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AN ADDRESS
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FROM THE point of view of science, it is an axiom of faith that the forces of the past give rise to the present and the future through some vastly complicated process of causation. Yet I had a great teacher of history in college who pointed out more than once that, on the contrary, it is the present and future that determine the past.

The idea may sound paradoxical, but it is simple and self-evident. Knowledge of the past, interest in it, and certainly the writing of history never take place in a vacuum. Out of the infinity of the past we select what we think is significant or important, and we do so typically because of what is happening around us now or what we think will happen. Suddenly we find ourselves needing to understand some aspect of the past, which was hitherto neglected, because of the value of that understanding to our present concerns.

This everyday process is nicely illustrated by the record of American interest in the Spanish past of the United States. Despite considerable Spanish involvement in the
full story of the United States over a period of five centuries, our history books for a good part of the twentieth century seemed to be able to get along quite well with very little attention to that involvement.

There was always Columbus, of course, at the beginning, but then came two great eruptions that more or less had the effect of driving the Spanish “forever” out of our national future and therefore out of our past: the Mexican-American War of 1846 and the Spanish-American War of 1898. After these, Spain and the influence of Hispanic culture in the United States was gone, finished, and hence historians could well ignore this dead end.

In 1996, however, when the most widely studied foreign language at all levels in the United States has come to be Spanish—far outstripping the former leader, French, not to speak of German, Italian, Russian, and Japanese—and when all of the southwest territory of the United States from which the Mexicans were driven is once again as much Spanish as Anglo, we realize with a jar that Hispanic culture is inescapably part of our future and that we had better try to recover, and fit together seamlessly as historians like to do, the long and quite continuing saga of Spain and North America.

When we asked the brilliant Ambassador of Spain to speak at the John Carter Brown Library on the subject of “Spain and Spanish America, the past and the future,” we expected an interesting talk, to be sure, but not the rousing one Ambassador Ojeda delivered. He met head-on so many current questions and concerns it is not surprising there was a quick consensus that his address should be put into print and widely distributed.

The John Carter Brown Library is 150 years old this year, dating from the moment in 1846 when Mr. Brown first began to build, with massive buying, a library dedicated exclusively to the history of the Americas during the colonial period. Following this inspiration, the tradition at the JCB has always been to look at all of the enduring early cultures of the New World with equal interest—Spanish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, African, American, and English. As time has gone by, that initial thrust has turned out to be more and more prescient, since the colonial past in all its faults and virtues continues to be with us still. In the words attributed to William Faulkner: “The past is not dead; it’s not even past.”

Norman Fiering
DIRECTOR AND LIBRARIAN
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A great deal was done in 1992 to celebrate or commemorate the Quincentennial of the Discovery of America. Events in 1992, however, followed quite a different pattern from the celebrations one hundred years before, in 1892. The ethical strides of our time, on the wings of an unprecedented prosperity, turned the celebration into a critical examination not only of the Discovery and the Conquest but of the whole of Western civilization. Ecological, archaeological, and indigenist manifestations vied with purely historical and ethical inquiries. The figure and personality of Columbus, although exhaustively researched, gave way to the role of the West in general. But it also brought out the role of Spain.

One hundred years ago, in 1892, Spain was hardly mentioned or studied. This time the fact that the Dis-
covery, and the Conquest of what is today the larger part of this continent, was a Spanish enterprise has been well imprinted in public opinion. Although the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in Chicago continues to ignore the Spanish past of a large part of the United States, this country is now much more aware of its varied history than before.

So much was said and done about 1492 that I began to feel rather strongly with Mark Twain, that if discovering America had been a great thing how much greater it would have been... to have missed it! But as you see, all we did and said in 1992 was not enough, and today we come back again to the same subject, and not without good reason, for the subject of the extraordinary historical happening that, forever, linked Spain and the American continent, has been and will always remain a great historical question, and being a Spanish question, will also always remain polemical.

Let us start by taking a look at the present-day creature. We are talking about 320 million persons who speak Spanish in 19 countries on both sides of the Atlantic. By the year 2000 they will be 400 million and in the next century Spanish will be the most spoken language in the world, after Chinese.

The same will happen in the United States. Already about 25 million American citizens speak Spanish as their first or mother language, which makes the U.S. rank as the fifth Spanish speaking country in the world, after Mexico, Spain, Argentina, and Colombia. Los Angeles is the second largest Spanish-speaking city in the world, after Mexico City and before Madrid and Barcelona. If the present demographic trends continue, the Hispanic minority, which now accounts for nine percent of the U.S. population, will grow by the year 2000 to 12 percent. By the year 2025 more people will speak Spanish in the United States than in Spain, and by the year 2050 Hispanics will conceivably become the main minority of the United States if they account, as projected, for 22.5 percent of its population.

The importance of the Spanish world for the U.S. is also impressive in economic terms. Already Hispanic-owned companies in the U.S. generate over 20 billion dollars in business gains a year.

These figures warrant a careful study of what is befalling us. Is it bad? Should Anglo-Saxon Americans be afraid of being swamped by Hispanics or concerned about


2. This is a generally accepted figure according to "Hispanic Business" based on the $12.15 billion generated by the 500 most important Hispanic companies in 1994. (The 500 Hispanic Business Annual Directory, 1995, p. 39.)
their cultural values? Is it good, convenient, or even desirable? In any case, good or bad, what does it mean? What will this inevitable evolution bring about in the U.S. and in the world?

The first thing that strikes all those who have studied Spanish culture and civilization is its social and political strength. Historians have tended to focus on the intellectual and political crisis that has afflicted the Spanish world for the last 200 years: political upheavals, social disarray, economic failure, intellectual and scientific stagnation. But under that surface of events lies a cultural and social entity that repeatedly defies disaster, emerges stronger at every trial, and finds solutions to its contradictions in its struggling quest for self-understanding and expression.

In the midst of the crisis of Spanish culture, when the Empire dissolved into 17 new countries, when Spain herself was divided in bitter civil strife, many thought that Spanish as a language and the Spanish world as a "nation," in the Latin sense of the word, would split up into many new and different entities. In the same way that the Roman world broke up into the nations and languages of Europe, Spain as a country and Spanish as a language would become a historical remembrance and an artifact of linguistic ethnology. Instead one finds from Patagonia to Alaska and from Los Angeles to the Pyrenees the same solid language, firmly rooted in its universal literature past and present. There is much less difference between the language spoken in each of the 19 countries of the Hispanic world, or even between that spoken in the American continent and Spain, than between the English spoken in England, the U.S., and Australia.

Similarly, one finds in that vast world a remarkably uniform social texture composed of the same cherished values, feelings, customs, expressions, myths, legends, literature, legal structure, and political inclinations.

The strength of this culture has overcome tremendous geographical barriers, first those that so fully separate the regions of Spain, then the formidable chasm of the Atlantic, the huge Andean mountains and the impenetrable jungles of their lowlands, the tremendous distances of the New World. Even by today's means of transport and communication we find it difficult to reach certain regions; how could those Spaniards traveling mostly on foot have reached and settled practically every corner of the American continent, almost from pole to pole? The toponymics of so many states in the U.S. bear testimony to this incredible expansion: Nevada, Montana, Oregon, Colorado, California, Florida, Arizona, Texas, and New Mexico, as well as so many cities and places, like Albuquerque and Santa Fé, Los Angeles and San Francisco, San Antonio, St. Augustine, Toledo, and Las Vegas.
Again, the strength of Spanish culture and civilization has overcome the even more difficult barriers of race and religion. First in Spain, where all the nations of the Mediterranean commingled for thousands of years, where Romans and Goths founded the first integrated kingdom after the fall of the Empire, and where seven centuries produced the marvel of an Islamic, Jewish, and Christian integrated culture in the crucible of modern Spain. And then, finally, in the American continent, where Native Americans and African-Americans came into the fold of Spanish culture and actually formed a new Spanish, Indian, and Black race which Octavio Paz has called the Race of the Future, and which incorporated all sorts of Mediterranean sources, including a strong defining Iberian component, together with Arab, Jewish, Amerindian, and African races and cultures.

This is what is celebrated in Spain and America on October the 12th as the "Día de la Raza," the Day of the Race. It was first conceived by an Argentinean writer in the last century and very widely used before the term "race" became divisive and hateful, before the horrible consequences it had during the Second World War and before the political struggle against discrimination, segregation, and apartheid.

The "Día de la Raza" was so obviously in celebration of a cultural fact that no one perceived its racial denomina-

The paradox of celebrating such a multiracial culture with a racial denomination did not escape the wit of a Peruvian cartoonist who on one of those October 12 celebrations, before the War, published a cartoon in which a White, an Indian, and a Black man toast each other with the ritual "Viva la Raza"!

IT IS EASY TO SEE the strength of Spanish culture and civilization spread all around the globe, clearly structured and identified, profoundly self-conscious in its feeling and its cultural expression, it ranks among one of the six living universal civilizations identified by Toynbee.

However, it is very difficult to define and to explain. Hardly anyone knows what it is. Every Spanish and Spanish-American writer has puzzled about its meaning, ever since the great crisis of Spanish civilization prompted its communicants to inquire into its meaning.

Spanish culture and civilization are above all highly disconcerting. They just don’t fit into the categories of modern thought. Spanish history has been so different from that of every other nation in the West. Perched on the westernmost extremity of Europe, it has always been the fulcrum between Europe and Africa, between the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, between Europe and America. Even today it serves this function in communications, in
political interpretation and mutual understanding, as well as in military logistics between the U.S. on the American continent and Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

History turned Spain in a different direction from the rest of Europe after the Arab invasion in 711; and when in 1492 the fall of the last Moorish kingdom could have signaled a return to the European tradition, the Discovery of the New World, almost fatefully decreed in the same year, again and definitively distracted Spain to a new non-European destiny.

Europeans have never quite understood what Spain meant. They first distrusted her multiracialism, her multiculturalism, and multireligiousness; then they suffered her political and military sway; finally they turned their back on her as the center of gravity of European politics and civilization moved slowly towards the East.

And if Europeans never quite understood Spain, Spaniards never bothered to understand it themselves.

Immersed in a colossal enterprise, their vitality was all thrown into action, into creating the huge monument of Spanish America against the immense odds of disparate geography, race, language, religion, and culture. In this, in the conquest, cultural assimilation, and virtual construction of the Americas, the Spaniards did in the New World what the Romans did in Europe.

This differential dimension of Spanish history has led many a great thinker in Europe toward gross misunderstanding if not complete ignorance of its significance.

Already in the eighteenth century Masson de Morvilliers wrote in the French Encyclopedia, “What do we owe to Spain? What has it done for Europe in the last two centuries, in the last four, or ten?”

Kenneth Clark in his very influential Civilization excluded Spain altogether. Instead of admitting his bewilderment and recognizing his ignorance, that arrogant Briton dared to say: “If I had been talking about the history of art it would not have been possible to leave out Spain; but when one asks what Spain has done to enlarge the human mind and pull mankind a few steps up the hill, the answer is less clear. Don Quixote, the Great Saints, the Jesuits in South America? Otherwise, she has simply remained Spain...”

In the last two centuries, when the crisis of Spanish civilization was painfully evident, the meaning of Spain became the object of obsessive study and romantic exploration. The Anglo-Saxon world was particularly attracted to this enigma. The best books on Spain have been written in English by Britons and Americans. The Germans and

the French have followed. In Spain, the 1898 national disaster prompted a whole generation of philosophers, writers, painters, and musicians to make this probe their life’s work. Also from this period on, statesmen struggled for the “regeneration” of Spain. Their combined efforts have led to present-day Spain.

This extensive and exhaustive study has not been able to reach a clear conclusion. Famous historians like Américo Castro and Sánchez Albornoz have dedicated their lives to an endless polemic that has unearthed more questions than answers.

However, one very clear characteristic emerges from all these splendid and contradictory studies: Spanish history is a history of cultural assimilation and social integration. The Iberian Peninsula appears through the centuries as a cauldron boiling with all the races and civilizations of the old world, a place where Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, Gypsies, Jews, and Arabs all mingled and made Spain their own country. And where

the whole Mediterranean tradition was melted into one characteristic culture.

Hispania was the province that was best assimilated by Rome. Seville gave the Empire her best emperors, Trajan and Hadrian, and some of her most powerful philosophers and writers, like Seneca. In the same way, and perhaps by the same token, Spain was the country which best assimilated the Goths. Their kingdom attained the first integration of Romans and Germanics after the fall of Rome, and was the strongest and most effective of the Gothic kingdoms in Europe. In the seventh century, St. Isidore, the Bishop of Seville, was conscious of this fact; he toiled for the fusion of Romans and Goths and set out to restore Roman culture to its new political setting. His compilation of Roman Law and his Encyclopedia (the Etymologiae) became the cultural anchor of Europe, where Isidore’s books were sought and treasured throughout the early Middle Ages.

The same cultural assimilation and social integration took place after the Arab invasion of Spain. During the seven centuries of Islamic sway over the Peninsula, the extraordinary conception of the “Reconquest” was kept alive—a clear indication of the strength of Spanish culture—but the assimilation of Islamic and Jewish culture proceeded with the same characteristic syncretism.

In the tenth century, El Cid realized that the only way to
achieve the Reconquest was through the tolerance of multiculturalism and the political assurance of multiracialism. Alfonso VI adopted his tactics. Moorish cities and kingdoms surrendered to both, on the basis of detailed capitulations that specified the mosques and synagogues that would remain alongside Christian churches as well as religious, cultural, and political rights that Arabs and Jews would enjoy under Christian rule. Castilian coins of this period refer to their kings as the emperors of the two religions.

Ferdinand III, conqueror of Seville in the thirteenth century, lies in a tomb with the same inscription in Latin, Castilian, Arabic, and Hebrew on each side.

The same syncretism took place in the world of culture and the arts. The Cantigas and Partidas compiled in the thirteenth century by Alfonso X (the Wise) include the theology and philosophy, the music and the poetry, even the games, such as chess, that the three cultures in Spain enjoyed in an increasing mutual assimilation. Europeans were conscious of this bizarre phenomenon and have left frequent testimonies of the suspicion and distrust, and even condemnation, with which they contemplated such cultural and racial miscegenation.

That is why in 1492 Spain was the country in Europe best prepared for the American enterprise. Spaniards went on doing in America what they had done with the Moors in the Peninsula. They were familiar with new races, they had the experience of assimilating new cultures, and they had devised institutions of social integration. What is more important still: they were prepared to recognize in the Indian a human being with a soul as heavenly as that of any Christian. This was unique and outstanding in the Europe of that time. The modernity of this notion, at the very beginning of the sixteenth century, is still a source of wonder and reverence.

Without all these elements, but especially the last one, the conquest of America would not have been possible. The contrast between Spanish America and the colonial efforts of the British and the French could not be more striking, both in their extension and intensity, and in their moral and political dimension.

Much has been said in condemnation of the Spanish conquest, especially by those who envied its success. First of all, Spain has been condemned for the conquest itself. Obviously there is much to be criticized when we censure such an incredible enterprise, carried out only at the dawn of the modern age, with the ethics of a highly developed world 500 years later.

But should the Celts have spared the Etruscans, should
Rome have abstained from putting an end to the last Egyptian dynasty and assimilating the Greeks? Rome also destroyed the native civilizations of Gaul, Iberia, and Britain, and no one seems to be complaining about that. Should the Arabs have respected the old political formations of the Syriac and Roman civilization in Asia and Africa? And what should we say of the West overrunning the whole world during the last 300 years at the hands of the British, the French, and even the Americans themselves? History is full of the tides of nations that come and go, and of civilizations that succeed each other in peace or war.

We should see the same in the case of Spain and America. The Discovery would have taken place anyway; if not in 1492 not much later; if not by Spain and Portugal, the only countries that possessed the vision and the navigational skill to do it at the time, then by another European power at a later date.

What would have happened if England and France had stumbled on the Discovery of America? Their extremely weak settlements in North America do not suggest any likelihood of success in conquering the large and powerful empires and kingdoms of Mexico, Central America, and in the Andes. Even less were they prepared to assimilate these cultures. On the contrary, their settlements were based on the cultural and political exclusion and progressive expulsion of the native Indians. Contrary to what so many say now, they had no feeling for their customs, their religion, their monuments, and their societies.

Instead the Spaniards, at a much earlier date, when Europe had not yet begun its archaeological or sociological interest in other societies and cultures, long before Montaigne began to bemoan the unhappy destiny of the “new barbarians,” preserved native languages in primitive dictionaries, recorded customs and religious beliefs, defended the natives against the abuses of settlers, and in a revolutionary and most precocious way proclaimed the Indian a free man, who could not be enslaved and against whose political formations war could not be waged without just cause.

The assimilation of the Native Americans to the category of any Christian and of their societies to the statutes of any European state at such an early date as 1507 by Francisco de Vitoria laid down the bases of modern international law and launched a vision of the American enterprise that has been an operating force down to our own days. Vitoria’s view was preceded by the multicultural and multiracial history of Spain: his portentous conception of cultural assimilation was only possible in Spain.

Neither France nor Britain followed this political direction, and Portugal only reluctantly.

It so happens that condemnations of the Spanish empire were written by Spanish dissidents like Bishop Las Casas (1479–1566) or Antonio Pérez (1540–1611), one moved by holy ire, the other by political intrigue. Neither the British nor the French ever condemned the same if not worse abuses in their colonies, because they did not feel as strongly as the Spanish that the natives were just as human as they were, a lesson that the Spanish had learned after so many centuries of successful miscegenation in Spain.

Would it have been better if Spain had limited her colonial expansion to a few settlements on the coast, leaving Aztecs and Incas and so many other native civilizations to work out by themselves the awesome problem of their contact with Europe? Many bemoan the extinction of those ancient civilizations in the same way that they bemoan having lost the innocence of childhood or the freshness of youth. But the contact with Europe would have extinguished those civilizations anyway or would have transformed them into antiquary curiosities as they are today in North America or in the Amazonas or in Australia, in Borneo, in the Philippines, even in Lapland in civilized Scandinavia. In our own days, no technique has been found for adapting native civilizations to the onslaught of Western civilization.

Instead, if Spain robbed them of their civilizations she gave them plentifully of her own. Spanish civilization is not the result of the imposition by force of Spanish culture. In the same way that Cicero claimed that the superiority of Roman justice, not the force of her arms, had achieved the incredible victories and expansion of the Roman Republic, also on the American continent, Salvador Madariaga describes in a poignant passage of his biography of Cortés the extraordinary mental and political revolution that it was for the Indians to see a Mother and her Child enthroned on the altars of their former sanguinary and cruel gods?

Spanish temperament, art, and religion were curiously attuned to what Spaniards found in the Americas. The stoicism so characteristic of Spain from prehistoric times blended intimately with Indian attitudes and feelings; their social behavior blended with the Spanish and they quickly adopted the new forms of its expression.

The exaltation of suffering and the intimate presence of death, which is the focal point of Spanish Christianity, was precisely the understanding the Indians had of their own religions. And Spanish baroque, in which that religiosity

TODAY, SPANISH AMERICA stands as a prominent and distinctive civilization, united by language and culture and particularly suited by history to the global assimilation of cultures and the global integration of races that characterize our immediate future.

Some will be surprised in hearing me say this in the light of the economic, technological, and scientific backwardness of the Spanish world or in the light of its social and political confusion. However, I invite you to consider that progress in science and technology as well as economic growth are the natural result of a successful social and political life. Many non-Western nations are now catching up to the West in the fields of science and technology. Their economies rival our own. Their population is increasing at a more rapid rate than ours. The West is no longer the principal source of their knowledge or their wealth.

Modern communications are such that globality will increasingly characterize the future in every dimension.

Races, language, traditions, and cultures will clash as they are pushed together in pursuit of economic and political dominance. Military superiority is no longer the monopoly of the West. Now that the awesome balance of nuclear terror in superpower confrontation has disappeared, military force becomes more diffuse and the newly modernized countries of Asia, Africa, America, and even Europe can easily confront the forces of the traditional great nations that hitherto had upheld the values of Western civilization.

In the coming turmoil, two qualities will become of paramount influence: First, a strong cultural conviction; nations that falter and flicker in their identity will lose the contest against stronger assertions. Second, that strong cultural conviction must be equally prepared and predisposed to adapt, assimilate, and integrate the cultural diversity that will challenge the world. A strong conviction, a strong identity, and adaptability: without these capacities, the coming clashes will be of uncertain outcome.

I invite you to consider that Spanish American civilization has these characteristics very precisely defined. I don't hesitate to assert that of all the civilizations now operating in the world, the Spanish American will be, perhaps not the only one, but certainly one of the most successful in overcoming the problems of our age.
IS THIS GOOD OR BAD for the United States? Should the United States fear losing its identity under a growing Hispanic influence?

Above all, allow me to point out that Spanish American civilization is part of the West. In Spanish America the U.S. will see something much more akin to its culture and civilization than anything that may come from Africa or Asia. At the same time, the U.S. is not always aware of the influence it has had and will continue to have over Spanish America nor of the “Americanness” of Spanish Americans. Ever since the American Revolution, Spanish Americans have seen themselves under the same destiny, have tried to follow the same paths, and have been obsessed with American culture and its way of life.

In the same way, Americans forget that Spanish Americans share their American experience: they, too, had to confront a new and frightful nature; they had to deal with the indigenous peoples; they also had a frontier; in sum, for centuries they have been living an American life. That experience has been decisive in the formation of the Spanish temperament. The Spanish way of being is profoundly American in the sense that it was shaped, in its last stages, by the American experience.

But if this is true of the Spanish nation, particularly of Castile, it is far more true of the Spanish Americans. Their temperament, although mainly Spanish, is also very American.

For these reasons (Western culture, American influence, and American experience), the Hispanic is particularly well suited to integrate in the U.S. If you add to this the assimilating and integrating characteristics of Spanish American civilizations you will have to agree that the Hispanic will not pose a problem to the Anglo or African American in the U.S. On the contrary, better than any other cultural group they will become an integrated part of the U.S. without losing, for that matter, their Spanish identity, as the citizens of New Mexico have proven for generations. The Spanish American understands and admires American civilization: it has the social and political strength that the Spanish world has lost; it embodies the values of fortitude, justice, straightforwardness, honesty, and social equality that Hispanics have always stood for, albeit not always found in their countries. In their turn, Hispanics bring with them their remarkable humaneness, a strong family structure, profound religiosity, and the social compassion and cultural richness that characterize their civilization, at a time when the social texture of the U.S. has come under the serious strain of modern life.
In other words, perhaps in 500 years half the population of the U.S. will speak Spanish as their mother tongue, but just as today, they will also speak English!