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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

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On the surface, these appear to be good times for Latin American studies in the United States. Enrollments in Latin American language and area courses are increasing sharply across the country. Attendance at meetings of the Latin American Studies Association and the regional Latin American studies councils is higher than ever. More books on Latin America are appearing than in any previous period. Submissions to journals such as *LARR* have increased considerably over levels of just a few years ago.

But the good times for Latin American studies in the United States are the consequence of bad times for Latin America in general. The debt crisis and falling commodity prices have set Latin American living standards back at least a decade. Central America is racked by guerrilla warfare and repression. The Organization of American States has fallen on hard days, and little remains of the Pan American idealism that led to its founding. The pervasive, if poorly articulated, public unease in the United States about the nature of U.S. policy responses to these challenges undoubtedly has been a major factor in the growth of student interest in Latin America.

Despite strong enrollments and the growing sophistication of research on Latin America, the institutional base of Latin American studies remains shaky. No new major sources of funding for the field have appeared in the last two decades, while several key foundations have reduced or eliminated their support, the most recent example being the Doherty Foundation. The Office of Management and the Budget has sought to eliminate all funding for Title VI of the Higher Education Act in the last several federal budgets, a potential disaster for international studies in general. Fortunately, members of both parties in the Congress have opposed this shortsighted disinvestment.

Without the work of the Center for International Education of the U.S. Department of Education, which administers Title VI funds, or the continued support of a handful of foundations, the U.S. Latin American studies effort (like all foreign area studies) would decline sharply. While the external support provided by such organizations is quite small in proportion to direct investment in area studies by institutions of higher education, outside funding is an important incentive for university administrations. Given the remarkable leverage that such external support generates, a further decline in outside funding will inevitably produce a serious deterioration of direct investment in foreign area studies by institutions of higher education.

The precarious state of international education in the United States also reflects the weakened status of higher education in general. The decline in real salaries of faculty makes the recruitment of highly qualified graduate students ever more difficult. The austerity of university budgets leads cost-conscious administrators to search for programs that can be eliminated. Interdisciplinary programs, such as area studies, are prime targets. While the boom in course enrollments may offer some protection to Latin Americanists, smaller enrollment bases tend to characterize many African, Asian, European, Middle Eastern, and Soviet studies programs, making them more vulnerable.

No safety nets insure the survival of foreign area studies programs, the professional associations that support foreign area scholars, or the journals that publish foreign area research. Associations can fail, as did the defunct Association for Latin American Studies, and journals can go under, such as the former *Hispanic American Report* and *Latin American Digest*. Others cling precariously to life. The successes of the past, such as the founding of *LARR* in 1964 or the creation of the Latin American Studies Association in 1966, reflected an extraordinary effort on the part of a committed and idealistic group of scholars. Many of these pioneers are now gone, and the task of facing current challenges rests with the present generation.

Efforts to cope with the increasingly adverse contexts of higher education and national politics have thus far been primarily defensive. This defense has not been ineffective, as is evidenced by congressional support for Title VI funding. But little progress has been made in expanding the base of funding for foreign area studies, which has declined in real terms over the last decade. The annual struggle to retain Title VI funding drains the energies of center directors and diverts attention from the need to generate new approaches and new sources of support for foreign area studies.

One idea that has surfaced repeatedly in the last few years is the creation of a national foundation or trust to provide a new source of support for foreign language and area studies in the United States.

Ideally, such a foundation should be funded from off-budget sources to save the international studies community from devoting inordinate amounts of energy to the annual appropriations battle. Perhaps the most innovative suggestion along these lines is contained in the Hayden Report (*Federal Support for International Education: Assessing the Options*, National Council on Foreign Languages and International Studies, August 1985), which proposes channeling to such a foundation a percentage of the counterpart funds that are returned to the U.S. Treasury from sales of surplus foods and materials abroad.

The success of any effort to introduce new approaches to the funding of international studies in the United States would depend in large measure on the support of Latin Americanists and on the efforts of their center directors and representatives in LASA, CLASP, and the regional associations. Cooperation with colleagues in other area studies fields would be essential as well. Despite the work that such a collaborative effort might entail, it should be considered. The future of Latin American studies in the United States might well depend on taking advantage of the current interest in the field to stabilize its financial base. In spite of the remarkable accomplishments of our colleagues in Latin America, they face even more precarious financial, institutional, and political situations. The fate of this journal, which depends so heavily on the research of U.S. and Latin American scholars, will ultimately reflect the success or failure of efforts to make a case for the increased funding of area programs. As far as the United States is concerned, an expanded national investment in Latin American studies offers the best hope for long-range improvement in inter-American relations, at a cost far below that of militarizing the Western Hemisphere.

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