

Fundación Banco Santander and Carmen Iglesias explore the unknown angles of America's independence on its bicentennial

- Carmen Iglesias will open the lecture series *Biografías e Historia* with the commemoration of the culmination of the Ibero-American independence process.
- The academic Carmen Sanz will also participate, as well as the Argentine professor and author of *Madre Patria*, Marcelo Gullo, and Jaime Olmedo, director of the Biographical Dictionary.
- Beginning on 18 May, the lectures will be featured on Fundación Banco Santander's [YouTube Channel](#). A new lecture will be available every week.

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The year 2022 marks two hundred years since the culmination of several independence movements in Latin America, beginning with that of Colombia in 1810. Throughout 1821, Central American countries such as Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama became independent republics after more than three centuries of belonging to the Hispanic Monarchy. Although the process continued in subsequent years and ended after the loss of the last overseas territories (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) in 1898, **Carmen Iglesias** believes that "it is worth revisiting those moments in order to interpret them in the light of current visions and contributions".

Therefore, **Fundación Banco Santander**, in collaboration with **Fundación Cultural de la Nobleza** is once again organising this year's edition of the lecture series *Biografías e Historia*, under the title of **"America, Spain and Independence. 200 years of a complex process"**.

Borja Baselga, director of Fundación Banco Santander, once again emphasised the importance of history, alluding to the quote by George Santayana, a thinker of the Generation of '98, who stated that *those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*. In Baselga's words, it is important to continue reinforcing Humanism, which is why we have been celebrating this cycle for more than fifteen editions now, because "it is necessary to illuminate such important historical episodes as the Ibero-American independences in the light of our present in order to banish many mistaken myths of our past".

According to **Carmen Iglesias**, the abduction and abdication of the Spanish kings led to a power vacuum and a liberal revolution in America and Spain as a consequence of the Napoleonic invasion. The possibility of political autonomy in the absence of the monarchy was not received equally in the different colonies. Between 1808 and 1810, many government assemblies were set up to exercise sovereignty in the name of the abdicated King Ferdinand VII both on the Iberian Peninsula and in the Americas, initiating a revolutionary process.

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The director of the RAH, who inaugurates the cycle with the lecture, ***"Turbulent times: meaning and form of the great revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries"*** on 18 May on Fundación Banco Santander's YouTube Channel, reveals that the wars of independence were a struggle between Spanish Americans against Spanish Americans... "they are not wars of independence, but civil wars", affirms **Carmen Iglesias**, dispelling some doubts about the true nature of the Ibero-American independence conflict that set Napoleon's invasion in motion, and in which the British were as damaging to Spanish interests as the French themselves, "the Anglo-Saxons did everything possible to achieve the greatest possible fragmentation of states that could be achieved". The President of the RAH states that "the general public does not know how the new nations became indebted to the English to the tune of 21 million pounds, and how this debt was not paid off until the middle of the 20th century", a vicious circle that nullified the development of many of these economies.

Another point to bear in mind was that the Indians were left without protection when the authority of the Spanish Monarchy was dissolved because "they remained loyal to the Monarchy and after this the responsibility for their protection passed to the Creoles".

Marcelo Gullo, Argentinean professor at the University of Lanus, and doctor of Political Science, author of *Madre Patria*, will follow the coordinator of the cycle with the lecture on 24 May entitled ***"The independence of Spanish America: a rereading of a complex reality"***, which describes the different interpretations of the Spanish-American independence process and proposes a new vision of the complex historical phenomenon that took place from 1810 onwards. "Britain could not have done anything in favour of independence if it had not had the inept Ferdinand VII as its leader", argues Marcelo Gullo, because if he had accepted the British proposal of free trade, "independence would have been achieved later, as in Brazil, and there would not have been the trauma of the wars of independence".

Likewise, the History academic, **Carmen Sanz**, presents the lecture, ***"The Discourse of Legitimacy at the Dawn of Independence: America against Napoleon"***, to be broadcast on the Fundación's YouTube channel on 31 May, who considers that the beginnings of the American independence process are directly related to Napoleon's Iberian invasion, "the peninsular institutions dependent on the Monarchy yielded without resistance, and the opposition came from the Boards organised by prominent local figures in towns and provinces". In Sanz's opinion, the assemblies were charged with legitimacy by explaining the renunciations of Bayonne as a kidnapping of Ferdinand VII. For this reason, adds the historian, "at the beginning of the American independence movements, the justification for the uprisings was the same: the seizure of power from the town halls to preserve the rights of Ferdinand VII in the face of Napoleon".

In general, territories that functioned as economic centres took longer to consider independence as a viable project. In the most important colonies, such as the Viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) and Peru, the elites did not give up their relationship with the Hispanic monarchy even though a new foreignizing political and social vision was gaining ground, as it allowed them to maintain political pre-eminence and economic and social control.

Jaime Olmedo, Technical director of the biographical dictionary, will close the lecture series on **7 June** with the talk entitled **"The other independence"**, since Modernism may have been a movement of cultural emancipation of the new republics in relation to Spain. Politically and legally independent from the first half of the 19th century, they also wanted to be culturally independent". Olmedo highlighted José Martí and Rubén Darío as the leaders of this movement, which sought references other than the Hispanic tradition, such as Symbolism or Parnassism, or writers such as Poe, W. Whitman, O. Wilde or G. D'Annunzio. D'Annunzio. "For the first time, a new literary and cultural era was crossing the Atlantic from the American coast to have repercussions in Europe and especially in Spain", Olmedo points out, while highlighting Darío's two trips to our country in 1892 and 1899 as proof of this. Modernism, according to Olmedo, accepted Darío, without realising that "this culminated the process of independence of these new nations".

About Fundación Banco Santander

Fundación Banco Santander works to contribute to building a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable society.

With this objective, they develop initiatives grouped into three lines of action: the promotion of culture as a tool for understanding the world around us, social action to facilitate the progress of vulnerable groups and care for the environment to protect the natural heritage.

In all its programs, the Foundation strives to create collaborative networks with the third sector to tackle the main global challenges.

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