

MAY 5 - U.S. 'lost' guns to Mexican gangs...in 1866 ! - Cinco de Mayo History

By Bill Federer

Napoleon's Muslim Mameluke cavalry charged with scimitar swords into a crowd in Madrid crushing Spanish resistance on "DOS DE MAYO," 1808.



Napoleon installed his brother Joseph as King of Spain.

Venezuela, then Mexico, declared independence from the French-controlled Spanish Empire in 1810.

Mexico struggled through fifty different governments in the next 50 years.



Santa Anna finally laid aside the Constitution and made himself dictator.

He exiled Benito Juárez in 1853, but Juárez returned the next year to lead the Revolution of Ayutla ousting Santa Anna.



Backed by Freemasonry leaders, **Benito Juárez led a War of Reform in 1856 against the church, suppressing religious orders, confiscating church property and denying rights to religious clergy.**

Juárez stopped paying interest on Mexico's debt to Spain, Great Britain and France in 1861, resulting in those countries planning an invasion of Mexico.

With the United States preoccupied with the Civil War, French troops landed in Mexico in 1862, being supported by various indigenous communities, financial leaders and church leaders.



MAY 5, 1862 - "**CINCO DE MAYO**" - the French Army suffered a minor setback at the **Battle of Puebla**, but went on to capture Mexico City, Guadalajara, Zacatecas. Acapulco. Durango, Sinaloa and Jalisco.

Mexican leaders traveled to Europe and pleaded with Maximilian I to lead Mexico.

Maximilian had a reputation for liberal ideas and progressive reform 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's brother was Emperor Franz Josef who ruled the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which, after Russia, was the largest country in Europe, consisting of Austria, Hungary, Bohemia (Czech), Croatia, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, and parts of Serbia, Romania, Italy, Montenegro, Poland and Ukraine.

Emperor Franz Joseph, who met Theodore Roosevelt in 1910, was assassinated in 1916 beginning World War I.



Mexican leaders, led by José Pablo Martínez del Río, supported Maximilian, as did Pope Pius IX, England's Queen Victoria and France's Napoleon III.



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

He created the wide avenue through the center of Mexico City - known now as the famous *Paseo de la Reforma*.

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

immediately abolished child labor and reduced working hours for laborers.



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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 sold for the price of their debt.

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



But the United States Government did not want European powers in the western hemisphere - the Monroe Doctrine - so it put diplomatic pressure on Napoleon III to abandon support of Maximilian and withdraw French troops from Mexico.

The U.S. then began **secretly supplying guns to the Mexican gangs, conveniently 'losing' arms and ammunition by leaving them at El Paso del Norte near the Mexican border.**

With the U.S. backing Juárez, Maximilian's supporters 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 followers



Maximilian was soon captured

Leaders around the world begged for Maximilian's life to be spared, including eminent liberals Victor Hugo and Giuseppe Garibaldi who sent telegrams to Benito Juárez.



Juárez refused and had him shot June 19, 1867.

Maximilian'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 independencia!*"

Benito Juárez died of a heart attack five years later after putting down a revolt led by Porfirio Diaz, who later was President till 1911.