

## Offer of the Crown to Maximilian

### *Junta of Conservative Notables*

*In addition to taking lands away from those who, in the Liberals' view, would use them inefficiently—namely the Indian communities and the Church—the Reform Laws also attacked the special privileges of army officers and Catholic clergy and sought to undercut the Church's ideological influence. These measures infuriated the Conservatives, who were supported by the Catholic and military hierarchy, and in 1857 they provoked a Conservative rebellion that came to be known as the War of the Reform. The Liberals emerged victorious in this bloody three-year civil war, but owing to its terrible destruction, President Benito Juárez presided over a destitute country in 1860. Conservatives continued to decry the liberal course of the Republic, while foreigners clamored for repayment of Mexico's debts, old and newly acquired. Juárez found himself obliged to suspend all payments on the foreign debt in July 1861, whereupon England, France, and Spain opted for military intervention. They landed troops at Veracruz in October 1861. While the aggressors had formally foresworn any intention of armed conquest, it soon became clear that Napoleon III, emperor of France, intended precisely that. With the United States in the throes of its own civil war, the French emperor thought it a good time to defy the Monroe Doctrine and to stake a French claim to New World territory. It took his armies nearly two years to seize the Mexican capital from Juárez's dogged republican regime.*

*Napoleon III found some eager allies in Mexico's Conservatives, who had long been persuaded that republicanism was at the root of Mexico's woes and that monarchy was the only form of government suited to their country. After reviewing the available European princes, they settled on Maximilian, the Hapsburg Archduke of Austria. In the following selection, a Junta of Conservative Notables formally offers Maximilian the crown on July 10, 1863.*

1. The republican system, whether it takes the form of a federation or a centralized government, has, during the many years of its existence, been a fertile source of all the many evils that afflict our country, and neither good sense nor political reason permit us to hope that it can be remedied except by destroying the sole cause of our misfortunes at its root.

2. The institution of monarchy is the only one suitable to Mexico, especially in our current circumstances, because it combines order with liberty, and strength with the strictest justification. Thus, it is nearly always capable of imposing order over anarchy and demagoguery, which are essentially immoral and disruptive.

3. To found the throne, it is not possible to choose a sovereign among the natives of the country (although there is no shortage of men of eminent merit), because the principal qualities that distinguish a king are those that cannot be improvised, and it is not feasible that a simple private individual should possess such qualities, much less that they can be established, without other antecedents, by a mere public vote.

4. And finally: a prince who stands out for his clearly exalted lineage, no less for his personal virtues, is the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of Austria. It is he who must receive the vote of the nation so that he may rule its destiny, because he is among the descendants of the royal house most distinguished for its virtues, extensive knowledge, elevated intelligence, and special gift for governance.

The Commission, accordingly, submits for the definitive resolution of the respectable Assembly, the following propositions:

1. The Mexican nation adopts for its form of government a MODERATED MONARCHY, hereditary, with a Catholic prince.
2. The Sovereign shall take the title of Emperor of Mexico.
3. The imperial crown of Mexico is offered to His Royal Highness, Prince Ferdinand Maximilian, Archduke of Austria, for himself and his descendants.
4. In case unforeseeable circumstances prevent the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian from taking possession of the throne that is offered him, the Mexican nation shall appeal to His Majesty Napoleon III, Emperor of the French, to indicate another Catholic prince.