

From the President

by **Gerardo Otero**, president of LASA | Simon Fraser University | otero@sfu.ca

It is with great expectations and hope that our 40th Congress in 2022 will be held with a substantial face-to-face component in San Francisco, California. It will also have a simultaneous virtual component to make it accessible to all the LASA membership and beyond.

But a word is in order to inform our members why next year's congress will not be held in Paris, as previously planned and announced. There was great enthusiasm in our membership about having the second LASA Congress in Europe, after Barcelona in 2018, which broke participation records. On February 23, 2021, however, our executive director, Milagros Pereyra at the LASA Secretariat, was notified by the Paris Convention Bureau that the hotel we had contracted, the Paris Rive Gauche, was closing for three years for renovation. Because this is a Marriott hotel, Milagros contacted its international representative to inquire what happened and whether we could postpone the contract to hold our event in a later year under similar price conditions to those agreed to for 2022. After several negotiations, Pereyra, on behalf of LASA, was able to sign a new agreement on March 23, 2021, to hold its congress in Paris at the same, renovated, hotel in 2024. The original agreement was respected in its integrity.

Pressure was now on to determine where to go hold our 40th congress in 2022. We had to consider the differential pace of vaccinations worldwide and accessibility. A few options were explored, including Vancouver, where we had to cancel our presential congress for 2021. But San Francisco, California, came out as the safest option, given the faster vaccination pace in the United States, now that it has a new administration. We will hold the 2023 congress in Vancouver, where we were able to cancel the contract for 2021 without penalty; and the same prices will be honored for 2023. There is consideration of having the 2025 congress in

Guadalajara, Mexico, given that we had to cancel our contract in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outstanding issue is that, paradoxically, it is overall more expensive for LASA members to hold the congress in Mexico than in the United States or in Canada. Further options will continue to be explored for 2025 and announced in a timely manner.



Before closing, I'd like to encourage you to please read our exciting call for panel and paper proposals for LASA's 2022 Congress on LASA's website (<https://www.lasaweb.org/en/lasa2022/>). The formulation of our central theme, "Socioenvironmental polarization and rivalry among great powers," was articulated with great help from the trio of fantastic colleagues that are accompanying me in organizing the congress. Here's a brief introduction to each of them:

Kata Beilin holds a PhD in Hispanic Studies from the University of Chicago. She is the academic director of the Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program and professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Enrique Dussel Peters holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Notre Dame. He is professor in the Graduate Studies Division in the Faculty of Economics at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where he also directs the China-Mexico Studies Center.

Birgit Müller holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. She is a research director at the National Center for Research and professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales in Paris (EHESS).

Finally, I'm passing along a communiqué from LASA's Ways and Means Committee:

Comunicado de la Comisión de Ways and Means de LASA

(Nota: Este comité está integrado por el presidente, la anterior presidenta, la vicepresidenta/presidenta electa, la tesorera y la directora ejecutiva [exoficio])

En español:

Recibimos numerosas comunicaciones en torno al pronunciamiento que hiciera el Consejo Ejecutivo de LASA sobre los derechos humanos en Cuba. Estas comunicaciones fueron leídas con atención y suscitaron un productivo debate en el seno del Consejo Ejecutivo y en la Comisión de Ways & Means. Las diversas posturas, visiones y hasta contradicciones que estas comunicaciones reflejan constatan una vigorosa pluralidad entre la membresía de LASA. En los complejos tiempos que vivimos, estos debates lejos de evadirse tienen que ser bienvenidos y profundizados dentro de los valores de la tolerancia y el respeto. Les agradecemos el tiempo tomado para dirigirse a nosotros en torno a este tema y los invitamos a seguir intercambiando ideas sobre este y otras complejas problemáticas de la región dentro de los espacios que para ello existen en la Asociación. Seguiremos atentos y receptivos.

In English:

We received numerous communications in response to the pronouncement posted by LASA's Executive Council on human rights in Cuba. These communications were read with great care, and they generated a productive debate inside the Executive Council and the Ways and Means Committee. The diverse stances, visions, and even contradictions that these communications reflect confirm the vigorous plurality within LASA's membership. Far from avoiding such debates in the complex times that we are living, we need to

welcome and deepen them within our values of tolerance and respect. We thank and appreciate the time taken to send us your views about this issue and invite you to continue exchanging ideas on this and other complex matters in the region, within the spaces that LASA provides for such purpose. We will remain attentive and receptive. //