

Plan of Iguala

Agustín de Iturbide

After more than ten years of sporadic violence, when the fighters for independence had been reduced to little more than guerrilla bands, Mexican independence was quickly and unexpectedly consummated when a royalist general, Agustín de Iturbide, reached an understanding with rebel leaders and issued a vague declaration of independence in the town of Iguala (in what is now the southern state of Guerrero). Former royalists and rebels joined forces and rallied around this plan of the "Three Guarantees," which celebrated the broadest points of agreement among the contending factions: independence, the union and equality of creoles (American-born whites) and Spaniards, and Roman Catholicism. Iturbide, whose reputation as a military leader was for brutality rather than prescience, failed to anticipate the many challenges and difficulties that came with Mexico's new political autonomy. His relations with the Constituent Congress created by the plan were troubled from the outset. They reached a breaking point when Iturbide, trumpeting the fact that neither Ferdinand VII nor any other European prince showed any interest in becoming Emperor of Mexico, had himself crowned Emperor Agustín I. Resistance to this presumptuous move culminated in a rebellion headed by another former royalist officer, Antonio López de Santa Anna, the young commander of the Veracruz garrison—a rebellion that ousted Iturbide in March 1823. Thus began a long period of penury and chronic political turbulence that quickly shattered the exuberant optimism apparent in the Plan of Iguala.

24 February 1821

Americans:

When I speak of Americans, I speak not only of those persons born in America, but of the Europeans, Africans, and Asians who reside here. May they all have the good grace to hear me!

The largest Nations of the Earth have been dominated by other Nations, and so long as they were not permitted to form their own opinions, they were not free. The European countries, although they achieved great heights in

education and politics, were once slaves to the Roman Empire. That Empire, the most renowned in history, was like a father who, in his dotage, watched as his children and grandchildren left home, for they were of an age to start homes of their own and to fend for themselves, though they maintained all the respect, veneration and love due their father.

For three hundred years, North America was under the tutelage of Spain, the Most Catholic and pious, heroic and magnanimous of Nations. Spain educated and aggrandized it, forming its opulent cities, its beautiful villages, its remote provinces and kingdoms, increasing its population and splendors, knowing every aspect of the natural opulence of its soil, its rich minerals, the advantages of its geographical situation. We have seen the damage caused by our great distance from the center of the Empire, and we know that the branch is now the equal of the trunk: public and general opinion declare that we should be absolutely independent from Spain and from all other Nations. Europeans and Americans from all regions likewise believe this to be so.

That same voice which sounded in the village of Dolores in 1810, and which caused the people so much hardship due to the disorder, abandonment, and a multitude of vices, also convinced the people that a general union between Europeans, Americans, and Indians, is the only solid basis upon which our common happiness can rest. After the horrible experience of so many disasters, is there anyone who is now unwilling to support that union through which so much good can be achieved? European Spaniards: your fatherland is America, because you live here; here you shall have commerce and possessions! Americans: Who among you can say that you are not descended from Spaniards? We are held together by a dulcet chain formed by links of friendship, common interests, education and language, and a unity of sentiments. You shall see that these are close and powerful links, and that the happiness of the Kingdom depends on everyone uniting in a single opinion and speaking with a single voice.

The time has come to manifest the uniformity of your sentiments, so that our union can be the powerful hand that emancipates America without the need of foreign help. At the head of a valiant and resolved army, I have proclaimed the Independence of North America! It is now free, it is now its own Master, it no longer recognizes or depends upon Spain or any other Nation. All shall greet it as an Independent Nation, and, with gallant hearts, we shall raise our voices, together with those of the troops that have resolved to die before abandoning this heroic enterprise. The Army is not animated by any desire other than to keep pure the Holy Religion we profess, and to preserve the general happiness. Listen, here is the firm basis upon which we found our resolution:

ART. 1. The Roman, Catholic, Apostolic Religion, without tolerance of any other.

ART. 2. The absolute Independence of this Kingdom.

ART. 3. Monarchical Government, limited by a Constitution suitable for the country.

ART. 4. Ferdinand VII or someone of his dynasty, or some other prince, shall become Emperor. We shall have an established monarchy so as to prevent acts of ambition.

ART. 5. There shall be an interim committee [*junta*] which shall convoke a Congress [Cortes] to enact this Plan.

ART. 6. This committee shall name a Governing body, and it will be composed of the representatives already proposed to the Viceroy.

ART. 7. It shall govern in accordance with the oath already made to the King, until the King shall come to Mexico, whereupon all previous orders shall be suspended.

ART. 8. If Ferdinand VII decides not to come to Mexico, the Committee of the Regency shall govern in the name of the Nation until the matter of who shall be crowned king is resolved.

ART. 9. This Government shall be sustained by the Army of the Three Guarantees.

ART. 10. The Congress shall decide if the Committee should continue or be replaced by a Regency until the arrival of the Emperor.

ART. 11. As soon as it is completed, the Constitution of the Mexican Empire shall enter into effect.

ART. 12. All of the inhabitants of that Empire, with no considerations except those of merit and virtue, are citizens qualified to accept any employment.

ART. 13. All persons and properties shall be respected and protected.

ART. 14. The Regular and Secular Clergy shall retain all of their properties and privileges.

ART. 15. All Government officers and public employees shall remain in office, and shall be removed only if they oppose this plan. Those opposed to the plan shall be replaced by those who distinguish themselves by their adherence to the plan, as well as by their virtue and merit.

ART. 16. A protecting Army shall be formed, which shall be called the Army of the Three Guarantees. Any of its members, from the highest to the lowest ranks, shall be executed if they violate any one of the Three Guarantees.

ART. 17. This Army shall observe their Orders to the letter, and its Chiefs and Officers shall continue on the same footing as before.

ART. 18. The troops that compose the Army shall be considered as troops of the line, as shall all who come to embrace this Plan: all other citizens shall

be considered a National Militia, and the rules for this and the form it shall take shall be decided by Congress.

ART. 19. Military ranks shall be determined by reports from the respective Chiefs, and shall be granted provisionally in the name of the Nation.

ART. 20. The interim Congress shall meet and proceed against crimes in complete accordance with the Spanish Constitution.

ART. 21. Those who conspire against Independence shall be consigned to prison; no further measures shall be taken against them until Congress dictates the punishment corresponding to the most serious crimes, including treason against His Divine Majesty.

ART. 22. Those who try to spread division and who are reputed to be conspirators against Independence shall be subject to close vigilance.

ART. 23. Inasmuch as the Congress which has been formed is a constituent Congress, Deputies must be elected with this understanding. The Committee will decide on the rules and the time necessary for the task [of writing a Constitution].

Americans:

Herewith, the establishment and the creation of a new Empire. Herewith, the oath of the army of the Three Guarantees, whose voice is that of he who has the honor of leading it. Herewith, the object for which I ask your cooperation. I ask of you no more than what you yourselves have wished and longed for: union, fraternity, order, interior calm, vigilance, and horror toward any turbulent movement. These warriors want nothing more than the common happiness. Join us to bravely advance an enterprise that in all aspects (excepting, perhaps, the small role I have played in it) must be called heroic. Having no enemies to combat, we trust in the God of the Armies, who is also the God of Peace, that those who make up this armed force, which brings together Europeans and Americans, dissidents and royalists, will be mere protectors, simple spectators to the great task that I have outlined today, which the fathers of the Nation shall retouch and perfect.

May the great Nations of Europe marvel at seeing how North America frees itself without shedding a single drop of blood. In your joyful celebrations, say: Long live the Holy Religion we profess! Long live Independent North America, among all the Nations of the Earth! Long live the union that brings our happiness!

Agustín de Iturbide