

THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO 1861-1865

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ABSTRACT

The United States was the shield behind which the Mexican Republic avoided the fatal blows of French imperial aspirations. The potential of the United States, with the end of its civil conflict close at hand, to act on behalf of the Mexican Republic was a vital factor in the ouster of the alien throne.

The success of French aspirations in Mexico, even with the United States handily involved in civil war, was dependent on too many variables. Could the South defeat or stalemate the rest of the United States? Would the United States, involved as it was in the fight for the survival of the Union, make a fatal misstep when challenged in an area where its influence and intentions had often been suspect in the past?

The neutral policy of the United States in Mexico enabled the federal government to survive the apprehensive period of the intervention with relative poise and afforded it the opportunity, once the Civil War ended, to emphasize the principles of the Monroe Doctrine.

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING FOR CONFLICT

From 1861 to 1865 relations between the United States and neighboring Mexico were complicated by war and chaos on both sides. The Convention of London forces invasion of the Mexican Republic in 1861, ostensibly seeking the redress of pecuniary grievances, became in time a French scheme not entirely directed to the mere collection of debts. French aspirations, as manifested by their aggressive actions, encouraged other European nations to attempt to assume protective roles in other distressed Latin American republics. While the United States was enmeshed in internal conflict, Mexico fought to maintain some semblance of sovereignty in spite of the French invaders.

During these troubled times, while the Juarista government was embattled and often in flight, the United States maintained its diplomatic representative in Mexico City, refusing to yield to the tides of change. It was not until the conclusion of the American Civil War that public and government attention could be directed to the problems of Mexico.

The years following the French intervention brought new problems and a resurgence of old ones to plague the already tenuous relations between the United States and Mexico. In order to put in proper perspective the circumstances which made relations between Mexico and the United States so strained during the crucial years from 1861 to 1865, the factors which played vital roles in the formation of policy on both sides of the Rio Grande should be examined.

The United States, under the Buchanan administration, had cast its lot with the Juarista Liberals during the War of the Reform.¹ It was felt that recognition of the Liberals by United States Minister Robert McLane "committed this country to the recognition of Liberal principles in Mexico." By this move the United States "gave the world to understand that our sympathies were on that [Liberal] side, and that our influence so far as its exercise at all would be compatible with our own interests, would be thrown into that scale."² Although the Liberals were acknowledged as the government of Mexico, the political tensions in the United States prevented the

1. Buchanan sought Mexican territory and hoped to annex Chihuahua and Sonora. For his Mexican policy see Philip S. Klein, President James Buchanan, A Biography (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), pp. 321-323.

2. New York Times, January 9, 1860.

ratification of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty by which the Liberals would have added to their treasury some \$4,000,000 in return for the right of transit across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and at two other points in Mexico.³ United States attention was directed toward the fall of 1860 when its own political destiny was to be shaped.

The United States presidential election of 1860 was held under the stress of immense national partisanship. The long years of strife between North and South were fast reaching the danger point. The campaign split the previously all-powerful Democratic Party into three factions. When the election returns were counted, Lincoln, the candidate of the new Republican Party, carried New England, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the Northwest. Lincoln polled some 1,800,000 votes against the 2,800,000 votes of the combined opposition. He received 182 electoral votes while the opposition split the others: 72 for Breckenridge, 39 for Bell and 12 for Douglas.⁴ John C. Breckenridge, carrying the banner for the Southern Democrats, and the Union Party's John Bell split the South, with the latter taking Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee,

3. The political opposition to the treaty felt that "no treaty negotiated under Mr. Buchanan's Administration could possibly be advantageous to the interests of the country or the world" Ibid., January 20, 1860.

4. Ibid., November 10, 1860.

and the former, the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Maryland, Delaware, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas.⁵

William Seward, campaigning for Lincoln at a New York convention, emphasized the gravity of the times. "There is an agreement that this republic of ours is now in a crisis and I confess as I believe it to be true. If this republic passes safely through this crisis then it is assured of a long life, if not it will die."⁶ In the South, tension had reached such a peak that the governor of North Carolina put the issue before his state in strong terms. "When North Carolina might deem it necessary to the preservation of her rights and the maintenance of her honor to assume a separate and independent position, she will call upon her sons to rally to her banner."⁷ In Alabama, the Montgomery Mail reiterated the threat. "Our people are preparing to take care of themselves in the event of the success of Black Republicanism."⁸ "The Federal Union in effect no longer exists: it was virtually dissolved last

5. Klein, President James Buchanan, A Biography, p. 351; Ollinger Crenshaw, The Slave States in the Presidential Election of 1860 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1945), pp. 197, 298.

6. New York Times, November 1, 1860.

7. Ibid., quoted in the Wilmington, North Carolina Journal, November 1, 1860.

8. Ibid.

Tuesday by the election of a Black Republican to the Presidency," spoke a Virginia newspaper. "We are on the brink of a revolution of which none can say what the issue may be."⁹ This was the feeling throughout most of the South.

The stage was set for conflict. The northern landslide for Lincoln delineated the camps even more clearly. Southerners, after the election, felt that they had been thrust into a hostile camp. Their belief was that the future policy of the new government would be based on hostility toward the South and her institutions, denying them equal footing with the North.¹⁰

While Southern newspapers were trumpeting disunion, a Northern newspaper acclaimed the victory of Lincoln as the "unbroken voice of all the Northern states," dismissing the South as being of "no account anyway."¹¹

The choice of William Henry Seward, a staunch foe of slavery, as the Secretary of State further threatened not only the internal situation, already beyond reconciliation, but the external position of the United States as well. The Latin American nations viewed Seward somewhat

9. Richmond Enquirer, quoted in the Petersburg, Virginia Bulletin, November 13, 1860.

10. New York Times, quoted in the Atlanta Constitution, November 9, 1860.

11. Richmond Enquirer, quoted in the Springfield, Illinois Republican, November 13, 1860.

suspiciously because of his past exhortations on the delicate subject of territorial aggrandizement.¹² In 1860, Seward further expounded his expansionist ideas. He foresaw the dissolution of the Spanish American republics as the preparation for their reorganization as members of the United States with Mexico City as the ultimate seat of power of the North American peoples.¹³ Needless to say, the United States was to be the eventual ruler of this vast confederacy of nations.

Seward was a long-time enemy of the South and her institutions. His opposition dated back to 1824 when he supported John Quincy Adams for president because of his distrust of Southern Jeffersonians.¹⁴ He opposed the election of Jackson in 1828 and saw in the accession of Jackson and Calhoun the loosening of federal ties and the basis for future disunion.¹⁵ Running for governor of New York in 1834, and again in 1838 when he was elected, he faced the slavery issue cautiously in deference to his political

12. James F. Rippey, The United States and Mexico (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 252.

13. John H. Latané, The United States and Latin America (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1927), p. 418; Frederick Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 228-229.

14. Edward E. Hale, Jr., William H. Seward (Philadelphia: George Jacobs and Co., 1910), p. 55.

15. Frederick W. Seward, William H. Seward (New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), I, p. 74.

future. But once governor, he spoke out against the evils of the fugitive slave law. In the 1844 presidential campaign, his abhorrence of slavery exceeded even his support of territorial expansion. "What will Texas cost? It will cost a war with Mexico, an unjust war--a war to expand the slave trade."¹⁶ Despite such a position, Seward was catapulted into the Senate in 1848, where he was an outspoken advocate of nationalism and republicanism. He was passed over for the presidential nomination in 1856 in favor of John C. Fremont. Although a leading candidate in 1860, his aspirations were again thwarted by circumstances.¹⁷

Seward was a more than able politician; yet it could not be assumed that he would be able to handle the difficulties which beset the United States from all sides with the growing threat of civil war. A fellow cabinet appointee, Gideon Welles, described Seward as having "genious and talent no one better knows . . . than himself but for one in his place he is often wanting in careful discrimination, true wisdom, sound judgement and discreet

16. Thornton K. Lothrop, William Henry Seward (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1898), p. 50. On Seward's political career see: Reinhard H. Luthin, Harry J. Carman, "The Seward-Filmore Feud and the Crisis of 1850," New York History, XXIV (April, 1943), 163-184; "The Seward-Filmore Feud and the Disruption of the Whig Party," New York History, XXIV (July, 1943), 335-357.

17. Seward, William H. Seward, I, pp. 216-218.

statesmanship."¹⁸ Welles described Seward as ambitious and self-seeking. "He thinks more of the glorification of Seward than the welfare of the country. He wishes the glorification of both and believes he is the man to accomplish it"¹⁹

The long-smoldering crisis between North and South erupted on December 20, 1860, when South Carolina seceded from the Union and declared itself an independent republic. Following the lead of the Palmetto State, Mississippi, Florida and Alabama left the Union on January 9, 10 and 11. Not far behind in the secession pageant came Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. By February 1, the battle lines had taken shape; only Arkansas demurred until May.²⁰

The newly elected President, facing the possibility of the destruction of the Union, set forth the Administration view in his inaugural address. "No state upon its own mere notion can lawfully get out of the Union."²¹ On April 12, 1861, the intention of the Southern states, now the Confederate States of America, to secede was further

18. Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Gideon Welles (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1960), I, p. 198.

19. Ibid.

20. Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1965), pp. 1-4.

21. Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), IV, pp. 263-265.

pronounced by cannon fire on Fort Sumter and the long conflict began.

While the United States was engaged in fratricidal warfare, Mexico, under the leadership of Benito Juarez, was emerging from its own civil war. Mexico had become divided over the far-reaching aspects of La Reforma and the powers contained in the Constitution of 1857. Both Conservatives and Liberals agreed on Mexico's basic needs: improvement of transportation, prevention of Indian raids, foreign capital, improvement of agricultural production, elimination of personal political parties, improvement of mining facilities, increased security of property, development of an esprit de corps in government service and the liquidation of the national debt. The method of solving this mountain of problems was the divergent point.²² The population of Mexico had split into two camps. The ruling oligarchy and its ally, the Church, resented the infringement of its traditional economic and political power structure by the have-nots, the mestizos and Indians struggling to shake the remaining shackles of colonialism.

With the defeat of Ignacio Comonfort and the accession of Felix Zuloaga to the presidency in 1858, the battle lines were drawn. The cabinet appointed by Zuloaga

22. Walter V. Scholes, "A Revolution Falters: Mexico 1856-57," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXII (February, 1952), 1.

echoed his preference for the preeminence of the Army and clergy.²³ The Constitution of 1857, which brought out the best abilities of the Liberal faction, had similarly awakened the greatest talent among the Conservatives. To the advantage of the Conservative cause, these talents were primarily military with the majority of trained military manpower, supply and knowledge being in the Conservative camp as the war erupted.²⁴ With the Liberals, led by Juarez, the three-year old struggle carried back and forth across Mexico, leaving in its wake the devastation of war: the destruction of property, commerce and agriculture in a nation with little that could be spared. With the fall of the old Aztec capital to the Liberals in January of 1861, the Conservatives took flight, eliminating one of the two governments and two presidents which had been present in Mexico since 1858.

The end of the war in Mexico and the beginning of the one in the United States further complicated relations between the two. The European world looked on both contests with the eye of a thrifty shopper, hoping to obtain a bargain at the fire sale of political upheaval.

23. Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Co., 1883-1888), V, p. 731.

24. Ralph Roeder, Juarez and His Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), I, p. 172.

In the United States both governments, the Union and the Confederate, upon the initiation of open conflict, turned immediate thoughts to Europe, although for different reasons. The Union, looking upon the states in rebellion simply as insurgents, hoped to block any recognition by foreign powers of the Confederate States of America as a political entity in world politics, thereby confining the struggle to the United States and excluding foreign influence.

The Lincoln administration, hampered by the desire to keep the war a simple domestic conflict, was forced to declare a blockade of the southern ports in April of 1861. The Union was then in an awkward position, for the imposition of a blockade implied a state of war and the drawing up of restrictions on neutral shipping, both of which would give the Confederacy the status of a belligerent.²⁵ The only major country in Europe which took a definite stand on the side of the Union was Russia and this was only because of its current enmity to England and France, both lukewarm to the Confederacy.

25. Alexander De Conde, A History of American Foreign Policy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), p. 243. A nation blockades an enemy's ports but closes its own through its rights of sovereignty. A simple declaration of port closure would have served in a case of rebellion. Stern, When the Guns Roared, p. 63.

The Confederacy was at a disadvantage in world diplomacy and power politics, for it had to create an atmosphere of friendship for its cause. The South, to maintain a solid economic and diplomatic position and to keep from being isolated by the Union blockade, needed to obtain recognition from Europe. With such recognition the necessary supplies and world stature would become available. England recognized the Confederate States of America as a "responsible power" in May, 1861, after which other European governments also followed with recognition of the South as a belligerent. Full diplomatic acceptance was forestalled; all remained neutral, waiting until the Confederacy could prove its strength in resisting the North.²⁶

In June of 1861, when Juarez began his first full term as president, Mexico was in chaos.²⁷ The government was faced with the task of creating a loyal state bureaucracy and the urgent need to suppress bandits and Conservative troops still rampant in the countryside (sometimes one and the same) and, most of all, to bring about an adequate system of finance upon which recovery

26. De Conde, A History of American Foreign Policy, p. 243.

27. The election took place in March, 1861, but resulted in no absolute majority. Congress postponed its decision until June 11 when Juarez was declared president by only a six vote majority. Bancroft, History of Mexico, VI, p. 292, and note 47.

could be based. The means of finance and revenue of the government were severely limited because 85 per cent of the revenue of the customhouses of Mexico was already pledged to foreign debtors and the remaining 15 per cent was contested by other creditors with claims against Mexico.²⁸

By the end of June the Liberal government was still floundering; a cabinet could not be formed, coveted posts went unfilled, and Juarez, of necessity, ruled by decree. The newly arrived United States Minister found the cabinet "quite disorganized" with "several of the Departments not filled and the duties either suspended or performed by subordinate clerks" ²⁹

Prior to the Civil War, Mexico had looked with suspicion both upon its northern neighbor and across the Atlantic. The Mexican government felt that the territorial ambitions of neither had yet expired. During the hectic days of the War of Reform each of Mexico's creditors had warships stationed at Vera Cruz "to protect its nationals." Opinion on the Mexican situation was expressed in a contemporary account in the New York Times. "No security exists for the property or lives of foreigners in Mexico at

28. Roeder, Juarez and His Mexico, I, p. 292.

29. Despatches From United States Ministers to Mexico 1823-1906, Department of State, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 466 reels 26 to 31, University of Arizona Library. Hereafter cited as Despatches.

this time and we fear none will ever exist until a foreign police force is employed to clear the country of robbers."³⁰ Even in the moments when the United States was on the brink of internal war, the residue of Manifest Destiny lingered on.

Mexico, under pressure from her European debtors, and debilitated by the results of civil strife, sorely needed a respite. Taxes yielded little from the war-ravaged populace. The legendary wealth of the Church had vanished. In 1858 it was estimated at about 120,000,000 pesos; by the end of the war, no one dared estimate what remained. Part had been expended during the war in support of the Conservatives, some had been buried by financial subterfuges, and part had been squandered by Liberal forces. The end result was that some 50 to 60 per cent of the resources on which the government had counted to establish itself was gone.³¹

In July, after a new cabinet had been formed, the law suspending the payment on foreign debt service was passed in Congress almost unanimously in a secret session. The adoption of such a drastic measure was believed by the

30. New York Times, April 2, 1861. On the sentiments of Democrats and Republicans toward Mexico see: Emerson D. Fite, The Presidential Campaign of 1860 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911), pp. 142-149.

31. Roeder, Juarez and His Mexico, I, pp. 289-290.

cabinet to be a start toward relieving some of the pressure which prevented the establishment of order, morality and the revival of the economy.³²

In Europe the moratorium added fuel to the fire which had been building since Mexican independence. The fabled wealth of Mexico had encouraged foreign houses to invest in the young republic. Now, after almost forty years of chaos, the only salvation for the investors was force. With the United States engaged in a sectional conflict which threatened to end the Union and permanently divide its strength, Mexico seemingly must stand or fall without the aid of an effective ally.

The next five years were sorely to try the United States since it had to maintain a middle position. While the Civil War continued, the United States was unable to take a definite stand in support of its neighbor because Europe might retaliate by openly helping the Confederacy. Still, the diplomatic channel to the Juarez government was kept open, the friendship of Mexico being essential in containing the ambitions of the Confederacy. The United States Federal government, seeking to portray its cause and the issue of Republicanism in the New World as the proper governing principle for the inhabitants of America, was bound to preserve the Republican government of Mexico.

32. Bancroft, History of Mexico, VI, pp. 18-19.

Prophetically, John B. Weller, the outgoing United States Minister of the Buchanan administration, wrote: "I have no doubt that certain powers taking advantage of our disposition and divisions at home will endeavor to destroy the Nationality and Independence of Mexico."³³

33. Minister John B. Weller to Commodore G. L. Pendergast, private, February 1, 1861, enclosed in Despatches.

CHAPTER II

THE UNION CHOOSES A COURSE

In anticipation of Mexico's probable default on her financial obligations, her creditors proposed concerted action.¹ In October 1861 representatives from the three countries with the largest claims, France, Spain and England, met in London to construct a tripartite agreement providing for military force to seek a settlement of claims.² The three powers agreed that this was necessary in order to exact payment of legitimate claims, not to seize Mexican territory, threaten her independence or interfere with the processes of government.³ Yet the

1. Word of the suspension reached London late in August and two months passed before action was taken. Ralph Roeder, Juarez and His Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), I, p. 172.

2. William S. Robertson, "The Tripartite Treaty of London," Hispanic American Historical Review, XX (May, 1940), 177-178. Paradoxically, the British-controlled mining companies were extremely prosperous throughout the anarchial years. By 1861 the stock of the United Mexican Mining Company was the most sought after investment on the London Exchange. When diplomatic relations were severed with Mexico, some \$317,020 in specie and bullion arrived in Britain, belonging to private mining interests. Philip J. Sheridan, "The Committee of Mexican Bondholders and European Intervention in 1861," Mid-America, XLII (January, 1960), 20-28.

3. Ibid.

agreement did empower the allies to execute operations beyond the seizure of ports if deemed necessary.⁴

The diplomats constructing the treaty agreed that the United States should be invited to become a signatory.⁵ The allies sought the concurrence of the United States in the proposed convention. This was revealed prior to the convention in a note from Sir John Crampton, English Ambassador to Madrid, to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Lord John Russell. "Although we could never recognize what was commonly called the Monroe Doctrine yet its acceptance by the American people showed European intervention in Mexico would be considered as an infringement on an imagined right."⁶ On November 30 a joint note by the envoys of France, Spain and England was sent to Secretary Seward, inviting participation in the proposed venture as a signatory power.

4. Robertson, "The Tripartite Treaty of London," Hispanic American Historical Review, pp. 177-178.

5. The clause to invite the United States to act in conjunction with the allies was insisted upon by England; France and Spain grudgingly consented. Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Co., 1883-1888), VI, p. 22.

6. Crampton to Russell, September 27, 1861, contained in "Correspondence respecting the affairs of Mexico, Presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, 1862, London 1862," Robertson, "The Tripartite Treaty of London," Hispanic American Historical Review, pp. 170-171.

The allies' offer to the United States was based on United States action in the waning, hectic days of the War of Reform, when European powers threatened to use force to collect debts. The Secretary of State at the time, Lewis Cass, made it known that the United States did not deny the right of any country to "carry on hostile operations against Mexico for the redress of grievances," but the United States would definitely object, and might resist with force, should any attempt be made to obtain a hegemony over part of Mexico or interfere with its political destiny.⁷

The situation had changed since that time; the Union was fighting for its existence and Europe no longer considered enforcement of United States policy a serious threat. In reality the invitation extended by the powers to the United States was merely a diplomatic courtesy. If the United States accepted, the Union cause would lose any support it might garner in Latin America; if the United States chose to resist the convention, the European powers would be thrown into the camp of the Confederate States.

7. Cass, during the earlier days of threatened intervention, had ordered the United States Gulf Squadron to be strengthened. He assured England, Spain and France that the Squadron was only to protect American lives and that it would not interfere in any quarrel between powers. Cass to Minister McLane, September 20, 1860, Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State 1801-1906, Mexico 1854-1867, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 473, reel 3, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Instructions.

What of the Monroe Doctrine? Could this 1823 declaration be applied effectively? By 1860 the Doctrine had not won any noticeable support for the United States in Latin America, not had it been recognized as a principle of international law in Europe.⁸ The non-acceptance of the Doctrine did not negate the fact that it stood as a principle of United States diplomacy, despite its being hampered by political partisanship. By 1860 the Monroe Doctrine had not gained that stature of a truly national principle supported by all factions.⁹

There had been no instance since 1823 of a direct prohibition of armed force for the settlement of European grievances in Latin America. The French interventions in Mexico and Argentina in 1838 and the Anglo-French intervention of 1845 had gone unprotested by Washington.¹⁰ The Monroe Doctrine, strictly interpreted, did not give the United States limitless rights to repel European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. The pledge of the Doctrine was limited solely to political intervention. There was no prohibition of the exercise of measures, peaceful or otherwise, for the satisfaction of just claims

8. Dexter Perkins, A History of the Monroe Doctrine (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1955), p. 105.

9. Dexter Perkins, The Monroe Doctrine 1826-1867 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), p. 420.

10. Ibid., p. 427.

or the settling of disputes, nor even of the waging of war.¹¹

Europe had already tested the force of the Doctrine in May of 1861 when Spain reoccupied Santo Domingo, making it once again part of the dwindling Spanish overseas possessions. Seward's reaction was a strongly worded correspondence in which he reminded Spain of the moral and political implications of this occupation which failed to recognize the principle of the Monroe Doctrine.¹²

Spain evidently had taken little heed of this warning; France and England were similarly unimpressed. England's primary motive in soliciting the United States as a partner in the venture was to quiet any criticism that might arise in the United States.

The question of the extent of United States involvement in the intervention was settled in the reply to the invitation of the signatories. Seward and Lincoln

11. Jane A. Hobson, "Matias Romero and the Monroe Doctrine in the French Invasion of Mexico 1862-1867" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962), p. 3.

12. Perkins, A History of the Monroe Doctrine, p. 140. Spain continued to ignore the Doctrine and attempted to reconquer Peru. See: William C. Davis, The Last Conquistadores: The Spanish Intervention in Peru and Chile 1863-1866 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1950). Spain and France were partners in another attempt to carve out a colonial empire elsewhere. See: R. Stanley Thomson, "The Diplomacy of Imperialism: France and Spain in Cochin China, 1858-1863," Journal of Modern History, XII (September, 1940), 334-356.

recognized Mexico's internal problems and without doubt favored a Mexico free of European influence, yet both realized that to show any strong support for the Mexican position would have been unwise. The United States had indirectly given some strength to the cause of intervention. When the state of Mississippi repudiated some \$15,000,000 worth of bonds held mainly by French and English investors, the Union government stated that no offense would be taken by any "humiliating exactions which may be made on the rebel government."¹³

Prudent statesmanship required that the United States be solidly established before becoming involved in foreign debates. Following such reason, Seward replied that the United States did not question the rights of nations, if their grievances were of such a size to resort to war for a settlement, but added that the United States did not wish to seek its satisfaction for grievances by applying force, especially against a sister republic. He also stated that United States complicity in the intervention would have been in violation of the time-honored principle against foreign alliances.¹⁴ Seward further protected the image of the United States by informing the allies of its deep interest in seeing that the treaty

13. New York Times, April 14, 1861.

14. Perkins, A History of the Monroe Doctrine, pp. 124-125.

countries would obtain neither territory nor influence within Mexico.¹⁵ Initially the London Convention partners adhered strictly to the prescribed and recognized practice of debt collection, and Seward, by not preaching the principle of the Monroe Doctrine, saved the Union position in Europe. The United States had clearly set itself in a spectator position in the hope that the powers would be true to their announced intention.

Mexico, sensing the inevitable, on July 29, 1861, instructed its envoy, Matias Romero, to cultivate the sympathies of the United States government and to encourage a climate of opinion based on the community of interests which bound the United States and Mexico.¹⁶ During the years 1861 to 1867, Romero represented the Mexican government in Washington in its effort to obtain the assistance of the United States. Between October 1, 1861 and June 30, 1862, he had some fifty-three personal interviews with Seward. His object was to induce the United States to invoke the Monroe Doctrine. Romero had even visited President-Elect Lincoln in Springfield to plead Mexico's case.¹⁷

15. Ibid., p. 125.

16. Hobson, "Matias Romero and the Monroe Doctrine in the French Invasion of Mexico 1862-1867," unpublished M.A. dissertation, p. 46.

17. Ibid., pp. 19-20.

Romero flooded the State Department with correspondence on the situation in Mexico and each month sent a detailed statement of events to Seward.¹⁸ He believed that the intervention and the American rebellion were two phases of the same movement which would provide a base of operations for French expansion in the Americas with the help of the dissident southern states.¹⁹

Romero believed that a European intervention in Mexico would lead to an intervention in "America in general," which would be fatal to the preservation and development of the democratic institutions on which were founded the "hope and social welfare of humanity."²⁰

Seward calmed Romero's fears of southern invasion by pledging to "adopt all the measures within its [United States] power towards preventing a hostile invasion of Lower California or any other part of the territory of the

18. Ibid., pp. 48-49.

19. Robert R. Miller, "Matias Romero: Mexican Minister to the United States During the Juarez-Maximilian Era," Hispanic American Historical Review, XLV (May, 1965), 231.

20. Romero to Seward, May 4, 1861, Notes from the Mexican Legation in the United States to the Department of State 1821-1906, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 475, reels 5 to 9, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Mexican Notes. Romero's fear of filibusters and southern invasion of Baja California is shown in: Romero to Seward, April 1, April 3, and August 16, 1861, Mexican Notes.

Mexican Republic by parties proceeding from territory over which the United States has or claims jurisdiction."²¹

Mexico's support and recognition were of strategic importance in the American Civil War and each side sought to gain the advantage. The Union government was officially recognized in Mexico, thus the Union was burdened with the task of preventing any Mexican support or cooperation with the Confederacy. The New York Times reported that the Liberal government of Mexico desired friendly relations with both North and South.²² Rumors of the annexation of Mexico by the South should the latter win the war made the friendship of the North more valuable to Mexico.

To protect Union interests abroad, Lincoln proposed that ministers be sent at once to those points which he felt needed to be "guarded as strongly . . . as possible."²³ The points were England, France, Spain and Mexico, in all of which the Confederacy would immediately seek support for

21. Seward to Romero, May 7, 1861, August 19, 1861, Notes to Foreign Legations in the United States from the Department of State 1834-1906, Mexico 1834-1906, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 474, reel 2, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as U. S. Notes; Secretary of War Simon Cameron to Seward, June 8, 1861, Letters sent by the Secretary of War, Military Affairs 1800-1861, National Archives, microfilm copy, film 476, reel 43, University of Arizona Library.

22. New York Times, April 5, 1861.

23. Roy P. Basler, ed., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1853-1855), IV, p. 281.

its cause. The new minister to Mexico, Thomas Corwin, was well chosen for the task and, of all the newly appointed ministers, he was the only one urged to his post at once. "The appointment of the Minister to Mexico was hurried up in order to have the right man there to antagonize and counteract the schemes of secessionists . . .," thus emphasizing the concern in the administration for counteracting any threatened Confederate designs in Mexico.²⁴

Thomas Corwin was an apt choice for the Mexican position. Corwin's political career began in 1818 and, although he had never been out of the United States, he had had a varied career. He was a state legislator, governor of his native Ohio, United States Congressman, Senator and Secretary of the Treasury under Millard Fillmore. Corwin lost his chance to be the presidential candidate of the Whig Party in 1848 when he refused to come out for anti-slavery, as he prized the preservation of the Union above personal ambition.²⁵ It was Corwin who, during the campaign of 1860, had bolstered Lincoln's popularity in

24. J. Jeffery Auer, "Lincoln's Minister to Mexico," The Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, L (April, 1950), 120; New York Times, March 13, 1861.

25. Norman A. Graebner, "Thomas Corwin and the Election of 1848: A Study in Conservative Politics," Journal of Southern History, XVII (May, 1951), 167; Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774-1961 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 740; Daryl Pendergraft, "Thomas Corwin and the Conservative Republican Reaction 1858-1861," Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, LVII (January, 1948), 23.

the former Whig territory of Southern Ohio.²⁶ In his career as a lawyer, he was considered clever rather than learned, attaining success in court out of his jury appeals and oratorical ability.²⁷ Corwin was described by a political acquaintance as having "a love of life, an irresistible way with people and a zest for the gamble and eminence of politics."²⁸ Corwin's suitability for the role he was to play in Mexico was strengthened by his opposition to United States policy during the Mexican War. In the 1850's many of the United States ministers to Mexico had been Southerners, slave owners, and advocates of Manifest Destiny, all suspected by Mexico of wanting to detach still more Mexican territory from the republic.²⁹ As a

26. Francis P. Weisenburger, "Lincoln and His Ohio Friends," The Ohio Historical Quarterly, LXVIII (July, 1959), 242-243.

27. James H. Hitchman, ed., "John Jay Janney and His Recollections of Thomas Corwin," Ohio History, LXXIII (Spring, 1964), 100-103.

28. Ibid. For Corwin's role in the succession crisis, see: R. Alton Lee, "The Corwin Amendment in the Succession Crisis," The Ohio Historical Quarterly, LXX (January, 1961), 1-26.

29. The eight representatives of the United States broken down by area were as follows: one each from California, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Arkansas, Kentucky, South Carolina, Maryland and Alabama. Thus Southern representatives had had the edge in the previous decade by a mere five to four margin. For a recent study of pre-Mexican War United States Ministers, see: Louis G. Pitchford, Jr., "The Diplomatic Representatives From the United States to Mexico from 1836 to 1848" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1965).

Northerner and anti-slavery Whig, Corwin had suggested that the Mexican War be stopped by ending the flow of supplies to the invading United States Army. In answer to Lewis Cass' assertion that the United States needed room to expand, Corwin replied: "If I were a Mexican I would tell you have you not room in your own country to bury your dead men? If you come into mine we will greet you with bloody hands and welcome you to hospitable graves."³⁰

That the appointment of Corwin was a definite asset is illustrated by the remarks from the Mobile Advertiser: "We think that our government should consider seriously how to neutralize the maneuver which the Lincoln administration is putting into play in Mexico" ³¹ The importance of Corwin's appointment was noted even by a fellow appointee, Carl Schurz, who felt that "next to Mexico, Spain is the most important diplomatic post" ³² Corwin's appointment was noted in a northern paper:

In the present crisis the mission to Mexico may well become the most important of all our foreign relations and it is fortunate that so able and skillful a statesman . . . has been selected for

30. Graebner, "Thomas Corwin and the Election of 1848: A Study in Conservative Politics," Journal of Southern History, pp. 163-167.

31. Roeder, Juarez and His Mexico, I, p. 350.

32. Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 84.

the responsible task of counteracting in that quarter the filibustering projects of the Southern Confederacy. . . . It is well known that he has since 1847 given his attention specially to the subject of the Mexican policy of the United States.³³

Corwin, free of the stigma that had characterized much of pre-war United States diplomacy in Mexico, was in an excellent position to further the Union cause and, hopefully, to foil any Confederate attempts to win support.

Although Corwin was admirably suited for the post, there was initially some uncertainty whether he would take on the job.³⁴ One source reported that Corwin was not seeking the position and that his being chosen was completely unsolicited. Lincoln reportedly "nominated him without any conference whatever and was influenced mainly by the desire to secure his services in carrying out the policy which Mr. Corwin has advocated in and out of Congress as most desirable for our future commercial, political and diplomatic relations with that republic."³⁵

33. Auer, "Lincoln's Minister to Mexico," The Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, p. 119.

34. Corwin's only personal experience with Mexico was as the counsel for one George A. Gardiner, a claimant of the Mexican Claims Commission. Gardiner had filed and been paid for a fraudulent claim under provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The claim involved some \$428,750.00 paid for the loss of a silver mine in San Luis Potosí. Corwin had sold his fee and interest in the claim when he entered the cabinet for \$80,357.00 in 1850 and was cleared of any implication in the fraud. U. S., Congress, House, The Gardiner Investigation, 32d Cong., 2d Sess., 1852, H. Rept. 1, pp. 1-130.

Part of Corwin's reluctance seems to have been that his health was poor and the Mexican climate was notoriously damaging to Americans. From March 12, when he was officially nominated, Corwin demurred until March 23, 1861 when he formally accepted. In part his acceptance, no doubt, was conditional on the placement of his sons. William was named Secretary of the Legation at Mexico City and Walter received a clerkship in the Interior Department.³⁶

36. Weisenburger, "Lincoln and His Ohio Friends," The Ohio Historical Quarterly, p. 234; Carman and Luthin, Lincoln and the Patronage, pp. 57, 97.

CHAPTER III

THOMAS CORWIN AND UNION POLICY

Although the United States archives were full of complaints against the Mexican government, Seward cautioned the new minister not to press any claims against it until it could gain full authority in Mexico. Corwin was to emphasize peace in Mexico since Union success lay in the full restoration of Juarista authority. The envoy was to thwart any attempts at recognition of the Confederate States by the Mexican government. Seward gave the Union Minister full rein since he believed that Corwin's "large acquaintance with the character of the Mexican people, their interests and their policy will suggest many proper arguments" ¹

Upon his arrival in Mexico, Corwin found the government well disposed to support the Union cause. The government was reluctant to express its position officially in a formal agreement in the absence of a firm promise of aid from the United States. ² Corwin's political acumen was of immediate value to the Union position and was further enhanced by his position as Dean of the Diplomatic Corps

1. Seward to Corwin, April 6, 1861, Instructions.

2. Corwin to Seward, May 29, 1861, Despatches.

at Mexico City. The Mexican Congress, put to a test by Corwin's request for Union troops to be allowed to cross Mexican territory to protect the Southwest, in June 1861, unanimously voted to allow the right of passage across Sonora from Guaymas to Arizona. Many of the delegates thought the South would use this as an excuse to seize Mexican territory; if this happened they would seek to enter the war as a Union ally.³ The Mexican government hoped that this permission would be "a fresh proof of the sincere desire which animated . . . Mexico to draw closer the relations of friendship which happily exist between the two countries."⁴

The suspension of the Mexican debt brought renewed fear of European intervention and the establishment of its hegemony in Mexico. Corwin felt that "without our aid she will look in vain for help elsewhere," although Juarez assured the United States Minister that his government would not consider any propositions from the Confederacy. Those Mexicans who were well informed about world affairs were reportedly aware of the dangers inherent in a Confederate victory. They felt such a victory would be the

3. Corwin to Seward, June 29, 1861, Ibid., enclosures F and D.

4. Matias Romero to Seward, August 26, 1861, Mexican Notes.

beginning of a conquest of Mexico.⁵ If European influence was established in Mexico the hopes of the Confederacy for recognition would be bolstered.⁶

A rumored Confederate invasion of Baja California tempted Seward to offer to purchase the area "in preference to seeing it inevitably fall into the hands of the insurrectionary party of this country by purchase or conquest."⁷ Informed that such alienation of Mexican territory was beyond discussion at this time, and under pressure from President Lincoln to help maintain Mexican independence, Seward empowered Corwin to negotiate a treaty which would assume the interest payment on the Mexican debt. The proposed treaty was to pledge the United States to pay at 3 per cent the interest on the debt of some \$62,000,000. The term was to be for five years from the date of the decree which suspended the interest payments by Mexico. Repayment was to be at 6 per cent interest with the public

5. Corwin to Seward, July 29, 1861, Despatches.

6. Corwin to Seward, September 7, 1861, Ibid.

7. Seward to Corwin, June 3, 1861, Instructions. The rumored plan was to seize Baja California to end the flow of commerce and capture the gold-laden Panama steamers in order to bolster Confederate finances. In August an attempt was made by Confederate sympathizers to purchase two vessels in Mazatlan supposedly to intercept the Panama steamers. Thomas Sprague to Seward, enclosed Corwin to Seward, May 29, 1861, Despatches, Consul Edward Conner to Seward, August 20, 1861, Despatches from United States Consuls in Mazatlan 1826-1906, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 469, reels 2,3, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Consular Despatches.

lands and mineral rights of Baja California, Chihuahua, Sonora and Sinaloa to be held by the United States as security for guarantee of repayment. If the debt was not paid in six years from the time the treaty went into effect all the territory held as security was to pass to the United States.⁸ The treaty was also conditional on the consent of Britain and France to hold off on any action against Mexico for refusal to pay until the proposed treaty was ratified by the United States Senate.⁹ This treaty was to prevent a European attempt to force Mexico to pay and perhaps exert political control over Mexico. It is quite evident that the expansionist spirit of the previous administrations had not been dulled by a trivial civil war. Secretary Seward certainly could not expect Mexico to repay the United States in the short six year period allotted, the result being that another portion of Northern Mexico would be pried loose and added to the United States. The October 1861 London Convention put Mexico's creditors in a community of interest; thus any proposal such as Seward's would have to be dealt with by the allies together even if the United States could get Mexico to agree to such an arrangement.

8. Seward to Corwin, September 2, 1861, Instruc-
tions.

9. Ibid.

Corwin, working with an eye to pleasing the Mexican population and government concurrently, proposed an unsecured loan to Mexico of some \$5 to 10,000,000 to pay her debts. He felt that the United States, by lending the money, would gain not only immediate but long term advantages and would bind Mexico "to the north by ties never to be broken."¹⁰ Bolstering the Mexican treasury would definitely remove the threat of a Southern Republic headed by the Confederacy.

Although the Union wished to preserve Mexico's political independence, an outright loan was completely unacceptable.¹¹ Congressional opposition and a \$1,000,000 per day cost for the maintenance of the army and navy already put a strain on the treasury. The immediate consideration for the Union was to defeat militarily the South.¹² During October and November of 1861, Corwin did not negotiate the treaty based on the security of public lands as he had been instructed by Seward. He held off because Sir Charles Wyke and the Mexican government were

10. Corwin to Seward, September 7, 1861, Despatches.

11. Lincoln desired that Mexico remain independent since he felt that the United States citizens would "scarcely justify him, were he to make no effort for preventing so great a calamity on this continent as would be the extinction of that Republic [Mexico]." Seward to Corwin, September 2, 1861, Instructions.

12. Seward to Corwin, October 2, 1861, Ibid.

attempting to reach a settlement on payment to Britain.¹³

Once Corwin was aware of the London Convention, "it was only with great difficulty that Wyke prevented him from at once concluding a loan convention."¹⁴ Wyke's attempts to settle with Mexico failed in November and Seward, in December of 1861, instructed Corwin to convert the draft convention of September into a formal convention.¹⁵

President Lincoln sought advice from the Congress in January of 1862 on how to guard United States interests and, at the same time, benefit Mexico. The interest in domestic affairs overrode the threat of Europe in Mexico and nothing was suggested.¹⁶ In February Lincoln, seeking to protect Union interests in Mexico, nominated Lt. General Winfield Scott to be an additional envoy to Mexico. Scott, because of ill health, had to decline the post.¹⁷ This attempt to place another minister in Mexico reveals how crucial Lincoln felt the Union position to be.

13. Carl H. Bock, Prelude to Tragedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), p. 84.

14. Ibid., p. 87.

15. Ibid., p. 270.

16. In December of 1861 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee met to discuss a Mexican loan but reached no decision. Ibid.; Roy P. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955), V, p. 109.

17. Ibid., p. 138.

In December of 1861 Lincoln submitted to the Senate a draft of the Mexico treaty based on Seward's suggestions to Corwin. The president felt that it was necessary to attempt a solution of the Mexican financial problem as it was of "momentous interest to the two Governments at this juncture." No action was taken by the Senate until another request by Lincoln prodded the Committee on Foreign Relations to submit a report which stated that, in view of changing conditions, it was "impossible for the Senate to advise the President with regard to all the terms of a treaty with Mexico so as to supercede the exercise of a considerable discretion on the part of our minister there, under instructions from the President." When the proposed draft was referred to the entire Senate it was turned down by a 28 to 8 vote. The Senate declined to assume any portion of the Mexican debt.¹⁸

Corwin was fully aware of the nature of Congressional and public opinion but in the spring of 1862, began to negotiate a loan treaty. The Secretary of State had advised his minister as early as February that the Senate felt it "not advisable to negotiate a treaty which will require the United States to assume any portion of the

18. W. Stull Holt, Treaties Defeated By the Senate (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1933), pp. 98-99.

principle or interest of the debt of Mexico."¹⁹ France and England also refused any guarantee by the United States for debt payment, feeling that it was "improper to complicate their Mexican affairs with those of any other government."²⁰ Although the Convention allies were still seeking to arrive at a settlement with Mexico, the joint venture was not beginning to show signs of internal strain.

With the first draft turned down by the Senate, Corwin was advised not to leave the Mexican government in doubt as to its support by the United States but to inform its officials that the President was "unable to suggest to you any other mode for contributing to the deliverance of our sister Republic from the embarrassments by which she is surrounded which would be acceptable to the Senate."²¹ After rejecting the hope of any financial help Corwin was cautioned on maintaining "if possible against any such pledge of the revenues of Mexico to foreign Powers as might affect our commerce injuriously or impair the ability of

19. Corwin to Seward, February 28, 1862, Despatches; Seward to Corwin, February 28, 1862, Instructions.

20. Corwin felt that it was probable that the recent Northern victories at Roanoke Island and Elizabeth City may have had "some influence in mitigating the rigorous demands of Spain and perhaps France." Corwin to Seward, March 20, 1862, Despatches.

21. Seward to Corwin, April 3, 1862, Instructions.

the Republic of Mexico to sustain the free government established by their own choice."²²

In April Corwin had finally negotiated a treaty with Manuel Doblado, Minister of Foreign Relations, to cure Mexico's financial difficulties. The treaty called for some \$11,000,000 to be advanced to Mexico. In return, Mexico pledged all unsold public lands, all nationalized mortmain property and all the notes, bonds or mortgages from the property. A board was to be established consisting of two United States representatives and three Mexicans with the power to transfer or sell these lands to either Mexican citizens or foreigners.²³ The Corwin-Doblado Treaty went further than Seward's September proposals and, if ratified, could work to put Mexico in the grip of foreign capitalists. That such a treaty could even be negotiated shows the severity of Mexico's financial troubles, augmented by the landing of allied troops and the faltering attempts to reach a peaceful settlement.

Corwin had reached an understanding with Doblado that if his treaty was accepted, a portion of the loan would be used to obtain "a favorable arrangement with England." The remainder was to be used, along with the

22. Ibid.

23. N. Andrew N. Cleven, "The Corwin-Doblado Treaty, April 6, 1862," Hispanic American Historical Review, XVII (November, 1937), 499-506.

imposition of direct taxation, to regenerate the Mexican treasury since the custom revenues would still be pledged to pay old debts.²⁴ The United States Minister's enthusiasm to contract a settlement which he had been warned would not pass the Senate is evidence of more than a mere desire to help; it shows a vigorous effort to entrench American interests firmly in Mexico after the war.

When Corwin's treaty arrived in Washington Lincoln, in an attempt to reverse the Senate's previous position, resubmitted it to the Senate. The treaty was tabled and two-thirds of the President's own party voted not to enter into a formal agreement with Mexico.²⁵ The opposition to the financial schemes to help Mexico was threefold. There were those who felt strongly against having either the whole or part of Mexico being brought into the Union and foresaw that a loan would bring that result. Another faction felt it derogatory to the national honor to deal with foreign nations on the problems of Mexico. The third group of skeptics doubted that "subsidies to a foreign State" would be of any real value in solving the Mexican

24. Corwin to Seward, May 5, 1862, Despatches.

25. Holt, Treaties Defeated by the Senate, p. 99.

dilemma.²⁶ Although the Senate was adamant in its refusal, Seward felt that

. . . there are already indications of a more hopeful spirit towards our unfortunate neighbor and that those will rapidly increase with the growing success of our government in its struggle with the insurgents . . . under these circumstances at present we decline debate with foreign powers upon Mexican affairs.²⁷

A vexing problem of the Lincoln administration was that of what to do with the slaves freed as a result of the war.²⁸ Concurrent with his financial schemes to aid Mexico, Minister Corwin sought to use the slave problem to bolster and insure American influence. Corwin, in his early years, had become a member of the American Colonization Society in his native Warren County, Ohio, in 1827.²⁹ As a former Whig, he opposed slavery and the fugitive slave

26. Seward to Corwin, June 7, 1862, Instructions; Seward to Corwin, confidential, June 24, 1862, enclosed in Ibid.

27. Seward to Corwin, June 24, 1862, Ibid.

28. Robert H. Zoellner, "Negro Colonization: The Climate of Opinion Surrounding Lincoln, 1860-1865," Mid America, XLII (July, 1960), 131-150.

29. Phillip J. Staudenraus, The African Colonization Movement 1816-1865 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 138; James H. Hitchman, ed., "John Jay Janney and His Recollections of Thomas Corwin," Ohio History, LXXIII (Spring, 1964), 106.

law; he was not an abolitionist.³⁰ Whenever the Society needed funds, Corwin could always be counted upon to raise the money by canvassing his political colleagues.³¹ Seward was anxious to have an international congress of some sort to deal with the subject of what to do with the slaves freed by an act of Congress in April of 1861. The act stated that property used for insurrectionary purposes was to be confiscated, and, in the case of slaves, freed.³²

Elisha O. Crosby, the new minister to Guatemala in 1861, left with explicit oral instructions to arrange for a colony of Negroes in Guatemala.³³ A man of Corwin's political astuteness was well aware of the current of feeling in the quest for new homes for the Negroes who were being released as a result of the war and realized that the issue could be well used in his Mexican maneuverings. The

30. Hitchman, "John Jay Janney and His Recollections of Thomas Corwin," Ohio History, p. 106. Corwin felt that the competition of slave labor degraded the white man and would encourage indolence among whites if permitted. Daryl Pendergraft, "Thomas Corwin and the Conservative Republican Reaction 1858-1861," The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, LVII (January, 1948), 2, 6.

31. Hitchman, "John Jay Janney and His Recollections of Thomas Corwin," Ohio History, pp. 106-107.

32. Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Gideon Welles (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1960), I, p. 150; Cleven, "Some Plans for Colonizing Liberated Negro Slaves in Hispanic America," Journal of Negro History, XI (January, 1926), 35-36.

33. Mary P. Chapman, "The Mission of Elisha O. Crosby to Guatemala 1861-1864," Pacific Historical Review, XXIV (August, 1955), 277.

negotiation of a recent treaty paved the way for the immigration of the ex-slaves to Mexican territory. In December of 1861 Corwin negotiated an extradition treaty with Mexico which excluded slaves and political prisoners or offenders who had been slaves.³⁴ The United States government had been laboring to conclude a general extradition treaty since 1825; progress in the matter had been thwarted by Mexican refusal to include the extradition of escaped slaves in the treaty and, on the other hand, the refusal of the pre-war southern block in Congress to accept any treaty which did not provide for the return of fugitive slaves.³⁵

In April of 1862 the House appointed a nine member Committee on Emancipation and Colonization to examine deportation plans for Negroes and to consider recommendations that the United States finance such ventures.³⁶ On May 17, 1862, Corwin approached Manuel Doblado, Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the idea of establishing freed slaves as colonists in Mexico. Corwin suggested that "the general

34. Corwin to Seward, December 24, 1861, Despatches.

35. George L. Rives, The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848 (New York: C. Scribner's Son, 1913), I, p. 167. For some aspects of this problem see: Secretary of State William L. Marcy to Minister James Gadsden, December 3, 1853, Instructions.

36. Benjamin Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 109.

character of those who are proposed as colonists is that of a patient and laborious people easily governed and obedient to the law." The United States Minister suggested that the Negroes be settled in Tehuantepec and pointed out to Doblado the advantages to accrue to Mexico from a development of agriculture in a rather unproductive portion of Mexico.³⁷ After approaching the Mexican administration, the next move was to convince his own government of the feasibility of the idea. In extolling his plan to Seward, Corwin sought to impress the Secretary with the idea by pointing out that the Mexicans would not object to such a migration because of a generally non-prejudicial nature. The climate of the proposed area of colonization, the Tierra Caliente and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, was supposedly favorable to Negro settlement. Corwin estimated that some 5,000,000 slaves would be able to settle in these areas.³⁸

Doblado replied to Corwin's inquiry that the Mexican government could not make deals which might later affect the national sovereignty, yet he held out hope for the plan since the tentative refusal was based on the

37. Corwin to Doblado, May 17, 1862, private, enclosed Corwin to Seward, May 20, 1862, Despatches.

38. Corwin to Seward, May 20, 1862, Ibid.

impending action of the United States Senate on the recently submitted Corwin-Doblado Treaty.³⁹

By the summer of 1862, there was an undertone of discontent in Latin America on the settlement issue.⁴⁰ The Central American republics expressed grave apprehension, fearing the effect of large bodies of Negroes immigrating into their territory.⁴¹ Seward advised Lincoln to halt the projects for colonization since Latin America was a key in Union foreign policy and the Union was in no position to lose their confidence.⁴²

As Corwin busily sought a way to maintain United States influence in Mexico, the Convention of London Allies had parted company and the French proceeded alone in their attempt to subjugate Mexico. The initial French military expedition met with failure at Puebla in 1862. This, along with Louis Napoleon's inability to supplement his force until the spring of 1863, forestalled the French for a

39. Doblado to Corwin, May 19, 1862, enclosed, Corwin to Seward, May 20, 1862, Ibid.

40. Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro, p. 112.

41. Cleven, "Some Plans for Colonizing Liberated Negro Slaves in Hispanic America," Journal of Negro History, pp. 37, 41.

42. By summer 1864 emigration schemes had been thoroughly discredited by the disastrous Cow Island experiment. Quarles, Lincoln and the Negro, pp. 112, 191-192.

year. It was not until April of 1863 that Mexico City was taken and the Juarista government put to flight.⁴³

By 1863 United States sentiment was beginning to manifest itself in favor of supporting Mexico. In January a resolution challenging French interference in Mexico was presented to the Senate by James A. McDougall of California. The resolution saw it as the duty of the United States to lend aid to Mexico to prevent "forcible interposition of any of the States of Europe" ⁴⁴ A New York Times editorial on the McDougall resolutions asked if the United States was ready or in condition to "throw down the gauntlet and bid defiance to France and perhaps to all Europe combined?" Certainly the Times article reflected the hopes of many that the French intended "no subjugation or undue political control on this continent."⁴⁵ The McDougall resolution was considered in February of 1863 but with strong objections voiced by Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, who urged caution and felt that war could result from such a strong position. The McDougall

43. For a complete account of the French military effort, see: Jack A. Dabbs, The French Army in Mexico, 1861-1867 (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1963).

44. McDougall was a Senator from California from 1861 to 1867 and one of the first members of Congress to direct attention to the aspirations of the French in Mexico. William L. Shaw, "McDougall of California," California Historical Society Quarterly, XLIII (June, 1964), 123-124.

45. New York Times, January 21, 1863.

resolution was tabled on a motion from Sumner by a 34 to 10 vote.⁴⁶

Corwin had previously been cautioned by Seward to refrain from recognizing any other government than that of Juarez in case of a drastic change.⁴⁷ The defeat of the Juarez troops at Puebla and the final occupation of Mexico City forced the government to move to San Luís Potosí. The Mexican Foreign Minister invited all the foreign representatives accredited to the Juarez government to accompany the government, but Corwin declined.⁴⁸

Corwin's decision not to accompany the Juarez administration into the field was approved by Washington. The Secretary of State felt that the interests of the United States could not be "effectually represented at San Luis" because communication between the latter and the United States legation at Mexico City was extremely meager.⁴⁹ With the fortunes of Mexico shifting so violently, the Secretary probably wanted to maintain the

46. Shaw, "McDougall of California," California Historical Society Quarterly, p. 124. The growth of opposition to Seward's Mexican policy is discussed in: Marvin Goldwert, "Matias Romero and Congressional Opposition to Seward's Policy Toward the French Intervention in Mexico," The Americas, XXII (July, 1965), 22-40.

47. Seward to Corwin, May 10, 1862, Instructions.

48. Corwin to Seward, June 26, 1863, Despatches.

49. Ibid.; Seward to Corwin, August 8, 1863, Instructions.

national representative at the point where the Confederacy was most likely to attempt to establish its influence.

Although officially Lincoln did not doubt the sincerity of French intentions, it was felt that a monarchy established in Mexico would have "no promise of security or permanence," nor improve the condition of Mexico.⁵⁰ The Union was now faced with securing Texas, lest the French link the destiny of Mexico with the Confederacy. In a letter advising the occupation of Texas Lincoln related that: "Recent events in Mexico, I think render early action in Texas more important than ever. . . . I am greatly impressed with the importance of reestablishing the national authority in Western Texas as soon as possible" ⁵¹ Lincoln assured the Juarista minister in Washington that the Union wished nothing but the best for his government.⁵² To give Corwin the freedom of action needed to maintain his ties with the Juarista government, Seward now recommended: "If for any cause your residence in the city of Mexico shall become intolerable or seriously

50. New York Times, July 31, 1863; Beale, The Diary of Gideon Welles, I, p. 385.

51. Basler, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, VI, pp. 364-365, 374.

52. Ibid., pp. 548-549.

inconvenient, you will be at liberty to resort to any other part of the country or to return to the United States."⁵³

The Union thus fully committed itself to supporting Juarez, even to the point of not having its representative in Mexico if it became impossible to maintain recognition of the Juarista administration.

The Union, by the fall of 1863, was favored by the victories at Gettysburg, Vicksburg and Port Hudson, which cut off Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana from the rest of the Confederacy. The efforts of the government could now be turned to reconquering Texas to prevent any movement by the French in Mexico toward reinforcing the Confederacy or seizing Texas for itself.⁵⁴ Union troops occupied Brownsville in November of 1863. This occupation of the Rio Grande had a reassuring effect on the border inhabitants and, they hoped, portended further developments. The Matamoros Consul reported: "All the better class of Mexicans are looking forward to the time when the French will be ordered from Mexico by the United States and the occupation of the Rio Grande has encouraged them in their

53. Corwin was directed in August of 1863 not to "address yourself under present circumstances to the new provisional government which bears sway at the capital." Seward to Corwin, August 8, 1863, Instructions; Seward to Corwin, November 23, 1863, Ibid.

54. Alwyn Barr, "Texas Coastal Defense 1861-1865," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLV (July, 1961), 23.

belief."⁵⁵ However grateful the Mexicans were, the Union was taking no chance of being involved in the Franco-Mexican shooting war. General Nathaniel P. Banks was "specifically charged to do whatever practicable to avoid any collision between forces under his command and either of the belligerents in Mexico"⁵⁶

As the Union had now secured the flank of the Confederacy and nullified the threat of French intervention, some members of Congress felt it was time for a forceful representation to both the French and the Juarez government of its position. In April of 1864, by joint resolution, it was resolved:

. . . that the Congress of the United States are unwilling by silence to leave the nations of the world under the impression that they are indifferent spectators of the deplorable events now transpiring [sic] in the Republic of Mexico; and they therefore think fit to declare that it does not accord with the policy of the United States to acknowledge a monarchical government erected on the ruins of any republican government in

55. Leonard Pierce to Seward, January 16, 1864, Despatches from United States Consuls in Matamoros, 1826-1906, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 1002, reel 4, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Consular Despatches.

56. Seward to Romero, March 12, 1864, U. S. Notes. For an eyewitness account of Union occupation of the border, see: Benjamin F. McIntyre, Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, Nannie M. Tilley, ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), pp. 239-388.

America under the auspices of any European power⁵⁷

According to Henry Winter Davis of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, this resolution did more "than declare the refusal of the United States to recognize a monarchical usurpation in Mexico. It declares a general rule of policy" ⁵⁸

Although the resolution was ignored by Seward, he was canny enough to see its effect if used properly. In writing to the United States Minister to France, he said that the resolution arose from the Congress itself, without any sort of prompting from the executive department.

Seward counseled that if the official policy of the United States was to change, the French would be notified through the proper diplomatic channels. ⁵⁹

Now that the war was fast closing, the problem of Mexico was pushing itself to the foreground. In the presidential election of 1864, all the potential candidates, Lincoln, Ulysses Grant, John Fremont and George McClellan, publicly avowed that they were determined to sustain the

57. Senator McDougall had been working to get a resolution passed since January. Shaw, "McDougall of California," California Historical Society Quarterly, pp. 126-127. Romero had encouraged Davis prior to the presentation of the resolution. Jane A. Hobson, "Matias Romero and the Monroe Doctrine in the French Invasion of Mexico 1861-1867" (unpublished M.A. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1962), pp. 86-87.

58. U. S. Congress, House, Henry Winter Davis Report of the Joint Resolution on Mexican Affairs, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 1864, Rept. 129, p. 6.

59. Ibid., p. 2, Seward to Minister William Dayton.

Monroe Doctrine and oppose the political interference of France in Mexico.⁶⁰ In June of 1864 McDougall offered a resolution which was written into the Republican National Party Platform:

Resolved, that the people of the United States can never regard with indifference the attempt of any foreign power of any republican government on the Western Continent, and that they will view with extreme jealousy, as menacing to the peace and independence of their own country, the efforts of any such Power to obtain any footholds for monarchical Governments sustained by foreign military force in proximity to the United States.⁶¹

This forceful resolution left no doubt as to the feelings of at least a good segment of people, but this part of the platform was defeated in July. The defeat of the resolution showed that a significant element still felt that as long as the Civil War continued, no matter how incensed or indignant the feeling, it was unwise to taunt France. The continuation of the neutral policy of the previous years was assured when Lincoln, in accepting the nomination for the presidency, approved Seward's Mexican policy and promised that it "will be faithfully maintained,

60. Robert R. Miller, "Matias Romero: Mexican Minister to the United States During the Juarez-Maximilian Era," Hispanic American Historical Review, XLV (May, 1965), 232; Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin to Minister John Slidell, June 23, 1864; James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy (Nashville: United States Publishing Co., 1906), II, pp. 654-655.

61. Shaw, "McDougall of California," California Historical Society Quarterly, pp. 128-129.

so long as the state of facts shall leave that position pertinent and applicable."⁶² A more vigorous stand on Mexican affairs was taken by the Vice-Presidential nominee, Andrew Johnson, who felt that once the war was terminated the United States could "attend to the affairs of Mexico." Johnson believed that a military expedition to oust the French would be feasible in the future.⁶³

As the Union policy had not yet changed to official hostility, the trend of events portended trouble for the Empire and perhaps for Mexico herself.

In June of 1864, Thomas Corwin, interviewed in Washington, showed how some Americans felt on the problem of Mexico. Corwin stated that he was never favorable to "the principle or practice of foreign intervention in Mexico," but that he "always believed and often so expressed himself that Maximilian or to [sic] any other Power to whom the Mexican people would submit who could give them a good and stable government and restore domestic tranquility would be to that country [Mexico] a real benefactor."⁶⁴ Obviously, this statement could be interpreted to the advantage of either side. If Maximilian

62. Basler, Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, II, p. 411.

63. Robert W. Frazer, "Maximilian's Propaganda Activities in the United States, 1865-1866," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXIV (February, 1944), 4.

64. New York Times, June 8, 1864.

could subjugate all of Mexico and reestablish peace and tranquility, would the United States recognize his empire? Or, for the Mexicans, was this an indication that a reconstituted United States would follow the principles of Manifest Destiny and this time finish with all of Mexico?

CHAPTER IV

THE CONFEDERACY FAILS AT MEXICO CITY

Although Mexico was a possible target for Confederate exploitation in its contest with the Union, there was an abysmal lack of concentrated effort in Mexico City. The Confederate endeavors centered mainly on the frontier provinces where, because of lack of control by the central government, the independent-minded governors were open to bids which could strengthen their position against the capital.¹

The first official opposition Corwin faced in Mexico was in the person of an ex-United States Consul at Vera Cruz, John T. Pickett.² Pickett, a West Point graduate, had had a long career in Latin American and European adventures. His close association with men who became important in the Confederate administration, such as

1. J. Fred Rippey, "Mexican Projects of the Confederates," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXII (April, 1919), 291-317.

2. On February 15, 1861, Pickett resigned his post at Vera Cruz due to the "destructive influence of this climate upon my health and the comparative inadequacy of salary" John T. Pickett to Lewis Cass, February 15, 1861, Despatches from United States Consuls in Vera Cruz, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 467, reels 8-9, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Consular Despatches.

Judah P. Benjamin, John Forsyth and John Slidell, led to his appointment as the Confederate representative in Mexico.³ Pickett believed that the destiny of the Confederacy lay in Mexico and Central America. His sympathies were also with the Conservative faction, with whom he believed the South should ally itself.⁴

Upon his arrival in July 1861, Pickett was to try to negotiate a treaty of friendship with Mexico and block all efforts of the Union to attempt to obtain special favors or concessions. Pickett was instructed not to insist upon formal recognition unless Juarez seemed ready for such a step, the feeling being that informal relations would suffice. The friendship to be fostered between the Confederacy and Mexico was to be based on those points which the two shared, domestic slavery and peonage,

3. The leaders of the Confederacy had ample pre-war experience in Mexico. See: Robert D. Meade, Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 121-122; J. Fred Rippy, "Diplomacy of the United States and Mexico Regarding the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, 1848-1860," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, VI (March, 1920), 503-531; John P. Moore, "Correspondence of Pierre Soule: The Louisiana Tehuantepec Company," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXXII (February, 1952), 59-72.

4. Burton J. Hendrik, Statesman of the Lost Cause (New York: Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1939), pp. 118-119; Frank L. Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 94. For Pickett's complete instructions see: Robert Toombs, Secretary of State, to John T. Pickett, May 17, 1861 in James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy (Nashville: United States Publishing Co., 1906), II, pp. 21-26.

agriculture and mining pursuits and the geographical proximity of the two areas, which meant that the Confederacy could "guarantee Mexico against foreign invasion."⁵ Corwin, reporting on the Union position in Mexico and his efforts to acquaint the Mexican government with the situation, stated that "it has been my constant endeavor since my arrival here to possess the Mexican mind of the true causes of our difficulties and thus enable them to estimate the danger to this republic which will result from any unfavorable termination of them." In early 1861, the Minister was able to report that Mexico "regards the United States as its true and only reliable friend in any struggle which may involve the national existence."⁶

Pickett, upon learning that Mexico had granted to the Union the right to move troops through Mexico to Arizona, was faced with his first test of statesmanship. He informed the government that this move was offensive to the Confederacy because "New Mexico had placed itself under the protection of these states." Pickett then threatened that such a privilege, unless annulled, would cause Mexico to lose "the state of Tamaulipas in sixty days."⁷ Seward, even though the tide of battle was then running against the

5. Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy, pp. 94-95.

6. Corwin to Seward, August 29, 1861, Despatches.

7. Ibid.

Union, felt that "the threats of the unsurgents will daily obtain less respect in Mexico as their demonstrations at home excite daily diminished apprehensions here."⁸

Seward believed that in an unofficial interview with the Minister of Foreign Relations Pickett had asked, not for full official recognition for the Confederacy, but only that Mexico remain neutral and refrain from any "acts in sympathy and cooperation with the United States."⁹

Pickett reported that he had succeeded in establishing friendly relations with Manuel de Zamacona, Minister of Foreign Relations and was confident if it were not for Mexico's trouble with England and France, who had suspended diplomatic relations, he could accomplish all the aims of his mission.¹⁰

Pickett's moves to thwart the United States were no more than half-hearted. First he proposed to recede to Mexico Upper California, New Mexico and Arizona in exchange for the establishment of free trade between Mexico and the Confederate States. In response to Seward's proposal to purchase Baja California, Pickett protested the sale of Mexican land to any government not "in amity" with the

8. Seward to Corwin, September 20, 1861, Instructions.

9. Seward to Corwin, September 13, 1861, Ibid.

10. Pickett to Toombs, July 28, 1861, Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, p. 49.

Confederacy.¹¹ Pickett furnished the Juarez opposition in the Mexican Congress with a letter from himself to the Mexican Secretary of State in reference to a threatened attack on the frontier. The opposition used this as the spearhead for an attack on Juarez and his cabinet for putting Mexico in such a precarious position. But the rejection of the Confederate Agent was evidently a solid decision since "the opposition orator was laughed at and not complimented even by a reply."¹²

The United States Minister was informed that Mexico would not recognize the Confederacy, but because of Mexico's weakened position, wished to remain "good neighbors." The Mexican government assured Corwin that it could not give direct or indirect recognition to the seceded states because it considered the war as a civil war and did not recognize the Confederacy as autonomous.¹³

Pickett labored under another handicap of which he was unaware. All of his official dispatches were intercepted by the jefe of Tamaulipas at Tampico by the request

11. Corwin to Seward, October 21, 1861, Despatches.

12. Corwin to Seward, October 29, 1861, Ibid.

13. The inquiry as to the official status of Pickett is in: Corwin to Manuel de Zamacona, Minister of Foreign Relations, November 10, 1861, enclosed Corwin to Seward, November 29, 1861, Ibid. Zamacona's explanation of the Mexican position is in: Zamacona to Corwin, November 25, 1861, enclosed Corwin to Seward, November 29, 1861, Ibid.

of Corwin. The dispatches were seen by Juarez and Corwin, then forwarded to Washington.¹⁴ While Pickett was officially the good friend of Mexico, the uncomplimentary remarks contained in his dispatches to the Confederacy were quite demeaning of many aspects of Mexican life and government.¹⁵ Pickett's career as Mexican agent and, in effect, the Confederate diplomatic effort in Mexico City ended in the fall of 1861 when Pickett spent a month in jail for assault. He left the country after his release.¹⁶

While there was no official Confederate agent in Mexico City there was a continuing struggle on another level to protect the Union position. The United States Minister was somewhat hindered by the "lack of truthful news." The first news received in Mexico City came in Southern newspapers by way of blockade runners from New Orleans or via a land route from Matamoros. As would be expected, the Southern papers were "greatly exaggerating everything in favor of the South." The news from these sources was available for a month before any contradiction could be obtained from New York or Washington papers on the same events. It was "hard to give . . . credence" to the

14. Carl H. Bock, Prelude to Tragedy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), p. 117; Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy, p. 108.

15. Ibid., pp. 98, 99, 108; Bock, Prelude to Tragedy, p. 117.

16. Ibid., p. 120.

Union position after a month of speculation from Southern sources.¹⁷ By July of 1862, the capture of New Orleans had convinced Mexicans of the "inability of the South to sustain the conflict much longer" ¹⁸ Although the Northern news had its impact, as late as December 1863, the United States Minister reported that the "papers in Mexico give everything favorable to the South from letters, newspapers and rumors." There was even, under the imperial government, "open declaration" by some newspapers that the Confederate States of America were the "natural allies of the Regency of the Empire."¹⁹

It is difficult to understand why the Confederacy, which placed such a value on Mexico, did not persist at the capital. The Secretary of State, Judah P. Benjamin, gave little importance to Mexican relations for some time and had not been disturbed by the failure of the Pickett mission.²⁰ Perhaps the profitable border situation was the benefit the government felt it could best use in its conduct of the war and would press recognition after dealing with the North. The ouster of the anti-Confederate Juarista government and the establishment of the Empire

17. Corwin to Seward, February 5, 1862, Despatches.

18. Corwin to Seward, July 28, 1862, Ibid.

19. Corwin to Seward, December 26, 1863, Ibid.

20. Meade, Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate States-man, p. 295.

would seem to afford the opportunity of gaining a true ally for the South. An alliance or recognition by Maximilian would aid the faltering of the Confederacy. But the Maximilian government, although in sympathy with the Confederate cause, could not afford to jeopardize its relationship with the Union.²¹

Encouragement to send another Confederate envoy came not from Maximilian, but from General Juan Almonte, acting as Regent of the new Empire until the Emperor's arrival.²² The second Confederate Minister to Mexico, William Preston of Kentucky, was chosen in January of 1864, in an attempt to bring about an understanding between Maximilian and the Confederacy. Preston was instructed not to enter Mexico until it was certain he would be duly received by the imperial government in order to avoid another official embarrassment.²³ Preston chose to wait

21. It was rumored in official circles in Mexico that the United States would recognize the Empire if the United States could "obtain in return certain guarantees against favorable treatment of the Confederates." Arnold Blumberg, "A Swedish Diplomat in Mexico, 1864," Hispanic American Historical Review, XLV (May, 1965), 285-286; Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1965), p. 270.

22. Benjamin to William Preston, January 7, 1864, Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy, II, pp. 611-612.

23. For Preston's appointment and instructions see: Ibid. The Confederate government's position with Maximilian had been weakened before he left Europe by the Emperor's refusal to see Confederate envoys. Stern, When the Guns Roared, pp. 269-270.

in Havana for the opportune moment to enter Mexico. In May of 1864, William Corwin, then in charge during his father's absence, reported that he had been informed confidentially by a person "high in authority here" that the Imperial government did not desire Preston ever to set foot on Mexican soil. The informant felt that his arrival "could produce nothing but trouble to this country and certainly could do no good to the Southern Confederacy."²⁴ Near the end of May 1864, Preston sent a member of his party from Havana to report on the situation of his desired reception in Mexico. By this time, Maximilian was fully convinced that "any act on his part tending even to encourage the so-called Confederates would but increase the ill feeling against him . . . without yielding him the slightest benefit." Preston's envoy reported on the unfavorable climate of opinion and the second official Confederate mission to Mexico ended before it ever reached that country.²⁵

24. William Corwin, Secretary of Mexican Legation, to Seward, May 28, 1864, Despatches.

25. William Corwin to Seward, June 29, 1864, Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE UNION BLOCKADE

In April of 1861 when Lincoln established a blockade of the southern ports, the United States Navy had only forty-two ships in commission which, except for twelve in the Home Squadron, were spread over the globe.¹ To shut down the commerce of the Confederacy would require patrolling the shore from Newport News, Virginia to Brownsville, Texas. The South, once at war, desperately needed arms and munitions since the bulk of the arms of the Federal Government were stored in arsenals north of the Potomac. It lacked the manufacturing and labor skills needed to produce clothing, medicine and tools.² Over 400 miles of harbors and beaches lay in Texas, second only to Florida in length.³ The presence of this long coast

1. Of the twelve vessels in the Home Squadron, three were in Mexican waters, one at Vera Cruz, two enroute from Vera Cruz to the United States. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies In the War of the Rebellion (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1908), Series I, Vols. 1-4, 12-22; Philip Van Doren Stern, When the Guns Roared (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 8.

2. William Diamond, "Imports of the Confederate Government From Europe and Mexico," Journal of Southern History, VI (November, 1940), 470-473.

3. Alwyn Barr, "Texas Coastal Defense 1861-1865," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XLV (July, 1961), 1.

accelerated Union need for the solid backing of Mexico to prevent access into the Confederacy from Mexico. Seward informed his minister to use his "best judgement as to the measures necessary to prevent the insurgent vessels from finding shelter in Mexican ports and also to prevent arms and other military stores being carried to the seceding states through Mexico."⁴ Corwin warned Seward that the Mexican states bordering Texas and New Mexico were weak in both population and wealth and could be captured by "a comparatively small force."⁵

The North Mexican states had been the scene of contraband traffic since Texas belonged to Mexico. During the years of civil strife, the northern states had come to take a somewhat independent course. Corwin reported that for almost four years, the government in Mexico City had not received "one cent from the custom houses on the entire Pacific coast and with the exception of Vera Cruz, very little from any port on the Gulf."⁶ The revenues of the northern ports were put to private use by autonomously inclined governors such as Santiago Vidaurri, ruler of Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas, where two choice ports could be

4. Seward to Corwin, June 24, 1861, Instructions.

5. Corwin to Seward, August 28, 1861, Despatches.

6. Corwin to Seward, May 28, 1862, Ibid.

used, Tampico and Matamoros, for breaking the blockade.⁷

The stimuli for the North Mexican caudillos to cooperate with the Confederacy were threefold. Mexican products could be sold at an enormous profit to the eager southern market. The chance to act as a middleman for European imports and exports to the Confederacy meant expanded business opportunities and profit. The Confederacy could, if necessary, provide a useful ally in any power struggle with the Central Government.⁸

It is not possible to date the exact start of the contraband trade through Mexico but it probably commenced as soon as the blockade was proclaimed. A United States Consul took notice that from May 11 to June 18, 1861, six ships arrived at Vera Cruz, carrying 136 cases of arms, about 4,725 stands of arms supposedly intended for Mexico.⁹ Matamoros quickly became the entrepôt for the contraband trade. The Confederacy occupied both the Texas and Mexican side of the Rio Grande at its mouth and in 1862 the

7. A Confederate Agent was sent to contact and cultivate Vidaurri see: William M. Browne, Assistant Secretary of State to José Quintero, with enclosure to Vidaurri, September 3, 1861, John D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy (Nashville: United States Publishing Co., 1906), II, pp. 77-80.

8. Brother Avila-Larios, F.S.C., "Brownsville-Matamoros Confederate Lifeline," Mid-America, XL, New Series, XXIV (April, 1958), 80.

9. Consul Rieken to Seward, July 25, 1861, September 3, 1861, Consular Despatches, Vera Cruz.

Matamoros custom house was located in Brownsville, though business was still contracted under the name of Matamoros.¹⁰ The Mexican tax on exports to Texas had been heavy prior to the rise of the contraband trade. For example, flour exported to Texas paid \$5.00 duty; this had now been reduced to \$1.50 to lower any barrier which might hinder commerce across the Rio Grande.¹¹

The route into the mouth of the Rio Grande from Europe was varied but the main traffic brought goods direct from English ports to Cuba and Jamaica, then through the Yucatan channel, putting in at Belize or Mujeres Island off the Yucatan coast. Rear Admiral Charles Wilkes described the Mujeres rendezvous as "a well known place where vessels intending to run the blockade as well as slavers fitted out [in] a harbor well adapted to their purpose . . . there is no government or authority here whatever, nor is it a port of entry or clearance but a rendezvous for plunderers, slavers and pirates."¹² From Belize or Mujeres Island, the vessels then continued up the Gulf of Mexico to Matamoros. An alternate route was from Nassau, through the Florida Straits to Matamoros.

10. Consul L. Pierce to Seward, March 1, 1862, Consular Despatches, Matamoros.

11. Consul L. Pierce to Commander H. French, September 16, 1862, Official Record, 1, XIX, p. 295.

12. Rear Admiral Charles Wilkes, to Secretary of the Navy S. Welles, January 18, 1863, Ibid., 1, II, p. 40.

The ships used for blockade running were, in the beginning, small schooners or steamers. Later, with the growth of the volume of trade and the addition of ships to the blockading fleet, a special vessel was put to use. The blockade runner was specifically designed to be inconspicuous on the horizon. It was built for speed with long, low, slender hulls, powered by steam and side paddle wheels. The funnels were raked back with telescopic joints which allowed them to be lowered to escape sighting on the horizon. Painted a slate gray with a turtle back shield over the foredecks to fend off heavy seas, these ships, burning hard coal for less smoke, supplied Matamoros with all the goods for which the eager Confederate states could pay.¹³

Concurrent with the blockade trade there grew a large overland trade with the North Mexican states. Agents from Texas contracted for "all the flour and corn that can be had." Blankets, shoes, cloth goods, coffee, rice, sugar, sulphur, gunpowder and saltpeter were taken overland into Texas. Cotton from the Confederacy found a ready cash

13. Flag Officer McKean to Commanding Officers, December 13, 1861, Ibid., 1, XVI, p. 818; Commander Daniel B. Ridgely to Secretary Welles, November 24, 1861, Ibid., 1, I, p. 220; Paul Horgan, Great River: The Rio Grande in North American History (New York: Reinhart and Co., Inc., 1954), I, p. 836.

market centered in Monterrey.¹⁴ By 1864, Mexico provided "the only lead the rebels west of the Mississippi get" ¹⁵

The trade supplying the Confederacy rose to such great proportions that the United States Consul in Matamoros, seeking to enforce United States restrictions, commented that "nearly every man in this community is making money through dealings with the rebels . . . it is almost impossible to get one to testify in any case" ¹⁶ Ostensibly the supplies arriving at Matamoros were for the Mexican army which was, by 1863, in flight from French pressure. Once France and Mexico began hostilities, the United States position was further complicated. Now that a state of war existed in Mexico it was difficult for the blockading fleet to prove to whom the goods, even if clearly contraband, were destined.¹⁷ The Juaristas lacked the finances to purchase even a fraction of the trade volume

14. Consul M. M. Kimmey to Seward, October 29, 1862, Despatches From United States Consuls in Monterrey 1849-1906, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, film 468, reel 1, University of Arizona Library, hereafter cited as Consular Despatches, Monterrey.

15. Kimmey to Seward, May 31, 1864, Ibid.

16. Pierce to Seward, August 5, 1864, Consular Despatches, Matamoros.

17. Acting Rear Admiral T. Bailey to Welles, March 13, 1863, Official Record, 1, XVII, p. 401.

and prior to the war, trade at Matamoros from Europe was almost non-existent.¹⁸

As the French army moved to consolidate control throughout Mexico, the French navy declared a blockade of the Mexican coast to break off any supply for the Juaristas from the outside. Matamoros was not included in the blockade which began ten miles south, leaving the port open for business.¹⁹ The French, realizing that European assistance to Juarez was unlikely because of prior debts, no doubt left the route open so that the Confederacy could maintain its supply, thus placing a hindrance on the only prospective source of support to Juarez, the Union.

The Union attempted to halt the contraband trade by combining other methods with the blockade. Restrictions were placed on voyages originating in the United States to Matamoros. Federal troops occupied Brazos, Point Isabel and Brownsville. The Mexican Minister Romero protested the withholding of clearance papers to vessels bound for Matamoros from the United States if the cargo was likely to be used in exchange for cotton. Romero felt that this practice was in violation of treaty and extended the blockade to Mexico without the concurrence of the Mexican

18. Acting Volunteer Lt. Joseph R. Couthouy to Welles, May 16, 1863, Ibid., p. 441; L. Pierce, Jr. to H. H. Bell, May 28, 1863, Ibid., 1, XX, p. 290.

19. Consul Lane to Seward, November 1, 1863, Consular Despatches, Vera Cruz.

government.²⁰ The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo provided for free use of the Rio Grande by citizens of both the United States and Mexico. Article Seven also forbade interruption of trade by either party, even for improving navigation, without the consent of the other signatory.²¹

None of the attempts to curb the contraband trade from Mexico was successful. When Brownsville was taken by Union troops, trade activity moved north and the goods crossed the Rio Grande at Piedras Negras.²² In April of 1863 Secretary Welles approached Seward on methods of terminating the contraband trade by either requiring Mexico to stop it or permitting the United States to effectively prevent it. Seward was not open to suggestions. He felt that forcing the problem would bring the United States into conflict with the French. He further opined that because Mexico was feeble, he disliked "to make exactions of her"²³ Although Juarez decreed in May of 1864 that border officials were to prevent articles of war from passing through Mexican territory "to the other side of the

20. Kathryn A. Hanna, "Incidents of the Confederate Blockade," Journal of Southern History, XI (May, 1945), 225-226.

21. Ibid., p. 223.

22. Kimmey to Seward, May 31, 1864, Consular Despatches, Monterrey.

23. Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Gideon Welles (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1960), I, p. 283.

River," the need to keep the border trade open for his purposes counteracted the decree.²⁴

One Ignacio Mariscal offered to close the port of Matamoros but felt that it "would deprive the Mexican treasury . . . of one of the most profitable entries it enjoys at this critical period." In exchange for this closure of the port, he hoped to gain \$1,000,000 and 20,000 muskets.²⁵ Juarez, by August of 1864, hard pressed by the French, still had possession of the customs houses at Piedras Negras and Laredo. The income from Piedras Negras was estimated as adding \$40,000 a month to the Juarista government.²⁶

In October of 1864, the French occupied Matamoros, thus ending Juarez's revenue and port of access. The French, not wanting to antagonize the Union, and seeing that the Confederacy was doomed, claimed neutrality and Matamoros remained open. By the end of the war it was estimated that nine-tenths of the goods brought into

24. Juarez Decree issued at Monterrey, May 7, 1864, related in Kimmey to Seward, May 11, 1864, Consular Despatches, Monterrey.

25. U. S., Congress, Senate, Mexican Affairs, 40th Cong., 1st Sess., 1866, Exec. Doc. 20, p. 163; Ignacio Mariscal to Major General F. J. Herron, April 29, 1864.

26. Kimmey to Seward, February 23, 1864, August 27, 1864, Consular Despatches, Monterrey.

Matamoros were transhipped into Texas.²⁷ The United States consuls in the territory captured by the French were credited to the Juarista government and since the United States did not recognize the Mexican Empire, it put the consuls in a precarious position as to their authority. The problem was resolved under the Empire by most of the consuls taking the title of commercial agent, thus bypassing the question of recognition by the French or Maximilian.

The existence of a profitable trade through Mexican territory into the Confederacy was evidently too tempting for several Union representatives. At the consular post of Campeche, Rafael Preciat, a native born Mexican and naturalized American, was not only a profiteer but a Confederate. Preciat, described as "a big fat Campeche gentleman" with a son at Spring Hill College in Mobile, ran the blockade "by way of the sound."²⁸ Preciat's ship was captured in June of 1861 near New Orleans and taken to

27. Emanuel D. Etchison to Major General L. A. Hurlbut, Commanding Department of Gulf, February 27, 1865, Consular Despatches, Matamoros.

28. George D. Allen, United States District Court Clerk's Office, Key West Florida, July 24, 1862, to Seward in Despatches from United States Consuls in Campeche, 1820 to 1880, National Archives, Record Group 59, microfilm copy, author's possession, one reel, hereafter cited as Consular Despatches, Campeche. Allen sent a copy of Preciat's activities as described in a journal entry from a captured blockade runner, Curlew, March 21, 1862. Corwin to Seward, February 22, 1862, Despatches.

Key West where it was condemned to be sold as a prize, but the wily Consul followed and bought it back for \$5,000.00. Preciat even offered to carry Confederate cargo to Havana for a blockade runner.²⁹ The records do not divulge the eventual disposition of Preciat's case. His activities were noted in the journal of a captured blockade runner and the journal was forwarded to Seward in 1862; Preciat then disappears from the post records.

Another ex-United States Consul, C. B. H. Blood, for his prior service at Monterrey, felt that he should be allowed the right to breach the controlled exits of ships from United States ports with goods which might be destined for the Confederacy. Blood's appeal was simple; all he desired was to be allowed to send a cotton press for installation at Matamoros. Blood observed that "there are some 2,000 bales shipped from there per month--badly packed" He reasoned that he had "spent . . . time and money for the government . . ." and if he were not permitted to trade in Mexico he would feel "unjustly injured" ³⁰

Still another Union representative who found the war trade enticing was Emanuel D. Etchison. Etchison had

29. Allen to Seward, Ibid.; Romero to Seward, June 23, 1862, Mexican Notes.

30. Caleb B. H. Blood to Seward, September 18, 1862, New York, in Consular Despatches, Monterrey.

a tainted background as a merchant in Washington, D. C. and Baltimore where he was implicated in some merchandise frauds.³¹ As United States Consul at Matamoros, he sought at the closing months of the war in 1865, to levy an additional tax of \$1.00 on every bale of cotton shipped from Matamoros to the United States. Without payment he declined to clear shipments.³²

Although the United States Minister at Mexico City was the titular head of all United States representatives in Mexico, each representative was virtually independent because of distance and transportation difficulties. With the outbreak of the war, adherence of the Lincoln-appointed consuls to the Union predominated. The reports from the consuls throughout Mexico to both Seward and Corwin were informative and graphic.³³

Despite the professions of faith in the Mexican Republic in May 1862, Seward warned his envoy to "suspend

31. Clarence A. Seward to Frederick W. Seward, New York, November 8, 1864, with accompanying documents from J. Dean Smith, Baltimore, November 2, 1864 and H. J. Jones enclosed Consular Despatches, Matamoros.

32. New York Evening Post, March 23, 1865, enclosed Ibid. Etchison mutilated record books so that no record of transactions during his tenure could be documented. Anzi Wood to Seward, March 20, 1865, Ibid.

33. Corwin himself was not immune to the temptation of the high profits of the cotton trade after his resignation. See: Ludwell H. Johnson, "Northern Profit and Profiteers: The Cotton Rings of 1864-1865," Civil War History, XII (June, 1966), 105.

any definite act of recognition in case of a dynamic change in Mexico," since on April 11, 1862, the allied powers had notified Juarez that the London Convention was dissolved.³⁴ The contest for Mexico was narrowed to only two participants--France and Mexico. The United States, still embroiled in its own war and wishing to antagonize neither party, declared itself neutral in the Mexican conflict.

In November 1862, Romero complained to Seward that the French forces in Mexico were attempting to purchase mules and wagons in New York and New Orleans. Romero felt that such sales would be direct assistance to the French in their war against Mexico and wanted the export of these goods prevented. If the purchases were made, Romero declared that the "neutrality to which they are bound would be violated by the sellers this being the position which the government of the United States has desired to take" ³⁵ The Mexican representative was disturbed because a shipment of rifles for Mexico had been detained since September 1861 yet

. . . . France is permitted to supply herself in the market of the United States with whatever she required to carry on her war against Mexico . . . Mexico is prohibited the exportation of

34. Seward to Corwin, May 1862, Instructions.

35. U. S. Congress, Senate, In Relation to the Exportation of Articles of Contraband of War for Use of the French Army in Mexico, 37th Cong., 3d Sess., 1862, Exec. Doc. 24, p. 2, Romero to Seward, November 22, 1862.

the only article which she needed, and the only one she had purchased in this country.³⁶

The problem of purchase by belligerents in a neutral country was complicated by an executive order of November 24, 1862, which prohibited any arms, ammunition, or munitions of war to be cleared or exported from the United States.³⁷ Seward informed Romero that the shipment of arms to Mexico was denied

on the ground not of want of them on her part as a belligerent but on the ground of the military situation of the United States, and on the other hand the wagons are allowed to be shipped not on the ground that France wants them as a belligerent but on the ground that the military situation of the United States does not demand an inhibition.³⁸

Romero's argument was based on an interpretation of strict impartiality toward belligerents and sought to find in Article Eighteen of the treaty of April 5, 1831, between Mexico and the United States, the definition of contraband as decided upon by the two signatories, and among other things, where contraband of war was enumerated, the Article included "horses with their furniture." Article Four also

36. The weapons detained were 36,000 Prussian manufactured muskets which were flint locks altered to percussion lock and "of such a quality that the Army of the United States would never use them." Ibid. Romero to Seward, December 10, 1862, pp. 7-8.

37. Ibid., Seward to Romero, January 17, 1863.

38. Ibid., December 15, 1862.

included "any other materials manufactured, prepared and formed expressly to make war by sea or land."³⁹

Seward, even with urging from Romero, would not prohibit the export of the mules and wagons because the United States had no "military need" for them. But in hampering the Juarista government the United States also prohibited the export of "all the firearms made and found in the country" because of the government's own real or imagined needs.⁴⁰ The United States probably felt that if allowed to leave the country many of the weapons would fall into the hands of the Confederacy. Romero, undaunted, demanded for Mexico the same rights that the United States had extracted from Great Britain on the exportation of articles of contraband of war to the Confederacy.⁴¹ In February 1863, the United States Secretary of War revised the interpretation on the executive order and made its principles applicable to "certain articles much needed by the French in the prosecution of their hostilities in Mexico."⁴²

39. Ibid., Romero to Seward, December 10, 1862, p. 5; December 20, 1862, p. 11.

40. Ibid., Seward to Romero, January 7, 1863, p. 13.

41. Ibid., Romero to Seward, January 14, 1863, pp. 14-16.

42. Seward to Corwin, February 25, 1863, Instructions.

From Mexico Corwin reported that the Mexican cabinet was suspicious of the supposed United States partiality toward the French. The rumors of French purchases of mules and wagons while Mexico was denied "a like privilege" understandably upset the Mexican government.⁴³ The question of arms importation and belligerent rights fell succeedingly into the background as the French drove Juarez from the capital and northward. French control of Mexico's seaports left only one avenue of entrance to the Juaristas, the north which they continued to control until the capture of Matamoros. In flight and without the funds or control of the whole of Mexico, purchase of arms was curtailed.

43. Corwin to Seward, January 27, 1863,
Despatches.

CHAPTER VI

UNION VICTORY: NEW HOPE FOR THE REPUBLIC

In September of 1864, with the Union seemingly on the road to victory at home and successfully holding its neutral policy in Mexico, the man who had represented the Federal government at Mexico City during the height of the war resigned. Thomas Corwin, then seventy years old, retired from his post. Corwin felt that the neutral position of the United States would leave him "few and unimportant duties to perform were I to continue to reside in Mexico as the diplomatic agent of this country."¹ The man upon whom Lincoln and Seward, in the dark years of 1861 had placed their faith to hold Mexico for the Union camp was commended for his "sagacity, prudence and patriotism . . . during trying times."²

Although the elder Corwin was gone, another remained to replace him. William Corwin, who had served his father as Secretary of the Legation at Mexico City, Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim and was instructed to continue

1. Corwin to President Lincoln, September 1, 1864, Despatches.

2. Seward to Corwin, September 19, 1864, Instructions.

as the representative of the United States in Mexico still credited to the Juarez regime.

As the French conquered more and more of Mexico after their capture of Mexico City, the Juarista government was progressively forced northward from San Luis Potosí to Monterrey; finally, by fall, they had arrived in Chihuahua.³ The neutralist policy of the United States, still in force officially, began to bend somewhat. In August 1864, Seward gave permission to Romero for a visit of two Mexican generals to observe the Army of the Potomac.⁴ The generals were just two more foreign observers which the war had attracted for its military lessons, but one might surmise that this visit could serve another purpose, that of giving to the United States an opportunity to find out from these generals just what the Mexican situation was. A journey into Mexico in the fall of 1864 by a small detachment of Union soldiers supposedly delivered weapons to Chihuahua City.⁵ According to General Lew Wallace's son, Henry L. Wallace, his father headed this

3. Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics Under the Juarez Regime 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), pp. 102-108.

4. Seward to Romero, August 31, 1864, U. S. Notes.

5. Amherst W. Barber, comp., The Benevolent Raid of General Lew Wallace: How Mexico Was Saved in 1864 Testimony of a Survivor Pvt. Justus Brooks (Washington: R. Beresford, Printer, 1914), pp. 7-10.

mission to aid Mexico prior to the end of the war. Henry Wallace described the purpose and secrecy surrounding his father's mission: "he did not have the open endorsement of the authorities but was permitted to make a loan for the Mexican government and apply the proceeds to the purchase of the needed arms and ammunition."⁶ The authenticity of this mission is still in doubt. Seward, who was violently opposed to any activities that would antagonize the French, definitely would not have given his permission, for the consequences, if the expedition were detected, would certainly produce that result. That arms and munitions began to find their way from the United States to the Juaristas is more than probable. In the Gulf of California, a Union vessel maintained contact with General Pesqueira, a Juarista official.⁷ In January 1865, the export of forage from California was prohibited. This act was directly aimed at the French on the Pacific coast.⁸

There were indications reported to Seward that the French were beginning to lose interest in supporting Maximilian. In November of 1864, the United States Consul in Vera Cruz reported that some 2,000 French troops left Mexico through the port for France and that he was informed

6. Ibid., pp. 15-16.

7. Jack A. Dabbs, The French Army in Mexico 1861-1867 (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1963), p. 143, note 30.

8. Ibid., p. 131, note 88.

"that 8,000 more will leave at the end of this year."⁹ If this trend was to continue, then the Union would be spared a military confrontation once the Civil War was ended. All that Seward had to do was to be able to control the bellicosity of many of the Union generals who enthusiastically anticipated combating the French after defeating the Confederacy. The Secretary of State, realizing that the end of the war would heighten the Mexican problem, advised the younger Corwin that the "presence of a diplomatic agent in Mexico at this juncture is eminently useful and necessary to this government."¹⁰

The last fear of the Union was that the Confederates, when defeated, would cross into Mexico, ally with the Empire and continue the war from Mexico.¹¹ In January of 1865 General Ulysses Grant ordered General Lew Wallace to the Rio Grande to inspect the Federal forces in Texas.

Knowledge of Wallace's mission to Texas was withheld from Secretary Seward because he was opposed to any plan which would draw France and the Confederacy into

9. Consul Calderon to Seward, November 12, 1864, Consular Despatches, Vera Cruz.

10. Seward to William Corwin, January 25, 1865, Instructions.

11. J. Fred Rippey, "Mexican Projects of the Confederates," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXII (April, 1919), 309; Dabbs, The French Army in Mexico 1861-1867, p. 33.

alliance.¹² Since Wallace was known to be friendly to the Republic, he would be suspect of attempting to foment some scheme to oppose the French.

Wallace's mission had two purposes, one of which was to attempt to engage the Confederate commanders in Texas in a plan to gain peace and then move against the Empire. Wallace also received from Romero a letter of introduction to General Jesus M. Carvajal, the governor of Tamaulipas. The plan with the Confederates was rejected and Wallace contacted Carvajal to find out how the Republican forces would react "if Confederate troops crossed over into Mexico in large numbers and joined Maximilian." Wallace was prepared to promise aid from the United States if the Republicans would oppose such an invasion.¹³ Lincoln may have been aware of the two phases of Wallace's mission, for the General had conferred with the President and Grant before he left. The Union was thus ready, if necessary, to engage the Empire if the Confederates sought to continue their resistance away from United States soil.

12. Robert R. Miller, "Lew Wallace and the French Intervention in Mexico," Indiana Magazine of History, LIX (March, 1963), 33.

13. Ibid., pp. 34-35.

On April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered at Appomattox. Less than a week later, Lincoln was dead.¹⁴ The United States was now faced with the tremendous task of reconstituting itself after four years of bitter warfare. The end of the war was also significant to Mexico, both Imperial and Republican. It meant the end to the United States arms embargo which had prevented the Juarista forces from its supply. There would be a surplus of military material which the government, in its effort to dispose of the excess, would definitely depress the purchase price.¹⁵ Another consequence which both the Empire and the Republic was quick to grasp was the existence of a large body of trained veterans, some of whom were bitter from their loss, others whose support of republicanism heightened as a result of having been victorious. One disillusioned Southerner, then in Mexico, wondered about the outcome for the country. "Will the remnants of both armies practice robbery and Filibusterism in Mexico . . . ?"¹⁶

14. For Mexican condolences, see: U. S., Congress, House, The Condition of Affairs in Mexico, 39th Cong., 1st Sess., 1865, Exec. Doc. 73, Part 2, pp. 80-89.

15. Miller, "Mexican Secret Agents in the United States 1861-1867" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation: University of California at Berkeley, 1960), p. 13.

16. William M. Anderson, An American in Maximilian's Mexico 1865-1866, Ramon E. Ruiz, ed. (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1959), pp. 41-43.

The contending governments of Mexico both knew that their salvation or termination would be determined by post-war policy in the United States. Both sides strove to marshall their supporters and support. The Empire sought recognition as the de facto government of Mexico, while the republicans, under Juarez, sought to mobilize public opinion and channel financial support and possibly volunteers to its cause.

In the spring of 1865, before the war ended, Maximilian and the Empire made a move to attempt to bring about some decision on Mexico. Luís de Arroyo came to the United States with the position of Consul General. Arroyo was to make a direct attempt to secure recognition. The representative of the Empire was instructed by José Ramírez, Minister of State and Foreign Affairs to contact the ex-United States Minister to Mexico, Thomas Corwin, and "avail yourself of his influence" in helping to gain recognition for the Empire.¹⁷ Evidently Corwin, once the staunch supporter of the Mexican Republic, had become disenchanted with the Mexican imbroglio and saw that the Empire was the hope for Mexico's future. Corwin sent Arroyo's letter on to Seward for his consideration. Seward received Corwin in March of 1865 and read a memorandum to

17. U. S. Congress, House, The Condition of Affairs in Mexico, Part 1, p. 573, Luís de Arroyo to Thomas Corwin, March 2, 1865, Confidential.

the ex-Minister which served notice on both his efforts as an agent of the Empire and the possibilities of its recognition. In declining Corwin's overture on behalf of the Empire, Seward postulated that it was a "fixed habit" of the United States to have "no official intercourse" with agents representing factions in countries which he felt stood "in an attitude of revolution antagonistic to the sovereign authority in the same country with which the United States are on terms of friendly diplomatic intercourse." To Seward it would be impossible to treat with representations from the Empire because the only government in Mexico recognized by the United States was the Republic.¹⁸

Undaunted by Arroyo and Corwin's initial failure, Maximilian's official coterie believed that by summer, President Johnson and Seward, despite all their past experiences, "would be willing at proper time to recognize him as the government of Mexico" ¹⁹ The tenacity of the Imperial cabinet was due to assurances made to the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs and to General Francois Achille Bazaine, French military commander in Mexico. Part of the Empire's faith in Corwin was due the

18. Ibid., p. 574, Memorandum, Department of State, March 18, 1865.

19. Ibid., pp. 574-575, Romero to Seward, July 31, 1865, with uncredited letter dated July 8, 1865.

fact that he was reportedly "disgusted with republics generally" Corwin, before he left Mexico in 1864, had had dealings with Ramírez and Bazaine which were reported to be "almost confidential in their character."²⁰ The ex-Minister was considered "the best friend of the empire in the United States" and because of his political connections it was felt he could accomplish much on behalf of the Empire.²¹ Corwin, unruffled by his rejection at the State Department, continued to encourage the Empire.²²

A new plan was drawn up by Maximilian to approach Seward. In July, Mariano Degollado came to the United States with a letter from the emperor expressing sympathy for the death of Lincoln. Degollado's plan was to use the letter as a pretext for a meeting with Seward.²³ Although Seward refused to see him, Degollado believed the reason to be the developing difficulty of President Johnson with his Congress.²⁴ With elections scheduled for the fall it was felt that "political considerations would restrain the

20. Ibid., p. 575. Corwin left Mexico on May 28, 1864, before Maximilian's arrival.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Robert W. Frazer, "Maximilian's Propaganda Activities in the United States 1865-1866," Hispanic American Historical Review, XXIV (February, 1966), 6-7.

administration from treating with any imperial agent."²⁵
 Degollado, sensing that Congress would be forced to either observe or overlook the Monroe Doctrine, entered upon a campaign to "develop sympathy for the empire throughout the United States."²⁶

As the imperial agents made their bid to capture either official recognition or influence public sentiment, the Juaristas were also busily at work. The republican government, being officially recognized, directed its efforts to other problems. Reasonably sure that Seward's policy would favor them, they turned to the United States public. The aim of the Juaristas was to procure funds, munitions, and men from the United States to aid their cause without infringing on the neutrality of the United States. In conjunction with his official ministerial office, Matias Romero was also the chief of Juarista agents in the United States and was authorized to raise a volunteer force of several thousand Americans and mobilize

25. Ibid., p. 7.

26. Ibid. Mariano Degollado, a chamberlain in the Imperial Court, was the son of the Liberal General Santos Degollado. Mariano had lived in Washington, D. C. and was married to a Virginian. His attainments were described as "mediocre" and his personality, colorless. An observer of the imperial scene said it was his wife who was ambitious and urged that the United States, if properly approached, would consider recognition of the Empire. Sara Y. Stevenson, Maximilian in Mexico, A Woman's Reminiscences of the French Intervention 1862-1867 (New York: Century Co., 1899), pp. 148-149; U. S., Congress, House, The Condition of Affairs in Mexico, part 1, p. 575.

sentiment in favor of Mexico.²⁷ The vehicles employed by Romero and his agents were societies or committees bearing such titles as Mexican Aid Society, Mexican Club, Monroe Doctrine Committee of New York and Monroe League of San Francisco. Through these instruments, mass meetings, demonstrations and testimonial dinners, Mexico's case was put before the public.²⁸ The open recruitment of volunteers for Juarez on United States territory would be in violation of the neutrality laws. The Mexican government circumvented the law by advertising and recruiting "armed emigrants" from regional centers in the United States under such titles as the Mexican Emigration Company or the Arizona Exploring Expedition; recruitment was carried on openly in the United States press.²⁹ As colonists, of

27. Robert R. Miller, "Matial Romero: Mexican Minister to the United States During Juarez-Maximilian Era," Hispanic American Historical Review, XLV (May, 1965), 235.

28. Robert R. Miller had written extensively on the Juarista agents and their activities in the United States. See "Placido Vega: A Mexican Secret Agent in the United States," The Americas, XIX (October, 1962), 137-148; "Gaspar Sanchez Ochoa: A Mexican Secret Agent in the United States," The Historian, XXIII (May, 1961), 316-320; "Herman Sturm: Hoosier Secret Agent for Mexico," Indiana Magazine of History, LVIII (March, 1962), 1015; "Californians Against the Emperor," California Historical Society Quarterly, XXVII (September, 1958), 193-214; "The American Legion of Honor in Mexico," Pacific Historical Review, XXX (August, 1961), 229-241.

29. Miller, "Mexican Secret Agents in the United States 1861-1867 (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation), p. 86; "Californians Against the Emperor," California Historical Society Quarterly, p. 194. The Allen Emigration Company offered \$1,000.00 and 800 acres land bounty for an enlisted man. New York Times, May 2, 1865.

course the new inhabitants could not be prevented from carrying their own weapons with them for personal defense or hunting in the wilds of Mexico. The enticements for joining one of these "emigration" companies were twofold, land and money. It was widely publicized in the United States that under the law of August 11, 1864, a land bounty was available to all foreigners who enlisted in the Republican forces. The land offered was to be from any land which was considered public property and would be exempt from taxes for five years in addition to which the volunteer would gain full Mexican citizenship.³⁰ Although the United States government could not prevent the emigration schemes, its officials did prevent armed expeditions from being organized and departing from United States soil.³¹

While the imperial and republican agents were matching schemes, a semi-official United States plan was formulated. In early 1865, Montgomery Blair, ex-cabinet member, proposed a joint expedition of 20,000 Union and

30. Miller, "The American Legion of Honor in Mexico," Pacific Historical Review, p. 230. Pvt. Justus Brooks recalls being offered \$1,000.00 bounty to enlist in Juarez's army at La Mesilla, New Mexico. Barber, The Benevolent Raid of Lew Wallace, p. 9.

31. Miller, "Californians Against the Emperor," California Historical Society Quarterly, pp. 206-210; A. P. Nasatir, "The French Attitude in California During the Civil War Decade," California Historical Society Quarterly, XLIII (March, 1964), 30.

Confederate troops to aid Juarez.³² The Mexican government, when notified, had two reservations about the plan. They felt that any such expedition must have the approval of the United States government and some guarantee that this army would not turn to filibustering. The Mexicans also felt that the Confederates should be limited to one third of the total force.³³ As the plan progressed, no leader could be found to head the expedition. Grant, William T. Sherman and Philip Sheridan all, for one reason or another, declined the command. In June of 1865 General John M. Schofield was chosen by the process of elimination to head the volunteers.³⁴ Schofield relates that he:

. . . consulted freely with General Grant, Senor Romero, President Johnson, Secretary of State Seward and Secretary of War Stanton, all of whom approved the general proposition that I should assume the control and direction of the measures to be adopted for the purpose³⁵ of causing the French Army to evacuate Mexico.

The operating costs of this expedition were to be borne by the Mexican government and a loan subscription by United States citizens.³⁶ The proposed operation

32. Miller, "Matias Romero: Mexican Minister to the United States During Juarez-Maximilian Era," Hispanic American Historical Review, p. 241.

33. Ibid., p. 242.

34. Lt. Gen. John M. Schofield, Forty-Six Years in the Army (New York: Century Co., 1897), p. 379.

35. Ibid., p. 379.

36. Ibid., p. 380.

miscarried from a combination of lack of subscribers for the loan and Schofield being won over by Seward to approaching the French with diplomacy instead of a display of United States musketry.³⁷

The failure of the plans for a military expedition did not still the belligerence of the now triumphant Union generals. Charges were made that "some fire-eating warriors" were not satisfied with the "blood and desolation of four wretched years" but were insistent upon preserving the Monroe Doctrine, "not only preserved in our minds but jabbed into Maximilian's with a bayonet point." Those officers looked hopefully for a conflict on the Rio Grande as a means to "win their spurs or to add a star or two to their shoulder straps or at least to impart fresh lustre to those they already wore" ³⁸ Grant and Sheridan were completely hostile to the Empire and sought to pressure the cabinet with "the importance of taking decisive measures in favor of the republic of Mexico." ³⁹ Seward, steeled by the end of the civil hostilities in the United States, counseled restraint and felt, in June of 1865, that the Empire was "rapidly perishing" and that interference by

37. Ibid., p. 383.

38. New York Times, August 20, 1865.

39. Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Gideon Wells (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1960), II, p. 317.

the United States would only prolong its demise.⁴⁰ After successfully resolving its own conflict, the United States treasury could not take on the strain which another war would bring about.⁴¹

The factor upon both the Juaristas and the Empire were depending to sway the United States government in its favor was the voice of the public. Although agitated over the new Mexican Empire and, depending on previous loyalty, either flushed with victory or disconcerted by defeat, the American people were not as enthusiastic as both factions had hoped.

The journals which had been the leaders in demanding peace during the Civil War as the alternative to financial ruin were, now that the war was ended, "eager advocates for the employment of . . . soldiers in some ill defined scheme of intervention or liberation in Mexico." The Republican newspapers were noted as being "wiser" than the Democratic in discussing any vindication of the Monroe Doctrine.⁴² Although public opinion was, on the whole, sympathetic to the plight of Mexico, attention could not be concentrated on the problem.⁴³ The unconvincing demonstration of French

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., pp. 367, 333, 348.

42. New York Times, May 7, 9, 1865.

43. Ibid., June 8, 1865.

military force and its failure to completely subdue the Juaristas indicated to many people that the French would not be able to erect a lasting empire in Mexico.⁴⁴

The expected movement of soldiers from the Confederate and Union armies south to join Juarez or Maximilian did not materialize. Only some 5,000 men from both armies sought their fortune in Mexico.⁴⁵ The anticipated rush of Confederates to take part in the proposed colonization plans of Maximilian was disappointing. By October of 1865 the immigration plan was reported as "even this early . . . an almost complete failure."⁴⁶ Although ex-Confederates in Mexico were constantly boasting of how many men they could raise to continue the struggle in support of the Empire, the war spirit of the United States had been dulled considerably by four years of civil strife.⁴⁷

Newspapers, both North and South, cautioned against the perild of involvement in foreign disputes.⁴⁸ How many would succumb to Mexican offers when the rich lands of the

44. Ibid., May 4, 1863.

45. Ibid., November 17, 1865; Miller, "The American Legion of Honor in Mexico," Pacific Historical Review, p. 229.

46. William Corwin to Seward, October 28, 1865, Despatches.

47. William Corwin to Seward, August 25, 1865, Ibid.; Consul F. Lane to Seward, December 6, 1865, Consular Despatches, Vera Cruz.

48. New York Times, November 17, 1865.

mid and far west were now opening to increased settlement. The problem of the reconstruction of the South immediately began to occupy the attention of both the public and the government. The maintenance of a large military posture was alien, and most of the men who had volunteered for the civil conflict wanted to return immediately to their civilian pursuits.

In November 1865 the Empire was again shown that its position was negligible in United States policy when an outspoken advocate of the Republic and its cause, General John A. Logan was appointed Minister to Mexico. Logan's appointment was made when the Republican forces had been backed almost out of Mexico; it was signalled as a "positive announcement that no success gained by force can commend the usurpation to the United States" and also that "acquiescence and recognition is as distant as ever." It was also hoped that the appointment of a pro-Juarez minister would calm the more belligerent element in the United States which felt that the inaction of the United States was a sign of resignation to the Maximilian regime.⁴⁹ Hearing of Logan's appointment, the Juaristas were "given

49. Ibid. Logan declined the appointment and in December was replaced by Lewis D. Campbell. Ibid., December 23, 1865.

new life . . ." and anticipated the best.⁵⁰ The French Minister suggested that France would remove its troops in Mexico if the United States would recognize Maximilian. Seward assured the French that the objection of the United States was not to French troops, but to their presence in establishing and maintaining a foreign monarchy.⁵¹

In December 1865, with the meeting of Congress, the door was securely shut on the aspirations of the Empire by a joint resolution presented by Senator Benjamin Wade and Representative Robert Schenk. The resolution was in opposition to the Empire and requested that the President take action to "vindicate the recognized policy and protect the honor and interests of our Government."⁵² In his Message to Congress, President Johnson dwelled at length on the non-interference of the United States, leaving "the nations of Europe to choose their own dynasties and form their own systems of government." He asked in return that Europe respect "the system of non-interference which has

50. U. S., Congress, House, The Condition of Affairs in Mexico, Part 2, Romero to William Hunter, Acting Secretary of State, January 21, 1966, enclosure No. 3, p. 93.

51. Frazer, "Maximilian's Propaganda Activities in the United States 1865-1866," Hispanic American Historical Review, p. 28.

52. Ibid., p. 17.

so long been sanctioned by time and which by its good results had approved itself to both continents."⁵³

The Congressional resolution and Johnson's message were only the beginning of the new posture, moving away from neutrality to more forceful language. The story of the end of the Mexican Empire is quite familiar to students of history. The reconstituted United States could now deal from a position of strength because indications were that there would be no confrontation with France. Johnson, Seward and the cabinet regarded war with Maximilian as unnecessary and foolish. Seward, leaving aside his diplomatic jargon, once commented that "Maximilian was caught like a rat in a trap," and would soon leave the country.⁵⁴

53. James D. Richardson, comp., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1897 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1896-1899), VI, pp. 368-369.

54. Robert W. Winston, Andrew Johnson Plebian and Patriot (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1928), p. 457.

EPILOGUE

Mexico had sought to use the United States as a bulwark and, if possible, a club against the invaders. Union policy, from the beginning, had favored the Juarista government. The federal government had tread lightly over a delicate situation without engaging the enmity of the Convention of London Allies and later, the French, whose army supported the Empire of Maximilian. Mexico, a vital key to Confederate success, was guarded closely by the Union.

The French attempt to create a New World empire was thwarted, not only by the Union victory, but by the disenchantment of France due to the strain on the treasury and the emergence of a vigorous Prussia as the leader of the German states. France's imperial dreams were transferred to Africa and Asia, proven more amenable to European imperialist endeavors.

The restoration of the Mexican Republic ironically brought a return of suspicion and mistrust in Mexico of the United States. The Mexican eagle and the United States eagle flew again, unfettered, but with watchful eyes upon each other.

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