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The Paraguayan War
(1864-1870)

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The Paraguayan War (1864-1870)

Part I. The Paraguayan War: History and Historiography*

The Paraguayan War (1864-70) began formally with declarations of war by Paraguay's dictator Francisco Solano López, first on the Empire of Brazil in December 1864, then on the Argentine Republic in March 1865, followed by invasions of their territories. With the signing of a Treaty of Triple Alliance (May 1865) it became a war waged by Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay for the destruction of Paraguay. The Paraguayan War, or War of the Triple Alliance, was the longest and bloodiest inter-state war in the history of Latin America. Indeed it was the longest and, apart from the Crimean War (1854-56) which cost over 450,000 lives (two thirds of them Russian), the bloodiest inter-state war anywhere in the world between the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. It lasted for more than five years, ending only with the death of Solano López at the hands of Brazilian soldiers on 1 March 1870, and claimed 150-200,000 lives (mostly Paraguayan and Brazilian) either in battle or from disease and deprivation associated with the war.¹ The War had a profound effect on the economies, politics and society of all four countries engaged, especially the two that did most of the fighting: Paraguay, the principal loser, and Brazil, the principal victor.

Antecedents

In a certain sense the Paraguayan War has its roots in the struggle between Spain and Portugal in the 17th and 18th centuries and between the newly independent United Provinces of the Río de la Plata (Argentina) – and more specifically the province of Buenos Aires – and first Portugal, then the newly independent Empire of Brazil in the second and third decades of the 19th century for control

* This is a revised and expanded version of an essay originally published as an Introduction to Maria Eduarda Castro Magalhães Marques (coord.), *A Guerra do Paraguai: 130 anos depois* (Rio de Janeiro: Editores Relume Dumará 1995), a volume which included papers presented at an international colloquium organised by the Fundação Roberto Marinho, with the support of the Banco Real, and held at the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro on 23 November 1994. I have incorporated some material from a lecture I gave on 'Politics, Society and Culture in Brazil during the Paraguayan War (1864-70)' at King's College London on 26 October 1995 on the occasion of the inauguration of the Centre for the Study of Brazilian Culture and Society.

¹ There were, of course, several prolonged and extremely savage 19th century *civil* wars: notably, in the middle decades of the century, the Taiping wars in China in the 1850s and 1860s, with incalculable loss of life, and the American Civil War (1861-65), in which more than 600,000 Yankee and Confederate soldiers died.

of the so-called Banda Oriental of the Río de la Plata. This conflict had, however, been largely resolved long before the events that led directly to the outbreak of the Paraguayan War. In 1828, after British mediation, the independent republic of Uruguay had been established as a buffer state between Argentina and Brazil. And in 1851-2 the Argentine dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas, the main enemy of an independent Uruguay, had been defeated by an earlier Triple Alliance consisting of Uruguay, Brazil and the Argentine provinces opposed to Rosas and domination by Buenos Aires led by Entre Ríos (and its caudillo General José Justo de Urquiza). In the conflict in the Río de la Plata in 1863-4 Argentina and Brazil found themselves – for the first time – on the same side and not prepared to go to war – at least not with each other.

It was an episode in the long-running civil war between Blancos (Conservatives) and Colorados (Liberals) in Uruguay – the rebellion led by the Colorado caudillo General Venancio Flores for the overthrow of the Blanco government of President Bernardo Berro in April 1863 – that triggered off the sequence of events leading to the Paraguayan War. Both Argentina and Brazil supported the Colorado rebellion. President Bartolomé Mitre of Argentina, a Liberal, elected in October 1862, took this position because the Uruguayan Colorados had backed him in the Argentine civil war of 1861 and because he believed the Blancos in power in Montevideo constituted a possible focus for residual federalist opposition in the provinces to the recently united Argentine republic. Brazil's position was a little more complicated. During the 1850s Brazil had dramatically increased its economic and financial interest in, and political influence over, Uruguay. By the end of the decade over 20,000 Brazilian subjects, mostly *gaúchos* from Rio Grande do Sul, together with their slaves, were settled there. Brazilians constituted more than 10 per cent of Uruguay's population. They owned perhaps 30 per cent of the land, including some of the best estates, and freely transported their cattle to *saladeros* in Rio Grande do Sul. The Blanco (Conservative) administration elected in 1860, however, had begun to adopt a tough line, attempting to restrict Brazilian settlement (and slaveholding) and to control – and tax – cross-frontier trade. Rio Grande do Sul, which had abandoned its struggle for independent statehood only 15 years before, expected the imperial government in Rio de Janeiro to protect its interests in Uruguay. The Liberal party was already dominant in Rio Grande do Sul, and as the political tide nationally began to turn in favour of the Liberals (culminating in January 1864 in the appointment of a Liberal-Progressive government under Zacarias Góis e Vasconcelos) Brazilian governments became increasingly responsive to pressure from Rio Grande do Sul to join Argentina in supporting the Colorado rebellion led by General Flores. It was in these circumstances that the Blanco government in Uruguay looked to Paraguay as its only possible ally.

Paraguay, the former province of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata that had successfully separated itself from both Spain and Buenos Aires in 1811-13, was geographically isolated: until Bolivia's defeat in the War of the Pacific at the end of the century it alone of the newly independent Latin American states was

landlocked. As a predominantly Guaraní-speaking nation it was culturally isolated. And under the dictatorship of Dr José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia (1813-40) and (at least until the 1850s) under the dictatorship of his successor Carlos Antonio López (1844-62), it had also isolated itself politically and economically from its neighbours. Paraguay had played only a minor role in the civil and inter-state wars of the Río de la Plata during the first half of the 19th century. It was, however, fearful and distrustful of its two much larger, much more populous and potentially predatory neighbours: the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata (Argentina) and Brazil. Both, but especially Argentina, had been reluctant, and late, to recognise Paraguay's independence. Both had territorial claims against Paraguay: Brazil in the far northeast of the country on the borders of Mato Grosso, a region economically valuable for its natural yerba mate forests; Argentina east of the Paraná river (Misiones) but also west of the Paraguay river, a remote area potentially valuable for its quebracho trees from which tannin was extracted. And there was friction with both over the freedom (or otherwise) of navigation on the Paraguay-Paraná river system and access to regional markets. Brazil required Paraguay to give the province of Mato Grosso access to the Río Paraná and thus to the Atlantic via the river Paraguay. Paraguay required Argentina to give it access to the Atlantic via the Río Paraná. During the 1850s, as first Brazil and then Argentina overcame the obstacles to their internal unity and stability and as Brazil in particular adopted what Paraguay regarded as an imperialist policy towards Uruguay, the government of Carlos Antonio López pursued with increasing urgency its policy of economic – and military – modernisation, making effective use of British technology and British technicians.

Francisco Solano López, to whom the Berro government in Montevideo appealed for help in July 1863, had come to power in Paraguay in October 1862 on the death of his father. Hesitant at first to make a formal alliance with the Blancos, his natural allies, against the Colorados in Uruguay now that the latter were backed by both Brazil and Argentina, Solano López during the second half of the year increasingly began to warn Argentina and Brazil against what he saw as a growing threat to the existing balance of power in the Río de la Plata which guaranteed Paraguay's security, territorial integrity and independence. He also saw an opportunity to make his presence felt in the region, to play a role commensurate with Paraguay's new economic and military power. Early in 1864 he began to mobilise for a possible war, taking advantage of the military preeminence Paraguay enjoyed at the time, as we shall see.

When, after diplomacy had failed to resolve its differences with the Uruguayan government, the Zacarias administration in Rio eventually issued, on 4 August 1864, an ultimatum to Uruguay threatening retaliation for the alleged abuses suffered by Brazilian subjects and direct intervention on behalf of the Colorado rebels, Solano López on 30 August issued an ultimatum to Brazil against intervention in Uruguay. After his warning was ignored and Brazilian troops invaded Uruguay on 16 October, Solano López on 12 November

precipitated war by seizing the Brazilian merchant vessel the *Marquês de Olinda* as it left Asunción for Corumbá with the president of the province of Mato Grosso on board, and on 13 December he took the momentous decision to declare war on Brazil and invaded Mato Grosso. And after Argentina refused permission for the Paraguayan army to cross the disputed and largely uninhabited territory of Misiones in order to invade Rio Grande do Sul, and ultimately Uruguay, Solano López on 18 March 1865 declared war on Argentina as well, and the following month invaded the Argentine province of Corrientes.

Thus Francisco Solano López began what became the Paraguayan War. To what extent his actions were rational, provoked by Brazil and Argentina, and essentially in defence of threatened national interests (perhaps even his country's survival), or irrational, aggressive, and expansionist – Brazilian intervention in Uruguay offering a pretext and an opportunity for a megalomaniac to realise a dream of empire? – is still a matter for debate. But whatever the thinking behind his actions, whatever the motivation, Solano López's decision to declare war first on Brazil and then on Argentina, and to invade both their territories, proved a serious miscalculation, and one that was to have tragic consequences for the Paraguayan people. At the very least Solano López made an enormous gamble – and lost. He failed to recognise the realities of power in the Río de la Plata. He overestimated Paraguay's economic and military power. He underestimated Brazil's potential, if not its existing, military power – and its willingness to fight. He was wrong in thinking that Argentina would be neutral in a war between Paraguay and Brazil over Uruguay. Mitre did not believe that Argentine interests, including the continued independence of Uruguay, were threatened by what he expected to be a brief, surgical Brazilian intervention in Uruguay in defence of its own interests. Solano López also exaggerated Argentina's internal contradictions and the possibility that, for example, Entre Ríos (still under the leadership of Urquiza) and Corrientes would prevent Argentina from waging war against Paraguay or in the event of war would take Paraguay's side against Buenos Aires.

Thus Solano López's reckless actions brought about the very thing that most threatened the security, even the existence, of his country: a union of his two powerful neighbours – indeed, since Flores had finally managed to seize power in Montevideo in February 1865, a union of all three of his neighbours – in alliance and war against him. Neither Brazil nor Argentina had a quarrel with Paraguay sufficient to justify going to war. Neither wished nor planned for war with Paraguay. There was no popular demand or support for war; indeed, the war proved to be generally unpopular in both countries, especially Argentina. At the same time little effort was made to avoid war. The need to defend themselves against Paraguayan aggression (however much provoked or justified) offered both Brazil and Argentina not only an opportunity to settle their differences with Paraguay over territory and river navigation but also to punish and weaken, perhaps destroy, a troublesome, emerging (expansionist?) power in their region. Mitre seized the chance to remove a regime which, like the Blancos in Uruguay,

he regarded as a perpetual focus for federalist resistance to Buenos Aires and thus a constant threat to the process of nation building in Argentina. Pedro II seized the chance to strengthen and consolidate the Imperial system and assert Brazil's undisputed hegemony in the region, and in particular Brazilian rather than Argentine hegemony over Paraguay as well as Uruguay. As the war progressed, it became, for Brazil in particular, not just a war for the overthrow of the Solano López dictatorship, guarantees of free navigation on the Paraguay/Paraná rivers and the dismemberment of Paraguay – the original war aims of the Triple Alliance (the last of which was kept secret until revealed by Britain in 1866) – but a war for civilisation (and democracy) against barbarism (and tyranny). This despite the awkward fact that as a result of the emancipation of the slaves in the United States during the Civil War Brazil was the only remaining independent state in the Western Hemisphere whose economy and society was based on slavery (as well as the only remaining monarchy). At the beginning of the War Brazil had a slave population of 1.5 – 2 million, 15-20% of the total population of between nine and ten million.

The Paraguayan War was not inevitable. Nor was it necessary. But once Flores left Buenos Aires for Uruguay in April 1863 it could have been avoided only if (a) Brazil had been less assertive in defence of the interests of its subjects in Uruguay and in particular had not intervened militarily on their behalf; (b) Argentina had remained neutral in the ensuing conflict between Paraguay and Brazil; and, crucially, (c) Paraguay had behaved more prudently, recognised the realities of power in the region, and attempted to defend its interests through diplomacy not war.

I address below² the argument that, as 'client states' and 'neo-colonies', Argentina and Brazil were prompted and manipulated by Britain, the 'fourth Ally', into waging war against Paraguay. Britain's purpose allegedly was to undermine and destroy Paraguay's state-led, 'autonomous', economic development 'model', which posed a threat to the advance of its own liberal capitalist 'model' in the region. More specifically, its aim was to open up the one remaining closed economy in Latin America to British manufactured goods and British capital and to secure for Britain new sources of raw materials – especially cotton in view of the disruption of supplies as a result of the US Civil War. This 'revisionist' thesis, rooted in the concerns of the 1960s and 1970s, has a certain intellectual appeal. Unfortunately, there is little or no evidence to support it. It is, in my view, based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the Paraguayan economic 'model',³ of Britain's interests in Paraguay and of Britain's relations with Argentina and Brazil. However, it is true that, although

² See Part II, 'British Imperialism and the Paraguayan War'.

³ For a recent discussion of the Paraguayan economic 'model' as it evolved under the dictatorship of Carlos Antonio López in the 1850s and 1860s, see Mario Pastore, 'State-led industrialisation: the evidence on Paraguay, 1852-70', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 26, pt. 2 (1994).

Britain was officially neutral in the War, British loans to Argentina and, more particularly, to Brazil and British arms made an important contribution to the eventual victory of the Allies over Paraguay.

The War

Considering the enormous disparity between the two sides in size, wealth and population (and therefore in real and potential human and material resources) the Paraguayan War would appear to have been an unequal struggle from the outset.⁴ Brazil (population almost 10 million), Argentina (population 1.5 million) and Uruguay (population 250-300,000) joined forces against Paraguay (population 300-400,000? – certainly much less than the 1 million or more still frequently cited). Militarily, however, the two sides were more evenly matched. In fact, at the beginning of the War, and for at least the first year, Paraguay probably had, at least numerically, a military superiority. Paraguay's standing army has been variously estimated at between 28,000 and 57,000 men plus reserves of between 20,000 and 28,000 – that is to say, virtually the entire adult male population was under arms. This should be compared with Argentina's army of 25-30,000 (only 10-15,000 of whom were available in the event of a foreign war, so delicate was Argentina's newly achieved internal unity and stability), Uruguay's of 5,000 (at most) and Brazil's of 17-20,000 (though Brazil also had its *polícia militar* and a vast reserve of up to 200,000 men in the form of the National Guard). Paraguay's army was probably also better equipped and trained than the armies of its neighbours at the outset.

In the course of the War Paraguay mobilised at least 70-80,000 men (though probably less than the 100,000 sometimes suggested). It could mobilise 30-40,000 at any one time, but after the defeat at Tuiuti in May 1866 rarely fielded more than 20,000. Once the Paraguayan forces had been expelled from Argentine territory (and had no serious possibility of returning), Argentina *reduced* its commitment to the Allied war effort so that by the end of the war there were only some 4,000 Argentine troops on Paraguayan soil. Uruguay never had more than a symbolic presence in the theatre of operations. Brazil, on the other hand, increasingly assumed responsibility for the bulk of the fighting. Brazil *expanded* its standing army to 60-70,000 men during the first year of hostilities by means of forced recruitment, transfers from the *polícia militar* and National Guard, the use of *escravos da nação* and *escravos da Casa Imperial* as well as some privately owned slaves (freed in return for service in the war) and the formation of corps of *voluntários da pátria* (some more voluntary than

⁴ For comparative data on size, population, government revenues, armed forces, etc of the combatants in the Paraguayan War, see Diego Abente, 'The War of the Triple Alliance: three explanatory models', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1987), Table 1 Regional power capabilities of Paraguay, Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, c.1860, and Table 2 Weighted index of power capabilities.

others).⁵ In August 1867, for example, three-quarters of the 40-45,000 Allied troops in the field were Brazilian. In the course of the war Brazil is estimated to have mobilised up to 130-150,000 men (though probably not the 200,000 indicated by some historians). Moreover, unlike Paraguay, which had to rely on its own arsenal and shipyard, the Allies also had access to manufactured arms and warships purchased abroad, mostly in Europe, as well as loans raised in the City of London to help pay for them. And the Allies, or rather Brazil, had total naval superiority. At the beginning of the war Brazil already had the largest and most powerful navy in the region (33 steam and 12 sailing ships), and in December 1865 the first of many ironclads, the *Brasil*, arrived on the scene.

The War itself can be divided into three phases. The first began with the limited Paraguayan offensives against Mato Grosso in December 1864 and Corrientes in April 1865. In May 1865 the Paraguayan army finally crossed Misiones and invaded Rio Grande do Sul. Initially successful, the invasion was eventually contained by the Allied forces. The Paraguayans never reached Uruguay. The Paraguayan commander Colonel Estigarribia surrendered to President Mitre (commander of the Allied forces during the first two and a half years of the war), Emperor Dom Pedro II – on his only visit to the war zone – and President Flores at Uruguaiana on 14 September. The Paraguayan army then retreated back across the Paraná river and prepared to defend the country's southern border. At the end of the first year of the war the only Paraguayan troops left on Allied soil were those (few) in Mato Grosso (which remained a secondary front in the war). In the meantime, on 11 June at Riachuela on the Paraná below the river port of Corrientes, in the only major naval battle of the war, the Brazilian navy had destroyed the Paraguayan navy and instituted an effective blockade of Paraguay, which it maintained for the rest of the war.

The second and major phase of the war (which included several periods in which there was little actual fighting) began when the Allies finally invaded Paraguay in April 1866 and established their headquarters at Tuiuti at the confluence of the rivers Paraná and Paraguay. There on 24 May they repelled a ferocious Paraguayan assault and won the first major land battle of the war. It was, however, more than three months before the Allied armies began to advance up the River Paraguay. On 12 September, at a secret meeting between Solano López and the Allied commander-in-chief Mitre at Yatayti-Corá, Solano López's offer of concessions, including territorial concessions, to bring the war to an end, provided only that he himself survived and Paraguay was not totally

⁵ An interesting recent study of mobilisation for war in Brazil, especially of blacks (slave, freed and free) is Ricardo Salles, *Guerra do Paraguai: escravidão e cidadania na formação do exército* (Rio de Janeiro, 1990). In *Prince of the People. The Life and Times of a Brazilian Free Man of Colour* (London, 1993) Eduardo Silva offers us a singular portrait of one free black *voluntário*, Cândido da Fonseca Galvão, better known as Dom Obá II d'África. See also Silva, 'O Príncipe Obá, um voluntário da pátria', in Marques (coord.), *Guerra do Paraguai*.

dismembered or permanently occupied, was rejected. Ten days later, at Curupaití, south of Humaitá on the river Paraguay, the Allies suffered their worst defeat of the war. They did not renew their advance until July 1867 when a movement was initiated to encircle the great river fortress of Humaitá (Paraguay's Sebastopol), which blocked access to the Río Paraguay and the Paraguayan capital, Asunción. Even so it was a further five months, following the decisive defeat and virtual destruction of the Paraguayan army at the battle of Lomas Valentinas on 27 December, before Allied (mostly Brazilian) troops under the command of the Brazilian commander in chief, the Marquês de Caxias, finally entered Asunción in January 1869 and brought the war to an end – or so they believed.

There was, however, a third phase to the war. Solano López formed a new army in the Cordillera east of Asunción, and conducted a successful but limited guerrilla campaign against the Allied forces. He was defeated and his troops massacred in the last great battle of the war at Campo Grande or Acosta Nu, north-east of Asunción on 16 August 1869. Even now Solano López himself again escaped. He and his Irish companion Eliza Alicia Lynch were pursued northwards by Brazilian troops for a further six months before Solano López was finally cornered and killed at Cerro Corá in the extreme northeast of Paraguay on 1 March 1870.

Why did it take so long for the Allies to bring the war to a successful conclusion despite their overwhelming naval and, at least after Tuiutí, military superiority? At the beginning of the war Mitre had boasted, famously, that the Allies would be in Asunción within three months. In the event it was almost four years before the Allies reached the Paraguayan capital. And even then the war dragged on for more than another year. The explanation lies, on the one hand, on the Allied side, or rather on the Brazilian side, since after the first year or so Brazil fought the war practically alone. Brazilian governments faced enormous logistical problems, first organising, then transporting their troops thousands of kilometres either overland or by sea and up river, and finally supplying their troops. And breaking down Paraguay's excellent land and river defence was not an easy task. But it is also true that Brazilian commanders demonstrated a high degree of strategic and tactical ineptitude. On the other hand, the Paraguayan troops, indeed the Paraguayan people, remained loyal to Solano López and fought with extraordinary tenacity and in the end, when national survival was at stake, heroically. This, and the Allied determination to pursue the war to the bitter end, also explains why the war was so bloody.

Consequences

The War was for Paraguay an almost unqualified disaster. In the event Paraguay survived as an independent state (though in the immediate post-war period under Brazilian tutelage). The ultimate consequence of total defeat, total

dismemberment, was avoided, not least because of the rivalry between the victors. Its national pride remained intact, even perhaps enhanced. But its territory was reduced by 40 per cent. And although population loss has been grossly exaggerated – even put as high as 50 per cent of Paraguay's (usually inflated) pre-war population, i.e. 200,000 or 300,000 or even half a million dead – more modest recent estimates of 15-20 per cent (or even lower) of a much smaller estimated pre-war population, i.e. 50-80,000 deaths, in battle as well as from disease (measles, small pox, yellow fever and cholera), are enormously high percentages by the standards of any modern war.⁶ Paraguay's economy was left in ruins, its manufacturing base and infrastructure destroyed, the beginnings of development outwards through greater trade and closer integration into the world economy set back a generation. A huge indemnity was imposed by the victors, although this was eventually cancelled (not, however, in the case of Brazil until the Second World War!). What was left of Paraguay's army was disarmed, its famous and formidable river fortifications permanently dismantled. Brazilian (and some Argentine) troops remained in occupation for almost a decade.

Argentina suffered estimated (possibly exaggerated) losses of 18,000 in battle plus 5,000 in internal disturbances triggered by the war and 12,000 in cholera epidemics. The territory it gained fell short of its ambitions, astute Brazilian diplomacy keeping Argentina out of the Northern Chaco. But it secured Misiones finally, and the Chaco Central up to the Río Pilcomayo. An increasingly strong, potentially expansionist Paraguay had been removed from the politics of the Río de la Plata. And on balance the war had contributed positively to national consolidation: Entre Ríos and Corrientes had not broken ranks; *montonero* rebellions in various provinces had been suppressed; Buenos Aires was accepted as the undisputed capital of a united Argentine republic; Argentine national identity had been considerably strengthened. The ground had been laid for Argentina's remarkable economic, social and political transformation during the following half century.

Brazil, which had made the major contribution to the war effort to which victory was due, suffered human losses totalling at least 25-50,000 in combat, and more from disease (though probably less than the total of 100,000 sometimes claimed). The financial cost of the war put a great strain on Brazil's public finances. Brazil had, however, gained from Paraguay all the territory it claimed between the Río Apa and the Río Branco. And Paraguay itself, even more than Uruguay, was now firmly under Brazilian influence and control. The war

⁶ On the much debated question of Paraguay's losses in the Paraguayan War and the demographic impact of the War on Paraguay, the most recent contribution is Vera Blinn Reber, 'The demographics of Paraguay: a reinterpretation of the Great War, 1864-70', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 68, no. 2 (1988). But see also 'Critique' by Thomas L. Whigham and Barbara Potthast, in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 70, no. 4 (1990).

stimulated Brazilian industry, directly in the case of cotton textile mills (for army uniforms) and Rio's arsenal, indirectly as a result of the protectionism provided by the higher general import tariffs imposed to finance government deficits. The war also modernised somewhat Brazil's infrastructure and rudimentary state organisation, which suddenly and unexpectedly became responsible for the recruitment, training, clothing, arming and transportation of a large standing army.

The Paraguayan War sharpened social tensions in Brazil in a number of ways – the inevitable result of mass mobilisation (and de-mobilisation). On balance it advanced the cause of social reform, and especially the abolition of slavery. It is not easy to disentangle the impact of the emancipation of the slaves in the United States (and other international influences and pressures at the time, notably from England and France) from the impact of the Paraguayan War itself in explaining the beginnings of a change in the intellectual and political climate in Brazil on the issue of slavery. The war undoubtedly intensified existing fears that slavery was Brazil's Achilles heel, that slaves constituted a potentially dangerous 'internal enemy'. It was necessary to offer freedom to the thousands of slaves recruited to fight in the war. And not least slavery made it difficult to justify the war in terms of civilisation versus barbarism. The fact is that, prompted by the Emperor, various projects for the gradual, though even now not immediate, abolition of slavery in Brazil were brought before the Council of State during the early years of the war. At the same time the war provided a reason or a pretext for delaying any significant steps. Nevertheless, the ground was prepared for the *Lei do Ventre Livre*, the law of free birth (or 'free womb'), introduced and passed immediately after the war in 1871, the most important piece of legislation leading to the final abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888.⁷

The war also stimulated discussion of political reform in Brazil. The conflict between Caxias, the Brazilian (and from January 1868 the Allied) commander in chief and leading Conservative politician, and Zacarias, the Liberal Prime Minister, which dominated the middle years of the War and which raised for the first time in Brazil the question of civilian control of the military, culminated in the so-called Conservative 'coup' of July 1868, which was also aimed at slowing down progress towards abolition.⁸ Zacarias's resignation led directly to the

⁷ For a brief discussion of slavery, abolition and the War, see Leslie Bethell, 'The decline and fall of slavery in nineteenth century Brazil', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, series 6, volume 1 (1991), pp. 79-81. The history of the origins and passage of the Law of Free Birth (1871) remains to be written.

⁸ An interesting discussion of the significance of the political events of July 1868 in Brazil can be found in Richard Graham, 'Brazil from the middle of the nineteenth century to the Paraguayan War', in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. III (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 789-91. On the militarisation of politics and the politicisation of the military in Brazil during the War, see Wilma Peres Costa, *A Espada*

break-up of the Progressive-Liberal alliance, the formation of Reform Clubs and a Reform Manifesto (May 1869) which raised a wide range of political and constitutional issues and proposed among other things greater autonomy for the judiciary, limited tenure for senators and a reduction of the powers of the Council of State. This was followed by a Radical Manifesto (November 1869) which added to the reform agenda an extension of the suffrage, the election of provincial presidents and an end to the Emperor's 'moderating power' (used to remove Zacarias from power) as well as educational reform and an end to slavery, and in December 1870 a Republican Manifesto and the formation of the Republican Party.

Finally, the war produced for the first time in Brazil a modern, professional army – created by Caxias to win the war after the defeat of Curupaití – and one that sought to play a political role. The link between the Paraguayan War, the *questão militar* in the 1870s and 1880s and the military coup of November 1889 that established a republic in Brazil, only eighteen months after the abolition of slavery, is too well known to require elaboration here. For Joaquim Nabuco and many others the Paraguayan War represented a division of the waters in the history of the Empire, both its apogee and the beginning of its decline. Victory in the Paraguayan War for Brazil's slave-based Empire came to be seen as something of a Pyrrhic victory.

Historiography

A wide range of primary sources located in the national libraries and archives of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay as well as Europe (especially Britain) and the United States is available to historians of the Paraguayan War. The press in particular is an important source in all four countries engaged in the War.⁹ The War also generated an extraordinarily rich iconography. Best known perhaps is the work of Cândido López, the young painter from Buenos Aires who joined the Argentine forces at the outbreak of the war, lost his right arm at the battle of Curupaití, taught himself to paint with his left hand and spent the next 20 years painting in oil the scenes and especially the battles he had witnessed. Several Brazilian artists, notably Victor Meireles de Lima (*Passagem de Humaitá, Riachuelo*) and Pedro Américo de Figueiredo e Melo (*Batalha do Avaí*), painted magnificent battle scenes, although unlike Cândido López they were trapped in the aesthetic of academic neo-classicism first introduced into Brazil by the French artistic mission of 1816. More interesting, and useful, perhaps, is the work of two outstanding Brazilian caricaturists, the German-born Henrique Fleiuss in *Semana Ilustrada*, Brazil's first great illustrated weekly, and

de Damocles: o exército, a Guerra do Paraguai e a crise do império (forthcoming).

⁹ See, for example, Efraim Cardozo, *Hace cien años. Crónicas de la guerra de 1864-1870 publicadas en 'La Tribuna' de Asunción* (11 vols., Asunción, 1967-1980).

– even more brilliant and certainly more savage – the Italian-born Angelo Agostini, first in *O Diabo Coxo* and *O Cabrião* in São Paulo, then in *O Arlequim* and, beginning in 1868, in *Vida Fluminense* in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁰ Paraguayan artists whose woodcuts were published in the illustrated journals *Cabichuí* and *El Centinela* also left lasting images of the war, as did a number of early photographers.

There are a large number of valuable first hand accounts of the War. Brazilian classics include *Reminiscências da Campanha do Paraguai* by General Dionísio Cerqueira, Andre Rebouças's *Diário*, and Alfredo d'Escragnonle Taunay's *Diário do exército*, *Memórias* and, above all, *La retraite de Laguna* (written and first published in French in 1871; Portuguese translation 1874). The latter, an account of a minor episode in the War, a failed Brazilian military operation in Mato Grosso early in 1867, by the then engineer, later novelist (*Inocência*, 1872) and historian Taunay, is the one undoubted literary masterpiece produced by the Paraguayan War. It stands with *Os Sertões* by Euclides da Cunha, another engineer, as one of the classic works of Brazilian literature. Equally valuable are the writings of Bartolomé Mitre, published as volumes I-VI of the *Archivo del General Mitre* (Buenos Aires, 1911-13), and other Argentine and Paraguayan participants in the War, and not least the accounts of foreign combatants and outside observers. These include *The War in Paraguay* (1869) by Colonel George Thompson, the former British army officer and specialist in fortifications and entrenchment who was one of Solano López's senior military commanders until his capture by the Allies in 1868; *Seven Eventful Years in Paraguay* (1869) by George Frederick Masterman, the young British military apothecary who directed the pharmaceutical services of the Paraguayan army until his arrest for plotting against Solano López in 1868; *Letters from the Battlefields of Paraguay* (1870) by Sir Richard Burton, the famous British orientalist and explorer, who was British consul in Santos at the time and visited the war zone in 1868 and again in 1869; and a two volume *History of Paraguay* (1871) by Charles Ames Washburn, who was US minister in Asunción until his expulsion in 1868.

The modern secondary literature directly concerned with the Paraguayan War can for the most part be grouped chronologically into (a) books published from the late 1920s to the early 1960s and (b) books published in the late 1960s and 1970s. The first group, beginning with Pelham Horton Box, *The Origins of the Paraguayan War* (1927), still a classic work, consists of useful but traditional (predominantly diplomatic) accounts of the origins of the War, for which Solano López was largely blamed, and (predominantly military) accounts of the War itself, concentrating on how Solano López was defeated: Tasso Fragoso (1934),

¹⁰ See Herman Lima, *História da Caricatura no Brasil*, 4 vols (Rio de Janeiro, 1963), vol. 1. I am grateful to Maria Eduarda Marques for drawing my attention to this and other sources on the work of Brazilian and foreign artists during the Paraguayan War.

Cárcano (1939-41), Spalding (1940), Cardozo (1954, 1961), Teixeira Soares (1955, 1956), etc., together with one general narrative history of the war by a US historian, still with all its limitations the best synthesis in English: Charles Kolinski, *Independence or Death! The Story of the Paraguayan War* (1965). In the second group are a number of stimulating, but not altogether convincing, revisionist works, in which Paraguay appears as the victim not only of Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay but also of capitalist and imperialist aggression (indeed genocide), with Britain as 'the Fourth Ally' in the War: Pomer (1968), Chiavenatto (1979), Fornos Peñalba (1979), etc – with only Tate (1979) and Herken Krauer (1983) offering a different view of Britain's role – together with two excellent books by US historians: John Hoyt Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic, 1800-1870* (1979), the best history of the Paraguayan republic up to and including the War since Efraím Cardozo, *Paraguay independiente* (1949), and Harris Gaylord Warren, *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance* (1978) on the treatment of the defeated Paraguay by Brazil and Argentina in the decade after the war.

Since the late 1970s the Paraguayan War has received disappointingly little attention from historians. Only a very few books, notably Salles (1990), and a handful of articles, notably Abente (1987), Reber (1988), and Pastore (1994), all cited in footnotes above, have offered the results of new research or new interpretations of what is already known. A number of promising new themes – the War and state building, the War and economic development, the War and social change, the War and national identity, the War and citizenship – have scarcely begun to be explored. The Paraguayan War awaits its modern historian.

Part II. British Imperialism and the Paraguayan War*

Introduction

In *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London, 1975), Eric Hobsbawm described the 1860s as 'by any standards....a decade of blood'. He had in mind, above all – besides the continuing Taiping Civil Wars in China – the US Civil War (1861-65) and the War of the Triple Alliance (Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay) against Paraguay (1865-70), both of which witnessed the kind of uncontrolled slaughter and destruction associated more with 20th century than with 19th century wars, as well as the somewhat less bloody wars in Europe for the political unification of Italy and Germany which culminated at the end of the decade in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. The US Civil War and the Paraguayan War, he suggested, were in their different ways both part of the process of global capitalist expansion. The Paraguayan War, for example, he regarded as a consequence of the integration of the River Plate basin into the British world economy: 'Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, their faces and their economies turned to the Atlantic, forced Paraguay out of [its] self sufficiency'.¹¹ In *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, 1967) André Gunder Frank had offered a similar interpretation of the significance of the Paraguayan War but in the advance of liberal capitalism in Latin America in the middle decades of the 19th century he had assigned a more active role to the 'metropolitan powers', by which he meant, above all, Britain. The metropolitan powers, he argued, had 'aided their Latin American junior trade partners with arms, naval blockades and, where necessary, direct military intervention and [the] *instigation of wars* such as that of the Triple Alliance versus Paraguay' (my italics).¹²

For almost a century explanations of the causes and origins of the Paraguayan War had emphasised territorial disputes between Argentina and Paraguay and between Brazil and Paraguay, conflict over rights to free navigation on the rivers Paraná and Paraguay and free access to regional markets, the growing interests of the Brazilian Empire (and, more particularly, the interests of the province of Rio Grande do Sul) in Uruguay, Argentina's desire under President Bartolomé Mitre (1862-8) to consolidate its newly established political unity, and threats to

* This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the international colloquium on the Paraguayan War held at the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro on 23 November 1994 and subsequently published in Maria Eduarda Castro Magalhães Marques (coord.), *Guerra do paraguai; 130 anos depois* (Rio de Janeiro: Editores Relume Dumará, 1995).

¹¹ E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (London, 1975), p. 78.

¹² André Gunder Frank, *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (New York, 1967; revised and enlarged edition, 1969), p. 287.

the regional balance of power posed, above all, by the expansionist policies of Paraguay's dictator (from 1862) Francisco Solano López. Still the classic account, Pelham Horton Box's *The Origins of the Paraguayan War* (2 vols., Urbana Illinois, 1927) has nothing whatsoever to say about any British involvement in the War. In the late 1960s and the 1970s, however, Paraguay was portrayed as the victim of capitalist and imperialist aggression – not only in the general historical literature but also in the more specialised monographs on the subject, notably León Pomer's *La guerra del Paraguay: ¡gran negocio!* (Buenos Aires, 1968); not only by Marxist or Marxist influenced historians under the spell of the dependency school but equally by historians of the nationalist right, and not only in London and New York but more especially in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and, naturally, in Paraguay itself. Argentina and Brazil had become dependent 'client states' primarily acting on behalf of British interests. Britain had become the main 'instigador, financista y beneficiador' of the Paraguayan War.

The argument was perhaps most comprehensively synthesised and presented in its most extreme form by a Nicaraguan historian, José Alfredo Fornos Peñalba, in an unpublished PhD thesis.¹³ For him Britain was an 'indispensible fourth ally' in the war against Paraguay, in some ways 'the most implacable of all independent Paraguay's 19th century foes'. In promoting, supporting and, above all, financing the war of aggression against Solano López waged by its 'neo-colonies', Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil, Britain's aim was not only to open up Paraguay, the one remaining closed economy in Latin America after independence, to British manufactured goods and to British capital and to secure new sources of raw materials (especially cotton, in view of the disruption of US supplies as a result of the Civil War). More than this, Britain aimed once and for all to destroy what Frank had called Paraguay's 'genuinely independent, autonomously generated development effort' under Dr José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia (1811-40) and his successor Carlos Antonio López (1844-62), since it offered Latin America an alternative 'nationalist' political, economic and ideological model to the international, liberal *laissez faire* capitalist model being imposed in its own interests by Britain. Britain's 'imperialist machinations', Fornos Peñalba concluded, did much to 'eliminate one of the most promising and progressive Latin American nations in the 19th century'.

It was an appealing and intellectually stimulating argument. Unfortunately, there is little or no empirical evidence to support it – at least according to the most recent and thorough review of Britain's relations with Paraguay in the 19th century based on British sources by a British historian (E.N. Tate, 'Britain and Latin America in the 19th century: the case of Paraguay, 1811-70', *Ibero-*

¹³ José Alfredo Fornos Peñalba, 'The fourth ally: Great Britain and the War of the Triple Alliance', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1979, pp. ix-x.

Amerikanisches Archiv, 1979) and the most recent study of the British role in the War, also based on British sources, by two Paraguayan historians: Juan C. Herken Krauer and María Giménez de Herken, *Gran Bretaña y la Guerra de la Triple Alianza* (Asunción, 1983). The most comprehensive modern study of Britain's relations with Latin America (Rory Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries*, London, 1993), which contains only half a dozen passing references to Paraguay, dismisses the Paraguayan War itself in one page. The most comprehensive modern study of British imperialism (P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, vol. 1 *Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*, vol. 2 *Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-90*, London, 1993), even though, unusually, it includes substantial chapters on South America (though not, curiously, Latin America), contains not one single reference to Paraguay or the Paraguayan War.

Britain and Latin America in the 19th century: formal and informal empire

Let me begin my discussion of British imperialism and the Paraguayan War with some general remarks on Britain's relations with Latin America in the 19th century, in order to demonstrate that if Britain had indeed been the major force behind the war of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay it would have been pursuing policies and behaving in a manner completely out of line with its policies and behaviour in Latin America as a whole at this time.¹⁴

For more than a century – from the Napoleonic wars and, more especially, from the dramatic events of 1807-8 in the Iberian Peninsula which eventually led to the break-up of the American empires of Spain and Portugal, to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 – Britain was the dominant external actor in the economic and, to a lesser extent, political affairs of Latin America. The 19th century was for Latin America the 'British century'. This is not difficult to explain. In the first place, Britain had been 'present at the creation'. The foundations of Britain's political, commercial and financial pre-eminence had been firmly laid at the time of the formation of the independent Latin American states during the second and third decades of the 19th century. Secondly, from 1815 until 1860 or 1870 Britain exercised an unchallenged global hegemony and, until 1914, a somewhat less secure global supremacy. The British Navy ruled the waves. Thirdly, and most importantly, Britain, the 'first industrial nation', the 'workshop of the world', supplied most of the manufactured and capital goods imported into Latin America, and the City of London, the world's major source

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of Britain's relations with Latin America, and sources for figures on British trade with, and British investment in, Latin America in the 19th and 20th centuries, see Leslie Bethell, 'Britain and Latin America in historical perspective', in Victor Bulmer-Thomas (ed.), *Britain and Latin America: A Changing Relationship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press in association with the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1989), pp. 1-24.

of capital, supplied most of the loans granted to the new Latin American governments and most of the capital invested in Latin American infrastructure (above all, railways and public utilities), agriculture and mining. Moreover, Britain had more than half the world's merchant shipping and British ships carried the bulk of the produce exported from Latin America to markets throughout the world. Finally, Britain itself was a major market for Latin American food and raw materials. In sum, throughout the 19th century Britain was Latin America's principal trading partner, the principal investor in Latin America and the principal holder of the Latin American public debt.

Latin America, though relatively peripheral in world affairs, did not entirely avoid Great Power rivalry. Britain was challenged in Latin America – most frequently and consistently by the United States, especially in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, and in the three decades before the First World War by Germany. But its political and economic pre-eminence was never seriously threatened. For its part, except for its attempt both to liberate and to conquer Spanish America by means of an invasion of the Río de la Plata in 1806-7 (which was, at least in its inception, entirely unauthorised and which in any case lasted not much more than a year and came to an inglorious end) and its activities in the Bay islands off the northern coast of Honduras and the Mosquito Shore on the Caribbean coasts of Honduras and Nicaragua in the middle decades of the 19th century, Britain showed no inclination to assume the political and military obligations of empire in Latin America.¹⁵ As a result, Latin America remained the only area of the globe largely free of empire once it had secured its independence from Spain and Portugal during the first quarter of the 19th century.

But were the sovereign Latin American states in the 19th century in some way part of an 'informal' British empire? The idea that in any discussion of imperialism it is important to distinguish between 'formal' empire in which a particular territory has been brought under the political and legal-constitutional control of an imperial power, and other forms of indirect political subordination and control has a long history. Lenin in 1916, for example, described Persia,

¹⁵ There were in fact only three outposts of the British Empire in Latin America, all of which had their origins in earlier centuries: (1) Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice on the 'wild coast' of northern South America between the Orinoco and the Amazon which had been first seized from the Dutch in 1796, formally ceded to Britain by treaty in 1814-5, and united as the Crown colony of British Guiana in 1831; (2) the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) 300 miles off the southern tip of South America which had been first settled by the British (East Falkland at least) in 1765-74, occupied (and the Argentines already there expelled) in 1833, and declared a Crown colony in 1841; and (3) the Belize settlement on the Caribbean coast of Central America, where British logcutters had first established themselves in the middle of the 17th century, which had expanded to twice the area of the old Spanish concession during the first half of the 19th century, and which became the Crown colony of British Honduras in 1862.

China and Turkey as 'semi-colonial countries'. The term 'informal empire' was apparently invented by C.R. Fay in his *Imperial Economy and its Place in the Foundations of Economic Doctrine, 1600-1932* (Oxford, 1934). It was first used in relation to Latin America in a pioneering article by H.S. Ferns, 'Britain's informal empire in Argentina, 1806-1914', in the journal *Past and Present* (1953), and given wide prominence in a famous article by J. Gallagher and R.E. Robinson, 'The imperialism of free trade' in the *Economic History Review* (1953). The concept has had a long and interesting life, but it was always open to the criticism that it was analytically imprecise and often proved vulnerable to specialist empirical research. The British historian D.C.M. Platt and his friends and colleagues proved particularly determined (though never totally convincing) in their efforts to undermine and discredit it.

At some stage in the 1970s the debate on informal empire, already confused and confusing, was further complicated by the introduction into it of dependency theory. Of course there was an imbalance of power, economic and political, between Britain and Latin America. Of course it was Britain not Latin America that determined the rules governing international economic relations in the 19th century. Of course Britain was more important to Latin America than Latin America was to Britain. Latin America, it could reasonably be argued, was dependent on British loans, investment, technical expertise, imports of manufactured and particularly capital goods, shipping, and to a lesser extent markets. Perhaps Latin America's dependence on Britain reinforced, if it did not actually create, the structural constraints on Latin American development (especially industrial development). Finally, the benefits of the relationship between Britain and Latin America were no doubt unequal, although it should be remembered that the Latin American political and economic elites at least ('collaborating elites', if you will) on the whole welcomed British economic 'penetration' and pursued enthusiastically the 'model' of capitalist modernisation by means of foreign loans, direct foreign investment, export-led growth, free trade and integration into world markets.

But does such a relationship *per se* amount to one of 'informal empire'? And did Britain pursue a *policy* of 'informal imperialism', that is to say, actively seek to incorporate the formally independent states of Latin America into its 'informal empire'? There surely has to be some consistent exercise of power, however indirect, by one state over the foreign policy, internal politics and domestic economy of another 'independent' state sufficient to be able to coerce the latter into doing what it would otherwise not do before we can talk of 'informal empire'.

As far as Britain and Latin America are concerned, Britain naturally promoted and defended its interests from its position of relative strength. A good deal of political arm-twisting took place behind the scenes; individual diplomats on the spot were often inclined to act in a high handed 'imperialistic' manner (not least because they were effectively 3-6 months away from the Foreign Office);

coercive measures – especially naval demonstrations – were undertaken to protect the lives, liberties and properties of British subjects or to preserve existing trade on a ‘fair and equal’ most-favoured-nation basis; and on a few occasions – notably the Anglo-French blockade of the Río de la Plata in the mid-1840, the Anglo-French-Spanish intervention in Mexico in 1861, and the Anglo-German-Italian blockade of Venezuela in 1902-3 – Britain (with other powers) resorted to gunboat diplomacy for the promotion of trade or the collection of debts. On the whole, however, considering the extent of Britain’s economic superiority – and Britain’s overwhelming naval supremacy – British governments more often than not exercised a considerable degree of restraint and were generally extremely reluctant to engage in direct interference, much less intervention, in the internal affairs of the Latin American sovereign states.

Britain, Brazil and the River Plate Republics in the period before 1870

During the half century from independence to the Paraguayan War British interest in Brazil and the River Plate republics was almost exclusively commercial. As early as the 1820s there were sizeable British communities in Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires. At the head of these British communities, alongside Britain’s diplomatic representatives, were the representatives – some transient, some becoming permanent residents – of more than 200 London and Liverpool merchant houses. Over half the British merchant houses established in Latin America were in Rio de Janeiro, a third in Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The merchant house, which has been called the predominant institutional expression of British business in Latin America in the 19th century existed primarily, of course, to import and distribute British goods: mainly textiles (cottons, woollens, linens, and so forth), but also other manufactured consumer goods (such as ironware, cutlery, porcelain, glass, pianos, furniture, hats, stockings etc.) and some capital goods and raw materials, especially coal. In the 1820s, for example, Brazil was receiving half its imports from Britain, worth £2-3 million per annum, making Brazil Britain’s third largest market after the United States and Germany. By the early 1870s £25 million worth of British goods (10 per cent of total British exports) were being imported annually into Latin America. This was a larger proportion than to any other continent or any country in the Empire except India. A third of these exports went to Brazil, between a fifth and a quarter to Argentina. At the same time British merchant houses handled the export of many local primary products including Brazilian coffee (although the main market was the United States) and Argentine hides and wool. In general, however, most of Latin America’s exports stagnated during the second, and to a lesser extent, the third quarter of the 19th century, which produced a marked imbalance in trade.

Neither the British, nor other foreigners, invested in Latin America (except, to some extent, Brazil) on a major scale for several decades after the financial and economic failures of the 1820s. Several loans to the new Latin American

states, including Brazil and Argentina, many in excess of £1 million, had been floated on the London capital market during the years 1822-5. By 1828 every state except Brazil had defaulted on at least the interest payments on its foreign debt, bringing into existence a host of committees of anxious and angry British bondholders. During the period after independence loans continued to be made only to Brazil. The great British merchant houses, however, invested modestly in internal commerce, land, food processing, even mining, and also provided valuable financial services for British and local clients.

Only in the late 1850s and the 1860s was there a resumption of foreign borrowing. A significant financial connection was once again re-established between the Spanish American republics and the City of London. Baring Brothers, for example, floated loans of £1.5 million for Chile in 1858, £1 million for Venezuela in 1862, and £1.25 million in 1866 and £1.95 million in 1868 for Argentina. Brazil and Peru were, however, the major borrowers, accounting for at least 50 per cent of total British portfolio investment in Latin America before the investment boom of the 1870s and 1880s. N.M. Rothschild and Sons, sole agents for the Brazilian government, issued five loans of between half a million and two million pounds to Brazil in the 1820s, two loans totalling £3.8 million in 1863 and one of £7 million in 1865. (We shall return below to the question of the loans to Argentina and Brazil immediately before and during the Paraguayan War.) Meanwhile, the first joint stock enterprises, a new type of business concern with headquarters in the metropolis, began investing in railways in Brazil, Argentina and elsewhere, in public utilities (for example, gas companies in all the major cities of Brazil), in land in Argentina and Uruguay. And the first British commercial banks – including the London and Brazilian Bank (1862), the London and River Plate Bank (1863) and the London Bank of Mexico and South America (1863-4), appeared on the scene – and their businesses expanded rapidly. By 1865 £80 million and by 1875 £175 million was invested in Latin America, 10 per cent of total British investment abroad, most of it in Brazil and Argentina, most of it in government bonds and, to a lesser extent, railways and public utilities.

In the half century after independence from Spain and Portugal, as commercial and financial links with Britain were consolidated, Argentina and Brazil had to put up with their fair share of high-handed, arrogant ‘Palmerstonian’ British diplomats intent on telling them how to organise their affairs. They were also the victims of the two most blatant examples of gun-boat diplomacy by Britain in Latin America in this period: the blockade of the Río de la Plata by the Royal Navy in the mid 1840s (against Rosas and in the interests of free trade), which was poorly planned, costly and ultimately futile;¹⁶ and the activities of the Royal Navy inside Brazilian territorial waters in 1850 (against

¹⁶ The classic work is John F. Cady, *Foreign Intervention in the Río de la Plata, 1838-50* (Philadelphia, 1929). See also H. S. Ferns, *Britain and Argentina in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1960), chapter 9.

slave ships and those who protected them), which brought to a successful conclusion Britain's long campaign for the abolition of the Brazilian slave trade.¹⁷ There is, however, no evidence that Britain exercised the degree of control over Argentina and/or Brazil in the early 1860s necessary to manipulate them into waging a war against Paraguay, nor any evidence that Britain desired to exert such power for such a purpose. In fact, more than a year before the outbreak of the Paraguayan War, Brazil had broken off all diplomatic relations with Britain as a result of the so-called 'Christie affair' (named after William D. Christie, the British minister in Rio de Janeiro from 1860), which had culminated in a six day British naval blockade of Brazil (December 1862 – January 1863).

For 40 years after the failure of the young Scottish merchants John and William Parish Robertson to establish themselves in the newly independent Paraguay and their eventual expulsion in 1815, Paraguay was regarded by British governments and by most British subjects as a remote, backward country of which little was known and which was of only marginal interest. There were those, not least among the British merchant community in Buenos Aires, who believed that Paraguay was an 'American China' of enormous potential as a market for British manufactured goods and as a source of raw materials, but they were a small minority with little influence over British policy and their views were in any case scarcely credible. Britain was interested in trade not only with Buenos Aires and Buenos Aires province but also with the interior provinces of Argentina (and therefore had a stake in the political unity of Argentina and the success of an Argentine Confederation). It also had an interest in the maintenance of free navigation on the region's principal rivers, the Paraná and the Paraguay. But what was sometimes called the 'continental interior' (i.e. Paraguay) over which in any case Argentina still claimed sovereignty, and the possibilities of trade on the Upper Paraguay, were largely ignored. Paraguay remained isolated and trade between Paraguay and Britain insignificant through the period.

It was only in the mid-fifties, after the Argentine Confederation finally recognised Paraguay (40 years after separation from Spain) and conceded to Paraguay free navigation on the Paraná, and after Britain and Paraguay signed a treaty of navigation and commerce (March 1853), that Paraguay's foreign trade began to grow. Exports multiplied two and a half times in the second half of the decade, though largely to Argentina. Neither of Paraguay's two principal export products (yerba mate and tobacco) found their way to Britain in any significant quantities. Imports doubled in the same period. And here the British played an important role. The merchant houses of Buenos Aires, among which the British were by far the most important of the foreign houses, and the three British houses that were now established in Asunción began importing British textiles

¹⁷ See Leslie Bethell, *The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade. Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869* (Cambridge, 1970).

(mainly cotton cloth), hardware, tools, leatherware, porcelain, etc. Paraguay operated a more open economy and became committed to a greater degree of *crecimiento hacia afuera* in the 1850s than is generally believed.

The government of Carlos Antonio López controlled half the land of Paraguay and exercised a monopoly over the growth and export of yerba mate and to a lesser extent hides and timber. It had no need to look to the London capital market for funds (for which it was later much praised by the *dependencista* historians of the 1960s and 1970s). Nevertheless, for both its programme of 'modernisation from within' (with its emphasis on industry and infrastructure) and its programme for a more effective defence against what it saw as predatory neighbours the Paraguayan government turned to its agents in London, J. and A. Blyth of Limehouse, for the supply of industrial and military hardware (pig iron, railway materials, arms and ammunition, even a steam warship or two). It also hired carefully selected foreign, mainly British, technicians. In her interesting book *The British in Paraguay, 1850-70* (Oxford, 1976) Josefina Plá estimated that there were in Paraguay in the period before the War 200 British subjects (excluding women and children), most of them under contract to the government, either as engineers employed in the shipyard, the arsenal at Asunción, the iron foundry at Ibicui, constructing railways and the telegraph, or in the army medical corps. Paraguay's chief engineer from 1855 was the Scotsman William K. Whytehead.

The main obstacles to a greater opening of the Paraguayan economy were perhaps not so much the economic policies of the Paraguayan government (though there were constant complaints from foreign merchants about its arbitrary interference in economic matters) as lack of products with an international market (an attempt was made to grow cotton but it failed), poor communications (the journey by sailing boat from Buenos Aires to Asunción took up to three months) and, above all, lack of British interest. The further development of economic relations with Paraguay was simply not a priority for the British government, British industrialists and merchants or the City. The only effort to secure a more liberal commercial treaty than that of 1853 and the right of navigation on the Upper Paraguay which was still denied British ships – that by William Christie, then British minister in Buenos Aires, in 1858 – had no official authorisation and in any case failed.¹⁸ There seems to be no evidence of *growing* interest in Paraguay, either as a market or as a source of raw materials. As for British industry's dependence on imported cotton ('white gold') about which so much has been made in the literature, the Paraguayan historian Diego Abente has shown how Britain had already located alternative sources to the USA – the West Indies, Egypt and Brazil – long before the outbreak of the

¹⁸ E.N. Tate, 'Britain and Latin America in the nineteenth century; the case of Paraguay, 1811-1870', *Ibero-Amerikanisches Archiv*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1979), pp. 53-4.

Paraguayan War.¹⁹ Certainly there is no sign that Paraguay's economic 'model' (as modified by Carlos Antonio López in the 1850s) was incompatible with British interests. Nor was there any *project to force* Paraguay to enter into closer economic ties with Britain and the world economy.

Charles Henderson, who took up his appointment as Britain's first consul in Paraguay in 1854, operated, like his colleagues elsewhere in Latin America, under instructions not to involve himself, much less interfere in, the internal affairs of the country to which he was accredited. He was specifically instructed to discourage Paraguay from looking to Britain in its quarrels with Brazil and Argentina. He was to restrict himself to the protection of British lives and property. The most serious case Henderson had to deal with was that arising out of the arrest and imprisonment in 1859 of Santiago Canstatt, an Uruguayan-born British subject, which was not resolved until 1862 when Canstatt was finally released by the Paraguayan authorities. Henderson in fact withdrew from Asunción during this time, but apart from a failed attempt to seize the (British-built) Paraguayan warship *Tucuari* as it left Buenos Aires harbour, in which shots were fired, no force was used by Britain. That is to say, when there was an excuse and an opportunity, Britain did not resort to gunboat diplomacy against Paraguay.²⁰ (Even if it had been felt sufficiently important to do so – which it was clearly not – it would have been difficult, in the Admiralty's view, for Britain to coerce land-locked Paraguay with the limited number of warships available on the South East Atlantic station.) The case did not even lead to the severing of diplomatic relations, although the British minister in Buenos Aires, Edward Thornton, who was given responsibility for Paraguay, was on leave for 16 months during 1862-3 and did not present his credentials in Asunción until August 1864. The British government as usual seemed anxious to forget about Paraguay.

Britain and the Paraguayan War

On the actual course of events leading to war between Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, Britain had, it seems, little influence. Thornton was strongly, openly, indeed notoriously anti-Paraguayan, which has led to a great deal of misunderstanding. Before the Brazilian invasion of Uruguay in October 1864, in defiance of Solano López's ultimatum, Thornton accompanied the Argentine representatives to meetings in Montevideo and told the Paraguayan Foreign Minister that every nation had a right to insist on satisfaction for injuries done to its subjects or citizens even though it might result in war and temporary occupation of territory. But this was private diplomacy. The British government had no wish to worsen existing quarrels in the Río de la Plata which, if they led

¹⁹ Abente, *op. cit.*, p. 57, Tables 3 & 4.

²⁰ Tate, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-6.

to war, could only threaten British lives and property and British trade. And despite his prejudices and preferences Thornton himself consistently used his influence in the interests of peace. Tate's examination of the official British correspondence at this time reveals no evidence of any desire in London to encourage or promote war or any activity either in London or in South America to that effect. Nor was the war when it began in any way welcomed by Britain or (officially at least) by British representatives on the spot.

Privately, once the war began, not only Thornton but most British officials favoured the Allies. They were critical of the Solano López regime; they had (racist?) contempt for Paraguayans; and they generally blamed Paraguay for the war. For them, as for Brazilians and Argentines, the war came to represent progress and civilisation versus backwardness and barbarism. British interests were obviously greater in Argentina and Brazil than in Paraguay. British commercial banks and British merchant houses in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires naturally favoured and – through their loans and the use of their merchant ships to transport arms, specie, correspondence etc. – even supported the Allies. British manufacturers sold ironclad warships, iron bars, tubing and plate for the building of warships, steam launches, artillery and ammunition to the belligerents – i.e. in practice to Brazil and Argentina, since Paraguay quickly came under a Brazilian blockade.²¹ But this was business, an opportunity for private interests in Britain, as for that matter in France and Belgium, to do well out of a war. There is no evidence that Britain actively and enthusiastically sought Paraguay's defeat. Britain remained officially neutral in the war. (Indeed one rare partisan act – the British government's making public the text of the secret article in the treaty of 1 May 1865 for the dismemberment of Paraguay when it became known in 1866 – could be regarded as hostile to the Allies).

Britain concentrated on ensuring that as far as possible the rivers Paraná and Uruguay remained open to British merchant ships (too few reached the Paraguay for this to be a matter of great concern), while adopting its traditional policy of respecting blockades so long as they were effective (even though in the short-run this often damaged British commercial interests). It is true that Britain made little effort to mediate. But it is also true that neither Paraguay nor the Allies were much interested in mediation. And now Britain had its own dispute with the Paraguayan government over its refusal to release British subjects held in Paraguay against their will (mainly because so many of them were essential to the Paraguayan war effort). After the summer of 1865 it was impossible to get out of Paraguay. On three occasions British warships went through the Brazilian blockade to reach these trapped British subjects.²² But there was no great show of force or direct intervention on behalf of the Allies. As British ministers insisted throughout, there was never the slightest danger of Britain itself being

²¹ On Brazilian government contracts to British firms for arms supplies, see Fornos Peñalba, *op. cit.*, appendix, XV. This is a topic that merits much more research.

²² Tate, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3.

dragged into the Paraguayan War.

This brings us finally to the question of British loans. Fornos Peñalba quotes Napoleon as saying: 'In order to win a war three things are necessary – money, more money and still more money'. The 'war machine' of the Allied armies was 'lubricated by immense British loans and other aid provided the Allies prior to and during the War'. He refers to Rothschilds and Barings as the 'best generals of the Allied armies'.²³ A good deal more research needs to be done into British loans at the time of the War. How much was loaned – and when? With what degree of enthusiasm? For what precise purpose (insofar as this can be determined)? And how significant was it in the context of overall expenditure by Brazil and Argentina in the prosecution of the war? The £7 million loan raised by Rothschilds for the Brazilian government in September 1865 – and used, it has been suggested, to buy warships – merits further investigation in particular. No further loans were made to Brazil for the duration of the war. In the case of Argentina, Barings offered £1.25 million of Argentine government bonds to private individuals and syndicates in 1866, but with London in the middle of a financial crisis less than half the subscription was taken up. There was no hope of issuing the further loans Argentina required for its war effort. Only in June 1868 was £1.95 million offered, and these bonds were not finally sold until the following year – at less than 75 per cent of their nominal value.²⁴ British investors were not, it seems, falling over themselves to bankroll the defeat of Paraguay. And the Spanish/Argentine economic historian Carlos Marichal has calculated that foreign, mainly British, loans represented only 15 per cent of total expenditure by Brazil and 20 per cent of total expenditure by Argentina on the Paraguayan War.²⁵

Two final comments (or sets of comments). First, if the war really was fought by Argentina and Brazil on behalf of Britain to destroy the Paraguayan economic 'model' of autonomous development (or what was left of it in the early 1860s), it clearly succeeded. If it was fought for the incorporation of the Paraguayan economy into the world capitalist economy it clearly failed. In fact it set back the process. Ten years after the end of the war Britain had a mere £1.5 million invested in Paraguay – and most of it portfolio rather than direct investment. This represented less than one per cent of British investment in Latin America. As for trade, not until 1903 did Paraguayan imports from Britain reach £100,000, and not until 1913 did Paraguayan exports to Britain exceed £50,000.²⁶ Secondly, if Britain really had been as deeply involved in the Paraguayan War as some historians would have us believe, it was a well kept

²³ Fornos Peñalba, *op. cit.*, pp. viii, 109.

²⁴ Philip Zeigler, *The Sixth Great Power. Barings 1762-1929* (London, 1988), p. 234.

²⁵ Carlos Marichal, *A Century of Debt Crises in Latin America: From Independence to the Great Depression, 1820-1929* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 92-3.

²⁶ Abente, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

secret at home. Sir Richard Burton, the British scholar, diplomat and explorer, author of *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil* (2 vols., 1869) and *Letters from the Battlefields of Paraguay* (1870), returning to Britain from Paraguay at the end of the War found in London a 'blankness of face whenever the word Paraguay...was named and a general confession of utter ignorance and hopeless lack of interest'.²⁷

Britain – and Britain's supposed imperialist ambitions – can no longer be made the scapegoat for the Paraguayan War. The prime responsibility for the War lay with Brazil, Argentina, to a lesser extent Uruguay, and of course, sadly, Paraguay itself.

²⁷ Sir Richard Burton, *Letters from the Battlefields of Paraguay* (London, 1870), p. vii.

Part III. The Paraguayan War: A Chronology

Antecedents

- 1750 Treaty of Madrid between Spain and Portugal; frontiers of colonial Brazil west of the line of Tordesillas (1494) recognised on the basis of *uti possidetis*
- 1777 Treaty of San Ildefonso redefined Spanish/Portuguese frontiers in the Río de la Plata
- 1808 Arrival of the Portuguese Court in Rio de Janeiro
- 1810 'May Revolution' in Buenos Aires
- 1811 Paraguay *de facto* independent
- Rebellion in Banda Oriental of Río de la Plata for autonomy from both Madrid and Buenos Aires
- 1813-40 Dictatorship of Dr José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia ('El Supremo') in Paraguay
- 1816 Independence of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata (Union fragmented by 1820)
- Portuguese invasion of Banda Oriental
- 1821 Formal incorporation of Banda Oriental into Reino Unido de Portugal, Brasil e Algarves as Província Cisplatina
- 1822 Independence of Brazil proclaimed
- 1825 Uprising in Banda Oriental against Brazilian rule
- 1825-8 War between United Provinces and Brazil for possession of the Banda Oriental
- 1828 Independence of Banda Oriental as Republic of Uruguay after British mediation
- 1829-32 Juan Manuel de Rosas governor of Buenos Aires province

- 1831 Federal Pact between littoral provinces (Buenos Aires, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe – and later Corrientes); Buenos Aires establishes *de facto* hegemony over provinces of the Río de la Plata
- Abdication of Emperor Dom Pedro I in favour of 5-year old son (Regency 1831-40)
- 1835-52 Rosas again governor of Buenos Aires province
- 1835-45 Separatist rebellion (Guerra dos Farrapos) in Rio Grande do Sul
- 1839-51 'Guerra Grande' in Uruguay between Blancos and Colorados
- 1840 'Majority' of Emperor Dom Pedro II (aged 15) proclaimed
- Death of Francia
- 1843-51 Seige of Montevideo by Rosas
- 1844 Brazil recognises independence of Paraguay
- 1844-62 Dictatorship of Carlos Antonio López in Paraguay
- 1851 Peace between Blancos and Colorados in Uruguay
- Treaty between Uruguay and Brazil in which Uruguay makes territorial and other concessions
- Triple Alliance of Entre Ríos province (under General Justo José de Urquiza), Uruguay and Brazil against Rosas
- 1852 Defeat of Rosas at battle of Monte Caseros (February)
- Argentina recognises Paraguay; agreement on free navigation on river Paraná
- 1853 Treaties of free navigation between Paraguay and Britain, Paraguay and France and Paraguay and the United States
- Constitution of Federal Republic of Argentina ratified by all provinces except Buenos Aires (independent state)
- 1854 Urquiza elected president of Argentine Confederation
- 1858 Provisional Convention between Paraguay and Brazil on free navigation on river Paraguay

- 1859 Argentine Confederation victory over Buenos Aires at battle of Cepeda (October); Buenos Aires loses independence.
- 1860 Bernardo Berro (Blanco) elected president of Uruguay; adopts tougher position on Brazilian penetration from Rio Grande do Sul
- Significant Liberal gains in Brazilian parliamentary elections
- 1861 Victory of Buenos Aires over Confederation at battle of Pavón (September)
- October 1862 – Francisco Solano López succeeds to presidency of Paraguay following death of his father Carlos Antonio López
- General Bartolomé Mitre, governor of Buenos Aires, becomes first constitutional president of united Argentina
- April 1863 – General Venancio Flores and the Colorados, supported by Mitre and Brazilian Liberals in Rio Grande do Sul, invade Uruguay from Argentina
- July 1863 – Uruguayan mission to Asunción seeking alliance against Argentina and Brazil; Solano López hesitates
- September/November 1863 – Paraguay warns Argentina that independence of Uruguay is necessary condition for balance of power in Río de la Plata
- January 1864 – New Liberal-Progressive government in Brazil under Zacarias Góis e Vasconcelos
- February 1864 – General mobilisation in Paraguay
- March 1864 – Berro resigns and hands executive power in Uruguay to Atanasio Aguirre, president of Senate
- May 1864 – José Antônio Saraiva arrives in Montevideo as head of Brazilian diplomatic mission (followed by Vice-Admiral Tamandaré and Brazilian fleet)
- June-July 1864 – Failure of joint representations to Uruguayan government by Saraiva, Rufino Elizalde (Argentine Foreign Minister) and Edward Thornton (British minister in Buenos Aires)
- 4 August 1864 – Brazilian ultimatum to Uruguay: satisfy demands or reprisals

- 30 August 1864 – Paraguayan ultimatum to Brazil warning against intervention in Uruguay
- 31 August 1864 – Zacarias replaced by Francisco José Furtado, another Liberal, as President of Council in Brazil (Furtado remains in office until May 1865)
- 16 October 1864 – Brazilian troops invade Uruguay in support of Flores and Brazilian navy blockades Montevideo; for Paraguay this is *casus belli*

The War

1864

- 12 November – Paraguay precipitates war by seizing Brazilian merchant steamer *Marquês de Olinda*, with president of province of Mato Grosso on board, after it clears Asunción for Corumbá; as a result Brazil severs diplomatic relations with Paraguay
- 13 December – Paraguay formally declares war on Brazil and initiates invasion of Mato Grosso

1865

- 7 January – Brazilian government decree creates *voluntários da pátria*
- January – Argentina refuses Paraguay's request for permission to cross Misiones in order to attack Rio Grande do Sul and ultimately support the Blancos in Uruguay
- February – Fall of Montevideo; Peace of Villa de Unión; Colorados victorious in Uruguayan civil war; Flores provisional president of Uruguay pending elections (never held)
- 18 March – Paraguay declares war on Argentina and initiates invasion of Argentine province of Corrientes
- 13 April – Paraguayan forces capture river port of Corrientes
- 1 May – Signing of Treaty of Triple Alliance (Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil) against Paraguay. War aims: (1) overthrow of Solano López dictatorship; (2) free navigation of river system; and (3 – secret clause) annexation of territory claimed by Brazil in Northeast of Paraguay and by Argentina in East and West of Paraguay

May-June – Paraguayan army under Colonel Antonio de la Cruz Estigarribia crosses Misiones and invades Rio Grande do Sul at São Borja

11 June – Battle of Riachuelo: Paraguayan navy attacks Brazilian navy but is defeated and destroyed; Paraguay in effect blockaded; but Allied advance along Río Paraguay denied by shore batteries at Curupaití and, above all, by the river fortress of Humaitá

5 August – Paraguayan troops capture Uruguaiana

August – Mitre becomes commander of Allied forces

September – Loan of £7 million by Rothschilds to Brazil

14 September – Estigarribia surrenders to Dom Pedro II, Mitre and Flores at Uruguaiana

September-November – Paraguayan army retreats across Paraná; withdraws from all Allied territory except Mato Grosso; on defensive on southern frontier

1866

16 April – Allied forces cross Upper Paraná river and begin invasion of Paraguay; establish themselves at Tuiuti

24 May – Battle of Tuiuti; first major test of strength; fierce fighting. Paraguay fails to dislodge Allies; but no Allied advance until September

3 August – Zacarias returns to power as head of new Liberal government in Brazil

3 September – Allied victory at Curuzú

12 September – Meeting of Mitre and Solano López at Yatayti-Corá fails to end war

22 September – Battle of Curupaití. Allied advance halted; worst defeat of war; no further advance until July 1867

October – Marechal Luis Alves de Lima e Silva, Marquês de Caxias, assumes command of Brazil's land and sea forces (arrives November)

November – Anti-war *montonero* rising in Cuyo province of Argentina led by Felipe Varela

1867

May-June – Brazilian expeditionary force to Mato Grosso defeated; ‘Retirada da Laguna’

22 July – Allied forces under temporary command of Caxias while Mitre in Argentina initiates movement to outflank Humaitá

2 August – Allied occupation of position north of Humaitá

18 August – Brazilian warships under command of Vice-Almirante Joaquim José Inácio attack and pass batteries of Curupaití

3 November – Second battle of Tuiuti; Paraguayan forces attack but fail to halt movement to encircle Humaitá

1868

13 January – Caxias replaces Mitre as allied commander; Mitre returns to Buenos Aires

18 February – Brazilian navy passes batteries at Humaitá

19 February – Rebellion in Uruguay led by ex-president Berro; Flores assassinated; later same day Berro himself captured, imprisoned and assassinated

22 February – Brazilian navy appears off Asunción; Solano López retires northwards (March)

12 June – Elections in Argentina; Mitre’s heir-apparent, Foreign Minister Rufino Elizalde, defeated by Domingo Faustino Sarmiento on anti-war platform

16 July – Conservative government in Brazil under Visconde de Itaboraí

22 July – Humaitá evacuated

5 August – Allied occupation of Humaitá

December – Series of Allied attacks on Paraguayan positions (Campanha da Dezembroada); battles of Itororó, Avaí, etc.; finally battle of Lomas Valentinas (27 December) in which Paraguayan army annihilated; Solano López escapes to Cordillera east of Asunción

30 December – Colonel George Thompson surrenders last Paraguayan river fortification at Angostura

1869

1-5 January – Occupation of Asunción; war assumed over; Caxias retires from theatre of operations

January – Solano López forms new Paraguayan army and initiates guerrilla operations

February – Mission of José Maria da Silva Paranhos (future Visconde do Rio Branco), Brazilian Foreign Minister, to Buenos Aires and Asunción to discuss formation of provisional Paraguayan government (away from Brazil until 1870)

15 April – Conde d'Eu, son-in-law of Dom Pedro II, arrives as new commander-in-chief of Brazilian forces

11 June – Provisional government established in Asunción

12 August – Allied forces storm and capture Peribebeú, Solano López's provisional capital

16 August – Battle of Campo Grande or Acosta Nu; Paraguayan troops massacred; last major battle of war; Solano López again escapes and retreats north

September 1869-March 1870 – Solano López pursued by Allied forces

1870

1 March – Solano López cornered and killed at Cerro Corá in extreme north-east of Paraguay; last Paraguayan resistance overcome.

Post-war

20 July 1870 – Preliminary treaty signed by provisional government of Paraguay with Argentina and Brazil in Asunción: war over; free river navigation; territorial issues to be discussed later

July 1870 – Elections to Constituent Assembly in Paraguay; new constitution (November)

1870-1 – Conferences in Buenos Aires and Asunción fail to lead to general peace treaty; agreement to conduct separate negotiations

9 January 1872 – Peace treaties between Brazil and Paraguay; Brazil secures territory claimed in Northeast Paraguay between Río Apa and Río Branco

February 1876 – Peace treaties between Paraguay and Argentina; Argentina retains Misiones, secures Chaco Central between rivers Bermejo and Pilcomayo, agrees to submit territory between the Pilcomayo and Río Verde to US arbitration, and renounces claims north of Río Verde (also claimed by Bolivia)

22 June 1876 – Last Brazilian troops evacuated from Paraguay

November 1878 – US President Hayes awards to Paraguay area disputed by Paraguay and Argentina

May 1879 – Evacuation of last Argentine troops from Paraguay



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