



America in the Fifties and Sixties: Julian Marias on the United States

Julian Marias

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With this one-volume, English-language presentation of two of his books on the United States, the Spanish philosopher Julian Marias joins the ranks of those foreign intellectuals and travelers who have made significant commentaries on our developing society. Such writers as Alexis de Tocqueville, Frances Trollope, Frederick Marryat, Charles Dickens, Harriet Martineau, James Bryce, and Denis Brogan have examined the American forest when our own writers have been detained among its trees. In forcing us to look at ourselves through their eyes, they have brought about major breakthroughs in our understanding and perception of ourselves. Rather than reiterating that the United States is a place dominated by modernity, by invasion of private life, and by aggressive materialism, Marias is charmed by 'the flavor of age' he finds permeating the country, surprised by its 'essential loneliness,' and impressed by the basic spirituality of the American people who, in contrast to the Europeans, have already begun to reach a point of saturation in their desire for material goods. For our contemporary image of ourselves as an harassed nation, Marias offers consolation by reminding us of aspects of the national life we tend to forget and which other foreign commentators have found it convenient to ignore.

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