

Mexican heroes fire up crowd

National Day celebrations in Budapest (and probably the world over) involve invitations from the country in question to fellow ambassadors, who number many dozens in the Hungarian capital.

The national anthems of the host country and Hungary are played (sometimes live, often recorded), followed by some usually standard remarks from the ambassador to the assembled diplomatic clan and other dignitaries about the satisfactory state of bilateral relations. (The next Norway National Day may require some considerable degree of tact.)

Then, after these preliminaries, the eating and drinking may begin, often of national specialities. It is a fairly standard routine. Mexico's National Day is more dramatic than most...

Going back to the beginning and consulting our history book: "On the morning of 16 September 1810, the parish priest of the town of Dolores, Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, declared himself in open revolt against Spanish rule from the pulpit of his church, launching the Mexican War of Independence.

"He exhorted his following to take up arms and join him in his fight against the injustices of the Spanish colonial system, and within moments he had an army of some

600 men. This action became known as the 'Grito de Dolores' or 'Cry of Dolores' and it ignited the pent-up resentment of the Spanish in Mexico. The bloody Mexican War of Independence would not conclude until 1821."

Today, to commemorate Independence Day, the President of Mexico leads the "Grito" on the spacious main square of Mexico City, called the Zócalo, flooded with tens of thousands of people.

And so do his ambassadors posted around the world. Thus, in the Museum of Military History in Budapest's Castle District last week, Ambassador of Mexico Isabel B. Téllez De Ortega clasped the green, white and red Mexican flag, adopted a steely demeanour and stepped forward to face her expectant audience. She took a breath and delivered her toasts:

"Mexicanos!" called the ambassador. "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Vivan los héroes que nos dieron patria!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva Hidalgo!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva Morelos!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva Allende!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Vivan Aldama y Matamoros!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva la independencia nacional!" "Viva!" shouted back the crowd.

"Viva México! Viva México! Viva México!" "Viva! Viva! Viva!" shouted back the crowd. (By now, the crowd has learned its lines and is word-perfect.)

These are the names of the heroes of the war and they will not be allowed to die. After the exciting call-and-response, a few words from Ambassador Téllez De Ortega about the 40th anniversary of bilateral relations between Mexico and Hungary were almost an anti-climax.

And then the partying could begin, accompanied by live mariachi music, now certified by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Ambassador
Isabel B. Téllez
De Ortega

