



### Britain's Empires

A History, 1600-2020

By James Heartfield

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A history of the many different British Empires – the Old Colonial System (1600–1776), the Empire of Free Trade (1776–1870), the New Imperialism (1870–1945), Decolonisation (1945–1990) and the era of humanitarian intervention (1990–2020). *Britain's Empires* aims to tell the story of the colonial past as one marked by change and reinvention.

For more than four centuries Britons have been dominating and colonising other peoples and territories. *Britain's Empires* tells that story without flinching from the oppressive and exploitative side of the imperial mission that shaped world history. It also aims to tell the story of the colonial past as one marked by change and reinvention, where each new era was embarked upon as a break with the past.

This is history of the many different British Empires – the Old Colonial System (1600-1776), the Empire of Free Trade (1776-1870), the New Imperialism (1870-1945), Decolonisation (1945-1990) and the era of humanitarian intervention (1990-2020).

Britain's Empires explains how imperial policy dominated and skewed the history of societies across the world, from Canada and the West Indies to Ireland, from Africa to the Middle East, from India to China and into Australasia; but also how the peoples of those territories imposed themselves on Britain, challenging slavery, standing up to colonial overlords and eventually overthrowing them. The history of Britain's Empires, explains Heartfield, is one of constant challenge and change, where vanquished become victors, and heroes often turn out to be villains.

### Readership

Students of British history; students of International Relations; students of post-colonial studies.

### Contents

Introduction; PART ONE THE OLD COLONIAL SYSTEM, 1600–1760; PART TWO EMPIRE OF FREE TRADE, 1760–1870; PART THREE MODERN IMPERIALISM, 1870–1947; PART FOUR COMMONWEALTH, 1947–89; PART FIVE EMPIRE OF HUMAN RIGHTS? 1990–2020; Notes; Index

### About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

**James Heartfield** wrote *The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society*, *Who's Afraid of the Easter Rising?* *The Equal Opportunities Revolution* and many other books; he is a long-standing campaigner for social justice.

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