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0521548152 - The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism: Classical Political Economy the Empire
of Free Trade and Imperialism 1750-1850 - Bernard Semmel

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The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism

Classical Political Economy
the Empire of Free Trade
and Imperialism
1750-1850

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*Professor of History, State University of
New York at Stony Brook*



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In memory of my father

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Preface

This study of the rise of free trade imperialism grew out of two previous studies of later periods in the history of England, in which, as in this effort, the themes of empire-building and the threat of revolution come together. In this work, I have attempted to uncover certain of the intellectual origins of the 'imperialism'—indeed, of the two 'imperialisms'—of the 'classic period', with which I have dealt in my first book, as well as the sources from which later theories of imperialism were constructed; I also wished to consider from a different perspective the character of the 'ideology' which underlay the dismantling of the old colonial system, and the construction of the Victorian Pax Britannica, which formed the background of my second book. The present study discusses the development and diffusion of a number of the central arguments of the 'science' of political economy—from the standpoint of a historian rather than an economist—which were crucial not only to the construction of theories of capitalist imperialism, but also served as a spur both to the efforts at colonization, and to those of establishing a British Workshop of the World, during the period considered in this study and afterward.

This book has been a long time in the making, and I should like to acknowledge the help of a number of people who read drafts, in whole or in part, in various stages, or with whom I spoke about its ideas. They include Professor Lord Robbins and Professor D. V. Glass of the London School of Economics; Professor Bert F. Hoselitz of the University of Chicago; Professor R. K. Webb of Columbia University; Professors Robert Lekachman, David Trask and John Williams, colleagues at the State University of New York at Stony Brook; and Morris Pearl. Of course, none of these persons found themselves concurring in all of my views.

For a number of summers, I enjoyed the support of the Research Foundation of the State University of New York, and during the academic year, 1964–5, I was able to spend a year in England, as a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies. I am most appreciative of this aid. I am also grateful for the secretarial help of my wife, and of my assistant, Sonia Sbarge, who also checked the accuracy of the citations. The librarians of the British Museum, the New York Public Library, the Public Record Office, the University College Library, and the Prior's Kitchen, The College, Durham, were most helpful in making the books and the manuscript

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PREFACE

collections under their care available to me. Parts of the book have appeared in the *Journal of Economic History*, the *Economic History Review*, and the *Economic Journal*, as well as in a chapter, 'On the Economics of "Imperialism"', included in Bert F. Hoselitz, ed., *Economics and the Idea of Mankind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). I am grateful for permission to reprint, in altered form, this material.

As in the past, I should like to make special mention of the help and support I have always received from my wife Maxine, and from my mother; recently, I have enjoyed the sympathetic understanding of my son Stuart, who would have preferred, I suspect, that I spend less of my time in my study. The book is dedicated to the memory of my father, after whom Stuart was named.

Stony Brook, L.I., March, 1969

Bernard Semmel