

# The Foundation of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security (1942)

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**CISS**  
SEGURIDAD SOCIAL  
PARA EL BIENESTAR

**HISTORY, THEORY  
AND WELFARE 1**



HISTORY, THEORY  
AND WELFARE

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Secretary General  
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*It is possible to organize human communities in such a way that workers are protected from the worst, material and moral consequences of illness and unemployment. Tomorrow will be better than yesterday. You who suffer will find an environment of security that will help opening the narrow door of happiness among you more generously and broadly.*

Paul Van Zeeland, 1942



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## PREAMBLE

The Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS) is a truly unique international cooperation agency, born in 1942, in the midst of World War II, at a time when there were very few international organizations and the theory about them was practically null. Even in its name you can notice that it is different from others and that it looks much more like the international instances from the early twentieth century than those that would arise at the end of the war.<sup>1</sup>

Since then it has been a space for the discussion and generation of proposals to improve social security in the Americas. In it, the main models in the field, such as the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), have been debated by characters of the highest global relevance: Salvador Allende, Juan Domingo and Eva Perón, Nelson Rockefeller and many others, are an essential part of their history.

Taking all this into consideration, the historiographical abandonment is striking. Actually, there are very few

<sup>1</sup> On the CISS and its comparison with other organizations, see César Sepulveda, *a cooperación internacional en materia de seguridad social en las Américas*, UNAM, Mexico, 1980. Available at <https://archivos.juridicas.UNAM.mx/www/bjv/libros/5/2109/23.pdf>; y Michael Wallace y J. David Singer, "Inter-governmental Organization in the Global System, 1815-1964: A Quantitative Description", *International Organization*, no. 2, vol. 24, pp. 239-287, 1970.

works on it.<sup>2</sup> Except for some efforts, fundamentally PhD Thesis,<sup>3</sup> its history has practically not been studied.

Despite its almost 77 years of existence, it has been underestimated and almost doomed to oblivion.

Precisely, in this and other works I intend to correct that situation. From a series of notebooks that are part of the History, Theory and Wellbeing collection, I will explain a story that not only speaks about the path of an institution, but also about humanity. The Conference has been an actor and witness of the reconfiguration of the margins on the Public and Private, of international conflicts such as World War II and the Cold War, and of the solidarity attempts by governments to improve social security. Its history is also that of the union of the American peoples in the search for well-being.

With all this, I not only intend to narrate the life of an institution and give the reader a broad view of the different issues that cross it. I also seek to contribute, as far as possible, elements that may be useful to understand the historical reasons of its birth and help restore an organism to

<sup>2</sup> Along with Sepúlveda's work, there is the story elaborated by the CISS. See Pedro Cervantes, Olga Palmero and Antonio Ruezga, *History of the Inter-American Conference on Social Security, 1942-1994*, CISS, Mexico, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> See Norberto Ulaje, *Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social*, bachelor's thesis, UNAM, Mexico, 1970; María del Carmen Martínez, *Elementos de la Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social*, bachelor's thesis, UNAM, Mexico, 1990; Guadalupe Chacón, *La Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social y su fortalecimiento en una época de crisis: la influencia de la política de México, 1982-1988*, bachelor's thesis, UNAM, Mexico, 1994; and Guillermina Anaya, *La Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social (CISS), situación, participación y logros en América Latina*, bachelor's thesis, UNAM, Mexico, 2002.

the height of its origin. In order for the CISS to face the problems of well-being in the 21st century, its first steps need to be known, its virtues recognized and its errors analyzed.

This first notebook is the beginning of the reconstruction of an exciting history full of conflicts and international agreements, of the always controversial issue on how to face common issues, of pilgrimage in search of permanent headquarters and of international work for the well-being of the continent.



## INTRODUCTION

The foundation of the CISS is a scarcely documented historical fact. Despite being an international organization with a different nature from that of its peers, there seems to have not been much interest in understanding its origin and strange configuration. In addition, the few existing works usually give an account of a linear history and without many conflicts: everything is explained since the International Labor Organization (ILO), and its starting point is usually set at the First Labor Conference of the American States which are members of the ILO, carried out in Chile in 1936.

However, this is only a half story. The Conference is very atypical precisely because it is the result of the encounter between three great processes: the change in relations between the United States, the Americas and Europe; the reconfiguration of the roll of the state due to industrialization and wars, and the complex path of the ILO to consolidate itself as a world institution and survive the conflicts of that time.

All this means that the road to reach the Chilean Conference was really complex. Only ten years ago it seemed impossible to hold an American meeting that included European actors. In fact, before allowing that, the creation of a Pan-American institute that complied with the functions of the ILO was considered, including the rising preoccupation for social security.

This is why, in the following pages, I intend to give a broader perspective on the foundation of the CISS. In the first section, I explain that while Europe began the paradigm shift on the intervention of the State in common affairs, America was in an intermediate process, marked by the rise of the US economy, liberalism in the Americas and Pan-Americanism.

In the second part I mention how in the wake of the 1929 crisis, the interest in labor and healthcare increased in various nations. This caused the governments, which were still under the logic of the Pan-American hemisphere, to think about building their own ILO: The Inter-American Labor Institute (IIT in Spanish).

Then, in section three, I explain that the crisis also generated an accelerated change in American perceptions about healthcare and global relations, which led to the emergence of inter-Americanism: an international policy based on regional cooperation without intervention — that would change during the Cold War — but that would allow transatlantic collaboration in front of the common themes and enemies, such as fascism. This would allow the ILO to expand on the continent and put an end to the idea of an American labor institute during the First American Labor Conference in 1936.

Now, in section five, I explain a more traditional part of history: the influence of the Havana Conference (1936) and the Lima meeting (1940) in the foundation of the CISS. I elaborate all this considering that the war was the engine of each one of the meetings and, even, the one that created the favorable conditions for the foundation of this organism: the suspension of the International Conference of National Unions of Mutualities and Health Insurance Funds and the

relocation of the ILO to Canada would be the crucial events in all this.

Finally, I analyze the minutes of the First Inter-American Conference on Social Security. In it, I show the legal nature of its creation, who attended, the spirit present in each of the delegations, the different debates on social security and the resolution in which it is constituted as an international organization.

With the above I intend to offer the reader a barely known story about the creation of this institution, without neglecting the conditions that allowed it and that make it even more interesting. I hope that those who deepen their reading enjoy it as much as I enjoyed writing it. The foundation of the CISS is full of curiosities, continental stories and high-level debates about well-being in America and the world.



## THE EXPANSION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND PAN-AMERICANISM

During the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europe lived the repercussions of modernization and industrialization. The rapid technological advances and the changes in the production model generated drastic changes in people's lives. Internal migration and population concentration in cities increased; the number of workers grew enormously and with them the demands to improve their working conditions.

All this led the State, as it was known at that time, to enter into crisis. Industrialization also caused the gaps in inequality between elites and the new mass of workers became more visible. This made the old idea of social assistance more and more unsustainable, in which care and well-being were individual matters and, at most, philanthropic.

Liberalism had constructed the idea that all individuals were free to improve their circumstances and that the intervention of the State in that process, rather than an aid, was coercion. For that reason, even the laws for the benefit of the less favored, such as the New Poor Law of Great Britain, provided minimal and miserable help: any act beyond would cause individuals to become conformist and not improve themselves.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In this regard, see George Rosen, *A History of Public Health*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2015.

The above implied that common affairs should be confronted privately, that is, through particular efforts or the altruistic participation of other sectors of civil society.

The problem was that, given the growth of the population and the industrialization process, there was an increasing pressure to reduce inequality and increase the rights of all. In addition, to top it off, the ghost of communism haunted Europe. Marxism spread rapidly throughout the continent and more and more unions and parties that communed with their ideas were increasing.

Possibly it was Bismarck's Germany who first faced the problem differently. To avoid the "radicalization" of communist ideas, an insurance was proposed to insure workers against illness, death and disability. In a short time, this idea spread throughout the continent and the first social security laws emerged.<sup>5</sup>

If liberalism had entered into crisis in itself, the Great War would force other economic measures to be implemented. The destruction of Europe had not only ended the empires and caused the triumph of communism in Russia, but also left millions dead, disabled and unemployed. After the villages destroyed each other, it was impossible to ask them to scratch themselves with their own nails and face the common problems with mere personal effort and altruism.

In this context, after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, the UN and the ILO arose. The first task was to be an international body for the peaceful resolution of conflicts; the second, to generate inputs to face the problems of work and

<sup>5</sup> Manuel Idelfonso Ruiz Medina, *Políticas públicas en salud y su impacto en el Seguro Popular en Culiacán, Sinaloa, México*, PhD thesis, Autonomous University of Sinaloa, Culiacán, 2011.

social security. The League of Nations was bound to fail after the United States abandoned it and the losers of the war were punished more,<sup>6</sup> but the ILO would remain at the forefront of labor issues from then until today.<sup>7</sup>

To face the problems of social security, the ILO itself promoted the creation of the Conference of Mutualities and Insurance Funds in 1927; direct precedent of the International Social Security Association (AISS) and older sister of the CISS. This organism was really interesting. Different health insurance fund representatives participated in it to exchange relevant information about the practice of their societies and of different insurance institutions.<sup>8</sup>

While this was happening in Europe, in America they had practically not initiated industrialization processes, except in the United States. Although there were already labor conflicts, which even escalated — like those of Cananea and Río Blanco in Mexico<sup>9</sup> — the reality is that there was still no such feeling of expansion of the Public Sector.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Erika Pani, *Historia mínima de Estados Unidos de América*, El Colegio de México, Mexico, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Regarding the ILO and, especially, its influence in Latin America, see Héctor Gros Espiell, *La Organización Internacional del Trabajo y los derechos humanos en América Latina*, UNAM, México, 1978; and Juan Carlos Yáñez, “La Organización Internacional del Trabajo y el problema social indígena: la encuesta en Perú de 1936”, *Secuencia*, no. 98, pp. 130-157, 2017a.

<sup>8</sup> César Sepúlveda, *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Mexico is a very important case. The revolution had a great social sense and, in fact, President Venustiano Carranza was among the first in the continent to use the expression “social security”. See María del Carmen Martínez, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> With this I do not want to diminish all the struggles for social justice. I just want to emphasize that the circumstances were different from

In addition, America was greatly influenced by Pan-Americanism, which was an international policy with which the United States sought its expansion and commercial control of the continent.<sup>11</sup> Its emergence can be explained by industrialization, the defeats of Spain in Cuba and the Philippines, and the radical interpretation of the Monroe doctrine by the Secretary of State James G. Blaine.<sup>12</sup>

*The New York Evening Post* first used the Pan-American expression in 1889, to explain Blaine's proposal to hold an International American Conference where security and trade issues were discussed.<sup>13</sup> The objective of the Conference was to establish an international agreement to keep America together, with the idea that the real enemy was in Europe. That is why we had to strengthen ties between nations, foster customs alliances and even promote a single currency. Of course, Secretary Blaine forgot to mention that all this should work in favor of his country and that the in-

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the European ones. To learn more about these struggles, see Francisco Zapata, *Historia mínima del sindicalismo latinoamericano*, El Colegio de México, Mexico, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Although there are many important texts on the subject, I recommend Joseph Byrne Lockey, *Pan-Americanism: It's Beginnings*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1920; Alonso Aguilar, *Pan-Americanism from Monroe to the Present*, Montly Review Press, New York, 1968; César Bermúdez, "Proyectos de integración en América Latina durante el siglo xx: una mirada a la integración regional en el siglo xxi", *Investigación y Desarrollo*, no. 1, vol. 19, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> To delve deeper into Blaine's relevance in Pan-American politics, see Edward Crapol, *James G. Blaine: Architect of Empire*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, New York, 1999

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Byrne, *op. cit.*

ternational intervention was negative as long as they did not carry it out.<sup>14</sup>

This is how the International American Conferences emerged, later called Pan-American Conferences, which occupied a central place in the organization of the Pan-American Union (UPAN), a direct antecedent of the Organization of American States (OAS). Although it was never possible to establish the single currency among member countries, this body did manage to become a space to directly influence nations.

In fact, its headquarters were in Washington and it was chaired by the United States secretary of State.

However, the Pan-American Conferences were also international spaces to develop ideas on issues that concerned them all and build ties between nations. In addition, the fact that they were carried out in different countries helped to dissipate, even a little, the influence of the United States on some issues. One of the first joint actions was the creation of the International Sanitary Bureau in 1902 — later called the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau (1923) —, the direct precedent of the current Pan-American Health Organization, dedicated to the creation of strategies to internationally address problems related to illness and health.

Thus, after the Great War, the countries of a destroyed Europe needed the participation of the State in common affairs, among which social security was one of the most urgent. Meanwhile, the United States was consolidated through trade and regional control based on Pan-Americanism. However, the global coordinates changed rapidly,

<sup>14</sup> As in Cuba, Dominican Republic, Panama and Haiti. See Erika Pani, *op. cit.*

which had repercussions on the Panamanian Conferences, beginning a long process that would lead to the creation of the CISS.

## THE VII PAN-AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND THE INTER-AMERICAN LABOR INSTITUTE

The VII Pan-American International Conference (1933) marked a before and after on the continent. There were substantial changes in regional policy and new alternatives that were developed around labor and social security issues. It was there that the idea took hold on the continent that the State was a reference of the common and, therefore, a fundamental agent for the necessary expansion of the Public Sector.

Prior to this, at the V Conference of 1923, it had already been suggested that the State should participate in health and social security issues. All thanks to the fact that the meeting was held in Chile, a country that was then forming, albeit in a fragmentary way, social insurance,<sup>15</sup> and that it also had, through the lawyer Moisés Poblete,<sup>16</sup> a good relationship with the ILO.

<sup>15</sup> Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Social Security in Latin America: Pressure Groups, Stratification and Inequality*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 1978.

<sup>16</sup> About Moisés Poblete, the ILO and the latinamerican labor movement, see Juan Carlos Yáñez, "Moisés Poblete Troncoso y la primera historia del movimiento obrero latinoamericano (1946)", *Revista Izquierdas*, no. 37, pp. 261-280, 2017b; Patricio Herrera, "Colaboraciones técnicas y políticas trasatlánticas: América Latina y la ILO (1928-1946)", *Estudios Internacionales*, no. 189, pp. 77-96, 2018. On the good relations between Chile and the ILO, see Juan Carlos Yáñez, "Chile y la

The idea, however, did not have the expected impact.<sup>17</sup> As I mentioned, Latin America was far from European reality.

The war had not brought death, mutilated or ceased. Liberalism remained the predominant ideology, trade unionism and the labor movement were relatively weak, the influence of communism was still insignificant and the economy, so far, had not suffered havoc; In fact, it had been favored by the US boom and the export system.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Pan-Americanism, with everything and its bad reputation, was strong. The notion of a united America in the face of the European threat was present in the ideals of nations. This meant that any interference from an agent outside the continent was seen with bad eyes, especially in the United States. A situation especially dedicated to the ILO.

At that time, the ILO did not have much presence in America. The Pan-American logic of the united hemisphere had obstructed it, despite its link with different workers' centers and important people such as the aforementioned Moisés Poblete or Vicente Lombardo Toledano. However, it always threatened to increase its influence. Latin America had begun a slight pro-

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Organización Internacional del Trabajo (1915-1925): hacia una legislación social universal", *Revista de Estudios Históricos Jurídicos*, no. 22, pp. 317-332, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Accident insurance was incorporated in many Latin American countries in the twenties, but it was until the thirties that sickness, maternity and death insurance emerged. See Guadalupe Chacón, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> The majority of the Latin American countries were in an intermediate position on the scale of world income per capita and were integrated into the world economy through primary sector exports. While Brazil was a poor country in 1920, Argentina was among the 12 richest countries in the world. On the economy in Latin America during this period, see Víctor Bulmer-Thomas, *La historia económica de América Latina desde la Independencia*, FCE, Mexico, 2010.

cess of industrialization,<sup>19</sup> which would sooner or later bring the same problems that European countries suffered to the region, such as the growing influence of communism among the workers. This would generate an increase in labor demands and allow the ILO to gain territory. To avoid this, it was necessary to deal with these issues regionally, and the ideal place to do so was the VI International Pan-American Conference of 1928. It should propose alternatives in this regard, which included the creation of a Pan-American organization that had the same role as the ILO, but regionally controlled.<sup>20</sup>

Unfortunately for those interested, the work of the Conference did not prosper. There were many outstanding issues since the last meeting and some countries still showed no clear interest in the matter. In addition, it seems that Moisés Poblete, at the request of the ILO, had lobbied with several delegations so as not to discuss the issue.<sup>21</sup> Only, as commonly happened in those meetings — when it came to strategic issues — the proposal did not die completely. It was agreed that the Executive Committee of the Pan-American Union should do everything possible so that

<sup>19</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>20</sup> The intention was clearly known by the ILO. In fact, they thought that the United States not only intended to form this body, but also to promote an American League of Nations, as can be read in the confidential report of the Spanish Fabra Ribas in 1922. In this regard, see Juan Carlos Yáñez, “Work in the Pan-American debate (1923-1936), “El trabajo en el debate panamericano (1923-1936)”, *Relaciones Estudios de Historia y Sociedad*, no. 138, pp. 45-72, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> In a note to the ILO, Poblete points out that the creation of that office had been set aside “as a result of personal journeys that I made myself close to friendly delegates.” Cited in Juan Carlos Yáñez, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

in the next meeting “it was studied and ruled in relation to the material improvement of the workers”.<sup>22</sup>

For that next meeting, however, the regional panorama had completely changed. The 1929 crisis impacted the American economies without distinction. The United States stopped buying goods from Latin American countries, which were in crisis because they depended on these exports. This hit their incipient industrialization, and many workers lost their jobs or suffered drastic salary modifications. Therefore, labor mobilizations increased, demands were radicalized and liberal regimes also entered into crisis.

All this caused the VII Conference to have a completely different tone to its predecessors. Most of its program was devoted to the functions of the State and social problems,<sup>23</sup> and there was no debate in which the economic crisis, labor issues or the situation of vulnerability of rural and indigenous communities were not mentioned.<sup>24</sup> Most of the ge-

<sup>22</sup> See Sexta Conferencia Internacional Americana, “Acuerdo para el mejoramiento de material de los trabajadores”, La Habana, 1928. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14358/mejoramiento-material-de-los-trabajadores-sexta-conferencia-internacional-americana-la-habana-1928/>

<sup>23</sup> Chapter V of the Conference was devoted to social problems. Point number one of that chapter was the consideration of the establishment of an Inter-American Labor Office that considered “social insurance: lack of jobs and practical *forms of social security*” as one of its guiding principles (italics are mine). In this regard, see Séptima Conferencia Internacional Americana, “Programa de la Conferencia”, 1933. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14578/programa-de-la-conferencia-septima-conferencia-internacional-americana-montevideo-1933/>

<sup>24</sup> It is important to mention that this Conference dealt in detail with new issues for the time, especially the rights of women and the social problems caused by the inequality between “Creole” and indigenous

neral concerns were about health, hygiene, prevention and disability, illness and unemployment insurance. Attendees stressed that the region was experiencing moments of terrible “social inequality, of economic misery and injustice among the workers of the city and the countryside,” and that the continental union depended on jointly generating favorable conditions for the less favored sectors.<sup>25</sup> For that, it was necessary to build an international body exclusively dedicated to labor and social security issues.

That instance should have been the Inter-American Labor Institute (IIT).<sup>26</sup> The brief history of the IIT is quite interesting, although it never came to fruition.<sup>27</sup> Its creation was proposed by the Mexican delegation, whose country had entered the ILO two years ago. That is why people referred to it as a Pan-American Labor Institute that would not be its competitor, but rather collaborate with it. However, its

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sectors. See Séptima Conferencia Internacional Americana, “Derechos civiles y políticos de la mujer”. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14665/derechos-civiles-y-politicos-de-la-mujer-septima-conferencia-internacional-americana-montevideo-1933/>

<sup>25</sup> See Séptima Conferencia Internacional Americana, “Instituto Interamericano del Trabajo”. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14675/instituto-interamericano-del-trabajo-septima-conferencia-internacional-americana-montevideo-1933/>

<sup>26</sup> Bruno Figueroa, *Cien años de cooperación internacional de México, 1900-2000: solidaridad, intereses y geopolítica*, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to the texts of Yáñez and Figueroa, see Norberto Ferreras, “La construcción de una *communitas* del trabajo: las relaciones de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (ILO) y América del Sur durante la década de 1930”, *Dimensões*, no. 29, vol. 29, pp. 3-21, 2012; and Vanesa Teitelbaum, “La política laboral en la VII Conferencia Panamericana”, en Carlos Marichal, *México y las Conferencias Panamericanas*, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico, 2002.

structure was intended as a mirror organization: it would have a central office based in Buenos Aires and Inter-American Labor Conferences every so often. It would also be made up of national delegations appointed in a tripartite manner — government, employers and unions — and its executive body would have representatives from the UPAN.

In turn, the Institute had to fulfill two main functions: the construction of inter-American ties between workers — implicitly implying the creation of a regional labor coordinator — and the generation of economic, political and social studies related to the workplace. For that, it would again have a “friendly” relationship with the ILO and be inspired by its work to do its own.<sup>28</sup>

As I already mentioned, its creation was justified by the discussion of labor rights, disability pensions and disease care, so it gave great importance to health, hygiene, prevention of occupational accidents and the insurance of workers.<sup>29</sup>

In summary, it was to be an institution to promote labor rights and devote attention to social security in the continent.

However, this interesting attempt at American cooperation on labor and social security lost support in a short time and failed to materialize, despite the fact that the proposal was accepted by most nations.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Yáñez, *op. cit.*

<sup>29</sup> See Seventh American International Conference, “Inter-American Institute of Labor,” 1933. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14675/instituto-interamericano-del-trabajo-septima-conferencia-internacional-americana-montevideo-1933/>

<sup>30</sup> Most member countries, including the United States, supported the creation of the Institute. However, the latter was reluctant in terms of financing. It had been resolved that, as is often the case with these

## THE FAILURE OF THE INTER-AMERICAN LABOR INSTITUTE AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE OF 1936

Actually, the IIT proposal took the pulse of the time change badly. It is true that the great crisis had paved the way to materialize the proposal, but it had also transformed the interests of its first promoters. In fact, in less than a year, hemispheric and global relations would be completely different from what they had brought to life. Paradoxically, these geopolitical changes were announced at the same VII International Conference. In it, Secretary of State Cordell Hull presents the Good Neighbor Policy promoted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>31</sup> It established that Pan-American relations would be supportive, friendly and not inter-ventional. Therefore, a resolution would be promoted with which a customs truce would be agreed, the negotiation for the suppression of trade barriers and the goodwill so that

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types of agencies, governments would be responsible for financing them. The point is that all countries were going through problems due to the crisis and not even the Americans could take care of such a large expense. In this regard, see Ferreras, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> See Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945: with a New Afterword*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995; and Earl R. Beck, "The Good Neighbor Policy, 1933-1938", *The Historian*, no. 2, vol. 1, pp. 110-131, 1939.

trade agreements favored all parties equally.<sup>32</sup> However, the change was not only hemispheric, but also global.

Roosevelt's policy initially intended to be neutral in the face of conflicts, but of international collaboration to avoid them.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, before the emergence of fascism and communism, a transatlantic international policy was developed with the intention of curbing possible national threats and drive away "bad influences" from the continent.

Thus, the Pan-American logic was set aside and the path to inter-Americanism was opened. It was no longer intended to lead the continent against European interests, but for nations of both continents to fight against fascism and communism. This opened the door to the participation of different organizations and allied countries, as long as they respected American sovereignty, especially American interests. During the Cold War this policy would be radicalized and would be fundamentally anti-communist.<sup>34</sup>

Unlike Pan-American, it's harder to locate the origin of the Inter-American concept. In fact, since the emergence of the Pan-American International Conferences, the two terms used to be used interchangeably — especially in Latin American nations that did not value Pan-Americanism positively. But the first time it appeared in an international Pan-American agreement was during the V Conference,

<sup>32</sup> See Seventh American International Conference, "Economic, Commercial and Tariff Policy." Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14635/politica-economica-comercial-y-arancelaria-septima-conferencia-internacional-americana-montevideo-1933/>

<sup>33</sup> Robert Dallek, *op. cit.*; and Erika Pani, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> On the Cold War in Latin America, see Vanni Pettinà, *Historia mínima de la Guerra Fría en América Latina*, El Colegio de México, Mexico, 2018.

with the resolution on money orders.<sup>35</sup> Thereafter, its official use became widespread, to the extent that many Conferences, such as that of Peace, and also the Labor Institute and, of course, the Social Security Conference, were named inter-American.<sup>36</sup>

This important change in policy favored the ILO, it was clear that it should stop the rise of the IIT in order to increase its influence on the continent. For that, it proposed a double strategy: a series of Latin American missions and the establishment of a bilateral relationship with the United States.

Between 1934 and 1936, the Organization carried out five missions in strategic countries: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Peru and Chile.<sup>37</sup> Mexico was not included in the agenda, perhaps because it was the promoter of the Institute, although the ILO maintained a good relationship with the Mexican government via Lombardo Toledano, who was clo-

<sup>35</sup> See Fifth American International Conference, "Giros Postales Interamericanos", 1923. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/14223/giros-pos-tales-interamericanos-quinta-conferencia-internacional-americana-santiago-1923/>

<sup>36</sup> This process was very complex. Some authors do not speak of Inter-Americanism, but of new stages of Pan-Americanism. On the other hand, certain politicians, such as Haya de la Torre, saw in inter-Americanism the policy of The Good Neighbor of Roosevelt. In my opinion, it wasn't until the creation of the OAS and with the Cold War that it acquires a much more precise definition. In this regard, see Ryan Fletcher, "Pan-Americanism — A Dream or Reality?", *Hispania*, no. 1, vol. 18, pp. 103-112, 1935; and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, *Treinta años de aprismo*, Fondo Editorial del Congreso de Perú, Lima, 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Patricio Herrera, "The American Labor Conferences and the Debate on the Working Conditions of the Proletariat of Latin America, 1936-1946", *Mundos do Trabalho*, vol. 7, núm. 13, pp. 105-128, 2015a.

se to President Lázaro Cárdenas. As a result of these missions, the First International Conference was held in 1936 in Santiago, Chile.

On the other hand, the relationship with the United States changed completely. In 1934, this country became a member of the ILO, although it was not part of the League of Nations. With this, both won: the Organization served as a link with possible allied countries of the Society and in return obtained “the blessing” of the United States to participate actively in America. If back in 1928 they seemed to pursue different ends, in 1934 they already had a good international collaboration.<sup>38</sup>

However, one issue had yet to be resolved: the IIT was not proposed only for geopolitical reasons, but also for the objective need to solve workers’ labor problems, including those related to social security. So, it was not enough to do international politics; It was also necessary to provide feasible solutions in this regard.

As I mentioned, in 1936 the first International Labor Conference on American territory, was convened in Santiago, Chile. The meeting was held there in the interest of the Chilean government, because it calmed the criticism of the most radical leftist of its country a little, while at the same time it was firm facing the pressure from the rightist to reduce its social policies.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the meeting was

<sup>38</sup> On the United States membership in the ILO, see, “The Membership of the United States in the International Labor Organization”, *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 28, núm. 4, pp. 669-684, 1934.

<sup>39</sup> César Sepúlveda, *op. cit.*

promoted a year earlier at the proposal of the Chilean delegation.

The intention was not only to face global problems, but also regional ones: “the conditions of agricultural workers, the recreational uses of workers and the application of social security”.<sup>40</sup> That is to say, everything that was supposed to be done by the IIT, was destined to perish without having seen the light.

In this way, the ILO had everything ready to prevent the development of the IIT. It had the approval of the United States and had lobbied with the main countries of the region, although it did not gain the support of Uruguay. In addition, it had some luck, as the Mexican government did not send worker delegates, which weakened its defense of the Institute. The absence of Mexican worker delegates is interesting. The reality is that 1936 was a complicated year for the country. The president was in the middle of a conflict with the former president Plutarco Elías Calles and there was tension due to the “radicalization” of his government. So, in order not to start another conflict and, supposedly, at the proposal of Emilio Portes Gil, the decision was made not to send any worker representatives.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Patricio Herrera, “Vicente Lombardo Toledano y el Congreso Obrero Latinoamericano (1935-1938)”, *Relaciones Estudios de Historia y Sociedad*, no. 138, p. 121, 2015b.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123. This also meant the absence of Vicente Lombardo Toledano. However, the situation is not very clear. Although Lombardo sent a letter to express his disagreement about the absence of worker delegates at the meeting, he had already considered not attending, by founding the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM). In addition, his participation was complicated, as his good relations with both the ILO and the government of his country would have prevented

Due to all this, the IIT proposal easily lost. During the meeting, the Uruguayan delegation resumed the initiative and was supported by Ecuador, Mexico and Paraguay.

United States did not want to participate in the dispute. In the end, it was decided that the Institute would not proceed and that labor problems would be dealt with through regional federations of sponsors and obliged to the ILO, which would have in turn a year and a half participation of Latin American officers.<sup>42</sup>

Regarding social security, a commission was created chaired by José Enrique Sandoval, a member of the Cuban delegation. It presented a report containing detailed studies on health, accidents, pensions and disability. With that study as a basis, a complex resolution was drawn up that would mark the discussions on the subject until the foundation of the CISS.<sup>43</sup> The first thing contained in the resolution was a central argument: changes in the labor world in the last 50 years had shown that it was necessary to insure workers to protect them from any risk arising from their work. Therefore, and with the desire to collaborate with the American countries in the matter, it was essential to establish some basic principles of social security and some other requirements that each government should meet.

In summary, the basic principles were that all workers had the right to social security that should be mandatory and governed by fair legislation. In order for it to materiali-

him from taking a clear position without having problems with either party. So, in my opinion, his absence was a strategic solution.

<sup>42</sup> Warren Irvin, "Labor Conference of American States, Santiago, Chile, 1936",

<sup>M</sup>*onthly Labor Review*, 1936

<sup>43</sup> *Idem*.

ze, it was necessary for the State to participate and guarantee the functioning of institutions that faced the accident, illness, old age, disability, premature death and problems that their dependents may have, taking into account the bosses, but especially the workers.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the ILO took advantage of geopolitical changes to consolidate its participation in the continent and faced the needs that had led to the creation of the IIT. From then on, it would be a crucial actor in continental policies in this area and the main promoter of the creation of an American body dedicated exclusively to social security.

<sup>44</sup> See ILO, "Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, *Labor Conference of American States which are Members of the ILO*, Santiago, 1936, pp. 271-302.



## THE HAVANA CONFERENCE AND THE LIMA MEETING

After 1936, the foundation of the CISS is much clearer, although that does not mean that it was simple. Its direct background is the International Labor Conference of 1939, in Havana, and the international meeting for the inauguration of the Hospital de la Caja Obrera in Lima, Peru, in 1940.

Inevitably, the Havana Conference was marked by the start of the Second World War, which would also impact the ILO. The whole meeting was imbued with the armed conflict, the search for peace and the affirmation of “unshakable faith in international cooperation, the inescapable need for peace and belief to eliminate war as an instrument of national policy.”<sup>45</sup>

However, the global context did not prevent social security work from continuing; on the contrary, it empowered them. It was understood that a fundamental tool to avoid conflicts was to guarantee the well-being of the people, and for that purpose a rigorous analysis was presented on the work done in the previous Conference, in order to

<sup>45</sup> “Segunda Conferencia Americana del Trabajo de los países miembros de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo”, La Habana, 1939. Available at <https://www.dipublico.org/101537/segunda-conferencia-americana-del-trabajo-de-los-paises-miembros-de-la-organizacion-in>

know how the States had advanced in its implementation and which were the pending challenges.<sup>46</sup>

The debates on social security were intense and took much of the meeting. Substantial progress was made in the matter and hard work was done to deepen the principles and proposals that had been made in Chile. Of all that was discussed, there is a debate that I would like to highlight, because it clearly shows the new perspective on the public sector and is still valid today.

The subject was compulsory insurance for occupational accidents. The debate dealt with whether it should be guaranteed through the institutions administered by the State or if private insurers should participate. At the end of many discussions, it was declared that accident insurance should be entrusted “to institutions that do not pursue any lucrative purpose and that deal exclusively with the prevention of occupational risks, the administration of benefits in kind and of payment of cash benefits”.<sup>47</sup>

The result of the debate shows the change of era: the transit of public benefit as a result of private action,<sup>48</sup> to the action of the highest public referent, the State, to gua-

<sup>46</sup> ILO, “Report on the Action Taken to Give Effect to the Resolutions Adopted by the Santiago Conference”, Geneva, 1939.

<sup>47</sup> In this regard, se Guillermo Palacios (en prensa), *Crónica de una jornada institucional*, CISS, México; y ILO, “Conferencia del Trabajo de los Estados de América”, *Revista Internacional del Trabajo*, no. 3, vol. 21, 1940.

<sup>48</sup> By that time, Bernard Mandeville’s famous “fable of bees” had lost strength. In the midst of the conflict, it was virtually unthinkable that “the competitive search for self-interest (‘private vices’) would yield good effects (‘public benefits’)”. Specially in the case of social security. In this regard, se Michael Warner, *Públicos y contrapúblicos*, FCE, Mexico, 2012.

rantee the common welfare. This idea was the one that permeated throughout the meeting and resulted in the following resolution:

- a) Every State must establish and maintain an accident repair legislation, inspired by the principle of occupational risk, which must be applied to all employees, whether national or foreign, and in the latter case, in accordance with the principle of reciprocity.
- b) The victim of an accident at work is entitled to medical-surgical benefits, medications, prostheses, orthopedics, necessary for restoration, hospitalization and rehabilitation.
- c) In addition, the victim will be entitled to a daily or weekly compensation of two thirds of the base salary, at least, if the temporary disability is total, and the corresponding percentage of it if it is temporary [...], which should be delivered from the day after the accident occurrence.
- d) If the disability is total and permanent, the victim will be entitled to an income equivalent to at least two-thirds of his salary, and if it is permanent and partial, to an income equivalent to the percentage that corresponds to him.
- e) In case of death, the bereaved shall be entitled to an income of at least two thirds of the deceased's salary.
- f) Every State must establish or maintain legislation for the mandatory insurance of illness, disability, old age and death, in accordance with the norms set forth in the resolution itself.
- g) The insurance must be administered by public institutions or by those created by the interested parties

themselves, recognized by the State, whose resources will come from the insured themselves and their employers, in whose charge will be the total or most of the corresponding fees to the low-wage or paid worker in kind.<sup>49</sup>

However, despite the achievements, no progress had been made in the generation of an international space specializing in social security. So far, the same thing that was planned to be done through the IRT had been done, only with the ILO. Something else was needed, and it would be war again that would give the last impetus for the creation of the CISS.

As I mentioned earlier, the ILO had promoted the Conference of Mutualities and Insurance Funds years ago, as a space that would coordinate international efforts on social security.

Since its creation, it had made substantial progress and developed on time every year. Unfortunately, in 1939, with 18 member countries, it had to suspend its activities due to the beginning of the war.

Something similar could happen to ILO. With the League of Nations on the verge of collapse and the Mutual Conference suspended, it was a matter of time before it also entered into paralysis. In order to avoid it, it had to move to the McGill University, in Montreal, Canada, in August 1940. That action brought several consequences on the continent.

The first was that it introduced Canada to the Inter-American concert. So far it was not part of the Pan-American Union and, in fact, this continued until it became a

<sup>49</sup> Pedro Cervantes, Olga Palmero and Antonio Ruezga, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

member of the OAS in 1990.<sup>50</sup> America's relationship with Canada was always complicated by the fact that it was considered "a member of another imperial system and essentially non-American: the British Commonwealth of Nations."<sup>51</sup>

However, due to the change in the headquarters of the ILO, this tension diminished at least for the time being, and Canada gained special relevance. In fact, one of the most curious questions at the First CISS was that for the first time that country was present at a continental meeting.

The second consequence was the emergence of the Inter-American Committee of Social Security Initiatives (CISS), which would be responsible for promoting the creation of the CISS. The key to this was Peru, which in 1938 was the first Latin American State to be part of the Mutualities Conference. Everything indicates that, with its disappearance, and with the ILO on American territory, it was a natural ally to build a similar organism in the new continent.

For this reason, in December 1940 the Peruvian government, under the pretext of the inauguration of the National Social Insurance Fund for workers in Lima and Callao, invited representatives from Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and the ILO to witness the event and a protocol meeting.

The meeting was chaired by the director of the ILO and by the Minister of Health of Chile, Dr. Salvador Allende. The CISS was founded at it with the mission of helping the

<sup>50</sup> Jean Paul Hubert, "La entrada de Canadá en la OEA: una buena decisión en el momento oportuno, o breve historia de una larga vacilación", *Agenda Internacional*, no. 29, vol. 18, pp. 9-18, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

exchange of experiences between the social security institutes of each of the countries and the creation of a CISS.<sup>52</sup> It was also resolved that said Committee would be based in Montreal, and that its main mission would be to organize the First Conference of that organization, which would finally be held in Chile, in 1942.

In this way, in the midst of war, confrontation and anger, governments managed to maintain collaborative links around social security. The highlight of that effort would be the first CISS, where not only the most relevant issues in the matter would be dealt with, but also the feeling of peace and friendship between nations would be transmitted.

<sup>52</sup> Guillermo Fajardo, "Importancia de Salvador Allende Gossens en la organización de la Primera Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social", *Revista CISS*, no. 8, pp. 7-24, 2004.

## THE FIRST INTER-AMERICAN SOCIAL SECURITY CONFERENCE

The First Conference was held from September 10 to 16, 1942, in Santiago, Chile. Establishing an exact date of birth of the CISS is a problem, since it is an atypical organization that does not have a foundational treaty. In fact, so far everything indicates that it does not have a constitutive act. What exists, are a series of minutes of the first meeting, as well as the agreement of the nations for the creation of an international body and a standing committee to direct it.<sup>53</sup> This can be read in resolution number 15 issued on Sep-

<sup>53</sup> The legal origin of the CISS is very interesting. Because it was an organism created before the great international organizations, it was not born by means of a treaty, but by a resolution. However, said resolution was signed by the will of representatives of the States, who have the capacity to create international organizations through express will; in this case, the resolution in question. Since then, the Conference has had an activity of an international organization, has received treatment as such from its peers and other States, and has documents that recognize its function, such as the Declaration of Mexico and the Headquarters Decree. In this regard, see CISS, "Declaración de principios de la Seguridad Social Americana", México, 1960; y Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, "Decreto Promulgatorio del Acuerdo entre los Estados Unidos Mexicanos y la Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social (CISS) relativo al Establecimiento de la Sede de la Conferencia en México, firmado en la Ciudad de México, el trece de octubre de dos mil cuatro", *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, Mexico, 2004.

tember 16. For this reason, in my opinion, that is the day it was officially born.<sup>54</sup>

The delegations that attended for each country were large.<sup>55</sup> Along with Ambassadors, Ministers of Health and Social Security, employers' representatives, academics, members of the labor sector attended. In addition, of course, there were representatives of the ILO and the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau. Among those present were many interesting characters, such as Salvador Allende, Nelson Rockefeller, Torcuato Di Tella, and Paul Van Zeland, to mention a few.<sup>56</sup>

The Conference was organized in the same way as others of the time. It had a deliberative body with a president elected by its members.<sup>57</sup> The latter should guide

<sup>54</sup> On September 16, Resolution number 16 was voted: "Crear bajo el nombre de la Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social, un organismo permanente de cooperación que actuará en relación con la Oficina Internacional del Trabajo". CISS, *Actas de la Primera Conferencia Interamericana de Seguridad Social*, Caja de Compensación de Los Andes/Corporación de Investigación, Estudio y Desarrollo de la Seguridad Social, Santiago de Chile, 1992, p.321.43

<sup>55</sup> The countries that attended were Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, the United States, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay.

<sup>56</sup> It is important to mention that, although they did not attend, the honorary presidents of the Conference were the presidents of each country: Manuel Ávila Camacho, Getúlio Vargas, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ramón F. Castillo, Enrique Peñaranda, W. L. Mackenzie King, Fulgencio Batista, Juan Antonio Ríos, Rafael L. Trujillo, Rafael Ángel Calderón, Carlos Arroyo, Jorge Ubico, Tiburcio Carías, Elie Lescot, Anastasio Somoza, Ricardo Adolfo Guardia, Higinio Morínigo and Manuel Prado.

<sup>57</sup> The president of this First Conference was Miguel Etchebarne, administrator of the Compulsory Insurance Fund of Chile.

the discussion, enforce the regulations, direct the votes and give an account of the general proposals to the General Committee. Said Commission<sup>58</sup> was in charge of determining the program, the agenda and proposing resolutions based on the proposals voted in plenary.

In general, the discussions were enjoyable. Those present agreed on the diagnosis that the time had come for the State to take charge of health, helplessness and the risks of work.<sup>59</sup> It was considered that, although Christian charity had been a first scheme for the protection of social needs, after the Industrial Revolution, and in the context of the war, state institutions were needed that were not only responsible for forecasting labor risks, but of all the states of need of society as a whole.<sup>60</sup>

There was also a general idea about the place of the Conference in the international context. In the war environment, regional cooperation in social security was very

<sup>58</sup> The Commission was made up of the president, the vice-presidents, the president of the Organizing Committee, the delegate of the Administration Council of the ILO, the representative of the director of that same organization and the representative of the Pan-American Sanitary Bureau.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>60</sup> Although social welfare and social security were almost used as synonyms at that time, the difference between the two was implicitly stated in the discussions. The first would be the “judgment or knowledge that is formed on the risks that may harm man in the future and the effort to be made” and the second, “a set of principles, norms, and institutions that intend to establish, maintain and to organize mechanisms and systems of attention and response to the various states of need faced by members of the society in general”. In this regard see Porfirio Marquet, “Protección, previsión y seguridad social en la Constitución mexicana”, *Revista Latinoamericana de Derecho*, no. 3, pp. 75-89, 2006.

important. For delegates it was an act of humanity in the midst of barbarism. A “heroic” effort of nations to overcome differences and strengthen their ties of friendship. In Van Zeeland words, the meeting itself was “an act of faith” that showed that the Americas refused to give up, even a little, their social idea.<sup>61</sup>

It is likely that the speech of the former Belgian Prime Minister was the most meaningful of the meeting and that is why it helps to better understand the origins of the CISS. He commented that his nation, like all of Europe, was in ruins because of a war that was no longer between different countries, but between two completely different ways of conceiving life: freedom and authoritarianism. That the world was disoriented, immersed in a whirlwind of “fire and blood” where the people, despite everything, resisted waiting for something better.

Precisely the Conference was a ray of hope to mitigate the suffering of these peoples. It was a “constructive work at a time when destruction was felt everywhere”. In addition, it not only discussed the present problems, but also those of the future. Everything that would come out of that meeting “would serve in Europe and beyond it in the days ahead.” In the future, when the way forward of the people resumed, the work would have favorable repercussions for all. In his words: “the new seed that has been sown will germinate.”<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> CISS, *op. cit.*, p. 86. It is worth mentioning that two months later, in England, the Beveridge Plan would be published, which would give even more strength to what was raised at the Conference.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-87.

Despite the optimism of Van Zeeland, the meeting also showed the problems of that future. An example of this was a tense moment between Nelson Rockefeller and Salvador Allende. In his brief exchange of words, one can see how Pan-Americanism was perceived, what was expected of Inter-Americanism, and even what relations between the United States and Latin America really would be during the Cold War.

In his speech, the American tycoon — and then coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs — mentioned that the war was the result of social insecurity. The lack of participation of governments in the well-being of individuals allowed the emergence of “prophets of dishonor and falsehood” in all countries that took advantage of the weakness of the unprotected volunteers to blind them with empty promises about their care.

However, for the moment, the Americas had not given in to this situation and that is why, in addition to defeating the world’s enemy forces, it was necessary to solve social security problems in the continent.

For this, state engineering was not enough, but an international political and economic alliance had to be built to help calm hunger and promote development in the region. In his opinion, they had to close ranks around the same friendship and cooperation policy:

Through agreements between governments, developing a common effort successively in several countries aimed at the application of new procedures to improve health care, health and food production. By virtue of these purposes we contribute our technology, our equipment and ideas, our resources, our organization and our experts in these problems.

[...] Without meddling in the sovereignty or integrity of any government, we really face the fact that true social security cannot be implemented by local, regional or national systems, however complete and effective they may be. Really effective social security measures must be conceived internationally and internationally applied.<sup>63</sup>

After these words, Salvador Allende gave a statement in his name and not from the Chilean delegation. In his short speech, he commented that Rockefeller's opinion seemed very interesting, because it was very similar to what the governments of the continent had historically requested: that economic choking and political control over American nations be left behind. That is why the CISS was expected to be the beginning of a new era marked by international cooperation "without imperialism, with political freedom and respect for our sovereignty".<sup>64</sup> It is still ironic and illustrative that 31 years later, in the midst of inter-american anti-communism, and in the same city where the Conference was held, the government of Salvador Allende would fall during a coup d'état supported by the United States.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, concerns about social security were divided into six points that were discussed as a whole and in 58 papers:<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>65</sup> See Peter Kornbluh, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability*, The New York Press, New York, 2013.

<sup>66</sup> CISS, *op. cit.*, pp. 349-353.

1. Application of Social Security to agricultural workers, independent workers and domestic staff.
2. Efficiency and economizing of medical and pharmaceutical health insurance benefits.
3. Functioning of disability pensions.
4. Defense of health through Social Security and its relations with the problems of Health and Social Assistance.
5. The most recommended financial regimes considering the magnitude of the scope of the insurance, the characteristics of the affiliated population and the need to establish continuity of forecasting.
6. Need to organize a uniform system of bio-statistics on etiological bases.<sup>67</sup>

The first point was the most discussed. Partly because without a time limit, all the participants wanted to talk and deepen into different aspects, and partly also because of their complexity. In fact, the issue is relevant because it remains one of the great debates of our time: how to incorporate domestic and rural workers in the social security scheme?

The discussion was led by the Chilean delegation, because its legislation already included the insurance of the entire population.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> The Constitution at the time said that: "The Constitution ensures all the inhabitants of the Republic: to safeguard the public health and sanitary wellbeing of the country [...] protection at the workplace, industry and social prevention tasks, especially with regards to healthy living spaces and economic conditions in order to provide each inhabitant a minimum state of wellbeing". In this regard, see Humberto Nogueira, *Constituciones iberoamericanas. Chile*, UNAM, México, 2005,

However, despite the insistent questions of the attendees, he never explained how he intended to achieve it. Of course, he was very insistent on the urgent incorporation of these groups into social security that should be reflected, an issue that was in fact manifested in resolution number 9.

In contrast, the delegations of Peru, Uruguay, Mexico and Brazil were more explicit in this regard. In the case of Peru, two main concerns about rural workers were established: first, that it was difficult to incorporate because they were dispersed in large areas of work; they were populations that went through internal migration processes, had low salaries, were poorly connected to urban areas and did not have similar labor schemes to workers. Second, that these same problems, but intensified, were present in indigenous sectors. Therefore, it was necessary for the CISS to make a clear resolution in this regard and the ILO be asked to conduct studies for the formalization of its work and with its incorporation into social security.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, the Mexican delegation explained the country's ejido scheme and established that its social security should be linked to the distribution of land and the bipartite scheme — beneficiaries and State — and that it should be part of the national institution of social security.<sup>70</sup> Meanwhile, the Uruguayan delegation commented that in order to incorporate domestic and rural sectors, it was necessary to understand “the culture of each job”, and from this, assess the ways of its incorporation.

pp. 158-162.

<sup>69</sup> Review the participation of Rabagliati, Luna and Ramírez at CISS, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-94.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

In his opinion, “we had to defend their culture and raise it in their category of man”, and, therefore, “generate technical support to meet their shortcomings and thus incorporate them into social security.”<sup>71</sup>

Finally, Brazil stated that, along with these cases, it was necessary to think about the incorporation of intellectual and liberal workers, that is, lawyers and doctors.<sup>72</sup> In his opinion, although it was not an urgent problem for all nations, it was likely that over the years it was increasingly necessary. To address their concern, it was established, in resolution 5, that there would be a specific discussion on this type of work at the next Conference.<sup>73</sup>

As for points two, three and five, there really wasn't much debate. By this, I do not mean that there were few participations, but that in general there was a great consensus on how social security institutions should be financed, in which disability pensions should work, and on the most recommended financial regimes, everything had to go through the State in accordance with the resolutions of Chile and Havana.

On the first and fifth points, it was clear that the institutions had to be supported by employers and workers and that the State should guarantee access to social security. That is why it was necessary that all works aspire to formalization. An example of this was the presentation of the delegate Alonso Di Piero, from Brazil, who in a broad speech spoke about the way in which Getúlio Vargas had built an efficient social insurance system based on “supplementary

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

taxes imposed equally by the employee, the employer and the government."<sup>74</sup>

There was also a broad consensus on pension financing; the debate was rather about the definition of total disability and whether temporary disability should be covered. On this, it was concluded that the immediate thing was to cover the individuals who had been unable to work and subsequently, gradually, also those who had a momentary problem, but could return to their post after a while, or that could develop a different skill, for which they would not have been disabled.

In the end, everyone understood that social security could only be guaranteed by the State and the reduction of economic inequalities. That is why the proposal by Salvador Allende in this regard was approved by consensus:

The First Conference declares [...]

- a) Society must find in the solidarity effort of all nations and all men a new inspiration to overcome misery and guarantee the dignified and sufficient conquest of livelihoods.
- b) The power of economic and technical resources should be used in meeting the needs of existence of more people and all peoples.
- c) The economic objective alone is not enough to consolidate an open and generous cooperation if it is not identified with the just social order, in which the yields of production are equitably distributed.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

- d) Each country must create, maintain and increase the intellectual, moral and physical value of its active generations, prepare the way for future generations and sustain the elucidated generations of productive life. This is the sense of social security: an authentic and rational economy of human resources and values.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, the fourth point was treated along with other general issues; in fact, it was examined between the speeches of Rockefeller and Allende. Therefore, it seems that it was not widely discussed. However, in reality, everything indicates that the agreement was lobbied by the Mexican delegation before joining the plenary, which would explain why it had been discussed so briefly.

I believe that it was due to two reasons. First, because in the midst of the general issues, Miguel García Cruz and Ignacio García Téllez presented the Compulsory Social Security Law that would be presented by the government of Manuel Ávila Camacho. During the presentation, it was established that the recommendations of the ILO were contemplated, the commitments acquired at the Santiago de Chile Conference of 1936 were respected and a model of health and social security was proposed with contributions, actuarial basis, collective agreements, benefits and an instrument to fulfill its functions — the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS).<sup>76</sup> They annexed an agreement already signed by several countries, except for Chile, for the

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 335-336.

<sup>76</sup> On the history of social security in Mexico, see Gustavo Sánchez Vargas, *Orígenes y evolución de la seguridad social en México*, Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales-UNAM, Mexico, 1963.

Conference to support this law in solidarity and be considered as a great influence for the rest of the nations.<sup>77</sup>

Second, because after this intervention, the Argentine delegation interrupted the plenary to request that once and for all it be established that, beyond the provision and social assistance, all countries should move towards a mandatory social security system that would contemplate health services. García Téllez immediately adhered to this proposal and between the two delegations asked to vote immediately. Without discussion and with a unanimous vote, resolution number 6 was established:

To the countries of the Americas that have various social security and welfare initiatives or institutions in development but have not yet structured a comprehensive Social Security scheme, that directs their social security policy towards the unification and generalization of these benefits, within a mandatory social security system.<sup>78</sup>

After days of discussion, the meeting headed towards the end. The creation of a Permanent Inter-American Social Security Committee (CPISS) was officially resolved, which would be responsible for following up on the resolutions, organizing the next conferences and their respective agendas. It would be made up of holder delegates from all nations, a tripartite delegation from the ILO, the director ge-

<sup>77</sup> The countries that signed were Argentina, Chile, the United States, Guatemala, Colombia, San Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Haiti, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Canada.

<sup>78</sup> CISS, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-181.

neral of the Pan-American Union and the director of the Pan-American Office; Its general secretariat would be designated by ILO.<sup>79</sup>

This is how the closure was reached. It was an emotional, but brief moment. Emotions were overwhelming, but the fatigue of those present was evident. In addition, most of the final agreements were taken out of plenary, so there were virtually no final discussions, except for some brief comments. The resolutions and statutes were read quickly and voted unanimously.

In the final speeches, Chile was once again thanked for the organization, the ILO for its support and the delegates present for their work and availability to build a permanent social security body. The Conference was an unprecedented event and that caused contradictory feelings: hope for the future and unease for the present; peace of mind for the work done and concern for the ways to materialize it.

The members were convinced that the efforts made would strengthen ties between the different nations, but, above all, that it gave them “spirit satisfaction” and “new strengths to continue fighting for a better future.”<sup>80</sup> With this feeling the meeting ended, the members said goodbye and started on their way back home.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332.

<sup>80</sup> *Idem.*



## CONCLUSIONS

The CISS was born thanks to the conciliatory spirit of the American countries and the effort of the ILO to maintain international collaboration in a violent and vertiginous moment, in which lively-aversion was stronger than solidarity. In this sense, it is an institution that is the daughter of hope and faith that wellbeing is a superior value that can unite nations above any problem that exists between them.

Therefore, its history is also that of the change of international relations and of the global political reconfiguration. Its nature is not understood without the long process that it lived before it was generated: Pan-Americanism and its necessary transformation in the midst of the economic crisis; industrialization and the struggle of workers for their rights; the pilgrimage of the ILO to have a presence throughout the world and remain in function despite the war.

In the history of its foundation you can see the different dilemmas of social security. Industrialization and war forced nations to rethink the boundaries between public and private sectors and the way in which common issues were to be addressed. Therefore, the welfare of the workers was at the center of the debate: it was them who supported the new global system and also those who were least protected from the contingencies of work and armed conflict.

The First Inter-American Conference on Social Security perfectly summarized this complex situation. In its deba-

tes, the most important problems of this time were raised, which, to a large extent, are also those of today.

In addition, the foundations were laid for the international organizations that would emerge later and indications of what the inter-American postwar relations would be like.

In conclusion, the September 1942 meeting concentrated all these feelings and circumstances and gave rise to an organization different from all existing ones. The CISS has summoned personalities of all kinds, has been the center of high-level debates and even the construction of its headquarters building is full of curiosities and valuable works. But all that, and much more, is a story still waiting to be told.

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In 1942, representatives from different countries of the Americas met in Santiago de Chile in order to discuss the welfare, war and tools that States had to face the risks of work. The main result of these discussions was the creation of an international agency specializing in social security: The Inter-American Conference on Social Security (CISS).

In these pages, the reader will be able to find the historical reason for this institution and the processes that led to its foundation: changes in relations between the United States, the Americas and Europe; the reconfiguration of the role of the State from industrialization and wars, and the complicated walk of the ILO to consolidate itself as a worldwide recognized organization.

This first notebook is the beginning of the reconstruction of an exciting story full of conflicts and international agreements, of the always controversial issue of how to face common issues, of international work to improve social security and of the union of American governments to in order to achieve the well-being of the peoples of the continent.

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