

Latin American Revolutions of  
the early 1800s

- I. Background – The Spanish/Portuguese Colonial System
  - A. The Roles of Colonies – fulfillment of mercantilism for Spain and Portugal
    1. Plantation Agriculture (with slaves) – cash and food crops
    2. Raw Materials – precious metals, wood, tropical produce
    3. Spread of Catholic Teachings
  - B. Colonial Social Order/Class System (in order of rank/status) – “Sociedad de castas”
    1. Peninsulares
      - a. Aristocratic, white colonists born in Spain or Portugal
      - b. held all important/powerful positions in the colonial government and military
      - c. relatively few in number
    2. Creoles
      - a. Aristocratic, white colonists born in the Latin American colonies
      - b. owned and controlled the majority of colonial businesses, land, and plantations
        1. generally wealthy
        2. generally well-educated (are very aware of the ideas of the Enlightenment and are aware of previous revolutions)
      - c. were not eligible to serve in top-level colonial government and military positions
      - \*. This class becomes the main driving force behind the revolutions
    3. Mestizos and Mulattos
      - a. people of mixed European and Native or African ancestry
      - b. generally worked as unskilled laborers, servants, farmhands, or plantation overseers
    4. African Slaves and Native Americans
  - C. Other Factors/Causes
    1. Influences from other, previous revolutions – USA, France, Haiti
    2. French Control of Spain and Portugal during the rule of Napoleon
      - \*. Causes temporary autonomy and ambiguity as to who was in control

## II. The Mexican Revolution (1810 – 1824)

### A. The 1810 insurgency

1. Led by the parish priest of the church in Dolores, Father Miguel de Hidalgo
  - a. He initially has the support of the Creoles
  - b. A champion of the lower classes
    1. wanted an improvement to the lives of Mexico's poor
    2. wanted an end to the system of Slavery
2. On September 16, 1810, Hidalgo gives a speech, which has come to be known as the “Grito de Dolores,” in which he called for Mexicans to fight for “independence and liberty”
3. Hidalgo then leads a march of his Native American and Mestizo parishioners to Mexico City – this turns into an armed revolt
4. In spite of early successes, Hidalgo's forces are defeated
  - a. The Spanish army is victorious
  - b. Hidalgo got no support from his former allies, Mexico's Creoles (who were opposed to his proposed reforms in the name of the lower classes)
  - c. Hidalgo was captured and executed for leading this revolt



## B. The 1813-1815 insurgency

1. Led by another reform-minded priest, José María Morelos
2. By 1813, his forces had captured much of southern Mexico
3. Again, the Spanish army defeated the rebels and executed Father Morelos

## C. The Events of 1820 – 1823

1. Problems in Spain – a revolt there almost deposed the King in 1820
  - a. Worried about the effect of this revolt on their own privileges, the Creoles joined forces with the remaining revolutionaries
  - b. The Spanish/Colonial government sends an army led by Agustín de Iturbide, a Creole officer to put down this insurrection
2. Instead of fighting, the revolutionaries and Iturbide join forces and occupy Mexico City in 1821
3. Independence from Spain is proclaimed
  - \*. Iturbide is named the Emperor of Mexico



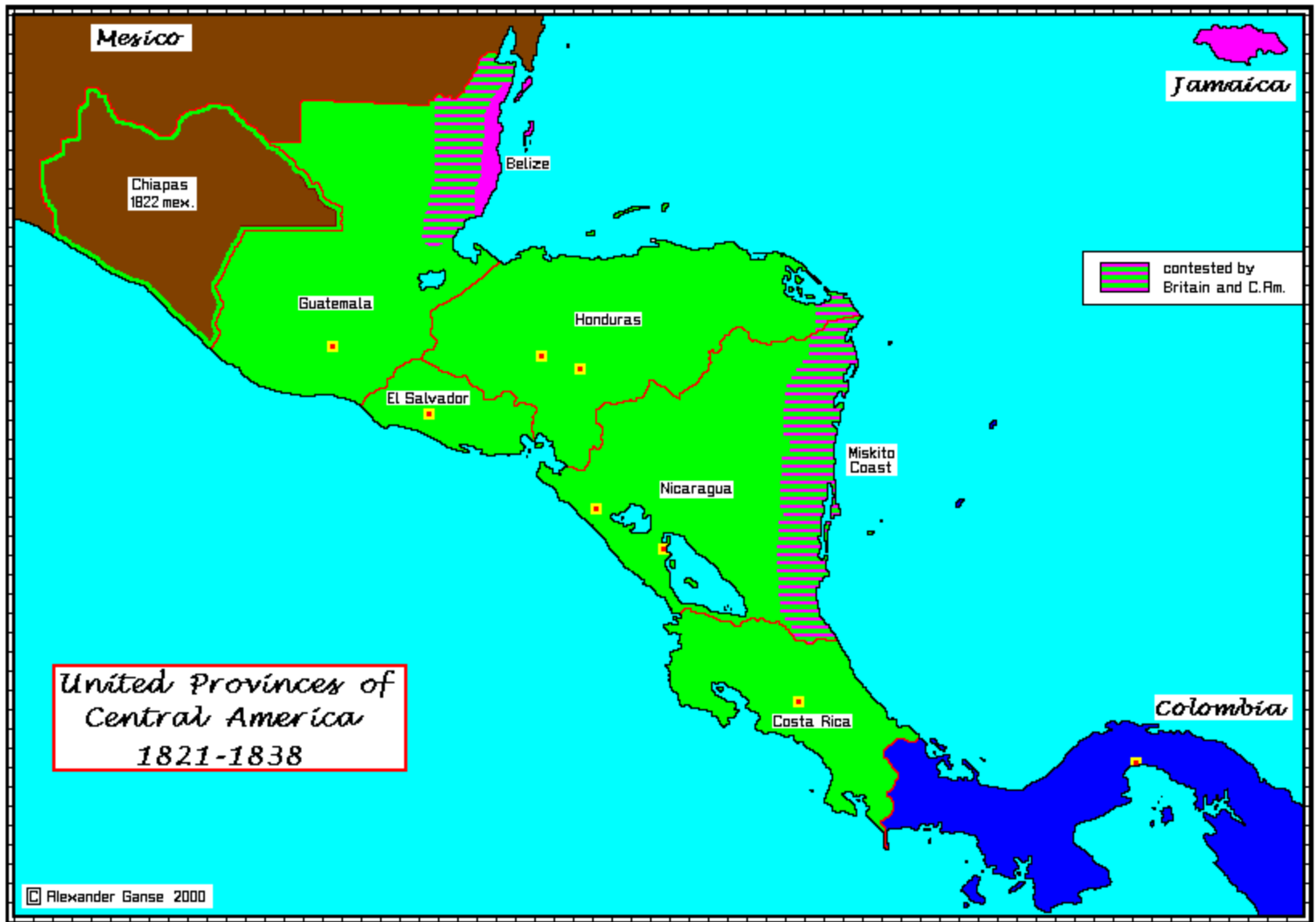
José María Morelos



Augustín de Iturbide

D. In 1824

1. Tired of his oppressive rule, the Mexican people depose Iturbide
2. Mexico becomes a republic
3. Spanish Central America, which had been a part of the Mexican Empire of 1820-1823 separates and declares its independence from Mexico (becoming the “United Provinces of Central America”)
  - \*. After attempting to stay together as one country, these former Spanish colonies separate into four separate countries in 1838
    1. Costa Rica
    2. El Salvador
    3. Guatemala
    4. Nicaragua





### III. Revolutions of Spanish South America (1810-1825)

#### A. In Northern South America

1. A revolutionary movement, centered in Caracas, had begun by 1810
  - \*. Simon Bolivar becomes the leader of this movement
    1. He is from a wealthy, creole family
    2. He is a very skilled army officer
    3. He is a well-versed believer in the ideals of the Enlightenment
2. Between 1817 and 1822, he led successful rebellions in the present-day countries of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and parts of Bolivia
  - \*. These areas were united as one country, called Gran Colombia, until 1830

*Grand Colombia*  
1819-1830





## B. In Southern South America

1. A revolutionary movement begins in Buenos Aires in 1810
  - a. Residents of Buenos Aires, called portenos, resented trading restrictions placed upon them by the Spanish
  - b. The porteños wanted self-rule and control over neighboring colonial areas as well
    - \*. Lack of Spanish control, caused by the occupation by Napoleon's forces, created the illusion of autonomy for the porteños
2. By 1816, the “United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata” (including present-day Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and part of Bolivia) was proclaimed
3. Jose de San Martín, another creole army officer, arose as the leader of this independence movement
  - a. His forces liberated Chile in 1818
  - b. His forces liberated Peru in 1820



- C. A “Meeting of the Minds” to decide the fate of South America in 1822
  - 1. San Martín and Bolívar met in Guayaquil (in Ecuador) to discuss what to do next
    - a. San Martín felt that the newly-independent countries needed to form monarchies
    - b. Bolívar felt that the newly-independent countries needed to form republican democracies
  - 2. Only agreeing that there was a common goal of liberation, San Martín let Bolívar take control of the entire revolutionary movement in Spanish South America
- D. By 1825, the formerly Spanish-controlled colonies in South America had formed independent nations
  - 1. All of these formed republican governments (that within a few years lapsed into military dictatorship)
  - 2. All of these immediately or soon abolished slavery





## IV. Brazilian Independence

### A. Brazil was of great importance to Portugal's economy

1. huge provider of minerals, produce, and wood
2. extensive plantation system – huge amount of slaves required to provide labor for the growth of food and cash crops

### B. In 1807, Portugal was invaded by Napoleon's forces – results **totally** different from his invasion of Spain:

1. The entire Portuguese royal family and court moves to Brazil
2. Rio de Janeiro becomes the capital of the Portuguese Empire
  - \*. A huge number of cultural and infrastructural improvements made in Rio de Janeiro
3. Brazil's trading and political status becomes equal to that of Portugal itself!
  - a. Economic boom in Brazil
    1. could directly trade with Portugal's allies in Europe (especially Britain) – unlike before
    2. mining and agricultural industries made more profitable
  - b. Brazil's colonial status was reinforced instead of weakened as a result!



- C. In 1820, King João VI (fully intending to stay in Brazil) is forced to return to Portugal when a revolt established a republic in Portugal
  1. João appointed his son, Pedro, the Regent (or temporary ruler) of the Portuguese Empire
  2. The new Portuguese government also demanded that Pedro return to Portugal and Brazil return to its previous status as a subservient Portuguese colony
  3. Pedro, on the urging of his father, refused and called a constitutional convention in Brazil
- E. In September, 1822, Brazil
  1. Proclaimed its independence from Portugal
  2. Creates a constitutional monarchy – Pedro becomes Emperor Pedro I
- F. Over the next year, Brazil successfully defended itself from the Portuguese army
  - \*. Portugal finally recognized Brazilian independence in 1825
- G. Other, later changes in Brazil
  1. Slavery finally abolished in 1888
  2. Became a republic in 1889 when Emperor Pedro II was overthrown



King João VI



Emperor Pedro I

## VI. The Overall Results of these Independence Movements = very little!

### A. The social order does not change very much

1. Creoles are now in control

2. The rest of the social hierarchy and living conditions basically stays the same, but now the Creoles were the ruling class

### B. Governmental Changes

1. No more control by Spain or Portugal

2. Most republican governments are soon replaced by military dictators called caudillos

### C. USA issues the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 – defending the newly-independent nations from (re)conquest by Europe