

attempts by national government to impose drastic centralization. In their struggle for survival, they reinforced the already firm relationship binding them to the local community and other institutions (town councils, local government, banks, professional and cultural associations, which often banded together to support the University). In this way, the small Universities fulfilled a dual function in united Italy: they were the training ground for the local ruling classes and their progressive integration into the national cultural system: and they provided a useful link between the academic world and urban bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century.

Amongst the themes brought to the fore during the conference, were: the autonomy of universities, financial assets, the role of learning as a fundamental aspect of the new identity of the bourgeoisie, the link between the sciences and the humanities, the recruitment of teachers including selection processes, the composition of the student population, the relationship between city-centre and suburbs: all topics which are still the subject of very lively debate in Italy, so that we can justifiably hope to see this line of historical research developed further. Naturally this requires the use and often restoration of the archives of small universities: terrain where significant progress has been made but where a great deal remains to be done.

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International Congress of Universities 1992. The University and the Fifth Centenary of the Discovery of America: Madrid, 13–16 July 1992.

On 13 July 1992 the International Congress of Universities opened in the Palacio de Congresos of Madrid, organized by two Spanish universities, the Complutense of Madrid and that of Alcalá de Henares, with the support of the *Sociedad Estatal Quinto Centenario*. The University, it was felt, could not stand by as a mere spectator during the celebration of an anniversary as significant as that of the Fifth Centenary of the Discovery of America, an event in which university people had played an important role. A deep and rigorous consideration of what the University had contributed to the formation of Latin-American culture was offered as a necessary introduction to another study, which discussed all aspects of the institution at the present time as well as possible directions for future development.

Given this multiple objective, it was a sensible decision to divide the discussions into three parallel sections. The first, under the heading 'The Presence of the University in the New World', brought together various thematic areas, such as 'Critical Awareness at the University: International Law and Indian Law'; 'The Birth and Development of Universities in the New World'; 'The University: Encounter and Fostering of Cultures'; and 'University, Crown, Church and Society in the Age of Discovery'. The second section dealt with 'The Current Reality of the University', and considered the true aim and identity of the institution. The third, 'The Future of the University: Proposed Solutions', encompassed topics like 'The Humanities in the University at Present and in the Future'; 'The University and Research'; 'The Mission, Aims and Values of the University Today'; 'Quality and Assessment of Teaching'; 'University, Society and State'; 'The University as Enterprise'; and 'The Training of University Teachers'.

Around these three sections there were arranged no fewer than 63 lectures and 268 short papers. There were more than 1,000 participants from all over the world, mainly from Europe and America. The working sessions started and finished with a Plenary Conference addressed by major figures from cultural life such as Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Silvio Zavala, Ricardo Diaz-Hochleiner, Luis Suárez Fernández and Michele Gendreau-Massaloux. The work of each section started separately with a series of lectures on particular themes given by specialists in those fields. There was then a period dedicated to short papers. Two temporary exhibitions mounted in the same building completed the project: one on historical cartography from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century with the title, 'The Image of America: Three Centuries of European Cartography'; the other comprising originals and facsimiles of foundation documents from European and American universities.

In view of the thematic content of the Congress, I believe there are two respects in which this academic gathering differed from every other which has been held on such a subject. In the first place it was not an international meeting on the history of universities in general, as might have been supposed. Rather, it concentrated exclusively on research in the field where the history of universities and the development of the New World came together from 1492 onwards; and speakers at the conference shared a research interest in this particular theme. The second characteristic, in my opinion the greatest novelty, was that of bringing together at a single meeting studies of past and present with perspectives for the future.

The academic quality of contributions was generally outstanding, and I refer not just to the lectures in which interest was assured given the careful prior selection carried out by the several committees of assessors,

but also to the short papers. For here we heard much that was new, with little going over of old ground. The participation of a large number of young researchers was encouraging. In this perspective, I as an historian found especially thought-provoking the discussion that took place in the third section ('The Future of the University: Proposed Solutions'). Here we heard a lot about something well-known but little practised: the ethical duty that academics have as an intellectual elite to put our learning at the service of the 'truth' and the advancement of mankind. In a society like our own this must be the first aim of the University.

A final special aspect of this Congress was the political element in the gathering. A splendid Committee of Honour was headed by their Majesties the King and Queen of Spain; and the Congress was graced by the presence of their Majesties and major political figures from Spain and Latin America, alongside more than three hundred Rectors from around the world. Great importance was given by the organizers to some of the parallel activities planned for those days, such as the twinning of Alcalá and the Complutense and, above all, to the subsequent twinning of both with the Latin-American universities. This act was without question a most moving one for the signatories and others present. But it also reflected an unfortunate university rivalry. An earlier initiative was the invitation extended with notorious precedence by D. Julio Feroso Garcia, Rector of the University of Salamanca, to the Rectors of the most ancient universities of Europe and America with a view to making use of the celebrations of the Fifth Centenary to sign the *Salamanca Declaration*. Within a few days of the announcement of this invitation from Salamanca, proposing academic co-operation and exchanges as a basis for future university activity, the parallel initiative was set in motion in Madrid: the International Congress of Universities, and the proposed the signing of the *Madrid Manifesto*. This document was to be presented at the Congress itself to the Deputy Prime Minister of Spain who was to be entrusted with taking it up to the Latin American Summit of Heads of State due to take place in Spain a few days later.

Apart from this regrettable incident, my assessment is that the Congress was very useful in academic content, and very satisfactory in its involvement of politicians in a project for the future which requires their support to prosper.

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