



FIGURE 3. Contemporary illustration of Benjamin Franklin giving letters of introduction to John Hewson. Technology smugglers like Hewson approached American representatives in Europe and asked for financial support and for letters of introduction to potential American investors. Hewson gained much credibility from advertising that he had the backing of Benjamin Franklin. Reproduced from *A Brief History of the Revolution: with a Sketch of the Life of Captain John Hewson, Including the Constitution of the United States, a Statistical View of the Grand Federal Procession, Mr. Wilson's Oration: Washington's Farewell Address, &c. &c.* (Philadelphia, 1843). Courtesy of the Franklin Collection, Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.

the Revolutionary War, Franklin assumed the role of the nation's preeminent statesman in Europe, the only arena where the United States truly behaved as a collectivity until 1789. He was, in short, the standard bearer of protonationalist consciousness in America.²²

Franklin's nationalism, however, evolved in a rather dramatic way. Before he went to London for the second time in 1764 he was an enthusiastic British patriot who followed the ethnically exclu-

sive linguistic-based English nationalist model.²³ His "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" is one of the earliest conceptualizations of the North American colonies as a coherent unit. Yet Franklin concluded this short and brilliant social and demographic analysis of the colonies with an ethnic exclusionary outburst: "The Number of purely white People in the World is proportionally very small. All Africa is black or tawny. Asia chiefly tawny. America (exclusive of the new Comers) wholly so. And in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians, and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy complexion; as are the Germans also, the Saxons only excepted who with the English make the principle Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. . . . Perhaps I am partial to the complexion of my Country," he conceded, yet "such partiality is natural to Mankind."²⁴ In the next decade and a half the number of German immigrants who flocked to Pennsylvania alarmed Franklin. When he was a young printer he had supported German-language newspapers, and even had his own *Pennsylvania Gazette* translated into German. In the 1760s, however, he joined the Anti-Propriety party, which sought to control German immigration. The 1764 Pennsylvania elections pitted Franklin and his party against the original Quaker proprietors of the colony. Franklin's party stood for English homogeneity while his opponents symbolized the civic inclusiveness of the emerging America by running on its eight-man slate two Germans and one Scots-Irishman.²⁵

Thereafter Franklin traveled to London, where his opposition to imperial measures slowly eroded both his English patriotism and his ethnic conceptualization of American identity. His presentation to the House of Commons of the American arguments against the Stamp Act established him as the voice of the American colonies. Snubbed by the British elite who could not accept the self-made man from the colonies as their equal, Franklin found his social niche among Scots and Quaker radicals and dissenters. He was embittered