

From Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America's Wars: The Age of the Caudillo, 1791-1899* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2003): "Viceroyalty of New Spain, 1810-29"

### **THE SPARK**

About eight o'clock in the morning on September 16, 1810, Father Miguel Hidalgo<sup>1</sup> exhorted a crowd of some 600 men who had come for Mass at the hamlet of Dolores where he was the curate to join him in rebellion; most did. This event, known as the *Grito de Dolores* (the Cry of Dolores), began the eleven years war for Mexican independence.

### **BACKGROUND**

According to Alexander von Humboldt, the population of Mexico in 1803 was at least 5.8 million persons. Of these individuals, 3 million were *mestizos*; more than 2.5 million were Indians; 112,000 were *criollos*; and, 80,000 were *peninsulares*.<sup>2</sup>

Those few *peninsulares* and *criollos* in Mexico (or New Spain, as it was then called) who were politically empowered reacted to Napoleon Bonaparte's seizure of the Spanish King in 1808. The *peninsulares* sought to preserve the King's empire and their privileges. Many *criollos* wanted to increase their privileges. Within this second group was a small element, some of whom had been significantly influenced by the Enlightenment, and who first sought home rule and eventually independence. The masses had no political voice or goal.

The *peninsulares* and mainstream *criollos* struggled for control of Mexico, each ostensibly in the name of the imprisoned King. On September 15, 1808, 300 armed *peninsulares* seized the opportunistic Viceroy of New Spain, Jose Iturrigaray, in order to forestall a threat from Iturrigaray and the *criollos*. They replaced him with the eighty-year-old marshal (*mariscal de campo*) Pedro de Garibay.

Over the next two years, the *peninsulares* controlled the office of viceroy and the two groups clashed verbally and, on occasion, with arms. Intrigue abounded. In December 1809 the captain of the Valladolid militia, Jose Maria Obeso, and a Franciscan, Fray Vicente de Santa , conspired to

revolt against the *peninsulares* but were betrayed. Elsewhere, Father Miguel Hidalgo and the more liberal *criollos* made their own plans to rebel.<sup>3</sup>

### **OPPOSING FORCES**

While the *peninsulares* and mainstream *criollos* wrestled over who was to be the King's representative in Mexico, a small group of Liberal *criollos* plotted to establish home rule. Professed allegiance to a king, who in 1810 appeared to have little chance of regaining his throne, gave the *liberal-criollo* plot respectability and broadened its appeal while a seemingly powerless monarch could not prejudice their actions. At this time most of those involved in the plot sought home rule and had no thought of declaring an independent nation.<sup>4</sup>

Lacking confidence in their ability to field a *criollo* army in a timely manner, the rebels planned to raise a peasant army. These *criollos* chose Father Hidalgo as the spokesman for their cause because of his popularity among the poor. The number of peasant Indians available to the Revolutionaries was limited only by logistics. They were armed with clubs and homemade edged weapons. The liberal *criollos* did not appreciate the peasants' ignorance of the martial arts. Apparently, many of the Indian peasants were so naive that they believed that a mere sombrero placed over the muzzle of a cannon would prevent its firing.<sup>5</sup>

Opposing Hidalgo and the liberal *criollos* were the *peninsulares* and overwhelming majority of the *criollos*, who were conservative. They perceived that the Hidalgo-led revolt was a class struggle so they presented a united front against it. The Royalist military, loyal to the King, in theory numbered some 33,000 men in 1810 and compared to its opponent was well armed. Less than one-third of the military units were regulars, the remainder militia.<sup>6</sup> In reality, the royal colonial army was a hollow force. In 1831 Hipolito Villarreal wrote concerning that army: "Without exaggeration, the King has more officers than privates; it being evident that most of the former purchased their places to mock justice, to escape paying their debts, to indulge in gaming and live a life of libertinage under the

protection of their epaulettes.”<sup>7</sup>

The Royalist army was scattered throughout the viceroyalty and unprepared for a major class struggle. The only projected enemies were Europeans invading Vera Cruz, North Americans attacking the north, and the unassimilated Indian tribes. Hurriedly, a Royalist army (the “Army of the Center”) commanded by *peninsular* Felix Calleja<sup>8</sup> gathered at San Luis Potosí. With the exception of a few senior officers, there were no Spanish soldiers in New Spain in 1810. The rank and file of the royal army were colonials, or Mexicans. The officers were *criollos* and the enlisted were *mestizos* and *mulattos*. Indians were exempted from military service. Numbering some 5,500 men, the army’s second in command was the *criollo* Manuel de Flon.<sup>9</sup>

### **OPENING STRATEGY**

Hidalgo believed that he could use the Indian masses to overthrow the *peninsulares* and drive them from Mexico. His strategy was to establish local *juntas* in the name of Ferdinand VII in the principal towns that he captured to undermine the authority of the *peninsulares*.

The conspirators planned to proclaim their rebellion at the San Juan de los Lagos annual fair, which was to be held December 1-15, 1810. Given Father Hidalgo’s oratory skills, it was perceived to be an easy matter for the priest to incite the pilgrims to seize the Spanish merchants and their goods and ignite a religious crusade.<sup>10</sup>

Apparently influenced by their capability to manufacture arms, the liberal *criollos*’ confidence in their ability to raise a peasant army increased prior to the fair. Therefore, the conspirators moved the date of the rebellion up to October 2. Two events occurred in August and September that caused the conspirators to expedite their plans. First, rumors were spreading concerning the plot. This is not surprising considering the increasing number of people who were becoming involved. Second, on September 11 a new viceroy took charge of Mexico. Francisco Javier de Venegas was a career soldier who had distinguished himself in the Peninsular Campaign against Napoleon’s

armies. This honest and hard-working officer replaced the inept pawn of the *peninsulares*.<sup>11</sup>

### **GRITO DE DOLORES**

At two o'clock in the morning on September 16, Father Hidalgo and other conspirators, who happened to be visiting him at Dolores (275 mi NW of Mexico City), were awakened with the news that they were betrayed. Among those present was Ignacio Allende,<sup>12</sup> the senior military person involved in the conspiracy. The leaders decided to rebel immediately. At morning Mass Father Hidalgo exhorted a crowd to follow him in rebellion and these converts were armed. The local prison was emptied and used to house captured *peninsulares*.<sup>13</sup>

The insurgents advanced south through the hamlet of Atotonilco where Hidalgo adopted the banner bearing the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the dark-skinned patron saint of the Indian, as a Revolutionary symbol. They reached San Miguel at dusk and easily captured the town. During the night the first acts of violence were committed against *peninsulares*. However, Allende, a resident of the town, was able to restore order by threatening prompt retribution against his followers. Hidalgo marched against the wealthy town of Celaya (180 mi NW of Mexico City). Here, Hidalgo threatened to execute his captive *peninsulares* should the town not surrender. This and his large following persuaded the leaders of Celaya not to resist. The rebel force, more akin to a mob than an army, entered the town on September 21 and pillaged it. Hidalgo now attempted to organize his army which had grown to 25,000 men and women. According to a Royalist agent, the rebel army was composed of 9,000 Indians armed with bows and arrows, slings and clubs; 4,000 Indians possessing lances and machetes; and 12,000 mounted men including some from the Queen's Cavalry Regiment who had followed their commander, Allende, into rebellion. The rebel army included less than 1,000 regulars. At this time Hidalgo was proclaimed the "Captain-General of America."<sup>14</sup>

### **THE SACKING OF GUANAJUATO**

On September 23 the rebel army turned west and then north. Its objective was the rich mining center of Guanajuato (250 mi NW of Mexico City), which was at that time the third-largest city in Spanish America with a population of some 60,000 (only Mexico City and Havana, Cuba, were larger). The local Intendant chose to resist. He gathered the *peninsulares*, the treasury, and royal supporters in the fortress-like public granary. On the twenty-eighth the rebels stormed the granary. The fighting raged for five hours; some 300 defenders and 2,000 attackers died. The rebels massacred most of the survivors and sacked the city.<sup>15</sup>

Hidalgo dedicated much of the next week to organizing a rebel government at Guanajuato. To his growing army Hidalgo now added many miners and domestic workers. Hidalgo and Allende split their growing force and within a few weeks they captured Zacatecas and Valladolid (now Morelia). These early successes and the size of the rebel horde, which now numbered some 80,000 persons, encouraged the rebel leaders to move directly against the viceregal capital, Mexico City.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, the Royalists were collecting themselves. The viceroy ordered General Calleja to march with all dispatch to the protection of the capital. A price of 10,000 pesos was placed on the heads of the rebel leaders. The tribute paid by the lower classes was abolished in an attempt to hold their loyalty. The government's printing press began a propaganda campaign and church authorities attempted to demonize the insurrectionists. In spite of the government's activities, new recruits flocked to Hidalgo's banner. By October 29 the rebel army passed through Toluca (40 mi W of Mexico City) without stopping. The only obstacles between Hidalgo's army and Mexico City were a range of low mountains and some 7,000 Royalist troops under Spanish Lt. Col. Torcuato Trujillo.<sup>17</sup>

### **BATTLE OF MONTE DE LAS CRUCES**

Colonel Trujillo chose to block Hidalgo's advance in the mountain pass near Monte de las Cruces (a place where bandits were

crucified). There at the narrows the two armies fought from 8:00 in the morning until 5:30 in the afternoon on October 30. The disciplined soldiers supported by well-served artillery held the high ground against an opponent twenty times their number. Although Trujillo's force was badly mauled losing 2,500 men dead and wounded, it was able toward nightfall to fight its way out of an encirclement and retreat toward Mexico City. The army's reception was less than enthusiastic, and the Viceroy seriously considered fleeing to Vera Cruz.<sup>18</sup>

Hidalgo sustained some 2,000 killed, and many more were wounded. More importantly, large numbers deserted the cause. Some 40,000 followers faded away. The rebel army was demoralized by this encounter with disciplined troops. The following day Hidalgo led his battered army over the mountains toward the capital as far as Cuajimalpa. There the army lingered for three days as the rebel leaders quarreled over their next move. Allende argued that the march on the capital should be continued. Hidalgo sent out agents to recruit new followers from the local villages but they were without success. The Viceroy ignored Hidalgo's call to surrender while a royal army led by Calleja rushed to rescue the capital. The cumulative weight of these factors probably caused Hidalgo to turn away from Mexico City.<sup>19</sup>

### **BATTLE OF ACULCO**

On November 3 the rebel army, now 40,000 men, moved northwest and captured Guadalajara (424 mi WNW of Mexico City) without opposition and then marched toward Queretaro. Four days later the rebel army and 15,000 Royalists, ignorant of the other's approach, fought a meeting engagement (both armies on the move) at Aculco. The rebels had enough time to take up a defensive position on a hill. Calleja attacked. Realizing the poor morale of their army, Hidalgo and Allende sacrificed their train (baggage and livestock) and artillery in a vain attempt to prevent a general engagement. However, their retreat rapidly disintegrated into a rout. Hundreds of rebels were captured and thousands more deserted; Calleja shot the prisoners.

The Royalists lost only one man killed and another wounded.<sup>20</sup>

Hidalgo and Allende quarreled and split the rebel army. Hidalgo marched to Valladolid to reorganize and recruit new followers; however, he remained for only a few days before returning to Guadalajara. Allende marched back to Guanajuato where he hoped to create a stronghold and manufacture cannons and munitions, but on November 24 he was driven out by the approaching Calleja. Both sides executed hundreds as these towns changed hands.<sup>21</sup>

By the time Hidalgo reached Guadalajara, his army was reduced to 7,000 men. However, he was heartened by rebel successes in the west under Father José María Mercado and in the south under Father Jose Maria Morelos. Also, Calleja moved cautiously awaiting reinforcements. Here at Guadalajara, Hidalgo was busy rebuilding his army and giving form to the rebel government. On December 9 Allende arrived from Guanajuato.

By the thirtieth a Royalist spy estimated the rebel army to number 36,000 men—6,000 cavalry armed with lances, 5,000 archers, and 25,000 peasants armed with lances, clubs, and slings. Of this huge army the spy estimated that only 200 formerly served in the militia and that the rebels had only 600 muskets. The rebels developed steel-tipped rockets, probably derived from the type used at church celebrations, in an attempt to compensate for their lack of fire power. The rebels managed to gather 122 cannon, most of which were small caliber and poorly manufactured.<sup>22</sup>

By January 1811 the Royalists were advancing on Guadalajara from two quarters. Jose de la Cruz was closing from Queretaro with 2,000 veterans, and Calleja was moving from Leon with 6,000 well-disciplined troops, half of which were cavalry, and ten professionally served field pieces. The rebels held a council of war which aggravated the deep division between Hidalgo and Allende. Hidalgo wanted to risk everything on a single battle; he argued that only by preserving the army's unity and defending Guadalajara could its morale be maintained. Allende wished to divide the massive army into six or

more parts and commit it piecemeal; he argued that it was too poorly disciplined to be employed in a single mass. Hidalgo prevailed and in mid-January 1811 he led his army of some 80,000 followers, which included 20,000 horsemen and 95 cannons, out of Guadalajara to battle. Only 1,000 Revolutionaries were well armed and properly trained.<sup>23</sup>

### **BATTLE OF CALDERÓN**

On January 17, 1811, the two armies met some twenty miles from Guadalajara. The mammoth Revolutionary army was arrayed advantageously on hilltops; Calleja attacked without waiting for Cruz. The battle raged undecided until a cannon shot hit a rebel ammunition wagon. The resulting explosion ignited a grass fire that a strong wind drove upon the rebels. The rebel army disintegrated. More than 1,000 Revolutionaries were killed during the ensuing rout and all of their artillery and train was captured. Hidalgo, Allende, and other rebel leaders escaped. The Royalists lost 49 killed, 134 wounded, and 10 missing. Among their dead was Flon, who was cut down while leading a charge on the rebel artillery.<sup>24</sup>

Calleja appreciated that he had inadequate forces to confront each and every uprising. Hence, he adopted a policy of brutality to intimidate would-be Revolutionaries. Exemplary punishment included summary executions. Villages were also burned to the ground.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Revolutionary cause still flourished to the north and in the south, Hidalgo's force had represented the heart of the rebellion. Its destruction left the tentacles to slowly wither. The Revolutionary leadership retreated northward toward the United States, but this was ended by treason, prison, and execution for Hidalgo, Allende, and others by mid-1811. Ignacio Lopez Rayon<sup>26</sup> took charge of the remainder of Hidalgo's army, although few of the surviving rebel leaders were willing to acknowledge him as their chief. The first phase of the war, which was fought primarily in central Mexico and northward into Sinaloa and Texas, ended badly for the



Revolutionaries. In spite of his military failures, Miguel Hidalgo is justly honored as being the father of Mexican independence.<sup>27</sup>

### **MORELOS IN COMMAND**

The mantle of rebel leadership now evolved upon José María Morelos.<sup>28</sup> Morelos and Hidalgo had shared common experiences. Both were members of the clergy, both had studied at San Nicolas College in Valladolid where their paths had crossed, and both had developed a close relationship with the lower classes. However, in more respects they were dissimilar. Morelos was a *mestizo* and not a *criollo*. He did have a university degree but did not possess Hidalgo's intellectual background. Morelos had spent eleven years working among the indigenous people. Morelos had sought out Hidalgo as he marched from Valladolid and on October 20, 1810, the two men had a two-hour interview. Morelos chose to join the rebellion and Hidalgo commissioned him as *lugar-teniente* (a person who exercises political and military power in lieu of the individual granting the authority) and directed him to spread the revolution to the west coast.<sup>29</sup>

### **SIEGE OF ACAPULCO**

On November 12, 1810, Morelos and approximately twenty followers armed with less than a dozen old firearms set out for the rich port city and Spanish stronghold of Acapulco (284 mi S of Mexico City).<sup>30</sup> By December 12 Morelos' army, which had grown on the march to 2,000 men and several cannons, occupied Aguacatillo, on the outskirts of Acapulco, and besieged the port. Here, Morelos issued a decree outlawing slavery and caste distinctions.

On January 4, 1811, some 1,000 Revolutionaries defeated 3,000 Royalists at Tres Palos, outside Acapulco. The Royalists lost 400 men and 700 prisoners plus 700 muskets. The Revolutionaries lost 200 killed.<sup>31</sup>

A month later, on February 7, Morelos tried to take the port through trickery. At four in the morning the rebels advanced on the fortress after sighting a prearranged signal from a royal artillery officer who had agreed to change sides. As they neared they were

suddenly greeted by heavy artillery fire from the fort and the warships in the harbor. Morelos fell back to Las Iguanas and renewed the siege. For nine days he bombarded the enemy; however, on the nineteenth the Royalists attacked from the fort and captured most of his artillery.<sup>32</sup>

Unable to continue the attack against Acapulco, Morelos abandoned the siege and marched north, winning a series of battles. Morelos entered Chilapa on August 18, where he remained for three months. During these months Morelos rebuilt an army of some two to three thousand and attracted many who would become Mexico's future Liberal leaders.<sup>33</sup>

Morelos believed the most effective force to be a small, disciplined army. Promotion should be based on performance and merit. Officers lacking in courage or leadership were to be dismissed. Morelos prescribed the death penalty for anyone found guilty of insubordination, cowardice, treason, "or any disturbance which is opposed to the law of God, the peace of the Kingdom, and the progress of our arms."<sup>34</sup>

Beginning in 1811 Calleja attempted to create a tiered defensive system. Towns, cities, and provinces were to raise their own militias for self-defense, thus freeing the royal army from garrison duty and allowing it to take the offensive against the largest of the rebel forces. No one outside military service was allowed to possess firearms. Only wealthier communities could comply.<sup>35</sup>

In mid-November 1811 Morelos began his second campaign. His immediate goal was to distract enemy forces that were threatening Zitacuaro and ultimately to encircle and isolate Mexico City and Puebla. On December 4 he defeated Royalist forces under Mateo Musitu at Chiaulta (180 mi SSE of Mexico City). Musitu was captured and executed; this was the fate of important prisoners taken by either side. Lesser Royalist prisoners were imprisoned in Zacatula where the heat and heavy labor usually caused the same fate....<sup>36</sup>

## **DEFEAT IN THE NORTH**

In March 1811 Bernardo Gutierrez had been sent to Washington by Hidalgo to obtain recognition and help. Failing, Gutierrez went to New Orleans and recruited 450 men and crossed into Texas. Through some hard fighting he won control of Nuevo León and Texas. Alvarez de Toledo, who had been appointed to succeed Gutierrez in Washington, betrayed his compatriot to the Spanish minister to the United States. The insurgents were defeated at San Antonio de Bejar (now San Antonio, Texas) on March 15, 1814.<sup>52</sup>

...Morelos was captured by Royalist colonel Agustín de Iturbide on November 5, 1815, near Tsalaca....He was executed on December 22. Morelos had tried to give the Revolutionary forces discipline, which had eluded Hidalgo.

## **FERDINAND VII IS RESTORED**

Far away in Spain, Napoleon's forces were defeated at Victoria and Salamanca. In March 1814 the liberated Ferdinand VII recrossed the Pyrennes and successfully reestablished absolute rule in Spain and attempted to regain control over the rebellious colonies.<sup>53</sup>

## **GUERRILLA WARFARE**

Morelos' death had ended the second phase of the war during which the Revolutionaries had won and then had lost practically all of Mexico south of Mexico City. By now 80,000 Royalists (mostly *criollo* militia) were under arms. Lesser Revolutionary leaders, scattered throughout Mexico, continued the struggle. The most competent were Vicente Guerrero,<sup>54</sup> who had 1,000 men in Oaxaca, and Guadalupe Victoria,<sup>55</sup> who commanded 2,000 men scattered between Puebla and Vera Cruz. Although they were not strong enough to directly confront the Royalist army, the rebels did seriously disrupt economic life and civil order, particularly in the rural regions. Other rebels resorted to banditry. They fortified themselves in mountain strongholds and preyed on locals and passing convoys. The years between 1814 and 1821 were bleak for the Mexican insurgents. Although a number of Hidalgo's and Morelos' lieutenants remained in the field, none rose to

the stature of their mentors.<sup>56</sup>

The Royalist army created *estacamentos volantes* (flying detachments) to hunt down the highly mobile bands of insurgents. They summarily executed suspected insurgents and torched towns that sympathized with the rebels.<sup>57</sup>

### **THE MINA EXPEDITION**

In 1817 the Royalists in New Spain were attacked by a Revolutionary from an unexpected quarter. Francisco Javier Mina,<sup>58</sup> who had championed constitutional reform in Spain, recruited some 300 men during his trek from Liverpool to Norfolk, Baltimore, Saint Thomas, Port-au-Prince, Galveston, and finally New Orleans. On April 15, 1817, Mina captured Soto la Marina (650 mi NNE of Mexico City) on the Gulf of Mexico. Mina was aided in the invasion by Commodore Luis d'Aury, a French sailor of fortune who held a rebel commission as "governor of Texas."

The invasion alarmed the government in Mexico City, for if not dealt with swiftly and successfully, it might serve as an example for others in the United States. The Royalists dispatched the Spanish frigate *Sabina* (40 guns) and two armed tenders from Vera Cruz in mid-May. They sank two of Mina's ships and drove the third off. In the meantime, Mina, leaving 100 men to guard Soto la Marina, marched for Guanajuato where he believed the Revolutionary activities to be centered. En route, commanding 300 followers, Mina defeated a 2,000-man Royalist force at Arminan on June 15 through reckless abandonment. Finally the Royalists tracked Mina down and captured him at the ranch of El Venadito on October 27. He was shot at Los Remedios on November 11, 1817.<sup>59</sup>

### **BACK IN SPAIN**

Events in Spain began the third phase of the war for independence, sometimes called the "National War" (*La Guerra Nacional*). On January 1, 1820, Rafael Riego, commander of a battalion of Asturian soldiers stationed at Cadiz, proclaimed for the

liberal constitution of 1812. Thus, the *Gran Expedición*, which had been preparing since 1818 to strike a decisive blow against the Revolutionaries in Spanish America, was thwarted. The revolt rapidly spread throughout Spain and on March 7, 1820, Ferdinand VII reluctantly stated that he supported the organic law. In the Americas pardon was offered to the rebels and by April thousands in Mexico had accepted. Vicente Guerrero, however, was not among them. In order to bring Guerrero to terms, the Viceroy recalled retired Iturbide<sup>60</sup> and promoted him to brigadier.<sup>61</sup>

### **THE PLAN OF IGUALA**

In late November 1820 Iturbide led 2,500 men southward from Mexico City. Iturbide's campaign against the insurgents was indecisive at best. Instead of vigorously pursuing the enemy, he subtly sought support among influential *criollos* concerning the prospects of his declaring independence while at the same time writing to the Viceroy that operations were proceeding well. On February 16, 1821, Iturbide wrote to the Viceroy that Guerrero had placed himself and his 1,200 men under his orders. Adding that negotiations were not complete, he painted a rosy picture. In fact, Iturbide had written to Guerrero on January 10 outlining a plan for independence under one of the members of the Spanish royal family. Guerrero replied "independence or death," but agreed to talk.

On February 24 Iturbide and Guerrero issued the Plan of Iguala. A unique feature of the plan was that it praised the Spaniards for their contributions to Mexico. The plan successfully preserved the privileges of the upper class. Mexico was to become an independent kingdom with Ferdinand VII or some other European prince as a constitutional monarch; the Catholic Church was to keep its privileges; the *peninsulares* and *criollos* were to be equal. In order to guarantee the success of the plan, the formerly hostile forces were forged into the Army of the Three Guarantees (*Ejército de las Tres Garantías*) with Iturbide as its commander.<sup>62</sup>

On March 3, 1821 the Viceroy denounced Iturbide. To help

assure that his plan would succeed, Iturbide seized a convoy of silver valued at 525,000 pesos, which was being carried from Mexico City to Acapulco to pay for the cargo of a galleon which had recently arrived from Manila.<sup>63</sup>

In March 1821 Iturbide had perhaps 1,800 men under his command, including those of Guerrero. The Viceroy had about 6,000 loyal troops stationed in the vicinity of the capital but he procrastinated. Initially, the two sides conducted an intense propaganda campaign. Unit after unit, city after city, and province after province declared for the plan. Although some blood was spilled at numerous sites, it was more peaceful than violent.<sup>64</sup>

Iturbide marched against Valladolid. On May 12 he called for the city to surrender. This was initially rejected. After the Army of the Three Guarantees breached the defenses on the same day, the Royalists surrendered and were given generous terms. Unlike his earlier campaigns, Iturbide was humane to his enemy. He next marched against Guanajuato. From Acambaro he marched to San Juan del Rio, key to Queretaro, which surrendered in June. The Royalist garrison at Queretaro, significantly reduced by desertion, surrendered on June 28. Once again, terms were generous. They were to embark for Havana as soon as possible.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, Viceroy Venadito gathered his resources to defend the capital. On June 1 he called for all able-bodied males between seventeen and forty to join the army. On July 5 a revolt in the capital forced the Viceroy to surrender his authority to Marshal Francisco Novella. By early August, the Army of the Three Guarantees controlled all of Mexico except Acapulco, Mexico City, Fort San Carlos at Perote, Vera Cruz, and the Castle of San Juan de Ulua. Iturbide in large measure won the day through a policy of conciliation and generosity....<sup>66</sup>

On July 30, 1821, Juan O'Donoju, the recently appointed Captain-General of New Spain and Superior Chief Political Marshal, landed at Vera Cruz (285 mi E of Mexico City). The port was besieged

by Iturbide's followers, and members of O'Donoju's family and escort began dying from yellow fever. Also, Novella refused to recognize O'Donoju's authority and O'Donoju had no forces at his disposal. While the Army of the Three Guarantees neared Mexico City, O'Donoju and Iturbide met on August 24 at Córdoba. They signed the Treaty of Córdoba, which slightly modified the Plan of Iguala. Mexico should be independent and a constitutional monarchy. On September 13, Iturbide, O'Donoju, and Novella met at the Hacienda of Patera near the Shrine of Guadalupe. On September 27 the 16,000-man Army of the Three Guarantees marched into Mexico City. Only Vera Cruz and its harbor's castle, San Juan de Ulua, remained in the hands of the Royalists. The "Act of the Independence of the Mexican Empire" was signed the next day by the *criollos* and *peninsular* members of the *Junta*.<sup>68</sup>

### **THE AFTERSHOCK**

The decade of the 1820s was chaotic. Iturbide made himself Emperor Agustín I, but his rivals deposed him in 1823 and shot him the next year when he tried to return from exile. Although a republic had been created, Ferdinand VII dreamed of reconquering his former colony. Mexican officials, absorbed in their domestic problems, paid little attention to Spanish preparations to invade.<sup>69</sup>

On July 6, 1829, a substantial, but poorly outfitted, invasion force sailed from Cuba. Rear Adm. Ángel Laborde commanded a small fleet carrying some 3,000 troops. One transport wrecked in a heavy storm off Louisiana. On July 16, in the heat of summer, 2,600 Spanish troops commanded by Brigadier Isidro Barradas landed at Cabo Rojo some 60 miles south of Tampico (452 mi NE of Mexico City). The fleet immediately returned to Cuba as ordered. The troops marched into the port on August 6 expecting a friendly reception and supplies; instead, they got yellow fever.<sup>70</sup>

The opportunistic Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna, governor of Vera Cruz, seized the moment. Anticipating the invasion, he gathered 2,000 troops and supplies at Vera Cruz. Once Santa Anna

learned that the Spanish had landed, he extracted a forced loan of 20,000 pesos from the merchants, chartered some ten ships, and embarked his 1,000 infantry. He sailed north without any warships for escort, brashly ignoring the possibility that the Spanish fleet might be patrolling the coast. Santa Anna ignored the fact that he required congressional approval to take his troops into another state. He also ordered 1,000 cavalymen north by land.<sup>71</sup>

...On August 21 Santa Anna attacked the 600 Spaniards south of the port. At 2 p.m. the Spaniards asked for a truce....Meanwhile, Mexican Gen. Manuel Mier y Terán was methodically assembling other Mexican troops at Altamira, some 20 miles north of Tampico. On September 7 Mier's force of 1,000 regulars, 1,000 militia, and 3 cannons joined that of Santa Anna. Time was on the side of the Mexicans, who grew stronger as the Spaniards grew weaker. However, Santa Anna would not be denied his glory and insisted that the Spanish be attacked. Late in the afternoon on September 10, the combined forces of Santa Anna and Mier y Terán attacked and the fighting continued into the night. Santa Anna permitted the Spaniards to surrender the next day. They were allowed to withdraw from Mexico after surrendering their weapons and supplies. Only 1,792 Spaniards were left to sail for Cuba. Santa Anna emerged as a war hero. He would deviously manipulate Mexican politics for most of the next twenty-five years.<sup>73</sup>

Matters did not end here. In retaliation against Spain, Mexico commissioned Gen. Jose Ignacio Basadre to recruit blacks in Haiti to infiltrate Cuba and instigate a slave revolt; however, the plan was never acted upon. Also, the army assembled at Jalapa to deal with the Spanish threat was used by Vice-President Anastasio Bustamante to overthrow President Guerrero in December 1829.<sup>74</sup>

### **OBSERVATIONS**

As throughout Spanish South America, the war for independence in Mexico was a struggle between Latin Americans fighting to liberate themselves from colonial rule and Latin Ameri-



cans, led in many cases by senior Spanish officers, fighting to remain under the rule of Ferdinand VII. Throughout the eleven years of fighting, Spain sent only 9,685 troops to Mexico.<sup>75</sup>

The *criollo*-dominated Royalist army in Mexico became the creator of the nation. As a consequence, the new Mexican army rewarded itself with a superior status within society which was protected by the retention of the colonial *fuero militar* (a separate legal system). Former Royalists dominated the new Mexican army of 1823. The only lieutenant general was Pedro Celestino Negrete, a Spaniard by birth. The Minister of War and Marine was another Spaniard, Antonio Medina. Iturbide created five marshals, of whom only one, Vicente Guerrero, had been a Revolutionary prior to 1821. He also promoted nine officers to brigadiers, only one of whom, Nicolas Bravo, had been a longtime Revolutionary. Of the 188 generals and colonels on the army register in 1840, eighty-one had begun their careers in the Spanish army.<sup>76</sup>

And, in the future, men such as Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who had fought against Hidalgo and Morelos but pledged their loyalty to Iturbide in 1821 and the Army of the Three Guarantees, would become presidents of Mexico during the 1830s and 1840s, some more than once.<sup>77</sup> Many of these officers were young, ambitious, and had already demonstrated their willingness to sell their loyalty. Many had risen four ranks within the Army—captains to generals—by changing sides more than once during the war, particularly in its last days.<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the Army, the Church, which retained all of its colonial property and privileges, as well as the landowners, the merchants, and the wealthy middle class, whose property was now more secure than it had been during the colonial era, were also winners. The losers were the Mexican masses and Spain. What little hope for change the masses had embodied in Hidalgo and Morelos. Following their deaths early in the war no one of sufficient stature remained to champion their cause.<sup>79</sup>

The war in Mexico was at times closer to a class war than the

contests in Spanish South America. In Mexico the overwhelming majority of the *criollos* fought for the King and most of the *mestizos* and Indians who did fight fought for the Revolutionaries. Many wealthy *criollos* were won over to the independence movement only after the Liberals in Spain had seized power from Ferdinand VII. Others contributed money to both sides in order to protect their interests. Aside from now desiring independence, these *criollos* shared little politically, socially, and economically with their republican countrymen.<sup>80</sup>

The limitations placed upon Ferdinand VII's power by the Spanish rebellion of 1820 caused the Mexican War for Independence to end with the Conservatives in control. As a result, the ultraconservatives intellectually, and, on occasion, militarily, opposed the Liberals for decades and generally dominated. They drew their support from many in the Church, those who had remained loyal to Ferdinand VII (both Spaniards and *criollos*), the Mexican nobility (owners of the vast estates), and the army whose officers were nearly all *criollos* and for the most part belonged to the landed families. An important consequence of the war for independence in Mexico would be the inability of this politically divided nation to defend the territory it claimed through exploration and weak colonization from the United States.<sup>81</sup>

James Smith Wilcocks, the future U.S. consul to Mexico City, wrote to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams on October 25, 1821, describing the devastation caused by the war:

Before the insurrection of the year 1810, the Kingdom contained six millions of inhabitants ... the royal revenue exceeding \$20,000,000, and the money coined at the mint of this city upwards of \$28,000,000 annually; it has, however, ever since been on the decline, in consequence of the devastations committed by both parties in the long and cruel war between the Europeans and Americans, so that the population cannot now be computed at more than four millions, the revenue at

more than half of what it was, and the money coined yearly at from \$5,000,000 to \$8,000,000; this year it will probably not exceed \$4,000,000.<sup>82</sup>

Estimates of the number killed range from 250,000 to 500,000 individuals. A large number of people fled Mexico.<sup>83</sup>