

Imperialism in Latin America

19th Century Latin America

- By the 1830s, most nations in Latin America had achieved independence. However, the road to political unity and economic prosperity was not as easily achieved.
- The idea of representative government was very appealing but when it was put into practice, regional & political factions vied for power, allowing for the rise of dictators, or *caudillos*.
- Additionally, prior to independence, few Latin American nations had much industry. The economic emphasis during the colonial era had been on the production of cash crops and other raw materials.



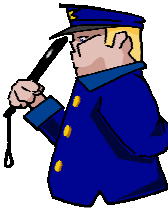
Economic Imperialism

- Latin American nations could produce many agricultural & mineral products demanded by industrial ones. The problem was that most nations did not have a comprehensive modern transportation system, nor did they have the industry to develop one.
- Latin American nations had 2 options: Borrow money to buy the necessary equipment OR allow industrial nations to construct and own the transportation system within the country.
- By borrowing money, they were indebted to another nation. And by allowing another nation to construct the transportation system they were forfeiting a measure of control. Both options allowed other nations undue influence in their economy and perhaps, government.
- While Latin America was not re-colonized directly, they were controlled economically.



The Big Stick

- By the mid-1800s, European nations had a good deal of economic control in Latin America, but they resisted political or territorial conquest... why?
- One reason was that the United States had emerged as a Western hemisphere policeman. By way of the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt corollary ("speak softly but carry a big stick"), the U.S. told European nations to stay out of the Western hemisphere, and warned Latin American nations of potential military interference.
- The United States involved itself in the Cuban War of independence (it became known as the Spanish-American War) in 1898, and received its first colonies: Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. Between 1901 and 1922, the U.S. military intervened again in Cuba several times, in the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti.



The Panama Canal

- The United States recognized the strategic value of a canal connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific, but Colombia refused to give the U.S. the rights to build the canal.
- In 1903, the United States supported (encouraged) a Panamanian rebellion against Colombia, and almost immediately recognized Panama as an independent nation.
- The U.S. was then granted the rights to dig the canal. Digging began in 1904, and was completed 10 years later in 1914. The canal remained a U.S. possession until 1999, when it was returned to Panama.

