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THE COLONIAL FOUNDATIONS, 1492–1880s

When Europeans reached present-day Latin America they found three important civilizations: Mayan, Aztec, and Incan. That we should still call the native peoples of this hemisphere “Indians” perpetuates the error of sixteenth century Spaniards who wanted to believe they had reached the spice-rich Indies.

The Mayan people, who occupied the Yucatán peninsula, southern Mexico, and most of present-day Guatemala, began to build their civilization around 500 B.C. The most famous achievements of this group were cultural—not only the building of exquisite temples, but also pioneering accomplishments in architecture, sculpture, painting, hieroglyphic writing, mathematics, astronomy, and chronology (including the invention of calendars). Normally organized into a series of independent city-states, some with populations of 200,000 or more, the Mayans seldom fought among themselves. (This serenity, evident in the elegant harmony of their artwork, contrasts sharply with the bloodthirsty motifs in Aztec art.) For reasons unknown, classic Mayan society collapsed, falling victim to domination (972–1200) and then absorption (1200–1540) by Toltec invaders from the central Mexican highlands. Yet, the direct descendants of the Mayans have survived in southern Mexico and Guatemala down to our own day.

Mexico’s spacious central valley later became the seat of the Aztec empire. One of the Chichimec tribes that came from the north to subdue the Toltecs in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Aztecs engaged in constant war with their neighbors, finally constructing the city of Tenochtitlán around 1345 (on the site of contemporary Mexico City). After gaining control of the entire valley of Mexico, they created a major empire—one that was just reaching its peak as Columbus touched shore in the Caribbean.

Aztecs were noted for their military organization and prowess at ceremonial city-building. Their art, except for their haunting poetry, was inferior in subtlety and craftsmanship to many other ancient Mexican civilizations.

In its final form, Aztec society was rigidly stratified. At the bottom were slaves and at the top was a hereditary nobility. Education, marriage, and labor were meticulously programmed, and the economy was owned communally. Kings, such as Moctezuma II, exercised immense political power. Despite centralization of authority, however, conquered states in neighboring areas were not incorporated into the empire. They were treated as tribute-paying vassals, and some—such as nearby Tlaxcala—were allowed to maintain a perpetual state of war with Tenochtitlán. One reason for this warfare was that the Aztec religion required human sacrifice, and prisoners of war could be served up for the bloody rituals.

Incas adopted a very different pattern of organization. Their empire stretched for 3000 miles along the Andes, from northern Ecuador through Peru to southern Chile. After consolidating their hold in the Cuzco Valley in Peru, the Incas began expanding their empire in the early 1400s and continued until the Spanish Conquest in 1532. Once defeated, groups became integral parts of the empire. To obtain support for the emperor, or Inca, local nobles from conquered areas were brought to Cuzco and treated as royal guests, while resistant elements in recently conquered zones were transferred to areas controlled by loyal followers. Political power belonged to a tightly organized, highly disciplined bureaucracy, with teams of local officials on the bottom and a single supreme ruler at the top. Incas were thereby able to command effective authority over most of the Andes.

Incas were master engineers, building a vast road system (for human and animal transit, since they did not use the wheel), an intricate irrigation system, and impressive terraced agriculture on mountain sides. The Incas also excelled in textile design and in treating head injuries, the latter made possible by extraordinary skills at trepanning the human skull.

Aside from the Mayans, Aztecs, and Incas, there were many other Indian cultures. In the area of modern-day Mexico alone there were over two hundred different linguistic groups. Estimates of the size of Latin America’s indigenous population have varied widely. One scholar has set the figure at 90 to 112 million, with 30 million each in central Mexico and Peru. Though this calculation may be too high, it is clear that by European standards of the late fifteenth century the Indian societies had grown very large. Then the Spanish arrived.

The European Context

Europe’s “discovery” of America (the Indians presumably knew where they were) was part of the remarkable European expansion in the fifteenth century. Europe was coming to know the rest of the world, as its navigators and explorers pushed back the frontiers of then-current knowledge of the globe. By the early 1600s they had woven a network

of communications all the way around the earth, and had established the economic dominance that would shape the modern world.

This burst of European expansion was made possible by a combination of factors. One was technical skill. Pilotage and navigation were notable examples, as was the ability to adapt coastal ships to the challenges of the open ocean. And another example was weaponry, which was to fortify the Europeans against the occasionally well-armed native peoples, as in Mexico.

A second factor was the economic base. Technology alone was not enough. Vikings had shown the technical ability to reach America, but they lacked the resources to carry out settlement and colonization, which required men and capital. In short, the New World was not to be had by speculators of small resources or limited purpose.

Third, there had to be a European power interested in more than technical expertise and profit. It had to be ready to pursue the unknown with exceptional determination. Spain and Portugal fit this description. These Catholic monarchies, with their crusading ideal of converting heathen masses to the true religion, had a unique motivation. Spain in particular had come late to the consolidation of its territory against the infidel Muslim occupier. Portugal, although earlier rid of the Muslim intruder, was equally committed to the militant spread of the Christian faith. Their boldness set a precedent for European intruders into Latin America over the next four centuries. However much Latin America struggled, it was to remain an extension, at times a contradiction, of the Europe that had sailed west in the fifteenth century.

Spanish America: From Conquest to Colony, 1492–1600

It was no coincidence that Columbus reached America in the same year as the Spanish liquidated the last Moorish stronghold in Spain. The reconquest down the Iberian peninsula saw the warring Christian nobles acquiring land and the crown strengthening its political control. The result by 1492 was a nobility and would-be nobility anxious for more conquests, and a crown ready to direct these subjects overseas.

The Spanish therefore reached the New World in a conquest spirit already well-developed at home. Spain had presented moderate opportunity for upward social mobility, and there is considerable evidence to suggest that the New World conquerors—Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, and their followers—came to America in order to win social status as well as wealth. Spanish motivation was no doubt complex. Ferdinand and Isabella and successive monarchs thought the wealth of the New World could strengthen their hand in Europe. Many dedicated missionaries hoped to save the souls of heathen Indians. The conquerors had multiple purposes in mind: as one conquistador said, “We came here to serve God and the King, and also to get rich.” But their central motive appears to have been the achievement of noble rank and wealth.

(About one-third of the conquerors of Peru came from the lesser or “common” nobility; two-thirds were of plebeian origin. These were people with status to gain.) Thus driven, they set out for they knew not what. In a few short years they had toppled the mighty empires of the Aztecs and the Incas.

How did they do it? How could a few hundred Spaniards overthrow empires with millions of Indians? When Cortés set out from Cuba toward Mexico in 1519, he had only 550 men and 16 horses. Within two and a half years he and his battered Spanish contingent (bolstered by several hundred reinforcements) had reduced to rubble the magnificent Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán and accepted the surrender of their disheartened and bewildered man-god, Cuauhtémoc. One explanation for their feat was the superiority of Spanish equipment and tactics—gunpowder (for muskets and cannons), horses, organization, and the confidence to stay constantly on the attack. Another factor was the propensity for the Aztecs to identify Cortés and his followers with the god Quetzalcoatl, whose return to the valley was predicted by myth. Important also was the role of non-Aztec peoples, such as the Tlaxcalans, who had grown restive under Aztec domination and who supplied the Spaniards with troops and advice on appropriate military tactics. Finally, and perhaps most important, an outbreak of smallpox, previously unknown in the Americas, ravaged an Indian population lacking natural immunity. By 1521, two years after the start of the Cortés campaign and less than thirty years after Columbus’s first voyage, the Aztec empire had fallen under Spanish control. Cortés lost no time in asserting his authority. He extracted pledges of allegiance from neighboring chieftains and directed a vigorous reconstruction effort.

Some factors that favored the Spanish in Mexico operated also in Peru, but Pizarro’s task was simplified by the civil war then wracking the Incan empire: the Inca Atahualpa, preoccupied by the local conflict, never took Pizarro as seriously as warranted. The small Spanish band had accomplished the takeover by 1533. They carted off as their booty a hoard of gold and silver large enough to fill a 12’ × 17’ room to the height of a man’s arm. The dream of El Dorado had come true in the Andes.

The Spanish Conquest was centered in the Caribbean and the strongholds of the two great Indian empires—Aztec and Incan. The Spanish also launched explorations from the major population centers, but they lacked the men or resources to establish direct control in many such areas. Primary Spanish attention focused on their new realms in Mexico and Peru.

It did not take long for Spaniards to recreate many aspects of their own society in the Americas. They laid out typically Spanish designs for cities and created richly complex societies. Coopers, bakers, scribes—people from all walks of life in Spain—came, under tight immigration control, to make their way in the New World.

But there was a shortage of Spanish women. According to a study on Peru, for instance, white males outnumbered white females by at least seven to one. This not only created intense competition for the hands of Spanish women, it also led Spaniards to take Indian women as their consorts. Their mixed-blood children, usually illegitimate, came to be known as *mestizos*. In time, the *mestizo* race would become the dominant ethnic component of much of Spanish America, including Mexico, Central America, and the Andean countries.

The Spanish crown soon realized it had a conflict of interest with the independent-minded conquerors and promptly created an elaborate bureaucracy, designed to keep the New World economy and society under firm control. In Spain the key institution for New World affairs was the Council of the Indies. Overseas the main unit of organization was the viceroyalty, headed by a viceroy ("vice-king") appointed by the king. The first viceroyalty was established in Mexico (then known as New Spain) in 1535, the second in Peru in 1544; two others were set up in the eighteenth century (see Map 2). The church had parallel structures, led by the archbishop and by the officials of the Inquisition.

In practice, this bureaucracy led to intense conflict over matters of jurisdiction, but the genius of the system was that stalemates, once they developed, could always be transmitted to a higher authority, such as the viceroy or the Council of the Indies. This meant that the various institutions would serve as watchdogs over each other (aside from periodic reviews and investigations of performance in office). Another feature of the system was, surprisingly, its flexibility. Virtually all groups had some measure of access to the bureaucracy. And though the crown retained ultimate authority, local officials possessed considerable autonomy, as shown by their occasional responses to royal decrees—*obedezco pero no cumpro* (roughly, "I accept your authority but will not execute this law"). Despite its seeming idiosyncrasies, the Spanish bureaucracy operated rather well in the New World, keeping the colonies under royal rule for nearly 300 years.

Underpinning this political structure was a set of values and assumptions that legitimized monarchical, elitist rule. They stemmed from the fundamental Roman Catholic premise, most clearly articulated by Thomas Aquinas, that there were three kinds of law: divine law, that is, God's own heavenly will; natural law, a perfect reflection or embodiment of divine law in the world of nature; and human law, man's thoroughly imperfect attempt to approximate God's will within society. Born in original sin, humanity was fallible by definition and it was only by the grace of God that some people were less fallible than others. The goal of political organization, therefore, was to elevate the less fallible to power so they could interpret and execute God's will in a superior way. And the ruler, once in power, was responsible to his or her own conscience and to God—not to the will of the people.

This rationale provided convincing justification for the supremacy of

MAP 2 Colonial Latin America: Political Organization



Spanish America: Viceroyalties
 Portuguese America (Viceroyalty of Brazil): Captaincies-general ca. 1780

The viceroyalties of La Plata and New Granada originally belonged to the viceroyalty of Peru.

the Spanish monarch. Its theological origin revealed and fortified close links between church and state. Resuscitated in the postcolonial era, as it has often been, the code also furnished, as we shall see, a devastating critique of democratic theory. In time, political rulers would thus legitimize their power on the basis of residual aspects of traditional Roman Catholic doctrine.

The empire's economic structure reflected the prevailing mercantilist theory that economic activity should enhance the power and prestige of the state, measured on the basis of gold or silver bullion. The good mercantilist was supposed to run a favorable balance of trade, thus acquiring species or bullion in payment. Following this logic, Spain attempted to monopolize the access to wealth discovered in the New World. The first target was mining, first of gold and then mainly of silver. Another goal was to maintain complete control over commerce. Agriculture, by contrast, received little initial attention from crown officials (unless it competed with Spain), and manufacturing, when later considered, was actively discouraged.

The central foundation for this economy was Indian labor, obtained from the natives by one form of coercion or another. They paid tribute to the crown and its appointed emissaries. Since cheap labor was so critical, the Spanish crown, colonists, and clerics fought bitterly for control of the Indians. In 1542, seeking to curtail the colonists, the king decreed the "New Laws," aimed at protecting the Indians by removing them from direct tutelage of the conquistadores and bringing them under the direct jurisdiction of the crown. By 1600 the crown had largely succeeded in this task, at least in legal terms. In reality, however, these changes altered only the legal form of oppression; the fact of oppression persisted.

For the Indians, the Conquest meant above all a drastic fall in population. Scholars have argued long and hard about the size of the indigenous population when the Spanish arrived. The most reliable studies of central Mexico place the preconquest populations, as of 1519, at around 25 million; for 1523 the figure is 16.8 million, for 1580 it is 1.9 million, and for 1605 it is 1 million—a total decline of 95 percent! Data on Peru are less complete, but they also show continuing decline, from 1.3 million in 1570 (forty years after the Conquest) to less than 600,000 in 1620, a drop of more than 50 percent. However uncertain the exact magnitudes, the Conquest clearly resulted in demographic calamity, largely attributable to diseases such as smallpox, measles, and influenza.

The Indian survivors saw their social order undermined and distorted. Forced to give their labor to the Spaniards, the Indians struggled to maintain their traditional social networks. The most fertile land was seized by the conquerors—who, in many cases, converted the land to raising livestock. Indians saw the symbols of their old religion destroyed and they clung to such syncretistic practices as they could devise. Diseases took a heavier toll of men than of women, and the re-

sulting sex imbalance further disrupted marriage patterns and family structure.

To offset the decline in Indian population, especially in tropical lowland regions, Spaniards began importing black slaves from Africa—a practice already familiar in Spain and Portugal and their Atlantic islands. Between 1518 and 1870, Spanish America imported more than 1.5 million slaves—over 16 percent of the entire Atlantic slave trade—mostly through Cuba and the northern tip of South America, destined for labor in the lowland coastal areas. Brazil, with its extensive sugar plantations, brought in about 3.7 million.

As we shall see later, Latin America produced largely multiracial societies, in contrast to the highly polarized biracial society that developed in North America.

The three ethnic components of colonial Spanish American population—Indians, Europeans, Africans—fit together in a social structure that divided itself along lines of race and function. The white sector, which included less than 2 percent of the sixteenth century population, was the most powerful and prestigious. In the same period the mixed bloods contained free blacks, *mestizos*, and mulattoes—all told, less than 3 percent of the total. The Indians, over 95 percent of the population, were placed in a unique position carefully limited and protected by a battery of royal laws.

There were additional important social relationships. One was the rivalry between whites born in Spain (*peninsulares*) and whites born in the New World (*criollos* or *creoles*). Another was the structure of occupations, such as the church, the army, merchants, and sheep farmers. These overlapping social categories produced in colonial Spanish America a complex stratification system in which social status was the major prize. Conflict between the *peninsulares* and *creoles* would eventually shape the struggles that led to independence.

Interaction between the racial groupings was less tension-filled, but still tenuous. Though interracial concubinage was widespread, interracial marriage was probably rare, and even then it followed gradations—whites might marry *mestizos*, and *mestizos* might marry Indians, but whites seldom married Indians. As civil and religious consecration was extended to interracial liaisons, especially those involving whites, they tended to blur social boundaries, legitimize aspirations for mobility, and foment uncertainty about the system of stratification. Movement definitely existed, both socially and geographically, and individuals could experience considerable change during their lifetimes.

Marriage and family customs generally assumed male domination of females. The cult of masculine superiority (*machismo*) appeared early in Latin America, within a broad range of social and ethnic strata, and many women led restricted lives. But contrary to the stereotypical image, the standard family was not always headed by a male patriarch presiding over a large brood of children. More often than not families

consisted of married couples reasonably close in age with two to four children.

But not all women married, and those who did, often did not remain married for life. Data on the sixteenth century are sparse, but by 1811, according to census results, only 44 percent of the adult females in Mexico City were married. Many women were widows, and approximately one-third of the households in Mexico City were headed by single women. This was due in part to the lower life expectancy for men. For whatever reason, many Mexican women spent much of their lives as single women.

Spanish America: The Transformation of Colonial Society, 1600–1750

Spanish American colonies underwent profound changes soon after 1600. The first impetus came from Europe, where Spain began to lose the power it once had in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. After the defeat of the armada by the English in 1588, the royal treasury repeatedly went bankrupt, the nobles challenged the crown, Catalonia erupted in revolt, and in 1640 Portugal—since 1580 governed by the Spanish monarch—successfully reasserted its independence. At the same time, Spain and Portugal began losing their monopolies on the New World. The English, Dutch, and French established settlements in North America and also gained footholds in the Caribbean.

With Spain's decline, the rest of seventeenth century Europe sought to counterbalance France, now the leading power. The New World became a vital element in the European power equation. This became clear in the War of the Spanish Succession (1700–1713), which installed the Bourbons on the Spanish throne and gave the British the contract (*asiento*) for the slave trade to the Spanish colonies.

Far-reaching changes were also taking place within the colonies. The ethnic composition of society underwent profound transition. Continued immigration and natural increase turned the whites, mainly creoles, into a sizeable segment of the population, perhaps 20 percent by 1825. Much more dramatic was the relative growth of the *mestizo* and mixed-blood category, from less than 3 percent around 1570 to approximately 28 percent by 1825. The shift in the Indian population was even greater, although in a different direction—down from over 95 percent to barely 42 percent. By the same year (1825), blacks accounted for about 12 percent of the Spanish American population.

As time passed, the creoles began to assume active roles in key sectors of the economy, such as mining and commerce. Especially striking was their increasing ownership of land (something the early Spanish monarchs had discouraged) and, in some areas, the appearance of great landed estates, or haciendas. Typified by vast territorial holdings and debt peonage, the haciendas often became virtually autonomous rural communities governed by the owners or their foreman. Land titles were

hereditary, and most were held by creoles. The hacienda in Spanish America brought a reversion to some of the values (although not the structure) of a classic feudal society. By the mid-eighteenth century, the crown was confronting a proud New World nobility.

The political role of the creoles was less obvious. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries they held many important political posts, mainly on the local level, such as in town councils or *audiencias*. Upper-level positions were still reserved for *peninsulares*. With the decline of Spain as an imperial power, however, political institutions ceased to function as before.

Portuguese America: A Different World?

The colonial history of Portuguese America contrasts with the story of colonial Spanish America. Under the royal House of Aviz, Portugal had established a far-flung empire with outposts in India, China, Africa, and some Atlantic islands. In fact, Portugal had become the European leader in exploration by shrewd use of its superior technical skills in cartography and navigation. In 1494 the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal granted Portugal the eastern half of South America (the dividing line could hardly be precise in the unknown territory), and in 1500 Pedro Alvares Cabral, the Portuguese sea captain credited with “discovering” Brazil, claimed that vast territory for his monarch. (See Map 2.)

This New World incursion differed from Spain's in two fundamental respects. First, there was no Indian civilization in Brazil comparable to the Aztecs or the Incas. The Tupí-Guaraní, the largest language group, lived along the coast from what is now Venezuela into southern Brazil and Paraguay, and Tapuias inhabited the interior. Some Indians were cannibalistic and most were semi-nomadic—which meant that Brazil would have to be settled gradually, rather than taken at a single blow. More important, it meant that the Portuguese, unlike the Spanish, did not face a highly organized, settled indigenous civilization. These Indians had built no imposing cities and they had no mythic explanations for this sudden alien intrusion.

Furthermore, there was no trace of silver or gold, and consequently no easy path to fabulous wealth. The first important economic activity was the export of brazilwood (hence the country's modern name), prized in Europe for its qualities as a source of dye. And in time, contrasting sharply with most of colonial Spanish America, agriculture, especially cane sugar cultivation, predominated in the Brazilian colonial economy.

The scarcity (compared to Spain) of human and mineral resources forced the Portuguese crown to resort to unusual means in trying to persuade or entice its subjects to occupy the New World holdings. In the 1530s the kings started making massive grants of effective power



The fortress-like construction of this sixteenth century Dominican monastery in south-central Mexico aptly illustrates the alliance of church and crown in the conquest of New Spain. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

over (almost totally unexplored) land, usually to military men with prior experience in India or Africa or to hand-picked personal favorites, and in either instance to men "of gentle blood." The land donations were huge, averaging about 130 miles along the coastline and running all the way back (as much as 500 miles or more) to the imaginary Line of Demarcation that divided Portuguese from Spanish America.

Not until 1549 did the crown begin to establish an effective imperial bureaucracy—but the purpose was to protect the area from French and British intrusions and not, as in the case of Spanish America, to reconquer the possessions from the conquerors. On the contrary, it was the lack of a Portuguese presence that forced Lisbon to act.

Partly because in its first century Brazil received a lower priority than Portugal's other overseas dominions (which were more profitable), monarchical control started out much looser than in Spanish America. Even when the Portuguese crown tightened up after 1549, the royal institutions were largely limited to the Atlantic coast, where the taxes on exports could be easily collected. Power on the local level rested with the landowners and the town councils. Even the church was weak in sixteenth century Brazil, compared to Mexico and Peru.

During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, landowners developed a lucrative sugar industry in the Brazilian Northeast. Having earlier made technological breakthroughs in sugar processing in their Atlantic islands, such as the Madeiras, the Portuguese had come to rely on the Dutch to retail the product in Europe. To grow sugar in America, however, required abundant labor. The Portuguese landowners first turned to the Brazilian Indians. As in Mexico and Peru, however, the Indians soon fell victim to devastating European diseases. The survivors often fled into the interior. Although the Portuguese continued to exploit the Indians until well into the eighteenth century, they had to look elsewhere for a satisfactory labor supply.

The obvious source was Africa. By the early 1500s the Spanish and Portuguese already had a half-century of experience with African slave labor, both at home and in their Atlantic islands, such as the Canaries (Spanish) and the Madeiras (Portuguese). It was not until the 1580s that the Portuguese saw enough potential profit to warrant importing African slaves. By 1650, however, Northeastern Brazil had become the world's greatest source of cane sugar, produced predominantly with African slave labor. Her sugar exports were estimated at £2.5 million a year, which made Brazil's coastal Northeast probably the richest single region in the entire Americas.

Other European powers wanted in on the sugar boom. The British and Dutch brought new technology, which eventually made the Caribbean into the world's preeminent sugar cane producer. The Dutch invaded Brazil itself in 1624 and controlled the sugar-rich Northeast until an alliance of Portuguese planters, merchants, and mixed-blood troops pushed them back into the ocean in 1654. Yet the Portuguese were never again to duplicate the near monopoly on New World sugar production they had enjoyed earlier in the century.

In the central and southern regions of Brazil the economy first centered on cattle-raising and, more importantly, on slave raids against the Indians (who were often shipped to the Northeast). As one Jesuit missionary lamented, "the true purpose" of these expeditions "was to capture Indians: to draw from their veins the red gold which has always been the mine of that province!" Carried out by the *bandeirantes*, whose legendary status in national history resembles a mixture of the California gold prospectors and the American cowboy, these forays extended Portuguese control over the Brazilian interior. Furthermore, they led to the discovery of mineral wealth, which had so long eluded the Portuguese. In the 1690s gold was found in Minas Gerais ("General Mines") and people flocked to the area. Diamonds were located in 1729. Mining reached its peak in 1750, with a yearly output of £3.6 million, although the low level of technological expertise contributed to a decline in mining near the late 1700s. The era also brought a brief export boom in cotton, but Brazil would have to await the nineteenth century coffee boom before regaining much prosperity.

TABLE 1-1 Racial Composition of Early Latin American Population

	Spanish America		Portuguese America	
	1570 (%)	1825 (%)	1570 (%)	1825 (%)
Whites (legally defined or by social convention)	1.3	18.2	2.4	23.4
Mixed-bloods (<i>mestizo</i> or <i>mulatto</i>)	2.5	28.3	3.5	17.8
Blacks	(included with mixed-bloods)	11.9	(included with mixed-bloods)	49.8
Indians	96.3	41.7	94.1	9.1
Total	100.1	100.1	100.0	100.1

Note: Some details may not add up to 100 because of rounding.

Source: Adapted from Richard M. Morse, "The Heritage of Latin America," in Louis Hartz, ed., *The Founding of New Societies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), p. 138.

Brazil's colonial economy had been created for export. It was "the King's plantation." The resulting social structure reflected the investment the Portuguese crown had made. The most important single human consequence was the pervasive presence of African slaves. Over 2.5 million Africans had been brought to Brazil by 1810, nearly one-third of the Atlantic slave trade in that era. Blacks were a major component of Portuguese American society, in contrast to most areas of Spanish America.

As shown in Table 1-1, blacks amounted to nearly one-half of Brazil's total population around 1825, compared with 12 percent in Spanish America, and the mixed-blood group, mainly *mulattos*, added another 18 percent. All in all, perhaps as much as two-thirds of the entire Brazilian population in the early nineteenth century were of partial or total black ancestry.

The multiracial colonial Brazilian society was highly stratified, according to the relatively little research done to date. Racial intermarriage was rare, accounting for no more than 10 percent of all marriages, and, as in Spanish America, it followed lines of gradation—whites might marry *mulattoes*, but they almost never married blacks. Concubinage and common-law relationships were more frequent among blacks than whites. As in Mexico City, about one-third the family units in a sample of colonial Brazilian communities were headed by single women.

A second major facet of the social structure was internal division within the white ruling stratum, particularly between Brazilian-born landowners and Portuguese-born merchants. This difference resembled the creole-*peninsular* conflict in Spanish America, and it had the potential for leading to an independence movement. As it turned out, European politics cut the process short. In any case, the looser crown control of

Brazil had generated less resentment among the colonists than in most of Spanish America.

Portuguese America's integration into the Western economy as a peripheral area resembled that of Spanish America, but with notable differences: first, for two centuries Brazil lacked the gold and silver that obsessed the Spaniards in Mexico and Peru; second, Brazil's main contribution until the eighteenth century was agriculture, not mining; third, and perhaps most important, Portugal had developed a simpler system for ensuring revenues from its prize colony ("the milch cow," as Brazil was known in Lisbon). Unlike Spain, Portugal did not develop a vast bureaucratic network aimed at taxing and controlling the domestic market. Instead, it concentrated almost entirely on taxing Brazil's exports. As a result, Brazil offered less potential than Spanish America for breeding a powerful alliance of colonial interests which might rebel against the political authority of the mother country.

The Roots of Independence

The independence movements that led to the creation of most of present-day Latin America's nation-states owed their origins to events in Europe. Most were not radical and none brought cataclysmic changes in the social order. Much of the impetus proved to be conservative, thereby shaping the direction of the young republics in the early nineteenth century. Our story begins back in Europe.

The Bourbon monarchs of Spain, whose family had succeeded to the crown in 1713, had sought to reverse Spain's decline, both in Europe and America. Hoping to shore up New World defenses against rival European powers while also increasing revenues for the crown, the Bourbon kings imposed far-reaching administrative and political reforms. One was to create new viceroalties—one at New Granada (first in 1717, then again in 1739) and another at Buenos Aires (1776).

In addition, Charles III (1759–88) replaced the complex administrative arrangement of the Hapsburgs with the intendency system. In effect, this led to the replacement of the hated *corregidores* in Spanish America with "intendants"—local governors who were directly responsible to the crown, not to the viceroy. Almost all of the intendants were Spanish-born *peninsulares*, rather than American creoles, presumably thereby assuring loyalty to the monarch. The intendants greatly strengthened crown control over government, but also collided with prosperous creoles, many of whom had taken advantage of relaxed administration.

This trend could be seen in the administration of local courts. Desperately needing funds, the late seventeenth century Hapsburg monarchs put court appointments up for sale, as had Philip II earlier in the century. It was creoles who bought, and by 1750, out of ninety-three judges fifty-one were American-born. The Bourbon monarchs

reversed this trend, and by 1807 only twelve out of ninety-nine judges were creoles. Ultimately, creoles would decide to look elsewhere for positions of authority and prestige.

One place they looked was to the town councils or *cabildos*, which were barely functioning by the early eighteenth century. *Cabildo* offices did not always find eager buyers. With the arrival of the intendants, however, more efficient taxation gave the *cabildos* increased revenues—and they reasserted their role as local councils. The *cabildos* thus became institutional bases of creole authority.

Charles III also sought to increase royal power by tightening crown control of the church. The most dramatic step was the expulsion of the Jesuit order from all of Spanish America in 1767. Charles saw the Jesuits as a state within a state, a rival source of power and wealth. The best properties of the Jesuits were auctioned off and the proceeds, of course, went to the crown.

The military was another power source. To ward off outside threats and to crush any potential rebellion, the king decreed the establishment of colonial militias, an excellent source of prestige for status-hungry creoles. But it also altered the military balance. By 1800, for instance, there were only 6000 members of the regular Spanish army in the viceroyalty of New Spain—compared to 23,000 American-born members of the colonial militia. This was the foundation of the patriot army that would later fight for independence.

The Bourbons wanted especially to promote colonial economic development, in order to strengthen their hand in Europe. In 1778 Charles III promulgated a Decree of Free Trade, which meant that the twenty-four ports of Spanish America could now trade directly with any port in Spain or with each other (but *not* with any port outside the Spanish realm). Commerce would no longer be restricted to four colonial ports (Veracruz, Cartagena, Lima/Callao, and Panama) or tied to the Cadiz monopoly in Spain. Buenos Aires immediately began to profit from the measure. In fact, contraband trade had long flourished on these formerly forbidden routes. But the crown increased its customs receipts, since it could now get at the goods that were once smuggled.

Partly for this reason, the colonial economy flourished under the Bourbons. The port of Buenos Aires, a small and lackluster town in 1776, grew to a city of 50,000 by the year 1800. Mexico was minting three times as much silver and gold in the 1790s as it had been in the 1740s. Commerce was thriving by the turn of the century.

The Bourbon policies appeared to be a success. Administration became more efficient, defenses improved, commerce swelled, and governmental revenues increased. But creoles were upset by many of these changes, which threatened (and often managed) to reduce their status and influence. It was the challenge to creole status, more than the influence of Enlightenment thought or the example of British colonies in

North America, that ultimately prompted the Spanish American dominions to opt for independence.

There had been colonial resistance, to be sure. In 1780 Tupac Amaru II, claiming to be a lineal descendant of the Incas, led an Indian revolt with an army of nearly 80,000 men. It took nearly two years of brutal fighting to stamp out the insurrections that swept over southern Peru and Bolivia. In 1781 the citizens of Socorro, in New Granada, violently protested against a tax increase and the disruption spread through much of the viceroyalty. Although patriotic Latin American historians have often described these events as “precursors” to the creole-led independence movements of the nineteenth century, this was not the case. As for Tupac Amaru II, some strands in that insurrection pointed toward independence, but on terms of Indian leadership that would never gain solid creole support. In the 1781 rebellion in New Granada, the protestors did not seek independence from the Spanish crown. They were protesting within the system, not against it.

Then how did independence come? Once again Latin America's fate was determined by dynastic politics in the Old World. After having tried and failed to help the French Bourbons save their crown, Spain allied with the revolutionary French regime in 1796, a pact that led directly to the annihilation of the Spanish navy at the Battle of Trafalgar (1805). Meanwhile, Napoleon Bonaparte, now France's dictator, in 1807 occupied Portugal, England's long-time ally. Napoleon reached the hills above the capital city of Lisbon just as the English royal navy was whisking the Portuguese royal house of Braganza and its court off to Brazil. Napoleon then turned to Spain. In 1808 he occupied Madrid, planting his brother, Joseph, on the Spanish throne. This was the act that prompted the colonies to revolt.

There was Spanish resistance to Joseph, as supporters of Ferdinand VII rallied to the cause. A junta was set up in Seville to rule in Ferdinand's name. In 1810 there followed a parliament, or *cortes*, dominated by Spanish liberals who had moved into the vacuum created by the monarch's absence. In 1812 it proclaimed a new constitution, which asserted the authority of parliament and restricted the role of the king.

The Colonial Response

When Napoleon put his brother on the Spanish throne the creoles rejected him as an imposter, just as the Spaniards had done. Since Spain no longer had a government, the colonists argued, sovereignty reverted to the people. Could this logic be extended to an argument for independence?

Yet there was nothing inevitable about the train of events that overtook Spanish America. Neither the European Enlightenment nor the example of the American Revolution alone would have fomented re-

bellions in Spanish America. Without Napoleon's intervention the Spanish American colonies might all have remained Spanish until well into the nineteenth century, as did Cuba.

One of the focal points of resistance to Napoleon was Buenos Aires, the seat of the newest viceroyalty, whose *cabildo* had already acquired remarkable authority. In 1806 an English squadron occupied the city of Buenos Aires, sending the viceroy fleeing to the interior city of Córdoba. A citizen's army drove the British out, and in 1807 it made short shrift of a second British attack. So it was the creoles, not the viceregal authorities, who successfully defended Buenos Aires from invasion. This demonstrated both the weakness of the crown and the capacity of the local citizenry.

Another lingering issue to the La Plata region was free trade. The proclamation of 1778 had partially opened up trade for Buenos Aires, which could now ship goods directly to Spain—rather than along the long tortuous route overland to Panama and finally across the Atlantic. But it was England, not Spain, that offered the most promising market for hides and salted beef. A contraband trade therefore flourished and Argentine desire for open commerce with other European countries intensified.

In 1809, after Napoleon had ousted Spanish King Ferdinand VII, a young lawyer named Mariano Moreno called for a two-year experiment with totally free trade. Moreno argued that such a step would strengthen loyalties to the Spanish crown and provide increased revenues—since duties could be charged on legal trade, but not on contraband traffic. Late in the year the viceroy granted Buenos Aires limited freedom of trade with nations allied to Spain or neutral in the Napoleonic wars. Once again, the elite of Buenos Aires tasted political success.

When Napoleon's forces seized the centers of Bourbon resistance in Spain in 1810, leading citizens met and decided to create a "provisional junta of the Provinces of the Río de la Plata, governing for Ferdinand VII." Although it was not until 1816 that a congress formally declared independence, the pattern had been set.

In 1810 a similar movement emerged in Caracas, where the municipal *cabildo* deposed the Spanish captain-general and organized a junta to govern in the name of Ferdinand VII. As in Buenos Aires, the insurgent group consisted mainly of wealthy creoles. Their leaders had more decisive views. The most famous, Simón Bolívar, from the beginning wanted independence for America.

Born into a wealthy creole family in Caracas in 1783, Bolívar was orphaned at the age of nine. He was then sent to Spain to complete his education, and after three years he returned to Caracas with a young Spanish bride, who within months died of yellow fever. Bolívar was devastated, and never remarried. (He did not deprive himself of fe-

male companionship, however.) A magnetic, charming, persuasive personality, he inspired loyalty and confidence among his followers. Familiar with the ideas of the Enlightenment, he vowed in 1805 to free his homeland from Spanish rule. In July 1811, the congress that convened to govern Venezuela responded to his vision by declaring independence.

But the pro-Ferdinand Regency in Seville proved more resilient than had been expected, sending troops to crush this upstart rebellion. Together first with blacks, then with *llaneros* (cowboys) of the Venezuelan flood plains, Spanish forces defeated colonial troops under Francisco de Miranda. Bolívar himself managed to escape to New Granada. In 1813 he returned to Venezuela and won a series of startling military victories, triumphs that earned him the title of "the Liberator."

Events in Europe again intruded. In 1814 Ferdinand VII returned to the Spanish throne, annulled the liberal constitution of 1812 and restored himself in an absolute monarchy. Many creoles concluded that since the king was back there was no reason to continue their mobilization.

Bolívar now saw his men and munitions dwindle. After a series of defeats he was obliged in 1814 to flee again to New Granada and then to the English island of Jamaica. He hoped that Latin America might become a single nation, but knew the odds were low. Here he was much influenced by the recent failures to establish republican government in Venezuela. Republican democracy "is overperfect, and it demands political virtues and talents far superior to our own. For the same reason, I reject a monarchy that is part aristocracy and part democracy although with such a government England has achieved much fortune and splendor." So Bolívar concluded: "Do not adopt the best system of government, but the one which is most likely to succeed."

In New Spain events took a different course. In 1808 *peninsulares* (rather than creoles) ousted the viceroy José de Iturrigaray, and promptly recognized the Regency in Seville. Mexico City was firmly in royalist hands until 1821.

The provinces of New Spain, particularly north of the capital, were another story. By 1810 a group of prominent creoles, including a priest named Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, were planning to seize authority in Ferdinand's name. When the plot was discovered, Hidalgo decided to act. On September 16, 1810, in the little town of Dolores, he gave an impassioned call to arms. And, curiously, it was not the local notables who rallied, but rather the long-suffering mixed-bloods and Indians. They flocked to the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe, whom they had long ago appropriated as their own. This "colored plebe" now formed a massive, angry, undisciplined army—"a horde," in the eyes of the startled creole elite.

Hidalgo's men stormed into the city of Guanajuato, where they mas-

sacred 500 Spanish soldiers in an all-out assault on the municipal granary. After looting freely, they headed toward Mexico City. Hidalgo struggled to maintain control.

By November 1810 Hidalgo was on the outskirts of Mexico City with about 50,000 men in arms. In a decision that has prompted debate and speculation ever since, he then pulled back from the city. Surely he could have taken the capital. Why did he withdraw? Was he afraid of his own following? Instead Hidalgo moved north. After a defeat near Guadalajara in early 1811 he went on to Coahuila where he was captured and subsequently executed by a firing squad at Chihuahua.

Leadership now passed to José María Morelos, another priest. Like Hidalgo, Morelos supported the abolition of Indian tribute and slavery, and even wanted agrarian reform. The latter was an explosive issue among the colonial elite. He insisted, too, that citizens had the right to choose their own form of government. Ultimately, Morelos envisioned "a new government, by which all inhabitants, except *peninsulares*, would no longer be designated as Indians, mulattoes, or castas, but all would be known as Americans." Thus Morelos combined nationalism with a commitment to social and racial equality.

In 1813 the Congress of Chilpancingo declared Mexico's independence from Spain (although it is September 16, the anniversary of Hidalgo's speech, that is celebrated as the country's independence day). The congress also decreed that slavery should be abolished and that Roman Catholicism should be the state religion. The constitution, adopted the following year, affirmed the ideal of popular sovereignty, created a system of indirect elections, and designed a powerful legislature alongside a weak three-person executive.

Meanwhile the Spanish were winning military victories. One of the Spanish commanders was the young Agustín Iturbide, later to play a central role in Mexican independence. In 1815 Morelos was captured, tried (by the Inquisition as well as by secular authorities), and executed. Others continued to fight for the cause, but the Spaniards now held the upper hand.

Thus ended the first phase of the Spanish American independence movements. New Spain's Morelos and Hidalgo were both dead. Bolívar languished in exile in Jamaica. The junta in the Río de la Plata struggled to maintain unity and had yet to call for independence. By 1815, with Ferdinand back on the throne, the Spanish crown appeared to have snuffed out its colonial rebellion.

Achieving Independence

The Spanish military advantage in South America did not last long. In 1816 Bolívar returned to Venezuela and began duplicating his earlier victories. But now he had allied with José Antonio Páez, the brilliant leader of the fearless *llaneros* who had earlier fought for the royalists.

Now Páez was fighting for independence from Spain. Bolívar's cause was further bolstered by the arrival of reinforcements from England, which by 1819 numbered over 4000. Thus strengthened, Bolívar established firm control of Venezuela by early 1819.

After defeating Spanish forces in New Granada, Bolívar attempted in 1821 to create a new state of Gran Colombia, uniting Venezuela, New Granada, and Ecuador. It gained little support, so Bolívar marched southward, hunting for more royalists and Spaniards to defeat.

Meanwhile, José de San Martín was conducting an extraordinary military campaign in the south. The son of a Spanish officer, born on the northern frontier of present-day Argentina, he began a military career at the age of eleven. In 1812 he offered his services to the junta in Buenos Aires, having decided in favor of independence for the colonies. A soldier by training and outlook, he did not have the political acumen of Bolívar or the social commitment of Morelos, but he was a skillful military strategist.

As commander of the rebel forces, San Martín was ready by early 1817 to attempt one of the most daring exploits of this era: leading an army of 5000 across the Andes for a surprise attack on royalist troops in Chile. He caught the Spaniards completely off guard, won a major victory in the battle of Chacabuco, and triumphantly entered the city of Santiago. San Martín now prepared for the next step in his campaign, the liberation of Peru.

By 1820 San Martín reached the Peruvian coast. Lima was even more monarchist than Mexico City. As the capital of a major viceroyalty, the city had received numerous favors and privileges from the crown. Although the elevation of Buenos Aires to a viceroyalty in the Bourbon era had hurt Lima economically, its monarchist sentiment was still strong. Creoles and *peninsulares* both tended to favor the continuation of Ferdinand VII's rule. San Martín withheld his attack, noting: "I do not seek military glory, nor am I ambitious for the title of conqueror of Peru: I only wish to free it from oppression. What good would Lima do me if its inhabitants were hostile politically?"

Here, too, radical change in Spain catalyzed events. When Ferdinand VII suddenly endorsed the liberal constitution of 1812, the turnabout stunned his Lima supporters. They were especially distressed over the abolition of the Inquisition and the challenge to the dignity of priests. Many could accept limitations on monarchical authority, but not on the role and power of the church.

This turn of events in Spain drastically altered the climate of opinion in Mexico City and Lima. Independence from Spain was no longer a radical or even a liberal cause. Now it was a *conservative* goal, a means of upholding traditional values and social codes. As if acknowledging this fact, the *cabildo* of Lima invited San Martín to enter the city in mid-1821. On July 28, he formally proclaimed the independence of Peru.

After further skirmishes with royalist troops San Martín went to Ec-

cuador for a historic meeting with Simón Bolívar. Exactly what happened there has never been established. Bolívar may have set the tone when he offered a toast "to the two greatest men in America, General San Martín and himself." Apparently Bolívar rejected San Martín's proposal for a monarchy in Peru, insisted on the union of Gran Colombia, and declined San Martín's offer to serve under his command. In any case, San Martín then resigned all his offices and soon went to Europe, where he died in 1850.

In late 1823 Bolívar moved to Peru, where the Spaniards still maintained an imposing force. In 1824 the royalists were decisively defeated by colonial troops in the battle of Ayacucho. In 1825 Bolívar entered Upper Peru (present-day Bolivia) in the hope that Peru and Upper Peru might form a single nation, but he was too late. The regional leaders of Upper Peru were set on creating their own republic. They promptly did so, naming it for Bolívar and making him president for life.

After returning to Lima, Bolívar went on to Gran Colombia, hoping to patch up the failing union. By now he had grown bitter and vindictive, upset that his dreams had failed to materialize. In 1830 both Venezuela and Ecuador withdrew from Gran Colombia. Suffering from tuberculosis, Bolívar looked back in despair. "America," he said, "America is ungovernable. Those who have served the revolution have plowed the sea." On December 17, at the age of only forty-seven, the Liberator died of tuberculosis.

In Mexico the defeat of Morelos in 1815 stalled the independence movement—until Ferdinand VII declared allegiance to the constitution of 1812, thus pushing prosperous and prominent creoles to the side of independence. The cause was led by the same Agustín de Iturbide who had led the royalists against Morelos.

The opportunistic Iturbide persuaded the viceroy to give him command of royalist forces in the south. He then marched against a rebel leader with whom he immediately struck an alliance—for the sake of independence. In 1821 he issued a call for three "guarantees": of religion (the Catholic faith to be the official creed), of independence (presumably a monarchy), and union (fair treatment for creoles and *peninsulares* alike). Iturbide took Mexico City and established an empire—with himself, of course, as emperor. It lasted only two years.

In Central America the landed creole class became as worried about liberal dominance in Spain as had been their counterparts in Mexico. In 1822 the Central American landowners decided to cast their lot with Iturbide's empire and announced their annexation to royalist Mexico. When Iturbide abdicated in 1823, the modern-day Central American states, from Guatemala to Costa Rica (excluding Panama) became the independent United Provinces of Central America.

The Brazilian Path to Independence

Independence came to Brazil in a manner very different from that of Spanish America. That was partly due to the fact that Brazil was by 1800 far more populous and prosperous than the tiny mother country. By contrast, no single Spanish colonial territory equalled metropolitan Spain in economic or political power. When the colonials proclaimed independence, Spain fought back doggedly and Spanish Americans grew to hate the crown. The Portuguese, on the other hand, did not even have the military power to stop the Brazilians' move toward political autonomy.

The context of Brazilian independence pointed up another important difference. When the Napoleonic army invaded Iberia in November 1807 the entire Portuguese court was able to flee to Brazil, thanks to the British royal navy.

Upon arriving in early 1808, the Portuguese court found a colony which had no printing press, no academic faculties, and no commerce, save with the mother country. The newly arrived Prince Regent and later Dom João VI promptly decreed the end of Portugal's commercial monopoly by opening Brazil's ports. His logic was obvious. Since Napoleon now controlled Portugal, the exiled Portuguese monarch could only continue to benefit from Brazil's foreign trade if the formerly exclusive link with Lisbon was severed. The prime beneficiaries were the British, who had, after all, brought the Braganza family and its retinue to Brazil.

Britain gained privileged access to Brazil in 1810 by official, fifteen-year agreements which: (1) gave Britain the lowest tariff (even lower than Portugal!) on goods entering Brazil; (2) committed the Portuguese crown to the gradual abolition of the African slave trade; and (3) guaranteed British subjects in Brazil the right of trial by British-named judges. These treaties soon caused deep resentment among the Brazilian elite.

The exiled Portuguese monarch now set about creating new institutions, such as a national library, a national museum, and a botanical garden, all in Rio. A French artistic mission was requested to speed professionalization in architecture, painting, and sculpture.

The crown was also sought to attract foreign immigrants to Brazil. It had very limited success, and large-scale European immigration was not to begin until the late 1880s. There was a push to promote textile manufacture, including repeal of the 1785 royal decree that banned all industry. But such measures could not get at the deeper causes of Brazil's economic backwardness: lack of capital, technology, skilled labor, and a significant domestic market.

In late 1808 French troops were driven from Portugal, and an assembly (*Cortes Gerais*) was called to write a new constitution. The newly victorious Portuguese liberals, interested in exploiting Brazil's wealth, pressed for the return of the royal court to Portugal. Dom João soon

did return to Lisbon, leaving his son Dom Pedro behind in Brazil as the Prince Regent of the Combined Kingdoms.

Attention now focused on the *Cortes Gerais*, which approved measures that would have restored Lisbon's royal trade monopoly in Brazil by setting lower tariffs for imports arriving in Portuguese vessels and/or trans-shipped from Portugal. The *Cortes* also approved measures returning the individual Brazilian provinces to direct and separate rule from Lisbon, thereby undermining the central rule created in Rio de Janeiro after 1808. However "liberal" the Portuguese Liberals were in Portugal, they abhorred the move toward autonomy of their American "co-kingdom."

The landowners and urban professionals who constituted the Brazilian elite had been preparing to confront the Portuguese recolonizers. Their passionate rhetoric overflowed the fledgling Rio press. They wanted the Prince regent, Dom Pedro, to refuse to return to Lisbon. By June 1822 Dom Pedro had decided to convoke a Constituent Assembly in Brazil. The *Cortes* in Lisbon then demanded the Prince Regent's immediate return and took new steps to reverse Brazil's growing autonomy. The Brazilian plantation owners' pressure on Dom Pedro now paid off: On January 9, 1822, in São Paulo, he defied the summons of the *Cortes*. "I shall remain!" he cried, giving birth to the only durable independent monarchy in modern Latin American history.

To win their independence the Brazilians had to fight, but not on the scale of the Spanish Americans. The fiercest combat came in Bahia, on the northeastern coast, and Grão Pará, in the eastern Amazon valley. In Bahia a junta proclaimed loyalty to Portugal and fought off the local pro-independence rebels. In 1823 the rebels triumphed, aided by Admiral Cochrane, one of the English military officers hired to give the rebel governments experienced help in combat. Another mercenary, Admiral Grenfell, led the victory over a similar loyalist junta in Grão Pará. His forces then mopped up a local rebel wing that was demanding more radical social change. In Brazil, as in Mexico, the elite was alert to repress any fundamental challenge to the socioeconomic establishment.

Portugal's military weakness partly explains why Brazil's struggle for independence proved less bloody than Spanish America's. Equally important, the Brazilian rebels did not split over the issue of republicanism because, with a few exceptions, the elite preferred a monarchy to a republic. Thanks to the exile of the court, the Brazilians could opt for an independent monarchy. Brazil thus entered independence with a unique legacy. Not least important, Brazilians did not associate independence with military prowess: no Brazilian Simón Bolívar or San Martín arose to dominate the patriotic imagination.

The Aftermath of Independence, 1830–1850

The new Spanish American republics faced formidable problems as they embarked on independence in the 1820s. The physical violence of the wars wrought economic disaster. The destruction probably reached its highest point in Venezuela, where *guerra a muerte* ("war to the death") took a heavy toll of human life and reduced the livestock population by more than one half between 1810 and 1830. The early phases of the Mexican wars, particularly during the campaigns of Hidalgo and Morelos, took a similar toll on people and property. Uruguay, where José Artigas led bands of gaucho rebels against well-entrenched Spanish troops, also suffered grave losses. During the second phase of the movement the theater of operations shifted to other areas, especially Peru, where the fighting appears to have been less intensive than before—but the burden of supporting large armies was nevertheless heavy. The civilian labor force was decimated and, throughout the continent, capital was scarce.

The economies of the new nations were overwhelmingly based on agriculture and mining. This was equally true of most of the world outside West Europe. Yet, Latin America differed from most of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia in that over the past two and a half centuries it had been partially brought into the world trading economy dominated by Europe. It was the exportable surplus from Latin American agricultural and mining production that linked it to the North Atlantic economy. With the creation of separate countries this basic economic structure remained intact almost everywhere, slowly to be modified in succeeding decades.

Trade had come to an almost complete standstill between 1810 and 1826. Commerce with Spain had stopped, and trade among the former colonies was also greatly reduced. Northwest Argentina, for instance, suffered from the loss of trade with Peru. Montevideo, still under Spanish control, could no longer function as a commercial entrepôt. Guerrilla warfare in New Spain and other areas made transport difficult and dangerous. Communications systems within and between the former colonies, never much favored by the Spaniards, fell into near-total disuse.

There was also the factor of postindependence regional conflict within major areas of Spanish and Portuguese America. Mexico was wracked by battles which kept that country divided and without effective national direction before 1850. Brazil, at the same time, collapsed into a series of regionalist revolts that left the monarchy effectively neutralized until the 1840s. And in the Río de la Plata region the fierce rivalry between the province of Buenos Aires and the rest of the country was resolved by the dictatorship of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1829–52). Everywhere the move was to assert economic autonomy by locality or region. That meant fragmentation. In Spanish America it meant that

Bolívar's dream would be buried under the advance of nationalism. One after another of the new republics claimed economic independence. They would soon find the world market a sobering test.

In many parts of Spanish America the new governments had to deal with public debts, even before they could attempt to rebuild their economies. To sustain the fighting, to equip the armies, the insurgent regimes frequently had to obtain or borrow funds. Tax collection, to put it mildly, was difficult. As a result, the national treasuries were empty and government authorities had to turn elsewhere for funds. A prime source was Britain, where bankers supported the regimes with loans—particularly in Argentina, Chile, Peru, and Mexico. Thus the new governments immediately ran up debts to foreign lenders. Managing the foreign debt has remained, down to our own day, a major problem for Latin American governments.

Another area in which foreign capital invested was the African slave trade, which continued on a large scale to Brazil (until 1850) and Cuba (until 1865). Both had an export-oriented agriculture that made slave labor profitable when it was being abolished elsewhere in the western hemisphere.

The years between 1830 and 1850 saw Latin America's exports to the North Atlantic economy increase. Key primary products were wheat and nitrates from Chile, tobacco from Colombia, hides, salted beef, and wool from Argentina, guano from Peru, sugar from Cuba, coffee from Brazil, and cacao from Venezuela. These same countries were heavily importing textiles and consumer goods, thereby often throwing local artisan producers out of work. It was the industrial producers in West Europe (especially Britain) competing against the small-scale Latin American producers who had survived from the colonial era. The result was a foregone conclusion.

This was all part of free trade, the dogma that had arrived in Latin America with Enlightenment philosophy and the postindependence commitment to the principles of liberalism. Applying this dogma was the most significant economic policy decision in nineteenth century Latin America. Along with a rapid inflow of foreign (primarily European) imports came a small cadre of foreign merchants, especially British. They become key figures throughout Latin America in the import of goods and services, the latter including shipping, insurance, and financing.

Should we be surprised that manufactured goods from Europe steadily displaced domestic products? Wasn't it inevitable that Europe's greater technology and economies of scale would prevail? Transportation costs should have helped protect local producers, but the supposed (or genuine) superiority of foreign-made goods posed a serious dilemma soon after independence and has continued down to today. Latin American economies often failed to make their own industry truly competitive. Why? Lack of a sufficient market was certainly a factor. But equally

important was the system of values and the social hierarchy which made it possible for the elite to perpetuate a society based on an agrarian-oriented economy.

The economic record of the 1830–50 period is therefore one of slow adaptation to the world economy. Latin America was on the fringes of the North Atlantic economy, which was to expand rapidly in the nineteenth century. Both research and data on the economic history of this era are distressingly scarce—but it appears, on the basis of evidence available, that Latin America's republics took a passive stance. The dynamism came from outside.

The creation and maintenance of large armies in most Latin American republics also crucially affected the social order, because they created a channel for careers based on talent. As the fighting intensified and the stakes increased, creole rebel leaders had to recruit soldiers and commanders on ability, rather than on skin color or social status. Thus José Antonio Páez, a rough-hewn *mestizo*, became a valued military leader in Venezuela. In Mexico José María Morelos was *mestizo*. Other examples abound. Military prowess became a means by which members of marginal groups could gain social recognition. None of the newly independent governments retained legal disabilities for *mestizos* or other mixed-bloods, a fact which helped to blur once-rigid social lines.

But if the wars opened a social avenue for ambitious *mestizos* and others, it was limited. Economic resources, particularly land, remained in the hands of traditional creole families. Commerce was modest in the years right after the fighting, and many merchant families retained their control of trade. Industry barely existed. As a result, there was only one way for men of modest origin to get ahead: through the military, and from there into politics.

This social dynamic helps explain much of the political turbulence in Spanish America between the 1820s and 1850. The new republics finished the wars with large military establishments, often led by *mestizos* who had no alternative careers. To get ahead they had to stay in the army—or move into government. In the meantime, creole landowners, in many parts of the continent, did not compete for political power. They withdrew to their haciendas, which could function as self-sufficient units, and tried to increase their landholdings. In effect they left government to the soldiers and to the bosses known as *caudillos*, partly because political power did not seem worth the trouble. Later in the nineteenth century, when governmental authority became a valued commodity, *hacendados* and *estancieros* came off their lands and took over.

So governments were toppled and run by *caudillos*, often soldiers (or ex-soldiers) who took power by force. Once in the presidential office, they usually found that sparse treasuries offered little reward for their followers. Their bands then dispersed, and new *caudillos* would come forward with new bands of followers. The governments did not have

strong finances and as a result were highly vulnerable to being overthrown. From the 1820s until mid-century, political authority in Spanish America was weak; the state, as a central institution, did not wield much autonomous strength.

During this era another current emerged, a move to consolidate and centralize power. It usually came out in attempted dictatorships, not popular consensus. The first two decades after independence thus saw the appearance of real or would-be "strong men," like Diego Portales in Chile and Juan Manuel de Rosas in Argentina, who sought to impose their will on their countries, thereby strengthening the role of the state. The struggle between locally based power and the centralizers—military or civilian—became a basic theme in the political life of the new nations.

In the Wars of Independence opened narrow channels for *mestizos* and middle-range groups in Spanish America, they did very little for the Indian masses. In general, Indians had been ambiguous about the struggle: though they sided with Hidalgo or stayed neutral in Mexico, they supported royalists in southern Chile, and in Peru and Colombia they fought on both sides. The leaders of the new republics therefore did not feel indebted to the Indians. More important, the Indians now lost the special protection of caste status they had enjoyed under Spanish colonial law. Whatever its drawbacks, that status had been an oft-used refuge for the Indians. They also lost their communal lands (which had been inalienable) and were theoretically forced into the competitive market so praised by nineteenth century liberals. In fact, they became even more isolated and poverty-stricken.

Independence left a somewhat different social legacy for Brazil. Instead of *displacing* a ruling elite, as happened in Spanish America, Brazil *acquired* a ruling elite: the Portuguese crown and its attendants. Brazil also acquired a monarchy that would last until 1889. But these political trends had little effect on the black slaves who labored on sugar plantations and elsewhere in the economy. In fact, the institution of slavery was not abolished at independence or by the 1850s, as in Spanish America (except for Cuba and Puerto Rico) and it would later become a central issue in Brazilian politics. In Brazil, as in other new nations, independence did not change life much for the poorest segments of the population.

The Pull of the International Economy, 1850–1880s

After 1850 Latin America moved from the postindependence consolidation phase to begin laying the foundations for its greater integration into the world economy. In political terms this required governments ready to create the infrastructure needed to export key primary products, such as guano from Peru, coffee from Brazil, henequen from Mexico, and sugar from the Caribbean. As the era of the *caudillo* gave

way to the era of the administrators, the prime task was national unification.

The independent republics moved to strengthen the use of two elements in their economies: land and labor. Most governments sought to put land into the hands of entrepreneurs who would invest and make it bear fruit. In Brazil and Mexico that meant government pressure to sell off government (previously crown) land. The losers in Mexico and the Andes were the Indians, but such action could also hit white or *mestizo* owners who had failed to develop their lands.

To provide labor, the Latin American elites in several countries hoped for immigration from Europe. These years saw repeated proposals to attract European immigrants, who would supposedly contribute to national development with little further investment. In fact, the elite—in countries like Argentina and Brazil—soon found that immigration was a sensitive issue, both at home and in the countries sending the migrants. Before 1880 immigration was nowhere a major factor in increasing the labor force. But the strong elite impulse to recruit migrants demonstrated their belief that their countries' economic and social salvation was to be found in Europe. As will become apparent, this reflected Latin American doubts about their countries' viability.

The mid-nineteenth century also saw an effort to improve Latin America's transportation network. What was needed were railroads, canals, docks, and roads. Since the sixteenth century, cargo (including people) had traveled by pack-mule or burro. In only a few areas did navigable rivers or lakes offer an alternative. By mid-century Latin America was the target for numerous proposals to build railroads. The impetus usually came from foreigners, especially British and North American. But few railways were actually built before the 1880s, so the transportation networks remained about as bad as they had been on the eve of independence.

The rhythm of economic activity quickened, nonetheless, throughout Latin America after 1850. The stimulus came primarily from the dynamic economies of North America and West Europe, led by Britain. As Europe plunged ever more deeply into industrialization, it needed increasing imports of food, such as sugar, beef, grain, as well as primary commodities such as guano and nitrate fertilizers, wool, and industrial metals. These were the decades when economic ties—trade, investment, financing, technology, transfer, migration—deepened between Europe and Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Brazil, and Cuba (even though still a Spanish colony). By 1880 the stage was set for even greater economic expansion.

The economic upturn after 1850 had several important limitations, however. First, it resulted in very little growth of domestic industry. The rising Latin American need for metal tools, small machines, instruments, construction equipment, weapons, and similar light industrialized goods, was primarily met from Europe, not from home-country

shops or factories. The trend was hardly surprising. The British, French, or U.S. products were of better quality than anything produced at home, although that advantage could have been narrowed if the domestic producers had had enough time and a sufficient market to upgrade quality. But that would have required government protection either through high tariffs or outright import prohibitions. No Latin American government was prepared or able to take such a step in these decades.

The reasons were several. First, imported products were superior and were thus strongly preferred by local consumers; second, most governments lived off tariff revenues, which tough protectionism would have cut off; third, the economically powerful groups, such as the landowners and cattlemen, were strongly committed to free trade, which their European customers preached as the only true road to prosperity; finally, Latin American merchants, who were strategically located in the largest cities, had an obvious stake in fighting protection. That motive was even greater when the merchant was a foreigner (usually British or French), as happened frequently by mid-century. Not surprisingly, the Latin American advocates of protectionism or state-aided industry could make little headway.

A second limitation on economic expansion between 1850 and 1880 was its reinforcement of the highly stratified socioeconomic structure inherited from the independence era: a thin elite at the top, a slightly wider "middle" group, and the other 90 percent or so at the bottom. The continued focus on agro-ranching and mining meant that most laborers would continue under working conditions and rates of pay that could never move them toward becoming the consumers that a "developed" economy both produces and needs.

Latin America was being pulled farther into the international economy in a way that would sharply limit its economic development. The nature of that economic link has continued to trouble Latin Americans for the last century, and will be a recurrent theme in the rest of this book.