Revolutions in Latin America

By Gordon Hurst
European Empires in the 1660s
How the revolutions developed

**Renaissance Spirit**

- Scientific Revolution
  - Intellectual Revolution
    - Enlightened Despotism
  - Agricultural Revolution
    - Industrial Revolution
  - Political Revolutions
    - American
    - French
    - Latin American
Causes of Latin American Revolutions

1. The Ideas of the Enlightenment including the writings of John Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine.

2. Haitian Creole discontent from being left out of government jobs and trade concessions.

3. The Inspirations of the American and French Revolutions.

4. The Preoccupation of Spain & Portugal who were fighting in the Napoleonic Wars.
Enlightenment Ideas


2. Give people rights: Life, Liberty, Property!

3. The creation of new societies based on the premise of logic and reasoning

4. People challenged the theory of “Divine Right” and “Absolute Monarchy”
Enlightenment Thinkers planted the seeds for revolution
Inspiration for revolution came from the American & French Revolutions

Declaration of Independence, 1776

Declaration of the Rights of Man & of the Citizen, 1789
Napoleon’s conquests allowed the Latin American countries to seize their opportunities.
Spain and Portugal were preoccupied in fighting the Napoleonic Wars.
Areas where the Revolutions took place
Haiti was the first to rebel

The Creole class were unhappy with the treatment they received from the French. The economy of the island revolved around slavery and the production of sugar cane. France became very rich but Haiti remained poor. The people resented being occupied by the French.
Toussaint L’Overture leads the Revolution in Haiti (1804)
Simón Bolívar: The Liberator of South America

He was the *Creole* leader of the revolutions in Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Panama and Bolivia. His ideas came from living in Europe and the newly independent United States. He was *The George Washington of South America* or “El Libertador”. His goal was to create *Gran Colombia*, a nation formed from the liberated Spanish colonies.
Bolivar’s Accomplishments

Grand Colombia
1819-1830

Panama
Caracas
Trinidad
Bogota
Venezuela
Guyana
Brazil
Tabatinga
Quito
Ecuador
Viceroyalty of Peru
Curaçao

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The “Muscle” of the Revolution

José San Martín liberated Argentina (1812), Peru (1814), and Chile (1817).

He was helped by his friend Bernardo O’Higgins. Both men met while studying in Europe.

San Martín and Bolivar worked together to form stable governments within the region.

José de St. Martín and Bernard O’Higgins cross the Andes Mountains.
Simón Bolívar Meets José de San Martín
Areas that came under the control of Bolívar & San Martín
After uniting Venezuela, Columbia, & Ecuador into Gran Columbia, he left to help free the rest of Latin America. He died a year later, with his goal of uniting all of South America unfulfilled. Today most towns and villages in South America still honor Bolivar with a statue.
The Mexican Revolution

On September 16, 1810 in the tiny village of Dolores, a criollo priest, Father Miguel Hidalgo began the Mexican revolution. Aided by an army of Mestizos and Native Americans he revolted against the Spanish. Within a year, Hidalgo was captured and executed. Finally, in 1821, Agustín de Iturbide toppled Spanish rule and liberated Mexico as well as Central America, then part of Mexico.
Brazil liberated from Portuguese Rule

The Portuguese royal family escaped Napoleon by fleeing to Brazil.

Pedro I set up a new, independent kingdom in 1821 when his father returned to Portugal.

Pedro II assumed full power after Pedro I abdicated his throne.

It was less violent than the other revolutions
Results of the Latin American Revolutions
Failures of the Latin American Revolutions
There was No Unity!

Bolivar’s dream for a united South America had failed. Many Newly independent countries Struggled with civil wars. By the 1830s, geographic factors (mountains, the Amazon, etc.) plus cultural differences defeated attempts at unification. Independence brought more poverty to these regions. There was no trade. Cities, towns and villages were destroyed by the fighting.
Many Countries came under the control of the Caudillos

WHO WERE THEY?
They were dictators who ruled by military authoritarianism. Most were wealthy *Creole* aristocrats.

They posed as reformers with goals to improve the economy and better the lives of the common people. BUT...they overthrew governments and took away basic human rights.

Some attempted to make improvements, but most just Cared about themselves, their families and friends [*nepotism*]. Power changes usually occurred at bayonet point [*coup d'etats!*]
Additional Problems

Feuds developed between the various leaders of the Latin American countries. The hierarchy and social structures from the past were brought back. Little was gained for the people. Conservatives favored the old social order and refused to make major changes. Liberals wanted land reform but were outnumbered in the local governments. Dependence on foreign nations for capital and for economic investments but many countries refused to invest as many nations were unstable and a bad risk.