



JIM C'S QUIZ OF THE WEEK

Cinco de Mayo - 5/5/2007

HOW DID "CINCO DE MAYO" ORIGINATE?

"Cinco de Mayo" (the 5th of May) is not Independence Day for Mexico, which was declared on midnight, September 15, 1810.

However, it took over 11 years to remove Spanish soldiers from Mexico, and in those years of turmoil, Mexico became heavily in debt. When Mexico stopped making payments in 1862, three European countries sailed into Veracruz to collect debts – England and Spain accepted terms, but Napoleon III wanted to create a Mexican Empire to be ruled by his puppet, Archduke Maximilian.

On May 5, 1862, an ill-equipped Mexican militia of 4,000 lead by General Zaragoza defeated a larger French army in the Battle of Puebla. The victory was a glorious, brief moment in Mexican history that helped develop a sense of national unity. By 1864 the French used 30,000 soldiers to establish Maximilian as emperor.

"Cinco de Mayo" is the third most importance holiday in Mexico after Independence Day (9/16) and Revolution Day (11/20). Almost any celebration in the U.S. is larger than anything taking place in Mexico, because commercial interests here have created an impressive cultural celebration with an emphasis on foods, beverages, and music.

Conventional Wisdom: Cinco de Mayo = a Mexican Cultural Fiesta

M of Z: Cinco de Mayo has expanded beyond a day in history