

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

A. CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLITICAL THEORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The ideas of the enlightenment inspired the emancipation of the Hispanic colonies of the New World (1800-1825)—the 17th century English enlightenment, the 18th century French variety, and, to a certain degree, the "enlightened despotism" of 18th century Spain. The revolutionary example set by the 13 British colonies (1776-83) also contributed to the revolutionary spirit in Latin America. The enlightened liberalism of the U.S. Revolutionary War, however, was close to Locke and Montesquieu, whereas in Latin America there was a decided inclination toward Rousseau. U.S. liberalism was, accordingly, individualistic and tolerant in intellectual matters while that of Latin America was emotional and ethically self-assertive. As Bertrand Russell has indicated, Rousseau's liberalism traveled from the intellectual sphere to that of the passions, and its anarchistic aspect was made explicit.

This romantic liberalism was ultra-nationalistic. It worshipped liberty, the splendor of war, and the cult of the successful hero. The latter found its way from a pure ideological conception into constitutional practice. Hence the domination of the executive branch in the structure of the new governments and the tradition of strong man rule that has plagued Latin American politics ever since.

Early European liberalism represented a middle class revolt against aristocratic and ecclesiastical privilege. It aimed at political reform and was willing to compromise and to tolerate dissenters. The Latin American independence movement, however, was not a revolt of the middle class, for none existed. Independence instead was merely a victory of the colonial oligarchs over the authority of the mother countries. The new republics were governed at the beginning by the landed gentry and the military caste. Rousseau's theory that society naturally endows the state with an all-powerful "general will" from which it is treason to dissent was accepted by the new rulers.

Important Latin American political thinkers of the independence period included Manuel Belgrano (1770-1820), an Argentine greatly inspired by the egalitarian ideas of the French Revolution; and his countryman, Mariano Moreno (1728-1811), who was deeply influenced by Rousseau, whose "Social Contract" he published in Buenos Aires. Venezuela produced Simón Bolívar (1783-1830), a follower of Rousseau, and Andrés Bello (1781-1865), an outstanding scholar who took a more moderate position in politics and displayed early in his life the characteristic Latin American interest in international law in his "Principios del Derecho de Gentes" (1832). From Colombia came Antonio Nariño (1765-1823), a precursor of independence who suffered imprisonment for publishing the "Declaration of the Rights of