

# **Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent Study Guide**

**Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent by Eduardo Galeano**

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# Plot Summary

*Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* by Eduardo Galeano is the story of the plundering of Latin American countries by foreign invaders. The historical account covers roughly five centuries. The book originally written to cover Latin American events and history through 1970 was provided with an addendum in 1978. This new chapter is entitled "The Last Seven Years." This last chapter is an update to information provided in the first version and is an account of reaction to the book and progress made since it was first published.

The chronology begins with the discovery of Latin America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Columbus had been sponsored by the Spanish Queen Isabella to sail west to India and to its riches. The discovery of the giant land mass in between—the Americas—was a surprise to Columbus and his crew. The inhabitants were called "Indians" since Columbus thought he had reached India. It was not long before the Spanish monarchy realized the prize they had accidentally discovered. Following the initial discovery, other Spanish explorers and their conquistadors soon returned to the land that was so rich in natural resources. The first pillage was the massive lodes of silver and gold discovered in this wild, untamed world. Hernan Cortes invaded the Aztec civilization which was an advanced society teeming with gold and silver. Montezuma feared the white-skinned, yellow-haired invaders who rode "tall deer," were covered in metal and aimed devastating fireballs at them. The Aztec leader determined that the invaders were returning gods and offered Cortes gifts of gold. But mere gifts were not enough, the conquistadors wanted it all. Although outnumbered by far, Cortes easily conquered these naïve, terrified people.

The Portuguese soon followed invading what is current day Brazil and plundering their rich resources. The region known as the Minas Gerais region contained the largest gold deposit ever found up to this time in history. Despite its vastness, the Portuguese in short order pillaged all the gold from the region. Although precious metals—gold and silver—were the first targets of the invading Spanish and Portuguese oppressors, over the years the resources of the continent were awe-inspiring and seemingly never-ending.

Although not indigenous to Latin America and transplanted originally by Columbus, sugar was a commodity that was to some in the world market as valuable as gold or silver. Sugar plantations sprung up in Brazil, Veracruz, on Caribbean islands and the Peruvian coast. However, just as gold and silver before it, the rich resource was plundered by foreign interests on the back of the poor workers who barely survived on the menial wages or the food they worked for. Bananas, coffee, cacao, nitrates, cotton, rubber, petroleum among others were all plundered by foreign interests. The foreign powers took the riches leaving behind poorer, more dependent countries, spent soil and impoverished workers who had no hope of a better life.

The sophisticated English got into the act creating lop-sided agreements with Portugal and Spain, taking from them the lion's share of profits and benefits and leaving the poor,



ravished countries in Latin America in even worse conditions. The monoculture societies in Latin America could not overcome their dependence on one-resource production and could never accumulate enough resources to create its own industrial infrastructure in order to provide finished products as opposed to just natural resources. For centuries the foreign powers engaged in slave trade, bringing literally millions of Africans into Latin America. The slaves and the native workers faced similar conditions—health issues, abuse, hunger and oftentimes early death.

As the centuries progressed, Latin American dictators entered into their own self-serving agreements with foreign interests. These dictators did little to further the cause of their country—they were more interested in gaining profits and position for themselves. In many ways, these dictators did as much harm to their countries as did the foreign invaders. They helped the plunder, abuse and abandonment of their own lands and people to continue. The pillage and abuse of Latin America continues on in modern times. The author views the the United States as the new conquistador. The US is continuing on in the tradition of its European cousins by entering into agreements with Latin American countries that favor them in tariffs, taxes and profits. Although there has been some progress along the years, Latin America has a long way to go. The abuse it has suffered over five centuries is heartfelt and part of their culture. It is not an easy task for the nations to recover from the despicable and degrading history thrust upon them at the hands of foreign invaders.



# Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver

## Lust for Gold, Lust for Silver Summary and Analysis

### The Sign of the Cross on the Hilt of the Sword

Loss of precious metals and discontent in dealing with intermediaries in trade for spices, tropical plants, muslins and sidearms drove Spain to sponsor Columbus on his 1492 trek. That year, however, represents more than the discovery of America. It was the year of a Holy War, a Christian war against Islam led by soldiers wielding swords with the Sign of the Cross on their hilts. Although America was considered the vast kingdom of the Devil, there was a cynical side to its conquest. Cortes noted that the "conquest of Mexico was to serve God and His Majesty and also to get riches."

### The Gods Return with Secret Weapons

The dispensation of land in the Americas was by Papal proclamation. The Pope awarded America to Queen Isabella. The lands south of a dividing line determined by the Pope were given to Portugal. Although the armies of Pizarro and Cortes were outnumbered by thousands of native defenders, their paths to victory was not difficult. The Indians were defeated by terror. Montezuma was terrified by the fireballs launched from canons the invaders used against them. The emperor was relegated to submission by the formidable presence of these light-skinned men, some with yellow hair. Surely this was the return of the Gods so recently prophesied. Horses once indigenous to South America had become extinct. The conquistadors arrived on horseback much to the astonishment of the Incas. The ultimate weapon against those attacked were the scurrilous diseases brought with them from Europe—tetanus, typhus and smallpox among them—killing more than half of the population.

### The Distribution of Functions Between Horseman and Horse

The plundering of Latin America's precious metals was followed by the exploitation of its people into an involuntary labor force. The energy of the Latin American labor force was focused on the external—the pressure to meet the needs of the demanding European marketplace. The labor force became the horse to the European horseman. The Latin American colonization served to develop capitalism. Unfortunately, the development was taking place in Europe not in its own backyard. Not all wealth left the country. However, the accumulated wealth remaining in Latin America was used to create grand palaces and showplace cathedrals and to widen the gap between the poor and the well off. The middle class promised by a capitalistic society was rejected and by-passed for sustained classism.

### The Silver Cycle: The Ruin of Potosi

The grandeur that was once Potosian society devolved into a distant memory. Stripped of its riches long ago, Bolivia is now one of the most poverty stricken countries in the



world. At its apex, Potosi lured talented artisans and painters. Much of their artwork and artifacts were stolen or destroyed. In just four centuries the population of Potosi decreased three-fold. The rich left first, then the poor. Another population center, Guanajuato, was said to have nourished a shocking inequality. Accumulated capital was most often passed thinly through the generations: Father a merchant, son a gentleman, grandson a beggar. Today most families in Guanajuato consist of five members who all typically live in one room hovels.

In 1601, Phillip III decreed the end of forced labor in the mines of Latin America. However, he secretly sent word to continue the practice. The perilous work in the mines caused the death of thousands of Indians every year. Laws were created throughout the years to protect the Indians—most often they were not enforced. Many Indians were poisoned by mercury used to extract silver from the mines. They suffered, losing hair and teeth and trembling uncontrollably. They were rendered too weak to work and became beggars before their untimely deaths. Out of guilt and a need for justification for the cruelty inflicted upon the Indians, many attributed the Indians' fate to their own sinful, soulless beings. Even though the Pope had declared them human, many were not convinced. One priest detected Semitic blood in the Indians because, like the Jews, the Indians were lazy, were not Christian and were ungrateful to the Spaniards for all their kindness. A survey conducted by the Catholic Church revealed that eight out of ten Paraguayans considered that Indians were animals.

#### The Militant Memory of Tupac Amaru

When the Spaniards first invaded South America, the Inca empire was at its peak. The Inca empire encompassed modern day Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador and portions other surrounding countries. The Aztec society was a successfully functioning confederation in Mexico with the Mayan civilization had control of the Yucatan and Central America. There is much evidence of the high level of advancement of these societies. Their temples were architecturally superior to the Egyptians. In Lima, many schools have been found with silver or gold plates inserted by surgeons. The Mayas left substantive proof of their astronomical and mathematic abilities. The Aztecs created irrigation systems and artificial islands that impressed Cortes. Once invaded, the Spaniards absconded not only the riches of the lands but the architects and engineers who created the societal infrastructures of these civilizations. These skills of these men were not important—the Spaniards needed them for their labor force in the gold and silver mines.

In 1781, Tupac Amaru led a rebellion against the oppressors. Although he achieved some success in freeing slaves and abolishing unfair taxes, he was captured after betrayal by one of his own chiefs. He and his family were subsequently tortured and murdered. Tupac's body was disassembled with parts being sent to various fronts, an ominous reminder for the Indians to stay in line. In 1969, even though reform was announced in Peru, there were still press reports of outraged Indians appearing to reclaim land stolen from their ancestors long ago. Other revolutionaries are dotted throughout the years of plunder, most meeting with failure and execution.

For the Indians, No resurrection at the End of Holy Week



Bolivian pongos, domestic servants, were still for hire in the early 1900s. Until they were fully liberated in 1952, the pongos slept with dogs and bowed to anyone with white skin. They were even forced to walk on all fours to transport baggage on their backs. The native costumes of some Indian tribes do not belong to their culture at all. Rather they designed and forced upon them by the Spaniards. The Spaniards encouraged the addition by the Indians to the naturally growing coca. Many became addicted, becoming easily compliant and dependent upon the Spaniards to satisfy their habits.

To this day, contact with the white man means death for the Indians. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were 230 tribes in Brazil. Since that time 90 have disappeared from violence, disease and the advance of civilization. A new conquistador—those from the United States—have descended upon the Brazilian forests. Indians have been machine-gunned from helicopters, villages bombed and tribal members inoculated with disease. The new conquerors are like those of ancient time. They steal the land and the riches, leaving the Indians terrorized or dead.

### Ouro Reto, the Potosi of Gold

Though at first the rain forests of Brazil seemed to hold no gold or silver, the Portuguese discovered gold on their own after they stole the land and exterminated its inhabitants. Brazilian gold mines spurred a dramatic increase of population from Portugal. From the time Brazil was conquered through abolition, it is estimated that 10 million blacks were brought from Africa. The Minas Gerais region was at the time the largest gold reserve ever discovered but was extracted in the shortest time period. Ouro Reto (rich town of black gold) became a thriving, sophisticated population center known as the precious pearl of Brazil. This mining town became wrought with decadence and corruption even among the clergy. Once again the labors were subjected to unhealthy conditions contracting and spreading deadly diseases amongst them. Though the black slaves lasted only on average seven years in the horrific environment, their masters insisted on baptizing them and forcing them to attend mass even though they were not allowed to sit in the pews. The gold miners took laborers away from sugar and tobacco plantations causing their demise. By the early 1700s, society began to spiral down from imbalance and inequity.

### What Brazilian Gold Contributed to Progress in England

Based on an agreement signed between England and Portugal in 1703, England, managed to undercut the benefits to Portugal of the gold mined by their colonies in Brazil. The agreement opened up its colonies' markets to British manufacturers. The agreement was disastrous for local Portuguese manufacturing. By the end of the 18th century Brazil was stripped of its gold. Minas Gerais was decaying in decadence and insolvency. Current day iron mining is being exploited by foreign operations in the region leaving no more iron behind than did the gold mining of years before. Like other plundered Latin American regions, Minas Gerais experienced an explosion of artistic talent during its hey day. Some vestiges of this art still exist although much of it has been plundered for its gold.



# King Sugar and Other Agricultural Monarchs

## King Sugar and Other Agricultural Monarchs Summary and Analysis

### Plantations, Latifundia and Fate

Next to gold, sugar was a source of great wealth for the Latin American conquerors. England and France entered an arrangement whereby they shared the profits of slave trade to the Americas. These profits led to gains in the industrial development for the English, French, Dutch and the US, while at the same time destroying the economy of NE Brazil and the Island sugar producers.

The key to success in the sugar industry was the traffic of slaves. From the beginning of the sixteenth century to the start of the nineteenth century, millions of Africans crossed the Atlantic, forced into a life of slavery. The ones that survived the trip were destined to lead miserable lives rife with hard labor, no reward, illness, hunger, torture and early death. Upon arrival in Latin America, slaves that were too small or sick to be sold were left on the deck to die. England was the biggest beneficiary of slave trade. Trade merchants become millionaires, financial houses swelled with money financing and insuring trade boats. Profits provided financing for Britain's Great Western railway. James Watts was subsidized with slave trade businessmen to build the steam engine.

In early 1900, Britain became the leader in an anti-slavery campaign to foster its international standings. Covertly, England continued its slave trade to Cuba and Brazil. Far north in New England, the slave trade helped to give birth to the US industrial revolution. Additionally, with capital obtained from slave trade, the US was able to finance George Washington with weapons for the American Revolution.

### The Rainbow Is the Road Back to Guinea

Beginning in the mid 1500s slave uprisings began to spring up. Most were thwarted with the guilty sentenced to death. Several hundred years later, slaves in Haiti escaped to the far side of the island and there reconstructed their former African life anew. The rainbow is to this day a symbol of their escape. The black kingdom of Palmares was established in NE Brazil. Until the late 1600s the civilization center was invulnerable. The Portuguese were relentless eventually engaging in a war with the self-liberated slaves that lasted 18 months. The Portuguese were victorious, killing thousands and beheading any that survived. There were slave rebellions in Cuba as well. The slaves maintained their devotion to their African gods asking to survive this life and return magically to their old one. These same gods are still adored in modern day praying for revenge of their ancestors oppressors.





### The Rubber Cycle: Caruso Inaugurates a Jungle Theater

The rubber industry in Brazil fostered the death of untold slaves. The heat drove the workers to the swampy areas that was rife with disease. Pent up in inhuman quarters, many died of heat exhaustion or communicable disease on their way across the ocean. Those who survived were given food and other necessities, driving the slaves into unending indebtedness to their masters. There was a worldwide boom for rubber and Brazil was home to the majority of the resource. Good times were ahead for everyone except of course the slaves who were over-worked and treated horrifically. Disaster struck the rubber industry when rubber tree seeds were smuggled out of Brazil to England. By 1913, rubber tree seeds sold to Asian plantations took over the rubber industry worldwide.

### Cheap Hands for Coffee

Coffee is ranked very high in the international marketplace. Latin America had a monopoly on coffee until the African coffee market reduced its share. Still, Latin America is still the world's top coffee producer. With coffee, Brazil's center of gravity moved south. Coffee producers used slaves and immigrants paid menial wages. Once again, coffee was a spoiler, destroying forests and leaving decadence in its harmful wake. Even modern times sees the plantations operated like in days before with vassal inhabitants who pay rent for their land through hard labor. Coffee is basic to El Salvador's economy. Haiti is home to a robust coffee industry. However, in both cases, the workers are paid menial wages under difficult conditions. Many of these workers suffer from severe vitamin deficiency. Columbia is king of coffee with only an estimated 5 percent of prices going to workers. Brazil has set up small farming plots called minifundios. These small farms produce an average of \$130 a year for their worker/owners.

### The Ten Years that Emptied Colombia's Veins

In Colombia in the 1940s, a democracy of small farmers raising coffee had created a society of citizens who had attained their own form of normalcy. However, the volatile country would soon explode in revolt. From 1948 to 1957, a bloody war turned Colombia into a cemetery having left 180,000 dead. Even after a quasi-peace agreement violence erupted repeatedly. Although the violence finally was arrested in 1957 and the coffee industry recovered, Colombia was left a poverty stricken country with inadequate employment opportunities and educational services for children. Approximately 1 million young children do not attend school.

### The World Market Casts Its Spell over Central America

Central American lands were comparatively unmolested until the middle of the 19th century. Coffee production became an important industry in the late 1880's by capturing one-sixth of the world's coffee production. To accommodate the growth of the industry, great tracts of idle land passed from the Church into private hands. As with other countries, wages remained at the hunger level preventing the development of any



internal market within Central America. Guatemala is the worst example of labor force racism. Indians suffer in the society remaining on the bottom rung. The banana crops in Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica were essentially taken over by US concerns which had more influence on the industry than did the various countries' presidents.

### The Filibusterers Come Abroad

In mid-nineteenth century, American William Walker and his band of assassins invaded Central America with the support of the US government. He robbed, killed, burned his way through the region ultimately declaring himself President of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras. He restored slavery to the region and was welcomed back to the US as a hero. From that point on invasions and interventions were the rule rather than the exception. President Taft declared the USA's intention to make the Panama Canal a state. Ex-President Teddy Roosevelt had swiped land from Colombia paying the country \$25 million to allow the erection of the Panama Canal which allowed the US a shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific. The US invaded and occupied other countries such as Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The US continued to dominate the banana industry in Central America. Ultimately the land was robbed of humus and the workers of their lungs but remained a major force in the industry. In the last 1920s, a tax was imposed on banana exporters but there was no system to ensure the taxes were paid.

### The Crisis of the 1930's: "Killing an Ant Is a Greater Crime than Killing a Man"

The great stock market crash in 1929 sunk the industries of Central America. Peasants were evicted, unemployment soared, economies collapsed. The Nicaraguan guerrilla leader caught the imagination of people worldwide. His small ragged army fought for years against the US invaders and National Guard. The more sophisticated armies were unable to defeat him. The Nicaraguan president invited him for talks. On his way, he was ambushed and killed, presumably a set up by the government. The murderer, Anastasio Somoza, later said that the US had ordered the killing. Somoza declared himself President of Nicaragua ruling as a cruel and murderous dictator for 25 years. Similarly another dangerous dictator rose to power in Guatemala. Jorge Unico an admirer of Napoleon applied a militaristic discipline throughout the country all the way down to school children.

### Who Started the Violence in Guatemala?

Ubico was overturned in 1944 by a revolutionary movement consisting of young officers and middle-class university people. Juan Jose Arevalo was elected as President and instituted new educational and labor standards. Arevalo made other changes all with a view toward improving the life of the people. However, propaganda spread that Guatemala was being run by Communists. A US-backed invasion of Guatemala was led by a native named Rodolfo Armas. Arevalo was overthrown and many intellectuals were killed or imprisoned. Since the first invasion, a conflagration started that has never been extinguished. Unrest and rebellion is a part of Guatemala's world. The society is poor and illness is rampant. Almost half the people that die each year are children. Infant mortality rate is 40 times that of the US.



### The First Agrarian Reform: 150 years of Defeat for Jose Artigas

Dispossessed Latins fought against the Spanish power at the beginning of the 19th century but was finally defeated. Landowners and businessmen became successful however the masses still suffered in poverty. Once the Spanish were thrown out, despite agrarian reform it was doomed to monoculture and dependence. Jose Artigas led the masses in the early 1800s. He fought against the Spanish and the Portuguese to improve the lives of the people in what is now Uruguay. He was able to institute the first agrarian code in 1815—free man and free land. Conditions began to improve markedly however it was not to last. The agrarian code was overthrown by the legislature. The landowners were evicted or buried in their land. A defeated Artigas fled to Paraguay and died alone after a long exile. Modern day Uruguay is controlled by a relatively few upper class families and claim the lion's share of the country's revenues.

### Artemio Cruz and the Second Death of Emiliano Zapata

A century after the Artigas land code, Emiliano Zapata introduced a similar law in his zone of revolutionary southern Mexico. Existing conditions for the people were dire and wages had not moved up for years. In 1845, The US annexed the Mexican territories of Mexico and California and restored slavery in the name of civilization. Mexico also lost the present day states of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada and Utah. After the invasion people suffered and the rest of Mexico's land suffered from American investments in its industries.

In 1910, the country rose against its President, Porfirio Diaz. Zapata led the successful insurrection in the south. Zapata proceeded with his plan to reform the agricultural structure in Mexico, benefiting the people with higher wages, the ability to own their own lands and make a better life for their families. Zapata had a devoted following and was making progress in his plans for reform. Sadly, he was betrayed and ambushed and executed reportedly thousands of armed men. Lazaro Cardenas followed the the Zapata model in agricultural reform. Although he too made progress, Mexico was never able to achieve its economic and social reformation.

### The Latifundia Multiplies Mouths But Not Bread

Latin American agricultural and livestock production per capita is lower today than before WWII. The small farm or Latifundia and its cousin the minifundio are choking agricultural and overall economic development as well. The principal weakness of the third world's economy is attributed to agricultural weakness. Although it is conventional wisdom that agrarian reform is the answer to greater development, many such plans have been introduced but many lay on shelves gathering dust. There is hope in that some plans have been implemented and enjoyed a measure of success. For example, Juan Domingo Peron defied the interests of the Argentinian landowners and imposed the Statute of the Peon and compliance with rural minimum wage. Similar steps have been taken in Peru and Chile showing at least modest progress.

### The Thirteen Northern Colonies and the Importance of Not Being Born Important



The Thirteen US colonies benefited from not have natural resources. There was no gold or silver that others may want to steal and kill for. There were no advanced Indian civilizations that had established successful agricultural centers. Latin America on the other hand had so many riches and resources that the invaders headed straight south to partake in the riches. These circumstances explain at least in part the successful consolidation of the United States as an economically autonomous system one which did not drain abroad the wealth it produced. The early diversification of their exports set off its rapid development. Unlike Latin America the thirteen US colonies was not chained to a monoculture and thus not dependent on the market fluctuations of one industry.

#### The Black Curse of Petroleum

Natural gas and petroleum are the main sources of energy in the world. As with coffee, petroleum fosters higher profits for consuming countries than for producing countries. The ratio is \$11 to \$1 profit in favor of the consuming country. The natural petroleum wealth of Venezuela and other Latin American countries has become a chief instrument of political servitude and social degradation. Cuba had been in agreements to provide refinery services for Standard Oil of New Jersey. After the 1959 revolution, Castro signed an agreement with the USSR. American companies refused to sign an agreement involving the USSR and began boycotting Cuba which led to the end of Cuba's refinery of American crude oil. Mexico too had experience with American oil corporation embargoes and unfair practices which left Mexico with a diminished petroleum industry dependent upon foreign demand.

Uruguay was the first Latin American country to install a state refinery. After some initial aggressive actions against it, by 1939, Uruguay's refinery was operating successfully. Based on that success, Brazil was spurred on to follow suit. The venture was a success for Brazil and continues operations currently but there were bumps along the way. At one point, Standard Oil geologists downgraded the quality of Brazil's oil in an effort to steer the market toward American affiliates in Venezuela. However, the "C" grading was found to be false and Brazil's rating was returned "A." Argentina also faced unfair grading of its petroleum reserves. Petroleum set off the Chaco War of 1932-1935 between South America's two poorest peoples. The War sparked by Standard Oil's intervention led to the mutual massacre of Bolivians and Paraguayans. Paraguay was victorious however the Bolivian land they claimed in victory was soon reclaimed by American interests. The volatility surrounding Latin American oil reserves continues with the individual countries making strides in fighting against foreign interests and interventions.

#### Vultures over Lake Maracaibo

Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela was found to be a great source of petroleum. Soon after rigs and derricks were installed in the lake, workers from Oklahoma and Texas were soon on site. Venezuelan dictator Juan Gomez began handing out concessions most of which went to Shell, Standard Oil or Gulf. Years later new Venezuelan leaders though failing to nationalize the petroleum industry ceased granting new concessions to foreign countries. However, just with other Latin American industries, Venezuela did not have

the resources to built and maintain petroleum production. Limited by the poverty of the masses, Venezuela could not sustain the development of manufacturers beyond certain limits.



# The Invisible Sources of Power

## The Invisible Sources of Power Summary and Analysis

As Lungs Need Air, So the US Economy Needs Latin American Minerals

The success of the greatest democracy on earth, the United States, relied on Latin America for natural resources and minerals. Petroleum continues to be the world's main energy source. Airplanes cannot be made without the bauxite necessary to produce aluminum. Copper is necessary to make the ammunition the military must have. These materials and others necessary to meet the challenge of industrial growth had become almost non-existent in the US. The US had to turn southward for its resources.

By-Products of the Subsoil: Coup d'etat, Revolutions, Spy Dramas, etc.

Brazil's vast iron resources were handed over to the Hanna Mining Company and handed their manganese over to Bethlehem Steel. The Brazilian government foolishly provided a tax free exempt for every \$88 out of \$100 Bethlehem invests in mineral exemption. As a result, Brazil gains very little from their valuable natural resources. Similarly, Bolivia ceded its valuable metals to a Dutch conglomerate. There are dozens of such examples which serve to fatten the exporter and leave the country and its people the worse off. As known resources ran out, scintillometers were employed to search and detect deposits. Using this high-tech equipment in Brazil hidden gold, silver, diamonds, gypsum and many other resources were found. Foreign interests bought a huge chunk of land for 7 cents. There were incidents of smuggling everything from diamonds to radioactive minerals. What was not given away or sold from Latin America was being carried off.

Copper Teeth in Chile's Flesh

Copper replaced nitrates as the center of Chile's economy with the US in a predominant position. Chile has the world's greatest copper lodes. To avert a similar fate that Chile's nitrate resources underwent, steps were taken to avert the plunder and economic hardship and protect Chile's precious copper reserves. The largest producers of copper were Chile, Zambia, the Congo and Peru. The government of Peru entered into agreements whereby the state reserves the right to retain their copper for their own projected plants. For not abiding by aspects of the agreements, several foreign interests lost their concessions. At last, a Latin American company was standing up to unfair foreign interests.

Iron Teeth in Brazil's Flesh

The US is dependent upon iron for many of its industries. Steel cannot be made without iron thus the large auto industry would be destroyed without a constant source of iron. Venezuela and Brazil are the main sources for iron in Latin America. In 1910, the Geological Congress in Stockholm created guidelines for US businessmen to follow to



evaluate the amount of subsoil of various countries. US companies was able to exploit the valuable resource as once again the Brazilian government lacked the capital and infrastructure to benefit from its own wealth.

### The Black Curse of Petroleum

Just as with coffee, petroleum allows rich countries to profit from the work of consuming the product versus the work the poor country contributes to producing it. The ratio is approximately 10 to 1—that is the consuming country makes \$11 per barrel while the producing company makes \$1 for that same barrel. The US is the biggest producer and biggest importer of petroleum. Shell's Venezuelan affiliates accounted for half of Shell's world profits. Cuba was allocated by Standard Oil to handle the its refining process. After th 1959 revolution, Standard refused to sign an agreement with the Soviet Union and Cuba ceased refinery operations for Standard. Mexico tangled with Standard Oil over refinery services years before Cuba's encounter. Uruguay was the first Latin American company to install its own state refinery.



# Tales of Premature Death

## Tales of Premature Death Summary and Analysis

### A Declaration of Independence Hailed by British Warships

In the mid-1800s the steam engine and innovations in the textile industry propelled Britain's Industrial Revolution. The British economy paid for the hides of Rio, the guano and nitrates of Peru, the copper of Chile, the sugar of Cuba and the coffee of Brazil with cotton textiles. In 1810, London created a devious policy which fluctuated with the needs of Britain, kept Latin America from falling into US or French hands and averted the infection of newly independent countries. Under this restrictive policy, Latin American manufacturers operated without the possibility of long-term development.

### The Dimensions of Industrial Infanticide

At the beginning of the 19th century, Mexican and Peruvian textile manufacturers were seeing a measure of success. Bolivia as well was an important textile center. Latin America was making strides in becoming a world class import/export country. It developed large ports to accommodate the burgeoning trade taking place between its countries and power foreign interests. However, the ports were merely paths through which the nations' income could be drained by those foreign powers.

### Protectionism and Free Trade: The Brief Flight of Lucas Alaman

The expansion of Latin American markets spurred wealth accumulation in London. Lucas Alaman, a conservative politician, warned that the economic ideology of Adam Smith was poison for the Latin American economy. His warnings were right—the credit and banking system failed due to the internal demands of poverty stricken countries unable to sustain its industrial growth. Esteban de Antunano insisted on Mexico's need to create a national machine industry to resist the aggression of European interests. Alaman and Antunano joined forces to reestablish political and economic independence and to extol the virtues of industrialization in defense against powerful and aggressive nations. However, they did not allow for the state of the continent due to the countless latifundia and general poverty.

### The Montoneros and Juan Manuel de Rosas's Legacy of Hate

The struggle between protectionism and free trade was the essence of the Argentinian civil wars in the 19th century. Taxes had been imposed on internal meat consumption and removed as exports. The gauchos accustomed to freely hunting calves was halted. Instead, the gauchos were proclaimed to be servants. The rise of the capitalist cattle ranch subjected Argentina to the dictatorship of the free-trade port. In an important step to recover national unity, Dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas introduced a protectionist tariff. It banned the import of many foreign commodities but a tax free status on ships bearing the Argentinian flag. Rosas above all represented the interest of beef ranchers in





Buenos Aires. Rosas remained loyal to the privileged class neglecting the millions of poverty stricken citizens. For all the strife he brought to his country, Rosas was despised and consider him guilty of treason. His bones have never been allowed a honorable grave.

#### How the War Against Paraguay Wrecked the Only Successful attempt at Independent Development

Since the 1950s, thousands of Paraguayans have permanently fled their country. Poverty is the impetus for this exodus from the country that had been considered the most advanced country in Latin America. Their success was taking profits from powerful foreign concerns, specifically England. In modern times, Paraguay is one of the most backward and poorest countries in the continent. Their downfall stemmed from a war of extermination which was the most infamous chapter in Latin America's history. The War of the Triple Alliance was actually prompted and financed by London who was protecting their own interests against those of Paraguay. Once the President of the country was killed by the invaders, Paraguay died with him.

#### How Loans and Railroads Deformed the Latin American Economy

Between 1822 and 1826 Britain had extended to the liberated Spanish colonies loans totaling millions of dollars. The Bank of England also directly financed government treasuries. The need for external financing became like the addict's need for drugs, indispensable. The prices of Brazilian exports dropped by 40 percent between 1821 and 1830 and 1841 and 1850 while foreign import prices remained stable. Inflation, bankruptcies, payment suspensions and desperate financial agreements were the result. By middle of the 19th century, payment of foreign debt took almost half of Brazil's budget. Railroads formed another web of dependency as a large portion of the financing was for railroads.

#### Protectionism and Free Trade in the US: A Success due Not to an Invisible Hand

Before the Civil War, Grant had a hand in the exploitation of Mexico. However, once the Civil War ended he sided on the side of protectionism for his country. After WWII the US began to establish lop-sided agreements with South American countries just as its older cousin England had. The International Monetary Fund and World bank came down on the side of the powerful nations, denying underdeveloped countries such as those in Latin America, the right of protecting their infant and struggling industries. However, at the time the US was able to maintain their own protectionist policies.



# The Contemporary Structure of Plunder

## The Contemporary Structure of Plunder Summary and Analysis

### An Impotent Talisman

In 1916, just one-fifth of foreign investments were from the United States. In modern times, however, three-quarters of direct private investment in Latin America is from the United States. The turning point was WWII when Latin America saw US investment advancing at the retreat of those from European interests. Following the European models, unequal exchange agreements have placed Latin America in an untenable position. Hunger wages in Latin America pave the way for high salaries and benefits for US workers. Although Brazil is an industrialized nation, it is still vitally dependent upon its coffee exports while Argentina depends on sales of beef to foreign powers. Globalization has benefited the powerful countries while the industrialization of Latin America has not been beneficial to its economy nor its society. It is structured in such a way that benefits the powerful.

### Which Flag Flies Over the Machinery?

Almost a third of US investment in Latin America is in Mexico. Of the top Mexican enterprises over fifty percent are wholly or partly controlled by foreign capital. Foreign concerns control more than half of new technologies such as the computer industry and machinery and industrial equipment.

### Bombardment by the International Monetary Fund Helps the Conquerors to Land

The Organization of American States has recognized that the disproportionate number of US affiliate financial resources weakens the chance for the success of national undertakings, leaving them vulnerable to aggressive take-overs by the US and its partners.

### The US Is Generous with Other People's Savings: The Invasion of the Banks

A large amount of Latin American funds have been absorbed into banks that are controlled from foreign shores, chiefly the US. The Latin American governments are fully aware of this process but are too weak or not inclined because of self-interest among the few to put a halt to it. The Latin American governments are satisfied with the solid guarantees and large-volume business from foreign interests.

### Technocrats are Better Hold-up Artists than Marines

The US provides more than fifty percent of the loans Latin American countries receive. Latin American governments are under great pressure from international monetary

organizations to pay their debts and reorganize their financial structures. However, their inability to build reserves and increase industrial progress and thus national revenues makes it increasingly difficult to meet their obligations.

#### The Organized Inequality of the World Market Is Unchanged by Industrialization

The international market separates buyers into two entities: those demanding raw material commodities and secondly those who seek finished goods. Powerful countries like the US force trade and industrial restrictions on weaker nations like those in Latin America. For instance, the US uses the IMF, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade on Latin America forcing reduction in their ability to expand their international trade horizon. Discarding the concept of free play of market forces, coordination of global activities position foreign shareholders to receive a disproportionate share of profits. It behooves foreign industry to operate in Latin American countries. They are given free land, tax exemptions and cheap labor. These companies make huge profits and leave little behind for the country who actually produced the product.

#### As Simon Bolivar Prophesied: We Shall Never Be Happy, Never

Latin American continues to struggle with their economy, the poor and the inequities of trade agreements that favor the powerful, foreign interests. Some of the countries are making strides against towering odds but there is a long way to go. As Simon Bolivar said, "We shall never be happy, never!"

# Seven Years After

## Seven Years After Summary and Analysis

In this portion of the book, the author Eduardo Galeano, describes events following the seven years after the book was published.

The author tells of reactions to his controversial book. He is heartened by the young girl who was reading the book to a companion on a bus in Colombia but spurred by her emotional reactions to what she read finally stood up and read it aloud to everyone. Galeano heard from a young woman who fled Santiago with the book inside her baby's diapers; and the young student who went from one book store to another in Buenos Aires to read the book because he didn't have enough money to buy it. The biggest compliment of all was when the book was banned by various militaristic dictatorships.

Among the important events occurring during the time lapse was the nationalization of Venezuelan oil. A terrible dictator, Augusto Pinochet, came into power in Chile. Pinochet was cruel and harsh to the Chilean citizens. He all but destroyed Chile's monetary system. Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Its citizens remain largely illiterate. Overall, Latin America's debt 1975 is at three times the amount as it was in 1969. Quite a jump in such a short period of time. Brazil made economic progress but shows infant mortality rising in the slums of the country's wealthiest cities. The oil boom in Ecuador brought color TV to the populace but failed to build hospitals or schools.

After seven years, however, Galeano sees very little real, positive, lasting change. Latin America's lack of development stems from external development and continues to depend upon it. A system that depends on maintaining its servitude to other more powerful countries will not grow and perhaps not even survive.



# Characters

## Montezuma, Emperor of the Aztecs

Montezuma (long)

The emperor, Montezuma, was the leader of the Aztec civilization in the early 1500s when his kingdom was invaded by the Spanish conquistadors led by Hernan Cortes. The conquistadors were sponsored by the Spanish monarchy and invaded the Aztec society because of the gold and silver and other precious resources that the Aztecs controlled. Montezuma was very alarmed to hear of the invasion. When he was first told of the impending battle, he was told that a mountain was alive and moving their way. When more messengers arrived with news of the invaders' weapons, Montezuma became terrified. Montezuma had no idea how to cope with this surprise attack. The weapon that had no name for the Aztecs was actually a cannon. It was described to him how a fireball would explode and fly out of the large iron object. The weapon, he was told, sounded as loud as thunder and echoed all over the countryside. When the object exploded, a large stone ball sped from it and rained fire as it flew through the air.

The men operating these weapons sat on "deer" as high as buildings. The "deer" were actually horses that at one time were indigenous to Latin America but had become extinct. The Aztecs did not know that the tall "deer" were actually horses. These invading soldiers' bodies were completely covered. All that could be seen were their faces. Obviously, the invaders wore armor plating but the Aztecs had never seen anything like it before. There was also something very strange about the invading soldiers. They were white, as white as lime. Some of the men had yellow hair. Others who had dark hair still had white skin. The men also were bearded. The Aztec Indians all were brown-skinned, dark haired and like most Indians cannot grow beards. These Aztec Indians had probably never seen a white man before. The "strange" physical appearance of these men were just as terrifying as the strange weapons they had. Montezuma concluded that these strange visitors were gods. It had been an prophesy among the Aztec culture that the god Quetzalcoatl would return to their city. Quetzalcoatl was white and bearded. Also white and bearded was Viracocha, the bi-sexual god of the Incans.

The Cortes and his conquistadors were clever people and had struck up an alliance with the Tlaxcalans, an enemy of Montezuma. After the Cholula Massacre, Montezuma sent gifts of gold to Cortes as peace offerings which did not ward off further invasion. The gifts only whetted the appetite of the invading conquistadors making them want and seek more gold and riches. Montezuma who was accused of treason by the priests ultimately committed suicide



## Tupac Amaru

Tupac Amaru - In 1781, Tupac Amaru led a rebellion against the oppressors, laying siege to Cuzco, Peru. Amaru was a mestizo chief and a direct descendant of Inca emperors. Amaru led a rebellion against the Spanish invaders that was akin to a messianic movement. Amaru was determined to turn his country around and defeat the Spanish conquistadors. (The term "mestizo" means one of mixed blood.) Amaru entered the plaza of Tungasuca and condemned the royal Corregidor Antonio Juan de Arriaga to death and ended the occupation. Within days, Tupac freed all the slaves and abolished all taxes and forced labor. Obviously, Tupac was a hero to the thousands of Indians who rallied to "the father of all the poor and all the wretched and helpless." He promised all those who would follow him and continue the battle that if they died in the war would be reborn after the invaders were defeated.

Tupac and his men battled on and won some battles and lost others. Although he achieved some success in freeing slaves and abolishing unfair taxes, his story did not end happily. Tupac was captured after betrayal by one of his own chiefs. The once glorious and beloved Inca Chief was handed over to the occupiers in chains. He was offered mercy if he would reveal the names of his other rebel accomplices. He refused saying that he and his captor were the only accomplices there were. His captor was the oppressor and he, Tupac, was the liberator, who both deserve to die. He and his wife and children and chief supporters were all subsequently tortured and murdered. Tupac's tongue was cut out and his body drug by galloping horses. He lived through that torture only to be beheaded to finally end his life. His head was sent to Tinta. Tupac's arms and legs were sent to various fronts, an ominous reminder for the Indians to stay in line. Tupac's torso was burned and the ashes thrown into the Watanay River. Tupac's murderers proposed that four generations of Tupac's descendants should all be obliterated.

In 1969, even though reform was announced in Peru, there were still press reports of outraged Indians appearing to reclaim land stolen from their ancestors long ago. Other revolutionaries are dotted throughout the years of plunder, most meeting with failure and execution but Tupac Amaru remains a hero of Peruvian history.

## Christopher Columbus

Christopher Columbus discovered Latin America but thought he had reached India and thus called the inhabitants of Latin America "Indians." Columbus transplanted sugar plants from the Canary Islands to Latin America and thus created the robust sugar industry, a resource that was not indigenous to Latin America.

## Hernan Cortes

Hernan Cortes led the Spanish Conquistadors in the invasion of the Aztecs who were easily conquered by the oppressors.



## **Jorge Eliecer Gaitan**

Jorge Eliecer Gaitan was the liberal leader in a failed rebellion in Colombia.

## **William Walker**

William Walker was a US citizen who invaded Central America with the private support of the US government. He killed, burned and robbed his way through the region ultimately declaring himself to be President of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.

## **Juan Jose Arevalo**

Juan Jose Arevalo was one of the leaders of the revolt in Nicaragua. He was elected President and began to bring positive reform to the country prior to his overthrow a few years later.

## **Jose Artigas**

Jose Artigas fought against the Spanish and the Portuguese to improve the lives of the people in what is now Uruguay. He was able to institute the first agrarian code in 1815—free man and free land

## **Juan Domingo Peron**

Juan Domingo Peron was the controversial President of Argentina (1946-1955).

## **Simon Bolivar**

Simon Bolivar was a Venezuelan military leader who fought against Spanish occupation. He made the famous comment about Latin America: "We shall never be happy, never!"



# Objects/Places

## Venezuela

Venezuela was colonized by Spain in the early 1500s. It was found to have the largest reserve of petroleum in Latin America.

## Nicaragua

The Central American country was invaded in mid-nineteenth century by American William Walker who ultimately declared himself President of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Honduras.

## Peru

The Peruvian coast was one of the main centers of sugar production in Latin America.

## Colombia

the world's largest coffee resource is found in Colombia. It's coffee industry is dependent hugely upon exports to the U.S.

## Mexico

The Mexican regions now known as Texas and California were annexed by the United States in 1845.

## Brazil

Brazil was the home to the Minas Gerais region which contained the largest gold reserve ever discovered to that time; but the riches were quickly mined and exported by the Portuguese.

## United States

The author of this book considers the United States as the modern day "conquistadors" who continue to plunder Latin America. US interest in Latin America began with the 13 original colonies.





## **Spain**

The Spanish conquistadors invaded Latin America in the early 1500s plundering their silver and gold and other precious resources.

## **Portugal**

In the early 1500's, the Portuguese invaded and claimed the area in South America that is now Brazil.

## **England**

Over many years, England was the benefactor of many lop-sided trade agreements with various Latin American countries.

# Themes

## Plunder

Hands down, the plunder of Latin America is the main theme of this book. The pillage of Latin America and its precious metals and other natural resources has been going on for five centuries and goes on in modern times. The first to plunder the natural resources of Latin America were the Spanish conquistadors. Led by Hernan Cortes, the conquistadors conquered the Aztec nation, led by Montezuma. They were astonished by the gold that was in abundance in this civilization. The Portuguese followed suit by invading and making claim on the robust gold in what is current day Brazil.

Through the years, the invaders or foreign powers continued to take and take from Latin America. After the precious metals came the pillaging of bananas, coffee, cacao, rubber, sugar produced on large plantations established by foreign powers. Not only did the oppressors take the resources, they left behind them nations that were poorer, peoples that were hungrier and sicker and poorer and soil that was overused and spent, ruined for decades. The plunder of other metals like iron, tin and copper and minerals like nitrates and bauxite (needed for aluminum) continued the ravage of the nations.

As fledgling governments grew in Latin America, England, the United States and other countries entered into trade agreements that were lop-sided and favored their own interests. These practices were yet another plundering of the Latin American nations and its people. Due to unfair agreements and contracts, the Latin American nations were never able to build enough reserve to establish their own industrial infrastructure. Their monoculture kept them tied to one industry. The impoverished populace kept the nations dependent upon foreign exports. When the soil was depleted from overuse for sugar, for example, the foreign interests would depart for regions with better soil, leaving the country behind with no other product or industry to rely upon and the poor workers with no chance of earning a living.

## Dependency/Subservience

One theme that is a consistent part of this historical chronology is the dependent societies that have emerged in the Latin American countries oppressed first by Spanish conquistadors and Portuguese oppressors. Although Montezuma led an advanced nation that was the Aztec civilization, their isolation left their people in a vulnerable position, easily cowed and overcome by the Cortes and his conquistadors. The terror of the invaders' cannons and fireballs that thundered in the air and the awe Montezuma felt in the presence of what he thought were prophesied, returning gods placed them in a subservient position. Although Montezuma's Aztecs far outnumbered Cortes' conquistadors, the victory was an easy one for the Spaniards.



The impoverished workers were dependent on their merciless plantation or mine bosses. To earn just meager earnings, not near enough to satisfy their needs or the needs of their families, the workers knew nothing else. Their dependency on maintaining these undesirable positions helped to make possible the plunder of their countries and their own abuse. Of course, after decades and centuries of this kind of life, it is not easy for one to break out of.

The various Latin American countries were targeted for specific resources. For example, Brazil had rubber trees and was the largest and virtually only source of rubber. As the industrial revolution occurred in other regions of the world, the demand for rubber grew. However, Brazil's land was over stressed by plantations that overused the land, now allowing time for a needed refurbishment. Rubber tree plant seeds were smuggled to Asia. Due to their ability to provide a better product compared to the diminishing crop in Brazil, Asia began to take over the rubber industry. The rubber tree plantations dried up leaving Brazil with eroded fields, unemployed workers and no other industry to turn to. The Latin American nations were hurt by their monoculture, that is their dependency upon one resource.

## Natural Resources

It would seem that no other continent in the world has ever known more natural resources than the continent of Latin America. Africa has an abundance of riches in natural resources but it is hard to believe that it would top Latin America. Latin America's rich, fertile soil, temperate climate and untapped resources dotted on the terrain amongst an unsophisticated people all made the temptation to plunder and pillage all but impossible to resist.

When first invaded, the Latin American countries had an abundance of silver and gold like the oppressing Spaniards and Portuguese had never seen or even imagined. It was like child's play for the conquistadors to take these resources from the unworldly natives. Montezuma had so much gold that he gladly offered precious gifts of gold to Cortes even though he was slaughtering his people. At one point in time, the only place that rubber trees existed was in Brazil. When the demand for rubber increased throughout an increasingly advancing world, Brazilian landowners and foreign interests were in an enviable position.

Sugar was not indigenous to any of the Latin American nations. However, Columbus transplanted sugar plants from the Canary Islands to various regions of Latin America including Brazil, Peru, Cuba, Veracruz and other Caribbean islands. Sugar grew so abundantly that Latin America took over as the number one sugar producer in the world. The thirteen original US colonial states was so bereft of natural resources that they turned to trade agreements with Latin America for vitally needed resources. Colombia is the number one producer of coffee. Even though Africa entered into the coffee market, Colombia's coffee is considered far superior. Colombia's number one coffee customer is the United States where companies like Starbuck's would, of course, not exist without Colombian coffee



# Style

## Perspective

The author Eduardo Galeano relates the history of the pillage of Latin America from the historical data and what his research has discovered. One would have to conduct one's own research to properly evaluate the veracity of the detailed depiction of the pillage of Latin America as presented by Galeano. It is part of most everyone's history education that Columbus discovered the Americas and that Cortes conquered the Aztec civilization. That the Spanish conquistadors continued their invasions and the Portuguese oppressors took claim to modern-day Brazil is not disputable. That is all fact as much as anyone knows.

The cruelty and abuse of the land and the people of Latin America as framed by Galeano perhaps is not fully known. The attempts at the "invaders" to bring Christianity to the Latin American inhabitants is mentioned by Galeano but dismissed as opportunistic and superficial. Without a doubt Galeano comes down on the side of the Latin American countries and people. In his view they are the victims and the foreign invaders are held chiefly responsible for the state of Latin America's people and lands. There is some blame assigned to the self-serving dictators who allowed the plunder to continue over the years. However, there is not much gray area for Galeano. It is conventional wisdom that there are two sides to every story. In most cases, Galeano offers only one. For example, Cortes invaded and conquered the Aztec nation. Galeano makes no mention of the cruelty inflicted upon the Aztec people by its leaders before Cortes was ever heard of. What does it say about a nation of people who continue to be victimized over the centuries? Is there not a point where the victim has to say no more?

## Tone

The author, Eduardo Galeano, from the very first chapter strikes a tone of bitterness and outrage from which the reader never finds solace. The tone is a gloomy, depressing saga of the Latin American experience. As Galeano describes the decades and centuries of abuse of the Latin American people, land and resources he never broaches the question of personal responsibility. Though perhaps not intentional, he describes the Latin American people in the main as soulless and nameless with no will to take a stand for themselves or their families. According to Galeano, year after year and century after century, these people make no progress and forge no better lives for themselves. They willingly stay in their misery cowed by foreign powers. There is no uplifting note in this depiction which is consistently negative and angry. There are surely advances and progress that could have been given more attention.

A Latin American person reading this chronology could only be disheartened by the lack of reason to be proud of their heritage. The conquistadors and other "invaders" brought Christianity to some of the regions in Latin America. Normally, this type of missionary



outreach would be viewed as a positive but Galeano attributes the priests and church officials with further abuse of the people and land. No mention is made of the multiple colleges and universities in Latin America many of them established by the Catholic Church. It is difficult to go away from this story with a positive view of Latin American people. On the contrary, they are part of the human experience, one that includes spirit and ambition and intelligence. The Latin American people in no way should be excluded. This reader walked away from this book thinking that the Latin American people have been plundered once again—by this angry author who failed to give these people the credit they or any people deserve. This chronology will serve to demoralize people who like anyone are in need of support and positivity.

## Structure

This historical chronology that covers roughly five decades of the pillage of the Latin American people, lands and resources is segmented first into two main sections. The first section, "Mankind's poverty as a consequence of the wealth of landowners" includes sub-sections that covers the plundering of gold and silver; pillage of other natural resources such as bananas, coffee, sugar, cacao, rubber among others; and, finally, the exploitation of invisible sources such as copper, iron, nitrates and tin. The sections are lengthy and detailed and related in a text-book style manner with a plethora of names and dates and events. The author weaves the story of the pillages from one decade to another and one century to another, showing the persistent and prevailing rape of the country. In each instance, he sets up each episode in a similar manner. First, the natural resource is described. Next the invaders or conquerers are introduced. The plunder of the resources is described followed by the havoc this action has caused the poor workers, the involved nation and oftentimes the spent, overused soil.

The second main segment, "Development is a voyage with more shipwrecks than navigators" describes first the struggle and ultimately losing battle that Latin American countries face in their attempts to gain independence and a thriving industrial infrastructure. First the Spanish, Portuguese and English people set up agreements unfairly favoring the powerful versus the fledgling governments in Latin America. The last segment outlines the contemporary plundering that goes on, mostly at the hands of the US. It describes the lop-sided amount of investment that US companies have in Latin America and the agreements that favor the US vis a vis taxes, tariffs and profits.

There is a third section that updates the book first written in 1970. This last section covers the events in Latin America that followed after the book was first published, through 1978.

Since the subject matter is so detailed and diverse, the lengthy sub-sections' are again segmented into even smaller segments that have explanatory headings. These sub categories help to clarify the complex material that is being covered.



## Quotes

"In the conquest of Mexico, wrote that they had arrived in America to serve God and His Majesty and also to get riches." Page 13

Page 285

"A system made impotent by its function of international servitude, and moribund since birth, has feet of clay. It pretends to be destiny and would like to be thought eternal."

"They lifted up the gold as if they were monkey, with expressions of joy, as if it put new life into them and lit up their hearts. Their bodies fatten on it and they hunger violently for it. They crave gold like hungry swine." Page 19.

"The ultimate goal of the Latin American colonial economy from its inception: although it showed some feudal characteristics, it functioned at the service of capitalism developing elsewhere." Page 31.

"The believe that the production of coffee and sugar is the natural destiny of the West Indies. Two centuries ago nature which does not trouble herself about commerce, had planted neither sugarcane nor coffee trees there." — Karl Marx, 1848. Page 65.

"A people that entrusts its subsistence to one produce alone commits suicide." Page 69.

"We [Cuba] export sugar to import candy, we export hides to import shoes, we export iron to import plows." Page 72.

"The day is not far distant when three Stars and Stripes at three equidistant points will mark our territory: one at the North Pole, another at the Panama Canal and the third at the South Pole. The whole hemisphere will be ours in fact as, by virtue of our superiority of race, it already is ours morally." President William H. Taft. Page 107.

"Poor Mexico, it has been said ever since [it lost Texas and California]. So far from God and so close to the United States!" Page 121.

"By yours the glory of victory followed by disaster and ruin, be ours the inglorious traffic of industry and an ever growing prosperity. . . The age of chivalry is gone; and an age of economists and calculators has succeeded." Page 173.

"The growth of Latin American manufacturing was sparked, in our century, from outside, rather than by planned national development policies. It has not been a maturing of productive forces; nor was it the result of explosion of internal conflicts." Page 209.



"The Latin American countries—impoverished, incommunicado, de-capitalized, and facing serious structural problems dismantle their economic, financial, and fiscal barriers in the monopolies' favor." Page 254.

"A system made impotent by its function of international servitude, and moribund since birth, has feet of clay. It pretends to be destiny and would like to be thought eternal." Page 285.



## Topics for Discussion

The Spanish conquerors stripped Latin America of much of its silver and gold. Although this wealth was transported back to Spain, why did Spain fail to develop into a capitalistic power? Explain what happened to the riches and who it ultimately benefited.

What is the one Latin American country that the Portuguese invaded? What resources did the Portuguese find there?

When Cortes invaded the Aztec civilization, what was the Aztec leader Montezuma's reaction? What did he think the invaders were and what did he offer them?

The thirteen US colonial states entered into trade with Latin America. Why did the colonies have this need? What natural resources did the colonies have in their own lands?

Why were the Latin American companies never able to establish their own industrial infrastructure? Why was it a disadvantage to provide only natural resources as exports as opposed to finished products?

What role did the USSR have in agreements between the US and Cuba? What role did Fidel Castro play?

The conquistadors brought Catholic missionaries into Latin America. What was the role the priests and church officials play in the history of the countries? Did this role have a positive or negative effect—or both? Explain.