THE PRC’S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY TOWARDS LATIN AMERICA IN THE 1950S AND 1960S

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Since its establishment in 1949 and for the next twenty years, the People’s Republic of China carried out a continuous effort to enhance its international position. With the world divided into areas influenced either by the US or the USSR, the PRC saw its possibilities of opening official diplomatic relations restricted. As a response, it implemented a programme of cultural diplomacy, targeting the countries of the Third World.

This article describes the PRC’s cultural diplomacy in Latin America and observes the means by which it was implemented. Additionally, it examines the extent to which this policy was successful, whilst observing the response it had in Latin America. It is argued that the informal exchange carried out through cultural diplomacy enhanced the PRC’s presence in Latin America; however, the later opening of diplomatic relations are to be claimed as product of a favourable international and domestic political situation.

Key words: cultural diplomacy; PRC; Latin America; 1950s; 1960s

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1. Introduction

What imperialism fears most is the awakening of the Asian, African and Latin American Peoples. The Awakening of the peoples of all countries. We should unite and drive U.S. imperialism from Asia, Africa and Latin America back to where it came from.

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The first contact between China and Latin America goes back to the XVI century when the Manila Galleon sailed to and from the Philippines, Veracruz in Mexico, and the port of Callao in Peru. It would transport silk, ceramics, porcelain, gunpowder, and other products from Asia to the Americas, and would return with gold, silver, maize and tobacco; even the Mexican silver dollar served once as currency in China. During the XIX century a second period in the relations is observed, with the first Chinese “coolies” arriving in Latin America, especially to Cuba (when the slave trade collapsed) and Perú. Different events in Latin America during this period produced the migration of Chinese groups throughout the continent and their establishment of colonies in various countries. The decline of the Spanish Empire and the emergence of new powers interrupted the exchange that had been developed by the Spanish, and therefore the contacts between Latin America and Asia ceased in 1815. Some relations were established during the Qing Empire, but they collapsed with the war between Nationalists and Communists.

No further formal or informal approaches to Latin America were made by China until nearly a century and a half later. Since its establishment in 1949, the PRC has conducted its foreign relations toward gaining international recognition and legitimacy. Right after its foundation, the close link with the Soviet Union (USSR) and other countries under communist regimes was formalized. But already towards the end of the 1950s the impending Sino-Soviet Split made itself felt, and the PRC reinforced a movement to strengthen ties with other countries in an effort at self-assertion; during this period, most countries were maintaining relations with Taiwan rather than the PRC. During the 1960s, the PRC was directly competing with the USSR for influence in the developing world. This is the context of the PRC’s cultural diplomacy towards Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s.

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6 Latin America is the part of the Americas where languages derived from Latin are spoken: Spanish, Portuguese and French, and their creoles. The twenty-four countries that form part of Latin America are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guadalupe, Guatemala, French Guyana, Haití, Honduras, Martinique, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.
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It will be argued that activities developed during this period helped the PRC gain a certain presence in Latin America by building links absent previously because of geographical and historical distances, but also because Latin America was part of the United States’ area of influence. By different means the PRC opened channels of communication that helped overcome the lack of mutual knowledge.

Not much importance has been given to Sino-Latin American relations, considering only the extent of economic exchange between the PRC and Latin America today, this study appears relevant. It offers a new approach to the 1950s and 1960s that goes beyond the existing literature which remains largely descriptive and brings together different elements that have been, until now, studied independently.

Such is the case of the PRC’s foreign affairs and the informal exchange between the PRC and Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s that later developed into formal diplomatic relations. Up to a certain extent, this article observes the connection between each country’s own internal affairs and how this was projected in the international sphere, linking historical research with the study of international relations.

The establishment of formal diplomatic relations responded to the situation of the international arena such as the PRC’s effort to gain a seat in the United Nations, and the election of governments that were sympathetic towards the PRC. What appears as significant concerning the importance of the developments of the 1950s and 1960s concerning the PRC’s relations with Latin America is that they set a precedent for the relations between both that continue until today. After the opening of diplomatic relations which started in the 1970s, and a gradually increasing exchange between both areas in the 1980s and 1990s, relations continue growing: in 2005 Chile signed a copper joint venture with China Minmetal Corporation and in 2006 Chile signed a Free Trade Treaty with the PRC; in 2007 Costa Rica opened diplomatic relations with the PRC.

It appears challenging and interesting to study the relations between the PRC and Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s through the lens of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy will be understood as the use of culture and other non-official diplomatic means as instruments of a government to pursue its

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7 The literature about the PRC and Latin American relations covering this period are mainly of the 1960s and 1970s; among them Victor Alba, Joseph J. Lee, Frank O. Mora, Daniel Tretiak, and William E. Ratliff. Up to a certain extent, they are used as primary sources as they were written during the period covered.
national interest. It relies on “soft power”\(^8\) which develops while a political body influences the behaviour of other parties involved, in this case countries, through non-diplomatic means when official diplomatic contact is impossible or precarious. Political scientists produced a definition of this concept only forty odd years after the period studied here; Soft power in the context of this study overlaps with the definition of cultural diplomacy. Together they help establish a link between international relations and history.

Instruments of cultural diplomacy will be observed: visits and exchanges, institutes of cooperation, literature, endorsement of revolutions by the PRC, relations with Latin American communist parties, trade, and the media, which includes radio and the establishment of news agencies. The continuity of the PRC’s activities during this period suggests that their initiatives did find a positive response among at least some of their targeted audience. The texts published in Spanish in the PRC are analyzed. In addition, a questionnaire sent to a few Latin Americans in a position to contribute useful testimony was devised.

This study is divided in three main bodies: a theoretical framework, a historical description of the relations between China and Latin America up to 1949, and an analysis of the means used in the development of ties between the PRC and Latin America specially Chile, Colombia and Cuba.

2. Cultural Diplomacy and the PRC’s foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s

Foreign policy is not the same as diplomacy: foreign policy “is the attitude struck by one state towards another; diplomacy is one of a number of instruments employed in order to make that attitude persuasive”\(^9\). Baldwin produces a four way taxonomy to understand the techniques of diplomacy: propaganda he defines as ‘influence attempts relying primarily on the deliberate manipulation of verbal symbols’; diplomacy refers to ‘influence attempts relying primarily on negotiation’; economic statecraft covers ‘influence attempts relying on resources which have a reasonable semblance of a market price in terms of money’; and military statecraft refers to ‘influence attempts relying primarily on violence, weapons, or force’\(^10\). The combination of propaganda and diplomacy help form


the concept used hereof cultural diplomacy, with “culture (...) [as] a powerful instrument in the hands of diplomats to pursue national interest in an unintrusive, intelligent, convincing and cost-effective manner”\footnote{11}

Under a Marxist-Leninist conception ideology is an intrinsic part of foreign affairs and international relations appear as a projection of the domestic situation of a country\footnote{12}. The PRC’s foreign policy has been presented in “terms of either national interest or the interplay of internal and external factors”\footnote{13}, as well as through a third approach “that focuses on the role of ideology in the theory and practice of Chinese international relations”\footnote{14}. The Chinese Communist Party created an organization of ideas, principles and values from which it derived its foreign policy\footnote{15}. Ideology can thus be seen as an explanation of the first (and real) motive –national interest- that informed Chinese decisions. Nonetheless, ideology itself also shapes the decisions taken, while being shaped in turn by real concerns of those who actually make decisions (for example, alignment with the Third World while obtaining backing in the UN). Mao’s influence on foreign policy does not contradict the main argument: though Mao’s decisions were expressed in Marxist terminology, when it came to foreign affairs China’s national interest always came first.

The broad lines of the PRC’s foreign policy during the 1950s and 1960s can be divided in four wide-ranging periods. A first period (1949-1953) is characterized by the “lean-to-one-side” policy and marked by the Korean War, overall a period of great hostility against the US. A second period (1953-1959) is marked by Soviet aid and de-Stalinization, and also influenced by the Geneva Conference and the Bandung Spirit, with the PRC slowly separating from the Soviet camp. A third period (1959-1965) is marked by the Sino-Indian conflict and the Sino-Soviet dispute; when “Sino-Soviet relations broke down over controversies relating to sovereignty, security, and ideology, China tried to be truly autonomous throughout the 1960s. Border clashes with the Soviet Union convinced Mao and Zhou to lean to one side again, but this time toward the United States”\footnote{16}. A fourth

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\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{11} “Cultural Diplomacy”, \url{http://textus.diplomacy.edu/textusBin/BViewers/oview/cultural_diplomacy/oview.asp} (accessed May 6, 2007).
\item \footnote{13} Young Mun Kim, \textit{Chinese Foreign Policy toward the Third World in the 1970s: the Theory and Practice of Three Worlds} (Ann Arbor: University Microfilm International, 1986) vi.
\item \footnote{14} Ibid., vi.
\item \footnote{15} Garza Elizondo, \textit{China y el Tercer Mundo}, 11.
\end{itemize}
and last period (1965-1970) was defined by the Cultural Revolution, producing a serious contraction in the PRC’s foreign relations.

Throughout the 1950s, the PRC gradually identified itself as having more in common with the nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America “than with the ‘developed’ nations, even if some of those nations shared its socialist form of government.” However, during the 1950s and 1960s the PRC had no official diplomatic relations with any country in Latin America, with the exception of Cuba. These opened in 1960 after the Castro’s Revolution. Therefore, the exchange between the PRC and Latin America, with the exception of Cuba before 1960, was always in a non-official context and can be consequently considered as cultural diplomacy. The PRC had a policy towards Latin America as a whole, the different effects it had in the Latin American countries were products of the different conditions in each one of them.

2.1. Cultural Diplomacy

It is difficult to find a clear definition of cultural diplomacy and it has generally just been taken for granted. It has been defined as the “use of exchange of information, ideas, persons, and culture as a systematic and unified arm of foreign policy”. A more general definition of cultural diplomacy would be how a state or nation pursues a national interest through quasi-official means, as planned by a government toward non-official channels. As an example, any sort of literature produced by a country about itself, and then distributed in other countries, could be classified as cultural diplomacy. Herbert Passin states that Chinese cultural

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18 While dealing with study cases in Asia; Australasia; Eastern and Western Europe, Herbert Passin uses “cultural diplomacy” liberally throughout his text, but a clear definition of the term is never given. See Herbert Passin, China’s Cultural Diplomacy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962).
20 What appear as very good examples of cultural diplomacy today are the programs that Taiwan (or Republic of China) has implemented with different countries in the world after its expulsion from the UN, and especially through the application of pragmatic diplomacy (that emphasize pragmatic returns) since the late 1980s, with propaganda being deeply engaged with diplomacy. For cultural diplomacy, culture, interaction between cultures, and cultural relations for the US, see Frank A. Ninkovich, The Diplomacy of Ideas: US Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
diplomacy was part of the Soviet heritage, and that China developed the concept through a sustained and massive programme directed to the Third World\textsuperscript{21}.

Not having diplomatic channels of communication with Latin America, cultural diplomacy was the only way of establishing contacts while acting as an instrument of foreign policy. Cultural diplomacy “broadens the horizon of diplomatic history, reemphasizing the ‘human’ element in bilateral relations”\textsuperscript{22} while at the same time it proves that “the different elements of historic research cannot be separated, that history’s social, economic, military, diplomatic, and cultural components are all intertwined and condition each other”\textsuperscript{23}.

2.2. Soft Power

First coined by Joseph Nye in 1990\textsuperscript{24} and more fully developed in 2004\textsuperscript{25} in a case study of power exercised by the United States, soft power is a term used in international relations to describe the ability of a political body to directly influence the interests and behaviour of other political bodies through cultural


\textsuperscript{21} Passin, *China’s Cultural Diplomacy*, 4.

\textsuperscript{22} Manuela Aguilar, *Cultural Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*, 4.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 4.


\textsuperscript{25} Nye, *Soft Power*. 
and ideological means. In Nye’s words: “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments” 26.

Nye begins his discussion about soft power with the importance of power, always in the context in which a power relationship exists 27. For Nye, power exists not only in terms of authority and oppression but in the ability to attract and convince also play a big part. Thus, “soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others” 28. It is related to hard power “because they are both aspects of the ability to achieve one’s purpose by affecting the behaviour of others” 29.

The soft power of a country rests on three resources: “its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)” 30. “When a country’s culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that other share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates” 31; situation that perfectly well fits the PRC’s policies of expansion and establishment of a world communist power. But not only does a directed policy exercise soft power, so do elements of popular culture, such as movies not screened in official spaces 32. Nye states that the production of soft power through popular culture is more likely to occur in areas where the cultures are rather similar, but then it rests upon the existence of “willing interpreters and receivers” 33; the transmission of culture as a resource for soft power of the PRC in Latin America appears as feasible: willing interpreters and receivers existed.

In the process of enhancement of soft power, different mediums have been used: among others, academic and scientific exchange 34, distribution of films (as

26 Ibid., 2.
28 Nye, Soft Power, 5.
29 Ibid., 7.
30 Ibid., 11.
31 Ibid., 11.
32 Ibid., 14-15.
33 Ibid., 16.
34 In the case of the United States, for example, it happened with Soviet scientists and KGB agents that went to the country which absorbed not only scientific knowledge, but also political ideas. See ibid., 45.
mentioned above) and popular sports. In conclusion, “the line between information and entertainment has never been sharp”\textsuperscript{35}. Nevertheless, the result of this transmission has not always been successful. For many Latin American sectors of society influenced by American anti-communism, Chinese communist propaganda definitely did not enhance the prestige of the PRC. Nevertheless, the promise of Communism appealed to other parts of society.

Political values are not only taken at face value, but also insofar as they are successfully executed domestically and abroad\textsuperscript{36}: how far a country itself respects the values it preaches. In this case, the situation becomes very sensitive, as some values are accepted, others openly rejected. Yet sticking to values, accepted or rejected, can also enhance soft power while showing the reliability and permanence in the procedures of a country. Here, there is a direct link to foreign policy. Nye affirms that “foreign policies also produce soft power when they promote broadly shared values such as democracy and human rights”\textsuperscript{37}. Foreign policies also produce soft power when they promote a plausible and viable administration-- during the 1950s and 1960s; the PRC presented itself as a plausible way of government.

Public diplomacy, defined as interactions aimed not only at foreign governments but primarily at nongovernmental individuals and organizations and involving the establishment of long-term relationships also builds up soft power. Most of the initiatives of the PRC towards Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s were of this sort. Up to a certain extent, public diplomacy can be considered as another name for cultural diplomacy; the introduction of the term is useful as it broadens the concepts involved in the theoretical discussion.

\textbf{2.3. Third World Policy}

China’s Third World Policy, originally developed from the Soviet “two-camp” theory of 1947\textsuperscript{38}, can be observed from the early 1950s as a strategy for prevention of American encirclement and later materialized in 1955 in the Bandung Conference\textsuperscript{39}. By the 1960s, it was more clearly defined dividing the

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 47.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 62.
\textsuperscript{38} Chen, ed., \textit{China and the Three Worlds},3. The concept of the Three Worlds can also be traced back to the pre-liberation period; see Kim, \textit{Chinese Foreign Policy toward the Third World in the 1970s}.
world in three entities: the First World being the superpowers, the US and the USSR; the Second World being the industrialized countries; and the Third World being the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. China saw itself as part of the Third World that would lead the revolutionary movement against the oppression of both superpowers. The PRC claimed a colonial experience and a continuing opposition to foreign intervention in common with the countries of the Third World. It stressed a common poverty in opposition to capitalist countries and insisted on maintaining its own national identity and heritage. The role played by the United States in the Chinese Civil War, Mao’s perception of the global conflict between the USA and the USSR, and the ideology of the CCP were determining factors in Chinese ideology and practice towards the Third World.

The Third World was seen as the “rural area of the world” where revolutionary movements would develop—or were developing—against the imperialism of the United States and anon, the Soviet Union. In this context, the Chinese dealt with “foreign revolutionary efforts or wars of national liberation.” It supported the emancipation of Third World countries, implementing its foreign policy on three levels that could operate either independently or concurrently: official (government to government), semiofficial (contact with groups and individuals), and communist party levels. Furthermore, the development of the Sino-Soviet rift intensified China’s support for the Third World.

3. Historical Description of Relations between China and Latin America

In this third section, the historical background appears as the key to observe the response and results of the PRC’s cultural diplomacy towards Latin America. Cultural diplomacy is used as an effective tool by the PRC to achieve diplomatic recognition.

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42 Garza Elizondo, China y el Tercer Mundo, 3.
43 Van Ness, Peking’s Support for Wars of National Liberation, 3.
44 Ibid., 5.
45 Dhanapala, China and the Third World, 29.
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3.1. Chinese-Latin American Relations pre-1950

Until the founding of the PRC, relations between China and Latin America were “intermittent and casual”⁴⁶. When the PRC was established, it did not open relations with any Latin American country until 1960 with Cuba; another ten years passed before the PRC opened diplomatic relations with Chile (both countries had governments professing Marxist Leninist tenets).

3.2. International Situation

This changed in the 50x and 60s and was laid out on an international stage set by the rebirth of Europe with the implementation of the Marshall Plan. The US experienced a sharp rise in its economy. The Korean War and the Cold War began. The 1950s were witness to the Suez Crisis and establishment of the European Community in 1957. Decolonization in Africa started. Latin America was within the sphere of influence of the US, though the USSR channeled various initiatives through local groups.

The 1960s was the decade when the Cold War became a long term situation of opposition between the US and the USSR. It was the decade that saw the Cuban Revolution consolidated its power, the beginning of the Vietnam War, Japan’s ongoing development of high technology. In Latin America, military governments appeared. The PRC advocated “self-reliance” in economics and promoted armed struggle as the route for national liberation; the Sino-Soviet Split and the rapprochement between China and the US are central events.

3.2.1. Sino-Soviet Alliance and Split

The Sino-Soviet Split emerges also affecting the PRC’s cultural diplomacy towards Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s. China accused the US and the USSR of seeking world domination and established non-diplomatic ties through cultural diplomacy with countries with an eye to the future. These countries could support them in their fight for legitimacy in the international arena in opposition to Taiwan.

3.2.2. Sino-US rapprochement

By the second half of the 1960s, the United States openly adopted a less confrontational attitude towards the PRC. Richard Nixon wrote in Foreign Affairs

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⁴⁶ Li, Sino-Latin American economic relations, 10.
that “the restoration of domestic tranquility could be achieved only by defusing the Vietnam War and that China should have its position in the world community” 47. The gradual lessening of hostilities between the PRC and the US towards the end of the 1960s, and Nixon’s visit in 1970, probably made the continuing presence of the PRC in Latin America more palatable. With the election of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970 formal diplomatic relations were immediately established. When Allende’s government was overthrown in 1973 the Chinese continued diplomatic relations with Chile. In spite of formal relations with China, Allende’s government had been clearly pro-Soviet. The Chinese could point to the failure of the Soviet project in Chile as proof of their leadership in world Communism.

3.3. Relations between the PRC and Latin America: 1950s and 196019601960s

Historical, political and geographical reasons have been given to explain why the PRC did not immediately open diplomatic relations with Latin American countries in 1949: Probably the most important element was the anti-PRC policy of the US48, in and that Latin America was within the sphere of influence of the US. The “Truman Doctrine” (1947) and the Rio Treaty (1948) helped maintain a political-economic control, restraining Communism 49. It is in this context that the PRC appeared; “by stressing cultural affinity in the broadest possible sense, within a violently anti-American framework, the Chinese were able to make a significant impression on many Latin American intellectuals with only a slight investment in money, time, and personnel” 50.

Latin American countries were “agrarian economies, with agricultural products being their major commodities (...) [and they were] sucked into the US commercial system” 51. The effects of the Great Depression had been strongly felt in Latin America, and in response Latin American rulers either forged a stronger commercial link with the industrialized nations, or built their own “import-substituting industrialization” (ISI), or both. ISI was “design as a strategy to improve the standing of the South within the capitalist world economy” 52 by economists of the area. Latin American governments stimulated industrial

49 Díaz Vázquez, “China-América Latina”.
50 Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 57.
51 Li, Sino-Latin American Economic Relations, 11.
52 Chris Brown, Understanding International Relations (New York: Palgrave, 2001) 199.
growth; as one of the consequences, organized labor emerged as an actor on the scene. In some countries political parties claimed to represent the interests of the working class, in others, alliances were formed between the working classes and entrepreneurs, resulting in a populist formula that would challenge the interests of the traditional elites. But ISI struggled with over protective measures and in the 1960s double digit inflation appeared, dragging in economic and political troubles. Land reform also became a difficult issue. Repressive governments appeared throughout the continent. As a response to Castro’s Soviet-backed communist revolution in Cuba, the Alliance for Progress was established in the 1960s by the US, promoting economic exchange between North and South America.

After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the opening of Cuban-PRC diplomatic relations in 1960, and the left-wing presidency of João Goulart in Brazil, exchanges between the PRC and Latin America increased, entering “it’s most productive phase”.

The downfall of João Goulart in 1964 made the work of the Chinese in Brazil difficult and was a major setback in the PRC’s advances in Latin America. “Had Goulart remained in power, they might very well have succeeded in gaining one of their major objectives in the area, diplomatic recognition by a major Latin American power. Recognition by Brazil, in turn, might have influenced other Latin American nations to follow suit”. Beyond this, the Sino-Cuban crisis that began in 1965 strongly debilitating the parties affiliated to the CCP: as a symbol of this case the Cubans did not invite the pro-Chinese groups to the Tricontinental Solidarity Conference in Havana in January 1966.

The Cultural Revolution made the PRC focus on its domestic situation, naturally producing a change in its attitude towards foreign policy but it kept up efforts to consolidate and enhance its international position. Ratliff agrees that after 1960, cultural diplomacy lost its effectiveness as contacts lessened, because of China’s internal affairs.

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54 In Brazil in 1964 and in Argentina in 1966. For more on the period, see Ibid., 51-58.
55 João Belchior Marquez Goulart (1918-1976) was a left wing President of Brazil since 1961, and was removed by a a right-wing military dictatorship in 1964.
57 Ibid., 20.
58 Garza Elizondo, China y el Tercer Mundo, 153.
In conclusion, I agree with Lee who observes two periods of the PRC’s in Latin America: the first goes from 1949 to 1959 and can be defined as exploratory; the second goes from 1959 until 1960, where the emphasis of cultural diplomacy was on opinion-makers, intellectuals and journalists. Analyzing the motives that justified the PRC in Latin America from its point of view, the international sphere plays a key part. During the 1950s China was trying to establish itself as a legitimate nation in the world, especially in opposition to Taiwan, and in equal terms with the USSR: “identification with the Third World contributes toward achievement (...) of national security and international recognition of China’s rightful position of prominence and authority.” At this point Latin American governments were mainly pro-US and anti-Communist (with the exception of Soviet influenced Cuba) a situation that required caution on the part of the PRC.

China was underdeveloped and its economy was predominantly rural and peasant based so its experiments could bear watching. Finally, the PRC’s anti-imperialist discourse appealed to many Latin Americans; intellectuals had a certain pre-disposition to believe good news concerning China. The circulation of propaganda became easier during the late 1950s. However, links had been established to a certain extent. It was not the quantity but the quality of the links that mattered.

4. People’s Republic of China and Latin America

In its search for diplomatic recognition in Latin America, the PRC used different means to establish its presence through cultural diplomacy. A description of the methods used follows with, a description of three paradigmatic: Chile, Colombia and Cuba.

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60 It’s interesting to notice that Lee considers that these kind of visitors intended to win over newspapers and magazines in Latin America, another way of achieving their cultural diplomacy objectives. Lee, "Communist China’s Latin American Policy".
61 In the struggle of the two "Chinas" for the seat in the United Nations, Chile supported Taiwan from 1950 until 1965, year in which Chile first abstained in the vote. See Gutiérrez and Lin Chou, Relations between the Republic of China and the Republic of Chile, 19.
63 Van Ness, Peking’s Support for Wars of National Liberation, 146.
64 Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 77.
A questionnaire was forwarded to twenty different persons\textsuperscript{66} in Latin America who provided information and relevant material. Four answered the questionnaire, four forwarded relevant material, and two discussed questions over the phone. Furthermore, the catalogues of the national libraries of Buenos Aires, Lima and Santiago were consulted to make a bibliography of primary sources related to the topic.

4.1. The Means of Cultural Diplomacy in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s

As set forth above, notwithstanding Latin America’s very low priority for Communist China in its Third World diplomacy, it was definitely a recipient of the Asian nation’s initiatives. Influence could be observed mostly in Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the northern part of Argentina\textsuperscript{67}, though many more countries were targeted. To be sure, direct support of revolutions by the PRC was also a way used to penetrate Latin America, but it obviously is not a part of cultural diplomacy\textsuperscript{68}.

The ways of developing cultural diplomacy are studied below in six different areas: visits and exchanges\textsuperscript{comma not semicolon} institutes of cooperation\textsuperscript{comma}; literature, texts in Spanish published in the PRC and distributed in Latin America; the establishment of pro-Chinese communist parties and a sixth...

\textsuperscript{66} They were contacted through Universities, Centres of Chinese Studies, Institutes of Friendship between their country and the PRC, and others through the media (such as newspapers and online journals).

\textsuperscript{67} Gustavo Cardozo, e-mail questionnaire, July 31, 2007.

\textsuperscript{68} China supported the wars of national liberation through explicit and implicit endorsement. Explicit backing was made through a public statement of Mao or statements made in the name of the Chinese Communist Party or People; supporting revolutions in an indirect way was by publishing articles in Chinese newspapers describing the situation in a certain country or simply by considering certain countries as places where a revolution was initiating or taking place. Agreeing with Van Ness, it can be said that the Chinese were not consistent in endorsing revolutions in Latin America, which was not the case for Asia and Africa. In Latin America only two revolutionary movements were endorsed explicitly through a statement by Mao in this period: the ones in Panama and the Dominican Republic. Mao’s statement about the revolutionary movement in Panama can be found in China Welfare Institute, \textit{China Reconstructs} XIII, no. 2 (1964) 1. Throughout 1965, the Chinese endorsed twelve armed struggles: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Venezuela and Paraguay, but little was published in the Chinese press about them. China did not have the money or the means to help wars of national struggle in Latin America, especially during the second period of the 1960s. For the endorsement of revolutions, see Van Ness, \textit{Peking's Support for Wars of National Liberation}, 151-181.
category, the media, in which radio broadcasting and the establishment of news agencies are included.

The basis of these cultural diplomacy means of interaction is propaganda. Propaganda is often defined in a negative way, as for example, “information that is often biased or misleading, used to promote a political cause or point of view”\textsuperscript{69} In a political context it has been officially recognized as a political weapon, since the First World War\textsuperscript{70}. Oriented to the masses world-wide, in concept and in operational terms, propaganda was developed strongly in all the Communist World\textsuperscript{71}. It has also been argued that during the 1950s and 1960s the Chinese perceived the course of history to be “determined largely by correct thinking among the people. (...) In this context the Chinese emphasis on “propaganda” among the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, rather than on economic assistance, takes on added significance”\textsuperscript{72}.

4.1.1. Institutes of Cooperation

Institutes of Cooperation can be defined as associations and groups which officially are not part of either governments or political parties. They became one of the pillars on which China’s presence was raised: “institutions can enhance a country’s soft power”\textsuperscript{73}. Communist Chinese friendship or cultural associations in non-communist countries appeared from 1950 onwards\textsuperscript{74}. They performed numerous functions, arranging visits and exchanges between the PRC and Latin America, distributing propaganda, publishing articles in newspapers, giving lectures and showing films from and about China\textsuperscript{75}. They complemented the New China News Agency (NCNA); in short, the PRC had presence in Latin America mainly because of them\textsuperscript{76}.

The first such institution founded was the Chilean-Chinese Cultural Institute in 1952\textsuperscript{77}. This association lobbied ardently for the opening of diplomatic relations

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{73} Nye, \textit{Soft Power}, 10.
\textsuperscript{74} Clews, \textit{Communist Propaganda Techniques}, 155-156.
\textsuperscript{75} See Dario De la Fuente, \textit{Instituto Chileno Chino de Cultura, Cuarenta Años} (Santiago: Instituto Chileno Chino de Cultura, 1992) 40.
\textsuperscript{77} De la Fuente, \textit{Instituto Chileno Chino de Cultura}. 

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while developing an active programme of cultural exchange\(^78\). It was founded mainly by intellectuals, politicians, and businessmen\(^79\). When in 1970, for the first time in Chile, a Soviet oriented Unidad Popular reached power through elections; one of its first acts was to open relations with the PRC.

Institutes were also founded in the PRC: in 1960 the Sino-Latin American Friendship Association was founded. This society was to coordinate the activities of the agencies that had contact with Latin America\(^80\). Another institute that began working in the PRC was the Institute of Latin American Studies in 1961, affiliated to the Academy of Philosophy and Social Sciences\(^81\).

4.1.2. Visits and Exchanges

Personal contacts, visits and exchanges are all ways through which culture is transmitted\(^82\), a means of cultural diplomacy. Starting in the 1950s, many Latin American personalities, such as writers, politicians and artists were invited to spend some time in the PRC. Some Latin American students studied in the PRC and helped in writing texts published in Spanish and distributed in Latin America\(^83\). Persons who visited the PRC during this period were mainly opinion-makers, intellectuals and journalists –most of them invited to participate in Conferences and to tour the Communist world\(^84\). This programme of visits and exchanges has also been called “guided tourism”, as the visitors were conducted on supervised tours carefully organized by the Chinese Government\(^85\). “Given the limited financial resources of the Chinese, their expenditures to bring hundreds of delegations from the remote countries of Latin America must surely be construed as strong evidence of their deep interest in Latin America”\(^86\).

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 23-24.
\(^{79}\) Ibid., 14.
\(^{80}\) Lee, “Communist China’s Latin American Policy”, 1126.
\(^{82}\) Nye, Soft Power, 13.
\(^{83}\) Isabelle Lausent-Herrera, information provided through e-mail, June 18, 2007.
\(^{85}\) Ibid., 57.

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Visitors came from a wide range of countries, and sometimes visited the PRC more than once and were treated as honored guests. Visits lasted for a week or up to two months: receptions were attended, landmarks visited, cultural events attended. Most were writers, poets or politicians likely to transmit what they saw to large groups of people. After 1956 these visits became more regular, as they were prepared under the supervision of the Chinese People’s Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. An important visitor was generally invited to a meeting with a national leader\textsuperscript{87}, as when Allende met with Zhou Enlai in 1952\textsuperscript{88}. Between 1949 and 1962, an estimated 75,000 people visited the PRC\textsuperscript{89}, many were invited for the commemoration of national celebrations\textsuperscript{90}. “Every foreign visitor is another feather in her cap, a mark of recognition, another milestone on the road to acceptance and respectability, another blow to the American policy of non-recognition”\textsuperscript{91}.

Chinese also visited Latin America: some to trade, some journalists and youth delegations, performing troupes\textsuperscript{92}. The first two people from the PRC to visit Latin America arrived in Chile in 1953 to attend the American Continental Congress of Culture\textsuperscript{93}. In 1959, four members of the propaganda department of the CCP toured Latin America\textsuperscript{94}.

4.1.3. Printed Material

The publication of many texts in Spanish in the PRC by the Beijing Foreign Languages Press and distributed in Latin America was an effective way of handing out information. This literature was available by mail from Beijing and could be obtained through the “friendship organizations” established in Latin America, or introduced in Latin America by the people who had visited Communist countries\textsuperscript{95}.

\textsuperscript{87} Passin, \textit{China’s Cultural Diplomacy}, 9.
\textsuperscript{88} The meeting is reported as having been held at midnight because Zhou was busy with other foreigners, and lasted three and a half hours.
\textsuperscript{89} Passin, \textit{China’s Cultural Diplomacy}, 1.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{92} For example, in 1959 a company of acrobats spent ten months touring Latin America. See Alba, after a delegation from the CCP toured Latin America, after a delegation from the CCP toured Latin America, “The Chinese in Latin America”, 54; and Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 66.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{94} Alba, “The Chinese in Latin America”, 54.
\textsuperscript{95} Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 70.
or that had ties to international Communist Parties networks. Mao’s *Little Red Book* arrived in Latin America for youth militant in pro-Maoist movements. The distribution of texts coincided with visits and exchanges. The Spanish edition of *Chinese Reconstructs* (*China Reconstruye*) began to circulate, distributed from Havana and Montevideo after a delegation from the CCP toured Latin America.

In 1954 the first Chinese pamphlet in Spanish was published by the Peking Foreign Languages Press, the *Constitución de la República Popular China*. The first Chinese periodical published in Spanish was China: *Revista Ilustrada* which originally appeared in 1955 or 1956. Books were published which emphasized politics and economics, land reform and guerrilla organization and new works were published, covering a wide range of topics. By the end of 1958, approximately sixty books had been published in Spanish by the Foreign Languages Press. From 1959 Mao’s writings circulated widely in Latin America. Towards the end of the 1950s, the majority of the books that had been published by the Foreign Languages Press had been translated to Spanish, Chinese English-language periodicals could be found in Latin America since 1956; by 1960 they were seven periodicals of this kind circulating. The end of the 1950s saw an increase of the number of publications circulating in Latin America.

During the 1960s, three Chinese periodicals were widely distributed in Latin America: *Peking Magazine* (*Revista de Pekín*), *Chinese Science* (*Ciencia China*) and

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96 Gustavo Cardozo, e-mail questionnaire, August 13, 2007.
98 Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. For a list of texts published in the PRC during this period and that could be found in Latin America see appendix (section 2). See also Ratliﬀ, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 69.
100 Ibid., 70.
101 Ibid., 69.
102 The topics covered went from the Beijing Opera to documents from the Eighth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Ibid., 69.
103 Ibid., 69.
105 Ratliﬀ, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 70. These periodicals were *China Reconstructs*, *Women of China*, *China’s Sports*, *Chinese Literature*, *The Chinese Trade Unions*, *Chinese Medical Journal* and *Scientia Sinica*.
106 Ratliﬀ, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 69-70. This is also observed by Julio Díaz Vázquez, e-mail questionnaire, August 12, 2007.
Chinese Woman (Mujer China)\textsuperscript{107}. Between 1962 and 1964 several of Mao’s essays were published; and in the initial stage of the Cultural Revolution the Chinese prepared a Spanish edition of Mao’s Selected Works and of the Little Red Book\textsuperscript{108}. In 1963, two texts published in Beijing were re-published by a Chilean Publishing House run by a group of intellectuals that supported the Maoist line, and that also distributed this kind of literature in the rest of Latin America\textsuperscript{109}. Texts about China were published by Latin American publishing houses and Latin American authors were translated to Chinese in the PRC\textsuperscript{110}.

Reprints of pamphlets originally published in Beijing appeared. Among the earliest Chinese Communist writings to be published during this period in Latin America to was Mao’s La Nueva Democracia, published in Chile in 1952. This included a poem of Pablo Neruda titled “To China”. Liu Shaoqi’s Como ser un buen comunista was published in Mexico and Guatemala in 1954\textsuperscript{111}. Ediciones Pueblos Unidos in Uruguay listed over 125 books dealing with China circulating in Latin America, and in 1960 listed over 300. According to Ratliff’s the lists included thirty-five works in Spanish by Mao, some works by Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Madame Sun Yat Sen.

In 1951 two books by Pablo Neruda were translated and published in China: Que despierte el leñador (and Poemas y obras selectas de Pablo Neruda)\textsuperscript{112}. The second author to be published was Jorge Amado in 1953\textsuperscript{113}. In 1959, thirty poems by José Martí\textsuperscript{114} and a collection of poems by Pablo Neruda and other Latin American poems were published\textsuperscript{115}.

Regarding the Cuban Revolution, Che Guevara repeatedly denied Mao’s influence. However, he did admit to Chinese journalists in Havana in 1959 that he

\textsuperscript{107} Ratliff states in his paper that during 1960 the three Chinese periodicals were China reconstruye; Mujer China and Ciencia China; Alba also mentions the existence of Revista de Peking. See Victor Alba, “The Chinese in Latin America”, The China Quarterly, no. 5 (1961) 54.; see also Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 70
\textsuperscript{109} This group was called “Eskartaco”, it has been very difficult to find more information about it. See Connelly and Cornejio Bustamante, China-América Latina: Génesis y Desarrollo de sus Relaciones, 77.
\textsuperscript{110} See appendix.
\textsuperscript{111} Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 70.
\textsuperscript{112} Information provided by Dario Oses, Fundación Pablo Neruda, Chile.
\textsuperscript{113} Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 72-73.
\textsuperscript{114} José Julián Martí y Pérez (1853-1895) was a renown Cuban poet and writer, and also leader of the Cuban independence movement from Spain.
had studied Mao’s works: “after the summer offensive of 1958”. Nonetheless the Chinese did at some point contact Latin American communists for secret and systematic training in Communist ideology and revolutionary techniques: “in 1956 special camps were set up in China for the training of Latin American Communists” going well beyond what we have termed cultural diplomacy.

4.1.4. Communist Parties

Contact between Communist parties was another method of establishing links with Latin America. Communist parties in Latin America were courted by the PRC from 1960, but had a “long tradition of subordinating their interests to those of the Soviet Union”117. Pro-Chinese Communist Parties in Latin America were a minority and had modest influence in day-to-day politics118. They dedicated their efforts towards theoretical purism while ignoring all political action to the extent of rejecting communist experiences in Latin America119.

But China’s rapprochement with the US towards the end of the 1960s heralded a radical change in the relation between China and Latin America.

An interesting case to observe, especially because of its long-term existence, is Sendero Luminoso120: a Peruvian Maoist guerrilla organization founded by the philosophy teacher Abimael Guzmán in the late 1960s which was very successful amongst students. It affected Peruvian politics directly through violent actions in the 1980s and first years of the 1990s.

4.1.5. Trade

Non-governmental trade relations were also used by the PRC to establish links with Latin American countries121. Before the Cuban Revolution in 1958, trade

116 Ratliff, “Chinese Communist Cultural Diplomacy toward Latin America”, 63-64.
118 Gustavo Cardozo, e-mail questionnaire, July 31, 2007.
119 Garza Elizondo, China y el Tercer Mundo, 147-153. Jorge E. Malena (Argentina) also explains that the leadership of pro-Maoist groups had a superficial understanding of Mao’s works, they lacked ideological training, lacked contact with the masses, and the preference of personal interests over the Party’s.
120 Partido Comunista del Perú - Sendero Luminoso. It launched a guerrilla war in the 1980s and engaged in armed conflict. In 1992 its leader Abimael Guzmán was captured, its activity diminished, but the group continues to exist.
121 Li, Sino-Latin American Economic Relations, 10.
relations had been weak and sporadic\textsuperscript{122}. Economic exchange between 1950 and 1960 amounted to 61 million dollars. Uruguay was the most important trading partner of the PRC during the 1950s, representing 40% of all Latin American exports to the PRC; official trade began in 1955 when they signed a trade agreement\textsuperscript{123}. In 1952 Chile and the PRC signed the first trade agreement between the PRC and a Latin American country\textsuperscript{124}. In 1953, Argentina established direct nongovernmental trade links, during a visit of seventeen representatives to the PRC; both countries issued a joint statement for the expansion of trade\textsuperscript{125}.

In 1960 Cuba was the first Latin American country to open diplomatic relations with the RPC and during the period 1960-1965 exchange between Latin Americans and Chinese grew strongly\textsuperscript{126}. From 1960 to 1965 trade volume rose to 300 million dollars; in 1965 it fell to 343 million dollars. During the 1960s, exchange between the PRC and Latin America remained relatively low. However the idea of aid to the Third World took a back seat to the possibility of having a market for Chinese products and a source of natural resources for the future. For Latin America, it was a question of a market for its products. During the second half of the 1960s trade fell abruptly, distracted by Sino-Soviet discrepancies and, by changes in the Latin American political scene. The PRC’s focus was on its domestic situation after launching the Cultural Revolution\textsuperscript{127}.

This erratic trade record allows us to conclude that “China’s economic relations with Latin America were carried on primarily for political purposes and that economic policy were just a part of foreign policy to Latin America”\textsuperscript{128}.

4.1.6. Media (radio broadcasting and news agencies)

The use of media influenced the diplomatic process while providing an extra channel of communication\textsuperscript{129}. The Chinese used media resources, such as radio, to support their Third World policy, but Latin American once again did not have high priority with the Chinese.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{124} The official link was made in 1957 when a representative from the People’s Bank of China visited Chile while touring Latin America. See ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{125} See previous section on visits and exchanges. See also ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{126} Díaz Vázquez, “China-América Latina”.
\textsuperscript{127} Díaz Vázquez, “China-América Latina”.
\textsuperscript{128} Li, Sino-Latin American Economic Relations, 20.
\textsuperscript{129} Gary D. Rawnsley, Media diplomacy: monitored broadcasts and foreign policy (Leicester: Centre for the Study of Diplomacy, 1995) 15.
New China News Agency (NCNA) offices were established in Latin America for the first time in Havana in 1959. As China did not have diplomatic representatives, NCNA became the unofficial representative of the PRC in Latin America, handling trade issues, organizing mutual visits between people from the PRC and Latin America, establishing contacts with overseas Chinese, and also financially supporting pro-Chinese groups.

Another channel of communication of Chinese influence was through the use of films. Among the films shown were Las dos mariposas, La buena cosecha, and Danzas y cantos regionales de China.

4.2. A closer look: notes on Cuba, Colombia and Chile

With the end of the Cultural Revolution, a more open foreign policy and the rapprochement with the US, characterized by Nixon’s famous visit, the PRC’s foreign policy entered a new period. In the Third World, it stopped supporting revolutionary movements and reoriented its foreign policy in search of diplomatic support. It became a member state of the United Nations and therefore was recognized as the “legitimate China”. During the 1970s, several Latin American countries, the first being Chile, opened relations with the PRC, breaking with Taiwan.

Varying attitudes and responses appear in Latin American countries towards the shifting. The Cuban, Colombian, and Chilean cases are especially interesting, in the context of cultural diplomacy.

In 1958, in the case of Cuba, when the pro-US regime of Fulgencio Batista fell, the new revolutionary government actively established close links with the PRC through exchanges of visits and economic treaties. However, mutual relations were quickly cut back as Cuba established close relations with the USSR who split with the PCR. Generally speaking, the attitude of Cuba towards the PRC...
experienced changes according to international politics and the exchanges of cultural diplomacy followed suit.

In the case of Colombia, relations with the PRC appear dominated by three main considerations\textsuperscript{135}. The Colombian Jesuit community considered the PRC as an enemy because members of the Society had been persecuted in mainland China after 1949. The Jesuit order in Colombia controlled the two biggest universities in the country, and therefore influenced the economic, social and political elite (many future foreign ministers studied there)\textsuperscript{136}. Secondly, the US’s ideas and stereotypes regarding the “Communist danger” influenced Colombian policy. Thirdly, the Colombian military were anti-Marxists: they fought against paramilitary groups\textsuperscript{137} and were the only Latin American country to send troops to fight in the Korean War on the side of the UN. Therefore during the 1950s and 1960s, there was a generally hostile perception of the PRC and the exercise of cultural diplomacy was severely restricted. On the other hand, many leftist Colombians as well as persons related to political parties of a more centrist line visited the PRC. Towards the end of the 1970s, the Chinese-Colombian Friendship Association was founded by these persons. This institution helped pave the road towards the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Finally, the US influence was a factor in Chile’s not opening diplomatic relations with the PRC before 1970, although the presence of the PRC was tolerated. While a stable democratic tradition permitted a continuous strengthening of the left, during the 1950s and 1960s Chile experienced a good rate of trade exchange with the PRC. When the socialist Salvador Allende was voted into power in 1970, official diplomatic relations with the PRC were established quickly. Responding in part to pressure from the left channeled through the Chilean Chinese Institute of Culture. In this case, cultural diplomacy functioned within limits, taking advantage of opportunities as they arose.

5. Conclusion

The PRC’s goals in Latin America cover a wide range of options, and different authors have stressed different objectives. However, it is clear that the PRC’s goals in Latin America during the 1950s and 1960s responded to different situations as they developed. Only in the 1960s, after the Cuban Revolution, were

\textsuperscript{135} Guillermo Puyana, e-mail questionnaire, August 14, 2007.
\textsuperscript{136} Guillermo Puyana, e-mail questionnaire, August 14, 2007.
\textsuperscript{137} The Colombian military fought against paramilitary groups such as (ELN-FARC), followers of Guevara; and EPL (Maoist); Guillermo Puyana, e-mail questionnaire, August 14, 2007.
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the Chinese able to pay significant attention to Latin America. In the short term China reinforced an anti-US movement (during the 1950s) and later gained ground as regards the USSR (in the 1960s). By establishing a constant presence, the PRC improved its long term image in Latin America, gaining international support. China’s presence in Latin America kept up opposition against both the US and the USSR, and its sustained presence during this period helped its claim of being the “legitimate China”, opposing Taiwan

However it is difficult to exactly assess the impact of the PRC’s cultural diplomacy as it was exercised during this period. The actual manner of distribution and circulation of texts are unknown; much was done under secrecy and it has been impossible to obtain an exhaustive lists. The same holds for the visits and exchanges and with the contact of the PRC with Latin American communist parties. Latin Americans who looked back on that period considered that the activities of the 50s and 60s had few positive effects on Sino-Latin American relations. On the contrary, they were judged to be adverse as a result of the PRC’s foreign policy which was perceived as dominated by radicals. The radicals promoted armed struggle in the Third World, a very difficult position considering the US- influence in Latin America. Furthermore, the PRC’s policy of self-sufficiency did not encourage foreign trade.

The impact of the PRC’s presence in Latin America appears to have been marginal: the opening of diplomatic relations in the 1970s responded mainly to the political situation of rapprochement between the US and the PRC. The impacts of the RPC –US relations were predominant. Nevertheless, it is argued here that the Chinese influence in Latin America through visits and exchanges, literature, influence over communist parties, economic exchange and all other kinds of propaganda, had a generally positive outcome. The increasing mutual knowledge between the PRC and Latin American countries especially links between individuals, permitted a certain dialogue between countries, until then, unknown to each other. However, as has been observed, the establishment of diplomatic relations cannot be claimed as an achievement of cultural diplomacy alone.

Cultural diplomacy of the PRC in Latin America was marked by the Asian nation sorting its way through an area traditionally under the influence of the US, and with which it had no formal diplomatic contact. Nevertheless, it reached a wide range of people. Towards the end of the period, it was able to reinforce its image in opposition to the USSR, and campaign actively to be accepted in the UN.

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138 Information provided by Jorge E. Malena, Argentina.
139 Information provided by Jorge E. Malena, Argentina.
International isolation produced by the Cultural Revolution was completely overcome in the 1970s with the PRC’s acceptance in the UN, therefore acquiring international recognition and status.

6. Bibliography


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