

PART II.  
PHILOSOPHY OF THE MEXICAN  
REVOLUTIONS.

## II. PHILOSOPHY OF THE MEXICAN REVOLUTIONS.

It is always difficult for the outside world to understand fully, and to form a correct opinion in regard to the real condition of things existing in a country, especially so when that country is in an abnormal state, that is, when it is passing through a period of serious disturbances. This is particularly difficult in the case of Mexico, whose peculiar conditions make it so different from all other countries, that even educated Mexicans cannot always clearly understand the real situation of affairs in their country, unless they have made a special study of such matters. In this way I account for the general impression prevailing in the outside world that because Mexico has been disturbed by a long series of civil wars, which lasted for over half a century, we were constitutionally disposed to fight, and did so without any plausible cause or reason; but such a view is a very mistaken one, and the following remarks will, I hope, explain the philosophy of our civil wars.

In the first edition of this paper I passed very briefly on the war of independence in Mexico, because I intended to write an article as short as possible without sacrificing the end in view; but, having been obliged to enter into some details of the war of independence of the South American Republics, I thought I could not afford to say less about the same war in Mexico. In the paper entitled "Genesis of Mexican Independence" I dealt at length on the war of independence in Mexico, and to avoid repetitions I will omit here the incidents and views there expressed.

To treat this subject methodically, I will divide this paper into three parts: the first embracing the war of independence, from 1810 to 1821, the second the revolutionary period from 1821 to 1855, and the third the war of reform and French intervention from 1856 to the present time.

### WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

During the Spanish rule in Mexico, which lasted exactly three centuries, from 1521 to 1821, there were three controlling privileged

classes, the people counting for absolutely nothing. The first was the clergy, who, by obtaining bequests from persons who were about to die, and in various other ways had accumulated very large fortunes, owning directly or through mortgages over two thirds of the whole real estate of the country, and so absorbed the principal financial business. Their power was based not only upon their immense wealth, but also upon the religious influence which they exercised, and on the fact of their being the only educated class, for although they knew but little, they knew a great deal more than the other classes did, who were kept in ignorance. Their thorough discipline assisted the clergy very materially in wielding great influence. They were so powerful during the Spanish rule that a Viceroy once attempted to enforce his authority over a recalcitrant archbishop of the City of Mexico by arresting him and sending him to Spain. The Viceroy succeeded in making the arrest, but when it became known that the archbishop was on his way to Veracruz, so violent was the excitement of the people that he was speedily brought back to the City of Mexico, and the Viceroy was obliged to leave the country.

The Spanish Colonial Government of Mexico was an autocratic one, the civil and ecclesiastical administrations being as closely united as it was possible for them to be. Among the long list of Spanish Viceroys who ruled Mexico during the three hundred years of the colonial period, ten out of sixty-two, or over seventeen per cent.,<sup>1</sup> were archbishops of Mexico, the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries in the colony; and the archbishop was, in fact, the ex-officio Viceroy, as whenever a Viceroy died, or was removed and left the country before his successor arrived, generally the archbishop took his place.

The second privileged class were the Spaniards by birth, who formed a kind of aristocracy, a few of them having titles; and being the only one holding offices of trust, responsibility, or emolument in the country, and monopolizing the principal commercial business, they were also a wealthy class. They were so jealous of the native Mexicans that even the children of Spaniards born in Mexico of a Mexican mother were not considered on the same footing as the Spaniards; they were called creoles, had no rights whatever, and could not fill any public office or hold any position of importance. But few Spanish women ever went to Mexico. The men generally went there while very young, grew up in the country, and married Mexican women, occasionally pure-blooded Indians, but generally the daughters of Spaniards by Mexican mothers born in Mexico. From these unions came the creoles.

The third class was the army, which was comparatively small, but

<sup>1</sup>A nominal list of Viceroys in Mexico during the colonial period, stating the time that they remained in office, will be found at the end of this paper.

was a very important element in the country. Native Mexicans usually held very subordinate positions, only in a few cases being admitted among the commissioned officers.

These three classes were, of course, devotedly attached to the Spanish rule, because under it they prospered and had all the wealth and power they could possibly desire, while any change would only endanger their position and welfare. The higher clergy were, of course, heartily loyal to Spain, while a few members of the lower clergy, Mexicans by birth—the Church being almost the only career open to the natives—having on the other hand some patriotic feeling, were the only ones who could appreciate the condition of things, and longed for a change.

However much may be said against the Spanish colonial rule in Mexico, it must be borne in mind that it was only a necessary consequence of the ideas and conditions of things prevailing at that time, and although it was selfish and greedy, the Spaniards did nothing more than it was thought proper at the time to do; and it cannot be denied that the Madrid Government had a kindly feeling towards the natives, which was, however, not always shared by the authorities, and that, notwithstanding all the sufferings and degradation to which they were subjected they were not exterminated, as was the unhappy fate of those living in the northern part of the New World, settled by the Anglo-Saxon race.

Spain gave Mexico all she had—her religion, her language, her laws, her civilization, her genius; and not for the exclusive benefit of her subjects of Spanish descent; the conquered race also shared these advantages, and produced many men of note as lawyers, priests, mathematicians, astronomers, literary men and artists. The centralization of power and the common language began the work of assimilation, which although far from being wholly accomplished, yet had its beginning during the time of the Spanish conquest.

*Opposition of Privileged Classes to Independence.*—The opposition of the clergy to independence from Spain, and the alarm with which they viewed the movement in that direction were so great that its leaders were excommunicated by all the bishops of the country the moment the insurrection broke out. The Inquisition commenced proceedings against them, and several members of the higher clergy took up arms against the cause of independence. The Bishop of Oaxaca, forgetting the teachings of the founder of his religion, organized his clergy into a regiment to fight against the insurgents; but the martial prelate had no occasion to come into conflict with them, for he fled from the city, when Morelos approached it in 1812.

Something similar happened in Colombia, where the Bishop of Popayan, Jimenez de Padilla, incited the natives in favor of the

Spaniards by his preaching and fought the patriots with his sword, until the royalists capitulated to Bolívar, on June 8, 1822, after eleven years of hard fighting, for which it has been called the Colombian Vendée, comparing it with the resistance that the French Revolutionists met in that province.

The higher Catholic clergy in Peru took the same attitude. In Argentina a capitulation was signed, on February 20, 1813, by General Belgrano, commanding the Argentine troops, with General Tristan, commander of the Spanish army, by which the latter bound himself under oath not to take up arms during the war against the Argentine Government within the limits of the Viceroyalty of La Plata, and the Archbishop of Charcas in Argentina, and the Bishop of La Paz in Upper Peru, released the Spanish officer from his oath, under the plea that God did not consider binding treaties made with insurgents.

The example of the United States, and even that of Spain—where the people rebelled against the Government established by Napoleon in 1808, under his brother, Joseph Bonaparte, notwithstanding that it had the sanction of King Ferdinand VII., who had abdicated in favor of the French Emperor—could not but affect the Spanish colonies in America, and most of them proclaimed their independence in 1810.

In the preceding paper on "The Genesis of Mexican Independence," I dwelt upon the causes of the same, and upon the remarkable coincidence that it was proclaimed almost simultaneously in all the American colonies of Spain, and I therefore do not say here any more upon the subject.

*Proclamation of Independence.*—Independence was proclaimed in Mexico on September 16, 1810, in Dolores, an Indian village in the State of Guanajuato, by Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the aged curate of the town, with the co-operation of Allende, Aldama, and Abasolo, three inferior officers of the Mexican militia, born in Mexico. His undertaking had from the beginning all the leading classes of Mexico arrayed against it. He collected a very large number of Indians and peasants, and two or three regiments of the militia followed his lead. To enlist public sympathy on his side, he had put his cause under the protection of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who was supposed to have miraculously appeared two hundred years before to an humble Indian, as the patroness of his race, near the City of Mexico, and who was greatly revered throughout the country. His men were disorganized, without arms or ammunition, and undisciplined, and although he captured the important towns of Celaya, Guanajuato, Valladolid, and Toluca, and under good military leadership might have accomplished a great deal more, availing himself of the popular enthusiasm for independence and of the surprise and discomfiture of the Spaniards, he did not know how to make use of those advantages.

While Hidalgo was a great enthusiast, he had no military talents and no disciplined army. His assistants, Allende, Aldama, and Abasolo, who were only captains in the Spanish militia, proposed to him a plan of operations, which, if adopted, might have been successful, but he refused to accept it, and followed his own ideas which culminated in his complete defeat.

He marched against the City of Mexico, and fought a battle on October 30, 1810, at Monte de las Cruces, within sight of the capital, and, although he was successful, he did not enter the city, but remained inactive for some days, thus giving the Viceroy time to concentrate his troops, and when those coming from San Luis Potosi were approaching under General Calleja, Hidalgo retreated to Queretaro, having been attacked and defeated at Aculco on November 7th. Hidalgo retreated to Valladolid, and from there to Guadalajara, where he arrived on November 26th, and established there a regular government. Calleja followed him, and Hidalgo came out to fight Calleja and met him at Puente de Calderon, and on January 17, 1811, a battle took place in which Hidalgo was completely defeated. His military lieutenant advised Hidalgo not to offer a pitched battle to the enemy, as his forces could not compete with the Spanish veterans, but he did not follow that advice and this was the cause of his defeat, as the organization and discipline of the Spanish army at last prevailed against his large but disorganized masses. Hidalgo finally was captured in Acatita de Bajan, on May 21, 1811, and after having been degraded by the Inquisition and the higher clergy, he was shot at the City of Chihuahua on the 31st of the following July.

While Hidalgo was in Guadalajara, in December, 1810, he sent to the United States as his official representative Señor Don Pascasio Ortiz de Latona, as stated in the paper entitled "Genesis of Mexican Independence."

*Morelos's Leadership.*—Hidalgo was succeeded by another priest, a full-blooded Indian, José Maria Morelos, who had in him the elements of a great warrior.

Morelos, like Hidalgo, was a parish priest in the State of Michoacan, whose capital, Valladolid, is now called Morelia in his honor. He received his commission from Hidalgo when he passed through that State, and Morelos marched with a few men to capture the port of Acapulco, failing in that attempt, because that port was well fortified, but he attacked and defeated the Spanish in several encounters, capturing the towns of Chilpancingo, Tixtla, Chilapa, in the present State of Guerrero, Chiautla and Izucar in the State of Puebla, and Taxco in the State of Mexico. In the City of Cuautla, in the present State of Morelos, he resisted with 3000 men the 12,000 that the Viceroy had sent against him, from February 19th to May 2, 1812, fighting almost

every day, and making that siege one of the most famous in the history of Mexico. He finally broke the lines of the enemy, and retreated with the remainder of his army.<sup>1</sup>

Morelos captured the city of Orizaba on October 26, 1812, and defeated the Spanish army which was besieging the town of Huajuapán in the State of Oaxaca, and also the city of Tehuacán in the State of Puebla, and from there he marched against the city of Oaxaca, which he captured on November 25, 1812. From Oaxaca he marched to Acapulco, which city he captured on April 12, 1813, after which he laid siege to the strong castle of San Diego, capturing it on August 20th of the same year.

Morelos organized a regular government, and convened a Congress, which met at Chilpancingo, on September 14, 1812, the first Congress we ever had, which declared independence on the 6th of November following. The Congress had to change the place of its meetings according to the fortunes of war, and on October 22, 1814, they issued a provisional constitution and established an executive government of three members, electing for that purpose Morelos, Liceaga, and Cos.

Morelos's fortunes began to wane at the end of 1813. On December 24th of that year he attacked the city of Valladolid and was repulsed with very heavy losses; in the following year his lieutenants suffered several defeats, Matamoros was defeated and captured at Puruarán, on February 3, 1814, and Galeana was defeated and killed at Coyuca on May 1st of the same year, and Don Miguel Bravo was also captured and shot at Puebla. Congress decided to continue its sessions at Tehuacán, and Morelos marched to that place escorting its members, but was overtaken by the Spanish troops, and to save the *personnel* of Congress he offered battle under disadvantageous circumstances at Texmalaca, on November 5, 1815, where he was defeated, captured, and taken to the City of Mexico, and, after being degraded by the Inquisition and higher clergy, he was shot at the Indian town of Ecatepec, near the City of Mexico, on December 22d of that year.

*Slavery in Mexico.*—The views about slavery of the Mexican revolution and its leaders will be shown by stating that Hidalgo issued, on December 6, 1810, not three months after he had proclaimed independence from Spain, a decree abolishing slavery in Mexico, and that our first Congress, which met in Chilpancingo in 1813, adopted at Apatzingán, on October 22, 1814, a constitution and promulgated a decree abolishing slavery. That decree, of course, could only be enforced in the few places which were occupied by the insurgents; but when inde-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Walter S. Logan spoke on the subject in an address before the *New York Historical Society*, delivered April 4, 1893, entitled "*Cuautla*," which I consider well worth reading.

pendence was achieved, one of the first acts of the first Mexican Congress, convened at the City of Mexico to adopt a Constitution, was to issue a decree, on July 13, 1824, which abolished slavery, and it was then actually abolished in the whole country. The fact that our present Constitution of 1857 repeats the prohibition of holding slaves in Mexico, a prohibition which has appeared in all of our Constitutions, has caused the common opinion prevailing in this country, that we only abolished slavery in 1857, a mistake which I have often had occasion to rectify.<sup>1</sup> In fact, every Mexican is born a strong anti-slavery man, so much so that we could not understand why the United States should have accepted slavery, and should have tried to sustain and extend it even at the cost of a tremendous civil war which imperilled the very existence of this country, and the great influence that it has to exercise upon the destinies of mankind, more especially when the very Declaration of American Independence proclaims the principle that all men are born free and equal, and when slavery is a contradiction of that great principle. But, fortunately, slavery has been abolished here, as it was in Mexico over seventy years ago, and the stain, which for a time tarnished the fair name of this country, has thus been completely effaced.

*Bravo's Magnanimity.*—In speaking of General Bravo, it will not be amiss to mention an incident which shows the magnanimity of the Mexican character and the temper of the men who were engaged in our war of independence. General Bravo had been detached by Morelos to the Province of Veracruz, and he attacked at San Agustín del Palmar, in December, 1812, a regiment of Spanish soldiers which had just landed from Spain and was escorting a military train to the City of Mexico, and defeated them, capturing three hundred men. Under the rules of war prevailing there at the time, all prisoners of war were shot without any mercy or discrimination. The Spaniards began that barbarous system, and the Mexicans thought they ought to retaliate. Bravo did not shoot these men at once, and on the evening of the day on which he captured them, he received the information from Morelos that his father, who had taken a prominent part in the war of independence, had been captured by the Spaniards and shot at the city of Mexico, accompanied by positive orders from Morelos to shoot all his Spanish prisoners. Bravo was a generous man, and while feeling deeply the blow he had received in his father's death, he yet hesitated as to

<sup>1</sup> Senator Money, misunderstood the position of Mexico on the slavery question when he said in his article: "Great Britain, lashed by the eloquence of Wilberforce, paid for and manumitted her slaves in 1838. France followed a slow second in 1848, and Mexico did not emancipate her own, of which she had very few, until several years after the events here considered." As appears from this paper, slavery was abolished in Mexico since 1810, and its abolition was carried into effect in 1824.

what he should do, and, after a sleepless night, he decided not only to pardon his prisoners, but to set them at liberty unconditionally. Such an act of generosity can only be fully appreciated when we consider the temper of the times, and the excitement under which both parties labored during that terrible struggle. It may be added that most of the prisoners, deeply touched by this act of magnanimity, joined Bravo's forces.

*Mina's Expedition.*—On April 15, 1817, General Francisco Xavier Mina, a Spanish soldier who had fought gallantly in Spain against the French, of broad-minded and liberal views, and a lover of liberty, went to Mexico to fight for her independence, as Lafayette had done several years before in the United States, landing in Soto de la Marina with five hundred men, and leaving a small detachment to guard the place, marched to the interior, defeating the Spanish army that opposed him. The Viceroy had to organize a large army under General Liñan to fight Mina, who advanced as far into the interior as the city of Leon, and, after several encounters in which he showed great military talent, he was defeated and made a prisoner at Venadito on October 27, 1817, and shot on the 11th of November of the same year.

After the capture of General Mina the revolutionary war in Mexico was almost ended, and in 1818 only small bands of disorganized men remained in the field, Vicente Guerrero in the south, and Guadalupe Victoria in the east, being almost the only leaders who had a regular force under their command. Guerrero was a muleteer, who joined the cause of independence from the beginning, fought under Morelos, and finally established his base of operations in the southern part of Mexico, which, favored by topographical conditions and climate, being very mountainous and in some places unhealthy, did not allow the Spanish regular troops to make much headway. He held his own until 1821 when the cause of independence finally succeeded.

*Independence Achieved.*—Such was the condition of things when, in 1820, the Spaniards at Madrid restored the Liberal Constitution adopted by the Cortes in 1812, when King Ferdinand VII. had fled from Spain and the country was in possession of the French, and that fact greatly alarmed the conservative Spanish element in Mexico, who, fearing that liberal principles might find a foothold in the mother-country and extend thence to Mexico, thought the best course they could pursue would be to proclaim independence from Spain, and establish a Catholic monarchy under a Spanish king, so that they would not be subject to the obnoxious changes which liberal ideas, that had begun to permeate Spain, might bring about. They addressed themselves, therefore, to Iturbide, who, although a native Mexican, had been one of the most successful leaders of the Spanish army against the insurrection, was a good soldier and an ambitious man. Iturbide fell in with

their views, and, when appointed by the Viceroy to command the army sent to subdue the southern revolutionary leaders, he took all the available forces and money which the Viceroy could spare and joined Guerrero and the other revolutionary leaders, proclaiming on February 24, 1821, a political platform called "Plan de Iguala," which was a compromise between the revolution and its opponents, as it accomplished independence, but under a thoroughly Catholic monarchy, with a Spanish prince on the throne, and forbidding the exercise of any other religion. All the other commanding officers of the Spanish army in other sections of the country soon accepted this platform, and, as a consequence, independence was accomplished almost without a blow.

An incoming Viceroy, Don Juan O'Donojú, accepted the Plan of Iguala, and signed at Cordova, on August 24th of the same year, a treaty with Iturbide by which he recognized in behalf of the Spanish Government the independence of Mexico on condition that an empire be established in Mexico, calling to the throne a member of the Spanish family in compliance with the Plan of Iguala.<sup>1</sup>

It is a remarkable coincidence that only a little over three months before the treaty of Cordova, General San Martin agreed with the Spanish Viceroy, La Serna, on some terms of settlement, almost identical to the basis of that treaty. The Liberal Cabinet, organized in Spain in 1820 after the restoration of the Constitution of 1812, had sent special Commissioners to the revolted colonies to offer them autonomy, on condition that they take the oath of allegiance to the King. Don Manuel Abreu was the Spanish Commissioner sent to Peru, and under his authority the Spanish Viceroy, La Serna, met General San Martin at Punchauca, north of Lima, on May 3, 1821. San Martin offered to accept peace under the following conditions: 1. Spain to recognize the independence of Peru; 2. to appoint a regency of three members, one by San Martin, another by the Spanish Viceroy, La Serna, and the third elected by the people; and, 3. to send to Madrid two commissioners to ask the Spanish royal family to send one of its members as King of Peru. These conditions were approved by General La Serna, subject to the approval of the civil councils of Peru, but his army having disapproved of them, they were not carried out.

<sup>1</sup> It was reported that King Ferdinand VII. had written a confidential letter in 1820 to Viceroy Apodaca, the ruler of Mexico at that time, informing him that he considered himself held in captivity by the Spanish Liberals, and that fearing to share the fate of Louis XVI. of France, he had decided to go to Mexico to use there freely his royal authority, and therefore requested him to keep New Spain free from the constitutional movement, so that he could go there as absolute King. Although some have considered this letter as apocryphal, Alaman published the text of it in his *History of Mexico*, Volume V., pages 61, 62, and perhaps this explains why, in the Plan of Iguala and the treaty of Cordova, Ferdinand VII. was offered the throne of Mexico.