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Creole Pioneers

The new American states of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are of unusual interest because it seems almost impossible to explain them in terms of two factors which, probably because they are readily derivable from the mid-century nationalisms of Europe, have dominated much provincial European thinking about the rise of nationalism.

In the first place, whether we think of Brazil, the USA, or the former colonies of Spain, language was not an element that differentiated them from their respective imperial metropoles. All, including the USA, were creole states, formed and led by people who shared a common language and common descent with those against whom they fought.[1] Indeed, it is fair to say that language was never even an issue in these early struggles for national liberation.

In the second place, there are serious reasons to doubt the applicability in much of the Western hemisphere of Nairn's otherwise persuasive thesis that:

> The arrival of nationalism in a distinctively modern sense was tied to the political baptism of the lower classes . . . Although sometimes

1. Creole (*Criollo*) – person of (at least theoretically) pure European descent but born in the Americas (and, by later extension, anywhere outside Europe).

> hostile to democracy, nationalist movements have been invariably populist in outlook and sought to induct lower classes into political life. In its most typical version, this assumed the shape of a restless middle-class and intellectual leadership trying to sit up and channel popular class energies into support for the new states.[2]

At least in South and Central America, European-style 'middle classes' were still insignificant at the end of the eighteenth century. Nor was there much in the way of an intelligentsia. For 'in those quiet colonial days little reading interrupted the stately and snobbish rhythm of men's lives.'[3] As we have seen, the first Spanish-American novel was published only in 1816, well after the wars for independence had broken out. The evidence clearly suggests that leadership was held by substantial landowners, allied with a somewhat smaller number of merchants, and various types of professional (lawyers, military men, local and provincial functionaries).[4]

Far from seeking to 'induct the lower classes into political life,' one key factor initially spurring the drive for independence from Madrid, in such important cases as Venezuela, Mexico and Peru, was the *fear* of 'lower-class' political mobilizations: to wit, Indian or Negro-slave uprisings.[5] (This fear only increased when Hegel's 'secretary of the World-Spirit' conquered Spain in 1808, thereby depriving the creoles of peninsular military backup in case of emergency.) In Peru, memories of the great *jacquerie* led by Tupac Amarú (1740–1781) were still fresh.[6] In 1791, Toussaint L'Ouverture led an insurrection of black slaves that produced in 1804 the second independent republic in the Western hemisphere – and terrified the great slave-owning

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2. *The Break-up of Britain*, p. 41.

3. Gerhard Masur, *Simón Bolívar*, p. 17.

4. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, pp. 14–17 and passim. These proportions arose from the fact that the more important commercial and administrative functions were largely monopolized by Spain-born Spaniards, while land-owning was fully open to creoles.

5. In this respect there are clear analogies with Boer nationalism a century later.

6. It is perhaps notable that Tupac Amarú did not entirely repudiate allegiance to the Spanish king. He and his followers (largely Indians, but also some whites and mestizos) rose in fury against the regime in Lima. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 24.

planters of Venezuela.[7] When, in 1789, Madrid issued a new, more humane, slave law specifying in detail the rights and duties of masters and slaves, 'the creoles rejected state intervention on the grounds that slaves were prone to vice and independence [!], and were essential to the economy. In Venezuela – indeed all over the Spanish Caribbean – planters resisted the law and procured its suspension in 1794.'[8] The Liberator Bolívar himself once opined that a Negro revolt was 'a thousand times worse than a Spanish invasion.'[9] Nor should we forget that many leaders of the independence movement in the Thirteen Colonies were slave-owning agrarian magnates. Thomas Jefferson himself was among the Virginian planters who in the 1770s were enraged by the loyalist governor's proclamation freeing those slaves who broke with their seditious masters.[10] It is instructive that one reason why Madrid made a successful come-back in Venezuela from 1814–1816 and held remote Quito until 1820 was that she won the support of slaves in the former, and of Indians in the latter, in the struggle against insurgent creoles.[11] Moreover, the long duration of the continental struggle against Spain, by then a second-rate European power and one itself recently conquered, suggests a certain 'social thinness' to these Latin American independence movements.

Yet they *were* national independence movements. Bolívar came to change his mind about slaves,[12] and his fellow-liberator San Martín decreed in 1821 that 'in the future the aborigines shall not be called

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7. Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 201.
8. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, p. 192.
9. Ibid., p. 224.
10. Edward S. Morgan, 'The Heart of Jefferson,' *The New York Review of Books*, August 17, 1978, p. 2.
11. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 207; Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, p. 237.
12. Not without some twists and turns. He freed his own slaves shortly after Venezuela's declaration of independence in 1810. When he fled to Haiti in 1816, he obtained military assistance from President Alexandre Pétion in return for a promise to end slavery in all territories liberated. The promise was redeemed in Caracas in 1818 – but it should be remembered that Madrid's successes in Venezuela between 1814 and 1816 were in part due to *her* emancipation of loyal slaves. When Bolívar became president of Gran Colombía (Venezuela, New Granada and Ecuador) in 1821, he asked for and obtained from Congress a law freeing the *sons* of slaves. He 'had not asked Congress to wipe out slavery because he did not want to incur the resentment of the big landowners.' Masur, *Bolívar*, pp. 125, 206–207, 329, and 388.

Indians or natives; they are children *and citizens* of Peru and they shall be known as Peruvians.'[13] (We might add: in spite of the fact that as yet print-capitalism had not reached these illiterates.)

Here then is the riddle: why was it precisely *creole* communities that developed so early conceptions of their nation-ness – *well before most of Europe*? Why did such colonial provinces, usually containing large, oppressed, non-Spanish-speaking populations, produce creoles who consciously redefined these populations as fellow-nationals? And Spain,[14] to whom they were, in so many ways, attached, as an enemy alien? Why did the Spanish-American Empire, which had existed calmly for almost three centuries, quite suddenly fragment into eighteen separate states?

The two factors most commonly adduced in explanation are the tightening of Madrid's control and the spread of the liberalizing ideas of the Enlightenment in the latter half of the eighteenth century. It is undoubtedly true that the policies pursued by the capable 'enlightened despot' Carlos III (r. 1759–1788) increasingly frustrated, angered, and alarmed the upper creole classes. In what has sometimes sardonically been called the second conquest of the Americas, Madrid imposed new taxes, made their collection more efficient, enforced metropolitan commercial monopolies, restricted intra-hemispheric trade to its own advantage, centralized administrative hierarchies, and promoted a heavy immigration of *peninsulares*.[15] Mexico, for example, in the early eighteenth century provided the Crown with an annual revenue of about 3,000,000 pesos. By the century's end, however, the sum had almost quintupled to 14,000,000, of which only 4,000,000 were used to defray the costs of local administration.[16] Parallel to this, the level of peninsular migration by the decade

13. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, p. 276. Emphasis added.

14. An anachronism. In the eighteenth century the usual term was still Las Españas [the Spains], not España [Spain]. Seton Watson, *Nations and States*, p. 53.

15. This new metropolitan aggressiveness was partly the product of Enlightenment doctrines, partly of chronic fiscal problems, and partly, after 1779, of war with England. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, pp. 4–17.

16. Ibid., p. 301. Four millions went to subsidize administration of other parts of Spanish America, while six millions were pure profit.

1780–1790 was five times as high as it had been between 1710–1730.[17]

There is also no doubt that improving trans-Atlantic communications, and the fact that the various Americas shared languages and cultures with their respective metropoles, meant a relatively rapid and easy transmission of the new economic and political doctrines being produced in Western Europe. The success of the Thirteen Colonies' revolt at the end of the 1770s, and the onset of the French Revolution at the end of the 1780s, did not fail to exert a powerful influence. Nothing confirms this 'cultural revolution' more than the pervasive *republicanism* of the newly independent communities.[18] Nowhere was any serious attempt made to recreate the dynastic principle in the Americas, except in Brazil; even there, it would probably not have been possible without the immigration in 1808 of the Portuguese dynast himself, in flight from Napoléon. (He stayed there for 13 years, and, on returning home, had his son crowned locally as Pedro I of Brazil.)[19]

Yet the aggressiveness of Madrid and the spirit of liberalism, while central to any understanding of the impulse of resistance in the Spanish Americas, do not in themselves explain why entities like Chile, Venezuela, and Mexico turned out to be emotionally plausible and

17. Ibid., p. 17.

18. The Constitution of the First Venezuelan Republic (1811) was in many places borrowed verbatim from that of the United States. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 131.

19. A superb, intricate analysis of the structural reasons for Brazilian exceptionalism can be found in José Murilo de Carvalho, 'Political Elites and State Building: The Case of Nineteenth-Century Brazil', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24:3 (1982), pp. 378–99. Two of the more important factors were: (1) Educational differences. While 'twenty-three universities were scattered in what eventually would become thirteen different countries' in the Spanish Americas, 'Portugal refused systematically to allow the organization of any institution of higher learning in her colonies, not considering as such the theological seminaries.' Higher education was only to be had in Coimbra University, and thither, in the motherland, went the creole elite's children, the great majority studying in the faculty of law. (2) Different career possibilities for creoles. De Carvalho notes 'the much greater exclusion of American-born Spaniards from the higher posts in the Spanish side [*sic*].' See also Stuart B. Schwartz, 'The Formation of a Colonial Identity in Brazil,' chapter 2 in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, eds, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, who notes in passing (p. 38) that 'no printing press operated in Brazil during the first three centuries of the colonial era.'

politically viable,[20] nor why San Martín should decree that certain aborigines be identified by the neological 'Peruvians.' Nor, ultimately, do they account for the real sacrifices made. For while it is certain that the upper creole classes, *conceived as historical social formations*, did nicely out of independence over the long haul, many actual members of those classes *living* between 1808 and 1828 were financially ruined. (To take only one example: during Madrid's counter-offensive of 1814–16 'more than two-thirds of Venezuela's landowning families suffered heavy confiscations.'[21]) And just as many willingly gave up their lives for the cause. This willingness to sacrifice on the part of comfortable classes is food for thought.

What then? The beginnings of an answer lie in the striking fact that 'each of the new South American republics had been an administrative unit from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.'[22] In this respect they foreshadowed the new states of Africa and parts of Asia in the mid twentieth century, and form a sharp contrast to the new European states of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The original shaping of the American administrative units was to some extent arbitrary and fortuitous, marking the spatial limits of particular military conquests. But, over time, they developed a firmer reality under the influence of geographic, political and economic factors. The very vastness of the Spanish American empire, the enormous variety of its soils and climates, and, above all, the immense difficulty of communications in a pre-industrial age, tended to give these units a self-contained character. (In the colonial era the sea journey from Buenos Aires to Acapulco took four months, and the return trip even longer; the overland trek from Buenos Aires to Santiago normally lasted two months, and that to Cartagena nine.[23]) In addition, Madrid's commercial policies had the effect of turning administrative units into separate economic zones. 'All competition

20. Much the same could be said of London's stance vis-à-vis the Thirteen Colonies, and of the ideology of the 1776 Revolution.

21. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, p. 208; cf. Masur, *Bolívar*, pp. 98–99 and 231.

22. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 678.

23. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, pp. 25–26.

with the mother country was forbidden the Americans, and even the individual parts of the continent could not trade with each other. American goods en route from one side of America to the other had to travel circuitously through Spanish ports, and Spanish navigation had a monopoly on trade with the colonies.'[24] These experiences help to explain why 'one of the basic principles of the American revolution' was that of '*uti possidetis* by which each nation was to preserve the territorial status quo of 1810, the year when the movement for independence had been inaugurated.'[25] Their influence also doubtless contributed to the break-up of Bolívar's short-lived Gran Colombía and of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata into their older constituents (which today are known as Venezuela-Colombia-Ecuador and Argentina-Uruguay-Paraguay-Bolivia). Nonetheless, *in themselves*, market-zones, 'natural'-geographic or politico-administrative, do not create attachments. Who will willingly die for Comecon or the EEC?

To see how administrative units could, over time, come to be conceived as fatherlands, not merely in the Americas but in other parts of the world, one has to look at the ways in which administrative organizations create meaning. The anthropologist Victor Turner has written illuminatingly about the 'journey', between times, statuses and places, as a meaning-creating experience.[26] All such journeys require interpretation (for example, the journey from birth to death has given rise to various religious conceptions.) For our purposes here, the modal journey is the pilgrimage. It is not simply that in the minds of Christians, Muslims or Hindus the cities of Rome, Mecca, or Benares were the centres of sacred geographies, but that their centrality was experienced

24. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 19. Naturally these measures were only partially enforceable, and a good deal of smuggling always went on.

25. Ibid., p. 546.

26. See his *The Forest of Symbols, Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, especially the chapter 'Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*.' For a later, more complex elaboration, see his *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors, Symbolic Action in Human Society*, chapter 5 ('Pilgrimages as Social Processes') and 6 ('Passages, Margins, and Poverty: Religious Symbols of Communitas').

and 'realized' (in the stagecraft sense) by the constant flow of pilgrims moving towards them from remote and *otherwise unrelated* localities. Indeed, in some sense the outer limits of the old religious communities of the imagination were determined by which pilgrimages people made.[27] As noted earlier, the strange physical juxtaposition of Malays, Persians, Indians, Berbers and Turks in Mecca is something incomprehensible without an idea of their community in some form. The Berber encountering the Malay before the Kaaba must, as it were, ask himself: 'Why is this man doing what I am doing, uttering the same words that I am uttering, even though we can not talk to one another?' There is only one answer, once one has learnt it: 'Because *we* . . . are Muslims.' There was, to be sure, always a double aspect to the choreography of the great religious pilgrimages: a vast horde of illiterate vernacular-speakers provided the dense, physical reality of the ceremonial passage; while a small segment of literate bilingual adepts drawn from each vernacular community performed the unifying rites, interpreting to their respective followings the meaning of their collective motion.[28] In a pre-print age, the reality of the imagined religious community depended profoundly on countless, ceaseless travels. Nothing more impresses one about Western Christendom in its heyday than the uncoerced flow of faithful seekers from all over Europe, through the celebrated 'regional centres' of monastic learning, to Rome. These great Latin-speaking institutions drew together what today we would perhaps regard as Irishmen, Danes, Portuguese, Germans, and so forth, in communities whose sacred meaning was every day deciphered from their members' otherwise inexplicable juxtaposition in the refectory.

Though the religious pilgrimages are probably the most touching and

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27. See Bloch, *Feudal Society*, I, p. 64.

28. There are obvious analogies here with the respective roles of bilingual intelligentsias and largely illiterate workers and peasants in the genesis of certain nationalist movements – prior to the coming of radio. Invented only in 1895, radio made it possible to bypass print and summon into being an aural representation of the imagined community where the printed page scarcely penetrated. Its role in the Vietnamese and Indonesian revolutions, and generally in mid-twentieth-century nationalisms, has been much underestimated and understudied.

grandiose journeys of the imagination, they had, and have, more modest and limited secular counterparts.[29] For our present purposes, the most important were the differing passages created by the rise of absolutizing monarchies, and, eventually, Europe-centred world-imperial states. The inner thrust of absolutism was to create a unified apparatus of power, controlled directly by, and loyal to, the ruler *over against* a decentralized, particularistic feudal nobility. Unification meant internal interchangeability of men and documents. Human interchangeability was fostered by the recruitment – naturally to varying extents – of *homines novi*, who, just for that reason, had no independent power of their own, and so could serve as emanations of their masters' wills.[30] Absolutist functionaries thus undertook journeys which were basically different from those of feudal nobles.[31] The difference can be represented schematically as follows: In the modal feudal journey, the heir of Noble A, on his father's death, moves up one step to take that father's place. This ascension requires a round-trip, to the centre for investiture, and then back home to the ancestral demesne. For the new functionary, however, things are more complex. Talent, not death, charts his course. He sees before him a summit rather than a centre. He travels up its corniches in a series of looping arcs which, he hopes, will become smaller and tighter as he nears the top. Sent out to township A at rank V, he may return to the capital at rank W; proceed to province B at rank X; continue to vice-royalty C at rank Y; and end his pilgrimage in the capital at rank Z. On this journey there is no assured resting-place; every pause is provisional. The last thing the functionary wants is to return home; for he *has* no home with any intrinsic value. And this: on his upward-spiralling road he encounters as eager fellow-pilgrims his functionary colleagues, from places and families he has scarcely heard

29. The 'secular pilgrimage' should not be taken merely as a fanciful trope. Conrad was being ironical, but also precise, when he described as 'pilgrims' the spectral agents of Léopold II in the heart of darkness.

30. Especially where: (a) monogamy was religiously and legally enforced; (b) primogeniture was the rule; (c) non-dynastic titles were both inheritable and conceptually and legally distinct from office-rank: i.e. where provincial aristocracies had significant independent power – England, as opposed to Siam.

31. See Bloch, *Feudal Society*, II, pp. 422ff.

of and surely hopes never to have to see. But in experiencing them as travelling-companions, a consciousness of connectedness ('Why are *we* . . . *here* . . . *together*?') emerges, above all when all share a single language-of-state. Then, if official A from province B administers province C, while official D from province C administers province B – a situation that absolutism begins to make likely – that experience of interchangeability requires its own explanation: the ideology of absolutism, which the new men themselves, as much as the sovereign, elaborate.

Documentary interchangeability, which reinforced human interchangeability, was fostered by the development of a standardized language-of-state. As the stately succession of Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Norman, and Early English in London from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries demonstrates, *any* written language could, in principle, serve this function – provided it was given monopoly rights. (One could, however, argue that where vernaculars, rather than Latin, happened to hold the monopoly, a further centralizing function was achieved, by restricting the drift of one sovereign's officials to his rivals' machines: so to speak ensuring that Madrid's pilgrim-functionaries were not interchangeable with those of Paris.)

In principle, the extra-European expansion of the great kingdoms of early modern Europe should have simply extended the above model in the development of grand, transcontinental bureaucracies. But, in fact, this did not happen. The instrumental rationality of the absolutist apparatus – above all its tendency to recruit and promote on the basis of talent rather than of birth – operated only fitfully beyond the eastern shores of the Atlantic.[32]

The pattern is plain in the Americas. For example, of the 170 viceroys in Spanish America prior to 1813, only 4 were creoles. These figures are all the more startling if we note that in 1800 less than 5% of the 3,200,000 creole 'whites' in the Western Empire (imposed on about 13,700,000 indigenes) were Spain-born Spaniards. On the eve of

32. Obviously this rationality should not be exaggerated. The case of the United Kingdom, where Catholics were barred from office until 1829, is not unique. Can one doubt that this long exclusion played an important role in fostering Irish nationalism?

the revolution in Mexico, there was only one creole bishop, although creoles in the viceroyalty outnumbered *peninsulares* by 70 to 1.[33] And, needless to say, it was nearly unheard-of for a creole to rise to a position of official importance in Spain.[34] Moreover, the pilgrimages of creole functionaries were not merely vertically barred. If peninsular officials could travel the road from Zaragoza to Cartagena, Madrid, Lima, and again Madrid, the 'Mexican' or 'Chilean' creole typically served only in the territories of colonial Mexico or Chile: his lateral movement was as cramped as his vertical ascent. In this way, the apex of his looping climb, the highest administrative centre to which he could be assigned, was the capital of the imperial administrative unit in which he found himself.[35] Yet on this cramped pilgrimage he found travelling-companions, who came to sense that their fellowship was based not only on that pilgrimage's particular stretch, but on the shared fatality of trans-Atlantic birth. Even if he was born within one week of his father's

33. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, pp. 18–19, 298. Of the roughly 15,000 *peninsulares*, half were soldiers.

34. In the first decade of the nineteenth century there seem to have been about 400 South Americans resident in Spain at any one time. These included the 'Argentinian' San Martín, who was taken to Spain as a small boy, and spent the next 27 years there, entering the Royal Academy for noble youth, and playing a distinguished part in the armed struggle against Napoléon before returning to his homeland on hearing of its declaration of independence; and Bolívar, who for a time boarded in Madrid with Manuel Mello, 'American' lover of Queen Marie Louise. Masur describes him as belonging (*c.* 1805) to 'a group of young South Americans' who, like him, 'were rich, idle and in disfavour with the Court. The hatred and sense of inferiority felt by many Creoles for the mother country was in them developing into revolutionary impulses.' *Bolívar*, pp. 41–47, and 469–70 (San Martín).

35. Over time, military pilgrimages became as important as civilian. 'Spain had neither the money nor the manpower to maintain large garrisons of regular troops in America, and she relied chiefly on colonial militias, which from the mid-eighteenth century were expanded and reorganized.' (Ibid., p. 10). These militias were quite local, not interchangeable parts of a continental security apparatus. They played an increasingly critical role from the 1760s on, as British incursions multiplied. Bolívar's father had been a prominent militia commander, defending Venezuelan ports against the intruders. Bolívar himself served in his father's old unit as a teenager. (Masur, *Bolívar*, pp. 30 and 38). In this respect he was typical of many of the first-generation nationalist leaders of Argentina, Venezuela, and Chile. See Robert L. Gilmore, *Caudillism and Militarism in Venezuela, 1810–1910*, chapter 6 ['The Militia'] and 7 ['The Military'].

migration, the accident of birth in the Americas consigned him to subordination – even though in terms of language, religion, ancestry, or manners he was largely indistinguishable from the Spain-born Spaniard. There was nothing to be done about it: he was *irremediably* a creole. Yet how irrational his exclusion must have seemed! Nonetheless, hidden inside the irrationality was this logic: born in the Americas, he could not be a true Spaniard; *ergo*, born in Spain, the *peninsular* could not be a true American.[36]

What made the exclusion appear rational in the metropole? Doubtless the confluence of a time-honoured Machiavellism with the growth of conceptions of biological and ecological contamination that accompanied the planetary spread of Europeans and European power from the sixteenth century onwards. From the sovereign's angle of vision, the American creoles, with their ever-growing numbers and increasing local rootedness with each succeeding generation, presented a historically unique political problem. For the first time the metropoles had to deal with – for that era – vast numbers of 'fellow-Europeans' (over three million in the Spanish Americas by 1800) far outside Europe. If the indigenes were conquerable by arms and disease, and controllable by the mysteries of Christianity and a completely alien culture (as well as, for those days, an advanced political organization), the same was not true of the creoles, who had virtually the same relationship to arms, disease, Christianity and European culture as the metropolitans. In other words, in principle, they had readily at hand the political, cultural and military means for successfully asserting themselves. They constituted simultaneously a colonial community and an upper class. They were to be economically subjected and exploited, but they were also essential to the stability of the empire. One can see, in this light, a certain parallelism between the position of the creole

36. Notice the transformations that independence brought the Americans: first-generation immigrants now became 'lowest' rather than 'highest', i.e. the ones most contaminated by a fatal place of birth. Similar inversions occur in response to racism. 'Black blood' – *taint* of the tar-brush – came, under imperialism, to be seen as hopelessly contaminating for any 'white.' Today, in the United States at least, the 'mulatto' has entered the museum. The tiniest trace of 'black blood' makes one beautifully Black. Contrast Fermín's optimistic programme for miscegenation, and his absence of concern for the colour of the expected progeny.

magnates and of feudal barons, crucial to the sovereign's power, but also a menace to it. Thus the *peninsulares* dispatched as viceroys and bishops served the same functions as did the *homines novi* of the proto-absolutist bureaucracies.[37] Even if the viceroy was a grandee in his Andalusian home, here, 5,000 miles away, juxtaposed to the creoles, he was effectively a *homo novus* fully dependent on his metropolitan master. The tense balance between peninsular official and creole magnate was in this way an expression of the old policy of *divide et impera* in a new setting.

In addition, the growth of creole communities, mainly in the Americas, but also in parts of Asia and Africa, led inevitably to the appearance of Eurasians, Eurafricans, as well as Euramericans, not as occasional curiosities but as visible social groups. Their emergence permitted a style of thinking to flourish which foreshadows modern racism. Portugal, earliest of Europe's planetary conquerors, provides an apt illustration of this point. In the last decade of the fifteenth century Dom Manuel I could still 'solve' his 'Jewish question' by mass, forcible *conversion* – possibly the last European ruler to find this solution both satisfactory and 'natural'.[38] Less than a century later, however, one finds Alexandre Valignano, the great reorganizer of the Jesuit mission in Asia between 1574 and 1606, vehemently opposing the admission of Indians and Eurindians to the priesthood in these terms:[39]

> All these dusky races are very stupid and vicious, and of the basest spirits . . . As for the *mestiços* and *castiços*, we should receive either very few or none at all; especially with regard to the *mestiços*, since the more native blood they have, the more they resemble the Indians and the less they are esteemed by the Portuguese.

(Yet Valignano actively encouraged the admission of Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, and 'Indochinese' to the priestly function – perhaps

37. Given Madrid's deep concern that the management of the colonies be in trustworthy hands, 'it was axiomatic that the high posts be filled exclusively with native-born Spaniards'. Masur, *Bolívar*, p. 10.

38. Charles R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, 1415–1825*, p. 266.

39. Ibid., p. 252.

because in those zones mestizos had yet to appear in any numbers?) Similarly, the Portuguese Franciscans in Goa violently opposed admission of creoles to the order, alleging that 'even if born of pure white parents [they] have been suckled by Indian ayahs in their infancy and thus had their blood contaminated for life.'[40] Boxer shows that 'racial' bars and exclusions increased markedly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by comparison with earlier practice. To this malignant tendency the revival of large-scale slavery (for the first time in Europe since antiquity), which was pioneered by Portugal after 1510, made its own massive contribution. Already in the 1550s, 10% of Lisbon's population were slaves; by 1800 there were close to a million slaves among the 2,500,000 or so inhabitants of Portugal's Brazil.[41]

Indirectly, the Enlightenment also influenced the crystallization of a fatal distinction between metropolitans and creoles. In the course of his twenty-two years in power (1755–1777), the enlightened autocrat Pombal not only expelled the Jesuits from Portuguese domains, but made it a criminal offence to call 'coloured' subjects by offensive names, such as 'nigger' or 'mestiço' [sic]. But he justified this decree by citing ancient Roman conceptions of imperial citizenship, not the doctrines of the *philosophes*.[42] More typically, the writings of Rousseau and Herder, which argued that climate and 'ecology' had a constitutive impact on culture and character, exerted wide influence.[43] It was only too easy from there to make the convenient, vulgar deduction that creoles, born in a savage hemisphere, were by nature different from, and inferior to, the metropolitans – and thus unfit for higher office.[44]

40. Ibid., p. 253.

41. Rona Fields, *The Portuguese Revolution and the Armed Forces Movement*, p. 15.

42. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, pp. 257–58.

43. Kemiläinen, *Nationalism*, pp. 72–73.

44. I have emphasized here the racialist distinctions drawn between *peninsulares* and creoles because the main topic under review is the rise of creole nationalism. This should not be understood as minimizing the parallel growth of creole racism towards mestizos, Negroes, and Indians; nor the willingness of an unthreatened metropole to protect (up to a certain point) these unfortunates.

Our attention thus far has been focussed on the worlds of functionaries in the Americas – strategically important, but still small worlds. Moreover, they were worlds which, with their conflicts between *peninsulares* and creoles, predated the appearance of American national consciousnesses at the end of the eighteenth century. Cramped viceregal pilgrimages had no decisive consequences until their territorial stretch could be imagined as nations, in other words until the arrival of print-capitalism.

Print itself spread early to New Spain, but for two centuries it remained under the tight control of crown and church. Till the end of the seventeenth century, presses existed only in Mexico City and Lima, and their output was almost exclusively ecclesiastical. In Protestant North America printing scarcely existed at all in that century. In the course of the eighteenth, however, a virtual revolution took place. Between 1691 and 1820, no less than 2,120 'newspapers' were published, of which 461 lasted more than ten years.[45]

The figure of Benjamin Franklin is indelibly associated with creole nationalism in the northern Americas. But the importance of his trade may be less apparent. Once again, Febvre and Martin are enlightening. They remind us that 'printing did not really develop in [North] America during the eighteenth century until printers discovered a new source of income – the newspaper.'[46] Printers starting new presses always included a newspaper in their productions, to which they were usually the main, even the sole, contributor. Thus the printer-journalist was initially an essentially North American phenomenon. Since the main problem facing the printer-journalist was reaching readers, there developed an alliance with the post-master so intimate that often each became the other. Hence, the printer's office emerged as the key to North American communications and community intellectual life. In Spanish America, albeit more slowly and intermittently, similar processes

45. Febvre and Martin, *The Coming of the Book*, pp. 208–11.
46. Ibid., p. 211.

produced, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the first local presses.[47]

What were the characteristics of the first American newspapers, North or South? They began essentially as appendages of the market. Early gazettes contained – aside from news about the metropole – commercial news (when ships would arrive and depart, what prices were current for what commodities in what ports), as well as colonial political appointments, marriages of the wealthy, and so forth. In other words, what brought together, on the same page, *this* marriage with *that* ship, *this* price with *that* bishop, was the very structure of the colonial administration and market-system itself. In this way, the newspaper of Caracas quite naturally, and even apolitically, created an imagined community among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers, to whom *these* ships, brides, bishops and prices belonged. In time, of course, it was only to be expected that political elements would enter in.

One fertile trait of such newspapers was always their provinciality. A colonial creole might read a Madrid newspaper if he got the chance (but it would say nothing about his world), but many a peninsular official, living down the same street, would, if he could help it, *not* read the Caracas production. An asymmetry infinitely replicable in other colonial situations. Another such trait was plurality. The Spanish-American journals that developed towards the end of the eighteenth century were written in full awareness of provincials in worlds parallel to their own. The newspaper-readers of Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Bogota, even if they did not read each other's newspapers, were nonetheless quite conscious of their existence. Hence a well-known doubleness in early Spanish-American nationalism, its alternating grand stretch and particularistic localism. The fact that early Mexican nationalists wrote of themselves as *nosotros los Americanos* and of their country as *nuestra América*, has been interpreted as revealing the vanity of the local creoles who, because Mexico was far the most valuable of Spain's American possessions, saw themselves as the centre of the New World.[48] But, in

47. Franco, *An Introduction*, p. 28.
48. Lynch, *The Spanish-American Revolutions*, p. 33.

fact, people all over Spanish America thought of themselves as 'Americans,' since this term denoted precisely the shared fatality of extra-Spanish birth.[49]

At the same time, we have seen that the very conception of the newspaper implies the refraction of even 'world events' into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers; and also how important to that imagined community is an idea of steady, solid simultaneity through time. Such a simultaneity the immense stretch of the Spanish American Empire, and the isolation of its component parts, made difficult to imagine.[50] Mexican creoles might learn months later of developments in Buenos Aires, but it would be through Mexican newspapers, not those of the Rio de la Plata; and the events would appear as 'similar to' rather than 'part of' events in Mexico.

In this sense, the 'failure' of the Spanish-American experience to generate a permanent Spanish-America-wide nationalism reflects both the general level of development of capitalism and technology in the late eighteenth century and the 'local' backwardness of Spanish capitalism and technology in relation to the administrative stretch of the empire. (The world-historical era in which each nationalism is born probably has a significant impact on its scope. Is Indian nationalism not inseparable from colonial administrative-market unification, after the Mutiny, by the most formidable and advanced of the imperial powers?)

The Protestant, English-speaking creoles to the north were much more favourably situated for realizing the idea of 'America' and indeed eventually succeeded in appropriating the everyday title of 'Americans'. The original Thirteen Colonies comprised an area

49. 'A peon came to complain that the Spanish overseer of his estancia had beaten him. San Martín was indignant, but it was a nationalist rather than socialist indignation. "What do you think? After three years of revolution, a *maturrango* [vulg., Peninsular Spaniard] dares to raise his hand against an American!" ' Ibid., p. 87.

50. A spell-binding evocation of the remoteness and isolation of the Spanish-American populations is Márquez's picture of the fabulous Macondo in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

smaller than Venezuela, and one third the size of Argentina.[51] Bunched geographically together, their market-centres in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia were readily accessible to one another, and their populations were relatively tightly linked by print as well as commerce. The 'United States' could gradually multiply in numbers over the next 183 years, as old and new populations moved westwards out of the old east coast core. Yet even in the case of the USA there are elements of comparative 'failure' or shrinkage – non-absorption of English-speaking Canada, Texas's decade of independent sovereignty (1835–46). Had a sizeable English-speaking community existed in California in the eighteenth century, is it not likely that an independent state would have arisen there to play Argentina to the Thirteen Colonies' Peru? Even in the USA, the affective bonds of nationalism were elastic enough, combined with the rapid expansion of the western frontier and the contradictions generated between the economies of North and South, to precipitate a war of secession *almost a century after the Declaration of Independence*; and this war today sharply reminds us of those that tore Venezuela and Ecuador off from Gran Colombia, and Uruguay and Paraguay from the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata.[52]

By way of provisional conclusion, it may be appropriate to re-emphasize the limited and specific thrust of the argument so far. It is intended less to explain the socio-economic bases of anti-metropolitan resistance in the Western hemisphere between say, 1760 and 1830, than why the resistance was conceived in plural, 'national' forms – rather than in others. The economic interests at stake are well-known and obviously of fundamental importance.

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51. The total area of the Thirteen Colonies was 322,497 square miles. That of Venezuela was 352,143; of Argentina, 1,072,067; and of Spanish South America, 3,417,625 square miles.

52. Paraguay forms a case of exceptional interest. Thanks to the relatively benevolent dictatorship established there by the Jesuits early in the seventeenth century, the indigenes were better treated than elsewhere in Spanish America, and Guaraní achieved the status of print-language. The Crown's expulsion of the Jesuits from Spanish America in 1767 brought the territory into the Rio de la Plata, but very late in the day, and for little more than a generation. See Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, pp. 200–201.

Liberalism and the Enlightenment clearly had a powerful impact, above all in providing an arsenal of ideological criticisms of imperial and *anciens régimes*. What I am proposing is that neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create *in themselves* the *kind*, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from these regimes' depredations; to put it another way, none provided the framework of a new consciousness – the scarcely-seen periphery of its vision – as opposed to centre-field objects of its admiration or disgust.[53] In accomplishing *this* specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen played the decisive historic role.

53. It is instructive that the Declaration of Independence in 1776 speaks only of 'the people', while the word 'nation' makes its debut only in the Constitution of 1789. Kemiläinen, *Nationalism*, p. 105.

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Old Languages, New Models

The close of the era of successful national liberation movements in the Americas coincided rather closely with the onset of the age of nationalism in Europe. If we consider the character of these newer nationalisms which, between 1820 and 1920, changed the face of the Old World, two striking features mark them off from their ancestors. First, in almost all of them 'national print-languages' were of central ideological and political importance, whereas Spanish and English were never issues in the revolutionary Americas. Second, all were able to work from visible models provided by their distant, and after the convulsions of the French Revolution, not so distant, predecessors. The 'nation' thus became something capable of being consciously aspired to from early on, rather than a slowly sharpening frame of vision. Indeed, as we shall see, the 'nation' proved an invention on which it was impossible to secure a patent. It became available for pirating by widely different, and sometimes unexpected, hands. In this chapter, therefore, the analytical focus will be on print-language and piracy.

In blithe disregard of some obvious extra-European facts, the great Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) had declared, towards the end of the eighteenth century, that: 'Denn *jedes* Volk ist Volk; es hat