and in a few years were raised—at which time they looked about for some
restituting the public duties and functions that would barely keep them alive in preference to an active
and industrious life that would assure them an independent existence. The classical
education that some of them had received, and the aristocratic manner
that they affected in their days of idleness and plenty, made them scornful of the
Europeans, who seemed to them mean and contemptible because they were
economic
and active; they regarded these men as inferiors because they en-
gaged in trade and occupations which they considered unworthy of the sta-
tion to which their own fathers had raised them. Whether it was the effect of
this vicious training or the influence of a climate that conducted to laxity and
effeminacy, the creoles were generally indulgent and negligent; of sharp wits,
rarely amused by argument and reflection; quick to undertake an enterprise
but heedless of the means necessary to carry it out, giving themselves with ar-
dor to the present, but giving no thought to the future; prodigal in times of
good fortune and restrained and long-suffering in adversity. The effect of these
unfortunate propensities was the brief duration of their wealth; the enormous
efforts of the Europeans to win fortunes and pass them on to their children
may be compared to the bottomless barrel of the Danaides, which no amount
of water could fill. It resulted from this that the Spanish race in America, in
order to remain prosperous and eminent, required a continuous accretion of
Spanish Spaniards who came to form new families, while those established
by their predecessors fell into obscurity and indigence.

Although the laws did not establish any difference between those two
classes of Spaniards, or indeed with respect to the most native born to either class
by Indian mothers, a distinction came to exist between them in fact. With it
arose a declared rivalry that, although subdued for a long time, might be
feared to break out with the most serious consequences when the occasion
should offer. As has been said, the Europeans held the high offices, as
much because Spanish policy required it as because they had greater op-
opportunity to request and obtain them, being near the fountainhead of all fa-
rors. Of the one hundred and seventy viceroys who governed in America
until 1813, only four had been born there and not by birth, as the sons of
officeholders. Of the six hundred and two captains-general and presidents,
fourteen had been creoles. The rare occasions on which office was secured by
high points occurred through fortunate coincidences or when they went to the
Spanish capital to solicit them. Although they held all the inferior posts,
which were much more numerous, this only stimulated their ambition to oc-
cupy the highest posts as well. Although in the first two centuries after the
Conquest the Indies offered Americans greater opportunities for advance-
ment, and during that period many obtained bishoprics, canonries, episcopal,
and lucrative benefices, their opportunities in this sphere had gradually been
exhausted. [Of the seven hundred and six bishops who held office in Span-
ish America until 1812, one hundred and five were creoles, although few held

2. The Forging of a Rebel

In his brief but valuable autobiography, Manuel Belgrano (1770-1820), one of the
fathers of Argentine independence, describes the influences and events that trans-
formed a young Creek of wealth and high social position into an ardent revolutionary.
The French Revolution, disillusionment with British liberalism, the English inva-
sions, and finally the events of 1808 in Spain all played their part in this process.
The place of my birth was Buenos Aires; my parents were Don Domingo
Belgrano y Peri, known as Pérez, a native of Osella in Spain, and Doña
María Joséfa González Casero, a native of Buenos Aires. My father was a
merchant, and since he lived in the days of monopoly he acquired sufficient
wealth to live comfortably and to give his children the best education to be had in those days.

I studied my first letters, Latin grammar, philosophy, and a smattering of
theology in Buenos Aires. My father then sent me to Spain to study law, and I
began my preparation at Salamanca; I was graduated at Valladolid, continued my
training at Madrid, and was admitted to the bar at Valladolid.

Since I was in Spain in 1789, and the French Revolution was then causing a
change in ideas, especially among the men of letters with whom I associated,
the ideals of liberty, equality, security, and property took a firm hold on me, and I saw only tyrants in those who would restrain a man, wherever he might be, from enjoying the rights with which God and Nature had endowed him.

When I completed my studies in 1791, political economy enjoyed great popularity in Spain. I believe this was why I was appointed secretary of the consulado of Buenos Aires, established when Gardoqui was minister. The official of the department in charge of these matters even asked me to suggest some other well-informed persons who could be appointed to similar bodies to be established in the principal American ports.

When I learned that those consuls were to be so many Economic Societies that would discuss the state of agriculture, industry, and commerce in their sessions, my imagination pictured a vast field of activity, for I was ignorant of Spanish colonial policy. I had heard some muttered murmurs among the Americans, but I attributed this to their failure to gain their ends, never to evil designs of the Spaniards that had been systematically pursued since the Conquest.

On receiving my appointment, I was infuriated with the brilliant prospects for America. I had visions of myself writing memorials concerning the provinces so that the authorities might be informed and provide for their well-being. It may be that an enlightened minister like Gardoqui, who had resided in the United States, had the best of intentions in all this.

Finally, I departed from Spain for Buenos Aires, I cannot sufficiently express the surprise I felt when I met the men named by the king to the council which was to deal with agriculture, industry, and commerce and work for the happiness of the province composing the vice-royalty of Buenos Aires. All were Spanish merchants. With the exception of one or two they knew nothing but their monopolistic business, namely, to buy at four dollars and sell for eight.

My spirits fell, and I began to understand that the colonies could expect nothing from men who placed their private interests above those of the community. But since my position gave me an opportunity to write and speak about some useful topics, I decided at least to plant a few seeds that some day might bear fruit.

I wrote various memorials about the establishment of schools. The scarcity of pilots and the direct interest of the merchants in the project presented favorable circumstances for the establishment of a school of mathematics, which I obtained on condition of getting the approval of the Court. This, however, was never secured; in fact, the government was not satisfied until the school had been abolished, because although the peninsula recognized the justice and utility of such establishments, they were opposed to them because of a mistaken view of how the colonies might best be retained.

The same happened to a drawing school which I managed to establish without spending even half a real for the teacher. The fact is that neither these nor other proposals to the government for the development of agriculture, industry, and commerce, the three important concerns of the consulado, won its official approval; the sole concern of the Court was with the revenue that it derived from each of these branches. They said that all the proposed establishments were luxuries, and that Buenos Aires was not yet in a condition to support them.

I promulgated various useful and necessary projects, which had more or less the same fate, but it will be the business of the future historian of the consulado to give an account of them; I shall simply say that from the beginning of 1794 to July 1806, I passed my time in futile efforts to serve my country. They all flounder on the rock of the opposition of the government of Buenos Aires, or that of Madrid, or that of the merchants who composed the consulado, for whom there was no other reason, justice, utility, or necessity than their commercial interest. Anything that came into conflict with that interest encountered a veto, and there was nothing to be done about it.

It is well known how General Beresford entered Buenos Aires with about four hundred men in 1806. At that time I had been a captain in the militia for ten years, more from whim than from any attachment to the military art. My first experience of war came at that time. The Marquis de Sobremente, then vicerey of the provinces of La Plata, sent for me several days before Beresford's disastrous entrance and requested me to form a company of cavalry from among the young men engaged in commerce. He said that he would give me veteran officers to train them; I sought them but could not find any, because of the great hostility felt for the militiamen in Buenos Aires.

The general alarm was sounded. Moved by honor, I flew to the fortress, the point of assembly, I found there neither order nor harmony in anything, as must happen with groups of men who know nothing of discipline and are completely insubordinate. The companies were formed there, and I was attached to one of them. I was ashamed that I had not the slightest notion of military science and had to rely entirely on the orders of a veteran officer— who also joined voluntarily, for he was given no assignment.

This was the first company, which marched to occupy the Casa de las Filipinas. Meanwhile the others argued with the viceroy himself that they were obliged only to defend the city and not to go out into the country; consequently they would agree only to defend the heights. The result was that the enemy, meeting with no opposition from veteran troops or disciplined militia, forced all the passes with the greatest ease. There was some stupid firing on the part of my company and some others in an effort to stop the invaders, but all in vain, and when the order came to retreat we were falling back. I heard someone say: "They did well to order us to retreat, for we were not made for this sort of thing."

I must confess that I grew angry, and that I never regretted more deeply my ignorance of even the rudiments of military science. My distress grew
when I saw the entrance of the enemy troops, and realized how few of them there were for a town of the size of Buenos Aires. I could not get the idea out of my head, and I almost went out of my mind, it was so painful to me to see my country under an alien yoke, and above all in such a degraded state that it could be conquered by the daring enterprise of the brave and honorable Benezet, whose valor I shall always admire.

A resistance movement under the leadership of Santiago Liniers drives the British out of Buenos Aires. A second English invasion, commanded by General John Whitelocke, is defeated, and the entire British force is compelled to surrender. B.K.

General Liniers ordered the quartermaster-general to receive the paroles of the officer prisoners; for this reason Brigadier-General Crawford, together with his aides and other high officers, came to his house. My slight knowledge of French, and perhaps certain civilities that I showed him, caused General Crawford to prefer to converse with me, and we entered upon a discussion that helped to pass the time—although he never lost sight of his aim of gaining knowledge of the country and, in particular, of its opinion of the Spanish Government.

So, having convinced himself that I had no French sympathies or connections, he divulged to me his ideas about our independence, perhaps in the hope of forming new links with this country, since the hope of conquest had failed. I described our condition to him, and made it plain that we wanted our old master or none at all; that we were far from possessing the means required for the achievement of independence; that even if it were won under the protection of England, she would abandon us in return for some advantage in Europe, and then we would fall under the Spanish sword; that every nation sought its own interest and did not care about the misfortunes of others. He agreed with me, and when I had shown how we lacked the means for winning independence, he put off its attainment for a century.

How fallible are the calculations of men! One year passed, and behold, without any effort on our part to become independent, God Himself gave us our opportunity as a result of the events of 1808 in Spain and Bayonne. Then it was that the ideals of liberty and independence came to life in America, and the Americans began to speak frankly of their rights.

3. MAN OF DESTINY

There is no more controversial figure in Latin American history than Simón Bolívar (1783–1819). To his admirers and dupes he is the Liberator of a continent; to his critics he is the proverbial "mae de borrachos," an ambitious schemer who sacrificed
He is sensitive to criticisms of his actions; a calmness against him cuts him to the quick, for none is more touchy about his reputation than the Liberator. . . .

His heart is better than his head. His bad temper never lasts; when it appears, it takes possession of his head, never of his heart, and as soon as the latter recovers its dominance it immediately makes amends for the harm that the former may have done. . . .

The great mental and bodily activity of the Liberator keeps him in a state of constant moral and physical agitation. One who observes him at certain moments might think he is seeing a madman. During the walks that we take with him he sometimes likes to walk very rapidly, trying to tire his companions out; at other times he begins to run and leap, to leave the others behind; then he waits for them to catch up and tells them they do not know how to run. He does the same when horseback riding. But he acts this way only when among his own people, and he would not run or leap if he thought that some stranger was looking on. When bad weather prevents walking or riding, the Liberator rocks himself swiftly back and forth in his hammock or strides through the corridors of his house, sometimes singing, at other times reciting verses or talking with those who walk beside him. When conversing with one of his own people, he changes the subject as often as he does his position; at such times one would say that he has not a bit of system or stability in him. How different the Liberator seems at a private party, at some formal gathering, and among his confidential friends and aides-de-camp! With the latter he seems their equal, the gayest and sometimes the maddest of them all. At a private party, among strangers and people less well known to him, he shows his superiority to all others by his easy and agreeable ways and good taste, his lively and ingenious conversation, and his amiability. At a more formal gathering, his unaffected dignity and polished manners cause him to be regarded as the most gentlemanly, learned, and amiable man present. . . .

In all the actions of the Liberator, and in his conversation, as I have already noted, one observes an extreme quickness. His questions are short and concise; he likes to be answered in the same way, and when someone wanders away from the question he impatiently says that that is not what he asked; he has no liking for a diffuse answer. He sustains his opinions with force and logic, and generally with tenacity. When he has occasion to contradict some assertion, he says: "No, sir, it is not so, but thus. . . ." Speaking of persons whom he dislikes or scorns, he often uses this expression: "That (or those) c***." He is very observant, noting even the least trifles; he dislikes the poorly educated, the bold, the windbag, the indiscrert, and the discourteous. Since nothing escapes him, he takes pleasure in criticizing such people, always making a little commentary on their defects. . . .

I have already said that the Liberator can assume an air of dignity when among persons who do not enjoy his full esteem or with whom he is not on terms of familiarity, but he throws it off among his own people. In church he carries himself with much propriety and respect, and does not permit his companions to deviate from this rule. One day, noticing that his physician, Dr. Moore, sat with his legs crossed, he had an aide-de-camp tell him that it was improper to cross one's legs in church, and that he should observe how he sat. One thing that His Excellency does not know, when at Mass, is when to kneel, stand up, and sit down. He never crosses himself. Sometimes he talks to the person beside him, but only a little, and very softly.

The ideas of the Liberator are like his imaginations: full of fire, original, and new. They lend considerable sparkle to his conversation, and make it extremely varied. When His Excellency praises, defends, or approves something, it is always with a little exaggeration. The same is true when he criticizes, condemns, or disapproves of something. In his conversation he frequently quotes, but his citations are always well chosen and pertinent. Voltaire is his favorite author, and he has memorized many passages from his works, both prose and poetry. He knows all the good French writers and evaluates them competently. He has some general knowledge of Italian and English literature and is very well versed in that of Spain.

The Liberator takes great pleasure in telling of his first years, his voyages, and his campaigns, and of his relations and old friends. His character and spirit dispose him more to criticize than to eulogize, but his criticisms or eulogies are never baseless; he could be charged only with an occasional slight exaggeration. I have never heard his Excellency utter a calumny. He is a lover of truth, heroism, and honor and of the public interest and morality. He detects and scorns all that is opposed to these lofty and noble sentiments.

4. THE ARMY OF THE ANDES

For Argentine the figure of José de San Martín has the same heroic and legendary quality that Bolívar enjoys for the people of northern South America. Modest and reserved, San Martín was nothing of an enigma to his contemporaries, and we lack a description as revealing of the man as Perú's Lares' sketch of Bolívar. Even the military career of San Martín's birth cannot conceal in his masterful campaigns of the Andes, his desire to do his own part. In this day his standard biography of San Martín is the classic life by Bernardo Enrique Mière (1812-1905), Distinguido Argentino militar, historiador, y estadista. Mière describes San Martín's painstaking preparations for the passage of the Andes.