POLITICS OF LATIN AMERICA

THE POWER GAME

SIXTH EDITION

Harry E. Vanden
Gary Prevost

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College of Saint Benedict/
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This work is dedicated to those who teach Latin American politics, with special thanks to those who showed us the way: Gary Wynia, who taught Gary Prevost, and C. Neale Ronning, John C. Honey, and Mario Hernández Sánchez-Barba, who guided Harry E. Vanden.

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Frequently Cited Acronyms

AD	Democratic Action Party, Venezuela
AID	Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of State
AMNLAE	Association of Nicaraguan Women, Luisa Amanda Espinosa
ANDI	National Association of Industrialists, Colombia
APRA	American Popular Revolutionary Alliance, Peru
ARENA	National Republican Alliance, El Salvador
ARENA	National Renovating Alliance, Brazil
BPR	People's Revolutionary Bloc, El Salvador
CACIF	Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations, Guatemala
CAFTA-DR	Central America–Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement
CDR	Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, Cuba
CDT	Democratic Workers' Confederation, Chile
CGT	General Confederation of Labor, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Brazil

CIA	Central Intelligence Agency, United States
CONAIE	Confederation of Ecuadorean Indigenous Nationalities
COPEI	Social Christian Party, Venezuela
CORFO	Development Corporation, Chile
CPC	Confederation of Production and Commerce, Chile
CPD	Coalition of Parties for Democracy, Chile
CSTC	Trade Union Confederation of Colombian Workers
CSUTUB	Confederation of Peasant Unions, Bolivia
CTDC	Democratic Confederation of Colombian Workers
CTV	Confederation of Venezuelan Workers
CTC	Confederation of Cuban Workers, Confederation of Colombian Workers
CUT	Unitary Labor Central, Brazil, Chile, Colombia
ECLA/ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America/and the Caribbean
EGP	Guerrilla Army of the Poor, Guatemala
ELN	National Liberation Army, Colombia
ERP	Revolutionary Army of the People, Argentina
ERP	Popular Revolutionary Army, El Salvador
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation, Mexico
FAL	Armed Forces of Liberation, El Salvador
FALN	Armed Forces of National Liberation, Venezuela
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes, Guatemala
FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
FEDECAFE	National Federation of Coffee Growers, Colombia
FDNG	New Guatemala Democratic Front
FDR	Democratic Revolutionary Front, El Salvador
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, El Salvador
FrePaSo	Front for a Country in Solidarity, Argentina
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front, Nicaragua
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GAM	Group of Mutual Support, Guatemala
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Import substitution industrialization
M-19	April 19 Movement, Colombia
M-26 July	July 26 Movement, Cuba
MAS	Movement Toward Socialism, Venezuela, Bolivia
MDB	Brazilian Democratic Movement
MERCOSUR/ MERCOSUL	Common Market of the Southern Cone
MINUGUA	United Nations Verification Mission, Guatemala
MIR	Movement of the Revolutionary Left, Chile, Peru, Venezuela
MNC	Multinational corporation
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement, Bolivia
MST	Landless Movement, Brazil, Bolivia
MVR	Fifth Republic Movement, Venezuela
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement

NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
OAS	Organization of American States
PAC	Civil Defense Patrol, Guatemala
PAN	National Action Party, Mexico
PCC	Cuban Communist Party
PDC	Christian Democratic Party
PDS	Social Democratic Party, Brazil
PDVSA	Venezuelan National Petroleum Company
PJ	Justice [Peronist] Party, Argentina
PLF	Party of the Liberal Front, Brazil
PMDB	Brazilian Democratic Movement Party
PP	Patriotic Pole, Venezuela
PPD	Party for Democracy, Chile
PRD	Democratic Revolutionary Party, Mexico
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party, Mexico
PSDB	Brazilian Social Democratic Party
PSN	Nicaraguan Socialist Party
PT	Workers' Party, Brazil
RN	National Renovation, Chile
UCR	Radical Civic Union, Argentina
UFCo	United Fruit Company
UNO	National Opposition Union, Nicaragua
UNT	National Workers Union, Venezuela
UP	Popular Unity, Chile
UP	Patriotic Union, Colombia
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity

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Preface

The political reality in Latin America has changed once again and another group of regimes quite different from those they have replace is in power. Thus the need for a new edition to put this change in context. It should also be noted that the sixth edition of *Politics of Latin America* is animated by the same passions that guided the first five editions, our love and fascination for Latin America and how politics are practiced there. We were motivated to proceed to a sixth edition by the continuing positive reactions we received from students and the community of scholars who study Latin America and who have adopted our textbook. We are most indebted to our students at the University of South Florida, Saint John's University, College of Saint Benedict, and Hamline University who have provided invaluable commentary. We are also indebted to the country chapter authors who have so graciously updated their work for the new edition.

The new edition continues to focus on power politics and recent developments in the region, but not only the post-2002 election and reelection since of numerous progressive governments chosen by their populations to provide an alternative to the Washington-driven neoliberal policies of the 1990s, but similarly, the backlash that began with the coup in Honduras in 2009 and congressional coup in Paraguay in 2010, and continued with the narrow election of neoliberal Mauricio Macri in 2015 in Argentina and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil in 2016. These events suggest that once again elitist sectors continue to seek ways to resist the assertion of popular power and new internal and external power alignments and that such reactionary actions will find favor, if not support, from many sectors in the United States. Pursuant to this new reality, there have been important changes in the sixth edition of *Politics of Latin America: The Power Game*:

New to This Edition

- Updated country elections in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Honduras, and Bolivia.
- Tables and charts have been updated, and a new chart has been added to show the evolution over time of the Gini coefficient in selected countries.
- In several chapters there is an analysis of the resurgence of the political forces of the right marked by electoral successes in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela at national or local levels.

- The U.S.–Latin American relations chapter draws a balance sheet on eight years of Obama administration policies in the region and the challenges facing the Trump administration, including the growing role of China.

Many people have helped us in this endeavor. We continue to learn and benefit from the voices and actions of Latin American peoples and from our many colleagues who study the region from around the world. In this regard we are especially grateful to Dorothea Melcher for assistance with the section on colonial Latin America, Kwame Dixon for contributing heavily to the section on Afro-Latins, David Close who helped us update the Nicaragua chapter, Richard Stahler-Sholk who provided an update on the Zapatistas, Marc Becker for his updates on Ecuador, Nathalie Lebron for her input on contemporary feminist movements, and Shawn Schulenberg who contributed the section on gays and lesbians contained in Chapter 5. Gary Prevost is especially indebted to the office staff of Saint John's University and the College of Saint Benedict. Special recognition goes to Sheila Hellermann for invaluable secretarial help and to student assistant Charles Pults, who updated the electoral systems table and appendices on electoral results. We are most indebted to Adam Golob at the University of South Florida for constructing the majority of the tables, and to Mariela Noles Cotito from ISLAC at USF for securing photos for this edition. The index was prepared by Sheila Hellermann at St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict. We also thank the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and its major supporters (the United States Agency for International Development, the United Nations Development Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and Vanderbilt University) for making data available. Finally, we are grateful to the following reviewers for their suggestions: Megan Sholar, Loyola University, Chicago; Daniel S. Haworth, University of Houston, Clear Lake; Erica Townsend-Bell, Oklahoma State University; Natasha Borges Sugiyama, University of Wisconson, Milwaukee; and Maria Rosa Garcia, California State University, Northridge.

We hope this new edition continues to excite and enlighten students and buttress the teaching of the professors who use it, and we beg the indulgence of the reader for any errors, which, of course, remain our responsibility.

Harry E. Vanden
Tampa

Gary Prevost
Collegeville

INTRODUCTION

NOTES ON STUDYING POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin America is a dynamic, complex, and rapidly changing reality. It ranges from small pastoral villages to two of the largest urban megalopolises on earth. Both democratic and dictatorial, its governments are sometimes replaced by voting in clean elections and other times by military coups. Although exciting to study, Latin America's complexity often challenges the ideas and intellectual approaches we use to study it—indeed, one approach alone is usually just not sufficient to understand what is going on there. The authors of this work maintain that it takes all the conceptual tools and insights that can be mustered to begin to understand such a complex reality. Because the political history of the nations that comprise Latin America has been quite different from that which developed in the United States, Canada, Britain, or Australia, most of us who study Latin American politics believe it is imperative to know this history because most political practices grew out of it. The authors speak of dictatorial *caudillos* and of authoritarian political culture, yet they acknowledge the great political changes and democratic reforms that have also marked Latin American history. Each nation has a political history marked by periods of dictatorship and democracy. Each nation has struggled with the need to change social and economic structures and traditional economic practices that have vested most of the land in a few families and left the vast majority of citizens with no or little land or means of adequately sustaining themselves. Latin America has experienced more revolutions than any other part of the world, yet the comparative conditions for the lower classes in most countries are only little better than they were at the end of the colonial period in the early 1800s. As reflected in the two introductory chapters on broad historical periods in Latin America (Chapters 2 and 3) and the detailed political history provided for each of the ten country case studies presented here, the authors strongly believe that one cannot begin to understand Latin American politics without knowing the region's history. Equally, they know just how great the political variations have been and thus strongly believe that one must equally study the particular historical evolution of each country to comprehend its own brand of politics and see how it conforms to and diverges from general political trends and practices in the region. The often influential role of the

United States in Latin American politics and inter-American relations is explored in Chapter 11. Similarly, there are certain events, such as the Mexican and Cuban revolutions, and certain figures—such as Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre of Peru, Juan Perón of Argentina, and Cuba's Fidel Castro—whose historical trajectories need to be studied because of their lasting influence in their own countries and in the region as a whole.

It should further be noted that there are many ways of remembering or interpreting what went on before. Indeed, it has been suggested that much of history has been written by the elite. Using the term perfected by the influential Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, we would say that the "superstructure," or the culture and institutions controlled by the dominant class, have dictated much of the history that has been written. For instance, we now know that much that was written by patriarchal European elites was but one version of what transpired. Class, gender, race, nationality, religion, and ideology all influence how we see an event and how we evaluate it. Slavery, one imagines, will always be seen somewhat differently by slave and slaveholder. And the descendants of each may keep many of their forefathers' views of things. The chapters in this book endeavor to present a view of the present and past that is inclusive of views of native peoples, Africans who were brought as slaves, women, dominated classes, and others who were subordinated as well as the more standard history written from the perspective of the dominant elites in Latin America, the United States, and Europe. By incorporating more diverse views, the authors hope to supply a better and more complete picture of how the region evolved and what it is like today.

But history is not enough. Similarly, before we deploy specific concepts gleaned from the study of comparative politics, most students of Latin American politics believe that a great deal of the political behavior in the region has been heavily influenced by internal and international economic forces and that one cannot fully comprehend politics without understanding the economics of the region. The internal economies of the indigenous societies were totally disrupted by the conquest and the imposition of economic systems designed to export wealth to Europe and thus incorporate the Americas into the international system on terms favorable to Europe. Economic power was seized by the European elite. Thereafter, the structure and functioning of Latin American nations would be heavily influenced by their trade and commercial relations with more economically developed areas; their economies, societies, and political institutions would also be transformed by this external orientation. Latin America was to fit into the international system as a producer of primary (unfinished) goods such as sugar, tin, tobacco, copper, coffee, and bananas. According to classical Western capitalist theories of free trade economics, such trade was to be equally advantageous to peripheral areas such as Latin America as it was to metropolitan areas such as Europe and the United States. Yet, after World War II, a careful study of the terms of trade for Latin America by the Economic Commission for Latin America of the United Nations suggested just the opposite—that benefits from trading patterns were accruing primarily to the developed areas, not to Latin America. As scholars of Latin America and other social scientists studied the full implication of this phenomenon, they arrived at a theory that

explained the continuing underdevelopment and dependency of Latin America. Dependency theory, as the paradigm came to be called, soon heavily dominated thinking among social scientists who studied Latin America. For most scholars, it became the principal way of understanding Latin American society, politics, development, and the region's relations with the outside world. This approach predominated from the late 1960s into the 1990s, supplanting many classical economic assumptions and displacing other theories of underdevelopment, such as modernization theory, which was championed by many U.S. scholars. Chapter 7 explores dependency theory in greater detail and makes the general argument that since economic and political power are so closely entwined in Latin America, an approach that combines both—political economy—is necessary. More recent theories of neoliberal economics and globalization are also explored.

But even if, as Karl Marx believed, economic relations form the basis for social structures, it is still necessary to examine those social structures carefully. Nor can economic relations be fully comprehended until elements of social, gender, race, and class relations are introduced. Family and gender relations, race, and subordination have all played key roles in the development of Latin American politics and economics. The subordinate position of indigenous peoples, Afro-Latins, and women has conditioned politics and been conditioned by them. Class is of equal importance, given the hierarchical nature of the societies that developed. The authors believe familiarity with these issues is necessary and thus have included one chapter on indigenous and African peoples (Chapter 4) and a second that explores the status of women and gender roles (Chapter 5).

The rise of fundamentalism in domestic politics in the United States, the Islamic resurgence in a variety of Muslim countries, and the rise of religious parties in India have once more brought religion to the center of the political stage. Yet in Latin America, the role of the Catholic Church and religion has always been an important factor in politics. For five centuries, the Church has remained the bulwark of the status quo in most countries. Yet, there have always been radicals in the Church who were not afraid to challenge entrenched political interests, even though most of the Church hierarchy usually worked hand in glove with the state. Such was the case in the sixteenth century when Chiapas Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas became a crusader against the enslavement of indigenous people. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two progressive priests—Hidalgo and Morelos—waged the first phase of the mass-based independence movement in Mexico. Adapting Marx to the specific conditions in the region, the most original Marxist thinker in Latin America, José Carlos Mariátegui, argued that religion could be a revolutionary force. Stimulated by his thought and progressive theological trends in Europe, the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez developed a radical new "theology of liberation." The advent of liberation theology and growing support for the radical transformation of socioeconomic structures by the Conference of Latin American Bishops after 1968 made religion a major political force for change in many countries in the region. Priests supported guerrilla groups, resisted dictatorships, became guerrillas themselves, and, in the case of four priests in Nicaragua, became part of the leftist Sandinista government. Lay people formed participatory Christian base

communities and used their faith as a potent political force. Meanwhile, more conservative Protestant evangelical groups converted millions to their faith. The new flock was often exhorted to support fellow Protestant (and usually conservative) candidates and not to be involved in (radical) politics. It is difficult to comprehend the dynamics of Latin American politics without understanding the religious forces and factions at work there. Thus the authors have also included a chapter on religion (Chapter 6).

Democracy and dictatorship have been two contrasting themes running through Latin American history and the conduct of politics in each nation. Their dynamic and dialectical interaction have defined the political game and created unique political cultures in the region. Thus, democracy and authoritarianism are explored in Chapter 8, as is Latin America's special brand of political culture.

Chapters 1 through 11 provide the national and hemispheric context in which Latin American politics are played out. Different readers and instructors may choose to emphasize different areas; others may opt to also read an accompanying novel, like Isabel Allende's *House of the Spirits* (1985), *El Señor Presidente* by Miguel Angel Asturias (1987), or Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970). Films and videos also illustrate many of these factors and bring figures like Juan and Eva Perón to life (*Evita,* 1996). The authors believe that astute students of the political game in Latin America must develop some appreciation for such background factors before they begin to focus on politics.

Most political scientists believe that politics concerns power and influence—how resources are allocated in a society. In his classic work, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How,* Harold Lasswell suggests that the study of politics is the study of influence and the influential. In a context that is particularly relevant to Latin America, he argues that the "influential are those who get the most of what there is to get" and further adds that those who get the most are the elite, and the rest are the masses (Lasswell 1958: 13). He further invokes the early political economist David Ricardo to the effect that the distribution of wealth suggests one of the principal avenues of influence in a given society. Thus Lasswell notes that in the early part of the twentieth century, 2,500 individuals in Chile owned 50 million of the 57 million acres of privately held land in the nation (p. 17). That is, the large landowners were dominant economically and could use this base to influence—if not dominate—the political process. The study of politics and the subfield of comparative politics have evolved considerably since the time Lasswell originally wrote those pages (the 1930s). At that time, he and other social scientists in the United States were more willing to focus on concepts of class and the domination of wealth. That was before the advent of the Cold War and the dichotomization of the world into two opposing camps, with social science often reflecting each camp's dominant values.

Social science in Latin America has been much more willing to use class and Marxist concepts in its study of the Latin American reality. This is reflected in the work of many Latin Americanists outside the region as well. In the United States, comparative politics evolved from traditional-legalistic approaches that looked at history and constitutions, to behavioral approaches that studied interest groups and voting behavior and other quantifiable political actions to explain politics, to post-behavioral approaches that came to include policy analysis, aspects of dependency

theory, and world systems analysis, as well as a postmodern literary/cultural deconstructionist analysis. Currently, political scientists in the United States are focusing a great deal of interest on rational choice theory. Yet, those conceptual tools most frequently employed by Latin Americanists who focus on politics do not usually include deconstruction (although there are exceptions among literary-oriented Latin Americanists and Latin American intellectuals) or rational choice theory. Conceptual approaches most often and most successfully employed include elitist analysis, class analysis, a pluralist analysis of interest groups, mass organizations and others who exercise power in the political process, analysis of voting and political preferences where conditions allow for relatively clean elections and free expression of opinion, dependency analysis and political economy, and a careful consideration of powerful groups like the military or armed guerrilla groups that have the capacity to use force to take power or heavily influence policy decisions. All these are employed in this work. The authors also rely on the approach to understanding Latin American power relations developed by Gary Wynia in *The Politics of Latin American Development* (1990).

Latin Americanists have followed their own evolution. As suggested earlier, they have found political history to be of great importance. From this they extracted useful political concepts such as *caudillismo*, *golpe de estado* (coup d'état), and junta. These and similar concepts like authoritarianism and machismo are, nonetheless, explained well by the concept of political culture as developed in comparative politics in the 1960s, during the time when behaviorism was dominant. In that political values and beliefs in Latin America are generally so different from those found in Anglo-American political cultures, special treatment is given to general outlines of Latin American political culture in Chapter 8. The authors examine the development of political values from family, gender, race, and class relations as well as historical factors. They do so in the confines imposed by class, authoritarian rule, and the use and abuse of power by those who rule. Later, the country-chapter authors make frequent use of these concepts as they analyze the politics of individual nations.

Of equal importance is a fundamental subtext in most writing about Latin American politics: power rules, and absolute power rules absolutely. This is manifest in the title of a highly respected work on Guatemala by Richard Adams, *Crucifixion by Power* (1970). Frequently it is not what the constitution says; it is the power of the dictator or the president to ignore the constitution, have Congress amend it, or simply arrange for the nation's Supreme Court to make a favorable interpretation. Ultimately, it may not be the constitution, elections, public opinion, civilian politicians, or the party system that decides the issues. Rather, it may be a coup, as in Ecuador in 2000 and Honduras in 2009, or a political understanding with the military that allows the president to dismiss Congress and the Supreme Court and rule on his own, as in Peru in 1992. In most Latin American countries, there is always the possibility that naked power can and will be used. This has been the case since the *conquistadores* established their rule through brute force. Naked power—and violence—can be used by the government to suppress the rulers' political enemies, by the military to take over the government or threaten to do so or by opposition groups that contend for power through the use of arms. One is here reminded of Mao Zedong's oft-quoted dictum: "Power flows out of the barrel of a gun." Even

when democratic processes are being followed, the threat of the use of force is often present. Thus, the military could often veto policy decisions by a civilian government, as was the case in El Salvador and Guatemala for many years; the oligarchy can threaten to mobilize their friends in the military on their behalf; or, as was the case in Nicaragua and Colombia, the opposition groups that grew out of revolutionary organizations can threaten to take up arms again.

At the local level the amount of power a large landowner can wield may be a more important factor in politics than the election of a reformist in the last election or the composition of the government. The local notable's power allows him to manipulate the policy process, control public officials, pay off the local police, or hire his own armed guards and also heavily influence the electoral process—indeed, most likely the reformer would have never been elected. Yet the notable's power could be challenged by a well-organized popular organization like the Landless in Brazil or neutralized by the presence of an active guerrilla group like the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) in Colombia. Of considerable significance is the emergence of powerful social movements like those in Bolivia and Ecuador and the massive "take the streets" protest movement in Brazil in June 2013.

In Latin America, politics are dictated by power and the powerful. This book examines those who play the power game in separate chapters on political actors and political institutions (Chapter 9) and revolutions and change (Chapter 10). The way the game is played is conditioned not only by the historical, social, and economic factors mentioned previously, but it also has developed its own rules and practices. They are explored in these chapters, beginning with a discussion of how the constitution is often best described as an ideal to strive for rather than a basis for the rule of law.

Country chapters on Mexico, which is in North America; the South American Southern Cone countries of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile; the South American Andean countries of Colombia, Venezuela and Bolivia; the Caribbean nation of Cuba; and Guatemala and Nicaragua from Central America follow. They provide specific examples of how the power game is played in ten different Latin American nations. This is a representative—but not inclusive—sampling of the Latin American political reality. Each of the Latin American nation-states has developed its own way of conducting politics. Reference is made to some key events in the countries not necessarily included in the case studies, but it was not possible to fully explore the particular political nuances of all aspects of national politics in each country. Those who carefully study general trends and how they develop in the included case studies will, we believe, have a good basis to explore how politics are conducted elsewhere in Latin America.

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Gulf of Mexico
MEXICO
Mexico City
BAHAMAS
Havana
CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
HAITI
San Juan
BELIZE
JAMAICA
Kingston
Belmopan
HONDURAS
Port-au-Prince
Santo Domingo
PUERTO RICO
GUATEMALA
Guatemala City
Tegucigalpa
Caribbean Sea
BARBADOS
EL SALVADOR
San Salvador
NICARAGUA
Managua
GRENADA
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
Panama City
Caracas
COSTA RICA
San José
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
SURINAME
PANAMA
Georgetown
Paramaribo
FRENCH GUIANA
Cayenne
Bogotá
COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
Quito
Atlantic Ocean
Pacific Ocean
PERU
Lima
BRAZIL
Brasília
BOLIVIA
La Paz
Sucre
PARAGUAY
Asunción
CHILE
ARGENTINA
URUGUAY
Santiago
Buenos Aires
Montevideo
Atlantic Ocean
Falkland Islands
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Political Map
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ONE

An Introduction to Twenty-First Century Latin America

A million people took to the streets in Brazil in June of 2013 to challenge government unresponsiveness to their needs and demands. They contested the political direction of a government led by Brazil's first woman president, Dilma Rousseff. Protests and political maneuvering continued in 2015 and 2016. Amidst a major corruption scandal that blossomed in 2016, the machinations of opposition politicians culminated in the impeachment and removal from office of Brazil's president only to have thousands go into the streets to protest Dilma Rousseff's successor, Michel Temer in 2017. The people are on the move in Latin America and their anger and frustration are ever more frequently intensified by the revelation of corruption. Before Brazil, protesters mobilized by the thousands to force leaders out of office in Ecuador, Argentina, and Bolivia and force policy change in those and many other countries. Massive demonstrations against the government have characterized Venezuela in 2017. A whole generation of more responsive, progressive leaders took the helm in the region and then conservative political forces found ways to challenge their power and forced progressive leaders out of office in Honduras, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. And a new generation of media-savvy, participating citizens are mobilizing in original and increasingly intense ways throughout the hemisphere. The traditional dominance of the United States and international financial institutions, like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is being challenged throughout the region, and China is becoming a much more important player in Latin America. Old norms were put aside as Bolivia has been governed by its first indigenous president; women recently served as elected presidents in Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, and Argentina; and a progressive former guerrilla headed Uruguay.

Such are the changes that are buffeting the region. Latin America—a term coined by a Frenchman to describe this area—is not a homogeneous part of the world that just happens to lie south of the border that runs from Florida to California. It is an immense region that is striving to establish its place in the world in the twenty-first century. A diverse area of twenty nations and peoples that includes Mexico, Central America, the Spanish- and French-speaking Caribbean nations,

and the Spanish and Portuguese nations in South America, Latin America is home to some 625 million people (more than 8 percent of the world's population) who well represent the rich racial and cultural diversity of the human family. Although a U.S. commonwealth, some also include Puerto Rico as part of Latin America. Its people include Amero-Indians from pre-Columbian civilizations, such as the Incas, Aztecs, and Maya; Europeans from countries such as Spain and Portugal (but also England, France, Holland, Italy, Poland, and Germany); West Africans from areas such as what is now Nigeria, the Congo, and Angola; Jews from Europe and elsewhere; Arabs and Turks from countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Turkey; Japanese; Chinese; and different peoples from the Indian subcontinent. These and other racial and cultural groupings have combined to create modern nations rich in talent and variety. The dynamic way the races have combined in Latin America even led one observer to predict that the Latin American region would be the birthplace of the fusion of the world's major racial groupings into a new *raza cosmica*—a cosmic race.

Latin America still has some places where the siesta follows the large midday meal. More commonly, the modern Latin American has a heavy meal in an urban setting and returns to the job for a full afternoon of work. The rapid pace of globalization, urbanization, commercialization, industrialization, and political mobilization continues to radically change the face of the region. Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Costa Rica still gear much of their economies around the export of excellent coffee. Meanwhile, Mexico is making more and more automobiles and automobile components as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; between Mexico, Canada, and the United States); Brazil is selling its passenger planes, jet trainers, and modern fighter aircraft in the globalized international market while it is developing a common market in the Southern Cone of South America (*Mercosur*); new clothing-assembly plants are moving to Nicaragua and Guatemala; and Costa Rica is manufacturing Intel chips and exporting software for hospital administration.

Latin America constitutes an enormous and extremely rich region. The area ranges from Cuba and Mexico in the north to Argentina and Chile's southern tip in Tierra del Fuego some 7,000 miles to the south. *El continente*, as the region is called by many of its Spanish-speaking inhabitants, is extremely diverse in geography and population. Geography as conceptualized in Latin America sees the mainland region of Latin America from Mexico south as one continent and not two as seen in the United States. It encompasses hot and humid coastal lowlands, steamy interior river basins, tropical rain forest, highland plateaus, coastal deserts, fertile lowlands, and high mountain peaks of almost 7,000 meters (23,000 feet). Subregions include Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

The term *Latin America* is an ingenious attempt to link together most of this vast area. Strictly speaking, it refers to those countries in the Western Hemisphere south of the United States that speak Latin-based (Romance) languages: Spanish, Portuguese, and French.[1] In a more general sense, Latin America and the Caribbean can be said to include the English- and Dutch-speaking parts of the Caribbean and South America as well as Belize in Central America.[2] The focus of this book will be

on the Latin part of the region, although the English- and Dutch-speaking countries will be included in some of the maps and tables and are occasionally referred to for the sake of comparison. Nor would we minimize their importance or the many similarities they share with the Latin part of the Americas.

Geography

Latin America is huge and diverse; it runs from 32.5° north latitude to 55° south latitude. With a total area of 20 million square kilometers (8 million square miles), it is one of the largest regions of the world. Taken on the whole, it is almost as large as the United States and Canada combined and larger than Europe.

The climatic and topographic diversity of Latin America is remarkable. Its range of environments is greater than in North America and Europe: rain forests, savanna grasslands, thorn scrub, temperate grasslands, coniferous forests, and even deserts. Plateaus extend down from the United States into Mexico and Central America. The Andes extend from the Caribbean island of Trinidad to Tierra del Fuego at the southern tip of South America and form the largest mountain chain on earth. They are most prominent as they parallel the west coast of South America. Many peaks are over 5,486 meters (18,000 feet); Mount Aconcagua in northern Argentina reaches almost 6,982 meters (22,840 feet) and is the highest point in the Western Hemisphere. Snow-capped peaks can be found from Venezuela in northern South America to Argentina and Chile in the south. A fault line that runs from California through the middle of Mexico and Central America and down the west coast of South America and another that runs through the Caribbean make the region prone to earthquakes. Volcanoes are found in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Other major geographic areas include the Guiana Highlands in northern South America, the Brazilian highlands, and the Pampas in the south. River systems include the Orinoco in the north, the Río de la Plata in the south, and the mighty Amazon in the middle of the South American continent.

Even at the same latitude, one can find very different climates. *Altitudinal zonation*, as this phenomenon is called, refers to the range in altitude from sea level to thousands of meters that occurs as one travels as few as 80 kilometers (50 miles) horizontally. It makes for very different climates. Land from sea level to 915 meters (3,000 feet) is termed *tierra caliente*; from 915 to 1,930 meters (3,000 to 6,000 feet), *tierra templada*; from 1,930 to 3,660 meters (6,000 to 12,000 feet), *tierra fría*; and above 3,660 meters (12,000 feet), *tierra helada*, which experiences frost, snow, and ice through all or most of the year. Even close to the equator, the temperature cools 2.05° C (3.7° F) for each 305 meters (1,000 feet) of altitude. Although at the same latitude, Quito, the capital of Ecuador at 2,835 meters (9,300 feet), has an average annual temperature of 12.6° C (54.6° F), while Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil, located on the coast, has an average temperature of 25.7° C (78.2° F). Each zone is suitable for different crops. Tierra caliente, when it is humid, is usually ideal for tropical fruits, while tierra templada is suited for growing crops like coffee, potatoes (which can be grown up to 3,355 meters [11,000 feet]), corn, and coca plants. Because of the temperature variation, crops requiring very different climates, such as bananas (humid, tropical lowlands) and coffee (cooler, shaded highlands), can be grown in the same Caribbean

island (Jamaica) or small Central American nation (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, or Guatemala). It is interesting to note that there are some crops that are extremely adaptive and can grow at a variety of altitudes. Corn is grown throughout Mexico, Central America, and the Andean region and formed an essential part of the classical Aztec, Mayan, and Incan economies. Coca cultivation has remained an essential part of agriculture in the area occupied by the Incan Empire (concentrated in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador but extending into Colombia, northern Chile, and Argentina). The cultivation and consumption of coca leaves has been an essential

part of indigenous culture in most of the Andean region since pre-Incan times. The coca plant can live up to forty years and produces the best leaves for chewing when grown at altitudes of 915 to 1,220 meters (3,000 to 4,000 feet). Coca thrives in the shaded areas of the eastern Andean slopes, but it also can be grown at much higher altitudes or in the dryer mountainous regions such as the eastern Colombian Andes. It will also grow in hot, humid rain forests at much lower elevations. The leaves are not as good from these latter locations, but this is a less important consideration when they are used for a newer economic activity—the production of cocaine.

The Amazon is the second-longest river in the world, carrying more water than any other. It runs from the jungles of eastern Peru for some 6,275 kilometers (3,900 miles) to its mouth at the Atlantic Ocean. Large riverboats and many ocean-going ships with a draft of 4.3 meters (14 feet) or less can go as far as Iquitos, Peru, where they still transport all the heavy cargo for that jungle city.

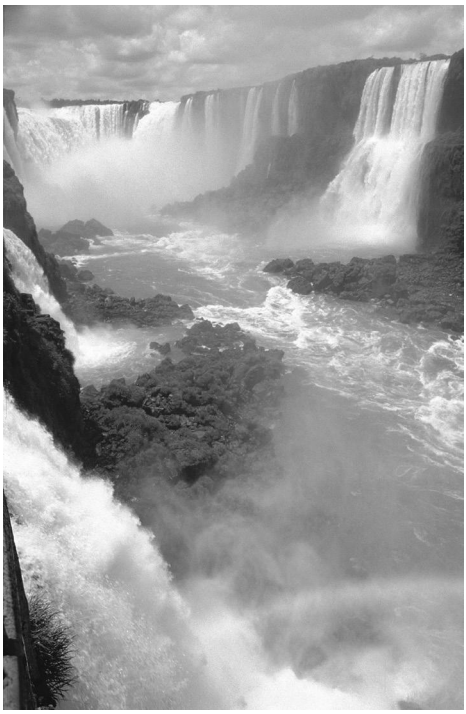
Once There Were Rain Forests

During the first century, tropical rain forests covered 2.02 billion hectares (5 billion acres) on our planet and represented 12 percent of the land surface. In the last 100 years alone, more than half that forest has been actively destroyed. The deforestation is extensive. According to one study, the size of the deforested areas rose from 78,000 square kilometers (30,110 square miles) in 1978 to 230,000 square kilometers (88,780 square miles) in 1988. By the mid-1990s, the annual deforestation rate was 15,000 square kilometers (5,790 square miles) per year and has continued to rise. In 2002, as we began the new millennium, over 20.2 million hectares (50 million acres) of tropical rain forest were lost every year. In Latin America, the Amazon basin alone houses the largest tropical rain forest in the world and contains one-fifth of the earth's freshwater, 20 percent of the world's bird species, and 10 percent of the world's mammals. More than 20 percent of the planet's oxygen is produced by the trees and plants in the area. Yet, 14 percent of the rain forest has disappeared in a recent ten-year period. According to Greenpeace, the last forty years has seen Brazil alone losing more than 18 percent of its rainforest. This represents an area about the size of California, and most of what remains is under threat.

In 1964, a military government staged a coup and displaced the civilian government in Brazil. During their two decades in power, the development-minded military leadership built the Trans-Amazon Highway and embarked on a policy of exploiting the resources in the Amazon basin and encouraging settlement. During the 1960s, Peru's civilian president, Fernando Belaunde Terry, tried a similar developmentalist strategy for Peru's jungle area that lay on the eastern side of the Andes. However, most of the Peruvian settlers found the jungle's "green wall" much more impenetrable than did their Brazilian counterparts.[3] In Brazil, the migration into the Amazon was enormous. In 1960, there were 2.5 million people living in Brazil's six Amazon states. By the early 1990s, the population had grown to 10 million and continues to grow today. There are more than 18 million landless people in Brazil. Thousands of landless peasants, rural workers, urban slum dwellers, entrepreneurs, and well-heeled Brazilian and foreign businesspeople arrived each day to see how they could carve a fortune from the land and resources in the forest.

The land is often crudely torn open to search for gold, iron ore, or other minerals in places like the huge open-pit gold mine at Serra Pelada. Indigenous populations, like the Yanomami, are pushed farther into the jungle and even shot if they resist the encroachment on their ancestral lands. When other local inhabitants, like rubber tapper Chico Mendes or environmental activist Sister Dorothy, try to resist the brutal destruction of the rain forest, they are often bullied by local officials, *fazenderos* (large landowners), or their hired henchmen or, as were Mendes and Sister Dorothy, assassinated.

The rain forest problem in Brazil alone is enormous. In 1998, the Brazilian government released figures indicating that destruction of the Amazon rain forest reached record levels in the mid-1990s. In 1994 and 1995, for example, an area larger than the state of New Jersey (12,610 square kilometers [7,836 square miles]) was destroyed. Indeed, according to a satellite imaging study by Brazil's National Institute of Space Research, 11,280 square kilometers (7,010 square miles) of Amazon rain forest were lost in 2001, and the figure increased to 15,835 square meters (9,840 square miles) in 2002. Not only is the rain forest cut down, but also, in classic slash-and-burn fashion, the vegetation is burned to prepare the land for agriculture or pasture. This means that not only are thousands of oxygen-producing trees lost every year but also enormous amounts of carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere when the biomass is burned. This process is also accelerating in Central America and the rain forest



The immense Iguazu Falls on the Brazilian-Argentinian border. *(Cro Magnon/Alamy Images)*

in southern Mexico. Since 1960 almost 50 percent of Central American forests have been destroyed. Environmentalists see the resultant drastic reduction in oxygen production and dramatic increase in carbon dioxide as significant causal factors in the greenhouse effect linked to climate change.

As Latin America strives to develop and as its population grows, its ecosystems are put under increasing stress. In Haiti, Brazil, and elsewhere, the ecosystem has suffered severe stress because of the intense population density. In Haiti, most of the trees have been cut down for building materials and firewood, and the number of birds and other dependent species has been reduced drastically. In Haiti and elsewhere, the commercialization of agriculture, demographic pressure, and policies that favor large commercial producers over small peasant farmers are also combining to increase land degradation. This set the stage for a huge loss of life as rain and mud flowed uncontrolled down the hills and into heavily populated areas when a hurricane swept across Haiti in 2004. Deforestation, overgrazing, and overexploitation of the land are endangering entire ecosystems throughout the region. Desertification is advancing. It has been estimated that desertification and deforestation alone have affected about one-fifth of Latin America. As early as 1995, some 200 million hectares (494 million acres) of land—almost one-third of the total vegetated land—were moderately or severely degraded.

The People

Latin America is endowed with enormous human resources. Its 625 million people come from all corners of the globe and are rich in their diversity and skills. Fertility rates are high in Latin America, and population growth rates have been some of the highest in the world. Currently, these rates have declined to 2 percent per year or less. Even at this rate, the population will double approximately every 35 years.

The original inhabitants of the region crossed to the Western Hemisphere on the Bering land and ice bridge that once united Asia and North America. This happened some 20,000 to 35,000 years ago during the Ice Age. The Asian migration flowed into North America and then spread into the Caribbean and through Central America to South America. Varied indigenous civilizations grew up throughout the region. By the time the Spaniards and Portuguese arrived in the late 1400s and early 1500s, at least 50 million indigenous people lived in the region (some estimates are more than double this figure). Population concentrations included the Aztec civilization in central Mexico, the Maya civilization in southern Mexico and northern Central America, and the Incan Empire in the west coast central Andean region in South America. Other groupings could be found throughout the region, including the Caribs, Taínos/Arawaks, Guaraní, and Araucanian. These peoples and their civilizations will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

The Spanish and Portuguese were the first Europeans to arrive in Latin America. As they came in ever-increasing numbers, they began to populate the region as well. Informal and formal unions between Iberian men and indigenous women soon produced offspring, who came to be known as *mestizos*. Later, as the Amero-Indian population was drastically decimated and additional inexpensive labor was needed, Africans were brought to the hemisphere as enslaved peoples. At least 7 million

survived the Middle Passage from western and southern Africa to Latin America and the Caribbean. The culture, religion, and cuisine they brought with them would forever change the face of the societies they helped to form. Indians, Europeans, and Africans populated Latin America during the first centuries. The fact that early Spaniards and Portuguese came without their families and claimed access to women in subordinate positions began a process of racial melding that continues to the present day. These pairings and their children were thrown together in dynamic new societies. Mestizos, mulattos, and *zambos* (the children of unions between native peoples and Africans) appeared in growing numbers.

Most Latin Americans trace their ancestry to Amero-Indian, Iberian, and/or African sources. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, there was a general realization that new laborers, artisans, and those with other skills could add to the growing nations. Most nations had outlawed slavery by the time of the Civil War in the United States. Brazil was the last; slavery was outlawed there in 1888. Thus, other sources of abundant and inexpensive labor were often needed. Chinese laborers were brought to Peru in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Thousands of Italians were lured to Argentina and southern Brazil to supply the labor for the growing agricultural and industrial production. Workers and indentured servants from India and the Chinese mainland were brought to the British Caribbean and British South America. Many Europeans came to their colonies or former colonies or from other nations to make their way in these new societies. French, Germans, Swedes, Irish, Poles, and others from Europe arrived on Latin American shores to make a better life or as refugees from famine, war, and revolution. European Jews came to seek opportunity and escape pogroms and persecution. Japanese came to southern Brazil and to other countries like Peru for better opportunities, often with their passages paid by the Japanese government (which wanted to alleviate population pressures on the home islands). Turks and Arabs came to explore new horizons. As the United States expanded its economic sphere into Latin America and the Caribbean, some U.S. citizens chose to stay in the lands where they went to make their fortunes. One, an early aviator who came to Peru, stayed to found what was that nation's best-known private airline, Faucett. The Spanish Civil War and World War II began a new wave of immigration from Spain and other countries taken over by the Fascists. Many Jews and others targeted by the Nazis owe their lives to the liberal immigration and visa policies of Latin American nations. (Ironically, as World War II was ending, Nazis, Fascists, and accused war criminals were often able to take advantage of these same liberal immigration policies and Argentine neutrality during World War II to make their way to countries like Argentina and Paraguay.) Today, new immigrants from Eastern Europe and elsewhere continue to arrive to make their places in these dynamic new societies.

The Land

When the first Europeans arrived in the Western Hemisphere, they found abundant land and resources. Most of the native peoples incorporated the concept of the earth mother, as most notably articulated in Andean culture as the earth mother *Pachamama*, the giver of all life. The land was a sacred trust, to be used with respect and care,

and was not the property of any one person. Land either existed in a state of nature or was used or owned collectively by and for the whole community. It was never to be harmed or destroyed and always to be used for the benefit of all creatures. Thus, the native people used but did not abuse the land. Early reports suggest that food was in abundance and generally well distributed to the entire population.

The regime the Iberians brought was far different. The crown, not the earth mother, was sovereign. Lands that had been inhabited by native peoples for thousands of years were unhesitatingly claimed for Spain and Portugal. Those who had been living on the land and working it were thought to have only those rights granted by the crown. Europeanization had begun. Hereafter, the land was to be used, owned, and abused for the benefit of the crown or its subjects. The native peoples, their needs, and their descendants were and would continue to be secondary and subordinate. The land and the people who lived in harmony with it would no longer be respected. There were empires to be carved and fortunes to be made.

At the time of the conquest (late 1400s and early 1500s), Spain and Portugal were very much dominated by feudal institutions. The landowning system was no exception. Both countries were dominated by huge feudal estates and powerful landlords. The peasants were poor and subordinate. This would be the basis of the system brought to the newly conquered lands. Initially, the Spanish and Portuguese monarchs gave huge land grants and grants to use the native peoples in a specific area. The *mercedes* (land grants, *sesmarias* in Brazil) and *encomiendas* (right to use the native peoples and the land on which they lived as long as the *encomendero* took responsibility for Christianizing them) were given to the *conquistadores* and others to whom the crown owed favors or debts. Thus, Europeans soon established domain over huge stretches of land and the people who lived on them. These initial grants were later turned into large landed estates, or *latifundios*, which were not too different from the huge feudal landed estates in the Iberian peninsula. Often ranging for hundreds of thousands of acres, they were frequently larger than whole counties. They were ruled over by the *patrón* and his family, who were the undisputed masters. The lowly *peon* was like a feudal serf and had little, if any, power or recourse, even after protective laws had been enacted. From colonial times to the present, the land tenure system reflected the nature and power configuration of the whole society. Well into the twentieth century, the subordinate status of the peasant and agricultural laborer was maintained. Vestiges of this system were still in evidence in the 1970s. In many areas, the humble *campesino* was expected to approach the *patrón* with eyes cast down, bowing and scraping. As late as the 1960s, there were still instances (mostly in the Andes) of what had become a widespread practice in colonial times: *primera noche/prima nocta*, the landlord's right to spend the wedding night with a newly married woman on his estate.

In time, many of the *latifundios* were divided or otherwise changed and became modern-day large landholdings: *haciendas, fazendas* (in Brazil), and *estancias* (in Argentina). Still owned by one family and comprising hundreds, if not thousands, of hectares (1 hectare = 2.47 acres) these farms still control a disproportionate amount of the land and resources in the countryside. Their continued existence attests to the concentrated nature of land ownership in Latin America.

Currently, land is also being concentrated in large commercial farms, including land used for soy, sugar cane, and other ethanol-producing crops.

The original indigenous population and later the mestizos, Africans, mulattos, *zambos*, and Europeans who became *campesinos* (anyone who owns or has control over the small- or medium-sized land parcels they work) were left with the rest. Their holdings were never large and were further reduced by division through inheritance, illegal takings by large landowners, or the need to sell off part of the land to survive. The resulting small landholdings, or *minifundios*, were and are the most common type of agricultural unit. Comprising less than 10 hectares (24.7 acres), these small family farms afford a meager living during good times and near starvation during bad. In Colombia, traditionally they accounted for 73 percent of the farms, yet they covered only 7.2 percent of the agricultural area. In Ecuador in 1954, 0.04 percent of the landholdings accounted for 45.2 percent of the farmland; in contrast, the *minifundios* comprised 73 percent of the landholdings but only 7 percent of the land. In Guatemala, per the 1979 agrarian census, less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the landholdings comprised 22 percent of the land, while the largest 2 percent of the farms had 65 percent of the land. In El Salvador in 1971, 4 percent of the landowners (the *latifundistas*) owned 64 percent of the land, and 63 percent of the landowners (the *minifundistas* and *microfundistas*) had only 8 percent of the land. At the beginning of the 1980s, 40.9 percent of rural families were landless altogether, and land concentration is still continuing in many areas. In Brazil, 70 percent of the rural population did not own any land at all, but 1 percent of the country's farms (*fazendas*) occupied 43 percent of the arable land in the 1950s. This inequity continued and later engendered a growing Landless Workers Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra; MST) in the 1980s. Their occupations of unused land have often met with brutal repression by local authorities and the *fazendero*'s hired gunmen (see Table 2). The conflict was so intense that some 1,600 Brazilians have been killed in land disputes since 1985.

The process of the fractionalization of small holdings has continued. The *microfundio*, a very small farm of less than 2 hectares (5 acres), is unable to sustain a family. The food and income from this small holding must be supplemented by income from outside labor by one or more family members. The capitalization, commercialization, and related mechanization of agriculture have put even greater stress on the *microfundistas* and many of the *minifundistas*. The reduction in demand for rural labor has forced many to abandon their holdings altogether and flee to the cities in hope of better opportunities. In recent times, large-scale agricultural production has undergone a transformation. The heavy reliance on cheap labor and abundant land in the absence of mechanization is rapidly giving way to more capital-intensive production that relies on mechanization and more intensive use of irrigation (where necessary), chemical fertilizers, and the application of insecticides by aerial spraying. As has been the case in U.S. agriculture, land is also in the process of being consolidated into larger units that can most benefit from the efficiencies of large-scale production. This has signaled a move from the traditional agricultural economy to an integrated capitalist mode of production.[4] The large plantations and commercial farms devote more and more of their production to cash crops that are sold on the world market, while the production of basic foodstuffs for local consumption more

TABLE 1. *Minifundios* and *Latifundios* in Select Countries: Traditional Landholding Patterns, 1970

	Minifundios		Latifundios	
Country	% of Farms	% of Land	% of Farms	% of Land
Argentina	43.2	3.4	0.8	36.9
Brazil	22.5	0.5	4.7	59.5
Colombia	64.0	4.9	1.3	49.5
Chile	36.9	0.2	6.9	81.3
Ecuador	89.9	16.6	0.4	45.1
Guatemala	88.4	14.3	0.1	40.8
Peru	88.0	7.4	1.1	82.4

Source: Michael Todaro, *Economic Development in the Third World.* 2nd ed. New York: Longman, 1985, p. 295.

frequently occurs on the small farms. China has emerged as a new market for many of these crops and for mineral and other primary products. Not surprisingly, the production of corn and grains for local consumption is decreasing amidst growing malnutrition. Fewer of the poor have the funds to augment their consumption of staples. Groups such as OxFam, Bread for the World, and Food First have noted the decrease in protein consumption among the poor with increasing alarm. More and more land is being used for the production of export crops like beef or soy, yet in most of Latin America few of the poor are able to afford beef or other meats more than a few times a year.

Although Latin America is industrializing and urbanizing at an amazing rate, agriculture is still very important. In 1990, agriculture still accounted for 40 percent of the exports for the region. The capitalization and commercialization of agriculture that have buttressed the consolidation and reconcentration of the land have radically decreased opportunities for labor and sharecropping in the countryside. Thirty-nine percent of the rural population in Brazil is now landless. There is also a high incidence of landlessness in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, and Peru. Consequently, there are fewer opportunities for peasants and landless laborers to sustain themselves. Currently, more than 60 percent of the rural population lives in poverty. Global economic forces are driving people off the land in record numbers. In Brazil, many flee to the Amazon region to mine gold or engage in a cycle of slash-and-burn agriculture that pushes them ever farther into the virgin rain forest. More generally, new, rural refugees flock to the cities, where they try to establish themselves in the growing shanty towns that ring large urban centers.

The Mega Cities: Urbanization

Latin America is no longer the land of sleepy peasants and small villages. It has changed dramatically. Some three-fourths of the population now live in urban areas (see Table 2) compared to 41.6 percent in 1950. There are three cities in Latin America that are now larger than New York City. Mexico City alone has some 22 million people and is the largest city in the world. São Paulo, Brazil, has 18 million and is

TABLE 2. Basic Statistics for Latin America, Canada, and the United States

Country	Total Population (2015) (in thousands)	Annual Population Growth Rate (%)	Urban Population (%) (2015)	Cities with 100,000 or More Inhabitants (2015)~	Gross National Income (International $) (in millions) (2015)#	Per Capita Gross National Income (International $) (2015)#	Life Expectancy at Birth (2015)	Literacy Rate (15+ yrs old) (2015)	Female Economically Active Rate (%) (2012)>	Estimated Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births) (2016)^
Argentina	43,298.26	1.03	91.8	27	586,170.69 **	13,640 **	76.1	98.0	47	10.1
Bolivia	10,737.27	1.61	69.1	10	73,380.39	6,840	67.8	94.5◊	64	36.4
Brazil	207,749.81	0.94	85.7	250	3,122,692.58	15,020	74.2	91.5	60	18
Chile	18,088.73	1.08	88.9	30	390,191.20	21,740	81.0	96.7▪	47	6.7
Colombia	48,228.61	0.98	79.4	61	651,946.99	13,520	73.8	93.6▪	56	14.1
Costa Rica	4,820.78	1.13	76.6	10	71,526.51	14,880	79.2	97.4▪	46	8.3
Cuba	11,421.59	0.15	77.0	13	210,992.15▪	18,630▪	79.2	99.8◊	43	4.5
Dominican Republic	10,530.93	1.24	78.8	20	142,837.60	13,570	73.3	90.9	51	18.1
Ecuador	16,144.35	1.56	64.4	16	180,674.67	11,190	75.6	93.3	54	16.9
El Salvador	6,298.49	0.40	69.0	10	50,383.05	8,220	72.7	86.8	47	17.3
Guatemala	16,381.75	2.08	56.0	5	122,755.40	7,510	71.5	77.0	49	22
Haiti	10,749.64	1.39	52.0	4	18,895.68	1,760	62.6	48.7ψ	60	48.2
Honduras	8,075.03	1.47	53.6	3	38,243.26	4,740	72.9	85.5	42	17.7
Nicaragua	6,085.53	1.17	57.6	5	30,715.10	5,050	74.6	78.0ϕ	47	19
Panama	3,929.11	1.64	66.6	2	81,359.88	20,710	77.4	94.1δ	50	10.1
Paraguay	6,639.16	1.34	66.4	7	57,576.13	8,670	72.8	93.9δ	58	19.4
Peru	31,383.48	1.32	78.7	23	375,324.84	11,960	74.2	93.8δ	68	19
Puerto Rico	3,683.24	-0.14	93.6	5	86,328.62⊐	24,030⊐	79.2	92.0δ	36	7.4
Uruguay	3,430.28	0.34	95.3	2	69,861.73	20,360	77.0	98.4	56	8.5
Venezuela	30,553.59	0.95	89.5	45	536,731.79⊐	17,730⊐	74.1	94.8▪	52	12.5
NAFTA Countries										
Canada	35,362.91^	0.74^	81.8^	52	1,576,518.82	43,970	81.9^	99.0*	58	4.6
Mexico	124,612.40	1.38	77.3	85	2,178,018.67	17,150	76.5	94.0	44	11.9
United States	323,995.53^	0.81^	81.6^	284	18,138,314.00	56,430	79.8^	99.0*	62	5.8

Sources: Economic Commission on Latin America. *ECLAC/CEPAL Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean.* http://interwp.cepal.org/anuario_estadistico/anuario_2015/en/index.asp. All data from ECLAC/CEPAL Statistical Yearbook 2015 unless otherwise noted.

⊐Data from 2013 ◊Data fvrom 2012 ▪Data from 2011 δData from 2010 ψData from 2006 ϕData from 2005

^2016 CIA World Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2091rank.html *Data from 2013 World Factbook estimates. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2103rank.html **Data from 2014 Atlas method. ~United National Statistical Division. Demographic Yearbook 2015. Population of Capital Cities and Cities of 100,000 or More Inhabitants. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2014.htm #The World Bank 2015 Data. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.MKTP.PP.CD >Data from Statistics and Indicators on Women and Men. U.N. Statistics Division. July 2013. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/Dec.%202012/5a.xls

the third-largest city in the world, and Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, has more than 12 million. By 1990 Latin America had 40 cities with 1 million or more inhabitants. This was more than Canada and the United States combined. More than 140 million Latin Americans live in these modern megalopolises compared to fewer than 100 million in the United States. Urban areas in Latin America continue to explode with new people as more children are born and millions flock to the bright city lights each year. Municipal services can in no way keep up with the steady stream of new arrivals. The streets are clogged with all types of vehicular traffic, and the air is polluted by thousands of cars, trucks, and buses. Mexico City has some of the most polluted air in the world. Oxygen is sold at booths on the street. Thousands suffer and many die from pollution-induced respiratory problems. Mexico City is immense and unmanageable. The quality of life for all too many of its residents is marginal. Nor is it easy to escape. It can take more than two hours to traverse it. São Paulo suffers from similar problems and, like Mexico City, has a very high crime rate. Other cities seem headed in this direction. As the growing middle class exercises its consumers' right to own private vehicles, gridlock is the norm in rush hour, and parking is often nearly impossible. The impoverished masses endure long hours on crowded buses and vans. The congestion is sometimes alleviated by subways, but they rarely cover more than a few areas of the city, may be more expensive, and cannot keep up with the growing number of new neighborhoods and urban squatter settlements.

Often, one-third or more of the population in the large cities lives in slums and shanty towns. Of the 18 million people in greater São Paulo, close to 8 million live in the *favelas*, as the urban slums are called in Brazil. Because many of these new agglomerations often grow quickly where unused land is illegally occupied, city services are often minimal or unavailable altogether. Living conditions are frequently horrible, with no running water, sewer, or trash collection (see Table 7 in Chapter 5). Sometimes the only electricity is provided by illegal taps to lines that run close to the neighborhood. Crime, violence, and growing gang activity are often at uncontrollable levels. Little, if any, police protection is available in most of the larger slums, and poor neighborhoods are often infiltrated if not run by drug gangs, juvenile gangs, and other types of organized crime. The rapidly growing Mara Salvatrucha and M-18 gangs control entire neighborhoods throughout El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and gangs control entire neighborhoods in Brazilian cities like Rio de Janeiro. Gangs often assert de facto control of specific slum neighborhoods, and the police are often reluctant to enter unless as part of a concerted, massive action led by heavily armed special police. (See the Brazilian films *Cidade de Deus* and *Tropa de Elite* for graphic depictions.) Slum areas are referred to as *barriadas, colonias, pueblos jovenes, villas de miseria*, or *tugurvios* in different Spanish-speaking countries and as *favelas* or *mocambos* in Brazil. They continue to grow dramatically. In these places, there is an abundance of misery and drugs, while hope is often in short supply.

Originally, towns in Spanish America were planned around gracious central plazas, often called the *Plaza de Armas* or *Zócalo*. Here, one would find a pleasant plaza with the main church or cathedral, government buildings, and the palaces of prominent officials ringing it. Others of means and social standing would occupy neighborhoods adjacent to the center. The outskirts of the cities were reserved for

Mexico City, 2000. *(Photo by Patrice Olsen)*

the poor and marginalized. However, the once-majestic colonial centers are now generally overwhelmed with traffic problems and pollution. Towns in Portuguese America were not always planned affairs; often, they grew around a fort or business center and then expanded. In all of Latin America, the worst slums are still generally found on the peripheries of the cities, although poor neighborhoods and scattered makeshift dwellings can also be found inside traditional cities, as is the case in Rio de Janeiro. Many of the wealthy and upper middle class have also begun to move to well-protected, gated, and guarded urban high-rises or flee the centers to populate more removed, attractive, exclusive neighborhoods characterized by gates and guards and high-walled, luxurious houses or high-rise condominiums staffed by numerous servants and well-armed private guards and with easy access to the newest in Latin American consumerism—the mall. Suburban-style *urbanizaciones* are also being constructed to cater to the housing needs of the rest of the growing middle class, which is also flocking to shopping centers and malls in growing numbers. The contrast between the lives of the urban poor and their middle- and upper-class fellow urbanites becomes ever more stark each day and increased in much of the region with the turn to neoliberal economics.

Ironically, many are afraid to shop outside of the privately guarded malls and shopping centers. Fed by deteriorating socioeconomic conditions for the poor, urban crime and delinquency have grown dramatically in recent years. One can see the

homeless and the hustlers living and sleeping on the streets in most of the major cities. Many middle- and upper-class drivers are afraid to stop at traffic lights—particularly at night—in many areas for fear they will be robbed at knife- or gunpoint or even by street children who threaten with broken shards of glass. Sometimes the merchants and the police take matters into their own hands. Brazil in particular has become infamous for the way street children have been beaten, run off, and even killed in groups to clear the area and discourage their perceived criminal activity. Some 5 percent of Brazil's children live in the streets. Of these, more than 4,000 were murdered between 1988 and 1991. Even Charles Dickens's impoverished souls would find life hard in the modern Latin American city.

Throughout Latin American society, crime and violence are growing to astronomical levels. Economic and social disparities, the suffering caused by International Monetary Fund-dictated economic adjustments and austerity, the ravages of globalization, a brand of free market economic policy called *neoliberalism* (see Chapter 7), narco trafficking, and the fallout from the guerrilla wars that have raged throughout the region all add to the general level of violence, which is now very high. For instance, El Salvador had one of the highest murder rates in the world at more than 100 per 100,000 per annum in the beginning of 2016. A few year ago, the homicide rate in Honduras was the highest in the world at 82 per 100,000. A few years ago, Colombia was at 80 murders per 100,000, while Brazil had 20 per 100,000. The cost in human suffering and lives is horrendous, and the economic cost is staggering. In 1998, the head of the Inter-American Development Bank reported that violence cost the region about $168 billion per year, or 14.2 percent of the regional economic product. Just in Brazil, the cost was $84 billion, or 10.5 percent of the gross domestic product. The figure for Colombia was 24.7 percent. Nor is Central America immune to the growing crime rates. Violent crime increased by 14 percent in the first half of 2004 alone in Guatemala and has now reached epic proportions. Throughout northern Central America violent street gangs, or *maras*, are on the rise. They got their start when thousands of Salvadoran and other street gang members from Los Angeles and elsewhere in the United States lost their residency because of criminal convictions and were deported to their home countries. Gang activity has been so virulent in El Salvador, Honduras, and even Guatemala that their governments have engaged in heavy-handed, often violent, crackdowns on the Mara Salvatrucha, M-18, and other gangs. Yet neither the police nor judicial authorities are able to stop the rapid growth of gangs (*maras*) in the three Central American countries, where they may include as many as 100,000 members. Also on the increase are violent kidnappings and carjackings in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, and elsewhere. The resultant personal insecurity and added economic expense weigh heavily on the region's future and cloud its growing dynamism. Crime and measures to combat it are consuming more of the region's gross national product (GNP) and slowing development. Many are now fleeing the cities to heavily guarded high-rises or gated suburban communities, or they are leaving their countries completely. More and more of the upper and middle classes live in fear of their own countrymen and try to isolate themselves from the masses. As well as economic refugees, there is a growing flood of refugees to the United States because of high levels of crime generally and gang and cartel persecution in Central America and Mexico in

particular. These problems, and their causes, will need to be addressed before the region can realize its full potential.

Yet, the growing personal insecurity and environmental degradation that the region is suffering would seem to contradict an essential tenet of Latin American life—*Hay que gozar de la vida* (Life is to be enjoyed). Many Latin Americans note that North Americans (meaning those who are from the United States) live to work and worry much too much about things. In contrast, Latin Americans work to live and *no se preocupan tanto*—do not worry so much. Whenever there is a bare modicum of economic security—and sometimes even when there is not—they live very well indeed. When one is free from the imminent threat of crime, kidnapping, or economic deprivation, life can be an enjoyable experience to be savored. One rarely turns down an invitation to a social gathering and frequently enthusiastically dances until dawn at a *fiesta*. Of those with any means, it is common practice to stop for a coffee or lunch with friends and family, and most business meetings begin with a *cafecito* and talk of family and friends. Indeed, work is generally not the all-consuming activity it has become in the United States, Japan, and parts of Western Europe. However, when the pollution from the street makes it difficult to sit in sidewalk cafes and the frequency of attacks on nocturnal travelers or gang extortions or assassinations make it dangerous to go out at night, the very essence of Latin American existence is challenged. Many are even afraid to leave their houses unattended or in the hands of poorly paid servants because of the frequent break-ins and house takeovers. In countries like Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador, and in cities like Mexico City, any person of means or position must also live in fear of kidnapping for ransom or extortion. Thus, rapid urbanization, industrialization, and the persistence of unresolved social and economic problems such as high unemployment, exploitation, and economic injustice have combined with rapid social and cultural change to produce conditions that threaten the very essence of the Latin American lifestyle. Yet, the indomitable Latin American spirit and passion for life propel "the continent" ever onward.

Notes

1. *Latin* here refers to modern languages that were derived from classical Latin: Spanish, Portuguese, and French in this case. Haiti is included as part of the region (indeed, it was the first country to gain independence—in 1804) and receives its fair share of attention and interest. Those areas still under French colonial rule receive much less attention. French colonies in Latin America include the Caribbean islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, Saint Martin, and Saint Pierre and Miquelon as well as French Guiana (site of Devil's Island) on the South American continent.

2. Although we will generally not include those areas that do not speak Spanish, Portuguese, or French in our study, it should be noted that the English-speaking part of the region includes not only Belize in Central America and Guyana in South America but also the Caribbean countries of Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago; English-speaking territories include Anguilla, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands (which Argentina claims as the Islas Malvinas), Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands, British Virgin Islands, and U.S. Virgin Islands. Dutch is spoken in the South American nation of Suriname and in the Caribbean Dutch islands of Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, Saba, Saint Eustatius, and Saint Maarten.

3. See the award-winning 1970 Peruvian film *La Muralla Verde* (written, produced, and directed by Armando Robles Godoy with Mario Robles Godoy) for a graphic depiction of the struggle with the jungle.

4. Because of the feudal nature of the original *latifundio* system and the way many small producers were primarily subsistence farmers who sold little, if any, of their production for the world market, many spoke of a dual rural economy with aspects of both feudal and capitalist modes of production. The integration into the capitalist world system that authors such as Andre Gunder Frank (1967) emphasized in his *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* has now become almost universal as the large farmers and plantations become ever more oriented to the production of cash crops for export and more and more of the smaller farmers are forced to sell their labor in the globalized national economy to survive.

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Cidade de Deus/City of God. Brazil, 2003. A modern classic on (very) violent gang activity in the largest slum in Rio de Janeiro.

Like Water for Chocolate. Mexico, 1992. Excellent portrait of Mexican family, food, and the daughter who stays at home to care for her mother.

Mexican Bus Ride. Mexico, 1951. Classic film by the Spanish director Luis Buñuel on Mexico, life in Latin America, and the institution of the bus in Mexico and Latin America.

La Muralla Verde/The Green Wall. Peru, 1970 (video, 1990). An excellent film about a young Lima family that fights bureaucracy and the jungle's green wall to colonize the Peruvian Amazon.

Pejote. Brazil, 1981. Gives a glimpse of the life of street children in a large Brazilian city. For a more general view of city life, see *Central Station*, Brazil, 1998.

Tropa da Elite. Brazil, 2007. Graphically depicts how an elite police unit in Rio de Janeiro operates in the city's slums.

Websites

http://lanic.utexas.edu/ Latin American Center Homepage, University of Texas.

http://www.blueplanetbiomes.org/ On rain forests in the Amazon.

TWO

EARLY HISTORY

For many years, people in the Western Hemisphere have widely celebrated Columbus's 1492 "discovery" of what the Europeans called the "New World." Accordingly, Columbus Day is celebrated as a national holiday in the United States. More broadly, throughout the Americas, the year 1992 was celebrated as the five hundredth anniversary of the "discovery of the Americas;" but not all celebrated. Many Native Americans banded together to solemnly mark the same period as 500 years of mourning because of the many injustices that the European invasion wrought on their people. Indeed, in the first 100 years of colonization, European rule attacked native religion and culture, razed temples and cultural centers to the ground, and forbade the practice of native religions. In so doing, the colonists attacked the very essence of the original Americans, called "Indians" because Columbus and the original explorers mistakenly believed they had reached the East Indies. Colonization was, as the French Antillean author Frantz Fanon suggests, a brutal, violent imposition of European on native. The effect of European rule was so devastating to the native peoples of Latin America that their numbers were reduced by as much as 90 percent during the first 100 years of European occupation.

There are several versions of how the Iberians treated the native people they encountered. The indigenous version is one of conquest, domination, and subordination. Yet Spain maintained that it brought Christianity and Western civilization to the world it found. In contrast, England long propagated the Black Legend about the cruelties of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas and attributed much of the native population's decline to the barbarities they suffered at the hands of the Spaniards. Another explanation of this precipitous decline is found in several recent studies that make an ever-stronger case for the disease theory of population decline—that is, the main cause of the radical decline in population of the original Americans was not the undeniable cruelty practiced by many of the Spaniards but the unstoppable epidemics of smallpox, measles, typhus, and other diseases that swept through the native population. The first Americans had not, it seems, acquired any natural immunity to these and other diseases the Europeans brought with them. Thus, they were ravaged by them. Many also argue this was the principal factor in the Spaniards' astounding conquest of millions of people with a few hundred

conquistadores. Indeed, the diseases often spread so rapidly that they arrived before the Spaniards. Evaluating these different perspectives, one might conclude that the story does indeed sometimes change over time but that each new version adds to our understanding of the past. Not surprisingly, then, we find that our historical views of what happened in the sixteenth century are heavily colored not only by the cruelty that gave rise to the Black Legend but also by our present understanding of epidemiology.

People in the Americas before the Conquest

To understand the historical context in which political power is exercised in Latin America, we need to briefly trace the human past as it developed in the Americas. Human history did not begin when Europeans began arriving in the Western Hemisphere in large numbers after 1492. Indeed, the common ancestry of all racial groups who found their way to the Americas was neither European nor Asian. Currently, it is believed that the earliest humans emerged on the shores of Lake Victoria in East Africa some 3 million years ago. The famous Leakey family of anthropologists' discovery of tools and bone fragments from our most ancient human predecessors suggests an African birthplace for our species. From there, it is believed, humans spread south in Africa and north to the Middle East, Asia, and eventually Europe. Later, they crossed the land and ice bridge that spanned the Bering Strait from what is now eastern Russia to arrive in Alaska during the Ice Age.

Indigenous Civilization

The movement of peoples from Asia to North America occurred in waves and began as early as 40,000 years ago. It continued until about 8000 B.C.E. These immigrants first populated the Western Hemisphere and were the first Americans. They swept down from Alaska and spread across North America and into the Caribbean and Central America; from there they spread down the west coast of South America and then eastward across the continent. As their productive forces increased, they moved from a nomadic existence to one of sedentary agriculture. By 1500 B.C.E., there were villages of full-time farmers. Corn, beans, and squash became staples in Mesoamerica (the southern two-thirds of Mexico, all of Guatemala, and most of El Salvador, Belize, Honduras, and Nicaragua), while potatoes, manioc, and amaranth were dominant in areas of South America. The large numbers of different ethnic groups practiced sedentary or semisedentary agriculture. As they further developed their productivity, they formed larger groups: tribes, chiefdoms, and states. This also led to more concentrated political power.

Native American settlements were scattered throughout the region. The population did, however, become concentrated in three areas: present-day central Mexico, southern Mexico, and northern Central America; along the Pacific Coast; and in the Andean highlands in what is now Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. Here, agricultural production was sufficiently advanced to sustain a large, relatively concentrated population. Each of these areas eventually developed a dominant, centralized state civilization that came to be known, respectively, as Aztec, Mayan, and Incan. Smaller political groupings developed elsewhere.

Many aspects of these empires have influenced the culture and even the political organization of subsequent polities in these areas. In that little about these civilizations is usually included in most general courses, the following section presents a rudimentary description of their key aspects.

Large draft or meat animals that could be domesticated were not available to the native civilizations. In the west coast civilization in South America, the guinea pig was domesticated as a source of food, and the llama was used as a pack animal


NEW FRANCE
DISPUTED BY ENGLAND, RUSSIA AND SPAIN
ENGLISH COLONIES
EFFECTIVE FRONTIER OF SPANISH SETTLEMENT
FLORIDA Ceded to England, 1763–1783
ATLANTIC OCEAN
VICEROYALTY OF NEW SPAIN
HAITI (SAINT DOMINGUE) Ceded to France, 1697
Guadalajara
Mexico City
Santo Domingo
JAMAICA Conquered by England, 1655
Guatemala
Caracas
VICEROYALTY OF NEW GRANADA
Bogotá
GUIANA
Separated from Viceroyalty of Peru, 1717, 1739
Quito
VICEROYALTY OF BRAZIL
Pernambuco
VICEROYALTY OF PERU
PACIFIC OCEAN
Lima
Cusco
Salvador (Bahia)
Chuquisaca (La Plata, Sucre)
São Paulo
Rio de Janeiro (Capital, 1763)
VICEROYALTY OF LA PLATA Separated from Viceroyalty of Peru, 1776
Santiago
AUDIENCIA OF CHILE Retained by Viceroyalty of Peru, 1776
ANDES MTS
Buenos Aires
CLAIMED BUT NOT SETTLED BY SPAIN
Map of
COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA
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1000 Miles

and as a source of wool and meat. The Aztecs bred a small mute dog for food in Mexico. Unlike in Europe, there were no cattle, horses, or oxen.

The use of baskets and of stone, bone, and wood gave way to the development of pottery and more sophisticated stone (obsidian) weapons and tools and eventually to the use of bronze in the Aztec and Incan Empires. In the first more developed societies to emerge, such as the Olmecs and Toltecs in Mexico and the Mochica in coastal Peru, large temple-centered cities emerged. They were beautifully designed and employed sophisticated stone and adobe construction. Only in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries did these city-centered societies begin to expand and form empires. They were still in the process of expansion when the Europeans arrived.

Our knowledge of these societies is incomplete, in part because there were few chronicles and inscriptions in Incan and pre-Incan civilizations on the west coast of South America and because many of the written texts, inscriptions, and chronicles that did exist for the Aztecs and Mayans were destroyed by the Europeans. The story of these peoples is only now being reconstructed through the laborious work of archaeologists and ethnologists from around the world.

The Maya. Mayan civilization flowered between 300 B.C.E. and 1100 C.E. During this time, Europe witnessed the disintegration of the Roman Empire, the rise of the Holy Roman Empire, and the beginning of the Middle Ages. Mayan civilization consisted of a series of city-states that developed in the Petén region of northern Guatemala, the Yucatán, and Chiapas in what is now Mexico. Their cities later spread into Belize and part of Honduras and eventually numbered about fifty. The Mayans developed what was then a very sophisticated native civilization. Their political-social organization was, however, hierarchical, with a king, nobles, and priests on top and the common people and slaves on the bottom; decision-making was authoritarian.

In the original Mayan states, the common people lived in thatched roof huts, not unlike those of the poor Mayan peasants of today, and nourished themselves on a balanced diet consisting of beans, corn, and squash. These crops could be cultivated in the same field. Planting the corn first ensured that it grew upward toward the all-important sun; the beans then used the stalk of the corn to follow the same path, while the broad leaves of the squash spread out on the ground to shade the soil from the desiccating rays of the sun and inhibit the growth of weeds. Further, the beans added nitrogen to the soil as the corn and squash removed it. The Mayan calendar also specified times when the land was to lie fallow. Terraces were used in highland areas to increase land area and stop soil erosion.

It is currently believed that the Mayan peasants paid tribute to the political and religious rulers in the cities. They in turn engaged in warfare with other city-states to gain more riches and obtain additional tribute. They also established extended commercial relations with civilizations to the north and even used the sea as a trade route.

In about 900 C.E., Mayan civilization suffered a rapid decline. The major cities and ceremonial centers were eventually abandoned, to be reclaimed by the jungle. Current research suggests the causes for this disaster were probably lack of adequate food production and soil exhaustion from overfarming, which had been induced by what evidently became an unsustainable population density.

The Maya's accomplishments in astronomy, mathematics, ideographic writing, architecture, and art and their highly sophisticated calendar mark them as one of

Rising some 148 feet out of the jungle in the Petén region of Guatemala, the Temple of the Jaguar in Tikal is one of the greatest Mayan structures. Apparently used for ceremonial purposes, it dates from the classical Mayan period and was constructed about 700 C.E. *(Photo by H. Vanden)*

the most developed civilizations of their time. They had incorporated advances in timekeeping from the Toltec and Olmec and employed the resultant extremely accurate 365-day calendar of eighteen months of twenty days with five additional days or "dead" days (which were considered unlucky). Their mathematical system used units of one, five, and twenty (which could be written as dots for ones and dashes for fives, with twenties denoted by position) and included a place value system employing a sign for zero. During their classical period, their calendar, astronomical observations, and use of zero as a place in written numbers marked their civilization as more advanced than any in Europe in these areas. Their hieroglyph-type writing recounted great events in their history and mythology and was carved or painted on their temples, pyramids, or upright stone *stelae* or recorded in their bark-paper codices. Recent research suggests symbols for syllables were also sometimes used