





HERMANN WEISSGÄRBER

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A view on the eventful history and bilateral work
of the Austro-American Institute of Education
from 1926 – 2016. Volume 1 (1926 – 1971)



Vorstandssitzung
12. Februar 1930.
H. Weissgärber



Nicholas Murray Butler
Columbia University in the City of New York
New York 24. 1931

Dedication

Dedicated to my parents, Alfred and Margareta Weissgärber, who introduced me to the exciting world of international education; my patient wife, Elisabeth, who has to listen to AAIE stories over and over again; and to our five children who are hopefully going to live their lives in an open-minded, tolerant, international and peaceful way.

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The following names and abbreviations found repeatedly in the book are listed here to facilitate ease and clarity of reading.

Amerika-Institut (AI) *also* Austro-American Institute of Education (AAIE)

America-Austria Society *also* Austria-America Society
(Chairman Dr. Johann Schober)

Institute of International Education (IIE)

Colorado Women's College (CWC) was formerly named Colorado Woman's College (CWC)

Information about AAIE archive sources:

In the AAIE archive there are countless loose newspaper clippings which have been marked with handwritten publication dates, however unfortunately often without listing the source. Many of the articles presumably come from the *Neue Freie Presse* as well as the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*. For the purposes of this book, many of these articles have been simply listed as "AAIE archive".

The internet sources are marked with the most recent dates on which the links were opened and checked.

Note:

Several quotes that are originally in English (in both the German and English versions of the book) have been left in their original form, except where indicated by []

Main photograph on book cover:

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Writing a comprehensive history of the AAIE will shed light on the evolvement of some of the most significant intellectual forces that have been shaping international cultural relations over the past century.

Both the AAIE and its mentor and initiator, the Institute of International Education in New York, have their origin in the aftermath of the First World War and its unprecedented suffering and loss of human life. It was felt that a universal international goodwill had to be created in the interest of moving ever closer to the attainment of world peace and to a lasting improvement of general living conditions. International educational exchanges were assigned a major role in reaching these goals, and rightly so.

This insight is embodied in the mission of the AAIE which blends in well with Austrian foreign cultural policy and its emphasis on the ability of culture to overcome borders, to open doors and to unite people of different backgrounds, faiths, religions and views of the world.

The AAIE is an excellent example of a cultural bridge builder with a lasting and profound impact on both sides of

the Atlantic. As such it is a much appreciated partner for Austrian cultural foreign policy.

It is a pleasure to introduce the present volume on the history of the AAIE to a large and interested audience with my very best wishes.

Sebastian Kurz

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sebastian Kurz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

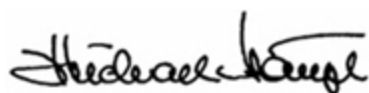
The Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs



International relations are important for Vienna and for the entire country. The Austro-American Institute of Education (AAIE) in Vienna therefore plays a vital role. For 90 years, the AAIE has promoted the relations between Austria and the United States with a focus on art, culture, and education. Thanks to the varied program, thousands of Americans have visited Vienna and got to know Viennese culture and our beautiful city. The AAIE is also a contact point for many Austrians who want to improve their English language skills and prepare for a visit to the USA. The Austro-American Institute of Education reflects the diversity of our city and has become an integral part of Vienna. It is the oldest English language institution of its kind in Austria. Broadening your horizon, learning about habits and traditions of other countries and their points of view can only work out if we interact with each other. The work of the Austro-American Institute of Education is therefore of vital importance to promote social exchange and bring people of many different backgrounds together. Doubts, worries, and prejudice can be put aside, which is one of the great

challenges of our time. My thanks go to all the staff members of the AAIE, and I would like to congratulate the Austro-American Institute of Education on the occasion of its 90th anniversary.

Michael Häupl

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Häupl". The signature is written in a cursive style with some stylized flourishes.

Mayor and Governor of Vienna

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AAIE Directors, Chairpersons and US Ambassadors from 1926 - 2016

YEAR	DIRECTOR	CHAIRP.	US DIPL.
1926- 1929	Dengler	Pirquet	Washburn
1929- 1930	Dengler	Luick	Washburn/ Stockton
1930- 1938	Dengler	Wenckebach	Stockton/Earle/ Messersmith, Emmet
1938 1945			
1946	Dengler/ Schämminger	Patzelt	Erhardt
1946- 1949	Schämminger	Kauders	Erhardt
1949- 1953	Schämminger	Stummvoll	Erhart/Donnelly/ Thompson
1953- 1961	Schämminger	Kleinwächter	Thompson/ Matthews
1961- 1967	Richter	Kerschagl	Matthews/ Riddleberger/ McArthur II
1967- 1971	Richter	Gruber	McArthur/Humes
1971- 1973	Richter	Leitner H.	Humes
1973- 1975	Richter	Schmitz	Humes/Buchanan
1975- 1976	Richter	Leitner H.	Buchanan
1976- 1977	Richter	Platzer	Buchanan/Wolf
1977- 1982	Dolezal/ Weissgärber M.	Platzer	Wolf/Kaiser/ Cummings
1982- 1983	Dolezal/ Weissgärber M.	Leitner L.	Cummings/Van Damm
1983-- 2000	Weissgärber M.	Leitner L.	Van Damm/Lauder/ Grunwald/Huffington/ Hunt/Hall
2000- 2004	Weissgärber H.	Leitner L.	Hall/Brown
2004- 2016	Weissgärber H.	Janda	Brown/McCaw/ DiCarlo/Eacho/ Wesner

Chapter I: Title and Idea for the Book

Every organization and every company should, preferably before its foundation, though certainly during the course of its existence, pause and consider its distinctive features. This is not a matter of self praise or a friendly pat on the back, but simply a question of the so-called “unique selling point”, or USP, as it is commonly described in today’s business world. What is our “Unique Selling Point”? Where do we stand, where are we going and which products or qualities differentiate us from our rivals and competitors? What do we stand for?

Young entrepreneurs are well-advised to seriously pose and discuss this question *before* founding a company, even at the risk of grappling with some potentially depressing realizations.

But how to proceed with an organization that has already existed for decades? How to proceed with an organization that throughout its eventful history has experienced countless highs and lows, changing political and economic systems, changing customer structures and target groups, but has never really confronted this question because its existence was seen as a matter of fact? Truly, the Austro-American Institute of Education (AAIE) is not alone in facing this issue, even though the number of organizations approaching three-digit anniversaries is getting smaller and smaller in many countries. But nothing, truly nothing, can circumvent dealing with this topic. It cannot be swept under the rug, trivialized or made irrelevant, ending up in some

drawer for later consideration. It is and remains an integral element of every organization.

It is a fact that since the founding of the Austro-American Institute of Education, we have addressed the strengthening of international ties between Austria and the United States of America on educational and cultural levels. The exact areas in which this important bilateral activity has been taking place will be explained with specific examples later in this book. Thus, the question of what we as an organization and as individuals stand for and strive for seems far easier to explain than the question regarding our aforementioned USP.

Regardless of how much joy and enthusiasm still fills our work even after decades, we can hardly claim that the Austro-American Institute of Education is the only organization in Austria engaging in bilateral affairs. And further, the fact that this engagement bears measurable results and brings the USA and Austria closer cannot be attributed exclusively to our efforts either. Innumerable smaller organizations and countless globally active organizations, all the way up to the United Nations, are addressing more or less successfully, the strengthening of bilateral relationships and the vision of a better and more peaceful world. So how does the AAIE differentiate itself from the others? What could a mission statement for our organization be, which makes us truly exceptional? What could our “claim”, our “slogan” be, which increases our recognition factor and defines the goal for our employees?

In the world of business we are familiar with slogans as short phrases which relay descriptive and emotional information. On the one hand, they increase the recognition value and/or brand awareness; on the other hand, they reinforce the connection between brand and service.

Therefore, slogans primarily serve the purpose of communicating the position of a brand to persons outside of the company. The bilateral environment of the AAIE requires us to take a look at some selected examples of claims that originated in Austria or the USA and have gained international recognition:

“Just do it” (Nike), “Intel inside” (Intel), “Red Bull gives you wings” (Red Bull), “We fly for your smile” (Austrian Airlines)

This is just a small collection of slogans describing and positioning successful brands. When our institute skidded into a crisis a few years back (also brought on by the global economic downturn), a restructuring of the organization became an imperative. As is often the case with organizations as old as ours, many structures had grown completely wild, disjointed and in need of an enormous input of energy by the employees in an already very work-intensive and complex business environment. In the course of this restructuring process, which affected mostly the administrative area of the AAIE, I began asking myself more and more such questions as, “What?” and “Why?”.

Realistically, it couldn't be our language courses, which have to stand firm in the face of excellent competition from other language schools in Vienna and all of Austria. Neither could it be our study abroad programs for American universities, as specialized, popular or sought-after as they might be, that would give us unique positioning. In the same vein, it also could not be our many cultural events, such as lectures, art exhibitions, readings or concerts organized on a regular basis within the framework of the Austro-American Cultural Circle (English & More). For some time it seemed as if it was the curse of an increasingly global and saturated world that hindered the AAIE from finding a way to position itself clearly and to define itself. The fact of the existence of a nearly infinite array of educational and cultural offerings in

present-day Austria and in the US certainly did not facilitate our process of self-discovery, our quest for meaning and the *raison d'être* of the institute. And yet we are able to determine features that clearly set us apart from others – characteristics that clearly differentiate us from many organizations already in existence today or currently springing up around us. For one thing, it is our indisputable *tradition*. Mindful of this fact, shortly before our anniversary in 2011, I created the claim, “**...you can't copy tradition**” for our institute.

It is apparent that one cannot make a living of tradition and memories of glorious times or well-known individuals. This approach would be nothing but dusty and unrealistic; and so our institute can only continue to exist if it ceases to close itself off from new developments, and instead embraces the call of a modern world. It should continue being what it has been since 1926 – a passionate service provider. We at the Austro-American Institute of Education are deeply convinced that modernity and tradition are not mutually exclusive, but rather go hand in hand. We have served many of our customers for decades and they experience and support us in this development. Together with us, they uphold several key elements that have characterized our institute for a long time. It is from our tradition that we draw ideas and strength for the tasks that lie ahead, which have by no means become smaller or easier. So tradition is one characteristic that we intend to establish as an outstanding feature for us.

Secondly, it is the way in which we do and have always done our (bilateral) work – on a personal, small-scale level, absent of all of the anonymity of large educational institutions. This feature, which has remained with us throughout the decades, was already addressed by our founder, Paul Leo Dengler, during the very first general assembly meeting of the AAIE in December of 1926:

“...This is a brand new idea which has never been done before in Europe ... treating travelers not as a compact mass, but also to individualize them in this area... .”¹

Dengler’s idea of individualization in the mid 1920s matches the pulse of our times more than ever before. The desire for personalized products nowadays is very large and the AAIE strives to fulfill many of these individual desires and demands of our customers in the USA and Austria.

Especially since the AAIE was founded in the light of *world peace* in 1926, our task today is larger and more important than ever. We are convinced that our bilateral activities in the field of education are part of an infinitely important diplomatic mission, and that these actions represent an indispensable contribution to international understanding. Committed to this tradition for the last 16 years, I endeavor to lead the AAIE in accordance with its 90-year-old basic orientation. It is an institute that has remained a constant in times of rapid and radical changes in so many areas of life.

Writing a book like this one harbors numerous dangers. As space and time are limited, of course only excerpts of our 90-year-long activity can be portrayed. Neither should this be a scientific paper, pleasing only a handful of highly interested specialists. The goal was to offer information to all people interested in international education in general, and naturally, to those who are or were active within the framework of international programs. Equally, offering American and Austrian readers a deeper understanding of the history of the institute was another overriding goal. This also meant that cross-connections to acting persons and organizations had to be compiled in numerous passages of the book. Therefore, I decided to take a closer look at some individuals, organizations and activities as representatives of our entire field of work and to name others only briefly,

without wanting to diminish their work or their impact. In volume I of our history, special emphasis will be put on the first four and a half, especially interesting decades of our institute (1926-1971). Beginning with the 1970s (volume II), I will give the reader a broader overview of the development of the institute and will go into detail only selectively.

The primary source of this book is original documents of the AAIE which offer a good overview of the society at hand and its activities. For a better understanding and in order to observe some connections more easily, these in-house sources have been expanded with relevant literature, internet sources and photographic material. Nonetheless, I can often describe facts only in a broad outline. Only during the course of research for this book did I realize that the time span to be examined is a historically relevant period spanning from the end of World War I, to the Treaty of Friendship between Austria and the United States of America, up until World War II. The book leads us from the time of occupation, to the Austrian State Treaty; from the years of the Cold War and nuclear deterrence strategies of the superpowers, up until the fall of the Iron Curtain. The observation period runs from the reunification of Germany, the collapse of the Soviet Union, to Operation Desert Storm, all the way to the terrible attacks on the World Trade Center in New York. The book spans the period from the introduction of the euro as a common European currency, to the millennium festivities and up until the crises of the American and European banking and finance systems. Finally, the book leads to the years witnessing the inauguration of the first African-American president, and ending in a time characterized by the largest wave of refugees since the end of World War II, initiated by numerous platforms for war and terror in this world.

It is this precarious state of our world which bestows institutes like ours, even 90 years after its foundation, with an enormous importance and a wide field of activity.

Chapter II: Austro-American Institute of Education as Part of Austro-American Diplomatic Relations

*"...Austria's role as advocate and host for dialogue and cooperation among the nations of Europe and the world has never been more important than today."*²

Generally, diplomacy is understood as the art of negotiating by authorized representatives of different nations and in most cases it relates to international diplomacy, specifically the development and maintenance of bilateral relations. Usually, negotiations and agreements take place in areas such as peacekeeping, culture and education, economics, trade and conflict management.

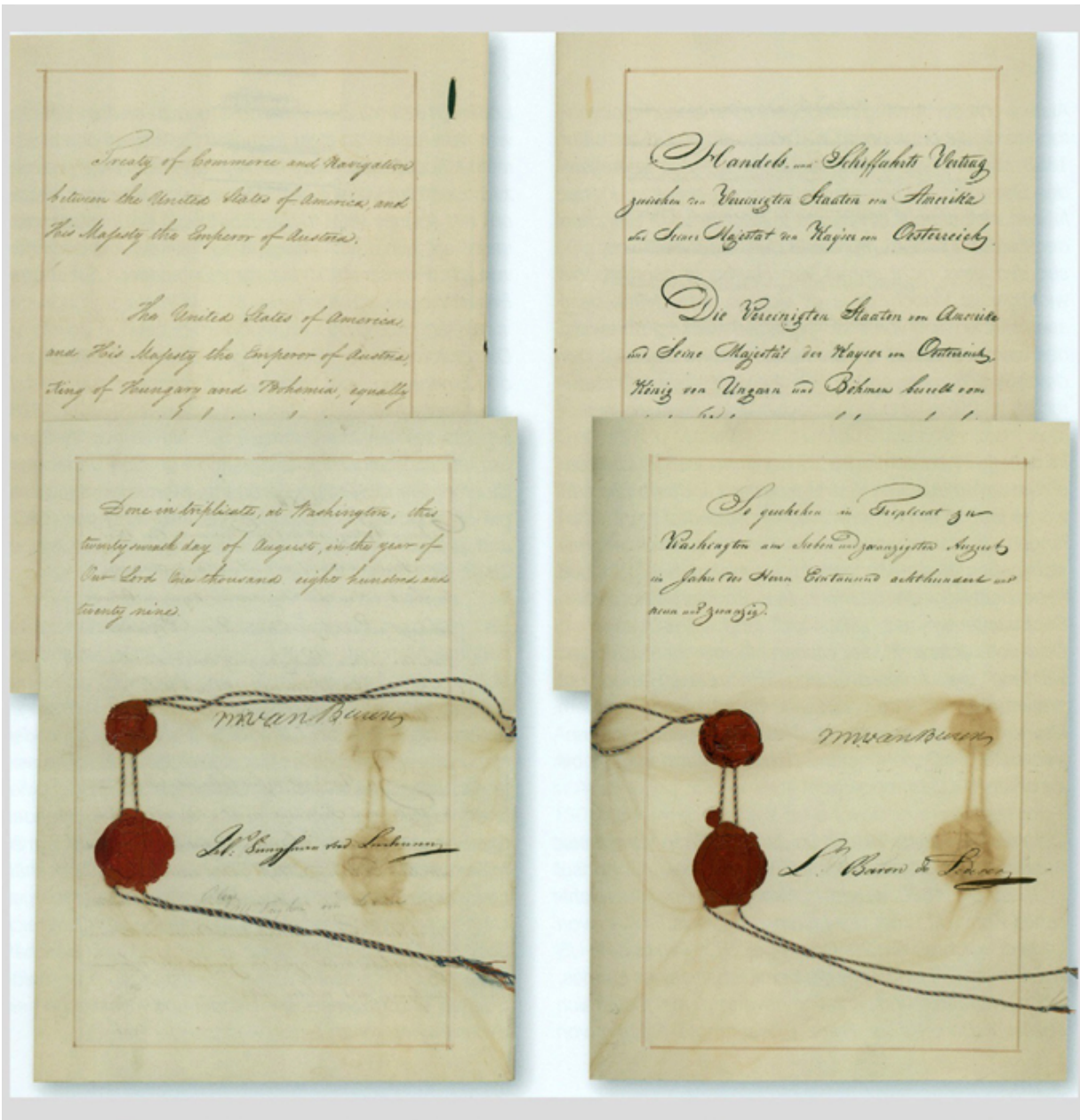
It is the intention of this book to demonstrate that the Austro-American Institute of Education (AAIE) holds a firm place in the areas of culture and education in these bilateral relations. As an introduction, the beginnings of diplomatic relations between Austria and the United States will be outlined very briefly.

In February 2013, the Embassy of the United States and the Ministry for European and International Affairs both invited to a ceremony at the Diplomatic Academy. The occasion was an event steeped in history. After all, the year 2013 rang in the 175th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and the United States of America. Distinguished speakers included the Austrian President, Dr. Heinz Fischer,

and the then Ambassador of the United States, William C. Eacho.

Let us flash back to the year 1820 for a moment, when an Austrian consulate was established in New York City. This was headed by Alois Baron von Lederer, who had been appointed by Emperor Franz I in 1828 to negotiate a commerce and navigation treaty. After its signing, this treaty remained in force up until the United States entered the First World War.³

Officially, the diplomatic relations between the two countries began somewhat later with the accreditations of the American and Austrian envoys. Henry A. Muhlenberg was accredited in November 1838 and his Austrian counterpart, Wenzel Phillip Baron von Mareschal, presented his accreditation in Washington D.C. one month prior.⁴



Pictured: Treaty of Commerce and Navigation⁵

Whereas trade relations were expanded greatly during the first decades – following the start of diplomatic relations – matters of tourism and the tourism industry only began to be slowly addressed around the year 1900. Naturally, the outbreak of the First World War saw a substantial deterioration of relations between the two nations and finally led to a complete severing of diplomatic relations by

the Austro-Hungarian Empire in April 1917. The United States declared war on the Danube monarchy a few months later. After the end of the war, the Treaty of Saint-Germain was not ratified by the United States. Thereby, it acted differently from its allies, being unable to identify with the concept of the League of Nations. Nonetheless, in August 1921 a treaty was signed by the United States, establishing the foundation for friendly relations with the young Austrian republic.⁶

At a later point in this book, additional bilateral treaties between Austria and the United States which were signed by individuals who were significantly involved in the activities of the AAIE, will be discussed. It is undisputed that bilateral academic and cultural activities constitute an essential part of diplomatic work. In this light, the AAIE was mentioned (by Ambassador Eacho) at a prominent point during the ceremony at the Diplomatic Academy.



Pictured: U.S. Embassy Reception, 2011⁷

©US Embassy. (from left) Hermann Weissgärber, Dir. AAIE, Christopher Hoh, Deputy Chief of Mission, Karin Schmid-Gerlich, Public Affairs

Specialist US Embassy, and Ambassador William C. Eacho.

“...it would be impossible to compile a full historical documentation of the last 175 years ... our exhibit is a visual journey, showing the highlights of U.S. - Austrian relations... . During my time in Austria, I have had the privilege of attending many events, where we increased cooperation and deepened the relationship between Austria and the United States ... we have had ... major celebrations of exchange programs between Austria and the United States ... and [including] the 85th anniversary of the Austro-American Institute of Education... .”⁸

In Ambassador Eacho’s speech, he commended the 85th anniversary of the AAIE, which was ceremoniously celebrated in 2011. One of the highlights of the celebrations in 2011 was a festive reception at the residence of the US Ambassador as a *thank-you* for the decades-long bilateral work of the institute as well as a mission call to continue this work in the decades to come. We can summarize proudly that for more than half of the years of official diplomatic relations between Austria and the United States, the AAIE has contributed its part in the grand concerto of diplomacy. Since its foundation, it has developed into a significant player in “Austro-American relations”, and will continue to assume its role with great responsibility and care.

Chapter III: The Political, Intellectual and Cultural Environment during the Founding Period of the Austro-American Institute of Education

"I experienced World War I as a civil war amongst Europeans: as a catastrophe of the highest order." ⁹

This quote by Count Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi, the founder of the Paneuropean Movement¹⁰, historically leads us to the end of World War I which had left Europe and the world in ruins. Out of these ruins sprang numerous ideas and concepts which warrant taking a closer look at for a moment, in order to better understand the birth of the Austro-American Institute of Education (AAIE) and the vision of its founders. At this point it appears equally useful to look at some organizations we will come across repeatedly in further explanations. It will become apparent how closely connected and interwoven all of these organizations and their respective concepts were. Some ideas and visions - especially in the founding year of the AAIE, but also during the following years - can be found again and again in records and documents of the AAIE and are therefore integrally linked to the institute and its history. Our short overview shall be an attempt to get a sense of the intellectual and political atmosphere of the postwar years.

International Good Will

The horrors of World War I had left a mark on all of Europe as well as on the United States of America. Within the political, intellectual and academic life the catchphrase of *international good will* had established itself. This term, rather this vision, must not be ignored in the context of the birth hour of the AAIE, especially since the core idea of the AAIE is very much anchored within this motto:

“Has there ever been a time greater than ours? Has it ever been more interesting to live on this fine, this beautiful Earth? We are sick of hearing constant praise of old times, since we are partaking in the unfolding of a new era, surrounded daily by new wonders of technology. Its ideal is the supranational unification of mankind... . A process of balancing the tensions between the regions of mankind is in the making such as the world has never before experienced, nor been able to experience, due to wanting technical conditions. Once we are all internally ready, mail and radio, airplanes and tourist classes of high sea cruise liners will replace the limitations of space with the infinity of mankind... . Our own country lies far from the vast stream of experiences - these flow in other places... . We want to contribute to strengthening this “international good will”, this mutual, empathetic tolerance and acknowledgement, because no other force on this planet will be able to prevent new world fires than an international army of spirit which deems every war a war amongst brothers.” ¹¹

These words, taken from the AAIE annual report of 1926, clearly express how great the desire was for everlasting world peace, for connection and understanding amongst peoples in the years following World War I. The thought to secure peace via international cooperation and intellectual

interaction had an increased and intensified influence on the academic programs of renowned institutions. Amongst other things, this is substantiated by the following quote by the then President of Columbia University, New York, Nicholas Murray Butler:

“International thinking is nothing more than a mindset of recognizing the different nations of the civilized world to be equal and basically friendly members of a greater community. The goal of such an international way of thinking: Helping to unite the peoples of the world to work together – serving a technical civilization, an economic development of trade and industry, and especially the advancement of knowledge and culture!” ¹²

World peace, international cooperation, and coexistence based on mutual understanding were equally some of the cornerstones of the 14-point program of US President Woodrow Wilson, which could be implemented as a community of nations at the Paris Peace Conference in February 1919. During this conference, the participating states decided on the foundation of a League of Nations.

The League of Nations

On January 10, 1920 the League of Nations, which initially consisted of 32 victor states and 13 neutral states, commenced its work. Its headquarters was located in Geneva. This association for securing peace did outstanding work in many areas and always followed its guiding principle – the preservation of world peace. The League of Nations occupied itself with the question of international education, also or maybe especially because world peace was its

motto. However, the first attempts at an education policy which spanned several nations failed due to internal quarrels and the opinion of many acting individuals and parties that education was a national rather than an international matter:

"...Then, I was much in Geneva from the early days when the League was beginning to concern itself with education in the schools... . As a matter of fact, the first proposal to foster intellectual cooperation under the League did not come from France. It came from Belgium... .The Belgians asked for an International Commission on Intellectual Relations. So coldly was the proposal received that it was withdrawn... . All that could be done in the First Assembly was the ventilation of the idea ... in favor of a "Commission" for the study of questions relating to "intellectual cooperation and education"... . At the Assembly, however, so nervous were the delegates about so new an experiment that the reference to education in the original resolution had to be deleted... . The members of the Committee ... were to include some of the foremost academic minds of the day... . Madame Curie was a member and so was Professor Einstein." ¹³

International Education

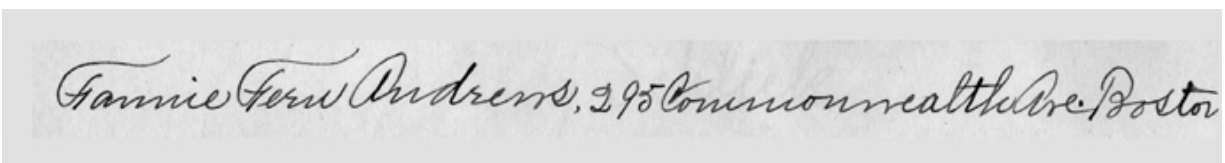
International education, thus organized education and training, was in its infancy during the interwar years as shown by the aforementioned attempts by the League of Nations. Initially agreed upon and ordered structures or

regulations spanning several nations were looked for, to no avail:

"...several other plans ... to educate men for international understanding were put forth in the course of the century, but they never came to fruit either. The first to come close to success was the Bostonian, Fannie Fern Andrews. A student of international law, with a doctor's degree from Harvard, she became interested in education for international peace..." ¹⁴

"...amongst the demands put forward..., two of the women (one F.F.Andrews) ... asked the League of Nations to set up "an International Bureau of Education"... ." ¹⁵

Amongst the internal documents of the AAIE are guestbooks with entries from the years 1928 - 1985. Studying these books, the signature of Fannie Fern Andrews can be found for the year 1938 - a clear indication of the importance of the AAIE in the spectrum of internationally active organizations.



Pictured: Guestbook 1938, AAIE Archive ¹⁶

Andrews' idea for a separate Bureau for International Education and Training finally became reality. In a report from this office in Geneva, international education is described as a long-awaited wish on a global scope: