

THE BRUSSELS CONFERENCE OF
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CONTACTS BETWEEN LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES CENTERS IN THE EUROPEAN countries have in the past been sporadic and informal. In order to make best use of existing scholarly resources a far greater degree of cooperation and interchange should exist, both at a national and a continental level. It was with a view to examining the present situation and to discussing the institutional bases for a program of cooperation that representatives of Latin American Studies Centers from France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Western Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and the Scandinavian countries met in Brussels on May 5-7, 1969. The Conference was sponsored by the Instituto Latinoamericano de Relaciones Internacionales (ILARI), represented by its director, Luis Mercier Vega, editor of the review *Aportes*, and François Bourricaud of the University of Paris. Latin American participants included Gino Germani of Harvard and Buenos Aires, Aldo E. Solari of CEPAL and Montevideo, and Domingo M. Rivarola of Paraguay. Kalman Silvert of New York University represented the U.S.A.

In his opening remarks, Luis Mercier Vega spoke of the need for a global view of Latin American study programs in European centers and of establishing the degree of relationship and interchange between these organizations and the possibilities of growth. It was necessary to find practical working machinery and to establish a flexible, functional articulation of resources without recourse to a mere duplication of existing administrative and bureaucratic structures.

Magnus Mörner represented centers in Gotenburg and Stockholm. Latin American studies in the Scandinavian countries had not until recently been developed to any notable extent, he said. What contact did exist was almost invariably with Sweden. Factors such as the deterioration of commercial relations with Argentina in the 1960's had adversely affected the growth of Latin American studies. Institutions for African and Asian studies had been established in 1962 in Sweden and Denmark respectively, whereas the foundation of a comparable center for Latin America had been delayed. Recently, however, interest has increased. This is due in part to the growth of economic relations and to the existence of ideological and political factors which have stimulated scholars

to an awareness of Latin American problems, and to the necessity of creating institutional bases for such studies in the Scandinavian countries.

Jacques Lambert of the University of Lyon and the Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine of Paris spoke of the long and close ties between France and Latin America, and of the reciprocal currents of interest and endeavors in the most varied disciplines. The problem was not one of scarcity of human resources or of lack of interest so much as of the isolation of each of the different specialized and regional institutions, especially the universities. Many of these were situated in the provinces without adequate communication or interchange with larger centers within and outside France—to which should be added the characteristic atmosphere of mutual hostility and mistrust between different university departments and faculties and their lack of desire to work together. The problem in France does not consist in producing researchers who are eager and competent to specialize in Latin America so much as in the full utilization of these people, the better to study economic and social problems of Latin American development. François Bourricaud of the University of Paris added that this meant overcoming the institutional deficiencies which constitute obstacles to the full use of the many available resources. Proposals should be systematized and the results collated in a coherent manner.

The contribution of Belgium to the study of Latin America was discussed by André Corten of the University of Louvain. Three distinct historical periods could be discerned. Economic-commercial themes dominated the first period, from about 1890 to 1910; socio-religious themes the second, from 1954; whereas main emphasis in recent years had been on sociology. The first type of studies had been motivated by commercial exchange. The second dated from a definite *prise de conscience* on the part of militant religious as regards their commitments to the social structure and its transformation. The work of Fr. François Houtard and of Fr. Albert Sirau as well as that of the Society of Jesus in founding research centers and fostering publications and documentation as well as their social action was mentioned. Two important centers of sociological studies were cited: The Université Libre de Bruxelles, whose Center for Latin American Studies was created in 1964, and the University of Louvain. The Servicio Europeo de Universitarios Latinoamericanos (SEUL), situated in Brussels, was also worthy of note, as was the review, *Cultures et Développement*, with articles on Latin America.

The most notable manifestation of interest in Latin America in Italy was to be found in the activity of various publishing houses, said Riccardo Campa, editor of *Nuova Antologia*, Rome. Of the existing institutions he cited the Istituto Italo-Americano, the Centro di Ricerche Sull'America Latina, which was primarily concerned with the promotion of relations between Italy and

South America, and the Istituto di Studi Latino Americano of the Associazione per l'Università Internazionale "Pro Deo," which fosters research and documentation on Latin American problems. He concluded that social studies of Latin America were little advanced in Italy.

The obvious and old established links between Spain and Latin America—political, economic and cultural—and the intense co-penetration of the two regions have marked the activities of Spanish centers. Typical of these is the Asociación de Sociólogos de Lengua Española y Portuguesa (ASLEP) and the Instituto de Sociología y Desarrollo del Area Ibérica. Manuel Lizcano and Enrique Couceiro, both of ASLEP, drew attention to the limited scope of existing centers in Spain and to the work of promotion and research which the above institutions had undertaken to improve this. ASLEP had three principal objectives: 1) research into communal structures in the Iberian area; 2) integration and development of the Iberian area and 3) the *Anuario de Sociología de los Pueblos Ibéricos*, three volumes of which have already appeared.

Harold Blakemore of London University talked about the state of Latin American studies in Great Britain. In the last five years, centers had been established in Cambridge, Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Oxford, following the recommendations of the Parry report. These had undoubtedly contributed to the increase in Latin American studies, although primarily in the fields of history and literature—the social sciences being as yet relatively undeveloped in Great Britain. Present efforts were concentrated on problems of documentation and of the availability of archival and library materials. The idea of a national library, accessible to all interested scholars, had been considered. The sudden "explosive and chaotic" expansion of Latin American studies would have to be organized with a view to cooperation at a national level. To this end, a review and an inventory of Latin Americanists have already been created and a general catalogue is being compiled.

Latin American studies in the Netherlands were represented by Professor van Zantwijk and A. E. van Niekerk of Amsterdam. The work of the Center of Latin American Studies and Documentation at the University of Amsterdam was noted as well as that of the Instituto de Estudio Hispano—Portugueses e Iberoamericanos of the University of Utrecht and the Instituto para América Latina, which has recently become a department of the Chamber of Commerce. The cooperative agreement with Lima University, the "Ayacucho" project and various research projects were mentioned as was the *Boletín Bibliográfico* edited by the Amsterdam Center.

The situation of Latin American Studies in Western Germany was described by Albrecht von Gleich of Hamburg, Hans Albert Steger of Dortmund and Jürgen Gräbener of Münster. The following historical-social factors could

be noted at the end of World War II: 1) the negative influence of National Socialist policies towards Latin America; 2) the lack of experience and of direct contacts between new researchers; 3) the extreme weakness of existing organizations; 4) lack of coordination or cooperation between different groups of researchers. Subsequent efforts were directed to remedying these deficiencies. One positive step was the Primer Coloquio Científico de Ultramar in 1961, another the creation of the Asociación Alemana para la Investigación sobre América Latina (ADLAF) in 1965. Interdisciplinary cooperation among the different centers has now been achieved with notable success. The difficulty of reaching conclusive and systematic results in the study of social phenomena without wide knowledge of the substance and methods of different scientific disciplines was noted. Adequate mechanisms for communication and exchanges were also important. This had been achieved in Germany by means of a network of teletype machines, linking the various centers and permitting a high degree of integration. The effective development of Latin American Studies in Germany and their subsequent institutionalization had been achieved to a great extent with the creation of ADLAF with its aims of coordinating programs and publications, and common use of available resources. Part of this success was due to the decentralized structure of the Association which has permitted the delegation of specific functions to individual member institutions; for instance, the Centro de Documentación is organized by Hamburg University and the *Boletín Informativo* is published in Cologne.

The following general observations were made: 1) Mechanisms of communication between the different European centers were very limited. 2) Little was known about internal conditions—academic, documentary, bibliographical, etc. peculiar to each country. 3) There existed great differences in the level of development potential and resources of various countries; cooperation with institutions or countries that were less well off should be fostered. 4) Insufficient relations had been established to date with comparable institutions within Latin America. 5) The lack of systematization and integration of resources and proposals for the development of Latin American study programs were noted. 6) The primary materials commonly used in Europe for reference and study were not of a sufficiently high quality. 7) It was difficult to establish regular and systematic programs because of the exiguous and fluctuating nature of available funds.

Suggestions towards overcoming these problems were summarized thus: 1) Annual meetings should be held, such as the present one organized by ILARI in Brussels. 2) Good translations should be made accessible of material relevant to Latin America for diffusion among the different centers. 3) Means should be found to make better use of specialists from Latin America in Europe

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and for using the experience of scholars from Europe and the U.S. in Latin America. 4) Efforts should be especially made to assist those countries where Latin American Studies are as yet poorly developed, as in the case of Italy. 5) Meetings should be organized to exchange news and information about archives, documentation centers, and libraries, etc. 6) All efforts should be made to preserve and maintain existing resources and study centers.

The principal recommendations were: that this form of cooperation should be maintained on a permanent basis; ADLAF was charged with organizing the next meeting which would have the aim of undertaking a study program on a theme of equal interest to scholars from Europe and from Latin America, and which could be renewed each year. The first subject of such a program could be the study of educational systems at both secondary and university levels, with a view to making recommendations for reform. Continuity must be ensured between the organizers of successive meetings. Where these do not already exist, coordinating centers should be created within each country, and institutes for social science studies of Latin America should be founded.

Secondary recommendations: A Commission should be set up to examine the possibilities of establishing an international conference of an informative and scholarly nature which would be held in Italy. Riccardo Campa and Gino Germani would undertake this task in collaboration with other Italian scholars. ILARI and the present conference were prepared to give moral, technical, and organizational support for this venture, as indeed for all activities which would promote the development of social science studies of Latin America.

A third group of recommendations was concerned with documentation and research. Exchange of news and documentation on themes of interest should be promoted. The bulletin published by the Amsterdam center should be expanded to include bibliographic activities and news from the different centers. ILARI would contribute to this with news of its own programs and progress. Bibliographical news of European studies should be amplified so as to make this material more easily accessible to scholars in Latin America. Finally, institutions and individual scholars should define their fields of interest so as to facilitate cooperation with centers in Latin America.

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