

# A BRIEF OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE MIDWEST ASSOCIATION FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES\*

*Robert L. Carmin, Ball State University*

*Kenneth J. Grieb, University of Wisconsin—Oshkosh*

*N. Merrill Rippy, Ball State University*

The origin of the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies is found in the decade of the 1950s, at which time the Pan American Union fostered the establishment of five regional councils for Latin American studies. In April 1958, the American Council of Learned Societies suggested the creation of a national organization to coordinate the activities of the numerous separate groups in the United States concerned with Latin America. During November 1958, a symposium on Latin American studies was held in Chicago, sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Newberry Library, with the assistance of the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress. A second conference on Latin American Studies in the United States, financed by grants from the Creole Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies, followed at Sagamore, New York in August 1959. This conference decided to establish the Association for Latin American Studies (ALAS), and an organizing committee was named at Sagamore. It was agreed that ALAS would also aid and encourage regional conferences for Latin American studies. The organizing committee met in Denver, Colorado, 1 October 1959, at the time of the Seventh UNESCO Conference and set up an interim executive committee for ALAS consisting of Preston E. James (Syracuse University, Geography), chairman; A. Curtis Wilgus (University of Florida, History); Robert Wauchope (Tulane University, Anthropology); and Harvey L. Johnson (Indiana University, Spanish-Portuguese), secretary-treasurer.<sup>1</sup> Council members of ALAS included A. W. Bork (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale).

Taking his cue from these national efforts, Harvey L. Johnson launched the midwest regional endeavor by sending out notices that a Mid-

\*Originally prepared by Professors Carmin and Rippy and published in the *MALAS Newsletter* (April 1973), this history was revised and brought up to date by Professor Grieb.

West<sup>2</sup> Council for Latin American Studies would be organized in the autumn of 1960. He announced that the Department of State and the Organization of American States would send representatives to the meeting to be held at Indiana University and invited persons in governmental agencies, business firms, universities and colleges, and public societies to consider membership. The meeting took place 13–15 October 1960, in Bloomington on the Indiana University campus, with a major address by Hubert Herring. Frederick B. Pike (University of Notre Dame, History) was elected as the first president of the Mid-West Council of the Association for Latin American Studies. Dues were set at \$1.00 and the organization was declared open to any interested person. A *Newsletter*, vol. I, no. 1, was to be issued by Dr. J. Cary Davis (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Foreign Languages) by February–March 1961.

The Second Annual Conference of the Midwest Council of the Association for Latin American Studies (MCALAS) was held 12–14 October 1961, at the University of Illinois, Urbana. The theme of the conference was “Reform and Change in Latin America.” The opening address was given by Oscar Lewis and the banquet speech by Frederick Pike. At the business meeting, Harvey L. Johnson was elected president. A committee to draw up a constitution for MCALAS was appointed, consisting of Robert Scott (University of Illinois, Urbana; Political Science), A. W. Bork, and Frank N. Lewis (University of South Dakota, Vermillion; Political Science), chairman. It was announced that more than one hundred members of MCALAS from agriculture, anthropology, commerce, economics, geography, history, political science, sociology, spanish, and portuguese had paid dues.

The principal address at the Third Annual Meeting of the Midwest Council for Latin American Studies, held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, 25–27 October 1962, was delivered by the Mexican ambassador to the United States, Antonio Carrillo Flores. William Glade (University of Wisconsin, Madison; Economics) was elected president of the council. The business meeting witnessed the first of a protracted series of discussions regarding membership in the organization. Members in attendance were torn between restricting participation to specialists and opening the group to all interested persons, including nonspecialists, high school teachers, and those outside the academic profession. No decision was reached and the debate continued through several annual meetings.

Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, hosted the Midwest Council’s Fourth Annual Meeting, 24–26 October 1963. The conference theme was “The Community in Revolutionary Latin America,” and Richard N. Adams was the keynote speaker. John Augelli (University of

Kansas, Geography) was elected president, and Mary Jo Read (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee; Geography) was elected secretary-treasurer; dues were raised to \$2.00. Discussion regarding the membership composition continued, resulting in appointment of a committee to study the question. Considerable time was devoted to the need to reinvigorate ALAS, and the meeting adopted a motion pledging MCALAS support for such an endeavor.<sup>3</sup>

The Fifth Annual Conference of the Midwest Council of the Association for Latin American Studies took place at the University of Notre Dame, 5–7 November 1964. The theme of the meeting was “Education and Social Change in Latin America”; the banquet speaker was Donald Sandberg, Ford Foundation. At the business meeting, N. Merrill Rippy (Ball State University, History) was elected president and Robert Knowlton (Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point; History) was named editor of the *Newsletter*. The chairman of the committee on membership (Richard Allen, Indiana University, South Bend; Spanish) reported and the council voted to continue the constitutional provision on membership: That MCALAS be open to all persons and institutions, including graduate students. Discussion of the revival of ALAS continued, this time focusing on potential cooperation among the regional councils. The presence at the meeting of the presidents of the Southeastern Council on Latin American Studies and the Rocky Mountain Council of the Association for Latin American Studies enhanced the prospects. The meeting endorsed a newsletter exchange among the regional councils and the formation of a committee of regional presidents to consider means of reinvigorating ALAS. It was also announced that, for the first time, the papers of the previous MCALAS meeting had been published by the University of Kansas, under the title: *The Community in Revolutionary Latin America: Occasional Publication No. 3*.

“Institutionalism in Latin America” was the program theme of the Sixth Annual Conference which convened at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 11–13 November 1965. The banquet speaker was Louis A. Baralt, and William V. D’Antonio (University of Notre Dame, Sociology) was elected as the council’s sixth president. The council had 146 members and a balance in the treasury of \$409.82. The viability of MCALAS was raised and discussed at the business meeting and the continuation of the Council and of annual meetings was supported.

The Seventh Annual Conference met 20–22 October 1966, at Michigan State University, East Lansing. The theme of the meeting was “Contemporary Brazil,” and the principal addresses were delivered by the Brazilian ambassador to the United States, Vasco Leitão da Cunha, and

Howard F. Cline. It was announced that membership of the council now stood at 268. The business meeting discussed a possible name change, since the formation of the national Latin American Studies Association (LASA) led to a proposal to adjust names of the regional associations accordingly. Consequently, it was suggested that the MCALAS become the Midwest Council of the Latin American Studies Association (MCLASA). After considerable discussion, the motion for the name change was defeated; instead, it was agreed that MCALAS would consider a name change after LASA became a functioning entity. In the meantime, MCALAS would join LASA as an institutional member. The new MCALAS president was Oscar Horst (Western Michigan University, Geography); Robert Gold (Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; History) was appointed editor of the *Newsletter*.

The Eighth Annual Meeting was held at Indiana University, Bloomington, 26–27 October 1967. The program focused on “Human Resources in Latin American Development.” The banquet speaker was Hiram Phillips, Acting Director, Latin American Bureau, Office of Institutional Development, USAID. Garland Wood (Michigan State University, Agricultural Economics) was elected as the eighth president of MCALAS, and Robert Knowlton once again became *Newsletter* editor. The conference adopted resolutions upholding the value of the continuation of regional councils with regional meetings and recommended that presidents of regional councils should be members of the executive council of LASA.

The Ninth Annual Meeting took place 24–25 October 1968, at St. Louis University. The theme of the conference was “Cultural and Religious Factors in Latin America.” The banquet address was delivered by Roger Vekemans, S.J., codirector of the Center for Social and Economic Development of Latin America. At the business meeting, Frank Bachmura (Indiana University, Bloomington; Economics) was elected president, and Robert Aubey (University of Wisconsin, Madison; Business) was elected secretary-treasurer. Harry Kantor (Marquette University, Political Science) was appointed editor of the *Newsletter*. The membership voted to award Mary Jo Read a plaque, expressing the appreciation of MCALAS for her work as secretary-treasurer for five years. Constitutional Revision Committee Chairman Robert Knowlton moved that Article 3, *Purposes* of the constitution of MCALAS be amended to delete the words *ALAS*, *councils*, and *institutions*, and to insert *LASA*, *associations*, and to provide only for individual memberships in the organization. The motion was adopted. The group also voted to change its name from MCALAS to the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies (MALAS). Dropping the word “council” from the name of the Association signified the end of

the concept of ALAS as a federation of regional bodies and the recognition of LASA as a national central unitary organization and of MALAS as autonomous.

The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies, 30–31 October 1969, convened at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana. The program theme was “Cultural Change in Brazil.” The keynote address was delivered by William H. Nicholls. Charles Fleener (St. Louis University, History) was elected president and Frank Bachmura was named MALAS representative to the newly constituted Consortium of Regional Councils of LASA.

MALAS assembled at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1–3 October 1970. The theme for the program was “The Role of the Latin American Military in Government,” and the banquet speaker was Galo Plaza, secretary general of the Organization of American States. Tom Martinson (Ball State University, Geography) was elected as the eleventh president of MALAS.

MALAS members gathered for the twelfth time at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, 22–23 October 1971. The theme of the conference was “Strategies of National Development,” and the featured speakers were Romeo Flores Caballero of El Colegio de México, and Dean George R. Waggoner, of the host university. Officers’ reports at the business meeting revealed that recent changes in Post Office and federal regulations had rendered it impossible to continue mailing the *Newsletter* via fourth class mail until appropriate forms were processed and the resultant shift to first class service had caused a decline in the treasury. Measures to regain fourth class mailing privileges were being undertaken. After some discussion of requests for the MALAS membership list, the membership voted not to release the roster except under special authorization by the executive committee. It was suggested that those wishing to utilize such lists for advertising could more properly do so through placing an ad in the *Newsletter*. It was announced that a brief outline history of the Midwest Association for Latin American Studies was being prepared by N. Merrill Rippy and Robert Carmin (Ball State University, Humanities and Sciences). William Griffith (University of Kansas, History) was elected president, and Roberto Esquinazi-Mayo (University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Spanish) was appointed MALAS representative to the Consortium of Regional Organizations for Latin American Studies.

The Thirteenth Annual Meeting was held 20–21 October 1972, at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. The program theme was “Conflict and Violence in Latin America.” The banquet speaker was Galo Leoro F., Ecuadorian ambassador to the Organization of American States.

At the business meeting, it was announced that Harry Kantor had resigned during the summer as editor of the *Newsletter* and had been succeeded by Kenneth J. Grieb (University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh; History). The treasury continued to decline, reflecting the high cost of first class mail. The membership elected Kenneth J. Grieb as the thirteenth president of MALAS.

“Race Relations in Latin America” constituted the program theme when MALAS members gathered for the fourteenth time, 26–27 October 1973, at Indiana State University in Terre Haute. The paper sessions explored the situation of minority groups throughout the region, including Blacks, Indians, and Japanese. At the business meeting President Kenneth J. Grieb announced the reconstitution of the executive committee, to revitalize the organization by providing more continuity between meetings, and reported on a special project—MALAS sponsorship (in cooperation with the Wisconsin Partners of the Americas) of a book collection to replace library materials which the Managua Campus of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua lost in the earthquake which destroyed that capital. He also announced that henceforth the *Newsletter* would appear quarterly, in October, December, February, and April. The secretary-treasurer was continuing efforts to obtain proper certification to allow use of third class postage in the future. Harry Kantor was elected as the new president of MALAS.

MALAS members assembled for the Fifteenth Annual Meeting at DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, 25–26 October 1974. The program theme was “The Andean Countries,” with papers dealing with all the nations of western South America. The luncheon speaker was Miguel Angel Burelli Rivas, Venezuelan ambassador to the United States, while John D. Martz, newly designated editor of the *Latin American Research Review*, addressed the banquet. At the business meeting the membership adopted a series of constitutional amendments to specify the professional, non-profit, and non-political status of the association, to fulfill requirements of the U.S. Department of the Treasury for appropriate certification as a non-profit organization, a step necessary under federal regulations to regain the use of third class postage for the *Newsletter*. Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo was elected as president for 1974–75. Robert Aubey continues as secretary-treasurer, and Kenneth J. Grieb continues as editor of the *Newsletter*.

Plans call for the Sixteenth Annual Meeting to be held at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 24–25 October 1975, with the program theme to be “Rural Life and Agrarian Problems in Latin America.” The 1976 Annual Meeting will be held at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, during

October 1976, with a focus on the effect of United States Independence on Latin America in accordance with the U.S. Bicentennial.

From one hundred members at the end of its first year (1961), MALAS has grown to include several hundred persons, spanning a wide range of disciplines—agriculture, business, anthropology, commerce, economics, geography, history, political science, spanish, and portuguese. The value of the organization has been in its two major functions—the annual meeting and the *Newsletter*. The *Newsletter*, under Editors J. Cary Davis, Robert Knowlton, Robert Gold, Harry Kantor, and Kenneth J. Grieb, has appeared regularly, since vol. I, no. 1 (March 1961), to inform the midwest Latin Americanists of activities of interest. It is the chief source of information about the recent history of Latin American studies in the midwest, including reports of all regional meetings and institutional activities in the midwest, reports of meetings and activities from other areas of the nation and the world, and an up-to-date bibliography of recent studies in all disciplines. Since 1973, the April issue has been a double-size release, enabling inclusion of an extensive bibliography. By 1976, with a return to third class postage, the February issue might also be expanded to a double issue, thereby broadening bibliographic coverage.

The annual meetings have been held each year since 1960, and have featured open and vigorous discussion among speakers, commentators, and audiences. Speakers have included prominent nonmidwesterners, diplomats, and highly respected scholars linked to MALAS. Programs in the Annual Meetings have included over 150 papers, dealing with virtually all the nations of the hemisphere and encompassing all disciplines involved in Latin American studies. Most of the programs have been topical, covering the entire region, although two dealt with a single nation and one was subregional. The principal focus has been upon economic-political change-reform-development.

The papers of several of the annual meetings have been edited and published: *The Community in Revolutionary Latin America* was published by the University of Kansas in 1964 from papers presented at the Fourth Annual Meeting in 1963; *Current Developments in Brazil: Selected Papers from the MCALAS 1966 Annual Meeting*, was published by Michigan State University in 1967; the papers of the 1967 program, edited by Frank Bachmura, were published in 1968 by Indiana University under the title *Human Resources in Latin America*; Charles J. Fleener and Henry J. Corgas edited *Religious and Cultural Factors in Latin America: Papers from the 1968 Annual Meeting*, which was published in 1970; and *Cultural Change in Brazil*, edited by N. Merrill Rippy, including papers of the annual meeting

in 1969, was published by Ball State University in 1970. MALAS has also engaged in occasional special projects, and has cooperated with other regional associations through the LASA Regional Liaison Committee.

MALAS remains a vigorous regional organization, well known throughout its area, dedicated principally to promoting the study of Latin America and to the advancement of scholarly interchange among Latin American specialists in the midwest.

## APPENDIX

<i>Year</i>	<i>MALAS Presidents</i>
1960–61	Frederick B. Pike, University of Notre Dame
1961–62	Harvey L. Johnson, Indiana University
1962–63	William Glade, University of Wisconsin, Madison
1963–64	John Augelli, University of Kansas
1964–65	N. Merrill Rippy, Ball State University
1965–66	William D'Antonio, University of Notre Dame
1966–67	Oscar Horst, Western Michigan University
1967–68	Garland Wood, Michigan State University
1968–69	Frank Bachmura, Indiana University
1969–70	Charles Fleener, St. Louis University
1970–71	Tom Martinson, Ball State University
1971–72	William Griffith, University of Kansas
1972–73	Kenneth J. Grieb, University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh
1973–74	Harry Kantor, Marquette University
1974–75	Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

## NOTES

1. Officers have been identified at their first mention by their university and field to indicate the geographical and interdisciplinary range of MALAS. For a fuller account of this phase of the organization of ALAS see a letter of Harvey L. Johnson in *Hispania* 43 (1960): 71–74.
2. One of the peripheral boons of studying the history of MALAS is the discovery of the variations in the spellings for “midwest” (in the midwest!) and the changes in the name applied to the organization as it moved through its early history. Spellings and names are retained as they appeared in the printed materials used as sources.
3. The effort to revive ALAS ultimately resulted in the creation of LASA, the successor national Latin American Studies Association.