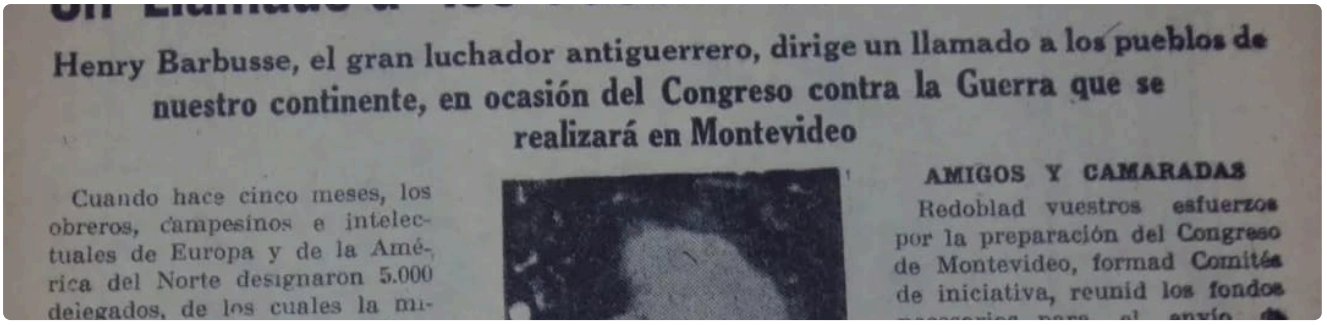
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Henry Barbusse, el gran luchador antiguerrero, dirige un llamado a los pueblos de nuestro continente, en ocasión del Congreso contra la Guerra que se realizará en Montevideo

Cuando hace cinco meses, los obreros, campesinos e intelectuales de Europa y de la América del Norte designaron 5.000 delegados, de los cuales la mi-

AMIGOS Y CAMARADAS

Redoblad vuestros esfuerzos por la preparación del Congreso de Montevideo, formad Comités de iniciativa, reunid los fondos

Henri Barbusse: Pacifism and Antifacism in the Americas

Ângela Meirelles de Oliveira

One of the first 'war novels' to be published in the twentieth century, Le Feu made Henri Barbusse internationally popular. The repercussion of the work as a manifesto about the banality of war and the defense of pacifism gave the author the status of an intellectual commited to his time.

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Barbusse: an activist for the international of thought

Born in Asnières-sur-Seine (France) in 1873 to a French father and English mother, Barbusse began his literary life thanks to the prize he won in a competition in the newspaper *L'Écho de Paris*. In 1895, this prize became his first book of poems, *Pleureuses*, which was published by Charpentier. Various other publications of short stories and poems anteceded his work of greatest success, the 1916 book *Le Feu: journal d'une escouade* (Fire: diary of a battalion), published by Flammarion. Barbusse had enlisted as a volunteer in the First World War and after being wounded in the battlefield wrote his memories about the conflict, which had a resounding public impact and won the Goncourt Prize that year.

One of the first 'war novels' to be published on European soil in the twentieth century (followed by Eric Maria Remarque (1928) and Ernest Hemingway (1930), amongst others), the book made Henri Barbusse internationally popular. It was published in English the following year (London, 1917 and New York, 1933), and some translations into Spanish—often poorly identified and not widely distributed—appeared after the First World War. [1] However, despite the existing translations, it is possible that Barbusse's much cited and referenced work was being read in the French original.

The repercussion of the work as a manifesto about the banality of war and the defense of pacifism gave Barbusse the mission that would characterize him until his death: the commitment of the intellectual to the questions of his time. A parallel between him and Émile Zola was often mentioned by those who reviewed his books or traced his trajectory, an association which placed him in the genealogy of the *Dreyfusards*. From prison Antonio Gramsci wrote: "The only French book which continues Zola is *O Fogo*, by Barbusse, because the war caused a certain type of fraternity to be reborn in France." [2] It must not be by coincidence that among his works Henri Barbusse wrote a biography of the French writer in his 1932 book *Zola*.

Imbued with pacifism in the immediate post-war era, Henri Barbusse helped found the *Clarté* movement (1919-1921)—the 'International of Thought'—, followed by the creation of the *Clarté* periodical (1921-1928), with Romain Rolland, Anatole France, and others. Involved in the tensions of joining the Third International and the emergence of the French Communist Party (PCF), the periodical was close to Bolshevism and the defense of the revolution, though without explicitly adhering to it. With the motto "the formation of an international of intellectuals," the group soon "brought together against the war elites from all over the world, men of 'good will' and progressives, with any distinction of tendencies or schools." [3]

Clarté's spread in Latin America is striking, with the profusion of *Clarté* or *Claridad* experiences in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru at the beginning of the 1920s. There exist a small number of references to the existence of a *Clarté* group in the United States; however, no bibliographic references or sources were found about it. Various of these enterprises derived from the personal contact of South American intellectuals with Barbusse, such as Maurício de Lacerda in Brazil and José Carlos Mariátegui in Peru. Peter Gold attributes the various Clarté groups on the continent to Mariátegui's contacts: "Mariategui was in no small measure responsible for spreading the work of Barbusse and the Clarté movement in Latin America." [4] Moraga Valle believes that the Peruvian journal was inspired by the Chilean one, due to the contacts of the Aprista Haya de la Torre with the Santiago group. [5] Exchanges among the Latin American enterprises are relevant and deserve to be carefully studied, but the prolific correspondence of Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland with numerous Latin American intellectuals cannot be overlooked, as it may have served as inspiration for the formation of a network. Romain Rolland had an intense epistolary dialogue in the 1920s with Gabriela Mistral, José Ingenieros, Haya de la Torre, etc. Fábio Moraga Valle's

article investigates in greater detail the profusion of *Claridad* enterprises including Mexico and Guatemala and concludes that although they debated common themes (national, Latin American, and international questions), the groups did not manage to create transatlantic collective action.

Henri Barbusse adhered to communism in 1923 and intensified his activism around the role of intellectuals in society. His 1927 book *Manifeste aux intellectuels* points to the link between Soviet Russia and the role of writers. With the change in the editorial line of *Clarté*, which adhered to the Trotskyist dissidence in 1928, Barbusse decided to start a new international intellectual mobilization project. The newspaper *Monde* (1928-1935) continued the activities of *Clarté* and likewise circulated intensely in the Southern Cone countries. This is what can be seen, for example, in the resurgence of *Monde* in Uruguay in 1936, at the initiative of the communist intellectual Pedro Cerruti Crosa.


11 mai 1934
37, rue Joubert - Paris

Septième Année
N° 301 1 fr. 50

MONDE

HEBDOMADAIRE INTERNATIONAL

DIRECTEUR : HENRI BARBUSSE

TOUS UNIS pour le 20 mai

LE PLUS GRAND CONGRÈS ANTIFASCISTE

Pr. SAMOILOVITCH
L'ARCTIQUE

JOHN DOS PASSOS
PACTE AMÉRICAIN

GABRIEL PÉRI
INDO-CHINE ET JAPON
EN ITALIE FASCISTE

Le prochain numéro de "Monde" paraîtra le 25 Mai

Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Reproduction of the first page of *Monde*, French edition, 11 May 1934

Source: Gallica



Reproduction of the first page of the Uruguayan *Monde*, 15 May 1936

Source: World Congress against the Imperialist War Collection IISH, Amsterdam

Among the names that were part of the council of the French *Monde* were the Argentine socialist Manuel Ugarte. A renowned anti-imperialist activist, Ugarte had been in exile for a long time in France, where he had been in contact with Henri Barbusse. The epistolary evidence indicates that Ugarte was responsible for various connections between Henri Barbusse and intellectuals from the Southern Cone. Wanting to expand the movement against the war and fascism around the world, Barbusse asked Ugarte for names and addresses of Latin American intellectuals to whom he could send the proposal for mobilization. This expedient was commonly used to divulge ideas via correspondence, as can be noted in the letter sent to Carlos Quijano. Until January 1933, Manuel Ugarte wrote in Monde about the Latin American political situation under the yoke of imperialism.



ACCION MONTEVIDEO, SABADO 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1932 PAGINA CUATRO

Contra la guerra

Un manifiesto de Barbusse

HenriBarbusse que ocupa el Secretariado del Comité I. de Lucha contra la Guerra Imperialista nos envía desde Aumont la siguiente carta:

Aumont, 2 de Diciembre de 1932.

Querido Carlos Quijano:

Mi amigo Manuel Ugarte me comunica su dirección y me asegura que Vd. se interesaría por el movimiento de lucha contra la guerra que organizamos en el mundo entero.
Le estaré muy agradecido si le fuera posible dar a conocer los documentos que le envío separadamente y la relación adjunta, y si hiciera el favor de contestarme lo que piensa a este respecto.
Reciba mis sentimientos más sinceros.

Henri BARBUSSE.

Mi querido camarada:

El 27, 28 y 29 de Agosto se ha realizado en Amsterdam un vasto Congreso Mundial contra la guerra imperialista.

ganización internacional tiene una tarea enorme que cumplir: Organización de los debates y las directivas del Congreso, encuestas, y campañas verbales y escritas, sobre las intrigas del imperialismo capitalista, es decir sobre los armamentos, las operaciones financieras, las maquinaciones políticas; denuncia de todas las responsabilidades y de todos los responsables, aclaraciones para destruir las campañas de la gran prensa imperialista. En una palabra, campaña continua de ilustración de la masa del público, porque nuestro gran argumento, es la verdad, la verdad profunda, documentada, luminosa y violenta sobre ese problema trágico, simple y complejo a la vez, de los peligros inmediatos de guerra.

El movimiento de Amster-

Profesionales

ESTANISLAO VALDEZ OLASCOAGA, Abogado — Misiones 1462 - Tel. 2380 Central.

JOSE PEDRO ZUBILLAGA, Abogado — 25 de Mayo, 707

ARTURO F. ECHEVARRIA, Escribano. — Uruguay, 805.

ANGEL SILVARIÑO — Abogado. — Juncal 1423.

SAGUNTO PEREZ FONTANA. — Abogado. — 25 de...

Reproduction of the page of the daily *Acción*, (Montevideo, 31/12/1932) where the letter from Henri Barbusse to Carlos Quijano is transcribed

Source: Biblioteca Nacional do Uruguai

The contact of the Argentine Aníbal Ponce with this group of French intellectuals occurred within a network of relations which also involve the figure of Manuel Ugarte. One of Barbusse's letters demonstrates the latter's intention in contacting the Argentine because of his importance for mobilization in Latin America: "... someone like Aníbal Ponce, with whom it is absolutely necessary that we establish relations, is not a communist and he appears to be one of the most important intellectuals in Latin America. I will write to Aníbal Ponce a letter which I will send to you. I think this could start things." [6]

Aníbal Ponce responded positively to Barbusse's appeal to help organize the movement against war and fascism. He soon began to lead the South American movement, becoming president of the Latin American Anti-War Congress of Montevideo, held on 12 March 1933. At the end of 1934, Ponce travelled to Europe and participated in the World Congress of Students, held in Brussel at the end of the December 1934, and the preparatory meetings of the I Congress of Writers of Paris. Ponce visited the USSR in February 1935 and that year returned to Argentina, starting the connections for the foundation of the Agrupação de Intelectuais, Artistas, Periodistas y Escritores (AIAPE). Looking at this trajectory, it can be seen that Aníbal Ponce was close to the projects for the internationalization of the intellectual struggle against fascism which resulted in the creation of the International Association for the Defense of Culture (AIDC).

The Argentine AIAPE, founded by Ponce in 1935 and its Uruguayan homonym—created by a group of intellectuals in 1936, through CTIU (Confederación de Trabajadores Intelectuales de Uruguay) were part of the widespread mobilization against fascism in the River Plate countries. In Brazil similar associations were also created, such as the cultural wing of the Aliança Nacional Libertadora (ANL), formed as a Popular Front in Brazil; generally speaking these groups of intellectuals supported the creation of popular fronts in their countries. In the United States the most prominent anti-fascist organization in the interwar period, pushed by the Communist Party (PCUSA) was the American League against War and Fascism (ALAWF), created on the occasion of Henri Barbusse's visit to the country in 1933, as will be seen below.

The historiography emphasizes the role of French intellectuality as the inspiration for the anti-fascist struggle in the Southern Cone, above all the Comité de Vigilance des Intellectuels Antifascistes (CVIA) in Paris in 1934. In parallel, writers' associations formed the Congress of Writers for the Defense of Culture (Paris, 1935 and Spain, 1937) and the International Association for the Defense of Culture (AIDC), which obtained significant South American and US participation. However, in the case of the United States, Henri Barbusse and his activism does not seem to have served as inspiration for such an intense mobilization as in the Southern Cone countries. In the ALAWF publication entitled *Fight! Against War and Fascism* (1933-1939), Barbusse contributed to only a few issues and his death in 1935 passed practically unnoticed.

In all of these spheres of international mobilization, from the expectation of the creation of an 'international of thought' in the 1920s to the formation of the International Association for the Defense of Culture (AIDC), we can find a greater or lesser references, both direct and indirect, to the figure of Henri Barbusse as the inspiration and catalyst for movements.

From Amsterdam-Pleyel to Montevideo and New York

The Amsterdam Congress in March 1932 was an action by the Communist International (IC), organized due to the threatened invasion of Manchuria by the Japanese; the defense of the USSR against Japanese imperialism was intermixed with pacifist accusations and at the same time with anti-fascist mobilization focused on the Italian regime. The Amsterdam Congress was organized by the writers Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland who appealed to global intellectuality. It was a definitive call for the beginning of the involvement of intellectuals in the struggles waged by the communists, who had been removed from the political struggles of the left by the sectarian strategies of the Communist International. [7]

Later, on 4 and 5 July 1933, another meeting was held in Salle Pleyel, in Paris, aimed to give continuity to what had been discussed in the Amsterdam Congress. With Hitler's victory in Germany, other concerns emerged on the movement's agenda. Out of these encounters came the movement entitled Amsterdam-Pleyel, which was intensely involved in the struggle against fascism in the following years.

During the organization of the Amsterdam Congress in 1932, Henri Barbusse took the lead in the national and international organization of intellectuals. The testimony of Annette Vidal, Barbusse's personal secretary, reports that by chance the task was concentrated in Barbusse's hands, who completed an almost Herculean epistolary task to answer all the requests for information.

> *All the texts which popularized the idea of the Congress asked for any adhesions and requests for information to be sent to Henri Barbusse. [...] Answering individually all the letters was impossible, not answering them unthinkable. Barbusse then decided to dictate by telephone to Paris, to ARAC [...] models of letters on which, as a postscript, we could answer the individual questions asked. [...] In the morning the postman arrived with a heavy load of letters. The whole day passed answering the individual questions and Barbusse spent the whole afternoon signing them. Sitting at his desk, when the letter was signed he would lift his hand slightly, I would remove the signed letter and Barbusse, tirelessly would add his signature at the bottom of the next letter and, if necessary, some words of information about the Congress.* [37]

The above narrative offers clues to explaining Barbusse's vast network of contacts with worldwide intellectuality. On the one hand, the network was centralized, whether purposefully or not, on his person; second, Barbusse spent an enormous effort corresponding with each individual who had written to him, offering the necessary personal touch inherent in correspondence.

The Amsterdam-Pleyel movement in the Southern Cone materialized during the holding of the Latin-American Anti-War Congress in March 1933 in Montevideo. Meeting there were workers, activists, trade unionists, and some intellectuals discussing the Chaco War, underway at that moment between Bolivia and Paraguay. In this context, a visit of the investigating commission of the Committee Against War and Fascism to inspect the situation in the region was scheduled for 1933, with the presence of Henri Barbusse.

However, this visit did not occur, despite the insistence and invitations on the part of activists and intellectuals, as can be seen in Luis Carlos Prestes' letter. The absence of a reliable network of activists on the continent was one of the reasons why Barbusse did not appear at the Montevideo meeting and also did not send the Investigating Commission which had been announced. He justified his attitude with the following comment: "It seems to me to be indispensable to begin at the beginning, I mean to establish secure connections, before thinking of initiatives such as the Investigating Commission in the region of Gran Chaco or the presence of a delegation at an important congress." [8]



L. C. PRESTES

Carta al compañero Barbusse

NOTA DE REDACCION

El nombre de la L. C. Prestes es bien conocido por las amplias masas de obreros campesinos y trabajadores intelectuales de la América Latina, como de un revolucionario ardiente e incorruptible, que convencido en la práctica, en la experiencia de su lucha política de lo erróneo y de lo depravado de las ideas del revolucionarismo pequeño-burgués que seguía antes, supo encontrar el camino hacia las filas del proletariado revolucionario que lucha bajo la bandera de la Internacional Comunista.

El capitán del ejército brasileño, L. C. Prestes, encabezó la lucha armada que se desarrolló en Brasil en 1924-1927 contra el gobierno burgués terrateniente de Bernardes, ligado con el imperialismo inglés. Durante esta lucha se formó un ejército rebelde (la llamada "Columna Prestes") que gozaba de la simpatía de las amplias capas de la población trabajadora que infligió serias derrotas a las tropas gubernamentales. Reflejando el estado de espíritu de la pequeña burguesía, que intentaba una lucha independiente, sin la dirección del proletariado y de su Partido Comunista, contra el dominio burgués-terrateniente, la "Columna Prestes" no tuvo un claro programa revolucionario, ni supo lanzar consignas verdaderamente revolucionarias. Esto condujo a que en 1927 la "columna Prestes" se viese obligada a internarse en Bolivia. Más tarde, la mayoría de los dirigentes del movimiento Prestes, reflejando la diferenciación en las filas de la pequeña burguesía, capituló abiertamente ante la contrarrevolución burguesa-terratenien-

Reproduction of the page of the review *Soviet* (Buenos Aires, 09/1934) where the letter from Prestes to Henri Barbusse is transcribed

Source: Cedinci

In 1935, this expectation gained force and it was announced in the press, especially the communist one. Barbusse's visit to Brazil and Argentina was organized through the intermediation of the activist Étienne Constant, responsible for helping to disseminate the movement in Latin America.

The Brazilian journalist Moacir Werneck de Castro stated in a letter: "Once again I insist on your trip to Brazil. I am certain that we will do everything possible to prepare for this. You will be welcome with the enthusiasm which your brave heart has always awoken in the sincere intellectuals and younger generations." [9] In relation to Argentina, Annette Vidal made some demands showing that the plans for the visit were more advanced. Amongst other concerns, Annette feared about police repression in Argentina, which could prevent the writer from speaking publicly; she was also concerned about his health, which had suffered in his trip to the United States.

Barbusse's planned trip to South America did not occur due to his death on 30 August 1935 in Moscow. This triggered a strong reaction among the intellectuals in the Southern Cone. In the Argentine AIAPE a civic funeral was held at the beginning of September 1935; in the Uruguayan CTIU and in the Brazilian Clube de Cultura Moderna (CCM) there were at the same time public sessions in his honor, with Henri Wallon participating in the event in Brazil. In this country also circulated a testimonial report of Barbusse's funeral in Moscow: Osório César, a communist psychiatrist, was in the USSR at a medical congress and wrote in a letter to *A Manhã* of the pomp and reverence with which his body was laid in state by the Soviets: "Moscow has just paid the mortal remains of the French writer great honors... I dare not say privileges. It seems as if the USSR is crying for having lost a national hero..." [10]

Barbusse's frustrated visit to South America in 1933 did not occur for other reasons. He chose instead to go on a tour in the United States, with the aim of collecting funds for the Committee for the Struggle against War and Fascism and to participate in the I Congress against War and Fascism, held in September of that year.

Henri Barbusse's trip to the United States is little mentioned in the historiography. A report he wrote, entitled "Tournée en Amérique" held in the archives of the PCF [11] in Paris, gives us some clues about the difficulties faced by Barbusse in his activism in the United States.

He was invited to participate in the Congress of the American Committee against War and Fascism (ALAWF), [12] held in New York at the end of September 1933. He took advantage to tour various cities (NY, Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Erie, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, Boston, Newhaven); according to him he participated in more than 40 meetings, with the intellectuals of *New Masses* journal, the *Clarté* Club, and the League of Negro Rights, amongst other groups. His principal objectives were to help organize the movement against the war and fascism in the United States, connecting the local movement with the international one, and raising funds for the organization through sympathizers and collecting money in his talks. In neither case was the trip successful, as will be seen below.

The difficulties faced by Barbusse began at the moment of his entrance to the United States, still in immigration. The writer and his secretary, Annette Vidal, were detained at the frontier after he "admitted that he was a communist," that caused the official to react and leading to a delay in the authorization for their entrance. Tom Mann, a well-known British trade union official, accompanied Barbusse and had had his visa denied by the embassy in London. After consultation with those responsible for immigration on Ellis Island, they were allowed enter the United States.

This gesture caused a reaction in the US press, including praise and criticism, which involved the nature of the state under Roosevelt's New Deal. An editorial from the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, on 3 October 1933, looked at the history of communist intellectuals stopped at the US frontier, such as the British-Indian politician and member Communist Party MP Shapurji Shaklatvala in 1925, or Alejandra Kollontai, in 1926, who was just passing through and was not authorized to 'touch American soil' on the way to Mexico. It

concluded that the action showed the "tolerance of the New Deal with guests from abroad." The newspaper's editorial stated that "It would have equally been an absurd not to let Henri Barbusse enter, a French writer who magnified literature with one of the most graphic representations of the horrors of war. After having been detained in port for various hours last week, he was admitted." [13]

Other newspapers warned about the risks inherent in Barbusse entering the country, since he could show "the appeal which [communist] theory could have to liberal thought by placing the damage caused by war and by capital on top of the list of evils of the world," admitting that Barbusse was also opposed to the social order established in the United States and that the immigration agent had acted 'prudently' by preventing him from entering. The editorial also called Barbusse a 'Pacific Communist' in an ironic manner. This term can indicate multiple understandings about Barbusse in that context. On the one hand, associating his name with softening of the danger of the communist, due to his intellectual and non-belligerent nature; on the other, the epithet referred to his struggle for pacifism and his trajectory as a writer in the First World War, as well as the mobilization against the War and Fascism at that moment. [14]

The First Congress Against War and Fascism was held in the United States between 29 September and 1 October 1933. The press reported that there were between 2 500 and 3 000 delegates "representing the most varied group ever gathered in a peace meeting, with clergy rubbing shoulders with communists, the *Industrial Workers of the World* and the *American Federation Labor* on the same committees, mixing with liberals, veterans and farmers" [15]. Other sources stated that 11,000 people appeared at the event, causing chaos in the traffic. [16] Barbusse's assessment, reported in "*Tournée en Amérique*" was initially optimistic: "There is no doubt that at the current moment a great agitation has been created in the most active and lovely part of the United States, that many marks have been established and that our comrades have before them considerable possibilities for the expansion and strengthening of the Movement for the Struggle against War and Fascism. This appears even more plausible because the American people are in general extremely open, much freer of tradition than is thought, well guided they can achieve much more rapid and decisive progress."

Despite Barbusse's high expectations of the movement in the United States, two problems were occurring. The first was related to the fact that the American League against War and Fascism did not see itself as a part of the international movement; its adhesion to the *Amsterdam Manifesto* (1932) was only "a type of ideological affiliation, a parallelism in types of action, which does not signify a connection of a national organization with an international organization." In other words, the United States organization had affinity with the purposes of the World Movement against War and Fascism, but did not feel subordinated to it. Another problem was the funds obtained from the journey; although he managed to collect a good amount of money, Barbusse said he had spent almost everything on his own journey and in the division with local committees. In the *Letter*, he concluded: "My journey, except for an unforeseen even that may occur, has been null in relation to a concession of the United States to the World Movement against War and Fascism."

Both in the case of the Southern Cone and the United States, the Movement against War and Fascism was inspired by Barbusse, his letters, texts, and manifestos. However, this did not signify strict control over the American organizations; to the contrary, they demonstrated relative autonomy in relation to European movements and Soviet coordination, indirectly represented by the figure of Henri Barbusse. These events showed once again that the struggle against fascism in American countries was marked to a great extent by local political traditions.

Barbusse's trajectory and the debate on engagement

The various reflections in the press on the figure of Henri Barbusse returned to his condition as an engaged intellectual. In the biographical narratives, in his physical description, and the repercussion of his lectures and books it is possible to perceive a shared conception of intellectual and, at the same time, one that became a model for the action of his peers.

The force of the *Clarté* enterprise was evident in the Southern Cone, especially in the recovery of Barbusse's biography after his death in August 1935, when the ideals of the journal were returned to and the 1920s texts republished. In the United States, the initiative of the 'international of thought' did not have as strong an impact as *Under Fire*, for which he was referenced. Alongside numerous articles, Barbusse's death resulted in the flourishing of opinion texts in the press in which his trajectory was analyzed; from these texts can be abstracted some important points about the action of the intellectual.

Most evident in the analyses is the valorization of the experience of metamorphosis experienced by the writer: from frivolous writer to critic. In his trajectory the points of inflection are the First World War, which provided the necessary experience for the recognition of the 'true' path of the intellectual. The valorization of this 'traffic of consciences' [17] was related to the trajectory of anti-fascist intellectuals as a whole, who were expected to 'abandon the ivory tower' and the alignment of political struggles.

Henri Barbusse's political and intellectual trajectory was returned to by activists of various tendencies—socialists, communists, and liberals; the analyses exalt various points of his experience, varying according to the political orientation of the author. The Argentine socialist periodicals *Izquierda*, *Crítica y Acción Socialista* and *Claridad* refer to Henri Barbusse as a socialist. This shows that the communist engagement of Barbusse was not evident to intellectuals. A common point was the interpretation of Barbusse's trajectory through metaphors such as 'clarity,' 'radiance,' 'illumination,' in a reference to the *Clarté* journal, but also to the role of the intellectual as a guide and light for the clarification of consciences. The Uruguayan socialist writer summarizes this association: "... not in vain, [Henri Barbusse] found in the meaning of the word CLARITY, his motto, and on this an anvil, on top of which a burst of starlight became its symbol!" [18]

For communist voices, Barbusse's role went beyond this enlightened conception of a guide and light for the clarification of consciences. Also involved was valorizing in the writer's trajectory his direct engagement in political struggles, going to the battlefield, so that drawing on this the intellectual could reoccupy the role of paladin of a new conscience. Carlos Lacerda, in his speech on Barbusse, valorized the man of action, "the man who fleeing positions and comfort, left his cabinet and came down to the people, the people whom he loved and whom he wanted to liberate from this confusing and hateful present." [19] Even among center-left writers, such as the Argentine *Aiapeano* Alberto Gerchunoff, the harsh contact with reality was exalted in Barbusse's intellectual journey: "What he suffered in the trenches, the sight of immense numbers made into dead meat, heroic meat and stupidly dead and crushed in the mud, gave him the idea of his world magistracy and induced him to transform his work into a militia." [20] In the US press, a similar approach is followed: "He was a soldier in France during the World War. He held the 'World Cross.' But this phase of his life is in the past. Now he is a soldier who fights for internationalism and world peace." [21]

A column by the Brazilian Álvaro Moreyra [22] poetically highlights this aspect of Henri Barbusse's life, through which the writer was removed from his isolation and thrown into the middle of the street, the social reality, which marked his activism. The text contains an extract from the book *L'Enfer* (1908) which

narrates the arrival of a man who, tired of travelling, ends up in a hotel room:

> *The lights of the city turn on. Through the cracks in the window they enter the room. He gets up, opens the window and leans out. 'It is the eternal gesture of those who are alone, within a room.'*

> *This man was Henri Barbusse. Henri Barbusse leaned out the window. The room was life.*
> *The window was war. [...]*
> *The tired man in the small hotel forgot the journey and the past.*
> *He stayed on the street, indefatigable, calling, helping.*
> *The death he brought from war finally carried him.*
> *He went.*
> *But spoke so loud that his words still echo.*

A second aspect of Barbusse's trajectory valorized in the speeches and texts of anti-fascist intellectuals was the communion between life and work, between action and thought. Hermes Lima declared: "His gifts as a writer were so linked to his social action that there is no way to distinguish the revolutionary from the novelist in him." [23] Aníbal Ponce's speech as Barbusse's civic funeral also narrates what can be understood as a certain mixing between the character of his novels and himself, the old soldier with a uniform of war fighting against fascism: "His generous friendship gave me a position at his side, and upon hearing him, so close to my care and admiration, it seemed to me that he was again wearing the grey coat and the helmet of war: as we always saw him in *El fuego* we learned to think about war; just as I had when a young man, among the pictures in my student room." [24]

The importance of the military aspect of Henri Barbusse was especially highlighted in the texts in the US press. The fact that a physically weakened man had enlisted voluntarily at the age of 40 to join a regiment of common men in the First World War seems to have echoed as a great act of bravery for society in that country. [25] Called *Poilu*, the term used in reference to French infantry, stories with precise details of his permanence in the conflict were disseminated: "He was wounded on the front three times, but always insisted on returning. He was offered a promotion, but he preferred to remain a common soldier." [26]

Joseph Freeman, the editor of *New Masses* who accompanied Barbusse on his US tour, emphasized the contradiction between the force of the 'spirit' of the writer and his physical fragility; the Frenchman repeatedly gave speeches while suffering a fever and sick. Freeman's tribute after Barbusse's death sought to bring together the aspects which made Barbusse's personality a model: "The dreams of the artist, the agony of the soldier, faith, reason, and the will of the communist were merged in an almighty being in the crucible of his intense and noble nature. If you saw him moving thousands with his revolutionary message, or talking with an individual worker or veteran of war or writer, you cannot but think: there is a man, there is a poet, there is a Bolshevik." [27]

This composition between Barbusse's personality and his intellectual activism transformed him into a symbol of intellectual mobilization. This assimilation explains, for example, the presence of a poster with Barbusse's face, painted by Antonio Berni, in the 1936 Mayday demonstration in Buenos Aires. The Brazilian Hermes Lima mentions this association: "Tributes to Barbusse are tributes to the anti-fascist cause of liberties and culture." [28] The short note in the journal *Acadêmica* had the same tone: "We who want life, we want life for everyone, we continue to shout. And our shouts will mean Barbusse as well." [29]

From an engaged intellectual in the symbol of the anti-fascist fight, Henri Barbusse's trajectory inspired analyses which brought to the limit the idealization and exaltation of the French writer. Interpretations of his life proliferated which attributed sanctity to him or even Christian inspiration; part of this analysis can derive from Barbusse's work, *Jesus* (1927), in which the writer looked at the human trajectory of the prophet. The Brazilian columnist Aluízio Barata considers him a 'mystic writer,' since "Jesus, in the spirit of Barbusse, gives his hand to Marx, and allies with him in the same work of social reconstruction and renovation. [...] And this mystic ardor in defense of Civilization is what establishes a reciprocal sympathy between the genial writer and all those who suffer and work." [30] Cipriano Santiago Vitureira, in Uruguay, interprets his trajectory in the same way. [31] Freeman, in the United States, describes him as a "prophet and fighter." [32] The comparisons derive from some characteristics attributed to the political and intellectual trajectory of Barbusse: constancy, annunciation, abnegation, preaching, as can be seen in the reading of Alberto Gerchunof: "Henri Barbusse was born with this instinct and lived with this design. He was a saint, in other words, a human messenger and a hero." [33]

These meanings given to Barbusse's political and intellectual trajectory culminated with manifestations of individuals or associations for the continuity of his work. In all of them, Barbusse was revered as an example of the fight of intellectuals against war and fascism. In Brazil, Roberto Sisson on behalf of ANL, stated in a telegram to the World Committee of the Fight against War and Fascism, the "commitment of his example will remain alive amongst us, will inspire us and help us to keep our combativity very high..." [34] In Argentina, in the name of AIAPE, Gerchunoff stated: "Who surpasses him with magnificent courage and who will not pay him the tribute of gratitude? We are here to do this." [35] In Uruguay, Ballesteros stated: "It is healthy and comforting to be able to express what, in an exemplary synthesis, signifies this man, this human archetype, at this summit, a reference, means to guide the efforts..." [36] Henri Barbusse was considered especially exemplary because he did not present any ambiguities. He represented in the interpretations studied a model of the engaged intellectual with an archetype or even sacred character, in whom the intellectuals of the Southern Cone and the United States could mirror themselves as inspiration, perhaps unattainable, of what could be seen as an ideal of engagement.

Intellectuals in the Americas saw in Barbusse a model of engagement. In this case, in addition to what could be considered a problem of the direct influence of French intellectuality on the Americans, it involved a question of identification with the trajectory of people in relation to international mobilization. In the United States, to a lesser extent, the trajectory of the writer as a selfless and resistant soldier was highlighted, as well as the coherence between his life and work.

Based on the questions raised above it can be thought that the transatlantic activism of Henri Barbusse forged him as a model of the engaged intellectual. With his positions marked by certainties and his actions motivated by the iron will of a communist activism, the writer symbolized a model of engagement close to a saint or a martyr, the latter reinforced by his tragic death.

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NOTES

1 See for example Enrique Barbusse, *El fuego en las trincheras* (Madrid: Rafael Caro Raggio, 1917); Enrique Barbusse, *El fuego: diario de un peletón* (Buenos Aires: s. e., s. d.). It can also be assumed that the first Italian translations (*Il fuoco* (Milan: Sonzogno, 1918)) circulated among countries with strong Italian diasporas, such as Brazil and especially Argentina.

2 Antonio Gramsci, *Cadernos do Cárcere* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001), 75-6.

3 Nicole Racine-Furlaud, "Une revue d´intellectuel communiste dans les années vingt : « Clarté»", *Revue française de science politique* 3 (1967): 484-5.

4 Peter J Gold, "The Influence of Henri Barbusse in Bolivia" *Bulletin of Latin American Research 2*, no. 2 (1983): 118.

5 Fabio Moraga Valle, "El resplandor en el abismo: el movimiento *Clarté* y el pacifismo en América Latina (1918-1923)" *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura 42*, no. 2 (2015): 114.

6 Henri Barbusse [*Carta*] 2 déc. 1934, S. l. [para] Constant, Étienne. S. l. Archives du PCF, Paris.

7 Jocelyne Carre-Prezeau, « *Amsterdam-Pleyel* (1932-1939). Histoire d'un mouvement de masse. » (Thèse Doctorat, Université de Paris VII, 1993), 24.

8 Henri Barbusse [*Carta*] 2 déc. 1934, S. l. [para] Constant, Étienne. S. l. Archives du PCF, Paris.

9 Moacyr Werneck de Castro [*Carta*] 12 mai. 1935, Paris [para] Barbusse, H. s.l. - Archives du PCF, Paris.

10 "Henri Barbusse e os funerais em sua honra," *A Manhã*, Out 16 (1935): 2.

11 « Tournée en Amérique » [Barbusse, Henri] [*Carta*] s.d (circa 1933), S. l. [para]. S. l. Archives du PCF, Paris.

12 The American League against War and Fascism (ALAWF) was created through the Congress held in September 1933. In 1937, it changed name to the American League for Peace and Democracy (ALPD) and was ended in 1939, as a consequence of the Molotov-Ribbentropp Pact.

13 "Tom Mann gets his visa," *St-Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct 3 (1933): 20.

14 "The pacific Communist," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct 2 (1933): 18.

15 "2500 meet in front against war," *The Lincoln Herald,* Oct 6 (1933): 1.

16 "11000 fight way to peace confabs," *Daily Worker*, Sept 30 (1933): 4.

17 Ricardo Pasolini, "Scribere in eos qui possunt proscribere. Consideraciones sobre intelectuales y prensa antifascista en Buenos Aires y París durante el período de entreguerras" *Prismas, Revista de historia intelectual* 12, (2008): 99.

18 Montiel Ballesteros, "Limite de Barbusse" *El Sol*, Oct. (1935): 2.

19 "Em homenagem a Henri Barbusse, do Club de Cultura Moderna," *A Manhã*, Ago 31 (1935): 1.

20 Alberto Gerchunoff, "Párrafos sobre Barbusse," *Unidad, por la defensa de la cultura,* Feb. (1936): 4.

21 Jo Metzer, "Henri Barbusse," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Oct 9 (1933): 3.

22 Álvaro Moreyra, "Henri Barbusse e a liberdade," *Marcha*, Nov 22 (1935): 1.

23 Hermes Lima, "A defesa da cultura," *Movimento, revista do Club de Cultura Moderna*, Out (1935): 4-5.

24 Aníbal Ponce, "El recuerdo de Henri Barbusse" *in Obras Completas* (Buenos Aires: Cartago, 1974), 547-50

25 Jack Weeks, "Author of « Under Fire » is still hopefull of Peace for World," *The Detroit Free Press,* Oct 19 (1933): 5

26 "Barbusse, French Poilu, Author, Here," *The Boston Globe*, Oct 25 (1933): 15.

27 Joseph Freeman, "Homage a Barbusse," *New Masses*, Set 10, 1935, 8.

28 Hermes Lima, "A defesa da cultura," *Movimento, revista do Club de Cultura Moderna*, Out (1935): 4-5.

29 "Barbusse". *Revista Acadêmica*, Ago. (1935): 24.

30 Aluizio Barata, "O misticismo de Barbusse," *O Homem Livre*, Ago 31 (1935): 6.

31 Cipriano Santiago Vitureira, "Homenaje a Barbusse," *Movimiento*, Nov (1935): 12.

32 Joseph Freeman, "Homage a Barbusse," *New Masses*, *Set* 10 (1935): 8.

33 Alberto Gerchunoff, "Párrafos sobre Barbusse," *Unidad, por la defensa de la cultura,* Feb (1936): 4.

34 "Em homenagem a Henri Barbusse, do Club de Cultura Moderna" *A Manhã*, Ago 31, 1935, 1.

35 Alberto Gerchunoff, "Párrafos sobre Barbusse," *Unidad, por la defensa de la cultura,* Feb, 1936, 4.

36 Montiel Ballesteros, "Limite de Barbusse," *El Sol*, Oct, 1935, 2.

37 Annette Vidal, *Henri Barbusse, soldat de la paix*. (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1953), 243-4.