THE ORIGINS OF LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES AT PRINCETON AND THE LEGACY OF PROFESSOR DANA MUNRO
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At this moment in the development of Latin American Studies at Princeton, we can profit from reviewing the road already covered - to see what has happened in the field in general in the twentieth century, and in particular the spade-work done at Princeton - and from evaluating the legacy on which we may build. . . . Today, in general, such studies in the United States are in a flourishing state, but it has not always been this way. In fact, to those few hardy souls working in history and literature since 1900, the study of Latin America has almost always seemed inadequate and fluctuating, plagued by limits on the number of colleagues, the size of library collections, and tight research and travel funds. Only three years ago, Charles Wagley, cultural anthropologist with wide experience in the area could write with assurance: "There is no doubt that Latin America has been neglected by the public, by policy-makers, by our own government and by educational institutions in the last three decades. . . ."

It is no exaggeration to state that until recent years the progress of Latin American Studies in North America has been halting. As late as 1943 Irving Leonard concluded that in our universities there existed a "general lack of personnel in Latin American Studies thoroughly equipped by the mastery of techniques of their discipline, adequate foreign residence and sufficient command of languages." There were a few scholars in history and literature, still fewer in anthropology, archaeology and geography, practically speaking none in sociology, political science and economics.

During the Second World War matters seemed to change. The government's demand for specialists led some to believe that the days in the wilderness were over, that the promised land of sustained interest, an expanded community of scholars and the manna of research funds lay ahead. The optimists were mistaken, and the next ten years and more saw only more marching through the wilderness. They ignored the fact that Latin American interest in the United States has flourished with the eruption of tensions, not the growth of stability, in Latin America: the Caribbean and Mexico, 1898-1923, the Good Neighbor Days of the thirties, the wartime years. After 1947 public and private support shifted away from Latin American Studies during the hot days of the cold war; government officials, humanists and social scientists were attracted to "centers of hostile power . . . rather than to the countries which [rested] within the shelter of the US Navy and Air Force as much as does the United States itself." . . . As late as the beginning of a new period of tension in Latin America, the eruption of revolution in Cuba, there existed as Bryce Wood has put it, "the fallacy that an economist or political scientist who brushed up on his high school Spanish thereby was justifiably accorded the status of Latin American area specialist."

The problem of containing change by revolution in Latin America has brought Latin American Studies from the wilderness to the fringes of the promised land. The government and some private foundations have awakened to the need to create a core of area specialists particularly in those disciplines which have long neglected Latin America as a fruitful field of research and comparative study, sociology, political science and economics. More to the point, this interest and flow of funds have begun to erode an attitude of condescension in government, business and university circles, "a condescension toward the people, institutions and cultures of Latin America that, however compounded with amusement and protectiveness, reflects a special feeling of superiority different from that expressed toward peoples in other regions." Even more encouraging, we are moving from the broad and unfortunately superficial studies to more intensive national monographs; the competent scholars must carry out research in loco. Put another way, specialists are more convinced that "each country has to be treated in its own right," that Latin America must enter the scholar's flesh and bone through practical field experience.

We must try to see Latin America from the inside, not from the outside, not as rich cousins charitable toward improvident relations, but as colleagues humbly engaged in the great struggle for human decency and fulfillment everywhere.

Just now I mentioned that the development of Latin American Studies until very recently was left to the labors of a few hardy souls, in history and literature, scattered in a few universities of the United States: Berkeley, Stanford, Texas, Duke, Harvard, Columbia, Yale and Princeton. One of those hardy souls is Professor Dana Munro. Fulfilling the precept that Latin America must enter the scholar's being through practical experience, he travelled as a graduate student through Central America, 1914-15, collecting data for his doctoral dissertation, The Five Republics of Central America (1918), still a standard work on the pre-1918 years. Like so many of the students he was later to train at the Woodrow Wilson School, Professor Munro utilized his research experience, his study and his understanding of what was then a tension-ridden and critical area of US foreign policy, the Caribbean and Middle America, in government service, in the State Department. After more than a decade of such service, he lost neither interest nor expertise in his area: on leaving the State Department, he published in 1934 a second major study, The United States and the Caribbean Zone, and in 1942 he offered the general public a...

In a very real sense, it is Professor Munro who laid the foundation of Latin American Studies at Princeton, and in a variety of ways: through his teaching in the History Department; through undergraduate conferences in the Woodrow Wilson School which focused on problems of the area; through judicious grants, financed by the Doherty Charitable Foundation to undergraduates who needed field experience to gather material for senior theses. His attention to undergraduates in the Woodrow Wilson School sparked the interest of historians (or Latin Americanists among the historians) such as Richard Morse of Yale and Milton Vanger of Brandeis.

It was at the beginning of a decade of stagnation or, if you will, withering of Latin American Studies through out the United States that Professor Munro with the support of the Doherty Foundation initiated and maintained one of the vital, almost unique and surely essential national programs for the training of specialists in Latin American Studies: the Doherty Fellowships for advanced study in the social sciences. Since 1948 Professor Munro and the selection committee he has chaired have awarded over 160 fellowships in the field of history, anthropology, sociology and economics. Nor did Professor Munro neglect Latin American Studies at Princeton. He arranged to have both the History and Romance Languages and Literatures Departments add faculty members with a major interest in Latin America, subsidized the field research of from 3 to 4 juniors each summer in Latin America; allocated funds for the improvement of the Latin American collection in Firestone Library; and encouraged an interdisciplinary senior seminar in History and Literature. It is a fact that the record of 10-11 senior theses per year on Latin American themes since the late thirties down to 1961, when Professor Munro retired, is a most decisive tribute to his little-advertised yet unswerving support to Latin American Studies at Princeton. I might add that Professor Munro has not abandoned his scholarly interests. Two years ago he published what has already become a major contribution to the field in which he has immersed himself, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean 1900-1921*, and he is currently at work on the second and complementary volume covering the following decades.

This, in brief, has been the legacy of Professor Munro to Latin American Studies at this University as teacher, administrator, scholar, and I think that you will agree that this legacy is a most substantial one.

In the five years since Professor Munro's retirement Princeton has tried to build on his foundation. Since 1963 a Latin American Studies Committee has met regularly... Our guiding principle, as members of this community of scholars, is to achieve understanding of the area we are dedicated to study. We must have no parti pris, no axe to grind, except the search for profound understanding of the past and present of Latin America. Perhaps this lays a heavy burden upon us, but one we cannot in all candor shirk. We must try to see Latin America from the inside, not from the outside, not as rich cousins charitable toward improvident relations, but as colleagues humbly engaged in the great struggle for human decency and fulfillment everywhere.

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