

by a romantic melancholy; poets, obsessed with love and death, died young.

This book may be regarded as merely another one of the pessimistic interpretations which of late have become fashionable among an advanced school of Brazilian writers. "These words," says Prado, will certainly not be understood. For some they will be pure rhetoric; for others they will be a mere political maneuver under the guise of a philosophical dissertation.

Nevertheless, the author shows a brilliant understanding of his country, and his impressions seem more convincing than the books which present Brazil as an ideal land.

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*Geografía y Política. Veinticinco lecciones de Historia Naturalista.*

By GONZALO DE REPARAZ. (Barcelona: Editorial Mentora, S. A., 1929. Pp. 277. 5 pesetas.)

The author complains that history has generally been written and taught by separating the universe, that is, the physical world from man and treating them largely as two distinct creations. While *homo sapiens* is admittedly the highest expression of life he is merely a part of nature and subject to the same laws as any other form of life. It is the author's purpose, then, to show that through his physical environment geographical factors have a deciding influence upon human society and hence upon the history of man and, finally, upon politics. Peoples rise and progress in proportion to the extent that they conform to the laws imposed upon them by geographical limitations and they fail in accordance with their ignorance of, or perverse opposition to, those physiographic conditions which determine their proper destiny. To illustrate this theory, which is by no means as novel as the author would have us believe, he dwells particularly upon the cases of Spain and Russia finding some interesting parallels and sharp contrasts between these two regions. Russia, through its gradual but natural obedience to the inexorable commands of its environment, is expanding today while Spain, because of a rapid but artificial development, has steadily lost ground until it has little left of its once great possessions.

Both Russia and Spain are on the threshold of two continents, one facing Asia, the other Africa. While Russia exists on a vaster scale, Spain has similar extremes of climate due to arid plains and high plateaus. Both regions have experienced numerous invasions by nomadic peoples; the Mongols swept into Russia from Asia and the Arabs into Spain from Africa, both intruders establishing states which endured for centuries.

The contrasts are more apparent and do not require a lengthy discussion. The relatively limited coastline of Russia and the vast hinterland of plains clearly indicated that its destiny was continental expansion; that of Spain, on the contrary, due to its peninsularity, was largely maritime. Which has worked out its providential mission in accordance with the dictates of nature?

The Russian revolution, which the author likens to a great glacier slowly pushing forward, is an inevitable result of geographical conditions, a natural response to environmental influences which the czarist régime perversely sought to oppose until it was too late. They clung too tenaciously to the policy of facing westward with an outlet upon the sea. The wisdom of Soviet Russia—and for this revolutionary government Sr. Raparaz has an undisguised admiration—in turning its back upon Europe and facing eastward—a tendency which the removal of the capital to Moscow clearly shows—is warmly applauded as conforming to natural destiny. The formation of a federation of Soviet republics is another policy designed to further the attainment of a great, united geographical whole which, the author feels, ultimately will be accomplished.

Spain, as a great peninsula, shut off from the rest of the continent by a barrier of mountains, was likewise intended by an omniscient power to look away from Europe toward the sea and also into North Africa where unmistakable affinities of the Berbers with the Iberians—the true Spaniards—are apparent. Among these people of the northern littoral of Africa there exists a communism, somewhat idealized by the author, such as prevailed among the primitive inhabitants of the Peninsula before the arrival of the conquering and despoiling Romans. It may be pertinent to inquire here, parenthetically, how much does the author—or anyone—really know about this early society which he venerates so highly. Is not his knowledge—and ours—of the Iberians, their life and habits, largely derived from the classic writers of those invaders for whom he professes so much contempt?

The independent, pastoral communism of the ancient Iberians was finally extirpated by these Romans with their imperialistic ideas which became the bane of later Spain, the author believes; and his denunciations of the Greek and Latin heritage of the Peninsula, which perverted the simple virtues of his Arcadian Iberians, are stinging. "Must western Europe renounce its classics?" he asks in concluding his work.

Let it renounce them, then. The sooner the better. Is its social organization—its capitalism, urbanism, materialism, militarism, and aggressive patriotism likewise inherited from the classics—in grave danger? What shall we do with it if, with these, the danger is complete and irremediable?

The servile imitation of later Spain to the models of Greece and Rome in government and institutions made its rulers blind to the laws of nature and the "manifest destiny" of the Peninsula—North Africa and the sea. They persisted in ignoring the lesson that nature set before them and, pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of a European imperialism in imitation of classical models, they turned Spain's back upon its real destiny and expended its strength in profitless continental wars. Through this same disobedience to natural law the Peninsula never achieved effective union as a geographical unit. Spain has ever remained *Las Españas*, roughly three Spains, a Mediterranean-minded Catalonia, a land-minded Castille, and an ocean-minded Portugal; the great maritime power that might have belonged to the Peninsula, through this lack of unity and realization of destiny, passed into the hands of the clearer-visioned Anglo-Saxon and the break up of a vast ultramarine empire soon followed. Today that section of the Peninsula which was most faithful to its divinely appointed mission—Portugal—retains far more of its former holdings. The latter, including its present-day possessions, totals 2,522,072 square kilometers while Spain has a bare 800,000. As a tiny maritime nation Portugal outwitted the dull, land-minded Castilians in the treaty of Tordesillas enabling itself to control an area in the western hemisphere nearly as great as the rest of Spanish America put together—Brazil. Thus Spain has failed dismally through a perverse opposition to natural laws while Russia is steadily gaining through a wise obedience to them.

The last four "lessons"—one resents, somehow, having these ideas presented with a pedagogic dogmatism which these captions suggest—

discuss another illustration of the author's theme. His scene shifts abruptly to Chile and the Balmaceda revolution. The whole course of events is traced in an excellent sketch beginning with a brief treatment of the peculiar geographical configuration of Chile. The fleeing of the officers of the senate and the assembly to the fleet was the deciding factor in bringing about the downfall of the dictatorship. In a country with a coastline as vast as that of Chile the control of the sea was bound to make the outcome inevitable and reasonably prompt.

Throughout this book it is evident that the author has strong convictions on the subject of which he treats. The work is often stimulating and there are many interesting pages in it but its main thesis, as already stated, is not particularly new. There is an abundant literature on the subject in existence and studies in social institutions carried on in the universities of this country and abroad have been examining and investigating the influence of environmental factors on human history for some time. There is a tendency in this book to over-emphasize the effect of broad physiographic features of the *milieu* in which a race or a people happens to be placed. After all, what has really affected the course of human history is the possession by one branch of the human family of certain goods or natural resources desired by others. The latter have sought to obtain these things from the possessors by barter or by force thus giving rise to the movements of tribes and peoples, their migrations, the resultant trade and warfare and the many other incidents that go to make up the history of the human race. Climate and topography have played their parts but human acquisitiveness explains much more.

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*Spanish Documents concerning English Voyages to the Caribbean, 1527-1568.* Selected from the Archives of the Indies at Seville, by I. A. WRIGHT, B.A., F.R.H.S. (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1929. Pp. x, 167. Facsimiles. Maps. Index.)

Miss Wright is well known to Hispanic American audiences, both because of her assistance to historical students of three continents who have used the manuscripts of the Archivo General de Indias and because of her own published researches. Consequently, any book, or other publication by her must command respect and attention. While