

American Minute with Bill Federer

Cinco de Mayo preceded by Dos de Mayo, Spain, Napoleon, Mexico, Maximilian, & Juárez

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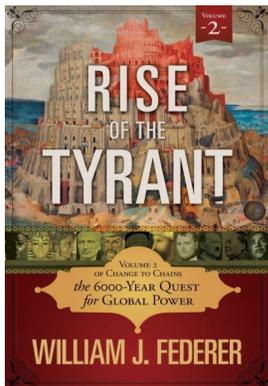
Napoleon made an alliance with the **Muslim Ottoman Empire** in 1806 and **Persia** in 1807.

Napoleon's victories across Europe caused **Spain's King Charles IV** to be **unstable** in his position regarding **France**:

- first **against**, 1793;
- then **for**, 1796;
- then **against**, 1803;
- then **for**, 1807... [continue reading American Minute ...](#)



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In 1807, **Napoleon** finally invaded **Spain**, beginning the draining **Peninsula War**.

Frustrated **Spanish citizens** forced **King Charles IV** to **abdicate** on March 19, 1808, and replaced him with his son, **King Ferdinand VII**.

French troops proceeded to **occupy of Madrid**.

When **Spaniards** gathered in protest, **Napoleon** brought in the **Muslim Mameluke cavalry** to subdue them.

In 1808, on May 2, the "Dos de Mayo," the **Mamelukes** charged on horseback brandishing their **scimitar swords**, slashing into the Spanish crowd.

Over 500 protestors were **hacked to death**, crushing the "**Dos de Mayo Uprising**."

Immediately afterwards, on May 6, 1808, **Napoleon** forced **King Ferdinand VII** to **abdicate**.

Napoleon then installed his reluctant brother, **Joseph Bonaparte**, as the new **King of Spain**.

Spanish America questioned if it should remain loyal to the **Spanish throne** with **the French brother of Napoleon** on it.

Compounding the situation, **New Spain** was **Catholic** and **Napoleon** had been **excommunicated** by **Pope Pius VII**, June 10, 1809.

Soon, in 1810, **Spanish America** began to **declare independence** from **French-controlled Spain**.

Simon Bolivar led the revolution, which eventually gave independence to:

- **Venezuela;**
- **Colombia;** (which included **Panama**);
- **Ecuador;**
- **Peru** (with the help of **Don José de San Martín**);

- and
- **Bolivia** (named for him).

A Constitution was written, similar to that of the United States, to create a "**Gran Columbia**" of former Spanish States.

It fell apart when **Simon Bolivar** insisted on being president for life.

U.S. President William Henry Harrison referred to **Simon Bolivar** in his Inaugural Address, March 4, 1841:

"This is the old trick of those who would **usurp the government of their country.**

In the name of democracy they speak, warning the people against the influence of wealth and the danger of aristocracy.

History, ancient and modern, is full of such examples ... **Bolivar** possessed himself of **unlimited power** with the **title** of his country's **liberator.**"

The United State's experience was different.

For a **century and a half prior to independence** citizens had been **schooled by pastors and church leaders in self-government.**

Simon Bolivar accused Spain of having kept the people of **New Spain** for centuries under a "**triple yoke of ignorance, tyranny, and vice.**"

As a result, it was therefore necessary that any new government "**will require an infinitely firm hand.**"

In **Mexico**, September 16, 1810, a priest named **Miguel Hidalgo**, gave a speech, "**The Cry of Dolores,**" calling people to **revolt against the Napoleon-controlled Spanish elites.**

Hidalgo gathered nearly 90,000 poor farmers.

Unfortunately, they were quickly defeated by the Spanish trained military at the **Battle of Calderon Bridge** in 1811.

Hidalgo was executed.

The Revolution continued, though, until **Spanish General Agustín de Iturbide switched sides**.

With his leadership, **Mexico** soon gained **independence** in 1821.

Unfortunately, rather than setting up a **constitutional republic**, like the United States, **Agustín de Iturbide** set up a **Mexican Empire** with himself ruling as the **Emperor**.

In 1824, Mexico adopted a Constitution.

In the following decades, **Mexico** struggled through the instability of **50 different governments**.

Santa Anna rose to power.

In his 40 year career, called by some historians the **Age of Santa Anna**, he ruled as **Mexico's President** for **12 non-consecutive terms**.

He finally laid aside **Mexico's Constitution** and made himself a **despotic dictator**.

Santa Anna told the U.S. minister to Mexico Joel R. Poinsett:

"A hundred years to come my people will not be fit for liberty ...

A **despotism** is the proper government for them, but there is no reason why it should not be a wise and virtuous one."

Modeling himself after **Napoleon**, he called himself "**The Napoleon of the West.**"

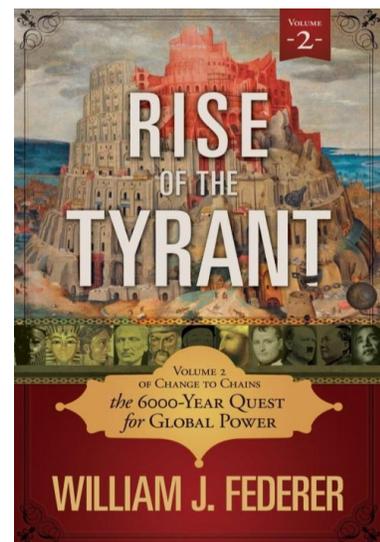
Santa Anna crushed dissent, resulting in **Texas declaring independence** in 1836:

"The late changes made in the government by **General Antonio Lopez Santa Anna**,

who having **overturned the constitution of his country**, now offers, as the cruel alternative, **either abandon our homes ... or submit to the most intolerable of all tyranny.**"

General Santa Anna led the **Mexican military**, losing the **Mexican-American War**, 1846-1848, resulting in the **Mexican Cession**, 1848, and **Gadsden Purchase**, 1854.

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In 1853, **Santa Anna** exiled a young leader who challenged his power -- **Benito Juárez**.

The next year, **Benito Juárez** returned to led the **Revolution of Ayutla**, ousting **Santa Anna**.

An aspect of **Mexican politics** involved the **Church**.

Originally, the **Catholic Church** in **Latin America** saw its political responsibility as limited to being a **conscience to the ruling elites**, reminding them to **treat the poor fairly**

as someday **they too will face judgement.**

Revolutionaries, though, wanted **immediate change**, and therefore accused the **Church** as being somehow **complicit in maintaining the status quo.**

In 1856, **Benito Juárez**, backed by Freemason leaders, led a **War of Reform** against the **Church.**

Religious orders were **suppressed**, **church property** was **confiscated** and **religious clergy** were **denied rights.**

Once he became President, **Benito Juárez** stopped paying interest on **Mexico's debt** to **Spain, Great Britain** and **France** in 1861.

This resulted in those European countries planning an **invasion of Mexico.**

With the United States occupied in a **Civil War**, **French troops** landed in **Mexico** in 1862, actually being supported by various Mexican financial leaders and church leaders.

On MAY 5, 1862 - "**CINCO DE MAYO**" - the French Army suffered a minor setback at the **Battle of Puebla.**

The **French** went on to capture:

- **Mexico City,**
- **Guadalajara,**
- **Zacatecas.**
- **Acapulco.**
- **Durango,**
- **Sinaloa** and
- **Jalisco.**

It is speculated that had the **French** not experienced the set-back of the **Battle of Puebla**, they would have taken **Mexico** sooner, and been in a position to alter the

America Civil War by supplying arms to the Confederacy.

Numerous **Mexican** leaders traveled to **Europe** to plead with **Maximillian I** to come to **Mexico** and **restore order**, to which he agreed in 1863.

Maximillian was the younger brother of **Emperor Franz Joseph I**, one of the world's most powerful leaders.

Franz Joseph ruled the **Austro-Hungarian Empire** -- which, **after Russia**, was the largest empire in Europe, consisting of:

- Austria,
- Hungary,
- Bohemia (Czech),
- Croatia,
- Poland,
- Slovenia,
- Slovakia,
- Bosnia,
- Herzegovina, and
- parts of Serbia, Romania, Italy, Montenegro, and Ukraine.

Emperor Franz Joseph ruled for almost 68 years, making him **one of the longest reigning monarchs in history**.

In 1910, **Theodore Roosevelt** met him.

In 1914, Emperor Franz Joseph's nephew, **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, was assassinated, starting **World War I**.

Franz Joseph's younger brother, Maximillian, was known for being a forward thinker with **liberal ideas**, advocating **progressive reforms in favor of common people**.

He spoke six languages and was commander of the Austrian Navy, sending out the first Austrian ship to circumnavigate the globe.

Maximilian was supported in going to **Mexico** by **England's Queen Victoria** and **France's Napoleon III**, along with the blessing of **Pope Pius IX**,

He had the backing of many Mexican leaders, led by **José Pablo Martínez del Río**.

Maximilian arrived at Veracruz on May 21, 1864, to **enthusiastic crowds**.

He created an **avenue** through the **center of Mexico City**, known now as the famous boulevard **Paseo de la Reforma**.

Maximilian's wife, Carlota, was shocked by the living conditions of the lower classes, so **she raised money from wealthy Mexicans to help poor houses**.

Maximilian immediately **abolished child labor** and **reduced working hour for laborers**.

He **canceled all debts for peasants over 10 pesos**, restored communal property and broke the monopoly of Hacienda stores.

He **forbade all forms of corporal punishment** and decreed that **poor people could no longer be bought and sold for the price of their debt**.

To the dismay of the wealthy, **Maximilian** upheld liberal policies of **land reforms, religious freedom, and extended the right to vote** beyond the landholding class.

After the American Civil War had ended, the **United States Government** did not want **European powers** in the **western hemisphere**, as stated in the **Monroe**

Doctrine.

The U.S. put diplomatic pressure on **Napoleon III** to **abandon support of Maximilian** and **withdraw French troops from Mexico.**

The **U.S.** then began to **secretly supply guns to Mexican gangs**, conveniently **"losing" arms and ammunition at El Paso del Norte** near the **Mexican border.**

With the threat of a possible U.S. invasion in support of **Benito Juárez**, the **supporters of Maximilian** began to **abandon him.**

Maximilian's wife, Carlota, went to Europe desperate for help but was **denied everywhere** and suffered an **emotional collapse.**

Napoleon III urged **Maximilian** to **flee Mexico**, but **he refused to desert his Mexican followers**, fearing the fate they would suffer.

He let his followers decide whether or not he should abdicate.

Faithful Mexican generals **Miguel Miramon**, **Leonardo Márquez**, and **Tomás Mejía** fought with an army of 8,000 Mexican loyalists.

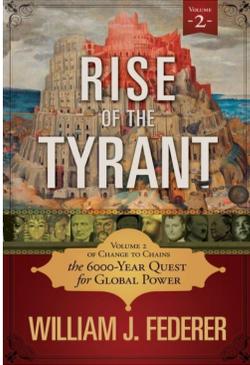
In 1867, they withdrew to **Santiago de Querétaro**, but **Colonel Miguel López** was **bribed to open a gate** to let a raiding party in.

Maximilian was captured.

Leaders around the world begged **Benito Juárez** to spare **Maximilian's life.**

Italy's reformer, Giuseppe Garibaldi, sent telegrams to **Benito Juárez** on behalf of **Maximilian.**

Even **eminent French author Victor Hugo**, author of *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, **pleaded for Maximillian's life.**



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Benito Juárez refused and had **Maximillian** shot on June 19, 1867.

He even photographed him in his coffin.

Maximillian's last words were:

"I forgive everyone, and I ask everyone to forgive me.

May my blood which is about to be shed, be for the good of the country. **Viva Mexico, viva la independenciam!"**

Benito Juárez died of a **heart attack five years later**, after putting down a revolt led by a **young leader** who challenged his power -- **Porfirio Diaz**.

Porfirio Diaz was President till there was another revolt led by a **young leader** who challenged his power named **Francisco Madero**.

Madero was murdered in a coup d'Etat in 1913 by **Victoriano Huerta**, which started another **civil war**.

A quote contrasting the stability of the United States with that of other countries was made by 13th **President Millard Fillmore**, December 6, 1852:

"Our grateful thanks are due to an **all-merciful Providence** ...

Our own **free institutions** were not the offspring of our **Revolution**. They existed **before**.

They were planted in the **free charters** of **self-government** under which the English colonies grew up ...

... **(Other) nations** have had no such **training for self-government**, and every effort to establish it by **bloody revolutions** has been, **and must without that preparation** continue to be, **a failure**.

Liberty unregulated by law degenerates into anarchy, which soon becomes the most horrid of all **despotisms** ...

We owe these blessings, **under Heaven**, to the happy Constitution and Government which were bequeathed to us by our fathers, and which it is **our sacred duty to transmit in all their integrity to our children.**"

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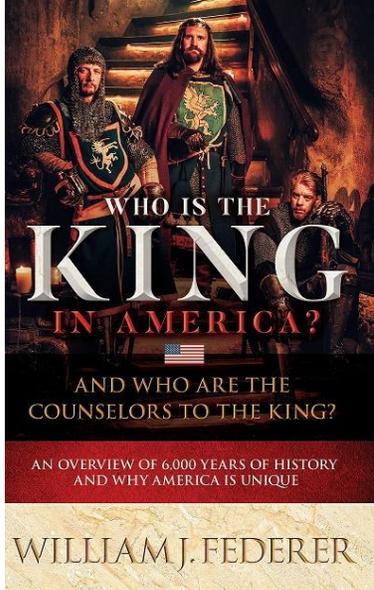
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