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solidarity with the Mexican revolution, its fate, its ideals, and its people. The tranquil toasts of diplomats will not unite these peoples. The historical choices of the multitudes will unite them in the future.

Is There Such a Thing as Hispanic-American Thought?*

I

I asked this question four months ago in an article on the idea of a congress of Ibero-American intellectuals. The idea of a congress has made much progress in these four months. It now seems to be an idea that has had a hesitating but simultaneous impact among various intellectual nuclei of Indo-Iberian America, an idea that has sprouted concurrently in the different nerve centers of the continent. Still schematic and embryonic, it is beginning to evolve and gain corporeity.

In Argentina, an energetic and willing group is proposing to take on the task of encouraging and realizing it. The work of this group is tending to connect with other similar Ibero-American groups. Some questionnaires are circulating among these groups to outline or suggest the subjects that the congress should discuss. The Argentine group has sketched out the program of a "Latin-American Union." In short, the preliminary elements exist for a debate, in the course of which the goals and bases of this movement of Hispanic-American coordination or organization will be elaborated and set forth as its initiators are wont to define them, though still a bit abstractly.

II

It therefore seems to me time to consider and clarify the question posed in the article I mentioned previously. Is there already a characteristically Hispanic-American thought? I feel that the statements of the supporters of such an organization go too far in this respect. Certain concepts in the message

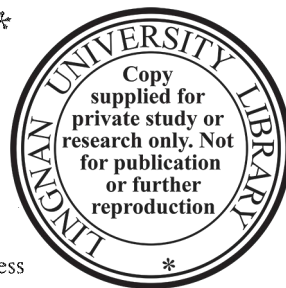
of Alfredo Palacios to the university youth of Ibero-America have led some immoderate and tropical temperaments to an exorbitant estimation of the value and power of Hispanic-American thought. Palacios's message, enthusiastic and optimistic in its assertions and phraseology as was proper in its character as polemic or proclamation, has engendered a series of exaggerations. It is therefore indispensable to rectify these excessively categorical concepts.

"Our America," writes Palacios, "has, until now, had Europe as its guide. Its culture has been nurtured and oriented there. But the last war has made evident what had already been prophesied—that at the heart of this culture were the seeds of its own dissolution." It is impossible to be surprised that these sentences have stimulated an erroneous interpretation of the theory of the decline of the West. Palacios seems to announce a radical liberation of our America from European culture. The tense of the verb lends itself to misinterpretation. The simplistic reader might deduce from Palacios's phrase that "until now, European culture has nurtured and oriented" America, but that it no longer nurtures or orients it. He concludes, at the least, that Europe has now lost the right and ability to spiritually and intellectually influence our young America. And this conclusion is inevitably accentuated and sharpened when Palacios adds a few lines later that "neither the European path nor its old culture serves us" and wants us to emancipate ourselves from the past and from European examples.

Our America, according to Palacios, feels itself on the verge of giving birth to a new culture. Taking this opinion or prophecy to an extreme, the journal *Valoraciones* says that "we are closing the book on these old topics, agonized expressions of the decrepit soul of Europe."

Should we see this optimism as a sign and testimony to the affirmative spirit and creative will of the new Hispanic-American generation? I believe it should first be recognized as characteristic of our America's old and incurable verbal self-aggrandizement. America's faith in its future has no need to subsist on an artificial and rhetorical exaggeration of its present. It is fine that America believes itself the home of a future civilization. It is fine to say that "the spirit will speak for my race." It is fine to consider oneself chosen to teach the world a new truth, but not to imagine oneself on the eve of replacing Europe or to declare the intellectual hegemony of the European peoples already finished and transcended.

Western civilization finds itself in crisis, but there is no indication that it is about to definitively collapse. Europe is not exhausted and paralyzed, as it is absurdly claimed. It has maintained its creative power despite the war and post-war. Our America continues importing ideas, books, machines, and fashions from Europe. What is ending, what is declining, is the cycle of capitalist civilization. A new social form, a new political order, is being formed in the heart of Europe. The theory of the West's decline, the product of the Western



* *Mundial*, May 1, 1925.

laboratory, did not envision the death of Europe, but of the culture whose seat is there. This European culture, which Spengler judges to be in decline without prophesying its immediate demise, succeeded Greco-Roman culture, which was also European. No one dismisses, no one excludes the possibility that Europe will renew and transform itself again. In the historical panorama which our viewpoint commands, Europe presents itself as the continent of the greatest rebirths. Aren't the greatest contemporary artists, the greatest contemporary thinkers, still European? Europe feeds on the world's vital fluids. European thought is immersed in the most distant mysteries, in the oldest civilizations. But this also shows its possibilities for convalescence and rebirth.

III

Let us return to our question. Is there a characteristically Hispanic-American thought? The existence in Western culture of French thought, of German thought, seems evident to me. The existence of Hispanic-American thought in the same sense does not seem equally evident. All the thinkers of our America have been educated in European schools. The spirit of the race is not felt in their work. The continent's intellectual production lacks its own characteristics. It does not have an original profile. Hispanic-American thought is generally only a rhapsody composed from the motifs and elements of European thought. To prove this, one can merely review the work of the highest representatives of the Indo-Iberian intellect.

The Hispanic-American spirit is being elaborated. The continent, the race, is also in formation. The Western sediments in which the seeds of Hispanic-American or Latin American thought are developing—in Argentina and Uruguay, one can speak of Latin ones—have not succeeded in uniting or combining with the soil on which it has been deposited by the colonization of America.

In the greater part of our America, they constitute a shallow and independent stratum through which the indigenous soul—humiliated and diffident because of the brutality of a conquest whose methods have not yet changed among some Hispanic-American peoples—cannot be seen. Palacios says:

We are nascent peoples, free of ties and atavisms, with immense possibilities and vast horizons before us. The intermingling of races has given us a new soul. Humanity is encamped inside our borders. We and our children are the synthesis of races.

In Argentina, it is possible to believe this; not in Peru and among other peoples of Hispanic America. Here, this synthesis does not yet exist. The elements of our nationality in formation have not yet been fused or welded. The profuse indigenous layer is kept almost totally foreign to the process of formation of this *Peruanidad* that our self-styled nationalists are wont to exalt

and inflate—these preachers of a nationalism without roots in the Peruvian soil, learned from Europe's imperialist gospels, and which is, as I have already had the opportunity to point out, the most foreign and artificial sentiment that exists in Peru.

IV

The debate that is beginning should precisely clarify all these questions. We should not prefer the easy fiction of declaring them resolved. The idea of a congress of Ibero-American intellectuals will be credible and productive to the extent that they can be outlined. The value of the idea lies almost completely in the debate that it inspires.

The program of the Argentine section of the projected Latin-American Union, the questionnaire of the Costa Rican journal *Repertorio Americano*, and the questionnaire of the group working here for this congress invite the intellectuals of our America to meditate on and discuss many fundamental problems of our continent in formation. The program of the Argentine section has the tone of a declaration of principles. This is undoubtedly premature. For the moment, it is only a question of outlining a plan of work and discussion. But a modern spirit and a will for renovation inspire the work of the Argentine section. This spirit, this will, gives it the right to lead the movement. Because the congress will represent or organize absolutely nothing if it does not represent and organize the new Hispanic-American generation.

Ibero-Americanism and Pan-Americanism*

I

Ibero-Americanism reappears sporadically in Spanish and Spanish-American debates. It is an idea or theme that from time to time engages discussions among our language's intellectuals (it seems to me that we cannot truly call them the intellectuals of *la raza*).

* *Mundial*, May 8, 1925.