

Notes on 19th Century Latin American Independence Leaders and Movements 1803 – 1898

I. The 19th Century Humanities: General Considerations

Between 1803 and 1898 the following areas of Latin America became independent from their European metropolises in France, Portugal, and Spain: (1) the western region of la Nouvelle France (New France), which included the entire territory sold by France to the United States in the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 (the northeastern region of New France had passed to British ownership at in 1763); (2) the French-speaking half of the island of Hispaniola (Haiti) won its war of independence from France in 1803; (3) the Viceroyalty of New Spain between 1810 and 1821 (Nueva España: México including its vast territory in modern southwestern United States, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica); (4) the Viceroyalty of New Granada between 1810 and 1824 (*Nueva Granada*: Panamá, Colombia, and Venezuela); (5) the Viceroyalty of Peru between 1810 and 1825 (Peru, Ecuador, and Chile); (6) the Viceroyalty of the River Plate between 1810 and 1824 (*el virreinato del Río de la Plata* including Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, and a claim to Uruguay); (7) Brazil in 1821 without a war of independence; (8) East and West Florida in 1821; and (8) Cuba and the Dominican Republic (la República Dominicana) in 1898.

In broad and very general historical terms, the first quarter of the 19th century was spent becoming independent from each region's original European masters either by sale (the Louisiana Purchase), European wars (Québec and Acadie passing to Great Britain), wars of independence (most of Spanish America and Haiti), or abandonment by a European monarchy (Brazil). During this period the humanities continue to exist and to be produced; however, what is produced in terms of art, literature, music, philosophy, and the like is dramatically overshadowed by the monumental figures of the independence leaders themselves. Therefore, the section below you will find brief introductions and corresponding links for the most prominent of these figures.

After independence, in general, throughout Latin America the production of the humanities strictly speaking resume with some notable figures in literature and art. These humanists, working in very poor countries that were struggling to rise from the ashes and disruptions of isolation, war, and poverty will be mentioned in the section below on Romanticism. It is not until the last quarter, however, of the 19th century that a new, mature, and uniquely Latin American movement arises. This is *modernismo*, a dynamic flowering of the humanities that overlaps European Modernism, but which also displays its own independent content and styles. This movement will be described and annotated in its own separate section.

II. Latin American Independence Movements

Francisco de Miranda first came to the United States with the official permission of liberal ministers in Spain. When Miranda spoke out for independence from Spain, he was considered an enemy in the mother country. Many more intellectuals in the Spanish colonies sought and were given political refuge in the United States (Colombia) in 1797. He was the most successful of the campaigners in the United States for Latin American independence from Spain.

A. Southern South America (1810-1824) and José de San Martín (1778-1850): On May 25, 1810, the *cabildo abierto* (open town council) of Buenos Aires--which was the capital of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata--declared independence (*un pronunciamiento*) from Spain because Spain was no longer free, but rather was controlled by France under the dictatorship of Napoleon and, in Spain itself, Napoleon's brother, José Napoleón. In other words, the middle class and upper class *criollos* of Buenos Aires, who were the most powerful force in the entire viceroyalty, declared their allegiance for the deposed king of Spain, Fernando VII, who was being held prisoner by Napoleon in France. Said another way, the leadership of Buenos Aires declared their independence from Napoleonic France, of which Spain was then a part. It must be noted that Buenos Aires had been neglected for nearly two hundred years from its founding in 1580 until the River Plate region became a separate viceroyalty in 1776. The port of Buenos Aires itself had been closed by Spain for 200 years, during which time all trade from Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and lower Bolivia had to be transported far northwest, up over the Andes, and down into the Peruvian capital of Lima and its port of Callao. Only smuggling and counterband entered and left the port of Buenos Aires. When the Virreinato del Río de la Plata was finally set up in 1776, direct trade began from the Atlantic Southern Cone to Spain—but no where else—it amounted to too little support from the metropolis and it was much too late. In fact, having wanted to trade directly with Argentina, the United Kingdom occupied Buenos Aires during the first few years of the 19th century. They were ejected in 1806, but by the *porteños* (residents of Buenos Aires) themselves, not by Spanish forces. In 1810, the polar struggle began between *unitarios*, who were composed mainly of the centralizing liberals in Buenos Aires itself, and the *federalistas*, who were made up of loose alliance of conservatives, Republicans, and elements dominated by the outlying provinces throughout the Viceroyalty. At first, the *unitarios* gained the upper hand because they were more concentrated geographically and they were more organized. From 1810 to 1816 the Viceroyalty was breaking up. In 1813, Paraguay declared independence from both Spain and from the *unitarios* in Buenos Aires. Meanwhile, rebels in Uruguay joined forces with Buenos Aires until 1828, when Uruguay began its final struggle to become a fully independent nation. The last region of the viceroyalty centered in Buenos Aires, Bolivia, became free and independent

when Simón Bolívar and Sucre won the last battle of South American independence at Ayacucho, Perú, on December 9, 1824. The Republican commander in this battle, and ally of Bolívar's, was Antonio José de Sucre. The Spanish army surrendered on December 10th, and the wars of independence in South America came to an end. The country of Bolivia was named after Simón Bolívar in 1825 by Sucre in the city that bears Sucre's name, and which is one of Bolivia's two capitals. (For facts and a brief historical chronology of Bolivia see the country notes for: => [Bolivia](#).)

A. For a brief description of **San Martín** (1778-1850) and the liberation of **southern South America**, click on the following image of him:



B. Northern South America and Simón Bolívar (1743-1804) : For a brief description about Bolívar, click on the following image of him:



C. Mexico, Hidalgo, Morelos, and Itúrbide (1810-1821) : For a brief description about these three leaders of Mexican independence, click on the following link: => [Hidalgo, Morelos, and Itúrbide](#):

D. Mexico's Independence in Art (1810-1821): For an anonymous art work depicting the mood in the aftermath of Mexican independence from Spain in 1821, click on the following image:

