**Father Miguel Hidalgo**

**Grito de Dolores**

On the morning of the 16th, Hidalgo called [Mass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_%28liturgy%29), which was attended by about 300, including hacienda owners, local politicians and Spaniards. There he gave what is now known as the *[Grito de Dolores](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grito_de_Dolores%22%20%5Co%20%22Grito%20de%20Dolores)* (Cry, or Shout, of Dolores), calling the people of his parish to leave their homes and join with him to struggle against the vice regal government.

Hidalgo's *Grito* did not condemn the notion of monarchy or criticize the current social order in detail, but his opposition to the events in Spain and the current vice regal government was clearly expressed in his reference to bad government. The *Grito* also emphasized loyalty to the Catholic religion, a sentiment with which both Creoles and Peninsulares could sympathize; however, the strong anti-Spanish cry of "Death to the Gachupines" ([Gachupines](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gachupin%22%20%5Co%20%22Gachupin) was a name also given to Peninsulares) probably caused horror among Mexico's elite.

**Hidalgo’s army – from Celaya to Monte de las Cruces**

Hidalgo was met with an outpouring of support. Intellectuals, liberal priests and many poor people followed Hidalgo with a great deal of enthusiasm. Hidalgo permitted Indians and mestizos to join his war in such numbers that the original motives of the Querétaro group were obscured. Allende was Hidalgo's co-conspirator in Querétaro and remained more loyal to the Querétaro group's original, more creole objectives. However, Hidalgo's actions and the people's response, meant that he would lead and not Allende. Allende had acquired military training when Mexico established a colonial militia; Hidalgo had no military training at all. The people who followed Hidalgo also had no military training, experience or equipment. Many of these people were poor who were angry after many years of hunger and oppression. Consequently, Hidalgo was the leader of undisciplined rebels.

Hidalgo and Allende left Dolores with about 800 men, half of whom were on horseback. They marched through the [Bajío](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baj%C3%ADo%22%20%5Co%20%22Baj%C3%ADo) area, through [Atotonilco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sanctuary_of_Atotonilco%22%20%5Co%20%22Sanctuary%20of%20Atotonilco), San Miguel el Grande (now Allende), Chamucuero, Celaya, Salamanca, Irapuato and Silao, to Guanajuato. From Guanajuato, Hidalgo directed his troops to Valladolid, Michoacán. They remained here for a while and then decided to march towards Mexico City.

The extent and the intensity of the movement took vice regal authorities by surprise. San Miguel and Celaya were captured with little resistance. On 21 September 1810, Hidalgo was proclaimed general and supreme commander after arriving to Celaya. At this point, Hidalgo's army numbered about 5,000. However, because of the lack of military discipline, the insurgents soon fell into robbing, looting and ransacking the towns they were capturing. They began to execute prisoners as well. This caused friction between Allende and Hidalgo as early as the capture of San Miguel in late September 1810. When a mob ran through this town, Allende tried to break up the violence by striking at the insurgents with the flat of his sword. This brought a rebuke from Hidalgo, accusing Allende of mistreating the people.

On 28 September 1810, Hidalgo arrived to the city of Guanajuato. The town's Spanish and Creole populations took refuge in the heavily-fortified [Alhóndiga de Granaditas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alh%C3%B3ndiga_de_Granaditas%22%20%5Co%20%22Alh%C3%B3ndiga%20de%20Granaditas) granary defended by Quartermaster Riaños. The insurgents overwhelmed the defenses in two days and killed an estimated 400 - 600 men, women and children. Allende strongly protested these events and while Hidalgo agreed that they were heinous, he also stated that he understood the historical patterns that shaped such responses. The mass's violence as well as Hidalgo's inability or unwillingness to suppress it caused the creoles and peninsulares to ally against the insurgents out of fear. This also caused Hidalgo to lose support from liberal creoles he might have otherwise have had.

The insurgents stayed in the city for some days preparing to march to the capital of New Spain, Mexico City. The [canon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_%28priest%29) of the cathedral went unarmed to meet Hidalgo and got him to promise that the atrocities of San Miguel, Celaya and Guanajuato would not be repeated in Valladolid. The canon was partially effective. Wholesale destruction of the city was not repeated. However, Hidalgo was angry when he found the cathedral locked to him. So he jailed all the Spaniards, replaced city officials with his own and looted the city treasury before marching off toward Mexico City. On 19 October Hidalgo left Valladolid for Mexico City after taking 400,000 pesos from the cathedral to pay expenses.

Hidalgo and his troops left the state of [Michoacán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michoac%C3%A1n) and marched through the towns of Maravatio, Ixtlahuaca, and Toluca before stopping in the forested mountain area of Monte de las Cruces. Here, insurgent forces engaged Torcuato Trujillo's royalist forces. Hidalgo's troops made royalist troops retreat, but the insurgents suffered heavy casualties for their efforts like they did when they engaged trained royalist soldiers in Guanajuato.

**Retreat from Mexico City**

After the [Battle of Monte de las Cruces](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Monte_de_las_Cruces) on 30 October 1810, Hidalgo still had about 100,000 insurgents and was in a strategic position to attack Mexico City. Numerically, his forces outnumbered royalist forces.

Hidalgo's forces came as close as what is now the [Cuajimalpa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuajimalpa%22%20%5Co%20%22Cuajimalpa) borough of Mexico City. Allende wanted to press forward and attack the capital, but Hidalgo disagreed. Hidalgo's reasoning for this decision is unclear and has been debated by historians. One probable factor was that Hidalgo's men were undisciplined and unruly and also suffered heavy losses whenever they encountered trained troops. As the capital was guarded by some of the best-trained soldiers in New Spain, Hidalgo might have feared a bloodbath. Hidalgo instead decided to turn away from Mexico City and move to the north through Toluca and Ixtlahuaca with a destination of Guadalajara.

After turning back, insurgents began to desert. By the time he got to Aculco, just north of Toluca, his army had shrunk to 40,000. There, General [Felix Calleja](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Calleja) attacked Hidalgo's forces, defeating them on 7 November 1810. Allende decided to take the troops under his command to Guanajuato instead of Guadalajara.

Hidalgo arrived in Guadalajara on 26 November with over 7,000 badly-armed men. He initially occupied the city with lower-class support because Hidalgo promised to end slavery, tribute payment and taxes on alcohol and tobacco products. Hidalgo established an alternative government in Guadalajara with himself at the head and then appointed two ministers. On 6 December 1810, Hidalgo issued a decree abolishing slavery, threatening those who did not comply with death. He also abolished tribute payments that the Indians had to pay to their creole and peninsular lords.

After Guanajuato had been retaken by royalist forces, the bishop there excommunicated Hidalgo and those under him, declaring them to be heretics, perjurers and blasphemers on 24 December 1810.

Royalist forces marched to Guadalajara, arriving in January 1811 with nearly 6,000 men. Allende and Abasolo wanted to concentrate their forces in the city and plan an escape route should they be defeated, but Hidalgo rejected this. Their second choice then was to make a stand at the [Calderon Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Calderon_Bridge) (*Puente de Calderon*) just outside the city. Hidalgo had between 80,000 and 100,000 men and 95 cannons, but the better trained royalists decisively defeated the insurgent army, forcing Hidalgo to flee towards Aguascalientes. At Hacienda de Pabellon, on 25 January 1811, near [Aguascalientes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aguascalientes%2C_Aguascalientes), Allende and other insurgent leaders took military command away from Hidalgo, blaming him for their defeats. Hidalgo remained as head politically but with military command going to Allende.

What was left of the insurgent Army of the Americas moved north towards [Zacatecas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zacatecas%2C_Zacatecas) and [Saltillo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saltillo) with the goal of making connections with those the United States for support. Hidalgo made it to Saltillo, where he publicly resigned his military post and rejected a pardon offered by General José de la Cruz in the name of Venegas in return for Hidalgo's surrender. A short time later, they were betrayed and captured by royalist [Ignacio Elizondo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignacio_Elizondo) at the [Wells of Baján](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wells_of_Baj%C3%A1n) (*Norias de Baján*) on 21 March 1811 and taken to the city of [Chihuahua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chihuahua%2C_Chihuahua).

**Execution**

Hidalgo was turned over to the bishop of [Durango](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Durango%2C_Durango), Francisco Gabriel de Olivares, for an official [defrocking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defrocking) and excommunication on 27 July 1811. He was then found guilty of treason by a military court and executed by [firing squad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firing_squad) on 30 July at 7 in the morning. Before his execution, he thanked his gaolers, Private Soldiers Ortega and Melchor, in letters for their humane treatment. At his execution, Hidalgo stated "Though I may die,I shall be remembered forever. you all will soon be forgotten"  His body, along with the bodies of Allende, Aldama and [José Mariano Jiménez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Mariano_Jim%C3%A9nez) were decapitated, and the heads were put on display on the four corners of the [Alhóndiga de Granaditas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alh%C3%B3ndiga_de_Granaditas)in [Guanajuato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanajuato). The heads remained there for ten years until the end of the [Mexican War of Independence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mexican_War_of_Independence) to serve as a warning to other insurgents. Hidalgo's headless body was first displayed outside the prison but then buried in the [Church of St Francis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Francisco_Temple) in [Chihuahua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chihuahua%2C_Chihuahua). Those remains were transferred later to Mexico City in 1824.

Hidalgo's death resulted in a political vacuum on the insurgent side until 1812. The royalist military commander, General Felix Calleja, continued to pursue rebel troops. Insurgent fighting evolved into guerrilla warfare, and eventually the next major insurgent leader, [Jose Maria Morelos y Pavon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jos%C3%A9_Mar%C3%ADa_Morelos), who had led rebel movements with Hidalgo, became head of the insurgents.

**Vicente Guerrero**

Vicente Ramón Guerrero Saldaña was the second president of Mexico and the first to come from las clases populares (the "popular" classes), which in Spanish is a euphemism for an individual of peasant or working class background. This circumstance of birth is important because it would have a decisive effect on both Guerrero's life and death. Born in Tixtla, a village in the sierra that furnishes a backdrop to Acapulco, he was of obscure origins and racially mixed background. His birth date was August 10, 1782.

When the Independence War began with Father Hidalgo's famous grito, Guerrero was working as a gunsmith in his home town. He joined the rebellion in November 1810 and enlisted in a division that independence leader José Maria Morelos had organized to fight in the south. Guerrero distinguished himself in the battle of Izúcar, in February 1812, and had attained the rank of lieutenant colonel when the insurgents seized Oaxaca in November of the same year.

In late 1815, following the capture and execution of Morelos, Guerrero was the only major rebel leader still at large. This was the independence movement's darkest period, similar to Washington's ordeal at Valley Forge. But Guerrero persevered, keeping the rebellion alive through a protracted campaign of guerrilla warfare. As the movement began to revive, Guerrero won victories at Ajuchitán, Santa Fe, Tetela del Río, Huetamo, Tlalchapa and Cuautlotitlán, all communities in that southern region he knew so well.

In 1819 a poignant bit of personal drama took place. Apodaca, the Spanish viceroy, had persuaded Guerrero's aged father to try and talk his son into surrender. Tearfully, the old man wrapped his arms around his son's legs and begged him to accept the Viceroy's terms. Turning to his men, Guerrero spoke these words: "Compañeros, this old man is my father. He has come to offer me rewards in the name of the Spaniards. I have always respected my father but my country comes first." Today there is a plaque on the wall of Guerrero's house in Tixtla containing this misquotation of his actual words: "Independence and liberty -- or death! My country comes before my father."

Failing to induce Guerrero's surrender, Apodaca sent an army against him under the command of the flamboyant and opportunistic [Agustin de Iturbide](http://www.mexconnect.com/en/articles/263-chameleon-adventurer-the-astonishing-career-of-agustin-de-iturbide). This force left Mexico City on November 16, 1820. Guerrero, with his tactical skills and knowledge of the terrain, got the better of Iturbide in several skirmishes. Then Iturbide, true to his chameleon nature, took a step that would have the widest-ranging repercussions. On January 10, 1821, he sent Guerrero a letter proposing that the two join forces and fight for Mexican independence under what he referred to as the "three guarantees": that Mexico should be an independent constitutional monarchy; that distinctions between Spaniards, creoles, mestizos and Indians be abolished; and that Catholicism should be the state religion.

With Guerrero's agreement, the Three Guarantees were proclaimed in a February 21, 1821, manifesto called the Plan de Iguala. The two men combined their forces into what became known as the Trigarante Army ("Army of the Three Guarantees") and prepared to attack Mexico City. Juan O'Donojú, who had succeeded Apodaca as viceroy, realized that the situation was hopeless and agreed to Mexican independence. On September 27, 1821, the Trigarante Army marched into the capital.

**Jose Maria Morelos**

**Insurrection against Spain**

About 6:00 a.m. on September 16, 1810, [Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miguel_Hidalgo_y_Costilla), the former leader of the College of San Nicolás, then the parish priest of Dolores, Guanajuato (since renamed [*Dolores Hidalgo*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolores_Hidalgo) in his honor), hastily ordered the church bells to be rung, and gathered his congregation. Flanked by [Ignacio Allende](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignacio_Allende) and [Juan Aldama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_Aldama), Hidalgo addressed the people in front of his church, encouraging them to take up arms, with the Cry of Independence (*El Grito de Dolores*, now celebrated every year on September 15th at 11:00 p.m.) that called for armed revolt after the Spanish colonial authorities had discovered the [Conspiracy of Querétaro](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Conspiracy_of_Quer%C3%A9taro&action=edit&redlink=1), a clandestine movement seeking Mexican independence. Like Allende and Aldama, [Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Josefa_Ortiz_de_Dom%C3%ADnguez%22%20%5Co%20%22Josefa%20Ortiz%20de%20Dom%C3%ADnguez), popularly known as *La Corregidora*, was one of the famous initial supporters of the revolt. Thus Miguel Hidalgo and his followers rose in open rebellion against the Spanish colonial authorities launching the Mexican War of Independence.

After taking all the important cities of the [Bajío](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baj%C3%ADo%22%20%5Co%20%22Baj%C3%ADo) region and being proclaimed [captain general](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captain_General) of Mexico in [Celaya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celaya) on September 21, Hidalgo y Costilla advanced as far as [Guanajuato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guanajuato%2C_Guanajuato). There on September 28, the rebels captured the [Alhóndiga de Granaditas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alh%C3%B3ndiga_de_Granaditas%22%20%5Co%20%22Alh%C3%B3ndiga%20de%20Granaditas) in battle, killing more than 700 Spaniards who had taken shelter there. Among the dead was the intendent of Guanajuato, [Juan Antonio Riaño](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Juan_Antonio_Ria%C3%B1o&action=edit&redlink=1), an old friend of Hidalgo y Costilla.

The Mexican revolutionary army was excommunicated by the [bishop of Michoacán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Morelia), [Manuel Abad y Queipo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuel_Abad_y_Queipo), another former friend of Hidalgo y Costilla. Hidalgo y Costilla and his army marched on to Valladolid, where the locals feared that the slaughter of Guanajuato would be repeated, prompting many people to abandon the region, particularly the rich and middle class society. However, Valladolid was taken peacefully on October 17, 1810.

In [Tacámbaro](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tac%C3%A1mbaro&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Tacámbaro (page does not exist)) Hidalgo y Costilla was proclaimed general, and Allende captain general. Hidalgo y Costilla ordered a rest for his troops in [Indaparapeo](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Indaparapeo,_Michoac%C3%A1n&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Indaparapeo, Michoacán (page does not exist)), where a few minutes before their departure, Morelos, who had read about his excommunication and his triumphs, found him. Still serving as the parish priest of Cuarácuaro, Hidalgo y Costilla asked Morelos to join the army. Morelos was promoted as colonel of the revolution army, ordering him to raise troops in the south and capture [Acapulco](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acapulco), to disrupt the commerce and trade with the [Philippine Islands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippine_Islands).

**His campaigns**

Morelos soon showed himself to be a talented strategist, and became one of the greatest revolutionary military commanders of the war. In his first nine months, he won 22 victories, annihilating the armies of three Spanish royalist leaders and dominating almost all of what is now the state of [Guerrero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrero). In December, he captured Acapulco for the first time, except for the fortress of San Diego. Spanish reinforcements forced him to raise the siege in January. By quick marches, he was able to capture most of the Spanish possessions on the Pacific coast of what are now Michoacán and Guerrero. On May 24, 1811 he occupied [Chilpancingo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chilpancingo%22%20%5Co%20%22Chilpancingo) and on May 26 he took [Tixtla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tixtla%22%20%5Co%20%22Tixtla).

In his second campaign, Morelos divided his army into three groups. The most important engagement of this campaign was at [Cuautla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuautla%2C_Morelos%22%20%5Co%20%22Cuautla%2C%20Morelos). On Christmas Eve 1811 the townspeople welcomed Morelos to the town. The next year his forces were [besieged by the Spanish army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Cuautla) under General [Félix María Calleja del Rey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9lix_Mar%C3%ADa_Calleja_del_Rey%2C_1st_Count_of_Calder%C3%B3n). On May 2, 1812, after 58 days, Morelos broke through the siege, and started his third campaign.

Major victories on this third campaign were at [Citlala](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Citlala&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Citlala (page does not exist)) on June 8, 1812, [Tehuacán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tehuac%C3%A1n%22%20%5Co%20%22Tehuac%C3%A1n) on August 10, 1812, [Orizaba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orizaba), [Oaxaca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oaxaca%2C_Oaxaca) and Acapulco. Morelos arrived at Orizaba with 10,000 soldiers on October 28, 1812. The city was defended by 600 Spanish soldiers. Negotiation led to surrender without bloodshed. He entered Oaxaca in triumph on November 25, 1812. Acapulco fell on April 12, 1813, forcing the Spanish army to take refuge in Fort Baltimore after.

**The Congress of Chilpancingo**

In 1813, Morelos called the [National Constituent Congress of Chilpancingo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_of_Chilpancingo), composed of representatives of the provinces under his control, to consider a political and social program which he outlined in a document entitled "[Sentimientos de la Nación](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sentimientos_de_la_Naci%C3%B3n%22%20%5Co%20%22Sentimientos%20de%20la%20Naci%C3%B3n)" (Sentiments of the Nation). The Congress called itself the Congress of Anáhuac, referring poetically to the ancient [Aztecs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aztecs).

On September 13, 1813, the Congress, with Morelos present, endorsed the "Sentiments of the Nation". This document declared Mexican independence from Spain, established the Roman Catholic religion and created the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. It declared respect for property and confiscated the productions of the Spanish colonial government. It abolished slavery and racial social distinctions in favor of the title "American" for all native-born individuals. Torture, monopolies and the system of tributes were also abolished. Morelos was offered the title "Generalissimo" with the style of address "Your Highness", but he refused these and asked to be called "Siervo de la Nación" (Servant of the Nation). On November 6, 1813 the Congress declared independence.

After several military defeats, the Congress organized a meeting in [Apatzingán](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apatzing%C3%A1n%22%20%5Co%20%22Apatzing%C3%A1n), and on October 22 promulgated the "Decreto Constitucional para la Libertad de la América Mexicana" ([1814 Constitution of Mexico Constitutional Decree for the Liberty of Mexican America](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=1814_Constitution_of_Mexico_Constitutional_Decree_for_the_Liberty_of_Mexican_America&action=edit&redlink=1)). This established a weak executive and a powerful legislature, the opposite of what Morelos had called for. He nevertheless conceded that it was the best he could hope for under the circumstances.

**Capture and execution**

Shortly thereafter, Morelos began his fourth military campaign, a series of disasters beginning at Valladolid in late 1813. While escorting the new insurgent Congress in November 1815, he was defeated in [Tezmalaca](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tezmalaca&action=edit&redlink=1" \o "Tezmalaca (page does not exist)). He was taken prisoner and brought to Mexico City in chains. He was tried and executed for treason. José María Morelos y Pavón was executed by firing squad on December 22, 1815 in San Cristóbal Ecatepec, north of Mexico City in order that his execution not provoke a dangerous public reaction. He was later judged to be reconciled to the church, lifting his excommunication, as he was seen praying on his way to his execution. After his death, his lieutenant, [Vicente Guerrero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vicente_Guerrero), continued the war of independence.

**Agustin de Iturbide**

**The Criollo rebellion**

From 1810 to 1820, Iturbide had fought against those who sought to overturn the Spanish monarchy and [Bourbon dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Bourbon)'s right to rule New Spain and replace that regime with a republic. In this, he was solidly aligned with the Creole class. However, events in Spain caused problems for this class, as the very monarchy they were fighting for was in serious trouble. The [1812 Cadiz Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_Constitution_of_1812), that was reinstated in Spain in 1820 after the successful [Riego Revolt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rafael_del_Riego%22%20%5Co%20%22Rafael%20del%20Riego), established a [constitutional monarchy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_monarchy), which greatly limited [Ferdinand VII](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferdinand_VII_of_Spain)'s powers. There was serious concern in Mexico that the Bourbons would be forced to abandon Spain altogether. This led to the disintegration of vice regal authority in Mexico City and a political vacuum developed that the Mexican nobility sought to fill, seeking limited representation and autonomy for themselves within the empire. An idea arose among this class that if Mexico became independent or autonomous, and if Ferdinand were deposed, he could become king of Mexico.

**Alliance with Guerrero**

Iturbide was convinced that independence for Mexico was the only way to protect the country from a republican tide. He decided to become the leader of the Criollo independence movement. However, in order to succeed, he would need to put together a very unlikely coalition of Mexican liberal insurgents, landed nobility, and the [Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church). Iturbide held a series of negotiations with Guerrero and made a number of demonstrations of his intentions to form an independent Mexico. Iturbide offered Guerrero a full pardon if he surrendered. Guerrero rejected the pardon but agreed to meet with Iturbide to discuss the independence of Mexico. The two met to discuss a plan for independence drawn up by Iturbide called the "[Plan de Iguala](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plan_de_Iguala)". This meeting is now referred to as the "Embrace of Acatempán", named after the locale where they agreed to implement the plan. Iturbide, Guerrero, and another insurgent leader, [Guadalupe Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guadalupe_Victoria), announced the plan on 24 February 1821.  On 1 March 1821, Iturbide was proclaimed head of the [Army of the Three Guarantees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Army_of_the_Three_Guarantees).

**Plan of Iguala**

The plan was a rather vague document that sought the transition of the center of power in New Spain from [Madrid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madrid) to Mexico City. Essentially, the idea was to bring Ferdinand VII to Mexico City to rule. If he did not come to Mexico, another member of the Bourbon royal family would be chosen to rule there. To attract the disparate parties involved in this scheme, the plan offered three guarantees: Mexico would be independent from Madrid, Roman Catholicism would be the official religion, and all of Spanish blood, whether born in Spain or in the Americas, would be able to live as equals in the new state.

The promise of independence convinced the insurgents to accept the proposal. The promise of the supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church was offered to the clergy, who were frightened by anti-clerical policies of Spanish Liberalism. The offer of equality between Criollos and the Spanish-born [Peninsulares](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peninsulares%22%20%5Co%20%22Peninsulares) assured the latter that they and their property would be safe in the new state. This was important because the Peninsulares owned a significant part of the valuable real estate and many of the businesses in Mexico. If the Spaniards had left, it would have been disastrous for the Mexican economy.

The plan gained wide support because it demanded independence without attacking the landed classes and did not threaten social dissolution. With this, Iturbide succeeded in bringing together old insurgents and royalist forces to fight against the new Spanish government and what was left of the vice regal government. Military leaders, soldiers, families, villages, and towns that had been fighting against one another for almost ten years found themselves joining forces to gain Mexican independence. However, their reasons for joining together were very different, and these differences would later foment the turmoil that occurred after independence.

Both the sitting viceroy and Fernando VII rejected the Plan of Iguala. The [Spanish parliament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cortes_Generales) sent a new "viceroy", [Juan O'Donojú](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Juan_O%27Donoj%C3%BA), to Mexico. (Technically, the office of viceroy had been replaced by a "superior political chief" under the 1812 Spanish Constitution.) Although Iturbide tried hard to convince O’Donojú that independence was inevitable, the new political chief refused to yield.

**Independence**

To show the military might of this alliance, Iturbide coordinated with associated royalist and insurgent commanders in the provinces, opting for a replay of the strategy of closing in on Mexico City from the periphery which Morelos had unsuccessfully attempted in 1811–14. However, Iturbide had the advantage of having most of the former royalist army on his side. Iturbide marched into Mexico City on 27 September 1821, his own birthday, with the Army of the Three Guarantees. The army was received by a jubilant populace who had erected arches of triumph and decorated houses and themselves with the tri-color (red, white, and green) of this army. The following day, Mexico was [declared an independent empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Declaration_of_Independence_of_the_Mexican_Empire).

What remained of the royalist army retreated, and while Juan de O’Donoju was cornered in the fortress of [San Juan de Ulúa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Juan_de_Ul%C3%BAa), he hastily negotiated a treaty with Iturbide, called the [Treaty of Córdoba](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_C%C3%B3rdoba). Similar to the Plan de Iguala, this document guaranteed autonomy for New Spain within the Spanish Empire under the Bourbon dynasty. This successor state would invite Ferdinand VII to rule as emperor or, in default, his brother [Don Carlos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infante_Carlos%2C_Count_of_Molina). If both refused, a suitable monarch would be searched for among the various European royal houses. In the meantime, a [regency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regent) would replace the viceroy. All existing laws, including the 1812 Constitution, would remain in force until a new constitution for Mexico was written.

Iturbide named himself President of the Provisional Governing Junta, which selected the five-person regency that would temporarily govern the newly independent Mexico. The junta had thirty six members who would have legislative power until the convocation of a congress. Iturbide controlled both the membership of this junta and the matters that it considered. This junta would be responsible for negotiating the offer of the throne of Mexico to a suitable royal. Members of the republican insurgent movement were left out of this government.