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Spanish Emigration to Cuba and Argentina

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In this selection the author examines the enormous impact of the massive Spanish migration after 1870 on the historical development of its two most important destinations in the New World and skillfully places this story in the broader context of European migration. José Moya explores the ways that economic growth in Argentina and Cuba created a demand for labor that was filled in part by Spanish peasants. In both countries, however, most Spaniards settled in urban areas and many were involved in commerce and artisanal activities. Moya reinforces the notion, discussed later in the book, that emigration was essentially a region-based undertaking as he follows emigrants from various areas of Spain to their New World destinations. He notes that Galicians and Catalans migrated to both countries, but the Basques in Argentina and the Canary Islanders in Cuba were considered superior to those from other regions of Spain. In Argentina, with its large Italian population, the Spanish migrants were important in preserving the Hispanic heritage of that country. In Cuba, with its large number of descendants of African slaves, they played a similar role.

The Spanish presence in the New World is often associated with images of sixteenth-century explorers and adventurers. The stories about Cortés, Pizarro, and Ponce de León are part of the curriculum in primary schools of the Western Hemisphere. Yet, most Spaniards reached the Americas as common immigrants rather than as conquistadors, with the vast majority arriving after the colonies had declared their independence from the Iberian Crown. At the most, 1 million Spaniards came to the Indies (as their American possessions were then called) during the more than 300 years of colonial rule from the end of the fifteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. More than four times that number came during the half-century after 1880.¹

These more recent transatlantic migrants not only arrived in greater numbers but they also shifted destinations. During the colonial period,

the two jewels of the Spanish overseas empire, silver-rich Mexico and Peru, had attracted the bulk of the *peninsulares* (people from the Iberian peninsula, the common colonial term for Spaniards). During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Argentina and Cuba drew over three-quarters of the emigrants from Spain: 2 and 1 million, respectively.

In this chapter, I first examine the global context of these population movements. The main question in this section is simple and evidently crucial: What broad social forces could explain the largest transcontinental migration of people in human history? The second section explains why Argentina and Cuba emerged as major magnets for European immigration, becoming, respectively, the second and sixth most important receiving countries in the world. The third and last section examines how Spanish immigrants adapted to their new lands, their image among their hosts, and their contribution to the historical formation of both countries.

The Global Context

Spanish transatlantic migration formed part of a much bigger process that took 56 million Europeans out of their native continent between the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and the world depression of 1930. No population movement of this magnitude had taken place in human history before. None has surpassed it.² These massive transcontinental migrations were caused, and formed part of, a process of modernization that began in Britain and spread from there to the rest of Northern Europe and, later, to the southern and eastern regions of the continent.

The most elemental part of this process was demographic modernization. Before the eighteenth century, high death rates tended to wipe out any gains made by high birth rates, so population growth in Europe, and the rest of the world, was slow and intermittent (periods of high growth rarely lasted more than two decades). In the late twentieth century, low death rates are counterbalanced by low birth rates so that the European population is again static or declining.

In the long transition from the traditional system to the modern one, however, a population explosion took place in Europe for the first time in human history as death rates fell earlier and faster (thanks to improvements in hygiene and the end of plagues) than birth rates. From 1800 to 1900, Europe's population grew from 188 to 420 million (even though 35 million emigrated overseas), and the continent's share of the world's population increased from 19 percent to 26 percent. In Spain this demographic growth affected mostly the northern coastal zones (Galicia, Asturias, Santander, the Basque country, and Catalonia) and the Canary Islands. Not coincidentally, these regions provided the bulk of the exodus to the Americas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—in sharp

contrast to the colonial period, when most settlers had come from southern Spain (western Andalusia and Estremadura).

The transition from subsistence to commercial agriculture during the nineteenth century fostered emigration in several ways. The countryside's growing ties to the expanding cities—in the form of trade, public administration, and migration—diminished the isolation of the peasantry and promoted the flow of information and mobility, necessary preconditions for the massive transatlantic crossings. Technological innovations and increased productivity fueled further population growth and unemployment, thereby increasing the potential pool of migrants and emigrants. The transformation of communal lands into private plots expelled many small farmers from the land while creating opportunities for others. Reliance on markets, particularly international ones, increased the chances for profits but also made rural economies more vulnerable. In the Canary Islands, for example, a wine-export boom collapsed around the middle of the nineteenth century and was replaced by a boom in cochineal (a natural dye) exports, which in turn fell victim to technological innovation a few decades later as the appearance of synthetic dyes made cochineal obsolete. Capitalist agriculture also awakened a desire for land and profits that often could only be fulfilled through emigration. Saving money to purchase land back home or to expand the family plot became an impetus for rural emigration in Spain as it did in the rest of Europe. Peasants impoverished by the pressures and competition of commercial agriculture did not have the resources to finance a transatlantic trip and tended to migrate internally. Those who traveled overseas were usually better off economically than their neighbors. With some exceptions, ambition and a desire to improve their condition, more than necessity, provided the psychological force behind the overseas exodus from rural areas.

The Industrial Revolution had a similar impact. It encouraged mobility by displacing rural artisans who could not compete with factories and by attracting to urban centers these artisans and the surplus rural labor released by demographic swelling and commercial agriculture. In the manner of stepping stones, many of these migrants or their children would later move on to the Americas. Eventually, industrialization would function as a check on emigration by offering alternative employment, but for a long period it displaced many more workers than it could absorb. As with capitalist agriculture, industrialization also spurred emigration by creating new demands and desires, particularly among the young. In 1912, for example, a Spanish priest blamed the transatlantic exodus on the covetousness of youngsters for patent-leather boots, fancy clothes, guns, phonographs, and other factory-made consumer articles.³ The easiest way to acquire these desirable goods, it seemed to young people, was to make money in the Americas, where, according to folk humor, “they leash dogs

with sausages." Another product of the Industrial Revolution, the photograph, carried those illusions and yearnings across the ocean, as a Spanish immigrant observed:

Every time one of these aristocrats of the duster and the broom [Spanish servants in Argentina] takes a picture in her Sunday best ('tailleur' [tailor-made] dress, stockings, patent-leather shoes), she immediately sends a copy home. The photograph passes from house to house throughout the village, and in every one enthusiastic comments are made, seeing in this seignorial attire an enviable well-being. If there is a young maid in the house, a desire awakens in her to leave for Argentina, and that night the meek bumpkin dreams of faraway lands, of palaces and gold, of fortune and happiness. The most determined decide to take the trip.⁴

The technological and innovative capacity unleashed by the Industrial Revolution also enabled the transoceanic transportation of not only dreams and photographs but also of masses of people. From the midnineteenth century onward, steamships increasingly replaced sailing vessels, the screw propeller supplanted the cumbersome paddlewheel, and iron (and later steel) hulls superseded wooden ones. Meanwhile, the sequential introduction of double-expansion, triple-expansion, steam turbine, and diesel marine engines kept cutting down fuel consumption and pushing up speed on the oceans. On land, new railroad construction increased the pool of potential emigrants beyond port and coastal regions and into the hinterland.

Another critical element that made mass emigration possible was the spread of liberalism as a hegemonic ideology. Up to the eighteenth century, the dominant mercantilist tenets held that a kingdom's wealth and power depended on the number of its subjects and that the State had the right to prohibit their departure (or the entry of foreigners into colonies). The demographic revolution or, as it was often called then, the "Malthusian devil," changed many government officials' minds about the benefit of an ever-expanding population. The liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and personal liberty made it increasingly difficult to defend government restrictions on population movement. During the nineteenth century European countries—beginning in the north of the continent and spreading south and east—eliminated most laws banning or restricting departures. On the other side of the Atlantic, American countries not only kept the gates open but also encouraged immigration, at times with offers of free passage and land.

Emigration was not then, and is not now, the result of backwardness and poverty but of change and modernization (or of a specific early phase of this process). The most developed countries and richer regions first joined the flow. Movement and flux—of capital, goods, services, technologies, ideas, and people—became the mark of modernization; as it

spread from England to Germany, to Scandinavia, to southern and eastern Europe, and to Japan, so did overseas emigration. Spain, as a country of relatively late modernization, was among the last European countries to join the nineteenth-century exodus en masse, even though Spaniards had been the first Europeans to cross the Atlantic.

The Receiving Societies—Background

Some of the same forces that caused emigration in Spain and the rest of Europe also helped turn Argentina, Cuba, and a few other countries into recipients of immigrants. Demographic growth in the Old World, particularly in the expanding urban centers where people did not grow their own food, generated the demand for grains and sugar that connected Argentina and Cuba to Europe through trade and transportation networks. This expanding market for food on one side of the Atlantic synchronically created a market for labor on the other, specifically in countries with fertile lands and low population density. Argentina had the pampas, one of the three finest farm belts on the planet,⁵ but few farmers. At the time of its independence in 1810, the new country of 1 million square miles—the size of continental Europe—held fewer than 0.5 million inhabitants, about half the population of Barcelona Province, or one-fifth of that of the city of London.

Argentina, in this sense, is a classic country of European settlement. The surplus population created by Europe's demographic expansion and economic modernization did not simply head for countries with flourishing economies. It moved toward specific environments. As Table 1 shows, 96 percent of the 56 million Europeans who left their continent in the century or so after the Napoleonic Wars settled in four regions: North America (in particular the area north of the Mason-Dixon Line and east of the Rocky Mountains), where 67 percent of the total settled; the River Plate (formed by eastern Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil), which attracted more than 20 percent of the total; Australasia, with 7 percent; and in smaller numbers, South Africa. These regions comprise the bulk of the non-European Temperate Zone and have warm-to-cool climates with an annual precipitation of 50 to 150 centimeters, thinly spread aboriginal populations, some of the world's best pasture and wheat-producing lands, immense herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, consistent surplus production of grains, and, with the exception of South Africa, largely Caucasian populations.⁶

Nineteen out of every twenty European emigrants thus settled in what historian Alfred Crosby has aptly called Neo-Europes, and their movement formed part of what the same author termed ecological imperialism, a migration-invasion of Old World animals (humans included) and plants that changed the fauna and flora of these countries. At this level,

immigration to Argentina formed part of a much larger demographic-ecological phenomenon.

Table 1. Destination of European Overseas Emigrants, ca. 1820–1932

Country	Number	Percent of Total	Cumulative Percentage
United States	32,564,000	57.9	57.9
Canada	5,073,000	9.0	67.0
Argentina	6,501,000	11.6	78.5
Brazil	4,361,000	7.8	86.3
Uruguay	713,000	1.3	87.6
Australia	3,443,000	6.1	93.7
New Zealand	588,000	1.0	94.7
South Africa	731,000	1.3	96.0
Cuba	1,394,000	2.5	98.5
Mexico	270,000	0.5	99.0
Algeria	150,000	0.3	99.3
Chile	90,000	0.2	99.4
Venezuela	70,000	0.1	99.5
Puerto Rico	62,000	0.1	99.7
British West Indies	60,000	0.1	99.8
Hawaii	40,000	0.1	99.8
Zimbabwe	30,000	0.1	99.9
Peru	30,000	0.1	99.9
Paraguay	21,000	0.0	100.0
New Caledonia	12,000	0.0	100.0
Total	56,183,000		

Source: José C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850–1930* (Berkeley, 1998), 46.

Cuba, on the other hand, is a peculiar country of immigration and an exception to the rule. An island a bit smaller than Pennsylvania and one-tenth the size of Argentina, it is the only Latin American country outside of the River Plate region, and the only tropical environment in the world, to have received massive numbers of European immigrants (see Table 1). What it had in common with other lands of European settlement was a small aboriginal population. Indeed, the indigenous inhabitants, estimated at 50,000 to 110,000 before Columbus landed on the island in 1492, were virtually exterminated by the violence of the Conquest and by Old World diseases for which they had no immunity. During the next three centuries, Cuba developed as a colony of European settlement with a rudimentary ranching and farming economy. While its strategic position allowed the Caribbean island to become a commercial entrepôt between the American mainland and Spain, it never reached the wealth and importance of the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru.

The colonial development of Cuba and Argentina resembled each other until the middle of the eighteenth century. They lacked the combination that had made the highlands of Mesoamerica and the Andean region the rich centers of the Spanish empire: precious minerals and a large, sedentary Indian labor force. They also lacked the other combination for a successful exploitation colony: a cash crop and an imported African slave force, as was the case in northeast Brazil or Saint-Domingue (which by the eighteenth century had become the richest colony in the world). By default, they became colonies of European settlement but proved much less able to attract white settlers than, for example, New England or Pennsylvania. Unlike England, Spain did not allow other Europeans to settle in its possessions and did not have the demographic density to provide many colonizers itself before the nineteenth century; indeed, most of those who left preferred to go to the wealthier regions of the empire. But if Argentina and Cuba lacked the wealth of Peru or Pernambuco, they were also spared the extremely unequal social structures of exploitation colonies. Together with a few other regions in the Iberian empires—such as Costa Rica, southern Brazil, and Antioquia (Colombia)—they developed a less affluent but more egalitarian class system that provided a relatively solid foundation on which to build an independent republic.

Cuba: Sugar and Slavery

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, Cuba's historical development took a sharp turn with the growth of the sugar economy and slavery. Although the Spanish Crown had chartered the Havana Company in 1740 to stimulate commercial agriculture and the importation of slaves, it was not until the British ten-month occupation of Havana in 1762 that both goals began to be accomplished. The reforms of the Bourbon monarchs, particularly Charles III, and the collapse of the sugar economy in Haiti after the revolution of 1791–1803 further stimulated the expansion of the plantation system. Between 1763 and 1860, Cuba's population increased from less than 150,000 to more than 1.3 million. Slaves accounted for much of this expansion. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Cuba imported more than 600,000 Africans, and its slave population increased from 4,000 in 1760 to some 400,000 in the 1840s. During the same period sugar exports increased 5,000 times from .02 to 93.45 million arrobas. By then, Cuba had the most advanced and mechanized sugar industry in the world and produced one-third of the global supply. Coffee, introduced by French planters who had fled Haiti during the revolution, and tobacco, grown in large part by immigrant farmers from the Canary Islands, became the two other major export crops.

The end of the slave trade after the middle of the nineteenth century increased the demand for labor. In the late 1840s, Cuban planters brought

in hundreds of enslaved rebel Maya Indians from Yucatán and the first of the 150,000 Chinese coolies who arrived from Shanghai and Canton during the next three decades.⁷ Ever since the Haitian slave revolt of 1791 the colonial government had also tried to attract white newcomers as a demographic counterbalance to prevent a similar uprising, allowing non-Spanish European Catholics to settle in Cuba. A few thousand came. But a tropical island with a plantation economy based mostly on slave and semi-bondage labor was not exactly the place to attract European immigrants away from the United States, where most of them were then heading.

Cuba, however, offered many attractions to Spaniards. One was its continuing colonial status. Indeed, the independence wars of 1810–1824 on the mainland served to intensify Spain's political and economic connections with the most important of its remaining colonies, which came to contribute almost one-fourth of the Spanish treasury's total revenues. Many loyalists, particularly from Mexico and Venezuela where the emancipation struggle and resentment against Spaniards had been especially virulent, fled to Cuba rather than back to Spain. The continuity and strengthening of formal ties protected and increased informal connections between family, friends, and business partners on both sides of the Atlantic, which in turn spurred immigration. The island's economy was one of the most advanced and dynamic in the Western Hemisphere. At the start of the nineteenth century Havana was larger than New York City. The most important technological innovation of the century, the railroad, appeared in Cuba in 1836, not only before any other Latin American country but also a dozen years before Spain itself and only eleven years after its English birth. The island was also a pioneer in the use of steam engines, the telegraph, and various other technologies. During the first half of the nineteenth century, therefore, some 60,000 Spaniards headed for Cuba—not a large number compared to the peak period in the early twentieth century but more than went to all the other American republics combined.⁸

The inflow of Spaniards into “the ever faithful island of Cuba” acquired greater force in the decades following the middle of the nineteenth century. The failed attempt against colonial rule by the “not-so-faithful” Cubans during the Ten Years' War (1868–1878) brought in 209,000 Spanish soldiers, many of whom stayed after the war was over. The decline of slavery and its final abolition in 1886 intensified the efforts of planters to bring in white laborers and made the Cuban labor market more attractive to free immigrants. Meanwhile, in Spain the emigration-causing forces discussed in the first part of this chapter were gathering strength. And the Spanish-American War brought in an even greater number of *peninsular* conscripts than the Ten Years' War, many of whom stayed after independence.

Unlike the case of the mainland colonies in the early nineteenth century, where emancipation shattered ties with the former metropolis (or state of origin) for decades, Spanish immigration to Cuba actually increased after the island broke away from Spain in 1898. In part because of the U.S. occupation, Cuba avoided the violent aftermath to independence that had afflicted other Latin American republics a century before. The economy, already one of the richest in the Western Hemisphere during the colonial period, continued to grow as sugar production increased tenfold during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The collapse of the beet sugar industry in Europe during World War I raised the international price from 2 to 12 cents per pound leading to a boom, known in Cuban history as “the dance of the millions,” that attracted hundreds of thousands of newcomers. Sugar exports also promoted the growth of the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, something of particular importance in attracting Spanish immigrants who preferred to settle in cities and work in commercial activities. Already by 1900, Cuba had become the most urbanized country in Latin America after Uruguay and a bit ahead of Argentina. In the following three decades about 800,000 Spaniards entered the island.

Argentina: An Agro-Pastoral Economy

Unlike Cuba, Argentina not only broke away from the Spanish metropolis in the early nineteenth century, but that emancipation also was followed by decades of civil wars and economic disarray. The new republic's first civilian president, Bernardino Rivadavia, tried to encourage agriculture and immigration with a plan to grant public lands to European settlers in emphyteusis, but conditions in the aftermath of emancipation proved propitious for neither. Recurrent civil strife in the countryside prevented planting and repelled settlers. Under the circumstances, only rudimentary ranching, which required little capital or labor input and exploited the natural resource of the pampas, thrived. Relatively few seminomadic gauchos herded and hunted wild or partly tamed cattle and horses in huge unfenced *estancias* (rural estates) for their hide and tallow. In this primitive pastoralism, roaming cattle impeded crop farming and ambitious cattlemen obstructed agricultural colonization projects, viewing them as antithetical to their interests or, at best, costly pipe dreams of liberal ideologues. Yet, indirectly and in the long run, rudimentary ranching facilitated immigration by allowing national capital accumulation at a time when other activities were not viable, by providing government revenues and thus aiding political stability, and by creating the first sustained links with the international economy.

Argentina's pastoral economy also became more complex and labor intensive as the nineteenth century progressed. In the decades after independence,

meat-salting plants (*saladeros*) introduced factory methods such as wage levels, a division of labor, and large-scale production on one site. These *saladeros* grew in number and size for much of the century as they supplied the Western Hemisphere's slave markets with jerked beef; they declined only after the abolition of slavery in Cuba and Brazil during the late 1880s. From the 1840s sheep raising grew so fast that by the end of the century sheep outnumbered humans eighteen-to-one and, at 75 million strong, formed the largest flock in the world outside of Australia. Demand from European factories for wool and from European urban dwellers for mutton fueled this expansion; in turn, the expansion of this economy encouraged immigration. Sheep farming was three times as labor intensive as cattle grazing, and the pampas' native plainsmen had neither the cultural inclination nor, given the abundance of wild cattle free for the taking, the material necessity to shepherd. Not surprisingly, sheep tending became so much an immigrant's occupation (mainly Basques and Irish) that an Irish minstrel in the pampas had to set the record straight with the following song:

*Usted pensar que los gringos
no saber nada mas que
cuidar ovejas en campaña.
Pero usted se equivoca,
porque ellos saben también
tomar mate y chupar caña.⁹*

You thinking [*sic*] that immigrants
don't knowing [*sic*] anything but
tend sheep in countryside.
But you are wrong
because they also know how to
drink *maté* and guzzle booze.

The final phase in the evolution of Argentina's pastoral economy, cattle breeding and beef export, had been delayed for three reasons: by the abundance of the creole livestock whose stringy flesh appealed little to the European palate; by the expansion of sheep raising on the pampas that absorbed grazing lands used by the cattle; and by the difficulty of shipping beef across the Atlantic. After the 1880s these obstacles were overcome by the Argentine *estancieros*, the national army, and new marine technology. Ranchers embraced the practice of importing and breeding pedigreed animals with such enthusiasm that by 1900 the high-grade-beef Shorthorns and Herefords outnumbered all other strains in the national stock. The military conquest of Patagonia from the Araucanian Indians in 1879–80 allowed sheep raising to move south to cheaper and more arid lands whose weeds tasted good enough to the notoriously indiscriminating herbivores, freeing up much of the pampas for cattle grazing. Steamers allowed the transportation of cattle on the hoof, and after the turn of the century refrigerated ships permitted the massive export of frozen and later chilled beef.

By the early twentieth century the 25 million head of cattle outnumbered humans five to one and Argentina had replaced the United States as the major supplier to the British market. The additional element that made this possible was a steady influx of immigrants. Unlike the cattle herding

of the decades following independence, where one gaucho could care for 2,000 head, the new cattle-beef economy required armies of laborers to erect the barbed-wire fences that prevented unwanted mixing of thoroughbred animals, to plant the alfalfa that fattened the livestock in a way that the pampas' wild grasses could never do, to milk cows in the mushrooming *tambos* (dairy farms, usually Basque-owned), and to build the wells, windmills, water pumps, and other devices of the modern *estancia*. Cattle barons, who a generation earlier had opposed immigration, now welcomed it with as much enthusiasm as the arrival of Brahma bulls.

The fences that checked the promiscuity of prize bulls also made possible the last stage in Argentina's agricultural revolution—agricultural now in the strict sense of the word and revolutionary in any sense. Cultivated land increased about fiftyfold from 0.5 million hectares in 1870 to 24.5 million in 1914. As late as the first date, the country imported most of its grains; by the second, it had turned into a veritable breadbasket, the world's largest producer of corn and linseed and the second largest exporter of wheat. If the pampas provided the rich and deep topsoil for this boom, Europe provided the *brazos* (literally "arms," and a pseudonym for immigrants often found in the writings and speeches of the country's rural oligarchy). Indeed, Argentina's agro-pastoral economy had steadily evolved toward more labor-intensive forms: from hunting feral cattle and horses for their hides (pre-1810) to herding and slaughtering semitamed animals for the meat-salting plants (ca. 1810–1890), to sheep raising (post-1840), and finally to cattle breeding and crop farming (post-1880). This tendency both fed upon and induced immigration, which increased with each stage. Moreover, the agricultural revolution on the pampas made possible the even more labor-intensive commercial and industrial economy of the urban centers, where 57 percent of the Argentine population resided by 1914.

During the nineteenth century, most Latin American governments had tried to entice European immigrants to "whiten" and "civilize" their countries. These racist agendas, however, were rarely fulfilled. Peru, for example, created dozens of immigration commissions, published and distributed "immigrants' guides," contracted propaganda agents in Europe, and offered would-be immigrants free ship passage, free lodging in Lima, free train transportation to the interior, and free land (fenced, with tools, seeds, oxen, and access to water). And yet for all the racist attitudes and official efforts of its ruling class, Peru attracted in 100 years fewer European immigrants than Argentina in one month and less than the United States in one week at the height of the mass migration period. Only regions with temperate climates and/or with a dynamic export agriculture able to modernize other sectors and create a high-wage economy proved able to attract European newcomers in massive numbers. Argentina clearly fitted both requirements. Cuba fitted only the last, and that is one of the

reasons why it was able to attract mostly immigrants from its own colonial metropolis.

Because Argentina broke its colonial ties to Spain in 1810 while Cuba's continued until 1898, Spanish emigration to the Caribbean island was higher than to the River Plate for much of the nineteenth century. Although family connections were never severed completely, the emancipation war and its bitter aftermath reduced the number of Spanish arrivals in Argentina to a trickle until the middle of the 1800s. In 1855, Italians and French already outnumbered Spaniards in the country's capital. However, as the hatreds of the war of independence softened and as Argentina entered into one of the world's most spectacular economic expansions after the 1880s, this country surpassed Cuba as the main destination of Spanish emigrants. By the World War I period, Argentina had by far the largest number of Spanish-born inhabitants in the Western Hemisphere: 830,000, or one-tenth of the country's total population and one-third of its foreign-born population. Cuba followed with 246,000, also about one-tenth of the total inhabitants of the island but almost three-fourths of its foreign-born population. Brazil ranked just below Cuba, and Uruguay, the United States, Mexico, and Chile followed way behind (see Table 2).

Who Came and What Happened

In terms of the regional origin of Iberian immigrants in both countries, there were strong similarities and some differences. Galicians, a people from northwestern Spain whose native language is closer to Portuguese than to Castilian, were the most numerous group in both New World lands. Indeed, they were so predominant that in both Argentina and Cuba, *gallego* became a generic term for all Spaniards. The practice was not completely innocent. Argentines and Cubans knew that other Spaniards resented being called so. Ethnic stereotypes in the Iberian peninsula often depicted Galicians as socially backward and dull-witted. And these stereotypes entered the host societies where "Galician jokes" became a staple of popular ethnic humor (something akin to "Polish jokes" in the United States).

Other groups from the northern seaboard of the peninsula were also overrepresented. Catalans represented about one-tenth of all Spaniards in both countries and were often portrayed as entrepreneurial but stingy—a stereotype that came from the Old World, where they were referred to at times as "the Jews of Spain." The other ethnic cliché about them was that of the "Catalan anarchist," which was not exactly an arbitrary invention. Around the turn of the century, Barcelona had become the most active center of anarchist militancy in the world. Asturians were more numerous in Cuba and Basques in Argentina. Although emigration from the Basque country, one of the most prosperous regions in Spain, declined in the twentieth century, it had accounted for about one-third of the *peninsular* flow

Table 2. Countries with the Largest Number of Spaniards in the Western Hemisphere, ca. 1914–1920

Country	Year	Total Population	Number of Foreigners	(%) ^a	Number of Spaniards	(%) ^b	(%) ^c
Argentina	1914	7,885,980	2,357,952	29.9	829,701	10.5	35.2
Cuba	1919	2,889,004	339,082	11.7	245,644	8.5	72.4
Brazil	1920	30,635,605	1,565,961	5.1	219,142	0.7	14.0
Uruguay	1911	50,000					
United States	1920	105,710,620	13,920,692	13.2	49,535	0.05	0.4
Mexico	1910	30,000					
Chile	1920	3,753,799	120,436	3.2	25,962	0.7	21.6

Sources: Argentina, Comisión Nacional del Censo, *Tercer censo nacional, levantado el 1 de junio de 1914* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos de L. J. Rosso, 1916–1919), 2:109, 396; Chile, Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo de población de la República de Chile levantado el 15 de diciembre de 1920* (Santiago: Soc. Imp. y Litografía Universo, 1925), 276, 289; Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, *Census of the Republic of Cuba, 1919* (Havana: Maza, Arroyo y Caso, [1920?]), 310; United States, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921–1923), 2:693; Brazil, Directoria Geral de Estatística, *Recenseamento do Brasil realizado em 1 de setembro de 1920* (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. da Estatística, 1922–1930), 1:iv, 302–3, 316–17; Mexico, figure for 1910: Mariano González-Rohvos y Gil, *La emigración española a Iberoamérica* (Madrid: Instituto Balme de Sociología, 1949), 111; Uruguay, figure for circa 1911: Spain, Consejo Superior de Emigración, *La emigración española transoceánica, 1911–1915* (Madrid: Hijos de t. Minuesa, 1916), 219.

^aForeigners as a percentage of total population.

^bSpaniards as a percentage of total population.

^cSpaniards as a percentage of foreign-born population.

to Argentina before the 1880s. Their earlier arrival, and the fact that they were the only Iberian group to settle in the pampas in large numbers and to engage in cattle raising (a prestigious occupation in Argentina with strong links to national identity), made Basques arguably the most admired ethnic group among Argentines, particularly among the elite. Some went as far as to portray Basques as racially superior to other Iberian groups and, consequentially, as less prone to mix with "inferior races" (Africans and Indians) in the New World.

Canary Islanders, on the other hand, hardly went to Argentina but formed the second most important group in Cuba. They never wore the halo of racial superiority that Basques did in Argentina, but they did enjoy a warmer welcome than their other compatriots. Cubans tended to view these fellow islanders as closer to themselves linguistically, culturally, and temperamentally. Tellingly, they, like the Basques in Argentina, were the only Iberian group to settle in the countryside in large numbers. Moreover, they tended to engage in tobacco farming, which, unlike sugarcane growing, was associated with family farming rather than with slavery. Like the pampas and the gauchos in Argentina, the *campesino* (countryside) and the *guajiro* (independent farmer) came to embody the essence of nationality in Cuba. The fact that Basques and Canary Islanders were somehow associated with these icons of national identity helps to explain their respective reputations in both countries.

With the exception of the Basques in Argentina and the Canary Islanders in Cuba, Spaniards tended to settle not in the countryside but in the expanding cities that the wealth from export agriculture made possible. In Argentina, 74 percent of all Spaniards resided in urban centers in 1914, a proportion higher than any other national group in the country (see Table 3). That same year, 18 percent of all non-Spaniards in that country resided in its capital, Buenos Aires; the proportion for Spaniards was twice as high: 37 percent. Similarly, 11 percent of all non-Spaniards in Cuba, but 31 percent of all Spaniards, resided in the city of Havana in 1919.

This preference for urban centers is not easily explained. The majority of immigrants did not come from cities. The proportion represented by those who did was not likely higher than among all the other immigrant groups listed in Table 3, which includes people from much more urbanized countries, such as England, Germany, and France, and particularly urbanized groups in the diaspora, such as Middle Easterners and Russian Jews. Some observers have blamed *latifundia*, the concentration of landed property into a few hands, for impeding the newcomers from accessing farms and forcing them into cities. But why would Spaniards have been more negatively affected by this than all other immigrants? In Cuba they were less than half as likely as blacks to live in rural areas and work in agriculture, and it is impossible to argue that free Spanish immi-

grants had greater difficulty in accessing landed property than recent former slaves and their descendants. What seems clear, then, is that this concentration in urban centers in both countries was not imposed by structural restraints but represented a culturally informed choice. Perhaps, as Mark Szuchman has put it, "of all the peoples that Rome had brought within its domain, the Iberians most closely imitated their conquerors in the significance they assigned to the city."¹⁰ Unlike in Anglo-American lore, where the city often represents danger and perdition, in Iberian tradition it embodies civilization, a term that tellingly derives from the Latin word for "city."

Table 3. Principal National Groups in Argentina in 1914 and Percentage Living in Urban Centers (Places with More Than 2,000 Inhabitants)

Nationality	Total Number	Percent Urban
Spaniards	829,701	74
Middle Easterners	64,369	73
French	79,491	69
Italians	929,863	69
Germans	26,995	66
English	27,692	62
Russians	93,634	57
Argentines	5,527,285	53
Austro-Hungarians	38,123	49

Source: Argentina, Comisión Nacional del Censo, *Tercer censo nacional, 1914* (Buenos Aires, 1916–1919), 2:395–96.

The urban concentration of Spanish immigrants had its occupational counterpart in their overrepresentation in commerce, as both owners and employees. The "gallego grocer" (*bodeguero* in Cuba, *almacenero* in Argentina) became a familiar figure in the towns and cities of both countries. In 1909, Spaniards owned 22 percent of all commercial establishments in Buenos Aires. This proportion was twice as high in some specific ones such as groceries, clothing and notions stores, dairies, bars and cafés, hotels, and bookstores. Their commercial presence in Cuba was even more pronounced. Spaniards accounted for 64 percent of all merchants and 78 percent of all salesmen in Havana at the end of the colonial period (1899). On the entire island, 53 percent of all merchants were foreign-born whites (91 percent of whom were Spaniards). Twenty years later, Spaniards still made up 43 percent of all merchants and 50 percent of all sales personnel in Cuba.

Spanish immigrants also actively engaged in crafts. A large number of the bakers and tailors in Argentina and Cuba were Spaniards. In Argentina, however, Italian immigrants proportionately outnumbered Spanish ones in skilled manual jobs, and the same was true in Cuba with the African-

Cuban population. This in part was the result of Spaniards' concentration in the commercial sector, which, in turn, was facilitated by their higher literacy. Seventy percent of Spaniards in Argentina in 1914 knew how to read and write, as compared to 62 percent of Italians. The literacy gap between Spaniards and Afro-Cubans was even wider: 69 percent versus 25 percent in 1899, and 72 percent versus 53 percent in 1919.

One of the principal differences in the insertion of Spanish immigrants into the labor forces of Argentina and Cuba was their participation in domestic service. In Argentina, Spaniards of both sexes were more likely to work as servants than any other national group. Indeed, the Spanish presence in the domestic service was so predominant that the "gallega maid" became a cultural stereotype in Argentine theater, movies, and popular humor. Lino Palacios, the creator of "Ramona," a well-known comic strip about a Spanish maid, remembered in an interview: "In the beginning [circa 1860s] most servants were native girls from the provinces. The *estancieros* brought these *chinitas*, as they used to call them, from the countryside. Then came the flood of Spanish immigrants, and all maids were Spanish, *gallegas*. Italians rarely worked in the house, only outside, as washerwomen and things like that."¹¹

In Cuba the domestic service also employed many of the immigrants: about two-thirds of all Spanish women and one-fifth of all Spanish men in the workforce at the end of the colonial period. These proportions surpassed those of native whites (one-half and one-sixth, respectively). But, unlike in Argentina, Spaniards did not become associated with the domestic service in popular culture. One of the reasons is the large black and mulatto population in Cuba, which accounted for 33 percent of the total population in 1899 but for 70 percent of all servants. The other reason was the greater proportion of women among the Spanish residents in Argentina (38 percent of the total in 1914) compared to Cuba (24 percent of the total in 1919). With the feminization of the domestic service in the twentieth century, the relative shortage of Spanish women in Cuba made their presence in that sector of the economy less significant.

Overall, one of the principal characteristics of Spanish immigrants in both Argentina and Cuba was that, unlike many immigrant groups in the United States that concentrated at the bottom of the occupational ladder, Spaniards appeared on all the rungs. In comparison with native whites, Spanish immigrants were underrepresented in the higher professions and (less so in Cuba than in Argentina) in the rural oligarchy. But they were not by any means excluded, and many of the richest landowners, industrialists, bankers, and merchants in both countries had been born in Spain. In the nineteenth century, Spaniards were overrepresented in the middle sectors of the economy, although the degree of overrepresentation may have declined with the growth of a native middle class of European background in the twentieth century. And, of course, Spaniards, particularly

the recently arrived and the poorly educated, engaged in all sorts of menial and low-skilled jobs.

The host societies' attitude toward these poor arrivals from Spain could be harsh. In 1859 a North American resident in Cuba wrote the following entry in his diary:

Even the negroes here seem to look down upon them. The inferiority of the lower classes of Spain, compared with those of Cuba, is even acknowledged by the Spaniards themselves. They may be seen by the cartload, the same as we see the very poorest class of emigrants coming up from Castle Garden in New York, and their appearance is very similar. They stare about, wondering at everything they see, and are pictures of filth, hunger and nakedness. They are called "*sucios blancos*" (dirty whites) by the negroes.¹²

Similar attitudes toward poor Spanish immigrants (or toward poor immigrants from rural backgrounds in general) existed in Argentina, where they were usually described as hardworking but slow-witted and dirty. Contrary to the implications of the quotation above, being white in racist societies had conferred certain advantages for Spaniards in the nineteenth century. But as European immigration increased, particularly in Argentina, a light skin became a more common, and thus less valuable, commodity.

Iberian imperialism represented a more serious source of conflict between Creoles and *peninsulares*. The war of independence in Argentina may not have been as bloody as those in Mexico or Venezuela, but it obviously fomented hatreds between natives and Spaniards that lingered past the middle of the nineteenth century. The revival of Spain's imperialist adventurism in Latin America during the 1860s (in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Chile) and its continuing domination of Cuba and Puerto Rico did much to keep resentment against the old colonial power alive. And so did the official history propagated by public education that celebrated the heroic deeds of Argentine patriots against the Spanish oppressors. Despite the continuing colonial status of the island, or perhaps because of it, Cubans developed one of the earliest and strongest national identities in Latin America. Necessarily, this nationalism had a strong anti-Spanish component. The Ten Years' War and the final War of Independence of 1895–1898 were brutal affairs. One-tenth of the population was killed or exiled. And yet, surprisingly, Hispanophobia after emancipation was relatively short-lived and milder than it had been in the mainland colonies under similar circumstances a century before.

Given the linguistic and cultural proximity, one could assume that Spanish immigrants speedily assimilated to their host societies. But this was not the case. In both Argentina and Cuba they created a separate institutional structure that included anything from social clubs and mutual-aid associations to choral societies, hospitals, banks, and newspapers. In

Cuba there is little evidence that creolization advanced faster among Spaniards than among the other immigrants to the island (Chinese, Haitians, Jamaicans, North Americans, and Lebanese). In Argentina, Spaniards consistently exhibited higher rates of residential segregation than Italians, and often higher than the French, British, and Germans. And these rates were particularly high vis-à-vis the native population. The endogamy rates of Spanish males and females consistently surpassed those of their Italian counterparts, who proved more willing to marry out of their own group. Popular stereotypes point in the same direction. Argentine plays and comedies of the earlier part of the twentieth century steadily depicted Italian immigrants as more likely than Spaniards to imitate and adopt local speech, habits, and mannerisms. Indeed, the figure of the *italiano acriollado* (Argentinized Italian) permeated the Porteño thespian scene.

The explanation for this apparent anomaly may lie in the Spaniards' colonial relation to both countries. As citizens of the mother country they thought that their ancestors had discovered and settled Argentina and Cuba; thus, they had special prerogatives not shared by other immigrants. Unlike other groups, many Spaniards believed that they did not have to assimilate to local customs to belong. Indeed, they belonged simply because they were the charter group, the progenitors, the givers of the original culture and language of the American nations. Of course, by the early twentieth century, Argentines and Cubans had long ceased to be transplanted Spaniards, just as North Americans had long ceased to be transplanted Englishmen. Other elements—indigenous, African, Italian—had contributed to the formation of these nations' cultures. But Spanish immigrants tended to downplay these influences or to see them as threats to the Hispanic legacy and predominance.

Conclusion

The influence of Spaniards in the historical development of Argentina and Cuba thus did not end with the Conquest and colonization. Their arrival in massive numbers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries significantly contributed to the growth of the population and of the economy in both countries. In Argentina, given the huge immigration of non-Iberians (French, Germans, Russian Jews, Middle Easterners, and particularly Italians, who were more numerous than the Spaniards), they played a pivotal role in preserving the Hispanic heritage of the country. By doing so, they helped to assuage the fears of cultural loss among Argentina's creole elite, giving this ruling group enough confidence in the survival of Argentina's Hispanic legacy to permit immigration and the resulting transformation of the country to continue. In Cuba, with the arrival of large numbers of African slaves during the first half of the nineteenth century, Spanish immigrants played a key role in preserving the

island's previous history as a settler society and preventing it from becoming a plantation economy like many of its neighbors in the Caribbean. Cuba, like Brazil and the United States but at a different spatial dimension, ended up as a mixture of a society of free settlement and a society of former slaves. The first component fostered the formation of a well-organized working class and large middle class; the second explains in large part the persistence of racially based socioeconomic inequalities despite decades of socialist redistribution. The presence of Spanish immigrants also explains why throughout the twentieth century Spain has had closer relations with Argentina and Cuba than with any other Latin American country irrespective of political systems.

Notes

1. For a more detailed analysis of Spanish immigration to Argentina see José C. Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

2. Although intercontinental migration has been increasing since the end of World War II, and particularly since 1980, it has not reached the levels of the earlier part of the twentieth century, in either absolute or relative terms. In 1900 the world had 1.55 billion inhabitants and in the next decade 14.8 million people emigrated from their native continents. By 1980 the world population had tripled, to 4.48 billion, but the number of people leaving their native continents in the next decade had fallen by more than half, to 7.1 million. In absolute numbers the early twentieth-century movement was thus two times larger than that of the 1980s; in relative terms (that is, in proportion to the world population) it was six times larger.

3. Ramón Castro López, *La emigración en Galicia* (La Coruña, 1923), 66–68 [originally written in 1912].

4. Manuel Gil de Oto, *La Argentina que yo he visto* (Barcelona: B. Bauzá, 1914), 66.

5. The other two are the North American Great Plains (including the Canadian prairies) and the Ukrainian *chernozem*, or black earth of the steppes.

6. The *World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1996*, lists the white population of these countries as follows: United States, 83 percent of the total; Canada, 97 percent; Argentina, 85 percent (in the eastern part of the country the proportion is closer to 95 percent); Uruguay, 88 percent; Brazil, 55 percent (south of São Paulo the proportion has been estimated as between 85 and 95 percent); Australia, 95 percent; New Zealand, 88 percent; and South Africa, 18 percent.

7. The other Latin American country that received a significant number of Chinese coolies during the period was Peru, where 75,000 arrived between 1847 and 1874.

8. Immigration statistics before 1882 are sketchy, but censuses list 39,000 Spaniards living in Cuba in 1846 and 90,000 in 1862.

9. Recorded in David J. R. Watson, *Los criollos y los gringos: Escombros acumulados al levantar la estructura ganadera-frigorífica, 1882–1940* (Buenos Aires, 1941), 16.

10. Gilbert M. Joseph and Mark D. Szuchman, eds., *I Saw a City Invincible: Urban Portraits of Latin America* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 1.

11. Transcribed in Isabel Laura Cárdenas, *Ramona y el robot: El servicio doméstico en barrios prestigiosos de Buenos Aires, 1895-1985* (Buenos Aires, 1986), 82-84.

12. Louis A. Pérez, ed., *Impressions of Cuba in the Nineteenth Century: The Travel Diary of Joseph J. Dimock* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1998), 51.

2

A History of Spanish and Italian Migration to the South Atlantic Regions of the Americas

Fernando J. Devoto

Contemporaries and then scholars interpreted the causes of migration of Spaniards and Italians to the countries of the Rio de la Plata at the turn of the past century in two basic ways. Statesmen, Marxists, Malthusians, neoclassicists and others, according to Fernando Devoto, believed that migration was caused either by misery (the pessimists) or by the opportunity to have a better life (the optimists). In addition, he argues, information-diffusion theory is important because it explains why immigrants did not always go where the salary differential between their old and new environments was the best. Finally, the author questions a number of common assumptions that immigrant theorists have made regarding the homogeneity of the migrants, the time frame in which they have been studied, the linear or circular nature of the migration process, and the most appropriate level of analysis (the nation-state, the region, or the village).

The search for the causes of the migration that drove millions of Spaniards and Italians to cross the Atlantic has given birth to a persistent controversy. This controversy was first posed by contemporary observers of the mass migration at the turn of the nineteenth century; these observers were polarized between those who thought that the cause of the exodus was “misery” (pessimists), and those who thought that the motive was a search for a “better life” (optimists). The controversy between the people who judged social development optimistically (that is to say, capitalism) and the pessimists who contested it (or at least contested its nondesirable effects) was certainly ideological. Among those in the first group were liberal economists, who thought that emigration was an advantage for national trade and for the balance of trade, and the politicians in the countries of origin, who believed that free “colonies” were a useful instrument for cultural penetration and, eventually, for other, more

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