

5

The European World Hegemony

By 1900 the peoples of Europe and European stocks overseas dominated the globe. They did so in many ways, some explicit and some implicit, but the qualifications matter less than the general fact. For the most part, the world responded to European initiatives and marched increasingly to European tunes. This was a unique development in world history. For the first time, one civilization established itself as a leader worldwide. One minor consequence is that the remainder of this book will be increasingly concerned with a single, global, history; indeed, by 1914 the first climax of what is now called 'globalization' had been reached. It is important not to think only of the direct formal rule of the majority of the world's land surface by European states (some people would prefer the term 'western' but this is unnecessarily finicky – the Americas and Antipodes are dominated by culture of European origin, not of Asian or African – and is also liable to mislead, because of the use of that word recently in a narrow political sense). There is economic and cultural hegemony to be considered, and European predominance was often expressed in influence as well as in overt control.

A remarkable aspect of the European cultural hegemony is how quickly other peoples responded to it, creating amalgams of their own cultures and foreign imports. Already by the late nineteenth century the first stages of such hybrid societies can be found in Asia. Japan was of course the clearest example, but parts of China, South-East Asia, India, Persia and the Middle East were not far behind. Some of this was based on what we may call 'defensive modernization': acquiring European weapons and methods of organization in order to defend at least some aspects of independence and sovereignty. But more important were the millions of cases in which indigenous populations took what they admired from the colonial or predominant power and gradually made it their own (although not always in ways that Europeans would recognize). In port after port, from Tangier to Cairo, Istanbul, Bombay, Singapore and Shanghai, young non-Europeans lived lives that were so vastly different from those of their fathers that it put

immense pressure on politics and value-systems, and would lead to revolutions the effects of which would dominate the twenty-first-century world.

One way of envisaging the Europeans' world of 1900 is as a succession of concentric circles. The innermost was old Europe itself, which had grown in wealth and population for three centuries thanks to an increasing mastery first of its own and then of the world's resources. Europeans distinguished themselves more and more from other human beings by taking and consuming a growing share of the world's goods and by the energy and skill they showed in manipulating their environment. Their civilization was already rich in the nineteenth century and was all the time getting richer. Industrialization had confirmed its self-feeding capacity to open up and create new resources; furthermore, the power generated by new wealth made possible the appropriation of the wealth of other parts of the world. The profits of Congo rubber, Burmese teak or Persian oil would not for a long time be reinvested in those countries. The poor European and American benefited from low prices for raw materials, and improving mortality rates tell the story of an industrial civilization finding it possible to give its peoples a richer life. Even the European peasant could buy cheap manufactured clothes and tools, while his contemporaries in Africa and India still lived in the Stone Age.

This wealth was shared by the second circle of European hegemony, that of the European cultures transplanted overseas. The United States is the greatest example; Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the countries of South America make up the list. They did not all stand on the same footing towards the Old World, but together with Europe proper they were what is sometimes called the 'western world', an unhelpful expression, since they are scattered all around the globe. Yet it seeks to express an important fact: the similarity of the ideas and institutions from which they were sprung. Of course, these were not all that had shaped them. They all had their distinctive frontiers; they all had faced special environmental challenges and unique historical circumstances. But what they had in common were ways of dealing with these challenges, institutions which different frontiers would reshape in different ways. They were all formally Christian – no one ever settled new lands in the name of atheism until the twentieth century – all regulated their affairs by European systems of law, and all had access to the great cultures of Europe with which they shared their languages.

In 1900 this world was sometimes called the 'civilized world'. It was called that just because it was a world of shared standards; the confident people who used the phrase could not easily see that there was much else deserving of the name of civilization in the world. When they looked for it,

they tended to see only heathen, backward, benighted peoples or a few striving to join the civilized. This was one reason why Europeans were so successful; what were taken to be demonstrations of the inherent superiority of European ideas and values nerved men to fresh assaults on the world and inspired fresh incomprehension of it. The progressive values of the eighteenth century provided new arguments for superiority to reinforce those originally stemming from religion.

By 1800, Europeans had lost most of the respect they had once showed for other civilizations. Their own social practice seemed obviously superior to the unintelligible barbarities found elsewhere. The advocacy of individual rights, a free press, universal suffrage, the protection of women and children (and even animals) from exploitation, have been ideals pursued right down to our own day in other lands by Europeans and Americans, often wholly unconscious that they might be inappropriate. Philanthropists and progressives long continued to be confident that the values of European civilization should be universalized, as were its medicine and sanitation, even when deploring other assertions of European superiority. Science, too, has often seemed to point in the same direction, to the destruction of superstition and the bringing of the blessings of a rational exploitation of resources, the provision of formal education and the suppression of backward social customs. There was a well-nigh universal assumption that the values of European civilization were better than indigenous ones and a large obliviousness to any disruptive effects they might have.

Fortunately, it was thought, for the peoples of some of the lands over which 'thick darkness brooded yet' (as one Victorian hymn put it), they were by 1900 often ruled directly by Europeans or European stocks: subject peoples formed the third concentric circle through which European civilization saw itself as radiating outwards. In many colonies enlightened administrators toiled to bring the blessings of railways, European-style education, hospitals, and law and order to peoples whose own institutions they saw as having failed (it was taken as evidence of their inadequacy that they had failed to stand up to the challenge and competition of a 'superior civilization'). Even when native institutions were protected and preserved, it was from a position which assumed the superiority of the culture of the colonial power.

A consciousness of such superiority is no longer admired or admissible, even if secretly cherished by many Europeans. In one respect, nevertheless, it achieved an end which the most scrupulous critics of colonialism still accept as good, even when suspecting the motives behind it. This was the abolition of slavery in the European world and the deployment of force

and diplomacy to combat it even in countries Europeans did not control. The crucial steps were taken in 1807 and 1834, when the British parliament abolished first the trade in slaves and then slavery itself within the British empire. This action by the major naval, imperial and commercial power was decisive; similar measures were soon enforced by other European nations and slavery finished in the United States in 1865. The end of the process may be reckoned to be the emancipation of slaves in Brazil in 1888, at which date colonial governments and the Royal Navy were pressing hard on the operations of Arab slave-traders in the African continent and the Indian Ocean. Many forces, intellectual, religious, economic and political, went into this self-correction. Europeans were the ones who had benefited the most from slavery, and the ones who first abolished it. In this obvious irony lie many of the contradictions in Europe's relations with the rest of the world.

Beyond the outermost circle of directly ruled territories lay the rest of the world. Its peoples were shaped by Europe, too. Sometimes their values and institutions were corroded by contact with it – as was the case in the Chinese and Ottoman empires – and this might lead to indirect European political interference as well as the weakening of traditional authority. Sometimes they were stimulated by such contacts and exploited them: Japan is the only example of an important nation doing this with success from the very beginning. What was virtually impossible was to remain untouched by Europe. The busy, bustling energy of the European trader would alone have seen to that. In fact, it is the areas which were not directly ruled by Europeans which make the point of European hegemony most forcibly of all. European values were transferred on the powerful wings of aspiration and envy. Geographical remoteness was almost the only security (but even Tibet was invaded by the British in 1904). Ethiopia is virtually the solitary example of successful independence; it survived British and Italian invasion in the nineteenth century, drawing not least on the important propaganda advantage of having been a Christian country for some fourteen centuries.

Whoever opened the door, a whole civilization was likely to try to follow them through it, but one of the most important agencies bringing European civilization to the rest of the world had always been Christianity, because of its virtually limitless interest in all sides of human behaviour. The territorial spread of the organized Churches and the growth in their numbers of official adherents in the nineteenth century made this the greatest age of Christian expansion since apostolic times. There was a renewed wave of missionary activity; new orders were set up by Catholics, new societies for the support of overseas missions appeared in Protestant countries. Yet the

paradoxical effect was the intensifying of the European flavour of what was supposedly a creed for all sorts and conditions of men. In most of the receiving countries, Christianity was long seen as just one more aspect of European civilization, rather than as a spiritual message which might use a local idiom. An interesting if trivial example was the concern missionaries often showed over dress. Whereas the Jesuits in seventeenth-century China had discreetly adopted the costume of their hosts, their nineteenth-century successors set to work with zeal to put central Africans or Pacific Islanders into European garments which were often of almost freakish unsuitability. This was one way in which Christian missionaries diffused more than a religious message. Often, too, they brought important material and technical benefits: food in time of famine, agricultural techniques, hospitals and schools, some of which could be disruptive of the societies which received them. Through them filtered the assumptions of a new civilization.

The ideological confidence of Europeans, missionaries and non-missionaries alike, could rest in the last resort on the knowledge that they could not be kept away, even from countries which were not colonized. There appeared to be no part of the world where Europeans could not, if they wished, impose themselves by armed strength. The development of weapons in the nineteenth century gave Europeans an even greater relative advantage than they had enjoyed when the first Portuguese broadside was fired at Calicut. Even when advanced devices were available to other peoples, they could rarely deploy them effectively. At the battle of Omdurman in the Sudan in 1898, a British regiment opened fire on its opponents at 2,000 yards' range with the ordinary magazine rifle of the British army of the day. Soon afterwards, shrapnel shell and machine-guns were shredding to pieces the masses of the Mahdist army, who never reached the British line. By the end of the battle 10,000 of them had been killed for a loss of 48 British and Egyptian soldiers. It was not, though, as an Englishman put it soon afterwards, simply the case that

Whatever happens, we have got
The Maxim gun, and they have not

for the *khalifa* had machine-guns in his armoury at Omdurman, too. He also had telegraph apparatus to communicate with his forces and electric mines to blow up the British gunboats on the Nile. But none of these things was properly employed; not only a technical, but a mental transformation was required before non-European cultures could turn the instrumentation of the Europeans against them.

There was also one other sense, more benevolent and less disagreeable, in which European civilization rested upon force. This was because of the

Pax Britannica which throughout the whole nineteenth century stood in the way of European nations fighting each other for mastery of the non-European world. There was to be no re-run of the colonial wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the nineteenth, although the greatest extension of direct colonial rule in modern times was then going on. Traders of all nations could move without let or hindrance on the surface of the seas. British naval supremacy was a precondition of the informal expansion of European civilization.

It guaranteed, above all, the international framework of trade whose centre, by 1900, was Europe. The old peripheral exchanges by a few merchants and enterprising captains had, from the seventeenth century onwards, been replaced gradually by integrated relationships of interdependence based on a broad distinction of role between industrial and non-industrial countries; the second tended to be primary producers meeting the needs of the increasingly urbanized populations of the first. But this crude distinction needs much qualification. Individual countries often do not fit it; the United States, for example, was both a great primary producer and the world's leading manufacturing power in 1914, with an output as great as those of Great Britain, France and Germany combined. Nor was this distinction one which ran exactly between nations of European and non-European culture. Japan and Russia were both industrializing faster than China or India in 1914, but Russia, though European, Christian and imperialist, could certainly not be regarded as a developed nation, and most Japanese (like most Russians) were still peasants. Nor could a developed economy be found in Balkan Europe. All that can be asserted is that in 1914 a nucleus of advanced countries existed with social and economic structures quite different from those of traditional society, and that these were the core of an Atlantic group of nations which was increasingly the world's main producer and consumer.

The world economy came to a sharp focus in London, where the financial services which sustained the flow of world trade were centred. A huge amount of the world's business was transacted by means of the sterling bill of exchange; it rested in turn upon the international gold standard, which sustained confidence by ensuring that the main currencies remained in fairly steady relationships with one another. All major countries had gold currencies, and travel anywhere in the world was possible with a bag of gold sovereigns, five-dollar pieces, gold francs or any other major medium of exchange, without any doubts about their acceptability.

London was also in another sense the centre of the world economy, because although the United Kingdom's gross output was by 1914 overtaken in important respects by that of the United States and Germany, she

was the greatest of trading nations. The bulk of the world's shipping and carrying trade was in British hands. She was the main importing and exporting nation and the only one which sent more of its manufactures to non-European nations than to European. Great Britain was also the biggest exporter of capital and drew a huge income from her overseas investments, notably those in the United States and South America. Her special role imposed a roughly triangular system of international exchange. The British bought goods, manufactured and otherwise, from Europe and paid for them with their own manufactures, cash and overseas produce. To the rest of the world they exported manufactures, capital and services, taking in return food and raw materials and cash. This complex system illustrates how little the European relationship with the rest of the world was a simple one of exchanging manufactures for raw materials. And there was, of course, always the unique instance of the United States, little involved in export, but gradually commanding a greater and greater share of its own domestic market for manufactured goods, and still a capital importer.

Most British economists believed in 1914 that the prosperity which this system enjoyed, and the increasing wealth which it made possible, showed the truth of the free-trade doctrine. Their own country's prosperity had grown most rapidly in the heyday of such ideas. Adam Smith had predicted that prosperity would continue if a closed imperial system reserving trade to the mother country were abandoned and so, in the case of America, it had soon proved, for a big expansion had come to the Anglo-American trade within a few years of the peace of 1783. By 1800 a majority of British exports were already going outside Europe and there then still lay ahead the greatest period of expansion of trade in India and East Asia. British imperial policy was directed less to the potentially embarrassing acquisition of new colonies than to the opening of areas closed to trade, for that was where prosperity was deemed to lie. One flagrant example was the Opium War of 1839–42. The outcome was the opening of five Chinese ports to European trade and the *de facto* cession to Great Britain of Hong Kong as a depot colony that could be organized under British law and management of commerce.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there had been for a couple of decades a high tide of free trade ideas, when more governments seemed willing to act upon them than ever before or after. In this period, tariff barriers were demolished and the comparative advantage of the British – first among trading and manufacturing nations – had continued. But this era passed in the 1870s and 1880s. The onset of a worldwide recession of economic activity and falling prices meant that by 1900 Great Britain was again the only major nation without tariffs for protection, and even in that

FPO

country questioning of the old free trade dogmas was beginning to be heard as competition from Germany grew fiercer and more alarming.

Nevertheless, the economic world of 1914 still seems in retrospect to be one of astonishing economic freedom and confidence. A long European peace provided the soil in which trading connections could mature. Stable currencies assured great flexibility to a world price system; exchange control existed nowhere in the world and Russia and China were by then as completely integrated into this market as other countries. Freight and insurance rates had grown cheaper and cheaper, food prices had shown a long-term decline, and wages had shown a long-term rise. Interest rates and taxation were low. From a European, and especially an Anglo-Saxon, perspective it seemed as if a capitalist paradise might be achievable.

As this system had grown to incorporate Asia and Africa, it, too, came to be instrumental in a diffusion of ideas and techniques originally European, but soon acclimatized in other lands. Joint stock companies, banks, commodity and stock exchanges spread around the world by intrusion and imitation; they began to displace traditional structures of commerce. The building of docks and railways, the infrastructure of world trade, together with the beginnings of industrial employment, began in some places to turn peasants into an industrial proletariat. Sometimes the effects on local economies could be bad; the cultivation of indigo in India, for example, more or less collapsed when synthetic dyes became available in Germany and Great Britain. The economic history of South-East Asia and its strategic import-

ance were transformed by the British introduction of the rubber-tree there (a step which also, incidentally, was to ruin the Brazilian rubber industry). Isolation first disturbed by explorers, missionaries and soldiers was destroyed by the arrival of the telegraph and the railway; in the twentieth century the motor car would take this further. Deeper relationships were being transformed, too; the canal opened at Suez in 1869 not only shaped British commerce and strategy, but gave the Mediterranean new importance, not this time as a centre of a special civilization, but as a route.

Economic integration and institutional change were inseparable from cultural change. The formal instruments of missionary religion, educational institutions and government policy are only a tiny part of this story. European languages which were used officially, for example, took with them European concepts and opened to educated élites in non-European countries the heritage not only of Christian civilization, but of secular and 'enlightened' European culture, too. Missionaries spread more than dogma or medical and educational services; they also provoked the criticism of the colonial regime itself, because of the gap between its performance and the pretensions of the culture it imposed.

In the perspectives of the twenty-first century, much of what is most durable and important in the impact of Europe on the world can be traced to such unintended, ambiguous effects as these. Above all, there was the simple urge to imitate, whether expressed ludicrously in the adoption of European dress or, much more importantly, in the conclusion drawn by many who sought to resist European hegemony that to do so it was necessary to adopt European ways. Almost everywhere, radicals and reformers advocated Europeanization. The ideas of 1776, 1789 and 1848 are still at work in Asia and Africa and the world still debates its future in European terms.

This extraordinary outcome is too often overlooked. In its unravelling, 1900 is only a vantage point, not the end of the story. The Japanese are a gifted people who have inherited exquisite artistic traditions, yet they have adopted not only western industrialism (which is understandable enough) but western art forms and western dress in preference to their own. The Japanese now find whisky and claret fashionable, and the Chinese officially revere Marx, a German philosopher who articulated a system of thought rooted in nineteenth-century German idealism and English social and economic facts, rarely spoke of Asia except with contempt, and never went east of Prussia in his life. This suggests another curious fact: the balance sheet of cultural influence is overwhelmingly one-sided. The world gave back to Europe occasional fashions, but no idea or institution of comparable effect to those Europe gave to the world. The teaching of Marx was

long a force throughout twentieth-century Asia; the last non-European whose words had any comparable authority in Europe was Jesus Christ.

One physical transmission of culture was achieved by the movement of Europeans to other continents. Outside the United States, the two largest groups of European communities overseas were (as they still are) in South America and the former British colonies of white settlement which, though formally subject to London's direct rule for much of the nineteenth century, were in fact long oddly hybrid, not quite independent nations, but not really colonies either. Both groups were fed during the nineteenth century, like the United States, by the great diaspora of Europeans whose numbers justify one name which has been given to this era of European demography: the Great Resettlement.

Before 1800, there was little European emigration except from the British Isles. After that date, something like 60 million Europeans went overseas, and this tide began to flow strongly in the 1830s. In the nineteenth century most of it went to North America, and then to Latin America (especially Argentina and Brazil), to Australia and South Africa. At the same time a concealed European emigration was also occurring across land within the Russian empire, which occupied one-sixth of the world's land surface and which had vast spaces to draw migrants in Siberia. The peak of European emigration overseas actually came on the eve of the First World War, in 1913, when over a million and a half people left Europe; over a third of these were Italians, nearly 400,000 were British and 200,000 Spanish. Fifty years earlier, Italians figured only to a minor degree; Germans and Scandinavians loomed much larger. All the time, the British Isles contributed a steady flow; between 1880 and 1910 8½ million Britons went overseas (the Italian figure for this period was just over 6 million).

The greatest number of British emigrants went to the United States (about 65 per cent of them between 1815 and 1900), but large numbers went also to the self-governing colonies; this ratio changed after 1900 and by 1914 a majority of British emigrants was going to the latter. Italians and Spaniards also went to South America in large numbers, and Italians to the United States. That country remained the greatest recipient of all other nationalities; between 1820 and 1950 the United States benefited by the arrival of over 33 million Europeans.

Explanations of this striking demographic evolution are not far to seek. Politics sometimes contributed to the flow, as it did after 1848. Rising populations in Europe always pressed upon economic possibilities as the discovery of the phenomenon of 'unemployment' shows. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, too, when emigration was rising fastest, European farmers were pressed by overseas competition. Above all, it mattered

that for the first time in human history there were obvious opportunities in other lands, where labour was needed, at a moment when there were suddenly easier and cheaper means of getting there. The steamship and railways greatly changed demographic history and they both began to produce their greatest effect after 1880. They permitted much greater local mobility, so that temporary migrations of labour and movements within continents became much easier. Great Britain exported Irish peasants, Welsh miners and steelworkers and English farmers; she took in at the end of the nineteenth century an influx of Jewish communities from eastern Europe which was long to remain a distinguishable element in British society.

To the seasonal migration of labour, which had always characterized such border districts as southern France, were now added longer-term movements as Poles came to France to work in coal-mines and Italian waiters and ice-cream men became part of British folklore. When political changes made the North African shore accessible, it, too, was changed by short-range migration from Europe. Italians, Spaniards and Frenchmen were drawn there to settle or trade in the coastal cities and thus created a new society with interests distinct both from those of the societies from which the migrants had come and from those of the native societies beside which they had settled.

Easier travel did not only ease European migration. Chinese and Japanese settlement on the Pacific coasts of North America was already important by 1900. Chinese migrants also moved down into South-East Asia, Japanese to Latin America; the spectacle frightened Australians, who sought to preserve a 'White Australia' by limiting immigration by racial criteria. The British empire provided a huge framework within which Indian communities spread around the world. But these movements, though important, were subordinate to the major phenomenon of the nineteenth century, the last great *Völkerwanderung* of the European peoples, and one as decisive for the future as the barbarian invasions had been.

In 'Latin America' (the term was invented in the middle of the nineteenth century), which attracted in the main Italians and Spaniards, southern Europeans could find much that was familiar. There was the framework to cultural and social life provided by Catholicism; there were Latin languages and social customs. The political and legal framework also reflected the imperial past, some of whose institutions had persisted through an era of political upheaval at the beginning of the nineteenth century which virtually ended Spanish and Portuguese colonial rule on the mainland. This happened because events in Europe had led to a crisis in which weaknesses in the old empires proved fatal.

This was not for want of effort, at least on the part of the Spanish. In

contrast to the British in the north, the metropolitan government had attempted sweeping reforms in the eighteenth century. When the Bourbons replaced the last Habsburg on the Spanish throne in 1701 a new era of Spanish imperial development had begun, though it took some decades to become apparent. When changes came they led first to reorganization and then to 'enlightened' reform. The two viceroyalties of 1700 became four, two more appearing in New Granada (Panama and the area covered by Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela) and La Plata, which ran from the mouth of the river across the continent to the border of Peru. This structural rationalization was followed by relaxations of the closed commercial system, at first unwillingly conceded and then consciously promoted as a means to prosperity. These stimulated the economy both of the colonies and of those parts of Spain (notably the Mediterranean littoral) which benefited from the ending of the monopoly of colonial trade, hitherto confined to the port of Seville.

A bit similar to what happened in the north, it is possible that these Spanish attempts at reform contributed to putting additional strain on a system that was already to some degree dysfunctional. Colonial élites felt themselves increasingly removed from the mother country. Menacingly for Spain, their leaders were often first-generation immigrants or even Spanish officials who in the New World saw a chance to act on liberal impulses that were hard to put into practice in the old country. A series of insurrections revealed deep-seated weaknesses; in Paraguay (1721-35), Colombia (1781) and, above all, Peru (1780) there were real threats to colonial government which could only be contained by great military efforts. Among others, these required levies of colonial militia, a double-edged expedient, for it provided the *creoles* with military training which they might turn against Spain. The deepest division in Spanish colonial society was between the Indians and the colonists of Spanish descent, but that between the *creoles* and *peninsulares* was to have more immediate political importance. It had widened with the passage of time. Resentful of their exclusion from high office, the *creoles* noted the success of the British colonists of North America in shaking off imperial rule. The French Revolution, also, at first, suggested possibilities rather than dangers.

As these events unrolled, the Spanish government was embarrassed in other ways. In 1790 a quarrel with Great Britain led at last to surrender of the remnants of the old Spanish claim to sovereignty throughout the Americas, when it conceded that the right to prohibit trade or settlement in North America only extended within an area of 30 miles around a Spanish settlement. Then came wars, first with France, then with Great Britain (twice), and finally with France again, during the Napoleonic invasion.

These wars not only cost Spain Santo Domingo, Trinidad and Louisiana, but also its dynasty, which was forced by Napoleon to abdicate in 1808. The end of Spanish sea-power had already come at Trafalgar. In this state of disorder and weakness, when, finally, Spain itself was engulfed by French invasion, some South American élites, supported by large groups of *creoles*, decided to break loose. In 1810 the Wars of Independence began with risings in New Granada, La Plata and New Spain.

These risings were not at first successful, and in Mexico the revolutionaries found that the ethnic tensions present often came to overshadow the conflict with Spain; Indians clashed with *mestizos* (those of mixed blood) and both clashed with Europeans. But the Spanish government was not able to win any group over, nor was it able to muster sufficient strength to crush further waves of rebellion. British sea-power guaranteed that no conservative European power could step in to help the Spanish and thus practically sustained the Monroe doctrine. By 1821 Spain was losing more and more military confrontations, and all the continent seemed to be in rebellion.

The key figure in the liberation of South America from Spanish rule was Simón Bolívar. He was born in 1783 into a wealthy family in Caracas, whose ancestors had settled in America in the sixteenth century. With his capricious personality and his military genius, Bolívar came to have a deep influence on all the wars of liberation, although his hopes for a united Latin America with a liberal political agenda were not to be fulfilled. Within less than seven years, his victories over the Spanish drove the colonial power off the continent they had ruled for over 300 years and created a completely new form of state system.

Bolívar landed in 1817 from Haiti with a small group of men on the coast of Venezuela. From here he moved on to join local oppositions to Spanish rule and launched attacks that eventually drove the colonial army from all of South America, with Bolívar himself being the *libertador* of all Spanish-speaking areas north of Chile. But instead of the union that Bolívar had foreseen, local élites set up separate republics in the region he had helped liberate (one of them, in what had been colonial upper Peru, was even named for the great *libertador* himself). But after having attempted to force a form of unified rule on the continent, Bolívar died a bitterly disappointed man, on his way into European exile in 1830. The republics he had given rise to continued to exist – Colombia, Venezuela and Peru. In the south, Chile and Argentina became *de facto* independent before 1820, and in the north Mexico declared its independence in 1821.

In Portuguese Brazil the story had been different, for though a French invasion of Portugal had in 1807 provoked a new emigration, it differed

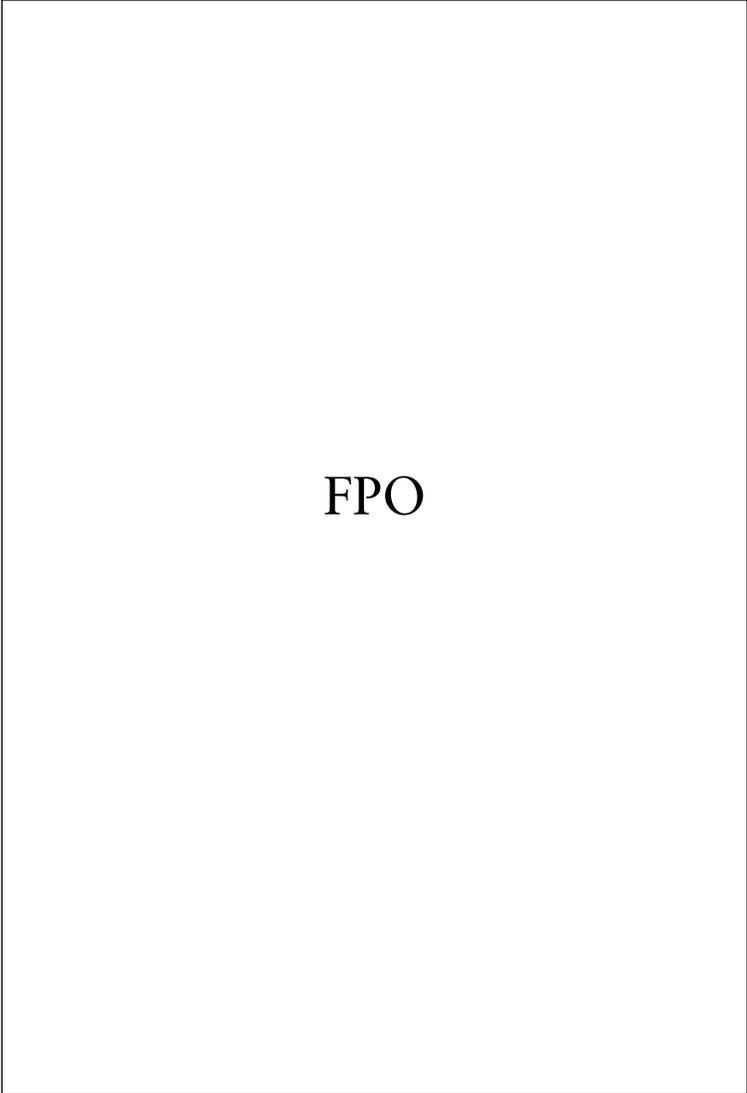
from that of the Spanish empire. The Prince Regent of Portugal had himself removed from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro, which thus became the effective capital of the Portuguese empire. Though he went back to Portugal as king in 1820 he left behind his son, who took the lead in resisting an attempt by the Portuguese government to reassert its control of Brazil and, with relatively little trouble, became the emperor of an independent Brazil in 1822.

The reasons why there was no wider process of unification in Latin America have preoccupied many historians. The main reason was probably a combination of differences in culture and the abundance of riches: the élite in each area thought that they could manage on their own, and was jealous of others getting access to the territory they controlled. The predominance of the military element may also have played a role: nobody wanted to include their armed forces into a larger army which they could not control. This fact also prevented any reunification by force in the nineteenth century (or beyond). None of the new states was strong enough to conquer the others.

In North America things were different. For all the variety of the thirteen British colonies and the difficulties facing them, they had after their victory relatively easy intercommunication by sea and few insurmountable obstacles of terrain. They also had some experience of co-operation and a measure of direction of their own affairs even while under imperial rule. With these advantages, their divisions still remained important enough to impose a constitution which gave very limited powers to the national government.

The Latin American republics were from the very beginning oriented towards international trade and commerce, and the close links many of them established with the world's leading commercial nation – Great Britain – were therefore natural. The new South American republics needed capital to build their enterprises, and access to international trade. They also needed protection against attempts by European powers to crush their independence and, eventually, to balance the rising influence of the United States in the north. From the British perspective, London wanted access to South American raw materials, and to avoid other European powers gaining decisive influence on the continent. For almost all of the nineteenth century South America's international affairs therefore remained linked to those of Europe.

The internal situation was more chaotic. The ethnic problems and the social inequalities they gave rise to were not removed by independence. Not every country experienced them in the same way. In Argentina, for example, the relatively small Indian population underwent near-extirmination at the hands of the army. That country was celebrated by the end of the nine-



FPO

teenth century for the extent to which it resembled Europe in the domination of European strains in its population. At the other extreme, Brazil had a population the majority of which was of African origin and, at the time of independence, much of it still in slavery. Racial mixes of all kinds were traditional there, and the result is an ethnic blend which may well be the least troublesome to be found in the world today.

The new Latin American states could not draw upon any tradition of self-government in facing their many problems, for the colonial administrations had been absolutist and had not thrown up representative institutions. For the political principles they sought to apply, the leaders of the republics looked in the main to the French Revolution, but these were advanced ideas for states whose tiny élites did not even share among themselves agreement about accepted practice; they could hardly produce a framework of mutual tolerance. Worse still, revolutionary principles quickly brought the Church into politics, a development which was perhaps in the long run inevitable, given its huge power as a landowner and its popular influence, but unfortunate in adding anti-clericalism to the woes of the continent. In these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that during most of the century each republic found that its affairs tended to drift into the hands of *caudillos*, military adventurers and their cliques who controlled armed forces sufficient to give them sway until more powerful rivals came along.

The cross-currents of civil war and wars between the new states – some very bloody – led by 1900 to a map which is still much the same today. Mexico, the most northern of the former Spanish colonies, had lost vast areas in the north to the United States. Four mainland Central American republics had appeared, and two island states – the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Cuba was on the point of achieving independence. To the south were the ten states of South America. All of these countries were republican; Brazil had given up its monarchy in 1889. Though all had been through grave civic disorders, they represented very different degrees of stability and constitutional propriety. In Mexico, an Indian had indeed become president, to great effect, in the 1850s, but everywhere there remained the social divisions between Indians, *mestizos* and those of European blood (much reinforced in numbers when immigration became more rapid after 1870). The Latin American countries had contained about 19 million people in 1800; a century later they had 63 million.

This argues a certain increase in wealth. Most of the Latin American countries had important natural resources in one form or another. Sometimes they fought over them, for such advantages became even more valuable as Europe and the United States became more industrialized. Argentina had space and some of the finest pasture in the world: the invention of refrigerator ships in the 1880s made it England's butcher and later grain-grower as well. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was the richest of the Latin American countries. Chile had nitrates (taken from Bolivia and Peru in the 'War of the Pacific' of 1879–83) and Venezuela had oil; both grew more important in the twentieth century. Mexico had oil, too. Brazil

had practically everything (except oil), coffee and sugar above all. The list could be continued but would confirm that the growing wealth of Latin America came above all from primary produce, and from the import of capital from Europe and the United States to exploit it.

This increase in wealth nevertheless was connected with two related drawbacks. One was that it did nothing to reduce the disparities of wealth to be found in these countries; indeed, they may have increased. In consequence, social, like ethnic, tensions remained largely unresolved. An apparently Europeanized urban élite lived lives wholly unlike those of the Indian and *mestizo* masses. This was accentuated by the dependence of Latin America on foreign capital. Not unreasonably, foreign investors sought security. They by no means always got it, but it tended to lead them to support the existing social and political authorities, who thus enhanced still further their own wealth. It would take only a few years of the twentieth century for conditions resulting from this sort of thing to produce social revolution in Mexico.

The irritation and disappointment of foreign investors who could not collect the debts due to them led sometimes to diplomatic conflicts and even armed intervention. The collection of debt was, after all, not seen as a revival of colonialism and European governments sent stiff messages, and backed them up with force on several occasions during the century. When in 1902 Great Britain, Germany and Italy together instituted a naval blockade of Venezuela in order to collect debts due to their subjects who had suffered in revolutionary troubles, this provoked the United States to go further than the Monroe doctrine.

From the days of the Texan republic onwards, the relations of the United States with its neighbours had never been easy, nor are they today. Too many complicating factors were at work. The Monroe doctrine expressed the basic interest of the United States in keeping the hemisphere uninvolved with Europe, and the first Pan-American Congress was another step in this direction when the United States organized it in 1889. But this could no more prevent the growth of economic links with Europe than could the Revolution sever those of the United States with Great Britain (and North Americans were among the investors in South American countries and soon had their own special pleas to make to their government). Moreover, as the century came to an end, it was clear that the strategic situation which was the background to the Monroe doctrine had changed. Steamships and the rise of American interest in the Far East and the Pacific made the United States much more sensitive, in particular, to developments in Central America and the Caribbean, where an isthmian canal was more and more likely to be built.

The outcome was greater heavy-handedness and even arrogance in United States policy towards its neighbours in the early twentieth century. When, after a brief war with Spain, the United States won Cuba its independence (and took Puerto Rico from Spain for itself), special restraints were incorporated in the new Cuban constitution to ensure it would remain a satellite. The territory of the Panama Canal was obtained by intervention in the affairs of Colombia. The Venezuelan debt affair was followed by an even more remarkable assertion of American strength – a ‘corollary’ to the Monroe doctrine. This was the announcement (almost at once given practical expression in Cuba and the Dominican Republic) that the United States would exercise a right of intervention in the affairs of any state in the western hemisphere whose internal affairs were in such disorder that they might tempt European intervention. Later, one American president sent marines to Nicaragua in 1912 on this ground, and another occupied the Mexican port of Vera Cruz in 1914 as a way of coercing a Mexican government. In 1915 a protectorate was established by treaty over Haiti, which was to last forty years.

This was not the end of an unhappy story of relations between the United States and its neighbours, though far enough to take it for the moment. Their importance here, in any case, is only symptomatic of the ambiguous standing of the Latin American states in relation to Europe. Rooted in its culture, tied to it by economics, they none the less were constrained politically to avoid entanglement with it. This did not, of course, mean that they did not stand, so far as nineteenth-century Europeans were concerned, on the white man’s side of the great distinction more and more drawn between those within the pale of European civilization and those outside it. When European policymakers thought of ‘Latin Americans’ they thought of those of European descent, and especially the urban, literate, privileged minority, not the immigrant, Indian and black masses.

The crumbling of the Spanish empire so soon after the defection of the thirteen colonies led many people to expect that the other settler colonies of the British empire would soon throw off the rule of London, too. In a way, this happened, but hardly as had been anticipated. At the end of the nineteenth century, the British magazine *Punch* printed a patriotic cartoon in which the British Lion looked approvingly at rows of little lion-cubs, armed and uniformed, who represented the colonies overseas. They were appropriately dressed as soldiers, for the volunteer contingents sent from other parts of the empire to fight for the British in the war they were then engaged upon in South Africa were of major importance. A century earlier, no one could have foreseen that a single colonial soldier would be available to the mother country. The year 1783 had burnt deep into the conscious-

ness of British statesmen. Colonies, they thought they had learnt, were tricky things, costing money, conferring few benefits, engaging the metropolitan country in fruitless strife with other powers and native peoples and, in the end, usually turning around to bite the hand that fed them.

The distrust of colonial entanglements which such views engendered helped to swing British imperial interest towards the possibilities of Asian trade at the end of the eighteenth century. It seemed that in the Far East there would be no complications caused by European settlers, and in eastern seas no need for expensive forces which could not easily be met by the Royal Navy. Broadly speaking, this was to be the prevailing attitude in British official circles during the whole nineteenth century. It led them to tackle the complicated affairs of each colony in ways which sought, above all else, economy and the avoidance of trouble. In the huge spaces of Canada and Australia this led, stormily, to the eventual uniting of the individual colonies in federal structures with responsibility for their own government. In 1867 the Dominion of Canada came into existence, and in 1901 there followed the Commonwealth of Australia. In each case, union had been preceded by the granting of responsible government to the original colonies, and in each case there had been special difficulties.

In Canada the outstanding difficulty was the existence of a French Canadian community in the province of Quebec; in Australia it was the clashes of interest between settlers and convicts – of whom the last consignment was delivered in 1867. Each, too, was a huge, thinly populated country, which could only gradually be pulled together to generate a sense of nationality. In each case the process was slow: it was not until 1885 that the last spike was driven on the transcontinental line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and transcontinental railways in Australia were delayed for a long time by the adoption of different gauges in different states. In the end, nationalism was assisted by the growth of awareness of potential external threats – United States economic strength and Asian immigration – and, of course, by bickering with the British.

New Zealand also achieved responsible government, but one less decentralized, as befitted a much smaller country. Europeans had arrived there from the 1790s onwards and they found a native people, the Maori, with an advanced and complex culture, whom the visitors set about attempting to destroy. Missionaries followed, and did their best to keep out settlers and traders. But they arrived just the same. When it seemed that a French entrepreneur was likely to establish a French interest, the British government at last reluctantly gave way to the pressure brought upon it by missionaries and some of the settlers and proclaimed British sovereignty in 1840. In 1856 the colony was given responsible government and only wars

with the Maoris delayed the withdrawal of British soldiers until 1870. Soon afterwards, the old provinces lost their remaining legislative powers. In the later years of the century, New Zealand governments showed remarkable independence and vigour in the pursuit of advanced social welfare policies and achieved full self-government in 1907.

That was the year after a Colonial Conference in London had decided that the name 'Dominion' should in future be used for all the self-governing dependencies, which meant, in effect, the colonies of white settlement. One more remained to be given this status before 1914, the Union of South Africa, which came into existence in 1910. This was the end of a long and unhappy chapter – the unhappiest in the history of the British empire – and one which closed only to open another in the history of Africa which within a few decades looked even more bleak.

No British colonists had settled in South Africa until after 1814, when Great Britain for strategic reasons retained the former Dutch colony at the Cape of Good Hope. This was called 'Cape Colony' and soon there arrived some thousands of British settlers who, though outnumbered by the Dutch, had the backing of the British government in introducing British assumptions and law. This opened a period of whittling away of the privileges of the Boers, as the Dutch farmers were called. In particular, they were excited and irked by any limitation of their freedom to deal with the native African as they wished. Their especial indignation was aroused when, as a result of the general abolition of slavery in British territory, some 35,000 of their slaves were freed, with, it was said, inadequate compensation. Convinced that the British would not abandon a policy favourable to the native African – and, given the pressures upon British governments, this was a reasonable view – a great exodus of Boers took place in 1835. This 'Great Trek' north across the Orange River was of radical importance in forming the Afrikaner consciousness. It was the beginning of a long period during which Anglo-Saxon, Boer and African struggled to live, sometimes apart, sometimes together, but always uncomfortably and with great tension.

A Boer republic in Natal was soon made a British colony, on paper in order to protect the Africans from exploitation, but equally importantly to prevent the establishment of a Dutch port which might some day be used by a hostile power to threaten British communications with East Asia. Another exodus of Boers followed, this time north of the Vaal River. This was the first extension of British territory in South Africa but set a pattern which was to be repeated. Besides humanitarianism, the British government and the British colonists on the spot were stirred by the need to establish good relations with African peoples who would otherwise (as the Zulus had already shown against the Boers) present a continuing security problem

(not unlike that posed by native Americans in the previous century). By mid-century, there existed two Boer republics in the north (the Orange Free State and the Transvaal), while Cape Colony and Natal were under the British flag, with elected assemblies for which the few black men who met the required economic tests could vote. There were also native states under British protection. In one of these, Basutoland, this actually placed Boers under black jurisdiction, an especially galling subjection for them.

Happy relations were unlikely in these circumstances and, in any case, British governments were often in disagreement with the colonists at the Cape, who, after 1872, had responsible government of their own. New facts arose, too. The discovery of diamonds led to the British annexation of another piece of territory, which, since it lay north of the Orange River, angered the Boers. British support for the Basutos, whom the Boers had defeated, was a further irritant. Finally, the governor of Cape Colony committed an act of folly by annexing the Transvaal republic. After a successful Boer rising and a nasty defeat of a British force, the British government had the sense not to persist and restored independence to the republic in 1881, but from this moment Boer distrust of British policy in South Africa was probably insurmountable.

Within twenty years this led to war, largely because of two further unanticipated changes. One was a small-scale industrial revolution in the Transvaal republic, where gold was found in 1886. The result was a huge influx of miners and speculators, the involvement of outside financial interests in the affairs of South Africa, and the possibility that the Afrikaner state might have the financial resources to escape from the British suzerainty it unwillingly accepted. The index of what had happened was Johannesburg, which grew in a few years to become the only city of 100,000 in Africa south of the Zambezi. The second change was that other parts of Africa were being swallowed in the 1880s and 1890s by other European powers, and the British government reacted by stiffening its determination that nothing must shake the British presence at the Cape, deemed essential to the control of sea routes to the East and increasingly dependent on traffic to and from the Transvaal for its revenues. The general effect was to make British governments view with concern any possibility of the Transvaal obtaining independent access to the Indian Ocean. This concern made them vulnerable to the pressure of an oddly assorted crew of idealistic imperialists, Cape politicians, English demagogues and shady financiers who provoked a confrontation with the Boers in 1899 which ended in an ultimatum from the Transvaal's president, Paul Kruger, and the outbreak of the Boer War. Kruger had a deep dislike of the British; as a boy he had gone north on the Great Trek.

The well-known traditions of the British army of Victorian times were amply sustained in the last war of the reign, both in the level of ineptness and incompetence shown by some higher commanders and administrative services and in the gallantry shown by regimental officers and their men in the face of a brave and well-armed enemy whom their training had not prepared them to defeat. But of the outcome there could be no doubt; as the queen herself remarked, with better strategic judgment than some of her subjects, the possibilities of defeat did not exist. South Africa was a theatre isolated by British sea-power; no other European nation could help the Boers and it was only a matter of time before greatly superior numbers and resources were brought to bear upon them. This cost a great deal – over a quarter of a million soldiers were sent to South Africa – and aroused much bitterness in British domestic politics; further, it did not present a very favourable picture to the outside world. The Boers were regarded as an oppressed nationality; so they were, but the nineteenth-century liberal obsession with nationality in this case (as in others) blinded observers to some of the shadows it cast. Fortunately, British statesmanship recovered itself sufficiently to make a generous treaty to end the war in 1902 when the Boers had been beaten in the field.

This was the end of the Boer republics. But concession rapidly followed; by 1906 the Transvaal had a responsible government of its own, which in spite of the large non-Boer population brought there by mining, the Boers controlled after an electoral victory the following year. Almost at once they began to legislate against Asian immigrants, mainly Indian. (One young Indian lawyer, Mohandas Gandhi, now entered politics as the champion of his community.) When, in 1909, a draft constitution for a South African Union was agreed, it was on terms of equality for the Dutch and English languages and, all-important, it provided for government by an elected assembly to be formed according to the electoral regulations decided in each province. In the Boer provinces the franchise was confined to white men.

At the time, there was much to be said for the settlement. When Europeans then spoke of a 'racial problem' in South Africa they meant the problem of relations between the British and Boers, whose conciliation seemed the most urgent need. The defects of the settlement would take some time to appear. When they did it would be not only because the historical sense of the Afrikaner proved to be tougher than people had hoped, but also because the transformation of South African society which had begun with the industrialization of the Rand goldfields could not be halted, and would give irresistible momentum to the issue of the black Africans.

In this respect, South Africa's future had been just as decisively influenced as had those of all the other British dominions by being caught up in

the trends of the whole world economy. Canada, like the United States, had become, with the building of the railroads on her plains, one of the great granaries of Europe. Australia and New Zealand first exploited their huge pastures to produce the wool for which European factories were increasingly in the market; then, with the invention of refrigeration, they used them for meat and, in the case of New Zealand, dairy produce. In this way these new nations found staples able to sustain economies much greater than those permitted by the tobacco and indigo of the seventeenth-century plantations.

The case of South Africa was to be different in that she was to reveal herself only gradually (as much later would Australia) as a producer of minerals. The beginning of this was the diamond industry, but the great step forward was the Rand gold discovery of the 1880s. The exploitation of this sucked in capital and expertise to make possible the eventual exploitation of other minerals. The return which South Africa provided was not merely in the profits of European companies and shareholders, but also an augmentation of the world's gold supply, which stimulated European commerce much as had done the California discoveries of 1849.

The growth of humanitarian and missionary sentiment in England, and the well-founded Colonial Office tradition of distrust of settler demands, made it harder to forget the native populations of the white dominions than it had been for Americans to sweep aside the Plains Indians. Yet in several of the British colonies, concepts of modernity made their impact on defenceless societies that had no access to technology. The Canadian Indians and Eskimos were pushed aside in order to open up the west and north-west to exploitation, and – being relatively fewer in number – they could not equal the Plains Indians' heroic struggle to keep their hunting-grounds. The story in Australia was even bloodier. The hunting and gathering society of the Aborigine was disrupted by settlement, tribes were antagonized and provoked into violence by the uncomprehending brutality of the white Australians, and new diseases cut fast into their numbers. The early decades of each Australian colony are stained by the blood of massacred Aborigines; their later years are notorious for the neglect, bullying and exploitation of the survivors.

In New Zealand, the arrival of the first white men brought guns to the Maori, who employed them first on one another, with disruptive effects upon their societies. Later came wars with the government, whose essential origin lay in the settlers' displacement of the Maori from their lands. At their conclusion, the government took steps to safeguard these tribal lands from further expropriation, but the introduction of English notions of individual ownership led to the disintegration of the tribal holdings and the

virtual loss of their lands by the end of the century. The Maoris, too, declined in numbers, but not so violently or irreversibly as did the Australian Aborigines. There are now many more Maoris than in 1900 and their numbers grow faster than those of New Zealanders of European stock.

As for South Africa, the story is a mixed one. British protection enabled some of its native peoples to survive into the twentieth century on their ancestral lands living in ways which changed only slowly. Others were driven off or exterminated. In all cases, though, the crux of the situation was that in South Africa, as elsewhere, the fate of the native inhabitants was never in their own hands. They depended for their survival upon the local balance of governmental interest and benevolence, settler needs and traditions, economic opportunities and exigencies. Although in the short run they could sometimes present formidable military problems (as did the Zulus of Cetewayo, or the guerrilla warfare of the Maoris) they could not in the end generate from their own resources the means of effective resistance any more than had the Aztecs been able successfully to resist Cortés. For non-European peoples to do that, they would have to Europeanize. The price of establishing the new European nations beyond the seas always turned out to be paid by the native inhabitant, often to the limit of his ability.

This should not be quite the last word. There remains the puzzle of self-justification: Europeans witnessed these things happening and did not stop them. It is too simple to explain this by saying they were all bad, greedy men (and, in any case, the work of the humanitarians among them makes the blackest judgment untenable). The answer must lie somewhere in mentality. Like many cultures of the time, the Europeans thought that only they themselves were advanced and civilized, and that they therefore had the right to rule others. But Europeans' belief in their own supremacy often took on a degree of fanaticism, fuelled by religion and by ethnocentrism. Sometimes these attitudes produced simple racism. But more often – especially in Britain and France from the nineteenth century on – they created an urge to modernize the world, rationalize it, and therefore make it more in line with European concepts of progress and improvement. The confidence in belonging to a higher civilization was not only a licence for predatory habits as Christianity had earlier been, but the nerve of an attitude akin, in many cases, to that of crusaders. It was their sureness that they brought something better that blinded men all too often to the actual and material results of substituting individual freehold for tribal rights, of turning hunters and gatherers, whose possessions were what they could carry, into wage-earners or soldiers.