

## Spain in the War of Independence

What began in 1776 as a war between the 13 original British colonies against Great Britain ended up turning into, with the passing of the years, a conflict in that which forms more or less the major European powers that intensely participated, without the help of them, surely the results would not have been the same.

To understand the interference of France and Spain in a confrontation that, by principal, only had Great Britain and its colonies as main subjects one must look back to the humiliation suffered by the two countries in the Paris Treaty of 1763, signed after the end of the Six Years War. For Spain, it had meant handing over Florida, Menorca, and the colonies of the east and the southeast of the Mississippi to England as well as the colony of Sacramento. In the case of the French, the losses were much more humiliating.

And already in the war of American Independence, it was the surrender of the English troops at the battle of Saratoga, on October 1777, that encouraged the French-Spanish intentions. France disbursed a great deal of money to please the colonists and put their powerful navy at their service.

The help of the Spanish began being more modest, refusing at first to officially enter the war. Despite of it, the colonist received money and weapons from the Spanish government. Spain wanted the English to abandon the Gulf of Mexico and recover Menorca, as well as Gibraltar. The only thing left to do was formally support, that was tactically clear. This open participation in the conflict happened after the signing of a secret agreement between France and Spain in 1779 called the Treaty of Aranjuez. With their signature, Spain was promising to enter the conflict, while the French promised that they would help their allies recover Menorca, Gibraltar,

Pensacola, and Honduras Bay among other areas. The knowledge of this agreement required that the British Army in America would weaken, since England was forced to send troops stationed in the colonies to Gibraltar. Even though North American historiography doesn't pay proper attention normally, it is quite certain that the Spanish troops of Bernard de Gálvez obtained major success against the British troops in the southern part of North America and in the Caribbean, resulting influentially in the face of the final outcome of the conflict.

Thanks to the support of France, Spain, and other countries like Holland, England didn't have any other choice except to sign the Treaty of Versailles in 1783, whereas it gave independence to the United States also, it stated that Spain maintained Menorca and East and West Florida. Likewise, it recognized the sovereignty over the Providence colony (in the Caribbean), and the recovering of the coasts of Nicaragua, Campeche (the west of the Yucatan peninsula) and Honduras. Of course, England did not hand over the sovereignty over Gibraltar.