

The Rule of Agustín de Iturbide: A Reappraisal

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After a struggle of eleven years, and the loss, according to the conservative estimate of Carlos María de Bustamante, of 200,000 lives,¹ Mexico awoke in September 1821 an independent nation. For months before the culmination of independence there was no doubt who would rule the nation – that is, who was the *de facto* chief of state, at least for the moment. Agustín de Iturbide, author of the Plan of Iguala, conceiver of the idea of the Three Guarantees that united all factions in favor of independence, chief of the Army of the Three Guarantees, signatory on Mexico's part of the Treaties of Córdoba that granted independence *de jure* (in Mexico's view), was the undisputed leader. Incorruptible, invincible, wise, Christian, the consummate politician, the salvation of the Church, the Protector of Spaniards in Mexico, the Hero of Iguala, the Liberator, the Father of the Nation, Iturbide had broken the yoke of the Lion of Castile. Mexicans, of all political persuasions, rallied around the demigod in a euphoria of rejoicing and hope that has no equal in the history of the country.² Yet, within less than three years, he would be reviled and viewed with contempt. Historians of Mexico almost universally dismiss him as a usurper, perjurer, traitor, as a vain and inexperienced man scarcely worth a mention after September 1821. Miquel i Vergés, for example, in his *Diccionario de Insurgentes*, assigns but one sentence to Iturbide's reign as emperor. José C. Valadés argues that it is even inappropriate to grant Iturbide the honor of Liberator because he was nothing but an opportunist.³

¹ Carlos María de Bustamante, 'Manifiesto histórico á las naciones y pueblos del Anáhuac, leído en la sesion pública del Soberano Congreso del 15 de abril de 1823' (Mexico City, 1823), Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin (hereafter cited as BLAC), Alamán papers.

² Javier Ocampo, *Las ideas de un día: El pueblo mexicano ante la consumación de su independencia* (Mexico City, 1969), p. 66.

³ José María Miquel i Vergés, *Diccionario de Insurgentes* (Mexico City, 1969), p. 301; José C. Valadés, *Orígenes de la república mexicana* (Mexico City, 1972), p. 11.

Of course, the core of the black legend of Iturbide, if it can be summarized in a phrase, is that he ignored the 'will of the nation' by attempting to erect what Bolívar called 'this poor Gothic thing', and what the Mexican Congress in 1824 termed 'fragments of the Gothic edifice carefully disinterred' – a monarchy on American soil.⁴

The victor writes the history of great events. The historical cloud that hangs over Iturbide originates with the handful of men who wrote the first major commentaries of the War of Independence and the reign of Iturbide. For about a decade after Iturbide's execution at Padilla in 1824, he remained in universal disgrace. In the 1830s a brief revival of interest led to some recognition of his greatest contribution – the liberation of Mexico. In 1833 President Antonio López de Santa Anna ordered his ashes moved from Padilla to the cathedral of Mexico City, but the order was only carried out in 1838 under Anastasio Bustamante who insisted that Iturbide's remains be placed in a chapel quite separate from the one that held the remains of the 'real' heroes of independence such as Hidalgo and Morelos. Yet, despite an occasional hint of reconciliation, his historical reputation was so effectively and permanently tarnished that when, in 1910, the bodies of the heroes of independence were moved to the new Monument to Independence, Iturbide's was left behind. With the exception of Lucas Alamán, who was in Europe until 1823 anyhow and therefore not involved in the Iturbide era, the authors of the first influential works about the struggle for independence and Iturbide, such as the devoted republican Fray Servando Teresa de Mier, the moderate republican Carlos María de Bustamante, the radical republican Lorenzo de Zavala, or Zavala's close collaborator and exalted federalist in the Acordada revolt, Anastasio Zerecero, all attested firmly that a monarchy with Iturbide on the throne had been a fundamental perversion of the national will.⁵ Of

⁴ 'Manifiesto que el Soberano Congreso Constituyente hizo a los pueblos en los momentos de publicarse el Acta Constitutiva de la Federación', Mexico City, 31 January 1824, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AGN), Gobernación, Legajo 486, Exp. 4.

⁵ Mier's opus is composed chiefly of a mass of pamphlets contemporary with the events. His *Historia de la revolución de Nueva España* (facsimile of London edition, 1813, 2 vols., Mexico City, 1921) terminates at 1813. For a modern summary of his views see John V. Lombardi, *The Political Ideology of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier* (Cuernavaca, 1968). Bustamante's work, too, is highly dispersed, consisting of many contemporary pamphlets, his important periodicals *La Abispa de Chilpancingo* and *Voz de la Patria*, and his *Continuación del cuadro histórico de la revolución mexicana*, (3 vols., Mexico, 1954), which is a re-compilation of diverse articles. He was the most prolific of the writers. Lorenzo de Zavala, *Obras: Ensayo crítico de las revoluciones de México desde 1808 hasta 1830* (prologue and notes by Manuel González Ramírez, Mexico City, 1969). Anastasio Zerecero, *Memorias para la historia de las revoluciones en México* (Mexico City, 1869).

course, Mier, Bustamante, and Zerecero were among those deputies in 1822 who suffered imprisonment and persecution at Iturbide's hands. Their writings won the support of most Mexicans and their views – that Iturbide was a usurper who had made himself a tyrant – have had lasting impact. Even the aristocrat Alamán thought Iturbide's assumption of the throne an ill-advised step more worthy of ridicule than angry denunciation. (Alamán thought Iturbide should have let himself be made into a lifetime Regent whose office could be hereditary). Thus, to the epithet of 'tyrant' applied by his enemies, Alamán added in the 1850s the tag of ridicule. The two most influential contemporary foreign observers, Henry George Ward and Joel R. Poinsett, were also antipathetic toward Iturbide.⁶

Behind this first front of most prominent authors, a second group of slightly less importance for the historiography was also tainted by partisanship to some degree. José María Bocanegra was a federalist, as shown by his decidedly partisan *Disertación apologetica del sistema federal* of 1825. José María Tornel published his *Breve reseña histórica* in 1852, but he had served in the 1820s as Santa Anna's private secretary and could hardly treat Iturbide with equanimity (though, unique among his contemporaries, Tornel considered Iturbide's execution to be illegal). José María Luis Mora's history of the revolution ended in 1812 so we have little evidence on his interpretation of subsequent events, though of course he was perhaps the leading philosopher of classic liberalism in Mexico.⁷ Vicente Riva Palacio and other authors of the mid-nineteenth century were liberals who opposed monarchy (though the treatment of Iturbide in volume 4 of Riva Palacio's *México a través de los siglos*, edited by the liberal Enrique de Olavarría y Ferrari, is quite moderate). Francisco de Paula Arrangoiz y Berzábal, though a monarchist under Maximilian, was not an eye-witness of the 1820s and, like Olavarría y Ferrari, simply followed Alamán's passages on the revolution. Niceto de Zamacois was a Spaniard who lived off and on in Mexico but, writing in the 1870s and 1880s, was already dependent on secondary sources.⁸

⁶ Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico desde los primeros movimientos que prepararon su independencia en el año de 1808 hasta la época presente* (5 vols., 1849–52, reprint, Mexico City, 1942). Alamán's vol. 5 deals with the Iturbide period. Henry George Ward, *Mexico in 1827* (2 vols., London 1828). Joel R. Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico, Made in the Autumn of 1822 by a Citizen of the United States* (Philadelphia, 1824). Both Ward and Poinsett left extensive views in their many reports to their home governments, which have been published in various forms.

⁷ Charles A. Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821–1853* (New Haven, 1968), p. 25.

⁸ José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente, 1821–1841* (2 vols., Mexico City, 1892–7). José María Tornel y Mendivil, *Breve reseña histórica de los*

In the twentieth century the most authoritative biography of Iturbide is that of William Spence Robertson, but at all the key interpretive points of Iturbide's career – his turning against Spain in 1820, his assumption of the throne, his abdication of the throne – Robertson either confesses himself unable to determine Iturbide's motivations or offers fairly bland explanations. Some authors have attempted to improve Iturbide's image, such as Ezequiel A. Chávez – but his work is riddled with error and suffused with hero worship; and Mariano Cuevas, who, being anti-liberal and pro-clerical, overstates the case for Iturbide, the role of the Masons at that point, and the role of the United States.⁹ Suffice it to say that the historiography on Iturbide remains largely partisan and unsatisfactory, with the problem common to such topics of original errors compounded by repetition.

I believe an historical disservice has been done. While recognizing that Iturbide lacked the grandeur of a Bolívar or the modesty of a San Martín, that he was a very fallible mortal, today's historian cannot fail to find him a fascinating subject of study. If viewed from the perspective of his own day, a different image emerges. The matter is best approached by posing the major problems. Why did Mexico, at the moment of its independence, adopt a monarchy? Why was Iturbide made the monarch? Was his accession as emperor legitimate? What went wrong afterward? Why did he abdicate?

The first question is quickly answered. Mexico became a monarchy because the Plan of Iguala and Treaties of Córdoba, upon the basis of which independence was achieved, re-created the supposedly legitimate empire of Anáhuac, or the Mexican Empire. In keeping with the emerging nationalism of the day, particularly influenced by the work of Francisco Clavijero, Mexico was seen as an independent entity illegitimately conquered by the Spanish invaders in 1521. The creole leaders of Mexican society were

acontecimientos más notables de la nación mexicana desde el año de 1821 hasta nuestros días (Mexico City, 1852). José María Luis Mora, *México y sus revoluciones* (3 vols., Paris, 1836), and *Obras sueltas* (2nd ed., Mexico City, 1963). Vicente Riva Palacio (ed.), *México a través de los siglos* (5 vols., Mexico City, 1888–9). Francisco de Paula Arrangoiz y Berzábal, *Méjico desde 1808 hasta 1867* (4 vols., Madrid, 1871). Niceto de Zamacois, *Historia de México, desde sus tiempos mas remotos hasta nuestros días* (18 vols., Barcelona, 1876–88).

⁹ William Spence Robertson, *Iturbide of Mexico* (Durham, 1952). Ezequiel A. Chávez, *Agustín de Iturbide: Libertador de México* (Mexico City, 2nd ed., 1962). Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la Nación Mexicana*, (3rd ed., Mexico City, 1967). Cuevas says of Iturbide's election: 'Never in the Mexican nation has there been seen a more popular and unanimous election' (p. 520), which is an overstatement, no matter how one views Iturbide or Mexican electoral democracy.

the rightful and legitimate heirs of the displaced and now disappeared native lords. As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁰ Iturbide incorporated the concept of calling upon Ferdinand VII and his brothers and nephew in turn to come to Mexico to assume the throne as a method of attracting the support of the powerful European Spaniards of Mexico to the enterprise of independence. The guerrilla leaders, such as Vicente Guerrero, Nicolás Bravo and Guadalupe Victoria, acquiesced because they wanted independence and because, truth to tell, they were not as yet clear in their thinking as to what form of government best suited Mexico. General Guerrero himself, as commander of the first division of the Army of the Three Guarantees had issued a manifesto calling then-Colonel Iturbide 'a magnanimous leader', a 'hero', 'the Father of the Nation'. Insisting that 'He is my chief and I am his subordinate', Guerrero pronounced of Iturbide: 'All the New World is grateful to you, and the most remote generations will pronounce your name reverently'.¹¹

Very few voices, in fact, were raised against the establishment of a monarchy after publication of the Plan of Iguala. Perhaps the strongest anti-Iturbidista voices of the day were Fray Servando Teresa de Mier and the periodical *El Sol*. In his 'Memoria político-instructiva enviada desde Filadelfia... a los gefes independientes del Anáhuac', Mier spoke out against the calling of a Bourbon prince to the Mexican throne, but his reasoning was simply that it would constitute exchanging one brand of slavery for another, that the Bourbons were not fit to be given the prize of Mexico. His years of persecution at the hands of the Spaniards had finally led him to the republican soil of the United States, and he testified that only a republic would represent the interests of all Mexicans. He reminded his readers that, historically, kings were merely idols, manufactured by the pride of private interests, 'they have eyes and do not see', 'they have ears and do not hear'. Yet Mier, too, recognized the political cunning of Iturbide's Plan of Iguala, for he had written, in various United States newspapers that were critical of the idea of calling a European monarch, that 'absolute independence was the object and the base of the Plan, and the rest is a political stratagem imposed by circumstances to incorporate all parties into the network'.¹² Thus, while fervently praying no Bourbon

¹⁰ Timothy E. Anna, *The Fall of the Royal Government in Mexico City* (Lincoln, 1978), pp. 205-9.

¹¹ Vicente Guerrero, 'Manifiesto patriótico que hizo siendo comandante General de la primera division del Ejército de las Tres Garantías' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, García collection.

¹² Servando Teresa de Mier, 'Memoria político-instructiva, enviada desde Filadelfia en agosto de 1821 a los gefes independientes del Anáhuac' (Mexico City, 1822), BLAC, García collection.

would ever darken the soil of Mexico with his presence, Mier essentially endorsed the political purpose of the Plan of Iguala, which was to create an alliance of previously opposing elements in favor of the great goal of independence.

The newspaper *El Sol*, which in 1821 was the voice of the Scottish-rite Masons and thus anti-Iturbidista, even admitted, in its next to last issue before the proclamation of Iturbide as emperor, that republics such as that of the United States were not suited to Mexico and would merely divide the nation up into 'a multitude of small republics' (*El Sol* was centralist, of course). 'Is the Mexican people in a condition to constitute themselves a republic?' the journal asked. The editors replied in the negative on the grounds that Mexico lacked the civic virtues and general enlightenment on the part of its citizenry for the exercise of full equality and the franchise. It must be emphasized that *El Sol* opposed Iturbide; it ceased to publish during his reign as emperor; and it resumed publication only on 2 April 1823, two weeks after his abdication. In that first issue after resuming publication the editors had to explain away their previous statement in opposition to a republic by saying they had been mistaken.¹³

Many other voices were raised in the debate that followed the achievement of independence to argue against the imposition of a republic. The author of one pamphlet pointed out that a republic was not suited to such a large country and, worse yet, it would raise the spectre of the creation of party politics to tear the country apart.¹⁴ Everyone had as their image of a republic not so much the United States, which in those days was little known and also the object of suspicion for its assumed territorial expansionism, but rather the republic of France. With that image in mind, the harmony and peace that the Plan of Iguala promised, with its three guarantees forming a magical triangle of security, held out the greatest hope. There was, of course, widespread disagreement over the Plan's provision to call on a Bourbon, but that was not the same thing as rejecting a moderate monarchy, which was to be based on the Spanish Constitution of 1812 until a Mexican constitution could be written. In 1821 and 1822, except for a few voices whose warnings were drowned out by the mass of comment and commentary, monarchy still had vast prestige. Any other form of government was barely imaginable.

But why Iturbide as emperor? His assumption of the throne is the core

¹³ *El Sol*, 15 May 1822 and 2 April 1823.

¹⁴ 'Amor o aborrecimiento, no quita conocimiento' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

of the view of historians that he was a figure suitable to ridicule and scorn. The Constituent Congress (after the abdication of the emperor) discussed in a special commission why Mexico had elevated Iturbide to the throne and concluded that they (the members of the same Congress) had been so fascinated by the brilliant name of their liberator that they had not yet realized the difference between 'independence' and 'liberty'.¹⁵ Countless historians have reviewed the events of 18 and 19 May 1823 – the rising of the mob to proclaim Iturbide as emperor, the meeting on 19 May of a frightened Congress intimidated by the mob in the galleries and forced to acquiesce, the hollow pretensions of pomp and circumstance in the months that followed.

There is a kind of selective amnesia at work here that seems to overlook the fact that, in the nine months between Iturbide's triumphal entry into Mexico City and his election as emperor, he ruled the country as chief executive, in his role as president of the Regency. After the death of Juan O'Donojú, no other person had anything approaching the prestige to contradict Iturbide. For the first six months the legislative function was vested in the Sovereign Provisional Governing Junta, which was to bridge the interregnum until the first Congress could meet. But the Junta was hand-picked by Iturbide himself and was, in Alamán's words, 'more a *tertulia* or concurrence of friends than a deliberating body'.¹⁶ The First Constituent Congress began meeting in February 1822, technically as the sovereign power, but it was a relatively ineffective body that was inappropriately constituted, internally divided, and made no headway whatever in consolidating the independent state. In November 1821 Iturbide requested the Sovereign Junta to specify precisely what his powers and duties were as Generalissimo and Admiral. The Junta granted him the most sweeping authority. He was to have the command of all land and sea forces, including the appointment of officers from the rank of brigadier down, commandants of provinces, and captains general. He was to be the protector of commerce, navigation, local order and ports. He was to name the two generals who would be chiefs of the general staff. He received the supreme honor of a 21-gun salute, and was to have an honor guard of two infantry companies and a military band. Perhaps most striking, the Junta clearly intended that Iturbide would remain as the commander-in-chief even after an emperor was named, for it decreed that he was to 'expedite passports and navigation licenses according to the

¹⁵ 'Dictamen de la comisión especial encargada por el soberano congreso de examinar los puntos de abdicación de la corona' (Mexico City, 1823), BLAC, García collection.

¹⁶ Alamán, *Historia*, vol. 5, p. 297.

orders of the emperor'.¹⁷ There was nothing – except Iturbide's own dedication to the program of Iguala – to prevent the Generalissimo from proclaiming himself, as Bolívar would later do, a dictator. Indeed, his powers at this point probably exceeded those that Bolívar possessed during most points in his career.

It is hard to imagine what force in society could have prevented Iturbide from seizing any powers he liked, should he have chosen to do so, because, in addition to the fact that the army was still 'his' army, the popular deification of the Liberator was a juggernaut that no one could resist, not even Iturbide himself. The 'cult of Iturbide', though its like might have been seen in other countries at other times, was perhaps unique in that it was genuinely spontaneous and not manufactured by the Hero himself or by his claue. Not even the kudos enjoyed by Bolívar in his moments of triumph equalled the cult of Iturbide. It was, I think, primarily the product of the joy and unrestrained relief occasioned by Iturbide's rapid and nearly bloodless victory over the forces of Spain. The Regency declared that fewer than 200 Mexicans had died in the Iturbide uprising, while Iturbide reported the deaths at less than 150.¹⁸ In their wildest dreams Mexicans had not foreseen that victory would come in only seven months after the proclamation of the Plan of Iguala. Besides, as yet no one knew of any objections to Iturbide: he was a blameless demigod, and men who would later be his fiercest enemies praised him. Despite the support of men like Guerrero, Bravo and Victoria, the achievement of independence was seen as Iturbide's victory alone.

Javier Ocampo, who made the most complete survey of the contemporary pamphlets of the weeks just after Iturbide's triumph (he found 505 in all), counted the titles bestowed by writers on Iturbide. He was the 'Immortal Liberator', the 'Undefeated Hero', the 'New Moses', the 'Protector of the Church', the 'Great Man of God', the 'Honor and Glory of America', the 'Alexander of America', the 'Second Constantine', the 'Victorious David', the 'Redeemer of the Fatherland', the 'Confusion of Spain', the 'Luminous Torch of Anáhuac', the 'New Abraham', the 'Trident of Neptune', the 'Surprise of History', the 'Ray of Jupiter', and countless more.¹⁹ The only thing that the cult of Iturbide would not allow, in fact, would be his retirement from public life.

¹⁷ Decree of Sovereign Junta, Mexico City, 14 November, 1821, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as INAH), T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

¹⁸ Regency to Iturbide, Mexico City, 22 February 1822, BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection; Iturbide to Regency, Mexico City, 7 December 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

¹⁹ Ocampo, *Las ideas*, pp. 331–2.

To deal with the most extreme examples of the glorification of the Hero before looking at those that illustrate substantive qualities, one might cite the reflected glorification of his family. One example was a march dedicated to his wife, Ana María Huarte:

Long live the Wife
Of the triumphant warrior,
Who with the olive in all its verdure
Treats all alike;
The loving companion
Of the great ITURBIDE
In whom resides
Peace, for good or for bad.

Another passage began:

A thousand times happy, oh! you Ana María
Huarte, united, by a sacred divinity
With a hero.²⁰

An even more extreme example was the solemn funeral memorial held in the parish of San Pablo on 3 December 1821, to mark the first anniversary of the death of Iturbide's mother, María Josefa Aramburu de Iturbide, who happened to be buried in the parish. A magnificent pyramid was erected in the church, surrounded by statuary, the building sumptuously decorated inside and out with funeral regalia, the Mass sung by members of the orders of San Diego, La Merced, Santo Domingo, San Francisco and San Agustín, attended by the Regency, the Provincial Deputation, the Ayuntamiento, and all graced by the presence of Iturbide himself. The odes that covered the pyramid included passages such as these:

The pure life of MARIA JOSEFA
Happy matron, fortunate Mother
Of the heroic son, who of the oppressed Fatherland
was its illustrious saviour.
Worthy mother of the hero
Who undaunted recovered
The liberty of a World
That was unhappily imprisoned by the Lion of Europe.

Another poem lamented her untimely death, less than a year before her son's triumph.²¹ Meanwhile, Iturbide's father was given the status of an honorary regent, with full salary and privileges.

²⁰ 'Marcha dedicada á la Sra. Da. Ana María Huarte', (Mexico City, n.d.), BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

²¹ 'Solemnes exequias de la Señora Doña María Josefa Aramburu de Iturbide' (Mexico City, 1822). BLAC, Alamán papers.

For Iturbide himself, it goes without saying, nothing was too good. He was President of the Regency, Commander of the Army, Generalissimo and Admiral, granted the title of Serene Highness. A loving nation bestowed upon him a reward of one million pesos and a grant of twenty square leagues of land in Texas²² for the maintenance of his official household (and he was not yet emperor). The Iturbide family, many years later, settled for a payment in cash of 760,000 pesos, while the grant of land remained a dead letter after the loss of Texas. Iturbide's salary was set at 120,000 pesos a year, double the salary of the Spanish viceroy.

Behind the excess of the cult, however, several salient characteristics of the Liberator of Mexico, as seen by the people he liberated, can be found. They serve to answer the question, 'Why Iturbide?' First, as he said himself, and his words were echoed by a multitude of writers, he had fulfilled the promise of Iguala. In his official proclamation on the day of his triumphal entry into Mexico City, his birthday, 27 September 1821, Iturbide had pronounced the glorious mandate: 'Mexicans: Now you are able to greet the independent Fatherland as I promised you in Iguala'.²³ The Declaration of Independence of the Empire, issued by the Sovereign Provisional Governing Junta on 28 September 1821, announced the consummation of 'The eternally memorable undertaking that a genius superior to all admiration and elogy, love and glory of his fatherland, began in Iguala and pursued, overcoming almost insuperable obstacles, and brought to its end'.²⁴

Furthermore, Iturbide had achieved this result by a peaceful victory, without the horrors of 1810. He was the pillar of social harmony, unity and peace. The third guarantee had promised equality for the defeated Spaniards, something for which Iturbide fought throughout his time in power, and it had also abolished castes based on race and color. In December 1821 the Sovereign Junta decreed as fundamental bases of the constitution of the Empire the Catholic faith, independence and 'the intimate union of all the present citizens of the Empire, or perfect equality... whether they were born here, or on the other side of the seas'. Any direct or indirect attack in print on these fundamental bases would

²² Regency to Iturbide,⁴ Mexico City, 22 February 1822. BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

²³ 'Proclama del Excmo. Señor Agustín de Iturbide' (Mexico City, 1821), pp. 246-7 in Suro Branch, California State University, *Catalogue of Mexican Pamphlets in the Suro Collection, 1623-1822* (San Francisco, 1939).

²⁴ 'Acta de Independencia del Imperio', Mexico City, 28 September 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

not be permitted. When Congress first met, on 24 February 1822, it declared the equality of all free inhabitants no matter what their place of origin. In September 1822 Congress decreed that under Article 12 of the Plan of Iguala no document in any public or private registry was permitted to list the classification of a citizen by his origin.²⁵

Author after author urged their readers to keep faith with the three guarantees and the Plan of Iguala. When a pamphlet appeared in December 1821 entitled 'Consejo prudente sobre una de las Garantías', and questioning the right of the European Spaniards to remain secure under the new Empire, the army demanded Iturbide seek out and punish the offending author.²⁶ He responded instantly (at 3 in the morning) by promising to uphold the third guarantee. The free press law was amended to make it an offense to criticize any of the guarantees, particularly the third.²⁷ Union, which meant social harmony and the security of the Mexicans and Spaniards in common citizenship together, was one of Iturbide's most impressive pursuits throughout his time as president of the Regency and Emperor.

Preservation of the security of the Spaniards in Mexico was vital, not only because Mexico still hoped for an early recognition by Spain and the other powers of its independence,²⁸ but also because it was essential to economic survival. One author reminded critics of the Spaniards that it was the third guarantee that had made independence possible. 'Can you forget', he wrote, 'that it is to this guarantee that we owe our liberty?'²⁹ Iturbide even sought the settlement in Mexico of yet further Spaniards. In a circular in December 1821 he wrote: 'Seeing how important is the increase in the population of the Empire, it is convenient that the Americans maintain a generous and politic conduct in order to conserve those good Spaniards who exist here with their fortunes, with their development of the arts and agriculture, and to incite many others from the peninsula and other foreigners to live here'.³⁰ This sort of concern was

²⁵ Decree of the Sovereign Junta, Mexico City, 15 December 1821; Decree of the Sovereign Congress, Mexico City, 24 February 1822; and Decree of the Sovereign Congress, Mexico City, 17 September 1822, all in INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

²⁶ Francisco Lagranda, 'Consejo prudente sobre una de las garantías' (Mexico, 1821), BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection; 'Representación de los Generales y Gefes del Ejército... a fin de proceder legalmente contra el autor del papel intitulado Consejo prudente...' Mexico City, 11 December 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

²⁷ Decree of Regency, Mexico City, 22 October 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

²⁸ *El Sol*, 22 December 1821.

²⁹ 'Callen unos y hablen otros' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

³⁰ Circular of Iturbide, Mexico City, 8 December 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

repaid by the Spaniards living in Mexico City when, for example, 276 of them sent a letter on 19 December 1821 to the Spanish commander of the fort at San Juan de Ulúa urging him to surrender to Iturbide, for he had fulfilled his promise to defend Spaniards and make them equal in the independent Mexico.³¹ 'El Pensador Mejicano', José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, who seems throughout the Iturbide period to be perhaps the most moderate and even-handed of the publicists, argued with his fellow Mexicans that there were as many, or more, bad creoles as bad Europeans in Mexico, pointing out particularly the many services to independence of such Spaniards as Generals José Antonio de Echávarri and Pedro Celestino Negrete.³²

In addition, Iturbide was the protector of the church and salvation of religion. The Plan of Iguala and the Treaties of Córdoba had declared the Catholic Church the only official church. Ecclesiastics and laymen alike showered Iturbide with appreciation for this act of courage in an era of doubters and encyclopedists. No less a light than José Domínguez (Minister of Justice throughout Iturbide's era) in 1821 published a pamphlet which was written in irony, pretending to be an attack against religious intolerance. His style was sufficiently forceful, however, that he had to add a note to the pamphlet explaining it was written in irony, meant to provoke admiration for the Hero of America who had defended the faith in the Plan of Iguala.³³ On a less ambiguous note, another author expressed his eternal thanks 'to our Catholic Liberator, the Second Constantine... Long live the Catholic Iturbide, long live our most Christian defender... Unconquered General of the Nation... Frightener of the impious, valiant Hero, Great defender of our Religion'.³⁴ In perhaps the most visible of the great state occasions of Iturbide's time, his coronation as emperor, Bishop Antonio Joaquín Pérez of Puebla, in his sermon, cited as one of Iturbide's greatest strengths his Christian piety: 'We glorify the Lord because He had our emperor born of progenitors who inspired in him piety... We glorify Him because He granted him teachers who above all things fortified in his soul the Catholic Religion'.³⁵ The Bishop of

³¹ 'Los Europeos piden el Castillo de San Juan de Ulúa, en Representación que hacen al Sr. General Dávila que lo defiende' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

³² 'Ni están todos los que son, ni son todos los que están' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, García collection.

³³ 'No paga Iturbide con condenarse' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, García collection.

³⁴ 'El ciudadano en campaña con entusiasmo patriótico' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

³⁵ 'Sermon predicado en la Santa Iglesia Metropolitana de Mexico el día 21 de julio de 1822 por... Antonio Joaquín Pérez' (Puebla, 1839), BLAC, García collection.

Sonora wrote Iturbide: 'To you alone belongs the glory because you alone were chosen by God'.³⁶ In short, Iturbide was the one the Lord had given.

Other common themes emerge from the shower of pamphlets that appeared just after Iturbide's triumph to help explain why he became emperor. It was widely recognized that two fundamental forces pointed him toward the throne. One was that he was Mexican-born. The other was that, in the minds of many contemporaries, quite simply, they owed him the monarchy for his incalculable gift of independence. From September 1821 there were frequent calls for him to take the throne. His accession in May 1822 was not the act of a simple mob operating with no precedent and no public support. Quite the contrary, there had been calls for him to assume the throne all along. As one author had it: 'We should think of a Monarch who unites in himself the circumstances of being from this country, Catholic, prudent, known, valiant, a lover of the Fatherland and loved by its people. And who more fits this case than the Hero of our days?'³⁷ Once it was known that Ferdinand VII and his government had completely rejected the Treaties of Córdoba, it was argued that Mexico was free to select whomever it wished. It was no longer bound by that part of the Treaties that prescribed a Bourbon for the throne. One author made this point forcefully, insisting that it was utterly incompatible that Mexico was now 'a free nation, but without liberty to elect a monarch: A sovereign nation, yet with its sons deprived of sovereignty'. 'It is true', he argued, 'that in the Plan of Iguala our Generalissimo proposed that Ferdinand VII, or a member of his dynasty, should be our emperor; which plan, formed with the presumed will of the Nation, has been confirmed with the express will of the Nation... And we know that in most of the towns they have already proclaimed our Generalissimo as emperor... Let our Generalissimo be crowned'. He concluded by pointedly remarking 'that having exposed my life for the liberty of my country, it only remains for me to cooperate in its just advancement, which I judge will consist in seeing one of our own sons crowned'.³⁸ When Iturbide issued a public manifesto refusing the acclamations that he should assume the throne, he was answered by an author who directed at Iturbide a pointed question: 'If the common view of the people, that is, not of some individuals in particular but of the people in general, fulfilling their duty of gratitude,

³⁶ Fray Bernardo, Bishop of Sonora, to Iturbide, Culiacán, 5 November 1821, INAH, T-2, 10, Colección Antigua.

³⁷ 'El importante voto de un ciudadano' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

³⁸ 'Derechos convincentes para elegir emperador americano' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, García collection.

proclaims Your Excellency as Emperor... how can Your Excellency resist the vote of all the nation'? The legitimacy of his election would lie in the will of the nation.³⁹ Fernández de Lizardi had been one of the first to proclaim Iturbide emperor, in a pamphlet of 29 September 1821. He testified that during the three days following Iturbide's triumphal entry in the capital 'the most common, and even most general, opinion, was no other but that Sr. Iturbide should be crowned'. He had declared at the time: 'If Your Excellency is not Emperor, our independence will be damned'.⁴⁰

The pressure was sufficiently strong that in October 1821 Iturbide issued a manifesto declaring that he did not aspire to the throne and stating his misgivings about the problem of electing a monarch, which could simultaneously give rise to aristocratic factions and to the tumult that democracy had a tendency to encourage.⁴¹ A prolific if not totally devoted family man (his eighth child was born while he was emperor and his ninth was born a few months after his execution in Padilla), he frequently said he sought only peace and retirement.

The only real question, indeed, would seem to be why Iturbide gave up his resistance to becoming emperor after nine months of denial. One clue comes from a series of letters he sent out to the commandants and captains general of the various provinces on 27 March 1822. He asked a series of questions about public opinion in each province regarding the Congress, the present cabinet, the national militia and other matters. But the question of most obvious interest to Iturbide was, what was the public view regarding monarchy or republic in each province? The replies arrived quickly in late March and early April, and Iturbide could only have been greatly encouraged by them. Almost every commandant and captain general whose letter has been preserved insisted, as Antonio López de Santa Anna of Veracruz put it, that 'the most sensible and enlightened part of the people adopts the constitutional monarchical government. The Republican system has few adherents, and its addicts are persons of little thought'. He added that many partisans of a republic were motivated only by the desire to prevent a foreigner or a Spaniard taking the throne. Pedro Telmo Primo of Querétaro reported that the constitutional monarchy was preferred by his people, and that 'it would make the Empire in a very short

³⁹ 'Contestación de un americano al Manifiesto del Señor D. Agustín de Iturbide' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁴⁰ *El Amigo de la paz y de la patria*, 19 May 1822.

⁴¹ 'Contestación de un americano al Manifiesto del Señor D. Agustín de Iturbide' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

time among the foremost powers on the globe'. Martín Gómez Lariz of Aguascalientes wrote that the people wanted Iturbide to take the throne. Only Texas and Coahuila showed a relatively stronger urge for a republic, while Guanajuato was said to favor a republic among all classes.⁴² Thus assured that most of the country wanted a moderate monarchy, Iturbide abandoned his resistance to popular cries for him to take the throne.

On 18 May 1822 a mass demonstration led by a contingent of Iturbide's own Regiment of Celaya, provoked initially by Sergeant Pío Marcha, clamored through the streets of the capital and in front of the residence of Iturbide, then called the Moncada Palace, demanding Iturbide accept the throne. The next day a memorial was presented to Congress signed by the 62 highest-ranking military officers then in the capital, among them Pedro Celestino Negrete, José Antonio de Echávarri, and the Marqués de Vivanco, requesting the legislature to consider the issue of Iturbide's election. With Iturbide present, at the invitation of Congress, and with loud approval from the mob that filled the galleries, 87 members of Congress (considerably short of the quorum of 102) debated the election. A motion to proclaim Iturbide emperor was presented by Deputy Valentín Gómez Farías and signed by 46 other deputies. In the end, 67 voted for the immediate proclamation of Iturbide as emperor, while 15 voted to refer the question to the provinces for decision.⁴³ I endorse entirely Robertson's judgment that there is no evidence that Iturbide had urged the populace to proclaim him emperor.⁴⁴

There is general agreement that the election by Congress was, strictly speaking, illegal, owing to the absence of a quorum and to the fact that the congressional record clearly shows repeated examples of deputies being interrupted when they spoke in a way that the gallery thought was negative. It is, however, important to point out that no member actually voted against Iturbide's election. The 15 who voted negatively were supporting a proposal to refer the question to their respective provinces for advice. In addition, the congressional record noted that some deputies

⁴² Letters to Iturbide from Santa Anna, Veracruz, 15 April 1822; Primo, Querétaro, 19 April, 1822; Lariz, Aguascalientes, 13 April 1822, BLAC, Iturbide papers.

⁴³ *Actas del congreso constituyente mexicano* (Mexico City, 1822), vol. 1, pp. 286–301. See Robertson's footnote on the vote, *Iturbide*, p. 175. It is worth noting that in the Second Constituent Congress when the vote was taken to declare Iturbide subject to execution if he should ever set foot again in Mexico, 62 deputies voted for the motion. Admittedly, the Second Constituent Congress was established on a different electoral base than the First and was smaller, but the fact remains that more deputies voted for his accession to the throne than for his execution, Alamán, *Historia*, vol. 5, p. 502.

⁴⁴ Robertson, *Iturbide*, p. 182.

did not vote because, having been among the 47 members who signed the motion of Gómez Farías, they had already expressed their will. In the following days Congress voted on various other questions concerning the monarchy, and on those occasions a quorum was present. The fact remains, however, that to Iturbide's enemies and to future generations of Mexicans and historians alike, the accession of Iturbide was the most inexcusable blot on his record. In 1823, immediately after Iturbide's abdication, Fernández de Lizardi wrote perhaps the most touching and human commentary on the tragedy of the emperor when, in the form of a soliloquy meant to be performed by an actor representing Iturbide, he has the deposed monarch say:

This crown, yes, this crown.
 This infamous mantle and this sceptre
 Common to the tyrant and to the pious
 To the hypocritical king, to the good Caesar
 They flattered my pride, they enchanted me
 They broke my good intentions
 For them I transgressed.⁴⁵

The question, however, of whether Iturbide's accession to the throne was legitimate in the fullest sense, rather than whether the act of the election was strictly according to congressional bylaws, strikes me as a more important point. Was it the general will of the nation? Recognizing that no one can authoritatively determine the will of a nation (although nearly every polemicist of the 1820s claimed to), the question is, rather, are there indications of substantive nationwide opposition? The answer is no. As Lorenzo de Zavala, who by 1823 had become a leading republican, later pointed out, it is not conceivable that Congress would have chosen anyone else as emperor.⁴⁶ It is not strictly correct to argue that Iturbide's election somehow interrupted the nation's inevitable move toward a republic because, in 1822, the movement for a republic was not yet strong. Some of the leading advocates of a republic were not yet present in the capital. Father Mier, though he expressed himself dumbfounded that Congress had not established a republic, was at this point still a prisoner in Ulúa. (He was released, in fact, two days after Iturbide's election.) Zavala said that, although there were republicans in Congress, no one called for a republic and, after heaping scorn on the idea of a monarchy, Zavala pointed out that the republicans of 1822 wanted a republic with clerical and military

⁴⁵ 'El unipersonal de Don Agustín de Iturbide, emperador que fue de Mexico', (Mexico City, 1823), BLAC, García collection.

⁴⁶ Zavala, *Ensayo crítico*, p. 128.

privileges, a guarantee for the Church, and religious intolerance – which he found equally absurd.⁴⁷ Men who were later counted among Mexico's foremost republicans, such as Gómez Farías, in May 1822 endorsed Iturbide as emperor. Even Santa Anna, in his autobiography, declares: 'About this time, the Republican Party came into being for the first time... Many of my friends tried to coax me into joining with them, but having been reared under a monarchy, I could not favor such an extreme change and listened to their words with disapproval'.⁴⁸ Fernández de Lizardi insisted that Iturbide himself had no choice but to acquiesce: 'I understand that if the Generalissimo had attempted to sustain his renunciation [of the acclamation], not one deputy would have remained alive; but neither would His Highness'. The mob, he argued, was as easily converted from friend of Iturbide to foe, and the Generalissimo's life was genuinely threatened. If he had not accepted the throne, said Fernández de Lizardi, no other faction could have garnered enough support to carry the day and Mexico would have fallen into civil war.⁴⁹ This was always Iturbide's apologia as well.

The basis of Iturbide's legitimacy as emperor lay in the Plan of Iguala and the Treaties of Córdoba. Congress, on 19 May, agreed with the general sentiment that the refusal of the Bourbons to recognize the Treaties left the choice of a monarch free. The more critical point, however, was whether the national consensus in favor of the Plan of Iguala had also constituted a consensus in favor of a moderate monarchy. The periodical *El Hombre Libre*, the other major journal of the day besides *El Sol*, argued on 17 May 1822, the day before the mob took to the streets to proclaim Iturbide emperor, that the nation had not consented to a monarchy because the Plan of Iguala was the work of one man only, that no corporation or disinterested group had been consulted before its proclamation, and that the adherence of the nation after its proclamation was not conclusive because, the periodical asked, what town or corporation could have refused to recognize the Plan?⁵⁰ Yet, in the same issue, *El Hombre Libre* argued that Mexico lacked both the civic virtues and the experience to form a republic. (*El Hombre Libre*, like *El Sol*, ceased publishing during Iturbide's monarchy.) Iturbide himself, in his apologia written in Livorno, argued that the Plan of Iguala was his doing: 'This plan was mine alone,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 107 and 132.

⁴⁸ *The Eagle: The Autobiography of Santa Anna* (ed. Ann Fears Crawford, Austin, 1967), p. 15.

⁴⁹ *El amigo de la paz y de la patria*, 19 May 1822.

⁵⁰ *El Hombre Libre*, 17 May 1822.

because I contrived it, I organized it, I published it, and I put it into execution'. He insisted, however, that it was only victorious because of the general approbation of the nation:

I was the depository of the will of the Mexicans: in the first place because what I signed in their name is what they ought to have wished for; in the second place because they had already given me many strong proofs of their real approbation to it, joining to me those amongst them capable of bearing arms, others assisting me by all the means that were in their power, and receiving me all in the towns through which I passed with acclamations and praise... As no one was compelled by force to make these demonstrations, it is evident that they approved my designs, and that their will was similar to mine.⁵¹

In the end, one must agree with Iturbide, no matter how evident the role played by his own ego. There were massive and sustained demonstrations of support for him, for the Plan, and presumably for every plank of the Plan. To argue that a national consensus existed in support of only certain planks and not others is to pretend to possess knowledge of public opinion that cannot be clearly distinguished in the Mexico of 1822, where as yet few regular periodicals existed and those that did were partisan organs. There was no substantial opposition to Iturbide becoming emperor. The cult of Iturbide's deification which has already been described is enough to substantiate an argument that in May 1822 his accession to the throne was legitimate.

What, then, went wrong? It was Iturbide's nine-month reign as emperor that constituted his failure. The answer, of course, is that Iturbide took a series of actions that the Mexican people found insupportable and the historiography finds inexcusable. Yet, few treatments of his reign emphasize the extent to which Iturbide is made to carry the blame for events over which he had little control.

Most obvious, but of relatively little importance, is the fact that, in a country bankrupted by the independence war, and despite the fact that as president of the Regency he had frequently given up or returned emoluments, Iturbide as emperor overspent in a manner that was thought

⁵¹ Iturbide, 'Memoria de Livorno', 27 September 1823, BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection. I used the handwritten first draft English translation by Michael Joseph Quin. BLAC also possesses the apparent handwritten original by Iturbide, the original Italian translation in manuscript, two other handwritten copies in Spanish, and another copy by Carlos María de Bustamante with his critical footnotes. An English translation published under the title *Memoirs of Agustín de Iturbide* (Washington, D.C., 1971) is decidedly inferior to Quin's translation. For a published copy in Spanish, but without the many documents and notes attached to the original, see Agustín de Iturbide, *Sus memorias escritas desde Liorna (27 de septiembre de 1823)* (Mexico City, 1973).

scandalous. In an attempt to surround himself with the trappings of monarchy, but more significantly, to reward as many of his closest supporters as possible, Iturbide established what was called 'the Imperial family of Their Majesties'. It consisted of a total of 134 persons: chaplains, major-domos, gentlemen pages, gentlemen of the bedchamber, ushers, tutors, physicians; and for the empress, ladies, honorary ladies, and maids of honor.⁵² Between Iturbide's accession to the throne and his abdication, the general treasury spent 255,400 pesos on the expenses of the imperial household. That is over 23,000 pesos a month, or nearly five times the cost of the household of the Spanish viceroys.⁵³ It might be pointed out that the three residences the imperial family occupied at various times – the Moncada Palace, the Buenavista Palace on Calle Alvarado, and the Archbishop's summer palace in Tacubaya – were all made available to them at no cost. None the less, regular payments of about 10,000 pesos a month were made to remodel the viceregal palace which the Iturbide family never moved into. The payments were on an ad hoc basis, but in December 1822 the government announced a planned budget for 1823 which called for an allotment to the imperial house of 1.5 million pesos that year; this was almost half of what was to be spent on the Ministry of Finance, which paid most of the salaries of civilian government employees.⁵⁴ After the revolt of General Santa Anna in Veracruz in December 1822 the *Gaceta*, in a less than reassuring assertion, defended Iturbide by insisting that 'we all know that he does not spend even a tenth of what the kings of Spain spent'.⁵⁵

All personal expenditures would have been forgiven, of course, if Iturbide had been able to meet the multitude of demands for employment and reward that bombarded him. The condition of the treasury would not permit it. One of Iturbide's defenders insisted that everyone aspired to be a general.⁵⁶ Zavala wrote: 'It is not easy to conceive of how many ambitions, both great and small, it was necessary to satisfy in order not to make for discontent'.⁵⁷ The army frequently complained of lack of adequate reward.⁵⁸ A private citizen complained in print that the victor-

⁵² *Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de Mexico*, 20 July 1822.

⁵³ Testimony of Antonio Bartres, Mexico City, 9 June 1823, INAH, 1 serie, Legajo 48; 'Razón de las cantidades que han ministrado por esta Tesorería general... para los gastos de la casa Imperial', BLAC, García collection.

⁵⁴ Budget for 1823, Mexico City, 21 December 1822, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

⁵⁵ *Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de Mexico*, 14 December 1822.

⁵⁶ 'Callen unos y hablen otros' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁵⁷ Zavala, *Ensayo crítico*, p. 133.

⁵⁸ 'Sentimientos de los oficiales del ejército imperial trigarante en la provisión de los empleos' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, García collection.

ious men of the Army of the Three Guarantees went hungry and ragged. They were looked upon with disdain, and the author wondered: ‘Perhaps, is it because many of them are of lower color?’⁵⁹ Another author commented in a satire that in the public view, at least among the lower classes, independence had brought no benefit, that it would always be a case of ‘the same friar on a different mule’.⁶⁰ There were many concerns that Iturbide showed preference for the peninsulars and creole nobles who made up his court. The most general complaint, however, was of a lack of public services and an increase in crime. Iturbide’s Council of State itself informed Congress that ‘the administration of justice is paralysed’. The fiscal of the *audiencia* of Mexico City declared that there was more crime at the end of 1822 than under the old regime, but he blamed Congress for failing to enact adequate laws.⁶¹ Even the limitation on slavery, one of the most significant social reforms of the period, was a half-hearted affair. No new slave was to be imported, and all children of slaves were declared free at the age of fourteen, but existing slaves were to remain in servitude.⁶² Iturbide’s famed colonization decree of January 1823 permitted foreigners settling in Texas to bring in their slaves, though they could not buy or sell them once in Mexican territory, and the children of slaves belonging to such colonists were to be free at the age of fourteen.⁶³

Among civil servants, members of the army, merchants and property owners (a formidable alliance, indeed), one of the most galling aspects of Iturbide’s rule was his taxation and salary discounts. On 11 March 1822 the Congress ordered salary discounts of from 8% to 20% for all civil and military employees, exempting only Iturbide, his father, and the widow of Juan O’Donojú (who had been granted a large pension). Iturbide himself made the gesture of accepting the full 20% salary discount on his own salary, and later, at his urging, Congress exempted the military.⁶⁴ The Regency had ordered a forced loan of 1.5 million pesos shortly after

⁵⁹ ‘Reclamo a favor de los heroes trapientos’ (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁶⁰ ‘Crítica del Hombre Libre’ (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁶¹ ‘Proyecto de la policía para la ciudad de México’ (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection; ‘Dictamen de las comisiones unidas de constitución y legislación sobre el proyecto de ley, consultado al gobierno por el consejo de estado’ (Mexico City, 1822), BLAC, García collection; ‘Manifiesto...que hace la Audiencia...sobre su conducta en la administración de justicia’ Mexico City, 25 November 1822, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 20, exp. 1.

⁶² ‘Dictamen de la comisión de esclavos’ (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁶³ Colonization decree, Mexico City, 4 January 1823, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 21, exp. 34.

⁶⁴ Decree of Congress, Mexico City, 11 March 1822; Decree of Emperor, Tucubaya, 22 August 1822, both in INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

independence, but Congress cancelled it in March 1822. Yet, in April, Congress opened a 'voluntary loan' in all provinces, the sums to be assigned by local city councils. In November the *Junta Nacional Instituyente* ordered another forced loan of 2.8 million pesos.⁶⁵ In December, the same Junta, with the emperor's approval, of course, ordered the creation of 4 million pesos of paper money, to be used to pay one-third of all salaries. All merchants were ordered to accept up to one-third of payments in the paper.⁶⁶ Since the money instantly lost all public credit, this constituted a salary cut of one-third for its recipients. The next day the emperor decreed that since the projected 1823 budget would have a deficit of 6 million pesos, there was to be a direct tax of that amount, each province being assessed according to its population. All persons, except those over seventy years old and ecclesiastics, would pay an additional special tax of 4 reales a year. Most startling, a property tax of 40% was established for all property owners, except the Church, which would pay 5%.⁶⁷ Remembering that the decrees of paper money and 40% property taxes occurred after the uprising against Iturbide had begun in Veracruz, these enactments provoked massive protest. One author wrote: 'Perhaps the Government of today is the tyrant of yesterday'.⁶⁸

In the political arena the enactments that were most held against Iturbide were manifold. He twice decreed that it was illegal to publish anything that threatened the existing form of government or the Three Guarantees, thus curtailing freedom of the press. In August the emperor and Council of State, in response to the conspiracy of Father Mier to create a republic, created special military tribunals in each provincial capital to try common criminals as well as all those who conspired against the government, thus suspending the articles of the Spanish Constitution relating to the arrest and trial of suspects.⁶⁹ On 21 December 1822, after the uprising in Veracruz had begun, the emperor again created special military tribunals.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Decrees of Congress, Mexico City, 16 March and 16 April, 1822; Decree of Junta Nacional Instituyente, Mexico City, 5 November 1822, all in INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

⁶⁶ Circular of Antonio de Medina, Minister of Hacienda, Mexico City, 20 December 1822, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

⁶⁷ Decree of Emperor, Mexico City, 21 December 1822, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

⁶⁸ 'Quejas del pueblo contra el papel moneda' (Mexico City, 1823), BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

⁶⁹ Extraordinary session of Council of State, Tacubaya, 2 August 1822, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 13-4, exp. 2.

⁷⁰ Decree of Emperor, Mexico City, 21 December 1822, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua.

As is well known, however, the fundamental political enactment on the emperor's part that provoked the uprising was, first, his arrest of a number of members of Congress and, subsequently, his dissolution of Congress altogether. Claiming that a plot to create a republic had been uncovered, Iturbide on 26 August 1822 ordered the arrest of about 50 individuals, including 15 congressmen, among whom were Carlos María de Bustamante, José Fagoaga, José Joaquín de Herrera, José del Valle, Anastasio Zerecero and Father Mier, the latter accused by the government of being the leader of the plot.⁷¹ In response to these imprisonments, Felipe de la Garza, commander of the Interior Provinces of the East, attempted an uprising to demand the release of the deputies and the freedom of Congress, as well as the removal of the emperor's ministers.⁷² Though Garza's rebellion was quickly crushed, and he was even pardoned by the emperor, the minister of Colombia, Miguel Santa María, who was a supporter of the conspiracy for a republic, was given his passport and ordered to leave Mexico. Iturbide took the final step on 31 October, announcing the dissolution of Congress and its replacement with a *Junta Nacional Instituyente*, composed of two deputies for every province with a large population and one deputy for each small province, all the members to be chosen by himself from among the deputies of the dissolved Congress. Iturbide accused Congress of failing to live up to its primary duties – which were to formulate a constitution, organize national finances, and maintain the army and civil service. 'Being responsible for perfecting the work that I began and which the nation by its general vote confided in me, I cannot permit [Congress] to ruin [this work].'⁷³

The members of the *Junta Instituyente* were announced on 1 November, and seated on 2 November.⁷⁴ The Bishop of Sonora, Marqués de Castañiza, as the eldest member of the Junta, served as its president, assisted by two member secretaries. From his prison cell, Father Mier wrote a satiric stanza:

⁷¹ 'Idea de la conspiración descubierta en la capital del imperio mexicano en 26 de agosto de este año' (Mexico City, 1822), BLAC, García collection.

⁷² 'Representación del Brigadier D. Felipe de La Garza al emperador' (Mexico City, 1822), BLAC, García collection.

⁷³ *Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de Mexico*, 5 November, 1822; Decree of Emperor, Mexico City, 31 October 1822, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 11, exp. 9. Even in a matter as straightforward as this, there is some historiographical confusion. Jesús Reyes Heróles, *El liberalismo mexicano* (3 vols., revised 2nd ed., Mexico City, 1982) vol. 1, p. 141 says: 'Many of the members of the Junta belonged to the first Constituent Congress'. In fact they all did.

⁷⁴ 'Lista de los Sres. Diputados designado por S.M.I. para que compongan la Junta que ha de substituir al extinguido Congreso', Mexico City, 1 November 1822, AGI, Gobernación, Legajo 11, exp. 9.

A bishop for President
Two clowns for secretaries
A hundred slovenly crows
This is the Junta Instituyente.
With such villainous people
It is certain they will legislate
To the pleasure of the Great Sultan
A magnificent sermon
Will be the Constitution
That these brutes form.⁷⁵

(In fact, the Junta was composed of only 45 members.) Further exhibiting the extraordinary ego that so angered Mexicans, Iturbide in the act of installation of the Junta declared that since independence 'my voice... constituted the single organ of the general will of the inhabitants of this empire'.⁷⁶

The dissolution of Congress, of course, gave rise to two other fundamental charges against Iturbide: that he had broken the vow of Iguala, which called for the Spanish Constitution of 1812 to remain in effect until Mexico could replace it with its own constitution; and that he was a tyrant. Most fundamental in the strictly legal view, however, is that Iturbide had also broken his investiture oath rendered to Congress on 21 May 1822, in which he promised to respect and obey the acts of Congress, the political liberty of the nation, and the personal security of each individual, swearing that 'if in that which I have sworn, or any part thereof, I should do the contrary, I should not be obeyed'.⁷⁷

What is often overlooked in the presentation of Iturbide's dissolution of Congress, however, is the fact that in its nine months in existence Congress had failed to address the basic issues of the consolidation of the empire, and that it was defective and deeply marred in its makeup and membership. At the time Congress was created, a strict adherence to the Spanish Constitution of 1812 had not been possible because of the lack of valid census statistics for Mexico upon which to base the proportional representation. As a result, it had been decided that Congress would be composed of deputies based on the number of *partidos* in each intendancy or province (the Internal Provinces and California, at that time, did not have intendancies). That would have made for 242 members, which was considered too many, so it was determined in the end that there would

⁷⁵ Manuscript poem of Mier, BLAC, Mier papers.

⁷⁶ 'Acta de instalación de la Junta Nacional Instituyente' (Mexico City, 1822), BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

⁷⁷ 'Manda nuestro emperador que ninguno le obedezca' (Puebla, 1823), BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

be deputies from each intendancy or province equal to two-thirds the number of *partidos*. Thus, the intendancy of Mexico, with 43 *partidos*, had 28 deputies; Guadalajara, with 28 *partidos*, had 17 deputies, and so on. The problem was that the distribution of *partidos* was more a product of territorial extent and defense needs than population, so that, incredibly, among the Internal Provinces of the West, Durango had 34 *partidos* (hence, 23 deputies), while Arizpe had 12 *partidos* (thus, 8 deputies).⁷⁸ In addition, it was decreed that each province with more than one deputy must have among its representatives an ecclesiastic from the secular clergy, a member of the army, and a magistrate or lawyer. After choosing these three deputies, the other members elected could *not* be from any of these professions. Furthermore, the province of Mexico was also required to select one miner, one titled noble, and one *mayorazgo*; while Guadalajara and Veracruz were to choose one merchant; Puebla and Sonora, one artisan; Nueva Vizcaya and Valladolid, one manufacturer; San Luis Potosí and Yucatán, one employee; and Guanajuato, one miner.⁷⁹

The emperor had long complained that this formation of Congress had made for 'monstrous inequality' among the provinces and for the election of deputies based on profession rather than talent. Durango, with 200,000 inhabitants, had 23 deputies, while Guanajuato, with more than 400,000 inhabitants, had only 7 deputies. Iturbide had requested Congress in early October to reduce the number of members, which Congress had refused to do. It was in the wake of this disagreement that Iturbide dissolved what he considered an unwieldy Congress, founded on what he called 'demagogic and anarchistic forms', in favor of a smaller *Junta Instituyente*.⁸⁰

Nor is it fair to charge, as Santa Anna immediately did, that Iturbide appointed only his loyal followers from among the deputies to make up the new *Junta Instituyente*. Indeed, several former and future republicans were among their numbers. One was Francisco Argáandar, one of the few men who had been a member of Morelos's Congress of Chilpancingo. There was also Lorenzo de Zavala. (Zavala had been an advocate of reforming Congress, but he wanted to see a bi-cameral legislature with

⁷⁸ 'Estado que manifiesta los Diputados propietarios y suplentes, que se han de nombrar para el Congreso constituyente del Imperio Mexicano' (Mexico City, 1821), BLAC, W. B. Stephens collection.

⁷⁹ Decree of Sovereign Junta, Mexico City, 17 November 1821, INAH, T-3, 35, Colección Antigua. For Nueva Vizcaya (Durango) and Valladolid the word used was 'labrador', but this obviously meant the owner of some factory, since Nueva Vizcaya sent a titled noble, the conde del Valle del Suchil, as its 'labrador'.

⁸⁰ 'Disolución del Soberano Congreso', Mexico City, October 1822, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 10, exp. 11.

more definite powers in its relations with the executive.)⁸¹ Furthermore, only four men from among those 47 deputies who had signed the motion of Gómez Farías on 19 May, urging Iturbide to take the throne, were included on the *Junta Instituyente*. Gómez Farías himself was not one of them. While most of the Congressional caucus from Guadalajara had signed the petition, the two members chosen for the Junta from Guadalajara were not among them. There is no real evidence to assume that Iturbide only picked sycophants to compose the *Junta Instituyente*. Iturbide, admittedly myopic on the subject, insisted that the *Junta Instituyente* was as representative as the Congress, and a lot more effective. Within less than two months it had produced a projected constitution.

Taking their cue principally from Carlos María de Bustamante, most historians rapidly conclude the story of Iturbide by saying that the outrage of his dissolution of Congress turned the nation against him, provoked the uprising of Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria in Veracruz in December 1822, and led by March 1823 to his overthrow. Bustamante wrote, for example: 'The will of the Mexican Nation, decided at the beginning of January 1823, was known to all except he who ruled its destiny: from all sides resounded a general clamour against the new throne, heard by all except he who was seated on it'.⁸² This considerably overstates the degree of national consensus.

Bustamante did not take adequate care to emphasize that there were actually three uprisings against Iturbide and that the second and third of those uprisings did not call for Iturbide's overthrow, while the first is so ambivalent that it is hard to be certain what it wanted. The first was the rising of Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria on 2 December 1822 in the city of Veracruz. Santa Anna admitted in his autobiography that he was primarily provoked by the fact that Iturbide had ordered him removed from his command and transferred to Mexico City.⁸³ Historians universally say that Santa Anna called for the creation of a republic. The fact, however, is, he both did and did not. On 2 December he issued one proclamation to the citizens of Veracruz, one to the soldiers under his command, and one 'Plan'. In all of them he put the emphasis on the demand that the Congress be reinstated. But only in the first of the proclamations did he call for the creation of a republic. In the proclamation to his soldiers he

⁸¹ Alamán, *Historia*, vol. 5, pp.417-18.

⁸² Bustamante, 'Copia de carta en que se narran los sucesos ocurridos en México durante el gobierno de Iturbide', Mexico City, 14 August 1832, INAH, Colección Bustamante, vol. 17-5.

⁸³ Santa Anna, *The Eagle*, p. 16.

never mentioned a republic, though he did refer to Iturbide as a tyrant. More importantly, in his 'Plan' of 2 December he merely called for the re-institution of the Sovereign Congress, which would 'examine the vote of the provinces, hear the learned men and public writers, and in the end, after a mature examination, declare the form of government' that most suited Mexico. Similarly, on 6 December, Santa Anna published a number of 'clarifications' to what was called the 'Plan of Veracruz', written by Miguel Santa María, the Colombian diplomat then awaiting a ship in Veracruz. It called for the restoration of Congress, but it did not mention a republic. In 22 rambling articles, it only once mentioned that the orders of Iturbide should no longer be obeyed. On 6 December Santa Anna also wrote a letter to Iturbide, explaining that he had felt compelled to withdraw himself from obedience to the emperor because Iturbide had broken his oaths and infringed the Plan of Iguala and Treaties of Córdoba. 'My idea is that a congress should be reunited...so that it can freely and spontaneously constitute the form of government most convenient and analogous to this country. This Congress will take care to justly reward your merits...providing you a very distinguished place in the nation'. Santa Anna concluded by expressing his love for Iturbide and his willingness to sacrifice himself to defend Iturbide's life.⁸⁴ The massive propaganda campaign launched against Santa Anna from Mexico City, combined with the attack of the imperial expeditionary troops still loyal to Iturbide, soon drove Santa Anna back to the confines of the port of Veracruz, and everyone expected his uprising would shortly be terminated.

The second rising began on 5 January 1823, when Generals Vicente Guerrero and Nicolás Bravo, who, together with Guadalupe Victoria, were considered the senior *guerrilleros* of independence, stunned Iturbide by

⁸⁴ 'Proclamas del Brigadier Santana a los habitantes y tropa de Veracruz', Veracruz, 2 December 1822, BLAC, Santa Anna papers. 'Plan del pronunciamiento en Veracruz y reformas que se le hicieron', Veracruz, 2 and 6 December 1822, BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection. I used the handwritten copy of this document made by Hernández y Dávalos, but the document is printed in many sources, including Carlos María de Bustamante, *Cuadro histórico de la revolución mexicana* (2nd ed., Mexico City, 1844), vol. 6, pp. 64–71, and Vicente Riva Palacio (ed.), *México a través de los siglos*, vol. 4, pp. 86–7. Santa Anna to Iturbide, Veracruz, 6 December 1822, BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection. Note that, with the letter, Hernández y Dávalos inscribed the title 'Carta a Iturbide manifestandole los fundamentos por los que ha promovido su desconocimiento como Emperador y proclamando la republica', yet the letter itself does not proclaim a republic. This suggests the source of some of the confusion about the content of Santa Anna's uprising; Hernández y Dávalos knew that the effect of the uprising was to create a republic, and did not pause to reflect that the letter in question did not mention a republic.

slipping out of Mexico City and raising a rebellion in the south. In a letter to Brigadier Francisco Antonio Berdejo on 13 January, Bravo wrote that their motivation was to restore Congress. He attested: 'You can see that neither do we aspire to a republic nor do we want to designate the form of government that should be adopted. We are in conformity with whatever [form of government] and even with the established one as long as it should be legitimized by the nation and its representatives. We do not demand anything more than the national representation that the emperor destroyed'.⁸⁵ This rebellion, too, soon came to nothing, and Guerrero was so severely wounded in a contest with imperial troops that his death was widely reported. Guerrero survived, but was out of the picture for some months. Bravo eventually joined up with Santa Anna and Victoria in Veracruz.

The third rising was the most important. The generals commanding the imperial expeditionary army that went out against Santa Anna were Iturbide's closest friends. They were Generals José Antonio Echávarri, Luis de Cortázar and José María Lobato. After driving Santa Anna back to the port of Veracruz and establishing a siege against him, they proclaimed on 1 February 1823 at their general headquarters the so-called Plan of Casa Mata. This was a stunning shock to Iturbide, but mainly because of the defection of such close colleagues. Iturbide later wrote of Echávarri: 'I had always behaved with him as with a brother...I had trusted him with secrets as I would have done to a son'.⁸⁶ Iturbide sent out General Pedro Celestino Negrete, the highest ranking officer in the imperial army and considered the second most powerful man in the empire, as a commissioner to the rebellious Echávarri. Unexpectedly, Negrete also endorsed the Plan of Casa Mata. The combined leadership of the 'liberating army' as it was called, settled their headquarters in Puebla and, although they preferred Echávarri as their leader, finally opted for the Captain General of Puebla, the Marqués de Vivanco, because Echávarri was a Spaniard.

It is critical, however, to note that the Plan of Casa Mata, like the Plan of Veracruz and the Bravo-Guerrero uprising, was motivated by outrage at the dissolution of Congress. It called for the restoration of Congress as the seat of national representation, not for the overthrow of Iturbide. Echávarri, in a letter from Casa Mata on 1 February 1823, told Ramón Rayón that: 'Upon pronouncing our votes for the installation of the

⁸⁵ Bravo to Berdejo, Chilapa, 13 January 1823, INAH, T-2, 10, Colección Antigua.

⁸⁶ Iturbide, 'Memoria de Livorno', BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.

Congress we have considered as a sacred duty the conservation of the emperor, and as a result these armies attempt no act against his august person which they respect as inviolable'.⁸⁷ The Plan of Casa Mata itself consisted of two primary points. First: 'It being incontrovertible that sovereignty resides essentially in the nation, the Congress will be installed with all possible brevity'. Second: 'The Army will never make any attempt against the person of the emperor'.⁸⁸ There was no demand for Iturbide's overthrow, the act was undertaken by men closest to him among all the officers, the demand was only for the restoration of the Congress, which Iturbide granted. Proof that the imperial government, though disappointed perhaps by the generals' action, was not terrified of it is the fact that on 18 February the government itself published, without comment, a copy of the Act of Casa Mata.⁸⁹

The Provincial Deputation of Mexico, which on 26 February told the Marqués de Vivanco that it entirely supported the reunion of a Congress, wrote to the emperor on 1 March: 'The nation is on the verge of its ruin... To save it is the duty of Your Majesty... The incontestable majority of the Nation... has set its sights and desires on a national representation as the only remedy of the evils that have weighed upon them; they want a constituent Congress'.⁹⁰ On 4 March the emperor published the decree calling for the reopening of the dissolved Congress (as opposed to the election of a new one), and on 7 March the Congress began to meet. The leaders of the liberating army agreed to recognize the Congress.⁹¹

To summarize, then, there were three separate uprisings against Iturbide, all motivated by the demand for restoration of Congress. The Veracruz movement of Santa Anna and Victoria initially proclaimed a republic, and Santa Anna in his own memoirs insisted he had been the first to proclaim a republic, yet their formal Plan of Veracruz made no mention of a republic. The abortive Bravo–Guerrero uprising in the south wanted only the restoration of national representation. Bravo attested he could live with the emperor as long as that concession was granted, and

⁸⁷ Echávarri to Rayón, Campo de Casa Mata, 1 February 1823, INAH, T-2, 10, Colección Antigua.

⁸⁸ Act of Casa Mata, Cuartel General de Casa Mata, 1 February 1823, INAH, T-2, 10, Colección Antigua.

⁸⁹ Circular of José Manuel Herrera, minister of Relations, Mexico City, 18 February 1823, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 21, exp. 23.

⁹⁰ Provincial Deputation of Mexico to Vivanco, Mexico City, 26 February 1823; Same to Emperor, Mexico City, 1 March 1823, both in INAH, Colección Bustamante, vol. 17-4.

⁹¹ Alamán, *Historia*, vol. 5, p. 466.

that it was not his goal to create a republic. The Plan of Casa Mata directly guaranteed the person of the emperor and the institution of the monarchy, requiring only the installation of national representation. The legitimacy of the monarchy and of Iturbide's accession to the throne is reinforced by the unwillingness of all but Santa Anna to proclaim against it.

Yet, on 19 March the emperor submitted his abdication to the Council of State. Since the rebels of Casa Mata had not demanded it, why did the emperor abdicate? He had not been defeated by his enemies. The moderate wing then commanding the bulk of the army favored continuation of the monarchy. Several provinces were on record as still strongly favoring monarchy and opposed to a republic. As he showed with his ill-fated return in 1824, Iturbide was not given to blind panic or personal fear, indeed his ego would not have permitted abandonment of the field without cause.

The more solid reasons for Iturbide's abdication are political. Three devastating political considerations became clear to Iturbide by mid-March. First, on 23 February 1823, while the *Junta Instituyente* was debating the grounds on which Congress should be established again, the Subsecretary of Relations, Andrés Quintana Roo, submitted to the emperor's secretary, Francisco de Paula Alvarez, his opinion that the restored Congress must have no restriction placed on the subjects it could debate, as the *Junta Instituyente* was contemplating. 'The Junta wants Congress to be unable to discuss the fundamental points...such as religious intolerance, the moderate monarchy, and others. It is an absurdity in politics to proscribe this kind of limit on the legislative power.' While Quintana Roo went on to discuss religious intolerance as an example of something Congress must be permitted to debate, the real point was that he had made it clear that a truly independent Congress would and should debate the very existence of the monarchy itself.⁹² Two days later Alvarez announced that the emperor, astounded at the hypocrisy of Quintana Roo's willingness to 'open up opinions diametrically opposed to the bases that the nation has adopted', fired him as Subsecretary.⁹³

The second political consideration is revealed by a statement of Carlos María de Bustamante who, in passing, comments upon the role of the army in the Act of Casa Mata: 'A nation that has arrived at knowledge of its true interests is not capable of retracing its steps on the road to liberty,

⁹² Quintana Roo to Alvarez, Mexico City, 23 February 1823, INAH, T-2, 10, Colección Antigua.

⁹³ Circular of José del Valle, Mexico City, 26 February 1823, INAH, T-3, 36, Colección Antigua.

and the armed forces should be their support'. He spoke of the army as the 'true friend of the public' which was about to provide 'a protecting hand that would save the nation at the edge of ruin'.⁹⁴

A third, and even more subtle political consideration, was explained by Nettie Lee Benson. The Plan of Casa Mata, although it did not call for the creation of a republic but actually guaranteed the continuation of the monarchy, had the effect of destroying the central government. Article 10 of the 11-part Plan of Casa Mata called for government in the province of Veracruz to be vested in the provincial deputation of Veracruz until the crisis was resolved. As Benson pointed out, not even Iturbide at first recognized the subtle destructive impact of this article, nor did the commanders of the liberating army. Article 10 caused each of the thirteen provincial deputations in the country to adopt the Plan of Casa Mata almost immediately, for it assured each provincial deputation that it could take over administrative control of its respective province. Thus the deputation of Puebla proclaimed the Plan on 14 February and assumed control of its province; Guadalajara's deputation proclaimed the Plan on 26–27 February; Querétaro on the 27th; San Luis Potosí in the first week of March; Yucatán on 4 March; Guanajuato and Michoacán on 8 March; while Oaxaca and the Eastern Interior Provinces created provisional governing juntas. Most of the provinces immediately abolished Iturbide's forced loans, special taxes and the paper money. 'By the middle of March, 1823, Mexico, instead of being a united country, was broken up into virtually autonomous provinces', which neither the emperor nor the Congress could control.⁹⁵

In short, Iturbide, the man who had made independence and who had everything disposed as he wanted heretofore, was presented with the spectre of having imposed upon him a Congress that would exercise real sovereignty, including discussion of the most fundamental bases that he held dear – religious exclusion and a constitutional monarchy – and which, if it could abolish those two planks, could no doubt do away with any other part of the Plan of Iguala. Indeed, on 8 April the restored Congress did annul the Plan of Iguala and Treaties of Córdoba, though it retained the three guarantees.⁹⁶ Second, the man who had made the army

⁹⁴ Bustamante, 'Copia de carta en que se narran', INAH, Colección Bustamante, vol. 17–5.

⁹⁵ Nettie Lee Benson, 'The Plan of Casa Mata', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 25, no. 1 (February 1945), pp. 45–56.

⁹⁶ Decree of Sovereign Congress, Mexico City, 8 April 1823, AGN, Gobernación, Legajo 486, exp. 4.

and had commanded its undivided loyalty heretofore, could never submit to having the army establish a protectorate over his person, his throne, or the future of his family, even if that army was directed, as it then was, by persons loyal to him. Third, by the second week of March 1823 neither he, the restored Congress, nor the army under Echávarri and Vivanco controlled the provinces. A member of Congress then with the liberating army at its headquarters in Puebla wrote to Father Mier: 'The tyrant weeps and groans and sees himself lost, he finds no road to take'.⁹⁷ Deeply hurt by the defection of his partners in the enterprise of independence, personally depressed, and facing the emasculation of his power and his throne, Iturbide proclaimed his desire to avoid becoming the pretext for the shedding of Mexican blood and, after extracting provisions to assure the personal safety of himself and his family, and a lifetime pension, departed for Veracruz to take ship to his Italian exile. Iturbide literally was not overthrown; he gave up because the political price of remaining on the throne was more than he would pay.

The historiography of Mexico, rooted as it is in the writings of Iturbide's personal enemies, obviously does not consider his abdication to have been adequate recompense for his sins. Little consideration is given to the fact that the other great Liberators of Spanish America committed similar sins, yet all have been restored to varying degrees of public honor. Was it not Bolívar who proclaimed a dictatorship in Colombia and a lifetime presidency in Peru and Bolivia? San Martín favored and worked for the establishment of a European prince on a throne in Peru. The closest analogy to Iturbide is, perhaps, the Liberator Emperor of Brazil, Dom Pedro I, who also abdicated after complex quarrels involving the powers of the monarch, the writing of a constitution, the relationship of the throne to the parliament, and the inherent struggle, universal to Spain, Portugal, Naples and even France at the time, between inherited norms of traditional monarchy and emerging liberalism. In Mexico, perhaps it was the Second Empire of Maximilian that finally imposed the black legend on the idea of monarchy. Iturbide and his supporters could not have foreseen that forty-six years after his achievement of independence the Mexican nation would finally opt for a republic that was centralist behind a façade of constitutional federalism.

Mexico did not heed the plea of Fernández de Lizardi, who insisted that while the nation could not excuse Iturbide's actions, it must not forget

⁹⁷ Mier to Ambrosito, Toluca, 9 March 1823, copying letter of Crescencio Rejón, BLAC, Mier papers.

his great contributions.⁹⁸ Nor has it adhered to the conciliatory epitaph of Pablo Villavicencia, who wrote of Iturbide: ‘We must never be ungrateful to you, we can detest your errors without forgetting your accomplishments, we can sympathize with your misery and respect your disgrace’.⁹⁹ It has refused the plea of Iturbide himself, who told his countrymen: ‘When you shall instruct your children in the history of their country, inspire them with affection for the first Chief of the Army of the Three Guarantees... [who] spent the most precious part of his life laboring that you should be happy’.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Fernández de Lizardi, ‘Perdonesele a Iturbide y mueran los traidores’ (Mexico City, 1823), pp. 410–12 in Sutro, *Catalogue*.

⁹⁹ ‘El Payo del Rosario a la grata memoria de Iturbide’ (Mexico City, 1826), BLAC, García collection.

¹⁰⁰ Iturbide, ‘Memoria de Livorno’, BLAC, Hernández y Dávalos collection.