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Nationality, Nationalism, and Supranationalism in the Writings of Simón Bolívar

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ANY new discussion of more or less any feature of Simón Bolívar's life or thought runs the inevitable risk of covering ground whose most intimate topography has long since been scrutinized with care by generations of scholars. So self-evidently important was the Liberator's career to the course of Latin American history—and no invocation of "structures," or "conjunctures," or even "vast impersonal forces" can really diminish that importance—that legions of historians, good and bad, have devoted themselves with wholehearted passion to the reconstruction of its every detail. In the case of Spanish American writers, patriotic *pietas* has produced some memorable scholarship as well as examples of exaggerated hero-worship or tedious *detallismo*. The effort has been prodigious.

What, in fact, is there really left to say about Bolívar? The commemoration of his bicentenary offers an opportunity to reexamine some of the main themes of his career and to probe, through a perusal of his copious writings, the more persistent fixed ideas that exercised his extraordinarily vigorous mind. That it *was* an unusual mind—forcefully imaginative as well as acutely perceptive—is beyond dispute. Daniel O'Leary believed that "the force and activity of his imagination tormented him."[1] Even Salvador de Madariaga, a by no means sympathetic biographer, admits the quality of "supreme intelligence" to be found in Bolívar's prolific correspondence.[2] This is not to say, however, that Bolívar was a systematic thinker: his writings, the great bulk of which were in epistolary form, reflect brilliant intuitions rather than deeply elaborate theoretical constructions. This is certainly the case with his views on the focus of this present essay, incipient nationalism and supranationalism. This topic was,

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1. R. A. Humphreys, ed., *The "Detached Recollections" of General D. F. O'Leary* (London, 1969), p. 11.

2. Salvador de Madariaga, *Bolívar* (London, 1952), p. 472.

of course, but one aspect of Bolívar's political thought, other features of which tended to be set out in more organized form in his writings.

It borders on the platitudinous, no doubt, to say that any anticolonial movement must ipso facto base its claims on the principle of preexisting (or at least potential) *nationality*. Without recourse to some such principle, the very demand for independence is a logical absurdity. The Spanish American revolutionaries of the wars of independence, by styling themselves "patriots," were well aware of this. National independence, however, is invariably influenced by its timing in history, not least in the sphere of ideological influences, foreign models of national organization, and so on. The breakdown of the Spanish American empire occurred at a time when discernibly "modern" types of nationalism were becoming established in Europe, and soon after the thirteen English colonies of North America had given striking proof that it was possible to *create* a new national polity out of an anticolonial struggle.

The modern European nation-state, as Heinz Lubasz reminds us, emerged "in the same area and during the same period as did modern capitalism, modern science and philosophy, and that specifically modern form of Christianity, Protestantism."[3] From this viewpoint, the emergence of new nation-states in Latin America was bound to be somewhat problematic; none of the phenomena mentioned by Lubasz was especially prominent in the Latin America of 1810. This does not mean, of course, that the Spanish colonial era had not laid the basis for independent nationhood *of a kind*. The geographical distribution (and isolation) of the main nuclei of Spanish settlement, the stubborn Hispanic propensity to localism (or "cantonalism," as it has sometimes been called), and, in the closing decades of empire, the reception of Enlightenment thought and the ideas of the United States and French revolutions—all these have been seen by most scholars as having contributed not merely to the gestation of independence itself, but also to the crystallization of a series of new Spanish American nationalities in its aftermath. These were certainly less than fully fledged.

The precise way in which incipient nationalism developed in later colonial times undoubtedly merits closer study than it has so far received,[4] but there is every reason to doubt that awareness of potential nationality was widely generalized among the colonial population. In his valuable assessment of the late colonial scene, John Lynch is surely correct in assuming that "in so far as there was a [potential] nation, it was

3. Heinz Lubasz, *The Development of the Modern State* (New York, 1964), pp. 1–2.

4. For an excellent and concise survey, see John Lynch, *The Spanish American Revolutions 1808–1826* (New York, 1973), pp. 24–36.

a creole nation,"[5] and that the Indians, Blacks, and mixed castes who made up the vast majority of Latin Americans at that period did not share a real sense of belonging to it. Even among creoles, it has to be added, there is no reason whatever to suppose that the promoters of independence were more than a minority in 1810; the record of the wars of independence themselves is entirely eloquent in this respect. The ideal of separate nationhood spread, to be sure, as the struggle unfolded; few would claim that it was dominant or in any sense universal at the outset.

Thus, Bolívar and his associates were always conscious, during their campaigns, of the importance of "opinion,"[6] the strength of which, as Bolívar himself pointed out in the Jamaica Letter, had held the Spanish empire together for so long. Nationalism (and it is an important point to remember) was not, therefore, a "natural" development in Spanish America in the way it may have been in Europe; it had to be induced, nurtured, fostered. "The opinion of America," wrote Bolívar in the dark hours of 1815, "is still not settled; although all thinking people are for independence, the general mass still remains ignorant of its rights and interests."[7] It was, in fact, the tenacity and heroism of the liberators, combined with the counterproductive policies of Spain after 1814, that finally persuaded the bulk of creole opinion to favor separate nationhood as the best course, after which the apparatus of nationality (flags, coats of arms, national anthems, and so forth) was adopted with alacrity throughout Spanish America.

The precise form the new nations were to take, how many of them there were to be, and whether the shattered unity of imperial times could be reconstructed on some new national or supranational basis—these questions were never far from Bolívar's mind and constitute an important dimension in his thought. He was not the only creole who pondered such matters. In some ways, his ideas can be seen to have reflected a fairly standard creole viewpoint, while in others the reach of his brilliant mind far exceeded the unique grasp on affairs which he enjoyed as the supreme actor in the great drama of independence. It is to an examination of Bolívar's principal ideas on these topics—with reference wherever possible to his own words—that the present article is devoted. Let us first

5. Ibid., p. 25.

6. See, on this point, Bolívar's remarks about the 1817–18 campaigns as recorded by Col. Luis Perú de Lacroix in his *Diario de Bucaramanga* (Bogotá, 1945), pp. 138–139.

7. To Maxwell Hyslop, May 19, 1815. Simón Bolívar, *Obras Completas,* ed. by Vicente Lecuna and Esther Barret de Nazarís, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Havana, 1950), I, 133. This collection, from which nearly all quotations from Bolívar in this article are drawn, remains the most accessible comprehensive edition of his writings, pending completion of the vast *Escritos del Libertador* project. It is cited hereinafter as *OC*. All translations from Spanish are the author's.

see whether it is possible to identify his attitude toward the question of nationality and the form his own nationalism took.

Bolivarian Nationalism

"Legislators!"—Bolívar is addressing (on paper anyway) the founding fathers of Bolivia in 1826—"On seeing the new Bolivian Nation proclaimed, what generous and sublime considerations must fill your souls!"[8] The note is entirely typical. Bolívar never doubted that the purpose of independence was the creation of new nations, or that this was an implicitly noble cause in itself. Both in the Jamaica Letter and in the Angostura Address (the two classic documents of the Bolivarian corpus) he drew his famous, if not altogether accurate, parallel between the breakdown of Spain's American empire and the fall of Rome, and the consequential rise, in both cases, of successor-nations.[9] Thus the automatic framework for Spanish America's postrevolutionary political systems (to whose shape and form, as we know, he devoted much of his most coherent political thought) was to be the *nation-state.* The concept makes an inevitably frequent appearance in Bolivarian rhetoric. In Caracas, at the conclusion of the Campaña Admirable in 1813, he proclaimed that the states of Venezuela were "once again free and independent, and raised once more to the rank of Nation."[10] New Granada, he announced in 1815, "appears before the world in the majestic attitude of a nation."[11] In the difficult months of Haitian exile, he never lost sight of this goal. "Let us form a *patria* at any cost," he wrote to Luis Brion, "and everything else will be tolerable."[12] With patriot armies once again in the field, he declared that peace with Spain could only be achieved if Spain recognized Venezuela as "a Free, Independent and Sovereign Nation."[13] To cite

8. Discurso del Libertador al Congreso Constituyente de Bolivia, Lima, May 25, 1826, *OC*, III, 770.

9. *OC*, I, 164 and III, 676. Bolívar's view that the *membra disjecta* of the Roman empire reconstituted their "former nations" is, of course, hardly a true account of what happened.

10. Proclama, Aug. 8, 1813, *OC*, III, 562.

11. Discurso pronunciado el 13 de enero de 1815 en Bogotá con motivo de la incorporación de Cundinamarca a las Provincias Unidas, *OC*, III, 621.

12. To Luis Brion, Jan. 2, 1816, *OC*, I, 188. The word *patria* is left in Spanish in this article. There is no really adequate English translation: "fatherland" has heavy Teutonic associations; "motherland" is best reserved for *madre patria*; "homeland" is doubtless the most accurate rendering, but lacks the resonance which *patria* has in Spanish. The term is not always an exact equivalent of "nation" as it can also be used to describe a narrower locality. After 1819 Bolívar applied the word to both Colombia and Venezuela (the latter then a section of the former), but as far as I can ascertain from a perusal of his correspondence, never thereafter used the word "nation" for Venezuela.

13. Declaración de la República de Venezuela, Nov. 20, 1818, Vicente Lecuna, ed., *Decretos del Libertador*, 3 vols. (Caracas, 1961), I, 139.

further examples would be to labor an obvious point unnecessarily. After 1819, as we shall see, Bolívar transferred his fundamental national allegiance to the newly created republic of Colombia—"this nascent nation," as he described it in 1821.[14] He accepted, and indeed assumed, that other sections of the dissolving Spanish empire were passing through transitions to nationhood similar to those in which he himself was engaged. Peru, so he flattered San Martín in 1821, was "the third *patria* which owes its existence to you."[15] And to Bernardo O'Higgins in distant Chile he wrote: "You are the man to whom that beautiful nation will owe, to remotest posterity, its political creation."[16]

Allegiance to, and positive affection for, the nation was, for Bolívar, the indispensable concomitant of the true citizen's obedience to the institutions of the state. As he said at Angostura, "a national spirit is required as the basis for a stable government."[17] Indeed, the *patria* had a natural claim on its inhabitants: fulfillment of "the duty of loving their *patria*," he claimed in 1813, was the reason why Venezuelans were being persecuted by Spaniards.[18] In an often quoted letter to General Santa Cruz (October 1826) Bolívar expressed this patriotic faith in lyrical tones: "our native soil . . . arouses tender feelings and delightful memories; it was the setting of our innocence and first loves, of our first sensations and of everything that has made us. What claims on love and dedication could be greater?"[19] In 1817, writing to friends who were living in exile, the Liberator urged: "Come, dear friends, and die for your country or at least die *in* it . . . . I tell you . . . it is preferable to live for the *patria*, even in chains, than to exist in sad inactivity outside it."[20] Occasionally, Bolívar was spurred to indignation when the patriotic enthusiasm of his followers was impugned. When, in 1818, the United States agent in Venezuela took an evidently flippant attitude toward certain minor operations of the patriot army, he was stiffly reproved: "These enterprises," wrote Bolívar, "were guided by love of the *patria* and of glory; far from being laughable, they merit the admiration and applause of all who have a *patria* and who love their liberty."[21] The sincerity of Bolívar's patriotism can never be doubted. He himself set the best of possible examples.

It would be fruitless to search for a concise, academic definition of

14. Al Congreso de Colombia, May 1, 1821, *OC*, III, 715.
15. To José de San Martín, Jan. 10, 1821, *OC*, I, 524.
16. To Bernardo O'Higgins, Jan. 8, 1822, *OC*, I, 619.
17. *OC*, III, 691.
18. A los señores de la Comisión Político-militar del Supremo Gobierno de la Nueva Granada, Aug. 8, 1813, *OC*, I, 58.
19. To Andrés Santa Cruz, Oct. 26, 1826, *OC*, II, 487.
20. To the Marqués de Toro and Fernando Toro, June 27, 1817, *OC*, I, 245.
21. To B. Irvine, Oct. 7, 1818, *OC*, I, 354.

nationality in Bolívar's writings; he was not that kind of thinker. Possibly the closest he came to providing such a definition (though indirectly) was in a proclamation to his fellow Venezuelans in 1818: "You are all Venezuelans, children of the same *patria*, members of the same society, citizens of the same Republic."[22] There is a sense, in my view, in which terms such as "nation," "*patria*," "state," and "republic" were almost, if not quite, interchangeable in the Liberator's various pronouncements; he himself rarely if ever drew distinctions between such concepts. Aside from its semiautomatic acceptance of the inescapable criteria of birth and geography, Bolivarian nationalism cannot easily be viewed as a narrow or exclusive conception; it was not tied to closely defined ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious moorings.[23] The proclamation of *guerra a muerte* in 1813, or Bolívar's resonant statement two years later that "No American can be my enemy even when fighting against me under the banners of tyrants,"[24] might seem to be clear evidence to the contrary; and plainly all his pronouncements have to be judged against the background of shifting tactical circumstances. But the general drift of his ideas is in a quite opposite direction. "For us," he declared in 1821, "all are Colombians; even our invaders, when they so wish . . . ."[25] The ultimate criterion of nationality expressed here is, in fact, political in nature. Thus, Spaniards who accepted the revolution were welcomed as, in effect, new nationals. "If you want to be Colombians, you shall be Colombians," Bolívar told the Spaniards of Pasto in 1822, "because we want brothers who will increase our family."[26] Defecting Spaniards such as General Mariano Renovales were urged to attract other, like-minded Spanish officers "who might wish to adopt a free *patria* in the American hemisphere."[27] The net was spread even wider than this. As early as 1813 Bolívar issued a general invitation to foreigners to settle in Venezuela, and declared that any foreigner who fought for the country's freedom would automatically acquire citizenship.[28] (In general, and although this does not form a conspicuous strand in his thought, he was enthusiastically in favor of immigration.) Nationality, in short, was open to all who accepted certain political principles.

> For a man of honor there can only be one *patria*—and that is where citizens' rights are protected and the sacred character of

22. A los pueblos de Venezuela, Oct. 22, 1818, *OC*, III, 670.

23. Least of all religious: "His indiscretion . . . knew no bounds when he spoke of religion, which he used to ridicule in a disgusting manner." Humphreys, *"Detached Recollections" of O'Leary*, pp. 28–29.

24. To Ignacio Cavero and Maxwell Hyslop, Dec. 2, 1815, *OC*, I, 185.

25. ¡Colombianos! Apr. 17, 1821, *OC*, III, 713.

26. A los Patianos, Pastusos y Españoles, Feb. 18, 1822, *OC*, III, 723.

27. To General Mariano Renovales, May 20, 1818, *OC*, I, 287.

28. Llamamiento a los extranjeros, Aug. 16, 1813, *OC*, III, 569–570.

> humanity respected. Ours is the mother of all free and just men, without discrimination as to background or condition.[29]

It might be observed here, in passing, that the language used in this context is revealing in its own right. Bolívar's standard metaphor (insofar as he had one) for the nation-as-collection-of-people was the family, the nation-as-abstraction being assigned definitely maternal qualities. "This is the Republic of Colombia," he proclaimed in 1821; "without doubt she will find a place in your hearts, . . . for she is Mother, and all are her children."[30] "Colombia will be a tender mother to you," he informed the recalcitrant Pastusos in 1822.[31] (He also told the Pastusos that he himself would be their father.)[32]

The absence of a genuine ethnic or cultural dimension in Bolivarian nationalism is perhaps worth underlining. In Europe, this dimension developed fairly steadily during the nineteenth century. The characteristic nationalism of America—North as well as South[33]—was altogether more open and flexible. Bolívar was naturally (and sometimes uneasily) aware of the ethnic mixture that underlay Latin American life, and even suggested, in his Angostura speech, that a continuing dose of miscegenation was desirable for the future: "our fathers [are] different in their origin and blood, . . . and their skins differ visibly . . . . The blood of our citizens varies; let us mix it in order to unite it."[34] Yet there is no suggestion, in this hint of a future *raza cósmica,* that race of itself is a necessary badge of national identity. Ethnicity was in no sense the touchstone of nationality; other factors, especially political factors, counted, too. Moreover, Bolívar never really speculated at any length, as he might have done, and as later nationalists (notably in Europe) *were* to do, on distinctions of national character. In the heat of battle, to be sure, he could refer to "the magnanimous character of our nation,"[35] or to "the natural ferocity of the Spanish character,"[36] but these were rhetorical flourishes rather than analytical comments. Spaniards, he told Santander in 1824, were "stubborn for tyranny and injustice, without possessing

29. To Francisco Doña, Aug. 27, 1820, *OC,* I, 492–493.

30. A los habitantes de Coro, June 6, 1821, *OC,* III, 717.

31. See note 26 *supra.*

32. A las tropas del Rey de España, y habitantes de Pasto, July 5, 1822, *OC,* III, 724. Bolivarian metaphor could well be studied further: for a model of what can be done in this field generally, see Mary Lowenthal Felstiner, "Family Metaphors: The Language of an Independence Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (forthcoming).

33. On the incipient nationalism of the United States, see Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1945), pp. 276–325, and Max Savelle, "Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution," *American Historical Review,* 67 (1962), 901–923.

34. *OC,* III, 682–691. On this point, see J. L. Salcedo-Bastardo, *Bolívar. A Continent and its Destiny,* ed. and trans. by A. McDermott (London, 1977), pp. 100–101.

35. Proclama, Caracas, Aug. 8, 1813, *OC,* III, 562.

36. To the editor of the *Royal Gazette,* Kingston, Aug. 18, 1815, *OC,* I, 155.

these qualities in support of liberal principles."[37] It is interesting, here, to see how political considerations dominate an observation, however indirect, on "national character."

When it came to the emerging nations of America, Bolívar had little to say in this connection. The famous conspectus contained in the Jamaica Letter, for instance, is almost silent on the subject. It refers to "the character of the Mexicans" but nowhere explains what this actually is.[38] Indeed, Bolívar's assessment of the likely prospects of the different states of America is based entirely on social, political, or geographical factors—Chile's isolation, for example, or Peru's potential corruption by "gold and slaves." Bolívar's most devastating generalizations about "national character" are applied to Spanish America as a whole, are often colorfully pejorative, and invariably reflect an extremely jaundiced view of the colonial past:

> Our being has the most impure of origins: everything that preceded us is covered with the black mantle of crime. We are the abominable product of those predatory tigers who came to America to shed its blood and to interbreed with their victims before sacrificing them—afterward mixing the dubious fruit of such unions with the offspring of slaves uprooted from Africa.[39]

Those few historians who have studied the incipient creole nationalism of the independence period tend to see certain common features as manifesting themselves throughout Spanish America. The Chilean scholar Gonzalo Vial, in an interesting survey, notes three characteristics as cardinal: patriotic pride; the idealized exaltation of the Indian background as a suitable patriotic myth; and an emphasis on divisions between (and sometimes within) the new nations—a resurgence of traditional "cantonalism" accompanying the thrust toward national freedom.[40] The Mexican historian Luis González y González (confining himself to his own country's independence, though the phenomenon is certainly to be found more universally) has identified a further feature, which he labels "nationalist optimism": visions of a bright future, based on optimistic (perhaps overly optimistic) assessments of national potential in certain late colonial writings.[41]

37. To Francisco de Paula Santander, Feb. 25, 1824, *OC*, I, 927.

38. *OC*, I, 170–171.

39. To Santander, July 8, 1826, *OC*, II, 428.

40. Gonzalo Vial, "La formación de las nacionalidades hispanoamericanas como causa de la independencia," *Boletín de la Academia Chilena de Historia*, No. 75 (1966), 110–144.

41. "El optimismo nacionalista como factor de la independencia de México" in Silvio Zavala, ed., *Estudios de historiografía americana* (Mexico City, 1948), pp. 153–215. Nationalist optimism in this sense was also a feature of the early United States. For examples, see Louis L. Snyder, ed., *The Dynamics of Nationalism* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 252–263.

Bolívar's high valuation of patriotism has already been sufficiently illustrated; but he does not conform to Vial's scheme in other respects. He does not seem to have shared, to any marked extent, other creoles' mythicization of the Amerindian tradition. In part, no doubt, this can be accounted for by the absence of a "usable" Indian past in his native Venezuela. It was easier for Mexican intellectuals to glory in the Aztec record, or for their counterparts in Chile to pay homage to Araucanian resistance to Iberian oppression. Venezuela had had neither Aztecs nor Araucanians. Bolívar's vision of Indians, past or present, tended to be rather stereotyped; no serious analysis of Indian problems, no serious understanding of Indian culture, is to be found in his writings. "The Indian," he wrote in 1815, "is of so tranquil a character that all he desires is repose and solitude"[42]—hardly a remark that betrayed a close acquaintance with the real world of Indians. Though he was moved to pity by the condition of the indigenous population of the Andes, his reaction to the Inca ruins he saw on his triumphant passage through the Peruvian highlands in 1825 was strangely literary, in the manner of the "enlightened" eighteenth century:

> Everything here inspires in me high ideas and profound thoughts; . . . the monuments of stone, the grand, straight highways, the innocent customs and genuine tradition, give us witness of a social creation of which we can have no idea, no model, no copy. Peru is original in the annals of man.[43]

Nationalist optimism, however, *was* very clearly a part of Bolívar's outlook. Expressions of this in his writings are not hard to find. In the Jamaica Letter, for instance, he wrote that once freedom was attained, "we will follow a majestic course toward the great prosperity for which South America is destined."[44] With the foundation of Colombia, he proclaimed, New Granada was summoned "to a greatness and dignity which the most brilliant imagination can scarcely perceive."[45] And for San Martín's benefit he sketched the "remotest centuries" when Spanish America was to see "free and happy generations overwhelmed by all the gifts which heaven bestows on earth."[46] Undoubtedly, however, the most eloquent exposition of this theme occurs in the magnificent peroration of the Angostura Address, with its lyrically imaginative retrospect from far ahead in time, with its superbly evoked glimpse of Colombia in futurity as "the center and emporium of the human family, . . . seated on the

42. To the editor, *Royal Gazette*, Kingston, Sept. 1815, *OC*, I, 179.
43. To José Joaquín de Olmedo, Cuzco, June 27, 1825, *OC*, II, 154–155.
44. *OC*, I, 174.
45. To the Vice-president of Cundinamarca, Dec. 20, 1819, *OC*, I, 408.
46. To San Martín, June 22, 1822, *OC*, I, 650.

Throne of Liberty, clasping the scepter of Justice, crowned with Glory, displaying to the Old World the majesty of the New."[47] It is clear, however, that pronouncements such as these were more a feature of the Liberator's ascendant phase than of his later years. Somber forebodings were soon enough to replace the sanguine hopefulness of the Angostura peroration; in fact, they were never entirely absent in this earlier period. The grim despair of Bolívar's immortal propositions to Flores in November 1830—far too well known to require quotation here[48]—could hardly have been surpassed in bitter pessimism. Yet the Liberator's final disillusionment, enhanced as it was by political failure and advancing sickness, should never be taken as wholly representative of his views.

In terms of those fissiparous tendencies, which Gonzalo Vial sees as fundamental to the new creole nationalism, Bolívar's stance differed notably from that of most of his contemporaries: he vehemently opposed such tendencies. His early experience, in Venezuela's First Republic and more clearly still in New Granada during the so-called Patria Boba, gave him the most adamantine of all his political opinions. "Unity, Unity, Unity should be our motto," he said at Angostura[49]—a sentence that might well stand as the leitmotiv of his political thought.

Strongly reacting to the "federalism" that had ruined the early politics of Venezuela and New Granada, he made the creation of strong, centralist institutions the keynote of his distinctive approach to constitutional questions. But Bolívar was well aware (and became increasingly aware) of the sheer strength of regionalism in Spanish America. He accepted that each of the new nations had its own local susceptibilities and that it was ultimately impossible to override these. The point was one he came to appreciate with particular force when he left the more or less familiar terrain of Colombia and ventured into the more ambiguous lands of the South. When he told the Peruvian Congress in 1825 "I am a foreigner,"[50] he was speaking from uncomfortable experience; his earliest days in Peru had taught him that "this is not Colombia, and I am not a Peruvian."[51] The swiftness with which he acquiesced in the formation of Bolivia was in part due to a correct perception of the strength of local feelings; the Upper Peruvian provinces simply did "not wish to be Peruvian or Argentine."[52] Back in Venezuela in 1827, addressing himself to the problem of how long Sucre should continue as president of Bolivia, he advised:

47. *OC*, III, 696.
48. To Juan José Flores, Nov. 9, 1830, *OC*, III, 501–502.
49. *OC*, III, 691.
50. Contestación al Presidente del Congreso, Feb. 10, 1825, *OC*, III, 749.
51. To Santander, Sept. 11, 1823, *OC*, I, 803.
52. To Santander, May 20, 1825, *OC*, II, 134.

"In your position, I would not stay on in the South, for in the long term we will always have the defect of being Venezuelans, just as we were Colombians in Peru."[53] Newly crystallizing national sentiment (even if it was crystallizing in a relatively small segment of the population) was, therefore, something to be reckoned with; it could not easily be forgotten or ignored.

As to the political boundaries of the new nation-states, Bolívar's ideas were logical and pragmatic; they were to be "the limits of the former viceroyalties, captaincies-general, and presidencies."[54] The practical application of this principle—the principle later known as *uti possidetis, ita possideatis*—sometimes conflicted with the doctrine of popular sovereignty to which Bolívar consistently appealed in his general political philosophy. This is illustrated in the well-known cases of the annexation of Guayaquil and the creation of Bolivia. The port of Guayaquil, as part of the presidency of Quito, had been attached to the old Viceroyalty of New Granada, the territorial basis for the new nation of Colombia. Irrespective of the wishes of its inhabitants—who might conceivably have preferred affiliation with Peru or even the independence they had acquired in 1820—Guayaquil had to become Colombian: "a city on a river cannot form a nation," wrote Bolívar. "Quito cannot exist without the port . . . . Tumbes is the border with Peru, and in consequence nature has given us Guayaquil . . . . Anyway," he added candidly, "politics and war have their own laws."[55] Upper Peru, the future Bolivia, presented a similar problem. Historically the province had been dependent since 1776 on the Viceroyalty of the River Plate; its creole elite now wanted separate nationhood. Bolívar, at least for a time, and maybe not altogether sincerely, expressed aversion to allowing a new republic to form,[56] thought that Upper Peru's position exactly paralleled Quito's,[57] and told Sucre, the prime mover in the affair, that he had no wish to give the Argentines the impression of "interference in their *national business.*"[58] In other words, he did not wish to break the territorial rule he had previously enunciated so clearly.

Yet while Bolívar certainly accepted the emergence of a series of nation-states from the wreck of the Spanish empire, it seems equally

53. To Antonio José de Sucre, Caracas, June 8, 1827, *OC*, II, 632.
54. To Sucre, Feb. 21, 1825, *OC*, II, 83.
55. To José Joaquín de Olmedo, Jan. 2, 1822, *OC*, I, 612–613.
56. To Santander, Feb. 23, 1825, *OC*, II, 88.
57. To Sucre, Feb. 21, 1825, *OC*, II, 83.
58. To Sucre, May 15, 1825, *OC*, II, 131. Sucre claimed, however, that Bolívar had approved of the idea earlier: "The idea was formerly his, and he gave it to me during the campaign [of 1824]." Sucre to Santander, Apr. 23, 1825, Roberto Cortázar, ed., *Correspondencia dirigida al General Francisco de Paula Santander* (Bogotá, 1964–), XII, 467.

clear that he did not regard this as something wholly fixed, in all its details, by nature or historical precedent. Human will—his own not least—could, he felt, play a part in determining the eventual political shape of postcolonial Spanish America. In his own region, northern South America, he succeeded in fusing three potentially (and in the end actual) national units into what he hoped would become the new nation of Colombia. And over and above this, he ardently and sincerely hoped for a measure of political association among the newly independent nations of the area. In other words, his ideals went well beyond the sphere of nationalism pure and simple, and well into the sphere of what has come to be termed "supranationalism." Three distinctive ideas dominate the record here: (1) what might be called Bolívar's maximal supranationalist position, embracing a vast concept of subcontinental federation or confederation; (2) the "middle-range" supranationalism implicit in the short-lived scheme of 1826 to federate or unite the three principal republics of the Andes; and (3) the one attempt at supranational fusion which was translated, albeit briefly, into some sort of reality—the Colombian experiment. Each of these schemes merits an examination, for while Bolivarian nationalism was in some ways no more than a reflection of the common creole nationalism of the period, Bolivarian supranationalism places the Liberator in a very select company, and in territory to which most creoles were not, in the end, prepared to follow him.

Maximal Supranationalism

In the opinion of Gerhard Masur, "continentalism was more important than nationalism in Bolívar's ideological make-up."[59] For John J. Johnson, "Bolívar was an American first and a Venezuelan second."[60] Even accepting the Liberator's frequent expressions of affection for his native land (which he clearly regarded as a nation from 1810 to 1819 and as part of a larger national unit from 1819 to 1830), it is not difficult to concur in these well-considered judgments. Nationalism, for Bolívar, was never enough. Indeed, his well-known supranationalist stance has given him a definite position of prominence as one of the pioneers of "inter-Americanism," Latin American "solidarity," and even internationalism more universally. The regular invocation of his name is a sine qua non at ceremonial meetings of the Western Hemisphere republics. It is important, therefore, to disentangle historical truth from pious myth. What, in fact, were Bolívar's main ideas? As we have seen, he accepted the fact

59. Gerhard Masur, *Nationalism in Latin America* (New York, 1966), p. 26.

60. John J. Johnson, *Simón Bolívar and Spanish American Independence 1783–1830* (Princeton, 1968), p. 68.

that various new nation-states were forming in postcolonial Latin America. In the Jamaica Letter, he explicitly repudiated the idea that the New World could become "a single nation" on the logical enough grounds that "different situations, opposed interests, dissimilar characters" were simply too strong.[61]

An underlying impulse toward unity, however, even at this ultimate level, sometimes found expression in his writings. In 1815, for instance, he expressed the hope—admittedly a somewhat vague hope—that "the universal link of love should bind together the children of Columbus's hemisphere,"[62] while in his first communications with the distant revolutionaries of the River Plate he was more definite. In a message to the Argentine people in 1818, he indicated that, once victory was won, Venezuela would invite them "into a single society, so that our motto may be *Unity* in South America."[63] To Juan Martín de Pueyrredón, their leader, he wrote:

> Americans should have but a single *patria* . . . ; for our part, we shall hasten . . . to initiate the American pact, which, by forming a single body of all our republics, will reveal America to the world in an aspect of majesty and greatness unexampled among older nations. United in this way, America . . . will be able to call herself the queen of nations and the mother of republics.[64]

This was not a unique inspiration. Writing to O'Higgins in rather similar vein in January 1822, Bolívar referred to "the social pact which must form, in this hemisphere, a nation of republics."[65] Separating meaning from rhetoric in such utterances is, obviously, rather difficult, but such words can hardly be taken as implying anything other than some kind of vision of ultimate Spanish American unity. Was this, perhaps, nationalist optimism transposed to a continental scale?

Whatever the nature of this vision (and quite how far it went is impossible to divine from the evidence), Bolívar was peculiarly emphatic that some form of close association between the new nations was both desirable and essential. Here we come to another of his great fixed ideas. "From the very beginning of the revolution," he claimed in 1826, "I have known that if ever we came to form nations in South America, federation would be the strongest link which could unite them."[66] This claim was

61. *OC*, I, 172.
62. Discurso pronunciado . . . en Bogotá, Jan. 13, 1815, *OC*, III, 622.
63. Habitantes del Río de la Plata, June 12, 1818, *OC*, III, 664–665.
64. To Juan Martín Pueyrredón, June 12, 1818, *OC*, I, 294.
65. To O'Higgins, Jan. 8, 1822, *OC*, I, 619.
66. To Miguel Díaz Vélez, Apr. 6, 1826, *OC*, II, 344.

certainly correct: it has been plausibly argued that the roots of Americanism for Bolívar, as also for his former teacher Andrés Bello, are to be found in the time they spent in Francisco de Miranda's company in London in 1810.[67] But whenever and however it may have begun, it remained a constant theme—confirmed, of course, by the evident community of interest which the new states acquired in the common struggle against Spain, "the virtual pact implicit in the identity of [our] cause, principles, and interests."[68] Hence the diplomatic initiatives of 1821–22, the "federal" treaties concluded by Colombia with Peru, Chile, and Mexico, and, finally, the summoning of the Congress of Panama itself.

The precise story of these proposals and agreements is less interesting here, obviously, than the root-ideas that underlay them. The basic notion was set forth simply enough in the instructions given to Bolívar's diplomatic agents in 1821: the aim is "a league or confederation or federative convention" which, however, is to be much stronger than "an ordinary offensive and defensive alliance," for:

> ours should be a society of sister nations, separated for the time being . . . , but united, strong, and powerful in sustaining themselves against the aggression of foreign powers . . . . [We must] lay the foundation of an amphictyonic body or assembly of plenipotentiaries which can give an impulse to the common interests of the American states and settle any discords which could arise in the future.[69]

This assembly of plenipotentiaries is to become, in effect, a permanent supranational congress, meeting at periodic intervals,[70] able not only to represent Spanish America in matters of peace and war internationally,[71]

67. See J. L. Salcedo-Bastardo, "Bello y los 'simposiums' de Grafton Street" in La Casa de Bello, *Bello y Londres*, Vol. I. (Caracas, 1980), pp. 425–444. An article in London's *The Morning Chronicle* (Sept. 5, 1810), generally attributed to Bolívar, envisages a Spanish American federation in the event of independence having to be won by force of arms. Miranda's ideas, though profoundly Americanist, differed from those of Bolívar in that Miranda visualized a single, unitary Spanish American constitutional monarchy.

68. To Supreme Director, United Provinces of the River Plate, Feb. 4, 1821, *OC*, I, 532.

69. Instructions to Joaquín Mosquera, Oct. 11, 1821, Vicente Lecuna, ed., *Relaciones diplomáticas de Bolívar con Chile y Buenos Aires*, 2 vols. (Caracas, 1954), I, 8–11. The amphictyonic associations of ancient Greece (the most famous being the Amphictyonic League or Delphic Amphictyony) leagued together tribes or cities for common (often religious) purposes.

70. At one point, however, he seems to have envisaged the scheme lasting for a dozen years or so and then, its useful work done, dissolving. To Santander, Jan. 6, 1825, *OC*, II, 67.

71. One must not ignore here, either, the "publicity value" of the Panama venture in terms of its impact on the outside world, though when Bolívar claimed to Perú de Lacroix that all it had been was "a bit of showing off" (*una fanfarronada*), he was surely contradicting the tenor of all his earlier pronouncements on the subject. Perú de Lacroix, *Diario de Bucaramanga*, pp. 140–141.

but capable, too, of deciding contentious intra–Spanish American issues—the creation of Bolivia,[72] the possible liberation of Cuba, and the Argentine-Brazilian war[73] were examples cited by Bolívar himself at one time or another—and of providing a stabilizing force among *and within* the newly independent nations. Here the federal ideal shaded into Bolívar's increasing preoccupation, as the years passed by, with the problem of order in Spanish America. Ideally, therefore, the federation was to become a "universal specific" against anarchy,[74] "a sublime authority whose name alone can calm our tempests."[75] Noting the growth of factiousness in Venezuela and of disorder in the River Plate provinces in the mid-1820s, Bolívar wrote:

> The Porteños and the Caraqueños at opposite ends of South America are the most turbulent and seditious of all Americans. Only the American Congress can contain them. I am therefore desperate that it should be formed, so that the great mass can contain these diabolical extremes.[76]

There can be little doubt, in my view, that Bolívar's instinct was to make the supranational framework as strong as possible; in his heart he clearly wanted something much more cohesive than a loose confederation. Internally, to be sure, as he told Hipólito Unanue, each country would be "free *in its own way*," but at the same time the federated states would ideally appear "less as nations than as *sisters*."[77] On learning that Argentine opinion wished to limit the powers of the Panama Congress, he commented: "I myself believe that they should be amplified almost infinitely, to give it strength and *a truly sovereign authority*."[78] The concept of sovereignty invoked here is no doubt figurative rather than juridical, but the drift of Bolívar's sentiments is clear enough. The extent of his supranationalist idealism can also be inferred from the kind of language he tended to use in connection with the proposed federation—"the greatest work for the happiness of the New World," as he called it.[79] "Every time I think about it, it entrances me," he wrote to Santander, "for *the creation of a giant* is not very common . . . . Its very shadow will save us from the abyss, or at least prolong our existence."[80] "The association of the five great states of America," he told O'Higgins, "will

72. To Sucre, Apr. 26, 1825, *OC*, II, 124, and to Santander, Feb. 23, 1825, *OC*, II, 88.
73. To Santander, Oct. 10, 1825, *OC*, II, 226, and Oct. 13, 1825, *OC*, II, 233–234.
74. To Santander, Jan. 6, 1825, *OC*, II, 67.
75. Invitación a los gobiernos de Colombia, México, Río de la Plata, Chile y Guatemala a formar el Congreso de Panamá, Lima, Dec. 7, 1824, *OC*, III, 738.
76. To Santander, May 8, 1825, *OC*, II, 126.
77. To Hipólito Unanue, Nov. 25, 1825, *OC*, II, 277.
78. To Santander, Oct. 21, 1825, *OC*, II, 249. Emphasis added.
79. To Pedro Molina, July 17, 1824, *OC*, II, 21.
80. To Santander, Apr. 7, 1825, *OC*, II, 115. Emphasis added.

. . . astonish Europe. The imagination cannot conceive without amazement the magnitude of *a colossus* whose very glance . . . will shake the world."[81]

Bolívar was very clear in his own mind that this federal union should be restricted to the Spanish American nations. He was not, therefore, a pioneer of Pan-Americanism or even, strictly speaking, Latin American solidarity. The empire of Brazil—as his correspondence throughout 1824 and 1825 makes abundantly clear—was suspect on the grounds of its possible association with the Holy Alliance. The "heterogeneous character" of French-speaking Haiti and the English-speaking United States excluded those countries, too, from the arrangement,[82] though Bolívar acknowledged his debt of gratitude to Haiti on several occasions, and his sincere admiration for the United States—"unique in the history of the human race," as he put it at Angostura[83]—cannot seriously be challenged. Even within Spanish America, Bolívar somehow doubted whether the federation would be all-embracing. He tended to share San Martín's view, apparently imparted during the Guayaquil interview,[84] that the River Plate would always remain apart. Guatemala (Central America, that is), by contrast, he saw as "by its situation the most federal people in America," a country to be welcomed into the scheme "with open arms."[85] It seems clear that he also saw the federation as somehow improving the position of his own nation, Colombia, vis-à-vis potentially stronger American nations.

> Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Chile and Upper Peru could make a superb federation. Guatemala, Chile, and Upper Peru will always do as we wish. Peru and Colombia are of one mind; and Mexico would thus be isolated in the midst of this federation, which has the advantage of being homogeneous, compact, and solid.[86]

(That was written in May 1825.) Wider schemes of international association, with one very important exception, did not greatly appeal to the Liberator. Several such world-embracing designs were mooted during the independence period. An Argentine proposal to join Spanish America with Spain, Portugal, Greece, and the United States in a great league against the Holy Alliance drew from Bolívar the wry comment that, in

81. To O'Higgins, Jan. 8, 1821, *OC*, I, 619. Emphasis added.
82. To Santander, May 30, 1825, *OC*, II, 146.
83. *OC*, III, 680.
84. J. G. Pérez to Secretario de Relaciones Exteriores, July 29, 1822, Bolívar's account of the interview, *OC*, I, 657.
85. To Santander, Apr. 7, 1825, *OC*, II, 115–116.
86. To Santander, May 30, 1825, *OC*, II, 146.

the event of a conflict between Greece and Turkey, "there you would have Chimborazo at war with the Caucasus."[87]

There was, however, one scheme of wider association that *did* persistently attract Bolívar, and this was his dream of an alliance (or some stronger link) between Spanish America and Great Britain, "the Mistress of the nations."[88] For Bolívar, Great Britain was not merely the country which provided the best of all foreign models for Spanish American progress. It was both powerful *and* liberal, and was bound therefore to see the justice of the American cause. "Nobody doubts," Bolívar affirmed in 1814, "that the powerful Nation which has defended . . . the Independence of Europe, would not equally defend that of America, were it attacked."[89] During his months of exile, he was beside himself with eagerness to secure positive British support for the independence movements, to the extent of suggesting an actual concession to Great Britain of Spanish American territory in exchange for aid.[90] The rise of British world power as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars enormously impressed the Liberator: "Her omnipotence is absolute and sovereign," he wrote, comparing England's "ascendant progress" to that of Rome "at the end of the Republic and beginning of the Empire."[91] The chief factors in America's destiny, he observed on another occasion, were "God, London, and ourselves."[92] Taking his writings as a whole, it would be permissible to argue that he had rather more faith in London than in God or his Spanish American compatriots. After Waterloo, the British were clearly a convincing counterweight to the real or imaginary threats posed by the Holy Alliance. "Do not fear the Allies," Bolívar wrote in 1823, "for the ditch is large, and the English fleet still larger."[93]

Bolívar viewed an association with Great Britain as a useful reinforcement of his scheme for Spanish American federal union, "which cannot," he wrote, "be achieved unless the English protect it body and soul"—were they to decide to do so, on the other hand, this would be a "guarantee against Spain, the Holy Alliance and anarchy."[94] In his stray "Thought on the Congress of Panama," published by Vicente Lecuna in 1916, Bolívar actually went so far as to visualize "the union of the new

87. To Bernardo Monteagudo, Aug. 5, 1823, *OC*, I, 792.

88. To Santander, June 8, 1825, *OC*, II, 151.

89. "Sobre la política de Inglaterra," *Gaceta de Caracas*, Feb. 7, 1814, *OC*, III, 827.

90. To Maxwell Hyslop, Apr. 19, 1815, *OC*, I, 134. Bolívar had Panama and Nicaragua in mind.

91. To Santander, July 10, 1825, *OC*, II, 167.

92. To Col. Tomás Heres, Apr. 28, 1824, *OC*, I, 956.

93. To Santander, June 14, 1823, *OC*, I, 769.

94. To José Rafael Revenga, July 10, 1825, *OC*, II, 166; to Santander, July 23, 1826, *OC*, II, 415.

states with the British Empire" in what would obviously become "the most vast, most extraordinary, and most powerful league ever to have appeared on earth."[95] (The reader of Bolívar's writings can hardly fail to be struck by how often he summons up images of power, vastness, and grandeur—there is something deep in his psychology here.) This may have been an unrealistic scheme, and indeed was—for Great Britain neither wanted nor needed it—but it was not altogether naïve or ill-considered.

Bolívar certainly cannot be accused of having ignored the dangers and disadvantages that an arrangement with Great Britain might bring.[96] On balance, however, he *did* believe that these were likely to be outweighed by positive gains. In June 1824 he made the following comment to Santander:

> Our American federation cannot survive unless England takes it under her protection . . . . The first thing is to exist, the second the means of existing: if we link ourselves to England we shall exist, and if we do not, we shall infallibly be lost. Therefore, the first course of action is preferable. And while it lasts, we shall grow up, we shall become stronger, and we shall become *truly national*, against the day when our ally might involve us in harmful commitments. Were that to happen, our own strength and the relationships we could then form with other European nations would place us beyond the reach of our tutors and allies. Let us even suppose that we suffer as a result of England's superiority: this suffering will be a proof that we exist, and by existing we shall preserve the hope of freeing ourselves from the suffering.[97]

The root-idea at work here, as is indicated in the use of the words "our tutors" in the above passage, is of a British connection serving as a mechanism by which Spanish America can further its own progress. Indeed, the "Thought on the Congress of Panama," more specifically, sees British influence bolstering social reform, and British "character and customs" becoming the normative basis of "future existence" in Spanish America. Beyond this, in distant centuries, Bolívar dimly perceives "a single, federal, nation covering the world,"[98] to which, by implication, the union of Great Britain and Spanish America might lead. With this

95. Un pensamiento sobre el Congreso de Panamá, n.d., *OC*, III, 756–757.

96. See, for instance, his draft letter to Revenga, Feb. 17, 1826, *OC*, II, 304–305, where he expresses unresolved fears of British preponderance as the result of the scheme. In the final version of the same letter, *OC*, II, 306–307, the doubts are dismissed.

97. To Santander, June 28, 1825, *OC*, II, 158–159. Emphasis added.

98. *OC*, III, 757.

suggestion we undoubtedly reach the outer edge of Bolivarian speculation. Supranationalism can go no farther.

Middle-Range Supranationalism

Bolívar's maximal schemes of federal union for Spanish America sprang fairly clearly from genuine Americanist idealism. It seems likely that his "middle-range" supranational proposal, canvassed without any real prospect of success in 1826–27, stemmed much more from immediate circumstances. A full description of these is redundant here, but it will be remembered that in 1825–26 Bolívar was at the very peak of his prestige in South America. "I have loved glory and freedom," he wrote in April 1826. "Both have been achieved, and so I have no further desires."[99] The Liberator was clearly fooling himself. The political stabilization of Spanish America remained a problem that he pondered incessantly—his idée fixe from 1826 onward being that the Bolivian Constitution was the solution. He was acutely conscious also of his own personal aura of power: this was the time when he contemplated expeditions to dislodge the baleful tyrant of Paraguay or to impose order on the turbulent Argentines—"the demon of glory must carry us to Tierra del Fuego."[100] At one point, indeed, Bolívar even suggested that he might become a kind of peripatetic supreme arbiter of South American affairs, almost, one might say, a personal supranational guarantor of the region's stability:

> By remaining outside [Colombia] at the head of a great army . . . I menace [its] criminal factions with a formidable force . . . . Caesar in Gaul threatened Rome, and I in Bolivia threaten all the conspirators in America and thus save all the republics. If I lose my positions in the South, the Panama Congress will avail us nothing, and the emperor of Brazil will gobble up the River Plate and Bolivia.[101]

The Liberator's followers and associates were prolific at this period with suggestions as to further uses that might be made of his great authority. Páez in Venezuela wanted him to create a Napoleonic monarchy or empire;[102] others wished him to become the "absolute chief of the South"[103] as protector of the Southern Cone; still others indicated that

99. To Santander, Apr. 7, 1826, *OC*, II, 348.

100. To Santander, Sept. 8, 1825, *OC*, II, 212. In 1821 he had written to Santander: "Who knows if Providence will carry me on to give tranquillity to the agitated waters of the Plate?" To Santander, Aug. 23, 1821, *OC*, I, 581.

101. To Santander, Nov. 11, 1825, *OC*, II, 270.

102. Páez's letter of Oct. 1, 1825, is printed in *OC*, II, 324–326, as is Bolívar's draft reply rejecting the idea. To Páez, Mar. 6, 1826, *OC*, II, 322–323.

103. To Santander, Feb. 21, 1826, *OC*, II, 309.

the River Plate and Bolivia might unite—under the name of Bolivia—in a single state: "If we listened to these gentlemen," Bolívar commented, "there would only be two republics, Colombia and Bolivia."[104] What can perhaps be deduced fairly easily from the abundant evidence here is that in 1826, intuitively foreseeing the modest outcome of the Panama Congress, agreeably cushioned by Peruvian flattery, and spurred on by dreams of continued glory, Bolívar concluded that the political state of Spanish America was more fluid than it really was. A vigorous initiative at this point, he seems to have thought, might secure stability over a wide area, if not the whole of South America.

The scheme eventually taken up, evidently suggested by some of Bolívar's Peruvian advisers, was for "a federation of the three sister republics, but a positive federation, to replace the general American one, which they say is nominal and up-in-the-air."[105] The only serious outline of this scheme from Bolívar's pen is to be found in parallel letters to Sucre and to General Gutiérrez de la Fuente composed in May 1826. Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia are to combine in a supranational entity, possibly under the name of Bolivian Federation; each constituent state is to adopt the Bolivian Constitution, suitably adapted; the federation itself is to be ruled by a congress and a vice-president, while the president himself, as "supreme chief," will spend his time touring the provinces, visiting each of the component sections at least once a year. As part of the arrangement, Colombia will be redivided into its original three states, while Peru also is possibly divisible into two parts, Arequipa becoming the capital of a new state. Thus, Venezuela is to enjoy equivalent status to Bolivia. The capital of the federation can be Quito or Guayaquil.[106] As with the maximal American federation, Bolívar's impulse with this "middle-range" plan was to strengthen the supranational element. The federation, he wrote, was to be "tighter than that of the United States," enjoying "the most perfect unity possible under a federal form," with "one flag, one army, and a single nation."[107] To Sucre, soon afterward, he wrote: "We should not use the word federation, but union . . . . I say

104. To Santander, Mar. 20, 1826, *OC*, II, 337. It is impossible to say whether Bolívar attached any importance to this proposal, which was of Argentine provenance. In general, there was always an undercurrent of hostility to Bolívar in the Southern Cone. Rivadavia's disdain for him verged on the pathological. Santander's reaction to the idea of a vast southern federation was that, as an idea, it was "very beautiful"—but that given the hostility of Buenos Aires and Chile toward Colombia, "it would be a power that was always threatening us." Santander to Bolívar, July 6, 1826, *Archivo Santander*, 25 vols. (Bogotá, 1913–32), XV, 36.

105. To Santander, May 7, 1826, *OC*, II, 360.

106. To Sucre, May 12, 1826, *OC*, II, 360–364, and to Antonio Gutiérrez de la Fuente, same date, *OC*, II, 364–366.

107. To Gutiérrez de la Fuente, May 12, 1826, *OC*, II, 365.

union because later on people will demand federal forms, as has happened in Guayaquil, where, the moment they heard 'federation,' they began thinking of the former *republiquita.*"[108]

There is little need here to recount the rapid failure of Bolívar's maneuvers in favor of the Federation of the Andes.[109] Within only a few months, in point of fact, it was politically dead, and Bolívar was advising Santa Cruz, for whom he had envisaged a key role in the scheme, to abandon "American plans" in favor of "purely Peruvian" policies.[110] There for all practical purposes the matter ended. It is possible, however, that Bolívar never fully abandoned a residual belief in the Andean union. As late as June 1829 we find him writing—once again to Santa Cruz, who by now was in the ascendant in Bolivia—that "the league of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia is more necessary every day, in order to cure the gangrene of revolution."[111] By that time, of course, Bolívar was well into his final, fruitless struggle against the fissiparous tendencies he had striven so hard to overcome—this time, within the confines of his personal supranational creation: Colombia. But a distant after-echo of the Andean union can perhaps be detected: since the withdrawal of Chile in 1977, the modern Andean Pact, the most promising of more recent supranational experiments in Latin America, covers precisely those countries that would have been included in Bolívar's plan.

The Colombian Experiment

"I shall serve for as long as Colombia—or my life—endures," wrote Bolívar in May 1821.[112] He spoke more truly than he could have known at the time. Colombia, the reconstitution of the old Viceroyalty of New Granada, was nothing if not the Liberator's personal creation. It was the only serious attempt to fuse incipient Latin American nationalities into a common national whole. This was perhaps less a supranational project than an experiment in creating a new nationality altogether. Though himself a Venezuelan, Bolívar was brought into early and increasingly intimate contact with New Granada and Granadinos—"this sister nation"[113] of "beloved compatriots"[114]—by the twists and turns of the first phase of the war of independence. The two territories were clearly interdepen-

108. To Sucre, Aug. 18, 1826, OC, II, 462.

109. Bolívar himself never uses the term, which, like Grancolombia, is an invention of historians.

110. To Santa Cruz, Oct. 26, 1826, *OC*, II, 486.

111. To Santa Cruz, June 25, 1829, *OC*, III, 226.

112. To Fernando Peñalver, May 24, 1821, *OC*, I, 561.

113. A la División de Urdaneta, Pamplona, Nov. 12, 1814, *OC*, III, 614.

114. Memoria dirigida a los ciudadanos de la Nueva Granada por un caraqueño, Cartagena, Dec. 15, 1812, *OC*, I, 48.

dent in military and strategic terms. The project of uniting them crystallized very early in Bolívar's mind. The basic reasoning was set out in a letter to General Mariño in December 1813. What northern South America needed, according to Bolívar, was a national unit of sufficient size and strength to figure convincingly on the political map: "two different nations . . . will appear ridiculous. Even if Venezuela and New Granada *were* united, this would only just make a nation capable of inspiring due and decorous consideration in others."[115] Colombia was born, therefore, out of military and diplomatic necessity, and "the creation of a new Republic composed of these two nations"[116] became a basic part of the Bolivarian program, actualized as a consequence of military triumph. Although the Fundamental Law of Colombia (December 17, 1819)[117] did not use the term "nation" to describe the newly created entity, Bolívar himself obviously regarded it as such, and regarded it as *his* nation from that point onward. He never really stopped regarding it in that light. Whatever his reservations about the 1821 (Cúcuta) Constitution, he nonetheless described it resonantly as "the pact of union which has presented the world with a new nation composed of Venezuela and New Granada."[118] To those who pleaded with him to concentrate on governing Venezuela, he insisted: "I now belong to the family of Colombia and not to the family of Bolívar, not to Caracas alone but to the whole nation which my constancy and my companions have created."[119]

The prime argument in favor of Colombia remained, for Bolívar, practical and what might almost be called geopolitical. Europe in particular would not pay attention if Spanish America were divided into a "multiplicity of sovereignties."[120] It is less often noted, perhaps, that Bolívar also had a strong desire for Colombia to cut something of a dash in the newly forming panorama of Western Hemisphere politics. He was never altogether sanguine on this score. His underlying fears in this were revealed in an interesting letter to Santander in December 1822, in the course of which he elaborated one of those international political conspectuses of which he was so fond.

> When I fix my gaze on America, I see her surrounded by the maritime power of Europe, by floating fortresses of foreigners, which is to say enemies. I then observe that at the top of the continent there is a most powerful nation, rich, very bellicose,

115. To Santiago Mariño, Dec. 16, 1813, *OC*, I, 81.
116. Speech to Congress, Angostura, Dec. 14, 1819, *OC*, III, 703.
117. Printed in *OC*, I, 173–176.
118. To President of Congress, Dec. 31, 1822, *OC*, III, 728.
119. To Fernando Toro, Sept. 23, 1822, *OC*, I, 684.
120. To the Vice-president of Cundinamarca, Dec. 20, 1819, *OC*, I, 406.

> and capable of anything . . . . Then I notice the vast and powerful Mexican empire which . . . is in a position to throw itself advantageously upon Colombia . . . . Facing us we have the rich and beautiful Spanish islands, which can never be other than enemies. At our backs we have ambitious Portugal with her immense Brazilian colony, and to the South, Peru, with its many millions of pesos, its rivalry with Colombia, its connections with Chile and Buenos Aires . . . . We are inferior to our brothers in the South, to the Mexicans, to the [North] Americans, to the English, and indeed to all the Europeans . . . . We have two and a half million inhabitants spread out across an extensive wilderness. Some of them are savages, some slaves, most enemies among themselves, and all vitiated by despotism and superstition. What a contrast to put against the nations of the world! That is our position. That is Colombia. And they wish to divide her![121]

Thus the union—and it is inaccurate to speak, as many historians do, of a Colombian federation—was not merely a condition of survival, but of *successful* survival. At times, particularly as he made his way southward—it is tempting to say the farther he got from Bogotá—Bolívar seems to have believed for a while that Colombia's position was, in fact, distinctly promising as compared with that of other emergent states. In May 1823, for instance, he told Santander that government propaganda should stress the difference between Colombia, "with its heroes and generals," and the ridiculous spectacle of "the rest of independent America, with its governments both absolute and dissolute, its . . . three-guaranteers, emperors, directors, protectors, delegates, regents, admirals, etc."[122]

And yet, not the least interesting aspect of Bolívar's attitude to his own creation was a persistent intuition that it would simply not work. His doubts began early. Venezuelans in New Granada, he had occasion to suggest in 1820, should not be given public jobs in that territory—"all they are good for is quarreling."[123] Soon afterward he complained that dissensions within the new union made him "suffer the agonies of torture."[124] (These dissensions he once described as an "astonishing chaos of *patriots, royalists, egoists, blancos, pardos, Venezuelans, Cundinamarcans, federalists, centralists, republicans, aristocrats, good and*

121. To Santander, Dec. 23, 1822, *OC*, I, 708–709.

122. To Santander, May 30, 1823, *OC*, I, 762. "Three-guaranteers" is a reference to Agustín de Iturbide's Army of the Three Guarantees in Mexico: the "three guarantees" were Religion, Unity, Independence.

123. To Santander, May 9, 1820, *OC*, I, 433.

124. To Santander, June 10, 1820, *OC*, I, 452.

bad.")[125] He was invariably conscious of the sheer effort needed to keep Colombia united, even playing (though not very seriously) with the idea of allowing the royalists to retain Peru so as to provide Colombia with "fearsome neighbors" to concentrate its mind.[126] To Santander he confessed his growing conviction that Colombia needed "an army of occupation" to keep it free,[127] and later concluded that he himself was the only force that could keep the union together. "Colombia is the sacred word, the magic word for all virtuous citizens," he told General Urdaneta as he made his way homeward in 1826, "and *I myself am the rallying point* for all who love national glory and the rights of the people."[128]

Bolívar's perception of the obstacles to unity in northern South America was as acute as anybody's. "There is no cohesion in this republic," he told the faithful O'Leary.[129] Time and time again in his letters he refers to the persistent force of local antipathy, undermining the very foundations of the union: "the South does not like the North. The coasts do not like the sierra. Venezuela does not like Cundinamarca. Cundinamarca suffers the disorders of Venezuela."[130] It was all very well to tell the Caraqueños, after Carabobo, that their city was no longer "the capital of a Republic" but would henceforth become "the capital of a vast department governed in a manner worthy of its importance."[131] Not all Venezuelans were convinced that this gave them much in the way of importance,[132] and it was no doubt galling to some to hear Bolívar describing their country as "these departments of the Former Venezuela."[133] New Granada, too, had its susceptibilities. "Venezuelans," Bolívar wrote in 1829, "cannot govern in New Granada . . . . This factor of implacable hatred has fixed my destiny, and that of Colombia."[134] To Sucre he made the same point in wrier tones: "We shall always be of reprehensible birth: Venezuelan and white. Guilty of this offense, we can never rule in these regions."[135] The human materials to bridge the great divide between

125. To Antonio Nariño, Apr. 21, 1821, *OC*, I, 551.

126. To Santander, Feb. 14, 1823, *OC*, I, 723. But Bolívar's letters in 1823–24 also reveal the much stronger fear that a royalist-held Peru would eventually be able to mount a serious attack on Colombia.

127. To Santander, Dec. 6, 1822, *OC*, I, 705.

128. To Gen. Rafael Urdaneta, Aug. 6, 1826, *OC*, II, 447. The same phrases were used in letters to others at this time: *OC*, II, 447–450. Emphasis added.

129. To O'Leary, Sept. 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 313.

130. To Santander, Oct. 8, 1826, *OC*, II, 479.

131. A los habitantes de Caracas, June 30, 1821, *OC*, III, 718.

132. For Venezuelan attitudes during the period of the union, see José Gil Fortoul, *Historia constitucional de Venezuela*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1907–9), I, 387–419, and David Bushnell, *The Santander Regime in Gran Colombia* (Westport, Conn., 1970), pp. 287–309.

133. To the President of the Senate, Caracas, Feb. 6, 1827, *OC*, III, 780.

134. To José María del Castillo Rada, Feb. 5, 1829, *OC*, III, 133.

135. To Sucre, Sept. 28, 1829, *OC*, III, 332.

Venezuela and New Granada were simply lacking—though Bolívar was delighted when Pedro Gual, a Venezuelan, married a New Granadan lady: "That is the way to make Colombians," he commented to Santander.[136]

It is doubtless true that with Páez's rebellion in 1826 and Bolívar's subsequent rift with Santander (who, despite his own New Granadan sensitivities, had done all that was humanly possible to make a going concern of the union) the break-up of Colombia was only a matter of time. Bolívar's solution to the Venezuelan problem merely delayed the moment of truth. The ups and downs of the increasingly tragic story of the next four years do not concern us here, but it is worth noting, perhaps, that Bolívar himself never ceased to hope that some dramatic constitutional innovation might rescue his political creation from disaster. The Ocaña Convention—"Colombia's last chance"[137]—failed to provide the required constitution, or any constitution at all. Bolívar's clear rejection of a monarchical or "imperial" solution[138] left him with few further ideas beyond the summoning of yet another constituent assembly, which, he continued to hope, might adopt his own frequently expounded political ideas—the concentration of "republican forms under the direction of a monocracy,"[139] in other words, something rather like the Bolivian Constitution. Such proposals as the creation of a new department straddling the border between New Granada and Venezuela to eliminate "this division . . . which is killing us,"[140] or the suggestion that he himself might become a roving generalissimo while someone else exercised the presidency—"I would run around the government like a bull round its herd of cows"[141]—came too late to be of use, and in any case were never properly developed.

Bolívar very clearly foresaw the impending dissolution of Colombia;

136. To Santander, Jan. 14, 1823, *OC*, I, 716.

137. To Gen. Santiago Mariño, Sept. 21, 1827, *OC*, II, 683.

138. Though Bolívar may at times have been somewhat elliptical on this point in dealings with European diplomatic agents, his fundamentally republican stance cannot seriously be doubted. (A Bolivian-style life-president, however, would have been close to an uncrowned monarch.) See Carlos Villanueva, *La monarquía en América. El imperio de los Andes* (Paris, n.d. [1913?]). Bolívar's own arguments against establishing a monarchy in Colombia are most lucidly set out in his famous "confidential" letter to O'Leary of Sept. 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 313–318, esp. 315.

139. To José Fernández Madrid, Feb. 13, 1830, *OC*, III, 398.

140. To Páez, Sept. 8, 1828, *OC*, II, 967. A similar scheme for a new cross-frontier department had been mooted back in 1821: "If we want there to be a Colombia," Bolívar had then commented, "this measure is of a vital necessity." To Fernando Peñalver, May 24, 1821, *OC*, I, 561.

141. To O'Leary, Aug. 21, 1829, *OC*, III, 293–294. Gerhard Masur suggests that this proposal, had it been adopted earlier (in 1825, say), "might have helped to develop a national spirit in Colombia." *Simon Bolivar*, pp. 467–468.

he was well aware that local pressures were building up to just such an outcome. "The day this act is sealed," he wrote, "the active part (*parte agente*) of the population will be filled with joy."[142] "We had better carry out what the caudillos of these peoples want," he opined in January 1830,[143] just before hearing of the successful breakaway movement in Venezuela. It seems clear that beyond the fear of Colombia splitting up into its natural component parts there lay a worse fear—the fear that dissolution would be followed by still greater dissolution. The model was the River Plate, an example that instilled deep foreboding in Bolívar: "Buenos Aires is in the vanguard," he told Santa Cruz in September 1830, "and we are following her."[144] To forestall such an eventuality, Bolívar finally thought it preferable to "divide [Colombia] with legality, in peace and good harmony,"[145] and perhaps "an international pact" could link the newly separated states; "time, which is prodigal in resources, will do the rest."[146]

Even in the bitter months that followed the disintegration, the last months of his life, Bolívar could never entirely bring himself to accept what had occurred. The hope of Colombian reunification remained: if necessary, he was prepared to use force to bring it about. "If they give me an army, I shall accept it," he wrote from Cartagena in September 1830. "If they send me to Venezuela, I shall go."[147] But to Santa Cruz, at around the same time, he wrote: "Although the best party, the party of national integrity, is the strongest . . . I have my doubts about the final reestablishment of order."[148] By the end of October 1830 he evidently felt that the "restoration of Colombia" was beyond his—or anyone's—reach.[149] Yet it is no doubt significant that at the very end, if only for the historical record, Bolívar still enunciated his hope. In his will, drawn up on December 10, 1830—seven days before he died—he described himself not as a Venezuelan, but as "a native of the city of Caracas, in the department of Venezuela,"[150] and the last of his many proclamations contained an ultimate appeal for the preservation of Colombia:

142. To O'Leary, Sept. 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 317.
143. To Urdaneta, Jan. 2, 1830, *OC*, III, 392.
144. To Santa Cruz, Sept. 14, 1830, *OC*, III, 452.
145. To Estanislao Vergara, July 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 246–248.
146. To O'Leary, Sept. 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 316. Bolívar was by no means unaware that Quito, like Venezuela, contained its separatist element, but he seems to have been less exercised by this. In accepting (or half accepting) the separation of Venezuela and New Granada, he continued to believe in the maintenance of a connection between New Granada and Quito. See his letter to O'Leary, Sept. 13, 1829, *OC*, III, 315–316.
147. To Gen. Pedro Briceño Méndez, Sept. 20, 1830, *OC*, III, 461.
148. See note 144 *supra*.
149. To Gen. Mariano Montilla, Oct. 27, 1830, *OC*, III, 484.
150. *OC*, III, 529.

"If my death helps . . . to consolidate the Union, I shall go in peace to the grave."[151] With these words, so very well known, the Liberator closed his public career. It is fair to say that they fell on empty air, and, in every important respect, have done so ever since.

"From every perspective except the Bolivarian," writes the author of a recent general history of Venezuela, "the Colombian consolidation was a colossal mistake."[152] Gerhard Masur invokes the example of Scandinavia to suggest that "South America visualized its destiny more clearly than Bolívar" by splitting into different nationalities.[153] It is easy to be wise after the event. In hindsight, of course, we can clearly see that Latin America's antecedent colonial experience, and the circumstances of the revolutions for independence, were factors that only superhuman effort could have neutralized. Colonial administrative divisions had created, in Hugh Seton-Watson's phrase, "separate hierarchies of interest and ambition" in Spanish America.[154] Independence confirmed these tendencies to division and separateness, or, rather, they *were* confirmed, as Rudolf Rocker puts it, in an undeservedly neglected classic on the theme of nationalism, by "the power lust of small minorities and dictatorially inclined individuals."[155] The genuine Americanists, among whom Bolívar stood supreme, were never more than a minority, however active, within the creole elites who decided Spanish America's subsequent fate.

And yet, when all has been said, and when all the difficulties have been neatly cataloged, it is still somehow difficult to restrain a feeling that the independence of Spanish America, like other historical moments, such as the end of World War I in Europe, offered opportunities that were somehow missed. Was Bolívar simply too visionary? Was he, in the overworked phrase, a man before his time? Time, as he himself said, is prodigal in its resources, but these do not necessarily favor unity. Latin American moves toward supranational integration in recent decades have not been especially encouraging; indeed, they have been markedly less so than Western Europe's moves in that direction. Supranationalism, as Europeans have discovered in the quarter-century since the Treaty of Rome, is certainly no panacea, and yet it does seem to offer solid advantages of a commercial and social kind, and it even has its political uses.[156]

151. A los pueblos de Colombia, Dec. 10, 1830, *OC*, III, 823–824.

152. John V. Lombardi, *Venezuela: The Search for Order: The Dream of Progress* (New York, 1982), p. 153.

153. Masur, *Simon Bolivar*, p. 478.

154. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States* (London, 1977), p. 219. Seton-Watson's volume is an honorable exception to the rule that historians of nationalism almost never include Latin America in their surveys.

Many Latin Americans nowadays consider a degree of unity to be indispensable in the quest for greater prosperity and autonomy. Simón Bolívar's efforts must always, therefore, remain an inspiration in his own continent. As the wise Dr. Rafael Caldera has written, "Why should we not recognize in Bolívar, a Spanish American creole, the evidence that we are capable of sustained and tenacious effort?"[157] And as for Bolívar's ultimate speculation—"a single, federal, nation covering the world"—few would deny its relevance to a divided planet whose very survival is a matter for serious debate. That phrase alone is sufficient to place the great hero of Spanish American independence in the ranks of those who have expressed, however fleetingly, one of the noblest ideals of modern mankind.

155. Rudolf Rocker, *Nationalism and Culture* (Los Angeles, 1937), p. 274.

156. The way the European Community supported Great Britain in the Falkland Islands war of 1982 springs to mind here. Latin America offered no truly comparable support to Argentina.

157. Rafael Caldera, *Moldes para la fragua,* 3d ed. (Caracas, 1980), p. 19.