before the Economic and Social Committee of the Organization of American States, 13 Jul 1957 in Box 57, George Smathers Papers. See also William Lantaff to Jose Mora (Secretary-General of the Organization of American States), 2 Aug 1957 in Box 57, George Smathers Papers. For Luis Machado's thoughts on Interama and why Latin Americans had been so indifferent to the idea, see Kenneth Frank to IACA members, 1 Jul 1957 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files. George Taylor Ross summarized Stackelberg's findings in a memo to IACA, 14 Dec 1954 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files. See Stackelberg to Ross, 26 Apr 1955 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files for more on Stackelberg's suggestion that Interama include a free trade zone.

[62] The vagueness of the promotional materials used to advertise Interama in the 1950s best illustrates the ongoing schizophrenia of the project. Reading from one pamphlet at an IACA meeting in 1956, Macdonald described Interama as "a clearing house for cultures and for trade expansion, a show case for a vast display of scientific and other accomplishments – a meeting place for the people of the Americas." See the IACA meeting minutes for 3 Jan 1956, State Archives of Florida.

traditional private non-profit corporation and returned to more localized control, but in the early stages the plan seemed better served by managing Interama through a public entity. Nothing about this arrangement seemed odd at the outset – Interama was fulfilling a public need and was desirous of receiving public loans for seed capital.

Like any public entity, however, politics and procedure often worked against the project. It was fairly easy, for example, for Interama to take on the taint of pork barrel politics. Walker and IACA had hoped to avoid this problem entirely by only seeking public funding through established federal loan programs such as the RFC. This form of funding required no special Congressional consent, and therefore no Congressman had to be convinced to vote for it. Congress' dealings with the project could be entirely based on the merits. Once the opportunity for RFC funding closed in 1953, however, this strategy became untenable. No other federal instrumentality appeared likely to support Interama, which meant the only avenue would be to ask for an appropriation. That would require a great deal of cajoling, likely a few trade-offs as well, and the prospects for success simply did not appear bright.[63]

Oddly enough, the pork barrel problem cut against Interama two ways. Not only was there the issue of convincing enough Congressmen to fund a large localized project, but there was also a considerable amount of wrangling in South Florida with various entities that expected to profit from the project once it did succeed. An early example of this emerged soon after IACA made its original loan application to the RFC in 1952.

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[63] Dr. Walker began exploring the possibility of seeking a Congressional appropriation for Interama as early as 1954. This was part of the impetus for expanding the base of support in the wake of the RFC failure. See Walker to George Smathers, 4 Feb 1954 in Box 8, Smathers Papers. Smathers never believed a Congressional appropriation was likely, and others in IACA began doubting the possibility of funding the entire project in the late 1950s. For illustrations of this decline in optimism about Interama's funding prospects, see George T. Ross to Kenneth Frank, 28 Jun 1957 in Box 3, IACA Subject Files; and minutes of the 3 Jun 1960 meeting of IACA, State Archives of Florida.

Walker and the Authority used the city of Miami's promise to grant them the 1,600-acre Graves Tract as evidence of the project's feasibility, but other cities around Miami complained that other sites had not received the fair consideration of IACA, a *state* instrumentality. Citizens from Homestead, Coral Gables, and elsewhere sent a petition with 4,000 signatures to the RFC, asking the agency to halt consideration of any loan until an independent survey could be done to determine the best place for the project. Dr. Walker raged at what he saw as Floridians' narrow-minded attempts to sink a project calculated for their own benefit, but the public nature of Interama forced IACA to address the issue. The RFC was ultimately convinced of the suitability of the Graves Tract, but not before significant delays tanked the loan application's chances for other reasons already described. [64]

The structure of IACA did nothing to help matters. Members of the Inter-American Center Authority were appointed by the Governor of Florida. The understanding had been that this would be done in consultation with Dr. Walker, but almost immediately events led Walker to fear the Authority would be hamstrung by political appointees. Bond holders harbored the same apprehensions once IACA began courting them to help finance the project. They wanted to see names of prominent businessmen whose support for the project would inspire potential bondholders to invest. Instead, they saw at the helm a state agency stymied by the presence of politicians. The concern was not unfounded; Walker noted early on that a battle was brewing between those members of IACA who were focused on building a successful Interama for Miami

[64] "Survey Sought on Trade Center Site," *Miami Herald*, 10 Sept 1952; William Walker to George Smathers, 8 Nov 1952 and William Walker Memo to IACA members, both in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.

and those who either did not understand the project or wanted to shift it into other areas to suit their interests.[65]

Furthermore, IACA was open to a degree of public scrutiny that would have been unheard of for a private non-profit corporation. As a state agency, the Authority's books were open to public inspection, which resulted in pressure from state government officials to keep expenses low and salaries limited. This mandate conflicted with the agency's needs as a major project looking to attract support from a wide variety of sources. IACA officials needed to travel, to entertain potential partners, to dazzle, in a sense. Walker urged state officials to bear in mind the tremendous benefits Interama would bring to Florida, and to think of the money expended in the planning stages as an investment. The optics of IACA's expenditures would prove, however, to be an ongoing battle throughout the project.[66]

Perhaps the most profound damage done to the project by IACA's management structure was the way in which it separated Interama from the city it was supposed to benefit. Walker, a Miami businessman, had proceeded on the understanding that Interama would advance the interests of Miami no matter what form it took. That calculation seems to have enabled Walker to fight Interama's battles at a level entirely divorced from considerations of Miami's immediate needs as a competitor in the fight for Latin American trade. Miami's businessmen may have accepted Walker's logic to some extent, but in the meantime they were almost completely shut out of the decision-making process governing the project. On a couple of occasions, the Port Authority and city government

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[65] See, for example, Frank Katzentine to George Smathers, 21 Jan 1954 and William Walker to George Smathers, 25 Apr 1955, both in Box 8, George Smathers Papers.
[66] See, for example, a letter from William Walker to Governor LeRoy Collins on this subject included in the 21 Oct 1955 minutes of IACA, State Archives of Florida.

attempted to bail out IACA with small cash appropriations and redistribution of funds from their own bond sales. These measures generally faltered, either over technicalities or pressure to keep local funding directed toward more concrete local needs.[67]

Over time, as IACA floundered through setback after setback, Miami's business and civic leaders continued pursuing their own meager attempts to promote the city as a gateway to Latin America. The Chamber of Commerce established a Foreign Trade Club to bring the city's shippers, importers, and exporters together to work out solutions to common shipping problems. The city government and Chamber of Commerce continued to celebrate Pan American Week and keep up communication with the Consular Corps. Abe Aronovitz, mayor of Miami from 1953 to 1955 and then city commissioner until 1958, led the effort to boost Miami's gateway identity while the city waited on its "big brother" Interama to come into being. Aronovitz experimented during his term as mayor with committees for trade promotion and encouraging light industry to relocate to Miami, and was a constant advocate for some kind of annual festival that would draw Latin Americans to the city more regularly. He envisioned something similar to New Orleans' Mardi Gras or the Carnival in Nice, France, something that would have broad appeal. [68]

Despite these and other ideas, Miamians began to feel their longstanding pipe dream of being a world-renowned trade and cultural center was turning out to be just that – a pipe dream. When confronted with the challenges of funding anything similar to the

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[67] At one point, the Port Authority contemplated financing Interama through a head tax at the airport, but this idea conflicted with the requirements of IACA's outstanding bond issue with Lehman Brothers. Furthermore, when the Port Authority attempted to give Interama part of the proceeds of its own bond issue in 1957, the major national airlines balked, insisting that the money be spent on jet-age improvements for Miami International Airport. See "Plan on Financing Interama Proposed," *Miami News*, 20 Jun 1957; and "Air Lines Backed on Port Funds," *Miami News*, 25 Oct 1957.

[68] "Interama: Boondoggle? Or Fine Civic Project?" *Miami News*, 28 Jul 1957; George Smathers to Abe Aronovitz, 6 Nov 1954 in Box 8, George Smathers Papers; "Mayor Urges Festival Here for Pan-American Nations," *Miami News*, 7 Nov 1954.

organizations that appeared to be thriving in New Orleans, the whole prospect of building Interama or anything like it seemed hopelessly big and out of reach. Perhaps the greatest snub of all came ironically from the New Orleanians themselves. In 1957, when the Interama bond issue was at its nadir and IACA was facing almost certain defeat, Mayor Chep Morrison of New Orleans pointed out that Interama's backers were simply trying to do too much too fast. He said international trade centers should "be developed slowly as a do-it-yourself project - not plunked down into the center of a community as a complete 'store-bought' package, as sponsors of the local Interama have been trying to do." Morrison spoke frankly at a dinner he attended in Miami, and said "Perhaps I am sticking my neck out when I say this, but I think your Interama people are trying to run before they can walk."[69]

The Cuban Revolution and the Realization of the Miami Gateway

Given the relatively limited amount of groundwork any of Miami's business and civic leaders had done to reach out to their counterparts in Latin America, it is ironic that Latin Americans themselves ended up being the ones to teach Miami how to "walk," as Chep Morrison put it, when it came to attracting their business. The lesson came not at Miami's invitation, but rather as a result of events far beyond local leaders' control. In January 1959, Fidel Castro marched down from the Sierra Maestra with a coalition force of poor rural farmers and disaffected urbanites and seized control of Havana from Cuba's dictatorial president, Fulgencio Batista. Castro intended to complete the revolutionary project that had begun in the 19th century but was stymied by the intervention of the

[69] "Take-It-Slow Attitude is Urged on Interama," *Miami News*, 1 Sept 1957.

United States in 1898. He envisioned limitations for foreign ownership of businesses, nationalized public services, and increased industrialization.

Castro's nationalist and egalitarian rhetoric appealed to many Cubans at first, but in practice his policies led almost immediately to conflicts with the United States and the Cuban elite. When Western nations proved reluctant to do business with the new regime, Castro turned to the Soviet Union for trade and economic support. By the fall of 1960, Cuba had negotiated for two hundred million dollars in trade over a four-year period and then an additional arrangement for trading Soviet oil for Cuban sugar. The Eisenhower administration responded by cutting Cuba's sugar quota, at which point the Castro government expropriated the property of U.S. oil companies operating in the country. The U.S. returned fire with a trade embargo and then ultimately severed diplomatic relations in January 1961.

Many Cuban elites left the country in the wake of Batista's downfall, and the number only accelerated as Castro's policies continued to turn more radical. Landowners, business owners, and former officials of the Batista regime felt especially threatened, and made up a considerable percentage of the earliest wave of Cubans to leave, earning them the nickname "Golden Exiles." Indeed, many of these initial refugees were wealthy, educated, well-connected within the Cuban community and in Latin America more generally. By the end of 1959, 35,000 Cubans had left the island.[70]

These tumultuous changes occurred just over 200 miles south of Miami, which had been the frequent playground of many of the first Cubans to flee. In their hour of need many of them chose to return, not for a pleasure trip, but as exiles. When conditions

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[70] Robert M. Levine and Moises Asis, *Cuban Miami* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 22-23.

in Cuba deteriorated further and induced more residents to flee, they often followed their predecessors to Miami and the growing cohort of Cuban exiles there. At one point in 1961, it was estimated that a Cuban refugee was arriving in Miami every seven and a half minutes on average.[71]

The demographic consequences of the 1959 Cuban Revolution were profound for South Florida. By 1970, 25 percent, or one out of every four persons in the city of Miami was of Hispanic descent, for a total of about 325,000. About 90% of these were Cuban. By 1970, Hispanics made up 45.4 percent of the city's population. By 1980, the number was up to 55.9 percent.[72]

In the early years of the Castro regime, the Cubans who arrived in Miami considered themselves exiles rather than immigrants. Many of them did not intend to stay, but instead were merely waiting for Castro's government to either implode on its own or be destroyed by its opponents. Some Cubans even used South Florida as a base for efforts to hurry this process along, including paramilitary groups like Alpha 66 and Brigade 2506. In time, however, as Castro consolidated his power and attempts to dislodge him failed, Miami's Cuban population began to put down roots. In doing so, they transformed Miami and all of South Florida in terms of its culture, political landscape, and economy. The massive influx of Cuban refugees at times put pressure on the social and economic structures of South Florida, but ultimately it was also Cubans who helped Miami realize its potential as a gateway to the Americas. The city's role in the Cuban Diaspora was only the beginning; by the 1980s Miami would become a major center of hemispheric business, banking, and transportation. The city's traditional elite

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[71] "Cuban Influx Gives Miami Spanish Accent," *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 Sept 1961.
[72] Raymond A. Mohl, "Miami: The Ethnic Cauldron," in *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 71-72.

had a role to play in this meteoric rise to prominence, but Cuban businessmen were the ones who made the city's Pan American business strategy flourish. In a way, Miami's success in the 1970s and 1980s was the story of the city's Cuban and Anglo leaders learning to work together to do what had made New Orleans so impressive in the late 1940s and 1950s.[73]

Miami's Anglo civic and business leaders were the first ones to attempt to fold the Cuban refugee situation into Miami's Pan American business strategy. In the early days of the migration, they focused more on the potential economic and logistical problems created by the arrival of so many new residents. Quickly, however, they realized the issue gave the city a certain amount of capital within the context of the Cold War. Washington set the example for this perspective. The federal government, seeking to embarrass the Castro regime internationally by demonstrating the humanitarianism and compassion of the United States, set up an extensive program to aid the Cuban refugees as they arrived in Miami. Funded by federal grants and managed by Florida's Department of Public Welfare, the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program provided incoming Cubans with temporary shelter, medical care, limited financial assistance, and help with finding a place to live. The federal government provided surplus food supplies, which local case workers handed out to refugees families in need. Children who were separated from their parents were assigned by the program staff to foster homes. Federal money also bolstered educational services in Dade County, especially vocational classes and programs for students with little to no knowledge of the English language. By the end of the 1960s, Washington had pumped over a billion dollars into Miami to assist the Cubans. Federal

[73] Melanie Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami: A Social History* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2009), 170-174; and Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 172.

officials justified the program as simply part of the United States' duty as a responsible world leader. Tracy Voorhees, director of the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program, described the effort as "both a challenge and an opportunity to do the kind of thing our country stands for."[74]

While Washington viewed the Miami-based response to the crisis as a credit to the United States, local leaders interpreted it as proof that Miami was a critical nexus between the U.S. and Latin America. After studying the Cuban in-migration and its impact, the 1962 Dade County Grand Jury pronounced the city a "Cold War outpost" whose citizens had accepted the responsibility to assist the Cuban refugees in "the overall conflict against a common foe."[75]

Local leaders and institutions expanded on Miami's "responsible" reaction to the Cuban refugee crisis by proposing new ways to accommodate incoming workers and professionals. Many of the first Cubans to arrive in Miami after Castro's takeover had previously been bankers, executives, government officials, or other white-collar professionals. In the U.S., however, they were often forced to find other kinds of work because they lacked the proper licensing and certifications to practice their trades. The press reported cases of esteemed Cuban professionals serving as waiters, cooks, taxi drivers, and custodians when they could not find work in their own fields. At one point, the former Cuban minister of education was reportedly working as a bus boy in one of Miami's posh hotels. One state education professional familiar with the situation

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[74] For a succinct explanation of the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program and its services, see a program description handed out to participants in Box 1, folder 2 of the Cuban Refugee Assistance Program administrative files (Series 325), State Archives of Florida. See also Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 285-286. Tracy Voorhees' statement is quoted in Frank Stearns to George Smathers, 21 Dec 1960 in Box 106, George Smathers Papers.

[75] Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury, 14 May 1963.

recommended that Florida license former Cuban teachers to teach classes in Spanish to their fellow refugees. "This," he explained, "is a magnificent way that we in Florida, representing the United States, can say 'Welcome' to these intelligent citizens and provide some useful activity for them and great benefit to ourselves." In a similar vein, the University of Miami medical school instituted intensive graduate courses to help Cuban doctors prepare for national qualifying exams so they could be licensed to practice medicine.[76]

Local and state leaders gushed along with the press over Miami's apparent outstretched arms. One press release reviewing the local effort described the city's response as "Miami's heart responding to a human challenge." The Chamber of Commerce wrote that "the ability of citizens of Dade County to adjust to the problems caused by the Cuban refugee must go down in the annals of history as one of the most impressive acts of responsible citizenship ever accomplished."[77]

This self-serving rhetoric made for good public relations, but city leaders also explored the possibility of converting Miami's Cold War capital into real economic growth for the city. Frank Stearns, for example, who had been involved with the city's planning department for decades, saw the Cuban refugee crisis as the perfect pretext for asking state or federal authorities to finally fund an international center of some sort. In 1960, Stearns urged state leaders and Senator George Smathers to lobby the federal government to take extraordinary measures to reactivate the program. He argued it did

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[76] James L. Burnsted to Thomas D. Bailey, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Florida, 26 Jan 1961 and University of Miami dean Homer F. Marah to Governor Farris Bryant, 17 Jan 1961 in Box 44, folder 8, Farris Bryant Correspondence (Series 756), State Archives of Florida.

[77] "Miamians Have Reasons to Be Proud," *The Miamian*, May 1964; undated press release on Miami's response to the Cuban refugee crisis in Box 44, folder 8, Farris Bryant Correspondence (Series 756), State Archives of Florida.

not matter whether federal leaders backed Interama or some other iteration of an international center, just so long as it got off the ground. He pointed out how badly jobs were needed in the Miami area, and suggested that an international center would be relatively non-controversial. Since the jobs for the construction would be all new, the program would avoid the accusation that it was taking jobs away from established resident Miamians. Instead, it would ease pressure in the job market while helping Miami build on its existing claim to being the "focal center for inter-American activities."[78]

Stearns did not offer much to go on in making his proposal, and several leaders (including Senator Smathers) reacted as though they had heard all they desired to hear about the idea of building a grand international center at Miami. IACA, on the other hand, shared Frank Stearns' belief that this might be the right moment to lobby for the federal government's participation in institutionalizing Miami's Pan American business strategy. The bond issue for Interama never took off in the 1950s, but the project did receive a boost in 1960 when the city government sold the 1,600-acre Graves Tract to IACA by warranty deed for $8.5 million. The city agreed not to collect the money until IACA had paid off its bond issue, which meant IACA could claim the land as an asset in negotiating loans and other support without having paid anything for it. The hope was that this arrangement would boost confidence in the Interama venture and speed up its development.[79]

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[78] See Stearns' proposal, received in Governor Farris Bryant's office on 2 Feb 1961 in Box 44, folder 8, Farris Bryant Correspondence. See also Frank Stearns to George Smathers, 21 Dec 1960 in Box 106, George Smathers Papers.

[79] For Smathers' reaction to Stearns ideas about attempting once more to draw the federal government into the Interama project, see Smathers to Stearns, 11 Jan 1961 in Box 106, Smathers Papers. See also Hoover, "Before Disney Arrived," 454-455.

This arrangement was helpful, but it left IACA without any operating capital with which to begin construction. Furthermore, some of the contractors submitting bids for work on the Graves Tract demanded that the entire parcel be put up as security on their investment in the property, which rankled many of Miami's civic leaders. To do this, the city of Miami would have to legally subordinate the $8.5 million lien they held on the property, which these leaders felt was not in the public interest. Robert King High, mayor of Miami and a member of IACA, wondered if perhaps the Cuban refugee crisis might serve as a sufficient reason for the federal government to help the project along.[80]

It happened that President John F. Kennedy had recently signed the Area Redevelopment Act, which aimed to stimulate industrial development in "distressed" sectors of the country. Eligibility for the program was determined largely on the basis of unemployment and underemployment rates. The Area Redevelopment Administration was authorized to make loans to private industries or for public utilities to draw those industries into a distressed area, both strategies being designed to quickly increase the number of available jobs in the area.[81]

IACA immediately went to work convincing Florida's Congressional delegation to have Miami declared a "Redevelopment Area" based on the presence of the tens of thousands of Cuban refugees who were either unemployed or underemployed. If this designation were achieved, IACA officials estimated they would be able to apply for as much as $26 million in Area Redevelopment Administration funds, which would bolster investor confidence in the bond issue and trigger the start of construction. Interama was expected to require 18,000 construction workers per annum at a cost of $290,000,000.

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[80] Minutes of IACA executive session, 20 Mar 1961.
[81] U.S. Department of Commerce, Area Redevelopment Administration, *Financing Area Redevelopment* (Washington: G.P.O., 1962).

IACA officials insisted Cuban refugees could be put to work on many aspects of the project, plus the entire economy of the Miami area would be elevated by the activity. The need for other federal relief funding could, they asserted, be completely eliminated. IACA chairman Irving Muskat urged Mayor Robert King High and others to secure every endorsement they could from local civic organizations and political leaders and forward them to Florida's Congressmen. Miami's participation in the Area Redevelopment program would likely require Congressional intervention, as Miami did not officially have the six percent unemployment rate stipulated in the program's rules for eligibility. The Cuban refugees were not counted in this number.[82]

In making their cases, leaders in IACA and the city government of Miami once again conflated their mission with that of the United States. Interama was all about improving relations between the United States and Latin America. Not only was the end result designed to achieve this end, but making jobs available to Cubans in the process would be a strong signal to the Latin American countries that the United States government was invested in the welfare of Latin Americans and would aid the victims of Communist aggression. Miami, they argued, was uniquely qualified to send this message. "Miami's geography made it an instrument of U.S. policy," Robert King High said in defending the city's request for Area Redevelopment funding, "and I think that Miami warrants priority recognition."[83]

Despite initial hopes that this strategy and the urgency of the situation would win over lawmakers, the attempt to have Miami declared eligible for Area Redevelopment funding ultimately failed. Members of the city's business community decried the

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[82] Undated memo entitled "How Interama Can Solve the Cuban Refugee Unemployment Problem," in Box 2, IACA Reference Files; Muskat to George Smathers, 27 Mar 1963 in Box 123, George Smathers Papers.
[83] Ibid.; "Miami: Outpost of Cold War," *Miami News*, 19 Apr 1963.

campaign because it made Miami sound as though it had a terrible economy just as the city's civic and business leaders were trying to lure more light industry to the area. One editor described the tactic as attempting to achieve "prosperity via poor-mouth." What was worse, many Floridians had advocated against the Area Redevelopment Act, believing it would only contribute to pork barrel politics. Now IACA and its allies in the Florida Congressional delegation were asking the same chambers of commerce and civic organizations to endorse the program just because a Florida city stood to benefit. The incongruity was more than many Floridians or their representatives were politically able to support, and the suggestion died a quiet death.[84]

IACA would continue to limp along, occasionally receiving a glimmer of hope that the federal government would fund Interama. By the late 1960s, however, it was clear that the project no longer bore any resemblance to the idea Mayor Everest Sewall had had back in the 1930s to institutionalize Miami's role as a center of hemispheric trade, transportation, and tourism. It floundered through a series of attempts to turn the center into an amusement park before dying completely in 1975. South Florida socialite and activist Phoebe Morse captured the sense of futility surrounding the project in a 1969 letter to her friend Claude Pepper, who had by this time lost his Senate seat but had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. "The dreams of inter American Love are

[84] John Tippin of the Vero Beach Chamber of Commerce aptly summarized the sentiments expressed by many Floridian civic organizations about Miami's sudden desire to support Area Redevelopment Administration funding. "It gives us considerable chagrin," he wrote to the manager of his North Miami Beach colleague, "to be asked to completely reverse our recommendations concerning this legislation because it now includes a tidy sum for Florida billfolds." See Tippin to James N. Pappas, 9 Sept 1963 in Box 123, George Smathers Papers. See also "Prosperity via Poor-Mouth?" *Miami Herald*, 28 Jun 1963.

long past," she wrote. "Today we must be realistic. This is a monster and some people are afraid to let go."[85]

Phoebe Morse was right about Interama being a non-starter, but her evaluation of Miami's penchant for "inter-American Love" missed the mark. The city's traditional business elite had failed repeatedly to develop a competitive Pan American business strategy, but new leaders were already up and coming in the business community. And, crucially, they were Latin Americans themselves. Over time, they used their growing economic and political influence and their knowledge of the hemispheric commercial landscape to do what Miami's Anglo elites had been unable to do for decades – make Miami into a place where Latin American elites would come to do real business.

The most immediately visible changes were cultural. Even though many of the Cuban refugees held out hope for an early return to their homeland, they still proceeded to make themselves at home in South Florida. Certain parts of Miami developed a decidedly Cuban feel, sound, and appearance. Dense pockets of Cuban-owned businesses developed along certain parts of the city, especially along West Flagler Avenue and Southwest 8th Street, still known today as "Calle Ocho." The 8th Street corridor had for years been fading into blight, with run-down buildings and boarded-up windows lining the blocks. Newly arrived Cubans were attracted to the area by the low rent prices, and over time Calle Ocho became a vibrant community.[86]

Spanish, both written and spoken, became commonplace. Miami had been home to one Spanish-language daily, *Diario de las Americas*, since 1953. With the number of Cuban residents on the rise, a number of other newspapers, periodicals, and radio stations

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[85] Phoebe Morse to Claude Pepper, 14 Apr 1969 in Box 399A, Claude Pepper Papers (Series 301), Claude Pepper Library.
[86] "Cuban Exiles Enliven the Whole Scene in Miami," *Christian Science Monitor*, 20 Jul 1973.

in Spanish emerged. This was partly because so many Cuban journalists, publishers, and broadcasters had left Cuba and resettled in Miami. By the early 1970s, Cuban residents were also running over a dozen private schools, many of whose students were taught at least some classes in Spanish. In 1977, the *Miami Herald* became the first major U.S. newspaper to publish a full Spanish-language edition, titled *El Heraldo.*[87]

Miami's Cuban population also contributed significantly to the local economy. Many of the initial arrivals in Miami had been involved in business in Cuba, and they put their skills to work once they established themselves in South Florida. Over 300 Latin grocery stores of various sizes were open by 1970, in addition to another fifty Anglo-owned stores catering to Latin tastes. About forty Latin-owned drug stores joined this number.[88]

Larger businesses followed. One of the most successful businesses run by a Cuban refugee in the early years after Castro's emergence was the Suave Shoe Company, owned by David Egozi. Egozi had been a shoe manufacturer in Cuba before his plant was taken over by the Castro regime. He left with five hundred dollars and a few belongings and came to Miami. He became president of Suave Shoe Company in Hialeah, and by 1970 he had produced $35 million in shoes. Two thousand men and women were on his payroll, a considerable economic boon to the community.[89]

Cubans also bolstered Miami's existing industries, including the garment business. This sector had begun to take off after World War II, but the arrival of Cuban refugees gave it a tremendous boost. Before the Cubans came, many of the garment

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[87] Ibid.; "Cuban Exiles Boost Miami Business," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 Sept 1971; Alex Stepick et al, *This Land Is Our Land: Immigrants and Power in Miami* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 46.
[88] "Latinization of Miami is Showing No Signs of Abating," *New York Times*, 18 Apr 1973; "Cuban Shops An Asset to Miami," *New York Times*, 26 Aug 1969.
[89] "Shoe Sales by Refugee 36-Million," *New York Times*, 7 Dec 1969.

workers had been "snow-birds" from up north who came down to Miami during the winters to escape harsh temperatures back home. They were often elderly and retired, but skilled in sewing and textile machine work, which made them good candidates for part-time work. By 1967, however, of the 12,000 workers in Miami's garment industry an estimated 85% were Cuban. Many of these Cuban workers, especially the women, had been involved with similar industries or home sewing in Cuba. They had the necessary skills to do the work, and they offered the additional advantage of being able to work full-time all year long. The transition to a majority-Cuban labor force was profitable for both the Cuban community and the garment industry owners. Overall output was increasing by 15% per year by the mid-1960s. Industry leaders excitedly talked up the prospects of overtaking garment production centers in New York and California.[90]

Miami's Cuban population made considerable gains in other industries as well. By the early 1970s, Cuban-owned construction companies were building about thirty-five percent of the new buildings in Miami-Dade County. By 1971, three Miami banks were headed by Cubans, and collectively the Cuban community was estimated to be earning over half a billion dollars annually. By 1980, over 18,000 Cuban businesses were open in Miami. The city was experiencing an economic transformation, with the Cuban refugee population as one of the leading factors.[91]

Crucially, this economic transformation was not contained within Miami's borders. Many of the Cuban business leaders who helped bring it about had been well-connected with colleagues across the hemisphere prior to Castro's arrival on the scene. In

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[90] "Garment Industry Doubles in Miami," *Washington Post*, 6 Jul 1969; "Cuban Labor Fueling Growth of Miami's Busy Garment Industry," *New York Times*, 19 Nov 1967.
[91] See especially Raymond A. Mohl, "Changing Economic Patterns in the Miami Metropolitan Area, 1940-1980," *Tequesta* 42 (1982), 63-73. Also see "Cuban Exiles Boost Miami Business," *Chicago Tribune*, 26 Sept 1971.

some cases, they had been able to bring large amounts of capital with them to Miami, or had at least had the necessary connections to attract investors once they arrived. Furthermore, not every Cuban refugee went to Miami. Many scattered to other Latin American countries, but kept in contact with one another. This enabled the Cubans to quickly establish something that Anglo Miamians had long struggled to achieve – a truly hemispheric network of business owners, investors, and political figures with intimate ties to Miami itself. This deepening connection with the rest of the hemisphere was revealed in trade statistics. By 1978, the U.S. customs district for South Florida was handling 31 percent of the United States' exports to Latin Americas.[92]

Banking became an essential component of this growing inter-American business network. In 1978, the State of Florida passed legislation allowing foreign banks to operate branch offices within its borders. By 1980, six Latin American banks were doing business in Miami. This might seem insignificant on the surface, but keep in mind that the number of truly powerful international banks operating out of Latin America was small. The six that established branches in Miami represented some of the most prestigious financial institutions in Central and South America.[93]

U.S. corporations with interest in Latin America began favoring Miami as well. Since 1919, the United States government has permitted U.S. banks to operate subsidiary companies in foreign countries. The enabling legislation for this kind of arrangement is called the Edge Act, and corporations formed under its provisions are commonly known as Edge Act banks. As Miami's commercial and financial ties with Latin America

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[92] Nijman, *Miami*, 98; Barry B. Levine, "The Capital of Latin America," *The Wilson Quarterly* 9, no. 5 (Winter 1985), 46-69; Thomas D. Boswell and James R. Curtis, *The Cuban-American Experience: Culture, Images, and Perspectives* (Towtowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1983), 85-89.
[93] Mohl, "Changing Economic Patterns," 68; E.N. Roussakis, "Miami's Thrust in International Banking," *Lawyer of the Americas* 13, no. 3 (Winter 1981), 468-485.

became stronger in the 1970s, Edge Act banks began selecting Miami as a headquarters for their overseas operations. By 1980, fifteen Edge Act banks were operating in Miami-Dade County, including subsidiaries of Citibank, Chase Bank, the Chemical Bank of New York, and Wells Fargo. Major corporations outside the banking industry also located branch offices or their headquarters to South Florida, including Exxon, Gulf Oil, Dow Chemical, International Harvester, Lockheed, American Express, Goodyear, and General Electric.[94]

All of this economic activity had a multiplier effect, because it attracted increasing numbers of Latin American businessmen to Miami. By the end of the 1970s, fully half of the foreign arrivals at Miami International Airport were Latin Americans from across the hemisphere. Wealthier Latinos bought second homes in Miami, invested in property, and sent their children to school in the area. These foreign visitors and their middle-class counterparts began choosing Miami as a key shopping destination, making regular trips to buy consumer goods that were either unavailable or too expensive in their home countries. Electronics and medical services were particularly common purchases.[95]

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This remarkable transformation did not come without a few obstacles. The overall economic successes of the Cuban refugee population were not immediately apparent, and in the earlier years of the Castro regime some groups in Miami viewed the Cuban presence as more of an economic invasion. Non-Hispanic white and African-American working class individuals in particular tended to view the Cuban refugees as a drain on the local availability of jobs. In their complaints, these disaffected Miamians often noted

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[94] Ibid.
[95] "Latins Finding Mecca in Miami," *Milwaukee Journal*, 12 Dec 1978; Garreau, *Nine Nations of North America*, 176-177.

that Cubans were willing to work for less than the going rates for labor in the city, which priced the labor of Miami natives out of the market. Many of those Miami natives who wrote to the governor or other political leaders seemed not to begrudge the Cubans for coming, but rather asked that other cities be asked to share the economic burden, or that something be done to increase the number of available jobs.[96]

For African-Americans in Miami, the Cuban influx aggravated a more profound problem. Miamians tended to regard Cubans as white, even those with darker skin tones. This placed the new arrivals above African-Americans in Miami's still-bifurcated racial caste system. Even with the integration of Miami's schools and public recreational facilities in the early 1960s, blacks still felt as though they occupied the bottom of what was now becoming a three-tiered population. The hiring practices of Miami's major industries did not help matters. Garment factories began hiring Latin American women over African Americans, claiming that Cuban women tended to have more home sewing experience that better prepared them for the needle trades. Even in the 1970s, when non-Hispanic whites became the minority in Miami and blacks and Hispanic whites became the majority, black unemployment remained high.[97]

Many native Miamians also associated the arrival of the Cuban refugees with an increase in crime. The same Miami-Dade County grand jury that praised the Cubans for their economic contributions to the region, for example, also identified them as the explanation for the rise in crime experienced in Miami in the early 1960s. Part of this association stemmed from long-standing stereotypes about Cuban predilections to

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[96] For some examples of the tone of working class Miamians' concern over the Cuban refugee situation and its effect on the local job market, see folders on the Cuban refugee situation in boxes 44 and 45 of Governor Farris Bryant's Correspondence, State Archives of Florida. See also "150,000 Refugees Make Miami the 'New Havana,'" *Chicago Tribune*, 8 Sept 1963.
[97] Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 155-178; 208-209.

violence. Miami had often been a haven for political refugees from other Cuban regimes, and press reports of clashes between pro-Castro and anti-Castro Cubans led some Miamians to believe the new Cuban in-migration would turn Miami into a kind of secondary battlefield for Castro's revolution.[98]

The perceived link between Cubans and crime was reinforced by events as time moved forward. One of the more unfortunate effects of Miami's increased interconnectedness with the rest of the hemisphere was the degree to which this made Miami a node in the international drug smuggling business. By the late 1970s, cocaine trafficking, mostly by organized groups of Cubans and Colombians often referred to as "cocaine cowboys," was becoming one of the city's most lucrative businesses. This drug, plus large quantities of marijuana, heroin, and other illegal drugs, entered Miami by air and sea, whereupon traffickers sold their cargo and began the process of laundering the proceeds, much of which ended up in Miami banks and investment projects. By the early 1980s, federal officials estimated that at least $28 billion worth of illegal drugs were entering the United States through South Florida every year.[99]

Fidel Castro himself had a hand in strengthening the trope of the troublemaking Cuban in Miami. In April 1980, the dictator announced that he would permit a number of his political opponents, called *gusanos* (worms) by his administration, to leave Cuba if they wished. Cubans living in Miami and Tampa were ecstatic – this meant they might be reunited with the relatives they had left behind on the island. They quickly dispatched chartered "freedom boats" to the Cuban port of Mariel, where refugees would be permitted to depart. Castro used this opportunity to release several thousand criminals

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[98] "Miami si, Cuba no," *New York Times Magazine*, 29 Sept 1974.
[99] Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.*, 62-64; Mohl, "Miami," 76-77.

and mental patients, who were also permitted to leave at Mariel. Many of the prisoners had been jailed for political crimes, but some had indeed had a violent criminal past. Castro took pleasure in widely announcing this information. Even had the *Marielitos*, as they were called, not included former prisoners and mental patients, the group would still likely have inspired a feeling of uneasiness among Miami's non-Hispanic population. The 125,000 Marielitos were on average poorer, younger, and of darker complexion than the earlier Cuban refugees. Whereas their predecessors had often arrived with money, possessions, or at least a skillset, many of these newcomers were penniless and lacked a profession.[100]

In the wake of the Mariel boatlift, a combination of events and perceptions of events combined to discredit the reputation of Miami's Cuban population overall and cause widespread anxiety among non-Hispanics in Florida and throughout the country. New statistics on the increasingly serious drug problem in South Florida combined with images of Marielitos living in makeshift camps under the Orange Bowl and overpasses along Interstate 95. Miami's crime rate shot up 66% in 1980 alone, which many locals assumed was attributable to the Marielitos. The potency of the connection between Cubans, drugs, and violence was revealed in pop culture. Novels, television shows like *Miami Vice*, and the infamous Al Pacino blockbuster *Scarface* (1983) portrayed Miami as a veritable war zone plagued by the machinations of competing drug cartels. Cubans and other Latin Americans were prominently portrayed by the creators as the leaders of these violent groups.[101]

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[100] Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 288-289.
[101] Ibid; Ken Tucker, *Scarface Nation: The Ultimate Gangster Movie and How it Changed America* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2008); Gonzalo R. Soruco, *Cubans and the Mass Media in South Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 9-10.

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Despite these obstacles, Miami's Cuban businessmen became increasingly interconnected with the city's traditional non-Hispanic elite as they built their own economic and social authority. They began in the earliest years of the Cuban in-migration by creating and strengthening their own business organizations. In 1961, Cuban businessmen led by Eliseo Riera-Gomez formed La Camara de Comercio Latina de Los Estados Unidos, or CAMACOL, known in English as the Latin Chamber of Commerce. The organization started out promoting local Latin-owned businesses, but as more banks and corporations with hemispheric projects began relocating to South Florida the organization took charge of promoting this trend. Starting in 1979, CAMACOL began hosting representatives of Latin American chambers of commerce at annual conventions to discuss ways of opening up more inter-American trade through Miami and investment in Latin projects.[102]

A similar organization, Asociacion Interamericana de Hombres de Empresa (Interamerican Business Association), formed about the same time. Former members of the Cuban Executives Association who had migrated to Miami started this new group, designed as a sort of business referral service and pro-Cuban business policy advocate. It started simply, with members meeting monthly for dinner and sharing contacts and ideas on business-related challenges. Over the next two decades, the Association founded chapters in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Haiti, and Argentina. Like CAMACOL, the organization's main objective was to support Latino businessmen in

[102] Sam Verdeja and Guillermo Martinez, eds., *Cubans: An Epic Journey, the Struggle of Exiles for Truth and Freedom* (Miami: Facts About Cuban Exiles, 2011), 671-694.

Miami, but over time it became involved in maintaining hemispheric business networks as well.[103]

Cuban influence in Miami's business affairs stemmed not only from the rise of business advocacy organizations, but also from the rise of prominent Cuban individuals who owned large businesses and commanded great respect in the community. Armando Codina, who remains a considerably influential figure in regional and national business networks as this study is underway, provides a seminal example. Codina arrived in the United States in 1962 at the age of fourteen. He came without his parents, who sent him to the United States with the assistance of Operation Pedro Pan, a joint effort by the U.S. government, the Catholic Church, and several Miami-based humanitarian organizations to evacuate children from Cuba. Codina lived in New York for several years before moving to Miami, where he started his own medical payments business. He later sold the business and became involved in real estate, quickly becoming one of the largest real estate executives in Miami-Dade County.[104]

Luis Sabines had a similar story. A native of Camaguey in Cuba, he left the island in the 1960s and took up the grocery trade in Miami, catering to the tastes of other Cuban refugees. He later moved into the appliance business, and became president of CAMACOL in the early 1970s. For twenty years, Sabines guided the organization in its efforts to promote U.S. exports to Latin American countries, and to encourage U.S. importers to buy consumer goods manufactured elsewhere in the hemisphere. In 1983 a

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[103] Ibid.

[104] Shell-Weiss, *Coming to Miami*, 170; Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.*, 75-76; Francisco Rodriguez et al, "Entrepreneurs: The New Generation," in Sam Verdeja and Guillermo Martinez, eds., *Cubans, an Epic Journey: The Struggle of Exiles for Truth and Freedom* (Miami: Facts about Cuban Exiles, Inc., 2011), 312-314..

poll sponsored by Coca-Cola identified Sabines as the most influential Hispanic leader in Miami.[105]

Miami's traditional non-Hispanic white elite initially paid no special attention to this rising group of up and coming Cuban entrepreneurs. In the early years of the Cuban diaspora, almost none of these men were U.S. citizens, could not vote, and were therefore excluded from the traditional means of influencing political affairs in Miami-Dade County. Consequently, formal organizations like the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and more informal elite social groups tended to lack Cuban members. As Cuban-owned business prospered and Cuban-directed banking and trade moved more to the forefront, several of Miami's established non-Hispanic leaders sought to open channels of communication with the parallel Cuban commercial elites who had been building up influence within their own networks for some time. Perhaps the most telling public symbol of this rapprochement was Armando Codina's selection as chairman of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce in the early 1980s. He had already served as the Chamber's vice-president of economic development and presided over a $750,000 effort to overcome problems with Miami's image as a place for new industries. Codina also became a member of the Miami Downtown Development Authority, a special tax district created to facilitate capital improvements in the city.[106]

Crucially, Cuban business leaders like Armando Codina were making their way into the less public sectors of power controlled by Miami's traditional non-Hispanic elite. Foremost among these was the so-called "Non-Group," an unofficial cluster of wealthy and influential businessmen who met regularly to discuss issues affecting Miami and

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[105] "'Poor Devil' Surpasses Ferre, Bankers in Poll on Influential Latins," *Miami Herald*, 22 Dec 1983.
[106] "Chamber Launches Industry Drive; Will Spend $750,000 over 3 Years," *Miami News*, 29 Apr 1980.

devise ways of harnessing their collective power to enact solutions. Alvah Chapman, Jr., president of the *Miami Herald*, and Harry Hood Bassett, chairman of the Southeast Banking Corporation, co-founded the group in 1971. Members kept no records, had no rules, used no letterhead, and had no expressly stated agenda. For much of its existence, Miami's public officials were not included. Most members declined to discuss the Non-Group's activities; those who did feed the press a line or two on occasion explained that members of the circle felt better able to exert their influence without a great deal of public attention. Some referred to the Non-Group as the "shadow government" of Miami-Dade County, but members insisted they were merely a group of influential citizens looking to help where public power structures needed extra support. "Someone's got to fill the gap," banker Lester Freeman said of the group, of which he was an original member. "That's why you see groups of business types getting together to discuss issues at the political level."[107]

With the exception of Maurice Ferre's membership in the 1970s, the Non-Group was almost exclusively a non-Hispanic white male group. For these men, the activities of Cuban entrepreneurs had been a phenomenon to monitor closely rather than a movement to engage. As with the more publicly visible institutions governing Miami's business community, however, the success of Cuban entrepreneurs and bankers was inescapable. Also, racial violence in Miami convinced Non-Group members that finding solutions to some of the city's most profound problems would require reaching across barriers of language, color, and ethnicity. This sentiment did not inspire any wholesale restructuring of the group, but in the early 1980s a handful of influential African-American and

[107] "The 38 People Who Secretly Guide Dade," *Miami Herald*, 1 Sept 1985; Muir, *Miami, U.S.A.*, 74-79.

Hispanic Miamians were asked to take part. Armando Codina was the first Hispanic to be asked.[108]

Perhaps nothing did so much to align the Cuban business community and Miami's traditional non-Hispanic elite behind a common hemispheric business strategy as the leadership of Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre in the 1970s and early 1980s. Ferre was Puerto Rican by birth, but spent his formative years at Andover and other prestigious educational institutions in the United States. His family commanded an international empire of real estate and development, of which Ferre's father managed the Miami segment. By the time he was 28, Ferre had become president of Maule Industries, the largest concrete company in Florida and a pillar of his family's business network.[109]

Ferre first waded into politics in 1967 as one of South Florida's delegates to the Florida House of Representatives. When Miami Mayor Robert King High died in office later that year, Ferre resigned to accept an appointment for High's seat on the Miami City Commission. In 1973, Miami Mayor David Kennedy was suspended from office as a result of bribery charges, and Ferre was once again on hand to fill the empty space. Later that year, Ferre was elected mayor of Miami in his own right, and would go on to win five additional consecutive terms as well.[110]

As the son and business partner of an internationally connected family, Ferre entered office already familiar with much of Miami's traditional elite and the leaders of the Cuban business community. Once in office, he capitalized on these connections to promote a hemispheric business strategy for the city. In setting the tone of his administration regarding international affairs, Ferre's policies strongly resembled those of

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[108] "The 38 People Who Secretly Guide Dade," *Miami Herald*, 1 Sept 1985.
[109] "Ferre Bills Himself as 'Visionary,'" *Miami News*, 12 Oct 1987.
[110] Ibid.

New Orleans' deLesseps Morrison. He stressed that Miami's continued prosperity required a sophisticated attentiveness to the world outside the U.S., and intimacy with foreign trade partners. "We in Miami have got to understand we do not live in Middle America, Iowa," he once remarked. "We are on the cutting edge with the Third World."[111]

Ferre worked to enact this internationalist vision by leading members of Miami's traditional elite on goodwill trips to Latin America, hoping to demystify the countries and drum up business. For one 1975 mission, Ferre even broadened the trip into a statewide junket of 132 Floridians, with the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce bearing the cost of Governor Reubin Askew's attendance. At home, the mayor coupled his unwavering support for attracting big ticket amenities to Miami with efforts to expand Latin trade. At the same time Ferre was fighting for Miami to get a new professional baseball franchise, an amusement park, and downtown improvements, he was also throwing support behind port and airport expansion, a new free trade zone, and bringing international trade conferences to the city.[112]

And with the combined efforts of Ferre and Miami's new multicultural elite, Miami achieved many of these objectives. In 1976, Mayor Ferre went before a meeting of the Organization of American States and announced that Miami would support a Trade Fair of the Americas. With careful marketing through the business community's growing hemispheric network of contacts, the city ended up hosting four such fairs over the next several years, the first attracting participants from 15 countries, 8,000 buyers, and $57 million worth of sales. Ferre's estimate for the event had been ten to fifteen million

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[111] "In Miami, World Affairs Is Just Routine City Business," *St. Petersburg Times*, 3 May 1983.
[112] "Governor's Latin Tour Plan Lauded," *Lakeland Ledger*, 27 Sept 1975; "Ferre Says City Needs to Adopt Better Attitude," *Miami Herald*, 13 Oct 1984.

dollars. In 1977, the federal Department of Commerce approved a $60 million free trade zone for Miami. Just like the free trade zone New Orleans had established in 1946, this facility would allow foreign corporations to bring goods into Miami without paying a tariff, assemble or repackage them, and then either import them into the U.S. or re-export them elsewhere. The new zone was a tremendous boost, creating over a thousand new jobs and diversifying Miami's value as a hemispheric control point for shipping.[113]

This international trade activity had cooperative aspects as well. CAMACOL, with its ties to hemispheric business networks, organized an international trade conference in Miami called the Hemispheric Congress of Latin Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1980. The idea was to bring together economic ministers and private sector business leaders from around the hemisphere to discuss ways of making inter-American trade easier and more efficient. The Congress began meeting annually, and in three years' time it was drawing 300 delegates from 20 nations. Planning for the 37th annual Congress is ongoing as this study is underway.[114]

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Florida Governor Bob Graham once told the *Los Angeles Times* in 1980, "I was born in Miami in 1936, and I grew up in Miami, and I remember that the city slogan was 'Gateway to South America.' In fact we were the gateway to South Georgia." With the arrival of the Cuban refugees in the 1960s, he explained, everything changed. "Now Miami is an international finance center," he said. "Miami has ceased to be a southern city. It is a cosmopolitan capital."[115]

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[113] "Miami Gets Free-Trade Zone," *St. Petersburg Times*, 7 Sept 1977; "Miami Trade Zone Approved," *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, 7 Sept 1977.
[114] "Latin Businessmen to Gather in Dade to Discuss Commerce," *Miami Herald*, 7 Sept 1982.
[115] "New Status for Refugee-Swollen Florida," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 May 1980.

Many of Miami's residents would have found Graham's statements a bit sanguine. He made them just as the Marielitos were beginning to arrive in Miami in full force, adding further strain to the already difficult issues of housing, employment, and race relations that were already simmering in the background as Miami's gateway to the Americas came into full view. And the changes did not stop there. Miami's increasingly Latinized identity helped draw in newcomers from all over the hemisphere. By 2000, Cubans were still the largest ethnic group in the city with just over 650,000 persons, but there were also over 80,000 Puerto Ricans, over 69,000 Nicaraguans, about 38,000 Mexicans, and thousands of residents from every other Latin American country, collectively making up 56% of the population of Miami-Dade County. Non-Hispanic whites and African Americans each made up about 20% of the population. Gateway for trade or not, by virtue of these figures, Miami had become the hemispheric center point its leaders had always envisioned.[116]

As with New Orleans, Miami's career as a gateway to the Americas was shaped by the city's consciousness as a competing port within the context of the Gulf South, and as an actor within the much broader context of the United States' relationship with Latin America. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Miami's civic and business leaders were driven by the need to succeed regionally. As the press and local officials made clear, fulfilling this goal meant beating New Orleans at its own game. This mindset, although it appeared to weaken a bit by the end of the 1950s, never completely gave way until the arrival of the Cuban diaspora in the 1960s changed the playing field considerably.

Unlike New Orleans, conversely, Miami's relationship with the federal government in the 1940s and 1950s was one of dependency where international affairs

[116] See table 6 in Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams*, 291.

were concerned. Whereas New Orleans benefitted from cooperation with federal agencies to promote trade and hemispheric investments, Miami's leaders banked on Washington assisting with getting their inter-American business strategy off the ground in the first place. Their vision was much the same; they believed their city could manage aspects of inter-American diplomacy that the federal government could not handle on its own. The difference was that their circumstances demanded that federal authorities accept this maxim *prima facie* and fund specific projects before their fiscal feasibility was proven. As the Interama debacle and other similar projects demonstrated, federal officials agreed that Miami was uniquely qualified to help strengthen cultural and interpersonal relationships within the hemisphere through "consumable internationalism." The sticking point was more about the price, the timing, and the politics of funding such unpredictable projects.

CHAPTER 4:
OIL AND SKEPTICISM: HOUSTON'S TEPID PAN-AMERICANIST IDENTITY

On the morning of January 29, 1962, dignitaries from the Port of Houston and other local business organizations gathered to dedicate the city's new World Trade Center. The institution was located in the heart of downtown at the corner of Texas and Crawford streets in a twelve-story contemporary structure, every detail calculated to convey a sense of modernity and cosmopolitanism. The exterior gleamed with glass and steel facades, while the interior space was adorned with marble and organized into an open-air "square doughnut" configuration. The idea was to showcase the size of the building and properly reflect Houston's good fortune as a busy and prosperous port.[1]

Even before the Center opened, Houston's foreign trade leaders were busy cultivating a diverse group of shippers, freight forwarders, foreign diplomats, and other tenants to fill its offices. The building would also house the port commission's international relations department and a small army of staffers tasked with assisting foreign visitors with their needs. Translators, secretaries, typists, and a resource library would be at the disposal of businessmen passing through Houston. The idea was that by concentrating these various cogs in the city's foreign trade machine so close together, the business of trade itself would become more efficient and Houston would attract more international customers.[2]

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[1] "Port's 12-Story World Trade Center is Opened," *Houston Chronicle*, 29 Jan 1962.
[2] "The New 12-Story World Trade Center," *Houston*, Feb. 1962.

But the city's trade community was going for more than just business efficiency. They also wanted to convey a certain attitude toward potential trade partners, a sense of friendliness and a willingness to cooperate. The dignitaries at the dedication attempted to capture this sentiment in an elaborate ceremony by pouring a pitcher of water taken from the seven seas into a fountain at the front of the new trade center. A representative for Houston's mayor remarked that the building embodied the "promise of peace, trade, and good will for all men of the Free World."[3]

Edward Fay, the Houston World Trade Center's inaugural director, claimed that the new institution was the first of its kind, but it was no secret that this was the city's answer to New Orleans' robust inter-American business strategy. Jerry Turner, general manager of the Port of Houston, assured the press during the building's early construction phase that "our trade center is not a copy but a new departure." He also admitted, however, that New Orleans' International House and International Trade Mart had served as models for the project.[4]

The Houston World Trade Center was actually in many ways the culmination of a conversation that had been going on in local foreign trade circles for years about how Houston would respond to the success of New Orleans' dynamic program of self-promotion in Latin America. While Houston had processed a significantly larger share of the nation's maritime trade than New Orleans since the end of World War II, the bulk of Houston's advantage lay in its domestic coastwise shipments. In direct foreign trade, however, the Crescent City had maintained an edge over Houston, some years doing nearly twice the business in direct foreign exports. The numbers were even more

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[3] "World Trade Building Opens," *Port of Houston Magazine*, 9-11.
[4] "Construction Starts on World Trade Center at Houston," *Odessa American*, 18 Aug 1960.

favorable for New Orleans when it came to direct foreign imports. Between 1946 and 1970, only twice did the Port of Houston come within a million tons of matching the annual volume of cargo being sent directly to foreign countries through the Port of New Orleans.[5]

Unlike in Miami, the generation of men leading the Port of Houston in the 1940s and early 1950s did not immediately see this as a reason to invest in an international program like that of New Orleans. They had in a sense grown up with the port from its earliest days as a deepwater outlet to the Gulf of Mexico. They understood that Houston's success could only be perpetuated through growth, but their prescriptions for growth tended to be more mechanical and less focused on the interpersonal aspect of trade. In their minds, infrastructure improvements, better freight rates, and equitable treatment by the federal government would produce much better results than an ambassador program or a club for visiting businessmen.

This sort of international outreach would have been an uncomfortable undertaking for many Houstonians in any event. Unlike New Orleans, Houston was a relatively young port, and the city's inhabitants had not experienced decades of frequent contact with visitors and customers from Latin America and the Caribbean. They did have a lengthy history of contact with Mexican-Americans and Mexican migrant laborers, but that experience had generally been less than positive. By 1940, around 20,000 individuals of Mexican descent lived in Houston, working mainly in blue collar labor positions in agriculture, domestic service, and the oil and railroad industries. These families were

[5] Annual reports of the United States Army Corps of Engineers, 1946-1970.

concentrated in three neighborhoods, none of which offered properly paved streets, adequate sanitation, or access to secondary education. De jure segregation was the norm.[6]

World War II had been a major catalyst in Miami and New Orleans for establishing an institutional response to the need for better human relations with Latin Americans abroad. A natural component of this effort had been to promote better relations between Anglo Americans and their Latin neighbors locally. In Houston, the drive to improve these relations was present, but weak, and hamstrung to a great extent by tensions with citizens of Latin American ancestry living in the city itself. A handful of civic organizations urged Anglo-Americans to better appreciate the culture and values of Mexican-Americans at home and Latin Americans abroad, but discrimination continued to make headlines in Houston and throughout Texas. A pivotal moment came in June 1943 when the Mexican government decided it would no longer permit its citizens to serve as guest workers in Texas under the Bracero Agreement signed the previous year. U.S. and Mexican officials had drafted the pact to help address critical labor shortages in the Southwest, but frequent reports of worker discrimination and mistreatment inflamed public opinion throughout Mexico. Mexican officials decided to put the Good Neighbor Policy to the test by suspending the program for Texas until satisfactory guarantees were given that Mexican nationals would not experience discrimination. Texas, whose agricultural economy depended on Mexican labor, took measures to smooth out these

[6] Arnoldo De Leon, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt: Mexican Americans in Houston* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), introduction, 22-45.

problems, but in many ways the damage was done. Texas became notorious for its treatment of individuals of Mexican descent.[7]

In Houston, the tension between Anglo-Americans and Mexican-descended individuals was reflected in how port leaders approached Latin American trade development. Port officials appeared glad to do business with Latin American importers and exporters, but their approach barely ever extended beyond that small class of individuals. The educational exchanges and tourism promotions so common in New Orleans' international program were largely absent in Houston, as were institutions designed to explicitly welcome Latin American guests into the city as valued business partners. In short, Houston's port leaders were able to articulate their desire for trade, but they experienced great difficulty articulating even the desire to make Houston into a Pan American space as New Orleans and Miami had sought to do.

By the mid-1950s, however, the leadership of the port had changed considerably. All members of the powerful port commission who had served before and during World War II had been replaced. The directorship of the port had been held by one man for sixteen years prior to 1947, and his successor was cut from much the same cloth. In 1953, however, the commission brought in a younger port director from outside the Texas region, along with a new international relations director – a position that had not existed before.[8]

These newer leaders saw Houston's lopsided foreign trade numbers as a liability. The older generation had leaned heavily on the success of oil and cotton as revenue

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[7] Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (Mar. 2006), 1212-1237.
[8] Sibley, *The Port of Houston: A History*, 193-195.

producers at the port, but bear in mind that oil was comparatively much cheaper at this time. Although there was a large demand for it, as a commodity oil was relatively cheap to handle and transport. As of the early 1960s, even as the price of oil began to climb a bit, moving a ton of general cargo through the port produced an average of 17 dollars in revenue for the various agents that handled it. A bulk commodity like oil only produced a single dollar in revenue. Oil constituted a significant percentage of the port's foreign trade in these years, but taken away, port leaders were alarmed at how little else the port was actually sending to foreign countries.[9]

In light of New Orleans' success in attracting foreign trade, Houston's failure to keep pace raised concerns that the port was not doing enough to cultivate good relationships with potential customers, particularly in Latin America. Vaughn Bryant, the port's new international relations director, observed that the trouble was not a lack of business to be had. Rather, a number of Latin American importers and exports were sending shipments through other ports, even when their transactions might have been more economical if routed through Houston. This, he explained, was as much out of habit or custom as anything else. To attract that sort of business, Houston's business leaders would have to develop a greater intimacy with Latin Americans, specifically the ones Bryant identified as "the men who count," meaning those who held the levers of power regarding commerce and shipping. As much as their predecessors had avoided what they considered an unnecessary aping of New Orleans' international program, the newer

[9] "Houston's Rank as Port Built on Varied Cargoes," *Dallas Morning News*, 26 Oct 1963; "Strong Export-Import Firm Planned Here," *Houston*, March 1945.

leaders believed an inter-American business strategy was exactly what they needed to recapture these Latin American customers.[10]

Houston's inter-American business strategy was never as pronounced as the ones in New Orleans and Miami, but its delayed development makes it a useful case for this study. Whereas much of Miami's early postwar attempt at an international program was merely reactive to events in New Orleans, Houston became invested only after nearly a decade of its leaders claiming no such reaction was needed. When they did finally turn the corner, Houstonians justified their change of direction by pointing out what they saw as successful in the New Orleans model. In a sense, even though they were late to the game and were less than fully successful, Houston's port leaders most aptly demonstrated the degree to which Gulf South port leaders believed in the value of a Pan American business strategy at midcentury.

As with New Orleans and Miami, however, Houston's courtship of Latin American trade partners would be strongly affected by outside influences. In Miami, the infusion of a large Cuban refugee population ended up being the principal factor in defining the city's relationship with Latin America and the Caribbean. For Houston, its dealings with Latin American trade partners quickly became subsumed into a new realm of economic activity brought on by the energy crisis of the 1970s. Oil, which had previously been valuable yet comparatively unprofitable to the port itself, suddenly became an engine of growth for the port and for the city. The old desire to be the gateway to Latin America became less prominent amid the wave of revenue coming from shipments of oil, petro-chemicals, and related capital goods. In this role, Houston's

[10] For Bryant's observations on the availability of Latin American trade, see "Port of Houston Will See Greater Increase in Trade with Latin America," *Houston Port Book*, Fall 1956.

business community felt themselves much more suited to cultivating a gateway to the entire world.

A Gateway by the Numbers

As World War II raged on, business and civic leaders in Houston appeared ready to make foreign trade with Latin American countries a priority in the postwar era. The strategy had been talked up for a long time; economists and financiers had long believed the grinding turmoil in Europe would keep markets in that region damaged for years, leaving Latin American exporters and importers looking for business elsewhere. If the rhetoric was to be believed, all Houston's leaders had to do was reach out and cultivate this lucrative source of port business. Locals believed it was meant to be, and Washington officials lent their encouragement. H.D. Gresham, senior economist at the U.S. Tariff Commission, told the Houston Foreign Trade Association as early as 1941 they had a "missionary responsibility toward Latin America."[11]

Conditions looked even more favorable at the end of the war. When the foreign trade department of the Houston Chamber of Commerce drew up its program for 1944, chairman J. Russell Wait observed that Latin American nations would soon emerge from the war with a tremendous reserve of credits and dollars earned by supplying raw materials to United States industries. He urged that the Chamber find ways to encourage more Latin American imports so as to maximize the share of the export business that

[11] "Economist Forcasts [sic] Heavy Latin American-Gulf Trade," *Vernon Daily Record*, 20 Dec 1941.

would soon develop. "It has been consistently maintained," he wrote, "that if we are to sell we must also buy."[12]

Just as their counterparts in Miami and New Orleans had done, Wait's committee recommended some sort of institution be established to coordinate this increased effort at promoting Latin American trade. The 1944 program called for a "permanent Latin American exhibit" offering sample products from around the hemisphere to entice importers in Houston and the interior. A "Latin American Center," whatever that might be, was nominally included in the plan.[13]

By this point, the Latin trade angle was already being framed by the press as a response to what appeared to be brewing in New Orleans. A March 1945 editorial in the *Houston Post* explained that the war had "upset Houston's port applecart," and that New Orleans was moving quickly to undercut the city's trade business. "If we do not hustle for all we're worth," the editor warned, "we may be left behind in the post-bellum race, except for oil and some cotton." The city's other major daily, the *Houston Press*, published a three-part series of articles in 1946 exploring New Orleans' international program in great detail, aiming to provoke action toward reciprocating the effort. Ella Tarbell of the *Houston Post* reported in 1946 that business leaders "almost unanimously" recognized the need for a world trade center along the lines of New Orleans' International House and trade mart. The trouble, she explained, was that no one wanted to pay for it.[14]

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[12] 1944 Program of the Houston Chamber of Commerce – Foreign Trade Department in Box 5, folder 2, J. Russell Wait Papers, Fondren Library, Rice University.
[13] Ibid.
[14] "To Revive to Port," *Houston Post*, 13 Mar 1945; "Foreign Commerce Group to Be Set Up," *Houston Post*, 13 Mar 1945; "New Orleans Sets Out to Grab Leadership in International Trade," *Houston Press*, 6 May 1946; "New Orleans Guns for Port Twice as Big: Puts Tag on Gulf Trade," *Houston Press*, 7 May 1946; "Air Hub of the Americas is New Orleans' Goal in World of Aviation," *Houston Press*, 8 May 1946; "Industries Hand Houston Advantage in Trade Race," *Houston Post*, 10 Apr 1947.

Tarbell's assessment somewhat overstated the enthusiasm of local foreign trade elites for fully reciprocating New Orleans' international trade program at that time. In May 1947, the editors of the Chamber's widely-circulated magazine interviewed several key members about their ideas for improving Houston's bottom line in foreign trade. C.E. Naylor, president of the Chamber and a significant local engineering firm, rejected the idea that institutionalizing the process of making foreign trade contacts would have any appreciable effect by itself. "Some of our citizens," he said, "seem to have an idea that if we established a club with an international background all the problems of the Port of Houston will be solved readily and pleasantly over the luncheon table or at coffee and that our Port will grow by leaps and bounds from then on. Nothing could be more fallacious." Instead, Naylor prescribed increasing foreign imports through Houston as the primary solution to the tonnage question. "People or countries who buy from us must also sell to us," he argued. "They, like us, must keep their people gainfully employed in order for them to buy from us. No one can be so blind to ignore this self-evident fact."[15]

Despite Naylor's sentiments, the general manager of the Chamber of Commerce, William N. Blanton, sent a committee to New Orleans in late 1947 to evaluate the city's international program and decide how Houston might benefit from a similar setup. Marvin Hurley, a young Chamber executive focusing on foreign trade, led the group. He later noted in a memoir that at the time it seemed International House and the trade mart had three major benefits – arousing an otherwise sluggish civic spirit with regard to foreign trade, generating favorable publicity, and convincing industrial centers in the interior that New Orleans was 'their port.' That being said, however, he also suggested the international program had not been the primary source of the Crescent City's success.

[15] "Civic Leaders Express Port Views," *Houston*, May 1947.

Supporters of the international program, he claimed, still believed freight forwarders and banks and railroads still did the lion's share of attracting more business.[16]

Hurley reported coming back from New Orleans with the sense that Houston really did need some kind of institution to facilitate world trade. Getting someone to take the initiative in starting the project, however, proved impossible at the time. Various executives and port officials claimed to favor the idea, but they were balanced out by people like Naylor who believed the business community's efforts could be more effectively directed elsewhere.

To some extent, the lack of enthusiasm for establishing a whole new trade development institution was a side effect of the broader economic success of Houston at the end of World War II. Although the port lost a considerable amount of wartime shipping to New Orleans, its other major industries kicked into high gear, especially oil and petrochemicals. On the eve of war in 1940, Houston and its immediate hinterland controlled 14 oil refineries, which constituted 11 percent of the nation's capacity to produce gasoline. The war touched off a tremendous demand for motor fuels, especially aviation-grade gasoline. Humble Oil and Refining Company of Houston alone manufactured over a billion gallons of aviation fuel during the conflict, bringing millions of dollars into the local economy.[17]

Petroleum-based chemicals were also in high demand. Humble Oil received a $12 million contract in 1943 from the War Department to manufacture toluene, a crucial ingredient in explosives, from petroleum byproducts. That same year, the federal

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[16] Marvin Hurley, *Decisive Years for Houston* (Houston Chamber of Commerce, 1966), 92-93.
[17] David G. McComb, *Houston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 128-130; Leah Tucker, "The Houston Business Community, 1945-1965" (Ph.D., University of Texas at Austin, 1979), 26-27.

government set up the General Tire and Rubber Company to manufacture synthetic Buna-S rubber from petroleum-based chemicals. Experts estimated that as much as fifty percent of the nation's synthetic rubber supply would ultimately come from Texas. Altogether, investment in the local petrochemical industry amounted to about $600 million during World War II. This was in addition to an uptick in business for the natural gas, steel, and shipbuilding industries. By the end of the war, Houston ranked first in the nation in total value of manufactured products.[18]

Crucially, Houston's growth did not stop when the war ended in 1945. In fact, it barely slowed down. Many of the industries that had either improved or emerged during the war found ways to carry their work over into the postwar era. The government-controlled corporation that had established the synthetic rubber industry, for example, sold its business to private corporations like Goodyear Tire and Rubber, which kept production going for domestic use. Plentiful space, the port, and the success of existing businesses drew additional industrial growth to the Houston area. The petrochemical sector grew especially fast, thriving on the easy availability of oil and chemical byproducts from local refineries. As more plants relocated to the Houston area, a vast network of pipelines connected them to one another, allowing companies to create products and then sell their byproducts to other companies for further manipulation into additional commodities. By 1950, the Houston petrochemical industry was producing about $750 million annually.[19]

The effects of this industrial boom on the city itself were profound. The population of Houston increased by 54 percent during the 1940s, and bank deposits shot

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[18] McComb, *Houston*, 128-131; Tucker, "Houston Business Community," 28.
[19] Tucker, "Houston Business Community," 13-20; 31-32.

up 282 percent. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent on new construction, including factories, thousands of new suburban homes, and department stores and malls. Public services, especially transportation, struggled to keep pace with the city's rapid growth. Oveta Culp Hobby, who had directed the national Women's Auxiliary Corps during the war and chaired the board of the *Houston Post*, famously said of the city's progress: "I think I'll like Houston if they ever get it finished."[20]

This was the backdrop for the discussion of how Houston ought to react to New Orleans' ostensibly successful drive to command foreign trade between the Gulf South and Latin America. While some local trade experts feared being outflanked by the Crescent City, business leaders in key positions of authority downplayed the threat in light of Houston's accomplishments. Sydnor Oden, chairman of the Foreign Trade Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and vice-president of the internationally active Anderson-Clayton corporation, argued in print that Houston's success as a port would stand for itself when foreign trade partners went looking for business. He cited a variety of favorable statistics, as well as a reminder that Houston had managed to outpace New Orleans' total tonnage figures in the late 1940s, even after that city had maneuvered to divert a considerable amount of wartime shipping away from other ports, including Houston. Oden credited these achievements to an already efficient and effective port leadership structure. "The dramatic story of Houston," he wrote, "is the story of many organizations working together with more attention to practical effectiveness than to non-productive publicity."[21]

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[20] McComb, *Houston*, 131-132.

[21] Houston's total tonnage figures bested New Orleans by anywhere between five and ten million tons each year between the end of World War II and 1950. This includes domestic coastwise shipping and direct

This is not to say there were not areas Houston's business leaders believed they needed to improve. While Houston was competing with New Orleans for port tonnage, for example, it was also vying with Miami for the role of air gateway to Latin America. Once the Civil Aeronautics Board began issuing temporary permits for international flights originating in cities other than Miami and Brownsville during the war, major cities across the nation began lobbying for the change to become permanent. Houston's business community quickly began framing the fight for international air routes as crucial to establishing the city's identity as the gateway to the Americas.

Four airlines petitioned the CAB in late 1943 and early 1944 to make Houston the terminus for international air routes. Braniff Airways, headquartered in nearby Dallas, requested a direct path from Houston to Balboa in the Panama Canal Zone, where it would split into two routes serving most of the South American capitals and industrial centers. Eastern Air Lines and Chicago & Southern Airlines each petitioned for a flight connecting Houston directly with Mexico City. Pan American Airways asked for a similar line plus another from Houston to Merida in the Yucatan Peninsula, where it would link up with the airline's existing network of Latin American routes.[22]

The CAB was facing a slew of applications for permanent air routes at this time, with several ports vying for flights to Latin America. New Orleans, Miami, and Tampa were involved, as was New York City farther north. Pan American Airways had traditionally held a monopoly on air traffic between the United States and Latin American airports, using Miami and Brownsville as international air gateways. Opening up the franchise to other ports and companies marked a departure from the older pattern

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foreign trade. See U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1946-1951. See also Sydnor Oden, "World Trade Is a Two-Way Street," *Houston Port Book*, Oct 1950.

[22] "Proposed Airlines to Make Houston Air Center," *Houston*, Jan 1944.

of using Pan American as the "chosen instrument" for expanding U.S. international air commerce, and the CAB wavered for some months on deciding which ports would get to participate in the postwar era.

The CAB released a preliminary report on June 14, 1944 outlining the international air routes it believed the public necessity and convenience would require after the war. Houston was left out entirely. The Board granted New Orleans flights into the Caribbean and Central America, while Miami retained a good portion of its former air supremacy with routes into those areas plus South America. Brownsville, a long-standing stronghold of Pan-American Airways, remained the air gateway linking Texas with Mexico City.[23]

Chamber of Commerce officials in Houston blasted the CAB report, calling it "unthinkable discrimination." In defending this assertion, however, they stated the case for Houston's worthiness as an international air gateway almost entirely in terms of its logistical value as a port. They painted a grim picture of the inconveniences travelers and businessmen could expect in the coming years if the city was not permitted to take its proper place as an air gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean. Chamber officials cited a report by consultants at Air Cargo, Inc. predicting Houston could expect to export 15,000 pounds and import 12,000 pounds of air cargo per day to South American countries if it were granted the right to fly internationally. The report predicted another 23,000 pounds of daily trade with Cuba and the Caribbean island nations. In addressing the CAB, officials at Braniff Airways drew particular attention to Houston's unique role as a point of contact for the developing oil industry in Venezuela and other parts of Latin

[23] The preliminary report is quoted extensively in CAB Docket 525, printed in *Civil Aeronautics Board Reports*, vol. 6 (Washington: GPO, 1947), 857-924.

America. Houston was a leading shipper of both oil and the capital goods needed for extracting it. The postwar demand for oil and petroleum-based products would be high, Braniff reasoned, and air traffic associated with the industry would increase dramatically. Houston, by virtue of its substantial role in this line of work, was the logical nexus between the U.S. and the rest of the hemisphere.[24]

Almost entirely absent from these justifications for Houston's international air gateway status was the more emotional sense of solidarity with Latin American countries so common with New Orleans and Miami during this period. Although Chamber officials argued that Houston's "quarter of a century of earnest endeavor to cultivate friendly relations with Latin American nations" was being ignored by the CAB, they declined to describe those relations in any detail or articulate their value to the public interest in Houston or the U.S. more broadly.[25]

Considered alongside New Orleans and Miami in reckoning what constituted "friendly relations" with Latin American nations, the CAB decision is easier to understand. As the preceding chapters explain, both New Orleans and Miami had long been destination cities for a range of Latin American visitors. Houston, oddly enough, had the largest Latin American population of all three cities in 1940, yet the vast majority of these were working-class individuals of Mexican descent. The city did not have the traditional inter-American commercial role New Orleans had, nor the history of serving as a shopping center or vacation spot for Latin American visitors as Miami did. This profound unfamiliarity with Latin Americans who were not trade barons was thrown into

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[24] "Houston Unrelentingly Continues Its Fight for Air Gateway to South," *Houston,* Sept 1944; "Houston Shown as Air Gateway to South America for Nation," *Houston*, July 1944; "Latin Air Travel from Texas Urged," *New York Times,* 28 Sept 1944.
[25] "Houston Unrelentingly Continues Its Fight for Air Gateway to South," *Houston,* Sept 1944.

sharp relief when Houston began seeking help to reverse the CAB decision. When port and Chamber officials convened a meeting of the minds in January 1945 to discuss strategy for lobbying the CAB to change its stance on the air gateway question, they looked north rather than south for help. Businessmen from major cities in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Colorado were invited, but no evidence readily suggests any Latin American representatives were asked to help proclaim Houston's hemispheric gateway identity.[26]

Whatever the tactics, Houston ultimately won its case. The CAB changed its tune in 1946 and issued an order establishing numerous additional air routes into Latin America, including three from Houston. Pan American Airways inaugurated its international flights between Houston and Merida in December 1946, while Braniff and Chicago & Southern began their flights in 1948. Houston was now an international air gateway, but it is crucial to reiterate that the city's leaders had pressed their case on a very practical basis. Houston, they believed, was a gateway by the numbers, not because of the city's identity.[27]

Port officials adopted this same attitude in seeking to improve their own tonnage numbers. Although the Port of Houston advertised itself in the United States and regularly sent trade missions both around its domestic hinterland and to Mexico and Central America, the message was generally very concrete. Houston, the pitch generally went, was a worthy port for business because of its superior physical plant and

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[26] "Conference for Houston Air Gateway Held Here," *Houston*, Jan 1945.
[27] "Houston Becomes International Air Gateway," *Houston*, June 1946; "Houston to Latin America by Air Inaugurated by Pan American," *Houston*, Dec 1946; "Houston Gets Long Awaited South American Air Service," *Houston*, May 1948.

convenient facilities, not because of a commitment to promote the broader diplomatic benefits of international commerce.

The same vision governed the port commission's approach to expanding its customer base in the U.S. and abroad through improvements at home. In the 1940s, the commission's policies focused on three major areas, starting with a widespread realization that Houston needed to diversify the products passing over its wharves. Oil and cotton had been the mainstays of Port Houston since the turn of the century. In 1940, these two commodities constituted 90% of the port's total foreign tonnage, with comparatively tiny amounts of other trade goods passing through. Port leaders expressed great pride in being the nation's number one port for oil and cotton, but warned that Houston needed to avoid putting all of its eggs in such a small number of baskets. "Now is the time for us to call a spade a spade and unhesitatingly look at a side of our splendid port record that is not as good," port commission chairman J. Virgil Scott told the Houston Foreign Trade Association in March 1945. He asserted that Houston's lopsided reliance on oil and cotton "can be corrected – and must be done."[28]

Over the course of the 1940s, Houston's foreign trade community sought strategies to diversify the port's business on both the import and export sides. The import side of the equation was as much about volume as it was about diversity; Houston's rate of foreign importation was regrettably low. In 1946, the port's foreign imports accounted for just over 200,000 tons, less than one percent of the total freight traffic. Foodstuffs, animal products, and a few raw materials constituted this meager haul. Whereas New Orleans' foreign trade authorities conflated increased imports with the broader goal of

[28] "Strong Export-Import Firm Planned Here," *Houston*, March 1945; "Committee of Leaders to Work for Increase in Port Tonnage," *Houston*, June 1945.

promoting a more cooperative hemisphere, Houston officials mainly pitched imports as a way to avoid repeating the failed economic nationalism of the 1930s. To increase exports, Houston officials focused on coaxing producers in the Midwest and Southwest to divert their goods away from New Orleans or the Eastern seaboard and send them to Houston instead. They also looked for ways to take advantage of the massive need for capital and consumer goods in countries rebuilding from the recent war. [29]

Improving the physical plant was another major theme of the port commission's postwar strategy. Both the war and the economic depression preceding it had slowed capital improvements at the port to a halt. Even basic repairs and routine maintenance had slipped during the war so resources and manpower could be shifted to defense-related projects. As a result, the Houston Ship Channel began the postwar era with urgent needs for dredging and widening, as well as for new and updated wharves and sheds. In 1945 the port commission began outlining a $37 million program for port improvements, including widening and deepening of the ship channel, along with new bridges and tunnels to eliminate ferry crossings. Port director J. Russell Wait acknowledged that these improvements were long overdue, and urged Houston citizens to back the program, lest the port begin to "retrograde." [30]

A third theme of the port commission's postwar playbook was the need to rectify what they saw as discrimination against Houston in particular and the Gulf South ports

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[29] For tonnage figures for Houston for 1946, see USACE, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1946, 771-782. For several examples of the attitudes of Houston's port leaders toward imports, see "Civic Leaders Express Port Views," *Houston*, May 1947. Regarding the strategy to take advantage of increased shipment associated with rebuilding Europe and, to some extent, Latin America, see "Drive Opened to Make Port World Leader," *Houston Press*, 23 Dec 1947. Houston officials also convinced Nelson Rockefeller to use Houston as the main shipping point for goods and equipment associated with his Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation project, a plan to bolster Venezuela's internal economy entirely through the private sector. See "Vee-Beck, New Foreign Trade Project to Aid Port Houston," *Houston*, Apr 1948. See also "International Houston," *Houston Port Book*, May 1948.

[30] Sibley, *The Port of Houston*, 194-196; "Future of the Port," *Houston*, Jan 1945.

more generally. During the war, port officials had complained bitterly about the amount of defense-related shipping diverted to New Orleans by the federal government. In a joint memorandum to the Texas Governor, they accused New Orleans businessmen and the Louisiana state government of pulling every conceivable political string in Washington to get the Crescent City designated as the primary port for shipping materiel and supplies. After the war, the focus was more on fighting for parity in freight shipping rates with Eastern ports, which lobbied for advantages over the Gulf South ports in seeking trade relationships with the Midwest. As officials like J. Russell Wait saw it, the complex system of shipping rates developed by the Interstate Commerce Commission over the years was skewed in favor of the Eastern ports. The discrimination was not necessarily deliberate, but persisted because southern ports did not work together to advocate for themselves. Houston's voice alone was not likely to produce much change. Accordingly, even though Houston competed with ports like Mobile, New Orleans, and Tampa, Houston's port officials treated the freight rate issue as an affront against all southern ports in order to secure enough support for change. J. Russell Wait himself helped found a lobbying organization called the Gulf Ports Association, and became its first president. This entity publicized the competition between ports of the Gulf South and East Coast, and organized concerted efforts across the Gulf South to influence relevant policy issues in Washington.[31]

Almost entirely absent from the rhetoric in the press and port leaders' internal communications was any serious interest in promoting Houston's image as a critical Pan

[31] Proposed statement for the Governor of Texas Regarding Lack of Ships from Texas Ports, undated in Box 24, folder 9, Wait Papers; "Planning Tomorrow's Port," *Houston*, Apr 1944; Address of J. Russell Wait before the Magazine Committee of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, 26 Apr 1945 in Box 5, folder 2, Wait Papers; Report of the President of the Gulf Ports Association for 1946 in Box 10, folder 8, Wait Papers.

American space. The city's foreign traders recognized Latin America as a potentially lucrative trade region, but through the end of the 1940s their efforts to attract Latin trade partners were relatively disjointed. The Chamber of Commerce and Houston Foreign Trade Association sponsored occasional goodwill trips to Mexico and the Central American countries, and they began publishing editions of the port's signature publications in Spanish. The documentation for these gestures suggests, however, that they were offered in a relatively passive tone. Port bulletins and correspondence with Latin chambers of commerce and shipping interests generally read like standard sales pitches, pushing Houston as a product rather than as a space for solving inter-American trade problems.[32]

As the 1940s came to a close, there was little to suggest that Houston was losing much from its existing approach to trade, at least in the big picture. In 1950, Port Houston handled the second highest volume of tonnage in the nation, beating out New Orleans by over five million tons. Bank clearings, deposits, retail sales, number of telephones, and numerous other yardsticks of economic advancement pointed to Houston being on the right path. Foreign imports and exports still made up only a small percentage of the city's trade volume, but the value of the coastwise shipping made that element of the situation seem irrelevant. By all appearances, Sydnor Oden had been correct when he called for a continued focus on "practical effectiveness" over "publicity." There was no need for Houston to imitate New Orleans; the port was succeeding in its own way.[33]

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[32] Annual report of the Foreign Trade Department of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, 1945 and form letter in Spanish from T.L. Evans to Latin American recipients, 21 Feb 1944 in Box 5, folder 2, Wait Papers; minutes of the Foreign Trade Department of the Houston Chamber of Commerce, 9 Apr 1946 in Box 5, folder 1, Wait Papers; "Drive Opened to Make Port World Leader," *Houston Press,* 23 Dec 1947.
[33] For tonnage figures for Houston for 1950, see USACE, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1951, xxvii. For the domestic statistics, see "Port Houston Second in U.S.," *Houston,* Feb 1951.

A Pan-American Turn?

Despite the foregoing circumstances, by the late 1950s Houston's world trade community was moving steadily toward a Pan-American business strategy. At the end of the decade, Port Houston would have an international relations department, a World Trade Center, and an annual international trade and travel fair similar in purpose to New Orleans' International Trade Mart. The port was learning to rely on image as well as capacity as a lure for business. But how did this change come to be?

Several factors accounted for the transition. The first and most precipitous was a disconcerting plateau in Port Houston's trade figures in the mid-1950s. From 1948 to 1954, Houston had ranked second only to New York in overall port tonnage and consistently showed annual growth, but in the middle of the 1950s those figures began to level off. In 1955, New Orleans surpassed Houston's total shipping count by just over 45,000 tons. Houston regained a slight advantage the following year, but in 1957, New Orleans once again bested the Bayou City's total, this time by over a million tons. All the oil and cotton Houston could move across its wharves was not enough to beat back the challenge of its competitor along the Mississippi River. The emergence of the St. Lawrence Seaway connecting the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean did not help matters. Port officials in Houston worried the new waterway would cut into their traditional Midwestern trade hinterland and depress business for all Gulf South ports.[34]

What bothered Houston's port leaders even more was the unfavorable situation regarding foreign trade. Even during the years when Houston was moving the most material through the port overall, there was never a single year in the 1950s when the

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[34] USACE, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1950-1957; Sibley, *The Port of Houston*, 199-200; "Houston Port Bureau Is Now Facing Greatest Challenge," *Port of Houston Magazine*, February 1959; "Port Opposed to Seaway Project," *Houston*, May 1953.

amount of tonnage going to or from foreign nations topped the amount moving through New Orleans. Foreign export totals usually hovered at least half a million tons below the Crescent City, with the gap increasing to over two million tons in 1954. The import numbers were even worse. New Orleans consistently imported at least one and a half million tons more annually from foreign countries, chiefly Latin American countries, than did Houston over the course of the decade. Houston continued to hold a tremendous advantage in coastwise shipping, but the message revealed by the foreign import and export totals was unmistakable. New Orleans remained dominant among the Gulf South ports in direct foreign trade, especially with Latin America.[35]

It was also painfully obvious to most observers that Houston had a serious image problem when it came to potential Latin American customers. The entire state of Texas had a notorious reputation for discrimination against Latino individuals and families. While Mexican citizens and Mexican Americans were legally considered white according to state and federal law, in practice the racial hierarchy was much more complex. By 1940, the U.S. Census Bureau classified Mexicans and Mexican Americans as white, and they were theoretically able to attend white schools, marry white spouses, and share public spaces with their Anglo counterparts. Nonetheless, Mexicans and Mexican Americans also often received lower wages, worked more difficult jobs, and experienced widespread de jure segregation.[36]

This situation became particularly acute in Texas during World War II. Temporary Mexican laborers, widely known as braceros, had been crossing the border seasonally to find work in the fields of the Southwest for generations, but in wartime their

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[35] Ibid.
[36] Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights," 1212-1237.

role was especially critical. In 1942, the demand for agricultural labor was so high the United States and Mexican governments developed a recruitment program to bring more Mexican braceros into the U.S. By 1944, over 140,000 Mexican citizens were working in the agriculture and railroad industries as part of the initiative.[37]

This larger influx of seasonal Mexican labor helped ensure a more efficient harvest, but local residents were often less than hospitable toward their guests. Business owners frequently barred braceros from entering their establishments, posting signs reading "We Do Not Serve Mexicans" or "Whites Only, No Mexicans Allowed." Pauline Kibbe, a journalist and community relations advocate, described the situation in her 1946 book *Latin Americans in Texas*. "Generally speaking, the Latin American migratory worker going into West Texas is regarded as a necessary evil," she explained. "Judging by the treatment that has been accorded him in that section of the state, one might assume that he is not a human being at all, but a species of farm implement that comes mysteriously and spontaneously into being coincident with the maturing of the cotton."[38]

The trouble extended beyond migratory workers. U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry were also victims of discrimination throughout Texas. A number of Mexican Americans volunteered or were drafted into the military during the war, and many others who remained on the home front worked in war-focused industries. Despite these contributions, they were frequently refused entry to movie theaters, restaurants, swimming pools, and other public facilities. Some of the most notorious cases included

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[37] Irwin F. Gellman, *Good Neighbor Diplomacy: United States Policies in Latin America, 1933-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 174-175.
[38] Nellie Ward Kingrea, *History of the First Ten Years of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission and Discussion of Its Major Problems* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1954), 17-26; Pauline Kibbe, *Latin Americans in Texas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1946), 176.

Mexican American recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor being refused service upon returning home from serving their country in the war.[39]

This state of affairs was assailed from several angles. Organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens represented Latino individuals in cases that fought discrimination in public facilities. Sympathetic editors noted that Texan examples of anti-Latino sentiment were fodder for Nazi propaganda. The Mexican government, working through its ambassador to Washington, Ezequiel Padilla, pressured federal officials to compel Texan farm communities to accord braceros equal treatment. In June 1943, after several attempts at a non-discrimination law had died in the state legislature, the Mexican government countered by informing its consulates that Texas would no longer be able to receive laborers under the Bracero Program.[40]

This brought major Texas growers and state officials solidly into the fracas. The Texas state government, for its part, responded at first by revising school textbooks that emphasized the role of Mexico as a mortal enemy dating back to the early days of the Lone Star Republic. Governor Coke Stevenson also established a Good Neighbor Commission, an agency dedicated to educating the public about the value of good relations with Latin American countries. The commission would also hear discrimination cases and aid in their solution. Nelson Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs bankrolled this organization in its early days.[41]

The messages coming from Texas about the equality of its Latino citizens and guests were mixed, however. Even after the bracero ban went into effect, fresh attempts

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[39] Kingrea, *History of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission*, 21-22.
[40] Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights," 1223-1224; "A Role for Texas," *Dallas Morning News*, 31 Oct 1943.
[41] "Good Neighbor Commission Named to Cement Latin Ties," *Dallas Morning News*, 11 Aug 1943.

at a law prohibiting discrimination against Latino individuals failed in the state legislature. No amount of lobbying from the Mexican government, U.S. officials, or even the state's own Good Neighbor Commission was able to achieve equality for Mexicans and Mexican Americans under the law.[42]

Houston did not have a large agricultural industry, but it was still home to a significant Mexican American population, supplemented by undocumented workers. The total Hispanic population of Houston, a majority of which was Mexican, swelled from 20,000 persons in 1940 to 40,000 in 1950. A significant portion of the city's Hispanic population lived in cramped slums on the northern and western sides of town. While a small number of Hispanic individuals belonged to the middle and upper classes of the city, the majority served as laborers in fields, factories, construction sites, or in private homes as domestic servants.[43]

Relations between Houston's Hispanic community and the white-Anglo majority remained rocky into the postwar era. As late as 1950, prominent citizens called for the formation of a special "Latin American squad" to police the city's Hispanic neighborhoods. In responding to this movement, local LULAC leader John J. Herrera issued an editorial denouncing the so-called "Latin American problem" in Houston. He further linked the preoccupation of city leaders with Latin American crime with the city's problems attracting Latin American business. "We pride ourselves as Houstonians that our City is the Gateway to Latin America," he wrote, "but we are far behind Miami,

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[42] Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights," 1224-1230.
[43] This conclusion about the occupations of Houston's Hispanic population is based on data in Table 6.1 of De Leon, *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, 100. Also see pp. 95-99.

Florida, New Orleans, San Antonio, El Paso and Los Angeles in our treatment of the Latin Americans."[44]

Neither the foreign trade imbalance nor relations with the city's Hispanic residents had provoked much decisive action on the part of the port commission or the Chamber of Commerce during the 1940s beyond the same passive insistence that Houston was able and willing to do more trade with Latin America. In the early 1950s, however, new personalities began taking over management of these entities. Edward J. Fay, a Harvard graduate who had studied Latin American history and economics became manager of the Chamber's foreign trade arm in 1951. Two years later, when the foreign trade situation was looking especially dark, the port brought on a new general manager, Warren Lamport, as well as a new director of international relations, Vaughn Bryant. Lamport had been general manager of the Port of Seattle, where he had pushed officials to follow New Orleans' example in establishing a foreign trade zone and a robust program of self-promotion. Vaughn Bryant got his start as a correspondent with the Associated Press in Latin America. He later became the public relations director for New Orleans' International House for several years before moving to Austin to become the executive director of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission. After a stint there, Bryant moved to Houston to work for the port commission.[45]

What distinguished these men from their predecessors in the port's leadership was the value they placed on building up the port's identity as a customer-oriented facility and establishing more personal, cooperative relationships with potential clients. In the old days, port leaders had relied heavily on passive publicity and impressive tonnage figures

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[44] John J. Herrera to M.E. Walter, editor of the *Houston Chronicle*, 11 Mar 1950 in Box 1, folder 8, John J. Herrera Papers (MSS 160), Houston Public Library.
[45] "Dream for World Trade Gate in Northwest May Be Realized," *Eugene Register-Guard*, 19 Dec 1947.

to lure business from foreign traders. This newer generation of executives saw benefits in taking a more active approach, building institutions designed to pitch Houston as a hemispheric marketplace while also promoting broader goals such as increasing imports of Latin American goods and improving human relations between U.S. and Latin American citizens.

One of the early hallmarks of this transition emerged out of the work of Vaughn Bryant, the former International House official who moved to Texas to head the state's Good Neighbor Commission. The organization had originally been set up during the war to alleviate tensions between Texans and Latin American migrant workers, and to project a more friendly and accommodating image of the state south of the border. From the beginning of his tenure as executive director, however, Bryant saw an opportunity for the commission to augment its human relations work with profitable forays into the field of economic diplomacy.[46]

The new director's tenure at New Orleans' International House and his brief stint working for the State Department's Private Enterprise Cooperation unit shaped his approach to improving Texas' image abroad. In describing his plans to his former boss at the State Department, John Begg, Bryant explained his goal was to build up good will between Texans and foreigners through education and exchanges of people and cultural information. Much as he had done in New Orleans, Bryant served as a liaison between federal officials and Texas businessmen to implement programs that matched up national policy objectives with local resources and operatives. The Good Neighbor Commission worked with Texas oil companies to sponsor booklets for U.S. travelers heading to

[46] Vaughn Bryant to John Begg, director of the U.S. State Department's Private Enterprise Cooperation unit, 20 May 1952 in Box 12, Subject Files of the Private Enterprise Cooperation Staff, Dept of State (RG 59), National Archives.

Mexico, "Good Neighbor" bumper stickers, films depicting pleasant relations between Mexican and U.S. citizens, and other initiatives.[47]

Still, Bryant believed Texas needed something more profound to properly publicize the state's identity as a nexus point between the United States and the rest of the hemisphere, both to Latin Americans and to Texans. The question was how to organize such an effort and how to fund it. Bryant believed the Good Neighbor Commission had a role to play in this kind of diplomacy, but as it stood the organization was operating on a shoestring budget. Moreover, state legislators had already tried to eliminate the commission, calling it an unproductive waste of taxpayer money. If a statewide effort to improve Texas' image abroad and attract more foreign trade was to get off the ground, it would need to partner with private enterprise.[48]

In late November 1952, Vaughn Bryant and Good Neighbor Commission chairman Neville Penrose invited businessmen and civic leaders from all over the state to meet in San Antonio to discuss the potential ways and means of organizing a statewide instrument for promoting foreign trade via Texas ports. The invitation stressed the need for coordinated action, and used the specter of New Orleans to illustrate the competitive aspect of the issue. "We have only to look to the East," the letter read, "to the Port of New Orleans and the Mississippi Valley, to appreciate what can be done once such a program is put into action."[49]

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[47] Ibid.; Vaughn Bryant to Morton Glazer (U.S. Department of State), 8 Sept 1952, and B.H. Underhill to Morton Glazer (both from the U.S. Department of State), 25 Jun 1952 in Box 12, Subject Files of the Private Enterprise Cooperation Staff, Dept of State (RG 59), National Archives.
[48] Vaughn Bryant to Robert Giles of San Antonio, 29 Oct 1952 in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers, Texas State Archives.
[49] Neville Penrose letter to Texas business and civic leaders, 21 Nov 1952 in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.

The meeting was held December 5, 1952. Judging by the attendance, Texas' business communities were eager to give the subject a fair hearing. In addition to the members of the Good Neighbor Commission, the assembly included representatives from Brownsville, Beaumont, Fort Worth, and Houston. Indeed Houston was particularly well represented. Three port commissioners were in attendance, along with the port's director of operations, the manager of the world trade division of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of the Houston World Trade Association, and several other businessmen from the Lykes Brothers Steamship Company and other corporations.[50]

Chairman Neville Penrose opened the meeting by restating the problem that had been pointed out in the invitation. For years, he explained, it had been apparent to business leaders across the state that millions of dollars' worth of business was "flying over Texas" every year without any serious effort on the part of Texans to stop it. By business, in this sense, he meant direct foreign trade. The time was right, Penrose told the group, for Texan business leaders to do something, perhaps by enlarging the mandate of the Good Neighbor Commission.[51]

The participants then took turns outlining their positions on this matter, including their concerns and their ideas about how Texas could attract more direct foreign trade. Roy Rubottom, a State Department operative in Latin American affairs and a native Texan, was present and encouraged the assembled businessmen to focus especially on increasing imports from Latin American countries. He asserted that Texas was uniquely situated to turn a major profit from Latin American trade, but in order to increase exports

[50] Minutes of the Open Meeting of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission on International Relations, 5 Dec 1952 in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.
[51] Ibid.

to the region the Latin Americans would need to be able to sell goods to the U.S. as well.[52]

Other speakers drew attention to the large amount of direct foreign trade being rerouted over the railroads to New Orleans because of equalized railroad rates that prevented the shipping cost from rising any higher than it would be to ship through a Texas port. That led the chair to call on Vaughn Bryant, who had been a key staff member at International House when it opened, to comment on how the Crescent City had managed to assemble such a powerful trade promotion system. Bryant gave a brief history of New Orleans' international program, explaining that the key to increasing direct foreign trade had been the establishment of close, friendly relationships with sellers in Latin America and the Mississippi Valley. He described the process as "missionary work" because International House had actually sent knowledgeable businessmen to persuade these sellers that New Orleans and other Gulf South ports offered a cheaper, more efficient alternative to shipping through ports on the Eastern seaboard. Moreover, these same missionaries labored to convince business leaders in the Mississippi Valley that increasing imports from Latin America would ultimately improve that region's value as a market for U.S. exports. International House then served as a clearinghouse for information requests coming from both the Mississippi Valley and the world market, and a large share of the resulting trade was funneled through New Orleans. The question, Bryant said, was 'Can we do it here?'[53]

In the commentary that followed, many of the attendees acknowledged they did believe Texas would benefit from a similar organization, but they warned having one

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

organization represent multiple Texas ports would be difficult. “You must remember we Texas ports are pretty jealous of our business,” Yguacio Garza, a leader of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Chamber of Commerce, cautioned during his remarks. “We are going to try to get all we can and we do fight for it.” The consensus was that a statewide organization would have to limit itself to functions that would aid all Texas ports without favoring any particular one.[54]

The meeting concluded with a plan to assign a subcommittee the task of doing more investigation and reporting back to the Good Neighbor Commission with its findings. Tom Slick, a member of the Good Neighbor Commission and an oil operator from San Antonio, took on the task of leading the smaller group. The Slick Committee met in Houston later in December, but the members unable to get much farther toward deciding what form a statewide foreign trade promotion operation should take. Vaughn Bryant wrote a memorandum back to Commission chairman Neville Penrose explaining that “there is still a bit of either suspicion or jealousy or both” among the various ports and their representatives. No one wanted to make concrete suggestions for fear they might inaugurate a program that would benefit another port over their own. Houston’s delegation, Bryant noted, seemed particularly reluctant to take a strong stand. The representatives from Houston’s Chamber of Commerce appeared to believe they were doing a fine enough job on their own and gave little concrete support to a centralized state trade agency. Oddly enough, Houston business leaders in the Slick group ended up

[54] Ibid.

forming a subcommittee to compare Texas' situation with successful trade promotion in other states and report back.[55]

Drawing on the findings of the Houston subcommittee, the Slick Committee drew up a plan for a statewide trade promotion organization that would benefit all Texas Ports. Slick himself suggested it might be called the Texas Foreign Affairs Commission, which would become a department of the state government that would absorb the work of the existing Good Neighbor Commission. The costs of the work would almost certainly overrun what the state legislature would be willing to provide in funding, but Slick envisioned an auxiliary nonprofit organization funded by the individual ports to make up the shortfall.[56]

Even as they assisted the Slick Committee in preparing a proposal for Governor Allan Shivers, the Houston business community proved to be collectively the greatest enemy of the idea's success. Early on, Floyd Martin of the Houston Chamber of Commerce complained to his fellow committee members and Vaughn Bryant that the concept of a statewide port promotion program was impractical. The contemplated public relations work would be costlier than what the state would be willing to pay for, and the organization would have no standing in legal battles over freight rates. Furthermore, the ultimate goal was to convince foreign traders abroad to use Texas ports, but a critical part of doing that was selling the would-be customer on a specific port with specific

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[55] Neville Penrose to R.W. Hedges (Manager of the Beaumont Chamber of Commerce), 10 Dec 1952; Minutes of the Slick Committee meeting in Houston, 17 Dec 1952; and Vaughn Bryant to Neville Penrose, 19 Dec 1952, all in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.

[56] Proposed outline of activities for a statewide organization to promote Texas ports, 8 Jan 1953 and Tom Slick to J.R. Aston (Manager of the Foreign Trade Development division of the Lykes Brothers Steamship Company), 13 Jan 1953, in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.

advantages. This state-level organization was prevented by its very design from doing that.[57]

Worse still, when the Slick Committee finally had a preliminary proposal ready for formal presentation to the Governor for his thoughts, a member of the Houston Chamber of Commerce short-circuited the plan and wrote to the Governor directly criticizing it. Perk P. Butler, chairman of the World Trade Committee of the Houston Chamber, told the governor it appeared the Texas Good Neighbor Commission was looking to justify and extend its existence by inventing a job for itself. The proposed organization, he argued, would be a waste of the taxpayers' money because there was no effective way to promote the lot of competing Texas ports as a group. He conceded that promotion was essential to facing competition from ports like New Orleans, but he asserted this was something each port had to do on its own using contributions from the private sector.[58]

Vaughn Bryant received a copy of the Butler letter from Weldon Hart, a top administrative aide to the governor. In reporting the setback to Chairman Penrose, Bryant admitted that almost all of the Houston delegation tended to share Butler's sentiments. He believed they were deeply suspicious of any foreign trade program not focused entirely on Houston, which boded ill for any further effort the Good Neighbor Commission might put forward. Governor Shivers agreed; Texas ports would have to be promoted by the private sector.[59]

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[57] Floyd Martin to J.R. Aston (Lykes Brothers Steamship Company), 16 Jan 1953; Floyd Martin to Vaughn Bryant, 16 Jan 1953.
[58] Perk P. Butler was also president of the First National Bank in Houston. See Perk P. Butler to Governor Allan Shivers, 17 Mar 1953 in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.
[59] Report of General Activities of the Good Neighbor Commission since December 1952, undated; Vaughn Bryant to Floyd Martin, 17 Mar 1953; and Vaughn Bryant to Neville Penrose, 26 Mar 1953, all in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.

Whatever the Houston business community might have thought of a state-level port promotion scheme, the process of discussing it must have served as a considerable bit of inspiration. Port officials followed up the Slick Committee debacle with a considerable flurry of activity to build up Houston's own international relations program. Foremost among the improvements was the port commission's decision to create a new international relations director position and hire Vaughn Bryant to fill it. Evidence suggests that although Bryant had been committed to overseeing an expansion of the Good Neighbor Commission, he was intrigued by the possibility of creating something more like New Orleans' International House in Houston. He said as much in the original San Antonio planning meeting, and had enthusiastically corresponded with members of the public who favored such an entity. Moreover, even as members of the Houston foreign trade community were busy tearing apart the Slick Committee's plans for a statewide port promotion scheme, they expressed their appreciation to Bryant for his efforts to serve the interests of the Texas ports. The record is unclear on how it happened exactly, but apparently Houston officials determined that Bryant had the right vision to solve the problems the port was experiencing with attracting more foreign trade.[60]

Bryant came as part of a package. As the Slick Committee had been doing its work, Houston port officials had been searching for a new general manager. W.F. Heavey, the outgoing manager, had been in charge of the port since J. Russell Wait had vacated the post in 1948. Heavey had in many ways continued the policies of the Wait era, focusing intently on capital improvements and favorable shipping rates. In selecting Heavey's successor, the port commission opted for a change of direction. In fall 1953, the commissioners announced the joint hire of both Bryant and Warren D. Lamport, formerly

[60] Floyd Martin to Vaughn Bryant, 19 Mar 1953 in Box 1, Good Neighbor Commission Papers.

the director of the Port of Seattle. Lamport came with extensive experience as a port administrator on the Pacific coast, and had a reputation for aggressive port promotion campaigns. Houston officials described Lamport and Bryant's hiring as the first step in "a worldwide campaign to obtain more general cargo business for Houston." Bryant was clearly brought on specifically for his experience in attracting Latin American trade. In his official introduction, port officials explained that his task would be to do exactly the kind of "missionary" work he had described in his remarks before the Slick Committee. He would tour both Latin America and Houston's trade hinterland in the United States in an attempt to bring the two groups closer together, using Houston as the meeting point.[61]

As Bryant and Lamport came aboard in Houston, Latin American exports and imports together only accounted for about 18% of Houston's total foreign trade. The primary goal of the port's new international relations department under Bryant was to move that number upward. And indeed there was room to grow. When Bryant and Lamport took over the port's promotional program in 1953, the United States was exporting nearly three billion dollars' worth of goods to Latin America annually, and importing a little over half a billion dollars' worth. Latin American as a region was exporting nearly a billion in goods to Western Europe at this time, mainly thanks to credits associated with the Marshall Plan. That funding was drying up, however, and port leaders aimed to present the U.S. as a substitute destination for Latin American exports, with Houston as the port of entry, of course.[62]

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[61] "Director is Named by Port of Houston," *New York Times*, 1 Nov 1953; "Port Plans Drive for More World Trade," *Port of Houston Bulletin*, Jan. 1954; "Lamport Named General Manager of Port; International Relations Director Appointed," *Port of Houston Bulletin*, 15 Oct 1953.
[62] "The Gulf Coast Gateway to World Trade," *Houston Port Book*, May 1950; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistical Office, *Yearbook of International Trade Statistics, 1963* (New York: United Nations, 1965), 12-21.

That last part was also a nagging problem Bryant intended to address. As he began touring Latin America to promote the port, he noted that Latin American exporters were gladly shipping their goods to the United States, just not to Houston. This, Bryant observed, did not appear to be because of any lack of promotion on Houston's part, but rather because custom and habit led these exporters to use New York, Philadelphia, or New Orleans instead. The remedy in this case, he believed, would be to develop the same kind of intimate relationships with Latin American trade authorities that existed in other ports, and to emphasize the economic benefits of shipping through the Gulf South rather than the faraway Eastern seaboard.[63]

Some aspects of the city's international program remained the same. Delegations of local dignitaries and Chamber of Commerce members continued to visit Latin America periodically, distributing tokens of friendship and snapping lots of photographs. Under Bryant's supervision, however, the port also initiated a more intimate approach to trade development. Starting in 1954, Bryant himself traveled periodically to Latin American countries, where he met personally with Latin American importers and exporters to discuss their challenges and sell the port of Houston. In describing these visits to businessmen in the Houston area, he noted that this kind of collegial approach was particularly essential to success in Latin America, where New Orleans and other ports had already done so much to corral the market. "Other ports are working overtime," he warned, "and this is the reason the Port of Houston is starting a new selling program."[64]

Meanwhile, other members of the Houston business community were also busy finding ways to increase Houston's hemispheric and worldwide visibility. In August

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[63] "Port of Houston Will See Greater Increase in Trade with Latin America," *Houston Port Book*, Fall 1956.
[64] "Houston Looks Abroad for Trade," *Houston Port Book*, Spring 1954; "Baytown Lions Club Hears Vaughn Bryant," *Baytown Sun*, 9 Mar 1955.

1953, University of Houston president W.W. Kemmerer announced that the Bayou City would host a World's Fair in 1956. A non-profit organization, Houston World's Fair, Inc., had already leased a 935-acre site for the event, and expected to issue $16 million worth of bonds in the near future. Kemmerer asserted early on that this was an opportunity for Houston to catch up in developing the cultural institutions generally found in cities of its size. "This 1,000-acre tract should be developed as a public property," he told one group, "to give our expanding population something it needs for education and recreation.[65]

The fair's backers also intended for it to educate people involved in foreign trade about the strengths of Houston as a port. That lesson was sorely needed at the time; Houston's direct foreign exports fell nearly one and a half million tons in 1953, and over a half million more tons in 1954. Moreover, New Orleans' total port tonnage was growing faster than Houston's at this time. Fair organizers viewed their project as a vital step in reinforcing Houston's identity as a leader in foreign trade. "The port needs help," Kemmerer told the Baytown Rotary Club in 1955, "even if those in charge are reluctant to admit it."[66]

Despite its hopeful billing, the World's Fair project ultimately did not succeed. Contemporary observers noted that while there was little to no opposition to the fair, most civic leaders were simply apathetic about its success. The project, for example, received almost no press from the Port of Houston or the Houston World Trade Association, even as the fair's founders identified trade promotion as one of their

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[65] "World's Fair in Houston," *New York Times*, 29 Aug 1953; "Houston Sets 'Texas-Size' World's Fair," *Christian Science Monitor*, 17 Sept 1953; "Realtors Hear Bright World's Fair Report," *Baytown Sun*, 12 Jan 1954.

[66] USACE, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States*, 1952-1956; "Rotary Club Hears Plans for Houston World's Fair," *Baytown Sun*, 20 Jan 1955.

principal objectives. Kemmerer left the organization in April 1955, and the organization's office closed shortly thereafter.[67]

A smaller undertaking was just emerging from the drawing board as the abortive Houston World's Fair was fading from the scene. In September 1955, the first annual Houston International Trade Exhibition opened downtown, with a series of commercial exhibits installed in the Shamrock Hilton Hotel. The event developed out of an idea by the Chamber's World Trade Committee, and was sponsored by several of the city's largest oil companies over the next few years. Retailers who commanded Houston's largest department stores typically served as administrators.[68]

The event was designed to increase foreign imports, but it trended heavily toward consumer luxury items like automobiles, handcrafted furniture and fixtures, and culinary delicacies. Vaughn Bryant's admonitions about cultivating better relationships with Latin America do not appear to have factored much in the planning for these annual fairs. Latin countries were typically in the minority among the exhibitors. In 1956, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, and the Dominican Republic were the only Latin countries with a display, but numerous countries from farther away participated, including Belgium, China, France, Germany, Sweden, Britain, Japan, Denmark, and the Netherlands. By 1960, the situation was no better; only five of the twenty-one exhibiting countries were in Latin America.[69]

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[67] "Lack of Interest Dims Hopes for World's Fair in Houston," *Baytown Sun*, 5 Apr 1955; "World's Fair Office Shut in Houston," *Baytown Sun*, 28 Apr 1955.
[68] "Houston Sets Trade-Travel Exhibit Dates," *Billboard*, 22 Aug 1960; "Houston Trade, Travel Fair to Open Sept. 21," *Baytown News*, 5 Sept 1962.
[69] "Inspect Foreign Cars," *Baytown Sun*, 27 Aug 1955; "International Trade Fair Grows Up in Three Years," *Houston Port Book*, 1 Sept 1956; "Dearborn Okays Bond Vote; Houston Readies Travel Fair," *Billboard*, 5 Sept 1960.

The Houston World Trade Center, with whose dedication this narrative opened, represented the most energetic effort on the part of Houston's business community to capture additional foreign trade by investing in relationships and an identity for the port. As the preceding story has revealed, this strategy had always appealed to at least some of Houston's port leaders, who believed they must adopt some version of it in order to compete effectively with its most successful practitioner, New Orleans. The arrival of Warren Lamport and Vaughn Bryant in the early 1950s had helped publicize the idea of actively cultivating Latin American relationships rather than sitting back and waiting for better trade figures to lure in new business. In the latter 1950s, yet another influx of new leadership was the answer to developing a concrete plan of action to act on these ideas.

The port commission, which had a reputation for managing its budgets closely and often looking askance at new programs or facilities without clear utility, had generally been lukewarm to the idea of sponsoring a new brick-and-mortar institution like New Orleans' International House to facilitate foreign trade. The combined lobbying of two commissioners in the late 1950s, however, helped break the impasse. W.N. Blanton, a longtime Chamber of Commerce executive with a flair for business promotion, became a port commissioner in 1953. He was an early advocate for developing some kind of trade promotion center that would build relationships with visiting foreign businessmen and help connect buyers and sellers on a global scale. Alone, he made little headway with the idea, but the addition of Howard Tellepsen as port commission chairman in 1956 event moved faster. Tellepsen was a comparatively young, energetic construction company president and patron of many local civic organizations. Upon taking charge, he identified both capital expansion and improved promotion as his major objectives. Although he

described the idea of a World Trade Center as "Bill Blanton's baby," Tellepsen's influence was crucial to getting the project approved and funded.[70]

The idea for a World Trade Center was folded into a broader port expansion plan Tellepsen aimed to fund through a public bond issue, a rare move for the Houston port commission. Harris County voters approved the bond issue in early 1957, which enabled the port to expand its crowded wharfs and inject additional capital into its promotional campaign. The first proposal for a trade center emerged about a month later, calling for a five-story addition to be built on top of an existing administrative building used by the port commission. By 1959, this idea had been scrapped in favor of a larger standalone structure.[71]

When the Houston World Trade Center opened in 1962, its similarity to New Orleans' International House and trade mart was inescapable. Its inaugural tenants consisted of a handful of freight brokers and steamship operators, along with over half a dozen foreign consulates. Volunteers and staff members were on hand to cater to the needs of visiting business operators and their families. Over time the number of tenants expanded, as did the services available to visitors. The Center was serving as the focal point Houston never had before for its world trade community. Overall, the Center was not especially focused on cultivating Latin American trade, but port leaders considered it a net benefit in that direction. Vaughn Bryant described it as part of a great comeback in

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[70] Sibley, *Port of Houston*, 200-201; David H. Falloure, *Sheer Will: The Story of the Port of Houston and the Houston Ship Channel* (n.p., 2014), 81-83; "Trade Center Fete Panel is Named," *Baytown Sun*, 19 Jan 1962.

[71] "Trade Center Will Be Erected Here," *Houston Port Book*, Spring 1957; "Center for Trade," *Houston*, Feb. 1959.

Houston's race for trade supremacy with New Orleans, something that would help the city reach its greatest trade potential by targeting the Latin American "little guy."[72]

Gateway by Default

The Port of Houston did see a remarkable upswing in business in the years following the establishment of its World Trade Center, and its tonnage and trade value indices did eventually rival and overtake those of New Orleans. These changes ended up having very little, however, to do with the efforts of the city's foreign trade community to promote an internationalist identity for the port. For a while in the 1960s, in fact, New Orleans appeared to be gaining ground against Houston, even as the Crescent City's business community was experiencing the institutional malaise described in Chapter 2. As with New Orleans and Miami, forces outside local control played a significant role in defining Houston's success in the 1970s and 80s. In Houston's case, events taking place as far away as Moscow and Riyadh would ultimately help produce the chance the port needed to lead the Gulf South in foreign trade.[73]

One major local factor in Houston's foreign trade increase entered the picture in 1956, although at the time no one could have guessed how critical it would ultimately be. In May of that year, the ship *Ideal-X* sailed into the harbor at Houston with a cargo from Newark, New Jersey. The goods on board, which traditionally would have been loaded in individual crates, were packed into 58 standardized containers that sat atop the main deck of the ship. Not only did this method shorten the ship's loading and unloading time – the containers could also be loaded onto trucks to be transported throughout the region. This

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[72] "In the Center," *Houston*, June 1961; "How to Reach Latin American Little Guy," *Baytown Sun*, 25 Oct 1961.
[73] "Houston Is Losing Port Competition," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 14 Jun 1964.

was the beginning of containerization, a critical, game-changing milestone in the history of shipping.[74]

Shipping by standardized container had gotten its start in New York City, replacing the convoluted age-old practice of loading individual crates, barrels, and other storage units. A trucking company laid out a proposal in 1953 to move cargo more efficiently by building a wharf that allowed a truck to drive directly onto a waiting ship. The idea was that the ship could take on several loaded trucks and then distribute them at other ports, saving the time normally required for loading and unloading the goods they contained. Malcolm McLean, the trucking magnate who conjured up this plan, ultimately improved on it by developing a detachable truck body that could be interchanged between trucks and loaded onto a ship for the voyage in between ports.[75]

Once this new method caught on, it dramatically reduced the amount of time required to load and unload cargo, as well as the cost involved. The companies that emerged to handle containerized shipping leased special cranes from the ports they used to move containers on and off of specially equipped ships. Later, the ships began carrying onboard cranes of their own. By 1970, a container could be loaded or unloaded in an average of two minutes' time.[76]

All ports were ultimately affected by containerization, but some were quicker than others to retool their facilities to handle the new technology. Houston had been one of the first U.S. ports to handle containers thanks to its relationship with the Pan Atlantic Steamship Corporation, a firm which pioneered the new method and ultimately

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[74] Marc Levinson, "Container Shipping and the Decline of New York, 1955-1975," *Business History Review* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2006), 49-80.
[75] Ibid.
[76] "The Container Revolution Started at Port Houston," *Port of Houston Magazine*, March 1970.

reorganized as Sea-Land Service, Inc. Sea-Land remained one of the foremost companies developing containerized shipping across the globe, and the Port of Houston became one of its chosen instruments for designing international shipping routes with unprecedented speed. New Orleans' port executives were slower to adapt to these changes, hoping instead as Chapter 2 explains to bank on New Orleans' geographical advantages as the major port serving the Mississippi Valley. Geography, however, was no longer enough to protect New Orleans' dominance over the region's trade. Shipping goods in bulk up and down the Mississippi was seldom as quick as a standard container could be moved by rail or truck. And, depending on the destination or origin of the shipment, there were other ports along the Gulf coast where a container ship could meet the railroad or highway much more efficiently. New Orleans was still moving millions of tons of general cargo, but its market dominance had been weakened. Houston, whose containerized port combined with a formidable network of highways and rail connections, was strengthened by these same trends.[77]

While containerization enhanced Houston's ability to handle its tonnage more efficiently, circumstances overseas were converging to make some of the port's signature commodities considerably more valuable. In 1972 for example, the United States government concluded an agreement to ship a massive quantity of North American grain valued at about $750 million to the Soviet Union. The agreement was a byproduct of the slight thaw in the Cold War known as détente. As part of Washington's cautious relaxation of tensions with the Soviets, officials relaxed agricultural export restrictions, which permitted the 1972 agreement to take place.[78]

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[77] "Flagship of Area's Economy Losing Out to Hustling Rivals," *Times-Picayune*, 13 Jun 1982.
[78] "Wheat Exports Welcome," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 23 Aug 1972.

As a major exporter of grain, Houston stood to gain from this transaction, and it did. About 70% of the Soviets' initial grain purchase was slated for shipment through ports in the Western Gulf of Mexico, with Houston getting the largest share. By January 1973, over half a million tons of wheat had been transported to Houston and loaded onto ships heading for the U.S.S.R. At the height of the process, ships were forced to anchor in Galveston Bay while waiting for their turn at the grain elevator.[79]

This surge in grain exports generated a significant increase in revenue for the port and the various firms involved in transporting and handling the product. The broader trend of increased trade with the U.S.S.R. also bore fruit; by 1976 three shipping lines plied the waters between Houston and the Soviet Union. The arrangement was not without its politics; in 1975 the International Longshoremen's Association staged a strike, arguing that the Soviet grain sale was driving up the domestic price of bread. They demanded that the federal government take measures to keep prices stable, and to ensure that a greater share of U.S. ships do the shipping of the grain to the Soviets. The dispute was ultimately resolved, and Houston's trade with the U.S.S.R. continued to boost the port's bulk tonnage figures.[80]

The Soviet grain deal was a boon, but not nearly as valuable as the advantage the port gained through changes in the international politics of oil. By the early 1970s, the public demand for petroleum products had outstripped domestic production and eaten into the United States' strategic stockpiles. The U.S. compensated for the loss by

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[79] "Russian Grain Ships Loading Wheat Here," *Port of Houston Magazine*, January 1973; "Russian Grain," *Del Rio News-Herald,* 2 Jul 1973.

[80] "Review of 1975 Shows Houston is a Port of Progress," *Port of Houston Magazine*, 1 Feb 1976; "Workers Refuse to Load Wheat Bound for Russia," *Waco Tribune-Herald,* 8 Aug 1975; "ILA May Refuse to Load Red Ships," *Brownwood Bulletin*, 21 Jul 1975; "Dock Workers Won't Load Grain Until Sure America Won't Be Hurt," *Waco Tribune-Herald,* 19 Aug 1975.

importing foreign crude oil, especially from sources in the Middle East. A number of these oil-producing countries had only had their sovereignty a short time, having gained their independence following World War II. By 1960, however, four Middle Eastern oil-producing nations plus Venezuela had formed the Organization of Petroleum Export Countries (OPEC) to balance out the tremendous influence of multi-national oil companies over their domestic economies. By 1975, another nine countries had joined OPEC, and with the U.S. and other industrialized countries importing more and more foreign oil, the organization was increasingly well-positioned to use its influence over production and pricing to exercise influence in world affairs.[81]

This situation came to a head in 1973 during a brief episode of the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict known as the Yom Kippur War. Egyptian and Syrian forces coordinated an attack on Israel, supplied and aided in part by the Soviet Union. In the Cold War-induced calculus permeating U.S. policy at the time, an American ally could not be permitted to fall in a Soviet-sponsored conflict such as this, particularly not with the ongoing war in Vietnam in such terrible shape as it was. The Nixon administration rushed supplies to the Israelis as quietly as possible to avoid damaging the United States' delicate diplomatic ties to anti-Israeli Arab governments, but the entire resupply effort quickly became public knowledge. In retaliation for this perceived snub, OPEC countries agreed in October 1973 to increase the price of oil by 70 percent. Saudi Arabia and Libya placed an outright embargo on oil shipments to the U.S. Other countries cut back their

[81] Jack Donahue, ed., *Big Town, Big Money: The Business of Houston* (Houston: Cordovan Press, 1973), 43; Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 125-126.

monthly production totals. All of these measures drove worldwide petroleum prices sharply upward, at one point to nearly 650% percent of their 1970 levels.[82]

The upshot of this oil embargo was a global recession and a multitude of crash programs to reduce energy consumption. In Houston, however, the crisis was actually very helpful for the local economy. For several years before the oil embargo of 1973, it had been one of the main ports through which U.S. corporations imported crude oil from the Middle East. Even with the embargo in place, U.S. production had no way to meet the public demand, which sent U.S. oil companies searching for additional sources all over the world. As more foreign oil was found, a good portion of it entered the U.S. through Houston. In 1973 alone, the port experienced a 200% increase in its bulk commodity imports, mostly oil. By 1979 Houston was bringing in 30 million tons of foreign oil annually. This activity spawned additional business, including the export of refined petrochemical products and capital goods associated with oil exploration and production. The increased value of oil and oil-based products only increased the value of the services used to move it across the wharves.[83]

Port officials kept their celebrations to a minimum in light of the recession plaguing much of the rest of the country. It was clear, however, that the oil industry was making more money than it ever had before. Previous concerns about the Port of Houston's dependence on oil as a prop for its tonnage figures disappeared. "Houston may be a one-horse town," remarked political scientist Richard Murray in 1980, "but

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[82] Daniel Yergin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 602-605, 625.
[83] "Port of Houston Continues Oil-Prompted Activity Surge," *Dallas Morning News*, 28 May 1979; "Port of Houston Sets New Cargo Records as Tonnage for 1973 Increases 21%," *Port of Houston Magazine*, March 1974.

Houston's horse … has been a far better steed to ride in the turbulent 1970s than mounts available to other American cities."[84]

Even after the oil embargo was over, Houston continued to serve as a major point of importation for foreign crude oil, including from Middle Eastern countries. Since oil prices never fully returned to their pre-1973 levels, the city's economy continued to benefit from the increased value of its top commodity, and OPEC countries continued to rank among the city's trade partners with the highest dollar value.[85]

Most historians have focused on the economic benefits of containerization and the Arab oil embargo for Houston, but these changes had their effect on the identity of the port as well. When oil was cheaper and Houston was still down in the tonnage count against New Orleans, Latin America had seemed to port leaders like a fine region for a focused trade development campaign. Moreover, New Orleans' method of attracting trade by focusing on relationship-building and institutional conveniences for trade partners had also seemed worthwhile. In the 1970s, however, Houston's trade promotion strategy was reorganized on a new axis, and the institutions charged with implementing it focused less and less on Latin America.

Evidence of this shift appears both in trade statistics and more qualitative markers. By 1977, oil was the principal factor driving the monetary value of Houston's direct foreign trade. That year, the port's most prominent trading partner by value was Japan, a major importer of oil and petroleum products that passed through Houston. Second place went to Saudi Arabia, whose crude oil fed the many refineries in the

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[84] Quoted in Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice, eds., *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth since World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 198.
[85] "Houston May Wrest 'No. 2 Port Title' from N.O.," *Times-Picayune*, 24 Aug 1975; "A New Record," *Port of Houston Magazine*, July 1979.

Houston area not sated by local sources. Of all the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, only Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela were among Houston's top ten trading partners by value. This was mainly because these countries were importing a large amount of oil-related machinery and capital goods through Houston. In Mexico's case, proximity had a role as well. Port leaders lauded these connections, but not for the sake of hemispheric solidarity or the value of cultivating a regional economic system. Brazil, Mexico, and Venezuela were emerging oil countries, and Houston was very much in the oil business.[86]

The city's internationalist institutions also reflected a decentralization of Latin America in the port's trade development strategy, but not because these institutions were diminished. On the contrary, Houston's institutionalization of business diplomacy actually matured during the 1970s. The World Trade Center ended up being only a physical home for a much more effective constellation of organizations, mostly run by individuals far outside the usual orbit of businessmen running the port.

The Institute of International Education (IIE) was the most prominent of these organizations. Begun as an early think-tank after World War I in the Northeast, IIE was originally intended to support educational exchanges between nations as an impetus to smoother international relations. When the group established a branch in Houston in the 1960s, however, it became much more. The City of Houston contracted with IIE to manage arrangements for visiting foreign dignitaries. When an ambassador or other foreign government official or prominent dignitary was slated to visit, IIE would take on the role of a State Department protocol officer. Much as International House had done

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[86] "Houston Port Tonnage Sets All-Time Record," *Baytown Sun*, 7 Apr 1977; "Dream for Brazilian Oil Fades Fast," *Odessa American*, 11 Mar 1975.

since the 1940s, IIE staff would coordinate transportation, proper greetings and gestures, seating arrangements, and other details.[87]

Two key elements distinguished this system from the one New Orleans had constructed decades before. For one, it was run by outsiders, so far as the port commission was concerned. The port cooperated with IIE where necessary, but they viewed their work as a separate affair. The other incongruity was the organization's global scope. IIE never described its functions as calculated to endear Houston to any particular region of the world, but rather to serve them all. This was also the case with the other organizations playing similar roles in the city, including the Houston International Protocol Alliance.[88]

This is not to suggest that port leaders in Houston stopped soliciting business from Latin American countries. The local Chamber of Commerce and World Trade Association continued sending periodic goodwill missions into the region to promote the port, and in the early 1980s Houston became the U.S. leader in exports to Latin American countries. Oil and oil-related products made up much of this total. In 1982, 13% of all U.S. trade with Latin America moved through Texas, with Houston handling the lion's share of it. Ironically, however, the greater the value of Latin trade moving through the port, the less local leaders appeared to pursue any kind of a Pan American business

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[87] "IIE Extends Hand of Friendship to People Everywhere," *Houston Port Magazine*, February 1980; Pamphlet, "Houston… City of Hospitality," 20 May 1971 in file entitled "Institute of International Education," Vertical File, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.
[88] Brochure for the Houston International Protocol Alliance, [1983] in file entitled "Consulates," Vertical File, Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

strategy. The trend was matched around the state; even the Texas Good Neighbor Commission began losing funding, with its final abolition coming in 1987.[89]

Houston's trajectory as a port in the second half of the 20th century echoes in many ways the entire Gulf South region's experience with the notion of the Pan American business strategy. Its leaders' initial indifference to the concept reflects a conflict faced by businessmen in many Southern cities, namely the desire to profit from a close relationship with Latin Americans without bringing them too close. Only the threat of losing ground in the regional fight for trade supremacy would bring Houston out of its halting approach to Latin American trade development. When that threat became especially great in the late 1950s and 1960s, key port officials spent millions to adopt some aspects of a Pan American business strategy, although from the outset Houston's internationalist institutions were far more global in their orientation. Finally, as was the case with New Orleans and Miami, Houston's destiny as a port was ultimately determined by factors far beyond the Gulf South or even the hemisphere. Judging by the numbers, Houston finally emerged from its regional competition with New Orleans and Miami as the true gateway to the Americas in the 1980s, but hardly because of its credentials as a Pan American space. The city owed its regional leadership in hemispheric trade to oil and industry far more than its World Trade Center.

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[89] "Houston Port Hurting for Trade," *Galveston Daily News*, 14 Sept 1986; "What's Good for Texas Is a Better Latin America," *Dallas Morning News,* 31 May 1984; "House Speaker Sides with Good Neighbor Commission's Fight for Life," *Dallas Morning News*, 19 Nov 1978.

CONCLUSION

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect January 1, 1994, greatly reducing tariffs on goods exchanged between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Congress had approved U.S. participation in late 1993 by only a slim margin, but the Clinton administration was confident the new agreement would help the United States adjust to a rapidly changing world economy and buttress the stagnant fortunes of the middle class. Clinton was especially hoping the treaty would usher in a lucrative boom of exports to Mexico.[1]

Some contemporaries also saw NAFTA as an opportunity to strike a new conciliatory chord in U.S.-Latin American relations, which, as we have seen, remained frayed throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Nixon and Ford administrations barely paid attention to Western Hemisphere affairs, save for ideological crusades against leftists like Chile's Salvador Allende. Jimmy Carter's administration aimed to inject a greater sense of respect and understanding into hemispheric relations; indeed the phrase 'Monroe Doctrine' became a taboo among top officials. In tangling with Brazil over the nation's desires for nuclear capabilities, Chile over human rights violations, and Argentina over its so-called "dirty war," however, the administration earned rebukes from some of the region's foremost political leaders. Ronald Reagan came into office in 1981 promising to cure the United States of its bout with "Vietnam Syndrome" and put U.S. foreign policy on a more assertive, interest-driven course. In Latin America, this mantra manifested as

[1] Remarks by President Clinton upon the signing of the NAFTA side agreements, 14 Sept 1993, Office of the White House Press Secretary.

support for friendly dictators and hostility toward reformist regimes that failed to meet Washington's ideological expectations, most notably the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. The George H.W. Bush administration rounded out the pattern in 1989 with a unilateral invasion of Panama to topple the government of General Manuel Antonio Noriega.[2]

From the business world's point of view, NAFTA also had the strong potential to help lift Latin America out of its "lost decade" of economic depression and failure that had strangled growth in the region since the late 1970s. Between 1972 and 1983, the collective debt of the Latin American countries had ballooned by a thousand percent, from 35 billion dollars to 350 billion dollars. Major U.S. banks had financed about two thirds of the loans. After a series of destabilizing crises, several Latin American governments had worked with international monetary agencies to develop austerity plans to restore solvency. Moreover, on the whole these adjustments had not provoked the wave of popular revolutions similar measures had done. Governments were still opening their countries' economies to foreign private investment. Free trade agreements and campaigns were flourishing throughout the region, including the Latin American Free Trade Association, the Andean Pact, and the Central American Common Market. NAFTA would be the first regional free trade pact with the U.S. as a signatory, a step advocates said would revolutionize hemispheric relations. "For the first time in history," one commentator noted with hyperbolic enthusiasm, "everything appears to be in place for a true hemisphere renaissance, economic as well as political. From the Yucatan to Tierra del Fuego, democracy and free-market capitalism have become the rule, rather

[2] Gaddis Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine, 1945-1993* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 132-137; Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations since 1889* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2000), 192-228; 234-235.

than the exception; anti-Americanism is on the decline; and free trade - with and without the United States as an active partner - is being pursued with an almost religious zeal."[3]

U.S. port cities, including those in the Gulf South, saw bright prospects for better hemispheric trade under NAFTA, much as they had in the 1940s. Houston's business community wasted little time positioning itself to take advantage of the new agreement. "The opportunity to make Houston a hemispheric gateway is there," declared one editorial, "but it will not be handed to the city. It must be seized." Local businessmen took this advice to heart. Even before the United States Senate had confirmed U.S. participation, a trio of business partners formed a new company aiming to launch a NAFTA trade exposition in Houston in 1994. The gamble ended up paying off; the Senate did ratify the trade agreement, and in only a matter of weeks the exposition received hundreds of inquiries from U.S. and Latin American companies. Houston business leaders also focused the city's 1993 International Festival on Mexico, and played host to the 1995 Trilateral Conference of Chambers of Commerce of North America.[4]

Farther east, New Orleans' foreign trade leaders were hoping NAFTA would help resuscitate the city's traditional position as a major hemispheric trading post. As Chapter 2 explains, much of the Crescent City's advantage in Latin American business slipped away to rival ports in the 1970s, and the oil boom refocused attention away from hemispheric trade. By the time oil markets began to sag in the 1980s, New Orleans' standing in inter-American commodity trading had dipped precariously low.

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[3] Thomas O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 162-165; "Latin Boom Beckons the U.S.," *Washington Times*, 18 July 1994.
[4] "Houston Sells Itself in Miami," *Houston Chronicle*, 12 Dec 1994; "Houston Group Plans to Throw NAFTA Party," *Houston Chronicle*, 21 Dec 1993; "Opportunity Is There for Houston, But It Must Be Seized," *Houston Chronicle*, 12 Sept 1993.

Improvements to the port's physical plant were a key part of the rebuilding effort, but trade leaders hoped NAFTA would lead to better relationships with buyers and sellers in Central and South America. MetroVision, a local economic development consortium, helped the city put its best foot forward by establishing "Encuentro," an annual Latin American trade exposition. New Orleans was also the site for the Clinton administration's May 1996 conference of finance ministers from around the hemisphere.[5]

Miami's reaction to NAFTA was somewhat rocky at first. Although a significant number of local businessmen welcomed the trade agreement as beneficial, the county government resolved itself in favor of asking Congress to crush it in 1993. The impetus for this move came mainly from Commissioner Pedro Reboredo, a former mayor of West Miami and a conservative anti-Castro Cuban-American. The resolution came only a day after the Dade County Commission was forced to concede defeat in a lawsuit it had initiated against companies legally handling humanitarian medical supplies bound for Cuba.[6]

This was in many ways an aberration, however. Miami was riding high in the early 1990s as a strong center of inter-American banking and transportation. It was also handling about 50% of U.S. commodity trade with Central America, 30% of U.S. trade with South America, and 50% of that with the Caribbean islands. Local business and many political leaders outside the Dade County Commission campaigned heavily to tie Miami closely to the increased interest in inter-American trade inspired by NAFTA. In 1994, Miami hosted the Organization of American States' Summit of the Americas, and the following year the city's legislative delegation managed to score a $750,000

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[5] "Latin Connections Take Hold – City Working to Strengthen Profitable Trading Ties," *Times-Picayune*, 24 July 1996.
[6] "'Gateway' Shuts Its Gates," *Miami Herald*, 21 Oct 1993.

appropriation for building a trade dispute arbitration center and an offshore stock exchange. "We are the only state in America with a foreign policy," Lieutenant Governor Buddy MacKay boasted. "And our foreign policy is that we want to increase the hemispheric free trade area and we want Miami to be the capital of that area."[7]

MacKay was far from accurate in suggesting Florida was the only state with a foreign policy, but his explanation of Florida's approach to foreign policy was fairly representative of the entire Gulf South region. Much as their forbears had done in the 1940s when World War II wreaked havoc on world markets, coalitions of business and civic leaders in Houston, New Orleans, and Miami actively promoted their cities' credentials as gateways to the Americas, eager to capture as much new business as possible from the impending wave of NAFTA enthusiasm. In many ways, furthermore, this drive was based on some of the same assumptions. Businessmen experienced in trading with Latin American firms reiterated the staple mantra of the 1930s and 1940s that making deals in this area required intimate relationships that sidelined protocol and embodied mutual trust. "Too often, Americans want to rush in and do business deals without establishing personal relationships built on trust," explained Rick Clapp, one of the Houston businessmen planning the 1994 NAFTA exposition. "You can't do business that way in Latin America." There was also continuity in how Gulf South business leaders of the 1940s and 1990s associated freer trade with political stability. "Feeding the

[7] "Increased Trade Brings More Squabbles," *Miami Herald,* 10 Dec 1995; "Expanding NAFTA Is Crucial for Florida Trade, Port Director Says," *Sun-Sentinel*, 26 Nov 1994; "Miami Bulking Up to Defend Trade Title," *Sun-Sentinel,* 25 Dec 1995.

growth of democracy is not just idealism," one pro-NAFTA editorial read in 1993. "It is a dollars and cents point."[8]

If this was the thought process underpinning a new Pan American business strategy for the Gulf South, however, it was missing quite a lot of the Pan Americanism, even the superficial kind. The school programs promoting Pan American Week, the honorary ambassador programs, the sumptuous displays of fanfare welcoming foreign dignitaries – these were missing or greatly reduced. The drive to increase foreign trade with Latin America was clear; the need to map a Pan American identity onto the city itself in order to attract that business was absent. Exploring why this was so helps capture some of what made the 1940s and 1950s such a unique era in U.S.-Latin American relations, particularly when viewed through the lens of the port cities of the Gulf South. It also offers an opportunity to articulate the permanent effects of the Pan American business strategy on the Gulf South and on U.S.-Latin American relations in general.

In many ways, the simplest explanation comes down to profitability. As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Gulf South port cities spent millions of dollars institutionalizing foreign trade and cultivating gateway identities for themselves. Houston spent three million on a World Trade Center, and the backers had originally wanted to spend three times as much. New Orleans businessmen managed to raise a quarter million dollars in a single meeting to start off International House in the midst of a global war, followed by millions more for an international trade mart and its successor mart in the 1960s. Miami's Pan American business strategy suffered perennially from a lack of support from the local business community, but civic officials believed enough in the

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[8] "Houston Group Plans to Throw NAFTA Party," *Houston Chronicle,* 21 Dec 1993; "NAFTA Promotes Latin American Freedom, Stability," *Houston Chronicle,* 8 Nov 1993.

cause to divert millions in taxpayer funds toward Interama. The State of Florida kicked in money for operating the Inter-American Center Authority, and Congress approved $9.5 million in 1966 to build part of the project. The local port authority donated half a million dollars in 1963, with the City of Miami providing upwards of twelve million over the years, money it was never repaid.[9]

The object of these projects, regardless of how genuine the Pan Americanist sentiment might have been among some leaders, was profit. The trade marts, Pan American Centers, and the other new institutions that became so popular in the 1940s and 1950s were ultimately useless to the people who invented them unless they could increase trade, transportation, and tourism revenue. In the early postwar years, Pan Americanism appeared to be a worthwhile investment for a port city. Many signs pointed to an abundant, lucrative trade with Latin America, if only a port could convince the right influential people in Latin American countries to see their worthiness as a place for doing inter-American business. Establishing expensive institutions to facilitate cultural and commercial exchange and creating elaborate displays of Pan American sentiment seemed to send the right signals at the right moment.

By the late 1960s, it was far more difficult to be enthusiastic about this business model. U.S. investment in Latin America was up, as was overall U.S.-Latin American trade volume, but so was Latin American resistance to economic manipulation from the United States, whether it came through public or private channels. When Nelson Rockefeller, then Governor of New York, toured Latin America in 1969, he was greeted

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[9] "Center for Trade," *Houston*, Feb 1959; "World Trade Opening Set 10AM Today," *Houston Post*, 29 Jan 1962; Alonzo G. Ensenat, *The Story of International House and International Trade Mart* (n.p., 1974); "Interama Hits Snag: Loan Held Up by CFA," *Washington Post*, 5 Feb 1966; Maurice Ferre to Claude Kirk, 8 Oct 1968 in Box 1, Inter-American Center Authority Papers, State Archives of Florida.

at nearly every stop by angry demonstrators denouncing the U.S. economic and political presence in the region. "A great many and probably a majority of the citizens of the hemisphere nations regard United States private investment as a form of exploitation or economic colonialism," he reported after the tour. Not much had changed, it seemed, from when Vice President Richard Nixon had received a similar reception in Latin America in 1958. Indeed, despite the best efforts of Eisenhower's "trade-not-aid" approach and Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, Latin American economies only grew by an average of about 1.5 percent a year in the 1960s. Governments were still expropriating U.S.-owned businesses based in their countries. Tariffs protecting key industries remained high in both the U.S. and its Latin American trading partners. In this atmosphere, attracting trade with professions of Pan American sentiment seemed out of step with reality. Compound this with the fact that Latin American trade was decreasing in value for Houston and New Orleans as chapters 2 and 4 explain, and it becomes clear why business leaders in those cities were less and less eager to invest in a Pan American business strategy.[10]

Institutionalizing Pan Americanism in the Gulf South had internal pitfalls as well, namely that it was easy for these organizations to experience what military planners would call "mission creep." Without a doubt, Miami's Interama is the most instructive example of this tendency. The whole point of the institution was to increase the flow of hemispheric trade and transportation through South Florida, but over the years the project's search for financial backing twisted its business model until it was

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[10] Rockefeller quoted in Thomas O'Brien, *The Century of U.S. Capitalism in Latin America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 141-142; R. Harrison Wagner, *United States Policy Toward Latin America: A Study in Domestic and International Politics* (Stanford University Press, 1970), 106-125; Kyle Longley, *In the Eagle's Shadow: The United States and Latin America* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 2002), 246-248.

unrecognizable. When Interama's local proponents first began seeking federal funding, their effort to conflate the project's mission with Washington's anticommunist agenda actually strengthened the bond between local and national prerogatives. It was a turn-off to local businessmen, however, who wanted the center to focus more heavily on commerce. Later, when funding became even harder to find and Interama devolved into an amusement park with a vague Western Hemisphere theme, neither local trade promoters nor Washington knew what to make of it. Support from public and private sources alike dried up quickly.[11]

Even the more successful Pan Americanist institutions had this problem. New Orleans' International Trade Mart, for example, began suffering from an identity crisis in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Building its new 33-story home on the east bank of the Mississippi River pushed the organization to the limits of its financial resources, so that its leaders spent the majority of their time trying to make the building turn a profit rather than using its resources to increase the inflow of dollars from international business. Moreover, the diffusion of responsibility for foreign trade promotion and cultural exchanges had become so tangled between International House, the trade mart, the city, and other groups that the trade mart struggled to define itself. "We have no financial problems," mart president Lloyd Cobb said in 1970. "Our big problem is to generate objectives which are separate and distinct and completely unrelated to work being performed… by other civic organizations." It was difficult to stimulate interest and

[11] "A Meeting Ground for the Americas," *Miami News*, 18 Jan 1972; Memo from Maurice Ferre to the Miami City Commission, 23 July 1969 in Box 399A, folder 2, Claude Pepper Papers (S 301), Claude Pepper Center.

investment from would-be clients when the clients could not be sure exactly how the trade mart was going to help them make more money.[12]

By the 1990s then, there was little to recommend Pan Americanism as a business strategy to the Gulf South port leaders contemplating the futures of their cities under NAFTA. The world in which they functioned, however, bore tool marks from the earlier era when the idea had seemed more workable. The legacy of the battle between Houston, New Orleans, and Miami to become the foremost gateway to Latin America lies in the institutional frameworks these cities established for using a port as a diplomatic space. As the preceding chapters have explained, these efforts were widely publicized, especially that of New Orleans, and they served as precedents for the institutionalization of foreign trade promotion in other cities. Business leaders in both Houston and Miami studied New Orleans' Pan American business strategy very closely, as we have seen, but so did their colleagues in Memphis, Dallas, Laredo, San Antonio, Baltimore, New York, San Francisco, and elsewhere. Even New York's iconic World Trade Center drew influences from the Crescent City. When architects were first sketching out their ideas for the Center in 1960, New York port officials used the success of New Orleans' International Trade Mart as a pretext to speed the project along. When representatives of world trade centers around the globe decided to form an association to coordinate their work in 1968, they first met in New Orleans, not New York.[13]

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[12] Minutes of annual meeting of contributor and debenture members of the International Trade Mart, 26 Mar 1970, International Trade Mart folder, Vertical File, Louisiana Research Collection.

[13] "New Orleans Turns Energy to World Trade Promotion," *Dallas Morning News*, 29 Sept 1946; "Texas Cities Look to International House," *Trade Winds,* 30 Apr 1947; "Baltimore Group Studies Own I-H Plan," *Trade Winds,* 30 Apr 1947; "New Orleans' Rise in Trade Reviewed," *New York Times*, 14 Jun 1947; "Memphians Praise Commerce Facilities," *Trade Winds*, 28 July 1948. For connections between New Orleans' International Trade Mart and New York's World Trade Center, see "A World Center of Trade Mapped Off Wall Street," *New York Times,* 27 Jan 1960; Year End Report of the International Relations Committee of the City of New Orleans, 1963 in Box 1, Records of the Mayor's Office of International

While it would be a bridge too far to suggest Houston, New Orleans, and Miami invented the idea of a port having a foreign policy, it is clear these cities made strides in developing the frameworks for exercising such a policy. When Mayor deLesseps Morrison announced that New Orleans would maintain a department of international relations and a slate of official ambassadors in foreign cities, outside observers praised the idea as unique and unprecedented. Over time, many municipalities and states increasingly tried the idea. By 1995, 42 states had 153 overseas trade representative offices in 22 countries, to say nothing of the paid and honorary representatives from individual U.S. cities.[14]

Moving from the institutional frameworks to the ideas at the their foundation, it is also clear that the Gulf South ports helped legitimize the notion that individual cities had a critical role to play in international diplomacy in the first place. When asked in 1983 whether Miami had a foreign policy, Mayor Maurice Ferre responded, "You're damned right we have a foreign policy… You cannot have a cosmopolitan city like Miami and not have a foreign policy." Municipal leaders around the country, even those without a heavy interest in foreign trade, have increasingly taken the same view. Most major U.S. cities now have some kind of international affairs or protocol office, as do most states. Taxpayer funds support a number of trips by U.S. mayors to overseas locations, just as they once did for internationalist mayors like Morrison and Miami's Robert King High. Furthermore, cities frequently weigh in on international issues, sometimes even those

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Relations, New Orleans Public Library; and "Co-Founder of Trade Center Concept to Speak," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Nov 1987.

[14] Press release entitled "New Orleans is Building Trade and Good Will with City 'State Department,'" 24 Mar 1947 in Box 40, deLesseps Morrison Papers, Louisiana Research Collection; "Regional Office of Private Enterprise Cooperation Opens," *Department of State Bulletin*, 16 July 1951. Data for the number of overseas state trade representatives in 1995 is quoted from the National Conference of State Legislatures in "Cities Dabbling in Foreign Affairs," *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 Feb 1995.

without a direct effect on their interests. In the 1980s, a multitude of city, county, and state governments took actions to divest more than $20 billion from firms doing business with South Africa, seeking to condemn the nation's apartheid regime. Congress, which had previously wavered on whether to impose sanctions against South Africa, took this as a sign of the popular will and acted accordingly.[15]

The Pan American business strategies of the Gulf South also helped both local and federal officials think through how these municipal functions ought to fit into the broader scheme of foreign policymaking. As this study has explained, leaders in Washington and the Gulf South alike benefitted from collaboration on hemispheric matters. Conferences like the 1955 Inter-American Investment Conference and centers of hospitality and business promotion like Miami's wartime OCIAA center and New Orleans' International House advanced critical national foreign policy objectives while also supporting local interests. Expertise from business leaders well-versed in the realities of inter-American trade like Houston's William L. Clayton and New Orleans' Rudolf S. Hecht informed national policymaking. In return, local organizations benefitted from the legitimacy lent to their endeavors by the attention of federal agencies and officials.[16]

One final legacy lies in how the various cities' Pan American business strategies have affected local identities in the Gulf South. Even today, when business and civic leaders in Houston, New Orleans, or Miami discuss their relationship with Latin America, they use the same "gateway" lexicon that developed in the 1930s and 1940s. And, just as their forebears did, they see that connection as representing more than trade

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[15] Maurice Ferre quoted in "City Makes World Affairs Its Business," *Miami Herald*, 2 May 1983.
[16] Hecht and Clayton were both on President Truman's influential Committee on International Economic Policy, also known as the "Aldrich Committee." See "New Group Offers World Trade Plan," *New York Times*, 5 Jul 1944.

tonnage or passenger volume. Whether the relationship is more real than imagined, or more show than substance, port leaders in this region still envision their cities as a sort of hemispheric crossroads. They especially do this, as we have seen, when it is useful to them. At the time of this writing, diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba are in the process of being normalized. Just as they did when NAFTA was on the horizon, business and civic leaders in the Gulf South are once again invoking their cities' roles as "gateways" to Latin America and the Caribbean in hopes of capturing a share of this new potential market. Given the political baggage surrounding Cuba's history with the U.S., it will interesting to see what role cities like Houston, New Orleans, and Miami play in shaping relations with the island nation, commercial and otherwise.[17]

[17] For examples of Gulf South port cities' recent interest in becoming a key gateway to Cuba, see "Houston Ready to Be a Gateway to Havana," *Houston Chronicle*, 17 Dec 2014; "New Orleans Could Boom with Resumed Cuba Trade," *Next City*, 12 Jan 2015, https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/cuba-us-relations-trade-new-orleans-port; "Obama's Plan to Lift Cuba Sanctions Raises Hopes of US Gulf Ports," *Journal of Commerce*, 13 Feb 2015; "Port of New Orleans Will Cater to Cuba as Trade Rules Ease," *Louisiana Weekly*, 24 Oct 2016.

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