

# THE NEW ATLANTIC AGE

From A BBC Home  
Service Talk  
By

## Focus-Point of Modern History Moves Toward The Americas



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round the Mediterranean. Practically everything in our tradition radiates from there. Egypt, the Holy Land, Greece, Rome, Asia Minor; our morals, our religion, our law, our thought, our sense of beauty, and a good proportion of our history are all things that happened round the Mediterranean. But you would not go for inspiration to the Mediterranean to-day. The history of the Ancient World may have been the history of things that happened round the Mediterranean. But the history of the Modern World is, and will be increasingly, the history of things that happen round the Atlantic.

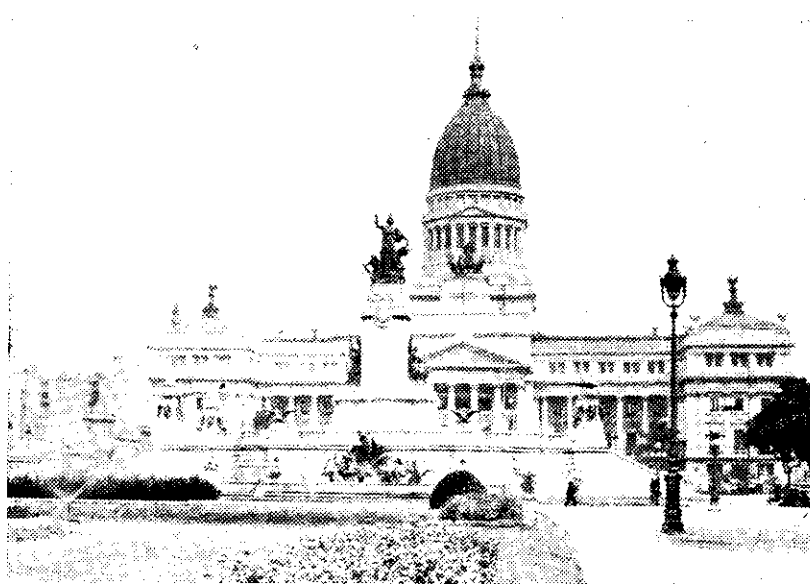
### All Related

This is the significance of the Americas. The countries of the eastern shore — Spain, Portugal, France, England, Scotland, Ireland — found them and populated them and helped to make them what they are. You will find Spain and Portugal indelibly impressed on Latin America, France and Scotland on eastern and western Canada, Ireland imparting its own flavour to the politics (no less than to the police force) of the United States, and England a potent influence on the formation of all North America. Not all the children take after their parents. The *New Yorker* is not the same as *Punch*; French Canada is a France that never was: France as it might have been if there had been no French Revolution. And stern Spanish ancestors would have some difficulty in recognising themselves in the democracies of Uruguay and Chile. Yet all of them on both sides of the Atlantic are relations, and the future of the world lies in their hands. For the age we live in is an Atlantic age.

**T**HERE are truck-loads of good travel books about Latin America, from the first explorers' to Darwin's *Voyage of the Beagle* and Bates's *Naturalist on The Amazon* and the last trippers who got off a cruise steamer and went up the Andes in a train or stayed for a week-end on an Argentine estancia and felt tough about it. But the books they write leave you with a vague, general impression that you are somewhere in the wilds, and that is about all. But the main thing about Latin America is that the part of it which matters is emphatically not the wilds. No country is governed by its jungles — excepting, at the moment, Germany. Its life is led, its future is determined, by those parts of it where man has conquered nature and made his own traditions.

### South America's Traditions

You have heard something of what those traditions are: the Indian background, which remains over large regions of the continent the foreground too; the Spanish super-structure (Portuguese in Brazil); and the top layer, which is quite uniform over the whole surface of the continent — Independence. The fascinating thing about its history is that when you explore it you have got beyond the old familiar landmarks. There is no 1066; 1815 is not the date of Waterloo, but an important date in the career of General San Martin; 1870, which means so much to us in Europe, is just the end of the Paraguayan War; and the most important event in 1914 is the opening of the Panama Canal. You gradually find your way about in a new region of history, and it is a great experience. But as it develops, you begin to see what it means. Most of us were brought up in a system of historical events that centres



"THE BIGGEST FACT about the Americas is their independence": A view of the ornate Argentine Congress building in Buenos Aires

At the moment a small group of the Atlantic peoples who live in the top right-hand corner of the map stand between the whole oceanic area and a remarkably unpleasant fate. For Atlantic mankind, with its easy life of free politics and cheerful dance music and selling goods to customers who pay for them, is threatened by an avalanche of hungry savagery which would soon put an end to the bright lights of Rio and New York and Buenos Aires. If you want to know what Germany intends to do to any country, don't waste your time listening to what she tells that country. Try to hear what she says about it to the others. When the Germans talk to

South America, its future is extremely bright. But what they say about it to the rest of the world is far more enlightening. The notion is extremely simple, and we have already seen some of it in operation. The Continent of Europe is to be neatly and thoroughly enslaved, including all the more productive parts of Russia. But because everything is not produced in Europe, it will be just as well to throw in Africa as a source of raw materials and an obliging market for European manufactures. That nice New Order would not mean many orders for America. The North Americans would have to sell their automobiles to each other. The South Americans would have to find customers in the moon for their meat and grain.

That is the place of the Americas in the picture to-day. Their battle is being fought on the high seas and in the air over France and on the plains of Russia. If the war was lost, they would be the losers without a single casualty.

### Why We Gave America Bases

Those people who like to think of the world as divided into neat compartments, continent by continent — Pan-America, the United States of Europe, and all that kind of thing — may have been mildly surprised some months ago when the British Government combined in defending the Americas by offering to the defending forces the use of British bases. But what they had forgotten, and what the Germans have forgotten too, is that we are a great American Power; and it is only natural for us to play a part in the defence of a hemisphere in which we are so largely interested. The defence of the eastern seaboard of the United States from bases in the West Indies is not merely the defence of Chicago and the Middle West. It is the defence of Ottawa and Montreal as well, and the grain-lands of Western Canada.

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"THE FREE PEOPLE of the Americas are all vitally concerned to defend their own doorstep": Brazilian naval vessels fitting-out in the Ilha de Cobras naval yard, Rio de Janeiro. In the left foreground lie two flotilla-leaders nearing completion