An Examination of Certain Factors which Contributed to the Separation of Central America From Spain: 1808-1821

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AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE SEPARATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA FROM SPAIN: 1808-1821

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts Department of History

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AN EXAMINATION OF CERTAIN FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE SEPARATION OF CENTRAL AMERICA FROM SPAIN: 1808-1821

John R. Permesang, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1980

The separation of Central America from Spain in 1821 was, unlike other similar occurrences, a peaceful event. This thesis, after presenting an historical overview, narrates certain happenings in the area during the thirteen years prior to the gaining of political independence. Commencing with the Napoleonic invasion of Spain in 1808, this thesis places special emphasis on political changes in the Spanish Empire which were brought about through the adoption of a liberal Spanish constitution in 1812. In Central America the new measures were opposed by a recently appointed Captain-General who effectively frustrated any creole ambitions towards having an enlightened government. Eventually, however, the re-promulgation of the 1812 Constitution and the presence of a more pliable Captain-General did rekindle hopes for a better and more responsive government. Nevertheless, independence was declared once the deteriorating Mexican situation made such an act inevitable.
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John R. Permesang
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In spite of geographical and historical explanations, the student of Latin American history must often grapple with the question of the lack of internal and external unity among the republics of Central and South America. Why these countries have chosen to forge ahead as small, relatively powerless entities while at the same time ignoring the advantages of unity is an intriguing question which the scholar should often ponder. For indeed, if undertaken in the correct frame of mind, it can prove enlightening and helpful in understanding the people in question.

There are of course, a variety of answers as to why groups of people find it difficult to join harmoniously with their brothers. Quite often racial, ethnic, or tribal problems exist as do numerous cultural anomalies. While admittedly difficult, it is only through an extensive analysis that such difficult barriers can be eliminated. Such an analysis is imperative though, for if a tranquil existence is a principal objective of a society, it can only be achieved through an understanding of its past. For only by recognizing the actions of its forefathers, can a society better anticipate future problems and more properly guide its own destiny.

Oftentimes it is helpful to assess local causes of disunity in the hope that they may prove applicable of other areas of stress as well. The following study will attempt to do this by using as an
example that area once known as the Captaincy-General of Guatemala. This same territory is now made up of the modern republics of Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and a small part of Mexico.

The present study does not propose to be all-encompassing. Primarily, this is because many of the archives in Central America have suffered greatly from wars and natural disasters. At the same time, there is a natural tendency among scholars to pay greater attention to regions with larger populations and land mass thus relegating the former Captaincy-General to a field only slightly researched. Noticeably absent are works dealing with daily life, the role of the lower classes, and the structure and responsibilities of various governmental agencies. One might also note the lack of comprehensive studies on specific events or eras. Questions, for example, still remain on el terror bustamantino, or Bustamante's reign of terror, and the political developments from 1320 up to independence. Thus, the field of Central American history today remains in a state of imbalance.

Although this study concentrates on the thirteen years after the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, it begins by offering an overview of colonial development which includes sections on religious and economic development. Discussions on the educational system, the press, and certain commercial institutions are also offered because of their critical appearance just prior to the 1808 invasion.

By 1321, the tranquil colony of Guatemala had deteriorated into a bubbling cauldron of confusion and petty factionalism. On
every scale, major and minor, it appeared that whatever political integrity that was left would soon decay into a morass of localisms. The present study addresses itself to examining certain important factors extant during those particular years which are considered precursors to independence.

Especially important was the convocation of the Spanish Cortes, or parliament, in 1810 and the subsequent promulgation of a liberal constitution two years later. This event caused a number of repercussions in Central America of both a positive and a negative nature. For example, local and national elections were held for the first time, and, with the hope of popular involvement, provincial congresses were authorized as was freedom of the press, albeit on a still restricted scale. Unfortunately, a newly-appointed Captain-General viewed the new reforms as an anathema. When a rash of disturbances erupted, his iron-fisted measures only served to alienate many levels of society while at the same time making the idea of independence more acceptable to critical personalities in the colony.

Nevertheless, his harsh tactics were effective in maintaining a kind of grudging peace from the time of Fernando VII's return in 1814 to his forced acceptance of the 1812 Constitution in 1820. With the 1820 re-promulgation new developments surfaced in Central America of which observers especially noted the growth of the dual political parties supported by sympathetic newspapers.

As had happened earlier, Central America's future was again modified by outside forces. This time however, the impetus to change came not from Europe but from the north in Mexico. Just months after
the declaration of Iturbide's Plan of Iguala, and the timely arrival of a Mexican army, the Guatemalan province of Chiapas seceded from the Captaincy-General and annexed itself to Mexico. The secession was provocation enough for the Captain-General in Guatemala City to convoke a meeting of local dignitaries which met on September 15, 1821. Shortly, and without provincial or any authentic public participation, Central America declared its independence from Spain on that same day.

The above decisions did not, unfortunately, precipitate an era of tranquility. On the contrary, absolute political chaos resulted from the unleashing of the heretofore controlled restraints on local and provincial animosities. Old jealousies between the provincial towns and Guatemala City surfaced detrimentally, a situation that was only aggravated when the decision was made to annex the entire colony to Mexico. Even further discontent was noted when absolute autonomy was declared in 1823. As before, both of these important resolutions were made with a minimum amount of provincial involvement.

Except for an epilogue which briefly describes the short Central American union with Mexico, this study ends with the September 15, 1821 declaration of independence. The decision to stop at this point was made simply because it was then that the official attachment to Spain ceased. It was then that loyalties changed noticeably with no further attempt ever being made to re-attach the former colony to the Mother Country.
A note in regards to the use of sources not written in English is in order. Because the works of a number of Central American and Spanish scholars were consulted, it was decided for consistency's sake to translate all quotations into English. In every case where the work was in Spanish this has been done by the author. Another problem that invariably seems to arise involves the use of institutional and political titles. Not only are there difficulties in arriving at the English equivalents, but over the years different authorities have come to use different titles for the same entity and, unfortunately, the Spaniards followed the same practice. In light of this, and until a convention meets to resolve the issue, the author has made every effort to translate those titles into their most literal English equivalent. Exceptions to this rule will be noted with such widely accepted terms as Cortes, Ayuntamiento, Audiencia, etc.
CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

In general, the growth of the colony of Guatemala was tranquil and for the most part uneventful. So far as the available evidence suggests, there were few disturbances of note prior to 1808, and those that did occur were apparently not oriented towards independence. Nevertheless, after that year the colony was subject to a number of serious revolts of such a widespread nature as to suggest substantial discontent. The sudden rise in the number of such incidents indicates that the three centuries of Spanish rule had indeed fostered problems which were profound and only thinly veiled. To understand this situation and to place the panorama of Central American independence in an historical perspective, it is necessary to examine certain components of colonial life whose development was critical to promoting an independence frame of mind among the Central American leaders.

Political Development

Unlike her northern neighbor, Central America lacked many of the rich pools of easily exploitable resources so common in New Spain. Unaware of this, a surprisingly large number of persons vigorously coveted the isthmus during the early years of the Spanish conquest. In not finding the quick riches that they had anticipated, many left for new horizons, leaving only the farmers, merchants, priests, and
bureaucrats to guide Central America's future. Nevertheless, before departing they had unknowingly established a political, religious, and economic legacy that was to prove profoundly enduring.

At first representing only crude spheres of influence, the territorial outlines of the republics extant in Central America today were nonetheless visible as early as the 1520's. Cortés' lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado, accompanied by the soldier-historian Bernal Díaz del Castillo, was one of the first interlopers. At first claiming the entire isthmus for his own, he soon had to content himself with that area which approximates present-day Guatemala. Nicaragua was carved out by Pedrarias who quickly instituted a reign of terror and bizarre exploits which were long endured by the area's unfortunate inhabitants. Surprisingly, the most sought after region was Honduras where the Audiencia of Santo Domingo, the governor of Cuba, and Cortés all claimed jurisdiction, a situation which was eventually cured through royal intervention. As such, the three major political divisions, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras were formed whereas on a less expansive scale, Costa Rica and Chiapas emerged through administrative decisions later in the sixteenth century. El Salvador, however, was destined to remain an appendage of Guatemala until 1786 when the Intendency System was introduced.


3 Woodward, Central America, p. 67.
Cognizant of the confusion in authority and allegiances, Spain authorized a number of early reorganizations. Even so, it was not until a 1567 cédula, or decree, arrived which established the Captaincy-General of Guatemala that a durable and satisfactory arrangement was inaugurated. With a capital in the city of Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala, it was to have complete jurisdiction over all the territory from present-day Costa Rica to Chiapas. Although technically subject to the Viceroy in New Spain, it was in practice, more responsible to the crown.

The Captain-General was the highest, most powerful political and administrative official in the colony. His duties were many, including the office of president of the Audiencia, or high court. He decided upon conflicts in authority and judged whether they were executive, judicial, Indian, or military in nature. He was the inspector-general of the entire legal system while at the same time being the highest military authority in the colony. Besides these responsibilities, he was obliged to promote colonization, agriculture, mining, and serve as the superintendent of public works and the Royal Treasury.

The most important administrative and judicial body in the colony was the Audiencia. Seated in Guatemala City and presided over

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by the Captain-General, it served as his advisory board and would eventually evolve into a complicated legal institution. At times referred to as an **Acuerdo** or **Tribunal Suprema**, in the Captaincy-General of Guatemala its central bureaucratic structure was comprised of four oidores, or judges, and one fiscal, or attorney. Spanish law defined three categories of Audiencias: the **Virreinales**, the **Pretoriales**, and the **Subordinados**. Since Guatemala's Audiencia was established in the capital of a Captaincy-General and because it was independent of the Virreinales, it ranked as a Pretoriale. In general, it appears that these august bodies conducted themselves honorably thus maintaining the good opinion of historians. In time, the Audiencias, whose judges were royal appointees, evolved to the point where they exercised some legislative functions. In one interesting example of early checks and balances, they were responsible for conducting the Captain-Generals' residencias, or investigations of the officials' conduct while in office.

With the restructuring order of 1567, the territory was divided into five provinces, Guatemala, Chiapas, Soconusco, Honduras, and Nicaragua. While Costa Rica was also recognized, its designation was that of a **gobierno**, a rank somewhat lower than a province. Except for Guatemala, which was under the authority of the Captain-General, each provincial executive was a subordinate governor appointed

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6 Ibid., p. 98.

by the crown. Provincially, the major subdivisions were districts of various grades and carried titles such as Alcaldías or Corregimientos, designations which seem to have been of equal importance.

Central Americans "lived in a number of different centers of population; mostly in cities, towns, and villages, but also in [smaller areas known colloquially as] rancherías, valles, pajuides, salinas, and others." Severo Martínez Pelaez notes that colonial cities were originally meant to be inhabited by only Spaniards while the mestizos, or those of Spanish-Indian ancestry, and Indians were confined to the surrounding areas. Utilizing the 1778 census as a guide, he writes that the major cities of colonial Central America were Guatemala City (pop. 30,000), San Salvador and León (pop. 20,000), Granada (pop. 10,000), Cartago (pop. 9,000), and Ciudad Real (pop. approx. 6,000).  

Urban government was in the hands of institutions called cabildos, or municipal councils, of varying ranks of which there were fifteen in Central America in 1810. In cities of primary importance, municipal councils were given the royal title Ayuntamiento as in the case of Guatemala City and León. The Ayuntamientos normally had an executive body comprised of two Alcaldes, or Mayor and vice-Mayor, an


9 Ibid.

10 Herrarte, p. 104.
Alferez Real, or Royal Ensign, one Alguacil Mayor, or Chief Constable, one Alcalde Provincial, or Provincial Judge, eight regidores, or councilmen, and one sindico procurador, or clerk. Although the rules governing the number of Ayuntamiento members were consistent, there were times when exceptions were made. For example, towards the end of the colonial era, Cartago, in Costa Rica, requested an authorization from the Audiencia permitting the establishment of an Ayuntamiento with a reduced number of councilmen. Although this request was eventually granted, by 1800 only three of the offices had been filled.

The Guatemala City Ayuntamiento, which is often referred to as "the family," had over the years evolved into a body of privileged creole citizens, which surfaced most noticeably after the great earthquake of 1773. Even so, it was by no means a rubber stamp institution and, jealous of its privileges, "in many instances was brilliant in defending its rights with dignity even before the omnipotent authority of the king."

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11 Salazar, Historia, p. 15.


14 Herrarte, p. 104.
In the late 1780's the Intendent System was introduced in Central America. Initially, four divisions, or Intendencies, were created (Comayagua, León, Ciudad Real, and San Salvador), each directed politically and economically by an Intendent Governor. Guatemala remained a province under the supervision of the Captain-General who also was to continue as the supreme authority over the entire colony. Costa Rica's position remained basically unchanged, although her governor was elevated somewhat to where he had the same functions as an Intendent except in financial matters. Geographically, each of the four Intendencies was divided into districts called partidos or sub-delegaciones.

Brought to Spain and America by the Bourbon Monarchs, the Intendent System was designed to answer a number of problems that were perceived as important by these rulers. The Intendents were to "centralize, uniformize, rationalize, and better the total governing system of the nation." More specifically, however, they were intended to oversee the financial and military administration of the colony and to "better coordinate the actions of the central and local authorities and to systematize the activities of the subordinate authorities."

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16 Ibid., p. 163.

17 Rodrigo Facio B., "La Federación Centroamericana," Revista de los Archivos Nacionales de Costa Rica 5-6 (March and April, 1939): 271.
Whether or not the Intendent System was successful in Central America or not remains to be determined. Rodrigo Facio 3. has noted that the injudicious implementation of an Intendency in Honduras resulted in the "complete decay of mining, agriculture, and commerce in the province." Nevertheless, another source, Troy S. Floyd, concludes that the mining industry in Honduras was characterized by enlightened, logical, and correct thinking. Supporting Floyd's point of view, gains in unification and order, plus notable improvements in the public treasury were reported.

Scholars also continue to discuss the role played by the Intendent System and its relation to Central American independence. Some have noted that a central power figure (the Intendent) which possessed broad military and economic powers probably increased provincial autonomy while at the same time developing correspondingly less allegiance to Spain. Such was the case in El Salvador where a lengthy period of interim Intendents allowed the creoles to become influential in the government. In this case, the only knowledgeable

18 Ibid., p. 272.
19 Troy S. Floyd, "Bourbon Palliatives and the Central American Mining Industry, 1765-1800," The Americas 17 (October, 1961): 118
20 Herrarte, p. 100.
21 Woodward, Central America, p. 67.
and consistent source of information and control rested in creole institutions, thereby forcing the Spanish authorities to rely upon them.

In opposition to this, Facio B., in quoting the Nicaraguan scholar, Salvador Mendieta, states that "the Spanish colonial system was calculated to stifle any nationalistic ideas." Yet another source is of the opinion that royal policies were meant "to destroy all jurisdiction not visibly emanating from the crown." Ernesto Chinchilla Aguilar supports this view by noting that the Ayuntamientos lost judicial, police, and financial powers and that some of their officers were left with but one-third of their former responsibilities.

Religious Development

The ecclesiastical development of the Spanish Empire was seldom far behind the political maturation of the colonies. As a whole, the Spaniards were devout, staunch supporters of their religion with the establishment of bishoprics in their respective provinces being an important personal objective. In Central America, Nicaragua was awarded the first Middle American bishop in 1531 with Comayagua and Guatemala receiving theirs a few years later in 1534. The

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23 Facio B., p. 271.
24 Herrarte, p. 103.
completion of this level of religious expansion came in 1538 with the appointment of a bishop in Chiapas. Perhaps as a result of the Las Casas experiment there, a bishopric was also created for the province of Vera Paz but this was abolished in 1607. In Costa Rica, religious affairs were under the authority of the Bishop of Nicaragua and remained so until the early 1800's when it too was granted a bishopric.

Although the Captaincy-General was technically under the political jurisdiction of the Viceroyalty of New Spain a corresponding situation apparently did not exist on religious matters. Royal patronage was supervised by the Captain-General and any serious breach of conduct brought a quick reprimand directly from the king. Nevertheless, the bishops enjoyed considerable autonomy throughout most of the colonial period even though the Bishops of Guatemala City, it being the capital, may have exercised some form of dominance. There is little doubt though that definite Guatemalan suzerainty probably surfaced in 1742 when Pedro Pardo de Figueroa was appointed the first Archbishop of the colony.

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Mandated to guide the more practical aspects of church business, a *Cabildo Eclesiástico*, or Church Council, was established during the era of conquest. Ramón Salazar notes that it resided in the "capital of the bishopric" (Guatemala) and that it was composed of a Dean, Archdeacon, Choir-Master, School Master, Treasurer, and both penitent and leading priests.29

Although its exact functions remain unclear, the *Cabildo Eclesiástico* was nonetheless a durable institution and is recorded as active in the 1820's. On the other hand, Mary P. Holleran notes its existence in 1537 when the Bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumarraga, ordered Bishop Marroquín of Guatemala to select the executive board.30

As in other regions, the church in Central America is noted for its accumulation of wealth and temporal power. The outlaw priest, Thomas Gage, wrote of unparalleled riches which may or may not have been exaggerated.31 Both Gage and Holleran imply a support of J. Lloyd Mecham's comment that "the clergy dominated the colonial era economically and politically."32 But this presents a somewhat stilted view of the many unsung efforts of the regular clergy which in many cases were the only refuge available to the indigenous population.

29Salazar, Historia, p. 18.
30Holleran, p. 22.
Their role not only in pacification but in a myriad of other ways, including a critical place in the independence movements, remain as yet unappreciated.

**Commercial Development**

The commercial life of colonial Central America was controlled by Spanish mercantilist policy makers who tended to have an unsympathetic view of colonial problems. Only minimum attention was given to the needs of the Empire or even to the potential dangers to the crown itself. Policy was based on the desire to extract as much wealth as possible from the colonies with no realistic knowledgeable consideration given to Spain's economic or military posture.

While Spain's policies were not that much different from other European powers, they did ignore three crucial areas which were atypical of her neighbors. First, Spain suffered from a weak industrial base which by 1600 limited her ability to supply the colonies. Second, although the Spanish Empire possessed vast, unexploited riches, she possessed an inferior navy which, after 1588, never posed a serious threat to her stronger contemporaries. Third, her merchant fleet was in such a poor state that trade was often erratic and, of necessity, directed towards more profitable enterprises. Thus, Central America, as a backwater market and producer benefitted even less than normal from the supposedly profitable attachments to Spain.

When the first Europeans arrived, their immediate goal was quick wealth and no time was wasted in exploiting the easiest and
most lucrative forms of endeavor. The numerous and seemingly insatiable sugar plantations and mines constantly clamored for cheap labor for which Costa Rica and Nicaragua became prime areas for slaving raids of various origins. Continuing until around 1730, slaving, along with the great epidemics, was a major contributor to a massive population decline which did not end until nearly 1700. A number of persons also engaged in gold mining operations which, for the most part, were confined to panning or surface endeavors and depended upon an extensive labor force. However, the mining enterprises and slaving raids became less frequent as the Indian population declined, forcing many Europeans to leave.

Faced with labor problems and technological obstacles, a number of Spaniards turned to agriculture as an alternative. In their search for a profitable crop they settled upon cacao, the major ingredient in chocolate. This beverage was quickly becoming a favorite throughout the Spanish dominions.

However, even though the Central American cacao, which had been long grown by local Indians, was of a quality highly sought after, the crown, which controlled the monopolies, soon allowed the more readily available Caracas and Guayaquil product to enter the market. For Guatemala, this was especially disastrous in that it effectively destroyed its one cash product. Internally, however, the seed remained an important staple on many levels. For example, in 1709 it was still an accepted medium of exchange in Costa Rica. Murdo J. MacLeón also notes its continued use as coin among
certain Indian tribes "until the middle of the twentieth century."\(^{33}\)

By the late 1500's the demand for Guatemalan cacao had declined noticeably and colonial leaders were again forced to search for another viable product. Within a few years they had enthusiastically adopted indigo, a dark blue dye, as a substitute. But, due to the introduction of English indigo, plus the development of synthetic dyes, the Guatemalan product became subject to periods of stagnation and neglect. Nevertheless, it did remain an important product until independence.

Towards the middle third of the seventeenth century, indigo production entered into one of its periods of decay. Out "of desperation" the Guatemalan merchants turned to openly trading with their foreign counterparts to such an extent that by 1715 "contraband dominated all forms of commerce in Central America."\(^{34}\) So blatant was the situation that one Captain-General notified the crown that "the ports of this shore were used for no other purpose than as a shelter for foreign ships and that the inhabitants of the whole territory, including the clergy, the highest government officials, were interested solely in illicit trade."\(^{35}\) Since payment for the contraband was normally in indigo, that industry was able to eventually enter a minor period of resurgence that lasted into the 1800's.


\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 373.
Thus, the Captaincy-General of Guatemala was a colony of only periodic economic importance. The political boundaries which would endure even unto the present were well defined, and typically, the church was politically, socially, and economically important. Although commercially the colony was less than successful, it appears that neither famine nor even hunger were commonplace. That it was neglected is highly probable but, even so, there were few murmurs of discontent.

Education

A study of the school system in Central America suggests that it was one of extreme contrasts. For example, although there was hardly a single elementary school in the provinces, in the capital the University of San Carlos boasted a library of more than 5000 volumes. Indeed, a second university was authorized for León around 1815 even while small towns were trying to drum up funds for a teacher's salary. Although education was not a high government priority, San Carlos became a meeting ground for the most advanced and enlightened persons in that area. As such, these same thinkers were able to impress their ideas on the minds of many future Central American patriots.

But for the common man, the educational system in Central America offered little hope and scholars are near universal in their comments, few as they are, regarding the paucity of elementary schools. Both Louis E. Bumgartner and Franklin D. Parker in their studies on José Cecilio del Valle, the Honduran savant, note that as late as
1800 there was not a single school in Tegucigalpa and in Comayagua there "were no schools worthy of the name." Nor was such a desolate state confined to just the above localities. In 1798 for example, the Secretary of one of the economic organizations requested permission, and funds, to establish a primary school in Trujillo, a major Caribbean port in Honduras. A further example might be seen in the town of Danli, which had to wait until 1814 for a school. Because of this situation, concerned parents were forced into maintaining some private schools on an informal basis.

In Nicaragua, education appeared to be somewhat more traditional if sporadic. During a great part of the colonial period a Seminario Conciliar de León, or councilor seminary, was the only learning establishment that existed in that province. Since this school was subsidized by funds donated by a number of persons, students from all walks of life were accepted. Teachers there were paid from a variety of sources such as the colonial treasury and student tuition.

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37 Guillermo Mayes, Honduras en la Independencia de Centro América y Anexión a Mexico (Tegucigalpa: Tipografía Nacional, 1956), p. 15.


39 Ibid.
The critical state of education in Central America can perhaps be best seen in Costa Rica. In 1803, Governor Tomas de Acosta wrote to the Audencia in Guatemala City that there was hardly a person in the town of Heredia that could write. Furthermore, he noted that in the entire territory of La Alajuela, barely six subjects could be found who could write and only three who were capable of being lieutenant governor. Costa Rica was not without hope, however, since the Casa de Enseñanza de Santo Tomás in San José was founded around 1800.

As might be expected, Guatemala City, as the social, administrative, and economic center of the colony, fared better educationally. Here, it appears, most, if not all, of the elementary education was conducted by the religious orders located in the capital. For example, there was a Franciscan house of studies with a special section for youths which displayed scientific talent and the convents of Nuestra Señora de la Merced and Nuestra Señora de Belén both maintained primary schools. The Colegio de San Lucas, which had been supported by the Jesuit order up to its expulsion in 1767, had, since then, been placed under the protection of the Archbishop. It is also possible that an Indian School, the Colegio de Cristo Crucificado, was an academy devoted to Indian instruction.

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For girls there were also a few houses of instruction. The Beatario de Nuestra Señora del Rosario welcomed Indian girls to learn the "womanly arts" while the Beatario de Santa Rosa de Lima instructed the "daughters of the first families" in sewing, cooking, reading, and embroidery. Finally, two schools, the Colegio de la Presentación de Nuestra Señora and the Colegio del Visitación de Nuestra Señora taught girls religion, reading, writing, cooking, and "other womanly duties." 42

An economic organization also conducted a number of promising efforts in the fields of culture and trade education during the latter 1790's. A school of mathematics, for example, was opened under the directorship of Captain of Engineers, José de Sierra. In attempting to obtain the best talent available, Fr. José Antonio de la Huerta y Caso was employed there until he left in 1798 to become Bishop of León whereupon his place was taken by Miguel Larreinago, a future leader in the Central American independence movements. 43 An example of the dedication to quality was the art school which was founded in 1797. Here the organizers utilized the talents of Pedro Garci-Aguirre, the treasury engraver, and of the miniaturist, Cabera. This was a popular endeavor which soon forced the rental of more rooms which were shortly filled to capacity. 44

42 Holleran, p. 50.


While classes were held in politics, economics, bookkeeping, languages, and drafting, a major emphasis was placed on the schools of spinning and weaving. Designed to promote a nascent textile industry, they were considered indispensable. Just how necessary they were can be seen when the spinning schools were closed as too expensive. In this case the tenacious promoters were able to maintain three small sub-schools in different barrios throughout the city. This was not just an isolated example for even after the promoting organization was disbanded in 1799, a few dedicated members were able to keep the art, mathematics, and spinning schools open.

In comparison, Central American higher education was operated in a much more professional and dedicated fashion. Indicative of this is the often stated opinion that almost without exception, every architect of Central American independence attended the University of San Carlos. Taken in context, this implies a correlation between the University and an atmosphere conducive to independent nonconformist thought. If true, then what conditions existed that allowed such a state to develop?

In a fundamental sense, an ambiance of independence was generated from the governing structure of the university. Its regulations strictly prohibited any civil or ecclesiastical violation of

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45 Woodward, Central America, p. 82.

46 Luque Alcaide, p. 106.

47 Meléndez, p. 188.
its autonomy and, to meet this end, only university alumni could elect important officials. A further guarantee was that the Rectorship was forbidden to any high civil officials and, hopeful of maintaining the tradition of freedom in teaching, any member of a religious order.

José Mata Gavidia is of the opinion that the Rector was more a figurehead than anything else and the real governing was done through claustros, or committees. For example the Claustro de Diputados decided on economic matters whereas on administrative and educational concerns the Claustro Ordinario governed. And finally, on matters of extreme importance and on filling professorships, a Claustro Pleno was consulted.

Although the physical and bureaucratic aspects of the school were indeed important in creating a certain mentality in its graduates, it would have accomplished little without a faculty capable of complementing its liberal structure. Fortunately, the last decades of the nineteenth century witnessed the coalescing of a number of educators at San Carlos which did exactly that. Although a certain amount of opposition to university reform did exist, it is generally agreed that a liberal blueprint engineered by Fr. Antonio Liendo y Goicoechea of Cartago was readily accepted.

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48 Ibid., p. 187.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 136.
At a time "when judges were still prosecuting witches" the University of San Carlos was forging ahead with a modern curriculum. Propelled by Fr. Goicoechea's classes in experimental physics, an enlightened effort was made to introduce the "great works of the natural philosophers." In medicine for example, Dr. Narciso Esparragaza y Gallardo was introducing new surgical techniques and had inaugurated smallpox vaccination. Also in medicine, the Chiapan, Dr. José Felipe Flores, known even in Europe, conducted classes in medicine which were considered to have been better than those offered on the continent. Interestingly, a colleague of Flores, Dr. Pedro Molina, became one of the principal leaders of the Central American independence movement.

As in other areas of the colony, the University of San Carlos was plagued with continual financial woes. In 1808, for example, the Rector notified Spain of the "ruinous and decadent state of the University." Professors' salaries had barely increased since its founding in 1678 and one Audiencia judge earned more than all the professors put together. To make ends meet, university officers resorted to "many petty devices" in order "to lay hold of extra small sums" and numerous campaigns were run to raise monies in the early

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52 Ibid.
53 Bumgartner, *del Valle of Central America*, p. 16.
54 Ibid., p. 19.
55 Ibid., p. 17.
In spite of this, the University of San Carlos vibrated with a newness and anticipation. The freedom of expression among both faculty and student body gave birth to a spirit of criticism and principles which were often in opposition to the absolutist government in Spain. Between 1780 and 1800 the "intellectual revolution in Guatemala was reaching its peak" as new scientific and philosophic theories produced an anti-authoritarian atmosphere that years later would manifest itself as opposition to Spanish dominance.

The Press

Under the tutelage of many of the above luminaries, colonial journalism took giant strides forward after 1795. In that year the only Central American newspaper extant at that time, La Gaceta de Guatemala, became the spokesman for the Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País de Guatemala, an economic organization which will be discussed later. While La Gaceta came to openly criticize a number of areas it also offered at the same time suggestions for improvement. Its pages carried discussions on land redistribution plus Indian and colonial problems, along with their possible solutions which were scientifically explored. Although it would eventually fade, as did

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57 Mayes, p. 21.

58 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 16.
the Sociedad Económica, it established standards for other periodicals which would surface just prior to independence.

Although Guatemala City was the fourth city in the Spanish colonies to receive a printing press, prior to La Gaceta most publications were confined to religious tracts. It was not until 1785, when Ignacio Beteta purchased a press, that the fortunes of Central American journalism improved. Even so, Beteta waited until June 18, 1793 before he petitioned Captain-General Martínez for a license to publish a monthly Gaceta which would maintain a format similar to that of El Mercurio in Peru. He argued that a newspaper was necessary for the betterment of the colony, that very few periodicals even arrived in Guatemala and then only government employees read them.

Beteta received tentative permission to publish a Gaceta on July 5, 1793. At the same time notice was also given that the Captain-General's secretary, Mariano Ezeta, was to act as its official censor. This action was shortly approved in Spain which only cautioned that care be taken as to what was printed and requesting that copies be sent there for official scrutiny.


60 David Vela, "La Gaceta de Guatemala, Segundo Periódico de América," Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala 17 (June, 1942): 466.

61 Ibid.
After a precarious beginning which included sporadic delivery and even a brief suspension in 1796, *La Gaceta* reappeared in 1797 with a new format and more vitality. It contained more provincial news, articles on culture, geography, history, medicine and even some creole literary efforts. Furthermore it had also changed to a weekly and arrangements were made for better distribution. The cause of all of this ferment was *La Gaceta*'s twenty-year-old editor, Alejandro Ramírez, secretary to the Audiencia and a member of the Sociedad Económica. Support and guidance also came from Fr. Jacobo de Villa Urrutia, a judge of the Audiencia and Director of the Sociedad Económica.

Especially under Villa Urrutia, and comparable to their efforts in education, the Sociedad Económica was a staunch defender of the press. In 1798, for example, by order of the Captain-General, *La Gaceta* was suppressed for reasons as yet unclear. This might have happened because it had become a champion of a number of liberal ideas and had criticized Central American commerce as "slow, lazy, and debilitating." It had even gone so far as to question royal succession to the throne. The suppression order was soon rescinded however on February 7, 1798, perhaps due to pressure exerted by influential citizens. Judge Villa Urrutia, for example, had forwarded

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62 Ibid., p. 468.
63 Ibid.
64 Luque Alcaide, p. 468.
65 Ibid., p. 157.
66 Ibid., p. 122.
a stern letter to Spain in which he defended La Gaceta as a useful organ which exposed "the egotism, the monoply, the abuses, and the political, economical, and moral errors which were holding up national progress." The intense interest in maintaining a periodical, at least as far as the Sociedad Economíca was concerned, can be seen in Villa Urrutia's statement that "without a newspaper on which to voice its ideas and programs" the Sociedad Economíca "would be an obscure and inert body.".

Perhaps La Gaceta's most controversial period began in 1804 when Simón Bergaño y Villegas became its editor. Destined to be tried for sedition before the Inquisition, Bergaño often criticized institutions which had long been considered sacred. The large landholders, for example, were alienated when he claimed their holdings were detrimental to the public welfare and when he proposed a system of land redistribution to correct the problem. In noting the appalling state of the Indian he carried on a favorite discussion of the then disbanded Sociedad Economíca. Even the progressive University

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67 Ibid., p. 125.
68 Ibid., p. 121.
70 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 34.
71 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 19.
of San Carlos did not escape his questioning eye. In this case he questioned the use of Latin in the lectures and called the law curriculum worse than useless. So infamous was La Gaceta under Bergaño that on January 8, 1806, Archbishop Luis Peñalver y Cárdenas denounced the newspaper for its satires on certain persons, and for articles "that excite the carnal passions."73

Thus pre-Napoleonic Central America noted the existence of both an independent university and a free press. Complementing these institutions were men of advanced ideas, who in many instances affected membership in both. Many university graduates or instructors, for example, maintained close connections to La Gaceta through their association with the Sociedad Económica. Logically then, at the very least it would seem that many of these same men could approach independence fearlessly albeit if in a somewhat confused manner.

The Merchants and Commercial Organizations

By 1799 there were four important commercial entities in the colony: the merchants, the Consulado de Comercio, a Merchant Guild, the Sociedad Económica de los Amigos del País de Guatemala, the Economic Society of the Friends of Guatemala, and the Sociedad de los Cosecheros de Áñil, the Indigo Grower's Society.

Concerning the merchants, during the last half of the 1700's a number of individuals arrived in the Captaincy-General of Guatemala

72 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 25.

73 Ibid., p. 35.
who were destined to have a profound effect on the commercial life of the colony. Groomed to one degree or another in the commercial houses of Cádiz and Seville were such well-known Central Americans as Juan Baptista de Irisarre, Martín Barrundia, Josef Piñol, Cayetano Pavón, Diego Peinado, and Juan Fermín Aycinena all of whom were to maintain strong financial connections in those cities. These relationships were so durable that 75 years later they were still extant.

Complementing these arrivals was the earthquake of 1773 which destroyed the old city of Guatemala (now Antigua). The disaster caused the ruination of "some of the leading merchants" of the city and help create an atmosphere "where paved the way for a new social and economic order." Once a new capital city was established, ample opportunities presented themselves for "capable and fortunate individuals" such as those named above. They joined with some of the old-city aristocrats and produced a new colonial elite eventually referred to as "the family" and led by Juan Aycinena.

Many of the Guatemalan merchants were related either through ties of marriage or finance. An astute group, by 1775 they had established a formidable power base. As in so often the case, a "bond of common interest between merchants and municipal officials and considerable overlapping in the membership of the cabildo, or the city council,

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76 Ibid., p. 546.
and the body of merchants was also established. From the beginning, and to this end, the merchants had purchased various positions in the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento, or at the very least, had been continuously influential in that body. Juan Fermin Aycinena, for example, served "two decades" and Cayetano Pavón for "sixteen years" on that same municipal body. Nevertheless, this was not necessarily a negative or suppressive activity. For as Floyd points out, they developed a sense of "civic responsibility" and became the "leaders of Guatemalan society" if for no other reason than self-preservation. It should also be pointed out that a certain appreciation of royal institutions existed and as such loyalty to the crown was strong.

A threat to the dominance of the merchant aristocrats on certain levels came from a group that Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr. calls a "middle class" of merchants. Although not admitted to the official family for one reason or another, the turn of the century saw their numbers and influence grow at a noticeable rate. So strong was their presence that the family-dominated Ayuntamiento petitioned the crown for an exception to the rule disallowing dual participation as municipal officers and members of the ruling body of the merchant guild. This request was made after their control of the Ayuntamiento

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78 Floyd, "The Indigo Merchant," p. 482.

79 Ibid., p. 481.

had been lost due to the political tactics of those same middle class merchants. 81

Support for the erection of an organization to represent merchant interests had long existed in Central America. The fore­runner of such an establishment has been noted as early as April 22, 1779, when a meeting of Guatemala City merchants elected four of their company to represent merchant interests. 82 A second step towards the formation of a guild was taken during October of 1787 when permission was received allowing meetings preparatory to the creation of a merchant society. Shortly after this, a petition was forwarded to Spain requesting approval of the establishment of a Consulado de Comercio. Permission to do so was eventually granted by Spain on December 11, 1793 and received in Guatemala City on April 14, 1794.

The royal approval for the creation of a Consulado de Comercio stipulated regulations that were essentially the same as those assigned to similar guilds located in other areas of the empire. Therefore, whereas the Guatemalan merchants had requested a membership limited to the 54 signers of the original request, the rules called for it to be opened to all merchants, plus importers, exporters, and certain ships' captains. Expanding upon this, a year later, the guild was opened to include growers and landholders also. 83

81 Ibid.


Control of this institution was important to the dominant merchants and to this end a considerable effort was expended by them, not always with expected results. 84

The Consulado de Comercio's responsibilities were, as elsewhere, established by royal order. It was to be governed by a prior, two consuls, nine councilmen, one syndic, a secretary, an accountant, and a treasurer. Located outside of the capital in the major population centers were sixteen deputy judges who presided over commercial disputes in distant areas. 85 The Consulado de Comercio was divided into two autonomous sections: a Tribunal, which presided over commercial cases, and a Junta de Comercio, or Commercial Board, which was concerned with the development of commerce in the colony.

The Tribunal heard an average of fifty cases a year between the years 1803 and 1815 on a variety of topics. Not a self-protection agency, there were a number of cases in which merchants who had been tried for smuggling had, after being convicted, had their goods confiscated and auctioned off as a fine. 86 At other times, cases between "merchants, landowners and planters concerning the sale and purchase of commercial effects and products for export" were heard. 87

85 Salazar, Historia, p. 17.
87 Ibid., p. 23.
The responsibilities of the Consulado were twofold. It was to provide the "briefest and easiest administration of justice in mercantile litigations" and it was to direct its attention towards the "protection and development of credit in all its aspects." Under these directives, it was expected to undertake public work projects, road and harbor construction, establish new settlements, improve river navigation, and uncover business problems and economic needs. Considering the needs, it appears that little substantial improvement was accomplished in any of the above areas.

To further develop the colony's economy, a second organization, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País de Guatemala, was established by a cédula dated October 21, 1795. A kind of intellectual counterpart to the Consulado de Comercio, it was first proposed by the Dominican priest, Fr. Jacobo Villa Urrutia who, as a judge of the Audiencia, was very much interested in reversing the economic stagnation of Central America. To this end he proposed to the crown that a Sociedad Económica be established as had been done in other parts of the empire. He also enlisted the assistance of the enlightened intelligenicia of the colony. Among the founding fathers of the

[Notes]

88 Ibid., p. 13.
89 Smith, "Origins," p. 159.
Sociedad Económica were such luminaries as José Flipo Flores, Antonio García Redondo, José Sierra, Juan Ignacio Barrios, Francisco and Martín Barrundia, Alejandro Ramírez, Fr. Goicoechea, Simón Bergaño y Villegas plus the artists Cabrera and Pedro Carci-Aguirre.  

Structurally the Sociedad Económica was governed by a director and sub-director plus the usual complement of officers. However, because of its extensive mandate, it was necessary for it to divide itself into a number of juntas, or committees, each of which addressed a particular issue. This mandate specified that it was to "promote the advancement of the colony in all the branches of human activity: commerce, industry, agriculture, the sciences, the arts, public instruction, etc."  

Membership expanded rapidly and soon included persons in Mexico plus clusters of corresponding members in various towns and cities of size. With a judge and secretary of the Audiencia as members, the way was open to include government officials plus other persons from a variety of occupations. Of major importance was the inclusion of the religious community, which, as a collaborator, "never refrained from any possible advancement . . . for their parishes." Indicative of clerical interest can be seen in 1815

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92 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 17.

93 Luque Alcaide, p. 56.

94 Ibid., p. 104.
when the Archbishop of Guatemala became director. A further expansion came when the Sociedad Económica associated itself with a Junta de Correspondencia, or corresponding Board, in Trujillo and the Asociación de Damas Leonesas, or the Association of Ladies of León.

As befitted its mandate, the Sociedad Económica's efforts were wide-ranging and numerous. Its support was critically important to the success of La Gaceta, an organ which was frequently used to voice its ideas. An example of this can be seen in the proposal to use Spanish in University lectures rather than Latin. Also, a number of schools were begun with the greatest attention being given those concerned with the textile industry. At a spinning school in Guatemala City, for example, apprentices were paid and prizes offered as a stimulant for quality work. And at Pinala, Fr. Vincente Guillen taught young ladies spinning techniques with the use of a spinning wheel, a relatively new instrument there. Such efforts were maintained even after the disbanding of the Sociedad Económica and strongly suggests a deep sense of responsibility on the part of the membership. Closely allied to these efforts, and as proof of the

95 Ibid., p. 69.
96 Ibid., p. 118.
97 García Laguardía, p. 58.
98 Luque Alcaide, p. 105.
99 García Laguardía, p. 57.
thoroughness with which the Sociedad Economica approached a topic, was the introduction of flax seeds from Spain. Local priests were sent instructions on how to grow better flax and an equipment exposition was held. Also prizes and other inducements were offered to producers of exceptionally fine examples.

Other areas of agriculture also received consideration by the Sociedad Economica. The reintroduction of cacao was being studied in 1797 and, in fact, a plantation was operated in Suchitepequez for this purpose. In other districts, prizes were offered to anyone who planted 500 or more cacao trees. José María Peinado, a future independence leader, introduced silk worms from Oaxaca, and the eternally active Alejandro Ramírez brought in cinnamon, canfor, mango seeds, breadfruit, sugar cane, and new species of birds from Jamaica. The Sociedad Economica also supported a botanical garden, a natural history museum and proposed a scientific expedition to study the Central American fauna.

Mysteriously, and for reasons not yet fully understood, the Sociedad Economica was suppressed in a cedula dated November 23, 1799. Different scholars have suggested a number of causes, all of which

100 Luque Alcaide, p. 101.
101 Ibid., p. 103.
102 García Laguardia, p. 57.
103 Ibid., p. 58.
104 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 17.
may have played a part. Elisa Luque Alcaide says that perhaps it was "some hidden personal reasons or the aversion to philanthropic institutions." Another authority proposes that a request and subsequent permission for the erection of a Mexican Sociedad Económica was somehow instrumental in causing the "Minister of Justice, Don José Antonio Caballero" in Spain, to cancel the Guatemalan institution. Financial woes exist as yet a third possibility. The Sociedad Económica gained sustenance from a variety of sources including dues of four, six, or eight pesos a month, voluntary donation, raffles, and even government supported lotteries. These funds do appear to have been insufficient since basic debts were left unpaid after the disbandment, and may have caused a kind of bankruptcy.

Nevertheless, the most likely cause for suppression is the one suggested by Woodward. In expanding upon all of the above theses he suggests that the Sociedad Económica's liberalism was a basic fault since it threatened traditional institutions. This explanation seems most probable since the basic premise of such an institution is change and this is often viewed as a threat to established powers. Of equal importance is that the Sociedad Económica attracted members who at

105 Luque Alcaide, p. 59.
106 Valdés Oliva, "Fueron Determinantes," p. 78.
107 Ibid.
108 Luque Alcaide, p. 62.
times proposed measures that aroused official displeasure. Not only were the rules of succession and Indian laws criticized, but a constitutional monarchy was seriously discussed also. So stirred up was the Spanish hierarchy that the regent of the Audiencia noted that the "Gaceta and Sociedad Económica were a seminary of republicanism."^{109}

The Sociedad Económica unfortunately ceased to exist except for a flurry of activity after 1800. Officially re-established on July 12 of that year, its former enthusiasm was noticeably absent.\(^{110}\) New activities involving tanning, honey, cochineal, and resin were begun but soon floundered. An independent periodical commenced publishing in 1815 only to fade shortly. Bearing little fruit, the last known meeting was held on October 25, 1818.

Predating the Consulado de Comercio by over ten years, but suggesting a long standing effort to offset merchant-financed strengths and abuses, was the creation of the Sociedad de Cosecheros de Anil on September 2, 1782. Before this, the indigo growers, like the miners and cattlemen, were forced to obtain financial relief through the offices of the Guatemala City merchants. Loans on crops, for the procurement of certain goods such as quicksilver, and for the exportation of their commodities were constantly needed.\(^{111}\) On a

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^{109} García Laguardia, p. 67.

^{110} Woodward, Class Privilege, p. 41.

provincial basis, this constant indebtedness created feelings of discontent augmented by the merchants' practice of interfering with price fixing policies. For this, and as part of the decree establishing the Sociedad de Cosecheros, a Montepío, or financing institution, was established to provide loans to the provincial growers which lessened their dependence on the merchants. The initial amount of 100,000 pesos was financed from the royal treasury and was to be repaid from export taxes. 112

Unfortunately however, by 1790 the indigo industry had begun a slow but consistent decline causing the fund to collapse. Further damage to the grower's association's effectiveness came from the evolution of a mellowing of grower-merchant relations wherein the merchants became far more "tractable." 113

Thus, in the years just before Napoleon invaded Spain, Central America witnessed the introduction of a new class, the creole merchant-princes, who although aware of the colony's problems, were either unwilling or unable to commit themselves to a solution. The Consulado de Comercio held promise but it also reflected merchant inability to provide large sums that were needed to correct the myriad problems that faced the colony.

The Sociedad Económica also suffered financial woes and may even have spent itself out of existence. Like a rocket, it gained an

enthusiastic ascendency only to fail disappointingly, perhaps a victim of official intrigue. Because of its acceptancy of new ways and ideas, its acceptance of social and political innovation, and the thoroughness with which it approached problems, the Sociedad Económica might very well have been the answer Central America needed.

Unfortunately, little is known of the Sociedad de Cosecheros de Anil. Questions remain on its governing structure, its activities, its finances, and its demise. Nevertheless, in a colony very much dominated by one province, Guatemala, it stands out as a local attempt to negate the powers of the merchant-aristocrats.

The role played by these groups in paving the way towards Central American independence is difficult to assess. Importantly though, many of the persons involved in the commercial pursuits of the colony were highly educated with many having been granted degrees at the University of San Carlos where they were exposed to its innovative methods. Therefore, while they might outwardly espouse a certain political viewpoint, the degree to which new ways were accepted was at the very least, greater than before, and while the Sociedad Económica may not have been a seminary of republicanism, the free flow and discussion of alternatives certainly opened the door to greater toleration. The magnitude of these feelings is especially noticeable when during the 1830's a number of truly exceptional reforms were attempted.

In essence then, the economic institutions or even their considerations may not have played an outwardly significant role in Central American independence. They were nonetheless, building blocks,
contributors towards attaining that goal even though at that par-
ticular time the very thought of independence might have been
abhorrent to most.
CHAPTER III

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FRENCH INVASION

In laying at the feet of Napoleon the crown worn by Isabel the Catholic and Carlos V, the disgraceful successors of these great kings delivered a stroke of death to the prestige of the Spanish monarchy in its American colonies.114

Napoleon's invasion of Spain in 1808 set into action certain events which would culminate in the total separation of Central America from the Mother Country. Unconsciously building upon the enlightened atmosphere already extant in the colony, the political and social rights authorized by a new constitution permitted an almost euphoric growth in expectations. These same expectations were not easily forgotten even after they were viciously and unjustly torn away in 1814. And although temporarily thwarted, Guatemalan patriots only needed to be patient until a second opportunity presented itself.

The French Invasion

At its height, Napoleonic hegemony in the early 1800's was indeed extensive. It included the combined kingdoms of Italy, the Confederation of the Rhine, and the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, all of which were aligned under the Grand Empire. Most other European countries also belonged while only England remained truly independent. She alone was strong enough to inflict a severe defeat on France at Trafalgar in October of 1805. To this Napoleon responded

114Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 7.

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with his Continental System, an economic measure under which European ports were closed to English goods.

Although impotent, Spain's position was nevertheless one of importance and was probably even considered essential to the very success of the Continental System. Even so, Napoleon remained uncharacteristically hesitant as to what course to follow with either Spain or Portugal.

After lengthy consideration he came to a decision by late 1807. His only alternative, as he saw it, was to turn Spain into a "satellite state."\(^{115}\) Exactly why this particular decision was made is still not yet fully understood, but there seems little doubt that he distrusted the Spanish court and viewed the entire affair there as irredeemable. One alternative that he had apparently considered was to try to maneuver Fernando into the role of puppet and thereby rule vicariously. But since Fernando had gone as far as actively conspiring for the overthrow of his father, he was justifiably suspect. Furthermore, any chance of Carlos going along with this plan was probably small since at one point he had suggested to Napoleon that someone other than Fernando be considered as the next king.\(^{116}\)

Indicative of his de facto involvement, Bonaparte had also been requested by both Carlos and Fernando to supply a proper wife


\(^{116}\) García Laguardia, p. 102.
for the heir apparent. This could have been a plan that Napoleon had initially preferred but it never reached fruition since by then other factors had caused him to decide upon a military occupation. Primary among such considerations was that such an action might, if correctly timed, and properly executed, insure the deliverance of the Kingdom of Portugal, his principal goal. Such an occupation would insure the official closure of the remaining European ports to English products. Spain's loyalty in this effort was gained from the promise that she would be given Portugal and its dominions as a prize.

It proved astonishingly easy to introduce the French armies into Spain. On October 17, 1807, the Treaty of Fountainbleau between Spain and France had been signed and contained among other things, an article which allowed for the movement of French troops across the Iberian peninsula with the secret objective of invading Portugal. The attack was to be accomplished by 30,000 French soldiers augmented by an equal number of Spanish troops. A second French army of 40,000 was to wait in readiness in the city of Bayonne, just across the border in France.

The combined Franco-Spanish force defeated the Portuguese armies during engagements fought in late November 1807, forcing the flight of the House of Braganza to Brazil. Once this was

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117 Lovett, 1:88.


119 Ibid., 3: 244.
accomplished, Napoleon then audaciously ordered the full scale invasion of Spain from France. In December, a large number of French troops began entering Spain to the point where by March, 1808, there were more than 100,000 of Napoleon's soldiers on the peninsula. In the time it took to accomplish the occupation not one serious objection was made by Spanish authorities.

Once the French designs were clear, Carlos began to give serious consideration to following the Portuguese monarch and his family to the New World. When this became public knowledge a serious rebellion broke out in Aranjuez, the then current site of the Spanish court. Considering this and at the same time fearing for the life of the unpopular royal favorite, Manuel Godoy, Carlos abdicated the Spanish throne in favor of Fernando on March 17, 1808. This was immediately seen as an unfortunate decision and a few days later an unsuccessful attempt was made to retract it. 120 So great was the national revulsion that Carlos' repudiation of his abdication was not accepted and Fernando entered Madrid as King of Spain on March 24, 1808.

A short time after this Napoleon invited the two feuding monarchs to meet with him in Bayonne, ostensibly to set their affairs in order. Before departing, Carlos and Fernando, who were by then both claiming the right to the throne, left the Spanish government in the care of two different proxies. Fernando assigned his powers to a Junta de Gobierno, or Governing Committee, while Carlos on the

120 Lovett, 1: 107.
other hand appointed Napoleon's brother-in-law, Marshall Jean Murat, Lieutenant-General of the Realm, a position of absolute power that he would hold until Napoleon's brother, Joseph, became King of Spain on July 9, 1808. 121

Arriving in Bayonne, Carlos and Fernando were both soon forced into abdicating all claims to the Spanish throne to Napoleon's designee as of May 5, 1808. But this did not clear the way for an uneventful French domination of Spain however. By this point the entire peninsula was taking its first steps towards a total revolt against the French.

The Central American Reaction

In Central America the Spanish officials there were very much aware of what was happening in Europe. However, being sensitive to the public morale, the authorities were selective in their choice of exactly what information was to be given out for public consumption. For example, Captain-General Mollinedo, who knew of Fernando's October revolt, chose to keep the public ignorant of the matter. 122

But on August 14, 1808, when a confidential communication from Viceroy José de Iturrigaray of New Spain was received in Guatemala which told of the French invasion, he not only let the information be printed but he also convoked a meeting of the most distinguished citizens to discuss the matter. This gathering included the members of the

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121 Ibid., 1: 121.

122 García Laguardia, p. 102.
Audiencia, The Archbishop, the Cabildo Eclesiástico, the local Ayuntamiento, prelates of the convents, military officials, Treasury officers, university leaders, members of the Consulado de Comercio, and the Intendent of Comayagua. As the most influential private citizen, the Marques de Aycinena was also invited.  

Surprised at what had happened in Spain, these notables drafted a response which stated that Guatemala "does not now or ever will recognize any decisions which are believed to be void to authority, strength, or which have been violently or illegally substantiated." In this fashion the colony renounced the acts of abdication while at the same time declaring Fernando as their king.

On September 19, 1808, the Captain-General initiated a donativo patriótico y voluntario, or voluntary patriotic donation, to secure monies for the struggle against France. The donations eventually reached the sum of 1,066,922 reales, most of which was in the form of indigo and drafts from Holland. Though the amount of hard currency was not great, the subscription nevertheless represented a sacrifice. Not only could the colony not afford such a sizeable loss but, like other Spanish dominions, Central America suffered from a chronic lack of coin which only aggravated their poor commercial posture.  

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123 Ibid., p. 106.
124 Barón Castro, p. 68.
125 García Laguardia, p. 107.
Captaincy-General of Guatemala for one year was less than the total amount collected, Salazar calls the subscription a "truly suicidal act."\textsuperscript{127} Surprisingly enough, the Indians were collectively, the largest mass contributor with the Marques de Aycinena, Gregorio Urruela, Gregorio Castriciones, and Archbishop Peñalver the major private donors.\textsuperscript{128} An interesting sidelight on the solicitation of funds, and indicative of its far-reaching nature was that Spain granted 600 Honduran slaves their freedom in gratitude for their generous gift of 1,000 pesos.\textsuperscript{129}

Besides denying any "foreign authority," a number of other minor actions were also taken. Captain-General Mollinedo ordered a temporary confiscation of most of the French-owned property and all Central American ports were strictly closed to foreign shipping. One authority even notes that French nationals living in the colony were put under guard.\textsuperscript{130} Other than these steps, little else appears to have taken place and, on a public level, the response was generally calm and less than sanguine.

\textsuperscript{127} Salazar, Historia, p. 114.  
\textsuperscript{128} García Laguardia, p. 108.  
\textsuperscript{130} García Laguardia, p. 111.
The Spanish Reaction

Events in Spain meanwhile were gathering momentum. Napoleon, who had been convinced by Murat that a French occupation would be an effortless undertaking, must have been surprised at the stoutness of the Spanish resistance and probably astounded at the depth of cooperation exhibited among the different authorities. As an example, in the unoccupied areas, local governing juntas were forming and armies were being trained and coordinated. So effective were these efforts that by the end of July, 1808, three French armies had been defeated.131

Considered by one historian as Central America's first constitutional antecedent, a Cortes, located in Bayonne began its sessions on June 15, 1808.132 Murat had initially approached Napoleon with the idea of a Cortes as a possible avenue by which Spain might better put her economic and administrative houses in order. This was acceptable to Napoleon who no doubt also anticipated the more efficient extraction of Spain's commercial and military resources.

Comprised of an equal number of representatives from each of the three major vectors of society, the nobility, the clergy, and the estado llano, or the proletariat, a total of 150 delegates were to be selected through an electoral system established by the Spaniards.133 Although the organizers did allow for colonial representation, it proved impossible for the machinery of selection to move

131Lovett, 1: 86.
132García Laguardia, p. 114.
133Ibid.
in the amount of time allotted. Therefore, certain individuals were selected as temporary deputies from among the colonials then residing in Spain. For the Captaincy-General of Guatemala, Francisco Antonio Zea, the director of Madrid's Botanical Gardens, was chosen. As probably the first instance of colonial representation in Spain this action set precedents in surrogate selection and dominion voice that would be manifested in future gatherings. Nevertheless, with its authority universally denied, this Cortes was doomed to a limited tenure and indeed, it was soon disbanded having never once met with its full complement of deputies.\(^{134}\)

The true causes of the uprising against the French in the spring of 1808 are still unknown. It has been suggested however, that a number of Spanish nobles, faced with the possibility of mob anarchy, were forced into denying Napoleon's authority.\(^{135}\) Perhaps fearing a repetition of the French Revolution, these natural leaders joined the patriot cause, and therefore were better able to control the rebellion's direction rather than relying on a chance proletariat victory. Apparently these nobles placed more faith in the ferocity of the masses than in Napoleon's power to either subdue or control them.

The popular segments of the movement were coordinated by locally elected town juntas. Overseeing these efforts were the larger provincial juntas which operated with a high degree of autonomy.

\(^{134}\)Aguado and Alcázar Molina, 3: 539.

\(^{135}\)Carr, p. 87.
Exactly how independent the provinces were can be seen when Asturias, on May 25, 1808, declared war on France. Although effective, the provincial juntas still required some guidance. In answer to this need, a central authority was established in free Spain on September 25, 1808. On that date a Junta Suprema Central Gubernative del Reino, or Supreme Central Junta of the Kingdom, was created in Aranjuez. Under the presidency of the Conde de Floridablanca, it declared itself sovereign, decided upon its composition, which included the election of representatives from all the Spanish dominions, and established an executive commission.

Unfortunately, problems arose which forced the Junta into three distinct ideological camps which gave it a divided character that was incapable of producing results. Also, under unrelenting military pressure, it was forced into undertaking a series of retreats which, by December of 1809, saw it lodged in Seville. Owing to this the Junta's position disintegrated to the point where it was necessary to dissolve itself in favor of a Council of Regency. This was done on January 31, 1810, after instructing the Council to maintain the same political directions as had guided it.

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136 Ibid., p. 87.
137 García Laguardia, p. 135.
138 Ibid., p. 138.
139 Aguado and Alcazar Molina, 3: 547.
140 García Laguardia, p. 144.
Under the Regency, as it had been under the Junta Suprema Central, it soon became apparent that before any group could successfully rule Spain, it would first have to legitimize its authority through a mandate emanating from Spain's traditional, if moribund parliament, the Cortes. Furthermore, such a Cortes would probably be expected to have constitutional powers and also be oriented somewhat towards meaningful reform. This was necessary for as Raymond Carr suggests, the Spanish patriots were beginning to raise a number of questions concerning the fundamental goals of the independence movement. Such questions could only be answered by a meeting of Spanish leaders.

Although proceeding somewhat hesitantly at first, which in itself suggests that it questioned the wisdom of such a move, the Regency did ultimately issue a call for the Cortes to meet. Insofar as it pertains to the colonies, and undoubtedly brought on by the French invasion, part of the Regency's decree admitted to Spain's erroneous practices in her colonies. It also invited each colony to elect its own Cortes deputies, the number of which was to be based on population. Unfortunately, the Regency lost some of its luster when it succumbed to initiating certain unnecessary delays. Due to this, it was ignominiously forced into ordering a speed-up of the election processes on June 11, 1810.

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141 Carr, p. 93.

142 Lovett, 1: 368.
Political Change in Central America

The above events were closely followed in Central America where at least one half-hearted attempt was made at establishing a popular junta as had been done in Spain. But with a stable government still extant, the Captain-General quickly vetoed this idea. Perhaps fearing the negative influences of the unsteady political situation in New Spain, he did, however, reinforce the capital's defenses shortly afterwards. In general, though, the colony remained dutifully faithful and by early 1809 almost all the formal institutions had sworn loyalty to the Junta Suprema Central.

On April 30, 1809, the decree which called for the selection of deputies to the Junta Suprema Central was received in Guatemala City and instituted what has been called the "first popular elections" in Central American history. The election rules which accompanied the decree stated that each Ayuntamiento was to hold an election from which would be chosen three of the most appropriate candidates. Of these three, a finalist was to then be chosen through a draw. Subsequently, the name of each finalist was to be forwarded to the Audiencia which in turn was to choose the three most capable from all the names submitted by all of the colonial Ayuntamientos. From these three names the deputy was finally picked, also through a draw.

\[^{143}\text{García Laguardia, p. 135.}\]
\[^{144}\text{Ibid., p. 136.}\]
\[^{145}\text{Ibid., p. 137.}\]
It took eleven months from the receipt of the election regulations until the day the Central American deputy was chosen. The Ayuntamientos of Guatemala City, San Salvador, León, Ciudad Real, Comayagua, Cartago, Quetzaltenango, Sonsonante, San Miguel, San Vicente, Santa Ana, Granada, Nicaragua, Nueva Segovia, and Tegucigalpa all had sent in their nominations to the Audiencia in Guatemala City. On March 3, 1810, the names of José Aycinena, Antonio Juarros, and Manuel Pavón y Muñoz were placed in an urn. Pavón was the eventual winner.

Despite this hopeful, if inauspicious, beginning, it was inevitable that some discontent be voiced. With two nominees, Pavón and Aycinena, being from the Guatemalan oligarchy and with all three being from the province of Guatemala it proved a little too much for some to swallow. Ineffectual, this displeasure was evidenced mostly in wall grafitti such as:

Al derecho y al reves
No va Pavón
novap av on.

Although the degree of public involvement in the election is subject to discussion, the event nonetheless provided valuable electioneering experience for the future. Also, some scholars note that both Pavón

146 Salazar, Historia, p. 119.
147 García Laguardia, p. 138.
148 Ibid.
and Aycinena were, at least to a certain degree, liberals, thus indicating a promising new trend.  

Unfortunately, these efforts were unrewarded since, by the time Pavón had been chosen, the Junta Suprema Central had already been replaced by the Regency. This news reached Guatemala City by mail on May 25, 1810, and was published in La Gaceta on June 9. A week later the Regency's decree, which Salazar calls a "genuine confession, an acknowledgement of the poor administrative system that Spain had imposed on her colonies and an admission that the creole complaints were indeed justified and, until then, ignored" was also printed. He uses one particular paragraph to suggest the Regency's apologetic tenor:

Spanish Americans, from this moment you have been raised to the dignity of free men: no longer are you the same as before, under a heavy yoke, far from the center of power, looked upon with indifference, vexed by greed, and destroyed by ignorance. Choose your representatives to the National Congress and tell us of them, as your destinies no longer depend on Ministers, Viceroy, or Governors; it is in your hands.

Accompanying the manifesto were the regulations pertaining to the Cortes and the elections of its deputies which were essentially the same as those for the deputy to the Junta Suprema Central. A major difference however was that rather than being allocated but one

149 García Laguardia, p. 138.
150 Salazar, Historia, p. 128.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
deputy, Central America was given six, a number based on the colony's population. Since the Cortes was scheduled to begin its sessions in September, each Ayuntamiento had to rush through the elections which although intense, were relatively problem free. As a result, a slate of deputies was chosen who were knowledgeable and honest. The first to be selected was Father Antonio Larrazabal for the province of Guatemala on July 24, 1810. Shortly, José Antonio López de la Plata was selected for Nicaragua, Father José Ignacio Avila for El Salvador, Father Florencio del Castillo for Costa Rica, and Father Mariano Robles was chosen to speak for the province of Chiapas. A minor problem in Honduras appears to have been the only serious occurrence which marred the entire enterprise. Due to continual strife between the cities of Comayagua and Tegucigalpa, the representation there was confused. Initially, José Francisco Morejón was selected and did in fact represent Honduras in Spain. However, a second deputy, José Santiago Milla, was also chosen from Honduras only to arrive after the Cortes was dissolved. This unfortunate

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154 Ibid.


156 Mayes, p. 89.
situation was indicative of the extreme localism which would plague Honduras for many years.

Structurally, no important changes were ordered in the government of Central America. A possible exception to this might be noted when on May 27, 1810, Captain-General Mollinedo created a Tribunal de Fidelidad, a kind of court meant to investigate unpatriotic acts. The Tribunal was composed of three military officers, all Spaniards. José Méndez, the Commander of Artillery and Sub-Inspector of the Militia was appointed president with Joaquin Bernardo de Campuzano the second judge and Joaquin Ibañez the Auditor. Possibly established as a precaution due to the insurgent movements elsewhere in the Empire, the Tribunal nevertheless proved short-lived and was abolished on February 20, 1811.

Guatemala also received information concerning possible French provocateurs descending upon the Spanish colonies. Captain-General Mollinedo was officially notified that agents, organized by one M. Doutlart of Baltimore, had been dispatched to Guatemala and that they were to enter Central America through the Gulf of Honduras. Cognizant of creole resentment at their continued second class status, the agents were ordered to cause as much dissention as possible. Apparently, by appealing to the lower clergy and government workers they hoped that official secrets might be gained and rebellions instigated. Supporting these suspicions were reports from northern Mexico and Yucatán which claimed the actual presence of these agents.

157 Baron Castro, p. 94.
Considered by some historians to be a farce, Captain-General Mollinedo nonetheless responded with a strong statement that warned that any French sympathizer or spy "would suffer the worst punishment that the government could inflict." While cautioning all Guatemalans, he also offered a 500 peso reward for the disclosure or capture of any French agent.

Indicative of the nascent sense of strength, an independent spirit that would manifest itself more openly after 1811, the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento initially balked at accepting the authority of the Regency. This act moved one author to call it the "first indication of those movements which would become expressions of popular sentiment." Although eventually accepted for expediency's sake, the Ayuntamiento qualified their acceptance by first noting that they considered the establishment of the Regency as contrary to Guatemala's rights. This position gained strength from the support given it by such well known Central Americans as the Marquis de Aycinena, José María Peinado, and Cayetano Pavón.

Fearless, and ever vigilant, the Ayuntamiento also protested to the Captain-General that the Tribunal de Fidelidad did not have a single creole member and suggested its enlargement to six persons,

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158 Salazar, Historia, p. 123.


160 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 45.

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half of which would be colonials. The Spanish government was not blind to such a threatening posture and indicative of its concern was the communication from Captain-General Mollinedo dated December 10, 1810, to the Secretary of Justice in Spain. In it Mollinedo commented upon the "alarming symptoms of rebellion against Spain and calling special attention to the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento."  

Perhaps the most widely known Central American effort relative to the Spanish American activities in the Cortes were the Instructions on the Fundamental Constitution of the Spanish Monarchy. Meant to be a set of directions for deputy Larrazabal, they were written in compliance with the same decree which authorized the convocation of the Cortes. On August 17, 1810, the Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City commissioned José María Peinado, Vicente de Aycinena, Miguel Larreinaga, and Father Antonio Redondo to prepare a set of Instructions which would state their desires and empowering Larrazabal to act on their behalf. The project was completed and subsequently presented to the Ayuntamiento on October 13, 1810 for its approval. As written, the Instructions were duly approved and enjoyed with acceptance as suggested when the other five Central American deputies, plus the representative from Mexico City, adopted them. Even so, some dissension was experienced in Guatemala City when four councilmen, Isasi, }

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161 Barón Castro, p. 94.


163 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 47.
Melon, Gonzalez, and Aqueche refused to sign them in their entirety. The Instructions were, in reality, the constitution that the Central Americans wanted. They expressed conservatively progressive ideas even though based on the objective of concentrating "political power in the hands of the American elite." It is nevertheless a remarkable document considering its authors and the times. It cries out against the despotic degradation of mankind and laments an arbitrary criminal code that has no "philosophy or principles" and the "blind and superstitious veneration for all the errors and consequences of the most barbaric and obscure times that self-interest, neglect, ignorance, or maliciousness have caused being made our laws." It notes an insatiable, arbitrary and obscure administration that views its subjects as a "troop of slaves," of interests born of the most "absurd principles," of capricious and ignorant distinctions between men that are contrary to reason and justice," of offensive inequalities based on localism and ignoring the general welfare." The authors wrote of a hierarchy "invented and amplified according to despotic interests and without public examination" and they called for a constitution that prevents royal absolutism by limiting monarchical authority and one whose laws are based on man's natural rights. They wanted a document which created an economic and political organization which supported the "three sacred principles of

164 García Laguardia, p. 222.

165 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 48.
property, liberty, and security" and demanded an educational system that dissolved public ignorance and was of general usefulness.\footnote{166}{J. Antonio Villacorta C., "Guatemala en las Cortes de Cádiz," Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala 17, (March, 1941): 10.}

The document was divided into a number of parts the two most important being the Declaration of the Rights of the Populace and the Constitution. The Declaration was, as one scholar has called it, a "literal copy of the Declaration of the Rights of the French Constitution of August 22, 1794" and as such need not be considered here except to note the extensiveness of French philosophe thought.\footnote{167}{Ibid.}

The Constitution was more original. It maintained the Catholic church as the state religion and suggested a shared government wherein royal powers would be balanced between the king and a powerful supreme council. Other articles indicate the colonial preference for personal qualities over social position in regards to state employment. A form of colonial congress was proposed whose deputies would be nominated by the Ayuntamientos. This same congress would address itself to the advancement of the Indians, the establishment of state revenues, their proper collection, distribution, and administration. Of major importance, the colonial congress was to have a "special obligation" to continually examine and modify existing laws.\footnote{168}{Ibid., pp. 3-25.} The Constitution proposed, in essence, an exercise in
A New Captain-General in Guatemala

When José de Bustamante y Guerra was sworn in as the Captain-General of Guatemala on March 14, 1811, it was with the determination of a man secure in the purpose and propriety of his mission. As a career soldier who had served the crown faithfully, and more or less successfully, at a number of different assignments, he was apparently well thought of. By the age of nineteen he had risen to the rank of brigadier and at twenty-one he had taken part in Malespina's circumnavigation of the globe in the 1790's.

Later appointed Governor-General and Commander of Montevideo he became known there for his persecution of Uruguayan patriots. Unfortunately, while serving in South America he had the bad luck of being captured by the British but had returned to Spain in time to take part in the famous May 2 (Dos de Mayo) uprising against the French in 1808.

Although Bustamante was, as Rodríguez suggests, initially positive towards his new position, and even maintained a "highly favorable" first impression of the Guatemalans, it is quite likely

169 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 49.

170 Salazar, Historia, p. 140.


172 Salazar, Historia, p. 140.
that these feelings did not extend to that part of the colonial administration under creole domination. There is little doubt that before entering Guatemala he entertained certain suspicions of the Ayuntamiento. An objective outlook on his part was in fact made all but impossible when in early 1811 he had read the above mentioned Instructions. He noted them to be "very subversive and dangerous in the present delicate state of the monarchy, and enough to inflame a spontaneous revolution." They were, he thought "designed to destroy the laws of the Indies and to set forth a plan of Independence." He also viewed one of their authors, José María Peinado, as "the ideological flame in the territory under his control."

Nevertheless, when he assumed his responsibilities, he did so with at least some idea of improving the life of the colony. He suggested that more nightwatchmen be employed and urged that prison conditions be improved. He proposed methods to control drunkenness and, under his sponsorship, a college of surgery was founded for provincial doctors.

Fearful of possible French designs on the Spanish colonies,

173 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 102.

174 García Laguardia, p. 249.

175 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 84.

176 Barón Castro, p. 141.

177 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 103.
he initiated a third monthly mail delivery between Oaxaca and Guatemala City so as to better improve communications with Spain.\footnote{Manuel Rubio Sánchez, "Comercio Terrestre de la Audiencia de Guatemala Con el Virreinato de la Nueva España," Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia 44, (1971): 324.}

To this same end, and in partnership with his wife, a public donation was begun in April, 1812. All persons were expected to contribute to this subscription and he was hopeful of raising enough money to maintain a Central American army.\footnote{Salazar, Historia, p. 156.}

But these accomplishments were but mere trappings which did nothing to alleviate the chronic problems which he inherited. The colonial government continued to flounder badly. Since the turn of the century the annual general administration receipts had declined to a point where they hovered around 70,000 pesos, an amount not nearly enough to maintain an efficient rule.\footnote{Wortman, p. 256.} A further indication of the economic stagnation then being experienced by the colony was the near zero growth of revenues from the interior customs houses.\footnote{Ibid., p. 284.}

As suggested by Miles Wortman, by 1810 Central America was near bankruptcy with a "deficit of over 400,000 pesos" and debts "exceeding four and a half million pesos."\footnote{Ibid., p. 277.} Attempts to alleviate the situation by raising taxes were ineffectual due to the poverty-stricken
conditions of the populace and to ayuntamientos which would not approve any further increases in taxation. So destitute was the government that when a rebellion occurred in El Salvador the expenses incurred by the expeditionary force sent to suppress it could only be paid with funds confiscated from the rebels. 183

The 1810 Cortes

Yet even before Bustamante had assumed his powers in Guatemala, certain events in Spain were occurring which would lead to a direct confrontation between him and the creole hierarchy. When the Cortes convened its first session on September 24, 1810, it lost little time in making changes. On the very day of its inauguration and with a bare majority of one, it decreed that "sovereignty resides with the people." It mandated "freedom of press, and abolished the office of the Inquisition and forced Indian labor. It also authorized certain freedoms of industry and commerce." 184

One of the Spanish leaders, Fr. Diego Muñoz Torrero proposed that the government have three branches: an executive, a legislative, and a judicial. Furthermore, and until the king returned, the Regency was to have executive responsibility, and the current extraordinary Cortes was to be the legislative body. Fr. Torrero also moved that Fernando VII be recognized as the true Spanish sovereign


184 García Laguardia, p. 147.
and that his Bayonne abdication be ignored. That these far-reaching pieces of legislation were successfully enacted suggests the presence of great enthusiasm and the promise of extensive reform. Confronted with this, the Regency, which is depicted as a rather traditional body, resigned that same day in protest. Taking its own time, the Cortes eventually responded to this by appointing a new Regency.

Philosophically, the Cortes was divided into three groups: the liberals, the partial liberals, and the radicals. While all were advocates of change, the degree to which they were dedicated to reform varied. Least successful in gaining a political following were the partial liberals who had limited guidance and possessed a philosophy that was nothing more than a "naive reformism." The liberals were only slightly more successful than the partial liberals with only a meager connection to the Spanish nation being their principal political lever. The radicals, who may have been no more than a branch of the liberal school which had somehow managed to formulate a plan of action were the most successful group. Their main strength lay in an "eloquent leadership" such as in their spokesmen, Arguelles, Torrero, and Toreno. Noteworthy is that any concept of a modern political organization was absent from all three groups with even important discussions being held informally.

185 Lovett, 1: 373.

186 Carr, p. 94.
Central America in the Spanish Cortes

When the Junta Suprema Central dissolved itself in favor of a Regency, it not only stipulated that a Cortes was to be convened, but also that it was to have colonial representation. In their final form, the instructions called for deputies to be selected from the Viceroyalties of New Spain, Peru, Santa Fe, and Buenos Aires, from the Captaincies-General of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Santo Domingo, and Guatemala, and from Chile and the Philippines. Most of the representatives from Central America had arrived in Spain by late August, 1811.

Although each of the Central American provinces had adopted the Guatemalan Instructions, each of the individual provincial governments expanded on them somewhat and authorized their deputies to lobby for their own independent goals. For example, Fr. Florencio del Castillo of Costa Rica requested that his province be granted a bishopric and elevated to the status of an Intendency. In addition to petitioning for the creation of a Provincial Deputation, Costa Rica also asked to have its educational system upgraded. The delegate from El Salvador, Fr. José Ignacio de Avila argued for the establishment of a bishopric independent of Guatemala City, and he used the large Salvadorean population, plus the richness of its tithes as being indicative of the importance of its request. Eventually

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187 García Laguardia, p. 185.
188 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 59.
189 Meléndez, Textos, p. 41.
190 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 71.
he would also speak on the need for El Salvador to have a seminary and for it to be more independent politically of Guatemala. From Chiapas, Fr. Mariano Robles appealed for a number of changes, among which were the creation of a seminary, trade relief, tax incentives, and even a Tehuantepec canal. Significantly, in 1813 Robles was to request that a Provincial Deputation be created in Ciudad Real "since Guatemala City did not pay attention to questions essential to the prosperity of Chiapas." In Honduras unfortunately, a situation existed wherein the cities of Tegucigalpa and Comayagua seemed to be in a continual state of near war with each other. In spite of this, and even though Tegucigalpa would deny his authority, the Honduran delegate, José Francisco Mayorga conducted himself admirably. He presented the Comayaguan requests for a Provincial Deputation, an independent port authority, and mining and educational reforms. The Nicaraguan, José Antonio de la Plata, submitted what were probably the most energetic proposals. Nicaragua requested a seminary, a canal across the isthmus, a university, and a separate audiencia. In addition, it was asked that Nicaragua be allowed to do as it pleased with its tithes without direction from Guatemala.

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191 Barón Castro, p. 75.
192 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 72.
194 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 73.
195 Ibid., p. 72.
Although not all of the Central American deputies conducted themselves with equal ardor, overall they were surprisingly active and noticeably competent. Outstanding in this respect were Fr. Larrazabal of Guatemala and Fr. Castillo of Costa Rica both of whom Mario Rodríguez considers to be "outstanding leaders." Importantly, the Central Americans were not at all intimidated by their illustrious colleagues from Spain. Larrazabal may even have been threatening when he commented that all of the colonies were in danger of revolutions similar to that which had happened in North America. Additionally, Fr. Larrazabal was one of ten American deputies who had worked on the Constitution and one of four on the Constitution's "permanent deputation." He was also selected President of the Cortes (a rotating position) for a number of terms, and served on the Overseas, Justice, and Ecclesiastical Commissions. He was also active in different capacities on projects which attempted to limit abuses of power. Fr. Castillo, who was the better orator, worked forcefully to abolish the Indian taxes and, like Larrazabal, served as Cortes president. Castillo, as a champion of Central America's indigenous population, spoke out against the abuses that

196 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 59; and Aguado and Alcázar Molina, 3: 554.
198 Ibid., p. 211.
199 Salazar, Historia, p. 160.
it was subject to and the virtual slavery in which it was held.  

It would appear that the Central American deputies were, to some extent anyway, successful in attaining their individual goals. As seen, for example, when Provincial Deputations in Guatemala City, Leon, and Ciudad Real were created. Also, trading concessions were granted, and Costa Rica was raised to a bishopric although this particular honor was not taken advantage of immediately. Also, a Honduran port authority was established, a Nicaraguan university was authorized, and the colony would automatically benefit from the planned empire-wide educational reforms.

Nevertheless some abrasive issues were not addressed. Most serious were those problems which seemed to stem from the traditional position of dominance enjoyed by the province of Guatemala. An examination of the provincial requests of the Cortes indicates a strong desire to be more independent of the capitol and its environs. The Honduran petition for authority in port matters is an example. Furthermore, Chiapas, like the other provinces, wanted a Provincial Deputation established because Guatemala essentially ignored her needs. El Salvador requested a bishopric (which might have been granted but for unease growing in that province) and along with Nicaragua, it expressed a need for greater political autonomy.

The 1812 Constitution

Although writing a constitution was not its only task, the

200 Salazar, "Mariano de Aycinena," p. 115.

201 Woodward, Central America, p. 82.
Cortes from the beginning explored the possibilities of such an action. In light of this, on December 23, 1810, a commission was named for that signal purpose. The "constitutional project," as it was called, was first presented to the Cortes on August 18, 1811, and debated on until March 11, 1812. The completed document was shortly thereafter promulgated in Cadiz on March 19, 1812.

The "Men of 1812," as Raymond Carr refers to them, appear to have been truly interested in building a powerful middle class in Spain with the Cortes as the "sole representative of the sovereign nation." They believed in a uniform income tax, absolute property rights and they anticipated an extensive dismantling of the bureaucracy wherein a number of uniform, streamlined municipalities would be created. In turn, these municipalities would be "subordinate" to a centralized system of government.

Nonetheless, as Rodriguez suggests, the final document was not democratic but moderate. Especially noticeable was that it was religiously and electorally traditional. The señorios, or enclaves of private jurisdiction, were abolished, but only to a point where it would increase agriculture production. While in theory all males over twenty-five were granted suffrage, in actual practice the qualifications were so extensive that only certain men could vote. The

202 Aguado and Alcázar Molina, 3:555.
203 Carr, p. 98.
204 Ibid.
issue of slavery was examined but nothing was done until 1817 and then only the slave trade was banned.\textsuperscript{205} Importantly, although the monarchy was limited as never before, it still remained very powerful.\textsuperscript{206}

Nevertheless, some progressive changes were incorporated. It was ordered, for example, that royal power was hereinafter to be tempered by a forty member Council of State which was to have twelve colonial delegates.\textsuperscript{207} As the Spanish Cortes was given extensive powers to enact laws on national welfare, so were a number of major political laws enacted.\textsuperscript{208} For example, each town of more than one thousand persons was to have an ayuntamiento and all councilmen were to be subject to a popular vote with no ayuntamiento office being open to purchase or inheritance.\textsuperscript{209} Furthermore, no councilman was to be a royally appointed official at the same time he was a councilman and the total ayuntamiento body was to experience a complete turnover every two years.\textsuperscript{210} Also, a new institution, the Provincial Deputation, was to be created in various localities. Finally, it is noticeable that the Constitution began to limit the Viceroy's and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{205} Rodríguez, \textit{The Cádiz Experiment}, p. 88.
\item \textsuperscript{206} Ibid., p. 76.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Samoya Guevara, p. 121.
\item \textsuperscript{208} Rodríguez, \textit{The Cádiz Experiment}, p. 80.
\item \textsuperscript{209} Facio B., p. 274.
\item \textsuperscript{210} González Viquez, p. 459.
\end{itemize}
Captains-General by placing certain economic and administrative duties in the hands of "Superior Political Chiefs." 211

As a result of the new Spanish laws there were, in addition to the more obvious changes, some less tangible effects. As noted above, a major problem which remained unsolved in Central America was the provincial animosity towards the capital. Most of this appears to have stemmed from commercial difficulties and abuses committed by certain merchants which were based in Guatemala City. Due to their importance, it is consequently difficult to understand why the delegates to the Cortes did not pursue these issues more fervently. Or for that matter, why were their instructions not more explicit on this point? It is not surprising then, as Thomas L. Karnes notes, that the Cortes did relatively little to alleviate commercial restrictions. 212 Furthermore, abrasive religious issues were untouched. This was especially true in El Salvador which had long wanted its own bishop and yet did not receive one. It must have been especially galling for the Salvadorean leaders to receive news that Costa Rica had been granted a bishopric while their own petitions remained unanswered.

Of future importance to the growth of a politically aware and more demanding society, were the reforms authorized in local politics. For the first time segments of the population hitherto ignored by

211 Samoya Guevara, p. 129.

these procedures were now drawn into them. Even though the personnel in the elected bodies would not change significantly, the politicians would henceforth be cognizant of issues and peoples they had previously ignored. In essence then, colonial leadership was being forced into becoming more responsive to the citizenry.

Still awaiting an objective analysis is the attitude towards the new laws by the Captains-General. In light of the fact that their overall powers were reduced, it seems probable that some resistance was evidenced. Hector Samoya Guevara notes, for example, that Captain-General Urrutía y Montoya attempted to name Political Chiefs as subordinate to him even though there were no authorized hierarchical divisions.\(^{213}\) Another authority claims that under Urrutía y Montoya's predecessor, Bustamante, freedom of the press was a myth.\(^{214}\) The effectiveness of the constitution therefore may have been in certain areas, at least, partially limited by unofficial restrictions.\(^{215}\)

In an age of growing and somewhat uncontrolled sophistication, a number of inopportune political objections surfaced. As the Cortes was liberal and at the same time anticlerical it alienated both the clergy and conservative factions in the colonies. Rodríguez agrees with this position to a certain point and even claims that an "arrogance of power" existed in the Cortes which the colonials found

\(^{213}\) Samoya Guevara, p. 130.

\(^{214}\) Herrarte, p. 124.

\(^{215}\) García Laguardia, p. 285.
It can be seen then that the overall effect of the Spanish Cortes in Central America was indeed conducive to the creation of a psychology of independence. Also at the same time, it helped lay the foundation for eventual separation by failing to inaugurate positive changes which would have forestalled such an action. Those reforms that it did decree were but tokens which did little to address the real needs of the colony. The Cortes created a frame of mind in which independence was viewed cautiously and perhaps inevitably.

The Constitutional Ayuntamiento and Provincial Deputation

Politically, Bustamante entered an arena that was soon to be a boiling cauldron. The new constitution allowed for popularly elected Ayuntamientos, which although promising, soon became a cause of continual irritation to the Captain-General. Beginning work in late 1812 its liberal creole leaders quickly surged forward and vigorously assumed tasks with a sense of freedom that startled the Spanish hierarchy. Notwithstanding the obstacles he placed in front of it, the Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City achieved an honorable record as the most important institution of its kind in the colony, and it established a code of conduct which others would follow. It dutifully accepted its new mandate of overseeing the public health programs, the maintenance of primary education, hospitals and other

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216 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 96.
welfare organizations, roads, bridges, and the promotion of agriculture, industry, and trade. Informally connected to the newly reinstituted Sociedad Económica and the Consulado de Comercio, it loosened government controls on business while at the same time prohibiting the growth of certain monopolies.

The newly commissioned Diputaciones Provinciales, Provincial Deputations, were also offensive to the Captain-General. Beginning as local governing juntas as had been established in Spain shortly after the Napoleonic invasion, they were intended to function as interim governments until a more formal system was created. Quickly gaining legitimacy in both Spain and the colonies (although not in Guatemala), they were legalized under the 1812 Constitution. Ominously, though, it should be noted that it was only through the intervention of certain renowned Americans that such units in the colonies were permitted. The Captaincy-General of Guatemala was initially granted two, one seated in Guatemala City and one in León, Nicaragua.

After the electoral Junta Preparatoria, or Preparatory Junta, had established the political boundaries, a deputy to the Provincial Deputation was elected from each district. For the Guatemalan Provincial Deputation, this included representatives from Guatemala

\[217\] Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 121.

\[218\] Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 111.

\[219\] Zelaya, Nicaragua, p. 97.
City, Ciudad Real, Comayagua, San Salvador, Quetzaltenango, Sonsonante, and Chimaltenango. The Nicaraguan Provincial Deputation included deputies from León, Granada, Segovia, Villa de Nicaragua, Nicoya, plus two from Costa Rica.\textsuperscript{220} Besides the seven ordinary members, the Provincial Deputations were presided over by a Jefe Político, or Political Chief, who was a royal appointee who, like the deputies, had but one equal vote.\textsuperscript{221} In the case of Guatemala, and while not necessarily typical throughout the empire, the Political Chief was also the Captain-General.

The Provincial Deputations represented a serious threat to the powers of the Captains-General and the Viceroy's. Since the Political Chiefs were all of equal rank, it is conceivable that, had the Constitution been strictly adhered to, their offices might have been severely weakened.\textsuperscript{222} If Chester Zelaya is correct when he says that the "Provincial Deputations were responsible directly to the central government in Madrid and not to any organ of government in America" then the absolutist positions of the Viceroy's and Captains-General were indeed in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{223}

Although the ayuntamientos were technically subordinate to the Provincial Deputations, in the Captaincy-General of Guatemala at least, the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento was forced to assume its

\textsuperscript{220}Rodríguez, \textit{The Cádiz Experiment}, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{221}Ibid., p. 65.

\textsuperscript{222}Samoya Guevara, p. 132.

\textsuperscript{223}Zelaya, p. 98.
responsibilities until its Provincial Deputation could begin to function.\textsuperscript{224} Besides being advisory bodies to the Political Chiefs and Intendents, the Provincial Deputations were in charge of all administrative aspects of the colony and even directed the activities of the ayuntamientos.\textsuperscript{225} They were obligated to supervise taxation, to ensure the proper use of public funds, the establishment of new ayuntamientos, the advancement of public education, the development of agriculture, industry, and commerce, census taking, the policing of constitutional laws, the care of welfare institutions, and the care and improvement of the Indian population.\textsuperscript{226} They were also a kind of appellate court on taxation issues and their offices were often used for military recruitment.\textsuperscript{227} They distributed vacant lands and could intervene in certain judicial matters and at times even determine the role of the government of economic matters.\textsuperscript{228}

By the time the Guatemalan Provincial Deputation had begun its work in the fall of 1813 a venomous sense of animosity had already surfaced between the Captain-General and the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento. The Provincial Deputation was also affected by this

\textsuperscript{224}\textit{Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America}, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{225}\textit{Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{226}\textit{Samoya Guevara}, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{227}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 125

\textsuperscript{228}\textit{Ibid.}
but to a lesser extent since its active life was so much shorter. Nevertheless, it did try to conduct business under this handicap although its effectiveness is still not certain. The Nicaraguan Provincial Deputation, of which even less is known, also attempted to work in a similarly honorable fashion. Unlike its brethren in Guatemala, however, it was assisted rather than hindered by the Intendent, Col. Juan Bautista Gual. 229

Bustamante Versus the Ayuntamiento and the Provincial Deputation

The constitutional Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City and the Provincial Deputation continued to function under wearisome conditions until Fernando's return in 1814. Although promising, their existence was limited due to the unsympathetic chief executive. As bastions of creole strength, they were an effective, if brief, education in the processes of electioneering and politics.

As noted above, Bustamante's posture of antagonism was evident in the final months of tenure of the old-style Ayuntamiento, and by the time he swore allegiance to the 1812 Constitution in September of 1812, most Central American leaders viewed any of his actions quite skeptically, regardless of their humanitarian nature. 230 Salazar notes that his actions and personality were especially offensive, even begrudging the freedom to discuss colonial and Empire problems

229 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 118.

and their destiny.  If, as is claimed, he was sent by Spain to "retard" any independence movements in Central America, then he complied with this mandate zealously. A police force was established which watched over even the slightest movement. Tribunals of Faith to review unpatriotic acts were established, and espionage was in use everywhere. Peace was maintained through a strict systematized persecution and denunciation with rich and poor equally fearful that even the most innocent act would be viewed as subversive. A system of mail censorship was imposed and Guatemalan readers were kept ignorant of the progress of the Mexican and South American rebellions. Given the nickname "Zonto" because of a mutilated ear, he commented in mid-1813 that Guatemala City "has been the center from which the turmoil which has embraced the provinces has originated." This was in partial response to the rash of uprisings then sweeping the colony.

Bustamante's wrath was not selective and his only criteria was whether or not, in his opinion, a person was a threat to the Empire. A good example of this can be noted after the election of the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento in the fall of 1812. Of the seventeen

231 Salazar, Historia, p. 151.
232 Chamberlain, Francisco Morazán, p. 11.
233 Carrillo Ramírez, p. 415.
234 Karnes, The Failure, p. 16.
235 Fernández Guardia, La Independencia, p. 8
elected members that Salazar considers, seven of them, Asturias, Batres, Barrundia, García Granados, Urruela, and Beltranena, were members of "the family." 236 As such, the creoles, a group whose loyalty he should have cultivated, became intimately involved in the Bustamante-Ayuntamiento feud and their letters to influential persons in Spain reflect a strong desire to see the Captain-General removed. 237 In response to this animosity, Bustamante used his position to hurt the powerful Aycenina clan, and indirectly others as well, through a denial of loans and by bringing legal suits against them on tax debts of 35,000 pesos. 238

Although his disputes with the Ayuntamiento had arisen almost immediately, probably the most widely heralded argument concerned his battle over freedom of the press. First decreed by the Cortes on September 24, 1810, it became a tool which Bustamante used to maintain his unyielding rule. Under him, the once promising Gaceta was reduced to printing lies and by 1811 it was securely "in government hands as is indicated by its new title, Gaceta del Gobierno" and as such, it was "reduced to a gossip sheet of Europe and Guatemala." 239


237 Woodward, Central America, p. 86.

238 Bumgartner, del Valle de Central America, p. 118.

239 Luque Alcaide, p. 128.

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Another facet of this same problem was Bustamante's refusal to allow the printing of any official Ayuntamiento document without his prior approval. So all-encompassing was this order that it even included a prohibition against printing the 1812 Constitution. To this the Ayuntamiento sent a formal protest to him on October 1, 1811.240

Ayuntamiento complaints were more formally voiced on May 13, 1812, when Sebastian Meloń, the mayor, and Lorenzo Moreno, a councilman visited the Captain-General. They presented a list of grievances which included his frank hostility towards the Ayuntamiento, an alienation of the citizens, and private decisions that he made without considering public opinion. They also commented upon his attitude which was causing the relations between the Spaniards and creoles to deteriorate along with his inappropriate demands and overly severe punishments.241

In anticipation of the elections of deputies to the Provincial Deputation and to the forthcoming ordinary Cortes, the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento petitioned the Captain-General on December 18, 1812, for specifics on those same elections and calling to his attention that the deputies were to be in Spain by September 1, 1813.242 Bustamante responded that he had decided not to hold the elections due to the rebellious state of the colony. The Ayuntamiento's

240 García Laguardia, p. 291.

241 Ibid., p. 285.

242 Ibid., p. 286.
answer to this was to authorize Antonio Juarros, a councilman, to compose a note which was to be sent to Spain. The note was submitted to the Ayuntamiento for approval on January 2, 1813, and was effective enough to cause Bustamante to shortly call for the elections. Possibly piqued because the note was sent anyway, he continued to hedge until March when the elections were eventually held. As if this were not enough, after the elections, he also delayed the deputies' departure by withholding their travel allowances.243

On February 1, 1813, the opening ceremonies of La Merced Church in Guatemala took place, an event that Bustamante chose to deliver yet another deliberate snub to the Ayuntamiento. To do this he ordered those seats reserved for the councilmen to be placed in an area of lesser importance, an act designed to have a humiliating impact.244 The Ayuntamiento protested this act also but only to the church hierarchy, which gained it little satisfaction.

Until the Provincial Deputation assumed its responsibilities in the fall of 1813, one of its tasks that had been undertaken by the Ayuntamiento was the periodic inspection of the jails. Its visits during April, 1813, provided yet another opportunity for a confrontation between the councilmen and the Captain-General. From the visits, a report was compiled which was highly critical of the government and noted problems such as dangerous overcrowding. Mentioned was the fact two prisoners, Antonio Marure and Gabriel Oxe, 


244Salazar, Historia, p. 164.
had been confined without knowing the charges against them and that another, Liberato Gano, had been imprisoned solely by the verbal order of Bustamante. 245

Visits of this sort were also the cause of a rift between the Ayuntamiento and the archmonarchist Ramón Casaus y Torres, the Archbishop of Guatemala, a chief collaborator of Bustamante. 246

The problem surfaced when he was requested by the Ayuntamiento to initiate prison reforms similar to those made of the Captain-General. Casaus scoffed at this and even went so far as to deny that church prisons even existed. This was a falsehood since two councilmen, Valdés and Castillo, had inspected one of the "nonexistant" jails and reported at least two priests were prisoners there. One of them may have been the "Indian philosopher" Tomás Ruiz, a savant highly thought of in the Ayuntamiento. 247

The war of nerves continued throughout the summer with Bustamante openly admitting that he authorized mail censorship, especially that coming from the rebellious areas. Even though the Captain-General claimed that this was done for reasons of security, the Ayuntamiento decided to inform Larrazabal of this fact plus other offenses anyway. 248

The Ayuntamiento also requested of Spain that a

245 Ibid., p. 166.

246 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 29.


248 García Laguardia, p. 286.
clarification of those laws pertaining to freedom of the press be issued since Bustamante continued to oppose it. Only constant pressure such as this forced the Captain-General to allow the Censorship Boards in Nicaragua and Guatemala to commence operation in November of 1813.

Probably because he anticipated even further complications, Bustamante also opposed the election of the Provincial Deputations, and at least in Guatemala City, their very installation. As might be expected, this accomplished nothing more than deepening even further the already extensive creole-Spaniard schism. Bustamante committed a critical tactical error here in that before this his enemies were generally confined to the capital and its immediate environs whereas afterwards they were found throughout the colony. The Guatemala City Ayuntamiento responded to the continued acts of hostility by forwarding yet another note to Spain protesting his actions.

Suggestive of an enthusiastic endorsement of the 1812 Constitution, after the Provincial Deputation elections the Ayuntamiento wrote to the newly-elected deputies and offered them the use of their offices as a temporary residence, an act to which Bustamante countered by suggesting that a room in the palace be used instead. The

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249 Ibid., p. 291.
250 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 114.
251 García Laguardia, p. 289.
252 Ibid.
deputies demurred on this and accepted the Ayuntamiento's offer which was probably taken by the Captain-General as yet another insult. By mid-summer, 1813, a number of deputies had arrived in Guatemala City only to find that the Bustamante would not allow any meetings to take place until the entire Provincial Deputation had been seated, an event which could not take place until September 2, 1813.

One of the rules governing the operations of the Provincial Deputation specified that the president have but one equal vote. When Bustamante chose to ignore this rule a further protest was sent to Spain, this time signed by five of the seven deputies. The vengeful Captain-General then requested that Archbishop Casaus investigate the signers since most of them were priests. This unfortunate situation might eventually have caused a violent clash had it not been for the timely return of Fernando to the Spanish throne. When this happened, government offices and policies returned to their 1808 state and brought about an automatic and sudden halt to the Bustamante-creole feud.

The Rebellions

The year 1808 ushered in the era of rebellions in Central America. Unlike other areas though, the Guatemalan disturbances do not appear to have been ideologically connected to any one particular cause but nevertheless remain critical to our understanding of the times. One of the first to occur was in Costa Rica in March of 1808. Serious enough to cause troops to be sent in, it was nothing more

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than a weak attempt aimed more at tobacco and liquor laws than at independence.\textsuperscript{254} Later that same year a more serious insurrection took place in Guatemala City. Often referred to as the \textit{Motín de Artesanos}, or Artisan's Mutiny, it is the act that Samoya Guevara considers to be the first true suggestion of independence in Central America.\textsuperscript{255} Beginning as an attempt by creole councilmen in Guatemala City to establish a Junta de Gobierno, it also apparently entertained the idea of removing Captain-General Mollinedo.\textsuperscript{256} For additional support a group of artisans was called upon who were already up in arms over high taxes and the threat of outside competition. On October 17, 1808, a riot broke out that was led by an ex-secretary of the Audiencia, Simón Bergaño y Villegas. If the amount of damage caused was minor, its psychological effect was great. Along with ominously demanding that all Spaniards be excluded from any responsibilities in government, there were also cries of "down with the Spaniards and long live free Guatemala."\textsuperscript{257}


\textsuperscript{255} Meléndez, \textit{Textos}, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{257} Arturo Valdés Oliva, \textit{Centro América Alcanzó la Libertad al Precio de Su Sangre}, (Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1965), p. 9. The era of rebellion also introduced, perhaps unconsciously, a sense of American nationality as indicated by the use of the terms "Spaniard" and oftentimes "European" applied to the Spaniards, whereas the titles "Americans" or "Guatemalans" would be voiced as pertaining to themselves by the patriots. While the Spaniard may or may not have been viewed at this time as a foreigner, this practice is suggestive of a rather extensive schism.
An extension of this event involves Bergano's correspondence which suggests that efforts were underway to extend the turmoil into the provinces and even including some priests in the affair. Mention was made of priests calling for the populace to "drink up the blood of the Spaniards just as they have been sucking up the money that belongs to us." The rebellion was easily suppressed with most of the leaders, including Bergano, being rounded up, some even being incarcerated in a Cuban prison.

Although thwarted, the artisan cause was not completely inert, however, as some leaders continued to actively promote change. One of them, Agustín Vilches, on May 6, 1809, was imprisoned "on proof of having promoted different insurrections" and even urging the acceptance of Napoleon as sovereign. One scholar, Arturo Valdés Oliva, says that Vilches "figures among the first victims of the struggle for liberty."

Although it is difficult to gauge the depth of conviction of the patriots, it does appear that pockets of independence sentiment did exist throughout the colony. One of the first indicators of this occurred in Ciudad Real, the capital of the province of Chiapas. In 1810 the Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City received a letter from Ciudad

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258 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 57.
259 Ibid., p. 58.
260 Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 25.
261 Ibid., p. 29.
Real which urged Guatemalans to follow the South American revolu-
tions and discussed a proclamation of independence. In it, the mon-
archy was attacked and suggestions were made as to how to use elec-
tions for subversive purposes. Reflective of many creole com-
plaints it mentioned high taxes, creole exclusion from the higher
levels of employment, the entrance of any class of Spaniard in the
colonies, and frivolous policies which caused serious commercial de-
privations. It was, as Jorge Mario García Laguardia states, "a
catalog of grievances against Spain, a justification of spiritual
and actual independence." A bitter letter, it noted that 'the
Spaniard, already a slave, intended to submit themselves and their
slaves to the throne of the Bonapartes' and was signed Los Ciudadanos
Patriotas, or the Citizen Patriots.

The character of the seditious acts changed in 1811 when they
became centered for the most part in the provinces of El Salvador and
Nicaragua where they began somewhat inauspiciously. In April of that
year, a soldier, Encarnación Valladores, underwent criminal charges
related to "certain words which touched on unpatriotic veins." Spec-
ically he was accused of exhorting the citizens of León to rebel.

262 García Laguardia, p. 278.

263 Ibid., p. 279.

264 Barón Castro, p. 112.
For his efforts, he languished in jail until 1814. Singly, while cases such as these were of minor importance, it has been stated that "hundreds" of similar examples happened during the decade 1810-1820. As such they were indicative of serious discontent and probably presented a rather startling picture to Spanish officialdom.

In November of 1811, a very serious riot occurred in the City of San Salvador. In this case, the leaders were well-to-do and most were related through ties of marriage and commerce. Central among these were Father José Matías Delgado and his cousin, Manuel José Arce (a future president of the United Provinces of Central America), plus members of the Aguilar, Lara, Aranzamendi and Fagoaga families. Through their extensive connections, it was hoped that the rebellion would spread throughout the entire colony.

The available evidence suggests that a betrayal forced the leaders into prematurely launching their offensive before their plans were fully developed. Exactly what brought this about is unclear but it seems that a religious schism appeared in the movement which caused the withdrawal of a number of prominent church leaders. Nevertheless, at five o'clock in the morning on November 5, 1811,

265 Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 31.
266 Mayes, p. 34.
268 Barón Castro, p. 146.
269 Holleran, p. 66.
Father Delgado rang the bells of La Merced church signaling that the rebellion had begun. Soon afterwards a vigorous assault against the military barracks took place and the arms contained there were taken. Initially successful, the Intendent Governor and other superior officers in the government were quickly apprehended and imprisoned.

At first the rebels' demands were controlled and perhaps not even truly reflective of their philosophical leanings. They desired, for example, the popular elections of Ayuntamiento members, free trade, and the abolition of monopolies. More indicative, however, of the charged atmosphere may have been seen on that same day when the rebels declared "national independence." On November 7, 1811, however, the central leadership in an apparent reversal, swore an oath of loyalty to Fernando. Also in an effort to enlist aid from the other districts, patriot representatives were sent out hopeful of convoking what one scholar calls "an authentic congress."

As had been hoped, the insurrection did indeed spread. Following San Salvador's example, the towns of Usulutan, Chalatenango, Cojutepeque, and Zocatecoluca, soon rebelled. Of these, the rebellion at Zacatecoluca was especially noteworthy. At first the movement there was partially suppressed by the local military but

\[\text{270} \text{ Valladares Rubio, "Manuel José de Arce," p. 30.}\]

\[\text{271} \text{ Valdés Oliva, "Fueron Determinantes," p. 81.}\]

\[\text{272} \text{ Barón Castro, p. 153.}\]

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a counteroffensive shortly placed the town in rebel hands. A number of the residents of Metapan also rebelled. Led by Juan de Dios Mayorga, a postal supervisor, the patriots were pledged to "violently depose Jorge Guillen de Ulisco, only because he was European."\footnote{Valdes Oliva, 
\textit{Centro America Alcanzo}, p. 49.}

Unfortunately, though, no major towns were inclined to participate in the rebellion. In fact, the important centers such as San Vicente, Santa Ana, Sonsonante and San Miguel went so far as to condemn the insurgents and some even raised troops to be used against the rebels.\footnote{Valladares Rubio, "Manuel Jose de Arce," p. 32.} And in San Miguel, authorities publicly burned the insurgents' invitation to join in their efforts.

In Guatemala City, the official response was not long in coming, even though it eventually proved to be surprisingly subdued and conciliatory. The Ayuntamiento there had successfully urged Bustamante to assume a cautious, and even forgiving tone towards the rebels. Accepting this advice, he named the creole Jose de Aycinena as the new Intendent of El Salvador. The Ayuntamiento meanwhile named Jose Maria Peynado as their representative while the Archbishop named as his religious counterpart, Fr. Mariano Vidaurre.\footnote{Ibid.} While this atmosphere was indeed conciliatory, it should be remembered that the Bustamante-Ayuntamiento feud had not yet assumed its future irrevocable proportions. Commanded by Aycinena, the royal forces

\begin{itemize}
\item\footnote{Valdes Oliva, 
\textit{Centro America Alcanzo}, p. 49.}
\item\footnote{Valladares Rubio, "Manuel Jose de Arce," p. 32.}
\item\footnote{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
entered San Salvador on December 3, 1811, and were greeted more as liberators than conquerors by the populace. Although Arce, Delgado, and a number of other leaders were jailed, a prudent policy of amnesty was shortly instituted under which they were quickly freed.²⁷⁶

There seems little doubt that the San Salvador revolt of 1811 caused the ensuing flurry of similar disturbances. On December 20, 1811, for example, in Sensuntepeque the district chief was forceably removed from office and some supplies of tobacco and liquor were destroyed. The leaders of that rebellion were soon captured in San Salvador and tried.²⁷⁷ Yet another uprising occurred in the town of Masaya "against the Spaniards."²⁷⁸ Spreading, other revolts occurred in Monimbo and Diriegas (Nicaragua) where groups of Indians rebelled and imprisoned local officials.²⁷⁹

A more serious occurrence happened in León, Nicaragua where a determined group led by Fr. Benito Miguelena had been storing arms and conducting clandestine meetings.²⁸⁰ On the 13th of December, 1811, the Leonese belligerents assaulted a high level meeting of the Intendent and demanded an end to Spanish rule.²⁸¹ Faced with this,

²⁷⁷ Valdes Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 50.
²⁷⁸ Zelaya, p. 71.
²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 72.
²⁸⁰ Salazar, Historia, p. 154.
²⁸¹ Zelaya, p. 66.
the Intendent, José Salvador, resigned in favor of a Provincial Governing Junta comprised of prominent citizens which promised to consider the rebels' demands.\textsuperscript{282} Some of the changes they called for were: a change in authorities, lower taxes, the abolition of monopolies and slavery, and freedom for certain prisoners.

Bustamante responded to this by temporarily appointing the Bishop of León, Nicolas García Jerez as Intendent. Under his guidance, a general peace was achieved even though the Provincial Governing Junta continued to be dominated by rebel leaders.\textsuperscript{283} His control became undisputed however, when on December 26, and facing a second revolt, he ordered troops to forcefully put down any disturbance. Outside of sending in auxiliary forces, the response of the Captain-General to this second threat remained much as it had been for San Salvador and thus the insurgent leaders do not appear to have been severely molested.

Unabated, reports of disturbances continued to filter into the capital during 1812. Paralleling the Leonese problem was a similar one in its neighboring city of Granada. Destined to last five months, the ill-feelings boiled over on New Year's Day, 1812, when a new Ayuntamiento was formed to replace the one which had resigned under pressure a week before. The Granadan leaders, perhaps in an attempt to stave off any official recriminations, then accepted the Provincial Governing Junta of León as the supreme government in Nicaragua.\textsuperscript{284}

\textsuperscript{282}Ibid., p. 66.
\textsuperscript{283}Salazar, Historia, p. 154.
\textsuperscript{284}Zelaya, p. 72.
Perhaps believing that these incidents were indicative of a much larger movement, Bustamante responded more firmly this time and sent a 1,000 man army into the area. This may have been done reluctantly though, since, as Bumgartner implies before ordering the troops to Granada he had twice offered the rebels a general amnesty which they refused to accept. This triggered a terrible spirit of vengeance in the Captain-General and he ordered the royalist commander, Sergeant-Major Pedro Gutierrez to attack Granada. After two days of fighting a treaty was signed which allowed for the peaceful entry into Granada of the army on April 25, 1812. However, Bustamante refused to honor the treaty and instead ordered that all rebel leaders be arrested and tried. No less than 158 insurgents were eventually captured and forced to march to Guatemala City in chains. Many of these unfortunates were destined to perish in the squalid prisons of Trujillo, Havana, and Cádiz.

The first rebellion of note in Honduras took place in Tegucigalpa on January 1, 1812. In a letter describing the event, the Honduran Intendent, José María Piñol y Muñoz claimed that unrest was centered in the convent of San Francisco. It also suggested that the suspected leaders, Fr. Antonio Rojas and Fr. Joaquín de Heredia be exiled from Honduras since wherever they went "they could plant poisonous seeds." Their complaints were not "clearly expressed," but a possible cause was an attempt by the local government

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285 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 64.
286 Mayés, p. 34.
287 Ibid.
to maintain a number of persons as perpetual members of the "district
government." Approximately 100 armed men were involved in the
disturbance which was serious enough to gain a promise that the ex­
pected official decision regarding the above named members would not
take place. Indicative of the pervading discontent felt by the
colonials towards unequal opportunities was a rebel proclamation
stating that "the mestizos were to be equal with the Spaniards." Costa Rica also witnessed some disorders. However, as sug­
ggested earlier, the uprisings may have been nothing more than protests
"against tobacco and liquor monopolies" rather than movements for in­
dependence. The town of San José appears to have been the scene
of most of the turbulence. There, a group of perhaps ten men includ­
ing Francisco Osejo, a teacher in the Casa de Enseñanza de Santo
Tomás did discuss new ideas. Osejo became "the target of the abso­
lutists because of his propagandizing in favor of liberal ideas." In the province of Guatemala, revolts in Remedios and
Chiquimula kept royal forces on their guard. The most serious of
the two happened in Chiquimula on February 23, 1812, when a large

288 Ibid., p. 33.

289 Ibid.

290 Ricardo Fernández Guardia, Historia de Costa Rica: La
Independencia, 2nd ed. (San José: Librería Lehmann and Cía., 1941),
p. 2.

291 Ibid., p. 4.
group of men attempted to make off with an arms shipment. Why this happened is not certain although the severity of the treatment afforded the leaders is indicative of their serious intent. Captured, many were eventually sent to prisons in Cuba, Trujillo, Peten, and Omoa, some for extended periods of time.

Also in February of 1812, Manuel Paz, a postmaster, incited the Indians of San Martín Cuchimatan into a rebellious fervor. Central to their complaints were a number of abuses committed by local authorities which forced them into a position of "opposition to the government of the Europeans." Unsuccessful, Paz and other leaders of the plot were eventually jailed as "being suspect in inciting riots." These disturbances, plus others in Olancho and Juticalpa in Honduras may have been efforts to subvert the royal troops which were on their way to suppress the Grandan revolt.

Perhaps as a result of Bustamante's quick action in suppressing the rebellions in San Salvador, Leon, and Granada, the number of disturbances declined sharply in 1813. As local officials became more alert, those persons who were inclined towards insurgent action found it increasingly difficult to plan, much less execute, their campaigns. On January 10, 1813, for example, in the town of Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 57.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 61.

Ibid., p. 62.
San Miguel, Ignacio Corona attempted to incite the populace but was arrested and jailed even before his movement got started. Therefore, while not as numerous as before, those plots that were hatched were more secretive and better planned than before. In March of 1813, the newly appointed Intendent of El Salvador, José María Peinado, who had assumed those duties after Aycinina was appointed to an official post in Spain, reported to Bustamante that a second rebellion was being planned in the city of San Salvador. In this instance the conspirators were much better coordinated and maintained a truly secret organization with chapters in many precincts. An indication of the depth to which the organization had permeated official circles is revealed by the recruitment of a Peinado confident, Victoriano Moto. The leaders were much the same as before except for Fr. Delgado who had been confined to Guatemala City as a result of his rebellious activities in 1811. While their concerns were not very different than those previously stated, they were further aggravated by harsh imprisonments, distress over the happenings in Granada, and a feeling that the promises of the 1812 Constitution were not being kept.

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296 Ibid., p. 66.
297 Gavidia, 1:xi.
298 Ibid., 1: 6.
300 Gavidia, 1: 5; and Valladares Rubio, "Manuel José de Arce," p. 37; Valladares Rubio, "José Matías Delgado," p. 239.
For all its planning however, it proved to be a fruitless adventure as Peinado had cleverly placed a spy named Costeno in the rebel midst. Due to this the plot was uncovered even before it had gained any momentum and the principal leaders were quickly arrested. If they were anticipating the same understanding as before they were sadly mistaken for this instance, Bustamante's mercy would extend only to the "simple people," a suggestion which probably came from his secretary, José Cecilio del Valle in order to forestall any further trouble.301

The most serious threat of 1813 was the conspiracy of Belén which was especially alarming to the Spanish authorities because of its location in the capital. Furthermore, it was one of the most all-encompassing, in terms of membership, of all the rebellions. A partial list of participants is worth noting. There was the highly respected Indian priest and professor of philosophy, Fr. Tomás Ruiz, the Sub-Prior of the Convent of Belén, Fr. Juan Nepomuceno de la Concepción, the priests Fr. Víctor Castrillo, Fr. Benito Miguilena, and Fr. Manuel de San José. Also included was the aristocratic councilman and officer of Dragoons, José F. Barrundia, Lieutenant Joaquín Yudice, and Sergeants Castro, Díaz, and Aranzamendi. Employees in various enterprises such as Andrés Dardon, Mariano Bedoya, Manuel Ibarra, Juan Alvarado, and José Ruiz were members of the plot as were the farmers Cayetano Bedoya and Mariano Cárdenas, the merchant Manuel Tot, the lawyer Venancio López, and Francisco Montiel, a prison guard.

301Bumgartner, p. 72.
Their plan, although extensive was unwritten and included operations in a variety of sectors. Grandiose in scope, the ultimate goal was independence with the arrest of Bustamante and the take-over of the military barracks as the immediate objectives. Designed to begin on December 24, 1813, it was upset by Lieutenant Yudice who appears to have betrayed the plot on December 21. Most of the rebels were quickly rounded up as well as some unfortunate innocents.

Bustamante's vengeance was terrible and diverse. After languishing in jail for almost a year the conspirators were sentenced on September 14, 1814. Barrundia (who had escaped), Yudice, Ruiz, Castrillo, dela Concepcion, de San José, Díaz, Castro, Dardon, Fernández, Bedoya, Ibarra, Cardenas and Tot were sentenced to death. Fr. Miguelena was sentenced to ten years in an African prison in addition to being exiled from the American colonies. As severe as these pronouncements sound, it is worthwhile noting that none of the conspirators served their full sentences nor were the death sentences carried out.

The year 1814 opened with an ominous note for Captain-General Bustamante. Not only was the Conspiracy of Belén still fresh, but he soon received news that in Remedios, two prison guards and a soldier

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303 "Relación de los Autos Pasados por la Capitanía General Relativos al Proyecto de Conspiración que se Forulaba en el Convento de Belén," Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala 11 (September, 1934): 15.
304 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 36.

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had attempted to incite the local military to rebellion. Also, in January, a rather serious disturbance occurred again in San Salvador. Quickly suppressed, the area was then placed under the charge of Colonel José Méndez y Quiroga, the former president of the Tribunal de Fidelidad, who quickly instituted a reign of terror similar to that which was then underway in the capital.

In light of Fernando's return to the throne in mid-1814 and the fear created by the "terror bustamantino," the decline of independence-oriented disturbances continued. Confined to secret clubs which were organized, the next rebellion would not take place until 1816. In that year a plot of potential dimension was uncovered in Guatemala City. Called the Conjuración del Mesón de Dolores, or the Gathering of the Inn of Dolores, after the place where the conspirators met, it was led by Fr. Juan de Salvatierra and his brother José, a weaver. In their plans, the brothers had hoped to include not only the weavers of the suburb of San Sebastian but also certain military elements as well. Unfortunately, poor judgment resulted in the recruitment of a loyalist who subsequently betrayed the conspiracy to officials. Also in 1816 José Santiago Milla, the former

305 Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 85.
309 Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 89.
deputy to the Cortes from Honduras, unsuccessfully attempted to bring to mutiny selected military units in that province. Thwarted, he again surfaced a year later in Honduras where he tried to persuade a group of tobacco farmers to rebel.\footnote{Mayes, p. 38.} In 1819 the Captain-General was notified by Intendent Tinoco of Honduras of the detention of persons for subversive activities. Little is known of this disturbance except that it did pose an obvious threat since it involved a number of government employees. Nevertheless prompt action by the government defused any possible threat the plots may have had.

The final disturbance of note occurred in the district of Totonicapán near Guatemala City where, in 1820, an Indian rebellion of "alarming character" took place. There, the complaints seemed to be directed mainly towards the oppressive tributes which had been imposed when Fernando returned in 1814.\footnote{Ibid., p. 26.} In proper fashion, the Indians eventually sought redress of their grievances by sending emissaries to the capital. Unsuccessful, the Indians responded by forming a kind of loose confederacy among nearby towns. In July, they crowned Atancio Tzul King, and appointed Lucas Agailar as president. A constitution was also written and all collected tribute was returned.\footnote{Ricardo Falla, "Conflictos Limítrofes de Comunidades Indígenas del Corregimiento de Sololá y Totonicapán (Siglos XVIII y XIX), Anales de la Sociedad de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala 45, (1972): 149.} Although the Indian kingdom endured for less than
a month it was nevertheless able to repulse the initial forces which were sent to suppress it. Unfortunately, the superior strength of the government prevailed, forcing the rebels to surrender. 313

In retrospect then, the Guatemalan rebellions have few consistent points. Other than frequently being unhappy over government commercial policies and the discrimination in employment shown creoles, there are few threads of uniformity to be noted. An exception to this might be the involvement of the clergy, who may very well have been frustrated parish priests, in every important insurrection where in many cases they were the leaders. Yet it would be a mistake to assume that all religious, especially the top-most levels, desired independence. There were numerous instances where the bishops did all in their power to frustrate any rebellious activity. A good example of this was in Leon where Bishop García ordered the use of force against any rebellion. Of special importance, Rodolfo Barón Castro suggests that in Guatemala City, Archbishop Casaus' "intransigent attitude" created untenable situations with subordinates who were "intimately tied" to the Constitution of 1812. 314 As a confirmed monarchist Casaus may also have "encouraged Bustamante's suspicions about the loyalty of the creoles because of his earlier experiences in Mexico."315 When he ordered all the priests in El Salvador to preach

313 Valdés Oliva, Centro América Alcanzó, p. 93.

314 Barón Castro, p. 106.

315 Rodríguez, The Cadiz Experiment, p. 115.
out against the insurgents there, Fr. Miguel Ignacio Carcomo of Santa Ana responded by calling the rebellion of 1812, sacrilegious, subversive, seditious, insurgent, and unfaithful. Finally, one can note the Vicar of Granada who in 1812 wrote a proclamation attacking the rebellion there as anti-Christian and that the rebels were traitors to God.

Thus the French invasion of 1808 served to initiate certain events which would lead indirectly to Central American independence. Unobservable at first, the mentality of liberty, incubated through the enlightened ideas espoused at the University of San Carlos, was subliminally encouraged by occurrences on the Iberian peninsula. The freedoms granted by the Cortes and the Constitution of 1812 fostered even further the psychology of independence which in all probability was not even consciously accepted or acknowledged by the Central Americans themselves. While it has been oftentimes repeated that the French invasion did serve to draw the Spanish Empire together, it can also be speculated that at the same time it served to pull the individual colonies into each other. In an isolated area such as Guatemala, long neglected by the crown, the sense of aloneness was only aggravated.

Colonial leaders were not oblivious to the obvious impotence of the Spanish throne in the face of a superior force either. Nor were they blind to the ease with which the occupation and imprisonment

316 Barón Castro, p. 139.

317 Meléndez, Textos, p. 139.
of their sovereign was completed. Even so, actual separation from Spain remained a nebulous ideal and probably not seriously considered by the vast majority of colonials.

The appointment of a new, and ruthless, Captain-General, which paralleled the era of rebellion further complemented the still nascent sense of Central American sovereignty. It is probable that had Bustamante maintained his initially moderate posture towards the rebels, and had he been more permissive towards the inevitable and constitutionally authorized changes, a separation from Spain may have been significantly delayed.

Nevertheless, and even considering the severity of many of the revolts, the actions taken by the Captain-General did help to defuse the spirit of rebellion that appeared to be growing. The return of Fernando to the throne in 1814 effectively sealed the fate of any serious movement towards freedom.

Still uncharted, the interim between the first and second constitutional periods (1814-1820) seems to have been one of fermentation. A time in which the lessons learned under Bustamante plus the wisdom gained through secret deliberations were to be the foundations of Central America's separation from Spain. All that was lacking was an event significant enough to force the Guatemalans into accepting the inevitability of independence. This was not to be long in coming.
CHAPTER IV

CENTRAL AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE AND ITS IMMEDIATE ANTECEDENTS

There seems little doubt that the iron-fisted tactics employed by Captain-General Bustamante and the untimely reappearance of Fernando effectively thwarted any Central American drive towards independence, conscious or otherwise. And, in the final analysis, it may prove that the creole elements in Central America did not in fact, desire full independence but rather a more egalitarian society extensively modified but still under a Spanish monarch. Under any circumstances though, the creoles had to resign themselves to biding their time until Bustamante was inevitably transferred and to this end many influential colonials worked vigorously.

In 1817 Bustamante did leave Guatemala to assume an honorable post in Spain. In his place came a far more pliable executive whose favor the creoles immediately began to cultivate, undoubtedly hoping to regain and maintain their former position of influence and dominance. That they were successful and possibly content with the outcome of that venture is suggested by the relatively tranquil atmosphere that was preserved until 1820 when the repromulgation of the 1812 Constitution occurred.

In that year, Central America once again, as in 1812, became the scene of feverish political activity. The struggle for power in both the ayuntamientos and Provincial Deputations was intense,
especially since the new Captain-General obeyed the dictums of the Constitution and freely allowed the development of an ambiance conducive to the creation of political parties. Intuitively, the creole leaders recognized the need for, and actively sought to control, both the Ayuntamientos and the Provincial Deputations even though the aristocrats' informal status remained secure under the protective eye of the Captain-General.

Therefore, in the eighteen months or so between the repromulgation of the 1812 Constitution and Central American independence, one notes the growth of increasingly sophisticated political organizations. A critical appendage to this phenomenon was the equally important development of competing periodicals which complemented either the conservative or liberal parties. Compounding this unsettled atmosphere came the disruptive news of the Mexican declaration of independence in February of 1821. With Mexico's immediate proximity to Guatemala it became impossible for the Central American leaders to ignore that happening and it subsequently played a large role in their future deliberations.

Creole spokesmen who had seen the 1812 Constitution as a chance to achieve all that they had hoped for, were thus faced with a new dilemma. Whereas they had anticipated a secure return to their favored position, and despite the guarantees offered by Mexico, that nation still remained an unknown ingredient to the Central Americans. Especially disturbing was that in Guatemala, the faction which favored total independence was vocal and gaining strength daily. Furthermore, this same group leaned heavily towards a republican form of
government and not one ruled by a king. These facts, and the possibility of a mass revolt forced colonial aristocrats into declaring independence although it appears that from the beginning an immediate annexation to Mexico was planned.

Unfortunately, the latent yet incredibly intense factionalism which surfaced just prior to independence, plus Mexico's own instability spelled doom to the short lived union with Guatemala. After the Mexican authorities left Central America, the internal rivalries they had sought to extinguish only blazed even more fiercely than before. Central America soon entered an era of petty civil wars which would eventually destroy what appeared to be a most promising future.

**Political Party Development**

The growth of a discernable political system in Central America was an observable phenomenon from 1811 forward which owed its existence to a number of factors. Of primary importance was the state of the educational programs in the colony. It will be recalled that although good elementary instruction was very often difficult to obtain, an excellent education could be had at the University of San Carlos. There, the introduction of new methods and discussions stimulated the questioning of the old and a more ready acceptance of unorthodox ideas which might have been considered threatening under other circumstances. In light of the many excellent educators available, it is not surprising that in the highly critical years, 1775-1799, no less than 666 degrees were granted, more than twice as many...
as had been granted in the preceding 25 years. 318

The Sociedad Económica was another important channel for the dissemination of ideas. As noted elsewhere, this organization had promoted a number of innovations dealing with education, commerce, and social issues. Not confined philosophically to any one particular class, social barriers were often transcended as when such traditional opponents as the Spanish hierarchy and the creole aristocracy rubbed elbows in their numerous discussions. Although suppressed in 1799, many important issues which it had helped reveal and openly consider could never again be ignored completely.

Although more limited in scope than the Sociedad Económica, the Consulado de Comercio also contributed to enhancing the sense of growing expectations. Even though limited to an elitist membership, certain modifications in their former position soon became necessary. The simple fact that their dominance was threatened by the free exchange of ideas prompted this. Colonial merchants did not ignore the obvious benefits gained from adapting new methods nor fail to note the advantages to be gained from policies still considered illegal in Spain.

The inherent weaknesses from which Spain suffered became especially noticeable after the Napoleonic invasion and prompted questions regarding faults in other areas. Privately, and publicly, Central Americans began to question Spain's policies and even the traditionally close relations between king and subject came under

318 Lanning, p. 203.
scrutiny. Even though a definite character has yet to be satisfactorily applied to the 1808-1820 rebellions, common preferences of a conservative or liberal nature did nonetheless surface. Also, Bustamante's harsh attitude and demeanor forced many into considering alternative points of view. Especially important was his conduct toward rebels from Granada and El Salvador, many of whom were members of the local aristocracy and thus highly influential.

While the above characteristics did contribute to the growth of political ideologies in pre-independence Central America, it should not be assumed that these positions were sharply divided or obvious. While it must be admitted that in some instances there were true conservative, liberal, or even strongly independent sentiments, quite often these feelings were determined by personal interests, a problem which would become more evident after independence. Nonetheless, it appears probable that some political views were held by a number of important persons before 1810.

A large-scale coalescing of political philosophies is first noticed by Rodríguez in the Bustamante-Ayuntamiento split in late 1811. Woodward goes somewhat farther and suggests that at approximately this same time two definitive political parties emerged. The first being the government party which grew up around Bustamante and consisted of pro-Spanish merchants in the capital and provincial textile producers. The second party, which grew around a personal mistrust of Bustamante, was made up of a strange conglomeration which

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included the Guatemalan aristocracy, the lower classes, and some other intellectuals.\(^{320}\) The government party was, as with its counterpart, also based on personal grounds as these persons hoped that a continued association with Spain would maintain profitable monopolies. A case in point was their opposition to the introduction of English cottons which would hurt both merchants and weavers.\(^{321}\)

**The Constitutional Elections-1812**

At the same time that sentiments toward the Captain-General were bringing on the coalescing of political amalgamations, the 1812 elections provided an ideal forum on which to bring the various positions into the open. As ordered by the Cortes, the first elections of this sort were for Ayuntamiento and Provincial Deputation offices. But before the elections took place, and to insure uniform adherence to regulations, a Preparatory Junta was formed whose responsibilities were to interpret the rules and to disseminate them to the various parts of the colony. It was decided that the first elections were to be held on November 22, 1812, and be applicable only to the Ayuntamiento position. At this time the citizenry voted only for electors, not for the councilmen themselves.\(^{322}\)

In Guatemala City at least, it appears that the election mechanism worked surprisingly well. In that city an acceptable


\(^{321}\)Ibid.

\(^{322}\)Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 105.
balance between creoles and Spaniards was attained with a majority of those selected being graduates of the University of San Carlos. More specifically, the results were, for mayor, Sebastian Melón, and for vice-mayor, Francisco Salomón. The councilmen were Antonio Juarros, Lorenzo Moreno, Domingo Pavón, Juan Bautista Asturias, Pedro Batres, José Francisco Valdés, Francisco Barrundia, José María Granados, Manuel del Castillo, José Urrela, Eusebio Castillo, and as secretary, Juan Francisco Córdova, a principal antagonist of Bustamante. Of these, almost two-thirds had aristocratic connections of some sort. Even so, one respected Central American scholar considers that it was the first collective manifestation of a liberal orientation in Central America. Francisco Gavidia, in the same vein, comments that in San Salvador, a similar event occurred when the Ayuntamiento seats there were also won by liberals. The results there were, interestingly enough, contested unsuccessfully by Intendent Governor Peinado, one of the authors of the famous Instructions. The available information thus suggests that in two critical Ayuntamientos, those of Guatemala City and San Salvador, a liberal majority prevailed, an obvious setback to Bustamante.

324 Strobeck, p. 5.
325 Facio E., p. 274.
326 Gavidia, 1:13.
The Captain-General's policy of restricting by every method possible the Provincial Deputation elections suggests a strong fear of its potential strength. Because of these practices the deputies to this promising institution did not meet until September, 1813, barely eight months before Fernando's return and his suppression of all constitutional decrees. Nevertheless, the elections were successfully carried out. Here, the results were that Fr. José María Pérez from Quetzaltenango, Buno Medina of Comayagua, Eulogio Carrea of Chiapas, and Manuel José Pavón of Sacatepequez, were elected. Due to its short tenure, little evidence exists to pinpoint a political philosophy although a probable aristocratic orientation is suggested by the close cooperation noted elsewhere with the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento. Thus the unfortunate Bustamante found himself in the unenviable position of being almost completely surrounded by legally constituted antagonists.

**Fernando's Return**

Napoleon's defeat at Leipzig in October of 1813 set the stage for the return of the Bourbon monarchy to Spain. Unfortunately, it also set in motion certain acts which would completely reverse the positive liberal reforms of the Cortes. It caused Spain and her dominions to regress politically and brought on a denial of the 1812 Constitution. This state of affairs was to exist until 1820 when a further upheaval would reinstitute the above changes and Constitution.

Meanwhile, the extraordinary Cortes, author of many new and

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327 Rodríguez, *The Cádiz Experiment*, p. 117.
advanced laws, dissolved itself on October 1, 1813. Its successor, a general Cortes, was selected and entered Madrid a few months later on January 15, 1814.\textsuperscript{328} It is generally accepted that in certain respects the general Cortes promised to be as liberal as the old one had been. For example, in a step that would eventually lead to Fernando’s suppression of the 1812 Constitution, the general Cortes decreed that any act of his was void as long as he was surrounded by the "armed forces of the usurper of the crown."\textsuperscript{329} It also ordered, on February 2, 1814, in anticipation of his return, that Fernando could not exercise any royal power until he swore allegiance to the 1812 Constitution.\textsuperscript{330} Because of these reasons and others, when Fernando entered Spain on March 24, 1814 he was not quite sure as to what route to take. Royal vanity mandated a challenge to any restriction of his powers but self-preservation dictated a wait and see attitude, at least initially.\textsuperscript{331} However, after receiving serious assurances of support from powerful military and political leaders, he decreed that the Constitution and all other laws promulgated by the extraordinary Cortes were null and void. As an epitaph to the Acts of 1812, on May 10 he went so far as to order the arrest of all the liberal leaders who at that time included the deputies Larrazabal  

\textsuperscript{328} Lovett, 1: 413.
\textsuperscript{329} Ibid., p. 377.
\textsuperscript{330} Aguado and Alcázar Molina, 3: 568.
\textsuperscript{331} Carr, p. 118.
and Castillo from Central America. Thus,

the popularly elected Ayuntamientos were replaced by others whose offices were inherited, the constitutionally responsible ministers were succeeded by the old cabinet; the Council of State and the Supreme Tribunal disappeared and were replaced by the Royal Council, the Council of Castillo and the Inquisition, which had been suppressed by the Cortes only to return immediately by virtue of Fernando's decree of July 21, 1814.  

In Central America, Bustamante, who had been feigning illness in order to ward off the continuing demands for his dismissal, greeted the news of Fernando's return with obvious relish. Forgetting his infirmities, he "initiated the 'Terror' with a savage vengeance." As might be expected he was especially wrathful toward the creoles and the Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City. All copies of the Instructions were ordered removed from the archives, important references to the year 1810 were to be segregated and forwarded to the government, the paintings of deputies Pavón and Larrazabal plus that of the Marques de Aycinena were removed to a lesser room, and most ominously, a list was to be compiled of all those who had signed the Instructions.

The same order which disallowed the Constitution also removed all elected councilmen and reinstated those who had held office in

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332 Ibid.


334 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 127.

335 Salazar, Historia, p. 184.
1808. In Guatemala City however there were only four surviving councilmen and two of these, Aycinena and Peinado, were occupied elsewhere. The two that were left, Isasi and Juarros were reassigned to their former positions with all other vacant posts apparently filled through an as yet uninvestigated election in 1815. A by-product of these actions was Bustamante's authorized harassment of any creole aristocrats who were somehow connected to the signers of the Instructions. Furthermore, these same persons were prohibited from holding any political position until 1817 when a royal pardon restored their privileges.

In Spain however, José de Aycinena, who had been appointed to the Council of the Indies, faithfully continued to report Bustamante's overly-zealous methods. Due in large part to his efforts, both the Council and the king modified their position not only toward the Guatemalan creoles but to the Instructions as well. A cédula dated June 13, 1817, rescinded the 1815 order which authorized the harsh treatment of the colonial leaders and, noting a certain royal displeasure towards him, also recalled the hated Captain-General. Bustamante informed the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento on August 19, 1817, that he had been ordered to leave and that General Carlos de Urrutia y Montoya was to replace him. Rigid to the end, he refrained

336 Ibid., p. 181.
338 Valdés Oliva, "Fueron Determinantes," p. 87.
from mentioning the new royal attitude toward the Instructions or that many of the still imprisoned patriots had been pardoned.  

A final note concerning the Bustamante era was the residencia conducted on him by the Guatemalan Audiencia in 1820. Related documents indicate the true extent of his alienation from every social level, high and low. He was charged with being unnecessarily vengeful toward and plotting the ruin of the houses of Aycinena and Beltranena and in general being an illegal hindrance towards the well-to-do from any background. His distrust of, and animosity towards, both the Ayuntamiento and the Audiencia were recorded as was his practice of partiality in employment. He was accused of censoring the mail, abusing prisoners, of having a lax attitude toward crime, of not supporting those laws which were favorable to the Indians, and even murder. Even though the Audiencia found him guilty on almost all counts, he retired semi-honorably to a lucrative position in Spain.

Political Development After 1820

In January, 1820, two junior officers in the Spanish army began a rebellion which would shake the Empire to its foundations. The units involved in the revolt had been destined to relieve the weary royal forces in the colonies. However, rather than go, they

339 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 129.
341 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 129.
apparently decided to rebel rather than face an uncertain future in a far land. This was a precipitous, if inadvertant act, for although it did force Fernando into accepting the 1812 Constitution, momentum towards this same end had been gathering ever since he had returned in 1814. For example, Spain had experienced a number of serious popular revolts which "reflected the post-war depression" and "a restrictive monetary policy." Compounding the presence of such obvious governmental instability were the colonial wars which were well on their way to attaining their final victories. Thus, it appears that the military, faced with a king who stubbornly refused to accept the disintegration of his empire and who was even calling for further sacrifice, felt compelled to withdraw their support of him.

Although Fernando continued to intrigue against it, he nevertheless swore obedience to the 1812 Constitution on March 17, 1820. News of this event reached the Captaincy-General of Guatemala in the early summer of that same year. Urrutia officially accepted it on July 9, 1820, and shortly thereafter it was proclaimed throughout the colony.

With the reinstitution of the 1812 Constitution in 1820, new elections for the Ayuntamientos, the Provincial Deputations, and the Cortes deputies were also authorized, but with some noticeable differences. Of paramount importance was the attitude of Captain-General Urrutia who, unlike Bustamante, appears to have placed few obstacles

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342 Carr, pp. 122, 126.
343 Ibid., p. 124.
in the way of the free exercise of Constitutional rights. Under him, the Central American political scene matured markedly and a more responsible and journalistically sophisticated press emerged. Both of these institutions quickly became tools to be used by the various vested interest groups.

Whereas in 1812, modern political philosophies were still in embryonic stages, the events since then had allowed for the appearance of relatively mature political foundations and practices. Bumgartner gives credit for this to the combination of freedom of the press plus the constitutional elections from which the "lines of two political groups commenced to form." Yet even so, political ideals do not appear to have been of principal importance. Rather, as both Bumgartner and Thomas L. Karnes note, the major issue was most probably, the simple control of Guatemala based upon the promotion of personal interests.

Even though other factions or splinter groups may have formed, there were only two of any significance. On one side were the Cacos, a group which had years before been in opposition to Bustamante. Opposing them were the remnants of Bustamante's favorites who were referred to as the Gazistas. Respectively, each of the

344 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 106.
345 Karnes, The Failure of Union, p. 17; and Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 107.
above groups would come to espouse liberal or conservative ideologies. The philosophical leader of the Gazistas was José Cecilio del Valle, a Honduran creole with close connections to the Spanish hierarchy. As a high government employee he had been Bustamante's secretary and personally coveted an Audiencia judgeship. Called "españolistas" by Salazar, the other principal Gazistas were Dr. Mariano Larrave, Antonio Robles, and Ignacio Faronda, all of whom were creoles.

Probably because of his well-deserved reputation as an intellectual leader, Central American historians generally refrain from criticizing del Valle. Rodríguez, however, does note that his enemies considered him a traitor, and accused him of being arrogant, egotistical, and eccentric. He also calls him an "opportunist" when he attacked the "family" since he knew very well that many persons resented their dominance. Nevertheless, he was a tough adversary who was able to forge a varied group of malcontents, artisans, merchants, and provincials into a viable political entity.

The Cacos meanwhile were led by a creative group at whose head was Dr. Pedro Molina, a future member of the Executive Triumvirate

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347 Mayes, p. 34.
348 Salazar, Historia, p. 209.
349 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 134.
350 Ibid., p. 135.
which ruled Central America for a short while in the mid 1820's. Closely associated with him was Fr. José Matías Delgado, the Salvadoran patriot, Mariano Gálvez and Juan Barrundia, both future chiefs of the province of Guatemala, Mariano Bedoya, and José Francisco Cordova. 351 The Cacos' alliance was truly a universal one as shown by the inclusion of Gálvez, who may have been the ill-timed offspring of a "family" daughter. 352 Also deeply involved were Mariano and Juan José Aycinena who, for the time being at least, felt that their interests would be best served by casting their lot with the Cacos. Strangely enough, the lower classes, perhaps drawn by the Cacos' anti-government position, also joined them. 353 This cooperative effort, however, was destined to collapse after independence was declared in 1821.

Evidence of the growing political sophistication can be seen in the efforts expended to marshal the artisan confidence. But even though both sides made noteworthy attempts at winning this bloc of votes, only the Gazistas were successful. The artisans had been hurt financially due to the Constitution's free trade stipulations to the point where their number had been reduced from near three thousand to approximately one thousand. 354 Espousing a conservative platform the

351 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 117.


353 Meléndez, Textos, p. 182.

Gazistas played upon their fears and when the Cacos came out in favor of free trade the artisan vote fell inevitably to the Gazistas.

**Journalism in the 1820 Elections**

A development parallel to that of the political parties in the 1820 elections was the introduction of the two competing newspapers, *El Amigo de la Patria*, edited by José Cecilio del Valle, and *El Editor Constitucional*, edited by Dr. Pedro Molina. Such a "two party press" was fundamental to a national political maturation thanks to their wide circulation "throughout Central America." This was true even though as Gordon Kenyon suggests, neither side, as yet, really knew how to use the press as a truly effective tool. Nevertheless, their effort was pronounced and, as Zelaya states, the two periodicals "exercised a great influence over the entire colony and came to create the necessary climate to produce some form of political change." They effectively served as powerful instruments in spreading the ideas of the Enlightenment "and thus conditioned minds toward independence."

One newspaper, *El Editor Constitucional*, evolved from the discussions of the *Tertulia Patriótica*, or Patriotic Gathering, which was formed shortly after Bustamante's departure in Guatemala City.

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355 Rodríguez, *The Cádiz Experiment*, p. 133.
357 Zelaya, p. 88.
The Tertulia was initially considered as a platform to promote the deliberation of new ideas, some of which undoubtedly came to represent separatist sentiments. Among its more reknown members were many liberals and included Pedro Molina, Fr. José María Castillo, Manuel and Juan Montúfar, Marcial Zebadua, José Beteta, Vicente García Granados, and José Francisco Barrundia.359 For those participants whose prior inclinations had not included much more than a maintenance of the status quo, any discussions led by the republican Molina, or for that matter by most of the above mentioned persons, must have proven especially stimulating if not outright threatening.

El Editor Constitucional made its initial appearance on July 24, 1820, with Molina, Montúfar, Fr. Castillo, and Barrundia being the major literary contributors.360 As to its effect, one scholar notes that it fell like a "bomb among the espanolistas" especially since it quickly became evident that it was to support an independence platform in every manner possible.361 An example, in response to official government reports which tended to distort information on the Mexican and South American rebellions, and indicative of Molina's pursuit of any idea supportive of independence was when he established agents in southern Mexico who were able to provide more reliable data.362 The Caco newspaper also attacked Spain and

360 Salazar, Historia, p. 204.
361 Salazar, "Mariano de Aycinena," p. 118.
362 Kenyon, "Gaínza," p. 244.
Spanish policies more venomously than did its more conservative counterpart. When it argued that Central America stood little chance of ever having a fair constitutional government it took irreversible steps towards becoming "reknowned as the champion of Central American independence." Writings were published on the emancipation of the colonies, civil liberties, and even anti-monarchical themes even though a number of its supporters were still constitutional monarchists. Weekly items of world importance were reported as were the debates in the Spanish Cortes and some bitter commentaries on Spanish-creole inequality.

El Amigo de la Patria first appeared on October 6, 1820, and, as befits its editor, it dealt in facts, logic, and a search for what was fundamentally good for Central America. It spoke of the advantages of civilization and pursued scientific topics, especially political economics, while at the same time trying to combat Molina's statements on independence and the injustice of Spanish rule. Yet del Valle was not necessarily against personal freedom or constitutionally guaranteed rights. He did, however, maintain stronger

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363 Ibid., p. 243.


365 Karnes, Failure of Union, p. 17.


interests in property and its protection and the belief that progress would indeed come, but he preferred them to emanate from evolutionary changes in existing institutions.\footnote{Karnes, \textit{Failure of Union}, p. 18.} Not without its muckracking side, in the third issue of \textit{El Amigo de la Patria} he published a list of fifty-nine members of the "family" who held no less than sixty-four government positions with a total salary of almost 90,000 pesos.\footnote{Salazar, "Mariano de Aycinena," p. 173.} Indicative of how Spanish officialdom viewed \textit{El Amigo de la Patria}, a Minister of the Treasury in Guatemala referred to its contributing authors as "good Spaniards."\footnote{Meléndez, \textit{Textos}, p. 155.}

**Ayuntamiento Elections**

As mentioned above, a Preparatory Junta had been formed to establish the formal rules regarding the 1820 elections. One of their decisions was to hold two elections, the first being for the ayuntamiento seats whereas the second would be for the Provincial Deputation and the Cortes deputies.

The ayuntamiento elections took place in July of 1820 and represented a struggle between the Cacos and the Gazista forces with free trade, at least in Guatemala City, being the principal issue.\footnote{Ibid., p. 181.} Exactly why this was so remains unclear but it appears that it was...
due to multiple causes. First, both parties were probably searching for a *cause célèbre* and the arguments on free trade could be either effectively pro or con. Second, the influential weaver artisans were no longer "passive," but were instead stubbornly unwilling to allow any class to dominate Central American commerce and permit the importation of English textiles.\(^{372}\) Third, there may have been true ideological differences between the two camps regarding open trade policies and their potential effects. Finally, personal interests cannot be totally ignored with feelings on the issue being apparently quite strong as can be seen when Caco authorities sent a military force to disrupt an artisan Gazista meeting.\(^{373}\)

On a coarser level, both parties hurled charges which may or may not have been accurate. The Cacos charged the Gazistas with corruption, outdated economic views, and self-interest. The Gazistas on the other hand attacked the aristocrat's traditional privileges, and the dangers of free trade while at the same time defending orderly rather than radical change.\(^{374}\)

The elections themselves produced mixed results wherein no one party became totally dominant while a few victories were even won by candidates who were of no particular political philosophy. For example, in the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento, the Gazistas gained a

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\(^{372}\) Rodríguez, *The Cádiz Experiment*, p. 133.

\(^{373}\) Meléndez, *Textos*, p. 181.

small but workable majority when both del Valle and Jose Francisco Cordova were elected to high positions. However, two highly influential Cacos, Mariano Aycinena and Francisco Arrivillaga were also elected which served to neutralize somewhat the Gazista position. On the other hand, the Cacos were more overtly successful in the battle for seats on the Provincial Deputation. There, they gained a slight majority which was made even more secure by the election of the influential Beltranena.

**Provincial Deputation Elections**

The national elections for the two Provincial Deputations, one seated in León and one in Guatemala City, and for the Cortes deputies were held in late 1820. Rodríguez mentions that in comparison to the elections held in 1812, there was more agitation, more candidates, and more voters than before. Also noted was a sense of importance that had not been previously apparent. By 1820 the importance of the Provincial Deputation was recognized as indisputable by both parties who in turn fervently sought its domination. Perhaps a result of this new significance is the fact that the Indian vote is recorded as having been strongly pursued, and thus, perhaps for the first time, true rural elections were held. Unfortunately, unlike the more closely controlled ayuntamento elections, a number of irregularities by local authorities were noted which served to detract

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376 Rodríguez, *The Cádiz Experiment*, p. 137.
from the luster of the moment. And, in an ominous prelude to the future, the Ayuntamiento of Comayagua began discussing the possibility of selecting its own Provincial Deputation.

With the development of dual political parties in Guatemala there surfaced a marked difference in the character of the Guatemalan Provincial Deputation in its attitude towards the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento. No longer evident was the egalitarian air of cooperation and harmony with stubborn clashes sometimes resulting from an overlapping of responsibilities. On a personal level, there were disagreements between Mayor del Valle of the Ayuntamiento and Deputation Secretary, Domingo Dieguez. Also noted were a number of petty differences such as when del Valle suggested the use of uniforms on policemen to help control crime only to have it rejected by the Provincial Deputation. The strength and subsequent importance of this body can be seen when it was successful against both the Audiencia and the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento in obtaining more district judges.

The two party system personified the deep-seated social schism between creoles and Spaniards. Suggestive of this was the suspicious

377 Ibid.
378 Mayes, p. 39.
379 Woodward, Central America, p. 38.
380 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 138.
381 Ibid.
attitude held by the Provincial Deputation towards any Spanish dominated institution including the powerful Guatemala City Ayuntamiento, the Audiencia, the Cabildo Eclesiástico, and even the Royal Treasury. Concerning this last institution, and bearing in mind the Provincial Deputation's support of free trade, clashes became inevitable. A case in point was the Treasurer's resistance to dismantling the interior customs houses, a step the Provincial Deputation felt necessary to help foster trade. The Consulado de Comercio was also alienated when the Provincial Deputation petitioned for its suppression because the "guild was inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution and that its functions corresponded to those of the Deputation and the Ayuntamientos."

The Nicaraguan Provincial Deputation was installed on October 25, 1820. One problem that it faced was that, unlike its earlier counterpart, and suggestive of a condition parallel to that in Guatemala, the previously noted cooperation with the Intendent was no longer in evidence. Unfortunately, the new Provincial Deputation in Leon was also beset with numberless local aspirations which were in reality impossible goals, destined to erupt periodically, and even help bring about the dissolution of the promising United Provinces of Central America. On a national level, Nicaragua continued to call for a separate Audiencia and Captaincy-General which was to include

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382 Ibid., p. 140.

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Costa Rica. This demand, as with others of the same kind, appears to have been made without consulting Costa Rica. Indeed, Costa Rica came to openly resent Nicaraguan dominance and even lobbied in Spain for its own Provincial Deputation. The above examples serve to support the claim that the "process of disintegration was well underway by the time that Independence came to Central America." 

Portentously, a similar situation was evolving in Honduras. As in Costa Rica, the patriots there were strongly inclined towards a greater independence of Guatemala. To this end, the Ayuntamiento of Comayagua, on November 6, 1820, elected their own Provincial Deputation, arguing that such a move was guaranteed by the 1812 Constitution. In response to this, the authorities in Guatemala pleaded with the Hondurans to cease such activities. To no avail, however, for a military force eventually had to be sent which resulted in the disbanding of the Honduran Provincial Deputation and the election of proper deputies to the Guatemalan body.

Independence

On March 28, 1818 Bustamante handed the reigns of government over to Carlos de Urrutia, the last royal appointee to hold the position of Captain-General of Guatemala. Having a "benign disposition"

385 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 142.
386 Mayes, p. 39.
387 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 142.
and being over sixty-five years of age he initiated a much needed era of calm to the troubled colony. Guatemala was the twilight assignment in a career which had been long and diverse. No stranger to the pan-Caribbean lands, he had previously served as Intendant-Governor of the province of Veracruz in New Spain and he had just finished a command in Santo Domingo as a Sub-Inspector. Suggestive of his desire to promote a policy of conciliation, one of his first official acts was to comply with the royal decree of April 13, 1817, which in part remedied the injustices committed against the Ayuntamiento officers of 1810.

Even so, Urrutia faced serious problems. By this time, the attitude of Central Americans was being affected by news of the onslaughts of Bolívar, San Martín, Sucre, and others in South America which were bringing the Spanish Empire to its knees. To the north, the situation in New Spain was ominous and about to boil over completely. Nor could the example set by Haiti, free since 1804, be viewed in isolation. Posing an even more immediate threat was the supposed presence of pirates and the possibility of an invasion by one of the newly-liberated areas of South America.

Internally Urrutia faced a citizenry sharply divided by

388 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 40.
389 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 94.
390 Herrarte, p. 123.
jealousy and animosity. On one hand, the Spanish hierarchy anticipated the continuance of the royal mandate, or at the most, nothing more than a slightly modified monarchy. On the other hand were the creoles, long weary of the interminable wait for equal opportunities. Even though seriously factionalized, only the most capitalistic seemed content with a maintenance of the status quo or were naive enough to expect that it would remain so. This would become especially true once the situation in New Spain began to change.

Compounding this uneasy state, and a fact that was destined to become important in Central America's independence, was that Captain-General Urrutia was ill and suffered from a paralysis on one side of his body. Spain was aware of this and, on January 30, 1820, decreed that in the case of an illness or an absence, Field Marshall Alejandro de Hore, Commanding General of Panamá, was to take over the Captain-General's duties. This order was shortly changed however. Brigadier General Francisco Pino was substituted for de Hore and in fact was named to the second highest post in Guatemala in anticipation of a problem.

At approximately this same time, early 1820, Gabino Gaínza y Fernández, destined to be the colony's last Captain-General, arrived in Guatemala. Gaínza was a Spaniard of noble birth and married to a


394 Ibid.
Guayaquil creole. He had seen extensive service in the Caribbean, Florida, and South America where he had taken part in the Tupac Amaru revolt. He was in his fifties when he was assigned the position of Sub-Inspector General of Infantry and Cavalry in Guatemala.

Meanwhile Urrutia continued to quietly conduct the affairs of the colony and under him the "family's" fortunes mended rapidly as evidenced by his making some youths in the Pavon and Ayciena clans cadets. Even though Urrutia's relations with the creoles were probably cordial, their jealously guarded pockets of strength remained vigilant. Noticeable in this respect was when on May 5, 1820, Gainza was advised of Fernando's acceptance of the 1812 Constitution, he mysteriously delayed notifying the local Ayuntamiento of this until June 27. The Ayuntamiento then censored him for this lapse while at the same time requesting that the confiscated records of 1810 be returned to them. But Urrutia was not to be led blindly and, in a threatening tone, warned the councilmen that he would hold them responsible for any disturbances resulting from the re-implementation of the Constitution. Exhibiting what may have been an unexpected display of stubborness, he continued some form of censorship even though the new laws guaranteed freedom of the press. This was so effective that Molina was forced to establish his own reporters in such turbulent

395 Ibid., p. 23.
396 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 98.
397 Salazar, Historia, p. 204.
areas as southern Mexico from where he would be sent non-censored information. \(398\) Urrutia's concerns were not unfounded, however, since independence sentiments were becoming more pronounced. He knew, for example, that Molina had sent two accomplices to New Spain where they were to solicit some type of an accord with a certain General Bravo who was then conducting military operations near the Guatemalan border. \(399\)

In addition to other pressures, the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento, once aware of the re-implementation of the 1812 Constitution, demanded that it be put into effect immediately. In addition, it ordered that it be read, in its entirety, throughout the colony and that 500 announcements of its proclamation be printed. Also, the Captain-General was requested to speed up the establishment of the Junta de Censura, or Censorship Board, so as to better put into effect the freedom of press laws. It also suggested that the old 1814 Provincial Deputation be reinstituted until a new one could be elected. \(400\)

As with Bustamante, Urrutia may have been intimidated by the new set of Instructions that had been written for the Guatemala City deputy to the Spanish Cortes, Julian de Urruela. Composed by Mariano Aycinena, Domingo Diequez, and Father Antonio Larrazabal, they called for all persons, regardless of their racial background, to be granted

\(398\) Ibid., p. 207.

\(399\) Férez Valle, p. 306.

\(400\) Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 131.
full citizenship status and that the newly activated Council of State in Spain have twenty American members. They also requested that half of all government positions be given to colonials, that free trade be established, and that some modification of the monopolies be instituted. Rodríguez called the Instructions an "ultimatum to the Spanish government" and considers them proof that "the process of alienation was reaching a point of no return." 401

Not without his devious side, Urrutia made a critical political appointment in Costa Rica. That province was long a scene of conflicting loyalties wherein the citizens were more faithful to Spain than to either Guatemala City or León. 402 This was a problem which would surface later, unfortunately at a time when Central America needed as much unity as it could muster. In any event, Urrutia only contributed to Costa Rican discontent when on June of 1819, he named the despotic Juan Manuel de Canas as a temporary governor of Costa Rica. The people there, long accustomed to sympathetic governors, resented his rough manners and coarse actions. Nevertheless, he was very successful in silencing those few who "had timidly spoken out in favor of a more liberal regime." 403 Thus, Urrutia, while exhibiting a rather mild demeanor, may have been capable of defusing a politically volatile situation. Long pictured as a sickly, humble

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401 Ibid., p. 144.


403 Fernández Guardia, Historia, p. 4.

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figure, it appears that he was just as firm a believer in power and a royalist system of government as Bustamante had been. The outcome was the same, only the tone was different.

By January of 1821, Central American independence was but nine short months away. Yet even as late as that, "independence appears to have been little more than a desire in the minds of a few men who apparently were without any notion of how to transmit the desire into reality." Nevertheless, thanks to the newly liberated press, Central Americans were all to follow the rebellions in New Spain and South America while at the same time noting that El Editor Constitucional was leaning more and more to a separatist solution. While such activities, plus the above-mentioned party rivalry did indeed promote independence, there was still the lack of an impulse which would force Central America into taking irrevocable steps towards declaring her separation from Spain. Exactly how immobile the Central America patriots were can be seen in early 1821 when the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento received an anonymous letter from Spain which invited the colony to claim independence since "it could not expect justice from the Spanish government." As this communication arrived shortly after the receipt of yet another note from a Guatemalan deputy to the Cortes which noted the unequal treatment afforded the

404 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 136.
405 Ibid., p. 137.
406 Mayes, p. 43.
American representatives in Spain, one wonders why no action was taken by Guatemalan leaders. Yet, as Karnes suggests, these events were nevertheless additional steps which served to weaken Spain's hold on the colony while at the same time discouraging the loyalists.  

In New Spain meanwhile, the conservative faction, made up of royalists who had previously abhorred the thought of independence, began to demand national sovereignty. Fearful that a renewed and radical Spain would be more dangerous to their traditional position of dominance than an independent country, they were ready to establish "a government contrary to their every interest." Their champion was to be the wealthy, religious creole, Agustín de Iturbide. Under his leadership, an accord was soon reached with the guerrilla chief­tain, Vicente Guerrero, in which their armies would unite under the Plan of Iguala which was signed on February 24, 1821. Among its twenty-four articles were the famous three guarantees which stipulated that Catholicism was to be the state religion, that New Spain was to be independent and governed under a constitutional monarchy, and that there was to be equality between creoles and Spaniards.

In an unrelated, but equally important circumstance, on

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407 Kenyon, "Gaínza," p. 244.
409 Herrarte, p. 127.
410 Meléndez, Textos, p. 218.
March 10, 1821, Captain-General Urrutia voluntarily, and temporarily resigned his powers to Sub-Inspector Gabino Gaínza, an act which has evoked considerable speculation. Guillermo Mayes, who personally maintains that Urrutia stepped aside for health reasons, notes that the historian Alejandro Marure suggests that he was forced to resign by the Guatemala Provincial Deputation. In a similar vein, Alberto Herrarte claims that the patriots saw Gaínza as more pliable than Urrutia and to achieve their ends, they applied pressure on him to resign. Yet even he poses the possibility that it may have been done for reasons of health, as does Enrique del Cid Fernández.

Both theories are relative and the truth is probably somewhere in between. That there was independence sentiment seems undeniable. However, exactly how strong it was remains undetermined and to what extent it penetrated into the Ayuntamiento of Guatemala City and the Guatemalan Deputation is subject to debate. That Urrutia was ill seems fairly well established and therefore it is possible that it played a role in his resignation. Nevertheless, his decision was made under the advisement of Doctor Pedro Molina, an ardent separatist, thus forcing one to question the entire affair. Also, Gaínza, as

\[411\] Parker, *del Valle and the Establishment*, p. 43.
\[412\] Mayes, p. 43.
\[413\] Herrarte, p. 124.
\[414\] del Cid Fernández, p. 27.
\[415\] Ibid., p. 24.
has been pointed out, was, in comparison, probably more pliable than Urrutia. He was also supported, to a certain degree, by such well known patriots as Barrundia, Molina, and Córdova who urged afterwards that he be given the title of Captain-General.  

As acting Captain-General, one of Gaínza's first acts was to issue a manifesto on the rebellion in New Spain. Dated April 10, 1821, he referred to Iturbide as a faithless, ungrateful thief and exhorted the Central Americans to remain faithful to Spain. He called for them to stay "united with a government that loves and protects them." He counseled an obedience which would find him "a peaceful leader, a father, and a compatriot who would guide and defend them." Disobedience however would find him "a resolute and firm soldier who would proceed against his enemy even unto death," explaining that he had "been charged with conserving the peace," a mandate he had promised unswervingly to obey. Not only did he denounce Iturbide, but he also ordered the arrest of all those Guatemalans who had previously urged him to declare independence.  

Iturbide's actions clearly brought to the forefront the prospect of a total separation from Spain. It provided, as Gordon Kenyon

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416 Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 150.
417 Rubio Sánchez, "Gaínza," p. 32.
418 Meléndez, Textos, pp. 221-224.
419 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 44.
notes, a "catalyst in precipitating Central American independence." As the events in one foreign country had shaken Guatemala, so had the conduct of yet another people forced her leaders to the point of seriously considering autonomy.

Politically, the Mexican situation was custom-made for the Cacos who, as a group, began pressing vociferously for independence. In this, they were supported by members of the "family" who were now convinced that their future lay in the self-governing Guatemala. The Gazistas meanwhile chose to remain cautiously loyal.

Gaínza on the other hand continued a tightrope act in which he tried to pacify both groups. However, some scholars note that around this time, and perhaps even from the beginning he had privately supported the Cacos. Woodward suggests that he worked with them and may even have encouraged the development of popular independence sentiment. Another source implies that while he may not have collaborated with the separatist movement he did nevertheless accept the inevitability of independence. In any event Gaínza's actions were never serious enough to stave off the inevitable separation.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1821, Central America enjoyed her last peaceful days for years to come, with few indications of the turmoil that lay ahead. By May, El Editor Constitucional,


421 Woodward, Central America, p. 88.

still under the increasing vitriolic Molina, had adopted an alarming attitude. In resorting to a slightly veiled anagram which, when unscrambled, read "the tyrant" and was applied directly to Fernando, he wrote something that a few years before would have gained him a severe punishment or even death.\footnote{Salazar, Historia, p. 220.} Almost comically, this act caused the newspaper to be brought before the Censorship Board. That it would be absolved of any crimes was a foregone conclusion since three members of that same Board were none other than Pedro Molina, Juan Francisco Barrundia, and Juan Francisco Córdova.\footnote{Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 138.} Exactly how unimportant official recriminations were to the patriots is seen on September 3, when \textit{El Editor Constitucional} changed its name to \textit{El Genio de la Libertad} (The Spirit of Liberty).\footnote{Salazar, Historia, p. 220.} Nevertheless, in all of this an atmosphere of colonial continuity was present as shown when Gainza initiated another subscription to pay for the tiling of the sidewalks in the capital.\footnote{Rubio Sánchez, "Gaínza," p. 34.}

Events in the Guatemalan province of Chiapas renewed with startling swiftness the continually encroaching possibility of independence. In the city of Comitán certain leaders formed a decision-making body, a \textit{Sala Capitular}, which on August 28, 1821, declared
Chiapan independence and their adherence to the Plan of Iguala.

They claimed the

laudable sentiments that caused New Spain to claim her rights from Spain, to peacefully declare independence, to firmly maintain the Catholic religion and its ministers, and to protect the rights of citizens under just and moderate laws are the same which caused us to claim similar indisputable rights.\(^{427}\)

Decisions such as this one were followed by others of a similar vein in the other Chiapan cities of Tuxla and Ciudad Real.

Why the Chiapan leaders decided on such a course is unclear. There may have been an unheralded sense of independence there, but the lack of documented extensive anti-Spanish activities suggest that this was not the case. Manuel Rubio Sánchez implies that the close proximity of Iturbide’s forces may have caused the Chiapans to volunteer for this course rather than be forced into it.\(^{428}\) What is even more probable is that the province of Chiapas, like Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and especially El Salvador, was intensely jealous of Guatemala dominance in their administrative, economic and religious affairs. Therefore, the Chiapans may have considered a future under New Spain more attractive than one under Guatemala.

Closer to home, Gaínza was faced with unrelated but similar problems. On August 31, 1821, Mayor Larrave of Guatemala City announced that a
certain unrest among all classes in the capital was sensed which was getting worse every day and that violent crimes

\(^{427}\) Ai Camp, p. 582.

\(^{428}\) Rubio Sánchez, "Gaínza," p. 36.
were on the increase; that there were anti-Spanish and anti-American sentiments seen on prominent walls, and that in view of this, the Ayuntamiento should dictate the most rigid means to evade the problems that such things might bring about.429

Indicative of the growing but uneasy drive towards freedom was councilman Ariza's response to Larrave's suggestion. Not only did he denounce the Spaniard in front of the Captain-General but he also called such actions subversive.430

A further problem that Gainza faced was that about this time he received reports that certain persons were gathering signatures on a petition calling for independence. In some cases these persons had visited schools in an effort to excite the students there. Gainza requested of the Ayuntamiento that it investigate this problem; a request that it promised to honor.431

It is generally accepted that the Chiapan resolutions were unknown in Guatemala City until September 13, 1821. This may not have been the case, however, as when Sánchez implies at least a hint of unrest in quoting a note to the Captain-General from the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento. In requesting the reestablishment of the Oaxacan mail delivery it argued that such prohibitions were no longer necessary. Perhaps recalling the bloody Hidalgo rebellion, it stated that

429Mayes, p. 44.
430Salazar, Historia, p. 221.
431Ibid.
the revolution to the north does not have the same characteristics as before: the bitter hostilities are not seen, the people have been respected, and the rights of man have not been violated. If the lines of communications are cut, the ancient relations between the inhabitants of Guatemala with independent peoples are also broken, and a disturbance will begin whose consequences will not be able to be hidden. This will be an act of an enemy, a complete break, an act of war, which is neither convenient nor conforming to the general prevalent feeling among the people. On the other hand, it is indispensible to know exactly and punctually the state of the Kingdom of Mexico in order to consider our own. Such censorship is dangerous in these circumstances and will cause public disconfidence, something unseen until now.  

Not only is the tone threatening, but it also implies that Gaínza caused the mail disruption and if so, he may have suspected imminent problems.

Also, the Ayuntamiento, on September 4, discussed the "schismatic effects of the Mexican events" during which some newer events may have been considered. Indicative of this was the petition presented to Gaínza, probably from the Ayuntamiento, that requested he "put himself at the head of the free citizens of Guatemala."  

So open and heated were some of these discussions that councilman Aycinena spoke up and openly admitted that the colony wanted independence and that the appropriate steps should be taken. Hopeful of containing a possibly irate Gaínza he also noted that no one had, however, considered a change in leadership. To this the Captain-General demurred and went as far as charging the Ayuntamiento with the

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Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 44.
responsibility of maintaining peace.  

Quietly, on September 13, 1821, Captain-General Gaínza received two dispatches from Chiapas. Both of these were dated September 5 and both declared Chiapas independent of Spain and Guatemala. The following day Gainza notified the Provincial Deputation of what had happened in Chiapas. The Provincial Deputation, upon hearing this news, declared itself incompetent to debate the consequences of such an issue and instead called for a Junta de Notables, or a Gathering of Prominent Citizens, to decide. After receiving a list of those to be on the Junta, Gaínza called for a meeting to be held on September 15, 1821. The list contained fifty-four names and was representative of public, civil, and religious institutions. There were members of the upper echelons of the religious orders including the Archbishop, the Provincial Deputation, the Audiencia, the local Ayuntamiento, high government and military officials, the Consulado de Comercio, and of course, the Captain-General. Of the fifty-four, one-third were priests and one-third were of the "family."  

The evening before the meeting was to take place, certain members of the Cacos party, including Aycinena, Molina, Barrundia and the Bedoyas, began to actively agitate for independence.  

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434 Salazar, Historia, p. 221.
435 Bumgartner, del Valle of Central America, p. 144.
Not wanting to leave a stone unturned, they pleaded with the public to attend the following day's activities, hopeful of surrounding the meeting place with persons clamoring for independence. The next morning, September 15, 1821, as the Junta deliberated the future of Guatemala, the Plaza outside the Government Palace did indeed fill with people, at least initially. However, one authority claims that after a while many began to drift away. Upon seeing this, Basilio Parros and Dolores Bedoya, Molina's wife, brought in an orchestra and set off some rockets, actions which were successful in reactivating the crowd and its enthusiasm until independence was declared.

Remarkably, the discussions as to what to do are favorably reviewed by historians. It was remembered by the conservative Manuel Montufar as a "free discussion and a rare spectacle in which Spaniards and creoles were united under the chief executive in deciding if Guatemala was to be independent or not." Examples of this can be seen when the arguments of the loyalist Casaus were opposed by his friend and subordinate Father José María Castillo. Another principal royalist, José de Valle, properly suggested the need for a colony-wide decision and not one from Guatemala alone. As logical as


440 Villacorta, Bibliografía, p. 7.

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his statements were, they were doomed to insignificance next to the arguments of the patriotic Miguel Larreynaga. 441

Significantly, the military response was neither strong nor threatening. Coronel Felix Lagrava, perhaps the most important military official outside of Gáñza, reacted calmly and, out of his love of Guatemala, decided not to forcefully oppose the declaration of independence. 442 Karnes notes that the mild military attitude was due to the fact that the royal troops were, in fact, under Gáñza. 443

Nevertheless, when the call to vote came, the inevitability of the events in Spain and Mexico, the public clamour, and the numerous happenings of the past fourteen years all contributed towards the outcome. One by one, and speaking for the entire colony, the Junta voted. Not surprisingly, in the end Central American independence was declared.

\[441\] Zelaya, p. 90.
\[443\] Karnes, Failure of Union, p. 20.
CHAPTER V

EPISODE

The schismatic tendencies of Central America were an element in the life's blood of the conquerors and it fermented with the colonial order and its laws. 444

When the fifty-eight notables declared Central America to be independent of Spain, they did so without consulting the other provinces. And even though the Provincial Deputation representing Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala did take part in the deliberations, it was not empowered to take under consideration such decisions. Also noticeably absent was representation from any Ayuntamientos other than that from Guatemala City. But even though this act triggered an appalling number of local disturbances, in reality no firm decisions were made as to the form of government that was to evolve. Rather, and to the credit of those involved, the establishment of a provincial congress of representatives which was to determine the form of government was instead provided for. While there has been considerable discussion on the audacity of a few individuals in determining Central American fate, it does nevertheless appear that an independent course would have been the one that most persons would have chosen anyway. That they allowed for total representation to decide other issues which may have been just as important indicates at least a hint of republican tendencies.


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Yet, the problem of what to do immediately after independence was not ignored. As early as the day of independence, and probably even sooner, two opinions were discernable. One side, comprised of some of the former separatists who had joined with the old loyalists, favored annexation to Mexico. The other side was composed of those who preferred a republican form of government. During the initial deliberations a consensus of opinion could not be found among those present, subsequently, it was decided to consider only the issue of independence. 445

The declaration, which was written by José Cecilio del Valle, bears some scrutiny since it established certain rules which would be followed for the next few months. In declaring that independence was the general desire of the people it stipulated that a congress was to be called so that "the form that the government will take and the fundamental laws which would govern" could be determined. The deputies to this congress, who were to meet on March 1, 1822, were to be chosen by the same electoral junta which had previously named the Cortes deputies and were to be proportioned at the ratio of one representative for each 15,000 "individuals." Gáinza, who signed the document, was to continue as Jefe Político, or Political Chief, and would preside over a Junta Provisional Consultiva, or Provisional Consulting Junta. The Junta was to be composed of "members of the Provincial Deputation" and consisted of Miguel Larreynaga for León, José Cecilio del Valle for Comayagua, the Marquis de Aycinena for

445 Parker, del Valle and the Establishment, p. 45.
Quetzaltenango, José Valdís for Solola and Chimaltenango, Angel María Candina for Sonsonate, and Antonio Robles for Ciudad Real.  

As written, the declaration of independence was a provisional statement and probably meant to set forth temporary measures since the main objective was to obtain a separation from Spain rather than anything else. Kenyon refers to the document as "irregular" and thus demanding quick action to make it legitimate. Supportive of this position, the Guatemala City Ayuntamiento quickly swore loyalty to it and by September 17, the information was on its way to the provinces.

With the young patriot, Mariano Galvez as "Prosecretario" or Protosecretary, the Provisional Junta began its sessions soon after independence was declared. Its initial, euphoric meetings were soon "filled with persons of all classes." The republicans were notably active at this point and probably used the masses to emphasize their petitions to the Junta. However, since most of the Junta members were monarchists, and therefore drawn to the prospect of annexation to Mexico, it is worthwhile to note that the meetings were declared secret on September 29. From this point on, the


448 Lemus, p. 364.

449 Salazar, "Mariano de Aycinena," p. 120.

450 Zelaya, p. 127.
idea of a union with Mexico began to prevail. 451

The evidence suggests that when the news of the Guatemalan actions was received in the provinces, it was viewed suspiciously. The news reached San Salvador on September 21, but leaders there, many of whom were the same ones who fought so valiantly for independ­ence in 1811 and 1814, delayed a full week before following Guate­mala's lead. In León, the Nicaraguan Provincial Deputation began to debate the issue soon after it learned of the Guatemalan action on September 22. There, although independence was declared, a serious qualification was added in the form of the Acta de los Nublados, or Provision of the Clouds. 452 This stated that Nicaragua would be in­dependent until "the clouds of the day clear up" but until then, all would remain as it had been before. 453 This was in reference to Nicaragua's desire to maintain its independence of Guatemala as was implied through the establishment of the Provincial Deputation. In Costa Rica, the Guatemala decision was not known until October 13 when the monthly mail brought it to Cartago. 454 Cautiously, the response there was to follow Nicaragua and adhere to the Acta de los Nublados.

451 Salazar, "Mariano de Aycinena," p. 121.
452 Zelaya, p. 95.
453 Ibid., p. 99.
454 Fernández Guardia, Historia de Costa Rica, p. 5.
These relatively calm first responses were soon to give way, almost overnight, to animosities which had long been dormant. The jealousies which had probably caused Chiapas to secede, began to surface everywhere. Granada, for example, accepted the Guatemalan declaration but denied the authority of Leon as implied in the Acta de los Nublados. Thus began the strife between those two cities which is apparent even today.  

In León, meanwhile, the Provincial Deputation, which was composed mostly of royalists, at one point decided not to accept Guatemalan authority and instead contacted Spain directly and offered their help in returning Central America to the Spanish Empire. But even this position was momentary as on October 11 the authorities there decided to join Mexico instead. At this point, Granada also changed its mind and decided to join with Guatemala and to accept whatever decisions it would eventually make. In yet another Nicaraguan city, Masaya, the authorities decided on October 16, to join the Leonese camp and thus declared for the Plan of Iguala. Confused, ten days later, Masaya changed its mind and decided to accept Guatemalan authority. By late October the Nicaraguan atmosphere was so electrified that the commanding officer in Granada contacted Gaínza and implied that hostile acts against them by León were imminent.

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455 Zelaya, p. 103.

456 Ibid.

457 Ibid., p. 115.
A similar situation existed in Honduras. There, the traditional animosities between Comayagua and Tegucigalpa caused each city to enunciate its own loyalties. In this case Comayagua chose to accept Mexican authority while Tegucigalpa elected to follow Guatemala. 458

In Costa Rica meanwhile, and with the blessings of the Leonese, a Junta Gubernativa Superior, or Superior Governing Junta, was established in its capital, ostensibly to maintain control until the situation stabilized. 459 But in a sense, the acceptance of the Leonese approval was a facade covering the true antagonisms that Costa Ricans felt towards their neighbors. Long suspicious of both León and Guatemala, Costa Rica had developed a strong sense of unique identity based on its suspicions. Of this, Thomas L. Karnes notes that independence "intensified separatism and grossly compounded it by freeing the forces of localism in individual towns and villages." 460

Things were not necessarily calm in Guatemala City either. There, the republicans intensified their call for an independent Guatemala in the chambers of the Provisional Junta, and in the pages of El Genio de la Libertad, all the while tentative flames of anarchy


459 Zelaya, p. 137.

spread to the point of street fighting.\textsuperscript{461} In light of events such as these, and after receiving reports of the chaotic situation in the provinces, Gainza moved up the date of the opening session of the Central American congress one month to February.\textsuperscript{462}

On another level, the Treasury had but sixty pesos in it plus a weighty debt to Mexico of over two million pesos.\textsuperscript{463} Also concerning Mexico, and the source of no little consternation to the Captain-General, a letter from Iturbide had been received which invited Central America to join Mexico under the banner of the Three Guarantees. Apparently hoping to increase the size of his empire even further, Iturbide had taken this step only after his agent in Central America, General Manuel Mier y Teran had offered the opinion that the Guatemalan situation was favorable to independence.\textsuperscript{464}

Back in Nicaragua, it seemed as if all political cohesion was rapidly disappearing. By November, certain interior cities such as Granada, Masaya, and Managua had consolidated and were outrightly refusing to accept Leonese domination. To achieve some sort of political independence, they instead proposed that a Junta Gubernativa Subalternaria, or Subordinate Governing Junta, be established. On November 22, 1821, this proposal was forwarded to Guatemala

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{461}Kenyon, "Mexican Influence," p. 179.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{462}Ibid., p. 178.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{463}Mele'ndez, Textos, p. 91.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{464}Kenyon, "Mexican Influence," p. 180.}
it was subsequently approved. Zelaya claims that from this point "the country divided not only territorily, but also economically, politically, and socially."\textsuperscript{465}

As in El Salvador, where difficulties were arising over the selection of delegates to the Central American Congress, so in Costa Rica many diverse opinions continued to prevail. Although independence was declared there on November 1, no decision as to the province's relationship with Guatemala was made.\textsuperscript{466} There, in fact, independence itself came as a surprise since Costa Rica had traditionally maintained close ties with Spain. Even so, with a frustrated clergy and nobility maintaining a strong opposition to independence, little change was probably expected.\textsuperscript{467} While Costa Rica would eventually join briefly with Mexico, in reality the ayuntamientos in the larger towns would debate alternative forms of government for one and one-half years more.\textsuperscript{468}

In late November Gainza received a further communication from Iturbide who had by then been crowned Agustín I of Mexico, which restated his previous invitation to join Mexico. More ominous however, was the news that a Mexican army of 500 men had been ordered into

\textsuperscript{465} Zelaya, p. 118.

\textsuperscript{466} Karnes, "The Origins," p. 263.

\textsuperscript{467} Fernández Guardia, \textit{La Independencia y Otros Episodios}, p. 10; and Fernández Guardia, \textit{Historia de Costa Rica}, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{468} Karnes, "The Origins," p. 263.
Chiapas close to the Guatemalan border. Gordon Kenyon is undoubtedly correct when he surmises that this was done to influence a Guatemalan decision in favor of a decision to join Mexico. Upon receipt of this information Gaínza and the Provisional Junta decided to consult with the provincial ayuntamientos on the issue. In this instance however, the actual decision on what to do in regards to Mexico was, as before, deferred until the Central American Congress met in February.

Violence in the capital continued to be a problem. Gaínza, who was now more openly advocating an annexation with Mexico, began to disrupt any known gatherings of republicans. So strong were his feelings on this point that he even ordered a troop of soldiers to suppress a public manifestation of non-annexation sentiment. Unfortunately, the ensuing clash only resulted in the deaths of two persons: Mariano Bedoya, who was active in the pre-independence developments, and Remigio Maida. Salazar is of the opinion that this was a preconceived plan especially since other measures, including a move to stop publication of El Genio de la Libertad were proposed. In fact, on December 1, the now confirmed monarchist, Mariano Aycinena, led a demonstration which requested that Gaínza expel all anti-annexationists.

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470 Zelaya, p. 128.
472 Ibid.
By January, 1822, the encroaching Mexican army, which caused "a true panic all over Central America" was under the command of Vicente Filísola. Threatening movements by the Mexican troops, plus the continued political deterioration in the provinces was taking its toll. For the monarchists, such as Aycinena, this proved to be a godsend, while for the republicanists it was disastrous. As the inability of Gaínza and the Provisional Junta to effectively govern became apparent, it was correspondingly obvious that an alternative power, and one that could take over quickly was necessary. To forestall imminent anarchy the only possible answer then was to accept a political agreement with Mexico. To this end, on January 2, 1822, Gaínza and the Provisional Junta did decide to join with Mexico with both Iturbide and Filísola subsequently being informed of the Guatemalan choice.

Interestingly enough, the resolution was this time not based on an arbitrary discussion in Guatemala City. Rather, it was founded on replies that were requested by the former Captain-General to what appears to have been most of the local governments in the provinces. The responses were: 104 for annexation, 33 preferred that the Junta should decide, 21 wanted the February Congress to decide, 2 were against any union with Mexico, and 27 did not answer. In light of

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473 Zelaya, p. 129.
474 Ibid.
this then, Gaínza did correctly gauge the opinion of the provincial leaders. Most had in fact, resigned themselves to the fact that unity "could be regained only by annexation to Mexico, a measure that had proved itself to be more popular than any other course of action."476

However, even though a large majority of the municipalities had decided in favor of annexation, exactly which towns these were remains unclear. In other words, to a large degree, they could have been small centers of population and therefore not truly indicative of the large majority of Central American leaders. An even more important unknown is whether the decisions represented the will of a complete Ayuntamiento, or merely that of a single appointee. It will be recalled that in Costa Rica there were difficulties in even locating enough persons to make up but one Ayuntamiento.

Of the large towns, it is important to note that the authorities in San Salvador vehemently remained against union. Also, since many nearby centers voiced similar sentiments, the Salvadorean leaders felt secure enough to forcefully attempt the take over of certain areas still loyal to Guatemala.477

Contributing to the provincial chaos was that in January some important cities in Nicaragua and Honduras had communicated with Mexico and voiced their dissatisfaction not only with Gaínza but with

476 Ibid., p. 185.
477 Ibid., p. 192.
the entire Guatemalan government in general and their "desire to be responsible directly to the imperial government" in Mexico City. So insistent were their demands that on February 16, 1822, Iturbide made Honduras answerable to the Captaincy-General of Puebla and León responsible to Mexico City.

Costa Rica meanwhile continued to be wooed by both Granada and León who were in direct competition for allies. In fact, the Provincial Deputation of León approached the Costa Ricans sometime after January 1, 1822, with a written proposal in order to establish an independent government. Continually unsure, the Costa Rican leaders had communicated with Mexico, stipulating at one point that any acceptance of the Plan of Iguala would have to be based on their continued commercial relations with Panama, and a number of other considerations. This fact seems to support Woodward's contention that after the decision to join Mexico had been made, "politics in Guatemala focused again on commercial policy."

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478 Zelaya, p. 132.
479 Ibid.
480 Ibid., p. 138.
482 Ibid., p. 266.
At about this same time, important changes were becoming visible in the political parties. The truth is that actually two new parties were emerging even though many of the personalities involved were the same. Labels also changed with serviles, or the servile ones, and fiebres, or the feverish ones, taking the place of the old names, Cacos and Gazistas. The serviles who favored a continuation of royal institutions, were in many cases members of the "family" who had finally made a break with the former liberals. The fiebres in many cases favored an independent Guatemala, free-trade, and religious reforms. As might be expected the fiebre party contained Molina, Galvez and many of their colleagues.

In Mexico meanwhile, the seating of a Constituent Congress was proceeding. The late selection of the deputies from the distant provinces, including the former Captaincy-General of Guatemala, had been anticipated and allowed for. As before, and in order to comply with the date of opening, temporary delegates were selected from the provincials resident in Mexico City. Unfortunately the selection of the permanent deputies from Central America was seriously complicated by Gáinza's not allowing all twenty-four districts to elect their representatives. His reasons for doing this were uncharacteristically vengeful and based on the fact that certain regions refused to recognize his "jurisdiction over them."


\(^{485}\) Ibid., p. 683.
of sixteen representatives to the Mexican Congress were chosen. Among them were such luminaries as José Cecilio del Valle, Pedro Molina, Mariano Larrave, and Mariano Aycinena. 486

All the while, the central government in Guatemala City continued to be beleaguered by reports of hostilities. On March 19, 1822, Gáinza was compelled to send an armed force of Guatemalans to El Salvador to put down its continuing rebellion against annexation. 487 Delays by the Guatemalan commander would mean that three months later the problem in El Salvador still would not be solved. Nor did the situation in Nicaragua appear to be on the mend. On April 30, an uprising occurred in Granada wherein the authorities there were overthrown because of their pro-León sentiments. 488

In all probability, Filísola knew of these problems when he left Chiapas for Guatemala City where he arrived as commander-in-chief on June 21, 1822, only to find the Salvadorean rebellion still going on. 489 For humanitarian reasons, he prudently decided to refrain from a show of force. An accord and eventual armistice were shortly achieved. 490

486 Ibid., p. 687.


488 Zelaya, p. 134.

489 Valladares Rubio, “Manuel José de Arce,” p. 56.

490 Ibid.
In reality, however, his choices may have been limited since most of the old jealousies continued to violently manifest themselves. In late May for example, the Intendent of León reported an impending revolt in that city by a group which included a number of prominent citizens.\textsuperscript{491} As reported, the suspected disturbance did indeed take place, albeit unsuccessfully, on June 4 closely followed by another in August and yet another in Granada in October.\textsuperscript{492} All the while, in Costa Rica, there was so much confusion over the election of deputies to the Mexican Congress that the electoral board annulled the results.\textsuperscript{493}

Filísola could hardly have failed to have been surprised at the intensity of the confusion and factionalism, for in reality, it probably seemed that hardly a single peaceful locality existed in any province. As the year wore on, the difficulties only increased, as in November when it became necessary to commence open military operations against El Salvador. Even though an armistice was technically in effect, Manuel José Arce, the Salvadorean military commander, had continued in his attempts to overturn nearby governments which had decided to join Mexico.\textsuperscript{494} The pacification campaign, although lengthy, was successfully terminated in February of 1823.

\textsuperscript{491} Zelaya, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., p. 146.
\textsuperscript{493} Benson and Berry, p. 697.
\textsuperscript{494} Valladares Rubio, "Manuel José de Arce," p. 51.
with the Salvadorean patriots remaining ominously dissatisfied. In a bizarre incident, perhaps born out of desperation, on December 5, 1822, without any formal negotiations, El Salvador fruitlessly annexed itself not to Mexico, but to the United States.⁴⁹⁵

There seemed to be no abatement in the disturbances and Central America at times almost appeared bent on self-destruction. By January the atmosphere had become even more dense in the light of unsettling political rumors out of Mexico. Nicaragua, continued to be especially problem-ridden. In Granada for example, on January 16, an uprising took place which only served to ignite similar movements in nearby towns.

Nevertheless, after a number of successful military operations, Filísola was able to inform the Secretary of State in Mexico City on March 20, 1823, "that he had reassumed complete control of Guatemala."⁴⁹⁶ Yet little more than a week later, and being cognizant that high-ranking officers in Mexico were close to rebellion against the emperor, he issued a decree on March 29, which called for a Central American assembly to decide on the adoption of a structure of government that the provinces could accept.⁴⁹⁷ Coming as a complete surprise, provincial leaders were for the first time faced with the difficulty of making truly fundamental decisions. Thankfully, the wisdom was found to quickly acquiesce to the dissidents' call for a

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 196.
⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 197.
representative assembly which temporarily served to end most of the provincial squabbles. All districts were ordered to hold elections in which the deputies to the new assembly would be chosen. To these actions little resistance from Mexico was anticipated since Filísola had been informed by the Mexican Congress that as far as they were concerned, Central America "was free to choose their own course as they themselves should decide." 498

It was originally intended that the Central American assembly was to meet on June 1, 1823. However, it was necessary to delay this until June 29, when the sessions did indeed begin. 499 Yet even at that late date, the discussions had to commence without any representation from Honduras, Nicaragua, or Costa Rica. 500 Nevertheless, with little fanfare, the recommendation was made to dissolve all bonds with Mexico and on July 1, 1823 the assembly declared absolute independence. 501

Filísola was asked to remain until a replacement could be found, but he was gone by August. With Gaínza not there either, Central America was for the first time on her own. Unfortunately, her leaders were incapable of binding the wounds of 300 years of colonial rule. Yet even so, a promising beginning was made when the


500 Zelaya, p. 181.

501 Ibid.
nation called the United Provinces of Central America was organized under a temporary governing triumvirate of Manuel José Arce, Tomás O'Horan, and José Cecilio del Valle. Disappointingly, the problems which had confronted Filísola would continue to disturb the United Provinces for years to come until its dissolution in 1839.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Central America gained its independence from Spain without bloodshed on September 15, 1821. How this happened, and an examination of some of the factors that contributed towards that event have been the subject of the above narrative.

It has been suggested that although there were attachments with the Mother Country, there were also Spanish policies that led to the neglect to which the colony was subject and as a dominion of only periodic importance, an attitude of self-sufficiency had been apparent since its inception. As such, this was in reality, the very beginning of the inescapable rupture between colony and crown. Providing nourishment to such nascent pre-independence point of view was the practice of shackling an already impoverished area with additional unfair commercial laws. By 1800, the colony, especially in the remote areas such as Costa Rica which had always operated semi-autonomously, almost intuitively developed a psychology of separation. It would appear then, that the ties binding Central America to Spain, which in many cases were traditional rather than substantial, could be easily severed.

In the context of religion, a great deal of research needs to be conducted on the activities of the Central American clergy. While the priests actively supported the introduction of innovative
commercial measures and techniques, their participation in the liberal reforms and rebellions after 1808 is quite astounding. Noteworthy also is that these activities were confined not only to the regular clergy but also involved members of the hierarchy as well.

Such an attitude is not easily explained and indeed, those reasons which motivated one priest might not have been the same as those which caused another to act. It may have been that certain threatening gestures were responsible. For example, anti-clericalism was rearing its head most inauspiciously as early as 1767, when the Jesuits were expelled from the empire. Later, the Spanish Cortes itself was marked by overtones which pointed to a dissolution of traditional church power. There may also have been some discontent resulting from the unmet need for reform. In fact, a Council on Diocesan Reform had not been held for three centuries in Central America. This possibility seems especially pertinent in light of the many enlightened priests in the colony.

One might also note the possibility that the accumulation of earthly riches had assumed such disparaging proportions that it was no longer acceptable to many of the less fortunate priests and laymen. Mecham provides a good example of this vast gulf when he notes that many "prelates enjoyed incomes of from 200,000 to 650,000 pesos" while "nine-tenths of the clergy did not receive more than 150 to 300 pesos annually."\footnote{Mecham, p. 48.} One might also note that frequently the local priests were physically isolated. For example, Costa Rica

\footnote{Mecham, p. 48.}
at one point had not seen its Leonese-based bishop in thirty-five years.

Like their temporal brethren, creole priests may also have been sensitive to their lack of representation in the upper echelons of the church hierarchy. In fact, only nine creoles had been named to noticeably high positions of leadership in the religious affairs of Central America as of 1821. In any event, "the evangelization of the New World created a new entity: an American church" and the priests from all parts of the Empire "became part of the fight for emancipation or at least showed partiality for a total reform."\(^503\)

Although colonial education on an elementary level was limited, there was, at San Carlos, an exceptionally fine university staffed by many learned men. Proof of its efficiency in producing respectable leaders can be noted by glancing over a partial list of its graduates. It quickly becomes obvious that it reads like an encyclopedia of Central American independence, and includes such names as Marúre, Bergano, Molina, Barrundia, Córdova, Larreynaga, Ruiz, Gálvez, Delgado, Arce, del Valle, and Herrera. One might consequently note that in the years immediately prior to independence a number of university papers were submitted which espoused revolutionary theories and their defense. For this reason and others, it has been suggested that the University of San Carlos was a "democratic literary republic, a living reflection of an independent entity which was capable of transferring the spirit of university independence into a

\(^{503}\) Barón Castro, p. 105.
Central American political reality.\textsuperscript{504}

Some scholars have submitted that Central American independence was primarily due to economic causes and the evidence would indicate that such an interpretation may very well be correct. There are strong suspicions that in both Costa Rica and in El Salvador economic calamities caused popular disturbances to which the government responded with some ineffectual and largely unsuccessful efforts. For example, it authorized the reduction of import duties, new ports and roads, and the establishment of organizations such as the Sociedad Económica and the Consulado de Comercio. Even so, by 1808, most serious Central Americans were not yet considering a complete separation from Spain but instead continued to maintain their traditional loyalties. Nevertheless, the obvious impotence of both Carlos and Fernando in the face of Napoleon's audacity probably caused some to question their existing ties. Although most colonials reacted negatively towards the French actions, the ease with which the two Spanish monarchs had given up their royal duties must have severely cracked the psychological allegiance that was traditionally given the Iberian leaders.

But even then, there were still strong possibilities that the situation was salvageable. When the 1812 Constitution and its accompanying reforms was promulgated, many undoubtedly considered that it legally emanated from the imprisoned regent Fernando. These hopes were rudely crushed when, upon his return in 1814, Fernando restored

\textsuperscript{504} Meléndez, Textos, p. 188.
everything to its 1808 status. After this momentary burst of liber-
ality which was so suddenly torn away, the colonists could not
logically expect much in the way of fundamental reform or change.
Importantly, it must not be forgotten that at this same time the
royal admission of equality between Spain and her colonies was also
revoked. By late 1814 then, the Central American patriots had de-
veloped an attitude conducive to independence born of frustration and
desperation that would not allow any continued calls of loyalty to
Spain to be listened to in 1821.

Compounding the above difficulties was the fact that Central
America at this same time was under the control of the iron-willed
Bustamante, a person who viewed the liberal reforms of 1812 with the
same degree of disdain as had Fernando. Although his initial at-
titude appears to have been properly firm, he had undoubtedly enter-
tained some prior suspicions of one magnitude or another. Eventually
feeling as if he was surrounded by adversaries, he soon struck out
against anyone of dubious loyalty. Of supreme importance here was
his harsh conduct towards many prominent creole leaders, most notably
those of the "family" and those belonging to the powerful Ayuntamiento
in Guatemala City.

It is possible that Bustamante's merciless vendetta, the
terror generated by his all too efficient spy system, plus the sup-
pression of the 1812 Constitution, were so disturbing to the Central
Americans that a violent, independence orientated, uprising was im-
possible. Even more ominous for the future of Spain in the colony
may have been that the spirit to resist, while not broken, was frustratingly manacled. To a proud people this was an unacceptable situation.

Thus it would appear that by the time the reins of government had passed into the relatively soft hands of Captain-General Urrutia, colonial animosities were deep-seated and a separation from Spain was probably inevitable. When the 1812 Constitution was re-promulgated in 1820, it only served to ignite a volatile combination of frustrated expectations and demands plus long pent-up local and national animosities.

Exactly how determined colonial liberals were about a complete severance of the ties with Spain is hard to assess. While it may have happened eventually one way or another, the hard lessons learned under Bustamante did dictate at least some delay which may explain why a more immediate attempt at independence was not attempted after 1817. Nevertheless, when Urrutia accepted without reservation the reforms of 1312 it did serve to irritate the rapidly accelerating creole desires for freedom. All that was needed at that point was the trigger to set everything off.

Such an event did occur with the Plan of Iguala. Under any circumstances it would be difficult to argue that the independence of New Spain and the subsequent secession of Chiapas did not force an important political decision on Central America before it was ready to assume the responsibilities of an independent government. Disaster proved inevitable as personal ambitions and interests plus
overwhelming factionalism forced its leaders to make continually immature decisions.

As has been suggested elsewhere, a fundamental cause of colonial emancipation from Spain was the creole's desire to modify the economic and political conditions under which he lived. In Central America the creoles placed a major emphasis on their participation in the Ayuntamientos and the Provincial Deputations and their requests for individual Provincial Deputations suggest that the above was indeed the case. Although Bustamante's difficult posture towards those two important bodies certainly aggravated creole sensitivities, Spain's lack of sympathy for their complaints over his obstructionist policies, and other issues, is even less understandable.

Under a more benevolent and enlightened leader, the perhaps heady attitude assumed by the defensive creoles might have been more readily accepted. In the face of Bustamante's regalistic and superior demeanor, this proved to be an unwise posture to have assumed. The mutual antagonisms between creole and Spaniards, the new reforms, and the creole-led revolts caused their every move to be suspect. This in turn was viewed by them as just another example of Spanish harrassment and inequality.

Other warnings of creole discontent abound and the cries against inequality as stated in the Instructions are especially pertinent. One might also consider that in almost every serious revolt, one of the most consistently voiced demands was the removal of peninsular Spaniards from government employment. While these demands may not have been the most serious, the mere fact that they
were almost universally called for indicates that it was one of the most wide-spread areas of discontent.

An important, yet little considered, factor in the independence movements has been that of the fear of the masses as felt by the upper classes. A number of scholars have commented briefly on this topic, but perhaps because of its nebulous nature, their references are few and not overly specific.

As early as 1811, there was government concern over unemployment, vagrancy, homicides, and other serious crimes. Rodríguez notes at this point the fear of the "advanced elements" of society that the lower classes might "go on a rampage against them."\(^{505}\) Bustamente used this fact when he established a military unit made up of the "scum of society" for use in the Salvadorean pacification.\(^{506}\) More recent was the report by the mayor of Guatemala City that an atmosphere existed among the lower classes which was becoming "more bloody and fearful each day" and which caused fear among the aristocracy.\(^{507}\)

From these comments then, one detects a long-standing suspicion of possible mass revolt. As long as Spain maintained some form of discipline, even though it might have been only psychological, those segments of society which had the most to lose felt secure. However, once it appeared that independence was unavoidable, a

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\(^{505}\) Rodríguez, The Cádiz Experiment, p. 133.

\(^{506}\) Gavidia, 1:14.

\(^{507}\) Bumgartner, p. 142.
control vacuum was created which could have allowed the dreaded "rampage" to take place. As in other instances, an acceptance of the Plan of Iguala seemed to offer a remedy. The close proximity of a large Mexican force must have been tempting and difficult to ignore for the threatened aristocrats.

In closing then, it might be said that Central American independence was not the result of any one causal factor but rather a number of interrelated causes. There were tangible reasons such as economic problems and stagnation, the desire for equality, and a tightly controlled society. But there were also concerns that are more difficult to identify. Of these, perhaps the most significant were rising expectations among the elite based on a greater knowledge of both practical and philosophical ideals. One also suspects a great deal of frustration based on the continual denial of those same expectations.

Only to be surmised also is the degree of fear in the hearts of the upper classes. That there was some cannot be denied even if it had its origins in an awareness of the excesses of the French Revolution. And finally, it would be foolish to claim that personal interests of a temporal nature were not part of the picture.

As a final note, in light of the above study, it should not be surprising that the current difficulties now extant in Central America are occurring. It is truly unfortunate that in such a magnificent land of potential abundance, so little attention has been paid to the lessons of the past. It is also regrettable that a warm
and noble people have chosen a route not substantially different than the troubled one traveled by their forefathers almost 160 years ago. Hopefully, studies of this sort may contribute to their cultural fulfillment and our understanding and acceptance of them.
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