

## Manuel Ugarte

UGARTE, Manuel Baldomero, Argentine writer, politician and Latin-American patriot, born in Buenos Aires (San José de Flores), Argentina, on February 27, 1875; died in Nice, France, on December 2, 1951. His writings and political activism were focused on the political unification of the Latin-American continent. He was a nationalist, anti-colonialist, with socialist ideas. This political orientation made him one of the illustrious “unknown” of American literature and political history. In fact, the dominant cultural and political forces of his country (mostly conservative, pro-colonialist and elitist) ignored him, the rightists because they considered him a socialist and the socialists because they considered him a nationalist. For these reasons, he was refused a tenure as a professor of literature and the National Literature Award proposed by Gabriela Mistral in 1930.



Floro Ugarte and Sabina Rivero were his parents, who belonged to the high class. The young Ugarte had a preference for national literature, in particular for writers as Lucio V. Mansilla, Guido Spano and Pedro B. Palacios (“Almafuerte”). Ugarte founded “La Revista Literaria” in 1895, which had a short life. He travelled to Paris in 1897, where he met Jean Jaurès, the charismatic leader of the French socialist party, and adopted most of his ideas. There he wrote several books, prefaced by Miguel de Unamuno, Ruben Darío and Pío Baroja among others. He learnt Italian, English and attended courses on philosophy and sociology at the university. In 1899, he visited United States and México, where he observed the big contrast and the relationships between the two countries, a fact that led him to foresee the effects of the imperialist expansion on Latin-America.

In 1903, he returned to Buenos Aires and entered the Socialist party, where he advocated for a nationalist view of socialism, opposed to the pro-European views of Juan B. Justo and Nicolás Repetto. Ugarte was part of the young intellectuals of the so-called 900 generation, together with Leopoldo Lugones, Alfredo L. Palacios, José Ingenieros, Roberto J. Payró and many others. In 1904, he was the party representative at the International Socialist congress in Amsterdam. In 1908 he published the polemical article “Socialismo y Patria” in the socialist newspaper “La Vanguardia”, precisely defining his ideas which combine anti-imperialism, socialism and democratic nationalism. Ugarte travelled on the continent from 1911 to 1913, giving numerous conferences and speeches in the main cities of Latin-America and at the University of Columbia (New York). He proclaimed the creation of a Latin-American union, similar to the United States of America, and had a big mediatic success. He left the Socialist party in 1913 due to its conservatism, and founded the “Asociación Latinoamericana”, when United States bombarded the Mexican city of Veracruz in 1914.

In 1915, Ugarte founded the newspaper “La Patria”, where, among others, Rubén Darío and Ricardo Jaimes Freyre wrote, but the project lasted only 84 days. Ugarte was the main speaker when the Argentine University Federation (FUA) was founded in 1918. Due to the isolationism imposed by the establishment, he was exiled in Europe from 1919 to 1935. In Spain he met his future wife Teresa Desmard, and they went later to France, to live in Nice. Ugarte was part of the editorial board of the magazine “Monde”, together with Maxim Gorki, Miguel de Unamuno and Albert Einstein, and signed the Book of Peace in 1929, with Bernard Shaw, Maurice Maeterlinck and other personalities. Augusto Cesar Sandino wrote to Ugarte to thank him for defending his cause through many articles and conferences held in different capitals of the world. He returned to Argentina in 1939, supported by his friends Manuel Gálvez, Gabriela Mistral and Alfonsina Storni. Ugarte and his wife went to Viña del Mar, Chile, in 1939, and lived there till 1946, when he came back to Argentina to join the Peronist revolution. Perón appointed him ambassador in México, and

later in Nicaragua and Cuba from 1946 to 1950. Ugarte resigned in 1951, came back to Nice and died there on december 2.

Manuel Ugarte considered that the real causes of wars were the rivalry among the most powerful nations who contended the right to exploit the colonial and semi-colonial countries. He had a strong national position: neutrality, fighting against latifundium and the abuses of the foreign capital, a common industrial market in Latin-America, preservation of the tradition and the local cultures, and social justice. Ugarte opposed imperialism in all its forms; yet in other aspects he was less orthodox in his socialism, in that he continued to believe in the rights of the individual over the state.

During his numerous journeys, he interchanged ideas and intellectual actions with important men in the political and cultural fields and had a profuse correspondence of marked historical interest with the most famous writers of his time. Most of the documents and letters regarding Ugarte are kept in ten volumes at the "Archivo General de la Nación Argentina" (see the book *El epistolario de Manuel Ugarte, 1896-1951* and [http://www.mininterior.gov.ar/agn/doc\\_escritos\\_fd6cat10.asp](http://www.mininterior.gov.ar/agn/doc_escritos_fd6cat10.asp) ).

From his poetic books, we may cite *Palabras* (1893), *Versos* (1894) and *Vendimias Juveniles* (1906). He also wrote short stories (*Cuentos de la Pampa*, 1903; *Cuentos Argentinos*, 1910) and literary, artistic and sociopolitical essays, namely, *El arte y la Democracia* (1905), *La Joven Literatura Hispanoamericana* (1906), *El Porvenir de la America Española* (1910), *La Patria Grande* (1922), *El Destino de un Continente* (1923), *El Dolor de Escribir* (1933), *Escritores Iberoamericanos del 900* (1943), and *El Naufragio de los Argonautas* (1951).

Manuel Ugarte was a thinker far ahead of his times, who endeavoured to establish the union of the American countries in the form of the United States of America or the European Union. The interests and the coalition of the imperialist powers, with their contradictions and rivalries, preclude such an outcome at present.

(Most of this material has been taken from Galasso, N., 1985, *Manuel Ugarte: Un Argentino "Maldito"*, Ediciones del Pensamiento Nacional, Buenos Aires.)

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