

Independence in Latin America

THE EUROPEAN MOMENT (1750 – 1900)



- **Quick recap in Latin America** (Mexico & everything south)
 - Diverse societies of Amerindians lived there for thousands of years, empires were present (Aztecs & Incas).
 - The Spanish are the first to arrive (1492), over the next couple of decades local empires are decimated and populations shrink due to diseases.
 - The Spanish set up a class system throughout the region, both Spain and Portugal (Brazil) used slaves.
 - By 1700, France and England also have a present in the Americas, but mainly in North America. Nonetheless, the power of Spain in the New World is in decline.

- The American, French, & Haitian Revolutions along with the ideas of Enlightenment thinkers were influential with many creoles in Latin America.
- They too were upset with colonial governments and high taxes, yet by 1800 there was not enough resentment for revolutions to take hold.



- However, when Napoleon went on the warpath in Europe it had revolutionary effects in L.A.

Immediate consequences of Napoleon in L.A.

- The Portuguese royal family moved to Brazil and ruled from there.
- The Spanish monarchy was replaced with Napoleon's brother (remember the Peninsular War?). To counter Napoleon a “resistance” / Spanish patriot political body was created called the Junta Central.
- However, some Spanish colonists objected to the “Junta Central,” not because they liked Napoleon, but they believed their loyalties lied to the King not new people.

- By 1810, opponents of the Junta Central (usually wealthy & powerful creoles) were leading uprisings in Spanish colonies trying to form their own governments.
- In 1811, parts of Venezuela declared independence, however the new government continued to favor slavery and opposed citizenship to mixed race and black people.
- In general, the “revolutionaries” simply wanted to replace the peninsulars as the elites in the New World.

- **Simon Bolivar:** (*The George Washington of Latin America*).
 - Was a student of the Enlightenment
 - A soldier / general of the revolutionaries
 - Supported emancipation in order to attract more people to the cause of independence
- He is ultimately credited for bringing independence to much of South America.



- Bolivar and the revolutionaries were aided by English veterans of the Napoleonic Wars and a small revolt back in Spain (1820) that caused enough disorder back home for the rebels to exploit.
- The last Spanish armies were defeated in **1824**. Bolivar had liberated Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.



- It was Bolivar's dream to unite the former colonies into a confederation called Gran Colombia, but by 1830 the plans were dead because each region wanted autonomy.



- Further south (Argentina, Chile), Patriot / rebel leaders were led by Jose de San Martin whose armies consisted of former slaves and gauchos (cowboys). Eventually his forces were put under the command of Bolivar and independence was won in 1824.



Brazil

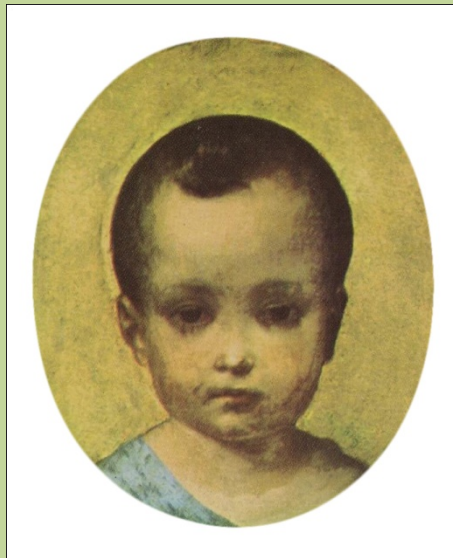
- *Brazil's independence story is different than the rest of South America.*
- The presence of the Portuguese monarchy in Brazil helped maintain loyalty (remember they left Portugal (1808) because of Napoleon).
- Once Europe was back to normal King John returned to Portugal (1821) leaving his son Pedro in Brazil to rule for him.



- Influenced by neighboring independence, Brazilians who resented Portuguese control also wanted to break free.
- Oddly, Pedro agreed, joined them, and declared Brazil independent in 1822. However, instead of forming a republic Brazil became a constitutional monarchy.



- Although Pedro permitted elected assemblies and political opposition, his stance to protect the “Portuguese” who lived in Brazil and his opposition to slavery was not popular in a country that economically depended upon it.
- In 1831, Pedro gave up the throne to his 5 year old son (Pedro II) who ruled until the late 1800s.



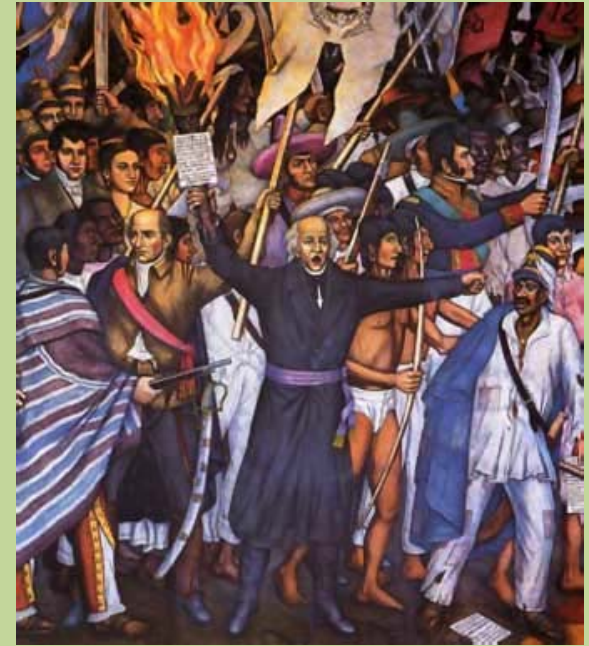


Mexico

- Mexico was Spain's wealthiest colony (silver mines). During the chaos of Napoleon, some Spaniards (living in Mexico) decided to overturn the viceroy in Mexico because he was too sympathetic to creoles.
- By filling the power vacuum these Spanish loyalists / conservatives became the new ruling authority, but by using “brute” force it caused lower classes in Mexico to revolt.



- In 1810, a priest named Miguel Hidalgo gave a speech urging large crowds of people to rise up against the oppression of the Spanish officials.
- Tens of thousands of Mexico's poor joined him and despite lacking military discipline they attacked their oppressors. Ultimately, the revolt was put down and Hidalgo was killed in 1811.



- The revolution continued under another priest named Jose Maria Morelos who led a more organized military attack, but was also killed.
- However, the small revolt back in Spain (1820) caused some loyalists to join forces with the rebels. In 1821, this alliance declared independence.
- At first it appeared Mexico would have a monarchy (perhaps due to the influence of some of the loyalists / conservatives who joined the independence movement), but the nation became a republic.



Map 17-3
Ways of the World, First Edition
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MEXICO AT INDEPENDENCE--1821

