A CHRC Article: Insurgentes Y Soldados: Mexico’s historical armies

Before Mexico became an independent country, Mexico was a part of the Aztec Empire (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). The Aztecs would be discovered by Spanish Conquistadors led by explorer, Hernan Cortes (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). In 1521, The Aztec Empire would be conquered with its capital, Tenochitlan ending up under Spanish rule (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). Mexico would then become a Spanish colony under the Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1535 (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). New Spain was one of the administrations that the Spanish government put into place in its colonies and New Spain would consist of Mexico, parts of the United States including Texas and California, Cuba, Hispanola (Modern day Dominican Republic and Haiti) and even the Philippines (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). Louisiana and even parts of Canada were also a part of New Spain, more specifically in Alberta (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). There were others Vice-royalties that Spain used to govern its colonies including the Vice-Royalty of New Grenada (Columbia, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and Ecuador), The Vice-Royalty of Peru (Peru and Chile) and the Vice-Royalty of the Rio Del La Plata (Argentina, Chile and Bolivia) (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). There was also the Vice-Royalty of Brazil who was ruled by Portugal (5. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia).

Everything would change in 1808 when Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Spain (2. Cunningham, J. M..). Miguel Hidalgo, a Catholic priest, decided to do something about it and encourage the Mexican population to take up arms in a speech deemed “Grito Del Delores” or Cry of Dolores (2. Cunningham, J. M..). The Cry of Dolores was essentially a rallying cry against Spanish rule, encouraging rebellion, demanding equality and invoking the name of Our lady of Guadalupe (2. Cunningham, J. M..), known universally as the Virgin Mary who appeared to St Juan Diego in 1531 (6. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia). Even though Hidalgo was executed with his followers dwindling in number, he would become a hero and martyr in the eyes of Mexicans and would see him as a symbol for independence (7. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia.)" Today, the cry of Delores would be re-enacted during Mexican independence day (7. Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia.)

After the death of Hidalgo, General Augustin de Iturbide would enter into relations with revolutionary leader, Vincente Guerrero in 1821 (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). In that same year, Spain would have its own revolution where liberals would take control, leaving many conservatives and monarchists isolated (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). Inturbide and Guerrero would create the plan of Iguala (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). Along with it would be the three guarantees which would be Supremacy of the Roman Catholic Church, independence from Spain and equal rights (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). In addition to the three guarantees were the army of the three guarantee, which would help Mexico gain independence from Spain with flying colors (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). From this, Inturbide would be crowned emperor of Mexico in late 1821 (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). The celebration wouldn’t last long though as Mexico entered political instability after independence (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). The first issue Mexico faced as discontent among the generals (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). Additionally, after becoming emperor, Inturbide abused his power along with his friends, ransacking the nation’s treasury and the emperor pocketing himself 120,000 pesos (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). These acts led to Mexico to go into financial debt, which in turn sparked a coup (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B).

General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna would become president in 1833 (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Santa Anna had talent as a soldier, braving local revolts as well as the Spanish at the battle of Tampico in 1829 (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Later on in his career however, he would face defeat after defeat against nations such as Texas, France and the United States (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). This article shall be known as Insurgentes Y Soldados: Mexico’s historical armies, focusing on the Mexican army both after Miguel Hidalgo’s revolt against the Spanish and prior to the first and second world wars. In 1836,when Santa Anna ordered Mexican troops take no prisoners during various battles against Texans such as the Alamo, Mexico would be met with condemnation by Great Britain and France (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). The Mexican army retreated across the River Grande after being beaten by Texan forces at the battle of San Jacinto (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B). The Rio Grande would be the border between Mexico and the newly independent Texas. The Republic of Texas would be its own nation for some time before joining the United States. In 1838, France would invade Mexico in December, taking the city of Veracruz following a non-payment of debts to France on Mexico’s part (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B).

1821 and 1822 saw the organization of the Mexican army (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). The army had three branches: These were the regular or permanent troops, the Milicia Activa or active militia and the Milicia Civica or civic militia (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). The latter of which transformed into the National guard known as Guardia National (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). The army included Fusiliers, Grenadier regiments (including the Hidalgo Regiment) and musicians and gunners (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Mexicans also had various calvary regiments and units including Horse Grenadiers, Hussars and light calvary, Dragoons including the Moncada and 9th permanent calvary regiments, horse mounted troopers, calvary Militia, presidential calvary, the Jalisco lancers and the Tulancingo Cuirassiers (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). There were also the Irish-American volunteers of the Saint Patrick battalion (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

The uniforms of the Mexican army, resembled uniforms worn by various European armies during the Napoleonic wars (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). This is true for the Tulancingo Cuirassiers and the Jalisco Lancers (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

Equipment used by the Mexican army included 90,000 muskets and 14,000 Carbines from the British (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

While these soldiers look to be soldier material, the Mexican military during Santa Anna’s time had many problems (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). One of the problems facing the Mexican Army under Santa Anna was from the officer corps and especially the generals, who were more interested in starting coups (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Instead of the generals being proper Mexican generals, the generals of Santa Anna’s time were more interested in politics and were self-enriching (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). The regimental officers were seen as better military leaders than the actual generals, but did not have the proper training or certifications (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Soldiers were also caught in the misfortune of Mexico’s political game involving military officers (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Sometimes soldiers would side with the government while others would engage in mutinies (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Of course, this led to a disordered system in the military where soldiers can become mere pawns in a political game involving their commanding officers, officers who were looting, committing mutinies and having political agendas rather than serving their country (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

Santa Anna could only muster 20,000 to 25,000 men despite the fact that many national guards were mobilized (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.). Even before Texas revolted from the Mexican state, the 1830s and 1840s led the Mexican state to encounter internal strife and military coups (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

Despite the many difficulties faced by the Mexican army, including drunkenness, politically self-centered military officers, desertion and even conscription itself, the Mexican army did fight with heroism when met with foreign invaders (1. Chartrand, R., & Younghusband, B.).

Citations

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