

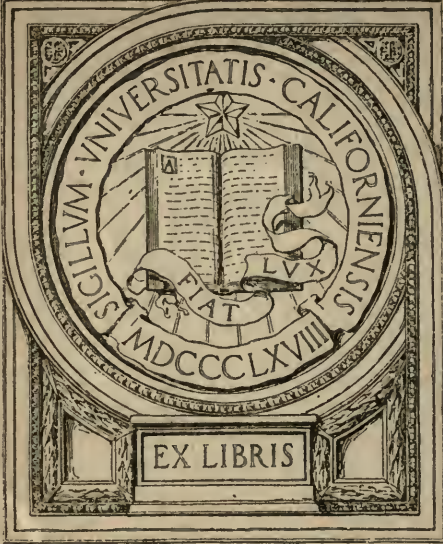
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R. L. Lomba,

AMERICA HOUSE

A Scheme for creating in Paris
an Association similar to the Washington
"Pan American Union"

BY

R. L. LOMBA

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PARIS

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8, rue du Sentier, 8

1917

“ AMERICA HOUSE ”

A Scheme for creating in Paris
an Association Similar to the Washington
“ Pan American Union ”

We intend in this pamphlet to give a foresight of what « America House » shall be. This is an idea we have studied for a long while and we did neglect nothing in order to render its realization possible. We are, here, exposing the motives and giving the plan of same on broad lines.

In the Palace that we wish to see built up, there will be room for the american chancellor's offices, consulates, chambers of commerce and generally all Departments for propagand,—in other words : for all institutions aiming at a closer union of Americas with the Old Continent.

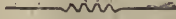
In order to show more clearly of what great interest this idea should be for France and even England, we shall say what Germany, on her part, is planning ; this, I hope, should be a decisive argument for convincing those people which could be sceptical as to the possibility and urgency of such an enterprise.

There has just been created in Germany an Economic Federation for Central and South America and West Indies, the object of which is to unite all the already existing commercial institutions, amongst which are the « Argentine German », the « Brazilian German » Associations, the « Hamburg Union for Import » as also, all the Navigation Companies which were running to and from South America in 1914.

This Federation intends to publish in Spanish and Portuguese languages, a paper which is to give to Ibero-American nations all informations concerning German Science, Industry & Finance, —and

also an Ibero-American Year Book, in order to furnish german manufacturing and export firms with every information likely to facilitate their undertakings in America. Moreover gorgeous clubs are to be open, in Berlin, to visitors and travellers coming from Latin America (1).

This far reaching scheme, as may be seen, is worth thinking over, for its consequences are numerous. As far as we are concerned, this is a note of warning that we intend to give the public and to those which may be interested by our scheme for an « America House ».



(1) This precious information was published quite recently by the paper *Le Brésil* and was confirmed to us, a few days ago, by M. Gaston Cadoux, the secretary for the Union of French Chambers of Commerce in Foreign Countries.

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STATEMENT

When a new question is arising, very soon two streams of opinion are discussing it. Certain people, by mere complaisance, glance a look on the question, in the whole, and then sentenciously decide it is biassed and in itself impracticable; these people, up to an extent and to use a military comparison, are drawing-rooms strateges. Of these, there are many who, boasting of their financial or wordly power, believe themselves entitled with the right of sentencing everything to life or death; one could believe the future to belong to them; and though a deficient past and a poor present show what are the results of their inconsiderately acting.—Therefore, any question, whatever modest it may be, should not be condemned *a priori*, but should be studied.

Other people, wishing to show an indifferent courtesy, will say the scheme is admirable, grand, with plenty of interesting by-sides, but that the idea was already expressed.—This is apparently saying, with all politeness: « We did not succeed, and you will not succeed any more. »—And that is why so many schemes remained still-born: they were drowned into an ambiancy of opinion by which they were paralysed, suffocated. They were submerged by an ill defined goodwill, the practical result of which was nothing.... but useless words.

Today, we wish to expose a scheme the importance of which nobody will fail to realize, but we intend to edify it with real and tangible means; we intend, with the help of all the great names in Diplomacy, Finance, Science, Literature and Fine Arts, to establish in Paris what we call « *America House* ».

This is not a new question, as far as we are concerned, seeing that as soon as 1913 we did launch this idea amongst public. At that time we were feeling to be alone to extol such a « programme », which certain people declared to be sublime and some others to be chimerical.

Since then, we have received encouragements from many prominent people in the American and French Society and therefore we submit this scheme to you with all confidence, so that you should know it better and give it your real and actual help.

There is in Washington an institution styled « *Pan American Union* ». This Society,—established under the United-States Government auspices and with the help of M. Carnegie, the American millionaire, who had a stately building erected for the purpose,—has for object to be a « hyphen » between the United States and the Latin America countries. A monthly « *Bulletin* » translated into several languages, is issued and widely circulated in America and even Europe, with the object of making known everything relating to New Continent. This Society has already demonstrated all the well-founded ground for its establishment and is at present receiving subsidies from all the American Governments.

Why, then, was a « centre » for the two Americas ever established in Washington? Why did not this organism exteriorize itself enough so as to make America known in the Old Continent as well? This is a question of capital importance. We are of opinion that it was not only necessary to create an inter-life of all the American Nations by speaking to them of their reciprocal life, but that it was also necessary to exteriorize this influence by introducing, so to speak, these nations to the Old Continent.

This was no more the part to be plaid by the « *Pan American Union* », and we believe there is room for another organism :—There must be established in Europe an american center of action—and just as, in Washington, they were trying to make Northern America known in Latin America, and vice versa, it becomes just as well urgent today to make these two Americas known in Europe and Europe known in the New World.

This is, then, so to speak, the crowning of a pan-american institution which, we repeat, has demonstrated its utmost utility ; then it is with and after it, that we intend to develop this american influence in Europe to bring over there everything that is fine, generous and stately in Europe.

And we are speaking here of Europe, not of France, because the institution admits of a head-office in Paris and similar offices in the most important metropolises of Europe and America (London, Madrid, Rome, New-York, Buenos-Ayres, Rio, etc.).

When, in 1914, we drew the outline of the American House bases in a *Memorandum* printed in French, English and Spanish and widely circulated here and in all the american countries, a French paper bestowed praise on us, but declared our scheme—which however he

qualified grand—to be chimerical in its realization and ill-timed as far as commercial diplomacy is concerned, because—said he—the Europe doors should not be thrown open to the influence of Northern Americans' invasion.

Though we are not allowed of discussing so delicate a subject, we believe that today these questions of influence are out of date, seeing how facts have upset so many international contrivances—and we have the right to state that the influence of any country is inauspicious when it is blindly accepted for some particular or exclusive interest; but when the welfare of community is aimed at, then, certainly, any influence whatever is a benefit.

Presently, no country is sufficiently certain of itself to pretend to remain alone in thought and act; there is always something better to take from another. Therefore, the Panamericanism, in Europe, cannot and should not occur to anybody as presenting anything distasteful or inamiable.—Open doors, reciprocal expansion, such is the basis of the tendency we intend to develop by establishing an American House; it is for this object that we wanted to associate both Americas in this onward more.

III

Why should we expand this idea of creating an American House in Paris?

Obviously several reasons militate in favour of this object, but the most imperious is undoubtedly the intimate bringing nearer each other of the States of America, in order to get stronger—the small ones benefitting of the advantages enjoyed by the great ones and being, up to an extent, drawn off a compulsory loneliness to find themselves into reciprocal contact, in a midst which shall perforce make them more powerful in economic and social propagand, and at same time develop their intellectual, social and moral interests of every kind.

This, we are bound to say, is a new and bold idea which present events are strengthening. It becomes more and more true that any nation, should it pretend to remain alone in working and maintaining itself, cannot possibly take all desirable developments or even successfully resist and subsist.

During a long time the American States wanted to remain into a particular loneliness, every nation wanting, so to speak, to preserve this lonely life which revolutions brought to them more than a century ago together with liberty.—Sacred liberty which, beyond the borders, showed in a glimpse an enemy always prepared to impose again the yoke of slavery, of woeful memory.

This idea. — which may have been salutary, during the time of national formation, for the strong establishing of all the institutions particular to every state — seems now as being ruinous when one has in view the constant progress which the law of evolution obliges us to accept without grumbling. Nobody today should remain alone ; even a nation feels uneasy and does not progress if it does not exteriorize itself, if it does not gather round other nations not only of same rank and blood -having common sentiments and interests—but also nations of various origins, by taking from these everything that is good, serious and profitable.

IV

When so conceived, national expansion far from being a danger, far from dividing or scattering the living strength of a nation, just the reverse makes this strength greater. Already now, certain great nations of Latin America have long ago understood this progress ; feeling uneasy at home, they wanted to come and sympathize with Old Continent and, at once, they have seen a tide of prosperity flow into the country as a beneficent genius. They did more : they did mean to talk together of their reciprocal interests and formed those international groupings which are now figuring in the diplomatic conferences.—All this is owing to the inherent strength of grouping, and for the greater success of each particular country.

By so presenting this grouping of Latin America, we intend to remedy also to a state of things which lasted but too long, *viz* :—The Old Continent owing either to prejudice or neglect, does not sufficiently know these countries ; the European public, in the main, look at them as regions yet under the shadow of obscurantism which there is no urgency to dispel.

People do not take the trouble to know these regions of unmatched wealth—which however possess history and institutions well worth being known. There must be said, though, that up to now these same nations did nothing, or next to nothing in order to put an end to such a state of things, so prejudicial on many respects. All the particular good wills are praiseworthy ; but when it is a question of a practical achievement, one is confronted with multiple difficulties.

That is why—without waiting any longer—it is necessary with the help of clear-headed and tenacious men, to succeed in drawing these countries out of an atmosphere of apathy and loneliness and bringing them up to the intellectual and social level of Old Continent. No stone

should be left unturned in this social work, because from this depends a future which is to have worldwide consequences as far as society, politics, finance, commerce, and even intellectual and moral world are concerned.

To group together these States, to multiply and make closer their reciprocal ties of sympathy, friendship and solidarity, to unite the weaknesses in order to turn them into strength—such is, I repeat, the programme of this « America House. »

V

We must, first, say what are the reasons which incite us to include in this grouping the United States of America.

When, about four years ago, we did consult on this point important american and french people, practically all of them did approve of our idea ; and though some of them, a very few of them fortunately, seemed at that time to formulate certain objections to a scheme which they were thinking to be perhaps rash or even dangerous, it looks today as if these same people had changed their minds, seeing they agree now to the participation of the United States to this grouping.

In fact if, in the past, there was amongst certain french and american « intellectuals » something like selfishness and distrust towards the United States of America, such is no more the case today, as those which were feeling a danger in this extension of north America influence, are now satisfied that nothing remains of their fears—for events demonstrated that United States will have nothing like a policy of annexion, hegemony or imperialism. They don't refuse to enter any group or international concert where their freely defined presence should be of an immense weight in the management of business.

In fact, should it be intended to turn Latin America into a vast grouping by giving it all means to reach a prompt and powerful progress without taking into account the constant evolution of United States, this way of doing would appear to us as a danger not only for this grouping itself, but even for the whole America.—Far from attracting the sympathies of a great nation, this would be arising its suspicion and distrust, for it would seem as if one should want to raise in front of its power of economic evolution another similar power which, though young, should very soon become very strong in the world concert.

Latin America has not and will not have such selfish ideas towards United States, for it is bearing in mind the benefits which the Great Republic of the North did bestow upon the Latin countries. In fact, if the French Revolution did bring its freeing breath to Latin America and opened for these countries a new life of Liberty in constant progress, it must be borne in mind that the Revolution of North America forestalled these ideas of liberty and even reinforced them, later on, by founding them on more definite sociologic points.—Latin America considers Northern America as being, together with France, its benefactor.

Even admitting, for one moment, United States to be ill-intentioned towards Latin America, it does not necessarily mean that they should ignore each other ; just the reverse : they should frequent, draw nearer each other in order to know each other better. Therefore it is necessary to act quite tactfully—and this is why by founding America House, we intend to create at same time a kind of Panatlantic Union.—France, England, Holland on account of its american colonies, must constitute a part of this institution.

Canada should not be forgotten in this Union of Powers, for Canada is enjoying everywhere a prestige, for the maintenance of which it works undefatigably. Canada is the connecting link of sympathy between England and France. Its history causes it to be mutually loved by these two countries and facilitates the growing of friendship between races which, up to now, could not sympathize with each other.

With Canada, England is to form a part of this American Union ; for, though the head-office of this institution is to be in Paris, a similar office could easily be established in London. It is well understood that this institution should not be simply for France use, but, indeed, for the benefit of all countries having american interests.—Canada, during these last few years worked very hard for its propagand, and its literature on the subject is everywhere quoted as a model of the kind, everywhere followed and everywhere copied. From all the above, there should be deducted that Canada has, in this grouping move, moral and material interests that we shall sum up presently.

As to the timeliness of our idea, we have interviewed the American diplomatic agents in France, and they accept this idea as praiseworthy and of capital interest.—Seeing that all of them, individually, accept such an idea, why then should not all these private good wills be grouped together and turned into the coming to light of a tangible work interesting every individual as well as the community ? As

already said :— from the scattered strengthes, should be called forth a great power, victorious over inertia.

We were lately invited to various meetings of the « Société de Géographie » and of the « Société de Géographie Commerciale », where we exposed our scheme which was warmly greeted. It was also much praised by the « Ligue Coloniale Française » where we were requested to expose it.

Recently, too, the « Revue du Comité France-Amérique » published a brief summary of it, in an article written after notes taken in an interview we had the pleasure to give to an editor of this paper.

It is necessary—we already said so—for all neutral or belligerent nations, during the war, to study beforehand the numerous problems of every kind that will crop up after the war is over, in order to solve the complex difficulties of a new order of things, also to patiently seek the soundest and most efficacious organizations, means and methods in order to prepare the after-war period of the revival of business.

It is necessary, no later than now, to make all possible efforts in order to modify or radically rectify all out-of-date or hurtful commercial systems, uses and methods, by a scientific adaptation of them to the requirements of modern life.

The founding in Paris of the preconized Panamerican Association would be one of the organisms to be established after the war, in order to hasten the development of relations of all nature between Europe and America, to intensify the foreign commerce, to enlarge and multiply the markets for European goods already existing in the New World.

VII

We thought, before undertaking anything positive in this direction, that this idea should be well known and defined. That is why we undertook to form a nucleus of important people in every american colony, and, as well, a nucleus of French, Canadian or English persons which should approve of the scheme in the main.

Once the plan be well known, we shall convene a general meeting of all those which have approved of this idea, at which meeting there shall be elected a Panamerican Committee for Study and Propagand, with object to discuss and settle the general plan and basis of this institution.—This being done, panamerican commissions are to be nominated in all american capitals, for backing the Paris Commission and obtain the Press, the Parliament and the Government help in every country.

The proper time for the launching of this scheme should be during the Peace festivities in Paris. This would be the psychological moment because, by that time, numerous American people shall come to Paris. They could be gathered into one of the big theaters there, in order to approve of the idea. Meanwhile, a Press campaign should be conducted in all American countries.

To bring to a close this statement of motives, we shall take the liberty to reprint here, from an interesting leader of the Parisian paper « *Le Brésil* », dated October 26th 1916, a few lines where it was appreciating our scheme. The writer said : — « One cannot see why what it was possible to have partly realized in Washington, could not be also done in Paris under a different and complete form. This idea has already seduced high personages such as Mr. Hanotaux, the late Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chairman of the « France-Amérique » committee, who, too, preconized the same in an article published a few years ago. It is but fair to add that Panamerican Union had the good fortune to find a « milliardaire », M. Andrew Carnegie, to endow it with a splendid palace.

« Now when notable American persons such as Prof. Baldwin and Mr. James Hyde, are pleading in favour of a panatlantic union,—that is an « entente » with the United States, which is to say the Panamerican Union with France and England, as basis of political and economical equilibrium of both Continents,—why should not the scheme for an « America House », which would be the materialization of this great idea, find in the American and Anglo-French high finance and commerce the financial elements needed for its realization, and near the American Republics governments, to help and sanction it, proportional subsidies such as the ones they are paying to the Washington Panamerican Union? This is, obviously, a great and seducing scheme, of which, in fact, there is an actual precedent in Washington and which should not be impossible to get realized in Paris. It is, it seems to us, well deserving to be taken into serious consideration by all the groups which were formed in view of developing and strengthening the relations between France and America ».

VIII

Here are the broad lines of what, practically, « America House » shall be :—Above and before all it will be an organ for information of the American States, where every nation is to have its own desk, for all the particular informations going beyond the aim of general ones.

There should be centralized all the services of newspapers and tele-

grams, giving exactly and without comment, all news of interest for politics, finance and commerce. There should be, too, the lists of quotations of all american markets and exchanges. There, also, should be the centre of propagand for all the official publications issued by governments; a propagand conduced on such basis would have the merit to be appropriated to every circumstance and every circle. Last, but not least, this centre of information would have for object to give all particulars about Trade, Industry and Finance, not only to individuals, but also to Governments.

There should be created an important paper :—*L'Amérique*—which should have special telegraphic service with all the States, so as to be able to give the public from day to day, information concerning every important event in America.

As a corollary to this practical centre of information, there should be an American Museum where should be mustered all documents interesting America.

In this Museum, there should be three departments, *viz* : —

1°)—a Commercial Department, that is to say, a permanent exhibition of products. Near this exhibition there should be a commercial Exchange, so that the Commission Firms specially working with american countries could make their business there and even hire offices. (We shall quote as a model of the kind the Commercial Museum of Philadelphia). One would also find there all desirable informations about characteristics and commercial importance of the firms with which one could eventually want to get in touch;

2°)—a Department for american Fine Arts and History. Since a few years, America did not remain idle as far as Fine Arts productions are concerned and, to day, there is overthere really beautiful things in Sculpture, Picture and Music. Then, there could be exhibited and brought to public notice everything original in these innovations of american Fine Arts. This would be a very simple and useful way to put in touch with each other the artists of the New and of the Old Continent and, so doing, to incitate and arise between the american nations emulation which is ever a producer when aptly guided. So would it be possible to order to the better artists busts, pictures or statues of the great citizens which shed a lustre over America, and even historical pictures concerning events recorded by american history;

3°)—a Department of Natural History, Archeology and Ethnology. It ought to be possible to make great progress in the domain of natural sciences and cause the flora, the fauna and the mining wealth of America to be widely known. As far as archeology and ethnography are concerned, this department should open interesting hori-

zons on these sciences which, up to now, were somewhat of a reserved domain for some rare learned people.

Close to this Museum, there is to be a Library containing all that was written concerning America. So, one would get a grand and stately Collection of original works. There, could also be found all pamphlets, publications, newspapers and magazines, engravings, maps and photos concerning these practically unknown countries.

An American Club would be the « rendez-vous » of all the colonies, where it would be most easy to meet each other and talk more freely, and also to get nearer european friends. There, in saloons specially disposed for this purpose, would be celebrated every year the America Day, on the 12th of October (Discovery of the New World), as also every particular National Day.

It is also intended to have an american theatre and a cinematograph, and tea-rooms for american families. The american lady ought to be a part of this institution, not only because she constitutes one half of the american colony and represents half America, but also because she is a priceless factor of sociableness in view of bringing american and european families nearer each other.

A popular University would have for object to have permanent lectures and conferences made by prominent american and european persons. This would allow of an important part to be played by the american lady, who may be certain to always win the applause of the assistance whenever she would choose to give a lecture.—Amongst this University objects, there would be the creation of chairs of geography, history, american literature, legislation, sociology, political economy, etc..., as also of Spanish, Portuguese and English languages. It will facilitate the exchanges of teachers and pupils between the various american and european universities. There, again, there is no doubt that emulation between various nations should be crowned with legitimate success.

At same time, one of the principal aims of this institution shall be to propagate, in all the European Universities and High Schools, Spanish and other languages spoken in America ; as also to diffuse English and especially French languages in the american Universities and schools—this in order to facilitate the relations between North and Latin Americas.

Taking always modern progress as basis, it appeared to us that tourism was playing in present days an important part in Society ; and, though apparently not offering anything practically belonging to industry or trade, nevertheless a touristic department should play an important part, seeing it is the initial point of many useful acquirements by making the way for the realization of great undertakings.

In order to facilitate the work of this touristic department, there should be created a centre for the study of intended travels, for the practical and useful guidance of american people in Europa, and for European wishing to go to America, as well.—Together with this, a postal department would allow of keeping in abeyance letters adressed to travelling Americans, or causing the same to be continued, as per eventual instructions.

With a view of inducing students to come over to Europa, there will be also a « Students' House », where they will find board, reading rooms, gymnasium and every possible entertainments. This would obviate to what is a terrible threat for the student arriving in Paris, that is :—to feel himself lonely or to find himself in a company of a more or less doubtful character. The various governments which are sending their foundation scholars to Europe, and even the american families would thus have a security ; for they could rely upon an effectual control of the authorities of America House who would keep them informed as to the behaviour and progress of their scholars.

Lastly, a Department for Provident and Social Defence would be the crowning of so many generous undertakings. As a matter of fact, the American when in Paris, whatever be the class of society to which he is belonging, always feels lonely whenever he wants to get advice on legal, medical or other matters ; he does not know where he is to apply for this, and very often then is misinformed or laid under contribution. There would be specially well known doctors to which patients could be directed on demand, also lawyers, specialists of international questions.

A special Relief Fund should also be founded in order to give assistance to those Americans which unforeseen circumstances could eventually have made short of cash.

For the best success in the creation of this Panamerican Office, we should point out that two principal factors must collaborate :—Private enterprise and official concurrence.

As far as the latter is concerned, there is an obvious way of getting it, namely :—the Panamerican Congresses, which are convened every two years in one of our great capitals. At the next one, which is to be held in Montevideo in 1918, we shall make all necessary efforts towards obtaining that one or two Governments should propose to found in Paris an Institution of this kind, endowed with subsidies from each State, proportionately with resources of, and the space that each country could eventually require in the Produce Exhibition.

As to what is the best form of this governmental cooperation, our opinion is that it should be the guaranteeing of a minimum of interest to the capital that would be employed in the erection of this Palace

of America and the organization of the intended Institution,—such as it is the case, by instance, with the American Railroads Companies.

But we feel obliged to add that this office must be created and managed by a private company; for, as a rule, State is a poor manager and, further, because this Institution must be an International one.

French Government and the City Council of Paris should be the object of a particular attention, for they could greatly help to this creation taking successfully its flight, especially under the form of a free granting of ground for the Palace of America House to be erected thereon.

The necessary capital for the practical realization of the scheme should find a first remuneration in the minimum of interest guaranteed; further, in the income which the institution should get; and thirdly in the rents of the Chancellors' and Consuls' offices, Chambers of Commerce, and even Commission Agencies that could be concentrated into this Palace.

Lastly, and to sum up, we shall say that, when France, England and Holland, on account of their American possessions, are to be a part of this institution, this at same time should be run under the auspices of all nations which colonized America—and therefore, not only France, England and Holland, but also Spain, Portugal, Italy, etc.

Paris, April 1917.

R. L. LOMBA,

Consul General of Uruguay.



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