

# ARTÍCULOS



## HOW SPANISH AMERICA DISINTEGRATED: SELECTED CROSS-NATIONAL FACTORS

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### *Resumen*

El presente artículo analiza la fragmentación de Hispanoamérica, utilizando siete variables centrales. El periodo analizado comprende desde las juntas rebeldes de 1809-1810 hasta los primeros años de Independencia, así como, de manera más general, desde las Reformas Borbónicas hasta la consolidación de los Estados independientes. Las conclusiones destacan el carácter progresivo y estructural de la desintegración de Hispanoamérica, sin subestimar sus múltiples posibilidades de resolución.

Palabras clave: *Independencia Hispanoamericana, reformas Borbónicas, comercio colonial, barreras aduaneras.*

### *Abstract*

This present article analyzes the fragmentation of Spanish America, using seven core variables. The period analyzed runs from the rebel juntas of 1809-1810 to the first years of Independence and, more generally, from the Bourbon reforms to the consolidation of independent States. The conclusions underline the progressive and structural character of the disintegration of Spanish America, without underestimating its potential multifinality.

Keywords: *Hispanic America Independence, Bourbon reforms, Colonial trade, Customs barriers.*

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### *Introduction*

A quick survey of the works dedicated to Hispanic-American Independence in the last two decades verifies the recurrent use of strictly national frameworks, be it for methodological convenience, cultural encapsulation, or lack of interest in the region as a whole, notwithstanding its analytical relevance. One consequence of this bias is that research is segmented as a function of structures, borders and less visible and even inexistent identities during the first years of Independence. The latent character of this atomization is assumed to be the state of things, and it leads to ignoring the complexity of a process that combines necessary, aleatory and multifinal aspects. This article analyzes the fragmentation of Spanish America, using seven core variables: a) administrative divisions within the Colony; b) provincial roots; c) economic discontinuity; d) commercial fractures; e) the creation of customs barriers; f) economic crises during Independence; and g) lack of communication between the new republics. The period analyzed runs from the rebel juntas of 1809-1810 to the first years of Independence and, more generally, from the Bourbon reforms to the consolidation of independent States. The conclusions underline the progressive and structural character of the disintegration of Spanish America, without underestimating its potential multifinality.

### *Colonial Divisions*

Looking at this in some detail, the administrative divisions of Spain's dominions in America not only marked the economic and political centers of the sub-continent, but structured the controls exercised by the metropolis. The highest level in the colonial hierarchies was the Viceroyalty, a delegation of the Monarch's authority in a concrete geographical circumscription. The functions of the Viceroy embraced civil and penal jurisdiction, the administration of all royal officials, the faculty of convoking courts and parliaments, and managing the omnipresent rights of the Sovereign. Sometimes, his autonomy enabled him to decide on political, financial and military matters within his territory. Present from the first times of the Conquest, his faculties were systematized during the reign of Carlos V, when the Viceroyalties of New Spain (1535) and Peru (1543) were created. Later, in the dominions of Peru were founded the Viceroyalties of New Granada (1717) and Rio de la Plata (1777) with the aim of neutralizing Britain's economic penetration, as confirmed in the Treaties of Utrecht of 1713 and

1715.<sup>1</sup> This new systematization and the territorial reallocations were not unrelated to Peru's subsequent economic deterioration and, as the years went by, would become the basis for the first border conflicts in South America.<sup>2</sup>

The next institution in line, significant above all for deploying local loyalties, was the Audiencia or Tribunal of Justice. The first of these was established in Hispaniola (today's Dominican Republic) and was extended progressively to the other American regions. It was presided over by the Governor or Viceroy, as adviser, through which he maintained a relationship of reciprocal controls. The Audiencias were generally composed of five Hearers (civil judges), appointed from among the most respected people in the area, or less frequently, from the surrounding district. Proof of their importance is that in the absence of the Viceroy, the oldest Hearer had to take over. In alphabetical order, during the colonial period were instituted the royal Audiencias of Buenos Aires, Caracas, Charcas, Chile, Cuzco, Guadalajara, Guatemala, Lima, Mexico, Panama, Quito, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Santo Domingo, Havana, Puerto Rico and Puerto Príncipe. With some exceptions, the majority served as the basis for the new Republics.

The second basic institution of the Colony, the *cabildo*, forged the identities closely associated with the dynamics of urban social cohesion in a more direct way.<sup>3</sup> As the political government of the cities, it could be closed, with meetings made up exclusively of its members, or open, with the attendance of all residents. Its jurisdiction embraced the urban precinct and the surrounding rural zone, and covered a relatively broad range of functions: creation and administration of the municipal régime; distribution

<sup>1</sup> The Treaties of Utrecht codified the peace agreements that occurred in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). In this way was established a new international order ruled by the "balance of powers" or the strategic equilibrium of rival forces to ensure continental peace. The general lines of these treaties were an expression of Britain's hegemony.

<sup>2</sup> The territorial disputes concerning Peru arose at the time when Lima ceded the port of Guayaquil to New Granada and Alto Peru (a territory that included Potosí) to the Viceroyalty of La Plata. Inspired by the old Peruvian policy, the Viceroy of La Plata prohibited Potosí from exporting precious metals to anywhere that was not Buenos Aires, affecting in this way the economic links between Lima, Arequipa, La Paz, Charcas and Potosí. Jorge Basadre, "Reconsideraciones sobre el problema histórico de la Confederación Perú-boliviana" (*Reconsidering the historical problem of the Peru-Bolivian Confederation*), *Revista Historia de América*, No. 83, 1977, pp. 97-98.

<sup>3</sup> The *cabildo* is constituted by a Governor or Captain General, the ordinary mayors, the town councilors, the Royal Lieutenants, the "loyal executor", the mayor, the attorney and the clerk of the court. Most of these people were of Hispanic-American origin.

of lands and lots; dispositions on urbanism and adornment; sanitary and cleansing measures; ejidos and the circulation of cattle; city supplies; public order, and the “protection” of the indigenous population. Close to Independence, the open cabildos became the preferred vehicle of rebel assemblies and the debate on the creation of the new States.

Among the highest and lowest levels of the colonial administration were numerous intermediate positions. During the period of the greatest hierarchical sophistication, which was also the time of greatest political stability, the colonial administration was comprised of around twenty successive levels, strengthening vertical communication with the Crown to the prejudice of the horizontal Spanish-American links.<sup>4</sup> In general terms, the cabildos used to prepare ordinances; the Audiencias would approve them with the agreement of the Viceroy, and they would come into effect for two years, while the Indies Council would accept them in Spain. This used to occur, above all, when municipal affairs were being dealt with. If they were of major relevance the decisions were adopted at least in part in the metropolis. On those occasions the Audiencias did not always intervene, in particular when the ordinances were carried out directly by the Viceroy or by the Governor.<sup>5</sup> More important, the creation and administration of taxes, as well as the regulation of selling prices to the general public, generally authorized by the Crown, could be intervened in directly by the cabildo. In this way, the colonial system used to combine local autonomies with relations of indifference with other Hispano-American centers.

### *Provincial roots*

It is well known that the Creole Affirmation had at its point of departure the Americanization of the institutions.<sup>6</sup> Between 1687, when the Crown

<sup>4</sup> John Lynch, “The Institutional Framework of Colonial Spanish America”, *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 24, 1992, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Francisco Domínguez Compañy, “Ordenanzas municipales hispanoamericanas” (*Spanish-American Municipal Ordinances*), *Revista Historia de América*, No. 86, 1978, pp. 28 and ss.

<sup>6</sup> In this article we employ the term Creole in its accepted sense as being an American descendent of a Spanish national. On the linkage of the Creole and Spanish-American social and economic structures, see André Saint-Lu, “Condition coloniale et conscience créole au Guatemala 1524-1821” (*Colonial conditions and Creole consciousness in Guatemala, 1524-1821*), Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1970. For a discussion on the connotations of this concept, see Horst Pietschmann, “Los principios rectores de organización estatal en las Indias” (*The principal lines of state organization in the Indies*),

put the sale in the hands of the Hearer, and 1750, the year when the Bourbon Reforms were approved, Spaniards born in America extended their presence into the administrative, economic, intellectual and military spheres of the Colony.<sup>7</sup> In 1779 they occupied more than half the places in the infantry Regiment of Havana and had a noteworthy influence on practically all the Audiencias of the sub-continent. Already, in that epoch, the Audiencias had started to be considered as “homelands” and embryos of “sovereign republics”, orienting their aspirations in the direction of sovereign administration with “foreigner” or outsider defined in their identity.<sup>8</sup>

Conscious of this situation, at the end of the 18th century, the Spanish Crown sought to take back control of its possessions through the strength of the peninsular monopoly of hierarchical positions. In a short time, the Creoles saw their participation among the Hearers and penal judges diminish dramatically. Between 1751 and 1808, out of a total of 266 posts available in the Audiencias, only 62 were still held by Creoles. In the last year of that period, six of the 99 posts were occupied by people native to the district and 16 from other places in America. The trend was not a uniform one. In other cases a secondary vector was the increase in people who were native to the district, to the detriment of other centers. In Buenos Aires, for example, of the total number of officials hired during the period 1776-1810, 64 percent were from the Peninsular, 29 percent were from Puerto de Santa Maria and

Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra (coordinators), “Inventando la nación: Iberoamérica” (*Inventing the Nation: Spanish-America*). Siglo XIX, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> The Bourbon Reforms lasted from 1760 to 1810. During this period, the Indies Council became a consultative body and in its place the Secretariat of the Indies acquired more weight; the Hiring House (*Casa de Contratación*) was eliminated, being considered useless for the freeing of trade; the intendances (*intendencias*) and the consulates were created; the universities renovated their content, and the Jesuit colleges were eradicated. The changes in teaching implied the substitution of the thesis according to which sovereignty resides in the people (and this was conceded to the King, according to the philosophy of Francisco Suárez) for the tyrannical thesis of the Enlightenment. Magnus Mörner, “La reorganización imperial en Hispano-América, 1760-1810” (*Imperial Reorganization in Spanish America, 1760-1810*), Stockholm, Institute of Ibero-American Research, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> Lynch, “The Institutional Framework of Colonial Spanish America”, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-81. According to Morón’s quantification, the concepts used most during the three centuries of colonization are: *pueblo, ciudad, república, país y provincia* (town, city, republic, country and province): Guillermo Morón, “La destrucción de la unidad latinoamericana” (*The destruction of Latin American Unity*), *Revista Historia de América*, No. 79, 1975, p. 13.

only nine percent were originally from the more remote districts.<sup>9</sup> In the Audiencia de Lima, the best-established in South America, the proportion was greater. With the exception of four years (1805-1809), a large proportion of the American officials had been born in Ciudad de Los Reyes, coming to represent 70% of the total in 1774.<sup>10</sup>

That said, the measures used to de-Americanize the institutions had uneven success. The principal centralist innovation, the intendancy, created by a Royal Ordinance of 1782, was aimed at subordinating the cabildos and in some cases substituting the royal mayors and the chief town magistrates. In the Viceroyalties, the intendants sought to assume public treasury responsibility and their personnel were recruited from soldiers and treasury officials.<sup>11</sup> However, the rejection of Americans made it impossible for the intendances to achieve a high degree of effectiveness. This in itself had to do with the structure of the army, where a lack of reinforcements from Spain consolidated the Creole presence.<sup>12</sup>

The opposition to Creole development and the contradictions and reverses in this policy were resented by the inhabitants and soon came to make up the dorsal spine of vindications that led on to Independence. However, although equal, the demands of the Creoles were watched over by the interests of their respective districts, not by the larger entities. The search for Creole preeminence had an essentially provincial rationale, with weak general loyalties.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Lynch, "The Institutional Framework of Colonial Spanish America", *op. cit.*, pp. 77-78.

<sup>10</sup> Mark A. Burkholder, "From Creole to Peninsular: The Transformation of the Audiencia of Lima", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 52, 1972, pp. 395-415.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Spain, "Real Ordenanza para el Establecimiento e instrucción de Intendentes de exercito y provincia en el Virreinato de Buenos Aires" (*Royal Ordinance for the Establishment and Instruction of Army and Provincial Intendents in the Viceroyalty of Buenos Aires*), Madrid, Imprenta Real, 1782.

<sup>12</sup> Allan J. Kuethe, "Military Reform and Society in New Granada, 1773-1808", Gainesville, Florida, 1978, p. 170; *Cuba, 1753-1811*. Crown, Military, and Society", Knoxville, 1986, pp. 126-127.

<sup>13</sup> This does not mean that Spanish-American identity was absent from the Creole imagination. In 1811, Servando Teresa de Mier said that we Spanish-Americans "have the same rights over America as had the Indian natives of Asia [and] which have all the nations of their countries". The citation and employment of the plural are paradigmatic of a common sense that did not crystallize. Teresa de Mier, "Nota Sexta" (*Sixth Note*), "Cartas de un americano 1811-1812" (*Letters from an American, 1811-1812*), México, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987.



*Discontinuity in ways of working*

According to estimates by J. Lockhart and S.B. Schwartz, in 1825 Spanish-America had about 12,557,000 inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> E.B. Burns established a similar figure, 12,250,000, distributed across twelve countries, while his calculations exclude Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay.<sup>15</sup> J.F. Rippy elevates the number to 16,790,000 inhabitants, a figure that is largely accepted by historians.<sup>16</sup> The differences in the estimates are significant, even where better statistical surveys were made. For Rippy, the population of the ephemeral Bolivarian Colombia was 2,790,000 in 1823 (not including Ecuador); Burns, for his part, estimates it at 2,009,000 in 1825. Finally, the official census for the 37 Colombian provinces published in 1827 estimated 2,379,888 inhabitants.<sup>17</sup> Simón Bolívar himself explained the reasons for these variations:

...a thousand circumstances cause [the census] to fail, and it is difficult to remedy this inexactitude, because most of the inhabitants have rural dwellings and they are often roving people, being farmhands, shepherds, and nomads, lost among the dense, huge

<sup>14</sup> J. Lockhart and S.B. Schwartz, "Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 338. According to Alexander von Humboldt, in 1825 the total population of the American continent (Latin America, Canada, the United States and Brazil), was 34,284,000. Alexander von Humboldt, "Carta a Charles Coquerel" (*Letter to Charles Coquerel*), *Cartas Americanas*, Caracas, Biblioteca Ayacucho, 2nd edition, 1989, p. 185.

<sup>15</sup> E. Bradford Burns, "The Poverty of Progress. Latin America in the Nineteenth Century", Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980, p. 185.

<sup>16</sup> J. Fred Rippy, "Historical Evolution of Hispanic America", New York, Appleton Century Crofts, 1945, pp. 106-107 y 127. Rippy's figures are accepted by Victor Bulmer-Thomas, among other historians, "The Economic History of Latin America since Independence", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 21. The estimate by country or region, in thousands of inhabitants, is as follows:

Cuba, Puerto Rico	800	New Granada	2,000
Chile	1,100	Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia	1,400
Central America	600	Río de La Plata	2,300
New Spain	6,800	Venezuela	790

<sup>17</sup> José Manuel Restrepo, "Exposición que el Secretario de Estado del Despacho del Interior del Gobierno de la República de Colombia hace al Congreso de 1827" (*Submission made by the Secretary of State for Dispatches from the Government of the Republic of Colombia to the 1827 Congresses*), Bogotá, published by Pedro Cubides, 1827, pp. 31-33.

forests, and the solitary plains, and isolated by lakes and mighty rivers. Who could form a full statistic of such areas?<sup>18</sup>

How prosperous was Spanish-America on the eve of Independence? According to P. Bairoch and M. Lévy-Leboyer, up to 1800 the output per inhabitant of Spanish-America and Brazil was 245 dollars (at 1960 prices), an amount slightly over the U.S. output per inhabitant of 239 dollars.<sup>19</sup> It is likely that these calculations underestimate the population of the Colony and as a consequence inflate the welfare figures for Spanish-American.<sup>20</sup> However, the figure is significant to the extent that it invalidates the conjecture of a primitive economic weakness vis-à-vis the United States. The inequality of the distribution of wealth, another important figure, gives results that can be considered convergent. According to L.L. Jonson, the gap between rich and poor in Buenos Aires fell during the period 1800-1830 as a result of the disappearance of fortunes linked to the colonial régime, and grew during the rosismo to 1855 on a par with the expansion of cattle-breeding. For this author, the difference between the lower and the higher income was similar to that of the United States.<sup>21</sup> Using the Gini coefficient, J. Gelman observes that the economic disparities in Buenos Aires were equivalent to those in Great Britain and the United States.<sup>22</sup>

One limitation with these statistics is that they do not enable us to see the economic relations that were responsible for deepening the differences between cities and countries. The big key to these relations and to their impact on Spanish-American disintegration was the labor form (see Table

<sup>18</sup> Simón Bolívar, “Contestación de un americano meridional a un caballero de esta isla” (*Replies of a South American to a gentleman from this island*), Kingston, September 6th, 1815, “*Cartas del Libertador*” (*Letters of the Liberator*), Volume I (1799-1817), 2nd edition, Caracas, Banco de Venezuela and Fundación Vicente Lecuna, 1964, pp. 215-236.

<sup>19</sup> P. Bairoch and M. Lévy-Leboyer (editors), “Disparities in Economic Development since the Industrial Revolution”, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1981, Tables 1.6 and 1.7.

<sup>20</sup> Bulmer-Thomas (“The Economic History”, *op. cit.*, p. 27) also observes that those figures are over-estimated; not for this reason, he adds, is the Spanish-American per capita income no longer higher than the rest of what is known today as the developing world.

<sup>21</sup> Lyman L. Johnson, “The Frontier as an Arena of Social and Economic Change”, in D.J. Guy and T. Sheridan (editors), “Contested Ground. Comparative Frontier on the Northern and Southern Edges of the Spanish Empire”, Tucson, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Jorge Gelman, “Crecimiento económico y desigualdad. La distribución de la riqueza de Buenos Aires durante la época de Rosas” (*Economic growth and inequality. The distribution of wealth in Buenos Aires during the Rosas epoch*), 13th Congress of the International Association of Economic History), July 22-26, 2002, Buenos Aires.

1).<sup>23</sup> The first, known as the *encomienda* or royal concession, organized under the protection of the New Laws of 1542, consisted of a community of indigenous people delivered to the Spaniards as a reward for services provided by the King. In exchange for an annual amount of precious metal or specie, the *encomendero* was responsible for protecting and indoctrinating

**Table 1**  
**Forms of labor in Spanish America at the dawn of Independence**

<i>Form of labor</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Zones affected</i>
Encomienda	Agriculture	Hispano-America
	Mining	Central America, Chile
	Urban drainage	Paraguay
Repartimiento	Agriculture	Central America, Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico
	Urban drainage	*Colombia, Mexico
	Mining	Central America, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru-Bolivia
	Textiles	Ecuador, Peru-Bolivia
Peonage	Agriculture	Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru-Bolivia
	Crafts	Argentina
Free labor	Agriculture	Central America, Mexico
	Cattle	Argentina, Venezuela
	Mining	Chile
Indigenous slaves	Agriculture	Central America, Chile, Mexico, Venezuela
	Mining	Colombia
African slaves	Agriculture	Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela
	Cattle	Argentina

\* Formerly New Granada.

**Source:** Juan and Julia Villamarín, *Indian Labor in Mainland Colonial Spanish America*, Delaware, 1975, p. 2; Ciro F.S. Cardoso and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Historia económica de América Latina* (Economic History of Latin America), vol. I, Barcelona, 1979, pp. 151-227.

<sup>23</sup> For this section the following were consulted: Julia Villamarín, *Indian Labor in Mainland Colonial Spanish America*, Delaware, Latin American Studies Program, University of Delaware 1975, p. 2; Ciro F.S. Cardoso and Héctor Pérez Brignoli, “Historia económica de América Latina” (*Economic History of Latin America*), vol. I, Barcelona, Crítica, 1979, pp. 151-227; Celso Furtado, *Economic Development of Latin America, A survey from Colonial Times to the Cuban Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 8-19; Sergio Bagú, “Economía de la sociedad colonial” (*The economy of the colonial society*), Buenos Aires, published by Ateneo, 1949.

the Indians. Soon, however, the excessive pressure on labor, bad nutrition and epidemics associated with the *encomienda* led to the destruction of a part of the native population. This caused a fracture without remedy in the economic bases of pre-Hispanic origin and contributed to the establishment of a Creole elite that was essentially parasitic.

The *repartimiento*, instituted at the beginning of the 16th century on pre-Hispanic structures, aimed at utilizing the indigenous labor concentrations via an obligatory *rota* system for public or farm work. To recruit the Indians for this work, the conquistadores were served by the *coatequitl* in Mexico and the *mita* in Peru, ancestral systems of collective labor.<sup>24</sup> In several zones of Spanish-America it represented the most important economic institution up to the end of the 17th century and in some cases (Potosí and Huanacavelica, for example) it survived until Independence. Overall, its presence was uneven, extensive and dislocated. The dynamic of the *encomiendas* and the *repartimientos* was strictly internal, with no incentives to generate interdependence with other centers in the Colony.

Another type of organization, not very different from the above, was the *reducción*, formed by indigenous settlements for their indoctrination in Catholic religion. Like the *repartimientos*, the *reducciones* represented islets of the indigenous population established in places far from the urban zones. Peonage, for its part, consisted of gratuitous services provided by the native people to the haciendas via a régime of indebtedness. Its greatest presence was in the non-mining regions of Peru, Mexico and Bolivia, and it also survived the Independence in the Andean zone and in Central America. In Nicaragua, in particular, it was associated with the development of the coffee industry into the 20th century.<sup>25</sup> Free labor, at the end of the colonial period, as found in zones of the future republics of Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica, involved almost exclusively the impoverished layer of the Creoles. Its appearance was linked to the development of the port centers con-

<sup>24</sup> Both institutions forced the migration of Indian peoples over long periods of time. One of the first migrations was organized in Peru by the Viceroy, Francisco de Toledo, in 1570, who mobilized close to 13,000 workers with their families for the extraction of silver in Potosí. Carlos Sempat Assadourian, "Acerca del cambio en la naturaleza del dominio sobre las Indias: la *mita* minera del Virrey Toledo, documentos de 1568-1571" (*On the change in the nature of domination of the Indian peoples: the forced mining labor of the Viceroy Toledo, documents from 1568-1571*), *Anuario de estudios americanos*, Vol. XLVI, Sevilla, 1989, pp. 3-70.

<sup>25</sup> On this aspect, see Jeffrey L. Gould, "To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of *Mestizaje*, 1880-1965", Durham, Duke University Press, 1998; Elizabeth Dore, "Debt Peonage in Granada, Nicaragua, 1870-1930: Labor in a Noncapitalist Transition", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 3, 2003, pp. 521-559.

nected to the metropolis. Finally, slavery was established along the coasts of Venezuela, New Granada and Peru, and on the islands of Cuba and Santo Domingo, it represented a labor force that maximized the social fractures and economic disparities of the population.

The socio-economic segmentation resulting from this labor mosaic prepared the way for the structural aspects of atomization. The effect is understood better if we contrast it with other colonial entities that became sovereign States, Brazil, or even more revealing, the United States, in which only two systems prevailed: free labor and slavery. In both cases, the organizational continuity favored internal articulation and the gradual creation of a single market.<sup>26</sup> In Spanish-America, on the contrary, the autonomy of the small centers was troubled by discontinuities that interacted via the mechanisms of subjection.

### *Commercial fractures in the colonies*

The Crown's trade policies are also significant in explaining Spanish-American atomization. The subject is too broad to deal with it in details; it is enough to refer to the two main orientations.<sup>27</sup> The first covers the second half of the 16th century, when trade in goods began between Mexico and Peru, the two great sections of the Colony. The relative complementarity of their industries made it possible for the first to sell mules, sugar, dried fruit,

<sup>26</sup> On a smaller scale, the contradiction between the forms of labor in the United States also put obstacles in the way of the country's integration. James Madison perceived this when he qualified the antagonism between slavery and uncoerced labor as the "true division" in the old British colony. Against all expectations, economic growth in the American Union did not resolve that rivalry, but the War of Secession (1861-1865) did. The cause of that conflict, according to Henry Adams, is the half million slave-owners who, in 1800, occupied the southern part of the Mississippi River and who were now described as the "seed of an independent empire". Henry Adams, "The United States in 1800", Vol. 1, Ithaca, Great Seal Books, 1955, Chapter v. It should be remembered that the Confederation of the eleven southern states was intended to defend the institution of slavery, for which it sought the return of the first Constitution of the United States. Its Magna Carta, signed in Alabama, sought to safeguard the sovereignty of each member state in the mode typical of confederations. Charles A. and Mary Beard, "Historia de la civilización de Estados Unidos de Norte América" (*History of the civilization of the United States of America*), Volume 1, Buenos Aires, published by Guillermo Kraft, 1949, p. 486.

<sup>27</sup> On the influence of the Bourbon Reforms on the political, social and economic structures of the Viceroyalty of Peru, see John R. Fisher, "El Perú borbónico, 1750-1824" (*Bourbon Peru, 1750-1824*), Lima, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2000. The author analyzes above all the Spanish trade policies and the recovery of the Peruvian economy after the dismemberment of 1776, thanks to the production of silver in Cerro de Pasco.

and textiles, and other products in less quantity to Peru, while the second specialized in silver-mining. With the opening of traffic from Manila, Mexico acquired the types of silk that came from China, both for the domestic market (supplied by the more expensive silk from Puebla), and for re-sale to Peru. Lima, for its part, recurred progressively to silver mined in Potosi to pay for these imports.

That situation posed the Crown with a double problem: on the one hand, it affected its control over the silk market (silk was produced in large quantities in Castilla and Venice) and, on the other hand, it reduced the export of silver from high Peru to the Peninsula. To reverse that state of affairs, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Crown took the decision, unhealthy whichever way you look at it, of prohibiting trade between the two Vice-royalties.<sup>28</sup> In this way, it structured, in a lasting way, what until then had been the result above all of the great American distances: a systematic indifference between major units of the Colony.

In 1774, the Crown re-authorized trade between New Spain, the Captain General of Guatemala, New Granada and Peru, although it applied the measure only to goods produced on their “respective soils” and upheld the prohibition of trade in farm goods that competed with Spanish industries.<sup>29</sup> With this last policy, the Crown sought to emulate the treatment which England imposed on its colonies: generating consumer markets for its industries. The identity of policies was presented in 1745 by José de Campillo y Cosío: the factories, said the Minister to King Felipe V, are the “only matter that in no way should be allowed in America”.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Woodrow Borah, “Early Colonial Trade and Navigation Between Mexico and Peru”, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1954. The prohibition of cloth exports from New Spain to Peru and the entry of silk from China determined for their part the halting of Puebla’s production. Borah, “Silk raising in Colonial Mexico”, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1943, p. 35. As a result, the textile workshops of that locality moved from silk to wool, an activity regulated by ordinances from the textile-makers organizations since 1598. In the 18th century, that product also declined as a result of the appearance of other Mexican manufacturing centers and the import of lower-cost cloth. Jan Bazant, “Evolution of the textile industry of Puebla, 1544-1845”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. III, No. 1, The Hague, 1964, p. 63.

<sup>29</sup> Government of Spain, “Real cédula con disposiciones acerca del comercio y contrabando entre las provincias de Indias” (*Royal document with dispositions on trade and contraband between the provinces of the Indies*), 1774, Luis Chávez (compiler), “El contrabando y el comercio exterior en la Nueva España” (*Contraband and foreign trade in New Spain*), Mexico, Bancomext, 1967, pp. 141-149.

<sup>30</sup> His recommendations, issued in the form of a manuscript from that year, also suggest the elimination or reduction of the monopoly of Cadiz, in order to cheapen the Spanish products and imported raw materials. Joseph Campillo y Cosío, “Nuevo sistema de gobierno

From 1778 and for two decades, Spain adopted a policy of free trade.<sup>31</sup> The measure had beneficial consequences for the flow of merchandise above all for Spain, while America continued to export precious metals and to buy from the Peninsula its farm products and the manufactures produced by other European nations.<sup>32</sup> In April, 1797, Spain and Great Britain went to war with each other and as a means of pressure the English fleet blocked the port of Cadiz. A little while later, traffic by Spanish merchant ships fell off, obliging the Crown to authorize the use of neutral ships. Its consent, dictated by the need to prevent disturbances in America, became generally applied. Trade between England and Hispano-America grew rapidly, turning that country into the major supplier of manufactures. The United States, another country that was favored by the situation, emerged as the great re-exporter from and to the sub-continent, followed in importance by England, the Low Countries and the German cities of the Hanseatic League.

The revoking of permission to neutral parties in 1799 did not eliminate it in practice and the Treaty of Amiens in 1802 re-established it indirectly by relaxing the old Spanish American prohibitions on trade with third ports and impeding the entry of foreign vessels. Not surprising, by 1808 a large part of Spanish America's foreign trade was being carried out by neutral vessels. In the specific case of Mexico, 95% of the exports

económico para América" (*New system of economic government for America*), Madrid, 1787, 2nd edition, Universidad de Los Andes, Mérida, 1971, pp. 60 y 70.

<sup>31</sup> The inspirer of that measure was the Count of Campomanes, attorney and governor of the Council of the Indies during the reign of Carlos III. His proposal, "absolute freedom of trade for the entire nation", sought to break away from the trading monopolies in order to encourage economic development in the Peninsular. Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes, "Reflexiones sobre el comercio español a Indias" (*Reflections on Spain's trade with the Indies*), 1792, Instituto de Estudios Fiscales, Madrid, 1988, pp. 134, 341-348.

<sup>32</sup> Antonio García-Báquero, "Comercio colonial y producción industrial en Cataluña a fines del siglo XVIII" (*Colonial trade and industrial production in Cataluña at the end of the 18th century*), Actas del Primer Coloquio de Historia Económica de España (*Minutes of the First Colloquium on the Economic History of Spain*), Barcelona, 1975, pp. 268-294. It should be noted that the avalanche of imports, above all after the Peace of Versailles in 1783, affected the monetary reserves and local production in the Viceroyalties. In Mexico, this was combined with a scarcity of food, occasioned by the harvest losses of 1785. Richard L. Garner, "Exportaciones de circulante en el siglo XVIII (1750-1810)" (*Exports of the circulating medium in the 18th century (1750-1810)*), *Historia Mexicana*, Vol. XXXI, No. 4, April-June, 1982, pp. 570-571.

that were loaded at Veracruz used U.S. ships.<sup>33</sup> This was the case for Cuba's foreign trade, which had the United States as its authentic metropolis.<sup>34</sup>

The substitution of the Spanish fleet and products was followed later by the promotion and establishment of trade agreements with each section of the Colony.<sup>35</sup> In 1810, a year after the Spanish disaster in Navas de Tolosa and the establishment of the governing juntas in Spanish America, the U.S. Secretary of State sent Joel R. Poinsett to Buenos Aires and Santiago with the aim of explaining to the new governments the advantages of trade with his country.<sup>36</sup> The message accompanied the draft of a treaty of "friendship, trade and navigation".<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that the initiative not only had to do with the attractiveness of free trade, but because both Washington and London presented these offers as a condition of virtual diplomatic recognition of the new Republics. On February 2nd, 1825, for example, Woodbine

<sup>33</sup> Javier Ortiz de la Tabla, "Comercio exterior de Veracruz 1778-1821: crisis de dependencia" (*Foreign Trade of Veracruz, 178-1821: a crisis of dependence*), Sevilla, Escuela de Estudios Hispanoamericanos de Sevilla, 1978, pp. 250, 241-261.

<sup>34</sup> Antonio García-Báquero, "Estados Unidos, Cuba y el comercio de "neutrales"" (*The United States, Cuba and trade with "neutrals"*), *Revista de la Universidad Complutense*, Vol. 26, 1977, p. 132. The majority presence of neutral vessels was a common feature throughout the region. The trade war with Caracas, for example, was "supported by the U.S. ships" from the war with Great Britain and on the eve of Independence, 72.49% of the merchandise that was transported used British and neutral fleets. Manuel Lucena Giraldo, "Visperas de la independencia americana: Caracas" (*On the eve of American Independence: Caracas*), Madrid, Editorial Alhambra, 1986, pp. 379-381.

<sup>35</sup> Octavio Sunkel and Pedro Peace, "El subdesarrollo latinoamericano y la teoría del desarrollo" (*The underdevelopment of Latin America and the theory of development*), Mexico, Siglo XXI-ILPES, 1970, p. 300.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Smith to Joel R. Poinsett, June 28, 1810, "Correspondencia diplomática" (*Diplomatic Correspondence*), Volume I, Part I, bookshop and publishing house "La Facultad", Buenos Aires, 1930, doc. 5, p. 6. See also James W. Gantenbein, "The Evolution of Our Latin-America Policy: A Documentary Record", New York, Octagon Books, 1971, p. 78. In July of that year were established the juntas in Buenos Aires and Santa Fe de Bogotá, in Quito in August, and in Santiago in September, while the Mexican eminences called for an armed rebellion in September. A year earlier, in May, the first meeting had been convened in Charcas.

<sup>37</sup> Poinsett not only sought the creation of trade agreements, but above all wanted to impose a U.S. policy of penetration. During his stay in Santiago, stirred up feelings against France, he instructed the local authorities on the "arbitrary secrets that were used to reduce these countries to French rule". Juan de Egaña, "Apuntes para el Manifiesto que debe hacerse en la Declaración de la Independencia de Chile" (*Points for the Manifesto that should be drawn up in the Declaration of Chilean Independence*), Escritos inéditos y dispersos (*Unpublished and scattered writings*), publication in the hands of Raúl Silva Castro, Santiago, Imprenta Universitaria, 1949, p. 86.



Parish, Britain's Minister Plenipotentiary in Buenos Aires, signed simultaneously with Manuel García, representing the United Provinces of Río de la Plata, two documents: one for trade and the other in which Britain recognized the new country's independence.<sup>38</sup> In other cases, the items were not concomitant, although they implied this linkage.

The logic of the separate agreements did not stop there. The instructions that the governments of the United States and Great Britain circulated to their agents stationed in Bogota, Mexico, Guatemala, Lima, Santiago and Buenos Aires in the 1820s, as well as their deliveries to the Panamanian Congress in 1826, included among their objectives obstructing the formation of a Spanish-American trading preference. The legal instruments used to achieve that aim were as follows: the principle of reciprocity, which eliminated safeguards against the avalanche of imported merchandise, and the most-favored nation clause, destined in the last instance to impede the re-establishment of a Spanish-American customs union prior to 1810.

Not without foundation, the negotiators of a delayed trade treaty between the Spanish American countries, the Central American Pedro Molina and the Mexican Manuel Diez de Bonilla, stated in 1831 that the sub-continent had been surprised at its good faith in signing agreements that "offer absolute reciprocity", but had "the result of giving exclusive advantages to England and the United States [...] and to none of the American countries".<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The equivalence between these treaties and diplomatic recognition is fully understood by the Spanish Americans. One example is enough: at the beginning of 1825, Diego Paroissien and J. García del Río, Peruvian ministers plenipotentiary in Europe, informed their government that Great Britain "has decided in the end to sign trade treaties with the governments of Mexico and Colombia, reserving the right to carry out another very soon afterwards with Buenos Aires, with Chile after having received reports from one of its countrymen about the state of that country, and with Peru once the campaign has finished that should free it for ever from the Spanish yoke". In a similar step, they both stated, "it is equivalent to our concept of recognizing the independence of those states". J. García del Río y Diego Paroissien to the Minister of Foreign Relations, January 17, 1825, "El Congreso de Panamá de 1826" (*The 1826 Congress of Panama*) publication and prologue by Raúl Porras Barrenechea, Lima, Archivo Diplomático Peruano, published by La Opinión Nacional, 1930, pp. 245-47. Notice that the U.S. trade initiatives were understood from that country's strategic viewpoint. On the characteristics of the system of intelligence that U.S. agents were establishing in Spanish America from 1810, see George B. Dyer and Charlotte L. Dyer, "The Beginnings of a United States Strategic Intelligence System in Latin America, 1809-1826", *Military Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1950, pp. 65-83.

<sup>39</sup> Protocol of the verbal Conferences between Pedro Molina and Manuel Diez de Bonilla, November 14 and 18, 1831, "El Congreso de Panamá y algunos otros proyectos de Unión Hispano-Americana" (*The Congress of Panama and some other projects of the Spanish-*

*Creation of customs borders*

Spurred on by the rate of imports and the deterioration of local production, the trade deficit for Spanish America reached the figure of £17 million in 1825.<sup>40</sup> To cover that liability, the governments resorted to foreign borrowing, converting it into “the arbiter they found to be easier to escape from their predicaments and ensure their independence”.<sup>41</sup> As can be expected, the measure did not resolve the difficulties but widened the imbalances and led to the first debt crisis, contracted above all with England and the Church.<sup>42</sup> To get out of this impasse, the countries of Spanish America negotiated new loans extending taxes on foreign trade as guarantee.<sup>43</sup> In this way, the protectionism that was born in Spanish America was not aimed at supporting local industries, as was the case in the United States under the influence of Alexander Hamilton, but as a short-term solution to the budgetary problems.

During the first decade of Independence, the contribution of tariffs to the government’s budget was increasingly high. Between 1826 and 1831, maritime customs represented a little over 48% of Mexican federal government revenue.<sup>44</sup> That proportion was found in New Granada in 1850, although it

*American Union*), publication and prologue by Antonio de la Peña y Reyes, Mexico, Mexicano Archive of Diplomatic History, Secretariat of Foreign Relations, 1926, p. 154.

<sup>40</sup> Charles C. Griffin, “Los temas sociales y económicos de la época de la Independencia” (*Social and economic issues in the epoch of Independence*), Caracas, John Boulton Foundation & Eugenio Mendoza Foundation, 1962, pp. 31-43. Mexico’s budget deficit went from 1,216,000 pesos in 1826 to 10,712,000 in 1844, on the eve of the convulsions that were to facilitate the U.S. invasion. Barbara Tenenbaum, “México en la época de los agiotistas, 1821-1857” (*Mexico in the epoch of the agitators, 1821-1857*), Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1985, p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> Alejandro Marure, “Bosquejo histórico de las revoluciones de Centro-América desde 1811 hasta 1834” (*A historical sketch of the revolutions in Central America from 1811 to 1834*), Volume I, Guatemala, printed by the N. Academia de Estudios, 1837, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> F.G. Dawson, “The First Latin American Debt Crisis: The City of London and the 1822-25 Loan Bubble”, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990; Margaret Chowning, “The Contours of the Post-1810 Depression in Mexico”, *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 1992, pp. 119-143.

<sup>43</sup> Not in all cases. To obtain a loan of 8 million, in 1824 Central America offered as a guarantee the lands of the federation and their rents. Jorge Luján Muñoz, “La Asamblea Nacional Constituyente Centroamericana de 1823-1824” (*The Central American National Constituent Assembly of 1823-1824*), *Revista Historia de América*, No. 93, 1982, p. 69.

<sup>44</sup> “Memorias de Hacienda y Crédito Público” (*Memoirs of Hacienda and Public Credit*), Mexico, years 1827-1832.

did not imply equivalent increases in public investment or the achievement of better conditions for local industries.<sup>45</sup>

The fiscal problems included two aspects that are worth drawing attention to. The first was that the greater expense produced by the tariffs did not have an even effect on all trade partners. Merchandise from England and the United States was sheltered by the trade treaties and was not faced by competitors in the region. The Spanish-American products, in contrast, did not benefit from special exemptions and at least competed within the same branch of production. The chance of reciprocal exclusion reactivated an old asymmetry: greater economic integration with the foreign powers and fewer intra-Spanish-American linkages.

To explain the second aspect, we shall look at the Central American case, which is emblematic and extreme. In 1823, the Isthmus registered a relative improvement after the stagnation caused by the war efforts. Nevertheless, the central government's incomes suffered a continuous deterioration because tax collections went to the states, which refused to contribute to the common fund.<sup>46</sup> A year later, the Central American capital declared itself incapable of sustaining common spending, while the states continued to impose pressure to collect more taxes.<sup>47</sup> In 1831, Cecilio del Valle was able to denounce the high cost registered by the complications and instability of Guatemala's tax régime, whose bids for the acquisition of meat changed "six times in 11 months".<sup>48</sup> Valle extrapolated that evaluation to the combined new Republics, pointing out that the "system of overall regulation, the disastrous effort at enriching the treasury that impoverished the people, and the lack of know-how in economic policy, [were] the principal causes of decay and backwardness".<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>46</sup> The Central American tax structure was relatively dispersed: gunpowder and the mails were charged modestly; taxes on tobacco, formerly the most important, fell by one third with the reform of 1824 and passed into the hands of the states; the maritime sales tax, for its part, grew to generate 500,000 pesos a year, although the total that was collected was not enough "to cover the federal budget, and even less to amortize the domestic debt". Marure, *Bosquejo histórico*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

<sup>47</sup> Guatemala General Archive (AGG), Book 95, dossier 2519 of document B6.7. *Cfr.* Luján Muñoz, "La Asamblea Nacional Constituyente Centroamericana" (*The Central American National Constituent Assembly*), *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>48</sup> Cecilio del Valle, "Memoria sobre abasto de carne" (*Minutes on meat supplies*), Guatemala, October 29, 1832, "Obra Escogida" (*Selected Works*), Caracas, Ayacucho Library, 1982, pp. 309 and ss.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem.*

The fiscal problems of the federations, however, were not exclusively the result of inefficient collection or the pressures of debt. A significant role was played by the characteristics of their constitutions. The authors of the first Constitutions of Central America, Mexico and Buenos Aires were inspired less by U.S. federalism (given as the main source that was consulted), and more by the Gaditano (i.e. Cadiz) type of confederative constitution. The difference stems from what the latter conferred on the state's higher economic faculties, resulting in less administrative capacity for the center and the progressive loss of control of the territories previously administered by the Viceroyalty. Between 1804 and 1825, Mexico's tax revenue fell from 20 million pesos to 9,770,000 pesos, so that the government was unable to sustain its administration of Cuba and Santo Domingo.<sup>50</sup> In the last part of that period, Guatemala made itself independent to organize its own federation and the central Mexican government experienced growing difficulties to keep it within the federation, and also Chiapas and Yucatán.

### *Economic crisis during independence*

Few factors contributed so much to America's break-up as did the War of Independence and the subsequent economic deterioration. The decline of industries reached dramatic proportions, above all in the zones preponderant in the old times of the Colony. Between 1818 and 1823, Mexican exports fell to a fifth of their initial value (from £2,236,000 to £469,000). In a similar period, 1807-1826, Peru's foreign shipments fell

<sup>50</sup> Luis Chávez Orozco, "Historia de México (1808-1836)" (*History of Mexico (1808-1836)*), Editorial Patria, México, 1947, facsimile edition, Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985, p. 208. On the relationship between political and fiscal sovereignty at the turn of the century in the Viceroyalty of New Spain, see Carlos Marichal, "La bancarrota del Virreinato: Nueva España, las finanzas del Imperio español, 1780-1810" (*The bankruptcy of the Viceroyalty: New Spain, the finances of the Spanish Empire, 1780-1810*), México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1999. The same relationship during the first republican epoch has been dealt with by Marcello Carmagnani in "Territorialidad y federalismo en la formación del Estado mexicano" (*Territoriality and federalism in the formation of the Mexican state*), I. Besson, G. Kahle, H. König and H. Pietschmann (editors), "Problemas de la formación del Estado y la nación en Hispanoamérica" (*Problems in the formation of the State and Nation in Spanish America*), Cologne, Bohlau Verlag, 1984, pp. 289-305.

to a fourteenth of their initial value (from £1,333,000 to just £94,000).<sup>51</sup> These countries were not the only ones affected. Cattle-breeding lay in ruins in parts of Venezuela, the north of Mexico, Río de la Plata and the Banda Oriental. To a large extent, the problem was because the cattle, the ranches and the farms served for the subsistence of the armies. The mines, the economic nerve of the Colony, were abandoned as a result of recruitment or increasing costs of production. Between 1810 and 1819, the extraction of minerals in the legendary Cerro Rico de Potosí was affected by flooding, the collapse of mines, irregularity in the provision of mercury and the migration of the Indian slaves.<sup>52</sup>

Some industries managed to prosper, such as arms production, although the boom was of short duration and was not enough to satisfy the needs of the war. Another sector that avoided destruction was the salt industry, swept along by growing exports of charqui (jerked beef) from the United Provinces and Uruguay. Mexico's textile industry also improved or conserved its position, as did the livestock industry in Buenos Aires (hides, goat hide or cordovan, horns, wool), and Chile's grain and mining industries.

That context favored the mutation of trade, in terms of both volume and destination. Traffic between southern Bolivia and the north of the Río de la Plata practically disappeared as a result of their separation. The same occurred with trade relations between Peru and Guayaquil, above all after the war of 1827, and with the overall exports from Paraguay, a country whose fluvial accesses were submitted to the blockage by Buenos Aires. Reciprocal trade with the third countries of Venezuela and New Granada also suffered a heavy deterioration due to its greater exposure to the military campaigns of the Independence. Up to 1831, the Central Bank of New Granada echoed that situation, and in particular the decline in trade with Mexico and Peru, considered as "the origin of all evils". According to its report for that year, it was urgent to make:

<sup>51</sup> Raúl Grien, "La integración económica como alternativa inédita para América Latina" (*Economic integration as an unprecedented alternative for Latin America*), México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1994, pp. 132-133.

<sup>52</sup> Enrique Tandeter, *L'argent du Potosí. Coercition et marché dans l'Amérique coloniale* (*The silver of Potosí. Coercion and the market in colonial America*), París, published by l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1997, p. 246. The problem of flooding also occurred in Mexico, where a part of public investment was devoted to draining the mines. Chowning, "The Contours of the Post-1810 Depression in Mexico", *op. cit.*, p. 132.

efforts to revive trade with [both countries], because unless this were done it the means of circulation in silver coinage would become more and more [difficult] to increase, mainly because the sources of Spanish coinage have been extracted by the peninsular emigrants in the revolutionary epoch, and not replaced, and this exhausted the source from which we obtain the moneys of Mexico and Peru.<sup>53</sup>

As a result of the unevenness of economic performance, the sub-continent lost the relative parity of the old administrative units and announced with it one of the most deep-rooted dynamics of the region: the asymmetric rate of growth and the growing disparity of development.<sup>54</sup>

### *Lack of communication by the new republics*

A final aspect and not therefore less important in the atomization of Spanish America was the lack of communication between its principal centers. Now, before the Independence of the Colony, it seemed to be an archipelago of small islets, with weak reciprocal links and cities often built along the coasts, each distant from one other. The export economy and its local structures closed to all that did not form a part of the radial system, was developed with the greatest vigor towards the metropolis and imposed its influence on the combined economic, political and cultural activities. Significantly, in the largest cities, events in other zones of Spanish America were known via the newspapers or communiqués arriving from London and Washington. Not without emphasis, the *Gazeta de Buenos Ayres* declared in 1810 that that capital and Mexico did not have “more relations than with Russia or with the Tartars”.<sup>55</sup> The arrival of Francisco Miranda in Caracas in 1811 is another example—it was known about in Chile via *The Morning Chronicle* from London, whose articles were translated and published in the *Aurora* a year after the events.<sup>56</sup> In 1825, Bolívar himself announced from Lima that news from Russia arrives before news from Caracas and that parts of the Battle of Junín had been known by the newspapers in England, which sometimes arrived in his hands at the same time as the papers from Bogotá.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Banco de la República de Colombia, *Economic Report*, Bogotá, 1831, p. 55.

<sup>54</sup> John Coatsworth, “Obstacles to Economic Growth in Nineteenth-Century Mexico”, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 83, No. 1, 1978, pp. 80-100.

<sup>55</sup> *Gazeta de Buenos Ayres*, No. 27, Buenos Aires, December 6, 1810, p. 423.

<sup>56</sup> *La Aurora de Chile*, No. 6, Volume I, Santiago, March 19, 1812.

<sup>57</sup> Simón Bolívar to Francisco de Paula Santander, Lima, March 23, 1825, “Cartas del Libertador” (*Letters from the Liberator*), Volume IV, 1966, pp. 289.

Republican life sharpened that unrootedness. With some exceptions, Spanish American legations began to operate first in the United States and Europe, not in neighboring countries. This situation explains in good measure the need to open channels of direct communication with the countries that offered credit and diplomatic recognition. In other cases, however, there was a lack of interest and negligence. The designation of Mexico's representative to Colombia, a country with which it been confederated in 1823, illustrates an additional factor: the vicissitudes of political inexperience.

Reciprocating Colombia's appointment of Miguel de Santamaría in 1821, the Emperor Agustín Iturbide designated Manuel de la Peña y Peña on May 18th, 1822. The short life of the imperial government impeded the establishment of the post. Once the republic had been proclaimed, Guadalupe Victoria appointed Francisco Molinos del Campo on December 31, 1823. The Deputy did not accept the mission, but postponed his resignation until 1825, slowing down the search for a substitute. On March 1st of that year, the Executive designated Anastasio Bustamante as minister and as extraordinary envoy Antonio Bustamante Oseguera. This time, it was the Senate which opposed the designations due to the continued lack of definition of Molinos del Campo and because Bustamante Oseguera had been a supporter of Iturbide. In his place, it elected José Anastasio Torrens, former secretary of the Mexican legation in the United States. The appointment of business representative in Bogotá had no precise objectives, and was used by Torrens to carry out anti-Bolivarian activities which led to his expulsion in 1829. After that diplomat retired, the Mexican government assayed the equally fruitless appointment of Bernardo González and Anastasio Cerezero. Between 1831 and 1853, diplomatic relations between Mexico and the three countries that were succeeded by Colombia (New Granada, Venezuela and Quito) decayed until they practically disappeared.<sup>58</sup>

It should be borne in mind that the lack of intra-Spanish-American communication occurred even at the level of strategic interests. Spain's occupation of the Peruvian island of Chincha and the French intervention in Mexico, both in the 1860s, were announced in the Buenos Aires newspapers, taking into account the opinion of the old continent, where the news

<sup>58</sup> The first Ambassador in old Colombia, Federico Falqués, was named before New Granada, Venezuela and Ecuador in 1853. His principal responsibilities were the negotiation of bilateral agreements and the payment of Colombia's debt, although he died on the way to Bogotá, the location designated for his residence (Archives of Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Relations (AHSREM), Legación de México 1855-1856, f. 292).

first arrived, and not from its natural allies.<sup>59</sup> In those years, Luis Gonzaga Cuevas criticized the “indifference [or] disdain” with which the Spanish American republics observed that things had arrived “at a level in which everyone [knew] what was happening in Europe and in the nethermost corner of the world, apart from the events going on in the American Republics”.<sup>60</sup>

The intelligentsia behaved no differently. The 63 leading historians of the 19th century, who had a similar training, read and wrote in French and English, and cited both classic and contemporary authors, valued the backwardness and the direction that development in their native countries should take, appealing almost exclusively to European examples. Spanish-American references were inexistent and in general their national histories resembled chronicles of the principal cities of the Republic.<sup>61</sup>

### *By way of a conclusion*

In contrast with Anglo-Saxon America, whose thirteen colonies first confederated and then merged into a federal régime, or in the closer case of Brazil, which for some years headed the Portuguese Empire and then led an attempt at excision in 1826, Spanish America was the object of an intense atomization. Between 1809 and 1823, four Viceroyalties, two of them created just before, were transformed into six countries: the Mexican Empire, Colombia, the United Provinces of Rio de La Plata, Chile, Paraguay and Peru. That last year, Central America separated itself from Mexico and in 1838 it was itself substituted by five small States: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as well as a British colony, Belize. In the south, the war between Brazil and Buenos Aires ended with the creation of Uruguay, the third and final excision of the old Viceroyalty of la Plata, afterwards Paraguay and High Peru (Bolivia). In 1830, Bolivarian Colombia, considered to be an emerging power, succumbed to its contradictions and divided into three countries: Ecuador, New Granada —incorporating

<sup>59</sup> Robert W. Fraser, “Latin American Projects to Aid Mexico During the French Intervention”, *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. xxviii, 1948, August, pp. 377-388.

<sup>60</sup> “El pacto de familia. Historia de un episodio de la diplomacia mexicana en pro de la anfictiónia” (*The family pact, History of an episode in Mexican diplomacy in support of the Amphictyony*), Historical Archive of Mexico’s Diplomacy, Mexico, Ministry of Foreign Relations (SRE), 1962.

<sup>61</sup> Burns, “The Poverty of Progress. Latin America in the Nineteenth Century”, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 and ss.



Panama until 1903— and Venezuela, the latter progressively worn down by Britain's expansion in Guyana.

Spanish-America's atomization seems to have been guided by the uncontrollable force of provincialism and its elites, the limited resources to maintain the cohesion of its old domains and external penetration. Between the proclamation of independence of the Junta de Charcas in 1809 and the dissolution of Central America, Spanish America had fragmented into 15 Republics.

Structural determinism or contingency —which group of factors prevailed in ending the once-powerful Spanish America? The examples of the United States and Brazil do not permit an explanation based exclusively on the first group of factors. The difficulties presented by the autonomist zeal of the North American colonies and the great distances that must have saved the Brazilian administration have a certain parallelism with Spanish America, and its unity represents an alternative scenario with seeming feasibility. However, it is also not possible to give a preponderant role to the contingency or the transforming effect of decision-making. The number and the intensity of the structural variables not only explain significant parts of the atomization, but also the failure of the attempts at integration realized during the first 50 years of Independence. The Congresses of Panama (1826), Lima (1847-1848), Santiago (1856) and the Second one in Lima (1864-1865), shared the particular and general causes of their frustration: legislative rejection of the ratification of the treaties and inapplicability of their postulates. That said, the question and its lack of definition remain: although the determinants of the fragmentation were multiple, by themselves they did not indicate that the process would remain at the level of the Viceroyalties or would lead to audiencias, or even to the subdivisions of these.

