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GEORG T. A. KRIZMANICS

*Commemorative encounters between Spain, Mexico
and Venezuela – From the Quincentenary of the so-called
discovery of America to the Bicentenaries of Independence¹*

Spotkania pamięci między Hiszpanią, Meksykiem i Wenezuelą.

Od pięćsetnej rocznicy tzw. odkrycia Ameryki do dwustulecia niepodległości

ABSTRACT

The joint bicentenary commemorations of the beginning of the independence movements in Latin America evolved out of the Ibero-American Conference as the foundation of the Grupo Bicentenario shows. However it is not the first commemoration cycle that involves the once colonial power Spain and its former Latin American colonies. Some 20 years ago this group of countries commemorated the quincentenary of the so-called discovery of America. The interpretation of the results obtained in a comparative study of Spanish, Mexican and Venezuelan legislation on the politics of memory, applied in the context of the mentioned commemorations, will propose answers to the following questions: What are the orders, power relations and discourses that dominate the politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community? What are the transformations between the quincentenary and the bicentenaries?

Keywords: Politics of memory; discourse analysis; Iberoameryka; pięćsetna rocznica tzw. odkrycia Ameryki

¹ The reflections in the underlying text are based on an investigation carried out by the author for his minor thesis defended at the University of Vienna in 2010 with the title *Generación de los Bicentenarios. Erinnerungsräume der Iberoamerikanischen Staatengemeinschaft: Spanien, der 12. Oktober und die nationalen Unabhängigkeiten Mexikos und Venezuelas*. Available at: http://othes.univie.ac.at/11697/1/2010-10-19_0105124.pdf, July 11, 2011. A Spanish version of this article has been included in Krzywicka Katarzyna (Lublin, 2011, in press). I want to deeply thank Anna Gruending for her indispensable and insightful comments on the here presented English version.

I. WHEN THE PRESENT COMES TO TERMS WITH THE PAST

A characteristic of political discourse in general and of any kind is that the past always takes place in the present. The past is a construction established in the present and it is the present that determines the prism through which the past is interpreted. For the political actor the function of this prism is the search to legitimize his/her projects in the present with an eye to the future.

In the realm of the Ibero-American Community there are two principal periods of reference for historical narratives: the so-called discovery in 1492 and the consecutive colonial experience on the one hand, and the independence processes on the other. This is not only reflected in the process of formation of the Ibero-American Conference that culminated in its constitution in 1991, but also in the efforts undertaken to achieve Latin American and Caribbean integration. In the run-up to the quincentenary of the so-called discovery of America in 1992, debates evolved in Latin America and the Caribbean that questioned the Eurocentric historical conceptions underlying these commemorations. After having lost some of its importance in the course of the last decade of the 20th century, the debates reemerged in the prelude to the bicentenaries of the beginning of the independence movements in Latin America. The most recent milestone in this commemoration cycle that began intensively in 2009 is the bicentenary of the Venezuelan Declaration of Independence on July 5, 2011. On this occasion, the Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez delivered a speech during the civic-military parade which exemplifies that the past in fact takes place in the present:

From here I invoke our national heroes; I invoke not only 200 years, I invoke in the name of all the 500 years of struggle by our aboriginal peoples, their sacrifice, by our mulatto, black, white, indigenous peoples; I invoke Miranda and his libertarian spirit; I invoke Bolívar, who resuscitated and became the people, all of them [...], the heroines and the heroes that made it all possible 200 years ago, one day like today.²

While the historical narratives utilized by a determined political actor follow a diachronic structure, the modifications and actualizations that he/she applies to them are always synchronous (Marchart, 2005: 23). In his speech, Chávez passes through the past, from the (mythical) origins of the nation to the present. A constant in his discourse is the reference to a *we* which exalts the persistence of a collectivity through time, a collectivity maintained through struggles and sacrifices. His words create the image of a strong, inseparable, or as Chávez would say, invincible unity and they describe an experience of social cohesion that implies the prospect and willingness to maintaining it in future. To this effect Koselleck (2011[1989]: 349–375)

² Transcript and translation by author; speech available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=788YYnqVT20>, July 11, 2011. All following translation from Spanish to English has been conducted by the author.

discusses the polarity between *space of experience* and *horizon of expectation*, from which emerge – by means of processes of negotiation and hegemonic struggles – the *historical conscience* of determined social groups. Assmann (2005: 139) remarks that historical conscience cannot be conceived independently from social conscience, belonging and *collective identity*. The *space of experience* as to Koselleck comprises the totality of the past which is accessible to a person or group. In contrast, the horizon of expectation makes reference to the anticipation of a concrete future expressed by wishes, fears, imaginations and visions. Let us return to the speech of Chávez during the parade of July 5, 2011 to identify afore-mentioned elements:

*We have initiated and we could say that today we initiate a new stretch of the big surge to the summit of the ultimate native land [...] I invite you [...] to overcome the divisions, overcome the conspiracies, defeat in thousands of battles those who pretend, from inside and from outside, to weaken and bring down the native land and its independence; we have to defeat them and defeat them in peace [...] And I invite you to initiate this new long march to June 24, 2021 to commemorate then, in ten years from now, the 200 years of the lightening of Carabobo, the national independence, the ultimate consolidation of the new native land, of the Bolivarian native land, of the socialist native land.*³

Generally speaking, all historical narratives are subject to negotiations that evolve in the present, in which various actors in a society compete for the hegemony of a unique narrative. The narrative that finally prevails has a strong impact regarding the discursive construction of national identities (Wodak/de Cilia, 2007: 338). Consequently, a society's past can be defined as the heterogenic totality, nevertheless hegemonic (although challenged), of the discourses with which the society identifies and recognizes itself (Marchart, 2005: 23).

In the following pages I will present some results of a comparative analysis that takes into account Mexican, Spanish and Venezuelan legislation regarding two periods: the so-called discovery of America commemorated on October 12th and the bicentenary commemorations related to the processes of independence in the colonial territories of the Spanish Empire. The investigation highlights, on the one hand, the mutual influences between these countries regarding the underlying meaning of October 12th and, on the other, points out that the orders, power relations and discursive structures identified with regard to this discourse are also of fundamental importance in the legislation concerning the bicentenary commemorations of the beginning of the independence movements in Latin America, and thus essential for their interpretation. The period of investigation is focused principally on the establishment and progression of the Ibero-American Conference, ranging from its constitution in 1991 to August of 2010, when the investigation was concluded. During this period, in the year 1992, commemorations of the quincentenary took place – organized under the

³ Transcript and translation by author; speech available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=788YnqVT20>, July 11, 2011.

leadership of the Spanish authorities – and the incipient bicentenaries – organized under the leadership of the respective Latin American governments. To these ends, the following questions were investigated: To what extent did these commemorations influence the prevailing politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community? Have there been changes in the discourse about the prevailing politics of memory? What orders, power relations and discourses dominate the transformations of the prevailing politics of memory and what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion underlie them?

What follow these introductory notes are some theoretical and methodological considerations that formed the basis of the investigation process. The third part of this article is explicitly dedicated to the presentation of some of the conclusions of the investigation.

II. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

IBERO-AMERICA: A SPANISH NARRATIVE?

The terms *Ibero-America* and *Hispano-America* have their origins in colonial times when they referred solely to the American colonies of the Spanish Empire.⁴ In Spain, during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, *Hispano-America* became the predominant official denomination for the former colonial territories (Lemus López, 1990: 293–303). The official use of this term persisted until the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975. The dogmatization and construction of some kind of Hispanic ideology, known as Hispanism (*hispanidad*), under Franco made it necessary to introduce a new denomination in order to re-imagine, both practically and symbolically, the relations between newly democratic Spain and the countries of Latin America. *Ibero-America* seemed to fulfill these requirements as much as from a temporal as from a spatial point of view. This term seemed to suggest a reference to a shared past with the Latin American and Caribbean countries from a Spanish point of view, the dissociation of the Francoist ideology, and the inclusion of Brazil and Portugal in this common concept of identification. Notwithstanding, this point of view only marginally takes into account the existence of polyphonic pasts and *double shared memories*,⁵ characteristics of the Ibero-American space of memory. However, does the current Ibero-American narrative equally represent the members of this community?

The principal division that subdivides and orders the Ibero-American space of memory, inhabited by multiple cultures of memory, is the one that separates the former colonial powers Spain and Portugal from their ex-colonies in the Caribbean and Latin America with Spanish or Portuguese as official languages. This clear division, however, is in contrast to the complexity of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms of

⁴ For terminological remarks see Carilla (1989: 342).

⁵ This formulation is taken from Troebst (2006) who applies it in the European context.

political, economic, social and cultural character, in which the different visions of the events of 1492 become evident.

The commemorative structure defined by the politics of memory that prevail in the Ibero-American Community is sustained by the commemorative calendar and its corresponding dates that define the collective memory. According to the rhythm that marks the calendar, the community relives the past that becomes part of the present. The communication between past and present is established and maintained with cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments, etc.) and institutionalized communication (recitation, perpetration, contemplation, etc.), what Assmann (2005: 37 f.) referred to as *memory figures*.

In the course of the bicentenaries of the – in the Spanish legislation called – Ibero-American republics, the representatives of the Spanish government are looking for the prolongation of their influence in the Ibero-American commemorative calendar. The future importance of the Ibero-American Community as an actor on the stage of International Relations depends considerably on the adaptation of its present historical conscience – that is to say, the historical justification of its political project – according to the current global standard. This standard is not principally defined anymore by visions of the future regarding socio-political conceptions and ideological demarcations, but rather by the position held towards a determined past (compare Gerbel et al., 2005: 7). Crucial in this sense is, above all, the willingness of the Spanish government to confront a process of historical introspection beyond glorification.

HISTORY AS POLITICAL TOOL

History as a political tool facilitates the creation of common references between scattered groups in a pluralist society. History is thus a vehicle to generate identification and political legitimacy. The politics of memory can also be understood as a category of analysis that helps to identify the political instrumentalization of history, the reasons behind it and the modalities of its construction, and its present political virulence. This broad conception of politics of memory includes public politics of memory as a sub-category, with the state as its exclusive actor (Sandner, 2001: 7). The concept of politics of memory thus has two meanings: on the one hand, it describes a category of analysis and on the other, a political strategy, in which political history is instrumentalized. Every social action that is sustained fundamentally by historical points of reference and/or that intends to influence the interpretation of history can be considered as politics of memory, independently of predominant power relations (Molden, 2009: 45). Political elites are of outstanding importance since they, as interpretative leaders, contribute to the definition of core ideas, norms, values and symbols of a society (Sandner, 2001: 11). Hence, this investigation has a particular the discourse of elites that is expressed, among others, in legislative texts and official declarations.

ORDER AND DISCOURSE AS CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

The notions *discourse* and *order* are the applied tools of analysis. To employ *discourse* as a category of analysis underlines that the construction process of order follows the characteristics of discursive practice and that discourse is prone to change.

A system of order, understood as a system that makes society possible, has direct implications on its constituent societal members. These, in their function as authors of discourses in general and discourses of politics of memory in specific, will have to fulfill determined preconditions in order to realize speech acts and to be identified as speakers, as Austin asserts (1975: 15): *the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked*. Here lies the asymmetry regarding the possibility of the speech act inherent to a system of order and its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Once recognized as a speaker, the possibility exists that he/she might be perceived, however dependent of the established conventions that regulate what is permitted to be expressed. *There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances*. (Austin, 1975: 14) A person, by achieving a speech act, reproduces the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that underlay a determined system of order. Discursive practices are consequently practices structured by a regulatory system; however, they are concurrently practices that structure a determined system of knowledge and its respective regulatory system. This does not mean that the reproduction is of mere mechanic character that reproduces the uttering according to a formal scheme. Every uttering is unique and cannot be repeated in an identical way. Even if the uttering is literally repeated, the context could be significantly altered – the uttering's information value and its effect on discourse could be radically different. These considerations suggest that a moment of change is inherent to *discourse* (Diaz-Bone, 2006: par. 14).

The written documents considered in this analysis are understood as one of various ways in which a successful speech act can be expressed. In this study, the original author of a speech act is not pursued. Rather, it is supposed that the legislative texts in question are the product of a technocratic political elite discourse. This refers to the language used in the deliberation process and its final written result: the law. However, this does not exclude the influence of related discourses outside the sphere of parliament. The passed laws are therefore considered as representative in the sense of representative democracy, although the technocratic language used can also be considered as a barrier to representation inasmuch the technocratic character of language excludes parts of the population. The corresponding government representatives are considered as the principal actors in this analysis as the legislative texts achieved juridical validity above all due to the votes of the parties in government.

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE CORPUS COMPOSITION

To understand the controversies that emerged and reemerged around the bicentenaries between Mexico, Spain and Venezuela, it is necessary to consider a broad historical panorama that includes the legislation regarding October 12th, the quincenary, and the bicentenaries. The juridical validity of the documents that form the corpus of legislations in question is limited nearly exclusively to the national level. The juridical validity of the international agreements achieved in the realm of the Ibero-American Conference or the United Nations depends on the political will of the signatory parties to include them in the national juridical framework. Despite the fact that some of these agreements might not immediately be incorporated into national legislation, they may have immediate political effects by igniting a debate on the basis of the wording used in these documents.

The corpus formation was based essentially on internet consultations with their undeniable advantages and possible inconveniences. The examination of the legislative texts was realized according to the availability of the documents in their digital format provided by the official gazettes of Mexico (Diario Oficial (DOF)), Spain (Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE)) and Venezuela (Gaceta Oficial). Thus, it is possible that beyond the documents consulted other relevant texts might exist that have not yet been digitalized. As to the indications offered on the BOE web page the historical editions of the gazette accessible comprehend the publications starting from the year 1661 to 1967. Recent publications are available from 1960 to date. The data retrievable from the DOF database comprises the period from 1917 to date. In the case of the Gaceta Oficial no comparable declarations can be made since the web site does not make reference to the time period made available. In the course of the investigation however I experienced that the existing data reaches back approximately to the 40ies of the past century. No information has been found about the provisions that determine the digitalization of the historical gazette editions. Notwithstanding, they have to exist given that during the examination phase of the investigation it became evident that not the totality of the archives had been digitalized. The archive the most complete seems to be the one made available by the Spanish state. The availability of the data in the case of the Mexican and Venezuelan legislation is similar, with possible quantitative advantages for the Mexican one.

III. RESULTS

THE QUINCENTENARY

Let us begin with the commemorations of the quincenary of the so-called discovery of America. How did commemorations of this event influence the trans-

formations of politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community? What were the transformations in the cases of Mexico, Spain and Venezuela?

During the first few decades of the 20th century, October 12th was established as national holiday in nearly all Ibero-American countries, usually celebrated as *fiesta* or *día de la raza* (Columbus Day). The origins of this holiday stretch back to the prelude of the fourth centenary of the so-called discovery of America (Gaceta de Madrid 1888: I/60/553). These annual commemorations were dominated by tributes to Columbus and his act of discovery, as well as to Spain for its cultural colonization of the American continent. Documentation indicates that, at the time when these events began to be celebrated a significant segment of the Hispano-American elites shared the values represented in these commemorations (Gaceta de Madrid, 1892: III/269/1077; 1892b: 290/134; 1918: 137/443–444), demonstrating the normalization of very difficult relations between Spain and its ex-colonies in the late 19th century. This normalization came to an end with the dogmatization that surrounded October 12th under Franco with his concept of Hispanism (*hispanidad*). With the end of his dictatorship in the 1975, the new democratic administration in Spain was somehow eager to improve the poor relations with their former colonies. Although sticking to the traditional meaning of October, 12 the dogmatic modalities of communication were replaced by more pragmatic ones. This new course of action in Spanish foreign policy was characterized by an augmented willingness to compromise, and linked to a determined agenda to make the commemorative year 1992 a milestone event for modern Spain (BOE, 1992: 3/115–116). Spanish foreign policy eventually convinced Latin American governments that the construction of new relations with their formal colonial master would be founded on equal rights, thus forming the basis for reconciliation.

An example is the criticism pronounced by the Mexican government regarding the term *discovery* and the underlying historical narrative propagated by the Spanish government. Therefore they proposed to refer to October 12th in terms of *Encounter of two worlds* (*Encuentro de dos Mundos*) (Dussel, 1994: 64; Ordoñez Cifuentes, 1996: 115). It was the recognition of these criticisms on the part of the Spanish government that concretized the new adjustment in Spanish foreign policy for Latin American governments, and a crucial symbolic gesture. This recognition is reflected at the international level by an agreement reached by UNESCO (1988: 130 EX/Decisiones, 9.2), and the consequent incorporation of the *Encounter of two worlds* in national legislations that indicates the degree of relevance.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that concessions made by the Spanish government regarding the reinterpretation of their own historical narrative in the context of the quincentenary have been rather superficial. This becomes evident when examining language used by Spanish legislators, fluctuating between *discovery* (*descubrimiento*) and *encounter* (*Encuentro de dos Mundos*). This indecisive attitude can maybe be attributed to a logic that aims to relating both concepts by insinuating their chronological succession: the *discovery* followed by the *encounter*. The most memorable trace

concerning the superficiality of concessions made by the Spanish government is the 1992 World Expo in Seville that was nonetheless held under the theme *discovery of America* (BOE, 1988: 239/28902–28907). Thanks to the intense publicity generated by this event the Expo's theme was deeply inscribed in people's memory.

Taking a closer look at the performance of the then Mexican government, its in consequence has to be highlighted as it only partially applied its own proposal for October 12th, *Encounter of two worlds*, to national legislation. This is exemplified by the fact that October 12th is still called *Columbus Day and Anniversary of the discovery of America* (*Día de la Raza y aniversario del descubrimiento de América*), as it has been since it first appeared in legislation at the end of the 1920s (DOF, 1929: LVI/38/1). What level of credibility, then, can be attributed to the Mexican government's efforts to question and change the denomination of October 12th defended by Spain?

The influence of the term *encounter* in Venezuelan legislation is more than marginal. It evidences above all the domination of the term *discovery* that persisted even during the first years of Chávez's first legislative period, until it disappeared suddenly in 2002 (Gaceta Oficial (Extraordinario), 2002: 5605/1–2).

As I have shown theoretically, it was the reiteration of an established tradition, October 12th, in new contexts that initiated a gradual transformation of its underlying meaning. Firstly, and in a very superficial way, with the controversy between *discovery* and *encounter*; secondly, and in a more substantial manner, when the government of Chávez changed the meaning of October 12th by calling it *Day of indigenous resistance* (*Día de la resistencia indígena*). This last transformation leads at first sight to presuming a sudden fracture; notwithstanding, the official commemorative program in that regard refutes this supposition, demonstrating the attachment to traditions (Gaceta Oficial, 2003: 37.793/330.540–330.541). Chávez and his government combine on the one hand, the *conservative tendency of rites* by sticking to the date October 12th, and on the other, the *creative potential* by assigning a new meaning to this commemoration (compare Kertzer, 1998: 377). The Venezuelan government takes advantage of October 12th, established worldwide as a commemorative date, to launch its messages in a climate of heightened attention. The dissemination of ideology resumed as socialism of the 21st century, including the eagerness to advance the establishment of an indigenous people's alliance and use it to achieve certain ends in International Relations (Gaceta Oficial, 2006: 38.545/350.083–350.084; 2009a: 39.323/373.480).

THE BICENTENARIES

The nature and range of the transformations of politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community evidences itself when contrasting Mexican, Spanish and Venezuelan legislation concerning the quincentenary with the legislation related to the bicentenaries. It is necessary to underscore that the observations presented here are

not more than a preliminary analysis that will require further study and elaboration at the end of the bicentenary commemorative cycle. What is the influence of these commemorations on the politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community? What are the transformations in the cases of Mexico, Spain and Venezuela?

The word *discovery* expresses uniqueness, to be distinguished as the first one. The insistence on the term *discovery* regarding the quinqucentenary commemorations also evidences the insistence on being a distinguished member of the Ibero-American Community. Concerning the bicentenary commemorations, the controversy is not anymore about *discovery* in physical terms, but rather in terms what could be described as *discovery* of values. Nevertheless, the ends of controversy stay the same: to be distinguished as a special member of the community.

The Spanish positioning with regard to the independence movements in Latin America assumes that the Enlightenment as their driving force was spreading from the Iberian Peninsula to the Hispano-American colonies. As such the reiterated *discovery* of the Hispano-American territories by Spaniards is expressed symbolically. It is for this reason that Spanish legislation does not highlight the emancipatory efforts of the ex-colonies, but rather the role of the Peninsular Spanish society as a facilitator of the emancipation processes from absolutist domination on both sides of the Atlantic. According to this interpretation, emancipation was the product of a common struggle, including peoples from the Peninsular and the ex-colonies, against the absolutist forces of which the end result was independence. Likewise, in a common effort, the Constitution of Cadiz, proclaimed in 1812, was elaborated. This document consequently represents the reference par excellence concerning the shared values in these struggles and the origin of a shared tradition of law. The achievement of independence by the Spanish colonies is described in its totality as a harmonic process.

The leadership of the Latin American countries concerning the organization and execution of the bicentenary commemorations is recognized repeatedly. This is the reason why the participation of Spanish representatives is limited to an official accompaniment (BOE, 2006: 38/5744–5747; 2007: 113/20314–20317). It is, therefore, all the more surprising that Spain insists on the incorporation of the promulgation of the Cadiz Constitution on March 19th in the Ibero-American Community's commemorative calendar. This is exemplified by the fact that the Spanish government has been able to successfully propose Cadiz as host city for the 22nd Ibero-American Summit of heads of State and Government in 2012 – 200 years after the promulgation of the constitution.

Completely opposed to the official Spanish position is the vision expressed in Venezuelan legislation. The emancipatory act and the agency in the struggles for liberty against the *Spanish yoke*, the *Spanish Empire*, is emphasized with Francisco de Miranda and Simón Bolívar as figures of identification (Gaceta Oficial, 2009: 39.218/370.280; 2010: 39.402/375.794–375.795). Never in this legislation are positive characteristics attributed to Spain. The ambitions of the Spanish government to establish the promulgation of the Cadiz Constitution as a commemorative milestone

for the Ibero-American Community are criticized in legislation. It is claimed that the Venezuelan Declaration of Independence in 1811 represents the *first constituent process in Latin America and the third example worldwide of the organization and civilization of peoples* (Gaceta Oficial, 2009: 39.218/370.280).

Most conspicuous about Mexican legislative texts is the programmatic disorientation. Even legislative measures that are particularly relevant for the execution of the commemorations were not undertaken or had been undergoing changes until 2010, the same year of commemoration (DOF, 2009: DCLXVI/9/32–33; 2010: DCLXXVII/12/81–83; 2010b: DCLXXXII/1/54–56). The independence stands out conceptually, but no reference is made to the power from whom Mexico won their independence. Terms that could evoke struggle or conflict have been avoided. The principal objective seems to be to present, by means of the commemorations, an image of social cohesion that evokes sentiments of solidarity, unity and most prominently pride. 2010, *the year of the homeland ought to be a motive of pride and reflection about our commitment with the homeland and thus an opportunity to reassume it* (DOF, 2010a: DCLXXVIII/3/18). The Mexican legislation clearly reflects the problematic internal security situation caused by organized crime and worsened by the militarization of the conflict on the part of the government. The government assigns itself the duty to *honor the memory of the protagonists of independence [...] to actualize their ideals and to preserve [the] faithfulness in the Nation with legality, justice, democracy and security, preserving the great quantity of things achieved as Nation in two hundred years of proudly being Mexicans* (DOF, 2010a: DCLXXVIII/3/18).

Despite good intentions expressed at the regional level to leverage existing synergies between the countries that are currently commemorating their bicentenaries, such as the creation of the Bicentenary Group in 2007, the reigning principle is one of non-interference. Every country commemorates its independence independently. This is reflected in the content of national legislations that rarely refer to each other and the mutual influence of various struggles for independence. Only the Spanish legislative texts highlight the importance of the bicentenaries for the Ibero-American Community. The Mexican legislation is instead inward looking, thus ignoring the greater historical context. In Venezuela, legislators present national events as preceding events in the regional context.

It is still too early to value in a substantial way the possible consequences of the bicentenary commemorations on the politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community. Still, at this time one tendency can be identified: the controversies that emerged extensively in the context of the quincentenary continue to plague relations between Spain and Latin American countries, since they never have been resolved. The Spanish government continues its efforts to defend a precursory role in the realm of the Ibero-American Community, however, in a much more prudent manner than 20 years ago. However, the former approach still surfaces and creates tensions, as it did when Ibero-American Secretary General Enrique V. Iglesias approached the bicentenary commemorative cycle with a Eurocentric lens. Iglesias presented the 1808

arrival of the Portuguese court in Brazil as the cycle's starting point and the declaration of the Cadiz Constitution in 1812 as its end (Iglesias, 2008: 6). Many, particularly of the Venezuelan government, were highly critical of this point of view (Montoya, 2009). Nevertheless, these obvious differences did not lead to an extensive debate, but rather remained limited to scattered expressions of divergent points of view.

DECISIVE FACTORS FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

Finally, what relations of power and discourses dominated the transformations of the politics of memory in the Ibero-American Community? The documents analyzed, evidence in some areas persisting mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The most controversial example in this sense is *discovery*.

Amongst the alternative denominations for *discovery* used for October 12th, *Day of indigenous resistance* is the most combative one. The image transmitted is one of confrontation between *indigenous peoples* and the other. The denomination *Encounter of two Worlds* instead establishes a clear division between the *two worlds* or *cultures*. Likewise, *encounter* insinuates a punctual event, while the concept of *resistance* rather expresses events that have taken place over a prolonged period of time. Consequently, the denomination *Encounter of two Worlds* tends to anchor its meaning in the past while *Day of indigenous Resistance* suggests the continuity of the struggle. Hence, the Chávez government presents this day as part of its counter historical project to confront the *colonial and Eurocentric prejudices that subsist in research and education in history and geography* (Gaceta Oficial (Extraordinaria), 2002: 5605/1–2). Inherent in the general premise of the Bolivarian project is the recovery of a history that has been minimized and silenced by the official history (Sulbarán, 2010). Official history means the version that was propagated by the governments in office prior to the Chávez administration. For how long will it still be possible to proclaim this official historiographical project as unofficial? Through this project, does the Chávez government really pursue emancipatory ideas or is it all about a political conjecture with the purpose of perpetuating its hold on power? The denomination *Day of indigenous Resistance* not only permits the Venezuelan leaders to emphasize a global historiographical deficiency, but also reflects an explosive political climate dominated by polarization.

CONCLUSIONS

The progressive institutionalization of the relations between Latin American States and the countries of the Iberian Peninsula since the construction of the Ibero-American Conference has not been accompanied by a homogenization of the discourse around the memory space that comprises this community. This is especially evident when

considering divergences between national legislations with regard to the bicentenary commemorations. However, the terminological trajectory and meaning of October 12th in the legislation of all three countries was quite similar until Chávez came to power in Venezuela. Furthermore, it must be noticed that in Latin American countries, October 12th is far less important than the commemorations dedicated to independence.

It is in the Spanish legislation where most references to the Ibero-American Community are found, what evidences the existence of a well defined politics of memory agenda in this framework. Legislations in Mexico and Venezuela concerning the quinqucentenary and the bicentenaries only marginally mention the Ibero-American Community, suggesting the limited importance that is attributed to the community in terms of politics of memory.

The Spanish governments after the Franco dictatorship seem to be conscious about the fact that the political importance of Spain in the field of International Relations and inside the European Union depends decisively on the quality of relations maintained with Latin American countries. The most severe challenge for the Spanish government ambitions in the Ibero-American Community are the policies pursued by the Chávez government that, apart from Spain, represent the most ambitious politics of memory agenda. Venezuelan and Spanish leaders are both conscious of how the politics of memory can be used to further political advantage.

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ABSTRAKT

Wspólne obchody upamiętniające dwustulecie powstania ruchów niepodległościowych w Ameryce Łacińskiej i będące jednym z efektów Konferencji Iberoamerykańskiej nie są pierwszą tego typu inicjatywą upamiętniającą, w której biorą udział zarówno Hiszpania, jak i jej były kolonie w Ameryce Łacińskiej. Dwie dekady temu te same państwa wspominały oficjalnie pięćsetlecie tzw. odkrycia Ameryki.

Artykuł omawia wyniki porównawczej analizy hiszpańskiego, meksykańskiego i wenezuelskiego ustawodawstwa dotyczącego polityki historycznej, uchwalanego w kontekście obu rocznic. Autor w pracy odpowiada m.in. na pytania: Jakie są porządki, relacje władzy i dyskursy dominujące politykę historyczną w państwach Iberoameryki? Jakie są kluczowe różnice (i z czego wynikają) między obchodami pięćsetlecia i dwustulecia?

Słowa kluczowe: polityka historyczna, analiza dyskursu, Wspólnota Iberoamerykańska

Biography note: Georg T. A. Krizmanics is PhD candidate at the Instituto Universitario de Investigación Ortega y Gasset in Madrid and works on "Politics of memory and identity in Latin America: Obstacles or facilitators of regional integration?" In 2011 he was distinguished with the Joan Prats Prize for young scholars. He studied political sciences at the University of Vienna and at Sciences Po. Paris. He obtained his master's degree from the University of Vienna in November 2010 with honors.