CHAPTER 2

The Coming of Independence to South America

Bolívar the Liberator

Simón Bolívar strides like a colossus across the stage of Latin American liberty and independence. But, as in all life, there were colossal downs as well as triumphant highs for the man called "The Liberator" by five nations of South America. In 1815, Bolívar found himself in exile on the island of Jamaica. Queried by a "gentleman of this island"—later identified as a British resident on the island, Henry Cullen—as to the nature of his war against Spain on behalf of liberty and independence, Bolívar penned one of the most perceptive documents ever produced on the nature of Latin America. Read it not only to learn about the mind and world of Bolívar in 1815, but also to appreciate that this document was forged by wisdom and experience that still have relevance today.

The Jamaica Letter: Reply from a South American to a Gentleman from This Island

Kingston, Jamaica, September 6, 1815

My dear Sir:

It is . . . difficult to predict the future lot of the New World, or to make definitive statements about its politics, or to make prophesies about the form of government it will adopt. Any idea relative to the future of this land seems to me to be purely speculative. Could anyone have foreseen, when the human race was in its infancy, besieged by so much uncertainty, ignorance, and error, what particular regime it would embrace for its own survival? Who would have dared predict that one nation would be a republic or another a monarchy, that this one would be unimportant, that one great? In my opinion, this is the image of our situation. We are a small segment of the human race; we possess a world apart, surrounded by vast seas, new in almost every art and science, though to some extent old in the practices of civil

society. I consider the current state of America similar to the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Roman Empire, when each breakaway province formed a political system suitable to its interests and situation or allied itself to the particular ambitions of a few leaders, families, or corporations. There is, though, this notable difference, that those dispersed members reestablished their former nation with the changes demanded by circumstances or events, while we, who preserve only the barest vestige of what we were formerly, and who are moreover neither Indians nor Europeans, but a race halfway between the legitimate owners of the land and the Spanish usurpers—in short, being Americans by birth and endowed with rights from Europe—find ourselves forced to defend these rights against the natives while maintaining our position in the land against the intrusion of the invaders. Thus, we find ourselves in the most extraordinary and complicated situation. Even though it smacks of divination to predict the outcome of the political path America is following, I venture to offer some conjectures, which of course I characterize as arbitrary guesses dictated by rational desire, not by any process of probable reasoning.[1]

VENEZUELA

Venezuela, like Mexico, was a country of competing interests. It was complicated even more by racial divisions that included not only Indians, Spaniards, and mestizos, as in Mexico, but also many blacks and pardos, both slave and free, who played an important role in determining the course of the Wars of Independence. The basic choice in 1810 in Venezuela, as in Mexico, was nonetheless simple. Should the Venezuelan Creoles bend to the will of the various Spanish juntas or seek a different path? When faced with a choice, as they were in 1810, the Creoles chose independence, which was declared on July 5, 1811. By this act, Venezuelan Creoles, who constituted an aristocracy based on their control of the land and nurtured by their sense of rank and responsibility, took the lead in the Venezuelan Wars of Independence. Theirs was the first country to declare itself fully independent of Spain.

But, as the United States had discovered in 1776, it was one thing to declare independence; it was another, more difficult thing to make it stick. The radical Creoles who pushed Venezuela so rapidly toward independence soon discovered the depth of opposition as civil war erupted in 1811. The royalists, as Spanish forces were known during the Wars of Independence throughout Latin America, mounted a determined campaign to crush this insurrection against Spain. Joining the royalists were not only more conservative Creoles, but also many pardos and blacks who were disenchanted by the Venezuelan declaration of independence and the new constitution revealed in 1811. With its strict voting requirements based on property ownership, the constitution essentially disenfranchised the large body of pardos, and it also retained slavery.

Why fight for these Creole landowners, those high and mighty lords of the land who mouthed equality but whose constitution promised so little? The

A Racial and Ethnic Road Map

The ethnic and racial composition of Latin America was complex in the nineteenth century and has become more so since then. Over the centuries, Latin America has attracted migrations of people from all over the globe, in continuous streams. Together they have created a kaleidoscope of cultures across the region.

But "ethnicity" and "race" can be difficult to define. Ethnicity and race exist in tandem with each other and together shape group and individual identities across Latin America. Yet the two terms have no fixed usage in either scholarly or daily life, and are often used interchangeably. Popularly, ethnicity is often used to refer to cultural differences, while race often refers to physical features. In Latin America and until recently among scholars of the region, "ethnicity" was often used to refer to indigenous people, who were defined by their customs, religion, and place of origin. Race often referred to Afro-descendant people, and frequently was based on a combination of ancestry, physical traits, and status. More recently, scholars have discussed "ethnicity, which may include the concept of race, as a social construct or classification system that is created by people with unequal levels of power." Indeed some now use the term "ethnoracial" to highlight how cultural practices and beliefs are intertwined with ancestry, physical traits, and status (Telles 29–31).

Regardless, social identity—how others identify people and how they define themselves—is made up of a combination of all these factors. Moreover, while race is much more than a function of skin color, recent studies have shown that skin color is a key variable in determining difference in Latin America and "social disadvantages are correlated with successively darker skin tones" (Telles 11).

Cuban poet and nationalist José Martí once said of race in Latin America: "There are no races. There are only a number of variations in Man, with reference to customs and forms, imposed by the climatic and historical conditions under which he lives, which do not change that which is identical and essential" (Mörner 150). On one level Martí seems to be suggesting that race does not in fact exist, emphasizing the essential features common to all humans. But on another level, he is pointing out that rather than having a fixed and permanent meaning, race is a social construct—an idea—whose meaning is created out of the historical context in which people live. Races are created as a way to categorize people and, ultimately, to foster difference. Each society uses those differences in distinct ways, whether to assign explicit rights and responsibilities or in more subtle ways, though almost always as a way to justify hierarchies. The Spanish, as they built their empire in the New World, were no different, creating and categorizing different groups, from Spaniards and Creoles to Indians, blacks, and mixed races.

In the early colonial period, Spanish elites introduced a hierarchy of *castas* (castes) defined by the proportion of Spanish blood a person had. The emphasis on *limpieza de sangre,* or purity of blood, dictated that those with more Spanish blood were of higher status and thus had more rights and opportunities. Whiteness itself became a marker of high status in this caste system, while those of indigenous or African descent were arrayed toward the bottom, and had legal rights and obligations accordingly. *Mestizaje,* or the spatial, cultural, and sexual mixture of peoples leading to new and mixed cultural forms, during the colonial period soon complicated this hierarchy and society became much more fluid. The children of the union of parents of different racial categories themselves occupied a new, distinct category from their parents in this racial hierarchy, so that, for example, the children of whites and Indians were called "mestizos," those of whites and Africans were called "mulattoes," and those of Indians and Africans were called "zambos."

There were other combinations, indeed so many that this rigid lexical hierarchy quickly fell away. Reflecting the complexity wrought by mestizaje, by the 1700s Spaniards increasingly referred to *raza,* or race, rather than caste when identifying someone's ancestry. And while people still used skin color and ancestry to make racial categorizations, they also relied as much or more on social cues such as clothing and education to determine a person's race and therefore status. By the early 1800s, the newly independent nations suspended casta laws altogether (Telles 15–16).

Confounding our understanding of lexicon is that in each country, different nomenclature emerged. In Central America, whites of Spanish descent are often referred to as *ladinos;* in Peru and Bolivia, mestizos and Indians are sometimes labeled *cholos;* in Venezuela, mulattoes sometimes carry the term *pardo,* and the examples multiply if we consider the full range of Latin America, from Cuba to Chile.

Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the discussion of race continued to evolve as elites tried to create unified, modern nations out of highly divided and stratified societies. By the late nineteenth century, as we will see in later chapters, the rise of scientific racism and an emphasis on whitening shaped much of the discussion of race in the region; in the early twentieth century, modernizing nation-states often transformed this into a pride in mestizaje or racial democracy. In modern Latin America, a person's race is determined as much by culture, language, habits, location, and economic situation as by skin color, and there is a great deal of fluidity within and between the categories. In the Andes, Indians who dress and act like mestizos and migrate from the highlands to work in the cities become "cholos." Light-skinned mulattoes move easily in the highest circles of society in Panama, the Dominican Republic, and Brazil, for example, and are sometimes thought of as white. While the color line in Latin America is

rarely rigid, whites still prevail in the highest circles of power and wealth, an inheritance from the Spanish and Portuguese colonial past.

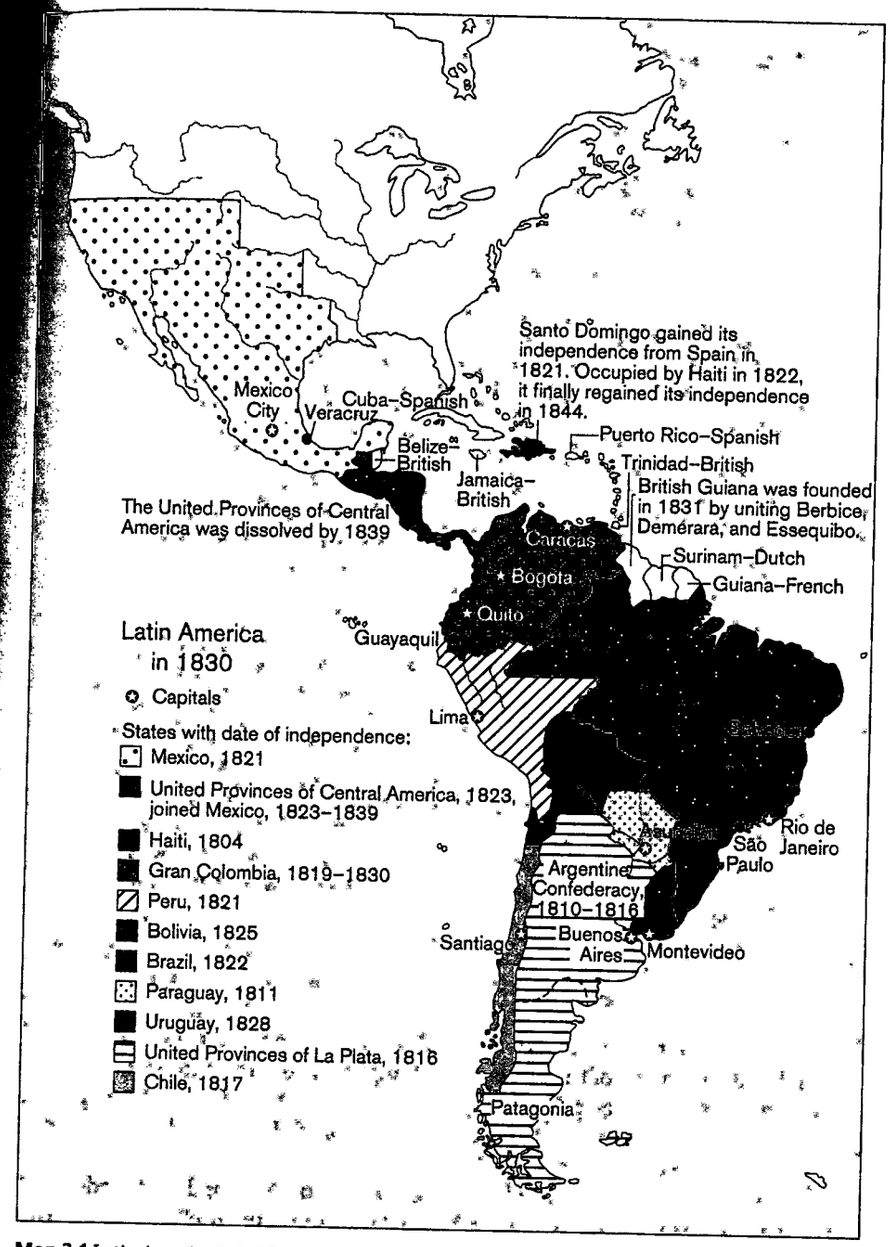
In the documentary *Haiti and the Dominican Republic: An Island Divided* (2011), Henry Louis Gates Jr. talks about race in the Dominican Republic with Juan Rodríguez, a Dominican anthropologist who worked at their Ministry of Culture. In this fascinating discussion, Rodríguez explains how in the Dominican Republic, no one self-identifies as black, even though 90 percent of the population is Afro-descendant. Rather, many Dominicans call themselves "Indio." Though all of the indigenous people on the island were wiped out after Conquest, the term "Indio" is used to negate their African heritage and to maintain a link with their Spanish heritage, according to Rodríguez. Only when he went to New York, claims Rodríguez, did he "learn to be black" and to feel his "roots were in Africa, not in Spain."

Edward Telles and the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), *Pigmentocracies, Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), pp. 29–31; see also Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*, 2nd ed. (Pluto Press, 2010), chapter 1; Magnus Mörner, *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 150 (quote originally published in *El Partido Liberal* [Mexico City, March 5, 1892]).

patriots, or those committed to independence, alienated many groups during the long course of the wars, and many of those groups found comfort and security in the cause of the royalists. In one sense, then, the wars were as much civil wars as revolutions, and much of the bitterness and ferocity of the fighting can be attributed to this division.

The complexity of the wars thus becomes painfully apparent. They were not simple wars of independence with sides easily chosen. Blacks, both slave and free, were slow to join with Creole elites; pardos were suspicious of Creole intentions and reluctant to make a common cause with them to champion independence. The royalists were quick to exploit these deep ethnic and social divisions in Venezuelan society. This complicated independence movement required a leader of remarkably high intelligence and ability—and it found one.

Simón Bolívar, born into a wealthy landowning Creole family on July 24, 1783, has been likened to George Washington for his role in the independence not only of his homeland, Venezuela, but also of four other Latin American nations: Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. But whereas Washington shared the limelight with equally brilliant and determined cohorts such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and the other Founding Fathers, Bolívar towered above his fellows. Bolívar's comet arched alone into the darkening sky of war in 1810.



Map 2.1 Latin America in 1830.

What Makes a Revolutionary?

What makes a revolutionary? What passion or obsession drives men and women to challenge the traditional nature of things? To question what is accepted as right? To lay down that most precious possession of humankind—life—for a cause? For Simón Bolívar, it was not just patriotic zeal and an infatuation with the ideals of the Enlightenment. The inspiration sprang as much from his heart as his mind.

In the following passage he described how he became a revolutionary.

> Listen to this: an orphan and rich at the age of sixteen, I went to Europe after having visited Mexico and Havana: it was then, in Madrid, I fell in love and married the niece of the old Marquis del Toro, Teresa Toro y Alaiza. I returned from Europe to Caracas in 1801 with my wife and I assure you that at that time my head was only filled with the mists of the most ardent love, and not with political ideas, for they had not yet touched my imagination. Then my wife died and I, desolated with that premature and unexpected loss, returned to Spain and from Madrid I went to France and then to Italy. At that time I was already taking some interest in public affairs, politics interested me. . . . I saw the coronation of Napoleon in Paris, in the last month of 1804: that . . . magnificent ceremony filled me with enthusiasm but less because of its pomp than for the sentiments of love that an immense public manifested to the French hero; that general effusion of all hearts, that free and spontaneous popular movement, stimulated by the glories, the heroic feats of Napoleon, made victorious by more than a million individuals seemed to me to be, for the one who would receive such sentiments . . . the ultimate desire to the ultimate ambition of man. . . . what seemed to me great was the universal acclaim and the interest which his person inspired. This, I confess, made me think of the slavery of my country and the glory that would benefit the one who would liberate it. . . . The death of my wife put me on the road to politics very early; it made me follow the chariot of Mars instead of following the plow of Ceres.

From Louis Peru de Lacroix, *Diario de Bucaramanga,* ed. Nicolas E. Navarro, trans. Doris M. Ladd (Caracas: Ediciones del Ministerio de Educación Nacional, Dirección de Cultura, 1949), pp. 62–65, quoted in John J. Johnson and Doris M. Ladd, eds., *Simón Bolívar and Spanish-American Independence, 1793–1830* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1968), p. 130.

Reared in an atmosphere of privilege, wealth, and learning, Bolívar was imbued with many of the ideals of the Enlightenment, from tutors and his own wide reading. He was passionately committed to reason, freedom, and democracy, and he borrowed freely from the models of the British and American constitutional systems in elaborating his own goals for Latin America.

As a young man in 1799 Bolívar was sent to Europe to round out his education, and the long experience abroad was both devastating and inspiring. He returned to Venezuela with his young Spanish wife, whom he adored, but who died in 1803,

less than a year after their marriage. The heartbroken Bolívar returned to Europe and swore never to marry again. It was a vow he kept, although he had numerous mistresses during his career as "Liberator" of Latin America.

Bolívar's intellectual and political genius was sharpened and focused in a Europe dominated by the brilliant French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Bolívar lived in Paris for many years, traveled often, and observed Napoleon as he conquered most of Europe.[2] When Bolívar entered the service of Venezuela in 1810 and was sent as an emissary to London to seek support for independence, one of his first acts was to persuade Francisco de Miranda, the most important precursor of Venezuelan independence and a confirmed radical, to return with him and lead the movement.

The royalists of Venezuela under the leadership of Domingo Monteverde formed a coalition of Spaniards, conservative Creoles, pardos, and blacks that overwhelmed Miranda and the patriots. Even nature seemed to oppose the patriot cause. A devastating earthquake rumbled across Venezuela from the mountains to the coast on March 26, 1812, and royalist clergy were quick to interpret the disaster as a sign from God. When Miranda signed a capitulation in July and appeared to have betrayed the cause, Bolívar had him arrested and let Miranda be taken by the Spaniards. It was the end of the First Republic in Venezuela. Bolívar fled across the border to neighboring Colombia to regroup. Yet, defeat only sharpened the Liberator's resolve.

Far to the south of Venezuela, Creoles in Argentina, Chile, and elsewhere in the Southern Cone also rose up against Spanish authority.

THE SOUTHERN CONE MOVEMENTS

Argentina

The Argentine independence movement played a critical role in independence struggles throughout the Southern Cone (a region comprised of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and was more deeply affected by foreign conflicts than was either Mexico or Venezuela. In 1806 a British military expedition invaded the Rio de la Plata region, and on July 27 the English occupied Buenos Aires. This action was part of the greater struggle between England and Napoleonic France, and it set the stage for a brief, successful show of force by patriotic Argentine Creoles.

The Spanish viceroy and wealthy Spanish merchants fled to the interior when the English landed. Argentine Creoles, on the other hand, organized a patriot army of Creoles, blacks, mulattoes, and some Spaniards, and ousted the British in August. Another British expedition followed in early 1807, landing at Montevideo and then attacking across the estuary. It, too, was soundly defeated.

Creole pride and nationalism were boosted by the successful defense of Buenos Aires and Montevideo in 1806 and 1807. Some date the beginnings of Argentine independence to these heroic actions.

Soon after, the Creoles deposed the cowardly Spanish viceroy who had fled before the British attack. They then elevated Santiago Liniers, a hero of the defense of Buenos Aires, to lead the viceroyalty. This act definitively marked the beginning of the Argentine independence movement. Subsequently, an attempted royalist coup led by the conservative Spanish soldier-merchant Martín Alzaga failed in early 1809, further reinforcing Creole autonomy and self-confidence.

In mid-1809 the Central Junta in Spain, now attempting to govern in the name of Ferdinand VII and wage war against the French, sent another viceroy to Buenos Aires. But the momentum was clearly with the radical Creoles of Buenos Aires. In May 1810 they forced the issue of power when Buenos Aires received news that the Central Junta had collapsed and that the French were in control of Spain. Led by intellectuals such as Mariano Moreno and backed by Creole militia leaders such as Cornelio Saavedra, Creoles called a *cabildo abierto,* or open city council, to discuss and act on the future of the nation. This cabildo abierto deposed the viceroy and named a revolutionary junta to govern Argentina.

Although formal independence was not declared until six years later, the province of Buenos Aires, which considered itself the representative and leader of Argentina, decided to follow its own destiny. The new government decreed virtual free trade and opened the ports of Argentina to the world. The hallowed relationship between church and state was broken, education was secularized, a free press was encouraged, and other enlightened and liberal measures were decreed. Those who resisted the changes were crushed, some being exiled, others executed.

From 1811 to 1816 the Buenos Aires revolutionaries went through several trying stages. Three basic trends were apparent: the gradual move toward complete and official independence in 1816; the splintering of the old viceroyalty of La Plata into the independent countries of Uruguay, Paraguay, and Bolivia; and the growing rivalry between the city of Buenos Aires and the interior provinces of Argentina, which bequeathed major problems of nation-building to Argentina in the nineteenth century.

The struggle between Buenos Aires and the interior provinces of Salta, Tucumán, and Mendoza had many facets. Basically, the interior provinces did not share the worldview of the *porteños,* or citizens of the port city of Buenos Aires, who so dominated the affairs of the new nation. Porteños looked overseas for their prosperity. They thrived on free trade that included the export of hides, tallow, and other beef products and on the import of goods from Europe, principally England, in the post-1810 period. Trade gave life and great wealth to Buenos Aires, and porteños felt that they ruled Argentina.

The interior provinces, on the other hand, marched to a different beat. Traditionally they raised or manufactured simple commodities—sugar, coarse textiles, wine, furniture, draft animals, and livestock—that were marketed locally or to neighboring provinces like Upper Peru, the province that eventually emerged as modern Bolivia. Self-sufficiency marked the economic life of the interior provinces.

The stage was set for a confrontation between Buenos Aires, which wanted free trade, and the interior, which resisted it. Free trade meant the introduction of cheaper European products—such as textiles—that undermined local economies. Porteños were centralists in the main, demanding that the provinces conform to the leadership of Buenos Aires. Provincials were federalists, determined to protect their interests and power against the metropolis.

Superimposed on this rivalry was, of course, the division between patriots and royalists, each one trying to exploit the weakness of the other. Although Argentina's independence was never seriously in jeopardy after 1811, the form that it would take—geographic and political—was hotly debated and fought over for most of the independence period, and, indeed, well into the nineteenth century.

Bolivia

Bolivia was a world apart from Buenos Aires. A country of high plateaus, magnificent snow-covered peaks, volcanoes, and steep valleys, its population of Indians was ruled over by a small Creole elite. In many respects it was a feudal society, divided between elites who possessed power, privilege, and land, and those who served the elites as servants and peasants. The elite controlled the principal sources of wealth and power, such as vast estates and the lucrative silver mines, while the Indian and mestizo population labored as peons, or peasants, in the service of the rulers. Feudal values—emphasizing the distance between elites and peasants—were not easily changed in such a rigidly organized and conservative society.

Bolivia's patriots, however, were not immune to the liberating influences of the Enlightenment and to the rhetoric of independence that inspired Creoles elsewhere in Latin America. Beginning in Chuquisaca (modern Sucre) and spreading to La Paz, a revolution led by radical Creoles and mestizos erupted in mid-1809. It called for the liberation of Bolivia from Spanish tyranny, but it failed to gain adherents among the majority of conservative Creoles, who were committed to preserving the social order (that is, their high positions in society above the Indian and mestizo masses). Several massive indigenous uprisings in the preceding half-century—notably the revolt of Túpac Amaru II in 1780—scared Creoles. The lessons of Indians and mestizos in rebellion were not lost on the elites. So this early independence movement sputtered and was crushed by royalist forces sent from Peru and Buenos Aires in 1809.

The successful patriot revolutionaries of Buenos Aires instigated the next stage of the Bolivian independence movement. Eager to inspire and control the movement throughout the former viceroyalty of La Plata, the first of several liberating expeditions was dispatched from Argentina to Bolivia in late 1810. Initially successful in defeating royalist resistance in the major cities of Bolivia, the porteños struggled to gain the support of Bolivian Creoles, who resented how the Argentines behaved like conquering overlords rather than companions in independence. The royalist army soon defeated the movement, and the Argentines pillaged and stole as they retreated from Bolivia.

Between 1813 and 1815, there were a few more efforts by Argentine patriots to liberate Bolivia from Spanish control. While each time they failed to bring independence to Bolivia, under the leadership of a brilliant Argentine soldier named José de San Martín, they were able to repel an attempted royalist invasion of Argentina.

What about the Bolivians themselves? They were caught between the invading armies from Buenos Aires and Lima, each side bent on ruling Bolivia, not the least because of the rich silver mines that each wished to control. Bolivian Creoles were in the main fearful of the radical rhetoric that accompanied the armies from Buenos Aires. Indians were promised emancipation from forced labor and from payment of tribute; in some instances, the Argentine agents promised land redistribution and other radical reforms. Therefore, ruling Bolivian Creoles tended to side with Peruvian royalists, who promised to maintain the social and economic order. For their part, radical Creoles and mestizos had continued to fight against royalist forces between 1810 and 1816. They formed guerrilla bands, or *montoneros,* and continued to plague royalists and foment social discontent until a royalist effort in 1816 finally crushed them.

Uruguay

Uruguay, the coastal country on the north banks of the Rio de la Plata estuary, followed a road to independence closely tied to the fortunes of Argentina. Uruguay, like Bolivia, was the object of active intervention from beyond its borders as royalists, patriots—and, in the case of Uruguay, Brazilians—sought to influence its destiny.

Uruguay's proximity to Buenos Aires, right across the Rio de la Plata estuary, both stimulated and impeded its independence. Uruguay was inspired by the example of Buenos Aires but inhibited by the determination of Buenos Aires to keep Uruguay as part of the emerging Argentine nation. The situation was complicated further by the Brazilians, who wanted to incorporate the region into Brazil.

Montevideo, Uruguay's capital, was located on the coast of the Rio de la Plata estuary. It was comparatively easy to reach from Spain. Often reinforced by Span-

ish armies, it became a focal point of royalist resistance to the Wars of Independence in the Rio de la Plata area. Uruguayan Creoles who desired autonomy or independence for their country were often driven into temporary and rotating alliances: sometimes with the patriots of Buenos Aires to oppose the Spanish royalists of Uruguay; sometimes with the royalists to oppose the ambitious Argentines; and sometimes Uruguayan patriots were simply overwhelmed by invading Argentines, Brazilians, and royalists and forced to flee their own homeland. In this era of test and challenge, the gaucho (a cowboy of Argentina and Uruguay) chieftain José Gervasio Artigas emerged as the hero of Uruguayan independence. Born to a well-to-do Creole family in Montevideo, Artigas took up the life of a gaucho smuggler and cattle rustler on the plains of Uruguay near the Brazilian border. Gauchos lived a semi-nomadic life of cattle droving and herding in Argentina and Uruguay. When the Spanish viceroy in Montevideo declared war on the patriots of Buenos Aires in 1811, Artigas rose to lead the Uruguayan patriots. They issued a call to arms, the "Grito de Asunción," in February 1811, and war erupted. The royalists got the upper hand, with the help of invading Brazilians, who saw a chance to expand their influence and perhaps even territory in the region. In turn, Artigas and his patriot army retreated in disgust across the Uruguay River to the province of Entre Rios.

The retreat proved to be a turning point in Uruguayan independence. This patriotic and nationalistic act symbolized the rejection of interference from abroad. The independence movement gained strength under duress, just as metal is forged by fire. The pattern of the Uruguayan independence struggle over the next few years was set: in their effort to gain control of Uruguay's destiny, Artigas and the patriots fought for Uruguay's independence while maneuvering between Argentines and Brazilians seeking to control the same, all the while fighting off the possibility of a royalist resurgence. Though Artigas was able to return to power in 1815, he was once again ousted by a Brazilian army in 1820, after which he fled to Paraguay, where he took permanent asylum and died in 1850, never to return to his beloved homeland.

Uruguay, like Bolivia, did not become independent until the 1820s, after the issue of independence was settled in Peru. After Peru was liberated, Argentina ousted its Brazilian rivals in Uruguay. This struggle finally brought Uruguayan independence, though the national boundaries between Uruguay and Brazil would not be formally established until the 1890s, after decades of skirmishes, invasions, and boundary wars.

Paraguay

A quick glance at a map of South America shows Paraguay's isolation. Landlocked a thousand miles up the Rio de la Plata river system, it is far from the continent's centers of power and population. Paraguay's independence

movement developed rapidly and successfully, so that by 1811 Paraguay was effectively free of Spanish control. In Paraguay, as in other parts of Latin America, a small group of Creole ranchers ruled over the large mass of mestizos and Indians. The agricultural economy of Paraguay produced tobacco, hides, sugar, and yerba mate, a bitter tea popular throughout South America.

Paraguayan Creoles were inspired by the events of May 1810 in Buenos Aires, which triggered crises throughout the former viceroyalty of La Plata. A cabildo abierto held in July in the capital of Asunción decided to tread the middle ground, recognizing the regency in Spain but refusing to accept any relationship with Buenos Aires other than one of "fraternity." The Argentines reacted aggressively and imprudently, dispatching an army under the command of Manuel Belgrano to bring Paraguay under control. Belgrano and his troops were trounced on the battlefield early in 1811. On May 17 Paraguay declared itself independent, and one of the most remarkable caudillos of the century rose in this dawn of the Paraguayan nation. His name was José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia. By 1814 he was in firm control and in 1815 he had himself appointed "perpetual dictator." Perpetual he was not, but he nonetheless governed Paraguay absolutely until his death in 1840 at the age of seventy-four.

Chile

The struggle for independence in Chile was long partly because of Chile's location. Located south of Peru—the bastion of royalist power in South America—and west of Argentina—the site of the most successful of the early independence movements on the continent—Chile became a battleground for the patriots of Argentina and the royalists of Peru. But it was neither Argentina nor Peru that triggered the Chilean thrust to independence. The crisis in Spain produced by Napoleon's invasion and the usurpation of Ferdinand set off waves of unrest in Chile.

Creoles in Chile were predisposed to think of themselves as "Chileans." They had a strong sense of identity with their land and its history. When news of the events in Spain and Argentina reached Santiago, the major actors in the independence tableau acted according to their self-interests and self-perceptions. Creoles manipulated the unsettling circumstances to their advantage and called a cabildo abierto for September 10, 1810. This cabildo abierto appointed a junta to govern while a national assembly was called.

This assembly convened in July 1811, but, in the meantime, the junta took some important actions. It organized an army and opened Chile's ports to trade with all nations—two actions difficult to interpret as anything other than steps on the road to full independence. The national assembly then turned even more radical, abolishing the Inquisition, secularizing education, and passing other measures guaranteed to antagonize Chilean royalists and conservatives.

Revolutionaries in Chile now pushed hard for a complete break with Spain. People like Bernardo O'Higgins were determined to make independence a reality. O'Higgins's military talents and patriotic sentiments marked him as the man of the hour. Born in Chile, the son of a Chilean mother and an Irish-born viceroy of Peru, Ambrosio O'Higgins, he was educated in England, where he met the most radical of the revolutionary precursors, the Venezuelan Francisco Miranda, who converted him to the cause of liberty and independence. O'Higgins returned to Chile in 1802 and in 1810 joined the revolutionary movement in Concepción. Although he paid lip service to Ferdinand VII and Spain's liberal Constitution of 1812, O'Higgins's devotion to a free and independent Chile coursed deeply through his heart and mind.

In 1813 and 1814, the viceroy in Peru, José Fernando de Abascal, dispatched royalist armies to crush the rebellion in Chile. They succeeded because the royalist counterrevolution was gaining momentum throughout Latin America after the return of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814, and also because the Chileans were divided. When O'Higgins and the patriot army were defeated at the Battle of Rancagua in October 1814, he fled with his troops across the Andes and eventually joined with Argentine forces led by San Martín.

Chile was drawn back again into the royalist orbit of Peru. A period of repression and terror occurred between 1814 and 1817 as the Spanish sought to extinguish the embers of revolt. Their brutality succeeded only in convincing Chileans even more firmly to forge their own destinies. But they had to await another invading army, this time the patriot army led by San Martín, which struck across the Andes from Argentina into Chile in 1817.

Colombia and Ecuador

Far to the north of Chile and Argentina, in the viceroyalty of New Granada (comprised of Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador), the revolutionary movement began in Quito, the capital of Ecuador. The sequence is familiar. In response to the usurpation of the Spanish throne by Napoleon in 1808, Creoles pushed for autonomy. In Quito this occurred in 1810. A junta of Creoles overthrew Spanish authority. Their victory proved short-lived. Dozens of imprisoned Creole patriots were massacred in a violent royalist reaction in August 1810, and by 1812, the royalists had reestablished control. Quito was not freed from colonial rule until 1822, when patriot troops from Colombia intervened.

Colombia itself fought a long and bitter war before its armies helped liberate Ecuador. The revolution in Colombia broke out in 1809, and by March of 1811, Creoles had declared a republic around Bogotá, the capital. Revolutions erupted in the cities of Tunja and Cartagena as well, challenging not only the Spaniards but also the Creoles of Bogotá for leadership of the revolution. While

Bogotá sought to monopolize the independence movement, each region and major city jealously guarded its prerogatives and privileges. One revolutionary newspaper lamented that "our revolution seems more like a lawsuit over lands than a political transformation to recoup our liberties."[3] The most celebrated of the revolutionaries, Antonio Nariño, struggled to unify his fellow Colombians, but the attempt was futile. Nariño was captured and exiled to Spain in 1814. Even Bolívar, operating in Colombia in 1814 and 1815, left the continent for voluntary exile in Jamaica, disgusted with the extremely divisive Colombians. By 1816, as in Chile, royalists were once again in power, and they dealt brutally with the patriots, executing the captured leaders and exacting a vengeance that only hardened the Colombian resolve to be free.

Peru

The most conservative of all of Spain's kingdoms in the Americas, Peru proved to be the most resistant to revolutionary sentiments. Under the capable administration of its viceroy, José Fernando de Abascal, Peru survived the crises triggered by events in Spain in 1808 with few disturbances. Most Creoles of Peru were largely satisfied with their lot and were uninterested in changing their status as rulers. Although they may have resented particular Spaniards and aspired to more self-government, they tended to side with the royalists in the preservation of order. This order was put to the test in 1814, however, when a rebellion erupted in the sierra (highlands) led by Mateo García Pumacahua, an indigenous leader and descendant of the Incas.

Pumacahua had been a leader in the royal militia who had helped quash the Túpac Amaru II rebellion in the early 1780s and later the early independence movements in Peru, which earned him the rank of colonel in the royal forces and president of the Cusco audiencia. But his dedication to the viceroy soon soured after he was pushed out of the audiencia by elites who felt it was inappropriate for an Indian to have such a high position. By 1814, Pumacahua had joined with liberal Creoles to challenge royalist control of Peru, in part because of the royalist failure to implement the Spanish Constitution of 1812 and especially its more radical reforms, including the end of Indian tribute. But Cusco's elites failed to back Pumacahua in large numbers, since many feared this army of indigenous poor led by a descendant of the Incas, especially when the rebellion became more radical and managed to win some key victories. Having little elite support, Pumacahua was captured and executed in 1815, but the episode was burned into the minds of Peruvian Creoles.[4]

Peru remained a royalist bastion until the 1820s. And it was a formidable one. Between 1810 and 1816, royalist armies from Peru were dispatched south into Chile and Bolivia and north into Ecuador to suppress the revolutions and restore royal order. To comprehend the behavior of Peruvians in this revolutionary crisis, and indeed that of all Latin Americans, one must keep in

ace and Rebellion in the Andes

hough Pumacahua at first sought to build alliances with Cusco's liberal elites, reole fears that the indigenous population would rebel and that "all who have roperty to lose," namely whites, would be robbed and killed by an "undisciplined" horde of Indians were real. In order to undercut liberal opposition, royalists turned to long-held biases among elites that portrayed Indians as untrustworthy, savagely violent, and simmering with unjust anger toward whites despite the gift of civilization that Spain had brought to the Americas. For example, the administrator of Arequipa (in Southern Peru) saw it as a race war and "exhorted his people to be thankful to their 'liberators' [the royalists who put down the rebellion] who had freed them from the threat presented by . . . thousands of Indians, mobilized with the object of removing these provinces from the rule of Ferdinand VII, best of sovereigns; then, in satisfaction of their hatred toward the other races, they would exterminate all the other non-Indians of this hemisphere. If this assertion appears exaggerated, direct your imagination towards the village of Sicuani, where the ungrateful and infamous Pumacahua developed his horrifying plans, designed to exterminate every white, beginning with those of Arequipa."

John Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions: 1808–1826,* 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 170.

mind that events in Spain were a constant influence on the Americas, and Spain itself was convulsed by movements as powerful as those revolutionary forces rocking its colonies across the Atlantic.

SPAIN

The colonizer in 1810 was engaged in a rebellion of another kind: a guerrilla war to overthrow the French usurper imposed as king by Napoleon in 1808. With the legitimate king, Ferdinand VII, absent, liberals and radicals governed in his place. They called a Cortes in 1810 and eventually produced a new constitution in 1812, all the while fighting a war with the aid of an English army to free their homeland from Napoleon's invaders.

During the deliberations for the new constitution, liberals in Spain made common cause with their like-thinking brethren in the colonies. Even Creoles were invited to cross the Atlantic to participate in the Cortes. When the Constitution of 1812 was finally proclaimed, it set in motion a train of reforms that abolished the Inquisition, stripped the nobility of many of its privileges,

granted freedom of the press, and decreed other reforms that almost transformed Spanish government into a constitutional republic.

Both royalists and patriots in Latin America were kept off balance by the attempted transition from absolute monarchy to liberal constitutionalism in Spain. Moreover, the new constitution was not popular in the Americas. Among other things, it allowed for only a small representation from the colonies, and many conservative Creoles found the document too liberal for their tastes. Old-line royalists such as Viceroy Abascal in Peru thought the reforms dangerous and foolhardy, although he went through the motions of implementing them to placate moderate Creoles in Peru. But the liberal reforms proved short-lived.

In 1814 a powerful coalition defeated Napoleon and restored Ferdinand VII to his throne. The latter disavowed the Constitution of 1812 and initiated a conservative restoration that included bringing his Latin American colonies to heel. With fresh, seasoned armies released by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the royalists reasserted control over the colonies. By 1816 Spain was once again in charge of most of its American colonies, with one notable exception—Argentina. This triumph over the revolutionaries was a testament to the continued strength of conservative royalism.

COUNTERREVOLUTION

This Spanish resurgence of arms and initiative was called the counterrevolution. In Mexico, the restoration of Ferdinand VII came at a most opportune moment for the royalist cause. After Hidalgo was executed in 1811, the revolutionary movement temporarily lost momentum until a brilliant mulatto leader emerged to take up the cause in 1812 and 1813. José María Morelos was born in a modest setting and worked as a muleteer for years before studying for the priesthood. When the revolution erupted, Morelos joined the movement and rose to prominence as a well-organized, intelligent, and temperate leader. A profound Mexican nationalist, he rallied all Mexicans to his cause, calling for equality among his countrymen. He declared in 1810 that "all the inhabitants—except Europeans—will no longer be designated as Indians, mulattoes or other castes, but all will be known as Americans."[5] He abolished slavery and Indian tribute—two institutions that perpetuated inequality in Mexico, as they did in many other emerging Latin American nations.

Morelos was avidly committed to other liberal principles as well. He abolished the compulsory church tithe, advocated the seizure of church lands, and promoted the idea that the land should belong to those who till it. Morelos's program promised a more equal and free Mexico, and the battle to achieve his promises has occupied much of modern Mexican history.

Afro-Mexicans in the Wars of Independence

Recently scholars have begun to pay more attention to the important role of Afro-Mexicans, or Mexicans of African descent, in the country's history, including their role as leading actors in Mexico's War of Independence (1810–1821). On the basis of the genealogical records of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormon), scholar Theodore Vincent found that revolutionary leadership became increasingly Afro-Mexican during the course of the movement. By 1818, most of the leaders were of African descent or Afro-mestizos, Mexicans with both African and Indian backgrounds. José María Morelos and Vicente Guerrero were perhaps the most famous. Morelos succeeded Hidalgo as military leader, while Guerrero eventually became president in 1829. Leaders such as Morelos and Guerrero played down their mixed racial origins, preferring to emphasize the equality of all Mexicans and do away with the racial labels so common at the time—"mestizo," "pardo," "mulatto," and so on. This more broadly inclusive message was key to rallying the ordinary people of Mexico behind a progressive, egalitarian agenda, Vincent noted.

Theodore Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero, Mexico's First Black Indian President* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

Morelos, however, fell prey to the counterrevolution. He was unable to gain the support of Mexico's Creoles, and the royalists, reinvigorated by the return of Ferdinand, regained the upper hand in 1815. They captured and executed Morelos on December 22, 1815, and with his death the Mexican independence movement was crushed, not to rise again for several years.

To the south, Simón Bolívar and the Venezuelans continued the fight for independence. After the First Republic ended in 1812 with a royalist triumph, Bolívar fled to the city of Cartagena and took stock. There he considered the failures and triumphs of the movement, the strengths and weaknesses of its principles measured against reality. He summed up his feelings and conclusions in the Cartagena Manifesto.

In this manifesto, Bolívar called for unity above all other considerations if the war for independence was to triumph. Questions of constitutionality, popular elections, and representative government had to be postponed in favor of militarily prosecuting the war. He was firmly committed to centralism, or central authority, rather than federalism, or the sharing of authority by provinces and states. Latin Americans struggled for most of the nineteenth century to reconcile their deep divisions over centralism and federalism, and Bolívar's perceptions of this future struggle between centralists and federalists proved extremely astute.

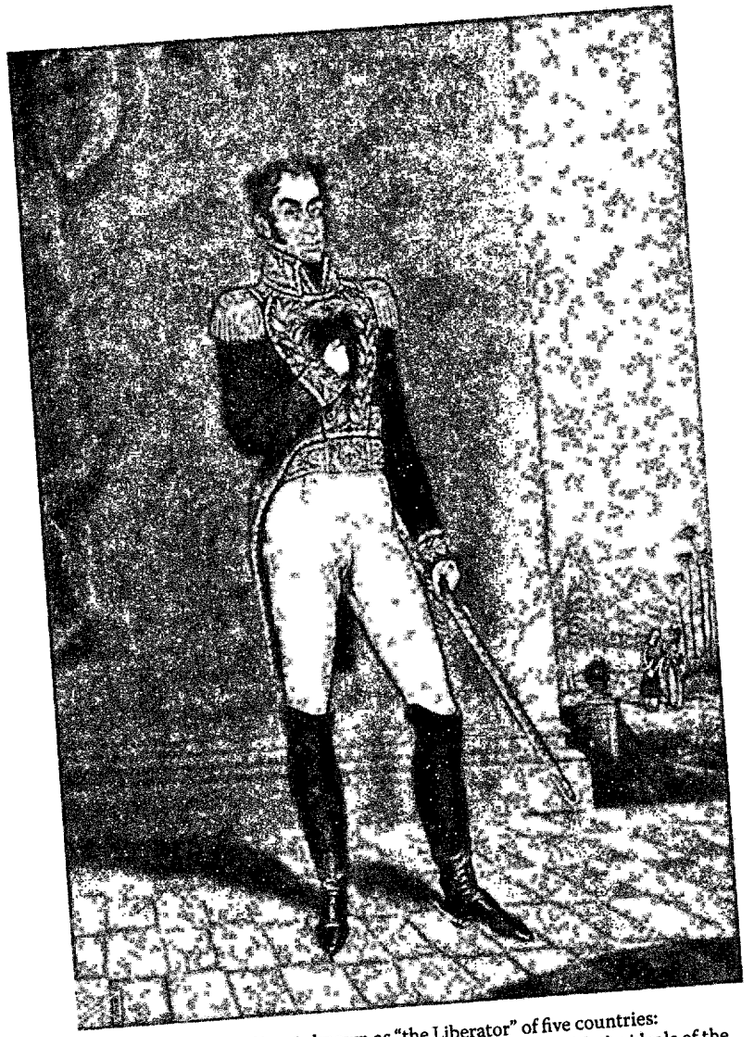


Figure 2.1 Simón Bolívar is known as "the Liberator" of five countries: Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Imbued with the ideals of the Enlightenment, he was inspired as a young man and devoted his life to freeing his land from Spanish oppression. Courtesy Library of Congress.

Bolívar also argued that Venezuela was the key to patriot victory in the viceroyalty of New Granada, while northern South America was in turn the key to the rest of the continent. After issuing his Cartagena Manifesto, Bolívar resumed his military campaign. Reinvigorated by victories in Colombia, he struck back into Venezuela in 1813. In a brilliant lightning war, Bolívar defeated the royalists and paraded triumphantly into Caracas, his carriage drawn through the flower-strewn streets by young women. It was a hero's welcome that the vain Bolívar reveled in. But the festivities and flattery were short-lived.

Again, the royalists took advantage of the diversity of Venezuelan society. The patriots had not yet gained the loyalties of pardos, blacks, and members of the lower classes in general, who suspected the haughty Creoles of pursuing only their own interests. And in the plains, or *llanos*, in the south of Venezuela, a brutal and ruthless leader of the fierce *llaneros*—as the cowboys and horsemen were called—arose to fight the Creoles and their patriot cause. José Tomás Boves, a Spaniard, led a band of Indian, white, and black llaneros into the war on the royalist side and forced Bolívar and the patriots into retreat. By the time General Pablo Morillo arrived in Venezuela in early 1815 from Spain with ten thousand veterans of the Napoleonic Wars, the second Venezuelan republic had been crushed, and Bolívar again retreated into exile. By 1816 the counterrevolution was almost complete and, with the exception of Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay, royal power once again coursed through the Spanish empire in America. But several factors argued against the permanent success of the counterrevolution.

First, the fierceness of the wars themselves made reconciliation difficult if not impossible. Too much blood had been shed, too many people executed ruthlessly, too many hard feelings born in the struggle. Second, Creoles had tasted power, and they were unwilling to let go of their dream of self-rule and self-determination. If defeat was bitter, victory had been sweet, and they were determined to retrieve it. Finally, many of the castes in Latin American society—pardos, mulattoes, mestizos, blacks, and Indians—had heard leaders such as Bolívar and Morelos commit themselves to redemption, freedom, and equality. Soldiering in the patriot armies produced a new sense of rights and identity that empowered these individuals to claim those promises of their leaders. Yet, although the promises often ran afoul of reality, the expectation of a better, more enlightened and liberal world had been awakened.

CONCLUSIONS AND ISSUES

The Wars of Independence opened across South America, from Venezuela in the north to Chile in the south, with a flush of enthusiasm. Declarations, manifestos, open cabildos, and other pronouncements marked this rupture from life

as usual. But the struggle against the royalists was long and bloody and marked by intense passions.

When Spain was freed from Napoleonic domination in 1814, fresh Spanish armies—veterans of the wars against Napoleon—sailed for the colonies to suppress the various rebellions. Making shrewd alliances with conservative Creoles and with many castes who did not relate to the radical, Creole-led patriots, the royalists crushed the patriots from Mexico to Chile. By 1816 it seemed that the fire of the Wars of Independence had been snuffed out. Bolívar was in exile, Morelos was dead, and the patriot cause was crushed.

Discussion Questions

In Bolívar's letter written from Jamaica in 1815, how does he justify the independence movements?

Why did some radical Creoles seek independence while conservative Creoles were slow to challenge Spain's dominance of Latin America?

What ethnic and social divisions in Latin America affected the ability of patriots to form independence movements? What were the historical roots of these divisions?

What role did Argentine patriots play in the independence movements in the Southern Cone, and how did their leadership spark new conflicts in Latin America?

How did events in Spain affect the course of the independence movements?

What was the counterrevolution, and why did it succeed, at least temporarily?

Timeline

July 24, 1783	Simón Bolívar born
1806 and 1807	Argentine Creoles defeat British invasions
1809	Independence revolt in Bolivia (failed)
1809	Independence revolt in Colombia (failed by 1816)
September 10, 1810	Cabildo abierto formed in Chile
1810	Independence revolt in Ecuador (failed by 1812)
1810	Collapse of Central Junta in Spain and creation of Cortes
1812	New liberal Spanish Constitution
October 1814	Chilean patriots defeated at Battle of Rancagua
1810–15	Argentine invasions of Bolivia to gain Bolivian independence (failed)
February 1811	José Gervasio Artigas uprising and the Grito de Asunción
July 5, 1811	Venezuela declares independence
July 1812	Royalists regain control of Venezuela
1814	Ferdinand VII restored to Spanish throne
1814–15	Indigenous revolt led by Mateo Pumacahua in Peru
1816	Argentina gains permanent independence
1816	Spain regains control of most of Latin America
1820	Artigas forced into exile

Keywords

abierto
na Manifesto
Junta
rrevolution
rade
o
de Asunción
ca Letter
llaneros
mestizo
mulatto
pardo
patriots
royalists
Southern Cone
zambo

CHAPTER 3

The Independence Movements

On to Victory

The Wars of Independence

The Wars of Independence cut across all sectors of society, from the poorest Indians to the richest Creoles, from bishops to humble parish priests. In this letter, written in late 1821, José Faustino Pérez, a Creole priest in the parish of Concepción in the interior highlands province of Jauja in Peru, describes his role in Peru's War of Independence. By that time, the war was forcing all citizens to take sides, often with dire consequences for those who chose incorrectly. Note how members of the clergy were intimately involved in secular conflicts.

> I, Don Faustino Pérez, priest of Concepción in the province of Jauja, appear before you gentlemen with respect and have this to say: from the first moment when my soul learned of the education given to me by my parents, I felt an inclination to embrace and protect those natural rights given to me. Yet, having raised my enthusiasm, I was never able to display it until the struggle for liberty forced me to shake loose from the yoke of oppression and tyranny. When the troops of Marshall Juan Antonio Alvarez de Arenales entered the Province of Jauja, I, filled with joy, called together my congregation and preached to them about the goals of this courageous general. From here on the town of Concepción—which decided in favor of our sacred cause—has suffered from the dangers and invasions which the invader enemy has committed on numerous occasions.
>
> My heart not satisfied with these operations, I have also contributed money and seed from my first fruits to maintain the patriot troops while they were in our province. . . . This conduct of mine, inspired by both religion and nature, has been judged criminal by the Chiefs of the King's Armies, and so I have been persecuted and stripped of all my possessions, and have fled on numerous occasions, until this latest one which finds me in the Capital [Lima]. And my family also has

> fered on account of their patriotic acts. . . . I have completed all the obligations of a od man, and true priest, not only in forming Christians, but also in making free izens.[1]

AKENING OF WORLD INTEREST

As he nineteenth century progressed, some parts of Latin America became closely linked to affairs in other parts of the world, principally in Europe and the United States. By the twentieth century, the affairs of most Latin American nations had become inextricably bound to the ebb and flow of events abroad. But, in 1810, most Europeans and North Americans still knew very little about Latin America. It was a world hidden for three centuries behind a Spanish and Portuguese curtain of dominion and exclusion. All of this changed in the wake of the revolutions.

The two most important nations in this awakening of interest were Great Britain and the United States. English merchants and mariners had long enjoyed profits made by trading illegally with Spain's colonies, and the Wars of Independence promised freer access to new markets. Patriots in Argentina, Chile, and other emerging nations opened their ports to free trade with the English, and the English gladly responded by sending more ships and goods and openly traded with the patriots in the Americas.

From the beginning of the Latin American struggle for independence, the United States was largely sympathetic to the patriot cause. Bolívar and his contemporaries were, after all, committed to the same republican ideals as the United States, and many Latin American patriots looked to the successful American Revolution as their model. Furthermore, many Americans viewed Spain as a degenerate European nation bound to a rigidly conservative monarchy and subservient to the Catholic Church. What better way to trumpet the virtues of the New World—filled with optimism, equality, and liberty—than to assist the Latin American patriots on their long, tortuous road to independence?

However, the United States was not an entirely free agent in its dealings with the revolutionaries. The United States, too, was a relatively new country that had to keep the powerful interests of Europe—especially those of Great Britain—in mind when formulating policy toward Latin America. In 1812 the United States and England went to war, and no clear victor had emerged by 1815. Furthermore, in 1815 Napoleon was finally defeated by England and its European allies. The members of this triumphant alliance, among them Austria, Russia, and Prussia, were very conservative and committed to monarchy. So they were predisposed to help their fellow monarch, Ferdinand VII of Spain, reestablish control over his rebellious colonies. Although the United States favored the patriot cause, it had to pursue a policy of strict neutrality in these circumstances. James Monroe,