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THE CENTENNIAL OF SOUTH AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

WE celebrate in this present year the centenary of the Battles of Junin and Ayacucho, battles which determined the achievement of South American Independence. After fifteen years of struggle and all kinds of sacrifices, the patriotic army was able to destroy, in the central part of the Andes, the stronghold of the Spanish power. It is possible to differentiate two periods in the struggle for independence. In the first period, starting in the year 1809, and ending in the year 1813, the revolution was led by the *Cabildos*, the colonial municipal institutions, protesting loyalty to the King of Spain, Ferdinand the Seventh, imprisoned by Napoleon, and asserting at the same time the right of the people of South America to establish the government with entire independence of the political organism of Spain. The second period, 1813 to 1824, is not led by institutions or corporations, but by great individuals or heroes. The motto was no longer loyalty to the dethroned king, but the achievement of complete independence from Spain.

The movement in the first period was doomed to fail. The Spanish authorities succeeded in suppressing the revolution everywhere. The Peruvian vice-royalty was the centre of the Spanish power and influence, and from Peru expeditions were sent to Quito, Charcas, and Chile. The Republic of Cundinamarca and Cartagena fell under the

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sway of Morillo and his powerful army. The Venezuelan movement, which since the year 1811 was proclaiming entire independence, was annihilated by the loyalist reaction, proving once more the inefficiency of the *Cabildos* and congresses in the leadership of emancipation. The only place in which a patriotic government was able to remain was Buenos Aires.

The provinces of the La Plata River proclaimed their entire independence from Spain in the congress of Tucuman in the year 1816.

The second period, under the influence of great personalities, had the advantage from the beginning of unified action and clear aims. Two currents appear at this time embodied in the representative heroes, Bolívar and San Martín. The first achieved the independence of the northern part of the continent, and established La Gran Colombia, composed of Venezuela, Nueva Granada, and Quito. The second had as a centre Cuyo, and established the independence of Chile and proclaimed the independence of Peru. In the moment in which these two currents met in the central part of South America, emancipation was completed. This meeting took place in the years 1822-24. Soldiers of the southern army contributed to the triumph of Pichincha, and to the independence of Quito. One year later, the principal part of the Colombian Army, led by Bolívar, went to Peru, and destroyed the last remnants of the Spanish-Colonial power in the famous battles that we are commemorating.

The South-American revolution in the second period fought against insuperable obstacles. Nature was then as wild and as hostile as in the epoch of the conquest. It was necessary to cross the Andes once in the southern part and many times in the north, repeating the deeds of Hannibal

and Napoleon in the Alps. The patriotic army fought not only against the Spanish soldiers that were on the continent, but also against the formidable expeditions sent by the mother country. And above these obstacles there was another much more important, resistance and revolt supported by South-American loyalists. The War of Independence was a frightful civil war, in which one party was supported by Spanish soldiers and Spanish resources.

The distinguished Venezuelan sociologist, Vallenilla Lanz, has presented overwhelming proofs of the civil character of the war in Venezuela. Let us remember that the great stronghold of the Spanish power was in Peru, in the mountainous part of this country. The Peruvian Indians, recruited by the Spaniards and trained by them, formed the powerful armies that defeated the patriots in Quito, Chile, the tableland of the Upper Peru, and the northern part of Argentina. The natives of Pasto in the central part of Colombia were famous for their heroic loyalty to the king and to the Catholic Church, which they believed was linked to the Spanish throne. Summarizing these facts we may say that independence was achieved to a certain extent against the indigenous races, the *llaneros* of Venezuela, and the Indians of Peru.

The miraculous character of the revolutionary movement in this second period and the greatness of its achievements have attracted the attention of many sociologists and historians. The peaceful colonists who lived such a monotonous and quiet life during almost three centuries, awoke suddenly to the new ideas; they displayed the most dynamic activity; they created almost *ex nihilo* armies and institutions, and gave to history the instance of one of the most remarkable epics in modern times. The materialistic school, represented in South America by Professor

Ingenieros, explained the independence as a result of economic factors only. According to this author, independence was the logical consequence of the political and economic decadence of Spain, and the wish of the Americans to free themselves from the hateful monopolies of the mother country. The documentary proof of this interpretation may be found in the famous "Representation of the farmers of the La Plata River addressed to the Vice-Royal Cisneros, in the inquiries which followed to get funds for the treasury by means of free commerce with England."

Professor Paxon is inclined to give, also, very important influence to the economic factor in the War of Independence. He says: "The materials are not yet collected to show how far Spanish American independence was due to the Liverpool and Manchester merchants, but such as are available seem to show that commercial pressure was the great influence in keeping the patriots patriotic. Particularly was this true in the chief port of entry for the southern provinces, Buenos Aires."

Against this narrow and materialistic interpretation we have the idealistic or romantic theory, which explains the movement for the new ideals of liberty proclaimed by the North American and the French Revolutions. This interpretation also presents some documentary proofs, the principal one of which is the publication by Nariño of the "Declaration of Human Rights." The determining factor of the revolution is not to be found in the obscure economic causes in favor of free commerce, but in the enthusiasm aroused by the new ideals spread by the pamphlet of Nariño.

Eclectic authors with broader comprehension of the social factors accept the intellectual as well as the economic influence in the revolution. García Calderon says that in

the Vice-Royalty of La Plata the struggle was due chiefly to the opposition of interest, while in Venezuela the ideas of political reform predominated. "All conspire in favor of liberty: revolutions in Europe, English ministers, independence of the United States, constitutional doctrines of Cadiz, romantic faith of the liberators, political ambition of the oligarchies, ideas of Rousseau and the encyclopædists, the decadence of Spain, hatred of all the castes against the inquisitions and Vice-Royalists." Blanco Fombona followed the same criterion: "Our fathers did not bind themselves to exclusive economic improvement; they fought for the establishment of a nationality, a thought to which they subordinated all material advantages."

We ought to consider also the explanation of independence as a result of the international situation, as a byproduct of the Napoleonic wars, the American Revolution, and the growing hegemony of England. Lord Bryce, in a very unhappy moment, dared to say, referring to the French invasion of Spain, that Napoleon was the true liberator of South America.

Other authors believed that the establishment of the new nationalities was due chiefly to the attitude of the United States, embodied afterwards in the Monroe Doctrine, and chiefly to the attitude of Canning, taking literally his pretentious statement in which he said, "We have called the new World to life, in order to establish the equilibrium of the Old."

The modern critic ought to consider all these theories in an effort to appreciate the influence of the different elements and to ascertain if there is something left unexplained by them. The truth is this: that the essential feature of the emancipation movement, its creative and heroic charac-

ter, could not be explained by economic, intellectual, or international causes.

Professor Ingegnieros, in giving not only paramount, but exclusive, influence to the economic factor of the revolution, has neglected entirely the different phases not only of the Colombian movement, but even the Argentinian emancipative current. It is true that the interest of Buenos Aires demanded free commerce with England, but it is known perfectly well that when Admiral Popham and General Beresford took possession of Buenos Aires in 1807, giving to the Creole farmers the best opportunities for trading with England, these Creoles put aside their economic interests, and fought against the British invasion, which they considered incompatible with the feeling of nationality. In the independence of Argentine, if, in the period that we call the insurrection of the *cabildos*, the economic influence is clear, and perhaps paramount, in the second period the idealistic character is the predominant feature. The ideal of San Martín was to spread the revolution, to cross the Andes, to free Chile, to get the command of the Pacific Coast, and to proclaim Peruvian independence. In his work, San Martín did not contemplate the economic interests of the government of Buenos Aires. In behalf of the high ideal of the independence of all South America, it was necessary to sacrifice other considerations and interests. In the obscure province of Cuyo he secretly created an army, concealing his wonderful project until the proper time.

It is almost impossible to explain the neglect of the Colombian Revolution by Professor Ingegnieros. This materialistic theorist, in spite of his proclaimed respect for facts, does not take into consideration the historical reality. The Colombian Revolution was the sacrifice of

the economic interest of a whole country to a romantic cause. The Republic of Venezuela was destroyed three times, and, after independence was attained, nothing of the prosperous condition of the colonial life remained. The creative character of the work of Bolívar, the hero embodying the Colombian movement, is still clearer. In the campaign of the year 1813, Bolívar, with only five hundred soldiers, conquered the principal part of Venezuela against an army of more than ten thousand soldiers. The reaction of the plains, of the ferocious armies of the semi-barbarous tribes, led by Boves, destroyed the second Venezuelan Republic. Economic interest was evidently against the continuation of the struggle. However, Bolívar was not discouraged. He started a new campaign, and failed again, but immediately after he renewed the fight in the fourth campaign which led him to ultimate success. During these years the material interests of all kinds of people, of all the social classes, was in favor of peace, and against the continuation of the revolution.

Regarding the observation of Professor Paxon, we may say that the influence of the English merchant was important, but by no means decisive or creative. This influence, according to the same professor, took place chiefly in Buenos Aires, and Buenos Aires was not the centre or the focus of South American independence. The centre of the great southern emancipative current was Cuyo rather than Buenos Aires, and the northern current started and developed with entire disregard of economic conditions.

The second theory, which we call the intellectual explanation of Independence, throws some light on the ideals and purposes of this time, but it is not enough to account for the dynamic character and the marvellous efficiency of the movement. In human evolution, will and feeling

have much more influence than mere intellectual conceptions. It is true that the ideals of liberty and democracy aroused the enthusiasm of the Creoles, who tried to imitate the French and the American Revolutions. The literature of the time is entirely inspired by the French thinkers and pamphleteers of the Great Revolution, and the constitutions framed by different congresses or assemblies were close imitations of the federal constitution of the United States. So the intellectual factor is paramount at the end of the first period, in the work of the Assemblies. It is not, however, a plausible explanation for the second period, in which the political theories were put aside, and the great struggle demanded only action, dynamic power, and creative will.

While independence was led only by intellectuals, disciples of Rousseau and admirers of the American Constitution, we had only generous initiatives, eloquent words, and prospects of new political institutions. But, we lacked the feeling of solidarity in the struggle for independence, the knowledge of reality, and above all, efficiency in action. In brief, we lacked true leadership.

The mere romantic and intellectual agitation of the first period failed before the well-organized army of the Peruvian Vice-Royalty, or before the strong reaction of the Venezuelan loyalists. This agitation, however, was useful because it prepared the environment and gave opportunity for the appearance of strong personalities. But the work to be done was far above the efforts and endeavors of the political leaders and orators of the first period. So the intellectual theories will explain the state of mind, the political thought of the earlier period of the revolution, but it cannot explain the destruction of the Spanish armies, the

suppression of the loyalist reaction, and the creation of new nationalities.

It is worth while to note that the men of action, the heroes, in the Carlylian sense of the word, who conducted the movement successfully, created armies and defeated the Spaniards, were entirely opposed to the exaggerated ideology of the intellectual leaders. San Martín and Bolívar were both declared enemies of the ultra-democratic ideals and federal institutions proclaimed in the earlier period of the struggle for independence. Both were aware of the inability of the federal government to conduct the struggle, and of the difficulty of establishing federal institutions in South America. They demanded a strong and unified government. They were our first political realists, and they succeeded in spite of the obstacles created by the imported political theories and institutions.

San Martín had very deep-rooted monarchic convictions and up to the last moment tried to get a prince of the Spanish royal family for the throne of Peru.

Bolívar said very clearly that America was not prepared for the advanced institutions of democracy and federation; he believed that we wanted a new and original form of government in accord with our geographic and historical conditions. Bolívar followed the influence of the English institutions rather than the French or American ideas. He proclaimed the necessity of a very strong and lasting executive, a hereditary senate, and the creation of a high moral and intellectual institution, dedicated to preside over the spiritual and ethical development of the country.

We may say that European and American ideas had their influence only in the liberal and democratic enthusiasm of the cultured class. This enthusiasm was limited to this class. At the top the leaders had ideas of their own, and

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at the bottom, the people were moved only by nationalistic feeling, embodied chiefly in the attraction and magnetism of strong personalities.

We must now devote some attention to the international factor in the explanations of the War of Independence.

The decisive influence attributed to the invasion of Spain by Napoleon in 1808 can be explained only by the absolute disregard of the essential facts of the South American Revolution. The invasion of Spain by Napoleon aroused a feeling of loyalty toward the King, both in Spain and in South America. The inauguration of patriotic committees, or juntas, in Spain to fight against the invasion contributed with its example to a similar movement in South America, and these South American juntas, in spite of their loyalty to Ferdinand, were without doubt the initiation of the revolution. So this fact and the economic independence of the colonies established as a consequence of the overthrow of Ferdinand were the only results of the Napoleonic invasion. It is unnecessary to insist in affirming that the Juntas failed in their attempts, and we have proof already that economic independence, however great its importance, was not a creative or decisive factor.

During the occupation of Spain by the French, South American loyalists succeeded in suppressing the revolutionary movement. As soon as Spain was free, she sent a formidable expedition led by Morillo, the largest army that had ever crossed the Atlantic. The real War of Independence began, as we have said, after 1814, when Spain enjoyed the most favorable diplomatic condition in Europe. France was bound to support her, and England, in spite of her economic interest in free trade with South America, adopted an attitude of neutrality, fostering a

policy of mediation, in order to reconcile the mother country with her colonists.

The rebellion of the Spanish expeditionary army in the year 1820 really favored the achievements of independence in South America, but it cannot be considered as a consequence of the Napoleonic invasion; it was due rather to the influence of the Spanish-American Revolution itself and the spread of liberal ideas. This expedition would not have been able to reestablish Spanish rule. If sent to Buenos Aires, it would have met the same failure as the powerful English expedition led by Whitelock in 1807. If it had been sent to Venezuela, it would have failed before the victorious army of Bolívar, and the same obstacles that destroyed the army of Morillo.

If the Napoleonic invasion favored to a certain extent the inauguration of South American independence, it was in turn useful also to Spain. Spanish troops and Spanish officers were trained in the struggle against Napoleon under the good influence of the English Army. These veterans, led by Morillo, the most distinguished Spanish general of the time, when the war was finished, were sent to combat the revolution.

In the year 1818 the countries of Europe decided to help Spain in this struggle against her rebel subjects. The South American Revolution was politically isolated. It enjoyed only the platonic or romantic sympathy of some liberals like Clay in the United States, or Mackintosh in England. There was nothing similar to the French alliance of the North American Revolution, and our agents in Washington and in England were unable to get even mere recognition.

It is true that we had the help of the privateers, American and English, but it was a factor of no decisive influ-

ence. It is true also that some very distinguished British officers like Cochrane, Miller, Guise, and O'Leary, fought successfully in the revolutionary army and navy. Nor can it be denied that the British officers and the British soldiers recruited against the orders issued by the British Government had a distinguished rôle in the battles fought in the northern movement. But neither the services of these men nor their number and influence would be considered as a factor of primary importance. The only thing that could help efficiently the South American Revolution would have been the formal recognition of these countries in the early stage of emancipation, or formal alliance with them. Unhappily, recognition by the United States and England came very late. John Quincy Adams's policy prevailed over the eloquent pleading of Clay. Only after the fall of Lima and the triumph of Carabobo, assuring the independence of Venezuela, did President Monroe deliver his famous message of the 8th of March, 1822. Professor Paxon was right when he said, "But South America had already gained its independence, so that recognition was an acknowledgment of a fact, rather than a prop to a wavering cause. It came too late to be considered as an emotional appeal."

Canning was even more cautious. He waited until the last moment. And South America was obliged to wait three years more to be recognized. It is rather an exaggeration to say that he called this new world into existence when he recognized it. The new world was called into life by itself. The step taken by England, like the recognition of the United States, was only the acceptance of the *fait accompli*. Doubtless the recognition of England and the United States had great influence afterwards in the consolidation of the new nationalities and in preventing the

extension to South America of the European policies and methods. But this influence had nothing to do with independence in itself, and its creative and heroic character.

Instead of looking for external causes in the explanation of the independence, we ought to focus our attention on the movement in itself and on the psychology of the race, or one might rather say, the men who embodied this movement. Was the South-American race capable of such audacious thought, continuity in effort, heroic energy, original plans, and a feeling of absolute self-denial for their achievement? May we attribute this wonderful work chiefly to human will and energy?

Dealing with the Renaissance, Burckhardt has discredited the mere intellectual explanation of the imitation of the thoughts and ideals of the Greco-Roman civilization. Instead of this intellectual explanation, Burckhardt has presented what we may call to-day the voluntaristic explanation. The Renaissance was a creative movement, due chiefly to the strong will and wonderful qualities of the high personalities aroused in the political tumult of Italy, and precisely because of it. The constant struggle and the political dissensions among the mediæval Italian towns developed the type of all-round men. The influence of ancient civilization came at the precise moment to give an intellectual direction. The Renaissance was the work of great personalities.

We may apply the standpoint of Burckhardt to South American independence on military and political grounds, and the explanation is entirely in accord with what history tells us about the psychology of the Spanish race. In spite of the three centuries of colonial quietude, the heroic energy of the race was not extinguished. As soon as the new ideal came, the spirit of adventure arose. South American

Independence is only a chapter, and perhaps the most brilliant one, in the heroic history of the Iberian race.

It was Bello, the famous humanist and poet, who first called attention to this point of view. These are his words: "Never would a debased people have been able to achieve the great deeds that illustrated the campaigns of the patriots. He who observes with philosophical eye our struggle with the mother country will recognize without difficulty that what made us prevail in this struggle was really the Iberian element. The captains and the old legions of the transatlantic Iberia were conquered by the improvised leaders and armies of the Young Iberia, which, renouncing her name, kept the indomitable spirit of the Old. Spanish constancy shattered itself against its own invincibility." Miguel Antonio Caro called attention to the entirely Spanish origin and Spanish education of the principal heroes. In recent times the celebrated thinker, Miguel Unamuno, did not hesitate to compare Bolívar with Don Quixote, the representative type of Spanish chivalry and heroism. But it is not necessary to go so far to find a real parallel.

For us, the movement for independence has a great similarity with the conquest, and both have the same explanation from the decisive point of view of human energy.

Studying the conquest, we may note three features in this marvellous achievement: individualism, mystic faith, and heroic will. Everybody knows that the conquest was due chiefly to individual initiative and to individual efforts more than to organized plans or work of the state. We know also to-day that the conquest of America was not inspired only by the quest of precious metals, and that beneath this selfish purpose, the conquerors had a mystical faith in the providential rôle of gaining for the Catholic religion a new

world. Everybody agrees also to-day in attributing to the conquerors the highest grade of heroic will and heroic ambitions.

We may find these same features in the movement for independence. We have the same individualism: the Southern movement had almost failed, checked in Upper-Peru by the Spanish troops, and before the obstacles of lack of organization and definite ideas by the government of Buenos Aires. But just in the darkest moment, San Martín, by virtue of his individual initiative, created an army in order to carry out a plan of his own. After the liberation of Chile, San Martín was called by the Government of Buenos Aires to pacify that province. But the hero, by an act of individual rebellion, disobeyed the orders of his government, and with his army, which was more of a private army than a national army, with Chile's aid, started the expedition to Peru, and proclaimed the independence of that country.

The features of individualism are still greater in Bolívar. After the failure of the first republic of Venezuela, he conceived the audacious plan of invading this country from Nueva Granada. He convinced the congress of this new republic of the efficiency of his plan, and started the campaign. But congress wished to go slowly and ordered him to stop and wait. Bolívar disregarded these orders, and the result of this fortunate disobedience was a most astonishing campaign, the capture of Caracas and the re-establishment of the republic. Years later, Bolívar repeated the same deed, invading Nueva Granada from Venezuela, following a plan of his own, considered impossible and absurd, and he achieved a still greater success. The discussions of a congress would have been entirely inefficient and even harmful in a work like this.

We notice also mystic faith in the work of the liberators. They believed in independence, in nationality, in the great destiny of America, in the same manner in which the conquerors were inspired by the Catholic faith. San Martín used to explain his disobedience, saying, "My destiny called me to Lima." Bolívar had an even more exalted conviction of his providential rôle. He had a prophetic vision of the future of America. He was under the influence of the God of Colombia.

From the point of view of heroic will, the liberators were not inferior to the conquerors. They had the same audacity, the same courage, the same constancy. When all seemed lost, they retained the same faith, and started to work again. They fought against primitive forces, against nature, and against primitive men. It is a great mistake to compare the liberators with European or North American heroes. The theatre of the war was different; the elements were different; and the methods were different.

We have to adopt this new point of view in order to understand the War of Independence. The mere erudition in the compilation of the facts, the anatomic criterion in contemplating it according to European standards will mislead us in the interpretation of South American history. Up to the present moment, we have, on South American history, many impassioned books written in those countries full of idle details, or disturbed by local jealousies and prejudices, or the incomplete and hasty synthesis written by European and North American authors without the warm sympathy, the deep comprehension, and the high perspective that this great epic demands. The story of the independence of South America, as rich in color and as full of heroic deeds as that of the conquest, is waiting for a Prescott to write it.

Without the intuition, the deep poetical view, which is the real view, the strong sympathy, and the intimate knowledge of the nature and race of South America, it is impossible to put South American Independence in its real place.

The Independence, like the conquest, being a tremendous effort, exhausted the economic elements and the human energies of the race. Independence was achieved, but all the other things were sacrificed. Wealth had disappeared; all the economic elements were destroyed; and a generation of the most brilliant men died in the struggle. Bolívar was aware of this when he said: "The only thing that you have attained is independence at the price of the others."

The struggle for independence explains in itself the condition of many South American countries during the nineteenth century. The war that destroyed the economic basis of society, developed, in compensation, original personalities, and the nineteenth century is characterized by the lack of economic progress and a dangerous increase of individualism.

After the conquest, due chiefly to the individual initiative of the great captains, the Spanish Government succeeded in checking the development of individualism. It suppressed the rebellions and built the whole organization of the most powerful colonial empire. The aggressive work of Pizarro, Cortes, Alvarado, and Valdivia was followed by the organizing work of Mendoza, Velasco, Gasca, Toledo. After the individuals came the action of the state. The War of Independence, in contrast, left the new nations to their own resources. And that is the difference between the colonial period and the nineteenth century. The organization of the new states demanded men of great administrative ability, strongly supported, to suppress anarchy and dissensions. The War of Independence developed

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military qualities and military leaders—not all men of constructive qualities. But even when *great* administrators *did* appear, they lacked the solid support enjoyed by the colonial organizers, and were bound to fail in a struggle determined by personal rivalries and amid constant anarchy.

The greatness of the War of Independence and the amount of sacrifice made to achieve it presents a great contrast with the pettiness and selfish struggles that followed it. This contrast is by no means a mystery, precisely because the war of independence must be followed by a period of exhaustion and depression. The difference between the republican South American countries that achieved very early some political progress, and the others that were the prey of anarchy for a long period, lies in the conditions and consequences of the struggle for independence rather than in geographical and racial causes. The countries in which the war did not last very long and did not destroy entirely the economic basis of society and the social structure of colonial times, were fit for the establishment of more solid and more democratic institutions. On the contrary, in nations like Venezuela, in which the continuous fighting almost annihilated social institutions and national wealth, an entire generation will suffer without remedy the consequences of these losses. The personal régime of the *Caudillos* or leaders will be unavoidable, and perhaps necessary. The degree of anarchy and the degree of intensity of the personal régime will appear in proportion to the damage done by the war in the economic organization and the social structure of these countries. With this point of view completed by others concerning the geographical factors, impartial historians ought to assume a more comprehensive and sympathetic attitude towards South American history.

The War of Independence is the explanation of our past, and it is at the same time the basis of our hopes for the future. The period of transition and exhaustion being past, and lofty ideals proclaimed, the wonderful example of heroic energy will remain. The race which was able to get her independence, entirely alone, against insuperable obstacles cannot die or degenerate. As soon as economic development and education shall restore favorable conditions, these people will succeed in establishing the most advanced democratic institutions and will take an honorable place among the nations of the world.

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