

REPRINT

# Hemisphere Accents

## A DESIGN FOR UNITY MUST BE FORMULATED

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**T**HIS IS AN OCCASION of great hope for all of us who believe in New World solidarity. We are under the wing of the United States National Commission for UNESCO, an institution devoted to promoting in this country the understanding of the rich, cultural pluralism of the contemporary world. And we are in Denver, a city famous for its internationalist outlook and full of the vitality and human warmth of the American West.

In paying my personal homage to Denver and its fine citizens, I hope I may be forgiven if I express a feeling of fraternal envy. I come, as you are aware, from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico where we have set ourselves the task of furthering hemispheric unity, by making our island a true townhall of the Western World. In regard to our Hemisphere we have, indeed, claimed that Puerto Rico can rightfully say, in an anti-Kipling mood:

"For North is North  
And South is South  
And here the twain shall meet"

Now I find that Denver is also enjoying this mood, but on a much vaster scale. I express, therefore, an envy that grows out of my admiration for this great New World townhall a mile high in the Rockies.

I have been asked to speak on the development of a hemispheric accent in the letters of the New World. Before such an eminent subject, I shall confine myself to weaving a few personal and modest thoughts. The development of a hemispheric accent logically presupposes the existence of a Western Hemisphere, not as a mere geographic unit, but as a historic entity as well. While the geographic fact cannot, obviously, be denied, there has grown, in recent times, a trend to deny the existence of a historic entity. A distinguished U. S. scholar and personal friend, Dr. Arthur P. Whitaker, has written a challenging book, *The Western Hemisphere Idea*, purporting to trace the rise and decline of this idea. With a wealth of scholarly data, he has observed how the trend towards "globalism" after the Second World War, and the subsequent division of mankind into two-worlds, has played havoc with the Hemisphere Idea, particularly in the United States.

Maybe here in Denver we are adding a new chapter to Professor Whitaker's book. Maybe we are concerned here with the rebirth of the Idea, on new grounds and with a new perspective. To that end, I shall now guide my thoughts.

"Globalism" was imposed on the United States as a result of its world-wide responsibilities. It was a product of the great struggle and the new United States power position. The myth of U. S. isolation lay in shambles amidst the smoke and ruins of Pearl Harbor on Infamy Day. If it is true as Lincoln said, that the United States cannot escape history, is certainly cannot escape its Twentieth Century world. It has been called to do great things, whether it has wanted to or not.

But should its world-wide policies be born of a hard-boiled realism? Should it—when placed before the challenge of history—merely evolve its own kind of Realpolitik? Should it become just a geopolitical power, basically concerned with the other sources of power in this world? Should it by-pass the weak states, the not too highly organized segments of

mankind, in search for the ultimate position of strength that may afford the ultimate security?

To the new American globalists, the Western Hemisphere idea only smacked of isolation. It was, as Eugene Staley wrote, not an idea, but a "complex." "Because the Latin American states are weak," he observed, "they cannot threaten the security of the northern republic and because of that fact, their relations to Washington can never be as important as those of the great powers of Europe and Asia." It, then, became popular to identify Pan Americanism with isolationism and therefore to weaken a trend which under Franklin D. Roosevelt had brought together the Americas as never before in their history.

As a corollary, there began to grow a feeling that Latin America could be taken for granted. Acquaintance, yes, but not that warmth of affection that leads nations as well as individuals to partake of each others' worries, set-backs and aspirations. On the other hand, Latin America, as it watched the U. S. scaling new peaks of power, glory and influence, felt a sense of estrangement. Thoughtful Latin American democratic opinion, that was fighting the cancer of dictatorships at home, could find little encouragement in U. S. policies and, with few noted exceptions, could hardly muster in American public opinion active friends and willing allies.

In spite of much good will in officialdom, in spite of the extension of technical aid and of an imposing succession of conferences, meetings, seminars and workshops and of the whole intricate paraphernalia of inter-American cooperation, the fact remained that somehow the two basic cultural streams of the Hemisphere were drifting apart. Both North and South were to suffer a rude awakening in the reception accorded to Vice President Nixon in certain portions of his South American trip.

Globalism can well claim a success if the Vice President of the United States is cheered in Warsaw. But what about Lima and Caracas? Should it be the U. S. lot to have cheers from the Poles and jeers from the Cubans? Must not globalism be in turn reexamined? Must not we take a second look at that Western Hemisphere "complex"? Should not a reunion be attempted with Latin America on the basis that friendship is not to be taken for granted as a passive fact, but should involve a living faith in common ideals and purposes? Should not we then seek for the historic "accents," that make the reunion in friendship possible?

We are faced with the task of reviving the Hemisphere Idea, in a new setting and in the light of new experiences. Let us briefly appraise its history, its ingredients, and the values that still carry a living message, as well as those that are outworn and obsolete.

What is the first historic "accent"? Obviously that old, old dream of Europeans concerning a New World to the West: America as the invention of the poetic mind. "America," the great Mexican humanist, Alfonso Reyes, has written, "was the invention of poets, the geographers' Charade, the gossip of adventurers, the greed of commercial undertakings and, above all, an inexplicable appetite and an impulse to transcend limits."

America was not merely discovered, but also covered by this

hope, by this fervor, by this search for the limitless and the impossible, by this recreation of humanity. What the Europeans could not do in Europe, they could do here, where everything was feasible. This spirit was to guide the Spanish and Portuguese explorers and colonizers, as it was to guide the Pilgrim Fathers a few generations later. "The New World"—Archibald MacLeish has written—"was a world new only in the charts of the seamen. The new world which men have in mind when they speak of America is a world new in its human possibilities—a world in which humanity is newly possible. It was not Amerigo or any of the explorers by sea, even Columbus, who discovered that world. It was discovered by later travellers in other journeys. But there are millions of Americans, nevertheless, who have seen it and who mean to live in it one day."

America as Utopia: there we have another of the most persistent New World accents. To the European mind, Utopia was a dream that could not be rooted in its historical habitat. It either belonged to the past as in the myth of the Golden Age, so eloquently expressed by Don Quijote before the goatherds; or it belonged to a land of dreams with no geographic reality, as in the works of Sir Thomas More and Francis Bacon and Campanella. But with America, the dream could be anchored in time and space. Let us remember Montaigne as he read the *Chronicles of the Indies* or watched, as a public official in Bordeaux, the tropical products brought by the New World traders or listened to stories about the Brazilian Indians told by one of his servants. Let us follow him as he discovers cultural relativity and the "bon sauvage"—the man of nature, freed from Europe's tortures. Or shall we follow Don Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacán, as he decides in XVI Century Mexico to establish his own Utopia among the Indians and as he drafts the famous "*Ordenanzas*" for the Indian pueblos, all full of thoughts from Plato and More?

An Utopia, yes, but an Utopia for freedom and justice. Here again we find one of the strongest accents. If white supremacy meant white imperialism, not so for Las Casas. He stood for the Indians' inalienable rights long before there was a Declaration of Independence, just as Francisco de Vitoria, the noted jurist, asserted that the Spaniards had no more rights over the Indians than the Indians would over the Spaniards, if the former had discovered Spain.

And what about the "accent" on social mobility? The Spanish explorers and settlers were to test this exhilarating feeling of abolishing cast-iron barriers to social advancement before the empire crystallized in the rigid molds decreed by the Council of the Indies and the ever increasing bureaucracy. A man like Cortes could today be a nobody and tomorrow the proud conqueror of an Indian civilization. A swineherd like Francisco Pizarro could become a Marquis. The New World was indeed, to borrow Emerson's phrase, "another name for opportunity." What the early Spaniards felt, was later to be the experience of millions in Argentina and Brazil—let us remember the *bandeirantes*—and to reach a grandiose scale in these United States, in the irresistible march of the frontier. The forgotten man in history at last had had his chance. Well could Stephen Vincent Benét write in his "Invocation" to *John Brown's Body*:

Stepchild of every exile from content  
And all the disavouched, hard-bitten pack  
Shipped overseas to steal a continent  
With neither shirts nor honor to their back.  
Pimping grande and rump-faced regicide,  
Apple-cheeked younkers from the windmill square,  
Puritans stubborn as the nails of Pride,  
Rakes from Versailles and thieves from County Clare,

The black-robed priests who broke their hearts in vain  
To make you God and France or God and Spain.

All these you are, and each is partly you,  
And none is false, and none is wholly true."

No wonder, then, that the result was a feeling of spiritual detachment from Europe. In that psychological aloofness, in that break with a historic and institutional past, the Enlightenment sowed its seeds of republicanism and natural rights, of confidence in man's capacity to reshape his world in open defiance of traditional authority. While in Europe the intellectual revolution was against an outworn social order, in the New World it was against Europe itself.

The idea of a Western Hemisphere became tinged by a revulsion against the Old World's political rule. The exiled Peruvian Jesuit Juan Pablo de Vizcado y Guzmán in his famous "Carta a los Españoles Americanos" vented these feelings sixteen years after Jefferson penned the immortal document at Philadelphia. "Let us, on our side, agree to be a different people; let us renounce the ridiculous system of union and of equality with our masters and tyrants. . . . Spain has been the first to break off all her duties toward us; she has broken the weak bonds that might have united and brought us closed together." And he added: "Let us again discover America for all our brothers, the inhabitants of this planet, from which ingratitude, injustice and the most insensate greed have exiled us." His conclusion was a ringing assertion of the nascent Americanist creed: "In this way America will unite all the extreme portions of the earth and its inhabitants shall be bound by the common interest of one single Great Fraternal Family."

The liberation of the American continent from political rule was accompanied by the strong feeling, particularly in the United States, that the New World was a completely distinct historical entity and, as such, should go its own way in splendid isolation. Jefferson wrote: "The European nations constitute a separate division of the globe; their localities make them part of a distinct system; they have a set of interests of their own in which it is our business never to engage ourselves. America has a hemisphere to itself. It must have a separate system of interests which must not be subordinated to those of Europe. The insulated state in which nature has placed the American continent should so far avail it that no spark of war kindled in the other quarters of the globe should be wafted across the wide oceans which separate us from them."

The accent was, then, on isolation, to which another accent was to be added: the accent on nationalism. Isolationism and nationalism tried, in the XIX Century, to set apart the Western Hemisphere from all nations and continents. The two accents fitted the course of history. Isolationism, helped by British Navy and by British capital, could concentrate U. S. energies in the building of a great Union. Nationalism was to provide the ideology. The westward movement particularly contributed to the notion that the United States was something fundamentally different from Europe. It was the Promised Land, the land of Manifest Destiny. It was "America." It swallowed linguistically the whole Hemisphere and if the jingaists had had their way, it would have swallowed geographically the whole New World as well.

The American dream turned to be a national, not a hemispheric dream. "God's people" came to be the settlers moving hopefully from East to West. A native, parochial nationalism sprang up, which at the turn of the Century could easily rationalize its newly created power in terms of social darwinism. This doctrine was, indeed, a tragic perversion of the Western Hemisphere Idea.

In the case of Latin America, the triumph of the Independence movement gave birth to an ephemeral solidarity. Under the guiding genius of Bolívar, the Spanish-American leaders felt themselves "Americans" all. A comradeship in arms was established. But disillusion followed in its wake. There was a sudden, anarchical relapse into provincialism, a disintegration of movements and ideas. Nationalism came to be the only possibly unifying force. A Peruvian "nation" could perhaps bring together creole Lima and Indian Cuzco. A Mexican "nation" could fuse into some kind of pattern the rich and baffling cultural mosaic of that land. An Argentine "nation" could eventually reconcile the Europeanized ways of Buenos Aires with the barbaric strains from the "Pampas." And the Brazilian giant could find in the idea of a nation-state the way to establish a hopeful link between the man of Manaos, the *bandeirante* and the master of Casa Grande y Senzala. Unity, any kind of unity, could only seem possible under the banner of nationalism. Romantic nationalism provided the poets, the novelists, the essayists, with a doctrine for an intellectual search of local color, but also gave them a leaven to promote national union.

The idea of America for humanity, the accent on the possible Utopia, was, however, kept alive by a few of the great minds that the Hemisphere has produced. Emerson, for instance, was—as Hans Kohn has pointed out—"painfully aware that American life did not live up to his idea of America." He broke with parochial nationalism in no uncertain terms. "Nationality," he remarked, "is often silly. Every nation believes that the Divine Providence has a sneaking kindness for it."

The poetic world of Walt Whitman could be filled by an obsessive nationalism, but in its more mature conceptions it could include an Utopia of freedom for all men and all nations. "Year ago"—Whitman wrote in the *Poetry of the Future*—"I thought Americans ought to strike out separate, and have expressions of their own in highest literature. I think so still, and more decidedly than ever. But those convictions are strongly tempered by some additional points. I see that this world of the West, as part of all, fuses inseparably with the East. If we are not to hospitably receive and complete the inaugurations of the old civilizations, and change their small scale to the largest, broadest scale, what on earth are we for? . . . Indeed, the peculiar glory of our lands I have come to see not in their graphical republican greatness . . . but more and more in the vaster, saner, more surrounding Comradeship, uniting closer and closer not only the American states, but all nations and all humanity. That O poets! is not that a theme worth chanting, striving for? Why not fix your verses henceforth to the gauge of the round globe? the whole race?"

In Latin America, the fervor for a greater union animated thinkers like Sarmiento and Alberdi, Hostos and Mirtí. It is true that to men like José Martí, "Our America," meant essentially Latin America, freed from its secular division and advancing—as he saw it—"shoulder-to-shoulder, one solid mass like the silver lodes in the depths of the Andes." But these men who resolutely tackled Latin America's political and moral ills had an understanding of the United States, a basic feeling for the finer values in United States civilization, seldom reached by Latin Americans since. In emphasizing Latin American unity, they have provided the groundwork for a new conception of the Hemisphere, for a new "accent" of a reunion in freedom.

That Latin America could poetically match Whitman's vaster dream was also shown by the great lyric poet Rubén Darío. In his "Canto a la Argentina" he went beyond Argentina's role as a South American melting pot. His vision embraced the whole of America:

\* Glory to all-powerful America!  
Her high destiny is weighed  
In the Continental scale  
Which has the Isthmus for fulcrum  
The two pans of the continent  
Heap up their treasure of hope  
In God's sight above the abyss.  
And for whose glory if not thine,  
O Freedom, so prodigious a store?

Armed with this vision, with this poetic "accent," we may now attempt to reformulate our Idea of a Western Hemisphere. One of its Nineteenth Century "accents" is completely outworn. Isolationism is dead. It has no longer any message for the United States nor for Latin America. Let us once and for all discard the concept that this Hemisphere can march alone. Let us, therefore, bring peace of mind on this score to the globalists.

Instead, let us admit the existence of an Atlantic community bordering a great Euro-Afro-American sea which has linked, in different historical periods, the men, the institutions, the hopes and aspirations and also the cupidities and sordid aims of three continents. The three continents have their own cultural diversity, but there is no political, economic or cultural detachment between them. Let us definitely reconcile ourselves with a Europe that is neither dominant nor decadent, but thrives in renewed intellectual and economic activity. Let us, as men of the New World, bring Africa into our perspective, that new Africa of emerging nations and confederations, an Africa that somehow also wants to live the American dream. And how can we forget Asia, which gave us prehistoric man and the dream of Columbus, and is now brought so near our shores by the new galleons of the air?

Let us put nationalism in its place. Wherever it works for unity by superseding parochialism, it should be welcome. Wherever it acts as a force that walls in cultures and ideas, let us resolutely point out its shortcomings. Above all, let us not convert it into a mental shibboleth. We must reorient ourselves to new horizons of thought and understanding. The accent on nationalism—North and South—must eventually be weakened.

Let us, on the other hand, emphasize the practical Utopia, the oldest New World dream, the oldest "accent" in our history. The new Utopia calls again for a spirit of adventure. New frontiers must be conquered, new psychological frontiers of the mind, perhaps more difficult than the march through the prairies and the *pampas*, through the jungles of Amazonia or the cold lunar landscape of the Andean *altiplano*.

Utopia, the land of abundance, cannot be limited to these United States. Latin America must be a partner in the great enterprise. The Western Hemisphere Idea will not succeed in leaving altogether the world of rhetoric until it is translated into meaningful human terms of freedom from want and from need. The great gap in the economic development of the Americas is a festering sore. Here is a field of action for a practical Utopia.

But the uppermost accents must be on freedom and unity. Freedom is the common denominator of the New World, the heritage that made America a historical entity and a human hope. Many times and in many a place this heritage has been betrayed. Freedom is the most powerful leaven for a new reunion between the United States and Latin America. The United States of Washington, Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt is part and parcel, as the Mexican philosopher Leopoldo Zea has written, of Latin America's ideals and aspirations. Whenever it is affirmed, Latin America grows in hope.

\* Translated from Spanish by Muna Lee

And unity in diversity is the Hemispheric accent of the future. Latin America can no longer remain "Balcanized," a prey to localisms. Not certainly the Latin America of the year 2,000 with 500 million inhabitants. New thoughts on unity must be chartered. A design for unity must be formulated.

And it is in no small measure up to the United States to encourage and support the Latin American drive for integration. In unity will ultimately be expressed the powerful cultural creativeness of this Hemisphere and its meaning and message to the rest of the world.

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