



History of Mexican Independence

New Spain, which included present day México and the state of Coahuila y Tejas, had been a Spanish colony for 300 years from 1521 to 1821. The independence movement was a result of the tumultuous political climate in Europe where French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte expanded his reach across Europe. War debt spawned by efforts, in both support and against Napoleon, caused the Spanish crown to seize church properties in New Spain. In addition, the disruption of trade with Spain coupled with failed crops in the colonies resulted in an economic downturn for New Spain.

Creoles, sons and daughters of Spanish parents in the New World, already found themselves at a disadvantage due to the lack of representation in the New Spain administration, the military, and the church as well as the prohibition of commerce with other nations. However, illiterate indigenous peons, the majority of the population in New Spain, had an even more precarious situation. As indentured servants they toiled the soil on plantations at starvation wages and found themselves indebted to the rich Creole or Spanish landowners who sold them goods at exorbitant prices. Communities that had communal rights often had infertile land as the Catholic Church, as well as the Spanish and Criollo plantation owners, held the majority of the arable terrain. Consequently, support of a local congress amongst the colonists grew when Napoleon instated his brother Joseph as the emperor of Spain with the abdication of King Ferdinand VII in 1808.

Meanwhile, a group of insurrectionists in New Spain had formed which sought the destitution of the Spanish Viceroy Francisco Javier Venegas and representation in government. The group consisted of Miguel Domínguez, Querétaro mayor; Ignacio Allende, a military official and small landowner; Juan Aldama, Spanish captain and landowner; Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Dolores, Hidalgo priest; and Doña Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez, wife of Domínguez, who hosted meetings at her home in Querétaro. The rebels planned an insurrection against the Spanish crown for December 1810 but once discovered, Doña Josefa sent word to Hidalgo and the priest called for peasants to take arms against the Spanish crown. On September 16, 1810, father of liberty gathered several hundred of his parishioners, and rang the church bell and pronounced the war cry, "¡Long live América!" and "¡Death to the bad government!," with which México's independence movement began. Many battles were fought throughout Mexico in the 10 years that followed and in 1821 Spain surrendered and México became a free, independent and sovereign nation.

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