

The postwar generation is imbued with a sort of revolutionary mystique. They have learned to distinguish between mere revolts against the abuse of power and revolutions that change the use of power and the social and economic structures as well.

Latin American political thinkers have not created a basic new theory of the state or an original form of government. Their political culture is western and has followed ideas of this civilization. On the other hand, they have developed some typically Latin American political theories. In domestic politics, for example, they consider successful revolution as a source of law, all revolutionary acts being legal and obligatory for the population. True, this conception is based on the teachings of European jurists, like Stammler and Duguit, but in Latin America it has been developed and implemented. Also, the Latin American concept of private ownership is unique for, in most of the constitutions, property is defined as "a social function." It is no longer the absolute right, as originally conceived by the philosophy of liberalism, but only a privilege granted to the individual as long as it is useful to society. Finally, the typical Latin American constitution is anticipatory. It deals with what ideally ought to be, rather than realities. Its provisions may lack for many years the legislation necessary to enforce them.

B. LATIN AMERICAN CONCEPTIONS OF THEIR OWN ROLE IN THE WORLD

The above survey offers a notion as to how Latin America has seen itself historically in its relations with the world community. Its wars for independence were not fundamental revolutions. They were a mere conflict between two factions of the social hierarchy: the creole patriciate and the Spanish rulers. Their disagreement was political only. When the struggle ended, the victorious creoles ruled a basically unaltered economic and social structure.

After independence, the three Spanish viceroyalties broke up into numerous independent states. The latter dealt with the rest of the world individually until the late 19th century. Then they began to associate themselves with the Pan-American movement which, in 1948, evolved into the O.A.S.² In world organizations, such as the League of Nations and the U.N., Latin America has preferred to deal with other countries as a bloc, either through the O.A.S. or their own U.N. caucus.

As soon as liberation was achieved, the most important task was the preservation of independence. Hence strong nationalism, characteristically exaggerated by weak and small nations, appeared. In domestic affairs, the Latin American people defended freedom and saw themselves as democrats. This may sound paradoxical, in view of the long history of dictatorships, but it is a fact. There has never been an original Latin American philosophy advocating dictatorial or totalitarian regimes. The political "theories" of dictators, like the recent justicialismo of Perón, were merely a posteriori rationalizations to justify oppression. On the other hand, popular and democratic thought has always formulated its programs of action. A most recent example of this is the 1959 Declaration of Caracas (upholding democracy, opposing totalitarianism and dictatorships, favoring a common

² The O.A.S. is to be covered in a separate study.