

**Maximilian I**  
**- A Habsburg on Montezuma's Throne**

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## *Abstract*

The life and fate of Maximilian I, the last emperor of Mexico, has attracted a substantial amount of research since his death in 1867. However, these works either only deal with the last few years of Maximilian's life, from his candidature for the Mexican throne to his death at the hands of the Mexican liberals, or with other aspects of his life such as his time as governor of Lombardy-Venetia.

Thus the main aim of this thesis is to offer a biography of Maximilian, which will not only look at Maximilian's reign as emperor of Mexico but will also examine the Habsburg aspect of the story. It is thus necessary to look at the extent to which his Habsburg upbringing, his education and his experiences as governor of Lombardy-Venetia shaped his idea of kingship; how his travels and his time in Italy conditioned him to regard the "other" in a certain imperial way; and how all these essentially Habsburg experiences and ideas played a part in his failure and demise in Mexico.

This thesis will thus aim to give a rounded picture the life and death of Maximilian I by examining his upbringing, his education, and his experiences in the navy and in Lombardy-Venetia. For without an understanding of these it is impossible to fully comprehend Maximilian's actions in Mexico.

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## *Introduction*

The fate of Maximilian I, the last emperor of Mexico, is hardly a popular or common subject of historical interest to the public in Europe, the U.S. or even Mexico today. In the Americas, little is known about Maximilian apart from the fact that he was the adversary of the Mexican folk hero Benito Juárez, who defeated the French invaders, put an end to the Second Empire and re-established the republic in Mexico. In Europe, most people have never heard of Maximilian and his Mexican adventure and apart from Edouard Manet's painting and his castle Miramar in Trieste no legacy of Maximilian remains; only in Austria still exists an interest of the public in the fate of "poor Max", though it has to be said that the memory of Maximilian is not as great as that of Franz Joseph. Even in death, it appears, Maximilian is destined to play the second fiddle to his brother.

Although Maximilian's story has almost been forgotten today, his death in 1867 and the events in Mexico had caused a big stir in Europe. The public in France and Austria had demanded more information about his death and had also raised broader questions concerning the involvement of Napoleon III and Franz Joseph. As a consequence, there was a flood of publications that dealt with the events that led to the death of Maximilian. Most of these early publications were diaries and eyewitness accounts of people, who had been directly involved in the events in Mexico. Thus these reports did not give an objective account of Maximilian's rule and of the Second Mexican Empire, but concentrated on the individual and subjective experiences of the respective authors.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For diaries and eye witness accounts of people involved in the Mexican adventure see: Count Horace de Viel Castel, *Memoirs*, London, 1888; Felix Prinz zu Salm-Salm, *Queretaro. Blätter aus meinem Tagebuch in Mexico. Nebst einem Auszuge aus dem Tagebuch der Prinzessin Agnes zu Salm-Salm*, Stuttgart, 1868; Emile Walton, *Souvenirs d'un Officier Belge au Mexique*,



In May 1868 Samuel Basch, Maximilian's private physician, published his memoirs; although Basch claimed that 'in the prison Maximilian asked me to publish an unbiased account of the events upon my return to Europe'<sup>1</sup>, his account was anything but objective. Basch mainly blamed Napoleon III and Marshal Bazaine, the commander of the French forces in Mexico, for the failure of the Second Mexican Empire and for the death of Maximilian. The biography by Friedrich Hellwald published in 1869 almost took the same line; according to Hellwald Marshal Bazaine as well as Juárez and the republican form of government were responsible for the downfall of Maximilian.<sup>2</sup> However, what is remarkable about this book is the fact that Hellwald attempted to excuse the actions of Napoleon III by portraying Maximilian as the colonizer of Mexico. This was in stark contrast to the prevailing opinion of the public and amongst historians in Austria, such as Johann Kemper, who portrayed Maximilian in a much too positive light by overlooking the flaws in Maximilian's character and blaming the failure of the Mexican adventure on the withdrawal of military support by Napoleon III.<sup>3</sup>

In France the focus was mainly on the French intervention and the military campaigns in Mexico. The earliest French works on Mexico, largely memoirs or observations of contemporaries, were almost entirely critical of France's involvement in general, and of Napoleon III in particular. After the last French forces withdrew from Mexico in 1867, Napoleon's political standing diminished rapidly; thus it was mainly the political

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Brussels, 1868; Sara Yorke Stevenson, *Maximilian in Mexico: A Woman's Reminiscences of the French Intervention 1862-1867*, New York, 1899; Calderón de la Barca, F., *Life in Mexico*, Chapman and Hall, New York, 1866; Klinger, W., *Für Kaiser Max nach Mexiko - Das Österreichische Freiwilligenkorps in Mexiko 1864/67*, Grin Verlag, Vienna, 2008; Kollonitz, P., *Eine Reise nach Mexiko im Jahre 1864*, Carl Gerold's Sohn, Vienna, 1867; Murray, R.H., *Maximilian Emperor of Mexico. Memoirs of his Private Secretary José Luis Blasio*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1934.

<sup>1</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections of Mexico. The last Ten Months of Maximilian's Empire*, Sr Brooks, Wilmington, 2001, p. 228

<sup>2</sup> Hellwald, F. *Maximilian I - Kaiser von Mexico*, Braumüller, Vienna, 1869

<sup>3</sup> Kemper, J., *Mexico unter Kaiser Maximilian I*, Mainz, Regensburg, 1907

opposition that criticized Napoleon for the French involvement in Mexico. One of the few historical works of the Mexican intervention that has been sympathetic is that of Paul Gaulot.<sup>4</sup> His work was based on the correspondence of Marshal Bazaine with Napoleon III, the minister of war and others, and it claimed that the French emperor was misinformed and badly served his ministers and commanders in Mexico. Nevertheless, the fact Gaulot only examined the French side of the story without taking reports and documents of Austrian or Mexican eyewitnesses into account, of course skewed his analysis, making it favourable for the French emperor.

While there was interest in the Mexican intervention in France and in the fate of Maximilian in Austria, the Second Mexican Empire was completely ignored by contemporaries and historians in Mexico. Most of the reports and historical research in Mexico concentrated on the French invasion of the country and the military struggle against the occupation. Moreover, the Mexican public as well as biographers were more interested in Benito Juárez; this did not only turn the Mexican president into a sort of legendary figure but it also helped to stabilize the new republic in Mexico as Juárez became a sort of folk hero. During the struggle between the monarchy and the liberals Juárez had been acting president under the provisions of the constitution of 1857. However, his fight against Maximilian gave him the necessary prestige to be elected as president in 1867 and again in 1871.

Therefore, it was not until 1928 when Egon Caesar Conte Corti gained access to the archives of Maximilian in Vienna that a first comprehensive and objective biography of Maximilian was published. His monumental work, *Maximilian and Charlotte of Mexico*, addressed the negotiations between Maximilian and Napoleon III, and Maximilian and the Mexican emigrants in Europe, then followed the progress of the

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<sup>4</sup> Gaulot, P., *L'Expedition du Mexique*, Ollendorf, Paris, 1906

Mexican Empire until its collapse in 1867.<sup>5</sup> Although Conte Corti could only draw on the sources available in the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv* Vienna, his work nevertheless provides the basic research on which many historians still rely today. However, Conte Corti's work appeared to satisfy the demand for publications and academic research on Maximilian and the Second Mexican empire and, as a consequence, there were few works written on the subject in the next decades.

It was only in the 1970s that there was a renewed interest in the Mexican affair; this was due to the fact that revisionist historians in Europe and the U.S. began to interpret certain aspects of historical events differently; thus they also questioned Maximilian's role in the Second Mexican Empire anew. For the first time, though, interest in the topic did not only come from academics in France and Austria but also from historians in the United States and in Britain. In the United States the academic debate centred less on Maximilian but was focused above all on the relationship between the USA and the Juárez government and the reforms in Mexico.<sup>6</sup> The work of the British biographer Joan Haslip was also crucial in renewing interest in Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire.<sup>7</sup> However, Haslip's work can be criticized for being written too fancifully and for failing to analyse the broader political and personal motivations that led Maximilian as well as Napoleon to get involved in Mexico. In the two European countries that had been the most involved in the Mexican adventure the interest in the subject also increased again. In France the focus began to shift from Napoleon III to different aspects of the interlude: on Maximilian and Charlotte and on analysis on possible economic motives for Napoleon's intervention.<sup>8</sup> In Austria the impetus was largely due

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<sup>5</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte von Mexico*, A. Knopf, Vienna, 1924

<sup>6</sup> Sinkin, R. *The Mexican Reform. A Study in Liberal Nation-Building*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979

<sup>7</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer. Emperor Maximilian of Mexico and his Empress*, Littlehampton Book Services, London, 1971

<sup>8</sup> Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique. Les illusions d'un grand dessein*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1994

to an exhibition at the castle of Hardegg, which resulted in a series of articles and books being published in the 1970s and 1980s on Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire, the so-called *Hardegger Beiträge zur Maximilianforschung*. These included amongst others the works of Ferdinand Anders' *Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian und das Segundo Imperio Mexicano*,<sup>9</sup> and Konrad Ratz's *Das Militärgerichtsverfahren gegen Maximilian von Mexiko*.<sup>10</sup>

In the last two decades the research on Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire has become more diverse. Jasper Ridley tried in his book *Maximilian and Juárez* to show the relationship between the two and their resulting actions and reaction.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, for the first time there was a genuine interest in Maximilian within Mexico; until this point the Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire were largely overlooked by Mexican historians and the focus had largely been on the French intervention. As already mentioned, this was largely due to the fact that Juárez had become such a legendary figure that research into the life of his opponent was almost impossible. Nevertheless, in 1998 Erika Pani published her research on Maximilian's court and court protocol as well as his policy towards the indigenous population of Mexico.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this research on Maximilian's court Richard Dunkin also looked at the different ways in which Maximilian attempted to legitimise his rule in Mexico and to fashion popular support for the empire.<sup>13</sup> In Austria the focus of the research on Maximilian shifted from Mexico to his earlier years as governor of Lombardy-Venetia. Brigitte Mazohl-Wallnig has written an article on the constitutional framework under

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<sup>9</sup> Anders, F., *Erzherzog Maximilian und das Segundo Imperio Mexicano*, Enzenhofer, Vienna, 1974.

<sup>10</sup> Ratz, K. *Das Militärgerichtsverfahren gegen Maximilian von Mexiko 1867*, Enzenhofer, Hardegg, 1985

<sup>11</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, Orion Publishing Group, New York, 1992

<sup>12</sup> Pani, E.P., 'El Proyecto de Estado de Maximiliano a Través de la Vida Cortesana y del Ceremonial Público'. In: *Historia Mexicana*, 1995, Vol 155/2.

<sup>13</sup> Duncan, P.H. Political Legitimation and Maximilian's Second Empire in Mexico, 1864-1867. In *Estudios Mexicanos*, 1996, Vol. 12/1.

which Maximilian had to work as governor in Lombardy-Venetia and the changes that Maximilian proposed to it.<sup>14</sup> Julia Toelle, on the other hand, focused on Maximilian's social and cultural policy of Maximilian in Italy, which was aimed to win over the elites in Milan and Venice that were opposed to Austrian rule in Italy.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Clemens Weber has recently completely a thesis that dealt with Maximilian's perceptions of Italy and the Italians and how these changed over time.<sup>16</sup>

However, although there have been a lot of publications on Maximilian and the Second Mexican Empire since his death in 1867, these works either only deal with the last few years of Maximilian's life, from his candidature for the Mexican throne to his death at the hands of the Mexican liberals, or with other aspects of his life such as his time as governor of Lombardy-Venetia. Perhaps, therefore, the time is ripe for a further attempt to understand the life, character and motivation of the last Mexican emperor. No single volume could encompass all aspects of Maximilian's life and reign, and there are significant and deliberate omissions from this one. For example, those primarily interested in the iconography of Manet's painting will find that it receives scant attention here, mainly because they are extensively treated elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, I have little to add to Ferdinand Anders' understanding of the Mexican coin system and the awarding of military medals in the Second Mexican Empire,<sup>18</sup> or to Albert Duchesne's analysis of the Belgian volunteer corps.<sup>19</sup> Thus the thesis that follows is a

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<sup>14</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat und administrative Eliten im Königreich Lombardo-Venetien 1815-1859*. In: Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte, Vol. 146, Mainz, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Toelle, J. *Das tanzende General-Gouvernement. Die kulturpolitischen Ideen des Erzherzogs Ferdinand Maximilians als Generalgouverneur des Lombardo-Venetischen Königreiches, 1857-1859*. In: Römische Historische Mitteilungen, Vienna, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Weber, M.C., *Das Italienbild von Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Elderfield, J., *Manet and the Execution of Maximilian*. In: *Das MoMa in Berlin*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Berlin, 2006

<sup>18</sup> Anders, F., *Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian und das Segundo Imperio Mexicano, Wissenschaft, Münzen & Medaillen/Ordenswesen/ Philatelie*, Hardegg, 1974

<sup>19</sup> Duchesne, A., *L'expédition des volontaires belges au Mexique, 1864-1867*, Brussels, 1967

biography of Maximilian, which lays strong emphasis on political and diplomatic history; however these fields still offer a wide scope of debate.

The standard interpretation of Maximilian's political views and his resulting actions first in Lombardy-Venetia and later in Mexico is that of a liberal idealist, who due to circumstances and external pressures could never fulfil his liberal convictions. However, the central argument of this thesis is that in contrast to the common view of Maximilian, his political thinking was not formed by liberal concepts and ideas but was fundamentally conservatives. As a consequence, the main focus in this work is on Maximilian's understanding of kingship, his political ideas as well as his views of the 'other' and his capability to modify these concepts in order to adapt to new situations. It is thus crucial for this thesis to investigate whether Maximilian was essentially a Habsburg with Habsburg ideas and principles of kingship?

In the context of the Habsburg Empire in the middle of the nineteenth century this question refers to the conviction of the members of the House of Habsburg that it was their divine right to rule over the empire and that any constitution or parliament constituted an infringement on the ruler's God-given rights. The revolution in 1848 had threatened these principles, yet Franz Joseph's accession to the throne on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1848 marked the return to a centralised absolutist system, which has been labelled neo-absolutism. In the face of the still raging uprisings and rebellions in parts of the Habsburg Empire, Franz Joseph order the dissolution of the Kremsier parliament on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1848 and the replacement of the Kremsier draft by a constitution drawn up by Count Franz Stadion.<sup>20</sup> Stadion's constitution suffered form two drawbacks: firstly, it lacked the authority of the Kremsier draft, which had been agreed to by an elected parliament. Secondly, it was never put into practice, for by the time the authorities had overcome the crisis still outstanding in the monarchy by force, Stadion's constitution

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<sup>20</sup> Beller, S., *Francis Joseph*, Longman, Harlow, 1996, p. 50

appeared an unnecessary liberal compromise.<sup>21</sup> It is thus hardly surprising that Franz Joseph tried to do away with the constitution altogether; the *Sylvester Patent* removed any kind of popular sovereignty for the Austrian system of government, including the elected local councils envisaged by Stadion. The provisions concerning the equality of language and nationality were expressively revoked, as was the list of individual rights. Moreover, the *Reichsrat* was reduced to a consultative body of elder statesmen, much like the State Conference of before 1848.<sup>22</sup> Thus neo-absolutism amounted to a power system designed to create more power for the Habsburg state and its ruler, Franz Joseph, so that he could maintain and enhance his and the Habsburgs' dynastic prestige and position in Europe.

Nevertheless, in order to understand how Franz Joseph and respectively Maximilian developed these concepts, it is important to examine their childhood, upbringing and education at the court of Vienna. Maximilian was brought up together with Franz Joseph and his younger brother Karl Ludwig; the brothers shared the same household that was presided over by the *Ajo* Count Bombelles, they had the same governess Luise von Sturmfeder and followed the same teaching syllabus. As the educators, teachers and superintendents spent a lot of time with the archdukes, it is worth investigating whether all of them were stout conservatives or whether some of them held enlightened, Josephinist views. Moreover, the subjects and teaching timetables also give an interesting insight into the values and politics at the Viennese court.

As Maximilian joined the Austrian navy and as he travelled extensively in the Mediterranean and even ventured to the New World, this thesis also investigates his view of the 'other'. Throughout his travels he kept a journal and it will be worth to find out to what extent his experiences abroad shaped his perceptions of foreign cultures and

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<sup>21</sup> Beller, S., *Francis Joseph*, 1996, p. 52ff

<sup>22</sup> Sked, A., *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815-1918*, Pearson Education, London, 2001, p. 144ff

peoples. Even more importantly, did his travels change his political views and his idea of kingship?

Understanding both Maximilian's neo-absolutist concept of government and his view of the non-German people of the empire are fundamental to analyzing his approach to being governor of Lombardy-Venetia. As his role lacked any kind of military power and did not give him a lot of civilian authority, Maximilian attempted to bind the Italian nobility to the court by granting them favours and positions. This essentially absolutist concept of government was also documented in his proposal greater autonomy of the Lombard-Venetian kingdom from the central government in Vienna,<sup>23</sup> in many respects it mirrored the system of government established by Franz Joseph after the suppression of the revolutions in 1848. The proposal would have concentrated power in the hand of the governor but crucially envisaged parliament as a mere consultative institution.<sup>24</sup>

Maximilian's upbringing, his travels, his time in the navy and his experiences as governor in Lombardy-Venetia clearly shaped his idea of kingship. Thus when he was crowned emperor of Mexico he brought these experiences and ideas to his new role. This thesis will, therefore, examine to what extent Maximilian attempted to apply Habsburg values and ideas of kingship and government to Mexico. It will also investigate whether Maximilian was able to modify his fundamentally Habsburg concepts and ideas of government and the 'other', when he found that they were not applicable to the situation in Mexico. Moreover, did his failure to do so lead to his downfall?

As the questions raised above clearly show, it is impossible to only examine Maximilian's rule in Mexico in isolation from childhood in Vienna and his experiences

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<sup>23</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 354

<sup>24</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat und administrative Eliten im Königreich Lombardo-Venetien 1815-1859*. In: Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für europäische Geschichte, Vol. 146, Mainz, 1998, p. 435



in the navy and as governor of Lombardy-Venetia. These experiences were extremely important as they shaped Maximilian's ideas about kingship, about the way he viewed the "other" and played an essential part in his demise. In order to be able to fully examine and analyse these concepts and ideas this thesis is using the biographical approach; without understanding Maximilian's upbringing, his education, his experiences in the navy and in Lombardy-Venetia, it is impossible to fully comprehend his actions in Mexico.



CHAPTER ONE

*A Small Archduke*

—

‘The little one is eager to learn and very lively (...) but sometimes I worry about his stubbornness’

*Marie Luise von Sturmfeder, Maximilian’s governess, 1833/34*

‘We marry to have children and not to satisfy the desires of our hearts’.<sup>25</sup> This comment made by the Austrian state chancellor, Count Metternich, about the reasons for marriage must have been uppermost on the mind of the Bavarian Princess Sophie, when she was told that she was to marry the Austrian Archduke Franz Karl. It was obvious that Franz Karl could not fulfil the desires of her heart for he was dull, uncouth, even stupid and had no other interests than hunting. However, as a loving and obedient daughter, Sophie followed the wishes and political ambitions of her father, the Bavarian King Maximilian I, and married the archduke in 1824. Nevertheless, it was not only the ambitions of her father that Sophie had to fulfil in this marriage, but also the hopes of the entire Austrian imperial family and the whole country to continue the imperial line of the House of Habsburg. The formerly numerous dynasty of Habsburg-Lorraine had diminished to only two archdukes in the direct line of succession and it seemed likely that the marriage between Franz Karl’s older and epileptic brother Ferdinand and Archduchess Marianna would have no progeny. Therefore, the continuation of the Habsburg dynasty

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<sup>25</sup> Hanateau, J., *Lettres du Prince de Metternich à la Comtesse de Lieven, 1818-1819*, Plon-Nourrit, Paris, 1909, p. 179

depended solely on Sophie's ability to produce male heirs. It was an enormous amount of pressure that was put on the shoulders of this young woman and maybe as a result Sophie suffered two miscarriages in July 1826 and June 1827.<sup>26</sup> Sophie's apparent inability to produce any living offspring fuelled already existing whispers and gossip at court; family members began to ask questions, since for centuries every wife of a Habsburg had brought numerous children into the world, despite suffering from tuberculosis, epilepsy and various other diseases, whereas this young and healthy Bavarian princess could not conceive. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was generally accepted that it was solely the women's fault if a marriage remained childless, so Sophie was subjected to a number of household remedies and other courses of treatment.<sup>27</sup> Despite all these efforts, the marriage between Sophie and Franz Karl remained childless for six years until on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1830 Sophie gave birth to long awaited heir, who later became Emperor Franz Joseph I.

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<sup>26</sup> Most historians seem to be in agreement that Archduchess Sophie had two miscarriages. However, more recent research by Gerd Holler and Gabriele Praschl-Bichler suggests that Sophie suffered up to five miscarriages between 1825 and 1829.

<sup>27</sup> Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA): Hofapotheke, Receptbücher der AH Familie, Hofapotheke HAp, cart. 52

## 1.1. RUMOURS ABOUT MAXIMILIAN'S BIRTH

The birth of Franz Joseph in 1830 had secured the continuation of the line of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine; thus, when Sophie was with child again in 1832 the pressure on her was less intense than during her earlier pregnancies. Nevertheless, she was confined to her bed in Schönbrunn, the summer palace of the Habsburgs on the outskirts of Vienna, for several months during her second pregnancy, for the doctors feared that she would suffer another miscarriage. As the date for the expected birth drew closer Sophie asked her father-in-law, the Emperor Francis I (II), for a “quiet” birth;<sup>28</sup> as it was still customary at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at most of the courts in Europe Sophie had given birth to Franz Joseph in the presence of a large number of witnesses, whose purpose had been to guarantee the legitimacy of the newborn child. According to Sophie's wishes there were only a few witnesses present in her chamber when the contractions began on the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1832; with the help of the experienced midwife Schmalzl, the birth was relatively quick and painless. At six o'clock in the morning the Archduchess was delivered of a healthy boy, who was baptized Ferdinand, Maximilian Joseph<sup>29</sup> which was shortened to Maxi by all the family.

If there had been gossip about Sophie's marriage to her husband Franz Karl before the birth of Franz Joseph then rumours were rife after Maximilian's birth due to his not very Habsburg-like appearance: he did not have the famous Habsburg lip nor the prominent

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<sup>28</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie. Die heimliche Kaiserin. Mutter Franz Joseph I*, Amalthea, Vienna, 1993, p. 59

<sup>29</sup> He was baptized Ferdinand in honour of his godfather, the later Emperor Ferdinand I; Maximilian in memory of Sophie's father, the Bavarian King Maximilian I; and Joseph in honour of Emperor Joseph II. - Source: Gruber, S. *Ferdinand Maximilian – Auf dem Weg zu einer verhängnisvollen Krone*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1999, p. 4

chin and above all he was sandy-haired, something unseen before in the Austrian Imperial family. As a result, many people at court and in the streets of Vienna whispered that Sophie had been unfaithful to her husband and that Maximilian, and maybe even Franz Joseph, were not fathered by Franz Karl but by the Duke of Reichstadt, Napoleon Bonaparte's legitimate son. But what was the basis for these rumours?

#### 1.1.1. RUMOURS AT COURT

When Sophie first came to the court in Vienna in 1824 she was unhappy and longed for her parents and her beloved Munich. Sophie's letters proved that even after three years of marriage to Franz Karl she still did not feel at home in Vienna and longed to see her parents: 'You cannot imagine, dearest mother, how often I have yearned to see you, since I have left you'.<sup>30</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that in the course of the years that followed her establishment in Vienna of a close relationship between her and the Duke of Reichstadt developed. Transplanted into surroundings that were at first strange to her, Sophie took to this young man, who, separated from his mother, lived at the court in Vienna in a sort of exile. However, it was not only the feeling of not belonging, of not being at home at the court of Vienna that drew the two together but also the fact that they shared common interests. Both Sophie and the Duke of Reichstadt were young and

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<sup>30</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1827

mildly hedonistic and stymied at a court that largely consisted of old and conservative men. As a consequence, Sophie and the Duke of Reichstadt often attended the theatre and were regularly seen dancing together at court balls.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the Duke of Reichstadt, although he was six years Sophie's junior, was possessed of a charm and elegance that contrasted with the boring insipidness of her husband Franz Karl. Rumours were fuelled not only by the close friendship that existed between Sophie and the Duke of Reichstadt but also by the fact that Sophie, childless after six years of marriage to the unattractive Franz Karl, produced the longed-for heir at the exact time when her close friend, the Duke of Reichstadt, reached manhood.

To strengthen the argument, the rumourmongers at court claimed that the Duke of Reichstadt showed more interest in Sophie's pregnancy and in Franz Joseph than was befitting for an uncle. The purpose of these rumours concerning Maximilian's and Franz Joseph's parentage did not only discredit Sophie's reputation and threatened her standing within the imperial family but also undermined her children's status as the possible heirs to the throne of the Habsburg Empire. In 1832 Emperor Franz I (II) had ruled the Habsburg Empire for forty years but the issue of who should inherit the crown after his death was still unresolved. The legitimate heir to the throne, Ferdinand, was regarded by many contemporaries at court and in the public as an amiable idiot for he was mentally disabled and suffered from epilepsy, which, it was assumed, meant he would be unable to father any children. Despite these deficiencies, Metternich supported Ferdinand's succession to the throne, mainly because he thought that Ferdinand would be easier to manipulate than any of the other archdukes: Archduke Johann disliked Metternich and had always been opposed to Metternich's politics; Archduke Franz Karl, who was the next in the line of succession, was only marginally more intelligent than

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<sup>31</sup> Holler, G, *Sophie*, 1993, p. 33

Ferdinand but his wife Sophie was a very energetic woman, who would have had more influence on her husband's decisions than the state chancellors and his advisors.<sup>32</sup>

However, now that these rumours existed they could not be stopped and despite the lack of viable evidence they can even be found in some modern biographies of Archduchess Sophie and have been accepted by many biographers of Maximilian. Joan Haslip, for instance, was convinced that these rumours were true and supported this claim by a letter written by the Duke of Reichstadt to his mother Marie Louise a day after Maximilian's birth in which the already dangerously ill young man pleaded: 'She [Sophie] has to stay alive for the sake of the child that she carries at her breast'.<sup>33</sup> However, it is questionable whether this comment by the Duke of Reichstadt is proof of his paternity: firstly, he could have actually just expressed concern for Sophie's health and that of the child; and secondly, researchers such as Gerd Holler and myself have attempted to locate Haslip's evidence in the Montenuovo archive, in which all the letters between the Duke of Reichstadt and his mother are registered, and no such letter can be found.<sup>34</sup> Of course this does not prove that there had not been a love affair between Archduchess Sophie and the Duke of Reichstadt as all evidence indicating a relationship between the two and the possible paternity of the Duke of Reichstadt of Maximilian and Franz Joseph would in all likelihood have been destroyed. However, historical research does not provide any evidence to support the claims that the Duke of Reichstadt was the father of the two archdukes; and above all the comment made by the Duke of Reichstadt to his intimate friend Count Prokesch-Osten on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1831

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<sup>32</sup> Herre, F., *Metternich. Staatsmann des Friedens*, Kiepenheuer & Wietsch, Cologne, 1983, p. 351

<sup>33</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer. Emperor Maximilian of Mexico and his Empress*, Littlehampton Book Services, London, 1971, p. 13

<sup>34</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p.



that ‘he had never touched a woman’<sup>35</sup> refutes the rumours about his supposed paternity of Franz Joseph and Maximilian. In addition, his death in 1832 made it impossible for anyone to suggest that Sophie’s third and fourth sons, Karl Ludwig (1833) and Ludwig Viktor (1842) were the results of a love affair between her and the Duke of Reichstadt. Nevertheless, the rumours whispered at the time were shouted from the rooftops some years later above all by French journalists, novelists and playwrights; this mainly reflected the fact that there were many in France who were dissatisfied with the political realities of both the July monarchy and the Second Republic. Thus, these people began to glorify the “better days” of the Napoleonic period, and if Maximilian were indeed the son of the Duke of Reichstadt then he would be the only direct living descendent from the Napoleonic line, which in return would have also legitimized French support for the Emperor Maximilian in Mexico in the 1860s.

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<sup>35</sup> Prokesch-Osten, *Mein Verhältnis zum Herzog von Reichstadt*, W. Spemann, Stuttgart, 1878, p. 102

## 1.2. IN THE NURSERY: 1832 -1838

For centuries it had been customary for royal and imperial families throughout Europe to entrust the upbringing and education of their offspring to the care of governesses, educators and teachers. In the case of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine the upbringing and education of the little archdukes (and it only applied to the male descendents of the house) was divided since the late Middle Ages into three stages: the domestic education through a governess, a so-called Aja, in the nursery until the age of six; the academic education at the hands of several teachers and under the control of the main educator, the Ajo, until the age of eighteen;<sup>36</sup> the last stage was supposed to be the political education through the father, though this last stage was often neglected due to a surprising amount of early deaths in the Habsburg dynasty.<sup>37</sup> In accordance with this concept, Maximilian was given into the care of a governess, Baroness Marie Luise von Sturmfeder, who was responsible for every aspect of Maximilian's, and also Franz Joseph's, upbringing – she took care of their health, began with their religious education and also influenced the archdukes at a stage in their lives when they were very impressionable. It is thus important to have a closer look at Maximilian's governess.

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<sup>36</sup> The word „Ajo“ and its feminine version “Aja” derived from the Spanish word *Ayo* that in return derived from the Gothic word *hagja*, which could be translated as “warden”.

Source: Vocelka, K. & Heller, L., *Die private Welt der Habsburger. Leben und Alltag einer Familie*, Böhlau, Vienna, 1999, p. 53

<sup>37</sup> Strakosch-Grassmann, G., *Erziehung im Hause Habsburg*, Städt. Kaiser Franz Josef Jubiläums-Realgymnasium, Korneuburg, 1903, p. 24

### 1.1.3. THE AJA: MARIE LUISE VON STURMFEDER

The governess of Maximilian was born in 1789 as the sixth of ten children into a family of lower nobility in Württemberg and was brought up in accordance with Catholic principles. From 1818 onwards she lived with her sister Charlotte von Dalberg in Moravia to look after her sister's sons; as the young woman belonged to the gentry, but was not rich, it was necessary for her to find some sort of employment. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century women, above all those of the gentry, were not supposed to work, and the only kind of employment open to them was that of a lady-in-waiting at some court or that of a governess. The connection between the young Marie Luise von Sturmfeder and the court in Vienna was an indirect one: the godmother of Marie Luise von Sturmfeder was a certain Duchess Stadion, whom Archduchess Sophie had known from her youth as a Bavarian princess in Munich; it was the Duchess Stadion that recommended Marie Luise von Sturmfeder as a governess to Archduchess Sophie.<sup>38</sup> After Sophie had given birth to Franz Joseph in 1830 Marie Luise Sturmfeder began her work as Aja and as the head of the imperial household, with which the archduke and the nursery were provided. Subordinate to the Aja were a nurse, an assistant nurse, a cook, a chamber woman, a general-purpose maid, a scullery maid and two footmen. Directly after his birth Maximilian was also given into the care of Marie Luise Sturmfeder and was integrated into this already existing system; consequently Franz Joseph and Maximilian as well as Karl Ludwig, born in 1833, were brought up together.

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<sup>38</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 42

Much detail of these early days can be reconstructed from an edited selection of Marie Luise von Sturmfeder's letters to her sister, published some forty years after her death, but while Franz Joseph was still on the throne. Sturmfeder's notes vividly described the exaggerated fears over minor happenings, such as the near panic of the court physician Dr. Malfatti and the whole imperial family whenever Maximilian or Franz Joseph had a cold.<sup>39</sup> The notes also painted the picture of a happy childhood; however, some historians, like Martin Weber have refuted this view by pointing out that even as young children the archdukes were already forced to adhere to the strict court protocol and were forced to be present at court dinners from a very young age onwards.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, it appears that Maximilian and Franz Joseph were happy under Sturmfeder's care and that the Aja managed to create an atmosphere of warm affection around the children. Both cherished fond memories of her for the rest of their lives; throughout his adult life Maximilian kept up a lively correspondence with his former governess and when he was Emperor of Mexico he was deeply moved to receive a letter by his Baroness Sturmfeder, who worried about this adventure: 'rarely has a letter touched me as deeply as yours'.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v., *Die Kindheit unseres Kaisers - Briefe der Baronin Louise von Sturmfeder Aja Seiner Majestät, aus den Jahren 1830 – 1840*, Garlach & Wiedling,, Vienna, 1910, p. 64

<sup>40</sup> Weber, M.C., *Das Italienbild von Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 2008, p. 4

<sup>41</sup> HHStA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 68

### 1.2.1.1. The educational principles of Marie Luise von Sturmfeder

When Marie Luise von Sturmfeder began her employment as governess at the court at Vienna she expected that Archduchess Sophie would give her a detailed educational curriculum, which she would have to follow. Instead, Sturmfeder was only given general direction by Sophie:

She [Sophie] said, she and the Archduke wished that the child should not always be disturbed; that everything should be quiet around him, (...); that he should not be given sweets all the time but be given simple and healthy food.<sup>42</sup>

Marie Luise von Sturmfeder was thus at liberty to pursue her own ideas; according to her own notes and letters the Aja based her concept on the works of the Catholic theologian Johann Michael Sailer,<sup>43</sup> who ‘tells you that the first years of childhood are incredibly important. Firmness, religiosity, friendliness are the most important concepts in order to positively influence such a young person’.<sup>44</sup> Sturmfeder’s letters showed that she attempted to adhere to these principles and also tried to instil them in Maximilian and Franz Joseph. She saw it as her responsibility to introduce her charges to the basic principles of the Catholic faith and to encourage them in their childish religiosity by

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<sup>42</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v., *Kinheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p. 10

<sup>43</sup> Johann Michael Sailer was a German Jesuit professor of theology; 1777-1780 he was a tutor of philosophy and theology, and from 1780 second professor of dogmatic at Ingolstadt; in 1829 he became bishop of Regensburg. The book Sturmfeder is referring to was probably either “Vollständige Lese-und Gebetbuch zum Gebrauch von Katholiken” or “Handbuch der Christlichen Moral” – Source: Lachner, R., ‘Johann Michael Sailer’, in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, Vol. 8, Traugott Bautz GmbH, Herzberg, 1994, pp. 1182-1197

<sup>44</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v. *Kinheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p. 143

‘talking and speaking to them of God’<sup>45</sup>. Another concept that Sturmfeder also stressed was tidiness; apparently Marie Luise von Sturmfeder managed to convey this principle to Franz Joseph, who throughout his life remained well organised and tidy, whereas Maximilian could be lazy and untidy.

### 1.2.2. TWO DIFFERENT BROTHERS

As the notes of Marie Luise von Sturmfeder, as well as the diaries and letters of Archduchess Sophie, already suggested, the two brothers had two very different characters; Franz Joseph was serious, quiet and tidy, whereas Maximilian was the complete opposite: he was out-going, lively and imaginative. A note by Archduchess Sophie illustrated Maximilian’s imaginative and lively character very well: one evening the five-year-old Maximilian asked his mother if he could accompany his uncle, Archduke Ludwig ‘to the land where the oranges grow?’<sup>46</sup>. It took Archduchess Sophie some time before she understood that he meant the balcony, where some orange trees were growing in pots. The fact that Maximilian was the more imaginative of the two brothers made attending military exercises and parades a very boring matter for him, whereas Franz Joseph delighted in everything to do with the military. Franz Joseph’s

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<sup>45</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v. *Kinheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p. 165f.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 37

love of the military and Maximilian's disinterest became apparent when Archduchess Sophie took the two boys to watch a military parade:

I took Franz Joseph to observe a military parade and I was delighted with him; he was as thrilled by roar of the canons, which were fired in close proximity to him, as by the gunfire. All the soldiers were delighted by his courage. Maxi was at his side while the troops were passing by but he [Maximilian] seemed to be bored because he has got such little interest in military matters that I did not take him to the manoeuvres the following day. Franzi, on the other hand, said later that he had not seen anything more beautiful in his entire life.<sup>47</sup>

Franz Joseph's love of the military was indicative of the major traits of his character: he was calm, obedient and orderly, which made him well suited for army life with its emphasis on hierarchy, structures and clear orders. Maximilian, on the other hand, was a much more impulsive child to the extent that his Aja was 'worried about his stubbornness',<sup>48</sup> Sophie also described the tantrums Maximilian threw when the four years old boy did not get his way:

You have no idea, dear mother, how terribly this child can contort his face, when he gets into a rage. At these occasions he pushes his lips and his jaw (...) forward and he pulls his eyes together. At such a moment he is really frightening to look at.<sup>49</sup>

Both Archduchess Sophie and Marie Luise von Sturmfeder were very much aware of the two different personalities of the two brothers and although they loved both boys the

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<sup>47</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1836

<sup>48</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v., *Kindheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p. 151

<sup>49</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 5<sup>th</sup> October 1834

two women had, nevertheless, slight preferences for the one or the other. The governess clearly preferred Franz Joseph; when Maximilian was given into her care Sturmfeder wrote: ‘from now on I have a real son [Franz Joseph] and a step-son [Maximilian]’.<sup>50</sup>

Sophie, on the other hand, had a slight preference for Maximilian:

I have got to say that of all my boys Franz Joseph is the best behaved (...) but Maxi wins everyone’s hearts; without being beautiful in the slightest, he draws everyone in with his changing (...) physiognomy, his lovely small figure and his funny ways. It is true he is very advanced for his age.<sup>51</sup>

Maybe Sophie’s preference for Maximilian can be explained by the fact that although all her sons loved her dearly ‘Maxi has the richest spirit’<sup>52</sup> and his personality was more like her own, lively and playful, whereas Franz Joseph was more like his father Franz Karl. In many ways Franz Joseph, as the heir apparent, was her guarantee for the future, her strength, whereas Maximilian was her weakness, but also the joy of her heart.

However, the relationship between Maximilian and Franz Joseph did not suffer because of these preferences of Archduchess Sophie and Marie Luise von Sturmfeder, at least not during their boyhood. Apart from scraps and fights, which are common and normal amongst boys their age, Franz Joseph and Maximilian were close and their relationship was marked by a deep and sincere love.<sup>53</sup> Whenever they could not be together, they sent each other letters or sketches about what the one or the other had done during the day. One of these instances was when Maximilian had to be separated from the rest of his brothers because he was ill with chicken pox. Franz Joseph wrote almost daily to his

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<sup>50</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v., *Kindheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p. 123

<sup>51</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1840

<sup>52</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 20<sup>th</sup> July 1840

<sup>53</sup> Cerny, H., *Die Jugendtagebücher Franz Josephs, 1843-1848*, Böhlau, Vienna, 2003, p. 38



brother for he wanted to ‘divert him as much as possible with sketches and little notes’.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, in order to entertain his ill brother Franz Joseph described to Maximilian occurrences within the imperial family as well as the new toys he got:

On Sunday we had a huge dinner (...) I am sorry I have not send you a sketch yet but I did not have time to do it yesterday, (...) grandmother gave me a toy castle, which can be fired at with little canons. The whole thing is really cute and it has even got toy soldiers.<sup>55</sup>

Archduchess Sophie was happy with the close relationship between her children and with their physical and mental development but she knew that in contrast to her girlhood in Munich, the boys could gain little intellectual stimulus from the court around them when they grew older. Therefore, she was afraid that they, and in particular Franz Joseph and Karl Ludwig, would grow as antipathetic to the finer aspects of the arts and of cultural life as their father Franz Karl. She attempted to remedy the problem by inviting selected writers and performers into the Hofburg. Thus the three little archdukes listened to Hans Christian Anderson telling them his stories and fairy tales himself. Sophie also took the boys to the theatre; it is true that early letters of Maximilian and Franz Joseph show more interest in the mechanics of scene changing than anything performed on stage, but this is hardly surprising amongst boys their age.<sup>56</sup> However, Sophie’s plan seemed to have been successful with Maximilian for he was

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<sup>54</sup> HHStA: Varia aus der Kabinettsregistratur, cart. 1

<sup>55</sup> HHStA: Varia aus der Kabinettsregistratur, cart. 1

<sup>56</sup> Palmer, A., *Twilight of the Habsburgs – The life and Time of Emperor Francis Joseph*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1994, p. 17

fond of the theatre and accompanied his mother often, whereas Franz Joseph and Karl Ludwig remained disinterested in the performing arts, even as adults.<sup>57</sup>

### 1.3. “GOING TO THE MEN”

#### - Emperor Francis I (II)

As it was customary in the House of Habsburg Maximilian and his brothers spent the first six years of his life in the care of women but when he reached the age of six he passed from this “feminine” care into a male-dominated world; it meant that Maximilian was taken from the loving care of Marie Luise von Sturmfeder and put under the supervision of an Ajo, and several teachers, educators and superintendents. According to the article 24 of the “Imperial Austrian family statute” it would have been the responsibility of the ‘head of the house to take an interest in the education of all of the princes and princesses of the house and to take care that they receive an education according to their august position (...), without interfering in the education, which had been provided by the respective heads of the family in their fatherly care’.<sup>58</sup> This meant that the family statute put the responsibility for the education and the selection of the

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<sup>57</sup> Archduke Karl Ludwig often complained in his diary that Maximilian was allowed to accompany their mother to the theatre, while he had to stay at home.

Praschl-Bichler, G., *Kaiserliche Kindheit: Aus dem aufgefundenen Tagebuch Erzherzogs Karl Ludwig, eines Bruders von Kaiser Franz Joseph*, Amalthea, Vienna, 1997, p. 25

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in: List, J. *Beiträge zur Stellung und Aufgabe der Erzherzoge unter Kaiser Franz Josef I*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1982, p. 453

Ajo of the archdukes in the hands of the head of the House of Habsburg and the respective father. In the case of Maximilian and his brothers it would have been the responsibility of Emperor Ferdinand I, since Francis I (II) had died in 1835, as the head of the House of Habsburg and of their father Franz Karl to provide an education for the archdukes. However, due to the limited mental capacities of Emperor Ferdinand I and the disinterest of Franz Karl in the education of his children, it was the Chancellor Metternich, who took the place of the former and Archduchess Sophie, who replaced the latter. As the three oldest sons were only three years apart in age, Sophie and Metternich decided that they should be brought up and taught together, which meant that they had the same Ajo, educators, teachers and were taught according to the same schedule.<sup>59</sup> As the positions of the Ajo, as well as those of superintendents and the teachers of the archdukes, were extremely important and influential, the selection of these positions was not a private decision for the best of the children but also a social and political one. During the French Revolution and the Napoleonic War, Austria had been a bastion of conservatism and both Metternich and Sophie had been opposed to the liberal ideas expressed in France and elsewhere in Europe at the time. Therefore, the Ajo and superintendents for the archdukes had to be stout conservatives supporting the Habsburg claim to rule over their territories as absolute monarchs. Bearing in mind that the concepts of absolutism and religion were seen as interconnected, it is not surprising that it was more important for Metternich and Archduchess Sophie that the Ajo, educators and superintendents were good Catholics and conservatives rather than that they had the necessary qualifications.<sup>60</sup> It was thus hardly surprising that Metternich and Sophie only reached a decision after long consultations. From their sixth birthdays until

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<sup>59</sup> Woeginger, S.K., *Die Erziehung der österreichischen Kaiser. Kaiser Franz II./I., Kaiser Ferdinand I., Kaiser Franz Joseph I., Kaiser Karl I., Otto von Habsburg*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1996, p. 59

<sup>60</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 16

the age of eighteen the three archdukes were entrusted to the care of Count Heinrich Bombelles, as Ajo, and Johann Baptist Coronini-Cronberg, Timotheus Ledochowski and Franz Gorizutti as educators and superintendents.

### 1.3.1. THE AJO: HEINRICH BOMBELLES

After a long series of consultations the choice of Archduchess Sophie and Chancellor Metternich for the Ajo of the three archdukes fell on Count Heinrich Bombelles. Many at court and even in the imperial family, i.e. Archduke Johann, thought that the appointment of Bombelles was rather odd and consequently they regarded it with suspicion. These suspicions derived not only from Count Bombelles foreignness but also from the fact that he was one of Metternich's protégés. The family of Count Heinrich Bombelles originally came from France. His father, Marc Marie marquis de Bombelles had been a diplomat in the service of Louis XVI; when the French Revolution broke out in 1789 the family, like many others of the nobility, fled the country and found refuge at the Bourbon court in Naples. However, when the revolution reached Naples in 1799 the Bombelles had to flee again, this time to Vienna. After the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy Heinrich Bombelles' father returned to France, whereas the son began his career in the Austrian service. In 1805 Heinrich Bombelles joined the Austrian army and took part in the wars against Napoleon. From 1815

onwards he joined the Austrian diplomatic service: first in London before he became the Austrian ambassador in Lisbon, which were followed by positions in St. Petersburg and Turin.<sup>61</sup> Metternich had watched Bombelles' career with interest; when an Ajo for Franz Joseph and his brothers was needed Metternich suggested Heinrich Bombelles. In the obituary for Heinrich Bombelles' death in 1850 Metternich revealed the reason why he had furthered Bombelles' career. Metternich wrote that he considered Bombelles as a person, who due to an innate inclination 'thinks in the same way as I think, sees things in the same ways as I see them and wants the same things as I want'.<sup>62</sup>

The most important thing for Metternich, and thus in return Heinrich Bombelles, was trying to prevent was any more revolutions like in France in 1789 and the following upheavals throughout Europe. Considering Bombelles' biography it is hardly surprising that he was a stout anti-revolutionary and a firm supporter of absolutism; Sophie and Metternich could hardly have found someone less sympathetic to liberal ideas. Bombelles' belief in the concept of absolutism that was based on the idea that the monarch ruled by the grace of God, which meant that the monarch stood above his subjects and that those should have no say in the running of the country.<sup>63</sup> Franz Joseph had clearly absorbed this principle. After he had become emperor Franz Joseph initiated a process of returning Austria to formal absolutism; the Sylvester Patent in 1851 removed any kind of popular sovereignty from the Austrian system of government and Franz Joseph commented that 'we have thrown constitution overboard and Austria has from now on only one master'.<sup>64</sup> Even when it became apparent that neo-absolutism was about to collapse in 1859, Franz Joseph only grudgingly acceded to an experiment

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<sup>61</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung Kaiser Franz Josephs*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1948, p. 16

<sup>62</sup> Metternich-Winneberg, R., *Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren*, W. Braumüller, Vienna, 1880, p. 124

<sup>63</sup> Woeginger, S.K., *Erziehung*, 1996, p. 59

<sup>64</sup> Beller, S., *Francis Joseph*, 1996, p. 55f

in constitutionalism. It was only due to mounting internal and external pressure that Franz Joseph granted the *October Diploma* in 1860 and the *February Patent* in 1861.<sup>65</sup> While Franz Joseph has generally been seen as a conservative-absolutist monarch, Maximilian has often been portrayed as a man with liberal principles, who supported the ideas of creating a constitution and parliament. However, as a young archduke he often spoke negatively about constitutional procedures in other countries such as Belgium. More importantly, when Maximilian became emperor of Mexico he never granted a constitution or established a parliament.<sup>66</sup> It is thus possible to argue that Maximilian had probably absorbed the conservative idea of absolutism.

In religious matters Maximilian was less open to the influence of the Ajo. Bombelles was a devout Catholic but his critics at court, like Baron Wesenberger, have pointed out that Bombelles 'only distinguished himself by demonstrating his devoutness and his support for the Jesuits'.<sup>67</sup> Although Maximilian himself was a good Catholic, he nevertheless thought that Bombelles' religious beliefs were too 'ultra' and that his Ajo demanded 'eccentric things'<sup>68</sup> from him in religious matters.

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<sup>65</sup> Beller, S., *Francis Joseph*, 1996, p. 80

<sup>66</sup> When Maximilian's engagement to his wife Charlotte was announced in 1856 the Belgian parliament had to approve Charlotte's dowry. Maximilian called the whole affair [a way] to inspire the unprejudiced observer with a profound disgust for constitutional shams' Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, Orion Publishing Group, New York, 1992, p.55

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in: Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 33

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p. 47

### 1.3.2. JOHANN BAPTIST CORONINI-CRONBERG

Officially Coronini-Cronberg was one of the educators of Franz Joseph but a note by Archduchess Sophie, in which she wrote that ‘Coronini sometimes completely despairs’<sup>69</sup> due to Maximilian’s laziness, indicates that he was also involved in Maximilian’s education. Coronini-Cronberg was a military man: he was born on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1796 in Görz, joined the Austrian army at the age of seventeen and was quickly promoted through the ranks. He was mainly stationed in Italy, a fact that refutes Joan Haslip’s claim that there existed a long-standing friendship between him and Metternich,<sup>70</sup> for where should this friendship have developed? Walther Haas, on the other hand, suggested that Coronini had been chosen due to his impressive curriculum vitae, his knowledge in the arts of war and the fact that he spoke German, Italian, French, Serbian, English and Latin.<sup>71</sup>

Coronini’s military background was also reflected in the way he treated the three little archdukes; most available sources and literature stated that Coronini tried to turn his charges into little soldiers<sup>72</sup>, since he was above all a military man, who emphasized the importance of composure and form.<sup>73</sup> Bearing in mind that Franz Joseph, even as a young boy, showed a preference for all things concerning the military it was naturally Coronini’s military attitude that appealed to Franz Joseph’s character, whereas his attempts to bring the military life closer to Maximilian remained unsuccessful. The fact that Coronini failed to instil in Maximilian a kind of enthusiasm for military matters, is

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<sup>69</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1841, cart. 19

<sup>70</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 18

<sup>71</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 36f.

<sup>72</sup> See: Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 22; Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 40; Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 88

<sup>73</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 37f.

illustrated by a trip of the three archdukes to Verona in 1845. There Field Marshal Radetzky gave them lessons in military strategy by introducing them to the mysteries of the Quadrilateral on which Austria's military supremacy in Northern Italy depended. While Franz Joseph was proud to be told about this mystery, Maximilian showed again his disinterest in military matters and preferred to spend his time visiting churches and museums.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the fact that Coronini put such emphasis on the military education, Maximilian appears to have preferred him to his other superintendents, though he complained that Coronini had bad breath.<sup>75</sup> It is possible that an aspect of Coronini's character appealed more to Maximilian; in contrast to the Ajo, Coronini was not a religious fanatic but held some enlightened principles in religious matters, which led to constant quarrels between him and Bombelles.<sup>76</sup>

### 1.3.3. MAXIMILIAN'S SUPERINTENDENTS: TIMOTHEUS LEDOCHOWSKI AND FRANZ GORIZUTTI

Most of the available literature completely neglects Maximilian's superintendents and only focuses on Bombelles and to some extent on Coronini, as there are very few primary sources that deal with Maximilian's superintendents. However, as it was customary at the court in Vienna Maximilian, like his brothers, was provided with his

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<sup>74</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 25f.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in: *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p 47

<sup>76</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 39ff



own superintendent upon leaving the nursery at the age of six: for Franz Joseph Count Coronini-Cronberg was appointed as superintendent, Count Morzin was assigned to Karl Ludwig and Maximilian's superintendent was Ledochowski, who was later replaced by Gorizutti.<sup>77</sup> Although the responsibility for the education, and above all for the academic education, of the three brothers, rested with the Ajo, Count Bombelles, it is, nevertheless, important to bear in mind that the superintendents had a lot of influence over Maximilian and his brothers. It was Coronini-Cronberg, Morzin and Ledochowski, who organised the archduke's daily routines; who monitored their development; and who influenced the choice of teachers for the brothers.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, their position of superintendent gave them the opportunity to influence the education of the archdukes, as they had direct and unsupervised access to Franz Joseph, Maximilian and Karl Ludwig. This would have made it possible for the superintendents to transfer and instil some of their own political and religious ideas in their charges; as already discussed above Count Coronini-Cronberg successfully furthered Franz Joseph's interest in the military, while he failed to do so with Maximilian. Thus, it is important to look at Maximilian's superintendents, Ledochowski and Gorizutti, in order to be able to judge what kind of influence these two men had on the development and character of Maximilian.

The first superintendent of Maximilian, Timotheus Ledochowski, came from a military background; he had been an officer in an Ulan regiment and had been recommended for higher purposes due to his many talents and the fact that he spoke French, German and Polish.<sup>79</sup> Apart from these facts though not a lot more is known about Ledochowski only that he left the court due to health reasons in 1843.<sup>80</sup> Since the sources about

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<sup>77</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p.44

<sup>78</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 24

<sup>79</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 42

<sup>80</sup> Sturmfeder, L.v., *Kindheit unseres Kaisers*, 1910, p.164

Ledochowski are so sparse it is impossible to judge how much influence he had on the character of Maximilian.

Maximilian's second superintendent Franz Gorizutti was a close friend of Coronini, who suggested the former for service at court; both had been born in Görz in 1796 and Gorizutti had also joined the Austrian army in 1813. Most of the available literature described Gorizutti as the most "enlightened" and progressive of all of Maximilian's superintendents, which in a Habsburg context meant that he was a Josephinist.<sup>81</sup> As Gorizutti had direct and unsupervised access to Maximilian, it is likely that he passed some of his ideas of this Austrian form of enlightened absolutism, with its emphasis on religious tolerance and the centralisation of the state, on to the archduke.<sup>82</sup> This may have influenced Maximilian's concepts of rulership in Northern Italy and Mexico later. Thus Gorizutti was probably the first person who brought Maximilian into contact with "enlightened" ideas at a very conservative court.<sup>83</sup> However, due to his enlightened ideas Gorizutti was constantly in trouble with the Ajo Heinrich Bombelles and the other conservative superintendents and teachers.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 42f

<sup>82</sup> Valjavec, F., *Der Josephinismus. Zur geistigen Entwicklung Österreichs im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Rudolf Rohrer Verlag, Vienna, 1944, p. 12

<sup>83</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 42f.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.44

#### 1.4. THE ACADEMIC EDUCATION

The way in which society treats and regards its children and their education has always been a mirror of the society itself as well as of the circles in which the children were brought up. In the case of Maximilian and his brothers these were the highest circles of Austrian society; in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, between the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and the revolutions of 1848, the nobility can definitely be regarded as the social and political elite. As Maximilian and Franz Joseph were part of this elite it is obvious that their education differed greatly from that of the rest of the population; one of the greatest differences was that the nobility still held an extremely old-fashioned concept of children, childhood and education. This becomes apparent in comparison to other social circles, such as the bourgeoisie: here a new concept of family had developed during the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. This new concept, which became known as the Biedermeier, included the idea of the nuclear family that was based on a loving-relationship between the parents and provided homely comfort. It also changed the conception of childhood; for the first time parents and the society began to perceive the child as an individual, who had its own personal needs and talents.<sup>85</sup>

In contrast to the bourgeoisie, the children of the nobility were still brought up in accordance with centuries-old principles; children were regarded as small adults - this can be deduced from the fact that most portraits of children up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century mirrored the portraits of adults in dress and mimic.<sup>86</sup> The main purpose of the education

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<sup>85</sup> Fertig, L., *Zeitgeist und Erziehungskunst. Eine Einführung in die Kulturgeschichte der Erziehung in Deutschland von 1600 bis 1900*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1984, p. 17

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13

was thus to turn the children into functioning adults as soon as possible, since what the families needed above all was an heir, who could one day take over the duties of a monarch or a lord. As the children were not regarded as individuals, their development, needs and talents were not taken into account in the education.<sup>87</sup> In order to turn the children into functioning adults as soon as possible the whole education was perfectly organised, the schedules were very tight and control was permanent. The main aim of this education was to provide the children with the traditional values, which were based on the two pillars of the Church and the dynasty.<sup>88</sup>

#### 1.4.1. THE SUBJECTS

In accordance with the principles mentioned above, the schedule of Maximilian and his brothers were strictly organised and regulated; the study quota was immense and was only interrupted by a few hours of repose. There were more tasks and duties than free time: the boys were under strict control and supervision from the moment they got up at 6 am until they went to bed at 8 pm. It can be argued that that during these thirteen hours they were nothing more than little slaves to their respective timetables. Maximilian's timetable for the year 1844, when he was just twelve years old, showed a

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<sup>87</sup> Neumann, T., *Quellen zur Geschichte Thüringens. Pädagogik im 18. Und 19. Jahrhundert*, Sömmerda, Erfurt, 2002, p. 14

<sup>88</sup> Fertig, L., *Zeitgeist und Erziehungskunst*. 1984, p. 5f.

heavy weight of subjects and hours he had to master every week; this included fourteen different subjects as well as several hours of sports and military exercises.<sup>†</sup>

Taking a closer look at the timetable it becomes obvious that the main focus of the education was put on different languages, history and religion. The emphasis on languages was due to the fact that Franz Joseph, Maximilian and their brothers were regarded as the future monarch and the elite of a multi-national and multi-linguistic empire. It was necessary for them to be able to speak most of the languages in the Habsburg Empire. Therefore, in addition to classical Latin and the traditional court languages of French and German that were predominately spoken in the Hofburg, the archdukes had to study other languages spoken in the empire, such as Czeck, Hungarian and Italian. The fact that these languages were included in the education of Franz Joseph, Maximilian and Karl Ludwig can be regarded as an attempt by Metternich and Sophie to create a sense of dynastic loyalty in these parts of the empire; for a sovereign, who could converse with his subjects in their respective native language, was much more likely to be regarded as the rightful ruler than an emperor, who appeared to be a foreign monarch. Nevertheless, examining the timetable it becomes obvious that the balance was tipped in favour of the traditional languages: in 1844 Maximilian received thirteen hours of German, French and Latin compared to six hours of Czeck, Hungarian and Italian. Despite this imbalance, native speakers were employed to teach the respective language to the archdukes as far as possible; an example for this attempt to provide the archdukes with the best language education possible was the choice of the Austrian Italian Gian Battista Bolza as the Italian teacher for Maximilian, Franz Joseph and Karl Ludwig. Bolza had published several textbooks about how to learn to speak the Italian language and he managed to teach Maximilian a good level of Italian. Some historians, like Joan Haslip, have identified Bolza as the first person who brought

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<sup>†</sup> Appendix 1 – Maximilian's timetable in 1844

Maximilian into contact with liberal and enlightened ideas.<sup>89</sup> However, this appears to be hardly possible as Bolza, in contrast to Maximilian's superintendent Gorizutti, did not have constant and unsupervised access to the archdukes. It was very common for Archduke Franz Karl and above all for Archduchess Sophie to be present in the classroom; as Archduke Franz Karl had received a similar education as his sons he spoke some Italian and at least at the beginning the lessons would have taken place mainly in German until the students had gained a certain level and understanding of the language. Thus Archduke Franz Karl and Archduchess Sophie would have noticed any such attempts by Bolza to influence his charges.

Another subject that was particularly emphasised in the educational schedule was history; the way in which the three archdukes were taught the subject was very subjective. The main focus was on the argument that the Habsburg monarchs were chosen by the grace of God to rule over the empire and its people,<sup>90</sup> which of course was meant to demonstrate to Maximilian and Franz Joseph that it was the emperor's innate right to reign without the interference of a parliament or the hindrance of a constitution. For the same reasons any kind of liberal concepts, such as a parliament or a constitution, had negative connotations and the three archdukes were only given a very subjective version of the accounts of the French Revolution. Instead, Maximilian and his brothers were extensively taught about the Catholic kings of the Middle Ages, which again aimed to justify the Habsburgs claim to power.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the way in which Franz Joseph, Maximilian and Karl Ludwig were taught the history of the *Reich* was just as subjective; the basis for this was the academic publication *Reichs- und*

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<sup>89</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.28

<sup>90</sup> Haas, W., *Erziehung und Bildung*, 1948, p. 56

<sup>91</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 34

*Rechtsgeschichte zum Gebauch bei akademischen Vorlesungen* by George Phillips.<sup>92</sup> Examining the book it becomes clear that the author puts the Germanic tribes of the past on the same level with the German-speaking people in the nineteenth century and thus concluded ‘that they are one people’.<sup>93</sup> Therefore, he supported a German state, which included Austria, as it was ‘a historic reality Austria and the rest of Germany need each other and will have to stand by each other against the changes of time’.<sup>94</sup> Phillips also argued that Austria should be the hegemonic power in such a state, as the Habsburgs had the biggest household power of all the German princes.<sup>95</sup> The book was clearly too theoretical and too difficult to be used in the education of the young archdukes, indeed the title suggested that it was intended as a source in academic lectures, and thus it is hardly surprising to find Dr. Frick, the history teacher, complaining that Maximilian and his brothers ‘lacked the necessary attention and (...) will to understand the scientific material’.<sup>96</sup> In many ways the two subjects of history and religion were interlocked, which can also be seen by the fact that from 1848 onwards Cardinal Rauscher taught both history and religion. The two subjects served the purpose to implant into the mind of Franz Joseph, Maximilian and Karl Ludwig that by the grace of God the Habsburg dynasty had the right to rule over the countries and people of the empire and thus to justify the system of absolutism that was in place in the Habsburg Empire.

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<sup>92</sup> Phillips, G., *Reich- und Rechtsgeschichte zum Gebrauch bei akademischen Vorlesungen*, Verlag der literarisch-artistischen Anstalt der J.G. Cotta’schen Buchhandlung, Munich, 1859.

<sup>93</sup> Phillips, G., *Reich- und Rechtsgeschichte*, 1859, p. III

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. VII

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 385

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in: Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 37

#### 1.4.2. Maximilian as a student

In general though, the academic education of Maximilian and his brothers had grave defects, even by the standards of the time; there was too much rote-learning, too little emphasis on how to think, and apart from his brothers, virtually no contact with other young boys in the classroom. The only time when the three archdukes were actually allowed to play with other children were the Sunday afternoons when the children of high ranking Austrian officials, i.e. Edi Taaffe, Henry Salis, the four Falkenhayn boys and Franz Coronini, were invited over to the palace. Moreover, it is surprising that half a century of social and political upheaval in Europe and the rapid scientific progress at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had had so little influence on Maximilian's education. In fact there was little difference between what Maximilian was learning in the late 1830s and what his grandfather, Emperor Francis I (II) had been learning some sixty years before.<sup>97</sup> The old-fashioned and strict education could hardly stimulate the mind of a young, lively and creative boy such as Maximilian. Although he was by far the most gifted and intelligent of the brothers, having a passion for literature and the history of his house, Maximilian was nevertheless a rather difficult student. In a letter to her mother Archduchess Sophie complained about Maximilian that '...everything that is hard work for him or that he does not want to do, he hates'.<sup>98</sup> Consequently, Maximilian was often scolded by his teachers and by Count Bombelles for he was not as well behaved as his brothers Franz Joseph or Karl Ludwig. Sophie was aware that Maximilian was a rather trying student for his teachers:

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<sup>97</sup> Peham, H. *Leopold II – Herrscher mit weiser Hand*, Styra Verlag, Graz, 1987, p. 174

<sup>98</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1841



Maxi is very lazy and talks too much, because his wild imagination runs away with him against his will. He is often scolded but it is like talking to a cow. (...) He is a good little boy but his imprudence and his laziness make me worry about the future. If only he will turn out well! Bombelles, who adores him, believes he will, but Coronini sometimes almost despairs.<sup>99</sup>

Maximilian also had a mischievous pleasure in picking at the weaknesses and little quirks of his teachers. For instance, one teacher who always insisted on calling him and his brothers by their titles, Maximilian nicknamed 'His Royal and Imperial Highness, the Professor for Geography' and a French teacher he called 'Monsieur Foppabile'.<sup>100</sup> However, if a teacher managed to capture his interest Maximilian proved to be an intelligent student. Therefore, the professor for English at the university of Vienna and the Archduke's English teacher, Charles Gaulis Clairmont, was Maximilian's favourite teacher for a long time.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1841

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.22

<sup>101</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 37

#### 1.4.3. Comparison with the academic education of Albert of Saxe-Coburg and of Frederick William in Prussia

Comparing Maximilian's academic education to that of that of other royal princes at the time it becomes obvious that his education remained far narrower than for example the syllabus followed by Albert of Saxe-Coburg some twelve years earlier<sup>102</sup>. Examining Albert's education it becomes obvious that it was broadly based on Wilhelm von Humboldt's ideal of humanism, which basically promoted the unity of academic knowledge and moral education, the so-called "wholeness of education". As the beginning of the nineteenth century was also a time of great advances in natural sciences, Albert's education not only incorporated classical and modern languages, such as English, French, German and Latin, but also included mathematics and natural sciences such as biology. Moreover after his education at home Albert attended university in Bonn, where he studied law and German. Compared to Maximilian's education, Albert received much broader and more modern education than the archdukes in Vienna.

However, it is even more worthwhile to compare Maximilian's education with that of the Prussian heir to the throne Frederick William, who was born a year before Maximilian and who later became the German emperor Frederick III. In many ways the education of Maximilian and Frederick were similar: both were entrusted to the care of a governess until the age of six and an academic education until the age of eighteen. Moreover, both were introduced to the traditional education of the European gentry,

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<sup>102</sup> Wiedau, K., *Eine adelige Kindheit in Coburg – Fürstenerziehung und Kunstunterweisung der Prinzen Ernst und Albert von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha*, Kunstsammlung d. Veste, Coburg, 2001, p. 24-35

such as piety, modern languages and courtly behaviour.<sup>103</sup> However, there are also some marked contrasts between Maximilian's education and the far more liberal and scientific education that the future Emperor Frederick III was receiving in Berlin.<sup>104</sup> Frederick's mother saw it as the main purpose of an education to 'prepare the person for life'<sup>105</sup>, which in effect meant that the education of the heir to the throne should equip him with the necessary skills to understand the changes in society and to react adequately to them. Whether his education actually gave Frederick III the skills to cope with the rapid changes in society is hard to judge as his reign lasted only ninety-nine days; too short a period to actually implement any political and social changes. However, throughout his time as heir to the throne he showed himself to be torn between certain liberal ideas and the success of the conservative politics of Bismarck.<sup>106</sup>

#### 1.4.4. The beginning of the rivalry between Maximilian and Franz Joseph

As already mentioned Maximilian and Franz Joseph were two very different brothers: Franz Joseph was serious and quiet, whereas Maximilian was outgoing, even charming

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<sup>103</sup> Wagner, Y., 'Prinzenerziehung in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts. Zum Bildungsverhalten des preußisch-deutschen Hofes im gesellschaftlichen Wandel', in *Europäische Hochschulschriften*, Vol. 3, 1995, p. 85-91

<sup>104</sup> Emperor Frederick's superintendent Count Dellbrück was a strong supporter of a modern and liberal educational theory founded by Johann Bernhard Basedow that stressed the importance of natural science and its practical application in the classroom  
Schuster, G (Ed) *Zur Jugend- und Erziehungsgeschichte des Königs Friedrich Wilhelm IV. von Preußen und des Kaisers und Königs Wilhelm I – Denkwürdigkeiten ihres Erziehers Friedrich Dellbrück*, Berlin, 1904, p. 34-49

<sup>105</sup> Wagner, Y., *Prinzenerziehung*, 1995, p. 77

<sup>106</sup> Herre, F., *Kaiser Friedrich III. Deutschlands liberale Hoffnung. Eine Biographie.*, Heyne, Stuttgart 1987 p. 84

and was in general more sociable than Franz Joseph. For instance, on a visit to Sophie's family in Munich, her Wittelsbach relations rather obviously preferred Maximilian over Franz Joseph; the same was also true for many at the court in Vienna and above all for some ladies there. Their different personalities had not been a problem during their childhood but as the two boys grew older it put a strain on their relationship. Franz Joseph began to experience pangs of jealousy of his much more open and likeable brother, whereas Maximilian was jealous of the attention his brother received. Since it was considered impossible that the epileptic emperor Ferdinand I could produce an heir, Franz Joseph was seen as the heir to the throne. As a consequence, Sophie thought it necessary that Franz Joseph, who often felt awkward in public, should be put in the spotlight during family dinners and other court affairs. For instance, she insisted that Franz Joseph always played the lead role in any theatre play her children performed such as "Le siège de Colchestre".<sup>107</sup> Unfortunately Franz Joseph was an untalented actor, whose performance was rather wooden, whereas Maximilian was a born actor and enjoyed the attention of the audience. Both boys suffered under this situation: Franz Joseph because he hated having to perform on stage, Maximilian because he felt neglected next to his brother. However, the older Maximilian got the more he became aware of the difference between his position as a mere Archduke and his brother's as the heir to the throne and as a consequence the relationship between the two brothers gradually deteriorated.

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<sup>107</sup> Cerny, H., *Tagebücher*, 2003, p. 78

#### 1.4.5. The educational and Grand Tours

In the two centuries preceding the birth of Franz Joseph and Maximilian it had become customary for the nobility to send their sons and daughters on grand tours through Europe. The purpose had been to further the education of the sons and to enrich their respective culture.<sup>108</sup> Most of these tours led through Italy; in German-speaking countries, Italy, her landscape and her classical architecture had been idealised by many. The publications of Johann Winkelmann had sparked a new interest in and approach to the arts and architecture of the ancient civilisations and had influenced German writers such as Kant, Lessing and Goethe.<sup>109</sup> Goethe's voyage to Italy in 1786 and publication of his impressions of the country were widely read and were often seen as the basic reading material for young noble men on grand tour through Italy.<sup>110</sup>

The first documented tour of Maximilian, Franz Joseph and Karl Ludwig took place in 1843 and led them to Hungary; the purpose of this tour as well as of the rest that would follow was to make the three boys see more of the vast Habsburg Empire and understand the different ethnic groups living within it better. Two years later in 1845 the three brothers visited for the first time the Italian regions of the empire. The itinerary included a trip to Verona, where the Field Marshal Radetzky had his headquarters. The elderly Field Marshal tried to amuse and entertain the three brothers with parades and fireworks. He also gave them lessons in military strategy by introducing them to the

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<sup>108</sup> Korte, B., *Der Englische Reisebericht. Von der Pilgerfahrt bis zur Postmoderne*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1996, p. 59

<sup>109</sup> Winkelmann's works included: *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*. Waltherische Hofbuchhandlung, Dresden 1764; *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*, Waltherische Hofbuchhandlung, Dresden, 1756; *Sendschreiben von den Herculanischen Entdeckungen*, Waltherische Hofbuchhandlung, Dresden, 1762.

<sup>110</sup> Rother, K., 'Deutsche Reisende vor der süditalienischen Kulturlandschaft', in *Reisen in den Mittelmeerraum*, H.H. Wetzel (ed.), Passauer Mittelmeerstudien, Passau, 1991, p. 35

mysteries of the Quadrilateral on which Austria's military supremacy in Northern Italy depended. While Franz Joseph was proud to be told about this mystery, Maximilian showed again his disinterest in military matters and preferred to spend his time visiting churches and museums.<sup>111</sup> Apparently Maximilian took a liking to the country, to the Italian people, to the warm climate and to rich culture for 'Maxi has lost his heart to Italy and to the Italians'.<sup>112</sup> Maximilian was above all fascinated by Venice; unfortunately there is no diary entry of his first visit and thus we only know what impression Venice made on this romantic thirteen year-old boy through the letters that he wrote to his mother during the voyage.<sup>113</sup> The moonlit Canale Grande, the palaces decorated with flags and the Piazza San Marco, which glowed in the light of the new gas lanterns for the first time, could not fail to make a great impression on Maximilian.<sup>114</sup> During the continuation of the journey which led from Pola along the coast to Trieste, Maximilian told his brothers and his other companions that he wanted to become a sailor.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 25f.

<sup>112</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 18, 24<sup>th</sup> August 1845

<sup>113</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 43

<sup>114</sup> It is true that most people only came to the St Mark's Square in order to see the square lit by the new glass lanterns for the first time and not to cheer the three Archdukes, although the government of Lombardy-Venetia failed to mention this in the reports to Vienna.

<sup>115</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 48

## 1.5. “Are they allowed to do that?”

### - Emperor Ferdinand I

The context of Maximilian’s almost idyllic childhood was, of course, punctuated by phases of political instability. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars had left deep scars in the political landscape in Europe; for European conservatives the ideas of liberalism and nationalism inevitably meant revolution and the destruction of the existing order.<sup>116</sup> The Habsburg monarchy as an absolute and a multi-national empire was especially threatened by liberal and nationalist concepts, since the former was directly opposed to the system of an absolutist monarch, ruling over his country by the grace of God, and the later would lead to the fragmentation of the Habsburg Empire.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, it was the Austrian foreign minister, and later chancellor, Count Metternich, who was the main architect of the conservative order that was agreed upon by the European powers at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The purpose of the settlement had not only been to maintain international peace but also to keep the threats of liberalism and nationalism at bay and thus to restore the conservative and monarchical order throughout the continent.<sup>118</sup> In the case of the Habsburg Empire, as in fact in most of the European countries with the exception of France, Britain, the Netherlands and some smaller German states, this meant the restoration of absolutism, an increased surveillance of the population through the secret police and the tightening of

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<sup>116</sup> Gebhardt, B., & Braubach, M., *Von der französischen Revolution bis zum Wiener Kongress*. Dtv, Munich, 1974, p. 59

<sup>117</sup> Seward, D., *Metternich. The First European*, Viking Adult, New York, 1991, p. 76

<sup>118</sup> Dyroff, H.D. (ed.): *Der Wiener Kongress – Die Neuordnung Europas*. Dtv Dokumente, Munich 1966, p.158ff; Kissinger, H.A.; *Das Gleichgewicht der Großmächte*, Manesse Verlag, Zurich, 1990, p. 139ff

censorship.<sup>119</sup> However, these political restrictions imposed on Europe and its people inevitably provoked opposition: in 1820 a revolution broke out in Naples and in 1822 in Piedmont, both were suppressed by Habsburg forces; in July 1830 the French King Charles X was toppled by a three-day uprising in the streets of Paris and replaced by the more liberal minded Louis-Philippe; in the same year the Belgians overthrew Dutch rule and a revolution broke out in Poland, which was brutally crushed by Russia in 1831.<sup>120</sup> Metternich's greatest fear had been that these liberal and nationalist ideas would tear apart the Habsburg Empire, but in the end it was the unresolved social question that threatened the existing order. Since the mid-nineteenth century the population had grown relentlessly: between 1819 and 1843 the monarchy's population increased by a quarter to over 36 million; Vienna's inhabitants, who at the end of the previous century had numbered 235,000 were now nearly 400,000.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, the industrial development in the Habsburg Empire had not kept pace with its rise in population; the economy that only stood at the beginning of the industrialisation process could not create a sufficient amount of jobs. Thus the rise in population combined with a lack of sufficient jobs led to extreme poverty amongst the working class. These poverty-stricken people usually lived in overcrowded tenements, worked up to sixteen hours in the factories under appalling conditions and struggled to scratch out a living.<sup>122</sup> It was the dire economic distress in the mid-1840s that drove these people to extremes: the capitalist cycle of boom and bust had led to a recession that increased the number of unemployed people dramatically; during 1847, 10,000 factory workers were laid off in Vienna alone.<sup>123</sup> The recession coincided with a series of bad harvests and potato

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<sup>119</sup> Sked, A., *Habsburg Empire*, 2001, p. 32

<sup>120</sup> Wrycza, H., *Der Novemberaufstand 1830–1831 im Königreich Polen im Spiegel der neuesten Forschung*, University of Salzburg, Salzburg, 1983, p. 29

<sup>121</sup> Seward, D., *Metternich*, 1991, p. 229

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, p. 227

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, p. 230



blights, which caused soaring food prices. In the spring of 1847 workers looted several grocery shops on the outskirts of Vienna and on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1847 the rise of the price of meat and bread triggered an uprising in Vienna.<sup>124</sup>

However, it was not only the majority of the workforce that was dissatisfied with the political system; it was the growing new middle class, the financiers, lawyers, professors and writers that became increasingly frustrated by their exclusion from government as well as irritated by the strict censorship that would not leave them alone.<sup>125</sup> Not only were journalist and playwrights affected by it but also theologians and scientists; academics and professional men complained constantly.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, some historians like Alan Sked have suggested that the system of censorship was not as strict and all-powerful as generally assumed. He pointed out that academics managed to get hold of published materials whether or not they were banned and that Austrian writers could publish their political views abroad if they assumed a pseudonym.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, it was possible for the general Austrian public to subscribe to foreign newspapers such as the *Leipziger Zeitung*, *Le Constitutionnel* and the *Augsburger Zeitung*,<sup>128</sup> which proved that even the censorship of the Habsburg Empire could not prevent a flood of hostile literature that entered the country via Germany. One of the most influential of these publications was Karl Moering's *Sibylline Books from Austria*, which was a blistering attack on the regime's ineptitude. Similar publications were printed in Brussels and read in the cafes in Vienna; all of them demanded more power for the provincial diet, an imperial diet and an end to censorship.<sup>129</sup> In the end the comment of Count Sedlnitzky, the man who was responsible for the censorship of the

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<sup>124</sup> Kißling, R., *Die Revolution im Kaisertum Österreich*, Universum, Vienna, 1948, p. 193

<sup>125</sup> Seward, D., *Metternich*, 1991, p 219

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217

<sup>127</sup> Sked, A., *Habsburg Empire*, 2001, p. 52

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*, p.53

<sup>129</sup> A. Wandruszka, *K. Möring*, In: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, Vol.53, 1939

Habsburg Empire, 'that a people, from the moment it begins to desire freedom, to acquire education is already in the first stage of a revolution'<sup>130</sup> proved to be true.

### 1.5.1. 1848

It is questionable whether the fifteen-year-old Maximilian knew anything about the plight of the paupers or the growing dissatisfaction with the régime, as he and his brother had virtually no contact with the ordinary population; they lived rather isolated from the rest of the world in the palaces of Laxenburg and Schönbrunn. However, the events that took place in 1848 disturbed Maximilian's highly regulated life and shook the core of the monarchy. Although Maximilian had been encouraged from a very young age to keep a diary, he stopped writing entries at the end of 1847 and only resumed the task in 1849. Thus there are no records of what he thought about the revolutionaries, whether he even sympathised with their demands or whether he agreed with the measures taken by the imperial government. The only source of information available about the reaction of the imperial family to the outbreak of the revolution are Sophie's diaries and correspondence, which she continued to write throughout the year 1848.

The series of revolutions that would spread across Europe began in Italy but it was from France, where an angry mob forced Louis-Philippe to abdicate and proclaimed the

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<sup>130</sup> Reschauer, H. *Das Jahr 1848*, Vienna, R.v. Waldheim, 1878, p.4

republic, that the spark of revolution spread. Soon demands for liberty, freedom and constitution could be heard and all over Europe; the news of a revolution in Paris reached Vienna on 29<sup>th</sup> February but the city remained quiet. The spark that inflamed the revolution in Vienna was a speech delivered by Lajos Kossuth in the Hungarian Diet declaring that Habsburg absolutism was ‘the pestilential air which (...) dulls our nerves and paralyses our spirit’ and demanded that Hungary should be ‘independent, national and free from foreign interference’.<sup>131</sup> Copies of the speech found their way to Vienna and it gave new stimulus to the meeting of the Lower Austrian Estates and to the students, who now demanded a constitution and the abdication of Count Metternich.<sup>132</sup> Austria had always appeared to be a fortress of conservatism and thus it took Metternich and the imperial family completely by surprise when a crowd of students hammered at the door of the Chancellery at the Ballhausplatz demanding Metternich’s resignation.<sup>133</sup> In many ways it appeared like the imperial family and the rest of the court merely stood by and watched as the mob of students tried to tear down the conservative structure on which the power and stability of the Habsburg Empire rested. Even more incredible to the imperial family than the student revolt was the fact that the citizens of Vienna, who had always been loyal to the Habsburg dynasty, now joined the students in their demands for a constitution, freedom of the press and the resignation of Count Metternich.<sup>134</sup> Sophie commented on the situation in her diary that ‘unfortunately the spirit is really, really low just like it is not very good here either. May the Lord have mercy with us and with our children’<sup>135</sup>. The pressure from the streets was mounting and it actually came to violent confrontations between the population and the army during which four people died. Under the impression of these riots and after the advice

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<sup>131</sup> Quoted in: Rapport, M., *1848. Year of Revolution*, Abacus, London, 2008, p. 60

<sup>132</sup> Waissenberger, R., *Wien 1815-1848*, Ueberreuter, Vienna, 1986, p. 175

<sup>133</sup> Knaus, H., *Wien 1848 – Reportage einer Revolution*, Holzhausen, Vienna, 1998, p. 123

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126

<sup>135</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 24

of Archduke Johann, who had never been on friendly terms with Metternich, Emperor Ferdinand reluctantly complied with the demands of the revolutionaries and dismissed the chancellor on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1848.<sup>136</sup> The man, who had had a firm grip on the politics of the Habsburg Empire for over forty years, had to flee Vienna in the middle of the night.

After the dismissal of Metternich the situation in Vienna had calmed considerably, which was also at least partly due to the fact that Emperor Ferdinand I, whom people called “Nandl the Looney”, had promised the revolutionaries that he ‘would grant you everything’,<sup>137</sup> even a constitution. However, despite these promises there was a backlash against the students and known revolutionaries after the events in March; many had been questioned by the secret police or had been taken into custody.<sup>138</sup> These measures, however, could not deter the progress of the revolution; when the constitution was granted on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1848 there were many at the universities and in the cafes in Vienna, who argued that the constitution had been imposed from above and that therefore that state had taken away from the people the right to express their will. On 15<sup>th</sup> May 1848 a student demonstration in Vienna almost ended with the students forcing their way into the Hofburg and into the presence of Emperor Ferdinand demanding a constitution that truly represented the will of the people and the end of censorship;<sup>139</sup> although the students did not manage to enter the palace it nevertheless came to violent riots between them and the National Guard posted outside the Hofburg.<sup>140</sup> It was obvious that the person of the emperor was no longer sacrosanct and

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<sup>136</sup> Herre, F., *Metternich. Staatsmann der Friedens*, Kieppenheuer & Wietsch, Cologne, 1983, p. 185

<sup>137</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 150

<sup>138</sup> Knaus, H., *Wien 1848*, 1998, p. 156

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>140</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 158f.

that from this point onwards the imperial family was in effect at the mercy of the mob of Vienna.

#### 1.5.1.1. The flight

As the situation was no longer safe in Vienna, the imperial family quietly left Vienna on 17<sup>th</sup> May and sought refuge in Innsbruck.<sup>141</sup> Franz Joseph was with the army in Italy, in order to suppress uprisings there, and thus it was Maximilian who rode next to his parents' carriage out of Vienna. He was sixteen years old at that point; old enough to understand that this was not an amusement trip but an actual flight from the revolution. Moreover, Maximilian, who had always been very proud of the history of the House of Habsburg, understood his mother's indignation only too well, when she told him that

I could have borne the loss of one of my children more easily than I can the ignominy of submitting to a mass of students. In the future the shame of the past will seem simply incredible.<sup>142</sup>

The flight of the imperial family had shocked the people in Vienna and above all the bourgeoisie began to complain about the situation; business was bad, the riots had

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<sup>141</sup> Knaus, H., *Wien 1848*, 1998, p. 171

<sup>142</sup> HHStA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 24, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1848

destroyed a lot of property and the fear of further excesses by the proletariat increased every day.<sup>143</sup> It was under these circumstances that the provincial diets and the conservative newspapers asked the Emperor Ferdinand I to return to Vienna, who complied with their wishes and the entire imperial family returned to Vienna on 8<sup>th</sup> August. A contemporary, who witnessed the return of the imperial family, commented on the appearance of Franz Joseph; it can be assumed that his mood was symbolic for the rest of the court including Maximilian. He observed that Franz Joseph had ‘a serious, almost dark expression not without a hint of indignation’.<sup>144</sup>

However, the situation in the city proved to be very unstable: there were fights between the moderate and radical revolutionaries and the impoverished working class who took up arms and began to loot the shops in the city.<sup>145</sup> The final spark that ignited this explosive atmosphere was the decision of the imperial government to dissolve the Hungarian diet and to declare all the laws that had been enacted by it as void. The diet and above all Kossuth refused to adhere to this directive from Vienna, whereupon Ferdinand and the state council decided to dispatch troops to Hungary, which were supposed to leave the capital on 6<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>146</sup> The revolutionary mob in Vienna tried to prevent the departure; in the riots and chaos that followed several people were killed including Count Latour, the minister of war. Again the imperial family managed to escape from the chaos and revolution in the capital on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1848; this time they took refuge in Olmütz in Moravia.<sup>147</sup>

Although the situation seemed more dire and dangerous than during the first flight of the imperial family, the counterrevolution finally gathered strength. The empire was saved by Radetzky, Marshal Jelačić and Field Marshal Windischgrätz, and by the

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<sup>143</sup> Knaus, H., *Wien 1848*, 1998, p. 174

<sup>144</sup> Quoted in: Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 177

<sup>145</sup> Knaus, H., *Wien 1848*, 1998, p. 180

<sup>146</sup> Rapport, M., *1848*, 2008, p. 123

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

nationalist hatred that divided the revolutionaries. Radetzky crushed the revolution in Italy, and Windischgrätz recaptured Prague and Vienna, though the intervention of the Russian army was needed to reconquer Hungary.<sup>148</sup> Archduchess Sophie was the leading figure behind the counterrevolution for now she was the most powerful personality in the imperial family; the “only man in the Hofburg” as the people of Vienna called her later. It was Sophie, together with the Field Marshal Windischgrätz and the new chancellor Prince Felix von Schwarzenberg, who persuaded Emperor Ferdinand I to abdicate, since he was not a suitable head of state in such a dangerous situation. Sophie also persuaded her husband Franz Karl to relinquish his right to succeed to the throne, since she thought that her eighteen-year-old son Franz Joseph would be a much better leader of a counterrevolution. Franz Joseph had the necessary youthful energy and popular appeal to lead the counter-revolution and he had above all no connections to the concessions made in March 1848.<sup>149</sup>

### 1.5.2 The Emperor Franz Joseph

The abdication of Emperor Ferdinand and the following succession of Franz Joseph had been kept secret, and it was only at the very last moment that Franz Joseph’s brothers

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<sup>148</sup> Seward, D., *Metternich*, 1991, p. 163

<sup>149</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 163f.

had been told about the plan.<sup>150</sup> Maximilian had been aware that something was going on but had come to the conclusion that Franz Joseph would be made governor of Bohemia.<sup>151</sup> However, during the ceremony in which Emperor Ferdinand I abdicated, Franz Karl renounced his rights of succession, and Franz Joseph began his reign, which was to continue until 1916, Maximilian was not only proud of his brother but also slightly awed by the elevated position that Franz Joseph now held.<sup>152</sup> Sophie was also delighted with Maximilian's conduct towards Franz Joseph after the coronation and she even though that it had a positive influence on his character:

I can't express (...) how happy I am with the conduct of my other children towards their brother. It surpassed all my expectations; you would think that a year passed between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> December, so completely changed is Maxi; he is behaving respectful and subservient towards the Emperor (...) I think that the great surprise of the [Franz Joseph's] succession to the throne has had a very positive influence on Maxi, on the whole youth, (...), on all people.<sup>153</sup>

Although this was definitely wishful thinking Maximilian was, nevertheless, among the first to take the oath of allegiance to his brother, the new emperor. Did Maximilian realize that from this day onwards he would have to ask for an audience to speak with his brother, that his brother was above all criticism and that any of his independent actions and ideas would rouse his brother's suspicion?

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<sup>150</sup> Kühn, R. (ed.) *Hofdamen-Briefe um Habsburg und Wittelsbach, 1835.1865*, Arnold, Berlin, 1942, p. 199

<sup>151</sup> Haslip, J. *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.34

<sup>152</sup> When Archduchess Sophie told Ludwig Viktor, Franz Joseph's youngest brother, that Franz Joseph had been crowned as Emperor, he refused to believe it and said that this was 'a stupid story'. Source - Kühn, R., *Hofdamen-Briefe*, 1942, p. 204

<sup>153</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Kaiser Franz Joseph*, Styra, Vienna, 1960, p. 93



At first this new difference in positions seemed to have caused little disagreement between the two brothers. The revolution was still raging in Hungary where the imperial forces made little progress and Franz Joseph had to accept the aid of the Russian tsar Nicholas I. Franz Joseph insisted on visiting the troops in Hungary and Maximilian accompanied him. Both were present at the capture of Raab; the letter that Maximilian send to his mother praised Franz Joseph's heroism and his bravery. Since it was a letter to his mother and since this kind of correspondence was usually passed around in the imperial family it is questionable whether the events took place in the exact same manner as described in the letter or whether Maximilian wanted above all to please his mother and to increase his own reputation and that of the new emperor at court:

Our emperor is magnificent. As soon as he heard gunshots near Raab, he rode (...) to the advancing troops; you can imagine the endless cheering, an emperor sharing all their dangers and troubles. As the troops entered the town, the emperor also entered it over the beams of a burning bridge.<sup>154</sup>

It was in the aftermath of the revolution that the first serious rifts in the relationship between Franz Joseph and Maximilian appeared; the main issue was that the two brothers held two very different opinions about how captured revolutionaries in Hungary and Lombardy should be treated. After the revolution was crushed many radical leaders, such as Count Batthyány, were shot, hanged or whipped after trial by court martial, while others like Count Andrassy were sentenced to death in their absence and had to go into exile. Franz Joseph wholly approved of the draconian measures and policy of Radetzky, Windischgrätz and Schwarzenberg, whereas the less military and

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<sup>154</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti , E.C., *Franz Joseph*, 1960, p. 115

more philosophical Maximilian disapproved of the measures. In his diary he wrote that although:

We call our age the age of enlightenment (...). In very many cities in Europe posterity will view with amazement and horror [that military tribunals] under the influence of hateful revenge, condemned people to death at a few hours' notice, perhaps they wanted something different from what was desired by the power that stands above the law.<sup>155</sup>

Of course, these ideas if mentioned in public would have been treason. This raises the question what reasons Maximilian had to make the comment: did he want to express his true convictions? Did he, as a young man, rebel in some way against the established methods and order of his seniors? Or was he, as a Christian, appalled by the misery and sorrow that he had seen and thus he was moved by pity for these people? Many conservatives at court, like Schwarzenberg, feared that the young archduke was a true liberal and sympathised with the defeated revolutionaries and their concepts.<sup>156</sup> They placed Maximilian at the opposite side of the political spectrum and thus managed to make him, his comments and ideas appear suspicious at a court that had defeated a revolution. However, Maximilian only held some vague and diffuse liberal ideas: for instance he supported the granting of a constitution but only if this was the wish of the monarch,<sup>157</sup> which suggests that Maximilian was in fact a conservative and that he was modern-minded only in a superficial way. The sympathies that he showed for the captured and sentenced revolutionaries probably derived from his compassionate character, from a sense that the rule of law should be upheld and from pity rather than

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<sup>155</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J. *Maximilian and Juárez*, New York, 1992, p. 47

<sup>156</sup> Weber, S.K., *Italienbilder*, 2008, p. 39

<sup>157</sup> Hübinger, C. Adelsliberalismus in Deutschland. In: Langewiesche, D. (ed.) *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert* Göttingen, 1988, p.188

from liberal convictions. On the contrary, his views on most matters were conservative; he was a devout Catholic, went to Mass regularly and had a strong sense of honour – the Habsburg sense of honour in which he had been brought up. This sense of honour also made it impossible for Maximilian to directly criticise Franz Joseph; he was directing his critique against the military tribunals and the military commanders such as Radetzky, Windischgrätz and Jelačić, who had set up these tribunals and were ultimately responsible for them although the sentences were carried out in the name of the emperor, by pointing out that ‘perhaps they wanted something different from what was desired by the power that stands above the law’.<sup>158</sup> There are no records or comments whether Maximilian ever expressed this directly to Franz Joseph but it can be assumed that his critique, although made in private, nevertheless reached the emperor. Maximilian’s opponents, above all Count Schwarzenberg and the conservative circles at court, would have made sure that Franz Joseph knew of Maximilian’s critique; it not only gave them the opportunity to discredit Maximilian and to limit any kind of influence he had on his brother but also raised the question of whether Maximilian, who was apparently did not completely supported the strictly conservative line taken by Franz Joseph and his advisors, should be removed from Vienna and given a task at some distance from the capital.

Therefore, this disagreement already marked the beginning of the estrangement between Maximilian and Franz Joseph. The former was not allowed to criticize the actions of his brother anymore and the latter grew more and more suspicious of Maximilian’s ideas and actions. Maximilian was still very popular amongst the people in the streets and at the more liberal circles at court centred around Archduke Johann.<sup>159</sup> Schwarzenberg and other conservatives at court feared that many of those dissatisfied with the current

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<sup>158</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J. *Maximilian*, 1992, p. 47

<sup>159</sup> Weber, S.K., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 79

political situation were ready to form a group around this apparently more liberal minded archduke and would consequently encourage Maximilian to take over the throne and thus overthrow Franz Joseph.<sup>160</sup> At this point Franz Joseph had only been in power for a couple of months; his regime was very unstable and his grip on the political and military power in the Habsburg Empire was still rather weak. Thus Franz Joseph might have been afraid to lose his throne to Maximilian, who enjoyed so much more popularity than him.<sup>161</sup> However, in none of Maximilian's notes can a hint be found that he considered such actions nor that he was in touch with the liberal circles around Archduke Johann at court. Moreover, Maximilian had been brought up in the Habsburg sense of honour that made it imperative for every member of the imperial family to accept the current emperor as the head of the House of Habsburg and to follow his orders. Since Maximilian had a strong sense of honour it remains doubtful whether he would have went against the family's code of honour by attempting to stage a *coup d'état*.<sup>162</sup> Even if Maximilian had turned against his brother it would still have been unlikely that the army would have followed him; the officer corps largely consisted of members of the nobility and was consequently rather conservative. Schwarzenberg's fear, therefore, lacked any kind of foundation; he and some of Franz Joseph's ministers, nevertheless, hinted that it might be a good idea to find for His Imperial Highness a suitable position at some distance from Vienna.<sup>163</sup> Although Franz Joseph was fond of his brother's company, he was nevertheless hurt by Maximilian's criticism of his orders concerning the treatment of captured revolutionaries. Consequently, it was agreed that Maximilian, who was now almost eighteen-year-old and who had always loved the sea, should go to Trieste and join the navy.

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<sup>160</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 92

<sup>161</sup> Gruber, S. *Ferdinand Maximilian*, 1999, p.31

<sup>162</sup> Gruber, S. *Ferdinand Maximilian*, 1999, p.50

<sup>163</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 94

## CHAPTER TWO

### *In his Brother's Shadow*

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‘Sometimes I ask myself the question if I can settle it with my conscience to follow  
the orders from Vienna blindly’

*Archduke Maximilian, as governor of Lombardy-Venetia, 1858*

When Maximilian reached the end of his education in 1850 the problem of the provision for the younger brother of Emperor Franz Joseph presented itself. As an archduke, and as the next in the line of succession, Maximilian was well provided for financially: he was entitled to an apanage of 75.000 florins a year; from 1<sup>st</sup> November 1853 onwards Maximilian received an additional grant of 25.000 florins per year; and on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1856 the emperor doubled the original apanage to the sum of 150.000 florins a year.<sup>164</sup> Apart from the financial provisions it was also necessary to find Maximilian a suitable career; traditionally most Austrian archdukes joined the army in order to get a certain amount of military training and were then gradually promoted to governor of some part of the empire.<sup>165</sup> However, since Franz Joseph was so strongly identified with the army and since he perceived his brother as a rival and as a threat to his throne it was impossible for Maximilian to follow this traditional route. It was thus necessary to find a different career for Maximilian that was yet suitable for his status as an archduke,

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<sup>164</sup> List, J., *Stellung und Aufgabe*, 1982, p. 11f.

<sup>165</sup> Maximilian's younger brother Karl Ludwig went down the traditional career path of an Austrian archduke: upon the completion of his military training he was appointed governor of Tyrol.

challenging enough to keep him occupied and most importantly, at some distance from Vienna as not to pose a threat to Franz Joseph. Therefore, it was thought appropriate that Maximilian should join the navy and in 1850, when he was eighteen years old, he was given a command in the Adriatic fleet.<sup>166</sup> It is true though that Maximilian was anything but unhappy about this career path; his journals and diaries showed his deep love for the sea, although this love sometimes appeared to be a welcome excuse to escape from his various duties in Vienna, Trieste or Milan. A poem Maximilian wrote on board of the steamer “Elisabeth” in November 1859 perfectly illustrated his wish to escape from his duties. One verse read:

Entbunden der Paläste Haft / Frei von des Schreibpult's Qual und Mühen / Da hebt  
sich frei des Geistes Kraft / Und der Begeist' rung Ströme glühen.

[Released from the custody of the palaces / Liberated from the agony and pain of the  
writing desk / The powers of the mind are lifted / And the tide of enthusiasm is  
burning]<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless, in the following five years (and again from 1859 to 1864) Maximilian had his headquarters in Trieste and only went back to Vienna for the occasional visit. In Trieste he rented the rather luxurious Villa Lazorovich from a rich merchant; the villa was situated on one of the hills surrounding the town, consisted of several buildings and had a big park, which was made accessible to the public.<sup>168</sup> However, Maximilian did not have much time to enjoy his ‘comfortable villa’ nor his ‘garden laden with fruits,

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<sup>166</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart, 109

<sup>167</sup> Quoted in: Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko. Erzherzog und Kaiser*, Niederösterreichisches Pressehaus, Vienna, 1982, p. 29

<sup>168</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 49

grapes, etc.<sup>169</sup> since his naval duties meant that he spent most of his time on board of several different ships cruising the Adriatic Sea. Fortunately, Maximilian kept journals and diaries about these journeys; it is thus possible to examine his experiences in foreign countries in the context of travel writing in the nineteenth century.

## **2.1. MAXIMILIAN'S TRAVEL ACCOUNTS AND TRAVEL WRITING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

Although people have travelled since time immemorial, it was at the end of the eighteenth century that it became possible and affordable for a wider public to travel. Later the steam engine revolutionised the way in which people travelled. By the mid-nineteenth century most western European countries had networks of railway tracks, which did not only connect the major cities with each other but also made it possible to reach remote regions faster than ever before. Affordable transport combined with a rising level of prosperity of the bourgeoisie and their wish to imitate the tastes and habits of the nobility led to the development of a modern form of tourism by the end of

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<sup>169</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G. *Ich bin bloß Corvetten-Capitän. Private Briefe Kaiser Maximilians und seiner Familie*, Ueberreuter, Vienna, 2006, p. 89

the nineteenth century; the Grand Tour had always been a feature of the education of the nobility but now for the first time the middle class could experience foreign countries and cultures. Consequently, this led to a dramatic increase in travel writing and these published accounts of journeys also enjoyed great popularity amongst the wider public. These publications covered different literary genres, ranging from the numerous accounts of scientific expeditions into exotic countries to very personal descriptions of travels through Europe. Above all the latter made it possible for the reader to participate in acts of (inter-) cultural perceptions and cultural constructions, in processes of understanding and misunderstanding. However, as Edward Said has demonstrated, the way people imagine places is not simply a private, individual affair and people's responses to these places when visiting them are not independent but are mediated by the culturally constructed representations they have previously encountered.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, these travel accounts were not a literal and objective record of journeys undertaken; they carried preconceptions that, even if challenged, provided a reference point through which the travelling subject was always also laid bare: travel accounts inevitably revealed the culture-specific and individual patterns of perception and knowledge.<sup>171</sup> Thus these journals, diaries and published accounts often told the reader more about the author himself, about his background, his nationality, his education and about his own attitudes than about the country the author had travelled. However, many of these contemporary texts were stained by the belief in racial superiority, not just the imperialistic idea of the superiority of the European race over others but also the perception that northern European nations and people were superior to those in the south.<sup>172</sup> For instance, most people in Austria in the nineteenth century considered

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<sup>170</sup> Said, E.W., *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1978, p. 113 - 166

<sup>171</sup> Korte, B., *English travel writing*, 2000, p. 5f.

<sup>172</sup> Youngs, T., *Travel Writing in the 19th century – filling the blank spaces*, Anthem Press, London, 2006, p. 20



themselves to be superior to the Slavs. This belief of superiority resulted in the fact that the Habsburgs did not only consider it their innate right to rule over the regions in the Balkans but they also believed that the Slavs benefitted from their rule as they were not advanced enough to govern themselves.<sup>173</sup> However, neither should the travel accounts nor the misconceptions and racial slurs be dismissed with a wave from the distance of a century: the prejudices and (mis-) perceptions of nineteenth century writers and their audiences are deployed in print and the broadcast media still.<sup>174</sup>

#### 2.1.1. THE TRAVELLER MAXIMILIAN AND HIS EXPERIENCE OF “OTHERNESS”

Maximilian gathered his experiences of foreign countries and different cultures on his various travels with the navy: in the autumn of 1850 on his last educational tour to Greece and Smyrna<sup>175</sup>; in the summer of 1851 on a cruise through the western Mediterranean visiting Sicily, Naples, Florence and Cadiz; from May till July 1852 he went on another tour through the western Mediterranean and the north-west Atlantic calling at Sicily, Spain, Portugal, Madeira, Tangiers, Algiers and Malta; and from June till November 1853 he cruised in the eastern Mediterranean visiting the Sultan of the

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<sup>173</sup> Fuchs, B., *Volk, Rasse, Geschlecht. Anthropologische Diskurse in Österreich, 1850-1960*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt, 2003, p. 163

<sup>174</sup> Youngs, T., *Travel Writing*, 2006, p. 6

<sup>175</sup> Maximilian was accompanied by his brother Karl Ludwig and their educator Count Bombelles; the journey had been a suggestion of Archduchess Sophie and was intended to give Maximilian more insight in the lifestyle of a sailor.  
HHSTA, Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 19, 19<sup>th</sup> August 1849

Ottoman Empire as the Crimean war had already erupted between Turkey and Russia; and in 1859 he set foot onto the new world visiting Brazil. Bearing in mind that travel writing was never objective but was determined by such factors as the author's nationality, education and cultural background, it is possible to examine Maximilian's accounts of the numerous journeys he undertook in the context of some of these factors. In the case of Maximilian it has to be understood that his travel accounts were written from the position of a privileged traveller. Although the archduke often attempted to travel incognito, something in which he only rarely succeeded, the main purposes of Maximilian's journeys was on the one hand to gain further nautical training on the sea voyage but on the other hand to represent the Habsburg Empire in the countries he visited. For instance, his journey to the Ottoman Empire in 1853 was a reaction to the political difficulties that the Crimean War, which was to become a large scale European conflict, presented. Maximilian's visit was thus an innocuous way for the Austrian emperor of getting in touch with the Ottoman leadership and to gain some insight into their political plans and actions. However, apart from a brief note about a meeting with the Austrian diplomatic corps in Athens, not a word about any diplomatic missions during his journeys can be found in Maximilian's notes.<sup>176</sup>

Nevertheless, it was his privileged position that led Maximilian to make rather quick judgments about the places he visited and about the people he encountered. In Pisa he described the cathedral and the tower as an 'architectural monstrosity' and for his part 'wished that the tower would be straight'.<sup>177</sup> Moreover, Maximilian did not only fancy himself a connoisseur of architecture but he felt that he could also comment on the people and customs of the country he visited. However, these comments revealed more

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<sup>176</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Mein erster Ausflug. Wanderungen in Griechenland*, Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1868, p124

<sup>177</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben. Reiseskizzen, Aphorism, Gedichte*, Duncker & Humblot, Leipzig, 1867, Vol. I, p. 195

about Maximilian himself, his character and his upbringing and education as a German prince, than about the people he commented on. Some good examples of how Maximilian categorized people and how he attributed certain national stereotypes to them can be seen in Maximilian's description of the Neapolitan fleet in the port of Palermo in 1852:

(...); it is incredible what characteristic differences can be detected from the bearing of a ship; in the northern I include the manners of the British, Danes, Swedes etc. and partly ourselves; in the southern prevails the distasteful, flawed, (...) nature of the Italians, Spanish and most of the French etc. – The north is affiliated with calmness, etiquette, strict discipline (...); the south with yelling, bonhomie and comedy; the northern sailor possess (...) bravery and has a fresh and clean appearance; the southern seaman has momentary bravery, (...) but otherwise he is slavish and low, and his unshaven face is neglected and savaged.<sup>178</sup>

Maximilian clearly tried to define his own, Germanic character by pointing to stereotypes attributed to countries and people in southern Europe. However, as this quotation has shown he did not see these different national characteristics as trivial but he based his judgments on them, which led to the belief that some people and nations were naturally superior to others.

However, as a member of the ruling house of a multi-national empire how could Maximilian believe in these ideas of superiority and inferiority? Weber has argued that it was the idea of the superiority of the Germanic race that gave the Habsburgs the justification to rule in the non-German parts of the empire<sup>179</sup>; as the German-speaking

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<sup>178</sup> Quoted in: Weber, M.C., *Italienbilder*, 2008, p. 176

<sup>179</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 184f.

people were seen as superior to the other ethnic groups in the empire they were often regarded as the *Staatsvolk*, which meant that they could dominate the politics and economy of the empire and that ethnic groups should be subjugated to their interest and needs. It is possible to argue that Maximilian and Franz Joseph believed in the idea of a *Staatsvolk* as well as in the superiority of the Germanic race, as they both saw it as the mission of the Habsburgs ‘to civilise these people’;<sup>180</sup> this also gave them a justification for Austrian rule in Italy. However, in Maximilian’s mind these ideas of the inferiority of Southern Europe only applied to the lower classes for when he met with the monarchs of the respective countries, to whom he was very often also related in some way or who were not actually southern but were members of northern European aristocratic families, he never mentioned these national stereotypes and perceived the aristocracy of these countries as equals.<sup>181</sup>

### 2.1.2. HABSBURG PATRIOTISM AND THE IDEA TO BE DESTINED TO RULE

Maximilian’s accounts of his travels also portrayed him as a man who was incredibly proud of his ancestry and the Habsburg dynasty and who had, despite his easy manners and vague liberal ideas, a very conservative attitude towards the concepts of monarchy.

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<sup>180</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 93

<sup>181</sup> The best example for such monarch was Otto of Greece, who was a Wittelsbach cousin of Maximilian’s mother Archduchess Sophie. At the Convention of London in 1832 the Great Powers had decided that Greece should have a Bavarian prince as its sovereign.

These traits in Maximilian's character are revealed in his description of van Dyck's portrait of Charles V:

He (...) must step before this picture, and he will be seized with respect and enthusiasm for this king of men. The "by the grace of God", shines powerfully from the commanding, earnest face of the emperor, too great to feel flattered that humanity lies in the dust before him; (...) the eagle, chosen as the symbol of the House of Habsburg, floats over Charles to crown his majestic head with laurel.<sup>182</sup>

Maximilian was definitely fascinated by the nimbus of the kings of old. Moreover, a visit to Spain also suggested that he longed for such an elevation for himself. The country held a special fascination for Maximilian; although the Spanish line of the Habsburg dynasty had long been extinguished Maximilian's Habsburg ancestors had ruled Spain for almost two hundred years. As a consequence, he felt that 'in Spain I was the nearest legitimate relative to the poor dead [Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain], nearer than the ruler and the princes of the country'.<sup>183</sup> Standing in front of the sarcophagi of the "Catholic Kings" Ferdinand and Isabella in Granada, Maximilian not only indulged in dynastic pride aroused by the ancient glories of his house but he also revealed his innermost feelings and thoughts:

Proudly and yet sadly I took in my hand the golden ring and the once powerful sword.  
Would it not be a brilliant dream to draw the latter in order to win the former?<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, p.258f

<sup>183</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, Vol. II, p. 161

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p.164

These comments show that Maximilian was not only incredibly proud of the legacy of the House of Habsburg but also that he dreamed of re-establishing and furthering the glory of his dynasty. However, as ‘a mere Corvette Captain’<sup>185</sup> it would have been fairly difficult for Maximilian to gain any sort of distinction for his house. Thus he must have been keen to be promoted quickly through the ranks of the navy or to be appointed as governor of a part of the monarchy. Considering Maximilian’s fascination with Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain it can be assumed that he wondered why had fate had placed the Austrian crown upon his brother’s head, while he should go through life without one, just because he was two years younger? In Seville, where a bullfight was given in his honour, Maximilian’s journal entries paint the picture of a young man revelling in reverence being paid to him as a member of the Habsburg dynasty. As a dying bull was granted the *coup de grâce* in Maximilian’s honour, he wrote in his journal:

A strange feeling comes over me, for the looks of the whole arena are directed upon me; and a murmur runs through the multitude. I cannot deny that I felt flattered by this national homage. I even fancied myself back in the fine old times, when the Habsburgs were the rulers of this noble people.<sup>186</sup>

These diary entries show Maximilian’s fascination with the kings of the Middle Ages and that he had a strong sense of dynastic pride. Moreover, the journals also suggest that Maximilian had aspirations to further the glory of his house and thus his comments can be regarded as the first signs of him being unhappy with his current position in life. Historians such as Joan Haslip have tended to regard Maximilian as a dreamer and a

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<sup>185</sup> Praschl- Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p.1

<sup>186</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, Vol. II, p.68

rather lethargic person, who did not possess the necessary desire to rule. These historians generally point towards Maximilian's later wife Charlotte, whom he married in 1857, as the driving force behind his appointment as governor of Lombardy-Venetia as well as behind his acceptance of the Mexican throne.<sup>187</sup> However, Maximilian's notes in Spain proved that he was unhappy with the status quo and that he longed for a more powerful position for himself several years before he met his wife.

## **2.2. THE ATTEMPT ON FRANZ JOSEPH'S LIFE IN 1853 AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

It was during one of these cruises in the Mediterranean Sea that Maximilian was told that there had been an attempt on the life of his brother Franz Joseph. The political situation in the Habsburg Empire at the beginning of the 1850s was anything but stable; the revolutions in 1848 had been barely suppressed and resentments against Austrian rule were still widespread amongst the different nationalities in the Habsburg Empire and above all in the Hungarian and Italian provinces.<sup>188</sup> The restoration of absolutism in the empire made independence of the provinces or even greater autonomy from

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<sup>187</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 104

<sup>188</sup> Kann, R.A., *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1980, p. 374

Austrian rule appear to be an impossible goal that could not be achieved in the near future. This was the political background against which the Hungarian tailor's assistant János Libényi attacked Franz Joseph on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1853. On that day Franz Joseph took a stroll on the ramparts of Vienna where Libényi attacked him with a knife; it was due to the bravery and presence of mind of Franz Joseph's adjutant on duty O'Donnell, who flung himself on the attacker and disarmed him before the police arrived on the scene, that Libényi did not succeed. Moreover, the collar of Franz Joseph's uniform deflected most of Libényi's blow so that the emperor only suffered a minor wound to the back of the head.<sup>189</sup> Maximilian, whose only source of information were the newspapers available in Trieste that reported that, although the wound was not fatal, Franz Joseph was nevertheless suffering from a high fever, was so alarmed by this news that he hurried to the capital.<sup>190</sup> It was not until a few days later that Karl Ludwig's more detailed letter reached him but at that point Maximilian was already on his way to Vienna.<sup>191</sup>

Maximilian's decision to see his brother in Vienna can be seen in very different ways and as such have caused quite a controversy amongst historians. Some, like Haslip, have stressed Maximilian's good nature and loyalty towards Franz Joseph, arguing that his only concern was his brother's health and well-being.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, Praschl-Bichler and Weber have pointed out that Maximilian would have been the next emperor of the Habsburg Empire if Franz Joseph had died.<sup>193</sup> Thus they suggested that Maximilian calculated that his brother would not survive the attempt on his life and that

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<sup>189</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Kaiser Franz Joseph*, 1960, p. 220

<sup>190</sup> Austrian Newspapers Online (ANNO): *Wiener Zeitung*, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1853, retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> October 2009,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgicontent/anno?apm=0&aid=wrz&datum=18530219&zoom=2>>

<sup>191</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 104

<sup>192</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 93

<sup>193</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 105  
Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 128



in consequence he would ascend to the Habsburg throne. However, it is impossible to figure out from Maximilian's letters and journals whether he journeyed to Vienna out of brotherly concern or out of a lust for power. Franz Joseph, though, must have been convinced that it was the latter; when Maximilian arrived at his bedside Franz Joseph was so angry at the sudden arrival of the heir-presumptive that he gave Maximilian a dressing-down for leaving the fleet without permission.<sup>194</sup> Apparently, more conservative circles at court shared Franz Joseph's view, for there exists a letter by Maximilian in which he complains that he was 'very angry at W. Windischgraetz, who dares to spread such false news, which is a personal affront against me'.<sup>195</sup>

Despite the rebuff, Maximilian showed himself deeply affected by the attempt on his brother's life and on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1853 he launched an appeal for subscriptions to build a thanksgiving church, close to the site of Libényi's attack.<sup>196</sup> The appeal revealed how closely knitted the ideas of Catholicism, monarchy and the Habsburg dynasty were in Maximilian's mind; in the appeal he stressed the ties between Austrian-Habsburg patriotism and Catholicism: 'A church will be the most beautiful memorial for Austria to proclaim her gratitude (...) to the world'.<sup>197</sup> However, Maximilian did not live to see the completion of the neo-gothic *Votivkirche*, which was inaugurated on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1879 on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the imperial couple twelve years after Maximilian's death.<sup>198</sup> Upon the inauguration Franz Joseph donated a stained-glass window to commemorate Maximilian as the Emperor of Mexico - a tribute perhaps of love but most certainly of remorse.

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<sup>194</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 104

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114

<sup>196</sup> Since Maximilian spent most of his time away from Vienna, he entrusted the handling of the day-to-day work concerning the construction of the *Votivkirche* to his brother Karl Ludwig.

Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 104

<sup>197</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 236

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*

### 2.3. THE AUSTRIAN NAVY

Feeling even more like *persona non grata* at the court in Vienna after the assassination attempt on Franz Joseph, Maximilian sought refuge in his work in the navy. It is hardly surprising that at the beginning there were many in the officer corps, which consisted mainly of Italian officers, who were less than thrilled to have the younger brother of the emperor joining their ranks. However, Maximilian's open character and his easy manners guaranteed that he was well liked amongst his comrades, who were 'surprised by his friendliness'<sup>199</sup> and Maximilian soon found a group of friends amongst the officers. Apparently Maximilian was meant to be a sailor; he had settled into this new life easily and had shown equal if not more eagerness and commitment to his training than most other recruits. On a visit to the port in Venice even Franz Joseph could see that Maximilian was happy with his career choice and perhaps more importantly that his tasks kept him busy enough as not to interfere with politics in the capital. Therefore, Franz Joseph commented in a letter to his mother that 'Max is flourishing, strong as a bear, as gay as ever, always to be found on board of the ship. And apart from all this he seems to be working hard'.<sup>200</sup> Franz Joseph's intentions in writing this letter might have been, on the one hand, to calm Archduchess Sophie's fears about the well-being of her favourite son and, on the other hand, to prove to her that the relationship between him and his brother had not deteriorated further. Consequently, Maximilian was promoted quickly through to the rank of captain and given a command over the corvette *Minerva*,

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<sup>199</sup> Sterneck, M., *Erinnerungen aus den Jahren 1847-1897. Herausgegeben von seiner Witwe*, Hartleben, Vienna, 1901, p. 91

<sup>200</sup> Schnürer, F., (ed.), *Briefe Kaiser Franz Josefs an seine Mutter, 1838-1872*, Kosel & Pustet, Munich, 1930, p. 62

which under his command won the recognition of a model ship.<sup>201</sup> Two years after Maximilian had entered the service, one officer noted that ‘it is inconceivable to us, how he has acquired so much maritime knowledge (...) in such a short time’.<sup>202</sup> However, Maximilian did not only pick up a lot of nautical skills in those two years but he also saw very clearly the financial, personnel and material deficits the navy was suffering from. As most of them had their roots in the past it is worth looking briefly at the history of the Austrian navy.

### 2.3.1. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Since the annexation of Trieste in 1382, the Habsburg Empire had direct access to the Adriatic Sea, but this was too small a basis to develop a large-scale navy against the superior strength of the Venetians. Later attempts by the government in Vienna to realize maritime projects, like the creation of an East Indian Company in Ostende during the reign of Charles VI and Maria Theresa’s attempts to establish colonies in India and the Nicobar Islands, failed due to various political and economic reasons.<sup>203</sup> It was only when the Republic of Venice broke apart during the French Revolutionary Wars and the former Venetian territory became part of the Habsburg Empire in the

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<sup>201</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 127

<sup>202</sup> Sterneck, M.; (1901), p. 91

<sup>203</sup> Braun, Th., *Österreichische Kolonialbestrebungen*. In: *Marine-Rundschau*, Issue 33, Vienna, 1928, p. 508ff.

Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797 that Austria did have the means to develop and enlarge her naval forces. Austria's inheritance included five ships of the line, two frigates, one corvette, twelve cannon boats and several barges.<sup>204</sup> However, due to the lack of interest in maritime matters of the Viennese government and Austria's other military commitments in Europe, which required large sums of money to adequately equip the army, most of the ships were dismantled and the timber sold. Austria thus did not take the chance to gain naval hegemony in the Mediterranean; a fact that was also reflected that in 1848 the fleet was reduced to three frigates, six corvettes, seven brigs and two small transport steamers.<sup>205</sup>

As the Austrian navy was exclusively based in the Italian provinces it had essentially remained Venetian; the administrative authorities of the navy were located in Venice, the officer's corps and most of the crews were from Venice and from Dalmatia and the command language on board of the ships was Italian. Under these circumstances the outbreak of the revolution in Venice on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1848 proved to be a real crisis for the Austrian navy. The revolutionaries arrested the commander of the navy, vice admiral Martini, killed another of the commanding officers and when the Austrian governor of Venice handed over the city to them many sailors of the Austrian navy joined the insurgents.<sup>206</sup> Fortunately for the Habsburg Empire, the main part of the fleet was not in Venice when the revolution broke out; the fleet gathered in Trieste where it was safe from attacks of the Sardinian or Neapolitan navy, for Trieste was on the territory of the German Confederation and the Italian states did not want to go to war

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<sup>204</sup> Schmidt-Brentano, A., *Österreichs Weg zur Seemacht Marinepolitik Österreichs in der Ära Erzherzog Ferdinand Maximilian (1854-1864)*. In: Die Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs, 1977, p. 120

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p. 120

<sup>206</sup> Wiggermann, F., *K.u.K. Kriegsmarine und Politik, Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der italienischen Nationalbewegung in Istrien*, Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaft, Vienna, 2004, p. 64

with the confederation.<sup>207</sup> After the Austrian forces recaptured Venice and order was restored, the central government in Vienna pardoned most of the disloyal sailors, but as the Italians in the navy were seen as a possible source for mutiny, a process of Germanisation of the officer's corps and the crews began.<sup>208</sup> Since many of the commanding officers had been Italian the Viennese government struggled to find an adequate commander for the navy. In 1849 Dahlerup, a Dane with considerable nautical experience, took over command but only two years later Count Wimpffen, who as a field marshal lieutenant had very little maritime knowledge, replaced him. However, Dahlerup and Wimpffen failed to modernise the navy and in many ways both were only an interim solution.<sup>209</sup> In 1854 Franz Joseph appointed Maximilian as the new commander-in-chief of the navy and although Maximilian did not a direct mandate from the emperor to modernise the navy, he began to turn the Austrian navy into a modern fleet.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Wiggermann, F., *K.u.K. Kriegsmarine und Politik*, 2004, p. 121

<sup>208</sup> Höbelt, L., 'Die Marine'. In Wandruska, A./Urbanitsch, P. (eds.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*, Vol. V, *Die Bewaffnete Macht*, Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 1987, p. 38

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, p. 49

<sup>210</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart 109

### 2.3.2. MAXIMILIAN AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE NAVY

In sending Maximilian to the littoral, the Emperor gave him a task that needed to be done and a challenge great enough to test his abilities. The command over the navy was a daunting task indeed; the navy had remained essentially Venetian, ships and equipment were outdated, training for the sailors was inadequate, morale was poor and the crews were prone to mutiny. It was therefore not a miracle that upon taking command Maximilian assured Radetzky that ‘in the future the navy, like the army, shall have as its foundation strict discipline [and would] develop into a useful corps dependable in times of crisis and animated with a good spirit’.<sup>211</sup> Maximilian’s tactful reference to the army’s good example did not reflect his true feelings, however. Throughout his time as commander of the navy, Maximilian always sought to assert both his own independence and that of the navy, which in theory was subordinate to the army’s high command, the so-called *Armeeoberkommando*. His striving for independence was helped by the muddled state of the Habsburg military administration. Following the Silvester Patent of 31<sup>st</sup> December 1851, Franz Joseph ruled the Austrian Empire as an absolute monarch.<sup>212</sup> In 1853 he subordinated the war ministry to the *Armeeoberkommando*, thereafter the Emperor in effect let the army administer itself, which he personally represented in the conference of ministers.<sup>213</sup> His general adjutant, Field Marshall Count Grünne subsequently exercised great influence over military matters. It was the camarilla around Count Grünne and his protégé Baron Wimpffen, whom Maximilian replaced as commander of the navy, in which Maximilian’s

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<sup>211</sup> Duhr, B. (ed.), *Briefe des Feldmarshalls Radetzky an seine Tochter Friedericke, 1847-1857*, Roller, Vienna, 1892, p. 140

<sup>212</sup> Sondhaus, L., *The Habsburg Empire and the Sea. Austrian Naval Policy, 1797-1866*, Purdue University Press, Indiana, 1989, p. 131

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 137

appointment was criticized the hardest on the grounds that the Archduke was too young and inexperienced.<sup>214</sup>

Nevertheless, naval circles in Trieste were delighted with Maximilian's appointment. As Admiral Tegetthoff rightly remarked in a letter to his father: 'the Archduke may be young and inexperienced, but he has the interests of the navy really at heart'.<sup>215</sup> However, the events in 1848 and the outbreak of the Crimean War had changed the interest of the Habsburg Empire, and therefore of her navy, considerably. Before the revolution the main tasks of the Austrian navy had been to show her flag in the Mediterranean and to protect Austria's trade interests in the Levant by stationing ships in Constantinople. However, the Crimean War had proved that Sardinia-Piedmont possessed a navy that was superior to that of Austria and that the government of Victor Emmanuel II still harboured the idea of unifying Italy under its leadership, although to achieve this aim the Sardinians would have to enlist the support of a great power such as France. As a result of these changed circumstances, the task of the Austrian navy now became twofold: firstly, to prevent any revolutionary spark from spreading from Italy to other provinces of the empire; and secondly, to defend the coastal regions since the government in Vienna assumed that the navy would not be able to fight the superior forces of naval powers like France and Britain in the open sea.<sup>216</sup>

Moreover, Maximilian also understood that in addition to these military tasks the Habsburg Empire had to "show the flag" overseas in order to fulfil economic and scientific aims. Thus Maximilian initiated a large-scale scientific expedition during which the frigate Novara became the first Austrian warship to circumnavigate the

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<sup>214</sup> HHSTA, Familienarchive Harrach FA Familie in spec 467.49 Grünne, Graf, 1853-1854, cart. 2

<sup>215</sup> Schöndorfer, U., *Wilhelm von Tegetthoff*, Bergland Verlag, Vienna, 1958, p.20

<sup>216</sup> Schmidt-Brentano, A., *Österreichs Weg zur Seemacht*, 1977, p. 132

globe.<sup>217</sup> The fact that Maximilian promoted scientific voyages was also part of the wider rivalry between Prussia and Austria for the mastery of Germany. The German Confederation had sold off most of its fleet in 1853,<sup>218</sup> however, Prussia had retained and expanded its own fleet. By 1860 the Prussian force reached fifty-five ships and was thus rivalling the size of the Austrian fleet.<sup>219</sup> Thus the scientific voyages did not only serve to raise the prestige of the Austrian navy but also asserted Habsburg protection for Germans overseas.

However, in order to be able to surpass the Prussian force and to defend the coastal regions of the empire it was necessary to reform the training of the officers and the crews and to modernise the fleet. The former was the easier issue to tackle and Maximilian relocated the Imperial Navy Academy to Fiume on the grounds that the old academy in Trieste had become too small and that the training provided there had been too much in line with the principles of the army and land warfare.<sup>220</sup> In addition, Maximilian actively promoted the Germanisation of the fleet; this process had already begun for political reasons after the mutiny of six out of seven Habsburg naval personnel in 1848.<sup>221</sup> As a consequence Italian sailors were seen as unreliable and in the following years Italians were system replaced by Germans and Austrians. Following the example of the army, Maximilian also made German the language of command in 1858.<sup>222</sup> All these measures combined gave the Habsburg fleet an appearance of being truly German, which was important in the rivalry with Prussia for mastery over Germany.

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<sup>217</sup> Schmidt-Brentano, A., *Österreichs Weg zur Seemacht*, 1977, p. 127

<sup>218</sup> Hubatsch, W. (ed.), *Die erste deutsche Flotte 1848-1853*, E.S. Mittler & Sohn, Herford and Bonn, 1981, p. 36

<sup>219</sup> See: *Conways's all the World's Fighting Ships, 1860-1906*, Conway Maritime Press, London, 1979; Gröner, E., *German warships 1815-1945*, Vol. I, Naval Institute Press, 1990

<sup>220</sup> Schmidt-Brentano, A., *Österreichs Weg zur Seemacht*, 1977, , p. 127

<sup>221</sup> Höbelt, L., 'Die Marine', 1987, p. 338

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, p. 348



However, modernising the fleet proved to be a much harder task to realize; by the mid-1850s Austria still relied almost entirely on sailing ships to show her flag in the Mediterranean, supplemented by a handful of paddle steamers, whereas during the Crimean War the British deployed a fleet consisting completely of modern screw-powered warships not just in the Black Sea but also in the Baltic.<sup>223</sup> More importantly, the Sardinians had deployed an all-steam squadron in support of their expeditionary corps in the Crimea, a fact that definitely posed a threat to the Austrian provinces of Lombardy and Venetia.<sup>224</sup>

It was thus necessary to modernise the fleet as quickly as possible. Until this point Austria largely relied on ships being constructed abroad, mainly in Britain, a dependencing on foreign know-how and on foreign capacities to build the required amount of ships. Moreover, fears that British authorities would seize the screw-frigate *Radetzky*, which had been built in Britain, for use in their war effort against Russia in the Crimean War also underscored the dangers of such dependence. Consequently, Franz Joseph, on Maximilian's insistence, ordered the construction of a new dry dock in Pola and Maximilian also did not hesitate to build ships in Venice as well.<sup>225</sup> By the spring of 1855 the Habsburg Empire had four frigates, four corvettes and two paddle steamers on patrol in the Mediterranean.<sup>226</sup> It is in the light of these achievements that Tegetthoff's praise of Maximilian has to be understood:

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<sup>223</sup> Sondhaus, L., *The Habsburg Empire and the Sea*, 1989, p. 184

<sup>224</sup> Ibid, p. 184

<sup>225</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart 109

<sup>226</sup> Ibid, cart 110

The Archduke has set to work with energy and zeal. He goes into every detail and I feel he will at last bring about a thorough re-organisation of the service which Dahlerup and Wimpffen [Maximilian's predecessors] merely bungled with their superficial policy.<sup>227</sup>

Although Maximilian had set the Austrian navy on the long and tedious process of modernisation, his achievements nevertheless paled in comparison to the forces of Britain, France, or even Sardinia-Piedmont. Austria was just catching up on the last round of technological advances, when the next break-through in naval technology just lay over the horizon. In October 1855 the French had successfully used armor-plated floating batteries to bombard Russia's Black Sea forts. The invention of iron-clad warships involved unprecedented expenditure for all European powers.<sup>228</sup>

Nevertheless, Maximilian managed to obtain Franz Joseph's permission to replace some old sailing brigs with modern warships.<sup>229</sup> However, the disposal of the old ships only covered a fraction of the cost of the new ones. As a consequence, Maximilian's reform and modernisation of the fleet was extremely expensive and naval spending exceeded the legal limit every year after 1850; in 1856 the service received more than double the authorized sum, prompting Count Grünne to protest on the army's behalf.<sup>230</sup> Throughout his time as commander-in-chief of the navy Maximilian had to struggle to secure adequate funding for the navy against the opposition of a series of government ministers. From the opposition of Count Schwarzenberg in the 1850's to that of Count Rechberg in the 1860's, most government ministers considered the navy a needless luxury that a financially strapped Habsburg state could ill afford. Moreover, Franz

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<sup>227</sup> Quoted in: Schöndorfer, U., *Tegetthoff*, 1958, p. 57

<sup>228</sup> Schöndorfer, U., *Tegetthoff*, 1958, p.184

<sup>229</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilians von Mexico, cart 113

<sup>230</sup> HHSTA, Familienkorrespondenz A, cart. 52

Joseph had a rather distant relationship to the navy; for all of his life he considered himself the ruler of a continental power.<sup>231</sup> It was thus Maximilian's direct access to the Emperor that prevented any cuts 'in the promised [funds, which were supposed to be] used for development'.<sup>232</sup> The level of independence from the *Armeeoberkommando* that Maximilian had exercised ever since taking command of the fleet became official in August 1856 when Franz Joseph formally decreed the separation of the navy from the army effective at the start of the 1857 fiscal year and the establishment of a navy ministry independent of the army's high command. Maximilian's policies during the 1850s provided the fleet with better personnel and facilities, but the high costs ultimately were to cause a backlash against the navy in the 1860s.

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<sup>231</sup> Although Franz Joseph always wore uniform, he never dressed in a navy uniform nor did he own one.

<sup>232</sup> HHSTA, Familienkorrespondenz A, cart. 52

## 2.4. MIRAMAR

When Maximilian went to Trieste in order to begin his naval training he had rented the Villa Lazarovich; although the villa consisted of several luxurious buildings and was surrounded by a big park, Maximilian thought that after his appointment of commander of the navy the villa was too small and did not adequately reflect the prestige of his new position. Consequently, Maximilian was looking for a place where he could build a suitable residence for himself in Trieste and the surrounding area; in the end he found the rocky promontory of Grignano northwest of Trieste. In the winter of 1855/56 the architect Carl Junker began drawing up construction plans, at the beginning of 1856 Maximilian bought the grounds and in March of the same year construction works began. The interior design was done by Julius Hoffmann and the twenty-two hectare big park was planned by the court gardener Laube and by his successor Jelinek.<sup>233</sup> After a construction time of four years Maximilian and his wife could move into the ground floor of the castle. In constructing Miramar Maximilian had evoked his childhood dream of ‘a beautiful house with a garden by the sea’;<sup>234</sup> the castle with its whitewashed towers and granite terraces stood on a rocky promontory above the Adriatic Sea; this unique position gave it the impression of rising directly out of the sea without any connection to the earth. Maximilian envisaged Miramar as a fairytale castle:

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<sup>233</sup> Perotti, E., *Das Schloss Miramar in Triest (1856-1870). Erzherzog Maximilian von Habsburg als Bauherr und Auftraggeber*, Akademie Verlag, Vienna, 2002, p. 21f.

<sup>234</sup> Holler, G., *Sophie*, 1993, p. 109

Aus blauer Fluth zum Himmelsblau / In Blüthenduft emporgestiegen / Ist Miramar ein  
Märchenbau / Des Dichters Herz in Lust zu wiegen.

[Out of the blue tide to the blue of the heavens / Rising with the scent of flowers / Is  
Miramar a fairytale castle / To fill a poets heart with joy.]<sup>235</sup>

The idea behind the romanticised vision of a fairytale castle was that the owner could create his own world, in which he could escape from the real world and its banalities. Maximilian imagined that in his own world in Miramar he could ‘renounce the vanities of the world, to live far removed from the deceit, the weariness and the fraud (...), content to retire to a serene and sunny climate, studying the arts and sciences and cultivating my garden’.<sup>236</sup> Since Miramar had been constructed in accordance to the wishes and ideas of Maximilian, who had taken a lively interest in the planning of the castle and who had been informed and consulted about every stage of its construction, it is necessary to look at Miramar at greater detail.

#### 2.4.1. THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

It proved to be rather difficult to identify the predominant architectural style in the nineteenth century; the classical style that had prevailed in the second half of the eighteenth century was slowly being replaced by other architectural styles such as neo-

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<sup>235</sup> Quoted in: Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 49

<sup>236</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 125

renaissance and neo-gothic. Although Miramar incorporated classical as well as byzantine elements, the castle was mainly built in a Norman style, a contemporary term for neo-gothic architecture. The Norman style represented the historical revival of eleventh century English and Italian architectural features. In the construction of Miramar several Norman elements were used: the simplicity of the building, the square tower and the pointed arches.<sup>237</sup> The emphasis of the Norman style with its connotations of German / Nordic ideals of austerity, reserve and melancholy can also be interpreted as a symbol of the claim to power of the Austrians over the Italian population and in consequence of the Habsburg dynasty's right to rule in Northern Italy.<sup>238</sup> Maximilian's conviction that it was the Habsburgs' right to rule over Northern Italy was furthermore demonstrated in the fact that battlements and defence towers gave Miramar the impression of a well-fortified castle; such defence fortifications were no longer necessary in the nineteenth century but they gave the castle and the Habsburgs' rule in Northern Italy a certain sense of legitimacy and continuity dating back to the Middle Ages.<sup>239</sup>

#### 2.4.2. THE INTERIOR DESIGN

Although the exterior of Miramar already displayed the Habsburg dynasty's right to rule, it is in the interior of Miramar that Maximilian attempted to legitimize the Habsburg as well as his claim to power. Throughout the interior design of Miramar

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<sup>237</sup> Perotti, E., *Schloss Miramar*, 2002, p. 29

<sup>238</sup> Ibid, p. 30f.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 49

there are constant historical references and above all the paintings refer to the archduke's perception of himself as a member of Habsburg family. For instance, Maximilian commissioned a large-scale genealogical tree beginning with Rudolf I and ending with the medallions of Charlotte and himself.<sup>240</sup> For the "Hall of the Monarchs" Maximilian commissioned fifteen portraits of contemporary monarchs such as Napoleon III and Ludwig II of Bavaria; initially the centrepiece of this gallery should have a portrait of Franz Joseph in full regalia but after Maximilian had accepted the Mexican throne in 1864 it was replaced by a portrait of himself as emperor of Mexico.<sup>241</sup> Thus Maximilian legitimized his (future) position by placing himself in the centre of these other currently ruling monarchs. The fact that Maximilian saw himself as a member in the traditions of the Habsburg dynasty culminated in the "Historical Hall", where a portrait completed in 1867 depicted Maximilian with the regalia of a medieval king: the crimson cloak; the eagle that hovers over his head; the personifications of three continents (Europe, Africa and America) that offer him their treasures; and the personifications of the fine arts that listen to his words.<sup>242</sup> Of course, this mystical portrait raises the question whether the often quoted picture of Maximilian as a liberal and enlightened archduke is actually true or whether Maximilian was unable to liberate himself from the Catholic-conservative ideological corset of his education. It is a question that keeps cropping up throughout Maximilian's life and will be examined again and again in this thesis.

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<sup>240</sup> Perotti, E., *Schloss Miramar*, 2002, p. 65

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64f.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67

## 2.5. MAXIMILIAN'S DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO PARIS IN 1856

In the spring of 1856 the emperor sent Maximilian on his first diplomatic mission to Paris to assess the atmosphere at the court of Napoleon III after the Crimean War. Austria's policy of armed neutrality had left her in an awkward political and diplomatic position; at the conference in Paris in 1856 the former enemies had been united against the peacemaker Austria. The new Russian Tsar Alexander II could not forgive Franz Joseph for not coming to his aid, while Russia had helped Austria crushing the revolution in Hungary in 1849; and Britain and France could not bring themselves to trust an ally, who had remained sitting on the fence. Most historians have passed severe judgement on the policy followed by Franz Joseph and his advisor Count Buol during the Crimean War.<sup>243</sup> According to some, Austria should have associated herself with Russia to preserve the alliance between absolutist monarchs that saved her in 1849. According to others, she should have cast her lot with the Western powers, when she would have emerged with allies and with her prestige unimpaired. As it was, she had placed herself between two chairs, since her policy of armed neutrality was essentially a defensive calculation due to the possible threat of revolution within the empire. Moreover, the cost of raising and equipping an army would have put even more fiscal pressure on Austria as her financial situation was already very weak. Count Buol's question to friend and foe alike summed up the awkward situation Austria found herself in: 'Did you really believe that Austria could have risked joining the war without

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<sup>243</sup> See: Kann, R.A., *A History of the Habsburg Empire, 1526-1918*, University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1980; Baumgart, W., *The Crimean War, 1853-1856*, Oxford University Press, London, 1999



risking universal war and revolution and thus the final ruin of the Empire?’<sup>244</sup>. In the context of this political climate the Austrian ambassador to Paris Count Hübner suggested that the only way to retrieve the situation was to send an Archduke to Paris as this would flatter the vanity of Napoleon III and his upstart court and would pave the way to a better understanding between the governments in Paris and Vienna.<sup>245</sup> Thus the birth of an heir to the French crown provided Franz Joseph with an excellent opportunity to send Maximilian to Paris with a personal message of congratulations.

### 2.5.1. THE *PARVENU* EMPEROR NAPOLEON III

As already demonstrated in this thesis, Maximilian had been conservative and nationalistic, which led him to harbour preconceived notions and prejudices about people and nations that were foreign to him; in the case of France it can be argued that Maximilian’s upbringing had been strictly anti-French. Archduchess Sophie, along with most of the nobility and the Austrian population, were bitterly anti-French and regarded

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<sup>244</sup>Baumgart, W., *Crimean War*, 1999, p. 32

<sup>245</sup> HHSTA, Varia-Diplomatie und Aussenpolitik, 1848-1918, cart. 12

Paris as the origin of all the troubles in Europe during the last seventy years. Maximilian was thus highly prejudiced against Napoleon III before he even met him; in his private letters to Franz Joseph Maximilian showed himself highly biased against Napoleon III, whom he repeatedly called a *parvenu* and who in Maximilian's opinion was 'utterly lacking in nobility'.<sup>246</sup> Maximilian's negative opinion about Napoleon III derived partly from the fact that most European ruling dynasties regarded the Bonaparte family as an usurper, which was reflected by refusal of several Swedish and German noble families to marry their daughters to Louis Napoleon Bonaparte and partly from Maximilian's conviction that the Habsburg dynasty was superior to the Bonaparte dynasty. The reasons for these convictions were manifold: the Habsburgs were the longest reigning dynasty in Europe, whereas Napoleon I had become emperor only recently in 1804; Louis Napoleon had crowned himself emperor of the French thus stressing the fact that he ruled by the will of the people, whereas the Habsburg emperors ruled by the grace of God; and finally that unlike at the court of Vienna where the Spanish etiquette decreed that only the highest ranks of the nobility had access to court, the rules at the French court were much more relaxed and access was granted to those who had gained noble titles during the reign of Napoleon I. Bearing these different ideas of royalty in mind, Maximilian's less than favourable assessment of Napoleon's court becomes understandable; in his opinion it was a court where 'the company was (...) distinguished by their disgusting dress and tasteless behaviour [and for the courtiers it was] often (...) hard to maintain themselves on a proper level'.<sup>247</sup>

However, within a week the tone of Maximilian's letters changed; he seemed to have overcome his suspicions and prejudices against the French emperor. Most

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<sup>246</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 51

<sup>247</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 70

contemporaries agree that Napoleon III possessed a certain charm and it appeared that Maximilian also slowly succumbed to this charm:

I breakfast every day with the Emperor and the Empress. Napoleon is one of these men, whose personality does not attract at first but who gains on knowing through his quiet charm and great simplicity of manner (...). Once he got over his shyness, he becomes very expansive and the more I get to know him, the more I feel he trusts me.<sup>248</sup>

This trust and sympathy must have been mutual for at the intimate breakfast parties at St. Cloud the hosts and guest chatted without reserve even about such explosive topics as the Italian Question. After the revolution in 1848 Austria had retained the two provinces of Lombardy and Venetia, a fact that had in effect ended the project of Italian unification for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, the Austrian government feared that Louis Napoleon was sympathetic to the ideal of Italian nationalism.<sup>249</sup> This fear was indeed justified as the Italian Question was of great interest to Napoleon from 1857 onwards and the left-wing opposition in the *Corps Législatif* was also passionately in favour of Italian unification.<sup>250</sup> In the end, Maximilian's mission was a success with regards to re-establishing relations with the French court but he was unable to extract the promise of Napoleon III not to interfere in Italy. With hindsight the visit was later to have fateful consequences; if those two ambitious dreamers Maximilian and Louis Napoleon had never met and been mutually attracted to each other, the former might

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<sup>248</sup> The shyness that Maximilian noted may have been due to the fact that Napoleon III was aware of the rumours surrounding Maximilian's birth; for if those were true than Maximilian and not Louis Napoleon would have been the rightful heir to the French throne. Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte of Mexico*, Vol. I, Amalthea, London, 1929, p. 57

<sup>249</sup> Weber, S.K., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 139

<sup>250</sup> Gooch, J., *The Unification of Italy*, Routledge, London, 1989, p. 83

have never got involved in the ill-fated Mexican adventure. As it was, Maximilian left Paris with a feeling of sympathy and admiration for Napoleon III. Moreover, he was probably far more impressed by his visit than he would have ever admitted in his letters to Vienna, in which he expressed his happiness ‘to turn the back on this centre of civilisation’.<sup>251</sup>

## 2.6. MAXIMILIAN’S MARRIAGE TO CHARLOTTE OF BELGIUM

With his diplomatic mission in Paris completed, Maximilian proceeded to Belgium, ostensibly to pay a courtesy visit to King Leopold I. However, a letter written by Archduchess Sophie suggested that at that point in time Maximilian was beginning to consider whom he should marry: ‘I [Archduchess Sophie] told the Emperor yesterday in the theatre about your marriage intentions, which he did not reject, though he cannot understand why you would look for [this princess] in England or Spain’.<sup>252</sup> The crucial point in Maximilian’s considerations about marriage were surely the fact that his brother Franz Joseph had married the Princess Elisabeth in 1856 and that any male

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<sup>251</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, p. 59

<sup>252</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Korvetten Kapitän*, 2006, p. 162

offspring of this marriage would replace him as the next in line to the Habsburg throne. Moreover, Archduchess Sophie's letter pointed out that Maximilian had apparently no idea whom he should marry; his only requirement seemed to have been that his future wife should be from one of the leading and most influential dynasties in Europe. To what extent Maximilian was actually looking for a wife in Brussels cannot be deduced from his correspondence but it can be assumed that Maximilian was aware that King Leopold had a sixteen-years old daughter, who he claimed 'promised to be the most beautiful princess in Europe'.<sup>253</sup>

#### 2.6.1. A DYNASTIC MARRIAGE?

Charlotte for her part clearly preferred Maximilian to all her other suitors; her letters and her dairies showed that she very quickly fell in love with the young and handsome archduke, whom she called 'charming in every way'.<sup>254</sup> This appeared to be rather uncharacteristic of the sixteen-year-old princess, whom contemporaries described as intelligent but serious and as hard and critical of herself as she was of others. King Leopold regarded a possible marriage of his daughter with an Austrian archduke favourably: on the one hand the marriage between Charlotte and Maximilian would strengthen Belgium's ties with Austria, which could be beneficial in the event that the

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<sup>253</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, p. 65

<sup>254</sup> Quoted in. Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 55

French emperor Napoleon III ever tried to annex the small neighbour country; on the other hand having the younger brother of the Austrian emperor as a son-in-law would have greatly enhanced the prestige of the House of Saxe-Coburg, which had become one of the leading dynasties in Europe only recently, and thus fitted perfectly into Leopold's political schemes. It was not without reason that journalists called Leopold the "Nestor of Europe"; by a combination of astuteness and diplomacy, he had succeeded in raising his small country to the rank of a European power and in turning it into a model of a constitutional monarchy with freedom of speech, a free press and free elections, though the suffrage was limited. Moreover, Leopold's marriage policy had elevated the House of Saxe-Coburg to princes of the blood, related to half the ruling families in Europe. For instance, Leopold's sister was Queen Victoria's mother and his brother was the father of Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. These relations offered him the possibility to give shrewd political advice to his relatives in the European royal family.

Maybe Maximilian had some hesitations about having such a shrewd diplomatic player as a father-in-law, for he did not ask for Charlotte's hand in marriage before October 1856 and their engagement was officially announced in November 1856.<sup>255</sup> However, it is not only the long time span between the first encounter between Maximilian and Charlotte and him asking for her hand in marriage that raises questions as to whether Maximilian was actually ever in love with Charlotte or whether it was a marriage of convenience for him. There is some reason to suggest that Maximilian married Charlotte for financial reasons: by 1856 Maximilian was spending considerably more than his apanage. Above all, his building project in Miramar cost a fortune. This would also explain Maximilian's rather undignified haggling for a higher dowry. As Belgium

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<sup>255</sup> Even King Leopold thought that Maximilian's hesitations were due to the fact that he regarded him as a 'great diplomat, who always has political reasons for every step he takes' - Source: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.89

was a constitutional state the amount of the dowry could not be settled merely by bargaining between the Austrian and Belgian Foreign Offices; the deputies of the Belgian parliament had to be convinced that the dowry was not excessive. Maximilian called the ‘whole affair [a way] to inspire the unprejudiced observer with a profound disgust for constitutional shams’,<sup>256</sup> a rather odd comment for a Habsburg prince who was supposed to harbour liberal and enlightened ideas. After a lot of negotiations the amount of the dowry was settled: Charlotte received 100.000 florins and further yearly 20.000 florins as needle money [*à titre d’épingles*] and Franz Joseph for his part granted 140.000 florins as a wedding gift.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, it is rather telling that in none of his letters to Franz Joseph during his first stay in Brussels in May 1856 is Charlotte mentioned nor did he send a report about his marriage to Charlotte on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1857 to Vienna. The only time Maximilian’s mentioned Charlotte was in a letter to his brother Karl Ludwig in which he described his wife-to-be; however, the description does not give the impression of a man in love: ‘She is small, I am tall, which is as it should be. She is brunette and I am fair, which is also good. She is very clever, which is a bit worrying, but no doubt I will get over that’<sup>258</sup>. Although this description was probably a joke between brothers, it also raises the wider question of Maximilian’s view of women.

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<sup>256</sup> Quoted in. Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 55

<sup>257</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 31

<sup>258</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 83

## 2.6.2. MAXIMILIAN'S VIEW OF WOMEN

Maximilian's comment about the intelligence of his wife, which he had no doubt that he would overcome, reflected the attitude of society towards women and their role in society in the nineteenth century. The prevalent view was that women were the weaker, less able and less intelligent sex, whose place was in the home, whereas men dealt with the complex matters of the outside world.<sup>259</sup> During his journey to Brazil in 1859 Maximilian revealed in his letters to Charlotte that he believed in the idea that women were the physically weaker sex, who should stay at home while men explored the world. Maximilian wrote that he was glad that Charlotte had stayed behind on Madeira for he was sure that 'the journey would have been too exhausting [and] the country for a woman almost impossible'<sup>260</sup> and that 'only a man, who can overcome the greatest difficulties and deprivations, can achieve things'.<sup>261</sup> In the nineteenth century women were not only regarded as physically inferior to men but they were also seen to be essentially different in character from men; they were seen as less rational and less intelligent.<sup>262</sup> As a consequence, a husband was supposed to be responsible for his wife, while her duty was to obey him. Maximilian's ideas about the place of women in society appeared to have concurred with the view in society at large, for on a visit to Gibraltar he commented on the British custom, which required the ladies to retire after dinner:

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<sup>259</sup> D'Cruze, S., 'Woman and the Family'; In: *Women's History in Britain – an Introduction, 1850-1945*, Oxford University Press, London, 1995, p.53

<sup>260</sup> Ratz, K. *Vor Sehnsucht nach dir vergehend. Der private Briefwechsel zwischen Maximilian von Mexiko und seiner Frau Charlotte*, Amalthea, Vienna, 2000, p. 50

<sup>261</sup> Ratz, K., *Sehnsucht*, 2000, p. 51

<sup>262</sup> D'Cruze, S., 'Woman and the Family'; 1995, p. 69



After the toasts, the ladies left the table to await the arrival of the gentlemen in the saloon, who still comfortably gave themselves up to wine and conversation. It seems strange when the ladies, at the desire of the gentlemen, humbly march away from the table. Many blame this habit as barbarous; I like it. The ladies ought to learn that they have to obey the men.<sup>263</sup>

Maximilian's opinion on the role of women in society did not only reflect the prevalent view of society but were also in accordance with his Catholic upbringing and the teachings of the Catholic Church. For centuries the Catholic Church regarded women as inferior to men both by nature and by law, a conviction that was mainly based on the role of Eve in the Fall of Man.<sup>264</sup> However, Maximilian's view of the place of women in society was rather at odds with the roles Archduchess Sophie and his wife Charlotte played in his life. The former clearly dominated her husband Franz Karl and was definitely the centre of the imperial family, whereas the latter was the more decisive character in their marriage as well as the driving force behind Maximilian's actions, although he was probably not aware of her influence on his decisions. Nevertheless, Maximilian owed his promotion to governor of Lombardy-Venetia on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1857 at least partly to his wife; her father King Leopold had asked Franz Joseph to give his new son-in-law 'a position (...), worthy of his high birth and which [would] give him at the same time a great scope for action'.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, Vol. II, p. 128

<sup>264</sup> Henderson, R., Tradition and status of women in the Catholic Church, In: Australian EJournal of Theology, issue II, 2004

<sup>265</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, p. 70

## 2.7. GOVERNOR OF LOMBARDY-VENETIA

It was not only the influence of his father-in-law King Leopold I that secured Maximilian his new position as governor general of the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom but also the fact that Franz Joseph realized that he had to relax the severity in his Italian provinces. During the journey of the emperor and the empress through Lombardy-Venetia in the winter of 1855/56, Franz Joseph had shown himself shocked with the degree of open hostility that met the imperial couple, due in part to field marshal Radetzky's harsh and oppressive rule anti-Austrian feelings were running high in the two provinces. A report to the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston stated 'that His Imperial Majesty was greeted rather coolly by his subjects in Lombardy'.<sup>266</sup> However, if Franz Joseph was to pursue a more liberal policy in Lombardy-Venetia, it was necessary to replace Radetzky with a less hated ruler. Radetzky, who was now ninety years old, could be retired on the grounds of age with due thanks for his service.<sup>267</sup> As Maximilian was generally regarded as having liberal leanings and as he had already lived in Trieste for several years and had thus gained some insight into Italian society, Franz Joseph appointed Maximilian as governor general of Lombardy-Venetia<sup>268</sup> for he regarded 'no one as more fitting [than Maximilian] for this country'.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> HHSTA, Nachlass Conte Corti, cart. 32

<sup>267</sup> After Radetzky's death in 1858 it was even considered by the imperial family to lay him to rest in the Capuchin vaults in Vienna; an honour that was only granted to members of the imperial family.

Pensendorfer, F., *Eiserne Krone und Doppeladler. Lombardo-Venetien, 1814-1866*, Deuticke, Vienna, 1998, p. 264

<sup>268</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84

<sup>269</sup> Ernst, O., *Franz Joseph I in seinen Briefen*, Rikola Verlag, Vienna, 1924, p. 95

### 2.7.1. THE KINGDOM OF LOMBARDY-VENETIA

Although both Lombardy and Venetia had been part of the Habsburg Empire before the Napoleonic period, Lombardy since 1714 and Venice since the collapse of the Venetian republic in 1797, it was nevertheless at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that the kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia was established.<sup>270</sup> Since such a kingdom had never existed before, it was a political construct based on the idea of continuity of Habsburg rule in the region from the sixteenth century onwards and was consequently used to legitimize Austrian hegemony in northern Italy. Moreover, in order to bind the people of Lombardy-Venetia closer to the House of Habsburg emperor Francis I (II) appointed members of the imperial family, Archduke Anton Victor (1816-1818) and Archduke Rainer (1818-1848), as viceroy. As the representative of the emperor, the main task was to incorporate the social elites in Lombardy and Venetia into the social structure of the Habsburg Empire and thus to increase their loyalty to the ruling dynasty, a task at which both viceroys failed. The social elites, both from the nobility and from the bourgeoisie, felt excluded from administrative bodies of the kingdom for in their opinion most of the personnel consisted of Austrians or Italian-speaking officers from South Tyrol; thus these elites felt they lacked the necessary access to the political institutions to push through their agendas.<sup>271</sup> The nobility was alienated even further from the state by the fact that many titles that had been granted in the Napoleonic era were not recognized by the Austrian regime. Therefore, many members of the Lombard and Venetian nobility

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<sup>270</sup> Toelle, J. *Das tanzende General-Gouvernement. Die kulturpolitischen Ideen des Erzherzogs Ferdinand Maximilians als Generalgouverneur des Lombardo-Venetischen Königreiches, 1857-1859*. In: *Römische Historische Mitteilungen*, Vienna, 2007, p. 417

<sup>271</sup> Merrigi, M., *Amministrazione e classi sociale nel Lombardo-Veneto*, Edizioni Studio Tesi, Turin, 1987, p. 119

were not received at the court of Archduke Rainer and as a result “rival courts” sprang up in both provinces.<sup>272</sup>

These latent resentments against Austrian rule finally unloaded themselves in several riots: in November 1847 there was an uprising in Milan, in Padua there were student demonstrations and the year 1848 began with the *sciopero del fumo*, a boycott of smoking that was directed against the Austrian monopoly on tobacco. The government in Vienna reacted to these developments with increasingly severe repressions, reinforced the troops in northern Italy and on 22<sup>nd</sup> February martial law was declared.<sup>273</sup>

The wave of revolutions that spread through Europe also reached the kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia: on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1848 the Milanese population rose against the Habsburg government and after five days of intense street fighting, forced the Austrian troops to evacuate the city and created a provisional government; and on 21<sup>st</sup> March a popular revolt drove the Austrians out and a Venetian republic was declared. However, apart from the desire to overthrow Austrian rule there was little agreement amongst the revolutionaries. The republicans favoured an independent state, whereas the nobility and the larger part of the bourgeoisie were mainly concerned with protecting their own interests. These elites therefore supported an intervention by the king of Sardinia-Piedmont Charles Albert in order to control the republican movement; on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1848 the Piedmontese forces entered Milan. Charles Albert's hesitations led, however, to a very indecisive military campaign and an opportunity to eliminate Radetzky's retreating army was missed. The Austrians withdrew to the Quadrilateral where they could rest and wait for reinforcements.<sup>274</sup> Bearing this situation in mind it is hardly surprising that referenda held in the Venetian provinces in May and in June in Lombardy produced the result that 99.9 per cent of the population supported an

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<sup>272</sup> Merrigi, M., *Amministrazione*, 1987 p. 122-127

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, p. 327f.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid, p. 333f.

annexation of the two provinces by Piedmont.<sup>275</sup> Piedmont's territorial expansion was, however, very short lived. In June Marshal Radetzky, with the help of reinforcements, was able to capture all of Venetia and made preparations to enter Lombardy. Charles Albert, on the other hand, had no real plan of action; his army was ill supplied and led by poor officers. In July Radetzky received another 20,000 soldiers and was superior to his opponents in army size and firepower. As he advanced, Radetzky was welcomed by many peasants who were disillusioned with the provisional government, which kept some of the heaviest taxes and imposed on them a greater burden of the war costs than on the great landowners.<sup>276</sup> On 22<sup>nd</sup> July Radetzky attacked the Piedmontese forces and, after five days of fighting, defeated them in the battle of Custoza. On 7<sup>th</sup> August Radetzky's troops entered Milan.<sup>277</sup> The defeat at Custoza effectively eliminated the union of Piedmont and Venice; throughout the winter of 1848/49 Venice was besieged by the Austrians.<sup>278</sup> In March 1849 the Piedmontese government renewed the hostilities with Austria but was defeated decisively at the battle of Novara after less than a week of fighting and had to seek peace.<sup>279</sup> Following Novara, the Austrians appealed to Venice to surrender but the Venetians refused. In the long run, however, Venice could not resist; the Austrians bombarded it, supplies ran short, famine spread, and epidemics broke out. After some negotiations, the city surrendered on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1849.<sup>280</sup>

The experiences during the 1848 revolution had irrevocably altered the relationship between the elites and the state: the former now actively supported independence from Habsburg rule and the latter mistrusted its Italian subjects, enforcing more and more restrictive and oppressive policies. Of course, these measures did not only apply to the

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<sup>275</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 94

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94

<sup>277</sup> Sked, A., *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire. Radetzky, the Imperial Army and Class War 1848*, Longman, London, 1979, p. 189f

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, p. 237f

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, p. 261

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, p. 272

Italian provinces of the Habsburg Empire but they were also enforced in those regions that had revolted against Austrian rule in 1848, such as Hungary and Bohemia. These policies did not only restrict civil rights such as free speech and increase censorship but they also limited the autonomy of the two provinces even further by transferring administrative responsibilities and institutions to Vienna. However, this was a common occurrence in all the provinces the Habsburg Empire after 1848, since the neo-absolutist regime attempted to centralize the administrative structure of the empire; the resulting administrative became known as the Bach system.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, the economic and tax obligations towards Vienna that the Lombard-Venetian kingdom had to honour were immense; in 1850 and again in 1854 the central government imposed bonds on property, trade and industry, which brought a revenue of 38 million florins in Lombardy and 24,3 million florins in Venetia in 1854.<sup>282</sup> Radetzky, who was appointed governor of Lombardy-Venetia after the revolution in 1848, was above all a military commander and although he was responsible for any military and civilian matters concerning the kingdom, he nevertheless emphasised the military aspects of the administration and disregarded the civil ones. In Radetzky's opinion the civilian administration was too lenient with the Italians and the opposition; Radetzky and the military high command therefore reacted against any opposition with brutal force, which was possible under the provisions of martial law that was imposed on Lombardy-Venetia until 1854. For instance, in February 1853 republicans around Mazzini and the Young Italy movement organised a small uprising in Milan. Although the insurgency was crushed quickly, Radetzky arrested four hundred revolutionaries of whom sixteen were executed.<sup>283</sup> These actions of course increased the unpopularity of Radetzky and Habsburg rule: just how much the population despised Radetzky was illustrated by a scene in the theatre,

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<sup>281</sup> Meriggi, M., *Amministrazione*, 1987, p. 315

<sup>282</sup> Weber, M. C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 96

<sup>283</sup> Pesendorfer, F., *Eiserne Krone*, 1998, p. 261

where he got hissed at upon entering.<sup>284</sup> In order to relax the situation in Lombardy-Venetia it was therefore necessary to remove Radetzky from his post and replace him by a more moderate governor, who did not have any connections with the reprisals after the 1848 revolution.

### 2.7.2. MAXIMILIAN'S NEW POSITION AS GOVERNOR GENERAL OF LOMBARDY-VENETIA

After Radetzky, the symbol of Austrian suppression in Italy, had retired in December 1856, Franz Joseph appointed Maximilian as governor of the Lombard-Venetian kingdom on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1857.<sup>285</sup> There was widespread disagreement with the Viennese government as to how the newly appointed governor should run the two provinces: some, like the minister of the interior, argued that Maximilian should hold a brilliant court respectively in Milan and Venice for he thought that a governor holding a grandiose court could impress and bind the Italians to the government in Vienna. Others took a more theological approach and saw Maximilian as the providence of the two provinces; and Baron von Bruck recommended that the archduke should establish a strong government that could exercise relative independence from the central authorities

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<sup>284</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Korvetten Kapitän*, 2006, p. 60

<sup>285</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84

in Vienna.<sup>286</sup> However, as the Bach administration in Vienna was centralising administrative structures and institutions throughout the empire, von Bruck's suggestion was unlikely to be fulfilled. Indeed Franz Joseph strictly specified and regulated the powers of the governor in the 'Regulations about the sphere of influence of the Governor in the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom'.<sup>287</sup> Although Maximilian was the 'representative of his Imperial Majesty' controlling 'all branches of the civil administration in the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom',<sup>288</sup> Franz Joseph nevertheless only assigned to him a superficial position, whose ostensible importance was undermined by the allocation of powers in the agencies subordinated to the governor. The crucial parts of the regulations were the paragraphs four and five, which declared that: 'The Governor is authorized to take all decisions concerning the civil administration'<sup>289</sup>(§4), with the exceptions stated in paragraph five. This exception paragraph, which comprised almost half of the regulations, excluded almost all important areas of trade from the control of the governor and transferred them to the central authorities in Vienna. This included the entire legislature, any alteration of laws or deviations from existing regulations as well as any affairs concerning the treasury or foreign relations. In more general terms Maximilian was not responsible for 'any orders of special (...) importance'.<sup>290</sup> Therefore, Maximilian's scope for action was comparable to that of Archduke Rainer as viceroy before the revolution in 1848; his main purpose was to represent and embody the emperor in Lombardy-Venetia in a dignified manner.<sup>291</sup> Maximilian thus represented the glory and power of the house of Habsburg but had in effect little administrative powers as most policies were drawn up in Vienna. However,

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<sup>286</sup> Seta, R., *Massimiliano d'Asburgo. Il governatorato del Lombardo-Veneto, 1857-1859*, Pordenone, Edizioni Studio Tesi, 1992, p.18

<sup>287</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84

<sup>288</sup> Archivio di Stato Milano (ASM), Fondo Cancellerie Austriache, cart.448

<sup>289</sup> Ibid

<sup>290</sup> Ibid

<sup>291</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat*, 1998, p. 435



this was a stark contrast to the powers that Radetzky possessed; as the General, Civil- and Military Governor Radetzky had been able to set the political agenda himself without much interference from the central government in Vienna, which meant that he had possessed and exercised real power in Lombardy-Venetia. However, unlike in the case of Radetzky Maximilian's scope for action was not only limited in the area of civilian administration but he also lacked the command over the army. After the dismissal of Radetzky the command of the Austrian army in Italy had been given to Count Gyulai, which meant that in effect there now existed a strict separation between the civil and the military power.<sup>292</sup> The new governor thus possessed neither the military power, which Radetzky had had, nor the prestige and authority of a viceroy, which had distinguished the last viceroy, Archduke Rainer. Maximilian was painfully aware of these limitations of his position as governor when he complained that 'upon being appointed as governor of the Lombard-Venetian Kingdom His Majesty has not given me a ministry but a chancellery'.<sup>293</sup> It was not an office that could act independently but could only execute direct orders from the central government in Vienna. In short the position of governor held a lot of prestige for Maximilian but only little real power; a fact that was partly a result of the fears of Franz Joseph and his ministers that Maximilian might interfere in the politics of the central government and partly a consequence of the Bach system, which limited the authority of the governors and centralised power in the government in Vienna.

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<sup>292</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Verwaltungsstaat*, 1998, p. 366

<sup>293</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 83

### 2.7.3. 'LA GUERRE DE LA COQUETTERIE'

If Franz Joseph and the Viennese government had believed that it would be enough to merely replace Radetzky with the young and supposedly liberal archduke then Maximilian's entry in Venice proved them wrong. Instead of cheering crowds the new governor was greeted by 'many gondolas [that waited] in the port of San Marco; but the people in them were cold like the unfriendly March evening; only a few cheers could be heard and [even] those sounded forced'.<sup>294</sup> This frosty reception showed Maximilian that in order to establish a successful government in Lombardy-Venetia it was necessary for him to bind those circles of Milanese and Venetian society that were opposed to Austrian rule to his court and ultimately to the government in Vienna. In order to achieve this aim Maximilian began what he called a 'guerre de la coquetterie'<sup>295</sup> against the nobility and the social elites. The idea that it would be possible to create a sense of dynastic loyalty amongst the aristocracy and the local elites by granting favours and giving them access to court was based on Maximilian's belief in certain stereotypes and national characteristics concerning Italy and the Italians. From his travels in Italy he had concluded that 'flattery is a characteristic of Italy';<sup>296</sup> consequently, it was necessary to flatter the Italians in order to prevent the rise of 'the Italian's original sin – the lust to conspire'<sup>297</sup> against Habsburg rule.

Therefore, it was of pivotal importance for Maximilian to create a brilliant court; this would enhance his own standing and prestige, giving him the power to grant favours such as attendance at balls and dinners, which in return the Milanese and Venetian

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<sup>294</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 309

<sup>295</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 94

<sup>296</sup> Quoted in: Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 177

<sup>297</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 460

nobility would regard as a privilege. He believed that ‘once the court is the centre of (...) the elegant Milanese society (...) then the lines of resistance will thin out’.<sup>298</sup> In accordance with this concept, Maximilian began to gradually widen access to court; many members of the nobility in the past had been denied attendance at court due to the fact that titles which had been granted during the Napoleonic era were not recognised by the Austrian government or due to a marriage outside the highest circles of society of one of their ancestors.<sup>299</sup> However, as it appeared to be impossible to disentangle the complex family structures within the Milanese and Venetian aristocracy, Maximilian in the end granted access to court to all noblemen and their wives.<sup>300</sup> Moreover, at the regular court dinners and balls Maximilian deviated from etiquette and opened the access to court beyond the ordinary circles; he consciously included not only the aristocracy but also the new elites in his invitations. The description of a ball given by Maximilian during the carnival season of 1858 illustrated his attempts to widen the access to court:

The ball was attended by 210 gentlemen and 70 ladies of the Italian aristocracy, by more than 100 [people] in the fields of industry, commerce, science, the arts and by 229 lawyers and their wives; and everyone acted jovially, unceremoniously and contently next to the numerous representatives of the bureaucracy and of the soldiers, who were also present. On this evening there was an atmosphere of true harmony and of that liberal spirit of mutual civility that the Archduke had always intended for these social circles; it was a mirror of the Parisian society where the different parties were brought together in a Salon by intellect and decency.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 92

<sup>299</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 95

<sup>300</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 92

<sup>301</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 287f.

This brief description of the ball revealed Maximilian's elitist-conservative concept of society: for Maximilian the representatives all classes were synonymous with those who possessed intellect and decency, which of course were synonymous with the members of the aristocracy and the social elites; thus, he did not consider anyone else fit for admission into the higher circles of society. Moreover, the fact that access to court was not only given to the aristocracy but also to others appeared to be a revolutionary deed, although the Archduke supposedly entertained liberal ideas: 'not only the gentry but also the nobles in the fields of intellect, (...) of science and the arts, as well as the nobles of the civil life were welcome at the court of the Archduke'.<sup>302</sup>

However, not everyone viewed Maximilian's 'guerre de la coquetterie' with pleasure. The Austrian officers stationed in Lombardy-Venetia resented Maximilian's pro-Italian course that found them 'excluded from the balls (...) for fear that the sight of their uniform might offend the delicate susceptibilities of the Italian ladies'.<sup>303</sup> Nor did the aristocracy in Venice or Milan show themselves impressed by the efforts of the archduke. The creation of a brilliant court in Milan and Venice might have appeased the Italian nobility some twenty years earlier but in 1857 they did not only demand access to the high society but also to the high offices of the state, which were often denied to them and given to German officials. Maximilian thus failed to bind the social elites to the court and he had to admit that the majority of the nobility 'remained in a more or less unchanged hostile position'<sup>304</sup> towards Habsburg rule in Lombardy-Venetia.

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<sup>302</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 287f.

<sup>303</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 111

<sup>304</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 92

#### 2.7.4. MAXIMILIAN'S PROPOSALS FOR POLITICAL REFORMS IN LOMBARDY-VENETIA

As already indicated, Maximilian's powers as governor of Lombardy-Venetia were relatively limited; his main purpose was to represent the emperor in the two provinces. Nevertheless, despite his limited range for action, Maximilian attempted to change the political situation in the kingdom by stressing the civilian aspects of the administration. Under Radetzky the Lombard-Venetian kingdom had been turned into merely a military ministry that governed the provinces according to military needs and concerns thus giving the military the chance to exercise both military and civilian powers.<sup>305</sup> Therefore, it was of critical importance for Maximilian to establish his authority over that of the military in civil matters and thus to create a civil government. His attempts to bind the local elites to his court can be seen as a move towards civilian government as well as the fact that he invited various jurists and economists to take part in the reorganisation of the provinces, which years of military government had reduced to the state of economic depression. A direct consequence of this measure was the establishment of a discount bank granting small loans to manufacturers of silk, which in those days provided the chief means of livelihood in Lombardy. Maximilian saw to it that Milan, like Paris and Vienna, was given a public works programme, with a new square in front of the Teatro dell Scala, and plans for setting off to greater advantage the facade of the cathedral by more than doubling the size of the Piazza del Duomo. The new governor also encouraged agrarian enterprises such as the drainage schemes of the Piano di Spagna marshlands at the head of Lake Como or in the Po valley.<sup>306</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>305</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Verwaltungsstaat*, 1998, p. 435

<sup>306</sup> Palmer, A. *Twilight of the Habsburgs*, 1994, p.99

Maximilian inaugurated a public lottery in aid of the distressed area of Valtellina and he was the first to arrive at the scene of disaster when floods devastated whole districts of the Po valley in October 1857, leaving thousands of people homeless.<sup>307</sup> The record of Maximilian's first nine months was impressive, not least because of his skill in persuading the Emperor to sign over one hundred political pardons outside the provisions of earlier amnesties and did everything in his power to expedite the repatriation of political exiles, whereas Count Gyulai refused to apply for any pardons for deserters or any Lombard, who had fought on the side of Piedmont in 1848.<sup>308</sup>

Although his record was impressive, Maximilian was nevertheless not satisfied with his achievements; as in the case of the navy Maximilian attempted to gain greater independence from the central government in Vienna for himself and for the kingdom of Lombardy-Venetia. In July 1858 Maximilian came to Vienna with proposals for giving Lombardy-Venetia autonomy unknown anywhere else in the empire since 'after a one-year (...) assessment [he thought that] the country had reason to complain'.<sup>309</sup> Maximilian's concept comprised the ideas of both federalism and the principle of subsidiarity for he argued that 'the principle of administrative unity of the empire should be openly and decidedly abandoned'<sup>310</sup> and that 'all administrative matters [that only concerned Lombardy-Venetia but not the whole empire should be treated] as internal affairs of the Italian provinces and should be ceded (...) to the local authorities'.<sup>311</sup> Maximilian's ideas were the complete opposite of the highly centralised Bach system; in effect he proposed a federal reform of the administrative structure of the neo-absolutist regime in the Habsburg Empire, which ever since the time of Joseph

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<sup>307</sup> Pesendorfer, F., *Eiserne Krone*, 1998, p.270

<sup>308</sup> Ibid

<sup>309</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, p.177

<sup>310</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 346

<sup>311</sup> Ibid, p. 350f.

II had been aiming to centralize the administration in the hands of the government in Vienna.

At first glance Maximilian's proposals appeared to be based on liberal and enlightened ideas of government; but his ideas concerning the establishment of a senate revealed his conservative view of government. The senate was supposed to be made up of representatives of the Catholic Church, the nobility and wealthy landowners, which handed power to the old elites and practically excluded all members of the bourgeoisie unless they were wealthy landowners.<sup>312</sup> However, even if the senate had been founded on a broader basis, its powers would nevertheless have been rather limited as Maximilian envisioned it more to be a consultative institution. According to his proposal the senate would possess the right to 'make suggestions about all policies and institutions' concerning Lombardy-Venetia and 'to give reports about issues'<sup>313</sup> but only if asked by the government to do so. Therefore, this senate would have been almost powerless, as it could not suggest any policies without the permission of the executive and as none of its decisions were binding for the government.<sup>314</sup> However, this raises the question of who actually would have benefitted from the reforms? Unsurprisingly, it would have been the governor of Lombardy-Venetia himself. Maximilian's proposals would have increased the power of the governor immensely by uniting all aspects of civilian government in the hands of the governor; this included all affairs concerning the police, the justice system, censorship, education and taxation.<sup>315</sup> The only aspect of government that would have been untouched by that reform would have been the relation between Lombardy-Venetia and the foreign ministry. A newly created ministry

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<sup>312</sup> Seta, R., *Massimiliano d'Asburgo*, 1992, p. 55

<sup>313</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 354

<sup>314</sup> Weber, M.C., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 141

<sup>315</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 357-360

for Lombardy-Venetia would have acted as a liaison between the governor in Milan or Venice and the Emperor in Vienna.<sup>316</sup>

Although Maximilian's suggestions for an autonomous Lombard-Venetian Kingdom were rather complex and abstract, they were nevertheless considered serious enough by the treasury to protest against such a reform.<sup>317</sup> The main reason the treasury was against a federal reform of the administration was the fact that the central government in Vienna would lose a considerable amount of tax from Lombardy-Venetia, which were two of the most wealthy and prosperous provinces of the empire. However, any reform of the structure of the administration of the Habsburg Empire was made impossible by the fact that Franz Joseph was relying strongly on the advice of Count Grünne and Count Buol, who were both committed to the old unilateral system. They thus convinced the Emperor that any major political concessions made in Lombardy-Venetia would prompt similar demands from Magyars, Poles, Czechs and every other nationality, making it impossible to prevent the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire. Consequently, Franz Joseph was once again unsympathetic to his brother's recommendations arguing that

Neither now nor ever can there be any question of the Italian provinces being governed independently from Vienna. Such a thing might have been possible a hundred years ago, but now it would weaken the monarchy and encourage revolution. Our interests in Italy cannot be judged purely from the Italian point of view.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 357-360

<sup>317</sup> ASM, Fondo Cancellerie Austriache, cart. 454

<sup>318</sup> Quoted in: Rinsche, F.J., *Brüder die Geschichte schrieben. Ein historischer Streifzug in Lebensbildern*, Nauck, Cologne, 1990, p.164



In many ways Franz Joseph was right; granting autonomy to Lombardy-Venetia would probably have destabilized the Habsburg Empire. Moreover, the population in the two provinces would not have been satisfied by mere autonomy but would have seen it as a step towards the end of the Habsburg regime in northern Italy and towards Italian unification. Therefore, Maximilian's proposals for autonomy might have been successful in 1815 when the majority of the nobility and the elites had only wanted greater influence and a voice in political matters but had not been completely opposed to Habsburg rule.<sup>319</sup> But now not only the population in Lombardy-Venetia wanted to get rid of the Austrians but the international situation also began to turn against Maximilian and Habsburg rule in northern Italy.

## **2.8. MAXIMILIAN'S DISMISSAL AS GOVERNOR GENERAL OF LOMBARDY-VENETIA**

Maximilian's attempts to overcome the problems and troubles in Lombardy-Venetia had largely been an internal affair of the Habsburg Empire until 14<sup>th</sup> January 1858,

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<sup>319</sup> Laven, D., *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs, 1815-1835*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 71

when three bombs thrown by the Italian liberal Felice Orsini outside the Paris opera house directed the attention of the world to the “Italian Question”. The French Emperor and Empress escaped the attempt on their lives with only a few scratches but eight people were killed and a hundred and fifty of the mounted escort and spectators wounded. Orsini’s open letter, which he wrote in prison to Napoleon, accused the French emperor of having broken the promises he had made to the cause of Italian freedom and appealed to him to follow his uncle’s example and liberate Italy from Austrian rule.<sup>320</sup> The publication of this letter did not save Orsini from execution but it made him a patriotic martyr throughout the peninsula; printed copies of Orsini’s letter were being smuggled into Lombardy-Venetia and circulated throughout all classes of the population.<sup>321</sup>

Unfortunately, Orsini’s trial coincided with the anniversary of the *cinque giornate*, the tenth anniversary of the 1848 revolution in Milan. The situation in the two biggest cities in the provinces remained relatively calm and Maximilian did his best to minimize the demonstrations that took place both in Milan and Venice. The demonstrators were supposed:

To avoid the Imperial Gardens and make St Mark’s Square into the target of demonstrative walks. (...) I took Charlotte by the arm and walked with her alone, without the any attendants or entourage, in the boulevard of the Imperial Gardens. It was really very empty, whereas the piazzetta was crowded. We walked straight at these people and across the piazzetta; there we walked up and down three times to give the saluting people time to come together. When it became very crowded, when everyone saluted and thus every demonstration was made impossible, we walked with the whole

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<sup>320</sup> Baeles, D., *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*, Allan and unwin, London, 1971, p. 73

<sup>321</sup> Weber, S.M., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 182

population in tow (...) to the outer parts of the city. With our avalanche behind us even the most ill-disposed in the cafés were forced to get up and salute us.<sup>322</sup>

However, the anniversary put the military authorities into a panic, despite Maximilian's efforts, and he was unable to prevent them from reporting to Vienna the most trivial of demonstrations. There was a renewal of searches and arrests; people who applauded too loudly at Italian scenes in the theatre were reported to the central government in Vienna, race meetings held on a private property were broken up by the police and all of Maximilian's protests were ignored by Franz Joseph.<sup>323</sup> These incidents highlighted on the one hand the fact that the government in Vienna had no idea as how to react to the demands for Italian unity and on the other hand it showed that neither Maximilian's political ideas for reform nor his 'guerre de la coquetterie' had produced any results; the elites and the population of the Lombard-Venetian kingdom remained hostile towards Austrian rule. Moreover, the demonstrations once again showed that the powers of the governor were severely limited: without control over the army and the police Maximilian could neither prevent nor break up these demonstrations.

However, Maximilian's time as governor of Lombardy-Venetia was running out; impressed by Orsini's appeal to him to liberate Italy and dreaming of Imperial grandeur, Napoleon III had met Cavour, the Sardinian prime minister, at Plombières where both had discussed the future of Italy.<sup>324</sup> In the end Cavour and the Emperor of the French had agreed that the Austrians should be expelled from Northern Italy, creating a united Italian Kingdom in the north under Sardinian leadership and that Sardinia-Piedmont would cede Nice and Savoy to France as a thank-you for Napoleon's alliance in a war

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<sup>322</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I. p. 387

<sup>323</sup> Toelle, J., *Generalgouvernement*, 2007, p.423

<sup>324</sup> Baeles, D., *Risorgimento*, 1971, p.102

with Austria.<sup>325</sup> However, Napoleon insisted that neither France nor Sardinia-Piedmont must appear as the aggressor as long as Britain still cherished the hope of resolving the Italian Question with diplomatic means; Napoleon's and Cavour's plan was in direct violation of the agreements reached at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 and thus the two countries should not appear to initiate hostilities.<sup>326</sup> Consequently, Britain suggested a congress of the European powers in order to solve the Italian Question but Austria demanded the disarmament of Piedmont as the price of its participation and Piedmont ignored these demands.

Still suspicious of his brother's intentions, Maximilian had asked the Emperor for both civilian and military powers in order to preserve 'what [he] had tried to achieve in the last two years'.<sup>327</sup> Franz Joseph relieved Maximilian in a very short note of his position as governor on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1859.<sup>328</sup> The powers Maximilian had asked for himself, such as the command over the army, were now entrusted to Count Gyulai; it was obvious that Gyulai had retained the Emperor's confidence, whereas Maximilian had lost his trust. Nevertheless, the reaction of Cavour to the news of Maximilian's dismissal showed how much he had achieved in the eighteen months as governor:

At last we can breathe again. The man who was our worst enemy in Lombardy, whom we feared the most, and of whom every day we watched the progress, has been dismissed. Already his perseverance, his fair and liberal spirit, had won him many of our supporters. Lombardy had never been so prosperous, so well administered. Then, thank God, the dear Viennese government intervenes, and in its usual way manages to

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<sup>325</sup> Coppa, F.J., *The Origins of the Italian Wars of Independence*, Longman, London, 1992, p. 228

<sup>326</sup> Ibid, p. 235f

<sup>327</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 88

<sup>328</sup> Ibid

make a mess of everything and to ruin its chances by recalling the Emperor's brother, because his wise reforms had displeased the old die-hards in Vienna.<sup>329</sup>

Two days after Maximilian's dismissal, Austria and Piedmont-Sardinia were at war. Overconfident in the strength of his armies, Franz Joseph had issued an ultimatum calling on Sardinia-Piedmont to disarm within three days, giving France and Piedmont a *casus belli* without appearing to be the aggressor. Part of Franz Joseph's and his foreign minister's, Count Buol's, reason for that ultimatum was the hope that Piedmont would be cowed by the Austrian bullying and so war would be avoided altogether. On the other hand, Piedmont's provocative claims and its military mobilisation were well designed to rouse Franz Joseph's rigid sense of honour and dynastic prestige, which of course had been part of the plan with France.

However, Habsburg pride was to suffer several humiliations during this war; the first one came on 4<sup>th</sup> June 1859 with the defeat of the Austrian troops at Magenta. It was a battle irrevocably lost by the Austrians, not so much on account of a military defeat as because of the fact that Gyulai completely lost his head and ordered an unnecessary retreat. Consequently, most historians have passed severe judgement on Gyulai since for the relatively short time that he had been in command of the army in Italy the once well-disciplined army of Radetzky had sunk into chaos. An Austrian general commented in 1858 that 'if the French attack us now then we are bound to be defeated due to our (...) leadership'.<sup>330</sup> Nevertheless, the defeat at Magenta left the whole of Lombardy open to the attack of French and Piemontese troops, a fact of which Maximilian had warned the Emperor would happen when a war broke out between the Habsburg Empire and Piedmont: 'if the Imperial government (...) saw the Lombard-Venetian kingdom as a

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<sup>329</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.118

<sup>330</sup> Quoted in: Millinary, A., *Sechsvierzig Jahre im österreichisch-ungarischen Heer 1833-1879*, Zurich, 1905, p. 12

mere military camp (...) and that above all Milan [and the whole region around it] would be relinquished to the enemy without a fight'.<sup>331</sup> Austrian rule in northern Italy depended mainly on the four fortresses of Mantua, Peschiera, Verona and Legnago, which became known as the Quadrilateral. The value of these fortresses was that Austrian troops could retreat to them, that they were almost impossible to conquer and that troops and supplies could be easily poured into these fortified towns from Austria to the north.<sup>332</sup> Throughout Radetzky's time as governor a great number of troops had been stationed in Lombardy-Venetia in order to suppress any uprisings; but crucially the Austrians had failed to build any fortifications in the region apart from the existing Quadrilateral. During the war against France and Piedmont the Austrian troops could not retreat to any fortifications in the area around Milan and, as a consequence, they could not defend their position against the advancing French and Piedmontese troops. Thus the Austrian army was forced to retreat further to the traditional strongholds of the Quadrilateral.<sup>333</sup>

Maximilian had been entrusted with the task of commanding the Austrian navy in case of a French attack on the ports and coast towns. However, throughout the war the French never attacked the Austrian ports and the command of the Austrian navy did not consider the fleet to be strong enough to engage in battle with the French in the open sea. After the war many domestic observers thus claimed that the performance of the fleet did not measure up to the unprecedented sums of money it had consumed over the past decade.<sup>334</sup> Nevertheless, after the defeat of Magenta Maximilian joined the Emperor at his headquarters at Vallegio. He was thus there to witness one of Franz Joseph's greatest personal defeats; after the defeat at Magenta Franz Joseph had

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<sup>331</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 83

<sup>332</sup> Weber, S.M., *Italienbilder*, 2008, p. 216

<sup>333</sup> Coppa, F.J., *Italian Wars*, 1992, p. 242

<sup>334</sup> Sondhaus L., *Habsburg Empire and the Sea*, 1989, p. 193

dismissed Gyulai and had taken personal command of his armies.<sup>335</sup> Unfortunately, the Emperor did not possess the military genius of either Radetzky or Napoleon Bonaparte and as a consequence, the Austrian high command lacked above all co-ordination. At a moment when the battle of Solferino was still undecided, the Emperor, seeing that the French had penetrated the left flank of his armies and thinking all was lost, ordered a retreat that turned into a rout. Maximilian described the aftermath of the battle of which he 'had never much hope of the outcome, but I did not imagine it would come so swiftly and would be so overwhelming. The retreat in the evening presented a scene of desolation I will never forget. The sight of the wounded was terrible'.<sup>336</sup>

In the end it was the high number of losses combined with an alarming wave of revolutionary enthusiasm, which swept through central Italy, that led Napoleon to break his promise to expel the Austrian from Italian soil and seek a quick preliminary peace settlement. Napoleon was also alarmed by the concentration of Prussian troops along the Rhine; he feared that if the war continued, it might turn into a revolutionary war that would give too much encouragement to the radicals.<sup>337</sup> Therefore the two emperors met in Villafranca to discuss the peace terms by which Austria retained Venice but ceded Lombardy to France that in return gave it to Piedmont. At the end of the war Maximilian was completely disillusioned with the Emperor and the government in Vienna, who were 'sinking [the Habsburg monarchy] lower and lower through incompetence, misunderstanding and muddle-headedness for which there is neither excuse nor explanation'.<sup>338</sup> Moreover, Maximilian understood that due to his outspoken opposition to his brother's policies in Lombardy-Venetia it would be a long time before he would be offered another prominent position by Franz Joseph again.

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<sup>335</sup> Weber, S.M., *Italienbilder*, 2008, p. 218f

<sup>336</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.120

<sup>337</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p.56

<sup>338</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.121

CHAPTER THREE

*The Mexican throne beckons*

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‘Out of the blue the Mexican crown was offered to me and with it the opportunity to end  
in a honourable and lawful manner my unemployed existence forever’

*Archduke Maximilian, 1863*

Until the end of the Italian War the Habsburg Empire had been a neo-absolutist state, ruled in principle by an absolute monarch directly from Vienna. The calamities of the summer of 1859, however, exposed the deficiencies of this system: the truth was that the bureaucratic-centralist structure of the Habsburg Empire had failed to cope adequately with the threats posed by Napoleon III and Sardinia-Piedmont; it had also become apparent that Franz Joseph was not experienced enough or far-sighted enough to be the absolute monarch he styled himself to be; nor was the Habsburg monarchy strong or rich enough to perform the role of a Great Power that he and his advisors, and Habsburg tradition, demanded of it. This situation had created a general sense of discontent amongst the different people of the empire: the Czechs increasingly resented German hegemony in Bohemia; the Polish noble leadership resented Galicia being run like a German province; and the Magyars had long been opposed to the centralist



system.<sup>339</sup> All these factors began to challenge Franz Joseph's absolutist rule and increased inner political pressure on the emperor considerably.

Instead of implementing reforms Franz Joseph tried, first of all, to save his throne by sacrificing his ministers; Buol had already been sacked in May and Bach, Kempen and Grünne followed by the end of the year. However, in the end it was the financial crisis, greatly exacerbated by the war's events, which was the main impetus for change. Franz Joseph realized that a situation had transpired in which he was forced to improvise some new form of government. This would have to placate society, above all the dissatisfied Magyars, and more importantly satisfy the financial interests at home and abroad, for it had proved to be impossible for the Austrian government to raise any more foreign loans. Therefore, the emperor decided that the Habsburg Empire was 'going to have a little parliamentarism',<sup>340</sup> and the result was the October Diploma. In many ways the October Diploma was the first step towards a constitutional form of government as it increased the authority of the imperial parliament, the *Reichsrat*, which had already been established in 1851. The *Reichsrat* was bolstered by extraordinary members, and it was given advisory, though not decision-making, functions with respect to the national budget and major bills of general legislation.<sup>341</sup> However, the *Reichsrat* still had no right to initiate laws and even more importantly Franz Joseph attempted to reserve important state functions such as foreign policy and military affairs as his prerogative.

However, the October Diploma failed to please either side: the German nobility saw the unity of the empire threatened, which they regarded as their historic possession, whereas the Magyars insisted on their ancient rights that guaranteed them at least a certain level of autonomy. As the October Diploma did not manage to satisfy the

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<sup>339</sup> Beller, S., *Francis Joseph*, Longman, Harlow, 1996, p. 81

<sup>340</sup> Quoted in: Crankshaw, E. *The Fall of the House of Habsburg*, Penguin, New York, 1963, p. 181

<sup>341</sup> Taylor, A.J.P., *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918*, Penguin, London, 1988, p. 112

demands of the different national groups and as it failed to establish order within the empire, Franz Joseph ordered Anton von Schmerling to draft a new constitution, the so-called February Patent. This established in the Habsburg Empire a bicameral imperial parliament, still called the *Reichsrat*, with an upper chamber appointed by the emperor and an indirectly elected lower chamber. The members of the upper chamber were appointed for life and included all the adult archdukes, prominent bishops, heads of noble families, and great citizens; whereas the lower chamber comprised the three hundred and thirty four delegates sent from the diets, which had been restored in the same year. Under the February Patent, the *Reichsrat* was given legislative power over all subjects not expressly reserved by the diets of the different Habsburg lands. Moreover, the emperor still had the prerogative over foreign policy and military affairs and he could still pass legislation when parliament was not in session.<sup>342</sup>

### **3.1. MAXIMILIAN'S FUTURE PROSPECTS**

The disastrous Italian campaign in 1859 had damaged the prestige and standing both of the military and the emperor; the bankers, the intellectuals and the heads of industry

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<sup>342</sup> Taylor, A.J.P., *The Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 113f.

openly said that it was the arrogant complacency of the aristocratic military caste that had lost the war and that it was due to the ineptitude of Franz Joseph that the troops had been sacrificed at Solferino. Upon his return from Italy the emperor had been hissed at in the streets and there had been some voices calling for his abdication and shouting ‘Long live Archduke Max!’.<sup>343</sup> It was thus hardly surprising that Franz Joseph did not want his brother anywhere near the court in Vienna for he feared that Maximilian could become a rallying point for those at court and in society dissatisfied with his rule. Nor did Franz Joseph think he could entrust Maximilian with the governorship of some province of the empire; the latter’s “liberal” policies in Italy and his plans for the creation of a virtually independent Lombard-Venetian kingdom had made this impossible. Thus Maximilian was condemned to lead the kind of life he had always despised: the life of a ‘prince receiving an apanage’.<sup>344</sup>

### 3.1.1. A POLITICAL PENSIONER?

Austria’s defeat in the Italian war and the resulting struggle for political representation and a sort of constitution within the Habsburg Empire had left Maximilian so disillusioned that he ‘found the condition of our poor country, as I expected, tangled and gloomy’.<sup>345</sup> This comment suggests that he neither approved of October Diploma nor of the February Patent and that he was in fact not a liberal but a conservative.

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<sup>343</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.122

<sup>344</sup> Quoted in: Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 212

<sup>345</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, Vol I, London, 1929, p.91

Maximilian's own prospects appeared just as bleak for the cheers that greeted him in the streets during a visit to Vienna and the tributes of the foreign press had closed the doors to all further promotions, leaving Maximilian with the idea that he had no other future in Austria than that of a pensioner at the age of twenty-eight. Most historians seem to agree with this pessimistic view; they tended to regard the period between Maximilian's dismissal as governor of Lombardy-Venetia and his acceptance of the crown of Mexico as a time when Maximilian practically lived the life of a pensioner, tending to his birds and planting magnolias in his garden in Miramar.<sup>346</sup>

However, examining the regular reports in the *Wiener Zeitung*, which reported regularly about the different social and charitable activities of the members of the imperial family, about Maximilian's activities in the year 1860 it becomes obvious that the Archduke led anything but a quiet life. In the winter of 1859 he embarked on a journey to Brazil, which he tried to keep as unconventional as possible by leaving the constraints and boundaries of civilisation behind him and by exploring the untouched wilderness of the Brazilian jungle. Upon his return from Brazil he visited together with Charlotte and her brother, the Duke of Brabant, an exhibition about the circumnavigation of the *Novara* in Vienna. At the beginning of June 1860 Maximilian paid a visit to his godfather, the former Emperor Ferdinand I, on his estate in Bohemia; on 7<sup>th</sup> June Maximilian and Charlotte were back in Trieste only to embark on a journey to Ragusa the next day. On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1860 Maximilian visited the *Küstenländische Gartenbau-Gesellschaft* in Trieste and on 26<sup>th</sup> November he went to see an archaeological exhibition in Vienna.<sup>347</sup> In addition the *Wiener Zeitung* reported

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<sup>346</sup> See: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.132ff; Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, Vol I, London, 1929, p.148; Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 43ff; Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 69

<sup>347</sup> ANNO, *Wiener Zeitung*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1860, retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010, <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=wrz&datum=18601126&zooom=2>>

repeatedly that Maximilian donated money to charitable organisations, such as for the restoration of the parish church in Possabro in Venetia.<sup>348</sup> Looking at this twelve-month period in Maximilian's life the picture of a young man leading a rather active, and in comparison to some other Archdukes, even hectic lifestyle emerges. Bearing all these activities as well as his duties as Admiral of the fleet in mind, it is a rather big misconception to describe Maximilian as a pensioner.

### 3.1.2. MAXIMILIAN, THE *REICHSRAT* AND THE FUTURE OF THE FLEET

Until this point Maximilian had managed to secure the necessary funds for the development and expansion of the Austrian fleet; a fact that was mainly due to his direct access to the emperor. However, the October Diploma of 1860 and the February Patent of 1861 completely changed the way in which the budget for the navy was granted; from now on it was the *Reichsrat* and not the emperor that had to approve the budget for the navy. When Maximilian attempted in the spring of 1862 to secure the necessary funds for the construction of two ironclad ships and another ship of the line, which would have amounted to an additional 8.5 million florins on top of the already granted navy budget, he encountered opposition not only from cabinet ministers but also from

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For more information on Maximilian's travels between 1859 and 1864 see: List, Erzherzoge, 1982, p. 143-168

<sup>348</sup> ANNO, *Wiener Zeitung*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1860, retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> January 2010, <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=wrz&datum=18601025&zoom=2>>

members of the *Reichsrat*. In the cabinet Plener, the finance minister, argued that the modernisation of the fleet had been extremely expensive with naval spending exceeding the legal limit every year after 1850 and that he and most of his fellow cabinet members considered the navy a needless luxury that the financially strapped Habsburg state could ill afford.<sup>349</sup>

The heated debate in the *Reichsrat* that followed Maximilian's proposition for a higher budget was one of the first domestic controversies in the newly created constitutional-parliamentary system. Generally speaking the members of parliament fell into two categories: those who were convinced that the Austrian navy could not catch up with the naval development programme of Italy and thus saw the main task of the fleet in defending the Austrian ports; and those delegates, who believed that Austria had to control the Adriatic in order to protect her military and trade interests in the area.<sup>350</sup>

After bitter debates the *Reichsrat* increased the naval budget, which ensured that Austria would have an ironclad core for her fleet, but the smaller appropriation for 1863 made Maximilian aware of the limits of his power and forced him to scale down his plans for the future.

More importantly, the heated debates about the naval budget had put Maximilian into the centre point of parliamentary critique. An anonymous report accused Maximilian of not being able to 'manage his own fortune with the necessary economy [and that] the same mistake was visible in the administration of the naval budget and that consequently, the large sum that the navy was forced to claim in the last years, was mainly due to mismanagement'.<sup>351</sup> However, as an archduke and a member of the ruling dynasty Maximilian was not bound by any parliamentary accountability and he could

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<sup>349</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 113

<sup>350</sup> Ibid

<sup>351</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 113

not be subject of any parliamentary debates.<sup>352</sup> Maximilian was very much aware of this fact when he complained in a letter to Franz Joseph that the opposition towards additional funds for the navy ‘in parliamentary circles (...) the agitation, which is so harmful to the public interest is escalating at an alarming rate’.<sup>353</sup> This negative comment about the *Reichsrat*, which had only exercised its constitutional right to debate and approve budgets, is a rather telling example for Maximilian’s ideas of government: in his opinion the monarch could grant a parliament if he wished but this parliament should have very limited powers and should under no circumstances interfere with the political decisions of the monarch and the ruling dynasty.

### 3.3.2. MAXIMILIAN’S PROSPECTS IN THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM OF THE HABSBURG EMPIRE

The introduction of parliamentary institutions had not only made Maximilian’s work as the commander of the navy more difficult, but it had also left Franz Joseph with far fewer options for the employment of the archdukes, including his brother, as many high ranking representative positions became obsolete. In the early 1860s a number of imperial relatives had to be removed from positions of responsibility, among them the emperor’s cousins Albrecht, who was demoted from military governor of Hungary to a

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<sup>352</sup> Schmidt-Brentano, A., *Österreichs Weg zur Seemacht*, 1997, p.143

<sup>353</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 114

corps commander, and William, who was reduced from the rank of *Armee-Ober-Kommandant* to the post of general inspector of artillery.<sup>354</sup> As for Maximilian, he himself noted that since the navy had to have its funding approved by parliament, it would be impossible for him to stay on indefinitely as *Marine-Ober-Kommandant*, mainly due to the fact that his expensive ironclad program had made him the central figure in one of the first great domestic controversies debated by the new parliament. This underscored the fact that his assignment to the naval command no longer served its primary purpose: to remove him from Vienna so that he could not get involved in the internal politics of the empire and threaten the position of the emperor. In the view of the political realities and his past relationship with Franz Joseph, it was unlikely for Maximilian to receive a position of importance elsewhere within the Habsburg Empire. This lack of prospects in combination with Maximilian's overconfidence in his own abilities and the encouragement he received from his advisors, above all from Scherzenlechner, and from his wife Charlotte, who had no doubt that the time would come 'when the Archduke will again play a leading role in the affairs of the world',<sup>355</sup> convinced the archduke that his only alternative lay abroad. Thus he tried to find for himself a role and scope of activity, in which he could prove that he was a Habsburg prince destined to rule. Maximilian's search seemed finally have come to an end when in October 1861, the Austrian foreign minister, Count Rechberg, came to Miramar and asked Maximilian whether he would like to become emperor of Mexico.<sup>356</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Sondhaus, L., *Habsburg Empire and the Sea*, 1989, p. 226

<sup>355</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.135

<sup>356</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 1



### 3.2. THE IDEA OF CREATING A MEXICAN EMPIRE

The idea of certain circles of conservative Mexican immigrants, living in exile in Paris, to create a monarchy in Mexico was not new: shortly after the end of the wars of independence (1810-1821) conservative Mexican politicians had been looking for a prince of a European dynasty to put on the throne of a to-be established Mexican empire. The reasons as to why the Mexican conservatives were looking for a European prince to become emperor were mainly to give the new Mexican monarchy a certain level of standing and legitimacy amongst its republican neighbours; they also hoped that a European prince would guarantee military support in the case of an armed conflict between Mexico and its neighbours such as the United States.<sup>357</sup> Thus a Mexican delegation of leading conservatives had travelled to Vienna in order to offer the Archduke Karl, brother of the Emperor Francis I (II), the crown of Mexico. But Metternich, the Austrian chancellor, was a realist in politics; he had long since realized that although he could suppress revolutions in Italy, Germany and Poland he could not prevent revolution further afield. Thus he knew that it was quite impractical to intervene in Mexico, especially as the United States of America would strongly resent the creation of a monarchy on its doorstep; thus it would not be in Austria's interest to become involved in a conflict with the United States on the American continent. Consequently, Archduke Karl declined the offer.<sup>358</sup> The conservatives then decided that their leader General Agustín de Iturbide himself should become Emperor Agustín I of Mexico. The First Mexican Empire lasted eleven months, from May 1822 until March 1823; the

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<sup>357</sup> Barker, N.N., 'Monarchy in Mexico: hare-brained scheme or well-constructed prospect?', *Journal of Modern History*, vol.4, 1976, p. 61ff

<sup>358</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 37

liberals led by General Antonio López de Santa Anna, who later declared himself dictator, overthrew the emperor and forced Iturbide to go into exile to England. When Iturbide returned to Mexico the next year and tried to start a revolution, he was defeated and captured by the liberals.<sup>359</sup> This time though, in what was rapidly becoming a tradition, they had him shot. However, this brutal end to the First Mexican Empire did not discourage Mexican émigrés now living in exile in Europe; they continued to believe that it was possible to establish a monarchy in Mexico with the financial and military help of a European power.<sup>360</sup>

### 3.2.1. THE MEXICAN ÉMIGRÉS

After the end of the First Mexican Empire many conservatives and supporters of Iturbide had left Mexico. Most of them had congregated in Paris and other European capitals, where they had conducted endless discussions on the subject of the restoration of the monarchy. Most prominent amongst Mexican émigrés was José María de Estrada, who had dedicated his whole life to the cause of monarchist restoration in his native land. As a young man he had been a member of the delegation that had offered the

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<sup>359</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire. The Story of Maximilian and Carlota of Mexico*, Macmillan, London, 1946, p. 103

<sup>360</sup> Ibid

Mexican throne to Archduke Karl in 1821, and later had served as Mexican minister in Vienna. There he married the daughter of the Marquise de Laurant, who as Countess Lützow subsequently became mistress of the household of Maximilian's court in Milan.<sup>361</sup> Gutierrez de Estrada was a verbose conservative reactionary and clericalist but he was also a man of considerable financial means, which he devoted to the political cause of establishing a monarchy in Mexico. Time and time again, he petitioned the foreign ministers of Spain, France and Austria with his ideas but until 1861 all his efforts had been in vain.

Gutierrez de Estrada had two energetic supporters of his plans in the persons of Juan Almonte and José Hidalgo. The former was allegedly the son of José María Morelos, a Roman Catholic priest, who led the insurgents in the Mexican War of Independence from 1811 to 1815.<sup>362</sup> When the Mexican-American War broke out Almonte served under Santa Anna as minister of War; he later became senator of Oaxaca for four years, and then served as Mexico's representative to the U.S. under President Santa Anna. In 1856 he was appointed minister to England, France and Spain; once overseas, Almonte became involved in the promotion of foreign intervention and monarchical schemes for Mexico.<sup>363</sup>

Hidalgo, on the other hand, was a young Spaniard, whose father had served under Iturbide when the latter had been fighting on the Spanish side. Throughout the turbulent years after Mexico's independence, Hidalgo had filled diplomatic posts in the Mexican legations in London, Madrid and Paris, where his endearing manners made him particularly popular with ladies of rank and substance.<sup>364</sup> Among those whom he thus courted was Eugenie de Montijo, who later married the French Emperor Napoleon III.

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<sup>361</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire*, 1946, p. 112

<sup>362</sup> Barker, N.N. 'Monarchy in Mexico, 1976, p. 66f

<sup>363</sup> Ibid, p. 113

<sup>364</sup> Barker, N.N. 'Monarchy in Mexico, 1976, p. 67

Although Hidalgo and Eugenie had not been in contact for many years, they met by accident in September 1861 in Biarritz; this encounter happened at the same time as the Juárez government suspended all payments to foreign creditors.<sup>365</sup> Thus Hidalgo could use his direct access to Eugenie to lobby the French Emperor for his support in the restoration of the Mexican monarchy.

Examining the three leading figures of the Mexican émigrés it becomes apparent that they were not representative of the Mexican population as a whole. Almonte, Hidalgo and Gutierrez de Estrada all came from privileged backgrounds and had had an education; they held conservative-monarchical views; and they had lived in Europe for some time. The fact that they had been in exile for several years is crucial as it raises the question of how they would have known what kind of government the Mexican people desired if they had not been in Mexico for several years. It is therefore, possible to conclude that Hidalgo, Almonte and Gutierrez de Estrada only represented a minority of Mexicans, namely the privileged upper class; but their influence at the various courts in Europe and their monopoly as sources of information on Mexican affairs made it possible for them to argue that the bulk of the Mexican people desired the restoration of the monarchy.

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<sup>365</sup> Wasserman, M., *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico – Men, Women, and War*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 2000, p. 116

### 3.2.2. NAPOLEON'S MOTIVES FOR PUTTING MAXIMILIAN FORWARD AS A CANDIDATE

Although Mexican conservatives had offered the Mexican throne to Archduke Karl in 1821 it is, nevertheless, astonishing that Napoleon favoured a Habsburg candidate for the position of emperor of Mexico. France and Austria had been at war only two years previously and Napoleon's personal relationship with Franz Joseph, who under Habsburg family law had to give his permission to his brother's candidature for the Mexican throne, had always been rather strained. However, Napoleon hoped to improve France's relations with Austria, which had been tense since Austria's defeat in the Italian war in 1859, by 'putting forward as a possible candidate of a dynasty with which I have been recently at war'.<sup>366</sup> It is also likely that Napoleon hoped that by supporting Maximilian's candidature he would gain the Habsburg Empire as an ally against the rising ambitions of Prussia under the leadership of Bismarck. Austria and Prussia had been struggling for dominance over the German Confederation ever since its creation in 1815. By the early 1860s it seemed possible that this struggle would end in favour of Prussia; thus Napoleon feared the creation of large and powerful German state led by Prussia on France's eastern borders.<sup>367</sup>

In addition to these considerations Maximilian also had excellent connections, through his father-in-law, to Britain; a fact that made it more likely in Napoleon's eyes that Britain would support a military intervention in Mexico.<sup>368</sup> Moreover, Maximilian fulfilled the prerequisites that Napoleon considered essential for the future emperor of

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<sup>366</sup> Archives Nationales (AN), Archive Napoléon cart. 400AP 63

<sup>367</sup> Smith, W.H.C., *Napoleon III*, Wayland Publishers, London, 1972, p. 73

<sup>368</sup> Archives Nationales (AN), Archive Napoléon cart. 400AP 63

Mexico: he was not a Spanish prince for the Spanish were hated in Mexico and the Mexicans would regard it as a step to make Mexico a Spanish colony once again; nor was he a member of the Bonaparte family, for the Great Powers would not agree to see Mexico incorporated into the French Empire. Most importantly, though, Maximilian was a devout Catholic, which would not only guarantee the support of the Pope as well as the Catholic Church and the conservative party in Mexico but would also rally Catholic opinion in France.<sup>369</sup>

In addition to the question as to why Napoleon put Maximilian forward as a candidate it is also intriguing to inquire why Napoleon III took such an interest in Mexico. This question has produced many different answers by historians: Haslip has stated that it was Eugenie's interest in the Mexican affairs and her influence over the French emperor that led to France's intervention in Mexico;<sup>370</sup> yet Baker has demonstrated not only that Eugenie knew very little about Mexico and just assumed that the Mexicans were like the Spanish but also that her influence on Napoleon was rather limited;<sup>371</sup> Lecaillon has pointed to the fact that by establishing a monarchy in Mexico Napoleon intended to create a buffer zone against the expansionist attempts of the United States, which would have made it more difficult for France to realise her economic interests in the region.<sup>372</sup> Cunningham has also stressed the fact that Napoleon had primarily economic reasons such as the import of cotton, gold and other precious metals.<sup>373</sup> Cunningham's theory is also supported by the fact that during his exile in Ham Napoleon III had envisioned a

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<sup>369</sup> Barker, N.N. 'Monarchy in Mexico, 1976, p. 67

<sup>370</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 135

<sup>371</sup> Barker, N.N., *Distaff Diplomacy: The Empress Eugenie and the Foreign Policy of the Second Empire*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1967, p. 94ff

<sup>372</sup> Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique. Les illusions d'un grand dessein*, l'Harmattan, Paris, 1994, p. 44

<sup>373</sup> Cunningham, M., *Mexico and the Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, Palgrave, London, 2001, p. 9

channel through Mexico in order to further commerce between the American continent and Europe.<sup>374</sup>

### 3.2.3. THE AUSTRIAN REACTION

Bearing all the political and strategic considerations mentioned above in mind, Napoleon had approached Franz Joseph with the offer of the Mexican throne for Maximilian. Thus, when Count Rechberg told Maximilian about the French suggestion of making him a candidate for the Mexican throne, he did not only act with the permission of but also in the name of Franz Joseph; in theory the emperor had no objections to Maximilian accepting the crown offered to him. In fact, the French proposal would have taken a big worry off Franz Joseph's mind: the new constitutional structure of the Habsburg monarchy left the emperor with fewer employment possibilities for the archdukes. Franz Joseph knew that although Maximilian liked his post with the navy, he was nevertheless aiming for a more prestigious position comparable to the one he had held as governor of Lombardy-Venetia, but under the current political realities no such position was available.<sup>375</sup> Therefore, Maximilian's acceptance of the crown of Mexico would remove a possible disruptive factor from the political stage of the Habsburg Empire.

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<sup>374</sup> Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique*, 1994, p. 47

<sup>375</sup> Conte, Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1929, p.91

However, no matter how much Franz Joseph wanted to get rid of his brother, he still distrusted Napoleon. In order not to get involved too closely in the plans and schemes of the French emperor Franz Joseph insisted that if Maximilian accepted the throne it was his own, private affair and that the Austrian government would not get involved in any way. It is possible that Franz Joseph feared that Napoleon would demand Venice as compensation for installing Maximilian on the throne of Mexico, a worry that was later echoed by many observers. In addition to these considerations Franz Joseph was also worried that Napoleon could retreat from his promises and withdraw his support once Maximilian was made emperor. Therefore, he advised his brother not to accept Napoleon's offer unless two conditions were fulfilled: first, that both Britain and France would support him in Mexico – and this meant not merely assurances of sympathy but definite treaty commitments to practical assistance; and second, that he would be accepted and welcomed as emperor by the majority of the Mexican people.<sup>376</sup>

When Count Rechberg told Maximilian in Miramar in October 1861 that Franz Joseph, as the head of the House of Habsburg, would not refuse his permission, Maximilian showed himself eager to accept the throne of Mexico on the conditions that Franz Joseph had laid down. Although Maximilian demonstrated an extraordinary level of indecision about the Mexican adventure during the next thirty months, as he fluctuated between delight and despair, his first reaction was joy. The prospect of becoming emperor of Mexico offered him an escape from his current situation in Austria, where the strained relationship with his brother had closed the door for any further promotion. Moreover, the Mexican offer also appealed to the more adventurous side of his character, his Habsburg pride as well as to his belief of being called upon to rule a people: Mexico was in America, that unexplored and undeveloped continent of the future; the letters by Mexican émigrés such as Gutierrez de Estrade spoke of

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<sup>376</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 5



Maximilian's obligation to 'save a dying country through the high-born prince',<sup>377</sup> and what could be more fitting than that Mexico should be ruled by a well-meaning Habsburg prince, a descendent of the first Christian emperor of Mexico, Charles V? From Maximilian's point of view the Mexican offer definitely contained a certain amount of dynastic pride and consideration. On his travels through Brazil he had commented that 'it seems to me like a fairytale that I am the first scion of Ferdinand and Isabella the object of whose life had been from childhood upwards to set foot upon a continent which has acquired such gigantic significance in the history of mankind'.<sup>378</sup> Therefore, by establishing a Habsburg monarchy at the heart of the New World, Maximilian thought he could further the prestige, influence and 'lustre of my house (...) our family has recently lost two sovereignties (...) so I cannot fail to see what an impression would be made upon the world (...) if the proposition [of the Mexican crown] (...) were carried out'.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart .1

<sup>378</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, Vol.V, p. 216

<sup>379</sup> Hyde, H.M, *Mexican Empire*, 1946, p. 115

### **3.3. MEXICO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

As the section above has demonstrated, neither of the protagonists had an objective idea about the political, social and economic situation of Mexico. The Mexican émigrés at the court in Paris were all supporters of the conservative party but they had lived in exile in Europe for many years; thus these émigrés were not representative of the social and political ideas and trends that were prevalent in Mexican society. Nevertheless, the reports and assurances of these émigrés, however inaccurate, were highly influential at the courts in Vienna and Paris and both Napoleon and Maximilian put a lot of trust in them, at least at the beginning of the Mexican adventure, as few other sources of information about Mexico were open to them. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the political, economic and social situation of Mexico at the middle of the nineteenth century.

#### **3.3.1. MEXICAN SOCIETY IN FLUX**

Throughout the colonial period society in Mexico had been strictly hierarchical; it was a society of orders and estates, in which the privileges, functions and comparative esteem of the various estates determined stratification and status. The central criteria for status

had been the five ethnic categories of Spaniards, *mestizos*, mulattoes, Indians and blacks.<sup>380</sup> Although a fairly rigid class system was defined in the sixteenth century, by the end of the eighteenth century society was quite different in several respects. The most notable change was the greatly increased number of those with mixed blood, which made it possible that the five ethnic categories gradually came to be regarded more as cultural than racial categories. As a consequence, movement within and amongst the estates was possible within certain constraints of hierarchy and patriarchy.<sup>381</sup>

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the top of the colonial social structure had been cut off. The Spaniards had been expelled from the country, leaving high offices to those white born in the new world, the creoles, who represented less than one-quarter of the population. Once Mexico had become an independent state, the creoles took over the position of the expelled Spaniards; they took over the highest levels of government; they became the highest clerics; and they solidified their position as rich businessmen, professionals, leading merchants, industrialists and mine owners. In effect, they attempted to maintain colonial structures by monopolizing resources and by limited access to power and prestige.<sup>382</sup> However, the creoles did not manage to uphold this quasi-colonial structure indefinitely and by the mid-1850s their power was threatened by a different group: the *mestizos*.

By the end of the colonial period the *mestizos*, who ethnically speaking were the progeny of the Spanish conquerors and the native Indian population, had accounted for approximately thirty percent of the population, by 1855 they made up almost fifty percent and were thus the largest single ethnic group in Mexican society. The vast majority of this group occupied the intermediate positions in society; they were small

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<sup>380</sup> Meyer, C.M, Sherman, W.L., Deeds, S.M. *The Course of Mexican History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 196

<sup>381</sup> Meyer, C.M; Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 335

<sup>382</sup> Krauze, E. *Mexico - Biography of Power. A History of Modern Mexico, 1810 -1996*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1997, p. 135

farmers and shopkeepers, lower clergy, domestic servants, notaries, scribes and secretaries and had only limited possibilities for social mobility.<sup>383</sup> However, a small percentage of this group had received a good education and could be found in lower-level bureaucratic posts, working as lawyers, merchants or journalists. As a consequence, this group was socially ambitious and participated in the fluid political life of post-colonial Mexico.<sup>384</sup> It was precisely from this group that the leadership of the reform movement in the mid-1850s would eventually coalesce.

The third group in the social order were the Indians, who accounted for about one third of the population.<sup>385</sup> The Indians lived for the most part in thousands of small villages, which had communal property and traditional values and which were socially and economically isolated from the remainder of the country. Only the larger Indian towns had churches; practically none had schools, which meant that only a few Indians spoke Spanish and that in consequence they could not participate in civil society. Although the post-independence governments abolished most of the colonial legislation that discriminated against the Indians, legal equality brought few actual benefits to the Indians of Mexico. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Indians were forced to join the army, were commandeered into work gangs, and were thrown off their lands.<sup>386</sup>

The lowest group in the social hierarchy of Mexico was the black population. Throughout the colonial period slaves had been brought to Mexico to work on the cotton plantations; by 1800 this group accounted for seven per cent of the Mexican

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<sup>383</sup> Meyer, C.M; Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 347

<sup>384</sup> Sinkin, R. *The Mexican Reform. A Study in Liberal Nation-Building*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1979, p. 19

<sup>385</sup> Meyer, C.M; Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 342

<sup>386</sup> Sinkin, R., *Mexican Reform*, 1979, p. 22

population.<sup>387</sup> Historians such as Joachim Meißner, Klaus Weber and Ulrich Mücke have pointed out that during Mexico's war of independence Hidalgo and the Mexican liberals used the idea of abolishing slavery to fashion support amongst the freed black population for their fight against the colonial power; consequently, a high number of blacks fought in the Mexican army.<sup>388</sup> Once Mexico gained her independence in 1810 slavery was officially abolished; however, it was not until the 50s and 60s of the nineteenth century that slavery was finally abolished in all the regions of Mexico. Moreover, the material that deals with the fate of the mulattos, the people of mixed white and black parentage, is very sparse but it could be possible that in a Mexican context this group were absorbed in the *mestizos*.

### 3.3.2. A LAND OF INCREDIBLE RICHES?

After Mexico had gained independence the principal economic activity in the country was agriculture, mainly maize but also cotton, sugar and tobacco, which could be used for export. However, Mexico had not always had an economy dominated by agriculture. During the three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule, the principal economic force had been the mining of precious metals.<sup>389</sup> The Spaniards had created a economic

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<sup>387</sup> Meißner, J., Mücke, U., Weber, K., *Schwarzes Amerika – Eine Geschichte der Sklaverei*, Beck, Munich, 2008, p. 205

<sup>388</sup> Ibid, p. 207

<sup>389</sup> Meyer, C.M.; Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 173

system by which the precious metals mined in Mexico were transported to Europe and Asia and in exchange luxury goods and capital were brought to the new world. The mines around San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and Durango had seemed to be inexhaustible and they had been the reason why most Europeans regarded Mexico as a land of incredible riches. Nevertheless, independence destroyed the mercantile system, not only because Spanish dominance was removed, but also because much of the fighting occurred in precisely those areas that had been tied to the economy.<sup>390</sup> After independence, revitalization of the mines proved to be impossible due to the lack of capital in Mexico and due to the fact that foreign investors were unwilling to the enormous risk of investing in such a politically unstable country as Mexico.

### 3.3.3 THE POLITICAL FACTIONS

The divisions in Mexican society did not only run along the lines of the different ethnic categories and castes or along the gap of rich and poor but also along competing ideological ideas. By the early 1850s, the political fractions and parties were clearly formed: the liberals on the one side and the conservatives on the other. In general the liberals were civilians and military men under forty, from a *mestizo* background and mostly from the centre and north of the country.<sup>391</sup> Borrowing freely from liberal

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<sup>390</sup> Sinkin, R., *Mexican Reform*, 1979, p. 14

<sup>391</sup> Krauze, E., *Mexico - Biography of Power*, 1997, p. 156

European thinkers, Mexican liberals opposed any institution that interfered with the free development of individual interests. Thus the liberal programme that was developed from the 1830s onwards sought to remove all vestiges of colonial forms. In the liberal view this included the rejection of a monarchy, the form of government favoured by the conservatives, as they regarded it as an anachronism of the dark ages, as well as attacks on the most powerful institution in Mexico: the Catholic Church. Sympathizers for the liberals came from the middle class and were found, in increasing numbers, among landowners and entrepreneurs, who saw economic opportunities in the proposed privatization of Church property.<sup>392</sup>

While the liberals were hostile towards the concepts of monarchy and the institution of the Catholic Church, the conservatives regarded them as the two bastions of stability. Thus they glorified the “golden age” of the colonial past and attempted to restore the old order. As the conservatives feared what the conservative propaganda called the chaos of republican Mexico, their supporters mainly came from those groups in society that stood to lose the most from political changes. As a consequence, on the conservative side were politicians, clergy, and military men some ten years older than their liberal rivals. Therefore, the conservatives were mainly urban, rich and from a creole background and were above all supported by the onerous bureaucracy of the capital city and the clergy.<sup>393</sup> It is rather remarkable that the supporters of both the liberal and the conservative were usually well-situated citizens and not labourers or peasants. Thus it can be argued that politics in Mexico were mainly a matter for the elites of the country.

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<sup>392</sup> Krauze, E., *Mexico - Biography of Power*, 1997, p. 156

<sup>393</sup> Ibid

### 3.4. LIBERALS VERSUS CONSERVATIVES

The different ideological views of the two political factions led to the fact that Mexico suffered from the struggles between the conservatives and the liberals, between the centralists and the federalists, between one region and another and that relations between the Catholic Church and the state were often strained. The fights amongst the different political factions produced a centralised state that was soon replaced by a federation and vice versa. Between 1824 and 1863 all in all fifty conservative and liberal governments succeeded each other, taking the forms of juntas, republics and dictatorships. Shifts in allegiance of the military from a certain faction to the other, so-called *pronunciamentos*, were seen as part of everyday politics and often caused the overthrow of one government or another.<sup>394</sup> Fanny Calderón de la Barca, the Scottish wife of Spain's first ambassador to the newly independent Mexico, commented on the political situation: 'One government is abandoned and there is none to take its place, one revolution follows another, yet the remedy is not found'.<sup>395</sup>

Moreover, the inner political and social turmoil was also reflected in Mexico's foreign policy: she failed to defend herself against the expansionist policies of the United States of America. The annexation of Tejas by the US in June 1845 led to Mexico breaking off relations with her northern neighbour. Hostilities between the two countries began a year later.<sup>396</sup> The war quickly assumed catastrophic proportions for Mexico, with US troops even occupying the capital Mexico City. The Mexican government was therefore forced to sign the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848 ceding Utah, New Mexico, California,

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<sup>394</sup> Krauze, E., *Mexico - Biography of Power*, 1997, p. 162

<sup>395</sup> Calderón de la Barca, F., *Life in Mexico*, Chapman and Hall, New York, 1866, p. 433

<sup>396</sup> Simpson, L.B., *Many Mexicos*, Macmillian, London, 1966, p. 258



Nevada, Wyoming, Colorado and parts of Arizona to the United States. In total Mexico lost nearly half the land she had claimed when she had become independent from Spain thirty-two years earlier.<sup>397</sup> However, the struggle and fight against a common enemy failed to unite the Mexicans as a nation and the liberals and conservatives continued to fight each other.

#### 3.4.1. THE REFORM LAWS

In the 1840s, during one of the brief spells of liberal government, the liberals had made some attempts to introduce enlightened reforms, but the real attack on the established order came in 1855. At this point the liberals had gained the upper hand in the political struggles again and a liberal government under the leadership of Ignacio Comonfort, and with Benito Juárez as chief justice, had been formed. Already the first major reform decree of the Comonfort government, the Ley Juárez, opened wide the latent divisions in the country; the Juárez Law challenged the Catholic Church authorities by introducing civil marriage, by allowing divorce for insanity and cruelty and by ruling that no boy could marry until he was eighteen and no girl until she was fifteen. More

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<sup>397</sup> Simpson, L.B., *Many Mexicos*, 1966, p. 258

importantly, the Juárez Law (*Ley Juárez*) of November 1855 sought to subordinate ecclesiastical privileges to civil law, which in effect abolished many powers of the ecclesiastical courts as well as the legal privileges of the clergy.<sup>398</sup> Although the Catholic Church denounced the law as anti-religious and heretical, it nevertheless failed to turn Mexico into a secular society. The Juárez Law only prohibited the ecclesiastical courts from hearing civil cases, and therefore the Catholic Church still retained the right to hear criminal cases. Thus it did not only fail to draw a clear line between the role of the Catholic Church and the role of the state but it also did not establish the secular state as the main dispenser of power in the nation.<sup>399</sup>

If the conservatives and the clergy had considered the *Ley Juárez* as a radical piece of legislation, than the *Ley Lerdo*, which was introduced in June 1856, was seen as even more controversial. The Lerdo Law decreed the sale or disamortization of all corporate property except when it was directly used by the corporation. This meant that the Catholic Church was prohibited from holding any real estate, that the clergy could no longer receive any gifts and donations in the form of real estate and that the Church would lose its income from rented property.<sup>400</sup> The purpose of this law had been threefold: to destroy the economic power of the clergy by forcing them to sell Church lands; to finance the government with the proceeds from the heavy tax on the sales of Church lands; and to encourage development by creating a new class of small proprietors.<sup>401</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Simpson, L.B., *Many Mexicos*, 1966, p. 270

<sup>399</sup> Sinkin, R., *Mexican Reform*, 1979, p. 123

<sup>400</sup> Simpson, L.B., *Many Mexicos*, 1966, p. 272

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid*

### 3.4.2. THE CONSTITUTION OF 1857 AND THE WAR OF THE REFORM

Both the Ley Juárez and the Ley Lerdo, along with several other pieces of liberal legislation and Mexico's first genuine bill of inalienable rights, were included in the new constitution of 1857. In addition, the first thirty-four articles of the documents spelled out in detail the liberal principles of equality before the law and of freedom of speech, of the press, of petition, of assembly and of education. It further abolished slavery and all titles of nobility.<sup>402</sup> However, the articles that prompted the most controversy were those that in some way touched upon the religious issue. While the constitution contained no article specifying freedom of religion, it did not recognise Catholicism as the religion of the state. Opposition of the church, already incensed by the laws of Juárez and Lerdo, was immediate. The bishops, led by Archbishop Pelagio Labastida and Bishop Clemente de Jesús Munguía of Michoacán denounced the constitution as an assault on Catholicism and as an attempt to replace Catholic society in Mexico with a secularised model based on foreign examples. The church authorities defended what they perceived as the Catholic identity of Mexico, while arguing against the liberal doctrine of sovereignty of the people and in favour of the Church's right to possess property and to exercise control over education and private morality.<sup>403</sup>

In view of the Ley Juárez, the Ley Lerdo and the constitution of 1857, Archbishop Labastida and his colleagues decided that it was not enough to order the clergy to refuse absolution to anyone who swore allegiance to the new constitution. The conservative thus considered it necessary to overthrow the liberal Comonfort government; Comonfort had been acting president since December 1855 and in November 1857 the

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<sup>402</sup> Meyer, C.M; Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 365

<sup>403</sup> Simpson, L.B., *Many Mexicos*, 1966, p. 276

Mexican Congress appointed him president, while Juárez was elected president of the Supreme Court. The conservatives carried out the *coup d'état* on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1857, despite the fact that Comonfort had closed Congress in December 1857 in order to curb the influence of the radical liberals. Nevertheless, in January 1858 General Zuloaga forced Comonfort to resign; he went into exile in New York and General Zuloaga established a conservative government in Mexico.<sup>404</sup> However, the fact that Comonfort had resigned left enough scope for Juárez to argue that the conservatives had seized power illegally; the argument went that under the provisions of the 1857 constitution, presidential powers had passed to Juárez as chief justice and that by making himself president, Comonfort had seized power illegally. Juárez then established his liberal government in Veracruz, whereas the conservative government remained in Mexico City. The two rival governments settled down to a three-year civil war, which became known as the War of the Reform. During this war the hatreds, the fears and the frustration of the contending parties were expressed in wanton destruction. The liberals shot priests and lay brothers, gutted churches and burned sacred images; the conservatives executed prisoners, confiscated liberal wealth and destroyed properties owned by liberals.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Cumberland, C., *Mexico. The Struggle for Modernity*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 184

<sup>405</sup> *Ibid*, p. 186

### 3.5. THE JUÁREZ' GOVERNMENT

After much violence Juárez emerged victorious out of the War of the Reform and in March 1861 Juárez, who had already been in office for three years as the *de facto* president in the regions controlled by the liberals, was elected President of the Republic with a convincing majority. The election as president had definitely been the high point of Juárez's career so far; born on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1806 in the mountain village of San Pablo Guelatao as a Zapotec Indian, it looked unlikely that Benito Juárez would ever become president of Mexico. However, when he was twelve he began to attend school in Oaxaca and in 1831 he was awarded a lawyer's certificate, which in effect was his passport into politics. From 1847 to 1852 Juárez was governor of the state of Oaxaca; in 1853, he went into exile because of his objections to the corrupt military dictatorship of Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna; he returned to Mexico in 1855 and became chief justice under the Comonfort government; and as already mentioned Juárez led the liberal side during the War of the Reform (1858-1861) from which he emerged victorious and was elected President of the Mexican Republic.<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Meyer, C.M, Sherman, W.L.; Deeds, S.M, *Mexican History*, 1999, p. 360

### 3.5.1. THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

However, the election of Juárez as president of the republic did not end all hostilities, for the conservatives still held some areas of the country and their General Mejía was still operating from his personal stronghold in Sierra Gorda. More important though than the threat that the conservatives posed were the huge foreign debts that the new liberal government was facing. The total debt, which had reached 90 million pesos in 1851, stood at 82 million pesos in 1861.<sup>407</sup> Those debts were a direct result of the civil war; the conservative government had been in considerable financial trouble and could barely raise enough money to pay its troops. A Swiss banker called Jecker offered to lend the Mexican government money on very advantageous terms for himself: for one million in cash fifteen million had to be repaid, which meant that Mexican government bonds bore a twenty per cent interest rate per annum.<sup>408</sup>

In the face of this enormous financial burden, the Juárez administration attempted to reassert federal government control over all the revenues appropriated by state governors, including the revenues of the river ports as well as those of the Gulf and the Pacific coasts. The government's evident aim was to strengthen its fiscal position but this decree involved a two-year moratorium, suspending all payments of foreign debts. The envoys of Mexico's main creditors, Britain and France, reacted violently to what Sir Charles Wyke, the British minister in Mexico, called 'barefaced robbery'.<sup>409</sup> Presenting a united front, the envoys of both countries broke off relations with Mexico and threatened armed intervention, making no allowances for the immense difficulties

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<sup>407</sup> Hamnnett, B.R *A Concise History of Mexico*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p.162

<sup>408</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 37

<sup>409</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.155

the newly elected Mexican government had to contend with in a country where guerrilla forces were still fighting in the mountains. Spain, Mexico's third major creditor, also threatened the landing of troops already fully mobilised in Cuba.<sup>410</sup>

### 3.6. THE EUROPEAN INTERVENTION

Apart from their common belief that a government was responsible for the debts and acts of earlier governments, the three European powers had very different motives for threatening armed intervention in Mexico. Spain's relations with Mexico had been strained ever since the latter had gained independence in 1821. Relations between the two countries reached a low point when Juárez expelled the Spanish ambassador from Mexico and in 1858 Spain actually threatened to go to war with Mexico on several occasions.<sup>411</sup> Spain's goal was thus to reassert her influence in Mexico preferably by creating a monarchy and installing a Spanish prince; whether or not Spain, which was herself suffering from inner political turmoil, would have achieved this ultimate goal is questionable, but a joint intervention by France and Britain against Mexico definitely

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<sup>410</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.155

<sup>411</sup> Cunningham, M., *Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, 2001, p. 23

improved Spain's international standing and prestige and gave the Spanish government a chance to deflect from its own troubles.

Britain's interest in Mexico was primarily commercial. Ever since Napoleon Bonaparte's continental system had excluded her from European markets Britain had had a strong commercial interest in Latin America. However, Juárez's refusal to repay Mexico's debts was not only damaging British commerce in the region but the British government also feared a trade treaty between Juárez and the US government, which would have excluded them from access to the Latin American markets.<sup>412</sup> Therefore, Britain's motive was to limit the influence of the United States of America in Latin America and to stabilize the political situation in the area in order to be able to establish flourishing commerce and trade links.

France's motives and intentions were a combination of those of her two allies: commercial interests and inner political considerations. Firstly, France had certain commercial interests in Mexico, as the country was regarded by Napoleon as a market for French goods as well as a supplier of raw cotton for the French textile industry. Since the beginning of the American Civil War, the Northern states prevented most shipments of cotton from the south to Europe, which had caused an economic slump in France, and Napoleon hoped that Mexico could replace the missing cotton shipments from the confederate states.<sup>413</sup> Moreover, even in his earliest writings Napoleon had envisaged the construction of a canal across the Isthmus of Panama, which would have greatly enhanced trade and communication between the American continent and Europe. Michele Cunningham has argued that Napoleon saw the intervention in Mexico as an ideal opportunity to further develop his relations with Britain, with whom he had

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<sup>412</sup> Cunningham, M., *Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, 2001, p. 18

<sup>413</sup> Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique*, 1994, p. 38



only recently signed a commercial treaty, and to pursue his goal of a united Europe.<sup>414</sup> Secondly, Napoleon also thought that an intervention in Mexico would deflect from the political problems at home; the clergy and the conservatives in France would be reconciled since Napoleon was supporting the conservative-Catholic party in Mexico, whereas Napoleon's apparent insistence on liberating the Mexican people would flatter republican opinion in France.<sup>415</sup>

Despite their different motives for an intervention in Mexico, France, Spain and Britain signed a convention in London on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1861. In the treaty the three allies agreed that the Mexican government should be forced to honour its debt to foreign creditors, which amounted to 80 million Mexican piastres, and therefore, the European powers decided to send their naval forces and 10,000 troops to Mexico.<sup>416</sup> As the Mexican decision to cancel all payments of debts to foreign creditors had been the reason for a joint European in the first place, the allied forces were to occupy the port of Vera Cruz and the customs houses there in order to take the revenues as a repayment of Mexican debts. Owing to the fact that Spanish troops were stationed in Cuba, which was then a colony of Spain, this power succeeded in establishing a foothold ahead of her two allies; on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1861 7,000 Spanish troops under the command of General Prim arrived. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1862 the French force of 2,500 soldiers under Vice General Jurien de la Gravière appeared; and two days later 700 British marines under Commodore Dunlop arrived.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Cunningham, M., *Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, 2001, p. 6

<sup>415</sup> Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique*, 1994, p. 48

<sup>416</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 73f

<sup>417</sup> Ibid

### 3.6.2. WARNINGS AND ENCOURAGEMENTS

While the three Allies were occupying the port and the customs houses of Vera Cruz in order to force Mexico to repay its debts, Maximilian received both encouragements and warnings about the political situation in Mexico and his possible involvement in the Mexican adventure. As already mentioned, Maximilian did not have on first hand account of the current situation and he had to rely on reports of Mexican émigrés and foreign diplomats. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of Maximilian's candidature for the Mexican throne there were many voices that warned him against the adventure. Prominent amongst them were the warnings of two conservative émigrés: the former Mexican Archbishop Labastida declared that a reorganisation of the political situation in Mexico would be difficult if not impossible. Miguel Miramón, the ex-president of Mexico now living in exile in Paris, stated that 'a monarchist party does not exist in Mexico'.<sup>418</sup> And Richard Metternich, the Austrian ambassador in Paris, was worried that the Archduke did not have any idea as to what he was letting himself in for. In a letter to Count Rechberg he asked gloomily: 'how many cannon shots will be needed to put him on the throne, and how many more to keep him there'.<sup>419</sup> These warnings by Mexican émigrés and Austrian diplomats should have made Maximilian begin to question the feasibility of establishing a monarchy in Mexico, but he appeared to have been oblivious to the dangers that the Mexican throne held, or maybe he was just so excited at the prospect of becoming emperor of Mexico that he chose to ignore the more unpleasant facts. However, bearing in mind Maximilian's past experiences in Lombardy-Venetia and his belief in his mission as a Habsburg prince to rule a people as

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<sup>418</sup> Quoted in: Cone Corti, E.C. *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, Vol I, p.121

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid*, p.122

well as the fact that the political situation in the Habsburg Empire made it unlikely for him to occupy an important political position again, it is quite likely that he considered all these negative reports about Mexico but dismissed them on the grounds that once he was made emperor he could change and influence the administration as well as the political situation in Mexico. Moreover, since his easy manners as well as his character and his modern ideas had always guaranteed Maximilian to be liked everywhere, he probably thought that he could win the Mexican people over.

Apart from the warning, Maximilian also received encouragement for his candidature for the Mexican throne, mainly from Mexican émigrés, Catholic conservatives but also from within his own family. As some of the voices cautioning him had come from the side of the Mexican émigrés, which suggested a split amongst the Mexicans in Europe, Maximilian sent his private secretary, Scherzenlechner, to Paris in order to gain some insight into the political ambitions and the credibility of those Mexicans living in exile in Europe. After meeting with Gutierrez de Estrada, Hidalgo and other immigrants, Scherzenlechner gave a mainly positive report about the Mexican circles at the French court and concluded that ‘the Mexicans in Paris are joyous about the nomination of Your Imperial Highness’<sup>420</sup> However, most of the émigrés in Europe had always been in favour of establishing a monarchy in Mexico; it was thus unlikely that they would have discouraged Maximilian from getting involved in the Mexican project. Maximilian also received encouragement to pursue the Mexican affair by Pope Pius IX, whom he had asked for his advice and blessing.<sup>421</sup> Pope Pius IX, who had once been held some liberal ideas but had been driven by his fear of revolution to support conservative regimes all over the world, was naturally in favour of a establishment of a monarchy in Mexico. The liberal party had stripped the Catholic Church of most of her privileges and wealth

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<sup>420</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 1

<sup>421</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Max von Mexiko, cart. 8

under the provisions of the constitution of 1857 and the pope, therefore, hoped that a Catholic emperor would restore the old privileges of the Church.<sup>422</sup>

In addition, Maximilian received further encouragement to accept the offer of the Mexican throne from within his own family. His father-in-law, King Leopold of Belgium, had the reputation of being a hard-headed man, famous for his astuteness and political judgement and consequently, Maximilian wanted to ask his advice before he made any decision concerning the Mexican crown.<sup>423</sup> As a young widower living in England, he had been offered the Mexican throne and turned it down, but now he believed that Maximilian should accept the Mexican crown on the conditions that Franz Joseph had laid down; that Britain and France gave their firm guarantee to support Maximilian in Mexico; and that the Mexicans would ‘choose the principle [of government] themselves’.<sup>424</sup>

Although Franz Joseph insisted on these conditions and although he still refused to give Maximilian any guarantees in political and military terms, he nevertheless encouraged Maximilian by agreeing to the floating of a loan of twenty-five million Mexican dollars to be effected through the banking house of Rothschild. Moreover, he also offered to advance his brother two hundred thousand Austrian gulden out of the family funds to meet the preliminary expenses, which proves that the Mexican project was not just a state affair but also a dynastic matter. Once the Mexican crown was accepted, the Archduke’s annual apanage of one hundred thousand gulden was to be used in repaying the same sum, and in settling the still outstanding debts on the building of Miramar. Maximilian was to be granted leave of absence on a permanent basis from the command of the Austrian navy and provided with a battleship to take him to Mexico. The biggest concession made by Franz Joseph was the permission to start recruitment for a

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<sup>422</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 1

<sup>423</sup> Ibid

<sup>424</sup> Quoted in: Cone Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, Vol I, p.116

volunteer corps serving directly under Maximilian, independently of the French army.<sup>425</sup> This part of the agreement was crucial for both Maximilian and Franz Joseph: an Austrian Volunteer Corps would give Maximilian a powerbase to act independently from the French military as well as provide him with the core of a future Mexican imperial army after the bulk of the French troops had left Mexico, whereas it did not put any obligations on Franz Joseph to provide any more troops or money as the Austrian Volunteer Corps would not be part of the Austrian army and had to be paid by Maximilian. Nevertheless, what is rather astonishing is the fact that neither of the two brothers appeared to have had any doubts of the success of creating an empire in Mexico and that Franz Joseph, who usually had his feet firmly on the ground, treated the concept of a Mexican monarchy as an accomplished fact rather than a chimerical idea, although the project of a Mexican Empire was still in its first nebulous phase when Maximilian and Franz Joseph met in Venice on New Year's Eve of 1861.

### 3.6.2. THE REACTION OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE JUÁREZ GOVERNMENT

While Maximilian and Franz Joseph were already making arrangements and plans for a future Mexican empire, its creation still depended largely on the political and military reactions of both the Juárez government and that of the United States. The European

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<sup>425</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart.5

intervention in Mexico was in direct violation to the Monroe Doctrine, which had been proclaimed by the United States in 1823 as a reaction to the expansion of the British Empire and British influence and trade links in the New World.<sup>426</sup> The doctrine stated

That with existing colonies or dependencies of any European power, we [the United States] have not interfered and shall not; but with the governments who have declared their independence, and maintained it, and whose independence we [the United States] have, on great consideration and just principle acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of exposing them or controlling in any other manner their destiny by any European power, in any other light than as a manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the government and the people of the United States.<sup>427</sup>

This meant that efforts by European countries to colonize land or to interfere with the politics of any state in the Americas would be viewed by the United States of America as acts of aggression requiring US intervention.<sup>428</sup> Clearly the joint European intervention in Mexico represented a case of interference of European powers in the affairs of a state of the Americas, but the United States were prevented from helping the Juárez government fight foreign intervention by the outbreak of the American Civil War in 1861.<sup>429</sup> As the USA was engulfed by her own troubles, Washington could only protest against the intervention of France, Spain and Britain in Mexico. The fact that the United States could not enforce the Monroe Doctrine was one of the key factors for the joint European intervention as well as for the subsequent French occupation of Mexico. In contrast to the north, the Confederate States were not opposed to the establishment of

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<sup>426</sup> Quoted in: Cunningham, M., *Mexico and the Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, 2001, p. 18

<sup>427</sup> NA, Records of the U.S. Senate, 39<sup>th</sup> Congress, SEN 39A- H6 to H6.1

<sup>428</sup> Valone, S.J., "Weakness offers temptation" – William H. Seward and the reassertion of the Monroe Doctrine. In *Diplomatic History*, 1955, Vol. 19/4., p. 583

<sup>429</sup> Ibid

a monarchy in Mexico, but in return the Confederacy expected France to recognise them as an independent state. However, Napoleon III was prudent enough not to recognise the Confederate States as long as the American Civil War was still undecided.<sup>430</sup>

As it was obvious that the US could not stand by the Mexican liberals, the three European powers decided that this was the best opportunity to achieve their respective motives and, consequently, they went ahead with the intervention in Mexico. The three allies had expected a joyful welcome when they landed in Veracruz, as the Mexican émigrés in Paris had led them to expect. Instead the allied forces were met with hostility and fear, for Juárez had issued a decree that made any form of assistance offered to the allies punishable by death. The Law of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862 was the most far-reaching measure against those who co-operated with the intervention; it stated that any foreigner who made an armed invasion of Mexico without the declaration of war, any Mexican who voluntarily served in the forces of such an invader, and any Mexican or foreigner living in Mexico who invited foreigners to invade or to alter the form of government of the republic would be guilty of a crime against the security and independence of Mexico and on conviction by court-martial would suffer the death penalty.<sup>431</sup> The Belgian ambassador to Mexico, T'Kint de Roodenbeke, sent copies of this law to Maximilian and to Brussels pointing out the danger it posed to any future emperor.<sup>432</sup> However, Juárez and the liberals knew that at the moment it was impossible for the liberals and the rest of their army to defy the combined might of the three naval powers. He was thus prepared to negotiate with the allies and maybe he hoped to profit from the differences that were already threatening to break up the alliance.

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<sup>430</sup> Valone, S.J., 'Weakness offers temptation', 1955, p.584

<sup>431</sup> Hamnett, B.R., *A Concise History of Mexico*, 2006, p.164

<sup>432</sup> HHSTA, Archive K. Max von Mexiko, cart. 3

### 3.6.3. FRENCH DEMANDS

The original plan under the Convention of London had been for the allied forces to force the Mexican government to repay its debts; the British claim amounted to 69 million Mexican piastres, the Spanish one to about 9 million and the French were owed 2.8 million.<sup>433</sup> The British government realized that the Mexican government could not afford to repay its debts in full. If the allies seized the customs house in Veracruz, Mexico's main source of revenue, it would render the Mexican government unable to operate: the claims of the three powers would absorb seventy-nine per cent of the customs dues. Charles Wyke, the British representative, thus proposed that the allies open negotiations with the Juárez, giving him with a detailed list of their respective claims and discussing how much the Mexican government was prepared to pay. The Spanish representative, General Prim, agreed, but Saligny presented the draft of an ultimatum that he proposed to be sent to Juárez. Without giving any particulars of the debts due to the French creditors, he demanded that the Mexican government pay twelve million US dollars to cover all the damages to the property of French nationals up to 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1861, with France reserving the right to claim a further sum as compensation for injuries suffered since then. Added to this sum he also demanded that the Juárez government recognize its liability to satisfy in full the claims of the Jecker bonds for an additional fifteen million dollars.

Both Wyke and Prim thought that the sum was excessive and 'utterly unreasonable and unjustified'.<sup>434</sup> The French demands would take up another fifteen percent of the customs revenues of Veracruz, leaving only six per cent for the Mexican government.

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<sup>433</sup> The Mexican piastre was equal to US dollar at that time  
Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p.81

<sup>434</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 171



They also asked why the French government was making such demands on behalf of a Swiss banker? The official French explanation was that, as Switzerland had no diplomatic representative in Mexico, France was acting on behalf of Swiss citizens there. But the Swiss government had asked the United States, not France, to represent its interests in Mexico. What in 1862 no one except Jecker and his closest intimates knew was the fact that Napoleon III's illegitimate half-brother and influential minister, the Duke of Morny, held thirty percent of the Jecker bonds. Many historians have argued that the French demands on behalf of Jecker had been intended to make impossible for the Juárez to accept the ultimatum but no evidence of these intentions can be found in the archives.<sup>435</sup> Nevertheless, the theory that Napoleon had wanted the negotiations with the Juárez government to fail would tie in perfectly with the arguments of some historians, like Ridley, that Napoleon had had a carefully constructed plan to occupy Mexico preferably in accordance with the Spanish and British governments.<sup>436</sup> If Napoleon's intentions had been from the outset to create a monarchy in Mexico then he did not voice them during the diplomatic negotiations between France, Britain and Spain. Napoleon must have feared possible complications with his allies: Britain would probably have withdrawn from the proposed convention, for she did not wish to get involved in the internal affairs of Mexico, and Spain would have put forward a Bourbon prince as a possible candidate for the Mexican throne. It is thus likely that both Spain and Britain were quite unaware of Napoleon's intentions to put Maximilian on the Mexican throne when the three powers finally signed the Convention of London on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1861. However, the fact remains that Maximilian had been approached by the Austrian foreign minister concerning his

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<sup>435</sup> See: Cunningham, M., *Mexico and the Foreign Policy of Napoleon III*, 2001; Lecaillon, J.F., *Napoleon III et le Mexique*, 1994; Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992; Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982; Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971

<sup>436</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 87

possible candidature for the Mexican throne on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1861, almost three weeks before the three powers signed the Convention of London.<sup>437</sup> Therefore, Napoleon must have had the intention of establishing a monarchy in Mexico, with or without the assistance of Britain and Spain, even before the three powers had agreed on a concerted action by signing the Convention of London.

Since both Britain and Spain were unaware of any such intentions the three allies met with representatives of the Mexican government in La Soledad, a small village a short distance from Veracruz, despite the British and Spanish protest concerning the unreasonable demands of the French government. The convention of La Soledad laid down the preliminaries for negotiations to take place two months later in Orizaba, thereby giving the commissioners time to consult their respective governments.<sup>438</sup> The convention was later ratified by both Spanish and British governments but publicly disavowed by the French. Although Saligny rejected the Convention of La Soledad, the French troops were happy to take advantage of the provisions, which allowed them to leave Veracruz for the Orizaba district. The French, as well as the other European powers troops had suffered greatly from the fever-ridden coastal climate in Veracruz. During their seven weeks stay there, twenty-nine French soldiers had died of diseases and one hundred and fifty-nine were in hospital.<sup>439</sup> The climate of the highland plateau in the Orizaba district was thus much healthier for the European soldiers. While the troops were on the march, General Count Charles Ferdinand de Lorencez arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1862 in Veracruz, with 4474 men and 616 horses as reinforcement for the French troops. They soon moved on to Tehuacan, where they joined the rest of the French army.<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 1

<sup>438</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 83

<sup>439</sup> Dabbs, J.A., *The French Army in Mexico 1861-1867*, Mouton, The Hague, 1963, p. 52

<sup>440</sup> Ibid

#### 3.6.4. THE END OF THE JOINT EUROPEAN INTERVENTION

The arrival of the French reinforcements had convinced the Spanish and the British commissioners that the French government's intentions were to nullify the election of Juárez in the previous year and to super-impose a system in Mexico acceptable to the French government. In such a way, Mexico would fall into the French imperial orbit, though more indirectly than Indo-China or Algeria. As a consequence, the British and Spanish delegates openly 'accused [the French government] of having broken the Convention [of London]'<sup>441</sup> at the conference in Orizaba on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1862. The British government had no desire to advance further into the Mexican heartland, fearing that after the end of the American Civil War the United States would dispense troops to aid the Mexican liberals; and the commander of the Spanish troops, General Prim, had come to the conclusion during his stay in Veracruz that Spain had little hope of recovering her former colony, where she was still as bitterly hated as in the days of the Inquisition. The conference thus spelled the end of the joint intervention, leaving France, as Admiral Jurien de la Gravière put it free to act 'completely independent, completely alone'.<sup>442</sup> The British, who had already embarked their Marines, set sail from Veracruz the following evening. Their commissioner Charles Wyke stayed behind as a private citizen, waiting for the resumption of diplomatic relations. By mid-April, the six thousand soldiers sent by Spain to reclaim a former colony had returned to Havana and a letter from General Prim, written before leaving the country, warned Napoleon III of the dangers of armed intervention; he pointed out that the end of colonialism had destroyed the old structures and that therefore, there was no deep-

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<sup>441</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/2

<sup>442</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/2

rooted aristocracy that could be relied upon to support a monarchy, and that Mexico's neighbour, the United States, held strong republican ideas and fiercely opposed the idea of a monarchy:

Far be it from me, Sire, even to imagine that Your Imperial Majesty's power is insufficient to erect in Mexico a throne for the House of Austria (...) It will be easy for Your Majesty to lead Prince Maximilian to the capital and to crown him King; but this King will find no support in the country, except from the conservative leaders, who did not think of establishing the monarchy when they were in power and only think of it now that they are dispersed, defeated, and in exile. Some rich men too will accept a foreign monarch, who will have arrived supported by Your Majesty's soldiers, but this monarch will have nothing to sustain him on the day that this support is withdrawn, and he will fall from the throne erected by Your Majesty as other earthly powers will fall on the day when Your Majesty's imperial cloak will cease to cover and defend them.<sup>443</sup>

Prim's reference to the "other earthly powers" was to the Pope, whose temporal power was protected by Napoleon III's troops; Prim's forecast was as accurate about Rome as it was about Mexico.

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<sup>443</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 90

### 3.7. THE REACTION OF THE PRESS AND BOURDILLON'S REPORT

The news of the breaking-off of the negotiations at Orizaba and the evacuation of the British and Spanish troops coincided with a visit of Maximilian and Charlotte to Brussels. King Leopold was by then an old, sick man, who before he died would have liked to have established another Coburg throne; he had hoped that his excellent connections to the British government, since Queen Victoria was his niece, would help to enlist British support for a guarantee, but it had been to no avail. Queen Victoria as well as public opinion in Britain, viewed the Mexican project rather sceptically and Lord Russell told Count Apponyi that he was 'amazed an Austrian Archduke should be attracted by an undertaking so bristling with difficulties'.<sup>444</sup> The British government saw the main difficulty in the reaction of the United States to the creation of a monarchy at her doorstep. Although the US was currently enwrapped in a civil war, this war would not last forever and recent victories of the Union forces made it look more and more likely that the north would emerge victorious. President Lincoln had already warned the European powers that the United States would not stand for any infringement of the Monroe Doctrine and that any European power, which intervened in Mexican affairs, would sooner or later encounter the hostility of the United States.<sup>445</sup> Britain did not want to damage her trade links in the area by provoking a war with the U.S. and thus the subtle threats of President Lincoln were sufficient to make British ministers even more prudent. Therefore, even King Leopold had to acknowledge that

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<sup>444</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 178

<sup>445</sup> Fuentes Mares, J., 'Washington, Paris y el Imperio Mexicana'. In: *Historia Mexicana*. 1963. Vol. 13., p. 59

apart from moral support ‘the British government would in all likelihood not offer any guarantee.’<sup>446</sup>

Nevertheless, the matter of Maximilian’s candidature was now public knowledge and unpleasant articles had been appearing in the Vienna press on an Austrian Archduke’s willingness to become a vassal of France:

We believe ourselves to be the organ of public opinion in Austria when we declare that not a person in Austria believes that the acceptance of this crown by Archduke Maximilian is fortunate (...). A crown delivered through the hands of a Napoleon. (...). Austria [and Maximilian] would become (...) a vassal of France.<sup>447</sup>

In general, the reaction of the Austrian press to the possible candidature of Archduke Maximilian to the Mexican throne was largely negative. *Die Presse* asked how the Emperor of the French could offer a throne to the Archduke that did not yet exist<sup>448</sup> and pointed out the fact that ‘this venture [the joint intervention of the allied powers] would have never taken place, if the United States would not be disunited and her immense powers would not be paralysed by the civil war’.<sup>449</sup> Mainly, though, the Austrian newspapers were worried about Napoleon’s intentions; they feared that Napoleon would demand the handover of Venetia in exchange for making Maximilian emperor of Mexico<sup>450</sup>. Apparently Maximilian was also beginning to doubt the intentions of the

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<sup>446</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 4

<sup>447</sup> ANNO, *Die Presse*, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1863, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=apr&datum=18630811&zoom=2>>

<sup>448</sup> ANNO, *Die Presse*, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1862, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=apr&datum=18620131&zoom=2>>

<sup>449</sup> ANNO, *Die Presse*, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1862, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=apr&datum=18620116&zoom=2>>

<sup>450</sup> ANNO, *Tagespost*, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1862, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=ibn&datum=18620102&zoom=2>>

ANNO, *Die Presse*, 20<sup>th</sup> January 1862, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=apr&datum=18620120&zoom=2>>

French Emperor for in a letter to the foreign minister, Count Rechberg, Maximilian came very close to the bitter truth:

From the very beginning of our negotiations the thought has continually recurred to me that there was a danger of an unlimited extension of French power (...) In my opinion, the Emperor Napoleon wishes to dominate Mexico without appearing to do so in the eyes of Europe. [Napoleon's actions were proof] of the desire of the Emperor of the French so to manage the affair that the future sovereign of Mexico will be quite unable to free himself from his tutelage'.<sup>451</sup>

Maximilian's analysis of Napoleon's intentions in Mexico refutes the popular claim by the Austrian press after the death of the Archduke that he had been deceived by Napoleon and had thus accepted the Mexican crown without prior knowledge of French intentions and of the political situation in Mexico.<sup>452</sup> Maximilian clearly understood that by accepting the French crown he would be dependent on the French Emperor and that he would be a pawn in Napoleon's *grande pensée*.

In the light of this realisation Maximilian decided to send Bourdillon, a former correspondent of the *London Times*, on a fact-finding mission to Mexico. Maximilian and Charlotte hoped to get from him 'an impartial account of the state of affairs in Mexico'<sup>453</sup> for so far the two had not heard a single account that had not passed through the hands of the Mexican émigrés in Paris. The report that Bourdillon produced painted anything but a positive picture of the Mexican people. He described them as 'rotten to

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<sup>451</sup> Quoted in: Cone Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, Vol I, p152

<sup>452</sup> ANNO, *Neue Freie Presse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1867, retrieved 14<sup>th</sup> March 2010,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=nfp&datum=18670702&zoom=2>>

<sup>453</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p 187

the core and good for nothing but thieving'.<sup>454</sup> In his opinion most Mexicans could be bribed, mainly because the majority of the population was so poor but also because of the greed of the different political leaders. Bourdillon suggested in his report that the Archduke should not only bring with himself the French army to pacify the country but also some Europeans of talent and probity to properly colonize the country. If this was the case though, he thought that Mexico, due to its natural resources of gold and silver, could once again become one of the richest areas in the world.<sup>455</sup>

Bourdillon's report, as well as the one he received from Kint d'Roddenbeeck, definitely had a great impact on Maximilian's decision to accept the Mexican throne; both stressed the immense natural resources of Mexico, which could be exploited by a government that established order. The reports also emphasised the backwards nature and character of the majority of the population, above all of the Indians who lived in extreme poverty and often could neither read nor write. To an extent this turned the whole project of a Mexican empire almost into a colonial mission to civilize a backward country and people by installing a monarchy according to European-Habsburg principles. It is quite likely that Maximilian came to this conclusion because of his past experiences as governor of Lombardy-Venetia: both he and Franz Joseph had seen a necessity 'to civilize the Italians'<sup>456</sup> by creating court that would bind the different factions of society to the ruling dynasty. In the case of Mexico, the establishment of a monarchy would be a factor of order, which would end the fighting between the conservatives and the liberals; the empire would also ensure that Mexico was lifted out of its backward state and would be transformed into one of the richest countries on earth. This belief of having a colonial mission in Mexico led Maximilian to ignore his own realisation as

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<sup>454</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.187

<sup>455</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Die öffentliche Meinung in Österreich zum Abenteuer Kaiser Maximilian I von Mexiko*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1978, p. 29

<sup>456</sup> Ernst, O., *Franz Joseph I in seinen Briefen*, 1924, p. 95



well as the many warnings and negative reports that he had received; the Mexican throne seemed to offer greater allure and glory for Maximilian than his current life in Austria. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1862 Maximilian confirmed his interest in the Mexican affair in a letter to Napoleon, stating that the Mexican Empire could only be established if certain conditions were fulfilled: the guarantee of his rule by the two naval powers and the guarantee of the military and financial support of France.<sup>457</sup> Maximilian's letter coincided with a letter by Napoleon in which the French Emperor stressed the point that the intervention would only support the creation of monarchy in Mexico if that was the wish of the Mexican people. In general though, Napoleon told Maximilian that the news from Mexico was very good, for 'General Lorencez wrote to me that he reckoned on being in Mexico-City by 25<sup>th</sup> May at the latest'.<sup>458</sup> The news of the Fifth of May, the defeat of the French army at the hand of the much smaller republican forces, only reached Europe a few days later.

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<sup>457</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/2

<sup>458</sup> Ibid

### 3.8. THE FRENCH OCCUPATION OF MEXICO

Following the evacuation of the British and Spanish troops from Veracruz, the French army had begun to occupy the country. Apart from some smaller fights and guerrilla style attacks the French met little resistance from the republican forces and thus General Lorencez wrote encouraging reports to Paris.<sup>459</sup> What he forgot to mention was the long forced marches through the hot plains, the difficulties of supplies and the effects of the yellow fever, which had decimated the French troops. Out of the seven thousand men that had landed in Veracruz less than six thousand were fit enough to take part in the march on Puebla.<sup>460</sup> The town had had a reputation of being stoutly conservative and thus the French had been expecting a friendly welcome, but the republican forces had occupied the city first and had turned it into a fortress. On 5<sup>th</sup> May the French encountered the Mexican force on Guadalupe Hill a few miles outside Puebla; three times the French troops tried to storm the hill, and three times they were repulsed. As they were regrouping for the fourth assault, the Mexican cavalry charged down the hill and routed them. The French lost five hundred killed and wounded, and the army had to retreat towards Oaxaca; Juárez, making the most of the victory, decreed that the Fifth of May should be made a national holiday.<sup>461</sup>

The defeat of the French troops at Puebla at the hands of the much smaller Mexican troops shattered Napoleon's optimism of an easy victory over the republican forces and of quickly creating a monarchy in Mexico. More importantly though, French honour had been insulted and Napoleon found a scapegoat in General Lorencez and accused

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<sup>459</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/2

<sup>460</sup> Dabbs, J.A., *French Army*, 1963, p. 62

<sup>461</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 109

him of having mismanaged the attack on Puebla. The need to avenge the defeat, to show the Mexicans and the world that France was one of the greatest military power on earth, which could conquer a backward nation if she really put her mind to it, had swung over French public opinion and ended the apathy and opposition in France to the Mexican expedition. In the Corps Législatif the Prime Minister, Billaut, explained that French honour must be avenged, and the deputies enthusiastically voted the funds he demanded for the new expedition to Mexico. In September General Forey sailed for Mexico and took over command from Lorencez, and more soldiers were dispatched to Veracruz; by the end of 1862 the French expeditionary forces consisted of twenty-eight thousand men. The new commander of the French forces had the strict instructions of Napoleon to occupy Mexico-City and to pacify the rest of the country. The Emperor's instructions on policy were even more specific: Forey was to empower Almonte, one of the émigrés who had petitioned Napoleon III to establish a monarchy in Mexico, to summon an assembly of notables presenting all shades of political opinion, but choosing only those who had given their adherence to the French. Should the assembly vote for a monarchy, and Napoleon made it clear that this was his wish, then it was 'in the interest of France to support them in their wishes and in that case the General should indicate the Archduke Maximilian as the candidate of France'.<sup>462</sup> However, Napoleon's motives were not quite so altruistic as they appeared to be; at this point Napoleon had invested a considerable amount of money and men in the Mexican project; costs which would have to be repaid by the future imperial government of Mexico in the form of money transfers but also through shipments of raw cotton and precious metals to France. Apart from the financial consideration there was also a political side to why Mexico was so important to Napoleon. The Mexican campaign with its heavy costs of men power and money had diminished Napoleon's political standing and prestige in France. The

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<sup>462</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/1

opposition and the Corps Législatif had asked why French troops were fighting so far from home and on behalf of a Habsburg prince. Therefore, it was essential for Napoleon that the Mexican assembly chose a monarchy as the form of government. The creation of monarchy would, on the other hand, reduce the political pressure that the opposition put on him and, on the other hand, it would guarantee that the costs of the occupation would be repaid to France as the future emperor would 'always be forced to act in the interests of France, not only from gratitude but even more because his country's interests will be in accordance with ours, and he will not be able to maintain himself without our influence'.<sup>463</sup>

### 3.8.1. ALTERNATIVES TO THE MEXICAN THRONE

Apparently, it was not only Napoleon who came to the conclusion that the future emperor of Mexico would always be dependent on the good will of France but also several other European governments, for when the Greek throne became vacant it was offered to Maximilian as a substitute for the Mexican crown.<sup>464</sup> It was above all the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston and the British government who were in favour of Maximilian's candidature to the Greek throne but what they had not reckoned with

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<sup>463</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1992, p. 104

<sup>464</sup> On 23rd October 1862 King Otto I. of Greece, a cousin of Maximilian on his mother's side, had to flee his country because he could not come to an agreement with liberal demands of certain parts in society

was Maximilian's Habsburg pride and his sense of chivalry. Both he and Franz Joseph considered it 'the height of bad taste'<sup>465</sup> on the part of the British government to offer him the throne of a country from which their cousin Otto had had to flee on board a British battleship, but to which he had never renounced his natural rights. But what outraged Maximilian most of all about the British proposal was the fact that the throne of Greece had already been offered to and declined by half a dozen princes. With biting sarcasm Maximilian complained in a letter to Count Rechberg about the lack of tact by the British government:

Even if it had been lawfully vacated by my cousin King Otto, I should be the last to feel inclined to accept a throne, which had been hawked around unsuccessfully by half a dozen princes. I am too well acquainted with modern Hellas and its present corrupt condition not to be convinced that it would be impossible to build a firm foundation of an independent state with a people as crafty and as morally degenerated as the modern Greek.<sup>466</sup>

The Greek crown was not the only one Maximilian was offered; in the spring of 1863 Poland was on the brink of revolution and a considerable body of European statesmen was in favour of restoring it as an independent monarchy.<sup>467</sup> Several names were mentioned as possible Kings of Poland, including that of the Archduke Maximilian. The major obstacle to the independence of Poland and the creation of a Polish kingdom was the fact that Prussia regarded it as her sphere of influence. Thus Bismarck asked the Austrian ambassador in Berlin, Count Károlyi, whether the liberalism of several members of the cabinet in Vienna led to the idea of establishing a united, independent

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<sup>465</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Öffentliche Meinung in Österreich*, 1978, p. 27

<sup>466</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 3

<sup>467</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p. 89

Poland, above all in connection with the candidature of Archduke Maximilian.<sup>468</sup> In the end nothing came of the idea and the rebellion of 1863/64, put down by Russia with a sanguinary ferocity, ended all Poland's hopes of independence. However, the offer of two crowns within a year boosted Maximilian's morale and appealed to his pride. He commented in his diary: 'They won't let me be (...) Figaro qua, Figaro la, every day a different crown'.<sup>469</sup>

The question as to why the European powers offered these alternatives to the Mexican throne to Maximilian is an intriguing one: Were they just worried that Maximilian was accepting a dangerous crown, or did the European powers want to curb Napoleon's influence in the Americas by removing his possible candidate? Although no documents exist to support either of these theories, it is likely that the European governments were worried about the influence and power Napoleon would exercise in the Americas through the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico. Moreover, a quasi-colony in Mexico would give France an economic advantage as it would open up new markets for French merchants as well as simplify the import of precious metals and cotton to France. Thus it is possible to argue that by offering respectively the Greek and the Polish crown to Maximilian, the European powers were less concerned with Maximilian's well being but with limiting French economic, political and military influence in the Americas.

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<sup>468</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Öffentliche Meinung in Österreich*, 1978, p. 28

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid*, p.28

### 3.8.2. THE FALL OF PUEBLA AND THE OCCUPATION OF MEXICO-CITY

The offers of the crown of Greece and of Poland had come at a time when news from Mexico was scarce and that which reached Europe was discouraging enough; the advance of the French army was stalled by heavy resistance of the Mexican republican troops. The months that had followed the French defeat at Puebla had been months of nervous uncertainty for Maximilian and Charlotte. Both were following the articles in the newspapers about the events in Mexico and were also receiving reports from Gutierrez de Estrada, Almonte and other Mexican émigrés. The French defeat at Puebla also made Count Rechberg, as well as Richard Metternich doubt the possible success of the French campaign, which both communicated to the Archduke. Apparently Maximilian also began to fear that his chance at ruling a people himself was quickly disappearing if the French could not defeat the republican forces, a fear that was heightened by the fact that Maximilian's brothers, and above all Ludwig Victor, had started to refer to Maximilian as the 'new Montezuma'.<sup>470</sup>

However, in May 1863 the reinforcement of the French troops finally began to pay off: after a siege of sixty-two days the republican troops surrendered Puebla to the French. Napoleon was happy when he heard the news of the capture of Puebla; his only regret was that it had not arrived before the election day in France, as it would have silenced any further criticism of the opposition concerning the campaign in Mexico. Despite the unfortunate timing Napoleon still had won the election with a comfortable majority in the Corps Législatif and the military victory had made the French people less worried about Mexico. After the fall of Puebla the prospects of Juárez and the republicans were bleak indeed: they could not raise an army big enough to defend Mexico-City. Juárez

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<sup>470</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 205

announced that it would be necessary for the government to leave Mexico-City and temporarily establish the capital of the republic in San Luis Potosi, some two hundred miles to the north. The morning after the republican forces had evacuated Mexico-City General Bazaine and his advance guard entered the city without a single shot being fired. Two days later Forey himself made his ceremonial entry, riding at the head of the army with Almonte on his right and Saligny on his left. They were welcomed by the clergy at the cathedral as the deliverers who had saved them from the godless liberals. The church authorities and the clergy interpreted the fact that Forey allowed the traditional religious procession of Corpus Christi day through the streets three weeks later as a sign that their old privileges would be restored under the future monarchy. The same was true for the Mexican conservatives, who had cheered the entry of the French and their Mexican supporters in the capital, when Forey restored the old Spanish titles of the nobility that had been abolished by the republic after Mexico became independent.



### 3.9. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE SECOND MEXICAN EMPIRE

In accordance with Napoleon's orders that 'you must be master in Mexico-City without appearing to be',<sup>471</sup> Forey lost no time in setting up a provisional government. He nominated thirty-five prominent Mexicans to become members of a junta that would establish the future government of the country. Nearly all the members of the junta were conservatives, and ten of them had already held office in a previous conservative government under Miramón. The junta nominated three regents to rule the country for the time being: Almonte, General Salas and Bishop Labastida; Bishop Ormeachea of Tulanciago was appointed as a deputy to the Regency Council till Labastida, who by this time had been appointed archbishop of Mexico by the Pope, returned to Mexico. The junta also elected two hundred and thirty-one eminent persons, nearly all of them conservative supporters, to form the Assembly of Notables. The assembly met in the National Palace on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1863 and passed four resolutions almost completely unanimously and without debate: the first, declared that 'the nation adopts as its form of government a limited hereditary monarchy under a Catholic prince',<sup>472</sup> the second, that the monarch should bear the title of emperor of Mexico; the third offered the crown to Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria; and the fourth declared that if the Archduke refused to accept the throne, it should be offered to another Catholic prince selected by Napoleon III. The Juárez government at San Luis Potosi protested against the proclamation of the Mexican Empire; however, with the American Civil War still raging the republicans could not hope for any support by the United States. Therefore,

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<sup>471</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon 400AP 62/1

<sup>472</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Öffentliche Meinung in Österreich*, 1978, p. 31

Juárez and his supporters could not stop the Assembly of Notables from sending a deputation to Miramar to inform Maximilian that the Mexican people had invited him to be their emperor.

### 3.9.1. REACTIONS TO THE PROCLAMATION OF THE SECOND MEXICAN EMPIRE

The news that the Assembly of Notables had offered him the crown of Mexico reached Maximilian first through a telegram by Napoleon on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1863. Maximilian was delighted and the news produced another change in Maximilian's attitude: all the doubts he had felt since the French defeat at Puebla now disappeared and his original enthusiasm revived. He thus wrote to Napoleon assuring him of his eagerness 'to lend a hand in the regeneration of Mexico'.<sup>473</sup> However, Maximilian's delight was tempered by the continued scepticism expressed by Franz Joseph, Count Rechberg as well as his own secretary, Baron du Pont. Rechberg had pointed out to Maximilian the threat that the continued victories of the Union forces in America threatened the future of the Mexican Empire, since once the American Civil War was over there would be a hostile and unemployed army waiting across the thousand-mile long border between the United

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<sup>473</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1992, p. 141

States and Mexico. The American Consul in Trieste, Richard Holdreth, confirmed the hostile attitude of the U.S. government by adding that anyone aspiring to the throne of Mexico would be extraordinarily lucky if he escaped with his life.<sup>474</sup> Consequently, Maximilian's letters to Napoleon became more demanding for he had realised that the questions of long-term guarantees was more vital than ever. Franz Joseph too kept insisting on the guarantees of the two naval powers, mainly because he thought it a folly to go to Mexico without the guarantees of two naval powers and thus for Maximilian to place himself at the mercy of France. With the Mexican deputation on its way to Miramar, Franz Joseph also declared again that he and the Austrian government would not become involved in the matter by stressing that Maximilian could only receive the delegates privately with no Austrian minister or Archduke present; Franz Joseph's explanation was that the delegation was coming from an assembly that had not yet been recognized by the Imperial government. Franz Joseph also made Maximilian, who had submitted a draft of his speech to both Franz Joseph and Napoleon, delete his opening sentence: 'The Emperor, as the august head of our House, and I are deeply moved'<sup>475</sup> by the Mexican offer. Franz Joseph was anything but moved, and he ordered Maximilian to remove all references to himself and his government. The whole Mexican project was Maximilian's personal affair, in which neither the Austrian emperor nor the government was in any way involved.

It was exactly the insistence of Franz Joseph that the Mexican affair was a private matter of Maximilian that the public and the press refused to accept and which was consequently discussed in the press: 'Maximilian is the brother of our Emperor and if things in Mexico would go badly (...) we would not be able to forget that the Emperor

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<sup>474</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 3

<sup>475</sup> Ibid

of Mexico was an Austrian Archduke'.<sup>476</sup> Therefore, there were many in the Habsburg Empire who wondered aloud how long it would be until Napoleon would ask the Austrian government for compensation for his support of the Mexican Empire; most commentators thought that Napoleon would demand the Austria hand over Venice in return for his assistance in Mexico. In short, the response to the proclamation of the Mexican Empire and the offer of the throne to Maximilian was consistently negative, for the public as well as the press could not believe that an Austrian Archduke would want to become 'a crowned slave of Napoleon'.<sup>477</sup> Maximilian was well aware of the negative reports in the Austrian press and he urged Count Rechberg in a letter 'to take care that, at least during the time the Mexican deputation stays on Austrian territory, no direct insults against the respective delegates can be made [by the press]'.<sup>478</sup> It is likely that Maximilian, who at this point seemed already resolved on accepting the Mexican throne with or without the condition that Franz Joseph had laid down a year earlier, was not only afraid that negative comments in the press would displease the Mexican delegates but he was also worried that the negative reports would hinder any future recruitment for an Austrian volunteer corps.

As already mentioned, Maximilian fully understood that the Mexican affair was his private matter; that Austria would not give any guarantees, that neither France nor Britain had given any definite guarantees and that the majority of the Austrian public was opposed to the Mexican project. However, the Mexican crown still had enough appeal for Maximilian to ignore warnings about the true state of Mexican affairs and to be willing to compromise on such important matters as the guarantees of the two naval

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<sup>476</sup> ANNO, *Die Presse*, 14<sup>th</sup> August 1863, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=apr&datum=18630814&zoom=2>>

<sup>477</sup> ANNO, *Volksblatt für Tirol und Vorarlberg* 13<sup>th</sup> October 1863, retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=ibn&datum=18631013&zoom=2>>

<sup>478</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 3

powers. For him the Mexican throne offered the possibility of what he believed to be his destiny: to rule a people.

Out of the blue the Mexican crown was offered to me and with it the opportunity to end in a honourable and lawful manner my unemployed existence forever. Who in my place (...) would not have snatched at the offer?<sup>479</sup>

The comment definitely shows how frustrated Maximilian was with his current position in the Habsburg Empire; although Maximilian was anything but unemployed as he was still commander of the navy, he nevertheless felt that this task was not challenging enough for him and he knew that the new constitutional structure as well as his unfriendly relationship with his brother had closed the door to any further promotion in Austria. Bearing all these considerations in mind, it becomes understandable why the Mexican throne had such an appeal to Maximilian.

### 3.9.2. CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE AND THE REFERENDUM

Maximilian thus received the Mexican deputation in Miramar on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1863; the party consisted of four Mexicans resident in Europe, amongst them Hidalgo and Gutierrez de Estrada, and five, who had come over from Mexico, including a priest

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<sup>479</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Öffentliche Meinung in Österreich*, 1978, p. 44

named Miranda.<sup>480</sup> In a rather long winded speech Gutierrez de Estrada offered Maximilian the crown saying that ‘as soon as the Mexican nation had been given back its freedom by the powerful hand of a magnanimous monarch it had looked to Maximilian as a Catholic prince ‘to restore the splendid heritage which we [the Mexican nation] were unable to preserve under a democratic republic’.<sup>481</sup> In his acceptance speech, which Maximilian delivered in Spanish, the Archduke stated that he was willing to accept the throne of Mexico and that he intended to reign as a constitutional monarch but he also stressed the point that guarantees were necessary and that he must be sure that the offer was supported by the majority of the Mexican people, which he demanded to be done via a referendum.

Franz Joseph was not pleased when he read the report of Maximilian’s speech; the archduke’s prevarication on the subject of the guarantees of both France and Britain provoked a sharp rebuke from his brother in Vienna:

I see that you do not explicitly adhere to the guarantee of the three powers, particularly England. I must remind you in the most decided manner of this condition as originally stipulated between us. You cannot place yourself in a state of dependence upon France alone.<sup>482</sup>

In contrast to the Austrian Emperor, Napoleon approved of most of the speech, but he warned Maximilian that ‘it is not parliamentary liberty that a country in the grip of anarchy can be regenerated. What is needed in Mexico is a liberal dictatorship, that is to

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<sup>480</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire*, 1946, p. 122

<sup>481</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992 p. 147

The speeches were also published: “Discours prononcé au Chateau de Miramar, le 2 octobre 1863, par M. Guiterrez de Estrada, President de la Deputation Mexicaine, en offrant, au nom de la June de notables, la couronne de Mexique a son altesse imperial et royale Monseigneur L’Archiduc Maximilien d’Autriche et response, Paris 1863

<sup>482</sup> HHSTA, Archiv, K. Maximilians von Mexiko, cart. 6

say, a strong power that shall proclaim the great principles of modern civilization, such as equality before the law, civil and religious liberty, an upright administration, an equitable judicial procedure'.<sup>483</sup> In many ways, Napoleon demanded of Maximilian exactly what he had done in France in 1851/52: to seize power, to establish a dictatorship and to only to make concessions to the liberals once his power was firmly established.

While Maximilian had conditionally accepted the Mexican throne at Miramar, the French forces, now under the command of General Achilles Bazaine, were making progress in their campaign against the republican forces; the republican forces used guerrilla warfare tactics to avoid any major battles that they stood no chance of winning. As a result the French troops occupied many towns but they could never stamp out the resistance of the republicans completely. However, in the towns occupied by French forces a referendum was organised in order to decide whether the people of Mexico wished to have Maximilian as their emperor. Juárez called upon the Mexican people to boycott the referendum and announced that anyone who voted would be deemed to have collaborated with the invaders and would be guilty under his decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1861. The majority of the inhabitants in the towns held by the French went to the polls and voted for Maximilian but the official results were certainly suspect. The republican propaganda claimed that the people were voting under the glitter of French bayonets and there was certainly a degree of force involved in the election. Nevertheless, the regency announced that of the 8,620,892 population of Mexico, 6,445,564 had voted for Maximilian.<sup>484</sup> The election was certainly a fraud; no elections could have been held north of Zacatecas or south of Tehuacan, where the French had no control. And even in the central areas voting only took place in the few towns controlled by the French.

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<sup>483</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 3

<sup>484</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 85

Charles Wyke commented that the referendum was held in such unimportant towns that they were ‘only inhabited by two Indians and a monkey’<sup>485</sup>. However, the official figures impressed Maximilian; they confirmed his belief that he was destined to rule a people and that he would be welcomed enthusiastically by the Mexican people; it also gave Maximilian and Napoleon the legitimacy they needed for the occupation and the creation of a monarchy in Mexico.

### **3.10. THE ACT OF RENUNCIATION**

By the end of 1863 it seemed as it would only be a matter of months before Maximilian was crowned Emperor of Mexico, although Franz Joseph kept pointing out the fact that his initial guarantees had not yet been fulfilled and although Count Rechberg kept warning Maximilian about the dangers that were involved in the Mexican adventure. But Maximilian appeared to be resolved on accepting the Mexican offer and thus Count Rechberg mentioned in the course of a conversation with Maximilian, who was on a visit to Vienna, that before accepting the throne of Mexico Maximilian would have to officially resign for himself and his heirs all rights of succession to the Austrian throne and his financial rights as an Austrian archduke. Maximilian told Rechberg that he

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<sup>485</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p. 86



would not sign away his rights in Austria.<sup>†</sup> The matter of Maximilian resigning his rights to the Habsburg throne should have been the topic of the meeting Maximilian had with Franz Joseph on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1864 but Maximilian stated that he was yet unsure whether or not to accept the Mexican offer. Why Franz Joseph did not raise the subject is a more complex question: firstly, he definitely wished to put off having an unpleasant family quarrel with his brother; secondly, he wanted to ensure that Maximilian completely committed himself to the Mexican adventure so that he could get rid of him as a disruptive factor in the political arena; and thirdly if Maximilian would have known about the Act of Renunciation it would have given him time to appeal to the *Reichsrat*. The *Reichsrat* would probably have sided with the Emperor, in which case the Hungarian diet could have evoked its right to discuss the problem. The result of the discussion of the Hungarian diet would in all likelihood have been contrary to that of the Austrian diet and may have caused discord between the two parts of the empire.<sup>486</sup>

At the beginning of March 1864 Maximilian went to Paris to discuss the matter of a loan for Mexico and the duration of the stay of the French troops in Mexico with Napoleon. He told Franz Joseph that his acceptance of the Mexican throne would depend on the answers he got from Napoleon but in reality he had already made up his mind to go to Mexico. However, on the eve of Maximilian's departure for Paris Count Rechberg handed him a document, compiled by the court historian Ritter von Arneth and autographed by the Emperor. Drawing on historical analogies and parallels, the memorandum set out in lengthy detail the reasons for the Act of Renunciation. The case of Leopold of Tuscany was dismissed as Tuscany had always been part of the Imperial inheritance, whereas Mexico's geographical position precluded such a possibility. Leopold, the third son of Maria Theresa, had been reigning over the Habsburg's

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<sup>†</sup> Appendix 2: The Act of Renunciation

<sup>486</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 5

possessions in Tuscany from 1765 until 1790, but when his older brother Joseph II died, Leopold became emperor of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire in 1790. However, Tuscany had not only been part of the Habsburg inheritance but was also only some hundreds miles away from Vienna, whereas Mexico was not even located on the same continent. What would happen in the event of Franz Joseph dying while the crown prince Rudolph was still a child? Would the Emperor of Mexico be able to perform the duties of a regent when he was ruling over a country at the other side of the world? Maximilian dismissed the memorandum and continued his journey via Brussels, where he received ‘valuable advice from cher papa’,<sup>487</sup> to Paris.

### 3.10.1. NEGOTIATIONS IN PARIS

Maximilian and Charlotte were welcomed by Napoleon with Imperial honours; there were balls and banquets in their honour and a reception that was attended by all the diplomatic representatives, with the exception of the United States minister, William Dayton. He had declined the invitation, for Washington wanted to make it quite clear that they still recognized Juárez as the lawful president of Mexico and would not accept a foreign emperor. Despite this subtle warning from the United States, Napoleon and Maximilian began to discuss the unresolved questions of the duration of the stay of the French troops and of a Mexican loan in private conversations. In the end Napoleon

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<sup>487</sup> Ratz, K., *Sehnsucht*, 2000, p. 134

acceded to Maximilian's request that France keep twenty-five thousand troops in Mexico for the next three years and that eight thousand men of the French Foreign Legion remain there for eight years. Maximilian in return promised to pay the entire cost of intervention, the costs of French supporting troops, and all prior debts due England, France, and Spain, including the exorbitant Jecker loan. This amounted to the astonishing sum of two hundred and sixty million francs for France alone; it included the expenses of the French army only up to 1<sup>st</sup> July 1864, after which date the Mexican government was to pay one thousand francs a year for every French soldier in the country, but it excluded the repayment of the Jecker bonds and the claims of the French nationals for damages suffered during the war. The Austrian ambassador in Paris, Richard Metternich, regarded the terms of the loan as highly unfavourable: 'the burdens involved are enormous and the finances will have to be very well regulated to survive such monstrous demands'.<sup>488</sup> And indeed, this financial clause of what was later known as the Treaty of Miramar almost tripled Mexico's already huge external debts and thus condemned the new Mexican Empire to bankruptcy from the very beginning. For the time being though, Maximilian congratulated himself of having secured the support of the French troops and on the friendly relationship he had established with Napoleon. From Paris Maximilian and Charlotte went to London in the hope of getting guarantees. However, the British government and Queen Victoria refused to give anything but their best wishes for the success of the Mexican adventure. Even Maximilian had to acknowledge the fact that 'it is impossible to insist on the guarantees, which had been demanded at the beginning, namely the one from Britain. (...) I cannot with honour put forward conditions which I now know to be unattainable'.<sup>489</sup> This was the decisive point in Maximilian's candidature for the Mexican throne: after two more than two years of

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<sup>488</sup> Salomon, H. *L'Ambassade de Richard Metternich à Paris*, Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1931, p. 153

<sup>489</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 6

negotiations he was willing to compromise on the main condition he had once seen as indispensable: the guarantee of another naval power besides France.

### 3.10.2. THE FAMILY PACT

In the meantime the Mexican representatives were crossing the Atlantic, on their way to Miramar to proclaim Maximilian Emperor of Mexico. On their way back to Miramar from London, Maximilian and Charlotte stopped in Vienna, where Maximilian was handed a document from Franz Joseph. The emperor demanded that Maximilian sign the family pact renouncing all his rights to the Austrian throne as well as the financial benefits he had hitherto enjoyed; otherwise Franz Joseph, as the head of the House of Habsburg, would not consent to Maximilian becoming emperor of Mexico.<sup>490</sup> Maximilian was indignant for he fully realized for the first time the consequences of his actions: the signing of the family pact practically meant a withdrawal from the House of Habsburg and as such closed the door to an honourable return to Austria if the Second Mexican Empire proved to be less stable than expected. The following day, Franz Joseph addressed a letter to his brother, which read:

I can give my consent to your accepting the crown of Mexico only on condition that you solemnly confirm the deed, of which I enclose a copy, renouncing for you and

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<sup>490</sup> HHSTA, Archiv, K. Max von Mexiko, cart. 12

your heirs the rights of succession and inheritance in Austria. If you are unable to consent to consent to this and prefer to refuse the crown of Mexico, I will take it upon myself to notify the foreign countries of your refusal, and in particular the Imperial crown of France.<sup>491</sup>

Franz Joseph left Maximilian only two choices: either sign the family pact and become emperor of Mexico or keep his rights to the Austrian throne but remain an unemployed archduke in Miramar. Maximilian still refused to sign.

Maximilian's stubborn refusal to sign the Act of Renunciation raises of course the question whether Maximilian actually believed that the Mexican Empire would be stable enough to resist the challenges posed by the republicans and the United States. Why else would he insist on his rights as an Austrian Archduke? An explanation for Maximilian's behaviour might be found in the fact that he was immensely proud of his Habsburg heritage.<sup>492</sup> As already mentioned, there were certain dynastic aspects to Maximilian's candidature for the Mexican throne. But by signing the Act of Renunciation he would cease to be a member of the House of Habsburg and thus, his achievements would not further the prestige and standing of the Habsburg family. Moreover, Maximilian's insistence on his birthright also makes it appear likely that Maximilian would have abandoned the Mexican crown as soon as the Habsburg throne would become vacant.<sup>493</sup>

On 27<sup>th</sup> March 1864, two days before the ceremony proclaiming Maximilian Emperor of Mexico was to take place in Miramar, Maximilian decided to refuse the Mexican throne. Maximilian's plan was to leave for Rome the next day in order to explain to the Pope the reasons for his refusal of the Mexican crown and then to retire to the island of

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<sup>491</sup> HHSTA, Archiv, K. Max von Mexiko, cart. 12

<sup>492</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1982, p.53

<sup>493</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Der Fall Maximilian von Mexiko*, Ueberreuter, Vienna, 2002, p.95

Lacroma.<sup>494</sup> However, Maximilian told Hidalgo, who had already arrived in Miramar for the ceremony, of his decision and Hidalgo telegraphed the news to Napoleon. Maximilian and Charlotte were already drafting their letters of refusal to Napoleon and Eugenie, when a letter from the French Emperor arrived appealing to Maximilian's honour: 'Your Imperial Highness is bound in honour to me, to Mexico, and to the subscribers of the loan. Family quarrels cannot prevent Your Imperial Highness from fulfilling more exalted tasks elsewhere. Only think of your own reputation. A refusal now seems to me impossible'.<sup>495</sup> On the same day Napoleon wrote a follow up letter in which he wrote the much quoted sentence: 'What would you really think of me if, after Your Imperial highness had already reached Mexico, I were suddenly to say that I can no longer fulfil the conditions to which I have set my signature?'.<sup>496</sup>

This touched a nerve with Maximilian for Napoleon had written to him that 'the honour of the House of Habsburg is in question'.<sup>497</sup> He postponed the acceptance ceremony that was to have taken place the next day and he offered Franz Joseph a compromise: he would sign the family pact if a secret clause was added by which Franz Joseph promised to restore him to his rights in Austria if he were driven out of Mexico.<sup>498</sup> Franz Joseph would not agree to the secret clause, but he promised that if Maximilian was forced to abdicate as emperor of Mexico he would 'take all measures to safeguard your position in my empire that I shall find compatible with its interests'.<sup>499</sup> He also agreed to pay Maximilian an annuity of one hundred thousand gulden every year and to release him from the debt of fifty thousand gulden he had incurred in building Miramar. He also granted 'the recruitment of approximately six thousand men and three hundred sailors in

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<sup>494</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 159

<sup>495</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 62/2

<sup>496</sup> Ibid

<sup>497</sup> Ibid

<sup>498</sup> HHSTA, Archiv Max von Mexiko, cart. 12

<sup>499</sup> Ibid

the monarchy for military services in Mexico';<sup>500</sup> these forces were to form part of the Austrian- Belgian volunteer corps.

However, this was not good enough for Maximilian; he insisted on the secret clause. Charlotte even went to Vienna to emphasize their position but Franz Joseph would not make any further concessions. On the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1864 Franz Joseph came himself to Miramar to have a final talk with his brother about the subject. The two brothers spent several hours in the library and when they emerged they both were in an agitated state. In the end, Maximilian finally signed the family pact though with great resentment; in fact, on the sea voyage from Miramar to Mexico, Maximilian drafted a protestation in which he declared that he did not recognise the legal validity of the family pact because he had been forced to sign by unfair pressure from eminent persons in several countries.<sup>501</sup> Maximilian accompanied the emperor to his special train but just as Franz Joseph was about to board the train he turned around and the two brothers said goodbye with tears in their eyes. They were never to meet again.

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<sup>500</sup> HHSTA, Archiv Max von Mexiko, cart. 12

<sup>501</sup> Ibid

### 3.11. THE EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I OF MEXICO

On the following day the Mexican delegation, which had come to make Maximilian the formal offer of the crown, arrived from Trieste and were received by Maximilian and Charlotte in the presence of a large gathering, including members of their future imperial household as well as the principal notables of Trieste and Napoleon's representative, General Frossard. In the bedchamber at the castle of Miramar Gutierrez de Estrada proclaimed Maximilian emperor of Mexico suggesting that in this role he represented the united people of Mexico. After the proclamation Maximilian signed the Treaty of Miramar, which guaranteed French military and financial support for the newly found monarchy but which also made the Mexican Empire liable for the debts incurred by previous governments. It was certainly the strain of the quarrel of the last three weeks and his mortification at having been forced to sign the Act of Renunciation that caused him to collapse at his desk in the library a few hours after the ceremony, thus postponing his departure to Rome and thence Mexico.

Three days later Maximilian was fit enough to travel, but he found it incredibly hard to say goodbye to his dream castle, his household and to the people of Trieste, of whom hundreds had gathered to see him leave the country. Thus he wept as he boarded the Austrian warship, the *Novara*, at Miramar.

The first stop for the newly crowned Imperial couple was Rome to get the Pope's blessing. Charlotte and Maximilian were given a splendid reception but neither Maximilian nor Pius IX gave any attention to the outstanding differences, the matter of the church properties, the necessity for a concordat and the appointment of a nuncio, which should have been settled before the Imperial couple departed for Mexico.



Maximilian, who seemed to have fully recovered, was as gratified as Charlotte by the splendour of the reception and thus evaded these unpleasant issues. Other commentators were not blinded by the splendour of the reception and one cynic commented that it was ‘no wonder they guard Maximilian so well. They would have difficulty in finding anyone else to take his place’.<sup>502</sup> The same view was reflected in the little songs, which were so popular with the lower classes:

Massimiliano, non ti fidare.

Torno al Castello di Miramare.

Quel trono facile di Montezuma.

E un nappo gallico colmo di spuma.

Del timeo Danaos, del ti ricorda.

Sotto il porpora trova la corda.

[Maximilian, do not be misled.

Go back to the Castle of Miramar.

That beguiling throne of Montezuma.

Is nothing but a cup of Gallic froth.

Remember Danaos and his dangerous gifts

Under the purple you may find the hangman’s rope]<sup>503</sup>

Maximilian and Charlotte were probably the only ones in Rome who did not hear the rhyme and the two continued their thirty-seven day voyage across the Atlantic, from Civita Vecchia to Veracruz.

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<sup>502</sup> Wiedenhofer, J., *Öffentliche Meinung in Österreich*, 1978, p. 63

<sup>503</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 7

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Second Mexican Empire*

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‘The country is being pacified and the robbers are being pushed back; but now is not the time for Napoleon to withdraw his troops.’

*Emperor Maximilian, in a letter to his father-in-law Leopold I, King of the Belgians, 9<sup>th</sup> February 1865*

After a sea voyage of thirty-seven days the *Novara* reached Vera Cruz on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1864; Maximilian had at last arrived in his new empire. The imperial couple went ashore the next morning and although the French and Mexican officials in Vera Cruz had organised an impressive reception, there was hardly any response at all from the people. The streets were empty, and the few individuals they encountered were too indifferent to cheer; arguably for the inhabitants of Vera Cruz the arrival of their new sovereigns was nothing more than yet another *pronunciamiento*. Galderan, the former vice consul of the United States in Vera Cruz, described the entry of Maximilian and Charlotte into the city in a letter to the U.S. foreign secretary William H. Seward:

He [Maximilian] landed the following morning about six o’clock and met with a grand reception from the French and Mexican authorities; on the part of the people no

popular demonstration was made in the least in fact they remained impassive spectators of the scene drawn thither by curiosity alone.<sup>504</sup>

In the face of this chilly reception Maximilian maintained what Countess Kollonitz called ‘a sarcastic tranquillity’,<sup>505</sup> but the Mexican representative pointed out that Vera Cruz was a liberal stronghold and that the reception would be much warmer further inland. This was certainly true: in Orizaba and in Puebla the imperial couple met with quite an ovation, which had been carefully staged by the French military authorities, and this was repeated at Guadalupe on the outskirts of the capital, where Maximilian and Charlotte paid a visit to the famous shrine of the virgin Mary. It was definitely these staged shows of support for the empire that Maximilian remembered and which he described in his letters to Europe as ‘a mass of people that came from the surrounding mountains and villages to see us’.<sup>506</sup> On 12<sup>th</sup> June 1864, the anniversary of the French occupation of the capital, Maximilian and Charlotte made their state entry into Mexico-City, where they were cheered by a crowd of one hundred thousand people.<sup>507</sup> On this day, it actually appeared possible that Maximilian could found a dynasty on the throne of Montezuma.

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<sup>504</sup> National Archives, Washington D.C. (NA), Dispatches from the US consuls in Veracruz, M183 – roll 9

<sup>505</sup> Kollonitz, P., *Eine Reise nach Mexiko im Jahre 1864*, Carl Gerold’s Sohn, Vienna, 1867, p. 59

<sup>506</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 44

<sup>507</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 61/2

#### 4.1. ESTABLISHING AN EMPIRE – POLITICAL LEGITIMISATION

In order to establish a functioning state Maximilian and the imperial government needed the power to impose their will on the Mexican people; this could not be achieved by coercion alone, but the empire had to justify its demands and existence before the people. Seymour Lipset states that ‘legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society’.<sup>508</sup> In the case of the Second Mexican Empire it was pivotal that the people should regard the monarchy as the legitimate form of government: firstly, the liberals stated that Maximilian had usurped power illegally as he had come into power with the support of French arms; and secondly, Juárez and the liberals never relinquished their claim to be the legitimate government of Mexico and thus provided a republican alternative to the monarchical form of government of the Second Mexican Empire. Therefore, for the empire to achieve legitimacy and to create a sense of loyalty amongst the Mexican people, it was first of all necessary for Maximilian to establish political institutions through which he could impose his will and which the Mexican people could regard as the legitimate government.

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<sup>508</sup> Lipset, S. “Social Conflict; Legitimacy, and Democracy”, in *Legitimacy and the State*, ed. W. Connolly, Blackwell, Oxford, 1984, p. 88

#### 4.1.1. THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

When Maximilian was proclaimed emperor of Mexico on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1864, he had stated in his acceptance speech his intentions 'to place the monarchy under the authority of constitutional laws, so soon as the pacification of the country shall be accomplished'<sup>509</sup>. However, once Maximilian had arrived in Mexico he had to acknowledge that the political and military situation was not stable enough to introduce a constitution:

(...) constitutional attempts cannot even be considered at the moment, complete authority has to remain in the hands of the government at least until the country is completely pacified.<sup>510</sup>

Maximilian was probably correct in assuming that it would have been difficult to implement a constitution; a constitutional monarchy would have required the establishment of a parliament, which in return would have required elections to be held throughout the country. However, the fact that the French forces still had not managed to pacify the whole of Mexico and that there was still fighting going on between the French army and the republicans made it impossible for any elections to be conducted in Mexico. Moreover, Maximilian had been brought up to regard the establishment of a parliament and the creation of a constitution as dangerous ideas, which limited the

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<sup>509</sup> *New York Times*, 28<sup>th</sup> April 1864, retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1864/04/28/news/spirit-press-approaching-campaign-advice-jeff-davis-growls-people-arrest><http://www.nytimes.com/1864/04/28/news/spirit-press-approaching-campaign-advice-jeff-davis-growls-people-arrest-alleged.html?scp=6&sq=New+York+Times%2C+28th+April+1864&st=p>>

<sup>510</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 44

monarch's god-given rights to rule his people. Thus it was not only the advice of Napoleon III but also his own inclination due to his Habsburg heritage that led Maximilian to postpone the implementation of a constitution in Mexico.

As it proved impossible to implement a constitution while the country was not yet pacified, Maximilian issued the *Estatuto Provisional del Imperio Mexicano* on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1865; the statute formed the basis of the state and provided a body of rules for all branches of public administration. In order to establish the empire as the legitimate form of government in the eyes of the Mexicans, the statute replaced former republican institutions with nine ministries.<sup>511</sup> Moreover, it allotted the emperor a position that was anything but a ceremonial one; Maximilian could exercise real political power. A council of state, whose members were appointed by Maximilian himself, made, reformed, declared and abrogated all imperial laws and government regulations. The emperor would offer proposals for consideration and after debate in the council the approved resolution would circulate as law.<sup>512</sup> However, for this government to work Maximilian not only needed the support of conservatives but also of the liberals in Mexico.

Maximilian had come to Mexico in the hope of winning over Juárez and of establishing a government based on the support of moderate liberals. He had little success with the former. While sailing to Mexico on board of the *Novara*, Maximilian had written to Juárez, inviting him to come to Mexico-City and join the imperial government.<sup>513</sup> Juárez had flatly refused the offer but Maximilian, nevertheless, attempted to integrate moderate liberals into his government. Thus, Maximilian appointed two well-known Mexican liberals to the state council: Jose Fernando Ramirez, who had hitherto opposed

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<sup>511</sup> Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart. 12/18

<sup>512</sup> Ibid

<sup>513</sup> Most historians have regarded this letter by Maximilian as a historical truth but Ridley has argued that the letter was a forgery by Juárez. Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p.179

the intervention, became foreign minister and Martin Castillo was appointed as finance minister. At the same time, Maximilian failed to appoint any prominent conservative to the state council: Almonte, who had headed the regency before Maximilian's arrival, was given a high-sounding court appointment to keep him out of politics, while the two other leading conservatives, Marquez and Miramón, were sent abroad. Marquez was sent on a mission to Jerusalem and Constantinople, and Miramón to Berlin to study the latest Prussian military tactics. He thus alienated the very party that had called him to the country and that was his power base and yet failed to gain the support of the moderate liberals.

Nevertheless, instituting the state on paper, however, was only the first step; the administration also needed to be functional. Maximilian hoped that the establishment of an effective Mexican bureaucracy, modelled on the lines of bureaucracies in Austria, would gather support for his regime after years of almost total state collapse. In principle Maximilian's ideas were correct, but unfortunately his reforms never touched the core problems of the Mexican administration, such as the corruption of the civil servants, who 'all do not know their duties and they only live for the money'.<sup>514</sup> Maximilian's reforms thus only scratched at the surface; they never questioned the social or economical problems that lay behind the difficulties his administration was facing, and in the end they were nothing else but a make over of the existing system. For instance, an inspection of the Foreign Ministry found no discernible filing system or registry of incoming and outgoing correspondence; important letters lay scattered on the floor or were missing altogether. Moreover, employees maintained no fixed working hours, coming and going as they pleased and an inspection at the Ministry of the Interior produced similar results. Although Maximilian claimed proudly that after

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<sup>514</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p.215

enacting 'radical changes' the civil servants now worked 'actively and regularly',<sup>515</sup> it remained doubtful if this was actually the case. However, these examples showed that apart from selective and paternalistic actions, Maximilian's reforms were in essence conservative, aiming at the uphold existing structures in Mexican society.

However, Maximilian's comments about being 'bound to recognize that capable men are almost impossible to find amongst the Mexicans'<sup>516</sup> prove that he appeared to have believed, at least to a certain extent, in the negative stereotypes attributed to the Mexican nation and in the resulting inferiority of the Mexican culture in comparison to their own. Charlotte described 'the people [as] apathetic, partly by nature, partly as a result of their misfortunes'<sup>517</sup> and Maximilian complained that 'capable men are almost impossible to find amongst the Mexicans'<sup>518</sup> for 'they all do not know their duties and they only live for the money'.<sup>519</sup> It is possible to argue that Maximilian saw it as his moral obligation to bring order to a country 'that was currently devastated by chaos but that was largely untouched by civilisation'.<sup>520</sup> Since Maximilian perceived Mexican society as inferior or less civilized than the European ones he had 'to look to the French element in particular for intelligent and practical schemes'<sup>521</sup>. As a consequence of Mexican inferiority it was his paternal mission to civilise the country, to educate the Mexicans in the fields of economy, administration, culture and morals, in short 'to educate the people in every detail'.<sup>522</sup> The fact that Maximilian referred to his subjects in terms of children who had to be civilised has been an idea that historians have

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<sup>515</sup> Duncan, P.H. Political Legitimation and Maximilian's Second Empire in Mexico, 1864-1867. In *Estudios Mexicanos*, 1996, Vol. 12/1, p.35

<sup>516</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>517</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 50/1

<sup>518</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>519</sup> Praschl-Bichler, G., *Corvetten-Capitän*, 2006, p. 213

<sup>520</sup> Anders, F. & Eggert, K., *Maximilian von Mexico*, 1982, p. 88

<sup>521</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>522</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 50/1



identified as typical for Habsburg neo-absolutism: the sovereign expected loyalty from his subjects, just like a parent expected loyalty from a child.<sup>523</sup>

#### 4.1.2. EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

Ever since the Assembly of Notables had offered the Mexican throne to Maximilian, the liberals in Mexico and the United States had argued that Maximilian and his government were not the legitimate rulers of the country, since the support for the emperor did not go 'beyond the populations controlled by the French and a few impotent and pursued bands, and as all that is very far from forming a majority of the country'.<sup>524</sup> Although Maximilian certainly believed that the plebiscite, which had been conducted in 1864, was the expressed will of the Mexican people and consequently provided the legitimate basis for his rule, he nevertheless attached great importance to winning diplomatic recognition from foreign governments just as Napoleon III had done a decade earlier. The reasoning behind this insistence on diplomatic acceptance was that if foreign powers recognised the empire, then the increased prestige abroad would aid in strengthening the state's image at home. International acknowledgement could also

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<sup>523</sup> See: Gottsmann, A., Venetien 1859-1866. Österreichische Verwaltung und nationale Opposition. In: Arnold Suppan / Grete Klingenstein (Eds), *Zentraleuropa-Studien*, Vol. 8., Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna, 2005, p. 502.  
Hobsbawm, E.J *Nationen und Nationalismus. Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, Campus-Verlag, Frankfurt, 1992, p. 100.

<sup>524</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State 1821-1906, M54 – roll 8

serve as a weapon to discredit and delegitimize the rival claims of Juárez's republican regime. Of course, his empire was immediately recognized by France, Austria and Belgium and soon other countries were sending diplomatic representatives to Mexico; the King of Prussia reopened his legation in Mexico-City and even King Victor Emmanuel of Italy, who wished to stay on good terms with Napoleon III, sent a minister. Portugal, Spain, Russia, Holland and Switzerland recognized Maximilian's empire but did not send ministers. Although Britain hesitated initially, Queen Victoria, who was Charlotte's cousin, eventually named Peter Scarlett as minister to the Mexican court.<sup>525</sup>

While Maximilian gathered European support, his empire had little backing among its new world neighbours. The Central American republics of Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica all resisted the idea of an "American" monarchy, fearing possible annexation by Mexico. Chile, along with Venezuela, Argentina and Peru refused to receive Mexican ministers. The concerns of the other southern American countries were not completely unfounded; while the whole Mexican project had still looked uncertain, Maximilian had already dreamed of a Habsburg Empire in America. In his imagination this empire would have comprised most of the central and southern American states, with Mexico and Brazil, where Maximilian's cousin already ruled as Pedro II, as the two nucleus states.<sup>526</sup> As a consequence, Brazil and Guatemala were the only two countries that were amenable to the neighbouring empire.

It was exactly the fear of an expansion of the Mexican monarchy to the south that made diplomatic attempts no more successful in the United States, where acceptance was critical. As Mexico's neighbour and military power to the north, the United States was a vital potential ally for Maximilian. If the Washington administration made peace with

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<sup>525</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart 10/4

<sup>526</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1978, p. 176

the empire, then the military and financial support of the Juárez government would disappear, along with the threat of U.S. intervention. However, as early as 1861 the United States had stated that she was firmly opposed to the French invasion of Mexico and the resulting establishment of the empire. Many in the political arena of Washington called for action to defend the Monroe Doctrine; amongst those were members of the Congress as well as Romero, Juárez's delegate in Washington, who argued that the US had to do more to help the Mexican liberals. The reports in of the American press largely reflected this attitude, but the New York Times argued that the US government should inform France that 'the attempt to control Mexico is an offence to us' and then 'determine on some course of policy which will comport with our principles and our dignity'.<sup>527</sup> Despite these appeals to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, the United States maintained neutrality toward the conflict, since a conflict with France over Mexico would have jeopardized the war effort against the Confederacy. The southern states, on the other hand, would have recognised the Second Mexican Empire on the condition that France would recognise them as an independent country in return; the diplomatic recognition of France would have given the confederate states a certain level of diplomatic standing when dealing with other countries as well as with its northern neighbour. Until mid-1865, the American Civil War complicated Maximilian's diplomatic efforts; although the southern states offered diplomatic recognition, it was contingent upon Mexico obtaining French support for the Confederacy in return. Southern endorsement, moreover, carried the danger of creating an obstacle in dealing with the government in Washington. Despite great efforts by the empire, the United States refused to establish diplomatic relations with Maximilian and continued its support of the Juárez regime.

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<sup>527</sup> *New York Times*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1865, retrieved 18<sup>th</sup> February 2010, <<http://www.nytimes.com/1865/07/17/news/austria.html?scp=5&sq=17th+july+1865&st=p>>

## 4.2. ESTABLISHING AN EMPIRE – POPULAR ACCEPTANCE

Maximilian did not only have to fashion public support for an entirely new theory of state but he also had to generate acceptance and authority for himself. Bearing in mind that there had not been an emperor in Mexico since the fall of Iturbide and the First Mexican Empire some forty years earlier, Maximilian recognised the fact that in order to build an image of monarchical power in Mexico, it was necessary to convince the polity of its legitimacy. The referendum, which had been held in 1864 under the glitter of French bayonets, certainly gave the monarchical system in Mexico legitimacy, at least on paper, but Maximilian knew that for it to survive and to prove stable it had to appeal to the masses and create a sense of dynastic loyalty amongst the higher circles of Mexican society.

### 4.2.1. TRYING TO WIN OVER THE *CREOLES* AND THE *MESTIZOS*

As already mentioned Mexico did not have a landed aristocracy on which the newly created monarchy could rely; this was due to the fact that after Mexico had gained independence from Spain the top of the colonial social structure had been cut off. The Spaniards had traditionally occupied the highest offices in the state but once Mexico

gained independence the Spaniards had been expelled from the country. Thus the creoles took over the positions of the expelled Spaniards; they took over the highest levels of government; they became the highest clerics; and they solidified their position as rich businessmen, professionals, leading merchants, industrialists and mine owners. In order to fashion support for the empire and to guarantee its stability it was, therefore, crucial for Maximilian to bind this highly influential social group to the ruling dynasty. The best way to achieve this goal was to create an imperial court in Mexico-City; it would not only give dignity and grandeur to the newly created throne but the creation of court offices as well as the dispensing of awards and favours would also bind the Mexican upper class to the court.<sup>528</sup>

Maximilian was well aware that the establishment of a court would strengthen the ties between the creoles and the empire; therefore he had focused his attention on drafting the rules and regulations of his court during his crossing of the Atlantic. When it was finally printed in 1865, these guidelines on etiquette and court ceremonies, the *Reglamento para el servicio y ceremonial de la corte*, filled almost four hundred pages. The manual detailed a wide range of job descriptions from the grand marshal of the court, aides-de-camp, chamberlains and court doctors to stable hands, cloakroom attendants, and maids. It also contained over one hundred categories of precedence, including every detail of the procedures to be observed at levees and receptions; the precise moment during the Maundy Thursday ceremonies at which the emperor should hand his hat to his aide and the empress give her shawl and fan to her lady-in-waiting; and who should hold the basin when they washed their hands.<sup>529</sup> In a letter to Karl Ludwig, Maximilian noted that ‘our Court Ceremonial, a thick printed book, a gigantic

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<sup>528</sup> Pani, E.P., ‘El Proyecto de Estado de Maximiliano a Través de la Vida Cortesana y del Ceremonial Público’. In: *Historia Mexicana*, 1995, Vol 155/2, p. 447

<sup>529</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart7/31

piece of work, is at last complete. I may flatter myself that in this sphere I have achieved the most finished piece of work that has ever been done'.<sup>530</sup>

The regulations were closely modelled on the strict Spanish etiquette that was in use the Hofburg in Vienna and to which both Maximilian and Charlotte were accustomed. The implementation of the regulations, however, proved to be rather difficult; while court etiquette was an age-old custom in Austria, this was not the case in Mexico. Sara Yorke Stevenson, a young resident of Mexico-City, observed that

It was at first difficult to establish among republican Mexicans the rigid etiquette of the Austrian court, and some unsuccessful attempts to do so were fruitful of heartache on both sides.<sup>531</sup>

As a consequence, most of the Mexican aristocracy had to learn the rudiments of the etiquette first and it was not until the following year that large and formal receptions were held at the palace. The strict Spanish etiquette that laid so much emphasis on formality also conflicted strongly with Mexican customs and clearly revealed the cultural gap that existed between the sovereigns and their subject. When the wife of General Salas was first introduced to Charlotte:

The poor old lady amiably advanced, prepared to give her the national *abrazo* - a graceful greeting which closely simulates an embrace (...). Much to her consternation, the tall Empress stepped back and drew herself up to her full height at what she regarded an undue liberty, while tears of indignation came into her eyes. Whereupon the poor señora was dissolved in tears, and the incident came near to disturbing the

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<sup>530</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, p. 465

<sup>531</sup> Yorke Stevenson, S., *Maximilian in Mexico: A Woman's Reminiscences of the French Intervention 1862-1867*, Century, New York, 1899, p. 131

good feeling that every one hoped might at once be established between the sovereigns and their Mexican court.<sup>532</sup>

Some historians, like Antonia García Cubas have faulted Maximilian for importing the ‘exaggerated ceremonial of Vienna’,<sup>533</sup> which he argued was alien to Mexican culture. Joan Haslip, on the other hand, has claimed that Maximilian wasted many hours on the writing of the court ceremonial only because he was obsessed with the mystique of royalty.<sup>534</sup> However, it can be argued that his attention to detail did not come from an obsession with the mystique of royalty but from the realisation that a functioning court, which was closely modelled on the Habsburg court in Vienna and which gave him the possibility to dispense offices and favours that would guarantee support for the throne from the most influential parts of society.

Maximilian clearly realized that it was crucial to bind the influential social group of the *creoles* to the court but he also saw the necessity of gathering support for the empire amongst the upper middle class, which consisted mainly of *mestizos*. Many in this group held liberal ideas; thus by granting them access to court Maximilian hoped to bind those to the empire that still had to be won over to the idea of a constitutional monarchy. As a consequence, access to state balls was not only given to the Mexican upper class but also to social and economic elites, which consisted of wealthy landowners and notable persons in commerce, science, industry and fine arts. It was a tactic that Maximilian had already employed during his time as governor in Lombardy-Venetia and just like in Italy it failed again. Although there was great competition for tickets of admission as many in society wanted to attend the balls, Maximilian

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<sup>532</sup> Yorke Stevenson, S., *Maximilian in Mexico*, 1899, p. 131

<sup>533</sup> García Cubas, A., *El libro de mis recuerdos, narraciones históricas; anecdóticas y de costumbres mexicanas anteriores al actual orden social*, Imprenta de Arturo García Cubas Sucesores Hermanos, Mexico-City, 1905, p. 502

<sup>534</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1976, p. 267

nevertheless, could not bind the liberal Mexican to the court and thus they remained in opposition to the establishment of a monarchy in Mexico.

#### 4.2.2. MAXIMILIAN'S POLICY TOWARDS THE INDIAN POPULATION

Throughout the three-hundred-year Spanish domination of Mexico, the Indians had been treated as a conquered people. They were forced to pay tribute to the Spanish crown; by law they were considered wards of the king; and they were forced to work for the state or the church with little or no compensation. In addition, the Indians were subject to restrictions on the types of clothes they could wear, jobs they could hold, money they could borrow, and even meat they could buy.<sup>535</sup> Although both conservative and liberal governments abolished most of the colonial legislation that discriminated against the Indians and other ethnic groups after Mexico gained its independence, legal equality brought few actual benefits to the Indians. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, Indians were forced to join the army, were commandeered into work gangs, and were thrown off their lands.<sup>536</sup> Many were also to work on the estates of the big landowners, the *haciendas*, with no compensation and were subjected to a system of

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<sup>535</sup> Sinkin, R., *Mexican Reform*, 1979, p. 21

<sup>536</sup> Pani, E. P., “*Verdaderas Figuras de Cooper*” o “*Pobres Inditos Infelices*”? *La Política Indigenista de Maximiliano*, In: *Historia Mexicana*, 1998, Vol. 47/3, p.582



slavery. It was amongst this poorest class of people that the idea of an empire had the biggest appeal; most hoped that they could benefit from the empire both materially and financially and that the empire would abolish the system of slavery that still existed in many places.<sup>537</sup>

Even before Maximilian became emperor of Mexico, he had encountered slavery several times during his travels. In Smyrna in 1859 he had insisted on a visit to the slave market and was appalled by ‘the picture of misery and sorrow’<sup>538</sup> that he saw there; in his travels to Brazil in 1860 Maximilian had shown himself shocked by the jesting manner in which the Brazilian landowner referred to the chicote, the double-pronged oxhide whip with which slaves were flogged. Maximilian’s religious beliefs and his humanitarian ideas revolted against the system of slavery and he condemned the government and the clergy who tolerated this practice. He asked himself: ‘is religion not a mockery when a white man arrogates the right to treat men who, like himself, are born in the image of the creator, as if they were beasts of burden, or bales of goods?’<sup>539</sup>

Maximilian had already put a lot of thought into improving the plight of the Indians; he even drew up a referendum about the Indian question.<sup>540</sup> Although the referendum was rather far stretched and its policies almost impossible to implement, it nevertheless provided the principles on which Maximilian based his attitude and policy towards the indigenous population. Arguably Maximilian regarded the Indians as noble savages and saw himself as a kind of father figure but he, nevertheless, attempted to promote their well-being and to protect them from exploitation.<sup>541</sup> Consequently, Maximilian set up a commission that was supposed to end the system of slavery that was still in operation on many *haciendas*; the idea was that the Indians should be elevated from their state of

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<sup>537</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 187

<sup>538</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Mein erster Ausflug*, 1868, p.160

<sup>539</sup> EH. Maximilian, *Aus meinem Leben*, 1867, Vol.V, p. 298

<sup>540</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 143

<sup>541</sup> Pani, E., *La Política Indigenista de Maximiliano*, 1998, p. 576

extreme poverty and slavery by giving them fertile land, which could provide them with food and a basic income.<sup>542</sup> Although Maximilian definitely had the best interests of the Indians at heart, it nevertheless proved to be impossible to lessen the plight of the indigenous population of Mexico due to the resistance of the wealthy and influential landowners.

#### 4.2.3. THE SEARCH FOR AN HEIR

Maximilian had seen his ascension to the Mexican throne only as the beginning for the foundation of a vast Habsburg empire in Latin America stretching from the Rio Grande to the River Plate. In his imagination Mexico and Brazil, where his cousin Pedro already ruled as Pedro II, would be the two nucleus states; the republican states adjacent and lying between Mexico and Brazil would be gradually absorbed by the empire. However, in order to achieve this goal and to guarantee the stability of the monarchy in Mexico Maximilian needed an heir. After ten years of marriage to Charlotte the couple was still childless. There had already been a lot of rumours, most of a slanderous nature, in Europe as to why Maximilian and Charlotte rarely shared a bed after the first years of marriage. The most popular version circulated by Maximilian's enemies was that the estrangement between Charlotte and Maximilian was due to the fact that the Archduke

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<sup>542</sup> Oprießnig, C. *Kickapoo-Indianer am Hofe Kaiser Maximilians von Mexiko. Eine Fallstudie zur Historiographie*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1991, p. 21

had caught syphilis from a prostitute in Vienna and had infected his wife; in another version of the same story Maximilian had caught syphilis from a prostitute in Brazil. Just how little credibility can be laid on this story, is proved by the fact that the exact same tale was told about Franz Joseph and Elizabeth after the Empress left Vienna and went on her travels around Europe. As it seemed unlikely that he and Charlotte would have any progeny, Maximilian looked towards his own family in the search for an heir. He suggested to his youngest brother, Ludwig Viktor, to marry one of Pedro's daughters and thus to become his successor to this Habsburg empire, consisting of Mexico and Brazil, in the new world. Ludwig Viktor, however, had little inclination to marry, as he was probably homosexual, nor to leave Vienna. Consequently he declined both the marriage plan and the offer of becoming Maximilian's heir.<sup>543</sup>

With Ludwig Viktor refusing to take part in the Mexican adventure, Maximilian turned towards the descendants of Mexico's ill-fated first emperor Iturbide, who fortunately had two surviving grand children: Augustín and Salvador. Of the two, Augustín seemed the best candidate as he was the younger one and Salvador was already attending college in Paris. Accordingly an offer was tendered to the family; though the family rejected it a secret agreement was soon reached between the two parties. Maximilian would provide for the education and maintenance of the children, with their aunt Josefa remaining as co-tutor, and both Augustín and Salvador would receive lifetime titles. The rest of the family pledged to leave the country and not return without authorisation; Augustín, on the other hand, stayed with Maximilian and Charlotte in the National Palace in Mexico-City.<sup>544</sup> The adoption of Augustín de Iturbide gave the Mexican monarchy the appearance of continuity by providing a symbolical link of the Second

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<sup>543</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1978, p. 176

<sup>544</sup> Duncan, P. H., *Political Legitimation*, 1996, p. 59

Mexican Empire to the first; thus it gave the empire the opportunity to widen its legitimacy and offered a future Mexican heir to the throne

#### 4.2.4. SYMBOLS AND RITUALS

The main problem of the Second Mexican Empire was that it was perceived by many as having seized power illegally with the support of French arms and that it did not possess any historic roots in Mexico. Thus it was necessary for Maximilian to recast Mexico's past in such a way that the empire appeared to be in line with Mexico's history and tradition. Maximilian understood that the best way to achieve this was to use symbols and rituals with which the majority of the population were familiar and which could create support for the empire from all the different classes and groups in Mexican society. The best example for Maximilian's attempts to use national rituals as a tool to create public support for the empire was the speech delivered on Mexico's independence day in 1864. In the speech Maximilian praised the heroes of the war of independence, distanced the Second Mexican Empire from the 'slavery and despotism'<sup>545</sup> of the Spanish colonial period and managed to gain a lot of support by his patriotic exclamation of 'long live independence and the memory of its heroes'.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Duncan, P. H., *Political Legitimation*, 1996, p. 57

<sup>546</sup> Ibid

In addition to these rituals there were also several symbols that Maximilian utilized in order to link the Second Empire to Mexico's past; for example, the palace of Chalputec, which in 1864 was some four or five miles beyond the western limits of Mexico-City, provided an opportunity to identify the empire with Mexico's Aztec past. The palace stood on a hill surrounded by a large park, where it had been built by the Spanish viceroy in 1785 on the ruins of the palace of the sixteenth-century Aztec emperor, Montezuma. W.H. Bullock commented in his travel journals on the great importance the palace of Chalputec held in the minds of the Indian population:

He [Maximilian] could hardly have made a more successful bid for the sympathies of the Indians; for to no other spot would the monarchical leaning of the mass of the population so naturally attach, as to the rock and grove of Chapultepec.<sup>547</sup>

However, in order to fashion support for the empire from all sides of society, Maximilian had to prove to the liberals and the world that the Mexican monarchy was both modern and progressive. Ignacio Trigueros, the Major of Mexico-City commented that the city needed 'essential improvements to place it at the level enjoyed by the leading cities of Europe and most of the United States'.<sup>548</sup> Therefore, Maximilian and the representatives of the municipal government began with the urban development of Mexico-City; one priority was to expand gas street lighting, not only for convenience and safety but also to enable the city to meet international standards, which in turn would ideally promote foreign trade, economic development and international respect for the empire. The idea that a modern capital would reflect the power and glory of the ruling dynasty led to the fact that the redevelopment program included the

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<sup>547</sup> Bullock, W.H., *Across Mexico in 1864/65*, Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, 2007, p. 145f.

<sup>548</sup> Trigueros, I. *Memoria de los Ramos Municipales correspondiente al semestre de julio a diciembre de 1866 presentada a S.M. Emperador por el alcalde municipal de la ciudad de Mexico Ignacio Trigueros*, Nabu Press, Mexico City, 1867, p. 55

improvements of public drives, such the Alameda, where the upper class of Mexico-City would promenade on evenings and Sundays; Charlotte herself planned the reconstruction of the Alameda and used her own funds to finance the project. The most ambitious of all projects was a planned *paseo*, called the “Calzada de la Emperatriz”. The planned boulevard was to be finer and wider than the Champs-Élysées and was supposed to lead from the Chalputec castle directly into the city, precisely to the statue of Carlos IV near the Alameda.<sup>549</sup>

### 4.3. THE PUPPET OF NAPOLEON?

The Second Mexican Empire had been established with the support of French arms and money and throughout its existence the empire depended heavily on the supply of French money and troops. Arguably Maximilian’s fear that ‘the future sovereign of Mexico will be quite unable to free himself from his tutelage’<sup>550</sup> had come true for although Maximilian now was the crowned emperor of Mexico, he was, nevertheless, not the absolute ruler of the country. Thus it is worth exploring the extent to which Maximilian depended on the support and goodwill of Napoleon III and whether he

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<sup>549</sup> Duncan, P.H., *Political Legitimation*, 1996, p.50

<sup>550</sup> Cone Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, Vol I, p152

could have foreseen this situation by looking at his experiences as governor of Lombardy-Venetia.

#### 4.3.1. FINANCIAL DEPENDENCE

The pretext of the joint intervention of France, Spain and Britain in 1861 had been the fact that the liberal government in Mexico could no longer pay the debts due to foreign debtors; but under Maximilian Mexico's debts more than doubled, rising from \$81, 632,760 in 1861 to \$201, 573,640 in 1866.<sup>551</sup> This enormous rise in Mexico's debts was mainly a cause of the Treaty of Miramar in which Maximilian had promised to pay the entire cost of intervention, the costs of French supporting troops, and all prior debts due Britain, France, and Spain, including the exorbitant Jecker loan. This amounted to the astonishing sum of two hundred and sixty million francs for France alone; it included the expenses of the French army only up to 1<sup>st</sup> July 1864, after which date the Mexican government was to pay one thousand francs a year for every French soldier in the country but it excluded the repayment of the Jecker bonds and the claims of the French nationals for damages suffered during the war.

In addition, the creation and maintenance of a functioning court also added to Mexico's mounting debts; as did Maximilian's attempts to win over those Mexicans, who were opposed to the empire. Thus, household expenses, costs for the state balls, and outfitting

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<sup>551</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 173

the royal residences became serious financial undertakings. Between April and August of 1864, the bill for purchases of silverware totalled \$47,113; chinaware amounted to \$11,375; crystal was bought for \$ 3,512 and wines for \$21,487.<sup>552</sup> Upon his arrival in Mexico Maximilian had granted himself an annual allowance of \$1.5 million; thus Maximilian's personal salary could cover all these expenses. The allowance was the same amount that Emperor Iturbide had received several decades earlier, but it was also extraordinary compared to the salary of the presidents of the Republic of Mexico. Mexico's first republican president, Guadalupe Victoria, received \$36,000 per year, from which came the salaries for his private staff and administrative expenses. The budget of 1869 that had allotted \$30,000 to Juárez was exactly fifty times less the amount that Maximilian received.<sup>553</sup>

Maximilian's allowance and the demands of the French and other debtors were financed through the circulation of Mexican bonds, the so-called *petits bleus*, in Paris and London in 1864 and 1865; these were the first large Mexican bonds ever issued on the Paris stock market and the first substantial Mexican loan in Europe since 1825. Despite Mexico's apparently disastrous straits, decades of civil war, and unenviable record of failure in servicing its foreign debt, thousands of French investors of modest means enthusiastically subscribed at a sixty-three per cent discount rate.<sup>554</sup> Nevertheless, the terms of the Treaty of Miramar made sure that virtually all of the proceeds of the *petits bleus* went to finance the French troops garrisoned in Mexico, to guarantee the loans, to cover the cost of floating the bonds, and to pay off past loans. Of the five hundred and thirty-four million francs nominally issued, only thirty four million, about six percent of

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<sup>552</sup> Duncan, R.H., *Political Legitimation*, 1996, p.42

<sup>553</sup> Ibid

<sup>554</sup> Topik, S.C., 'When Mexico Had the Blues: A Transatlantic Tale of Bonds, Bankers, and Nationalists', 1862–1910. *The American Historical Review* 105.3 (2000): 77 pars. 22 Apr. 2010 <<http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/105.3/ah000714.html>>.



the total, were actually paid to Maximilian's government.<sup>555</sup> Arguably the Treaty of Miramar had condemned the new Mexican Empire to bankruptcy from the very beginning. The financial situation was further aggravated by the fact that the imperial government did not have any access to the silver mines in the north of the country. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that Maximilian could not fulfil these obligations; a fact that he acknowledged in a letter to Napoleon in May 1866.<sup>556</sup> As a consequence, Napoleon found it impossible 'to demand new subsidies of the Corps Législatif for the army to remain in Mexico'.<sup>557</sup> The Austrian ambassador to Mexico also reported that the French finance minister would 'stop advance payments unless revenues of the country were handed over to his agents';<sup>558</sup> and indeed the French forces did take control over the revenue of Mexico, which was mainly created by customs raised at the large ports such as Vera Cruz. However, with the loss of control over the revenues of Mexico Maximilian lost a part of his sovereignty and thus he made himself and the Second Mexican Empire even more dependent on France.

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<sup>555</sup> Topik, S.C., 'When Mexico Had the Blues: A Transatlantic Tale of Bonds, Bankers, and Nationalists, 1862–1910', p. 79

<sup>556</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>557</sup> Ibid

<sup>558</sup> HHSTA, Ministerium des Äußern, Politisches Archiv, Mexico, cart. 4

#### 4.3.2. MILITARY DEPENDENCY

In the Treaty of Miramar Napoleon had guaranteed that twenty-five thousand French troops would be stationed in Mexico for the next three years and that eight thousand men of the French Foreign Legion would remain there for eight years. The stability of the Second Mexican Empire depended largely on these troops; at the beginning of 1865 the French forces had occupied almost all of Mexico and Maximilian's government had established its authority over all except four of Mexico's provinces. Only Guerrero, Chihuahua, Sonora and Baja California, which together had only seven per cent of the country's eight million inhabitants, had not been occupied. With the country finally more or less pacified, a fact that delighted both Maximilian and Napoleon, the French emperor began to urge Maximilian in his letters 'to organise the national troops'<sup>559</sup> as soon as possible, as he felt that he could recall some of his troops now. Maximilian had of course been aware that the French forces would not stay indefinitely but the creation of a regular army proved to be rather difficult: what remained of the Mexican forces lacked order and discipline; units had been broken up and generals had been deprived of their commands.<sup>560</sup> More worryingly though, and was the desertion rate; many Mexican officers and soldiers deserted and joined the liberal forces, taking with them arms, ammunition and equipment.<sup>561</sup> As a consequence, the liberal troops increased in number and were now able to halt or stall the campaigns of the French army. This was the case in the capture of Oaxaca; the French forces had to lay siege to the city for more than six months before they could defeat the liberal troops and occupy Oaxaca.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>560</sup> Chartrand, R. & Hook, R., *The Mexican Adventure*, Osprey, Oxford, 1994, p. 24ff

<sup>561</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 194

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid*, p. 198

As Maximilian had been aware that the French troops would not stay in Mexico indefinitely and that the Mexican troops were neither numerous nor disciplined, he had obtained the guarantees of Franz Joseph and King Leopold to recruit volunteers for an Austrian-Belgian corps even before his departure from Europe. In theory these volunteers should have provided Maximilian with the core for his own imperial army and should have given him a power base independent from the French forces and Napoleon III. Franz Joseph had granted ‘the recruitment of approximately 6,000 men and 300 sailors in the monarchy for military services in Mexico’<sup>563</sup> and together with the soldiers from Belgium the volunteer corps consisted of nine thousand men: all of them had finished the military service in their respective home countries; they had to serve in Mexican forces for six years; and they were guaranteed to be able to return to their old commands in Belgium or Austria after they had served their time in Mexico.<sup>564</sup> Moreover, the Austrian volunteers were not a homogenous group but in fact the soldiers came from all parts of the Austrian Empire; thus it consisted of Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Croats, Austrians and a large group of Poles, who had been fleeing from Russian reprisals after the Polish uprising in 1861. The volunteers should have formed the basis of the imperial Mexican army but the financial difficulties of the empire made it impossible for Maximilian to pay them. In the end, it was the French army that paid the volunteers and thus the Austrian-Belgian corps was put under the control of the French military high command and it was integrated into the French troops in Mexico.<sup>565</sup> Maximilian had thus failed to establish an important power base and the survival of the empire still depended on French arms.

Nevertheless, although the military might of France was essential to the stability of the Second Mexican Empire, Maximilian had astonishingly little influence on the French

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<sup>563</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>564</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Maximilian von Mexico*, 2002, p.106

<sup>565</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Der Fall Maximilian*, 2002, p.107

army and the French military campaigns in the country. Just how little influence Maximilian had can be deduced from his strained relationship with the commander of the French forces in Mexico, Marshal Bazaine. Before the landing of the emperor, Bazaine had been in the eyes of conservatives and liberals alike ‘the master of Mexico’<sup>566</sup>. Being used to giving orders to everybody in Mexico, including the regents and the archbishop, it was not easy for him to submit to Maximilian. Maximilian, on the other hand, found it hard to work with a man, who in many ways undermined his authority in his own country. Although Bazaine’s behaviour to Maximilian in public was impeccably correct, and although Maximilian on his side gave many public demonstrations of respect for Bazaine, there nevertheless existed a friction between them that began a few weeks after Maximilian’s arrival in Mexico. In Bazaine’s opinion Maximilian was tackling none of ‘the grave questions by which the country is disturbed’<sup>567</sup>, while Maximilian accused the Marshal of ‘laziness and lack of organizing power coupled with jealousy and discontent with others’.<sup>568</sup> Although Maximilian and Charlotte constantly complained in their letters to, respectively, Napoleon and Eugenie of the dilatoriness and expense of the campaign and accused Bazaine of incompetence, the French emperor never showed any intention of releasing Bazaine of his command or to give Maximilian more power in military matters.<sup>569</sup> The tension that existed in the relationship between Bazaine and Maximilian, however, was a result of the fact that the Marshal was not subordinated to the Maximilian’s authority; Bazaine only executed the orders he received from Napoleon.

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<sup>566</sup> Archives Nationales, Archives Napoleon 400 AP 62/2

<sup>567</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire*, MacMillan, London, 1946, p. 163

<sup>568</sup> Ibid

<sup>569</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 50/1

AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

#### 4.3.3. REPETITION OF ITALY

As Maximilian had been afraid that he would be ‘unable to free himself from his [Napoleon’s] tutelage’,<sup>570</sup> it is worth asking the question whether he could have foreseen the difficulties he was facing now in Mexico by looking at his own past as governor of Lombardy-Venetia. Although at first glance the crown of Mexico offered much more power and scope for independent action than the position of governor of Lombardy-Venetia, these two posts that Maximilian once occupied are remarkably similar, as are Maximilian’s attempts to solve the political and social hurdles he encountered in both Mexico and Italy.

In Lombardy-Venetia Maximilian’s purpose had been to represent and embody the Austrian emperor, Franz Joseph, in a dignified manner. Maximilian thus represented the glory and power of the House of Habsburg but had in effect hardly any real power as policies were drawn up in Vienna and the command of the army had not been entrusted to him but to Count Gyulai.<sup>571</sup> In Mexico Maximilian’s position was anything but ceremonial; there he exercised executive power through his prerogative to introduce bills to state council for consideration.<sup>572</sup> Although this gave Maximilian considerable more power than he had possessed in Italy, he nevertheless lacked one crucial element in Mexico as well: the command over the army. As demonstrated above, Maximilian had very little influence on the military campaigns in Mexico as he failed to organise an efficient fighting force. When Maximilian had arrived in Mexico in 1864, there already existed an imperial army of 19,437 men, built around the earlier conservative forces.<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Cone Corti, E.C., *Maximilian and Charlotte*, 1929, Vol I, p.152

<sup>571</sup> Mazohl-Wallnig, B., *Österreichischer Verwaltungsstaat*, 1998 , p. 435

<sup>572</sup> Ibid

<sup>573</sup> Chartand, R. & Hook, R., *Mexican Adventur*, 1994, p.23

Building on these existing forces Maximilian began to reorganize and increase his regular army in January 1865; thus in October 1865 the strength and structure of the forces was reported as 7,658 regulars, 9,432 auxiliary troops, and 12,263 rural guards and gendarmerie, for a total of 29,353.<sup>574</sup> As can be seen, one of the problems of Maximilian's force was that only a quarter of it could be considered as a professional army, whereas nearly half of it was in fact of a police force. Moreover, there were deeper structural problems that plagued the imperial army: the Mexican leadership that was woefully incompetent. General officers had become more accustomed to political intrigue and to fighting small insurgencies than to leading their men in a serious, modern military conflict with a determined, well-equipped and well-trained opponent.<sup>575</sup> Unit commanders and officers on all intermediate levels lacked the kind of hands-on military experience their French counterparts had gained in the Crimean War. As a consequence, the officers of the imperial army did not know how to develop independent action within the framework of a broader operation that may often make the difference between winning and losing a war.<sup>576</sup> Thus Mexican officers tended to be passive, awaiting orders from their superiors but such orders were often too late and when they arrived, often contradictory and meaningless as well. Due to the inefficiency of the leadership and the structural deficits of Maximilian's army military power remained with the commander of the French forces in Mexico, Marshal Bazaine. Of course, this was a challenge to Maximilian's authority, which was constantly threatened by his dependency on France not only in military matters but also financially. French bonds represented the major part of Mexico's revenue but when a second bond was undersubscribed and the Mexican government failed to generate income through taxation and other sources, Napoleon decreed that French forces should take control

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<sup>574</sup> Chartand, R. & Hook, R., *Mexican Adventur*, 1994, p.24

<sup>575</sup> Depalo, W.A.Jr., *The Mexican National Army*, College Station, Texas, 1997, p. 194

<sup>576</sup> Ibid

over the customs raised at the large ports such as Vera Cruz. With the loss of control over the revenues of Mexico Maximilian lost a part of his sovereignty; Maximilian was thus dependent on Napoleon's support, decisions and goodwill in a very similar way as he had been dependent on Franz Joseph as governor of Lombardy-Venetia.

The other similarity between Maximilian's time of emperor of Mexico and governor of Lombardy-Venetia is the ways in which he attempted to overcome the hostility of a large part of society towards respectively his own and Habsburg rule. In both countries Maximilian began a 'guerre de la coquetterie'<sup>577</sup> against the nobility and the social elites; consequently, Maximilian attempted to establish a brilliant court that would create a sense of dynastic loyalty amongst the aristocracy and the local elites by giving him the opportunity to grant favours and access to court. In both Italy and Mexico Maximilian widened access to court in order to include 'not only the gentry but also the nobles in the fields of intellect, (...) of science and the arts, as well as the nobles of the civil life'.<sup>578</sup> This revealed Maximilian's elitist-conservative concept of society: for Maximilian the representatives of society were synonymous with those who possessed intellect and decency, which of course were synonymous with the members of the aristocracy and the social elites. Thus he considered a vast majority of the population in both Mexico and Lombardy-Venetia as unfit to attend court; this was based on Maximilian's belief in certain stereotypes and national characteristics concerning the Italians and the Mexicans, which in return led to the fact that Maximilian perceived Italian and Mexican culture as inferior to his own. A consequence of this perceived superiority was that Maximilian saw it as his paternal mission 'to educate the people in every detail',<sup>579</sup> a view he shared with his brother Franz Joseph, who argued that the Italians 'had to be civilized (...) and had to be made accustomed to treat the court with

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<sup>577</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 94

<sup>578</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 94

<sup>579</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon, 400 AP 46/1

due respect'.<sup>580</sup> It is remarkable that Maximilian referred to his subjects in both Mexico and Lombardy-Venetia in terms of children; Weber and Gottsmann have identified this belief as typical for Hasburg neo-absolutism: the sovereign expected loyalty from his subjects, just like a parent expected loyalty from a child.<sup>581</sup> Nevertheless, Maximilian's attempts to civilize and to create a sense of dynastic loyalty amongst his subjects failed both in Lombardy-Venetia and Mexico.

#### 4.4. ALIENATING ALL SUPPORT

It had been the members of conservative circles in Mexico, who in 1863 had proclaimed the Second Mexican Empire and who had offered the Mexican throne to Maximilian. As a consequence, they expected Maximilian not only to enforce and up-hold conservative principles and ideas, but also to restore the ancient privileges and rights to the conservative elites. However, Maximilian had a reputation of having some liberal beliefs and upon his arrival in Mexico he failed to fulfil the expectations and demands of the conservatives. While Maximilian's refusal to restore the property and privileges to the Catholic Church alienated his natural powerbase, the clergy and the

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<sup>580</sup> Quoted in: Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1979, p. 93

<sup>581</sup> See: Gottsmann, A., *Venetien 1859-1866. Österreichische Verwaltung und nationale Opposition*, In *Zentraleuropäische Studien*, Vol 8, Vienna, 2005, p. 502.  
Weber, C.M., *Italienbild*, 2008, p. 185



conservatives, it nevertheless failed to fashion support for the empire from the liberal side.

#### 4.4.1. THE CHURCH AND THE CONSERVATIVES

By the end of 1864 the Mexican conservatives were thoroughly disillusioned with Maximilian, above all his attitude towards the still unresolved issue of the Church and the former Church property caused a serious rupture between the Emperor and his main supporters. Over the last three hundred years since the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish, the Catholic Church had steadily increased its power, influence and wealth in the country. By the nineteenth century the Catholic Church was the biggest land and property owner, enjoyed many legal privileges and had considerable influence over the population. During the republic the liberals challenged these established rights of the Church; the Ley Juárez abolished many powers of the ecclesiastical courts as well as the legal privileges of the clergy, the constitution of 1857 failed to recognise the Catholicism as the religion of the state and the Ley Lerdo nationalized the property of the Church. It was under this law that the liberal government had closed most of the monasteries and nunneries and had sold the Church land to private purchasers in an attempt to raise money to repay Mexico's enormous debts. The clergy had assumed that Maximilian, as a devout Catholic and as a descendent of a conservative and strictly Catholic dynasty, would reinstate all their former privileges, their land and property.

The former U.S. legate to Mexico, Thomas Gorwin, rightly remarked that ‘the Archbishop [Labastida was] still insisting on the return to the Church of all the property formerly owned by it, and sold under a law of Congress’.<sup>582</sup> Arguably the Mexican clergy had some reason for this assumption, as throughout his four-year candidature for the Mexican throne, Maximilian had never expressed his liberal sympathies in the question of religion and in his letter to Pope Pius IX in November 1861 he had even promised to reinstate the ‘Church in all the prerogatives that are due to her in a country so eminently Catholic’.<sup>583</sup>

Thus the conservatives and the clergy had some reason to be disillusioned by Maximilian’s stance towards the Church when he did not place a cross in his imperial crown and did not call himself emperor “by the grace of God” in official documents. They were shocked to discover that Maximilian did not intend to reverse the anticlerical policies of the republic but instead insisted on religious toleration and confirmed the sales of the Church’s land by the Juárez government and the titles of the purchasers. Apart from Maximilian’s and Charlotte’s belief that it was impossible for a modern ruler to return to the days of Philip II of Spain and refuse toleration, there was also the fact that the heavily indebted Mexican state could simply not afford to buy the land from the purchasers and then return it to the Catholic Church. Moreover, many French nationals and other foreigners had bought land and property that had once belonged to the Catholic Church; thus a reversal of the policy of nationalisation and secularisation of church property would have caused serious problems with Napoleon III, on whose support the survival of the Second Mexican Empire still depended.<sup>584</sup> Moreover, the majority of the Mexicans, who had bought former Church property, were liberals. It would have alienated the liberals even further from the Maximilian and the Mexican

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<sup>582</sup> NA, Dispatches from the U.S. Ministers to Mexico 1823-1906, M97 – roll 31

<sup>583</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 8

<sup>584</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Der Fall Maximilian*, 2002, p.100

monarchy if the imperial government would have repossessed these lands and properties and handed them back to the Catholic Church.

Therefore, it was in Maximilian's best interest to hold on to the policy of nationalisation and not to return the properties and land to the Catholic Church. In Maximilian's mind the only solution to his difficulties with the Church was to enter into negotiations with the nuncio Meglia, whom the Pope had sent to Mexico, and to reach a concordat that would settle the question 'in an entirely Catholic but also perfectly liberal sense'.<sup>585</sup> Although the Vatican had reached agreements with other governments about the nationalisation of church property before, for example in France in 1801, the pope and the curia refused to come to an agreement with Maximilian on the question of Church property in Mexico; the Vatican would not renounce its claims to the nationalized property nor would it tolerate liberty of worship and as a consequence, the private talks between the nuncio and the Emperor did not produce any results. After a few weeks of fruitless discussion, Maximilian issued a decrees in which he declared that the Roman Catholic religion was to be the official religion of the Mexican Empire, but that all other sects would enjoy religious toleration, and that the confiscation and sale of Church lands by the Juárez government were recognised as valid.<sup>586</sup> These decrees did not only provoke the wrath of the entire religious hierarchy in Mexico and of the most powerful sections of the conservative upper class but it also proved to be the final breaking point with Rome; recognising that he could not come to an agreement with Maximilian the papal nuncio issued a public protest against the decrees and left for Rome. With the conservatives and the clergy turning towards open opposition towards the empire, Maximilian was left isolated without any large group of supporters. In less than a year

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<sup>585</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 44

<sup>586</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart 24 /3

after his arrival in Mexico, Maximilian had managed to alienate his own powerbase, the conservatives and the clergy, and had yet failed to win over the liberals.

#### 4.4.2 THE BLACK DECREE

When Maximilian had arrived in Mexico he had hoped to form a government based not only on the support of the conservatives but also of the moderate liberals. Thus he had attempted to integrate moderate liberals into his government by appointing two well-known Mexican liberals, Jose Fernando Ramirez and Martin Castillo, to the state council.<sup>587</sup> However, this gesture had little success in fashioning support for the empire from the liberals, who remained more or less hostile towards the monarchy and Maximilian. Moreover, although French forces and the Austrian-Belgian volunteer corps were hunting Juárez and the liberal troops, whom the imperial government branded as bandits, they never managed to crush the guerrillas completely. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 Maximilian issued a decree, which was mainly directed against the guerrillas but which was also supposed to eradicate the threat that Juárez posed to the popular appeal and acceptance of the empire by the Mexican people.<sup>588</sup> Maximilian believed that Juárez had left Mexican territory and had sought refuge in the United States; thus Maximilian thought that by leaving Mexican soil Juárez had automatically

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid, cart. 15/8

<sup>588</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart 13/42

forfeited his claim that he and the liberals were the legitimate government of Mexico. And indeed there was some question as to the legitimacy of Juárez's claim to the Mexican presidency: under the republican constitution Juárez's term of office had ended but on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1865 Juárez had issued a decree prolonging his own term of office as president until such time as it would be possible to hold a presidential election throughout the republic.<sup>589</sup> Consequently, the emperor thought that the republican opposition was left without any leadership and that the resistance was now maintained by a soldiery that was in no way patriotic but was the debris that always remained after a civil war:

The time for indulgence has passed, for it would only help the despotism of the bandits who burn villages, rob and murder peaceful citizens, poor old men and defenceless women. The government, strong and powerful, will henceforth impose inflexible punishment.<sup>590</sup>

This inflexible punishment was clarified in the decree, which stated that anyone found carrying arms or was convicted of being a member of an armed band, even if he claimed to have acted from patriotic or political motives, would be put to death within twenty-four hours without being permitted to send a petition to the emperor or to any other authority.<sup>591</sup> When prisoners were captured in a military action, the commander of the unit that captured them could execute them on his own authority without a court martial. The decree was to go into effect on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1865; anyone to whom it applied would be granted amnesty if he surrendered before that date. Mexican conservatives welcomed the decree, for in their opinion Maximilian was at last taking firm action

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<sup>589</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 238

<sup>590</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart 13/42

<sup>591</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart 13/42

against the guerrillas. The liberals, on the other hand, were as incensed by the provisions of the decree as by Maximilian's claim that Juárez had left Mexico.

Maximilian apologists have always felt that of his actions the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 was hardest to justify. Contemporaries of Maximilian, like his private secretary Blasio, have argued that Maximilian only issued the decree because he thought that Juárez had left Mexican soil and because he had been pressured into doing so by Bazaine.<sup>592</sup> Paul Gaulot, on the other hand, denied that Bazaine held any responsibility for the decree. In effect, it is impossible to exempt either Maximilian or Bazaine from responsibility for the decree; Bazaine had been complaining that the emperor pardoned too many captures bandits and had urged Maximilian to allow him to shoot guerrillas but the decree had been drafted by the war ministry and Maximilian had approved it.<sup>593</sup> The other excuse put forward by Maximilian's supporters, that he believed that Juárez had left Mexico and that the resistance would consequently collapse, is equally specious. Even if Maximilian thought that Juárez had left the county, he still knew that guerrilla activity had never been greater than in the summer and spring of 1865; Maximilian had repeatedly written to Napoleon expressing his alarm at their increasing strength and his annoyance at Bazaine's failure to destroy them.<sup>594</sup> Thus Maximilian did not issue the decree because the guerrillas were nearly beaten but because he feared that they were getting stronger and hoped, by resorting to this drastic measure, to finally destroy them.

Whether Maximilian or Bazaine were to be blamed for the decree, it was nevertheless executed with full force. On 13<sup>th</sup> October 1865 two republican generals, Ateaga and

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<sup>592</sup> Murray, R.H., *Maximilian Emperor of Mexico. Memoirs of his Private Secretary José Luis Blasio*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1934, p. 184

<sup>593</sup> Sara Yorke Stevenson overheard Bazaine complaining about the emperor's habit of pardoning liberals at a state ball in Mexico-City

Yorke Stevenson, S., *Maximilian in Mexico*, 1899, p. 178

<sup>594</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

Salazar, and thirty-five of their officers and men were taken prisoner by imperial forces under the command of General Mendez. Most of the men were pardoned and given the opportunity of joining the imperial army but Ateaga and Salazar and three officers were shot. The execution of the two generals further intensified the hatred of the liberals for the imperial government and provided fuel for their anti-imperialist propaganda in the United States. In a letter to the U.S. foreign minister William H. Seward, Romero, Juárez's representative in Washington, condemned the decree and praised Ateaga and Salazar as martyrs:

In the first, the ex-Archduke supposes, contrarily to the fact, that the President of the Mexican Republic has abandoned the national territory, and from this hypothesis, he concludes that the defenders of independence, whom he calls bandits, in obedience to orders received from the French, have no leader. (...) [The decree created] most informal military tribunals, extending their jurisdiction to every person in the country, found armed, without license from his so-called government, regardless of the party he belongs to. In this decree (...) he [Maximilian] condemns to death, every armed man who is not a French or rebel soldier, and even those temporarily called to defend their country; and sanctions severe penalties for the mere act of concealing a patriot or circulating alarming news.<sup>595</sup>

The decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 did not only damn Maximilian forever in the eyes of the liberals but it also failed to have the wished for effect of destroying the liberal resistance; in effect guerrilla activity remained stable and even increased in some parts

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<sup>595</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State 1821-1906, M54 – roll 8

of the country.<sup>596</sup> It was exactly this decree under which Maximilian was sentenced to death after the fall of the empire. In many respects, the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 was the Rubicon: until this point Maximilian had tried to find a way to win the liberals over and to integrate them in the Second Mexican Empire. Thus the decree was a complete reversal of this policy; from now onwards Maximilian was attempting to completely stamp out the opposition and threat posed by the liberals. It is worthy to note that as a young archduke he had criticized his brother, Franz Joseph, for employing the same measures, such as the military tribunals, against the revolutionaries in Hungary in 1849 as he was now using against the liberals and their supporters.

#### **4.5. NAPOLEON CHANGES HIS MIND**

When Maximilian had considered refusing the offer of the Mexican throne in March 1864 due to the fact that he had not wanted to renounce his rights to the Austrian throne, Napoleon had appealed to Maximilian's pride and honour by arguing that Maximilian could neither withdraw from the promises he had made nor from the agreements he had signed: 'What would you really think of me if, after Your Imperial highness had already reached Mexico, I were suddenly to say that I can no longer fulfil the conditions to

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<sup>596</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 217



which I have set my signature?'.<sup>597</sup> Now Napoleon was doing exactly the same thing for what he had condemned Maximilian in 1864; he withdrew from all the promises, agreements and treaties he had signed. In the Treaty of Miramar Napoleon had guaranteed that twenty-five thousand French troops would be stationed in Mexico for the next three years and that eight thousand men of the French Foreign Legion would remain there for eight years; by the end of 1865 Napoleon had come to the conclusion that it was necessary 'to set a definitive term to the French occupation'.<sup>598</sup> On 15<sup>th</sup> January 1866 Napoleon informed Maximilian of his decision to withdraw his troops from Mexico,<sup>599</sup> and on 22<sup>nd</sup> January he announced to the Corps Législatif in his speech from the throne that 'all our overseas expeditions are reaching an end, (...) our army (...) in Mexico is already returning to France'.<sup>600</sup> Napoleon's plan was to withdraw the troops in three stages: nine thousand men would leave in October 1866, another nine thousand in March 1867, and the remaining 11,300 would be withdrawn in October 1867. However, Napoleon later revised this policy for he feared that a withdrawal in stages would leave the remaining French forces too weak to defend themselves; in the end he set the date for the complete evacuation of the French troops from Mexican soil for March 1867. However, what were the reasons that led to Napoleon changing his mind?

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<sup>597</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 217

<sup>598</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>599</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/2

<sup>600</sup> HHSTA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 44  
Smith, W.H.C., *Napoleon*, 1972, p.180

#### 4.5.1. THE PRESSURE ON NAPOLEON

Throughout the French invasion in Mexico, the opposition in the Corps Législatif had questioned the benefits of the French occupation of Mexico. In April 1865, at a time when French forces had occupied almost all of the country and Maximilian's government had established its authority over all but four provinces, the opposition in the Corps Législatif raised the issue of Mexico again asking why the troops were not brought home now that victory had been achieved. It was a question that people were asking all over France; a fact that he knew from secret reports of the *procureurs*. Napoleon had to admit that the people in France 'had never appreciated (...) what interest we could have to create a great empire in Mexico'.<sup>601</sup> As the public pressure to recall the troops from Mexico was mounting, so were the demands of the delegates in the Corps Législatif for the Mexican government to begin with the repayment of its debts. By the Treaty of Miramar Maximilian had agreed to pay all the costs of the French conquest of Mexico, amounting to two hundred and seventy million francs at three per cent interest per annum, plus one thousand francs a year for every French soldier, and four hundred thousand francs every time a French warship brought new troops to Mexico.<sup>602</sup> However, as already demonstrated above, the Second Mexican Empire depended heavily on French financial support and could not create enough revenue, so it was impossible for Mexico to fulfil the demands of the Corps Législatif. Napoleon's desire to bring back his troops to France also had external motives; in Europe the growing power of Prussia made it look possible that war would break out soon. The forty thousand troops in Mexico were not a large proportion of the total of

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<sup>601</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>602</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 213

four hundred thousand French troops, but if Prussian ambition brought about a war in Europe, these forty thousand men would be much better employed along the Rhine than in Mexico.<sup>603</sup> The more worrying matter that Napoleon had to take into consideration was the fact that with the capitulation of Lee to Grant at Appomattox the American Civil War had ended. Throughout the last four years Napoleon had believed that the South would win the American Civil War and that Maximilian would have as his northern neighbour not a strong and powerful United States but a weakened Confederate States of America.<sup>604</sup> He had also hoped that the Second Mexican Empire would have been firmly established before the end of the Civil War, and that once French troops had withdrawn from Mexico, the United States would accept and recognize Maximilian. As long as the United States had been caught up in her own troubles, her official policy had been one of neutrality, although she secretly provided Juárez and the liberals with weapons and ammunition.<sup>605</sup> With the end of the Civil War, the assassination of Lincoln and mounting pressure on Seward from the American public and press as well as from military commanders such as Grant to enforce the Monroe Doctrine and thus to invade Mexico in order to restore the republican government, it was rather uncertain if the United States would remain neutral much longer.<sup>606</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Dabbs, J.A., *French Army in Mexico*, 1963 , p. 236

<sup>604</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 222

<sup>605</sup> Ibid

<sup>606</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 224

#### 4.5.2. MAXIMILIAN'S REACTION

Maximilian was furious when he was told about Napoleon's decision; he wrote to the French emperor in protest accusing him of breaking 'the treaties that [he] had signed with me only two years ago' and demanding that Napoleon 'returned his troops immediately to the American continent'.<sup>607</sup> However, there could be no question of Napoleon changing his mind, he was determined to cut his losses in Mexico. Complying with Napoleon's orders, Bazaine began to evacuate the French troops from the borders, withdrawing to convenient assembly points and not fighting unless they were attacked. As soon as the French soldiers started to withdraw from strategically important positions, the liberal army immediately occupied those and thus the liberals conquered more and more territory. It became increasingly obvious that after the evacuation of all the French troops from Mexico, the imperial army would not be able to halt the advance of liberal forces. Maximilian looked chiefly to Austria to provide the volunteers needed for his army and ultimately to replace the withdrawing French troops. A force of 6,800 Austrian volunteers had already arrived in 1864/65 and now formed part of the Austrian-Belgian volunteer corps.<sup>608</sup> In March 1866 his agents recruited a second contingent consisting of four thousand volunteers in Austria; the first detachment was to sail from Trieste on 15<sup>th</sup> May.<sup>609</sup> Seward instructed the U.S. consul in Vienna to make a strong protest to Count Rechberg, the Austrian foreign minister and to inform him that

In the vent of hostilities being carried on hereafter in Mexico by Austrian subjects, under the command or with the sanction of the government in Vienna, the United

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<sup>607</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>608</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 12

<sup>609</sup> Ibid

States will feel themselves at liberty to regard those hostilities as constituting a state of war, waged at this time and under existing circumstance, the United States could not engage to remain as silent or neutral spectator.<sup>610</sup>

With this statement Seward abruptly reversed Washington's posture toward foreign intervention in Mexico; the United States' neutrality toward the conflict between France and the Juárez government would apparently end if Austrian troops intervened in the conflict. Seward was sure that the Austrian government would not engage itself in a war overseas while Prussia was threatening its vital interests in Europe. And surely enough, the Austrian government forbade the volunteers to sail to Vera Cruz and banned any further recruitment in Austria of volunteers to serve in Mexico.<sup>611</sup>

#### **4.6. MAXIMILIAN CONSIDERS ABDICATION**

By the summer of 1866 Maximilian's situation looked very serious; the liberals were winning everywhere and he had neither sufficient money nor sufficient troops to stop them. Napoleon believed that Maximilian's best course was to abdicate and return to Europe and there were many amongst the French officers and the moderate liberals,

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<sup>610</sup> Valone. S.J., 'Weakness offers temptation', 1955, p.592

<sup>611</sup> Ibid, p.594

who agreed that abdication was the only possible solution.<sup>612</sup> Maximilian wavered, his common sense fought with his pride as he dreaded the ridicule of failure. It was at this point that Charlotte intervened; she decided to go to Europe in order to confront Napoleon with his broken promises; she would regain the support of the Pope and she would open the eyes of European statesmen to the growing danger of the United States.<sup>613</sup> Before she set out for Europe, Charlotte gave Maximilian a memorandum in which she urged him not to abdicate:

Abdication is only excusable in old men and idiots. It is not permissible in a young man of thirty-four, full of life and hope for the future, for sovereignty is the most precious of all possessions. From the moment one assumes responsibility for the destiny of a nation, one does so at one's own risk and is not at liberty to abandon it. (...) Emperors do not give themselves up. So long as there is an emperor, there is still an empire, even if he has no more than six feet of earth belonging to him, for the empire is nothing without the emperor.<sup>614</sup>

On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1866 Charlotte left Mexico-City; on the four-day long journey to Vera Cruz Charlotte began to behave a little strangely and the members of her court later, with hindsight, thought that she displayed the first symptoms of insanity.

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<sup>612</sup> AN, Archive Napoléon, 400 AP 61/1

<sup>613</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian von Mexiko. Tragödie eines Kaisers*, Knauer, Vienna, 1978, p.225

<sup>614</sup> Ratz, K., *Sehnsucht*, 2000, p. 344

#### 4.6.1. CHARLOTTE'S VOYAGE TO EUROPE

On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1866 Charlotte arrived at Saint-Nazaire and went from there by train to Paris. She had hoped to see Napoleon at once but the emperor was ill and could only receive her a few days later. Although Charlotte pleaded with Napoleon to reverse his decision with regard to the evacuation of the French troops, the emperor remained adamant; the French would withdraw from Mexican soil by March 1867.<sup>615</sup> Following Charlotte's departure from Paris, Napoleon wrote a letter to Maximilian in which he ultimately cut himself and France loose from any responsibility for the survival of the monarchy in Mexico:

We had great pleasure in receiving the Empress Charlotte, yet it was very painful for me to be unable to accede to her requests. We are in fact at a decisive moment for Mexico, and it is necessary for Your Majesty to come to a heroic resolution: the time for half measures has gone by. I must begin by stating to Your Majesty that it is henceforth impossible for me to give Mexico another écu or soldier.<sup>616</sup>

While Napoleon was cutting the remaining ties with Mexico and even urged Maximilian to abdicate, Charlotte was trying to gather support for the empire. From Paris she went to Miramar; she stayed there for three weeks living not in the castle, where construction work was being carried out, but in the little cottage in the garden.

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<sup>615</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian von Mexiko.*, 1978, p. 226f

<sup>616</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

She then went to Rome to see Pope Pius IX and there she showed the first unmistakable symptoms of insanity.<sup>617</sup>

On 30<sup>th</sup> September 1866 Charlotte had a private audience with the pope during which she asked Pius IX if she could stay the night in the Vatican instead of returning to her hotel. No woman in history had ever spent a night in the Vatican and, consequently, the pope at first declined her request.<sup>618</sup> But Charlotte insisted that this was the only place where she would be safe from Napoleon's agents, who were trying to poison her. There was no question she was suffering from paranoia and a severe persecution mania, and thus the pope allowed her to stay one night in the Vatican; the next morning he sent her back to her hotel under escort.<sup>619</sup> In the hotel she refused to touch any food or drink that had been prepared by the staff of the hotel she was staying in, for she claimed that 'someone is intent on poisoning me'.<sup>620</sup> She also drove with her lady-in-waiting to the Trevi Fountain and filled a crystal pitcher with water from the fountain and took it back to the hotel to drink.<sup>621</sup>

Realizing Charlotte's mental distress, her gentlemen had written to her brother King Leopold II of Belgium, who arranged for his sister to be taken to Miramar. There she was examined by Professor Riedel, the leading mental specialist in Vienna, who diagnosed 'a severe congestion of the brain'.<sup>622</sup> Leopold later decided that Charlotte's medical condition and the isolation of Miramar were doing more harm than good, and he had her brought to Belgium, where she lived in the castle of Tervuren near Brussels. Her mental state did improve slightly; the persecution paranoia vanished and sometimes

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<sup>617</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte von Mexiko, Triumph und Tragödie einer Kaiserin*, Piper, Munich, 2008, p. 238

<sup>618</sup> Ibid, 241f

<sup>619</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State, 1821-1906, M54 – roll 10

<sup>620</sup> Ibid

<sup>621</sup> Ibid

<sup>622</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1978, p. 427



she even understood her condition, while on other occasions she asked why Maximilian was late for dinner.<sup>623</sup>

On 18 October 1866 Maximilian received a telegram informing him that the empress was ill. The telegram did not specify the nature of her illness but mentioned that she was in the care of Professor Riedel. When his physician, Dr Basch, told Maximilian that Professor Riedel was the director of the lunatic asylum in Vienna, Maximilian did not only immediately understand what had happened to Charlotte but he also realized that her mission to gather support for the Mexican Empire in Europe had failed.<sup>624</sup> Charlotte died on 19<sup>th</sup> January 1927 at the age eighty-six, having survived Maximilian by sixty years.<sup>625</sup>

#### 4.6.2. MAXIMILIAN REACHES A 'HEROIC DECISION'<sup>626</sup>

While Charlotte travelled to Europe the liberals had overrun the empire: by the end of September they had captured Matamoros, Tampico, Tuxpan, Saltillo, Monterrey, Durango, Guaymas, Alvarado and Tlacotalpan; by the end of the year Oaxaca, Mazatlan, Jalapa, Guadalajara and San Luis Potosi had fallen to the liberals.

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<sup>623</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte*, ,2008, p. 259

<sup>624</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections of Mexico. The last Ten Months of Maximilian's Empire*, Sr Brooks, Wilmington, 2001, p. 28

<sup>625</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte*, ,2008, p. 262

<sup>626</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

Maximilian's empire had shrunk considerably, now comprising only the areas around Vera Cruz, Orizaba, Puebla, Mexico-City and Querétaro. Considering the desperate political and military situation the emperor was facing, it is hardly surprising that rumours that Maximilian was about to abdicate were circulating in Europe and the United States.<sup>627</sup> Maximilian was indeed seriously considering abdication but he could not make up his mind. Before her departure to Europe Charlotte had called abdication an act of cowardice but now one of Maximilian's closest advisors, Hertzfeld, urged him to abdicate and leave Mexico.<sup>628</sup> A return to Europe would have meant humiliation and a future without any prospects; Franz Joseph might reinstate Maximilian in his rights as an Archduke but he would certainly not give him any kind of high-ranking position. However, remaining in Mexico without any outside support for the empire was definitely a dangerous idea.

Without having reached any kind of a resolution, Maximilian travelled to one of his residences in Orizaba in November 1866; the news spread immediately that he was on his way to Vera Cruz to embark for Europe and that he would abdicate before he sailed. Maximilian, though, was so unsure and indecisive about the best course of action that he summoned his cabinet ministers to Orizaba in order to get their advice on whether or not he should abdicate. Some of his moderate liberals in the cabinet thought that he should go, but Maximilian's conservative ministers appealed to Maximilian's sense of honour and pride by calling a possible abdication and return to Europe a flight. However, the conservatives were less concerned about Maximilian's safety if he stayed in Mexico than fear for their own; before the French occupation of Mexico Juárez had decreed that any Mexican, who supported or helped the invaders would be considered a

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<sup>627</sup> AN, Archives Napoléon 400 AP 46/1

<sup>628</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1978, p. 232

traitor and would be shot if he fell into the hands of the liberals.<sup>629</sup> Thus, the conservative ministers did not only stand to lose their position and property in Mexico if Maximilian abdicated but quite possibly also their lives.

When the question of abdication was put to a vote, it is not surprising that ten out of twelve ministers voted against abdication.<sup>630</sup> When the ministers told Maximilian of their decision, he said that he would continue as emperor until he could convoke a special session of the Assembly of Notables, whose decision he would abide by. Maximilian had decided not to abdicate; he was now relying solemnly on the support of the conservatives, including Miramón and Marquez who had returned to Mexico, to fight the liberals. Upon Maximilian's return to Mexico, the imperial government issued a proclamation stating that the emperor would not leave the country but would defend the empire against the liberals:

One of the most grateful events for good Mexicans has just occurred to the nation. H.M. the Emperor, who has made so many sacrifices for the welfare and happiness of our dear country has given the best proof of the interest he takes in it. When overwhelmed by the natural feelings which were still contending and which are still so in his mind, in consequence of the ill-health of his august and noble spouse our beloved sovereign, he thought for a moment that he ought temporarily to abandon the country to devote himself to fulfilling the sacred duty of offering to his worthy consort the cares she so much needs in the delicate condition in which she is. The Emperor sacrifices himself for us, postpones his duties as a man to those which his honour points out to him to be controlling, and in these critical moments that the country may pass safely through, he solemnly declares that he will continue at the helm and will

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<sup>629</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 96

<sup>630</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections of Mexico*, 2001, p. 64

contest without remission until the last drop of his blood be shed in defence of the nation.<sup>631</sup>

Maximilian seemed indeed prepared to stay in Mexico;<sup>632</sup> before the French army marched out of Mexico-City on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1867, three years and eight months after they had captured it, Bazaine had offered Maximilian a place on the last French ship leaving Vera Cruz for Europe. On the way to Vera Cruz, Bazaine stopped in Puebla from where he sent Maximilian a message that if he had changed his mind about leaving the country, he would wait for him at Puebla and escort him to Vera Cruz. Maximilian, however, had decided to remain in Mexico and to lead his army into battle against the liberals.<sup>633</sup>

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<sup>631</sup> NA, Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to Mexico, 1823 -1906, M 97 – roll 31

<sup>632</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian von Mexiko*, 1978, p. 239

<sup>633</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The Tragedy*

‘I am dying in the knowledge of having wanted to achieve the right thing’

*Maximilian, in his farewell letter to his mother, Archduchess Sophie, 16<sup>th</sup> June 1867*

At the beginning of 1867 the situation for Maximilian and the survival of the Second Mexican Empire looked very bleak indeed: the liberals were winning everywhere. The liberal forces had recaptured most of Mexico and Maximilian’s empire, in effect, had shrunk so much that it now only comprised the cities of Vera Cruz, Puebla, Mexico-City and Querétaro. The military success of the liberal troops was mainly due to the fact that France was withdrawing her forces from Mexico; in accordance with Napoleon’s orders the French army was assembling in Vera Cruz to be shipped back to Europe. Before evacuating a town, the French in most cases destroyed their armaments. Bazaine and the French officers were bitterly reproached for this, both at the time and afterwards, by Maximilian and his supporters. They raised the question as to why the French did not at least leave their cannons, their rifles and their ammunition behind for Maximilian’s army. Maximilian’s supporters attributed this solely to Bazaine’s malice and his hatred of Maximilian.<sup>634</sup> Bazaine’s supporters, such as Paul Gaulot, refuted this accusation. They argued that the imperial army was so inefficient that they would not

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<sup>634</sup> Hellinghaus, O. (ed.) *Maximilian von Mexiko. Das Ende eines Kaisers. Blätter aus dem Tagebuch des Prinzen Felix zu Salm-Salm, Generals und Ersten Flügeladjutanten des Kaisers*, Herder & Co., Herder, Freiburg, 1928, p.31

have been able to collect the munitions if the French had left them behind.<sup>635</sup> It was true though, that when the French evacuated a town, the liberals occupied it almost immediately; and if the French had not destroyed their ammunition when they withdrew, it would in every case have fallen into the hands of the liberals. Thus the steady advance of the liberal troops under the command of General Escobedo and General Corona towards Mexico-City gave Juárez, who was moving a little behind his armies, the chance to move further south and to establish his government in Zacatecas.

## 5.1. QUERÉTARO

While the liberals were overrunning the empire, the Mexican conservatives had appealed to Maximilian's honour as a Habsburg and had presented him with the necessity of putting himself at the head of his army and to assume command. From the safety of Paris Gutierrez de Estrada asked Maximilian in letter:

Which general renounces his command over the army at the hour of battle? (...) The Empress has sacrificed her health, as she would have sacrificed her life, (...) the whole

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<sup>635</sup> Gaulot, P. *L'Expedition du Mexique*, Ollendorf, Paris, 1906, p. 496

world (...) would applaud your Majesty if you would show the same courage. Then a glorious victory will be possible (...). However, if everything fails, then you, sire, have the certainty to have done everything humanly possible and to have preserved your honour as well as that of your house.<sup>636</sup>

Nevertheless, it had not only been the appeals of the conservatives and the knowledge that a return to Austria would give him few future prospects that convinced Maximilian not to abdicate, but he also hoped that a military victory against the liberals was still possible. The withdrawal of the French forces from Mexico had seriously weakened the military strength of the imperial army but Maximilian had attempted to see the French departure as a sort of liberation; his comment that ‘we are now finally free from exterior pressure’<sup>637</sup> was clearly intended to appeal to the Mexicans’ sense of independence and thus to raise the morale amongst his supporters and troops. Maximilian’s hopes for a military success were raised by a victory of Miramón over the liberal forces. Miramón, who had known that Juárez was established in Zacatecas, had led a troop of cavalry, had raided Zacatecas and had almost captured Juárez. Unfortunately, the liberal leader had been warned and he and his ministers had left the city just in time. Maximilian had given Miramón the order that ‘in the event that you capture Juárez, Lerdo de Tejada (...) and others, they should be tried by court marshal in accordance with the law of 4<sup>th</sup> November of last year; the sentence though will not be carried out until we [Maximilian] have given our consent’.<sup>638</sup> The question what Maximilian would have done with Juárez if Miramón had caught him is an intriguing one: would he have given the permission to shoot Juárez in accordance with the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865? Or

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<sup>636</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 237

<sup>637</sup> Quoted in: Ratz, K. *Das Militärgerichtsverfahren gegen Maximilian von Mexiko 1867*, Enzenhofer, Hardegg, 1985, p. 26

<sup>638</sup> Quoted in: Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 25

would he have pardoned his enemy? However, the joy about Miramón's victory was short-lived; his daring raid had caught the liberals off guard, but General Escobedo quickly assembled his forces and struck back at Miramón; a week later he defeated Miramón at San Jacinto, a little south of Zacatecas.<sup>639</sup> The liberals captured more than one hundred prisoners in the battle, most of whom were shot, but Miramón managed to escape with the rest of his forces to Querétaro.

#### 5.1.1. STRATEGIES, RIVALRIES AND SHORTAGES OF SUPPLIES

On the 13<sup>th</sup> February 1867 Maximilian left Mexico-City, not for Vera Cruz and the safety of Europe, but for Querétaro in the north of the country. He was accompanied by General Marquez and a force of two thousand cavalry, while the Austrian and Belgian levies stayed behind in the capital. The Belgian and Austrian volunteer corps had been disbanded on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1866 partly due to the fact that the imperial government could not longer pay the volunteers and partly due to the pressure that the United States put on Austria not to supply troops for the Mexican Empire.<sup>640</sup> Most of the Belgian and Austrian soldiers had left Mexico together with the French army. However, one thousand and eleven Austrians and a couple of hundred Belgian volunteers had decided to stay in Mexico and had become part of the imperial army. As the Austrian and

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<sup>639</sup> Ridley, L., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 247

<sup>640</sup> Klinger, W., *Für Kaiser Max nach Mexiko - Das Österreichische Freiwilligenkorps in Mexiko 1864/67*, Grin Verlag, Vienna, 2008, p. 56



Belgian volunteers were regarded as more reliable and experienced than the Mexican soldiers they were kept in the capital to contribute to the security of the government and the ministers, who remained behind in Mexico-City.<sup>641</sup> However, this arrangement deprived Maximilian of a valuable military support in the campaign against the liberals; without the support of the Austrian and Belgian volunteers the imperial army only comprised nine thousand men when Maximilian entered the city on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1867. From a military point of view the decision to face the liberal forces in Querétaro was not particularly wise: the city lay in the midst of a fertile valley and was entirely surrounded by hills. Arguably, Querétaro could only be effectually defended by an army numerous enough to occupy the surrounding hills in order to prevent the liberal forces from encircling the city, but Maximilian's forces were in no position to do so. Therefore, the principal merit of choosing Querétaro as the headquarters of the campaign against the liberals in the eyes of Maximilian and his conservative supporters had been that the city was a conservative stronghold and consequently the conservatives could rely on the support of the inhabitants for the provision of food, money and other supplies. Maximilian had never managed to regulate and improve the financial situation of the empire, and consequently he did not have sufficient funds to maintain his army even at the beginning of the campaign. Maximilian's surgeon, Dr. Basch, reported that the imperial government attempted to overcome the money shortage by deciding 'to declare a forced loan. (...) The rich citizens of Querétaro had to pay and maintain the army whether they wanted to or not. But they accepted the inevitable good-naturedly. Querétaro was a city with pro-imperial sentiments and its residents voluntarily made the sacrifices that had been imposed on them'.<sup>642</sup> Of course it is rather unlikely that the citizens of the town supported the imperial forces gladly; Basch's comment can thus be

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<sup>641</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire*, 1946, p. 252

<sup>642</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections of Mexico*, 2001, p. 129

seen as a justification for Maximilian's decision to stay in Mexico for it proved that there were still some ordinary Mexicans who were still loyal to the emperor. However, despite the enforced loan and other hardships that the inhabitants of Querétaro were suffering due to the imperial army's need for provisions, Maximilian was nevertheless in a far weaker position than the liberals. Owing to his failure to organize an efficient army and financial administration Maximilian was short of men, short of munitions and short of money, whereas Juárez and the liberal forces now, after the end of the American Civil War, received supplies, ammunition and arms from the United States.<sup>643</sup> At the end of February 1867 there were two liberal armies advancing on Querétaro, one under the command of General Escobedo, who was coming from San Luis Potosi with seventeen thousand men, and the other under Corona, coming from Acambaro with eighteen thousand soldiers.<sup>644</sup> When the two armies were still approximately one hundred and fifty miles apart, Miramón proposed to Maximilian the idea of attacking the two armies in turn before they could unite. He thought that if he could defeat Escobedo by a vigorous surprise attack, which would have a shattering effect on the morale of Corona's forces, he could then march against Corona and defeat him.<sup>645</sup> The proposal was discussed at a council of war; the council consisted of Maximilian, who presided over it, and the five conservative Generals Marquez, Miramón, Mejía, Mendez and Castillo. Although all five generals were fighting for the same cause, there was nevertheless a certain degree of discontent and rivalries amongst them. General Marquez, for instance, was against attacking the advancing armies of the enemy, mainly because Miramón had come up with the idea. Since Marquez had considerable influence over Maximilian, the latter rejected Miramón's proposal.<sup>646</sup>

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<sup>643</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State, 1821-1906, M54 – 12

<sup>644</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 133

<sup>645</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 255

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid*, 257ff

As a direct result of the decision ‘not to attack the enemy forces and to await them in a protected position’,<sup>647</sup> the armies of Escobedo and Coroana joined together at Querétaro and began the siege on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1867 with thirty-five thousand soldiers and siege artillery that bombarded the city nearly every day. Maximilian’s nine thousand men resisted valiantly and often made successful sorties to obtain provisions and to inflict a blow at the liberals’ morale by defeating their troops in some local engagements. Maximilian had established his headquarters in the Convent of La Cruz on a hill inside the city. The convent came under fire but Maximilian behaved with great coolness, and alarmed his officers by insisting on strolling slowly across the courtyard, where there was no cover from liberal shells and bullets. He also walked in the streets of the city and stood together with his soldiers on the battlements of the city, ‘where the Emperor (...) is very much in danger. Toward noon, a grenade explodes six to eight paces from the Emperor. In a group around him stand General Marquez and Mendez as well as the officers of the General Staff. All duck, except the Emperor, who remains standing upright’.<sup>648</sup> Although Maximilian proved his courage and bravery during battle, Prince Salm-Salm and other officers in the imperial army thought that Maximilian was not much of a military commander. On several occasions the imperial forces were able to win small engagements but instead of attacking the liberal army in these moments of weakness, Maximilian decided not to go over to the attack and pursue the enemy.<sup>649</sup> However, it is questionable whether a direct attack against the liberal forces, as Prince Salm-Salm argued for, would have produced a positive result; the liberal forces greatly outnumbered the imperial army and thus it is probable that the liberals would have eventually defeated the attacking imperial troops, which in return would have diminished the number of imperial soldiers defending Querétaro.

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<sup>647</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p.133

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143

<sup>649</sup> Hellinghaus, O., *Tagebuch Prinzen zu Salm-Salm*, 1928, p. 57

### 5.1.2. WILL MARQUEZ BRING REINFORCEMENTS?

The longer the siege lasted, the more the defenders suffered from the shortage of food and ammunition. The supply of the latter had become so scarce that the conservatives ordered that the lead-covered roofs of the churches and theatres to be taken down and melted into bullets.<sup>650</sup> Maximilian and his officers thus realized that they could not hold out indefinitely in Querétaro. Their only hope was that a relieving army would come to their aid and force Escobedo to abandon the siege. Therefore, the war council decided to send General Marquez to Mexico-City to raise a new army that would march to the relief of Querétaro. At dawn on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1867 Miramón led a sortie and attacked the liberals as a diversion while Marquez with an escort of one thousand men cavalry slipped quietly out of the city.<sup>651</sup> The manoeuvre was successful; Marquez reached Mexico-City, and by resorting to the *leva*, the system of forced recruiting that had employed by conservatives and liberals alike during the civil war, Marquez's press gangs managed to forcibly enrol young men into the army.

However, while Marquez was recruiting soldiers in order to relieve the imperial forces defending Querétaro, the liberal army under the command of General Diaz began capturing and occupying the few remaining cities and towns that were held by the conservatives and imperial troops. One of the cities that were still in the hands of the imperial army was Puebla. The liberal forces under the command of General Diaz besieged Puebla and on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1867 captured it by assault. Although the commander of the imperial forces Noriega had surrendered unconditionally to Diaz, the latter nevertheless ordered that Noriega and all his seventy-four officers were to be shot as

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<sup>650</sup> Hellinghaus, O., *Tagebuch Prinzen zu Salm-Salm*, 1928., p. 44

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61

traitors under the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862. After capturing Puebla Diaz advanced on Mexico-City. Marquez was intending to lead the army he had raised to Querétaro to rescue Maximilian but he knew that if he left Mexico-City it would fall immediately to Diaz, which would be a terrible blow to the morale of Maximilian's supporters. Therefore, he decided to disobey Maximilian's orders and lead the army against Diaz to save Mexico-City by defeating him in battle. The troops of Marquez and Diaz clashed at San Lorenzo on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1867. Diaz routed Marquez's men, who fled in all directions as they had not had any military training before the battle. Marquez was able to retire in good order to Mexico-City with four hundred Austrians, who had enlisted in Maximilian's army when the Austrian and Belgian volunteer corps had left for Europe in January 1867.<sup>652</sup> Marquez now had no army to lead to Querétaro, so he decided to put the capital into a state of defence and hold it at all costs against an attack by the liberals. Within a few days Diaz had laid siege to Mexico-City, establishing his headquarters in Maximilian's former palace in Chapultepec.

In the meantime the defenders of Querétaro were waiting impatiently for the arrival of Marquez's relieving army and were wondering why he had not come. Maximilian sent out scouts who were to slip through the lines of the liberals and bring back news of Marquez from Mexico-City. Dr Basch described the eagerness with which any kind of news about Marquez and the relieving army were expected in the besieged city: 'Marquez has disappeared and remains so. We have no firm news about him. (...) More than three weeks have passed since Marquez's departure. The day fixed for his return had long since passed. (...) We have sent out courier after courier but none has returned'.<sup>653</sup> Most of the scouts Maximilian sent out had been captured by the liberals; along the road to Mexico-City their bodies could be found hanging from the trees,

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<sup>652</sup> Hellinghaus, O., *Tagebuch Prinzen zu Salm-Salm*, 1928, p. 75

<sup>653</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 173

sometimes mutilated and with notes saying that this fate would befall all traitors who carried messages for Maximilian.<sup>654</sup> Despite the fact that the liberals were executing any imperial soldier that fell into their hands, Maximilian refused to treat captured liberal soldiers in a similar way. The Mexican generals had proposed that liberal prisoners should be executed and their corpses displayed to their comrades in the besieging army as reprisal for hanging Maximilian's messengers. However, the emperor forbade any reprisals and insisted that the liberal prisoners be kindly treated and that any who were wounded should receive medical attention in the hospitals as his own soldiers did.<sup>655</sup>

### 5.1.3. CAPITULATION OR BETRAYAL?

By the middle of May the situation was becoming very serious for Maximilian. His supplies were getting low and although he still retained the loyalty and support of most of the inhabitants of Querétaro, some of his soldiers were deserting to the liberals. The departure of Marquez as well as losses and desertions had reduced Maximilian's troops to less than seven thousand men, while the arrival of reinforcements had raised the liberal numbers to forty-one thousand.<sup>656</sup> As the defenders were so greatly outnumbered and, as it looked likely that the liberals were going to win shortly, Maximilian and his

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<sup>654</sup> Murray, R.H., *Maximilian Emperor of Mexico. Memoirs of his Private Secretary José Luis Blasio*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1934, p. 151

<sup>655</sup> Hellinghaus, O., *Tagebuch Prinzen zu Salm-Salm*, 1928, p. 77

<sup>656</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 259

generals decided that their only hope was to break through enemy lines with their cavalry and to ride across the country to Vera Cruz. The city was still in the hands of the conservatives, and Maximilian and his generals thought that it would be possible to find ships at Vera Cruz to take them to Europe and they thus agreed to attempt the breakout on the night of 14<sup>th</sup> May 1867.<sup>657</sup> The plan had been that three thousand Indian inhabitants of the city, who were to be organized by General Mejía and armed for the purpose, would create a diversion.<sup>658</sup> However, Mejía failed to collect sufficient arms and ammunition to create a diversion and thus Maximilian made the fatal decision to postpone the attempt for twenty-four hours.

During the night of 14<sup>th</sup> May liberal forces entered Querétaro; and Maximilian was awakened at 4 a.m. on 15<sup>th</sup> May to be told that the enemy were in his headquarters at the Convent of La Cruz. When Maximilian, accompanied by Blasio and a few of his officers, stepped out into the courtyard it was full of liberal soldiers, but Maximilian and his companions were not arrested as the soldiers apparently did not recognise them. The question of how the liberal forces had managed to gain entry into the city has been a source of dispute amongst conservatives and liberals in Mexico. Maximilian's supporters argued that they had been betrayed by Colonel Lopez, the commander of Maximilian's household cavalry. According to this version of events Lopez, acting on his own accord and not on the order of the emperor, showed the liberal forces an unguarded entrance in Querétaro; the conservatives claimed that Lopez received a considerable amount of money as a bribe for this act of betrayal.<sup>659</sup> Not surprisingly the liberals recounted a completely different version: one day before the fall of Querétaro Lopez, acting as an authorised agent of Maximilian, had met with the commander of the liberal forces, General Escobedo, to deliver Maximilian's offer of handing over the city

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<sup>657</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 197

<sup>658</sup> Hyde, H.M., *Mexican Empire*, 1946, p. 266

<sup>659</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 282ff.

to the liberal forces if he and his supporters were allowed to leave Querétaro and board a ship to Europe. However, Escobedo had orders only to accept an unconditional surrender of the imperial forces; thus Escobedo declined Maximilian's offer and in the early hours of 15<sup>th</sup> May 1867 liberal soldiers surprised the imperial guards and forced their way into Querétaro. While the liberal troops were occupying Querétaro, Maximilian and his companions rode to the hill of the Cerro de las Campanas. There Maximilian asked General Mejía 'whether it might be possible to break through with a handful of determined people. Mejía was negative on such a possibility. The Emperor stayed calmly on the Cerro, hoping that one of the many shells that were bursting there would end his own life, too. (...) He [Maximilian] asked Mejía five more times whether a breakout might be possible. But the general's reply remained a steadfast "no". So he finally asked for the white flag to be raised on the Cerro'.<sup>660</sup> After two months the siege of Querétaro was over, and Maximilian surrendered to the liberal forces under the command of Escobedo.

#### 5.1.4. THE REVENGE OF THE LIBERALS AND THE REACTIONS OF THE PUBLIC IN THE UNITED STATES

After Maximilian had surrendered to Escobedo several of his officers, amongst them General Mendez, had gone into hiding in Querétaro. On 16<sup>th</sup> May 1867 the Escobedo

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<sup>660</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p.203



issued an order that anyone who had served as an officer in the imperial army ‘would be shot when he was captured unless he surrendered to the liberal authorities within twenty-four hours’.<sup>661</sup> Thereupon most of Maximilian’s officers surrendered and were imprisoned with the others. Mendez alone did not turn himself in, as he knew that he could not expect any kind of mercy from the liberals; a little more than a year ago he had shot the two liberal Generals Arteaga and Salazar in accordance with the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865.<sup>662</sup> Three days later the liberals found him and he was executed without trial on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1867. However, Mendez was not the only supporter of the imperial cause who was executed; throughout their campaign against the Second Mexican Empire the liberals had shown no mercy to captured imperial soldiers, most of whom were shot under the provisions of the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862.<sup>663</sup>

News of these executions had reached the United States, where the support of the American public began to turn against Juárez and the liberals. The *New York Times* summed up the prevailing feeling in the United States by stating that ‘the Juarists in Mexico have recently lost the sympathy of the American people because of (...) the massacres that they have committed against captured imperial [soldiers]. After each of their victories (...) they committed general slaughters (...) amongst the imperial officers’.<sup>664</sup> It is this change of sympathies of the American public, which claimed that Juárez’s ‘policies finds the contempt of all mankind’,<sup>665</sup> that provided the basis for the attempts of the US government to persuade the Mexican liberals to release Maximilian

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<sup>661</sup> Hellinghaus, O., *Tagebuch Prinzen zu Salm-Salm*, 1928, p.111

<sup>662</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 292ff.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid

<sup>664</sup> *The New York Times*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1867, retrieved 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D02EED7133AEF34BC4151DFB366838C679FDE&scp=2&sq=29+may+1867+mexico&st=p>>

<sup>665</sup> *The New York Times*, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1867, retrieved 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9C01E3DD173EEF34BC4C52DFB366838C679FDE&scp=2&sq=14+may+1867+mexico&st=p>>

and send him back to Europe.<sup>666</sup> However, the diplomatic attempts of the USA proved to be in vain as Juárez did not change his mind. The liberal leader had two main reasons for not pardoning Maximilian: firstly, he feared that if Maximilian were allowed to return to Europe, the former emperor would become a rallying point for Mexican conservatives and he might even return to Mexico to proclaim another empire; secondly, Juárez had to take the feelings of his liberal followers into account, who would not have approved of a pardon for Maximilian.<sup>667</sup>

Thus on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1867 Juárez decreed that Maximilian and the two Generals, Miramón and Mejía, should be brought before a military court on the charges of promoting invasion and usurping the supreme power contrary to the presidential law of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862.<sup>668</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 298.; Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 260

<sup>667</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 260

<sup>668</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 25

## 5.2 THE COURT MARTIAL

At the end of May the news that Maximilian and the imperial forces had surrendered and that he had been imprisoned by liberals reached Europe. The Austrian newspapers expressed their hope that ‘in contrast to many historic tragedies, the Mexican one will have a happy ending’.<sup>669</sup> Nevertheless, the prevailing opinion was that the United States would use her considerable influence over the Mexican Republic to prevent any kind of reprisals against the Habsburg prince. ‘The great influence of the northern American republic and the respect for the bravery and misfortune [of Maximilian] on the side of Juárez will secure the personal fortune of the dethroned monarch. Of this we can rest assured’.<sup>670</sup> However, soon there were different reports and rumours circulating in the Austrian and European press claiming that Maximilian had been strangled and the two generals Miramón and Mejía had been hanged; or ‘although the reports about the tragic death of Emperor Maximilian have not been confirmed yet, this unfortunate outcome [of the Mexican adventure] appears all the more likely’.<sup>671</sup>

Although Maximilian and his fellow prisoners had heard rumours that Maximilian would be tried by court martial and executed, Maximilian, nevertheless, remained confident that he would be allowed 'with all European officers and troops to leave the country’.<sup>672</sup> Arguably Maximilian could not imagine that the Mexican liberals would execute an anointed monarch and he also based his belief of a return to Europe on the

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<sup>669</sup> ANNO, *Tagespost*, 19<sup>th</sup> April 1867, retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=vtl&datum=18670419&zoom=2>>

<sup>670</sup> ANNO, *Neues Wiener Tagesblatt*, 30<sup>th</sup> May 1867, retrieved 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=wrz&datum=18670419&zoom=2>>

<sup>671</sup> ANNO, *Neue Freie Presse*, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1867, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2009,

<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=nfp&datum=18670419&zoom=2>>

<sup>672</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p.260

fact that the liberals had treated himself and his fellow prisoners quite humanely. After he had surrendered to Escobedo. Maximilian had been taken back to the convent of La Cruz, where he fell ill with dysentery Maximilian's health had not been the best during the last few years and the strains of the last two months had further aggravated his condition.<sup>673</sup> His physician, Dr Basch, had asked to be allowed to consult with the chief surgeon of the liberal army, Riva de Nejra, who examined Maximilian and on whose advice Maximilian had been moved to the healthier quarters of Teresita Convent, and a few days later to the Convent of the Capuchins.<sup>674</sup> There Maximilian had been forced to spend the first night in the vaults of the convent but had been given a cell, which was about ten paces long and three paces wide with a window that looked out on the passage, the next day. The cell contained a camp bed, a cupboard, two tables and four chairs. At night a general and three colonels were on duty in the passage with revolvers in their hands; in general, the liberal guards treated Maximilian with consideration and even respect.<sup>675</sup> As Maximilian had been expecting to be allowed to return to Europe, it must have come as a shock when he was told at the end of May that he would be tried by court martial on the charge of treason against the Mexican Republic under the provisions of the decree of 25 January 1862; Miramón and Mejía were also informed that they were to be tried with Maximilian at the same court-martial on the same charge of treason.<sup>676</sup> Furthermore, Maximilian and the two generals were told that they could choose lawyers to defend him at court; Maximilian selected Mariano Riva Palacio, Martinez de la Torre, Jesus Maria Vasquez, Eulalio Ortega and Frederic Hall but it was

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<sup>673</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 212

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid*, p. 215

<sup>675</sup> Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 212

<sup>676</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 28

questionable if they would arrive in time for the trial as two of them had come to Querétaro from Mexico City.<sup>677</sup>

Now for the first time Maximilian apparently realized the full seriousness of his situation: he and his generals were not to be tried as prisoners of war but as common felons. Felix von Salm-Salm and his wife Agnes tried on several occasions to persuade Maximilian to escape. They even offered one of the liberal officers a bribe of \$100,000, but Maximilian, hearing that the ministers of Prussia, Austria and Belgium as well as two of his lawyers were on their way to Querétaro, aborted the plan. Maximilian deemed it incompatible with his dignity for the ministers and the lawyers to arrive and find that he had fled. Mariano Riva Palacio and Martinez de la Torre were two of the most respected lawyers in the capital and as members of the liberal party might yet succeed in convincing Juárez to commute the death penalty to banishment. Maximilian was also not entirely convinced that the plan was not a trap; he did not trust the officer, whom Salm-Salm had bribed, and was afraid that an escape attempt would give the liberals a chance of shooting them all and then publishing to the world that Maximilian of Habsburg and his two generals had “accidentally” been shot while trying to break out of prison.<sup>678</sup>

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<sup>677</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 29

<sup>678</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.488

### 5.2.1. THE CHARGES AND THE TRIAL

Maximilian had only been informed that he would be charged under the provisions of the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862 but on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1867 Maximilian was given a list of thirteen precise points with which the liberals were charging him. The charges against Maximilian were:

1. He was a tool of the French intervention.
2. He usurped the title emperor of Mexico.
3. He usurped the rights of a sovereign and freely constituted people.
4. He commanded with the force of arms the interests, rights and lives of all Mexicans.
5. He waged an unjust war on the side of the French.
6. He recruited foreign volunteer corps.
7. He published a manifesto on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1865, which stated that the republican government had left the country and which thus declared the republican forces as bandits.
8. He enacted the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 and implemented it.
9. He continued to wage war against the republic after the French troops had departed from Mexico.
10. He decreed that in case he would be captured his abdication should be made public; and in the event of his death sovereignty should be passed to a regent.
11. He demanded to be treated by the court martial as a defeated sovereign in a just war.

12. He refused to acknowledge the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862 and jurisdiction of the court martial.

13. He showed contempt of the court by not answering the prosecuting attorney.<sup>679</sup>

The last three points had originally not been included but when the prosecuting attorney, Azpiroz, had questioned Maximilian about the charges, the latter had refused to answer any questions as he thought that ‘the charges are so ridiculously inept and mean-spirited’.<sup>680</sup> Maximilian also claimed that the court did not have the jurisdiction to try him whether they regarded him as their emperor or as an Austrian archduke; for if he should be tried as the defeated emperor of Mexico then this could only be done by a national congress; and if the liberals regarded him as an Austrian Archduke then he should be transferred to an Austrian warship. It is likely that in the case that the liberals saw Maximilian as a mere archduke, he would have attempted to invoke a regulation in Austria, which stated that no member of the House of Habsburg could be tried by court martial.<sup>681</sup>

As the trial was to begin on 7<sup>th</sup> June 1867 Maximilian’s lawyers protested that this gave them not enough time to prepare their defence against all thirteen charges.<sup>682</sup> Thus the lawyers sent a telegram to Juárez and the ministers of justice and war in San Luis Potosi asking for a longer adjournment. They were granted another five days but were told that the trial must begin on 13<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>683</sup> Since the two lawyers Mariano Riva Palacio and

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<sup>679</sup> The charges as well as the records of the case had been published in Mexico shortly after Maximilian’s death in 1867 under the title: *Resena historica de la formacion y operacion del cuerpo de ejercito del norte durante la intervencion francesa, sitio de Queretaro y noticias oficiales sobre la captura de Maximiliano, su proceso integro y su muerto*. The translated and edited version of these records by Konrad Ratz is used throughout this piece of work. Quoted in: Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 32

<sup>680</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 224

<sup>681</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 33

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid*

Martinez de la Torre were themselves members of the liberal party, they set off to San Luis Potosi to ask Juárez to postpone the trial for a month to give them more time to prepare the defence and not to proceed against Maximilian under the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862, which they called inappropriate in this case.<sup>684</sup> They also asked Juárez to pardon Maximilian and to commute the death sentence if he was convicted by the court. Juárez listened to the arguments but referred the decision to a meeting of his cabinet; after the meeting he informed Mariano Riva Palacio and Martinez de la Torre that the cabinet had decided that the trial must start on 13<sup>th</sup> June and that the charges under the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January must be proceeded with.<sup>685</sup> As to their request to pardon Maximilian and to commute his death sentence, this could only be decided after the trial.

The trial began at 8 a.m. on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1867 in the Iturbide theatre in Querétaro. The judges, lawyers and prisoners sat on the stage of the theatre, and the audience was packed with members of the public. Mejía and Miramón were forced to be present at the hearing but Maximilian was adamant that he would not ‘appear on stage and [that he would] resist against this until his last breath’,<sup>686</sup> and in the end he obtained a medical certificate that stated that he was too ill to attend. The court was composed of seven officers: a lieutenant colonel, who presided, and two major and four captains. When Maximilian was told that the judges were all young officers he said that he believed ‘that they have chosen for the court martial only those who possess the best uniforms’.<sup>687</sup>

Although Maximilian had been charged with thirteen points, the arguments of the defence centred around refuting the four main charges: that Maximilian had been a tool

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<sup>684</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 267

<sup>685</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 267

<sup>686</sup> Quoted in: Conte Corti, E.C., *Maximilian Und Charlotte*, 1924, p. 264

<sup>687</sup> Quoted in: Ratz, K., “*Vor Sehnsucht vor dir vorgehend*” - *Der private Briefwechsel zwischen Maximilian von Mexico und seiner Frau Charlotte*, Amalthea, Vienna, 1998, p. 328



of the French intervention; that he had usurped the title emperor of Mexico and the rights of a sovereign and freely constituted people; and that he had enacted the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865 and had implemented it. Maximilian's lawyers refuted the first charge by pointing out that the French intervention had in effect been a civil war between two almost equal forces and that civil wars could only be resolved through force of arms. Maximilian's involvement in the initial intervention had been minimal and once he had arrived in Mexico had denied the French many of the concessions that the regency under Almonte had granted them.<sup>688</sup> The second and third points were regarded by the defence as void as Maximilian had only accepted the throne of Mexico after a referendum held in Mexico assured him that this was the expressed wish of the people. The lawyers argued that the fact that the referendum had taken place under the threat of French arms had not been known to Maximilian; thus he could not be an usurper as he had not known that he had taken unlawfully power against the wish of the Mexican people.<sup>689</sup> The third charge, that Maximilian had enacted and implemented the decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865, was especially difficult: the defence of course pointed out the parallels between Maximilian's decree and the decree that the Juárez had issued on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862. Moreover, the lawyers also attempted to argue that the decree 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862 conflicted with the republican constitution of 1857, which stated under article 13 that no one was allowed to be sentenced by special decrees or special courts.<sup>690</sup> In the eyes of the defence the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862 represented a special decree and was thus unconstitutional. They argued, furthermore, that the decree did not apply to Maximilian since he first came to Mexico after the republic had de facto ceased to exist. The prosecution though argued that the republic had never ceased to exist; therefore the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January was valid and Maximilian was subject to it

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<sup>688</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 44

<sup>689</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 45

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid*, p. 36

because it was a clearly recognized principle of international law that an alien who resides in a foreign country is subject to that country's law.<sup>691</sup> The lawyers defending Miramón and Mejía pointed out that the two generals had merely carried out the orders of the established a *de facto* government, which they had loyally served, believing that it was the lawful government of Mexico.

Despite the fact that Maximilian's lawyers had presented a strong case in Maximilian's defence, the seven judges did not take long to reach their verdict. On 14<sup>th</sup> June, the second day of the trial, they announced that:

Maximilian has been convicted of having committed crimes against the state, international law, public order and peace according to article 1 (...), article 2 (...) and article 3 of the decree of 25<sup>th</sup> January 1862. The defendants Miguel Miramón and Tomas Mejía have been convicted of having committed crimes against the state and international law, which are defined under the article one in the mentioned decree. All three have been caught in the process of an act of war on 15<sup>th</sup> May (...) whereby they fall under the mentioned decree. Due to this decree the defendants Ferdinand Maximilian, Miguel Miramón and Tomas Mejía are sentenced to (...) death.<sup>692</sup>

Maximilian and the two generals were to be executed by firing squad at 3 p.m. on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 1867.

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<sup>691</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 268

<sup>692</sup> Quoted in: Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1984, 347f

### 5.3. THE NINETEENTH OF JUNE

After the verdict had been pronounced the defence layers only had forty-two hours in which to obtain a reprieve from Juárez; both went to San Luis Potosi to see him, and repeated to him all the arguments they had used in their final pleas to the court. After Riva Palacio and de la Torre had spoken to Juárez, he still refused to pardon Maximilian, for if he were pardoned, it would be illogical and unjust to punish any of his subordinates for having carried out executions under the imperial decree of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1865; the people of Mexico, especially the army, would never tolerate it if all the crimes committed against the liberals went unpunished.<sup>693</sup> Juárez knew that pardoning Maximilian would have caused great indignation in the army and amongst his liberal supporters, who claimed that Maximilian should not be spared ‘just because he is the brother of the Emperor of Austria’.<sup>694</sup> Apart from these considerations Juárez and his ministers also had sound political reasons for refusing to pardon Maximilian. Romero, Juárez’s delegate in Washington D.C., explained them in a private letter to his friend Hiram Barney in the United States on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1867:

I do not know what disposition President Juárez will make of Maximilian, but I’m afraid that if he is allowed to go back to Europe with impunity, he will be a constant menace to the peace of Mexico. He will keep on styling himself, to our shame – Emperor of Mexico: all dissatisfied Mexicans will keep up an active correspondence with him about his supposed popularity there, and even may induce him to return at

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<sup>693</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 270

<sup>694</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State, 1821-1906 , M54 – 13

some future time (...) such of them as can afford it, will go over to Austria and form a Mexican court for Maximilian at Miramar, and he will have enough of them to organize a legitimate government there (...), some European powers will keep recognizing him as the Emperor of Mexico (...), whenever we may be likely to have complications with any European nation, the first step taken by the interested party will be to intrigue with Maximilian and to threaten us with giving aid to our lawful sovereign to recover his authority from the hands of the usurpers, if we decline to accept their terms. Besides, if Maximilian is pardoned and is allowed to go home, nobody in Europe, I am sure, will give us credit for magnanimity (...), on the contrary it will be said that we did so through fear of public opinion in Europe and because we would not dare to treat harshly our sovereign.<sup>695</sup>

However, when the two lawyers protested that the time between the sentencing and the execution of the sentence was too short, Juárez agreed to postpone the execution for three days so that the condemned could order their affairs. The order that the execution had been postponed to the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> June, only arrived in Querétaro at the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>696</sup> Meanwhile Maximilian, Miramón and Mejía had spent their last days in religious devotions and reading; they had already received absolution and were preparing for death when the telegram from San Luis Potosi arrived postponing the execution for three days.<sup>697</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State, 1821-1906 , M54 – 13

<sup>696</sup> Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1984, 351f

<sup>697</sup> Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p. 270

### 5.3.1 THE INTERNATIONAL REACTION

In Europe and the United States there was much concern over Maximilian's fate. The foreign governments that wished to intercede for Maximilian's life had no diplomatic relations with Juárez's government; they therefore addressed their pleas to the government of the United States. Juárez's minister in Washington reported that the United States foreign minister was 'desirous that the administration of President Juárez should know that besides the Emperor of Austria, the Emperor of France and the Queen of England have secretly and in a confidential manner appealed to the United States to use any legitimate good offices within their power to prevent the execution of Prince Maximilian'.<sup>698</sup> However some of these governments also had ulterior motives; Prussia for instance had recently defeated the Habsburg Empire in war and Bismarck was eager to reconcile Austria. It is in this light that the telegram of Baron Magnus, the Prussian minister in Mexico, to Juárez has to be understood, in which he assured the president that

My sovereign, his Majesty the King of Prussia, and all the monarchs of Europe, united by the ties of blood with the prince prisoner, (...), his brother the Emperor of Austria, his cousin the Queen of Great Britain, his brother-in-law the King of Belgium, and also his cousin the Queen of Spain and the Kings of Italy and Sweden, will readily come to an understanding to give to his Excellency Don Benito Juárez every assurance that no one of the three prisoners shall return to tread on Mexican territory.<sup>699</sup>

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<sup>698</sup> NA., Notes to Foreign Legations in the U.S. from the Department of State, 1834 -1906, M99 – roll 70

<sup>699</sup> NA, Notes from the Mexican Legation in U.S. to Department of State, 1821-1906, M54 – 13

However, it is important to notice that Baron Magnus, and not the United States, directed the appeal to Juárez; indeed throughout his captivity Maximilian relied exclusively on the assistance and influence of Magnus and Salm-Salm, whereas the Austrian envoy, Baron Lago, seemed to be curiously absent. Many contemporaries argued that the Austrian government acted too late and only tried half-heartedly to save the life of Maximilian; an accusation that made it appear as if Prussia had been more concerned with the safety and well-being of Maximilian than his family and his native country. Austria's reluctance to interfere in the events in Mexico was commented on not only by Maximilian's lawyers, who felt as if 'the transatlantic cable had been cut'<sup>700</sup> but also by the Austrian press, which raised the question why 'our envoy in Washington, von Wydenburgk, still cannot report anything positive about the fate of Emperor Maximilian'.<sup>701</sup> The Austrian government's attempts to influence Juárez and thus to save Maximilian's life appeared to be uncoordinated and clumsy. The Austrian government had assumed that the United States had great influence over the Mexican liberals and Juárez. Too late did the cabinet in Vienna realize that the US government could not dictate to Juárez how to treat Maximilian and the conservatives; thus when Franz Joseph assured the Mexican government that he would 'at once re-establish Prince Maximilian in all his rights of succession as Archduke of Austria, upon Maximilian's release and renouncing forever all projects in Mexico',<sup>702</sup> Maximilian had already been shot the previous day.

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<sup>700</sup> Quoted in: Ratz, K., *Militärgerichtsverfahren*, 1985, p. 50

<sup>701</sup> ANNO, *Neue Freie Presse*, 4<sup>th</sup> June 1867, retrived 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010,  
<<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=nfp&datum=18670604&zoom=2>>

<sup>702</sup> NA-Washington D.C., Notes to Foreign Legations in the U.S. from the Department of State, 1834 -1906, M99 – roll 70

### 5.3.2. THE EXECUTION

The execution took place early in the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> June 1867 on the Cerro de las Campanas, the hill where Maximilian had surrendered on 15<sup>th</sup> May. Maximilian was resigned to his fate; he had written his farewell letters to his mother and to his wife, in case she would ever recover, and had asked Dr Basch to take his body back to Austria.<sup>†</sup> On the day of the execution Maximilian woke before daybreak, he confessed again and then heard mass in his cell. Just before 6 a.m. he was taken to the Cerro de las Campanas, where the execution was supposed to take place. The only acquaintances of Maximilian who attended the execution were his valet, Grill, his cook, Todos, and Baron Magnus; Dr Basch could not bear to go. But apart from those and from the soldiers that surrounded the square, there were less than fifty people present to witness the execution. The three condemned were lined up with Maximilian on the left, Miramón in the centre and Mejía on the right of Miramón. Edouard Manet famously painted this scene.<sup>†</sup> It is worth noticing the iconography of the painting: The Mexican soldiers wear French uniforms, the prisoners clutch hands and Maximilian is already growing pale and haloed. In short Manet's accused Napoleon of killing Maximilian by withdrawing French military support.<sup>703</sup> Facing the firing squad Maximilian made a short speech in Spanish in which he stated, 'I forgive everybody. I pray that one may also forgive me, and I wish that my blood, which is now to be shed, may be for the good of the country. Long live Mexico, long live independence!'.<sup>704</sup> Then the commanding officer gave the order to fire; Maximilian was shot 'from the shortest distance and all

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<sup>†</sup> Appendix 3: Maximilian's last will

<sup>†</sup> Appendix 4: Edouard Manet famous painting this scene.

<sup>703</sup> See: Wilson-Bareau, J., (ed.), *Manet: the Execution of Maximilian. Painting, Politics and Censorship*, National Gallery England, London, 1992

<sup>704</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p.277

six bullets passed through the body (....) The three chest wounds were absolutely fatal. One had found its way through the heart'.<sup>705</sup> Maximilian died instantly, as did Mejía and Miramón.<sup>†</sup>

#### 5.4. Homecoming

The news of Maximilian's death was published in the press in New York on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1867 and reached Paris by 1<sup>st</sup> July. As the World Exhibition was just being opened by Napoleon III on that day, he withheld this news but on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July it had been reported in most of the European newspapers. It created an atmosphere of outrage, indignation and disbelief. The statement of the president of the French Senate, that 'a horrible crime has been committed against the laws of war, of nations and of humanity',<sup>706</sup> summed up the prevailing feeling of the courts and the public in Europe. There were many both in Austria and France, who blamed Napoleon for Maximilian's fate and regarded him as the 'original author of this tragedy'.<sup>707</sup> In the session on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1867 the deputies of the Corps Législatif did not only attack Napoleon for his role in the events in Mexico but

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<sup>705</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 251

<sup>†</sup> Appendix 5: The official announcement of Maximilian's death by the Juárez government

<sup>706</sup> Quoted in: Ridley, J., *Maximilian and Juárez*, 1992, p.321

<sup>707</sup> Quoted in: Ruzicka, J.R., *Der Einfluß der öffentlichen Meinung der Vereinigten Staaten und Europa's auf das Schicksal Kaiser Maximilian I von Mexiko*, University of Vienna, Vienna, 1950, p. 159



they also challenged Napoleon's form of government. Adolphe Theirs, the Orléanist, argued that the lesson learned from the expedition to Mexico was that the ministers had to have the power to control the government and if necessary to resist the decisions of the monarch.<sup>708</sup> The situation got even more tumultuous when Jules Favre, a republican, exclaimed that the blood of Maximilian would revisit France;<sup>709</sup> the attacks of the deputies and of the press against Napoleon and his form of government continued for several weeks.

The Austrian newspapers also blamed Napoleon for the events in Mexico and argued that 'Maximilian's (...) ghost will haunt the French Emperor for ever'.<sup>710</sup> However, the Austrian press did not only blame Napoleon for the tragic outcome of the Mexican adventure but they also accused the United States of having only their own interest in mind and had thus 'watched the events in Mexico in order to have a pretext for an intervention through which they could justify an annexation of Mexico'.<sup>711</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of the Austrian press hailed Maximilian as a martyr and as an artistic man, who had lived like a poet and died like a soldier. The *Neue Freie Presse* commented that 'Maximilian did (...) what honour demanded of him; he remained at his post against all odds; and when there was no more to preserve the throne he held on to his Mexican idea with such tenacity that even impressed his enemies'.<sup>712</sup>

While the press and the public in Austrian and France were asserting blame, Franz Joseph and the rest of Maximilian's family tried to persuade Juárez and the liberals to allowed them to take Maximilian's corpse back to Austria to be buried with the other

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<sup>708</sup> *Opinion Nationale*, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1867

<sup>709</sup> Ibid

<sup>710</sup> ANNO, *Morgenpost*, 1st July 1867, retrieved 11th January 2010, <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&aid=wrz&datum=18670701&zoom=2>>

<sup>711</sup> ANNO, *Prager Abendblatt*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1867, retrieved 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010, <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&datum=18670704&zoom=2>>

<sup>712</sup> ANNO, *Neue Freie Presse*, 1st July 1867, retrieved 11th January 2010, <<http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?apm=0&datum=18670701&zoom=2>>

royal Habsburg in the crypt of the Capuchin church in Vienna. The Juárez government ‘wanted to gain political capital from [this]. (...) They declared themselves ready to deliver the body only if it were to be claimed by an official act of the Austrian government’.<sup>713</sup> The Mexican government’s insistence on the official act of government meant that Franz Joseph indirectly acknowledged the legitimacy of the Juárez and the liberal government. Thus Franz Joseph ordered Admiral Tegetthoff to go to Mexico and bring back Maximilian’s corpse. Juárez’s government raised many difficulties and Tegetthoff had to stay in Mexico-City for two months before finally leaving for Vera Cruz with Maximilian’s body.<sup>714</sup> Maximilian's body was returned to Austria on the *Novara*, the same ship that had brought him to Mexico in 1864. On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1868 Maximilian was buried in the Habsburg family vault in the Capuchin church in the presence of the Austrian imperial family and the diplomatic representatives of the European court.

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<sup>713</sup> Basch, S., *Recollections*, 2001, p. 254

<sup>714</sup> Schöndörfer, U., *Tegetthoff*, 1958, p.57ff

## *Epilogue*

According to the Catholic rite, the body of Maximilian should have been laid out before he was put to rest in the Capuchin vault in Vienna on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1868. However, in Maximilian's case the imperial family refrained from displaying the body of the late emperor and thus the mourners walked past a closed coffin. This led to the creation of a conspiracy theory surrounding his execution and death of the emperor and to the rumour that Maximilian might not have been shot at all but was living quietly somewhere in South America. Although these rumours were common knowledge it was not until 2001 that they were investigated further. In his research Rolando Ernesto Deneke claimed that Emperor Maximilian had not been executed but had lived under the name of Justo Armas in El Salvador. According to Deneke Justo Armas arrived in the capital San Salvador around 1868 and apparently the man had a striking resemblance with the late Mexican emperor: he was tall, had blue eyes, an unusual beard, spoke several languages fluently and had, from the very beginning the patronage of the vice president of El Salvador, Gregorio Arbizú.<sup>715</sup> Moreover, Armas appeared to have several possessions, such as silverware, furniture and paintings, which bore the crest of either the House of Habsburg or the Second Mexican Empire.<sup>716</sup>

To validate his research and to verify these rumours Deneke analysed the handwritings of Maximilian and Armas and came to the result that both were nearly identical.<sup>717</sup> Moreover, the decedents of Gregorio Arbizú, in whose family grave Justo Armas had been buried, agreed to let Deneke take a DNA sample in order to compare it with one

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<sup>715</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Maximilian*, 2002, p. 198

<sup>716</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte von Mexiko*, 2008, p. 282

<sup>717</sup> *Der Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2001, retrieved 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010, <<http://derstandard.at/522581>>

provided by a member of the House of Habsburg. Although the sample of Justo Armas had been contaminated with microbes, it nevertheless showed a high percentage of congruence with the Habsburg sample.<sup>718</sup>

Had Maximilian really not been shot and had lived a happy life in El Salvador? Had someone been executed in his stead? Or had the execution squad been shooting with blanks?

Deneke, and other historians like Lughofer, have argued that the firing squad had been using blanks and that it would have been easy to remove the alleged body of Maximilian under a blanket.<sup>719</sup> Moreover, they have pointed to the fact that Juárez did not release the body for two months; a timeframe in which, according to Lughofer, Juárez and the liberal government were looking for another body that physically resembled Maximilian; not an impossible task as there were many bodies of dead European soldiers in Queretaro at the time.<sup>720</sup> The theory that another body than Maximilian's had been embalmed and shipped to Europe has been substantiated by a study of the Mexican historian José Manuel Villalpando, who compared several pictures of the body. Villalpando came to the conclusion that there were considerable differences between the photographs and that in one instance the body had been replaced with a dummy.<sup>721</sup> Furthermore, the embalmmnt of the body had been done amateurishly, with the consequence that features of the face could hardly be identified anymore. Therefore, Maximilian's mother, Archduchess Sophie, allegedly exclaimed when she was shown the mortal remains: 'This is not my son'.<sup>722</sup>

Although Deneke's and Lughofer's ideas have been widely discussed amongst historians, there are, nevertheless, a few arguments that refute their theories. Firstly,

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<sup>718</sup> *Der Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2001, retrieved 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010, <<http://derstandard.at/522581>>

<sup>719</sup> Lughofer, J.G., *Maximilian*, 2002, p. 197

<sup>720</sup> *Ibid*, p. 199

<sup>721</sup> *Der Standard*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 2001, retrieved 16<sup>th</sup> May 2010, <<http://derstandard.at/522581>>

<sup>722</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte von Mexiko*, 2008, p. 283

Juárez would have taken a huge risk by pardoning Maximilian. The former emperor could have returned to Mexico, like Iturbide had done in 1824, and proclaim another empire with the military assistance of a European power. Secondly, the last days of Maximilian are very well documented through eyewitness reports and letters, which suggest that there would not have been enough time to organise and execute such a complex plan. And thirdly, Dr Basch and Admiral Tegetthoff, who examined and viewed the body, had been close confidants of the emperor; both confirmed that the mortal remains, which they saw in Mexico, were those of emperor Maximilian.<sup>723</sup>

Although the research of Deneke appears to be plausible, some doubts nevertheless remain. The only way to find out whether a stranger was buried in the Capuchin vaults in Vienna would be a DNA analysis. If it were Maximilian, the sample would show congruence with the genetic material of members of the House of Habsburg and Wittelsbach. However, both houses have so far refused to provide samples for such an analysis. Thus it will remain a mystery whether the mortal remains in the pompous sarcophagus in the Capuchin vaults are those of Maximilian, the Emperor of Mexico.

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<sup>723</sup> Bestenreiner, E., *Charlotte von Mexiko*, 2008, p. 289

## *Conclusion*

Writing this thesis about the life and fate of Maximilian it has often been difficult not to fall into the pitfalls of the biographical approach. Documents and original sources, of course, presented a problem: they were intended to persuade, and can mislead, particularly if quoted selectively. However, this thesis has made extensive use of original material, because historical works are most valuable if they are securely based on as wide a mastery of the archival sources as is possible. These sources enable both the author and the reader to grasp the uncertainties of the past and also restore a human perspective to a historical figure such as Maximilian. However, even for an individual who wrote as much as Maximilian there is still much that is unclear, and there are major gaps in the evidence. Relatively little correspondence survives for his youth and for his last weeks in Mexico, in part possibly because the Mexican documents were lost after his execution in 1867. As a consequence, all interpretations of the events during these periods need to be cautious.

It has also been, on occasions, tempting to overemphasise the importance of a single event or to focus too closely on one specific aspect or phase in Maximilian's life. As this research has shown, it is worth examining Maximilian's experiences before he accepted the Mexican crown and not just concentrate on the short period in his life that he spent in Mexico. Maximilian's upbringing and education, his travels and time in the navy as well as his experiences as governor of Lombardy-Venetia shaped and influenced his ideas of kingship and government. This thesis has argued that in contrast to the standard view, Maximilian's political thinking was not formed by liberal concepts

but that it was fundamentally conservative. A prime example for his elitist-conservative ideas was his proposal for an autonomous Lombardo-Venetian kingdom; the reforms would have increased the power of the governor immensely by uniting all aspects of civil government in his hands.<sup>724</sup> At the same time, Maximilian's ideas about the establishment of a senate also revealed his conservative view of government as it would merely function as a consultative institution.<sup>725</sup> In many ways Maximilian's proposal mirrored the neo-absolutist system established under Franz Joseph after the suppression of the revolutions in 1848.

This thesis also examined the similarities between Maximilian's experience as governor of Lombardy-Venetia and his rule in Mexico. The proposal for political reforms in Lombardy-Venetia as well as the *Estatuto Provisional del Imperio Mexicano* showed that Maximilian's political ideas were strongly influenced by conservative ideas; both concentrated power in Maximilian's hands. Moreover, the council of state only had limited powers, as it was Maximilian prerogative to initiate proposals; after debate in the council the approved resolution would then circulate as law.<sup>726</sup> It is again worth pointing out that the political system Maximilian established in Mexico resembled closely the neo-absolutist government in Austria under Franz Joseph. Further similarities between Maximilian's experience in Lombardy-Venetia and his reign in Mexico were his attempts to establish a brilliant court that was supposed to create a sense of dynastic loyalty amongst the aristocracy and the local elites by giving him the opportunity to grant favours and access to court. However, this disregarded the vast majority of the population of both countries who were deemed unfit to attend court. This was based on Maximilian's belief in certain stereotypes and national characteristics

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<sup>724</sup> HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 354

<sup>725</sup> Ibid, Faszirkel I, p. 357-360

<sup>726</sup> AGN, Gobernación, Segundo Imperio, cart. 12/18; HHStA, Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 84, Faszirkel I, p. 357-360

and, consequently, he perceived both Mexican and Italian culture as inferior to his own and saw it as his mission to educate and civilize his subjects.<sup>727</sup>

Looking at the parallels between his time as governor in Lombardy-Venetia and his reign in Mexico, it is striking that Maximilian never abandoned his elitist-conservative view of society nor his belief in a neo-conservative form of kingship. His attempts to create a sense of dynastic loyalty had clearly failed in Italy; yet, when he arrived in Mexico Maximilian implemented the same measures to bind the Mexican nobility to the court. Maximilian obviously had not understood the changes in society; the Italian and Mexican nobles were no longer appeased by the creation of a brilliant court but they demanded access to the high offices of state. However, as Maximilian regarded Italians and above all Mexicans as inferior and inefficient, these positions were often denied to them and instead given to Germans, and in the case of Mexico, French officials. With regards to the political system, Maximilian also appears to have been unable to modify his concept of kingship in order to adapt it to the situation in Mexico. Upon being made emperor, Maximilian implemented a political system along the same lines that he had proposed for Lombardy-Venetia, which in return mirrored neo-absolutism in Austria. However, by 1864 even Franz Joseph had had to abandon neo-absolutist government; the *February Patent* of 1861 was effectively the constitution of the Habsburg Empire. Moreover, it established a bicameral imperial parliament that was not a consultative institution but had actual legislative powers.<sup>728</sup> Maximilian failure to implement a constitution and to establish a parliament in Mexico also alienated moderate liberals, who might have accepted and supported a constitutional monarchy. Thus it is possible to argue that Maximilian's stubborn adherence to Habsburg ideas and principle of kingship contributed hugely to his downfall in Mexico.

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<sup>727</sup> Haslip, J., *Imperial Adventurer*, 1971, p.93

<sup>728</sup> Taylor, A.J.P., *The Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 113f.



In addition Maximilian's shortcomings regarding the creation of a constitutional monarchy, historians such as Stephen Valone, Michele Cunningham and José Fuentes Mares have argued that the Second Mexican Empire was doomed from the very beginning due to such different reasons as lack of funds, military dependence on France and the threat of invasion by the USA to enforce the Monroe Doctrine. Furthermore, after gaining their independence and the ensuing internal struggles, most Latin American countries adopted some form of democracy or became dictatorships. The notable exception is Brazil, which besides Mexico was the only other monarchy in the Americas; thus it is to compare the two states. When Pedro II, to whom Maximilian was related, became emperor of Brazil in 1831 the country was politically fragmented, with different ruling groups fighting for power. Moreover, no national economy existed, the level of economic activity and such of revenue was low, and wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few. Brazil's population was racially diverse and overwhelmingly illiterate.<sup>729</sup> These conditions meant that the central government possessed few resources, limited administrative capacity, and a restricted field for action. The situation in Brazil was thus comparable to the one in Mexico when Maximilian arrived in 1864. The political parties were split into liberals and conservatives, society was divided along different ethnic groups, and economic activity was nowhere high. As the situation in both countries was similar, how did Pedro manage to establish a successful monarchy in Brazil, whereas Maximilian failed to do the same in Mexico?

The main answer to this question is the fact that Pedro was regarded as a neutral arbiter between the different political factions. He was resourceful, patient and above all persevering and as a consequence established an undisputable dominance over public affairs. Even more importantly, Pedro eschewed bold initiatives and avoided

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<sup>729</sup> Barman, R.J., *Citizen Emperor. Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825-91*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1999, p. 34

confrontation, thus making it possible for the ruling elements in Brazil to identify with the values, concepts and principles he embodied.<sup>730</sup> Maximilian, on the other hand, had become emperor of Mexico with the support of the conservative party that had offered him the throne and that hoped that Maximilian would reinstate them in their old privileges and powers. Thus the liberal elements in Mexican society regarded Maximilian as a conservative and an usurper; his attempts win over the liberals and integrate them into his government remained unsuccessful. Moreover, Maximilian's refusal to restore property and privileges to the Catholic Church alienated his conservative powerbase and yet failed to fashion support amongst the liberals. Maximilian was left isolated without a large group of supporters. In contrast to Maximilian, Pedro was seen as an authority figure who brought stability and certainty to the political scene. The ruling groups in Brazil had to defer to the emperor in settling policy matters; Brazil was a constitutional monarchy but the provisions of the great prerogatives. Among other powers he had the right to name ministers, appoint senators, and to dissolve the lower house of the legislature.<sup>731</sup> As demonstrated above, Maximilian's administration was fundamentally neo-absolutist; he never implemented an official constitution and the established council of state had too little powers to be more than just a consultative body.

In summary this thesis has demonstrated that Maximilian was essentially a conservative, who held specific neo-absolutist or Habsburg ideas about the concept of kingship and government. These principles were instilled in him by his upbringing and education and had further been shaped by his travels and his experiences as governor in Lombardy-Venetia. Thus when he became emperor of Mexico, Maximilian implemented a very similar system of government as he had outlined in his proposal for

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<sup>730</sup> Barman, R.J., *Citizen Emperor*, 1999, p. xiv

<sup>731</sup> Ibid

autonomy for Lombardy-Venetia. He also attempted to bind the Mexican aristocracy to the dynasty by employing the same methods as before in Italy. In effect, Maximilian failed largely to realize the political realities in Mexico; thus he proved himself to be incapable of modifying his political ideas in order to adapt them to the situation in Mexico. Combined with the withdrawal of French military and financial support, Maximilian's adherence to the Habsburg concept of kingship ultimately led to his downfall and execution in 1867.

## Appendix 1:

Maximilian's timetable in 1844:<sup>732</sup>

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
7.00 am	Mass	Self - occupation	Mass	Self - occupation	Mass	Italian	Toilette
7.30 am	Italian	Hungarian	Italian	Hungarian	Hungarian	Italian	Self - occupation
8:00 am	Italian	Hungarian	Italian	Hungarian	Hungarian	Italian	Self – occupation
8.30 am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9.00 am	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Mass
9.30 am	Self - occupation	History	Self - occupation	Going for a walk	Self - occupation	Going for a walk	Mass
10.00 am	French	History	Maths	Natural science	History	French	Going for a walk
10.30 am	French	Maths	Maths	Natural science	History	French	Going for a walk
11.00 am	Drawing	Maths	Writing	Latin	French	Maths	Self – occupation
11.30 am	Religion	Writing	Drawing	Latin	French	Maths	Self – occupation
12.00 am	Bohemian	Geography	French	Religion	Writing	History	Geography
12.30 am	Bohemian	Horse riding	French	Religion	Drawing	History	Religion
1.00 pm	Dancing	Horse riding	Sports	Self occupation	Fencing	Horse riding	Going for a walk
1.30 pm	Dancing	Horse riding	Sports	Self - occupation	Fencing	Horse riding	Going for walk
2.00 pm	Lunch	Horse riding	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
2.30 pm	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
3.00 pm	Recreational time	Lunch	Recreational time	Recreational time	Recreational time	Recreational time	Recreational time
3.30 pm	German	Recreational time	German	Maths	Natural science	Recreational time	Recreational time
4.00 pm	German	Natural science	German	Maths	Natural science	Latin	Natural science
4.30 pm	Latin	Natural science	Latin	Geography	German	Latin	Self occupation
5.00 pm	Latin	Latin	Latin	Self occupation	German	German	Benediction
5.30 pm	Going for a walk	Latin	Going for a walk	Horse riding	Going for a walk	German	Military exercises
6.00 pm	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Horse riding	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Military exercises
6.30 pm	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Going for a walk	Military exercises
7.00 pm	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Music	Military exercises

<sup>732</sup> HHSTA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 99

## Appendix 2:

Maximilian's ideas about a new structure for the Austrian navy:<sup>733</sup>

### **Navy Ministry**

Minister Burger

military/ technical/

and administrative

section

### **Navy Command**

Ferdinand Max

technical advice

insepections

### **Commission**

### Admirals of the Ports

Triest   Pola   Venedig   Lissa

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<sup>733</sup> HHSTA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 115

### Appendix 3:

Memorandum „Comments about the budget for the imperial navy in the year of 1861:<sup>734</sup>

If Austria neglects (...) to develop her navy, she will become a second rate power; The Italian empire will plant its victorious tricolour in Istria and Dalmatia. (...) In addition, the vulnerable coastal provinces will reach the conclusion that Austria cannot protect them, and they will thus gravitate towards more powerful centres. Even now the coast of Istria stirs towards Italy and in the south of Dalmatia the Slavic-Russian influence is gaining more and more ground.

(...)

We have set the budget of the navy for the year 186, with a bleeding heart, to 5.000,000; we have set, in accordance with the requests of the army, the budget of the flotilla to 1.000,000 (...) The navy has thus (...) done its obligation in the important budget question. It is now left to the (...) patriotic judgement of the *Reichsrat* to give the command of the navy to opportunity to develop in a few years the strength to protect the coasts and the trade so that Austria can seize her political position at sea.

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<sup>734</sup> HHSTA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 113

## Appendix 4:

The act of renunciation, which Maximilian signed in 1864.<sup>735</sup>

As your Imperial Highness Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian has told his Imperial Majesty of your intention to accept the offered Mexican throne, and thus to establish, with the help of God, an empire of your own, his Imperial Majesty has considered in a family council the conditions, under which his majesty as the head of the House of Habsburg and as the regent of the Habsburg Empire, will give his consent to the state act:

His Imperial Highness, Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian, will renounce for himself and all his descedants the rights to the succession to the Austrian throne, and all appending kingdoms and countries, without exemption, in favour of the line of succession of the other male descendants of the Austrian house (...)

Neither his Imperial Highness nor his descendants, nor someone in his name, can at any time reclaim his rights to the succession to the Austrian throne.

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<sup>735</sup> HHSTA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexico, cart. 12

## Appendix 5:

Handwritten note by Maximilian concerning the committee on the Indian question.<sup>736</sup>

### Indian Question:

Secret Committee with administrative, military and religious departments:

The parish priest of Vera Cruz as head of the religious department.

Own cipher for correspondence.

Own riders with centre.

Own archive in Chalputec.

Messengers for the centre.

Agents in the centres.

Regular weekly reports.

Book on Indians (Pierron) with all capable military men, priests, officials, judges and accomplished students.

No important office should be assigned with the approval of the committee.

Secret taking of the oath in Chalputec.

Indian grade: Cura Telles Giron de Texcoco, Sanchez Solis.

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<sup>736</sup> HHSTA: Archiv K. Maximilian von Mexiko, cart. 43



Justicia  
 Gerechtigkeit mit dem  
 Staat. Honor, Administration,  
 militärisch, Religion.  
~~Recht~~  
~~Recht~~  
 Gerechtigkeit für alle. Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit für die Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit mit dem Staat  
 Gerechtigkeit in der Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit für die Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit in der Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit für die Gerechtigkeit

Justicia - bdy (Person)  
 mit dem Staat alle Gerechtigkeit  
 militärisch  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit



Justicia - bdy (Person)  
 mit dem Staat alle Gerechtigkeit  
 militärisch  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit  
 Gerechtigkeit

## Appendix 6:

Maximilian's last will and testament:<sup>737</sup>

My last wishes only concern my body, which soon will be relieved of all pain, and then my supporters, who will survive me. Dr Basch will take my body back to Vera Cruz. It is my will that this will happen without ceremony or pomp and that there will be no special protocol on the ship that will carry my body back to Europe. I am anticipating death calmly, and thus wish that silence around my coffin. If the rumour about the death of my poor wife proves to be false, then my body should be entombed somewhere until the Empress and I can be united in death.

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<sup>737</sup> HHSTA: Nachlass EH Sophie, cart. 10

## Appendix 7:

The famous painting by Edouard Manet depicting the execution of Maximilian:<sup>738</sup>



<sup>738</sup> Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany

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