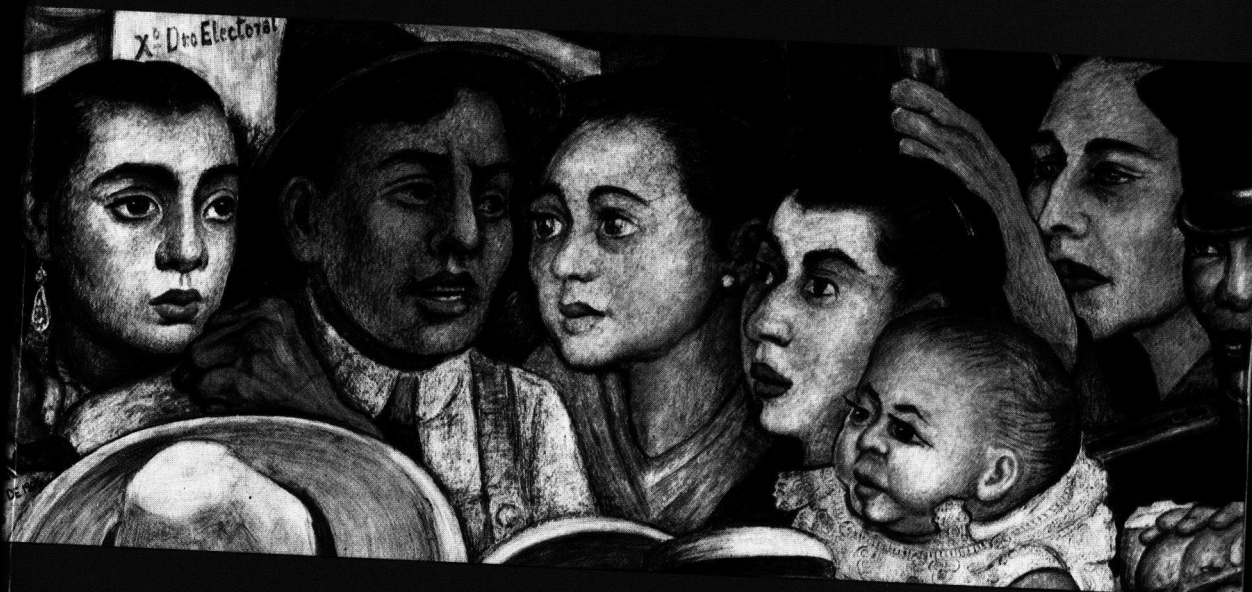


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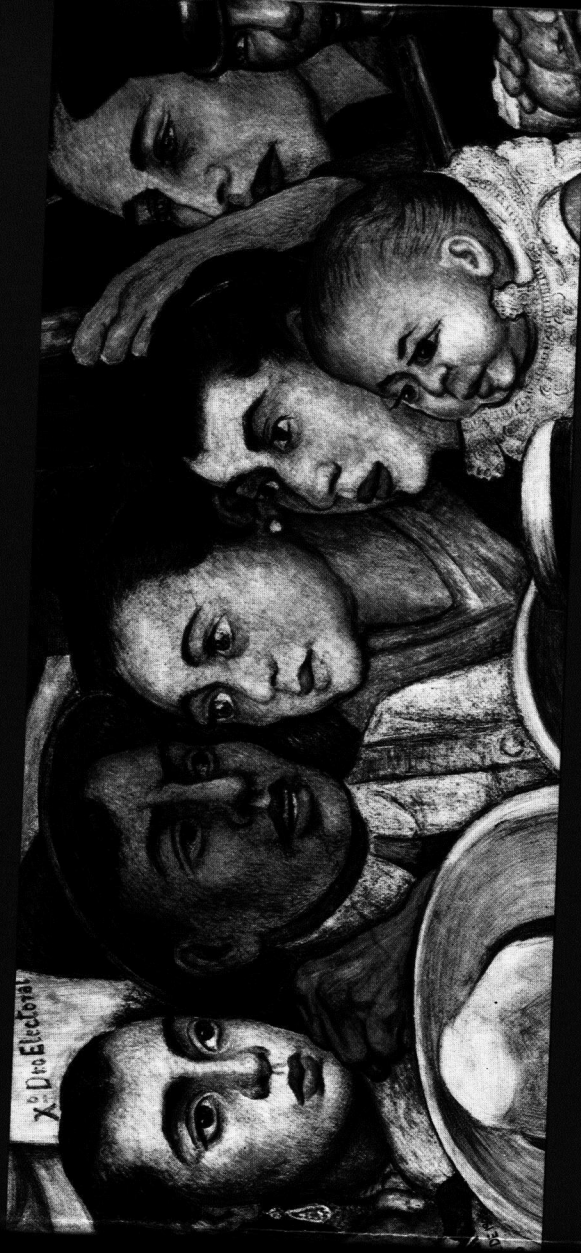


The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean
UPDATED EDITION



PETER WINN

AMERICAS



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Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar's provocative forty-five-second computer animation, "Logo for America," was installed on the Times Square lightboard in the heart of New York City in 1987.

I

A View from the South

IN April 1987, strollers in Times Square who looked up to read the neon news headlines were startled to see a computer animation map of the United States across which was written: THIS IS NOT AMERICA. As they watched, the images changed. The word AMERICA expanded to fill the screen, and the "R" became a rotating map of both Americas—North and South. For Alfredo Jaar, a conceptual artist from South America, his forty-five-second "broadcast" was an effort to shock U.S. citizens into realizing that "this country has co-opted for itself the name 'America' and even our everyday language forces us to picture only one dimension of America."¹ Many North Americans forget that we share "America" with thirty-three other sovereign nations and their nearly half a billion people.

What makes the equation of "America" with the United States particularly ironic is that the name first appeared on sixteenth-century maps identified with *South* America, whose northeast coast had been explored by Amerigo Vespucci, the Florentine navigator. His accounts, which exaggerated his own role, were widely read. It was Vespucci's facility with his pen more than his maritime feats that got his name attached to the "New World" Columbus had "discovered." Only with the founding of the United States would "America" also be used for the northern part of the "Western" hemisphere. As Mexican intellectual Edmundo O'Gorman has stressed, America was *invented*, not discovered. Its invention began with the first

European chroniclers, who often projected onto their "New World" the Old World's fantasies of the exotic, and continues to the present day.

"Latin America" is equally an invention, devised in the nineteenth century by a French geographer to describe the nations that had once been colonized by "Latin Europe"—Spain, France, and Portugal. The Caribbean, a region named after the sea it encloses, and the almost extinct "Indians" who used to inhabit its smaller islands, is even more complex in its origins and polyglot in its peoples. There, beginning in the seventeenth century, England and Holland added their colonies and cultures to those of Spain and France. During the nineteenth century, they also added "East Indians" and Chinese to the descendants of the Africans brought in by Europeans to replace the declining "Indian" population of the "West Indies."

My own interest in Latin America and the Caribbean began in 1959, as a college freshman, when a thirty-three-year-old revolutionary who had just overthrown a corrupt dictator in a Caribbean island better known for its dance rhythms came to speak at my university. We were a study in contrasts: Fidel Castro sported a beard, long hair, and olive fatigues; I was clean-shaven, with a crew cut and a button-down collar. He was then a young rebel with a cause, who spoke the language of humanism, democracy, and social justice. I was part of a generation on the cusp between the monochromatic fifties and the psychedelic sixties, between social conformity and political engagement. Castro was convinced that his revolution marked the beginning of a new era for Latin America and the Caribbean. I was unaware that the decades that followed would be as filled with change for the United States as for the lands to the south of our borders. Two years later John F. Kennedy announced the Alliance for Progress, United States support for Latin American reforms intended to make revolutions such as Castro's impossible. Together, these events sparked an interest in Latin America and the Caribbean that quickly deepened, leading me to spend the last three decades studying the region.

This has been a period of far-reaching change for the people of Latin America and the Caribbean, changes that have transformed their countries and reshaped their lives. A largely rural region has become a continent of

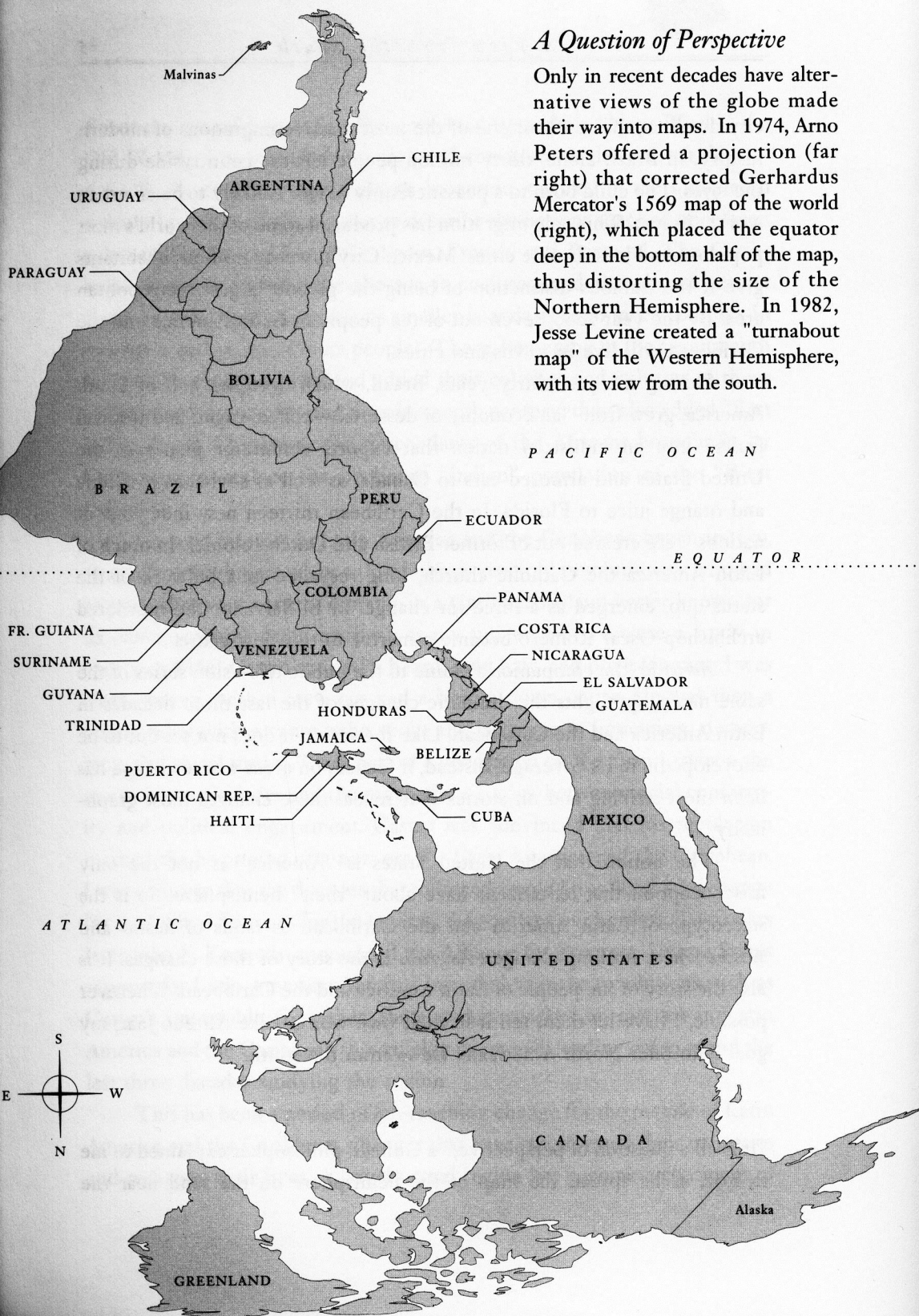
city dwellers, the result of one of the most massive migrations of modern history. In Brazil alone, thirty million people left the countryside during the 1970s. The child born to a peasant family in 1962 is likely to be an urban worker in 1992. This epic migration has produced some of the world's most populous and least livable cities. Mexico City's twenty million inhabitants give it the dubious distinction of being the globe's largest metropolitan area. By the year 2000, seven out of ten people in Latin America and the Caribbean will live in towns and cities.

During the past thirty years, Brazil, which occupies half of South America, grew from "an economy of desserts"—coffee, sugar, and tropical fruits—into an industrial nation that exports commuter planes to the United States and armored cars to Canada, as well as soybeans to China and orange juice to Florida. In the Caribbean thirteen new independent nations were created out of former British and Dutch colonies. In much of Latin America the Catholic church, long regarded as a bulwark of the status quo, emerged as a force for change. In El Salvador the murdered archbishop Oscar Romero became a martyr to this new cause.

Americas, the companion volume to the public television series of the same name, spotlights the dramatic changes of the last three decades in Latin America and the Caribbean. Like the series, it does not set out to be encyclopedic in its coverage. Instead, it focuses on areas where change has been most striking and on stories that reveal these changes most graphically.

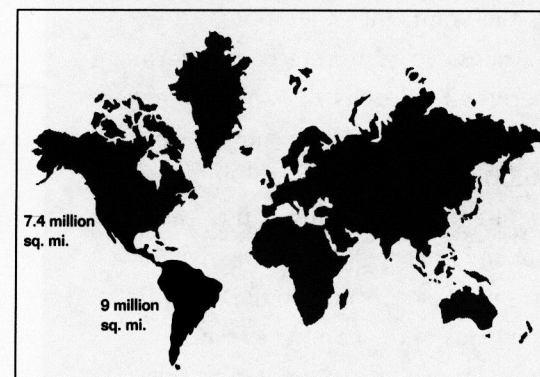
The notion that the United States is "America" is not the only misconception that its citizens have about "their" hemisphere. So is the stereotype of Latin America and the Caribbean as lands of fiestas and siestas where nothing changes. *Americas* is the story of those changes. It is also the story of the people of Latin America and the Caribbean. Wherever possible, I have let them tell it in their own words. Like Alfredo Jaar, my goal is to offer North Americans views from the south.

"It is all a question of perspective," a Chilean philosopher explained to me in 1972, as he spread the map of the hemisphere on the sand near the

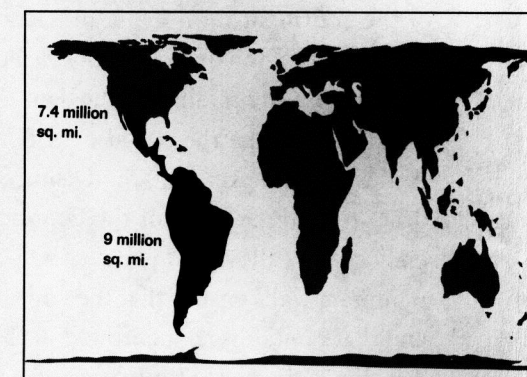


A Question of Perspective

Only in recent decades have alternative views of the globe made their way into maps. In 1974, Arno Peters offered a projection (far right) that corrected Gerhardus Mercator's 1569 map of the world (right), which placed the equator deep in the bottom half of the map, thus distorting the size of the Northern Hemisphere. In 1982, Jesse Levine created a "turnabout map" of the Western Hemisphere, with its view from the south.



Mercator Projection



Peters Projection

crashing waves of the Pacific. "Like you, we have been accustomed to viewing our country from the north, and feeling our isolation and subordination as 'Chile,' which means 'the land at the end of the world' in the language of our Mapuche Indians. But, once you realize that our north is south," he exclaimed, turning the map on its head, "everything changes! Suddenly, Chile is at the *top* of the world, not the bottom. It is important to see us from the south."

The world has indeed been accustomed to viewing the Americas from the north, and to regarding the difference between North America and the rest of the Americas as a measure of the latter's inferiority. European cartographers reinforced this vision of the world by creating maps projected from the north, which exaggerate the size of the northern hemisphere and understate the scale of the southern half of the globe. We have all been brought up with this reduced image of Latin America and the Caribbean. In reality, with an area of nearly nine million square miles, the other Americas are larger than the United States and Canada combined. Viewed from the south, the geography of Latin America and the Caribbean takes on a different dimension.

The mountain chain of changing names that forms the Pacific spine

of the continent from Chile to Alaska is the dominant geographic feature of this vast region. In South America the Andes rise from Antarctica to form the highest mountains in the hemisphere, with dozens of snow-capped peaks that scrape the sky at over twenty thousand feet. The snows of the Andes feed the Amazon, the Orinoco, and the Plata rivers, which together drain over three-fifths of the continent. The parallel ranges of the Andes enclose the valleys and plateaus where much of the region's people live. Its mountain walls ensure that the continent's major rivers flow to the Atlantic and that rainfall is concentrated in the lowlands to the east. As a result, the Amazon is the world's mightiest river, containing a fifth of the earth's fresh water, and flows through its largest rain forest, covering 2.7 million square miles of South America—an area equal to 90 percent of the contiguous United States. To the south the Plata river system waters the fertile pampas, the region's largest plains and one of the world's breadbaskets. The Pacific strip to the west of the Andes is mostly arid land, which requires irrigation to bloom. The coast of Peru and Chile contains one of the world's driest deserts, including areas where no rainfall has ever been recorded.

This pattern of a mountain range enclosing populous valleys and plateaus, and separating a dry Pacific fringe from a larger expanse of humid tropical lowlands, continues north into Central America and Mexico. Viewed from the south, the Rockies are just a less lofty extension of Latin America's mountain chain. The same is true for the Caribbean, an arc of islands stretching some twenty-five hundred miles from Venezuela's Orinoco to Mexico's Yucatán, the visible tips of a submerged mountain range.

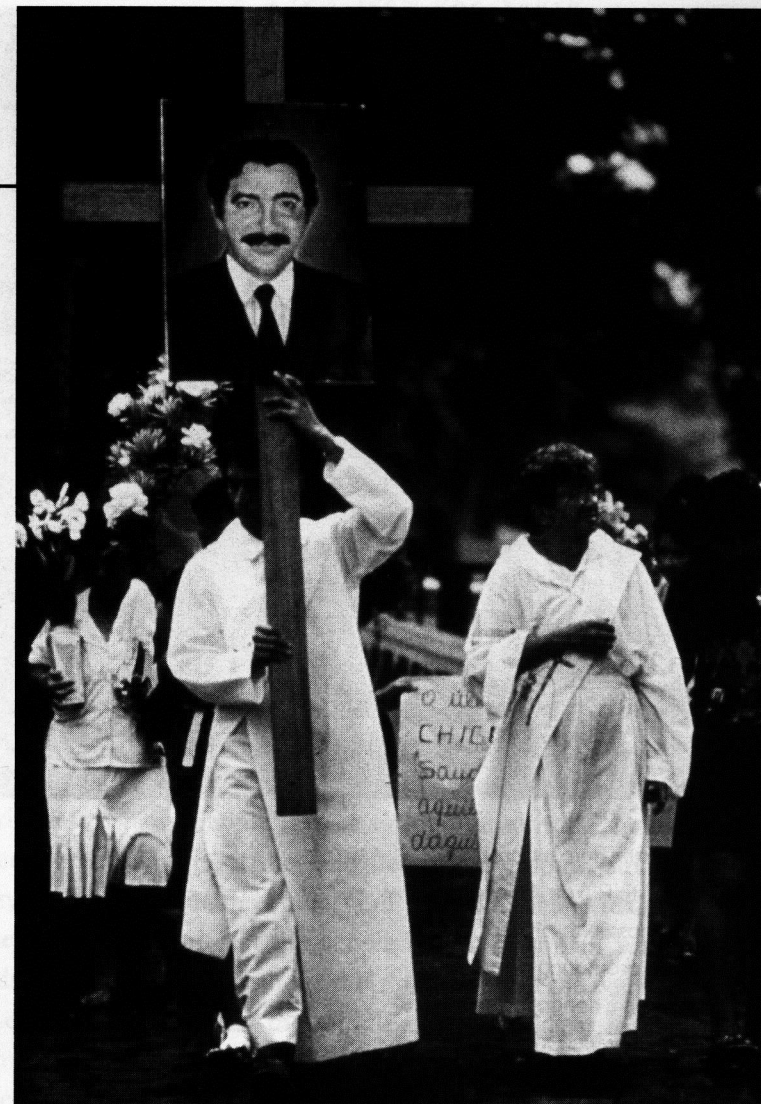
Latin America and the Caribbean formally end at the Rio Grande and the Florida Straits. Viewed from the south, these are political boundaries but porous borders, which have not stopped the flow of people or culture. Since World War II more than five million people have migrated from the Caribbean to the United States. Altogether the twenty-five million people of Spanish American origin in the United States make it the world's fifth largest Spanish-speaking country. Latin America and the Carib-



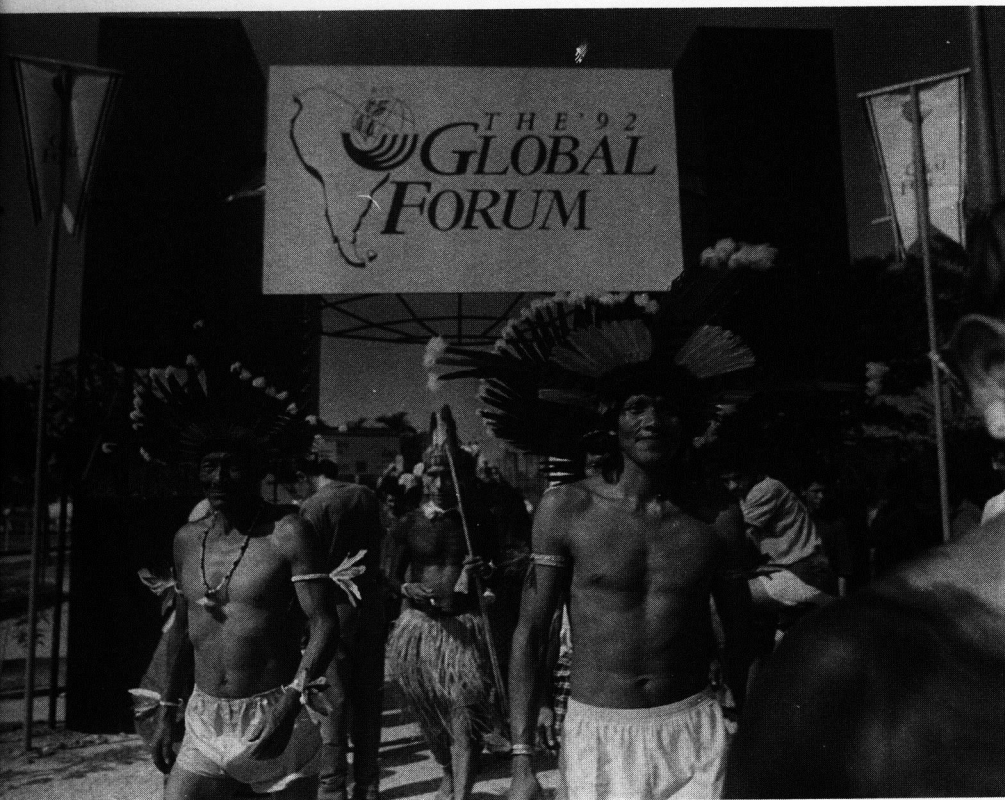
Highways have opened up previously inaccessible rain forest areas to a tide of landless peasants and miners. Today more than three hundred thousand *garimpeiros*, or prospectors, search for precious metals in the Brazilian Amazon. At Serra Pelada, some thirty thousand miners sift the mud for gold in a barren landscape.



During the 1980s, some forty-five thousand gold prospectors invaded the lands of the Yanomami Indians, isolated hunters and gatherers. The mining poisoned the rivers with mercury, turning the once virgin rain forest of the northern Amazon into a wasteland, and the Yanomami into a malnourished people vulnerable to the diseases the miners spread.



Indians are not the only people whose way of life is threatened by the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. Chico Mendes, a leader of Brazil's rubber tappers, became world famous for his efforts to defend their example of sustainable development. His murder by a rancher's gunman in 1990 was deeply mourned.



The June 1992 Earth Summit brought the world's leaders to Rio de Janeiro to deliberate on proposals to protect the environment while promoting development. It also featured a nongovernmental Global Forum, in which indigenous peoples like these Amazon Indians presented their concerns about land and hunger as well.

bean continue deep into North America, uniting the Americas in a shared culture as well as a shared hemisphere.

Changes in the Land

"Geography has shaped our history," affirmed Ricardo Arias, in 1991 Panama's vice president. It has molded the lives of the region's people in the past and continues to influence their future possibilities. Tourists are struck by the beauty and grandeur of the landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean, but for those who live there, nature has a more vital significance. Much of the land is geologically young and seismically alive. Tremors shake Chile each day, and in 1985, an earthquake left twenty thousand dead and one million homeless in Mexico. Yet its geology has also helped the region, forming rich deposits of metals and minerals, as well as petroleum and gas reserves that are among the largest in the world.

Most of the people of the other Americas live either close to a coast, as in North America, or in densely populated valleys and plateaus that range from four to twelve thousand feet above the sea. Nowhere else in the world do so many people live at so high an altitude. In Latin America, where three quarters of the land lies in the tropics, altitude moderates latitude. Throughout the Andes and Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America), the majority of the people live in mountain valleys and tablelands whose cooler climates belie their proximity to the equator. In Ecuador a monument that marks "the middle of the world" is located at a chilly eight thousand feet, and natives wrap themselves in thick wool ponchos once the equatorial sun sets. Mexico's equally high central plateau has been the most densely inhabited area of the other Americas for millennia, and remains so today, containing its capital, Mexico City, and half of its one hundred million people.

In most of Latin America, nature has dealt humans a harsh environment of mountains, deserts, and jungles, but the region's people have adapted with striking creativity. In the Andes, where only 2 percent of the land can be farmed, and what you can grow and graze depends upon altitude and rainfall, indigenous ethnic groups utilized every "ecological

niche" for what it could provide, creating a unique "vertical" pattern of settlement, with "colonies" at different altitudes, in order to secure a complete basket of goods. Indigenous peoples also made full use of the region's plants and animals, many of them—including maize and manioc, potatoes and llamas—unique to this hemisphere.

The flora and fauna of Latin America and the Caribbean changed dramatically with the arrival of European colonists, who brought their animals and plants with them, and so did the ecology. Cattle and sheep altered both the landscape and the diet of much of the region. Wheat fields replaced cornfields, and sugar and coffee took over large tracts of land. Mules and donkeys replaced llamas and people as beasts of burden. European oxen were yoked to American plows. Between them, the horse and the steer transformed the Argentine pampas into ranches, while the coming of the railroad in the late nineteenth century turned it into farmland as well.

Although the landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean has been changing for centuries, in recent decades the transformations have accelerated and their impact on the environment has been intensified by the advance of technology, the stress on economic growth, and the multiplication of populations, which have more than doubled in the last thirty years. Economic development and population growth have exacted heavy environmental costs. Pollution now sullies once idyllic beaches with oil and sewage and poisons the atmosphere of cities with toxic smog from factory smokestacks and automobile exhausts. Today, Mexico City and Chile's Santiago rank among the world's most polluted cities, and Brazil's São Paulo is not far behind.

The changes in the seemingly immutable Amazon rain forest, long a symbol of unspoiled nature, are the most striking example of these changes in the land. To many North Americans, it is also the most disturbing example. Saving the rain forest has become an international ecological cause—and with good reason. But for the people who live there the issue is far more complex, and those who would save the rain forest need to understand its inhabitants' experiences and points of view.

From the air much of the Amazon still seems a carpet of green

stretching from horizon to horizon, a two-thousand-mile canopy of two-hundred-foot-high trees from the foot of the Andes to the Atlantic. On the ground it is still possible to go for days along wild rivers through virgin forests that evoke Joseph Conrad's vision of "travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were king."²

Yet, even in the heart of the continent, the impact of "civilization" on the rain forest is now all too apparent. Downstream from Manaus, the capital of Brazil's Amazonas State, some sixteen hundred kilometers from the sea, the blue-black waters of the Rio Negro and the yellow waters of the Solimões—both several kilometers wide—come together to form the Amazon. This junction, with its distinct, banded colors running side by side for miles, symbolizes the majesty of nature in the earth's largest rain forest. But the river bank that stretches from Manaus to the "meeting of the waters" is lined with industries, including such heavy polluters as oil refineries, metal works, and lumber mills. In the swift current that flows past their steel structures, iridescent blue fish float belly up in the dark waters, innocent victims of "progress." João Andrade, whose family has fished these waters for generations, talked with me on his boat about the changes he has witnessed. His brother now works in a local refinery. "We need the jobs," he said, "but we also need the river."

The watery highway that makes these industries possible is no longer the only way into the rain forest. Today roads traverse the once trackless jungle, cutting its green carpet with ribbons of red dust, which miners, ranchers, and farmers have followed with devastating effects. Almost nine hundred kilometers southwest of Manaus lies the once remote state of Rondônia, which forty years ago was a sylvan wilderness on the border of Bolivia, whose largest population was some thirty-five thousand tribal Indians. But in the 1980s a road was completed to Rondônia from southeast Brazil, and landless peasants were encouraged by the military regime to use it to colonize the undeveloped rain forest. More than half a million Brazilians embraced their government's offer of free land, followed by miners, ranchers, and lumber companies, each with their own ideas of how to exploit the natural resources of the Amazon. One quarter of Rondônia's

rain forest was clear-cut for its hardwoods or burned down to make room for farms and cattle, while miners poisoned its rivers with mercury. But the tropical soils of the Amazon proved less fertile and more fragile than the settlers imagined, unable to sustain more than a few years of cultivation. Today, abandoned farms and scrub ranches scar the landscape and nearly three quarters of Rondônia's population is urban.

Hundreds of miles to the northwest, the rain forest crosses Brazil's frontiers into Peru and then Ecuador, but the human assault on the Amazon does not stop at international borders. In Peru impoverished peasants are clearing the jungle to grow coca leaves for traffickers who are poisoning the headwaters of the river with the chemicals that transform coca into cocaine. In Ecuador foreign agribusiness corporations have cut down the forest for plantations of African palm and petroleum companies have polluted the rivers with their drilling.

Yet the changes in the Ecuadorian rain forest have also had some positive consequences. Although many indigenous groups have suffered, some have prospered. The Shuar used to be notorious for their blood feuds and head shrinking. Today they are better known for their self-government, cattle exports, and experimental education. When landless peasants followed the new roads down from the Andean highlands to colonize their "empty" lands, the Shuar stopped feuding and united in a federation that purchased livestock, secured titles to their land, and established an innovative bilingual education program in the middle of the rain forest. Shuar children now go to jungle schools where they are taught in their own language by radio. Many of them have gone on to secondary school and some have even earned university degrees.

The threat to the environment that sustains their way of life has also prompted the region's indigenous peoples to set aside ancient rivalries and overcome language barriers to form a federation that lobbies in Quito, Ecuador's capital, and sends leaders to present their case to international audiences and agencies, such as the World Bank. These pressures persuaded CONOCO, one of the largest oil companies in Ecuador, to stop drilling.

The Amazon rain forest has become a symbol of heightened global concern for the fate of the earth. It is the "lungs of the world," supplying

one third of the earth's oxygen and one fifth of the planet's fresh water. It is also a "flywheel of climate," whose destruction would accelerate global warming with dire consequences for the rest of the globe. The Amazon is also a "library for the life sciences," stresses the Smithsonian Institution's Thomas Lovejoy, the most biodiverse area on earth, and the sole habitat of more than a million species of plants and animals. It is "the world's greatest pharmaceutical laboratory," whose organisms may contain cures for cancer and other diseases. For all these reasons, argues Lovejoy, saving the Amazon is "a matter of global destiny."³

For Brazil—with the Amazon regions occupying more than half its territory—the issue is more complex. Some Brazilians still regard the Amazon as so vast and so fecund that there is no need to be concerned if a dam submerges an area the size of Britain or ranchers burn down rain-forest acreage larger than Belgium. Others resent being lectured on the environment by "the world's largest polluter," as one businessman termed the United States, "which slaughtered its own Indians to win its wild west" and is clear-cutting its own "last virgin forests." There are also Brazilians, not all of them military officers, who see the Amazon as "an issue of sovereignty," said Colonel Jarbas Passarinho, a veteran government minister, and worry that the current environmental concerns will be used as an excuse to "internationalize" the Amazon. Declarations by North American and European politicians that "the Amazon belongs to the whole world" have awakened Brazilian fears that the Amazon might become "a green Persian Gulf."

Increasingly, as signaled by Brazilian president Fernando Collor's hosting of the June 1992 Earth Summit, the U.N.-sponsored Conference on the Environment and Development, Brazilians do recognize the need for conservation of the Amazon. But in a country whose economy has been unstable for years and that is burdened with a \$200 billion foreign debt and an equally onerous internal social debt—symbolized by its seven million street children and ten million landless peasants—there are other priorities that may seem more urgent than warnings that the rain forest may disappear by the year 2100.

"We need strategies that are *both* economically productive *and* envi-

ronmentally sound," stressed Jacques Marcovitch, a São Paulo environmentalist who helped Brazil's giant Companhia Vale do Rio Doce (CVRD) design such a strategy for its huge Carajás mining and metals venture—including the world's largest deposits of high-grade iron ore—in the eastern Amazon. The public company had devoted 12 percent of its multibillion-dollar investment to conservation under World Bank and environmentalist pressure. The result was an enormous mining-refining complex that did not pollute the nearby river or atmosphere and was surrounded by a rain-forest. But this did not save the Carajás region—an area of 324,000 square miles—from environmental damage. Pig iron smelters using the CVRD railroad, port and ore were fueled by charcoal and the surrounding forest was gradually cut down to feed them. The discovery of gold at Serra Pelada in 1980 brought tens of thousands of prospectors to the district. The railroad CVRD built to the coast also attracted landless peasants from Brazil's impoverished Northeast, "which brought . . . land speculation and rural violence," as well as "deforestation" and "itinerant agriculture." The privatization of CVRD in 1997, moreover, has led to a downgrading of its environmental efforts. "It is a complex problem," argues Marcovitch. He had designed a solution that included a different fuel, but stressed that "sound technology is only part of the answer. We also need economic growth, political will, public understanding—and international support."

Eating Rain Forest Crunch ice cream will not save the Amazon. Nor will swapping foreign debt for virgin rain forest. These are well-intentioned but inadequate responses. Viewed from the south, the need is for sustainable development—environmentally sound strategies that help Brazil develop economically and socially—and for policies that give the country's landless poor a better alternative than burning down the jungle to create a farm whose fragile soil will soon be exhausted. "You cannot talk about ecology," stressed Marcovitch, "to people who are struggling to survive."

Brazil's problems are shared by other countries in the region. The landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean will continue to change as economic and social pressures grow. The task is to shape those changes so that they do not destroy the land—and the diverse peoples who live on it.

Lands of Immigrants

Alfredo Jaar, the artist who created "This Is Not America," is a Chilean of Dutch descent. He was shocked to be regarded as a "Hispanic" in the United States, a complaint echoed by Brazilians, who do not even speak Spanish. One of the misconceptions that many North Americans have about Latin America and the Caribbean is that it is a homogeneous region, whose people "all look alike." On the contrary, the diversity of its population, the result of immigration patterns as complex as those that formed the United States and Canada, is what gives the region its unique character. Most are of European descent, although roughly one quarter have Indian ancestors and perhaps an equal number African roots.

We think of Latin America as an area of Iberian colonization, but this is a simplification of its history and heritage, as a partial list of recent heads of state makes clear. Guatemala's Kjell Lagerud's Scandinavian heritage is evident in his name, as are the Slavic roots of Brazil's Kubitschek or the Italian and German lineages of his military successors, Médici and Geisel. Chile's Aylwin has British forebears, his predecessor Pinochet French origins. Nor are all of the region's heads of state of European descent. Argentina's Menem is of Arab ancestry. Peru's Fujimori campaigned for president dressed as a Japanese samurai. Yet names can also be deceiving. The roots of Grenada's Maurice Bishop and Trinidad's Eric Williams lie in Africa, not England, as do those of Haiti's francophone Duvaliers and Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Their names are a reflection of the colonial powers that brought their ancestors to the Caribbean.

Like the United States, the rest of the Americas are lands of immigrants. The first "Americans" were Asian hunters who crossed the Bering land bridge at the dawn of hemispheric prehistory and gradually made their way south. In time they evolved into the peoples Columbus mistakenly called "Indians," a name that has stuck even among many of these indigenous peoples. In 1492 there may have been sixty million of them, ranging from nomadic hunters and gatherers in the Amazon rain forest to the sophisticated urban civilizations of the Andes and Mesoamerica, where

unique
nationalities

their more than 125 million descendants are still concentrated today. Most are now mestizos, people of mixed Amerindian and European ancestry, and anthropologists insist that only some twenty-five million are culturally "Indians"—a claim that prompted Francisco Calí, a Guatemalan Mayan leader, to retort: "Who are these foreigners to tell *us* who is an Indian?"

Europeans came next, beginning in 1492, to exploit the wealth of American Spaniards pursuing gold and glory, Portuguese looking for tropical luxuries and elusive El Dorado, Northern Europeans seeking Iberian treasure and fertile lands; Catholic friars in search of heathen souls and American utopias. By 1800 some two million Europeans had migrated to Latin America and the Caribbean.

From the start, the Europeans brought enslaved Africans with them, first as personal servants, then increasingly as field hands to work the tropical plantations and mines of the Caribbean and Brazil. This wave of forced migration grew with time, cresting in the eighteenth century. At least ten million enslaved Africans were taken across the Atlantic in chains before this inhuman traffic was finally ended in the mid-nineteenth century. They are the ancestors of the more than one hundred million people of African descent who inhabit Latin America and the Caribbean today. Many of these are mulattos, people of mixed African and European origin, a separate racial category in Latin America and the Caribbean that is ignored in North America. Perhaps half of Brazil's 165 million citizens have African roots, as do most Caribbean islanders and many Panamanians and Venezuelans.

The nineteenth century witnessed another massive influx of even to nine million Europeans in search of land, jobs, and opportunities.

Most were from Italy, Spain, and Portugal, but many were Germans and Slavs, and some were Britons and French. These European immigrants settled mostly in southern South America, changing the face of Argentina and Uruguay, as well as parts of Brazil and Chile. Asians came, too, during this era—Chinese and Japanese, Indians and Indonesians—mostly as replacements for African slave labor in the plantations of the Caribbean and Brazil. Arabs and Jews arrived in smaller numbers, but soon played significant

cant economic and cultural roles as merchants and entrepreneurs, intellectuals and professionals.

As a result of these varied migrations, Latin America and the Caribbean is now a polyglot region with a diversity of races, ethnicities, and cultures. Mixing over the centuries has produced a racial spectrum and cultural kaleidoscope whose great variety and richness expresses itself in many ways, including language. In Latin America and the Caribbean people speak ten principal languages. Half of them are European tongues, with Spanish spoken by some 300 million people and Portuguese by another 165 million. English, French, and Dutch are used by significant numbers in the Caribbean, but in many islands a Creole patois that owes as much to Africa as to Europe is more common. Belize's Black Carib dialect combines the African with the Indian.

Once there were two thousand indigenous languages in the Americas, and even today some eight hundred are spoken, although many by small tribes that seem headed for extinction. Yet, five major language groups have survived the traumas of history and the assaults of modernity: Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, is still spoken by one million people in Mesoamerica, the numerous Mayan dialects by perhaps two million more. In South America eight million people speak Quechua, the tongue of the Incas, and another half a million highlanders, Aymara. Guaraní, once spoken through much of Brazil, is an official language in Paraguay, although most of its three million people are mestizos.

Like its landscape, Latin America's languages have changed with the shifting needs of its people. In many countries people of Amerindian and African ancestry are now bilingual, while in others indigenous peoples are losing their language as they migrate and assimilate. Yet change can also work in the opposite direction: In the northern Andes, Ecuadorian and Colombian Indians are learning Quechua as part of their reaffirmation of ethnic identity.

The foods of Latin America and the Caribbean, like their languages, reflect the varied people who migrated to their shores, as well as the tension between tradition and change. "It's not a Haitian meal unless it

includes rice and beans," insisted Max Beauvoir, one of that country's leading Vodou priests, as he added another savory dish to an already plentiful lunch. In Mexico the indispensable ingredient might be maize, in Argentina beef, in Brazil manioc. Throughout the Americas food and identity are intertwined.

Some diets reflected the shaping influence of geography. On the high plateau of Bolivia and Peru, where neither maize nor wheat can grow, the potato was long the staff of life, while along the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua that honor went to the banana. Other foods reflect cultural traditions or historical legacies. The maize tortillas and tacos of Mexico, as well as the flowers, herbs, and chili peppers that give Mexican cuisine its special flavors, are legacies of its indigenous cultures. On the streets of Salvador, the old colonial capital of Brazil, black women wrapped in African dress still sell *vatapá*, a paste of ground shrimp, cashews, and mint redolent with West African spices and palm oil, stuffed in *acarajés*, deep-fried bean cakes. Argentina's many beef courses go back to its gaucho heritage, while its pasta dishes and pastries attest to its Italian immigrants, and its afternoon teas to a British influence dominant a century ago.

Yet, throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the foods people eat are no longer the same, a reflection of the changes that are transforming the region. Wheat bread is now as common in Mexico City as maize tortillas. Lamb and pork are more likely to be found on Andean tables today than llama or guinea pig, although the peppers and spices that flavor them remain resolutely Andean. Traditions of obtaining and preparing food are also changing under the augmented pressures and possibilities of modern life. When Rafael Pandam wants to eat meat or fish in his home in the Ecuadorian rain forest, the Shuar Indian takes the wooden spear that his brother emblazoned with carved snakes and goes out and hunts it. Most in the Americas once hunted, fished, and farmed for what they consumed, but few do today. Now they buy their food, although how they do it is also revealing. I remember villages in the Peruvian Andes two decades ago where potatoes were more readily accepted in the market than the national currency. Today, the overwhelming majority of Latin Americans are part of the monetary economy. The sound of maize being ground for tortillas

on a stone metate is still heard in rural Mexico, but most Mexican women now buy their corn flour in a store and many purchase their tortillas as well.

Fast-food restaurants have spread throughout the region, bringing McDonald's to Managua and pizza to La Paz. Even the leisurely lunch at home is disappearing in the region's busy cities. Yet, despite the pressures of modern urban life and the appeal of the international, the cuisines of Latin America and the Caribbean retain their distinctive character.

The changing "traditions" of the other Americas also reflect their varied histories, expressed even in the sports that they now call their own. In South America, where European influence was strong, football—the worldwide game that only North Americans call soccer—is the national sport, and both their teams and players rank among the world's best. Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay have all been world champions, and Brazil's Pelé is widely regarded as the finest player in football history. The South Americans have added their own personality to the European game introduced by British railway workers a century ago. Brazilians play with a fluid grace that has been traced to the Afro-Brazilian samba. When Argentina defeated England in soccer in 1950 it was viewed as important a declaration of independence as Peron's purchase of the British railways.

In the Caribbean, the impact of British colonial rule is seen in the ascendancy of cricket, the upper-class English sport in which the descendants of British slaves often lead the world. The West Indians play with a Caribbean flair absent in Middlesex, transforming the game of their ancestors' masters in the process.

But most of the Caribbean basin is a zone of U.S. influence, and here baseball is generally the national pastime, a passion that transcends politics and international frontiers. When Nicaraguan Dennis Martínez became the first Latin American to pitch a perfect U.S. major league game in July 1991, both Contreras and Sandinistas celebrated what President Violeta Bárrrios de Chamorro hailed as "a feat that fills all Nicaraguans with pride."⁴ Many players of Latin American and Caribbean origin have become stars in the United States—most recently Dominican slugger Sammy Sosa—and Cuba's national team regularly wins the gold medal in the Pan-American games. When the Baltimore Orioles visited Havana in

1999, the first by a U.S. major league club in over forty years, 16-year-old Geovani Poei waited hours in the hot sun under a Yankees cap to see them practice. "I want to see them with my own eyes," the young short-stop stressed.⁵ Though Cuba and the United States have been isolated from each other by ideology for four decades, baseball remains our common field of dreams.

Centuries of Change, Decades of Transformation

The nations of Latin America and the Caribbean may be diverse, but they have also shared a common historical experience, which continues to influence this changing region. This book will focus on the underlying dynamics of change that have shaped Latin America and the Caribbean in their current mold and that are reshaping it into the region of the future. The Americas began as European colonies, and their insertion into a changing world order according to the prescriptions of more powerful nations has marked their histories. It has created conflicts within their societies, over the loss of autonomy that this integration implied and over the division of its benefits and costs. The social unrest and political instability for which the region is notorious reflects these tensions. Yet they have also been creative tensions, which have stimulated the people of Latin America to innovate and experiment. Some of these attempts succeeded, while others failed, but all have had their impact, both within and beyond Latin America and the Caribbean. For five centuries the other Americas and the outside world have influenced each other, a two-way process of change that is still going on today.

It is a history that began with Columbus and an influence that reflects the imprint of colonialism. Tourists flock to the colonial monuments—the silvered baroque churches of Mexico, the elegant mansions of gold-rush Brazil, Nelson's Dockyard at Antigua's English Harbour—visible reminders of a vanished age. But the less visible legacies of European empire have lasted well into our own time.

In 1972 I was with a friend in Talca, a provincial town in Chile, which was in the midst of a sweeping agrarian reform. Inside the local basketball stadium, peasants dressed in their Sunday best sat in the stands to witness the expropriation of the large landed estates on which they and their forebears had worked for generations. When the name of an estate was read out, bursts of applause were heard from the section where its peasants were seated, along with the occasional shout: "Now the land is ours!" After the ceremony, an aging peasant with a broad mestizo face and leathery hands invited us into a bar to toast his good fortune. It was not just that his children would own the land, he stressed, but that they would no longer have to take orders from the old owners, bearers of an aristocratic Basque name, as he and his ancestors had done as far back as memory reached. Outside, a large sign proclaimed: TODAY THE LANDED ESTATE COMES TO AN END IN TALCA! My friend shook his head: "It is not just the landed estate that is coming to an end, but the whole structure of power that has dominated rural Chile for centuries."

No other region of the Third World was colonized for so long, penetrated so deeply by Europe. None shares its languages, religions, and values to so great an extent. More people speak Spanish and Portuguese in the Americas than in Iberia. Most of the world's Roman Catholics live in Latin America, with Brazil home to the largest national Church. Jamaica's parliamentary democracy, a British legacy, has sustained that new nation through years of economic crisis and polarized politics. The common experience of European colonialism is the starting point for understanding the region's unique relationship to the rest of the world.

Latin America and the Caribbean were inserted into a European world against their will. The Aztecs and Incas did not ask to be conquered by Spain. The Aymaras did not choose to do forced labor in the silver mines of Potosí. The Africans brought in chains across the Atlantic did not wish to be enslaved on the plantations of Brazil or the Caribbean.

Some accepted their subordination with a fatalistic resignation and tried to make the best of a world that they could not control. In Mexico there were Aztecs who helped the Spaniards conquer other Indians; in Barbados some slaves sought to improve their lot by proving their loyalty

to an omnipotent master. Others tried to make their way in a colonial world of European design, whether as merchants or miners, servants or soldiers. There were "moneybags" Indians in Peru who bought substitutes to work in the mines; there were slaves in gold-rush Brazil who purchased their freedom with nuggets earned in the mines or bought by selling their bodies in the streets.

But many in Latin America and the Caribbean resisted the fate that others had decreed for them. In Guatemala, the Itzá withdrew deep into the Petén jungles and maintained an independent Mayan kingdom for two centuries after the coming of Columbus. In the backlands of Brazil, fugitive slaves created Palmares, a neo-African kingdom that lasted for most of the seventeenth century and included some thirty thousand people at its height. The eighteenth-century history of Peru was punctuated by Indian rebellions that culminated in the great Tupac Amaru revolt of 1780, which set the Andes ablaze, cost one hundred thousand lives, and took five years to suppress.

In the wake of the American and French revolutions, the independence movements of the early nineteenth century brought European rule to an end in most of the continent, but the

As the century wore on, another revolution—the Industrial Revolution—transformed Europe and drew Latin America and the Caribbean into a new world economic order as exporters of raw materials and importers of manufactures. The rich resources and markets of the region became newly valuable, and its elites were attracted by European ideas and luxuries—and the prospect of wealth on an undreamed-of scale. British investments, French fashions, and Italian immigrants flowed across the Atlantic, transforming much of Latin America. The pampas of Argentina were turned into modern ranches and farms. Buenos Aires became the "Paris of South America." Rubber barons built an elegant opera house in the heart of the Amazon. By 1890 British influence in Uruguay was so great that when Julio Herrera y Obes was asked how it felt to be that small South American country's president, he quipped: "It feels rather like being the manager of a big ranch whose board of directors sits in London."⁵

The twentieth century saw the rise of the United States as a global

power that regarded the rest of the Americas as its backyard. U.S. interventions and investments were controversial in the other Americas, as were Washington's efforts to shape the politics and policies of Latin America and the Caribbean. The region's relations with the rest of the world became more difficult and attitudes toward the United States became more ambivalent. The United States was now the "Colossus of the North," regarded as both protector and threat, benefactor and exploiter, success story and cautionary tale. In much of the region, the United States is still viewed as both a model of liberal democracy to be emulated and as the source of foreign intervention to be opposed. "We love you, but we hate you," was the way a Cuban psychiatrist recently put it. "It is like an old affair."

The integration of Latin America and the Caribbean into a wider world has unsettled the region and worsened its internal tensions. The terms of this international merger have often reinforced the power and wealth of its elites, turning Argentine ranchers into cattle barons and Salvadoran coffee planters into oligarchs. But they have also clashed with the aspirations of the people of the Americas for democracy and social justice.

Uruguay offers a good example of these internal tensions. At the turn of the century, rural Uruguay was transformed into a landscape of modern ranches in response to Europe's growing demand for meat. Many of these *estancias* had elegant houses that reflected the new wealth and social pretensions of their owners. The ranches were separated by wire fences that enclosed branded cattle bred from prize imported bulls. There was no longer an open range for Uruguay's gauchos, the fabled "centaurs of the pampas," to roam. Nor was there as much need for their labor. Some became peons on the ranches, others rustlers on the range. Many became unemployed squatters in rural slums known as "rat cities." In 1897 they rose in a rebellion whose motto was "Free Air and Fat Cattle." When a delegation of ranchers came to their camp to press for peace, one rebel gaucho turned to a friend and said bitterly: "Here come those who would have us die of hunger."

The social unrest and political instability for which Latin America and the Caribbean are notorious still reflect such conflicts. "We needed a

revolution," one Cuban peasant told me, "because Cuba was a rich country with too many poor people." Latin America has the most unequal distribution of land, wealth, and income in the world. In Brazil, the gap between the wealthiest state and the poorest is worse than in India. Moreover, many of the region's governments are unrepresentative and most of them are deeply in debt. "The result is an onerous double debt—a foreign dollar debt and an internal social debt," said a Brazilian publisher. "It is a struggle to pay off one, let alone both."

Yet their struggles to shape their own destinies in circumstances not of their own choosing have often prompted the people of Latin America and the Caribbean to innovate. During recent decades, in particular, they have responded to these external demands and internal tensions in creative ways. Their economists have devised new strategies and their religious leaders have embraced new theologies. Some have created a culture of migration: Barbados "exports" 10 percent of its people each year, whose remittances sustain their island families. Others have pioneered new grassroots movements, including women's movements whose union of professional and poor women differs greatly from their North American counterparts. Their writers have developed artistic voices of striking originality, reaching out to new audiences and blurring the lines between elite and popular culture. Puerto Rico's Luis Rafael Sánchez wrote a novel about a popular singer of boleros, romantic songs that he views as a defense of Hispanic culture against "U.S. cultural imperialism," in an innovative style that uses the words and forms of boleros. The tensions that afflict Latin America and the Caribbean have often proved creative tensions.

A common thread uniting many of these experiments is their democratic character. In October 1988 I was in Chile as an observer of that nation's plebiscite on General Augusto Pinochet's fifteen-year dictatorship. I saw elderly peasants with weather-beaten faces wait for hours in the hot sun to cast their ballots, and a pregnant young woman in labor insist on being carried to the voting booth before she was taken to the hospital. The following day people of all ages paraded past the dictator's headquarters demanding "Democracy Now!" while bewildered soldiers kept an uneasy

guard. Chileans' desire for democracy had finally overcome the fear of repression that had held them in thrall for so many years.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the past decade has seen a surge of democracy in a region long known for its dictators. This movement for democracy has not been confined to national politics. The people of the other Americas have extended it to their churches, neighborhoods, and homes. In São Paulo's new suburban communities Brazilian migrants have formed Christian base communities as part of an effort to democratize the Catholic church. In the desert shantytowns of Lima, Peruvian women have organized themselves to press for neighborhood control of basic services, while Chilean feminists have demanded democracy in the home as well as the nation. In different ways, the people of Latin America and the Caribbean have sought to increase the participation and power of those who have been disenfranchised or marginalized. During these same years, leaders have tried to establish more equal relations between the nations of the hemisphere and some have pushed for social justice within their own societies by experimenting with diplomatic realignments and social revolutions. Not all of these experiments have succeeded, but most have had an impact on the region and many have influenced the world beyond.

Since the European "discovery" and conquest of the Americas, Latin America and the Caribbean have not only been shaped by the rest of the world; they have influenced it as well. During the initial period of mutual reconnaissance, the idea of a New World captured the European imagination, which peopled it with monsters and noble savages, and constructed its utopias on imagined American shores. In the centuries that followed, American treasure and trade helped Europe to dominate its economic relations with Asia and to construct the foundations for its global empires. "The gold and silver of the New World," concluded French historian Fernand Braudel, "allowed Europe to live beyond its means and to invest beyond its savings."

In our own era, too, the other Americas are having a major impact upon the rest of the world. Writers such as Gabriel García Márquez,

Octavio Paz, and Derek Walcott have won Nobel literature prizes and focused world attention on the region's rich literature and art. Mexico's revolutionary muralists were the first Latin American artists to win international acclaim. When I visited Mexico in 1967, I became friendly with Luis Arenal, the brother-in-law of David Siqueiros, who along with Diego Rivera and José Orozco was one of the "three greats" of the Mexican mural movement. Siqueiros was painting a mural inside Cuernavaca's new heliport, and Arenal invited me to come with him to see the work in progress. I was not alone. The heliport seemed filled with foreign visitors, many of them artists from Europe or the United States who were there to learn from this Mexican master, a politically committed innovator who painted futuristic forms with an industrial spray gun, and take the lessons home to apply in their own countries. The paintings that cover the barrio walls of East Los Angeles today are inspired by the Mexican muralists.

The vibrant popular culture of Latin America and the Caribbean has also found an avid international audience in recent decades. Bob Marley became a global pop icon and lambada a European dance craze. Reggae has penetrated popular music in the United States and samba has shaped recordings of Paul Simon and David Byrne. Brazilian soap operas are watched across the Atlantic, while their Mexican rivals have won millions of devotees north of the U.S. border—and even in Moscow.

The "theology of liberation" developed in Latin America has influenced churches around the world, playing a major role, for example, in the Philippines' democratic revolution. Its vision of a more activist and democratic Church has challenged the Vatican's vision of Catholicism for the third Christian millennium. Its stress on social justice has inspired middle-class North Americans to risk jail in order to provide sanctuary for Central American refugees.

Even the region's problems have had their impact on the larger world order. The enormous debt owed by the nations of Latin America has forced the international financial community to reconsider its policies. The accelerating destruction of the Amazon rain forest has focused global attention on the role that countries such as Brazil can play in promoting—or preventing—global warming and the greenhouse effect.

Brazil is also a good example of the increased swathe that the nations of the other Americas are cutting in international circles. It is already the world's fifth most populous country and its tenth largest economy. Despite Brazil's current onerous debt and recent economic difficulties, during the coming century its size, rich resources, entrepreneurial dynamism, and industrial strength should make it an international force.

The same is true for Mexico, the largest Spanish American country. During the 1970s Mexico played a leading role in Third World demands for a New International Economic Order that would distribute the benefits of trade and investment more equitably. Its policies have changed, but not its significance. Mexico is the United States' second most important trading partner and its leading source of foreign oil outside the unstable Middle East. Recently, Mexico was the moving force behind the creation of a North American Free Trade Association with the United States and Canada. This may prefigure a hemispheric common market that would reshape the Americas during the next century. In a world divided into trading blocs, the United States and the other Americas may well rediscover that they have a "special relationship."

Even smaller countries in the region have played outsize international roles. Over the past three decades Cuba has exerted an influence within the Third World far greater than its size would suggest. More recently, Costa Rica led the ministates of Central America in preempting U.S. military strategies in the region with negotiated solutions of their own. Colombia may be a nation of only thirty-four million, but its six billion dollars in cocaine exports has had a major impact on the United States and Europe. In the future, the growing number of independent Caribbean islands may increase their clout in such international bodies as the Organization of American States, where they will have a majority of the votes by the end of the next century.

In diverse ways, the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean are moving beyond their traditional roles as bit players on the world stage to claim leading parts in its economic, political, and cultural dramas. They are no longer, in García Márquez's phrase, "exiled from the memory of men" and "condemned to one hundred years of solitude."⁶

The people of the region are also having a profound impact on North America through their migrations. The flood of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants to the United States has altered its cities and labor force and challenged its educational system and notions of assimilation. There are already more than thirty million people of Latin American descent in the United States, and by the year 2050 there may be ninety-six million. In the twenty-first century Hispanic-Americans will be this country's largest minority, and one third of the nation's blue-collar work force may regard Spanish as their mother tongue, which 11 million speak at home today. They will exert a growing influence over the internal politics and foreign policy of the United States. The Cuban-American community already shapes Washington's policy toward Cuba, including the Helms-Burton act of 1996. The Hispanic caucus in Congress played a major role in designing the 1986 immigration law and 1990 census and in ratifying the 1992 NAFTA accord. In the future, Hispanic-American voters could act as a swing bloc in elections and their leaders will exercise increasing power in such major states as California, Florida, New York, and Texas. As their numbers and assertiveness grow, Latin American and Caribbean communities in the United States may well force this nation of immigrants to rethink what it means to be an "American."



The conquest of Mexico reshaped the history of the Americas in a European mold. This unusual view of the capture of the Great Temple of the Aztecs is through the eyes of Cortés's Tlaxcala Indian allies, whose tens of thousands of warriors helped the Spanish overcome the Aztec's numerical superiority.