



1845	1847-1848	1853	1867	1898	1899
Texas is annexed by the U.S.	In war with Mexico the U.S. acquires territories of Alta California and Santa Fé de Nuevo México	In Gadsden Purchase the U. S., acquires parts of New Mexico and Arizona from Mexico	U.S. purchases Alaska	Spanish American War	Founding of United Fruit Company
1927	1934	1950	1954		
Augusto Sandino releases his <i>Political Manifesto</i>	Sandino is killed by elements of the Nicaraguan National Guard, led by Anastasio Somoza García	Jacobo Arbenz elected president of Guatemala	Guatemalan exiles overthrow Arbenz with CIA aid		

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Commerce, Coercion, and America's Empire

6

1900–1901	1902	1903	1907–1909	1914	1917
Walter Reed publicizes work on Yellow Fever	Cuba adopts the Platt Amendment	U.S. government engineers Panamanian Independence	The Great White Fleet of the U.S. Navy circumnavigates the globe	Completion of Panama Canal	Puerto Ricans become U.S. citizens

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“It’s down that way, by the white man, who make the chicken.”

While getting directions on a Kingston street one May afternoon, I was reminded of just how difficult it is to encapsulate history of United States-Latin American relations. The white man, it turned out, was Colonel Sanders, so ubiquitous in North America that today he registers simply as the cartoon icon of a fast food empire, neither “white,” nor a “man.” In a brief exchange, where I was asking a local man for directions, Colonel Sanders was rendered as both of those things, with a slight twist. He was not so much the unmistakable symbol of an American fast-food empire (and thus symbol of U.S. dominated global capitalism more generally) as he was a curiosity, odd enough that amidst all the landmarks on a busy street, his face stood out. Who ever heard of a white man who cooked chicken?

To be sure, we cannot be entirely certain as to why Colonel Sanders was rendered simply as the “white man, who make the chicken.” The comment may have referred to his skin, his hair, his clothes, or all three, and this indeterminacy is exactly the point. The American¹ presence in Latin America is often represented in simple terms, as a violent

oppressor or noble savior. These images serve immediate political interests but offer little access to larger truths. The United States has been a violent and often unwelcome presence in Latin America. The United States has also been a source of aid and investment, and the source of many of the mass cultural phenomena that shaped the region during the course of the twentieth century. Unlike the European empires of a bygone era, which were formal administrative systems founded on political, economic, and social control, the American Empire was in some ways a voluntary association, rooted in a burgeoning international mass market. The United States provided desirable objects (comestibles, modern conveniences, music, films, and television), and though they often came with asymmetrical power arrangements attached, the bargain inherent in U.S. global domination was not one sided. Recalling Colonel Sanders, we could say that just as the United States consumed the region, gobbling up its resources, land, and even its people, so too did Latin Americans consume the United States. This was the driving logic of what historians came to call the "American Century."

Here we will focus principally on American influence in Latin America in the decades prior to 1959, leaving later U.S. engagements in the region for other chapters. The temporal choice is an obvious one, bounded by the beginning of U.S. military interventions in the region and the fairly sudden change in U.S. attitudes towards Latin America that came with the Cuban Revolution. Before Fidel Castro, North Americans often saw threats coming from the south, but American hegemony (i.e., the domination of one place by another) was a more nuanced phenomenon, driven more by commercial interests than anti-communist hysteria. These were the halcyon days of American imperialism, a time when one could imagine that U.S. hegemony as not simply Great White Fleets and U.S. Marines, but as Coca Cola, jazz, baseball, and movie stars, as the things that people all over the world desired.

Empire?

We encounter our first problem with the term itself. American statesmen at the turn of the twentieth century insisted that European countries made empires, and that the United States was at its core an anti-imperialist nation. Empires were systems that linked ideological domination (often through Christian evangelism), physical domination (the mighty European military machines of the sixteenth to twentieth centuries), and economic control in formal imperial systems, governed from European capitals. Whether seen as the product of intrinsic European superiority or the outcome of brutal systems of exploitation that enriched Europeans at the expense of slaves and indigenous peoples,² empire was concept that evoked Europe. By contrast the US was a nation forged through anti-imperial struggle, a nation dedicated to the principles of freedom and self-determination.

As political rhetoric designed to stir patriotic feelings and win elections, the anti-imperial claim has long served its purpose within the United States. As a description of actual practice, it has long been wanting. Since the very beginning, the United States has been an expansionist nation. At times, the federal government negotiated territorial acquisitions. At others, the government used American military and economic power to defend U.S. interests. Following their own historical precedents, in the early years of the nineteenth century, settlers from the eastern seaboard gradually encroached on both indigenous lands

and regions claimed by other European empires, moving into the Ohio Valley and Mississippi Basin, Florida, Louisiana, and other regions to the west. During the first half of the century, the United States was a generally prosperous, stable society, with an expanding population. Farm-children from the East needed land to work, and it made some sense that American expansion either came at the expense of increasingly weak European empires or nation states that were in the midst of fratricidal struggles and economic decline. North Americans fought two separate wars with Mexico, the first over Texas in 1836 (which was not technically a war with the United States) and the Mexican–American War in 1847–1848. Several years later, U.S. President Franklin Pierce bought a slice of territory from Mexican President Antonio López de Santa Anna (the Gadsden Purchase), bringing an end to the latter's iconic career. Alaska was purchased from Russia in 1867.

Viewed from the South, these wars looked like acts of imperial aggression. North Americans viewed them differently, as acts of manifest destiny, material reminders that God had given the responsibility of ruling the Americas to the United States. Moreover, these conquered territories did not become colonies. They were gradually incorporated into the United States, their residents newly minted as U.S. citizens (with all the racial and gendered caveats of the day).

These acts stand in stark contrast to American expansion elsewhere, where the racial makeup of extant populations caused American expansionists to demur on the issue of annexation. The American West, imagined as empty land, was incorporated into the political territory of the United States as a land that would, when peopled, be white. Americans viewed other regions—Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean in particular—more skeptically, as poor racial candidates for incorporation into the United States. In a country whose self-image was anti-imperialist, there was not enough political will to colonize these places, yet the United States did need to dominate these regions if ~~the country~~ was to become a global power. Though suspect in human terms, these countries had the raw materials American factories needed, were ideal markets for American exports, and were ideal jumping off points for American aspirations to global military power.

Two military conflicts at the turn of the twentieth century signaled the moment when U.S. military power and colonial aspirations coincided. The first was the Spanish–American War. The pretexts for the war (the protection of American lives, retaliation for the sinking of the *Maine*) were quickly overshadowed when, in the aftermath of a quick defeat of Spanish forces in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, the U.S. government demanded the transfer of the remaining fragments of the Spanish Empire to American control. In the Philippines this meant the United States would be the military overlord, reserving the right to dominate politically and economically. In Puerto Rico it meant a quasi-colonial status under which islanders would eventually receive U.S. citizenship in 1917. In Cuba, it meant the Platt Amendment, which gave the United States the right to meddle in the internal affairs of the island, to control its foreign policy, and the right to maintain a military base on the island (Guantánamo Bay). American forces did not depart the Island until the Platt Amendment was incorporated into the 1902 Cuban constitution, and it remained the law of the land until it was abrogated in 1934 (see the Platt Amendment on the book's website: www.routledge.com/textbooks/dawson).

The second military conflict that signaled U.S. ascendance was the War for Panamanian Independence in 1903. After the acquisition of California in 1848, American businessmen

and filibusterers spent decades embroiled in the internal affairs of several Central American countries (particularly Nicaragua) as they tried to secure the construction of a canal across the isthmus. Panama was not a viable option because the French Panama Canal Company already had a contract with the Colombian government to construct a canal in the region. Only in 1893, after the French Company ran out of money and abandoned the project, did the U.S. government and U.S. investors turn their sights on what seemed the most viable spot for constructing a canal. When the U.S. government offered to take over the project and Bogotá refused to agree to the terms offered, President Roosevelt threw his support behind a group of conservative landowners who had long favored Panamanian independence from Colombia. After a short conflict, Panamanian independence was won.

Roosevelt then undertook negotiations for the construction of a canal with the Panamanian Ambassador to the United States, the French engineer and canal booster, Philippe-Jean Bunau Varilla. The resulting agreement (the Hay-Bunau Varilla Treaty) gave the United States rights to a Canal Zone that extended five miles on either side of the proposed canal in perpetuity, in return for an initial payment of \$10 million and annual rent of \$250,000. Work was resumed on the canal in 1904, and the 48-mile-long Canal was completed in 1914.

The cost of the project was enormous, measured both in dollars and human lives. The U.S. government spent a total of \$375 million to build the canal, and at times employed nearly 50,000 workers in the construction process. More than 27,500 people died during construction, though only 5,609 of them died in the ten-year period during which the United States government oversaw construction.

The fact that the United States saw many fewer deaths than the French even as they undertook the bulk of the work in constructing the canal speaks to the complex ways in which modernization and American power were linked. Most of those who died as the canal was built were either victims of yellow fever or malaria. These diseases had long been endemic to the Caribbean, taking thousands of lives annually. They limited the ability of European powers to rule outside of temperate zones, killing soldiers and administrators indiscriminately, and crippling colonial armies (the French faced enormous challenges in trying to control Mexico during the 1860s in part because of their high casualty rate due to yellow fever). Locals who survived their bouts with yellow fever emerged with some immunity. Malaria could strike the same person repeatedly. Not knowing the exact causes of these illnesses, most doctors simply tried to isolate patients in hospitals.

In 1881 a Cuban doctor and etymologist named Carlos Finley discovered that the vector for yellow fever was the *Stegomyia Fasciata* mosquito, an insect that could be found abundantly in the cisterns, sewage canals, cesspools, and other sources of open water that surrounded urban areas. His discovery gained little international attention until U.S. soldiers stationed in Cuba after the Spanish-American war began to suffer high casualty rates from yellow fever. Major Walter Reed, a doctor in the U.S. army, was sent to Cuba to investigate the epidemic, and after coming across Finley's findings and testing them, he concluded that mosquitoes were indeed the cause of the malady. Reed recommended a series of measures that were carried out immediately in Havana. The incidence of yellow fever in the city fell from 1,400 in 1900 to 37 in 1901.

The new measures to combat yellow fever, which included putting screens on dwellings, fumigating houses, providing running water, building sewer systems, and putting oil or kerosene in all sources of standing water, had a dramatic impact on the canal project. The last case of yellow fever in Panama was reported in 1905. Malaria rates also fell after officials cut back the vegetation near work areas and housing, drained swamps, built ditches, and introduced larvae-eating minnows into the water supply.

The lives that were saved by these innovations were critical to American hegemony in the Americas, first in the form of the workers who constructed the infrastructures that allowed the United States to extend its military and commercial reach (the Panama Canal, after all, allowed both the U.S. Navy and U.S. merchant shipping newfound mobility), and later as workers in American-owned firms and consumers of U.S. exports. The value of American investment in the region, which jumped from around \$308 million in the 1897 to \$2 billion by 1929, spoke to that reach. Those investments needed to be safeguarded, making it likely that U.S. military capabilities would be brought to bear to defend US interests in the region with some frequency.³

Table 6.1 offers a stark example of the implications of U.S. hegemony Latin America. While for the most part the U.S. did not create formal apparatuses of imperialism (with the notable exceptions of Puerto Rico, Guantanamo Bay, and Panama), U.S. forces intervened in Latin America on dozens of occasions in the years after the Spanish–American War. These interventions created a permanent U.S. military presence in the region, either through ongoing occupations or through the threat of future invasions. Unlike formal empires, American officials foresaw an end to each occupation, and were invariably committed to training U.S.-friendly security forces that would permit their withdrawal. Like formal empires, U.S. occupations sometimes lasted for decades, creating a sense of their own permanence.

The sheer number of interventions suggests an American military with vast reach and aspirations. Close scrutiny reveals something else. For the most part United States interventions in Latin America were limited to the relatively small nations of the Caribbean. When the United States took on larger nations, the results were not always favorable. General John Pershing's "Punitive Expedition" in Mexico (March 1916 to February 1917) was a case in point. Sent across the border to capture Pancho Villa, who had the temerity to attack Columbus, New Mexico, the expedition returned home demoralized, its objectives unmet.

Pershing's failures revealed the limits of U.S. military capabilities. Mexico proved too great a challenge for a state that was not prepared to embrace total war. It was instead in the smaller countries of the Caribbean and Central America where American officials could flex their military muscles in the support of U.S. foreign policy without putting the country as a whole on a war footing. American investors in these countries often looked to the United States when their interests were threatened, but so too did many in the struggling middle classes and landed elites. American military power was a useful tool in their struggles against workers, peasants, and the political left, and they regularly aligned themselves with foreign investors in demanding U.S. intervention in the name of protecting lives, property, and order.

In the short run, these interventions had the effect of ensuring U.S. domination and protecting foreign economic interests. In the long run, they produced a series of distortions that have had lasting impacts on both the United States and the countries where U.S.

Table 6.1 U.S. Military interventions in Latin America, 1898–1959

<i>Country</i>	<i>Date</i>
Cuba	1898–1902
Puerto Rico	1898–
Nicaragua	1898
Nicaragua	1899
Honduras	1903
Dominican Republic	1903–1904
Cuba	1906–1909
Nicaragua	1907
Honduras	1907
Panama	1908
Nicaragua	1910
Honduras	1911
Cuba	1912
Panama	1912
Honduras	1912
Nicaragua	1912–1933
Mexico	1913
Dominican Republic	1914
Mexico	1914–1918
Haiti	1914–1934
Dominican Republic	1916–1924
Cuba	1917–33
Panama	1918–1920
Honduras	1919
Guatemala	1920
Costa Rica	1921
Panama	1925
El Salvador	1932
Uruguay	1947
Puerto Rico	1950
Guatemala	1954
Panama	1958

Source: Marc Becker, www2.truman.edu/~marc/resources/interventions.html

forces intervened. The figures propped up by American interventions, including the Somozas in Nicaragua, the Duvaliers in Haiti, and Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, could stand as the ultimate rogue's gallery of twentieth-century autocrats, violent men who depended on U.S. backing to defend elite interests and allow them to strip their countries of billions in wealth. Their foes, including Augusto Sandino, Fidel Castro, and Jean-Bertrand Aristide either led or inspired movements that caused enough trouble for the US to make one wonder if the costs of supporting the dictators might have outstripped the benefits. Even more, in the case of people like Castro, one could easily argue that the cost was not only paid by US interests in Latin America; it was also borne by a political system that to this day suffers from a series of distortions that can be traced back to US support for Batista (namely, the outsized role that Cuba plays in US elections). Thus is the convoluted tale of a century of U.S. intervention in Latin America.

Bananas Are Our Business

There are very few commodities that explain American interests in Central America and the Caribbean as powerfully as the banana, a fruit that is infertile, highly vulnerable to disease, and delicious. North American consumers were first introduced to bananas in 1870, and quickly developed a strong attachment to them. By 1914 almost every American household could afford bananas, at least once in a while, and consumers in the United States purchased 45 million bunches per year. Though they would not grow in the United States, bananas were easily cultivated in Central America. This attracted even more North American capital to a region already coveted for its sugar, coffee, and potential for a canal.

Looking to dominate this emerging business, a group of North American plantation and railroad entrepreneurs created the United Fruit Company (UFCO) in 1899. At its founding the UFCO immediately became the largest banana company in the world, with plantations in Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic. The company had a fleet of ships (forty-one by 1912) that handled a booming two-way trade. Bananas came north, and construction materials and merchandise traveled south. The UFCO also controlled hundreds of miles of railroad in the Caribbean, employed tens of thousands of workers, and operated stores, schools, hospitals, radio stations, breweries, banks, and hotels.

United Fruit was a model for the modern, vertically integrated corporation. Bananas grown on UFCO plantations were transported on roadways and railroads the company built and owned to its own ports (UFCO essentially owned Puerto Barrios in Guatemala). The UFCO's Great White Fleet would then transport the bananas to the United States, where they would ripen artificially in UFCO-owned warehouses before distribution to wholesalers and supermarkets. This system gave the UFCO a degree of market domination that, over time, allowed the company to eliminate smaller producers in most places, and act as the principal employer in large parts of Central America, the Caribbean, and Colombia. While most scholars today reject the idea that the UFCO controlled enclaves (geographically, economically, and socially cut off from other parts of the country), its presence in some regions was overwhelming.

The unique characteristics of the banana facilitated this type of integration. Bananas are descended from a plant that grew wild many thousands of years ago in Oceania, spreading slowly across Asia and into Africa by the beginning of the Common Era (AD). Over many generations, banana growers tinkered with the plant's characteristics, turning a rather bitter fruit that was difficult to eat into the commodity we know today. Genetic modifications ultimately produced a fruit with a tough exterior that protects the inner fruit, and which needs to be cultivated because it cannot regenerate naturally. Modern bananas do not ripen on the branch. They require human intervention in order to be palatable.

The Gros Michel, the most important banana of the early twentieth century, could withstand schooner travel because it grew in very large bunches that did not protrude outwards, and ripened very slowly, allowing significant quantities of product to be transported to North American markets without spoiling. The Gros Michel's principal drawback was that it was susceptible to Panama disease, which could easily wipe out entire plantations (a problem that became more acute after most production was turned over to this variety). Because of this, the UFCO and its competitors claimed that they needed to keep millions of

acres of potential plantation tracts in reserve. These lands could be colonized in the event of blight at existing plantations.⁴

Work in the banana business was arduous, a never ending process of cultivating existing plants and clearing land for new plantings, invariably done within a malarial environment. Cultivation, processing, and harvesting required a constant influx of migrant labor, workers who moved along labor circuits in the Caribbean by the tens of thousands. Living in company housing, workers earned meager wages, were away from their families for months or years at a time, and often found themselves in communities where they did not speak the local language. The standard dilemmas faced of these types of communities—alcohol abuse, prostitution, and violence—were common to banana zones.

These conditions lent themselves to charges that the UFCO was an agent of imperialism, especially in the case of Guatemala. Thanks to a close relationship between oligarchical interests in Guatemala and the UFCO, the company developed a dominant position in the country shortly after it was incorporated. In 1901 Guatemalan President Manuel Estrada Cabrera gave the UFCO a monopoly over the country's banana business, and promised the company veto power over legislation that might affect it adversely. In return the UFCO promised to turn hitherto unproductive lands (at least in the eyes of the state, if not those of the peasants who occupied those lands) into sources of national wealth, enriching its Guatemalan partners and the politicians who defended the company's interests.

Guatemalans responded to the pact between local elites and the UFCO in a variety of ways. Workers sometimes chafed at their conditions and pay, but were often cognizant that the opportunities afforded by the UFCO were better than those from any other employer. For some in the middle class and elites, the benefits bestowed on the country by its association with the UFCO seemed substantial enough to outweigh the costs. Material wealth, public services and infrastructure spawned by the UFCO seemed to promise a future that was better than the past.

Others took a more cynical view of the UFCO, concluding that even if the company acted only in its own interests, the individual benefits gained by playing along with the company outweighed the risks of resistance. Still others however, viewed the total domination of Guatemalan society by a single foreign company and industry with distaste, chafing at the loss of national sovereignty and deep inequalities that characterized their country under the UFCO. The Guatemalan government, like other Caribbean banana republics, was repressive, undemocratic, and beholden to the company. Here as elsewhere, guerrillas, political activists, and intellectuals called for an end to UFCO domination as early as the 1920s.⁵

The first serious signs of trouble for the banana pact came in 1944 when a military conspiracy led by Juan José Arévalo overthrew the government of Jorge Ubico. The junior officers who organized the coup did not simply seize power for themselves. They had visions of transforming Guatemala into a more democratic and equal society, a society less dominated by the logics of the banana republic. Looking on their country, the revolutionaries of 1944 saw a profoundly unequal society. Two percent of the population owned 72 percent of agricultural land. Rural poverty was extreme, and getting worse as coffee and banana cultivation spread. The political system they inherited was a simple appendage to the inequalities in the land tenure system, and lacked anything that resembled democratic practice.

Arévalo distinguished himself from previous politicians by insisting that the coup be followed by a democratic election, which he won in December 1944. He took office in 1945

for a five-year term. While in office Arévalo passed some minor reforms, but was reluctant to directly confront the power of the UFCO. The same could not be said for Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, who was elected in 1950 to succeed Arévalo with 65 percent of the national vote. Though Arbenz was a committed anti-communist, he believed that some of Guatemala's wealth had to be redistributed if the country was to escape its desperate poverty and inequality. As the largest landowner in the country, the UFCO would need to make some sacrifices.

Arbenz faced a difficult task in his effort to push back against the UFCO and its local allies. The company was implacably hostile to all reform efforts, and would do almost anything to protect its interests. And by any measure, these interests were vast. The company owned 42 percent of the land in Guatemala. It owned the nation's railroad system, along with the utility that provided electricity to the Guatemala City (the capital). Even though it was the largest business in the country, the UFCO paid almost no taxes or duties to the government. If its capacity to paralyze the national economy, transportation, and power grids was not enough to ward off any threats, it could also count on the support of the U.S. government in battling its enemies.

Between 1944 and 1950 Arévalo maintained cordial, if strained, relations with the United States. Arbenz however, immediately drew the ire of the U.S. upon taking office. Within months of assuming the presidency he legalized the Communist Party, and threatened to expropriate the UFCO's railroads (International Railroads of Central America—IRCA). In response, the U.S. government announced a plan to implement trade sanctions and launched a propaganda war depicting Arbenz as threat to American national security. The U.S. government likely assumed that even the threat of sanctions would force Arbenz to backtrack, because at the time 85 percent of Guatemala's foreign trade was with the United States. Sanctions could rapidly cripple the country.

The threat did not work. To the contrary, in 1952 Arbenz undertook his most radical steps, introducing an Agrarian Reform Law called "Plan 900." The law allowed the government to expropriate unused land from large estates and redistribute it to peasants. Landowners would be compensated with twenty-five-year bonds that paid 3 percent interest, and compensation would be based on the value of the land as assessed in 1952 tax declarations.⁶ It was a bold maneuver, aimed at creating a new political constituency for the regime. If it worked, it would also shift some production away from export commodities and towards staple crops.

The UFCO, which in 1952 cultivated only 139,000 acres of its 3 million acres of property in the country, lost 234,000 acres as a result of the law. Worse still for the company, the government offered only \$1 million in compensation for the confiscated lands, basing the offer on company's own tax filings, which were widely known to significantly undervalue their land.

The UFCO adopted multiple strategies to fight expropriation. First, they insisted that if they were to lose the land they should receive at least \$16 million, as that was the fair value of the land. They also argued that the nature of banana cultivation should leave them exempt from seizure, because the threat of Panama disease meant that they might have to abandon their current plantations at any time. Without their reserves, they could be forced out of business, and this would be disastrous for everyone.

The company also launched a propaganda campaign against the government. Company spokesmen in the United States warned the American public of the threat emerging

in Guatemala. Working in concert with their supporters in the Eisenhower administration, company officials called Arbenz a communist, evoking images of the Soviet Union gaining a foothold in America's backyard. For a country in the midst of the McCarthy-era Red Scare, the potential threat emerging in Guatemala seemed very real. Americans feared nuclear war (Stalin exploded an atom bomb in 1949), the Maoist revolution in China, and the ever present threat of a fifth column inside the United States, and the image of a communist Central American dictator threatening American freedom played very well at home. It was still early in the cold war, and millions of Americans genuinely believed that the dominoes were falling in their direction.⁷ Naturally, it did not hurt that two key administration figures, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA director Allen Dulles, had close ties to the UFCO.⁸

U.S. officials began plotting the overthrow of Arbenz as early as 1952. The CIA played a particularly important role in the plans, establishing training camps for a rebel invasion on UFCO-owned lands in Honduras. When, in May 1954 U.S. officials learned that Arbenz had begun to import weapons from the Soviet bloc, the CIA sprang into action with Operation PBSUCCESS. On June 17 a small rebel force under the command of Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas invaded the country, relying on arms, intelligence, aircraft, and an information blitz (radio broadcasts, overstating the size and power of the rebels, phone calls threatening enemies with death, etc.) provided by the CIA. On June 25 the army abandoned Arbenz without having suffered a major defeat. He resigned and fled to Mexico two days later.⁹

If ever there was a case for arguing that a specific result was over-determined, Arbenz' fall offers such an opportunity. Close business ties between UFCO and the administration, CIA fears of growing Soviet influence, anxiety about the potential a success of socialist reforms, and the U.S. government's inability to distinguish nationalism from communism all worked against Arbenz. He was popular, to be sure, but this alone could not guarantee his survival.

Arbenz may have mistaken popular support for strength. In Latin America political leaders with strong regional bases, support from the military, and connections to allies outside their country have historically been better positioned than those who are simply popular in the broad sense. This is especially true for reformist regimes, and in particular those that position themselves as representatives of marginalized groups. Arbenz was a well-loved president, but he faced powerful enemies in the UFCO and its supporters (middle level managers, businessmen who profited from their connections to the company, anti-communists, and large portions of the military). Any democratic reformer would be hard pressed to prevail against such an array of adversaries.

Cultures of Consumption

It is difficult to misinterpret the meaning of a soldier pointing a rifle at your head, a foreign warship commanding your harbor, or bombs raining from the sky above you. U.S. military interventions are typically explained to a North American audience as exercises in the spread of democracy, but to the victims of those interventions American militarism means the naked use of violence in the defense of U.S. interests. The UFCO, working with the CIA, orchestrated the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz and the installment of a friendly

government in June 1954. These are facts that describe a series of events that took place over several days. In very short order, they left an indelible impression across the region. Outright opposition to U.S. interests means war; a war that democratic regimes like Guatemala's could not expect to win. Those committed to a radical path would need to adopt other means to resist U.S. military power.

Because they are so cataclysmic, so powerfully divisive, we might be inclined to see the totality of the U.S. role in Latin America through these military interventions. To do so however, is to miss out on the myriad other ways that the United States factored into everyday life in this region during the twentieth century. As the United States gradually supplanted Great Britain as the most important investor and trading partner in the Latin America, American capital, innovations, and popular culture gradually became ubiquitous presences. Every day millions of people went to work for companies that were based in or did business with the United States. Millions more purchased products, heard sounds, saw images, or felt desires that linked them to their northern neighbor.

For the remainder of this chapter, we set aside the story of military domination and explore the more ambiguous story of the cultural flows that shaped both Latin America and the United States during the twentieth century. In the South the United States generated contradictory feelings and sensibilities. It was the home of the tourists who came to your cities, ruins, and beaches; tourists who often acted in boorish and disrespectful ways. It was the country of cold Anglo-Saxons, hard-hearted, rational people who had become rich because they lacked the passions and *joie de vivre* of their southern neighbors. It was a land of little culture, a land where diversity (indigenous peoples, Africans) was crushed instead of embraced. And still, it was the land of the future, of new things, of freshly unwrapped cellophane. It was a land of industrial invention, the best, largest, and fastest cars, trains, airplanes, and ships. It was the land of unimagined scientific innovation, of great cities, of foods and drinks that possessed of properties never before imagined. And it was the land of glamorous movie stars, people so beautiful and wealthy that it was difficult to watch them without feeling a desire to be them, to be like them, or be with them.

During the twentieth century, American products, along with the aura of progress and wealth that they embodied, circulated throughout Latin America. jazz, baseball, Coca-Cola, and movie stars were among the early American icons in the region,¹⁰ to be later supplemented by radio, television, and fast-food. Though objects of mass production and intended for a mass market, they were anything but one-size-fits-all impositions on a foreign consumer. American products found markets by marrying what was appealing in the foreign (its newness, its association with wealth and modernity) to what was appealing in the local (specific and often long-standing tastes and desires).

This goal was accomplished by making American products through local partnerships, and modifying them slightly to suit local tastes. Brands as varied as Budweiser, Coca-Cola, and Elvis Presley were recast to represent amalgams of North American modernity and specific Latin American sensibilities. In each instance American firms needed to find the right mixture, which they often did by manufacturing products locally and linking them to distinct regional symbols, while retaining the qualities that made their products more desirable, more modern. Take the advertisement reproduced as Figure 6.1, selling cigarettes made by the British American Tobacco Company, which was one of a series of ads that appeared in the Mexico City newspaper *El Universal* in late December 1949.¹¹

De auténtica extracción mexicana, nuestro original "chocolatl-ati" es, desde hace siglos, un factor importantísimo en la alimentación mundial. En igual forma que, en materia de cigarrros, BELMONT es un factor decisivo en la satisfacción del buen fumador. Es por esto que, con derecho propio y con todo orgullo y satisfacción, tanto la olorosa tablilla de exquisito chocolate, como la inconfundible cajetilla roja de BELMONT, ostentan el sello de: "HECHO EN MEXICO"

Belmont

COMPARE CALIDAD Y PRECIO!

Encuentra en todas las tiendas de licorería y almacenes, al "Bolsita Mundial Belmota" por \$2.00. Hechos y comercializados por Guillermo Wala correspondiente del Mutual Broadcasting System.

Figure 6.1 Belmont Cigarettes magazine ad

Source: *El Universal*, December 22, 1949

The advertisement links a number of powerful images: the cigarette with the foreign name, the ubiquitous *Hecho en Mexico* symbol, the chocolate of the ancient Aztecs, and industrialization. It is accompanied by the following text:

As an authentically Mexican product, our original "chocotl-atl" has been a globally important source of nutrition for centuries. And when it comes to satisfying the intelligent smoker, Belmont does the same for cigarettes. That is why, just as with the sweet smelling tablet of exquisite chocolate, we take great pride and satisfaction in our right to imprint the unmistakable red BELMONT package with the "Made in Mexico" seal.

We see here the complex alchemy of the foreign and the national that informed the new American empires. A British–American cigarette was appealing in part because it was a foreign cigarette. People who smoked Belmonts demonstrated that they could afford something more expensive, more classy than a local brand. Beyond this, tobacco evoked a combination of a particular national past and the universal industrial present, much in the way that chocolate also spoke to a mixture of the local and the universal. And like other advertisements in the series, which linked Belmont to the Mexican film industry, Mexican ceramics, and the revolutionary muralists, the advertisement ties Belmont to the industrial workers who produced chocolate, cigarettes, and revolutionary culture. If the people who produced the national treasures smoked Belmonts, why wouldn't you?

Cartoon Figures

Such were the complexities of the cultural flows that characterized the early decades of the "American Century." Objects—a cigarette, a drink, a movie star—acquired complex meanings within a series of asymmetrical exchanges. And interestingly, no object was more ambiguously woven into these exchanges than the banana, the commodity with which we began this story. For more than a century, bananas have signaled the tropical essence of their place of origin. Even today, when we peel the label off our Chiquita banana (for the record, it is now a Cavendish and not a Gros Michel), we come face to face with the image of Carmen Miranda. In our memory she is a sultry Latin belle, sexually inviting, colorfully dressed, her head adorned with tropical fruit (Figure 6.2).

Stereotypes are funny things. They can silence and marginalize individuals and groups, but they can also be quite useful, even for those who are stereotyped. For groups, stereotypes provide symbols that members may rally around in order to feel a sense of belonging. They can be comical signs of that group identity, points of departure for laughter as the collective chortles, "oh, that is us." Bananas and banana culture formed a part of this for tropical Latin Americans. The banana was a symbol (however skewed) of a tropical culture that stood as an alternative to the alienated industrial lifestyles of the North. Banana cultures were typified by sensuous women, men who played romantic tunes on their guitars, people who drank strong drink on their verandas, overlooking verdant palm forests, white-sand beaches, and clear blue waters. This was the image that Miranda parleyed into global fame. Truly an amalgam, this Portuguese-born woman gained fame as a samba star, capitalizing on a genre that appropriated the dress and music of the Afro-Brazilian *favela* (slum).



Figure 6.2 Carmen Miranda

Source: © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS

Miranda first gained national attention in Brazil in the documentary film *A Voz Do Carnaval* in 1933. This led to the feature film *Alo, Alo, Brazil* in 1935, which made her into one of the biggest stars in the country. By the late 1930s, she was also garnering attention outside of Brazil. Miranda was cast in several Hollywood pictures, including *Down Argentine Way* (1940), *That Night in Rio* (1941), and *The Gang's All Here* (1943). By then Miranda had made

it in Hollywood, and for much of the rest of her career she would pay relatively little attention to the Brazilian music and film industry.

Like artists all over the world who have moved to centers of creative energy and financial power, Miranda chose Hollywood over Rio. And like partners and friends left behind by their former collaborators all over the world in these moments, Miranda's former colleagues viewed her choice with a mixture of pride and resentment. That she made it at all spoke volumes to the quality of the cultural scene she left behind. That she left them behind was a reminder that the United States had the capacity to lure away Brazil's most powerful stars, to in effect consume both Brazilian music and its producers. It is a reminder that individually Brazilians are as good as anyone, but that collectively they are second class. Tellingly, the more Miranda became an international star, the more she faced scorn in her own country as a sell-out.

Local bitterness over her international stardom was complicated by the fact that others in Brazil continued to benefit from her fame even after she left. Brazilian musicians and singers developed international audiences. The samba grew more popular as a national art form in Brazil. American tourists were drawn both to Rio de Janeiro and to other tropical paradises in search of the sensual mystique she embodied. Carmen Miranda, Dolores Del Rio (who in fact played a Brazilian in Thornton Freelan's 1933 film *Flying Down to Rio*), and a host of other beautiful Latin American women profited from these exchanges, along with the hotel operators, musicians, vendors, and others who earned livings from the monetization of a stereotype. What is not certain is whether or not the benefits invariably outweighed the costs.

One of the most obvious costs came in the ways that particular cultures and individuals were flattened into a single image of Latin American sensuality for a global audience. That Dolores Del Rio (a legendary Mexican actress) could play a Brazilian quite seamlessly in an American movie represented an odd sort of affront to both Brazilians and Mexicans. It was the 1930s version of the Italian American actor Al Pacino playing a Cuban mobster in 1983's *Scarface* (his accent almost as dreadful as Marlon Brando's in *Mutiny on the Bounty*), a film that trafficked in disturbing stereotypes about Cuba. Yet if Pacino's Tony Montana was an anti-hero, Dolores del Rio and Carmen Miranda served more as objects of desire, place holders for North American fantasies and easily exchanged. Indeed, interchangeability has played significant part in the memories that North American audiences have of Carmen Miranda. When asked, many Americans of a certain age remember incorrectly that Miranda starred in a Disney cartoon, *The Three Caballeros*, released during 1945.¹² It was in fact her sister Aurora who starred in the film that introduced a generation of American children to **the South**.

It may be somehow fitting that one of the most enduring symbols we have of the United States presence in Latin America during the first half of the twentieth century is a Disney cartoon. Perhaps more than any other company, Disney created products that were both globally popular, and indisputably associated with the United States (even if some Disney images were German before they were American). *The Three Caballeros*, along with 1943's *Saludos Amigos*,¹³ captured a great deal of what was at stake in the emergence of the United States as a global power during the twentieth century. Walt Disney made the films at the conclusion of a goodwill tour of Latin America, which he took at the request of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs at the U.S. State Department. The trip was part of

a larger effort by the U.S. government and American business interests to build friendly and supportive relationships with their Latin American neighbors; relationships that would favor both commerce and security. In the resulting films, we see Disney animators and their creations traveling to Latin America and becoming entranced by the cultures, geography, and mysteries of the region.

Reading these films is not as easy as it may seem. The cultural critic could easily jump on the gendered and racializing practices in the texts. Donald Duck, the American tourist, is taken on a wild ride through an exotic and titillating world by the gun-toting Mexican Panchito Pistoles and the sophisticated but androgynous Carioca Joe. Donald falls head over heels for Aurora Miranda. He is induced into a hallucinogenic stupor by her beauty (or perhaps, somebody put something in his drink?). Elsewhere in these films Goofy (at the very least a figure who evokes a racial stereotype in the U.S.) is made into an Argentine gaucho, his performance suggesting a degree of rusticity that would have made Sarmiento proud. The Andes are rendered as a terrifying, mystical place, cut off from Western civilization, and best avoided through the modern wonder of the airplane (Disney's little Pedro).

American audiences have loved these films for generations. They no doubt enjoy the humor, the music, the aesthetically pleasing quality of the cartoons, and probably the stereotypes (is goofy not like some version of the Appalachian hick, or the southern sharecropper?). Interestingly, it appears that Latin American audiences have also long loved these movies as well. Both movies were quite successful in Latin America, and even debuted in Latin America before being released in the United States. Both have also had a long afterlife in the region.

How do we explain this? We might begin by remembering that different audiences often view the same film in distinct ways. Would Latin Americans have laughed at the bumbling fool Donald, easily tricked by his Latin American hosts, always lost, never quite at ease in a foreign land? Would they have been comforted by the fact that Joe and Panchito were much more in charge, much more in command of their faculties, than Donald? Would they have enjoyed the pleasing quality of the cartoons, and laughed at the stereotypes of themselves in the films because, after all, a cartoon by its very nature is a caricature, and these ones were funny? Given their own tendency to view the countryside as racially inferior, would urban Argentines have recognized their own stereotypes of the gaucho in Goofy? Would they have been happy to see beautiful images of their modern cities in the films, images that contrasted with the ways Americans often represented their countries? Did they like the films simply because Donald was already a huge draw for Latin American audiences? We do not know.

What we do know is that these films, like *Carmen Miranda*, like the banana, constituted part of the terrain on which United States–Latin American relations were negotiated during the twentieth century. Even after U.S. attitudes hardened during the cold war (and especially after the 1959 Cuban Revolution), the American presence in Latin America and the Latin American presence in the United States were framed as much by the market—each consuming the other—as they were by the simple imperatives of military might. We ought not lose sight of the significance of this fact in the face of otherwise overwhelming images of violent acts carried out in the name of U.S. domination, because the market gave the United States a far greater reach than its military ever could.

The Documents: Contesting Hegemony

No single text can convey the complexity of the American presence in Latin America. Because of that, below we have a selection of four different documents. Each tells a small part of that history. Our first is a fairly traditional text, the manifesto composed by the guerilla leader Augusto Sandino (1895–1934) in 1927 as he confronted the Marines, the most visible sign of U.S. hegemony. Political strife was commonplace in Nicaragua at the time. Groups denoted by the labels “Liberal” and “Conservative” continually clashed under the watchful eye of the U.S. government, which in turn used these conflicts to press its own advantage. In part because of his experiences in exile between 1921 and 1926, Sandino took an unusual view of these struggles. He was less concerned with the parochial battles between Liberals and Conservatives than he was about the larger influence of the U.S. in Nicaragua. When the Liberals and Conservatives agreed to a U.S.-brokered truce in 1927, Sandino rejected the accord, and released the manifesto included below (Document 6.1).

One of the first Latin American guerrillas to specifically go to war against the United States, Sandino calls to mind Simón Bolívar's dream of a Latin America united against imperialism.¹⁴ Still, the manifesto is not simply a transparent call for the Nicaraguan people to unite in defense of their sovereignty. Sandino's war mixed battles over long-standing and often personal local grievances (class, ethnic, and kinship conflicts in the Segovias region of Nicaragua) with opposition to the United States presence in the country, conflating local enemies with the imperial power. At the same time, by positioning his fight as an anti-imperial struggle, he could claim to represent all true Nicaraguans. His skill as an ideologue lay in his ability to conflate these various foes into one enemy. In light of this, Sandino's manifesto needs to be understood as a text that in some sense produces the enemy it describes.¹⁵

Document 6.2 shifts our attention away from the anti-imperial project and towards to a more benevolent version of United States-Latin American relations. As U.S. president between 1932 and 1945, Franklin Roosevelt favored what he called the “Good Neighbor Policy,” which funneled U.S. aid and investment into friendly countries, positioning that aid as the most effective means of promoting economic progress and modernization. Supplemented at the end of the Second World War with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and later USAID, the Peace Corps, and John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, these types of initiatives sought to help Latin Americans by paying for doctors and vaccines, teachers, agronomists, and engineers, and investing millions of dollars to build schools, homes, hospitals, electrical grids, dams, and improve infrastructure more generally. The U.S. government also hoped that the aid would thwart American enemies in Latin America by revealing the ways that capitalism could alleviate hunger and end poverty.

Our text, the documentary film *Silent War*, highlights a variety of these efforts. Like others of its day (notably *Good Neighbor Family* and *Roads South*), the film suggests that the United States can use its position on the cutting edge of all things modern to help Latin America. The progress described in the film (in this case, a yellow fever vaccine) serves U.S. strategic interests and saves the lives of the villagers in Popoyán; the kind of benefit that a contemporary management consultant might call synergy, and which was not unlike earlier efforts to reduce the impact of mosquito-borne illnesses, undertaken during construction of the Panama Canal. This was what made the logics of American influence in

Latin America so compelling. American officials, along with many Latin Americans, often believed that they were doing good deeds.

Idealism is not so easily evident in Document 6.3, the nakedly propagandistic film *Journey to Banana Land*. This film is said to have premiered on board the *S.S. Talamanca* of United Fruit Company's Great White Fleet in 1950, a setting somehow apt for a complete whitewash of the UFCOs business dealings in Guatemala. Under pressure in Guatemala because of its vast landholdings, the company used this film to show a North American audience the positive impact the company had on this country. Viewers witness the country's relative modernity and the ways in which banana production was benefiting everyone, worker and consumer alike. The film also represents a powerful source for interrogating a series of other assumptions about class, gender, and ethnicity (in both Guatemala and the United States).

Document 6.4 returns us to where we began, with a slight shift. Ariel Dorfman's critique of U.S. imperialism during the 1960s begins by arguing that we must understand a set of assumptions about the modern and the primitive in order to understand American imperial practices. Written during the United States' war in Vietnam, in the aftermath of both the overthrow of Arbenz and the Cuban Revolution, Dorfman's text describes a nakedly imperialist United States. His evidence for this: Donald Duck cartoons, icons of popular culture read across the hemisphere.

Dorfman's critique is powerful and illuminating, and provides a clear reading of cartoons that today seem quite troubling (indeed, far more troubling than *The Three Caballeros*, given their content). Still, we are left wondering whether his critique of Pato Donald and Huey, Lewey, and Dewey tells us more about the assumptions of the cartoon's creators than it does about Donald's readers. *Journey to Banana Land*, Donald Duck, *Silent War*, and other texts may have been created to serve as instruments of imperialism, but it seems unlikely that the audiences who consumed these texts were entirely naïve. North American school children may have thought the family in *Journey* silly, boring, or sufficiently unlike their own family as to be unrecognizable. Did they throw spitballs at the screen, go to sleep at their desks, or cut class? Latin American audiences may have laughed at *The Three Caballeros* because Donald was such a buffoon, a reminder of how unsophisticated North American tourists were. And that man on the street may have thought it odd, inexplicable, that the white man made the chicken. We will never know, and that is part of the magic of the mass consumption that accompanied the "American Century." Just as long as you bought a ticket, you could make the meanings your own.

Document 6.1 Augusto Sandino, *Political Manifesto*, Nicaragua, July 1927

Source: Bruce, Marcus (Ed). *Nicaragua: Sandinista Peoples' Revolution Speeches by Sandinista Leaders*. United Kingdom, Pathfinder Press, 1985, First Trade.

A man who does not ask his homeland for even a handful of earth for his grave deserves to be heard, and not only heard, but believed.

I am Nicaraguan and I am proud that in my veins flows, more than any other, the blood of the American Indian, whose regeneration contains the secret of being a loyal

and sincere patriot. The bonds of nationality give me the right to assume responsibility for my actions on matters of Nicaragua and, therefore, of Central America and the entire continent that speaks our language, without concerning myself over what the pessimistic and cowardly eunuchs may call me.

I am a city worker, an artisan as they say in my country, but my ideals are broadly internationalistic in nature and entail the right to be free and demand justice, although to achieve this state of perfection it may be necessary to shed my own blood and that of others.

The oligarchs, who act like geese in a quagmire, will say I am plebeian. It doesn't matter. My greatest honor is to have emerged from the bosom of the oppressed, who are the soul and nerves of the race, who have lived put off and at the mercy of the shameless assassins who helped incubate the crime of high treason: the Nicaraguan Conservatives who wounded the free heart of the homeland and who pursued us ferociously as though we were not children of the same nation.

Sixteen years ago Adolfo Díaz and Emiliano Chamorro ceased being Nicaraguans, because their greed destroyed their right to claim that nationality, as they tore from its staff the flag that flew over all Nicaraguans. Today that flag hangs idle and humiliated by the ingratitude and indifference of its sons who don't make the superhuman effort to free it from the claws of the monstrous eagle with the curved beak that feeds on the blood of this people while the flag that represents the assassination of defenseless peoples and the enmity of our race flies in Managua's Mars Field.

Who are those who tie my homeland to the post of ignominy? Díaz and Chamorro and their bootlickers who still want the right to govern this hapless land, supported by the invaders' bayonets and Springfield rifles. No! A thousand times no!

The Liberal revolution is on the march. There are those who haven't betrayed, who haven't halted, who haven't sold their rifles to satisfy Moncada's greed. It is on the march and today stronger than ever, because the only ones who remain are the brave and the selfless.

The traitor Moncada naturally failed in his duties as a soldier and a patriot. Those who followed him weren't illiterate and neither was he an emperor, to have imposed such greedy ambition upon us. I place before his contemporaries and before history this deserter Moncada, who went over to the foreign enemy with his cartridge pouch and all. An unpardonable crime that demands vindication!

The big men will say that I am very little to have undertaken such a task; but my insignificance is surmounted by the loftiness of my patriotic heart, and so I pledge before my country and history that my sword will defend the national honor and will be the redemption of the oppressed.

I accept the invitation to the struggle and I myself will provoke it, and to the challenge of the cowardly invader and the traitors to my country I answer with my battle cry. My chest and that of my soldiers will form walls that the legions of Nicaragua's enemies will crash upon. The last of my soldiers who are soldiers for Nicaragua's freedom, might die, but first, more than a battalion of you, blond invader, will have bitten the dust of my rustic mountains.

I will not be Magdalena, begging on bent knee for the pardon of my enemies—who are the enemies of Nicaragua—because I believe that nobody on earth has the right to

be a demigod. I want to convince the cold-hearted Nicaraguans, the indifferent Central Americans, and the Indo-Hispanic race, that in the spur of the Andean mountains there is a group of patriots who know how to fight and die like men.

Come, you gang of morphine addicts; come murder us in our own land, I am awaiting you, standing upright before my patriotic soldiers, not caring how many you may be. But bear in mind that when this occurs, the destruction of your grandeur will shake the Capitol in Washington, reddening with your blood the white sphere that crowns your famous White House, the den where you concoct your crimes.

I want to advise the governments of Central America, especially that of Honduras, that you need not fear that, because I have more than enough troops, I will militarily invade your territory in an attempt to overthrow it. No. I am not a mercenary, but a patriot who will not permit an offense against our sovereignty.

I wish that, since nature has given our country enviable riches and has put us at the crossroads of the world, and since that natural privilege is what has led others to covet us to the point of wanting to enslave us, for that same reason I wish to break the bonds that the disgraceful policies of Chamorro have bound us with.

Our young country, that tropical brown-skinned woman, should be the one to wear on her head the Phrygian cap with the beautiful slogan that symbolizes our "red and black" emblem, and not that country raped by Yankee morphine addicts brought here by four serpents who claim to have been born here in my country.

The world will be imbalanced if the United States of North America is allowed to be the sole owner of our canal, because that would put us at the mercy of the decisions of the colossus of the North—to whom we would have to pay tribute—those practitioners of bad faith, who with no justification whatsoever seek to become its owners.

Civilization demands that a canal be opened in Nicaragua, but it should be one with capital from the whole world, and not just U.S. capital. At least half the costs of construction should be paid with capital from Latin America and the other half from the rest of the countries of the world that want to hold stock in such a company, and the United States of North America could have only the three million that they gave to the traitors Chamorro, Díaz, and Cuadra Pasos; and Nicaragua, my homeland, will receive the tariffs that by right and justice belong to it, with which we will have sufficient income to build railroads across our territory and educate our people in a real environment of effective democracy, and at the same time we will be respected and not looked upon with the bloody contempt that we suffer today.

Brothers and sisters of my people: having expressed my most ardent desires for the defense of our homeland, I welcome you in my ranks regardless of political affiliation, as long as you come with good intentions, remembering that you can fool all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all the time.

Document 6.2 *Silent War* (Film).

To view this film, please visit the book's companion website at www.routledge.com/textbooks/dawson

Document 6.3 Journey to Banana Land (Film).

To view this film, please visit the book's companion website at www.routledge.com/textbooks/dawson

Document 6.4 Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, "From the Noble Savage to the Third World" 1970

Source: From *How to Read Donald Duck* by Ariel Dorfman. Copyright © 1984 by Ariel Dorfman, reprinted with permission of The Wylie Agency LLC.

Donald (talking to a witch doctor in Africa): "I see you're an up to date nation! Have you got telephones?"

Witch doctor: "Have we gottee telephones! . . . All colors, all shapes . . . only trouble is only one has wires. It's a hot line to the world loan bank." (TR 106, US 9/64)

Where is Aztecland? Where is Inca-Blinca? Where is Unsteadystan?

There can be no doubt that Aztecland is Mexico, embracing as it does all the prototypes of the picture-postcard Mexico: mules, siestas, volcanoes, cactuses, huge sombreros, ponchos, serenades, machismo, and Indians from ancient civilizations. The country is defined primarily in terms of this grotesque folklorism. Petrified in an archetypal embryo, exploited for all the superficial and stereotyped prejudices which surround it, "Aztecland," under its pseudo-imaginary name becomes that much easier to Disneyfy. This is Mexico recognizable by its commonplace exotic identity labels, not the real Mexico with all its problems.

Walt took virgin territories of the United States and built upon them his Disneyland palaces, his magic kingdoms. His view of the world at large is framed by the same perspective; it is a world already colonized, with phantom inhabitants who have to conform to Disney's notions of it. Each foreign country is used as a kind of model within the process of invasion by Disney-nature. And even if some foreign country like Cuba or Vietnam should dare to enter into open conflict with the United States, the Disney Comics brand-mark is immediately stamped upon it, in order to make the revolutionary struggle appear banal. While the Marines make revolutionaries run the gauntlet of bullets, Disney makes them run a gauntlet of magazines. There are two forms of killing: by machine guns and saccharine.

Disney did not, of course, invent the inhabitants of these lands; he merely forced them into the proper mold. Casting them as stars in his hit-parade, he made them into decals and puppets for his fantasy palaces, good and inoffensive savages unto eternity.

According to Disney, underdeveloped peoples are like children, to be treated as such, and if they don't accept this definition of themselves, they should have their pants taken down and be given a good spanking. That'll teach them! When something is said about the child/noble savage, it is really the Third World one is thinking about.

The hegemony which we have detected between the child-adults who arrive with their civilization and technology, and the child-noble savages who accept this alien authority and surrender their riches, stands revealed as an exact replica of the relations between metropolis and satellite, between empire and colony, between master and slave. Thus we find the metropolitans not only searching for treasures, but also selling the natives comics (like those of Disney), to teach them the role assigned to them by the dominant urban press. Under the suggestive title "Better Guile Than Force," Donald departs for a Pacific atoll in order to try to survive for a month, and returns loaded with dollars, like a modern business tycoon. The entrepreneur can do better than the missionary or the army. The world of the Disney comic is self-publicizing, ensuring a process of enthusiastic buying and selling even within its very pages.

Enough of generalities. Examples and proofs. Among all the child-noble savages, none is more exaggerated in his infantilism than Gu, the Abominable Snow Man (TR 113, US 6-8/56, "The Lost Crown of Genghis Khan"): a brainless, feeble-minded Mongolian type (living by a strange coincidence, in the Himalayan Hindu Kush mountains among yellow peoples). He is treated like a child. He is an "abominable housekeeper," living in a messy cave, "the worst of taste," littered with "cheap trinkets and waste." Hats etc., lying around which he has no use for. Vulgar, uncivilized, he speaks in a babble of inarticulate baby-noises: "Gu." But he is also witless, having stolen the golden jeweled crown of Genghis Khan (which belongs to Scrooge by virtue of certain secret operations of his agents), without having any idea of its value. He has tossed the crown in a corner like a coal bucket, and prefers Uncle Scrooge's watch: value, one dollar ("It is his favorite toy"). Never mind, for "his stupidity makes it easy for us to get away!" Uncle Scrooge does indeed manage, magically, to exchange the cheap artifact of civilization which goes tick-tock, for the crown. Obstacles are overcome once Gu (innocent child-monstrous animal—underdeveloped Third Worldling) realizes that they only want to take something that is of no use to him, and that in exchange he will be given a fantastic and mysterious piece of technology (a watch) which he can use as a plaything. What is extracted is gold, a raw material; he who surrenders it is mentally underdeveloped and physically overdeveloped. The gigantic physique of Gu, and of all the other marginal savages, is the model of a physical strength suited only for physical labor.

Such an episode reflects the barter relationship established with the natives by the first conquistadors and colonizers (in Africa, Asia, America and Oceania): some trinket, the product of technological superiority (European or North American) is exchanged for gold (spices, ivory, tea, etc.). The native is relieved of something he would never have thought of using for himself or as a means of exchange. This is an extreme and almost anecdotic example. The common stuff of other types of comic book (e.g. in the internationally famous Tintin in Tibet by the Belgian Hergé) leaves the abominable creature in his bestial condition, and thus unable to enter into any kind of economy.

But this particular victim of infantile regression stands at the borderline of Disney's noble savage cliché. Beyond it lies the foetus-savage, which for reasons of sexual prudery Disney cannot use.

Lest the reader feel that we are spinning too fine a thread in establishing a parallel between someone who carries off gold in exchange for a mechanical trinket, and imperialism extracting raw material from a mono-productive country, or between

typical dominators and dominated, let us now adduce a more explicit example of Disney's strategy in respect to the countries he caricatures as "backward" (needless to say, he never hints at the causes of their backwardness).

The following dialogue (taken from the same comic which provided the quotation at the beginning of this chapter) is a typical example of Disney's colonial attitudes, in this case directed against the African independence movements. Donald has parachuted into a country in the African jungle. "Where am I," he cries. A witch doctor (with spectacles perched over his gigantic primitive mask) replies: "In the new nation of Kooko Coco, fly boy. This is our capital city." It consists of three straw huts and some moving haystacks. When Donald enquires after this strange phenomenon, the witch doctor explains: "Wigs! This be hairy idea our ambassador bring back from United Nations." When a pig pursuing Donald lands and has the wigs removed disclosing the whereabouts of the enemy ducks, the following dialogue ensues:

Pig: "Hear ye! hear ye! I'll pay you kooks some hairy prices for your wigs! Sell me all you have!"

Native: "Whee! Rich trader buyee our old head hangers!"

Another native: "He payee me six trading stamps for my beehive hairdo!"

Third native (overjoyed): "He payee me two Chicago streetcar tokens for my Beatle job."

To effect his escape, the pig decides to scatter a few coins as a decoy. The natives are happy to stop, crouch and cravenly gather up the money. Elsewhere, when the Beagle Boys dress up as Polynesian natives to deceive Donald, they mimic the same kind of behavior: "You save our lives . . . We be your servants for ever." And as they prostrate themselves, Donald observes: "They are natives too. But a little more civilized."

Another example (Special Number D 423): Donald leaves for "Outer Congolia," because Scrooge's business there has been doing badly. The reason is "the King ordered his subjects not to give Christmas presents this year. He wants everyone to hand over this money to him." Donald comments: "What selfishness!" And so to work. Donald makes himself king, being taken for a great magician who flies through the skies. The old monarch is dethroned because "he is not a wise man like you [Donald]. He does not permit us to buy presents." Donald accepts the crown, intending to decamp as soon as the stock is sold out: "My first command as king is . . . buy presents for your families and don't give your king a cent!" The old king had wanted the money to leave the country and eat what he fancied, instead of the fish heads which were traditionally his sole diet. Repentant, he promises that given another chance, he will govern better, "and I will find a way somehow to avoid eating that ghastly stew."

Donald (to the people): "And I assure you that I leave the throne in good hands. Your old king is a good king . . . and wiser than before."

The people: "Hurray! Long Live the King!"

The king has learned that he must ally himself with foreigners if he wishes to stay in power, and that he cannot even impose taxes on the people, because this wealth must

pass wholly out of the country to Duckburg through the agent of McDuck. Furthermore, the strangers find a solution to the problem of the king's boredom. To alleviate his sense of alienation within his own country, and his consequent desire to travel to the metropolis, they arrange for the massive importation of consumer goods: "Don't worry about that food," says Donald, "I will send you some sauces which will make even fish heads palatable." The king stamps gleefully up and down.

The same formula is repeated over and over again. Scrooge exchanges with the Canadian Indians gates of rustless steel for gates of pure gold (TR 117). Moby Duck and Donald (D 453), captured by the Aradians (Arabs), start to blow soap bubbles, with which the natives are enchanted. "Ha, ha. They break when you catch them. Hee, hee." Ali-Ben-Goli, the chief, says, "it's real magic. My people are laughing like children. They cannot imagine how it works." "It's only a secret passed from generation to generation," says Moby, "I will reveal it if you give us our freedom." (Civilization is presented as something incomprehensible, to be administered by foreigners.) The chief, in amazement, exclaims "Freedom? That's not all I'll give you. Gold, jewels. My treasure is yours, if you reveal the secret." The Arabs consent to their own despoliation. "We have jewels, but they are of no use to us. They don't make you laugh like magic bubbles." While Donald sneers "poor simpleton," Moby hands over the Flip Flop detergent. "You are right, my friend. Whenever you want a little pleasure, just pour out some magic powder and recite the magic words." The story ends on the note that it is not necessary for Donald to excavate the Pyramids (or earth) personally, because, as Donald says, "What do we need a pyramid for, having Ali-Ben-Goli?"

Each time this situation recurs, the natives' joy increases. As each object of their own manufacture is taken away from them, their satisfaction grows. As each artifact from civilization is given to them, and interpreted by them as a manifestation of magic rather than technology, they are filled with delight. Even our fiercest enemies could hardly justify the inequity of such an exchange; how can a fistful of jewels be regarded as equivalent to a box of soap, or a golden crown equal to a cheap watch? Some will object that this kind of barter is all imaginary, but it is unfortunate that these laws of the imagination are tilted unilaterally in favor of those who come from outside, and those who write and publish the magazines.

But how can this flagrant despoliation pass unperceived, or in other words, how can this inequity be disguised as equity? Why is it that imperialist plunder and colonial subjection, to call them by their proper names, do not appear as such?

"We have jewels, but they are of no use to us."

There they are in their desert tents, their caves, their once flourishing cities, their lonely islands, their forbidden fortresses, and they can never leave them. Congealed in their past-historic, their needs defined in function of this past, these underdeveloped peoples are denied the right to build their own future. Their crowns, their raw materials, their soil, their energy, their jade elephants, their fruit, but above all, their gold, can never be turned to any use. For them the progress which comes from abroad in the form of multiplicity of technological artifacts, is a mere toy. It will never penetrate the crystallized defense of the noble savage, who is forbidden to become civilized. He will

never be able to join the Club of the Producers, because he does not even understand that these objects have been produced. He sees them as magic elements, arising from the foreigner's mind, from his word, his magic wand.

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1929	1930	1930	1934	1937	1943
Collapse of U.S. Stock Exchange signals beginning of global economic crisis	Vargas takes power in Brazil	Military coup begins the decada infama (Infamous Decade) in Argentina	Lázaro Cárdenas elected president of Mexico	Vargas Announces Estado Novo (New State)	Junior Officers Coup in Argentina
July 26, 1952	1955	June 1973	July 1, 1974	March 24, 1976	
Evita dies	Perón is overthrown, goes into exile	Peron returns from exile, is re-elected president in September	Peron dies, leaving Isabel, his third wife, president	Isabel Perón is overthrown, military begins the Process of National Re-organization (Dirty War)	

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of remittances (e.g., Mexicans send billions of dollars in remittances home from the United States every year). A significant number will ultimately remain in their new home societies, often deeply ambivalent about what they have gained, and what they have lost.

Table D.1 Urban Agglomerations with Five Million or More Inhabitants, 1950–2015 (population in thousands)

	1950	1975	2000	2015
Buenos Aires	5,042	7,963	12,024	13,185
Mexico City		10,691	18,066	20,434
São Paulo		10,333	17,962	21,229
Rio de Janeiro		9,144	10,652	11,543
Lima			7,443	9,388
Bogotá			6,771	8,970
Santiago			5,467	6,495
Belo Horizonte				5,395
Guatemala City				5,268
Total	5,042	38,131	78,385	101,907

Source: Jorge A. Brea, "Population Dynamics in Latin America," in *Population Bulletin* March 2003, Vol. 58, No.1. (www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2001/wup2001dh.pdf)

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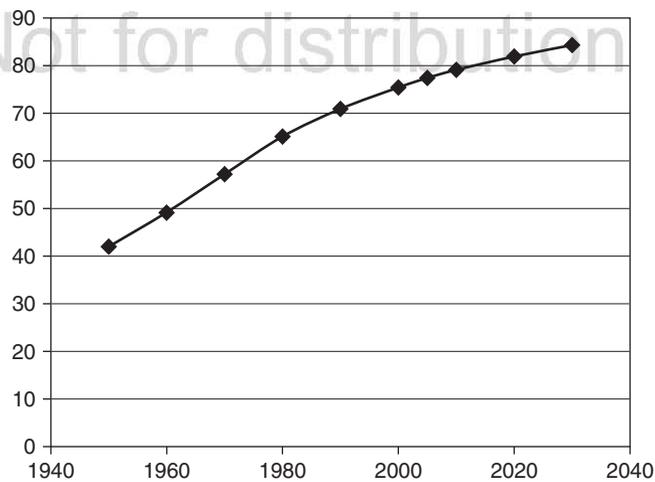


Figure D.2 Graph: Urbanization in Latin America (percent of total population)

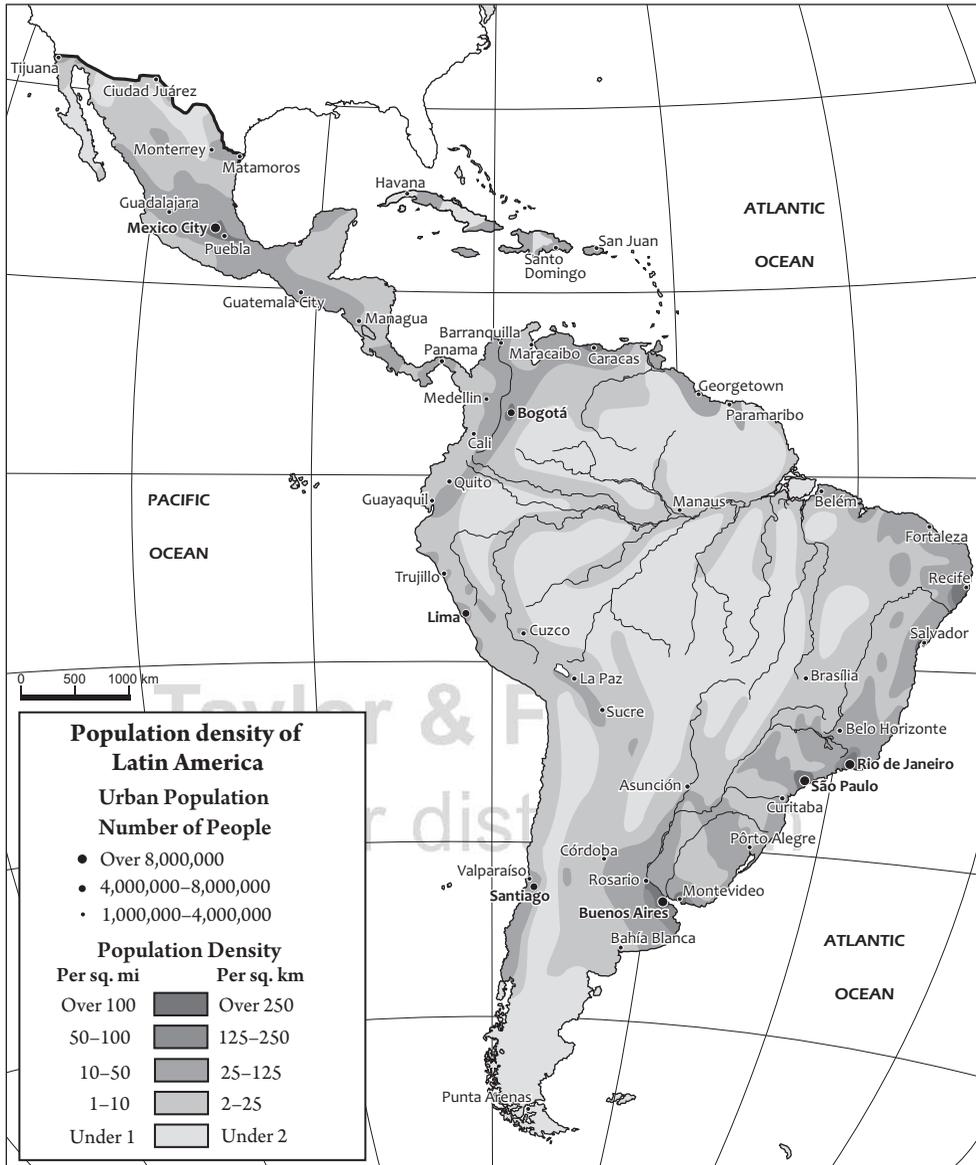


Figure D.3 Map: Population Density in Latin America

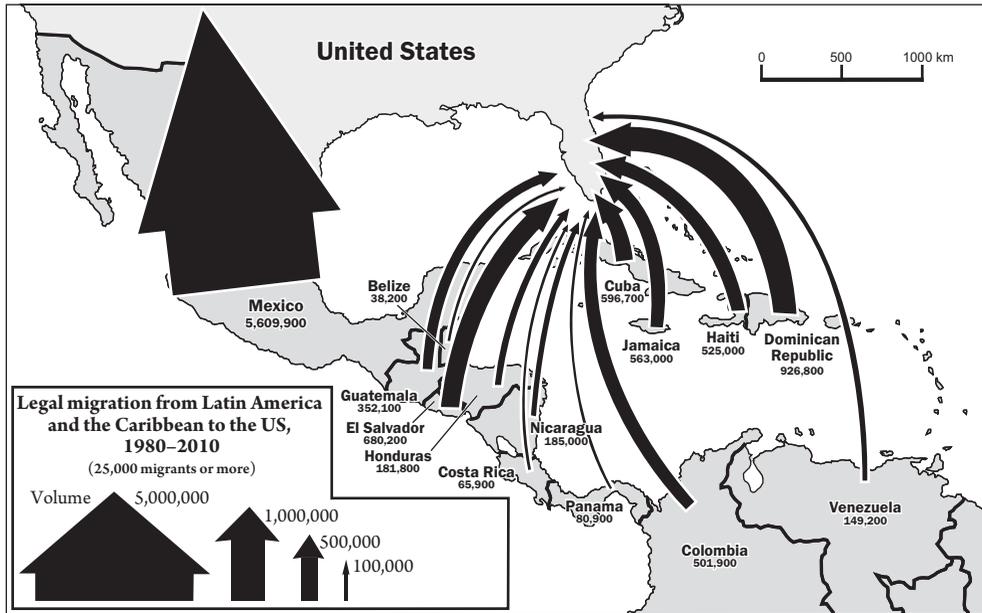


Figure D.4 Map: Legal Migration from Latin America and the Caribbean to the United States, 1980–2010

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- 3 Over time, raw materials have consistently lost value relative to manufactured goods.
- 4 The larger issue of women workers has received a great deal of attention in recent years. See, for example, Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, "Talking, Fighting, Flirting: Workers Sociability in Medellín Textile Mills, 1935–1950," in *The Gendered Worlds of Latin American Women Workers*. See also Elizabeth Quay Hutchinson, *Labors Appropriate to their Sex*.
- 5 GDP measures the value of all goods and services produced in the national economy in a single year.
- 6 This analysis is drawn from Victor Bulmer Thomas.
- 7 In Mexico a series of domestic measures, including the privatization of land (which put land and labor on the market), and the suppression of *alcabalas* (taxes that placed barriers to internal trade), produced a growth rate of 2.3 percent per year 1877–1910, doubling per capita income.
- 8 An excellent example of this can be found in Greg Grandin, "Can the Subaltern Be Seen? Photography and the Affects of Nationalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84:1 (2004), 83–111.
- 9 In this, they were unlike about one-third of the students in the school, who fled.

5 Signs of Crisis in a Gilded Age

- 1 See his book, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- 2 Millennial movements generally mix deep religious devotion, a sense that the end of the world as we know it is at hand, and rebellion. Mexico had its own millennial movements, including Tomochic in 1892.
- 3 This concept alerts us to the ways that economic systems based on private property and free markets have the capacity to transform social relations that had previously operated by different logics.
- 4 I draw here from William Roseberry's concept of hegemony. William Roseberry, "Hegemony and the Language of Contention," in Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds.), *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiating of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 355–366.
- 5 Consider the role that the raising of the U.S. flag at Iwo Jima in 1945, and Chief Nguyễn Ngọc Loan's execution a Việt Cộng officer in 1968, have had in encapsulating World War Two and the Vietnam War.
- 6 Miners were, of course, a distinct part of this group, and in some regions factories were built in rural areas. Plantation agriculture, which tended to be highly mechanized and specialized, could also be included. Miners and rural workers did take part in various labor movements. Several important strikes during this era took place at mines (e.g., Cananea, Mexico, 1906).
- 7 In all, two million immigrants came to Argentina between 1870 and 1910, mostly from Spain and Italy. The rural working class remained largely Argentine born, while the urban proletariat was largely foreign born.
- 8 In 1914 there were only 110,000 Jews in Argentina, out of a total national population of 7.9 million.
- 9 At the time, British investment in Latin America was still greater, at \$5.8 billion, but the United States was clearly on its way to overtaking the British.

6 Commerce, Coercion, and America's Empire

- 1 We use the term "American" here to describe the United States. There has been considerable debate among scholars about its merit in recent years. Some have substituted North American or some other term because they find the very term imperialistic (we leave aside how Mexicans and Canadians feel about the use of North American in this context). I use the term for two reasons.

- First, it is how citizens of the United States call themselves. Second, Latin Americans generally know what it means, and very few of them use the term to refer to themselves.
- 2 See Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).
 - 3 Alan M. Taylor, "Foreign Capital in Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," Working Paper 9580 *National Bureau of Economic Research*, March 2003, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w9580>.
 - 4 The plantations they left in their wakes suffered from reduced biodiversity and were not easily turned to other forms of agriculture.
 - 5 Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre famously identified Central America as the critical testing ground for U.S. imperialism in Latin America (see an excerpt from 1929's *A donde va indoamericana* on the website (2nd ed., Santiago de Chile: Ercilla, 1935). Others in this camp included Augusto Sandino, C. L. R. James (author of *The Black Jacobins*), and Fidel Castro.
 - 6 The plan also empowered local peasant committees to oversee their lands, shifting power from the central government to marginalized groups.
 - 7 The domino theory, which proposed that weak regimes would fall to communism when influenced by communist neighbors, eventually seriously weakening the United States, was first articulated by George Kennan in a 1947 article in *Foreign Affairs*. It was a guiding theory of U.S. cold war politics, and part of the rationale behind both U.S. policy in Latin America and the Vietnam War.
 - 8 Allen Dulles once served on the Board of Trustees of the UFCO, and John Foster Dulles served as legal counsel to the Firm before joining the administration. Both held UFCO stock.
 - 9 In the aftermath, UFCO agreed to new taxes on profits of 30 percent (up from 10 percent in 1953). A total of 250,000 acres of land were returned to the company, but the UFCO did agree to give up 100,000 for a land reform, and the United States gave \$80 million in aid. After PBSUCCESS, the Eisenhower administration allowed an anti-trust suit against UFCO to proceed that weakened the company, which ultimately rebranded itself as Chiquita Bananas.
 - 10 Bartenders at the Hotel Nacional in Cuba even invented a drink named after movie star Mary Pickford.
 - 11 The conglomerate was founded in 1902, as a joint venture between the Imperial Tobacco Company and James Duke's American Tobacco Company.
 - 12 The film debuted in Mexico City in December 1944, and in the United States in 1945.
 - 13 The film debuted in Rio de Janeiro in 1942, and was released in the United States in 1943.
 - 14 Sandino wrote a notable letter to Hipólito Yrigoyen in 1929, called his "Plan for Realizing Bolívar's Dream."
 - 15 Sandino was killed in 1934, but the movement that overthrew the U.S.-backed Somoza regime in 1979 was named for him.

7 Power to the People

- 1 Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, p. 87.
- 2 Radio Nacional began as a commercial station and was taken over by the government in 1940, but continued as a commercial venture, featuring music and *radionovelas*.
- 3 There is some question as to the authenticity of the note. Quoted in Levine, *Father of the Poor: Vargas and His Era*, 150–152.
- 4 Levine, *Father of the Poor*, p. 138.
- 5 The Cristero revolt centered on the defense of Catholic traditions in the face of anti-clerical government programs. It was also very much a defense of local practices and autonomies against a state that was viewed with a great deal of distrust.
- 6 Much of the material for this section is drawn from Joy Elizabeth Hayes, *Radio Nation*.
- 7 By the late 1930s Emilio Azcárraga would control two national networks, one affiliated with NBC and the other with CBS. He would ultimately command 80 percent of the radio and TV audience in the country.