

The Columbus Quincentenary and the Politics of the "Encounter"

ARIANA HERNÁNDEZ-REGUANT

The quincentenary of Columbus's arrival in America can be added to a long list of similar commemorations—among them, the bicentennial of the French Revolution, the bicentennial of Cook's arrival in Australia, and the bicentennial of American independence, all of which were organized by state governments in order to both assert a certain national identity and achieve international prestige and power. Although these commemorations celebrate historical events, they are concerned not with the past but rather with the present and the future. Governments in power promote and sponsor these celebrations, according to Chesneaux, to "ritualize the past and twist the collective memory to [the state's] purposes." Thus history is used to legitimize a certain power structure, and, consequently, any dissent from the official version of the past is ignored.¹

In this fashion, the Spanish government exploited Columbus's arrival in America in 1492 for the purposes of asserting, both in Spain and abroad, the unity of Spanish identity and Spain's new authority in a united Europe, in which Spain would act as a mediator between Europe and Latin America. This article focuses on the official discourse used by the government of Spain for the commemoration of the quincentenary of Columbus's arrival in America, which, I suggest, is best understood with reference to the

Ariana Hernández-Reguant is a visiting scholar at the Library of Congress. A native of Spain, she is completing her Ph. D. in social anthropology at the University of Barcelona.

domestic and foreign policies of the Spanish government, controlled by the Social-Democratic party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español, or P.S.O.E.). On one hand, the Spanish government was seeking to invent a national identity and create the illusion of a national unity by referring to a past event in which all Spaniards were supposedly involved. On the other hand, the government was trying to legitimize the integration of Spain into the Western world after thirty-six years of traumatic isolation (1939-75) and four centuries of darkness. Spain's goal was to become a leading member of the European community and a major player in the ongoing process of European integration. In 1992, Spain claimed its rightful role as a mediator between Europe and Latin America by appealing to history.

The year 1992 marked the onset of a major public relations campaign that was supposed to strengthen both Spain's fragile domestic unity and its marginal position in Europe. In 1992, Spain hosted three other events considered to be of worldwide importance: the summer Olympic Games, in Barcelona; the selection of Madrid as the 1992 "Cultural Capital of Europe"; and the World's Fair in Seville. Many other conferences and festivals were held in Spain during that year. Spain wanted to make 1992 "its year," the moment in which the whole world could locate Spain on the map after "250 years of isolation," as Fernando Valenzuela, president of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, put it.² This same idea was expressed by Colón de Carvajal, a direct descendant of Columbus and a major player in the organization of the quincentenary:

I think every Spaniard knows that 1992 is a definitive date in our history. In that year the full integration into the E.E.C. will take place Coincidentally, in 1992 there will be two other events: the Quincentennial, represented by Expo '92, and the Olympic Games Both events have a high symbolic value, and symbols are the motor of history Both will give us the chance to regain our lost universality.³

The official propaganda emphasized that the commemoration of the quincentenary was not to be merely rhetorical but would serve to promote economic, cultural, and scientific development in both Spain and Latin America. As a consequence of the common heritage celebrated in 1992, Spain is to play a leading role in the development of Latin America, serving as a go-between for the European community.

THE INSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION
OF THE QUINCENTENARY

Preparations for the events just described had an extensive organizational basis.⁴ The Commission for the Quincentenary was responsible for most cultural events linked to the quincentenary. It was founded in 1981 by the Spanish government following a proposal by King Juan Carlos, and it had a budget of \$14 billion.⁵ This commission was initially led by Manuel de Prado and Colón de Carvajal, the aforementioned descendant of Christopher Columbus, who was an influential member of the ruling party (P.S.O.E.). The president of the Commission for the Quincentenary was Luis Yáñez Barnuevo, also secretary of state for international cooperation, director of the powerful Institute of Ibero-American Cooperation, a leading P.S.O.E. politician, and a childhood friend of President González.

The Commission for the Quincentenary, a section of the State Department of Foreign Affairs, included within it three organizational bodies called *Alto Patronato*, *Pleno*, and Permanent Commission. The *Alto Patronato* (board of trustees) was an honorary presidium headed by King Juan Carlos. It also included the Spanish president, various state ministers, the president of the Sevillian Expo '92, and, of course, the president of the commission itself, Luis Yáñez Barnuevo. The *Pleno*, in contrast, was a larger assembly that included representatives from all ministries, labor unions, religious, military, and academic institutions, and many other social and political organizations. Finally, the Permanent Commission contained different commissions that were responsible for the actual organization of various educational, scientific, and technological projects. Examples included joint research projects, exhibits, publications, and the restoration of colonial buildings. Five hundred such projects were planned, one for each of the five hundred years since Columbus first set foot on American soil. These projects were supposed to represent different ways of connecting "the past, the present and the future."⁶ Only one-third, however, were underway by 1992.

The Permanent Commission coordinated the Spanish regional commissions as well as the Latin American commissions—one for every country of Latin America. Other countries and organizations—the United States, the Bahamas, Italy, Israel, the Organization of American States, and UNESCO, among others—participate in this forum as observers. All these different

national commissions had permanent offices in Madrid and met once a year.

The chief executive organ of the Permanent Commission for the Execution of Programs of the Quincentenary of the Discovery of America was the State Society for the Quincentenary. Its task was to carry out all events and activities related to the commemoration that were approved by the Commission for the Quincentenary. It supported not only public initiatives but also private enterprises that promoted technological, scientific, industrial, and commercial exchanges between the Iberian Peninsula and Latin America.⁷ For example, it organized "Adventure 92," in which "400 students from Spain, Portugal, Latin America and the U.S. will retrace the voyages of Columbus while participating in an on-board educational Summer program about the Quincentenary" through 1992.⁸ The official publication of the State Society was the monthly cultural magazine *América 92*, with news and articles on events and activities related to the quincentenary. The State Society published two other magazines: the quarterly *Prólogo*, on Spanish-American literature, and the quarterly *Pensamiento Latinoamericano*, on social and political thought. The State Society for the Quincentenary also sponsored exhibitions, books, television documentaries, an opera entitled *Christopher Columbus*,⁹ a two-and-one-half-year journey through the Western Hemisphere with official replicas of Columbus's three ships,¹⁰ and the construction of a monument "to the Universe and to Knowledge," called "The Armillary Sphere." This monument would symbolize Madrid as the Eiffel Tower symbolizes Paris. The sphere was supposed to be 302 feet high, mobile, and accessible to the public. It would represent the solar system in three dimensions and would commemorate, "in a contemporary yet timeless way,"¹¹ the "celebrated epic of the discovery," in which Columbus demonstrated the roundness of the earth. The constant musical effects and the enormous size of the Armillary Sphere—defined in *América 92* as "moderated gigantism"—were supposed to reflect "the spectacular nature of the event." So did its cost: around \$60 million.¹² Unfortunately, lack of funds and sponsors made completion of the construction impossible.

The interests of the State Society for the Quincentenary were represented in the United States by the Spain '92 Foundation. This foundation promoted exchanges between the United States and Spain and coordinated initiatives to commemorate the quincentenary in the United States.¹³ One enterprise sponsored by the

foundation was "In Search of One's Roots," a genealogical research project tracing Spanish names in the United States back to their origins in Spain.¹⁴ The foundation also promoted television documentaries, rock concerts, regattas, gala dinners, a flower tournament, and the tour of Columbus's ships in the United States. In addition, it published the monthly *Encounters* in collaboration with the Latin American Institute at the University of New Mexico.¹⁵ This collaboration gave the foundation academic legitimacy in its presentation of Spanish culture and national ideology. Finally, the Spain '92 Foundation was one of the initial sponsors of the extravagant Honeymoon Project, the wedding between the statue of Columbus in Barcelona and the Statue of Liberty in New York City, celebrated in the Nevada desert on Valentine's Day, 1992. The maid of honor for this wedding was Marianne, the symbol of the French Revolution.¹⁶

EXPO '92

The organization of Expo '92, like the Commission for the Quincentenary, was headed nominally by the *Alto Patronato*. A public corporation, Sevilla '92, was in charge of preparations for this event. According to the official propaganda, the objectives of Expo '92 were to celebrate the Age of Discovery, to stimulate the cooperation and exchange of ideas between countries for a future of peace and new discoveries, and to show the contribution of Spain "to universal culture."¹⁷ Expo '92 was billed as a "magnum universal event . . . the most ambitious initiative for the Quincentennial." The future, not the past, was the main focus of the exhibit: "It will show how the future will be as a consequence of events of the past . . . [and] will comprehend a long series and inventions that will explain the past, will describe the present, and will shape the future with imagination."¹⁸ About one hundred countries participated; eighteen to twenty million visitors, almost half from abroad, attended the 55,000 live shows. Some of the poorer countries received financial aid from Spain in order to ensure their presence at this universal exhibit.¹⁹

Expo '92 took place from March to December 1992 on an island in the Guadalquivir River in Seville. According to the official brochures, it embodied "The Whole World in One Island," thus epitomizing "one world, one single human race."²⁰ Seville is the capital of Andalucia and the hometown of Spain's prime minister,

Felipe González and his wife, as well as other prominent politicians.²¹ According to the *Washington Post*, Seville is "badly in need of a boost." Expo '92 was supposed to bring not only new jobs, but enlargement of nearby airports, a subway system, a high-speed train, and a freeway between Madrid and Seville.²² Hence the city would "once again regain its role of importance in Southern Europe."²³

THE OFFICIAL SPANISH DISCOURSE

The colonization of America is euphemistically called *Encounter Between Two Worlds*. This expression was introduced in 1984 by Mexican professor Miguel León Portilla, of the Mexican Official Commission, to replace the widely used words *discovery* and *conquest*. After some debate, the word *encounter* was officially adopted by the Spanish Commission for the Quincentenary.²⁴ Both Yáñez and Colón de Carvajal defended the use of the word *discovery* in spite of its imperialistic connotations and objected to the more diplomatic *encounter*. For Yáñez, both cultures did discover each other, so "the expression *discovery* is fully justified and has been legitimated by history."²⁵ For Colón de Carvajal, those who use the word *encounter* instead of *discovery* wrongly fear being accused of Eurocentrism or Spanish chauvinism: "[T]o be objective . . . , it was Europe that discovered the real extension of the universe. This was a discovery and not an encounter."²⁶ Pedro Pacheco, a popular Andalusian politician, came out in favor of the expression *encounter*, but he maintained that the terminological debate was merely cosmetic, for neither term can hide the destruction wrought by the Spaniards:

Those who believe that the "Black Legend" will be eliminated by burying words such as *discovery* and *conquest* and substituting for them the feminine and hypocritical concept of *encounter* confuse semantics with reality.²⁷

The word *encounter* implied an acknowledgment that America had already been "discovered" before Columbus arrived. At the same time, it served to shift the emphasis to the colonization of America as it was undertaken by Spaniards and to the subsequent Spanish cultural heritage, instead of focusing on Columbus's Italian origins and his maritime achievements. This emphasis was

the crucial difference between the official Spanish discourse and the one used by both the Italian and the United States commissions for the quincentenary.²⁸

The philosophy behind the term *encounter*, graphically represented in the Honeymoon Project, was that two cultures met on an equal basis and, in a union of mutual consent, influenced one another and melted into something new:

The Eurasian world perception becomes a universal conception of mankind. The European man discovers a new continent, and the pre-Columbian indigenous man discovers the existence of human beings of different facial features, color, religion, and culture.²⁹

The word *encounter* hid the negative consequences of the enterprise and seemed to suggest the peaceful and egalitarian fusion of two groups and cultures. In fact, Pacheco is right: Such a term did not recognize the unbalanced relationship between Spaniards and Native Americans. The opposing positions, *pro-encounter* and *pro-discovery*, were two sides of the same argument and shared the same ideology. The disagreement was merely rhetorical.

For Mayor Federico Zaragoza, director of UNESCO and P.S.O.E. official, the main consequence of the encounter was the appearance, in 1492, of "the conscience of a new world, a world shared by everybody."³⁰ Also, "new facts were born from pain and happiness, from victories and defeats."³¹ According to official speeches, these facts were the merging of two cultures, but *merging* is used as the predominance of one culture over the other. That is, Spanish became the only language, and Native Americans and Spaniards came to believe that they belonged "to one community." This would have been a result of *mestizaje* (racial mix), a unique element of the Spanish colonization: a "sublime transcendence of the races, . . . a very exceptional fact in the universal panorama of empires and colonizations."³² Spanish colonialism would be a unique case in which a European nation emptied itself onto the newly discovered lands, intermarrying with the native population.³³ However, according to the prevalent ideology of *hispanidad*, the absence of the Native American element after the "fusion" converted the phenomenon of *mestizaje* into the dominance of the Spanish "race." The dominant feature of Latin American culture today is thus its Hispanic quality.

The commemoration of the quincentenary means the affirmation of a community, the Hispanic one, and the universality of certain values, such as freedom. Thus, Hispanic community, universality, and freedom were, in the best moments of history and now again, the sign of Spanish fate.³⁴

Spanish officials denied the Native American ethnic heritage of Latin America and consider the Latin American population to be homogeneous. For example, Yáñez Barnuevo states that "the majority of the inhabitants of Latin America are of Spanish origin,"³⁵ ignoring the fact that many Native Americans are not Spanish speakers and are unlikely to benefit from any commemorative projects. Native Americans were simply not the audience for official pronouncements. They were ignored in speeches and projects directed to the Latin American ruling classes, either white or *mestiza*. As Chesneau puts it, "[T]hose excluded from the political decision-making process are also excluded from the history books."³⁶ Hence, Native Americans continued to be dispossessed of their past—a past that was not compatible with the colonizers' goals. Their past was the domain of the ruling classes and served to perpetuate the latter's economic, political, and cultural domination over the native population. The negative aspects of the conquest were forgotten, because they did not contribute to the construction of the future that the Spanish government envisioned. Thus, as Yáñez put it, the quincentenary was not supposed to be an apology for the conquest, "nor is it a permanent plea for forgiveness for what our ancestors did to theirs."³⁷

One of the few attempts by the Commission for the Quincentenary to include Native Americans in the celebrations was a questionnaire sent to some of their social and political organizations in 1988. Very few of them responded. Their answers, published by the Commission for the Quincentenary in a press release in 1988, showed surprise and rejection. Almost all of them agreed that Spain should not be the protagonist of this celebration but should instead empower Native Americans by financing them, listening to them, and helping them organize and express themselves. For example, the representative of TUITSAM (Indigenous Students of Lima) asked, "Is it possible to celebrate the beginning and continuation of genocide, exploitation, colonization, domination?" TUITSAM, as well as other organizations, charged that Spain and the Latin American states were not interested in indigenous populations but only in their own prestige and well-being.³⁸

Similarly, UNESCO, through the project Amerindia '92, focused on the folkloric aspects of indigenous cultures, ignoring indigenous rights to land and any other controversial issues. The only result of Amerindia was a rhetorical document.³⁹ Finally, in 1992, in a summit of Latin American, Spanish, and Portuguese political leaders, Bolivia pushed for a commitment to the support of an Indigenous Fund. This fund would promote development projects among indigenous peoples. Most leaders agreed reluctantly, but money was not allocated and no specific plans were established.⁴⁰

In July 1989 in Guatemala, the Seventh Ibero-American Conference of National Commissions for the Commemoration of the Discovery of America was dedicated to "The Presence and Significance of Indigenous Peoples of the Americas." At this conference, the problems suffered by the Indians with respect to land, economic and cultural development, justice, and self-determination were recognized. However, the conference resulted in nothing other than recommendations to the member governments "to move forward" on the "Indian question."⁴¹

Proof of the arrogance of official organizations towards indigenous culture showed in quincentenary pamphlets, which betrayed the organizations' ignorance on the topic. For example, on the cover of a luxurious pamphlet published by the Spanish Commission for the Quincentenary, next to a photograph of the Spanish king was a picture of the pyramid of La Luna, which was identified as part of Chichen Itza; in fact, Chichen Itza is a Mayan site and La Luna a Nahuatl one, located thousands of miles away.⁴²

Native Americans were not represented in quincentenary discourses and events, because they did not have any importance in Spain's international aspirations. In Latin America, the quincentenary perpetuated economic and cultural hegemony. The two worlds of the encounter were two worlds of power: one native Spanish (peninsular), the other *criollo*. The Latin American commissions for the quincentenary also perpetuated this view. Their members were *criollos* (descendants of the first-generation Spanish in America) who longed for a closer relationship with Spain. For example, Guillermo Morón, president of the Academy of History of Venezuela and member of the Venezuelan Commission for the Quincentenary, pointed out that Spanish politicians contradicted themselves. He defended the idea that Latin Americans are all descendants of Spaniards and that Spain and Latin America are like flesh and blood that cannot be separated. Yet Spain, in his

opinion, seemed to be adopting the European Calvinist ethic, in which money, technology, and science are the dominant values, forgetting to help the Latin American nations. Morón denounced Spanish politicians and the king for praising the common past while promoting little cooperation beyond the expression of intentions. He concluded that Spain is like a mother who should look after her daughters.⁴³

The rhetoric surrounding official events showed that this quincentenary commemoration was concerned neither with the past nor with alternative voices. All politicians with a role in the commemoration agreed that emphasis should be placed on the political future rather than the past. For example, Fernández Ordóñez, Spanish minister of foreign affairs, considered that although the quincentenary took us to the past, it also propelled us to the future.⁴⁴ According to Jaime Lusinchi, former president of Venezuela, "we cannot look at the history of five hundred years without asking what options we have and what is our role in the twenty-first century."⁴⁵ For Yáñez, the celebration was "a starting point and not a goal."⁴⁶ This is why

we must review our common past, but only under the condition that such a debate does not make us sterile; that it does not paralyze us. Rather, it should lead us to the construction of a common future We have chosen commemoration—as opposed to celebration—as a means for collective reflection in the Ibero-American community, not a reflection just about the past, but mainly, to analyze the present and to build a future.⁴⁷

This explains why the official discourse openly ignored critical historians and avoided any negative account of the colonization. Alternative interpretations of the past were irrelevant to the goals of the discourse, which was directed towards the present and future political standing of Spain. From the official viewpoint, critical perspectives were typically seen as attacks on the integrity of Spain; therefore, any dissidence was quickly disqualified. Moreover, the official Spanish discourse continued in the same ideological bent as official Spanish historians and intellectuals from the Franco period, such as Sánchez Albornoz or Menéndez-Pidal, who presented a triumphal version of the discovery and rejected any negative account as part of the "Black Legend."⁴⁸ Thirty years later, Yáñez assumed that the Black Legend was "a doctrine invented by the European rivals that wanted to gain Spain's colonies, and "to resurrect now this old criticism only shows lack of imagination

and intellectual poverty. Although there may be a few 'shadows' in colonial history, like the death of many Indians due to superexploitation and illnesses, it is more important to emphasize the great although unknown works of the Spaniards during the first one hundred years of presence in America, such as roads, cities, harbors and universities."⁴⁹ Thus

this is not the time to resurrect useless arguments over Black or Pink Legends, or over pro-indigenous scholars vs. pro-Hispanic ones. This is a good time for a useful common action between Americans and Europeans.⁵⁰

POLITICAL GOALS

Spain's discourse stressed the traditional ties and sisterhood between Spain and Latin America, asserting the need for a continuity of these links. Spain's former president, liberal Adolfo Suárez, considered that "Spain would deny her own history and part of her identity if she allowed distance between Latin America and Europe."⁵¹ Traditionally, Spain's policy in Latin America was based on the ideology of *hispanidad*, which Franco and the aforementioned official historians promoted, with the idea of one day creating a Hispanic world such as the commonwealth.

However, Spain's goal of strengthening economic relations with Latin America was only marginal.⁵² After Spain joined the European Economic Community (EEC), trade agreements with Latin American countries were relinquished, and, for example, Mexican exports to Spain dropped more than 50 percent. In 1991, products from Latin America amount to only 4 percent of Spain's total imports.⁵³ Mexico and other Latin American countries repeatedly denounced this fact and, after Spain's full integration into the EEC, "are uncertain of how they fit into Spanish plans, and they have been pressing Spain to both preserve and redefine traditional ties."⁵⁴

Spain used its privileged access to Latin America as a trump card to market itself as a necessary partner for the richer EEC members that want to increase their presence in the Latin American market. On commercial exchanges with Latin America, the EEC was a distant second behind the United States.⁵⁵ This was acknowledged in many official speeches, in which Spain tried to defend the position that "a greater presence of the EEC in Latin America should be a factor of tranquility and security for the U.S.,

even if that implies some economic competition."⁵⁶ At the same time, Europe could also collaborate economically with the United States instead of competing. In this regard, President Felipe González considered that 1992 provided

the opportunity for numerous debates and programs that will serve to revitalize the ties that join Spain and the United States with the rest of the international community For Spain, 1992 is a year of wager, commitment and future Spain has a long history of relations with the United States, from the Spanish pioneers of the 16th century to the crucial moments of American independence. We understand that the new bilateral treaties of cooperation, signed in 1989, mark the beginning of an era rich in cultural and economic exchange I especially wish to affirm the recognition and friendship of the Spanish government toward the [North] American businesses that have already decided, or are about to decide, to participate in some of the outstanding events that in 1992 will leave their mark on our individual and collective memories.⁵⁷

The quincentenary was mainly an internal, and therefore electoral, discourse of the Social-Democratic party, designed to perpetuate and legitimize its own power in Spain and also its position as one of the leaders in a united Europe. Spain wanted to assert its importance in the international scene as it did five hundred years ago.⁵⁸ This time, however, its main interest lay in the Western world. In addition to its international aspirations, the Spanish government was trying to legitimate itself at home as the only government alternative.

The government's discourse, addressed to the West and to Spanish citizens, presented Spain as a historical unity, ignoring any past before 1492. The idea of a common identity for all Spaniards ignored the fact that Spain was barely created when Columbus went to America, that the journey was primarily a Castilian enterprise, and that some culturally distinct groups, such as the Catalans, remained absent from America as either investors or colonists until the end of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ In addition, cultural diversity in sixteenth-century Spain was barely acknowledged. Within the Permanent Commission of the Commission for the Quincentenary there was a committee for the project "Sefarad '92" and another one for "Al-Andalus '92." While Sefarad '92 was supposed to emphasize the Jewish heritage in Spanish culture, Al-Andalus '92 stressed its Islamic elements, both

"showing their contribution to the Century of the Discovery."⁶⁰ Pressures from Israel caused Spain to give careful attention to Sefarad '92.

Official speeches and events also ignored any contemporary cultural diversity within Spain and presented the country as essentially Castilian. They hid the existence of nationalist movements in various regions of Spain, such as Catalonia and the Basque country, which seek greater autonomy and celebrate their own differentiated past, thus undermining the vision of a single Spain. From their perspective, the government was presenting, both to Spanish citizens and to the Western world, an invented Spanish nationality by tracing it back five hundred years. But the nationality that the government was promoting as Spanish was, in fact, Castilian; and it considered the language, culture, and history of Spain none other than the Castilian ones. An example of this disregard for non-Castilian culture was the creation of the Cervantes Institute, approved in 1990 by the *Alto Patronato*. The Cervantes Institute follows the models of the British Institute, the Alliance Française, or the Goethe Institute, and it is conceived with centers all over the world that will promote the Spanish language and culture. According to the government, only the Castilian language will be taught there, despite claims and protests from autonomous regions that advocate the use of their own language.⁶¹

Confronted with strong anticentralist and proindependence regional movements, the government needed to create the illusion that there is such a thing as a Spanish national unity and identity as a result of the common glorious past that all peoples of the peninsula share. After four centuries of decline and thirty-eight years of fascism, Spain needs a reference point. Through the promotion of a distant historical episode—the glorious encounter—Spaniards would regain their pride and identity. As a consequence of the great past, the new Spain was presented as culturally and politically homogeneous and with a major international role, thus shifting the attention from the government's failures.

IS THERE ROOM FOR CRITICISM?

As has been made obvious despite the use of the word *encounter*, the quincentenary marginalized Native Americans and assumed that America had no history before Columbus arrived. Social conflicts and inequalities linked to the events of 1492 were ignored, as were

contemporary manifestations of injustice. Proponents of the official celebration recognized the existence of negative aspects of the colonization of America by the Spaniards but argue that these events should be forgotten and forgiven if a common future was to be constructed.

For these reasons, the Spanish government sought to monopolize the production of history. Nearly all publications, films, and research grants in relation to the colonial period were controlled by the Commission for the Quincentenary.⁶² This was a very effective way to silence any version of history that differed from the official one. The official version of history was also the only one presented on Spanish public television, which is directly controlled by the government.⁶³

In Spain, most criticism of the quincentenary came from academics and intellectuals, and there were various regional commissions organized against the quincentenary. The most active one probably was the Catalan Commission against the Quincentenary (C.C.C.C.C.), supported by students and professors from the Catalan universities.⁶⁴ Members of various anticentralist movements generally denied that their forebears participated in the conquest and subsequent colonization, and claimed separate national identities, which are not Spanish. They present Spain as an artificial nation created out of several diverse nationalities that were non-Castilian in language, culture, and history. They reject any involvement in the genocide perpetrated in America by the Spaniards. *El País*, the main Spanish newspaper, which generally supports the government and published many articles that praised the 1992 events, also published articles by contemporary Spanish writers, such as Juan Goytisolo and Rafael Sánchez-Ferlosio, who were critical of the quincentenary. These authors denounced the government's lack of interest in the past as well as the omission of Native Americans, both in official discourses and in scheduled events. Sánchez-Ferlosio stated that "what this Quincentenary attempts, in addition to other objectives even more superficial and indecent, is to invent, five hundred years later, a Spanish empire that never existed."⁶⁵ He attributed such an invention to a collective psychological need for a glorious past that could elevate Spain to the same level as the world's leading nations:

The British and the Romans made others applaud and believe in their infamous empires. Why is it that we Spaniards, with equal tortures, equal blood, and equal death, do not receive the same imperial honors?⁶⁶

Most academic critiques were published in marginal journals such as the bilingual Basque-Spanish *Langaiak* and the Catalan *L'Avenç*. The common position of those critical academics was to denounce the genocide of the native populations by the Spanish colonial power:

We should view the conquest of America as a chapter in the history of exploitation of men by men, instead of as a chapter in the history of civilization.⁶⁷

This critical version of Spanish colonization rarely reaches the public. Most Spanish-speaking citizens, to whom this discourse was directed, accepted the official version uncritically and wanted to believe in the greatness of Spain. For them, the official discourse was a nationalist one, and to disagree with it meant to diminish the Spanish identity.⁶⁸ As Chesneaux shows, the use of history by the power structure to legitimate the present is "infinitely more operational than many a scholarly discourse by professional historians," where public opinion is concerned.⁶⁹

The official Spanish discourse and commemoration of the "Encounter Between Two Worlds" disregarded historical debate, avoided any reference to past or current Native American issues, and incorporated no alternative viewpoints, because it responded to a political strategy, a strategy of power. The discourse responded to the current national and international agenda of the Spanish government. Only the absence of these goals—according to Chesneaux, necessary to the very existence of a capitalist state sustained through endless economic expansion⁷⁰—would allow a different type of discourse to emerge. The discourse on the quincentenary was not historical; it used the past only as a rhetorical device for ideological and political purposes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. John Eidson for his guidance and encouragement during the preparation of this article. I am also grateful to both Dr. Marc Leone and Dr. Miquel Izard for inspiring me to pursue this research. Finally, I want to thank my friend Lisa Buck for her support and always helpful criticism.

NOTES

1. Jacques Chesneau, *Pasts and Futures or What Is History For?* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 18.
2. Fernando Valenzuela, quoted in Juan González Nuño, "Pulso a la cooperación española," *España Aquí* 6 (September 1989): 11-14.
3. Manuel del Prado y Colón de Carvajal, "Razones de Sevilla 92," *El País*, 23 May 1988 (my translation).
4. For more detail, see the pamphlet published by the Spanish Commission for the Quincentenary, *Qué Es el Quinto Centenario* (n. d.).
5. "The Spain-USA Quincentennial. Commemorating 500 years of America," *Encounters* 5-6 (Spain '92 Foundation and Latin American Institute, University of New Mexico): 34.
6. For audiovisual projects, see, for example, "Mil palabras para una imagen," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 9. For technological projects, see "Los electrones hablarán castellano," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 23; and I. Bravo, "La Eureka Hispanoamericana," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 14-15. For historic preservation projects, see, for example, "Nueva vida para los centros históricos degradados," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 57. For publication projects, see "Biblioteca Quinto Centenario—500 años, casi 500 libros," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 45. See also "Biblioteca Quinto Centenario" (monthly supplement to *América* 92 and to *Encounters*).
7. *Qué es el Quinto Centenario*.
8. Miguel de la Quadra-Salcedo, "Aventura 92 en el mar," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 22. See also A. Bremón, "Un barco con carga fácil," *El País*, 25 October 1988.
9. See, for example, G. Tonsky, "World Premiere of the Opera 'Christopher Columbus,'" *Encounters* 2 (Spring 1990): 40.
10. See, for example, C. Gallego, "El nuevo viaje al no tan Nuevo Mundo," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 18-20. See also E. J. Gonzáles and J. Higuera, "Hello Columbus. Sailing Towards the Quincentennial," *Hispanic* (June 1990): 30-38. See also S. Bower, "The Three Caravels and Their Return to America," *Encounters* 3 (Summer 1990): 20-30.
11. J. Lara Coira, "The Armillary Sphere," *Encounters* 2 (Spring 1990): 27-29.
12. See Luis Fernández Galiano, "Trofeo Colombino," *El País Internacional*, 26 February 1990. See also J. Gómez Soubrier, "La Ciudad de los Anillos," *América* 92 1:4 (April-June 1990): 7-9. See also Coira, "The Armillary Sphere," 27-29.
13. *Primer Dossier de Prensa* (press release) (Washington DC: Spain '92 Foundation, September 1989).
14. S. Gocorpe, "In Search Of One's Roots," *Encounters* 1 (Winter 1989): 40.
15. The contents and line of *Encounters* are very similar to those of *América* 92: news and articles related to the quincentenary. *Encounters*, however, places the emphasis on issues of special interest in North America. According to its editor, "*Encounters* is a magazine inspired by 1992," its focus being "pan-Atlantic, pan-American and pan-Iberian." It is directed to the United States, which "with its racial and cultural multiplicity are the logical protagonists of such an intellectual encounter. If modern and democratic Spain seeks to find its economic future in the new Europe, its cultural future stems from its American legacy," editorial, *Encounters* 1 (Winter 1989): 6.
16. *Honeymoon News* (Winter 1988).
17. *Imagine It!* Brochure published in 1989 by the Exposición Universal Sevilla 1992.

18. "Sevilla 92," *España Aquí* (September 1989): 17.
19. See, for example, "The Spain-USA Quincentennial. Commemorating 500 years of America," 34.
20. *Imagine It!*
21. Alfonso Guerra resigned from his position as vice president of the Spanish government on January 1991 due to a political and financial scandal that involved his brother. See, for example, Juan G. Ibáñez, "Guerra dimite para facilitar 'un buen Gobierno'," *El País*, 14 January 1991; and Juan Méndez, "El 'caso Juan Guerra,' elemento clave de la caída," *El País*, 14 January 1991.
22. E. Gody, "Seville Pins Its Hopes on 1992 World's Fair," *Washington Post*, 30 March 1990.
23. Brochure published by Sociedad Estatal Sevilla 92 (n. d.) (my translation).
24. See, for example, A. Caño, "Con tiros de ballesta matábamos 'infinitos,'" *El País*, 16 October 1988; and H. Dieterich, ed., *Nuestra América contra el Quinto Centenario* (Bilbao: Txalaparta, 1989).
25. Luis Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro comienza en 1992," *El País*, 20 May 1988 (my translation).
26. Manuel de Prado y Colón de Carvajal, "Razones de una conmemoración," *El País*, 20 May 1988 (my translation).
27. Pedro Pacheco, "El valor estratégico de 1992," *El País*, 20 February 1989 (my translation).
28. The U. S. Quincentennial Commission (formed mainly of Italian-Americans) also places all emphasis on Columbus, "the man and his maritime accomplishments rather than the ensuing cultural legacy" (González and Higuera, "Hello Columbus," *Hispanic* [June 1990]: 30).
29. Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro."
30. Quoted by J. A. Sorolla in "La UNESCO participará en la conmemoración del V Centenario del Descubrimiento," *El País*, 14 March 1989 (my translation).
31. Marcelino Oreja Aguirre, "Acción, razón y pasión," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 5-7. Marcelino Oreja was president of the European Council and is now a delegate of the Conservative party to the European Parliament.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro."
34. Colón de Carvajal, "Razones de una conmemoración."
35. Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro."
36. Chesneaux, *Pasts and Futures*, 106.
37. Yáñez Barnuevo to all Latin American ambassadors and representatives of the different national commissions, in Cáceres (Spain), 1989. Quoted by P. Jara in "Yáñez dice que el V Centenario no es una apología de la conquista," *El País*, 14 May 1989 (my translation).
38. In "Directorio de Organizaciones Indígenas de América" (press release of the State Society for the Quincentenary [n. d.]) (my translation).
39. Quoted by Sorolla in "La UNESCO participará." See also "La UNESCO decide apoyar el Quinto Centenario," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 26-27; Federico Mayor Zaragoza, "Que el Mundo Entero Participe," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 26; and Eduardo Subirads, "Amerindia y el Quinto Centenario," (Madrid) *El Independiente*, 7 August 1991.
40. Brazil and Spain were the countries that disagreed the most with this proposal. See "Constituido el Fondo Indígena. Aprobado en la Cumbre Iberoamericana," Agencia Efe (Efe News Agency), 24 September 1992.
41. G. Tonsky, "The State of Things: The Indigenous Question in the Ameri-

cas," *Encounters 2* (Spring 1990): 30-33.

42. A. Caño, "Con tiros de ballesta."

43. Guillermo Morón, "A Su Imagen y Semejanza," *El País*, 6 January 1990.

44. Francisco Fernández Ordóñez, "Una Andadura en Común," *América 92* 1:1 (May 1989): 7.

45. Jaime Lusinchi, prime minister of Venezuela, in a speech given in 1988 in Caracas, Venezuela, at the *VI Reunión de la Conferencia Iberoamericana de Comisiones para la Conmemoración del Quinto Centenario del Descubrimiento de América—Encuentro de Dos Mundos* (pamphlet published by the Spanish Commission for the Quincentenary).

46. Yáñez Barnuevo, in a speech given at the same conference.

47. Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro."

48. See, for example, Ramón Menéndez-Pidal, *El Padre Las Casas. Su Doble Personalidad* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1963). Menéndez-Pidal considers Las Casas mentally insane and defends the conquest and colonization of America by the Spaniards. See also Salvador de Madariaga, *El ocaso del imperio español de América* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1959). Madariaga claims that Spain lost her Latin American colonies not only because of Jews, Masons, the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the French, American and Black revolutions, but especially because of the national idiosyncrasies and individualism of the Spanish people. See also Claudio Sánchez Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1956).

49. Yáñez Barnuevo, "El futuro."

50. Oreja, "Acción, razón y pasión."

51. Adolfo Suárez, "Año Latinoamericano de Europa," *América 92* 1:1 (May 1989): 8.

52. See, for example, William T. Salisbury and Richard V. Salisbury, "Realism and Relations among Spain, Latin America and the United States," in *The Iberian-Latin American Connection: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy*, ed. H. J. Wiarda (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1986), 101.

53. This information was obtained from the Spanish embassy in Washington, DC. As a result of Spain's membership in the EEC, trade agreements with third countries had to be canceled, so trade with Latin America dropped from a steady 10 percent in the last few years. Baklanoff foresaw it in 1986. See Eric N. Baklanoff, "Spain's Emergence as Middle Industrial Power: The Basis and Structure of Spanish-Latin American Economic Relations," in Wiarda, *The Iberian-Latin American Connection*, 164.

54. L. Rohter, "A Mixed Welcome for Juan Carlos," *New York Times*, 12 January 1990.

55. See, for example, Eric N. Baklanoff, "Spain's Emergence," 162.

56. Suárez, "Año Latinoamericano."

57. Felipe González, "A Presidential Greeting," *Encounters 2* (Spring 1990): 5.

58. Spain would like to "export" its democracy and act as intermediary in most world conflicts. Its ambitions are mainly for diplomatic influence and prestige. In addition to presenting itself as "an interlocutor between the United States and Latin America . . . , as an intermediary between the North and the South, and also as a go-between with Europe and the EEC," Spain uses its ties with Latin America "to define itself as a nation" and to determine "its place in the world" (H. J. Wiarda, "Iberia and Latin America: Reforging Historic Linkages?" in *The Iberian-Latin American Connection*, 5-17).

59. Queen Isabel *La Católica* stated in her will the monopoly of Castille over

trade with America. All transactions were conducted through the administration in Seville. This led historians to assume that non-Castilians, and especially minorities who were considered suspicious or not loyal to the Crown, were banned from participating in enterprises with America until 1778, when the law liberalizing trade with America was sanctioned. Recent studies, however, confirm that the queen's will did not have the status of law. It was therefore not illegal for Catalans to participate in trade with America, but very few actually did. See Carlos Martínez Shaw, "La exclusió catalana d'America, Punt i Final?" *L'Avenç* 150 (July–August 1991): 34–38. See also Pierre Vilar, *Catalunya dins de l'Espanya Moderna*, vol. 2 (Barcelona: 62, 1968), 249–50.

60. *Encounters* 1 (Winter 1989): 40.

61. Jordi Busquets, "El PSOE se niega a que el Instituto Cervantes enseñe gallego, vascuence y catalán," *El País*, 24 December 1990; and idem, "El congreso aprueba la creación del Instituto Cervantes para la difusión del castellano," *El País*, 8 March 1991.

62. In addition to publications already mentioned, the commission sponsors research grants and fellowships on Latin American culture and history. These fellowships are promoted and financed in collaboration with the Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whose president is also Luis Yáñez Barnuevo.

63. See, for example, "Mil palabras para una imagen," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 8. The series of cartoons produced by TVE (Spanish Public Television), "Las Mil y Una Americas," for example, presents Native Americans as noble but ignorant savages whose souls are saved by the culturally superior Spaniards. Its main characters are the boy, Cris, and his dog, Lon. For further references, see A. Montes, "La historia de América contada a los niños," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 12; and "La Historia, como jamás fue contada," *América* 92 1:1 (May 1989): 56.

64. In 1990, the C.C.C.C.C. held a conference, "Against Hispanity and the Quincentennial," in Barcelona. They have a small office, and the members of the commission meet once a week.

65. Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, "La Envidia del Imperio," *El País*, 6 July 1988.

66. Idem, "Totalitarismo Diacrónico," *El País*, 4 July 1988.

67. Josep Fontana, "Introducción," *Langaiaik* 11 (October 1988): 9–10. See also Miquel Izard, "La Nova Espanya i la Espanya Nueva," *L'Avenç* 96 (September 1986): 36–41; Dolores Juliano, "Un Dios a Nuestra Imagen y Semejanza: El Mito del Buen Colonizador," *Langaiaik* 11 (October 1988): 17–26; and J. Mestre, "Luchas y reivindicaciones de los indígenas latinoamericanos," *Langaiaik* 11 (October 1988): 27–42.

68. Information based on many informal interviews carried out in Spain during 1989, 1990, and 1991.

69. Chesneaux, *Pasts and Futures*, 105.

70. *Ibid.*, 78.