

lators of several of the important laws of the Reform; and Ignacio Ramírez (1812-79), a bitterly anticlerical and materialistic lawyer and writer. The extremism of the Mexican liberal thinkers is accounted for by the extraordinarily privileged position of the church and the uncompromising attitude of the oligarchy. The political thought of the 1824-67 period constitutes the prelude to the important revolutionary changes which took place in Mexico after 1910.

Liberal reform and reorganization philosophy was not, of course, limited to Argentina and Mexico. Other thinkers tried to lead their countries down similar paths. The Chilean thinker, Francisco Bilbao (1823-65), whose well-known study "*La Sociabilidad Chilena*" was publicly burned by the conservative authorities, was influenced by the early European Socialists.

By midcentury, Latin American political thinkers began taking to positivism. It was the dominant political philosophy in the 1870-1900 era. The main inspiration came from Auguste Comte (1798-1857), the French founder of this school. Latin American political thinkers often blended with Comte the philosophies of Herbert Spencer (1810-1903) and John Stuart Mill (1806-73).

Since positivism aimed at the improvement of human society by scientific means, at peaceful social transformation through scientific progress, it fitted in very well with the needs and conditions of the Latin American States. Its "world view" and its religion had nothing to do with the supernatural; it proclaimed only the religion of humanity.

After the 1860's, when the political turmoil of the early national period had somewhat abated and respect for law and order began to characterize political action, the positivists' influence became strong in Latin American education and politics. Public education, especially, was made more practical and scientific, and the old humanistic approach was abandoned. This positivist educational reform began in Mexico under the Díaz regime and was extended to the rest of the area, last of all to Cuba in the early 20th century. Gabino Barrera (1818-81) and Enrique José Varona (1848-1933) were the leading educational philosophers in Mexico and Cuba respectively.

In politics, the positivists were progressive liberals, emphasizing evolutionary change. In Mexico, a group of such thinkers known as Científicos provided the Government with an official positivist philosophy from 1890 to 1910. In Brazil, the phenomenon was repeated; here the country even took from Comte the motto for its flag—"Order and Progress." Positivist political thinkers enjoyed prestige and respect in nearly every Latin American country in the late 19th century.

Positivism substituted empiricism for romanticism. Its practical approach allowed free inquiry into philosophical problems, but its thinkers all too often engaged in extraphilosophical activities, particularly politics. The positivists advocated for Latin America the methods used by the most advanced countries of Europe without taking into consideration differing social and cultural realities. For example, the Mexican Científicos, obsessed with the progress of the white European nations, ignored the miserable conditions of the mestizo and Indian masses. Positivism thus became ill suited to the