

Latin Americans Win Freedom

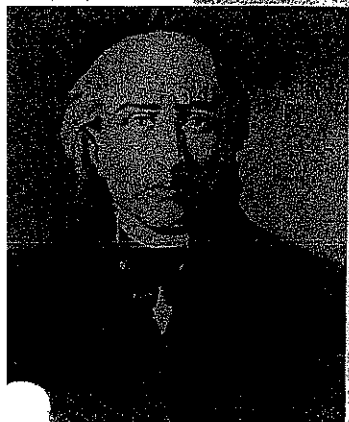


All the countries to the south of the United States are called Latin America. For more than 300 years, Spanish kings had ruled most of Latin America. Then Latin Americans heard how the people of the United States fought to be free during the American Revolution. Latin Americans learned how the French people fought for freedom during the French Revolution. The people of Latin America decided to fight for their independence.

In 1808, Napoleon of France conquered Spain. Napoleon's brother became the ruler of Spain and Spain's colonies in Latin America. The people of Latin America did not want to obey a French king. Many Latin Americans wanted to fight for their freedom.

In 1813, Napoleon was defeated by the allied nations. Then Spain had a Spanish king again. The Spanish army was weak after fighting Napoleon. The new Spanish government was weak, too. Because Spain was weak, Latin Americans decided to start their fight for freedom.

Mexico was the first Spanish colony in Latin America to fight to be free. Father Miguel Hidalgo was a Catholic priest. He became the leader of Mexico's war against Spain. Father Hidalgo started an army. Most of the soldiers were poor Indians. In 1810, they began to fight. Father Hidalgo and his soldiers won some battles. Then



FATHER HIDALGO

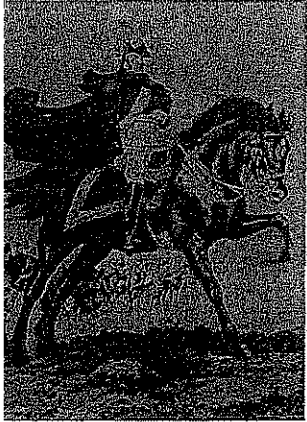
he tried to capture Mexico City. This time, Father Hidalgo was captured. He was killed by Spanish soldiers.

The Mexicans kept on fighting for their freedom. In 1821, the Mexicans won their war with Spain. Mexico became a free nation.

The colonies in South America also wanted to be free. Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín were two great leaders of the fight for freedom in South America. They helped many colonies become free nations.

José de San Martín began the fight for freedom in Argentina. He helped Argentina win its freedom from Spain.

San Martín decided to help Chile and Peru become free. He and Bernardo O'Higgins of Chile formed an army. They led the army across the tall Andes Mountains. They went into Chile. They fought Spanish soldiers in Chile. In 1818, Chile became a free nation.



JOSÉ DE SAN MARTÍN



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San Martín and O'Higgins led an army across the Andes Mts.



DOM PEDRO

Brazil is the largest country in South America. Brazil became free without fighting. Brazil had been a colony of Portugal. In 1808, Napoleon conquered Portugal. The king of Portugal went to live in Brazil. After Napoleon was defeated, the king went back to Portugal to rule. Dom Pedro, the king's son, became the new ruler of Brazil.

The people of Brazil wanted to be free. In 1822, Dom Pedro told Portugal that Brazil wanted to rule itself. Portugal did not want to fight against Brazil. Portugal allowed Brazil to be free.

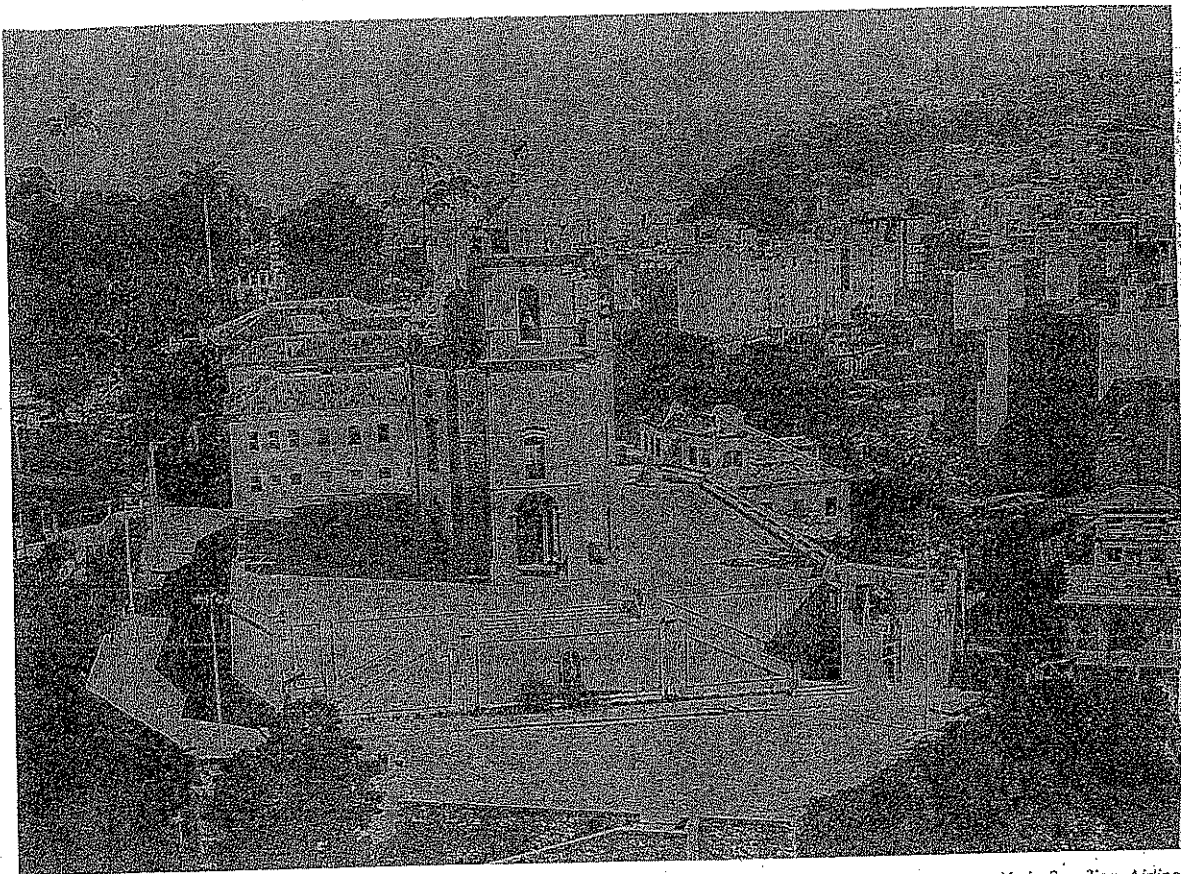
Thousands of people had fought to win freedom for Latin America. By 1826, most of the Latin American colonies had won their freedom.

What factors weakened the Spanish empire in the early 1800's?

Which was the first country in Latin America to take action against the Spanish?

What role did Father Miguel Hidalgo play in Mexico's independence?

Who played a significant role in South America's independence movement?
How did these individuals help achieve independence?



Varig Brazilian Airlines

Brazil was still a colony of Portugal when this church was built in 1739.

Peru was Spain's strongest colony in South America. South America could not be free until Peru was free. Bolívar and San Martín fought to free Peru.

From Chile, San Martín led his soldiers to Peru. They captured Lima in 1821. Lima was the most important city in Peru. Lima was free, but Spain ruled the rest of Peru.

Bolívar was fighting to free the northern colonies in South America while San Martín was fighting in Chile and Peru. Bolívar wanted all of South America to be free. He was a great army leader. He lost many battles, but he did not quit. Again and again he fought for freedom in South America.

By 1822, Peru was Spain's only colony in South America. Bolívar led more battles to free Peru. In 1826, Peru won its freedom. Spain had lost all its colonies in South America.



SIMÓN BOLÍVAR