

*“I loved him as a father loves a son...  
Europe, damn me then, but I deserve his thanks”:  
Philip II’s relations with Rudolf II<sup>1</sup>*

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*INTRODUCTION*

The successors of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperors hated Spain; so say many authors. The theme runs like a leit-motif in Paula Fichtner’s recent biography of the emperor Maximilian II. She insists that he “would never like Spain or Spaniards”, and that he “was generally contemptuous of his Spanish relatives (except his wife) and their subjects, either openly or indirectly”. This was unfortunate, since he “had no alternative to living in close proximity with Spaniards whom he disliked intensely”<sup>2</sup>. It has often been assumed that in this, as in so much else, his son Rudolf II followed in his footsteps. Chudoba stated that Rudolf “inherited” his father’s hostility to the superiority displayed by king of Spain<sup>3</sup>. Evans went further: he argued that from the reign of Charles V onwards, the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty were locked in permanent conflict which “is sometimes latent, never resolved, even in periods of apparent co-operation”. He summarises Rudolf II’s attitude to Spaniards in a terse phrase: “he really hated them”<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> F. SCHILLER: *Don Carlos*, trans. H. Collier Sy-Quia, Oxford 1996, Act 5, Sc. IX, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> P. SUTTER FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, Newhaven-London 2001, pp. 22, 31 and 118 respectively.

<sup>3</sup> B. CHUDOBA: *España y el Imperio*, Madrid 1963, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world. A study in intellectual history, 1576-1612*, Oxford 1973, pp. 12-13 and p. 53 respectively.

It was a truism in sixteenth-century Europe that Spaniards and Germans hated each other, particularly after the 1540s. Protestant propaganda sought to denigrate Charles V by attaching this foreign label to him, however ill-fitting. His attempts to reinforce Catholicism were regarded as part of a “Spanish” world view, particularly after the key role played by the duke of Alba and Spanish soldiers during the Schmalkaldic wars in 1546–1547, which led to extensive vilification of all things Spanish. When, in the context of another war, the duke of Alba ordered the execution of the Flemish nobles Egmont and Horn in 1567, the Venetian ambassador commented that it would cause “perpetual and indelible hatred between the German and Spanish nations”. But the situation was complex. Spaniards were as likely to be damned in such propaganda for being too Catholic as for being too Jewish or even Muslim <sup>5</sup>. Moreover, in more recent works it is the Emperor Ferdinand I, born and bred in Spain, and who continued to present himself as “*Infans et Princeps Hispaniarum*”, who has been widely credited with establishing the basis of the “*via media*” between the warring Christian creeds which is presented as the opposite of “Spanish” religious tendencies <sup>6</sup>. Moreover, it was the apparently Spanish-hating Maximilian II who, while happily married to a Spanish Infanta, governed the Spanish realms successfully, and allowed his heir, Rudolf, and three other sons to live a large part of their lives in Philip II’s court in Spain. He also did everything in his power to marry his eldest daughter, Anna, to the Spanish monarch <sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> P. W. POWELL: *Tree of Hate*, New York & London, 1971, ch. 3, esp. pp. 47–50; S. ARNOLDSSON: *La Leyenda Negra. Estudios sobre sus orígenes*, Göttenborg 1970, part IV: “La Leyenda Negra en Alemania”. G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen vom Kaiserhofe*, 3 vols., Vienna 1892–1895, III, p. 441 note 2: “*il sigillo di un odio indelebile et perpetuo tra la nation alemana et spagnola*”.

<sup>6</sup> A good starting point for Ferdinand I: A. KOHLER: *Ferdinand I. 1503–1564. Fürst, König und Kaiser*, Munich 2003, and P. S. FICHTNER: *Ferdinand I of Austria*, Boulder (Colorado) 1982. The useful collection by A. ALVAR (ed.): *Socialización, vida privada y actividad pública de un Emperador del Renacimiento. Fernando I, 1503–1564*, Madrid 2004, includes P. SCHMIDT’S: “‘*Infans sum Hispaniarum*’. La difícil germanización de Fernando I”, pp. 273–284. See also C. LAFERL: *Die Kultur der spanier in Österreich unter Ferdinand I. (1522–1564)*, Vienna 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Good starting points for Maximilian: P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, New Haven & London 2001, and V. BIBL’S works, especially his: *Maximilian II.: Der rässelhafte Kaiser*, Hellerau bei Dresden, s. d., and the collection by F. EDELMAYER & A. KOHLER (eds.): *Kaiser Maximilian II. Kultur und Politik im 16. Jahrhundert*, Munich 1992.

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It is notable that proof of the existence of this hatred for Spain is seldom provided. The most frequently used primary sources are the letters of Venetian or papal envoys whose states were frequently at odds with Philip II, making them receptive to critical comments. These have tended to be misconstrued by later historians who expect national tensions to be the norm. The 1574 report of the Venetian ambassador Cortaro is a case in point. It has been cited to prove Maximilian II's hatred of Spain. Cortaro claimed that he had a low opinion of *Philip II's ministers*, indeed

such great disdain that the thing he most likes to do is to speak ill of them all ... he has spoken to me several times at great length on this, calling them 'the Little Spaniards', and almost inferring that they are solely concerned with their own interests <sup>8</sup>.

On an earlier occasion Maximilian had spoken angrily of a "certo Spagnoletto" who had misrepresented his motives for approving the peace between Catholics and Protestants in France <sup>9</sup>. As criticism of venal ministers go this is mild indeed, and using the diminutive when alluding to "Spanish" ministers seems more disdainful than anything else. None of this, of course, is a condemnation of Philip II or of all things Spanish. In any case, as I have argued elsewhere, the term "Spanish" was not always a "national" designation at this point. One of the king's leading ministers until 1573 was Portuguese; the influential cardinal Granvelle was from the Franche Comté, and Italians not only advised the king but filled key government posts. Yet all could be called in certain contexts "Spanish", as would the numerous Netherlanders and Germans in the top ranks of the military who made up the "Spanish" army <sup>10</sup>. Critical, even acerbic comments against "Spanish" policies, particularly in relation to the use of military force to enforce orthodoxy, and complaints of Spanish pride appear to

<sup>8</sup> Cit. R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 53 note 1:

*"di tanto sdegno, che niuna cosa fa più volentieri, che dir mal di tuti loro ... et con me n'ha tenuto diverse volte lunghissime ragionamenti, chiamandoli Spagnoleti quasi volesse inferire, che solo mirino il proprio commodo"*.

<sup>9</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 439 note 3 citing events from 22 and 23 March 1568.

<sup>10</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "Patriotismo y política exterior en la España de Carlos V y Felipe II", in F. RUIZ MARTÍN (ed.): *La Proyección Europea de la Monarquía Hispánica*, Madrid 1996, pp. 49-105, esp. pp. 74-76, 90-100.

have been commonplace at the imperial court<sup>11</sup>, but we should not confuse this with general hostility.

Rudolf II spent over seven years living with Philip II, treated much like the king's son. In later life he spoke Spanish by preference and dressed in Spanish fashion. It is paradoxical, therefore, that he should also be portrayed as someone who hated Spain. Unsurprisingly, most historians paint a complex, even contradictory picture as can be seen from this selective sample: Chudoba paints a fairly positive picture. Having stated that Rudolf II was hostile to "Spanish policies", he argued that Rudolf had imbibed Spanish culture and "the strict spirit" of the Spanish court, as well as the ideas which governed the life and work of Philip II. In later life, however, mental illness caused the emperor to lose the many benefits he had gained from "his Spanish education"<sup>12</sup>. Evans identified the diverse influences that Rudolf II was exposed to under his father and his uncle and concluded that he veered between two extremes with regards to Spain: "part unthinking acceptance, part violent antipathy"<sup>13</sup>. Haupt echoes the widespread view that Rudolf II was attached to Spanish culture but did not like the Spanish or their politics. In keeping with a negative view of Spain, he associated certain negative aspects of the emperor's character –his haughty demeanour, his reserve, and his limited capacity to laugh– with the Spanish Habsburgs<sup>14</sup>. Contemporaries were similarly struck by the combination of admiration and rejection, but it is worth noting that Philip II's ambassador at the imperial court commented shortly after Rudolf II took power that Maximilian II had been more partial to "*los españoles*" than his son<sup>15</sup>.

His refusal to marry Philip II's daughter, the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia, appears to prove Rudolf II's antipathy towards Spain. The rejection of his favourite child by a man he had treated like a son, and on whom he had lavished

<sup>11</sup> H. LOUTHAN: *The quest for compromise. Peacemakers in counter-reformation Vienna*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 134-136.

<sup>12</sup> B. CHUDOBA: *España y el Imperio*, *op. cit.*, p. 244, p. 258.

<sup>13</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> H. HAUPT: "Kaiser Rudolf II. in Prag: Persönlichkeit und imperialer Anspruch", in *Prag um 1600*, Vienna 1988, 2 vols., I, pp. 45-55, this at pp. 46-47.

<sup>15</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario de..., embajador imperial en la corte de Felipe II*, ed. de F. Labrador Arroyo, Madrid 2001, p. 162: "*El emperador en la demostración y afición a los españoles no correspondía a su padre ya difunto*".

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affection and material support, was a hard blow for Philip II personally as well as politically. It is not difficult to imagine him commenting, as did his fictional counterpart in Schiller's play *Don Carlos*, that while he could accept Europe cursing him, from Rudolf II he deserved gratitude<sup>16</sup>. An article alone cannot give a full account of the long and tortuous marriage negotiations. A more detailed analysis of ambassadors' dispatches will be covered in another publication. This preliminary study focuses on key structural elements that both united and divided the two branches of the Habsburg dynasty, and contends that Rudolf's actions can be explained in large measure by reference to longstanding conflicts over imperial authority and political supremacy.

#### *BACKGROUND*

Charles V and Ferdinand I had cooperated so closely that it is usual to present them as part of the same entity. Both Köhler and Edelmayer make a distinction between the "*gesamtsystem*" they operated and the "*teilsystem*" established after Philip II and Maximilian II took over. The very terms imply that unity gave way to disunity<sup>17</sup>. Yet, it could be argued that there were more similarities than differences. Ferdinand I was certainly more dependent on his brother than would be the case with their successors, at least in the beginning, but many of the elements that both bound and divided the family spanned the century.

The redrawing of geographical and political boundaries, invariably a source of instability, was one common element. Grave problems were caused at the outset as a result of the unnatural decoupling of the imperial title, the greatest in Christendom, from the Habsburg territories in Central and Eastern Europe between 1519 and 1558. Charles V insisted on taking the title, but he allocated the Austrian lands to Ferdinand in the forcible partition of his multiple inheritance.

<sup>16</sup> In the play, the words are addressed to the fictional Marquis de Posa.

<sup>17</sup> A. KOHLER: "Vom Habsburgischen Gesamtsystem Karls V. zu den Teilsystemen Philippps II. und Maximilians II.," in F. EDELMAYER & A. KOHLER (eds.): *Kaiser Maximilian II...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-37; F. EDELMAYER: "Los hermanos, las alianzas dinásticas y la sucesión imperial", in A. ALVAR (ed.): *Socialización, vida privada y actividad pública de un Emperador...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-179, "el antiguo sistema global y colectivo... se rompió... en dos sistemas parciales", p. 175 and p. 179.

As Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V was the secular leader of the Christian world, but he did not consider the war in Hungary, where Ferdinand and Suleyman fought for control, to be part of his remit; nor the defence of Austria, although he did march to its aid in 1532, when he hoped to fight Suleyman in person. Without imperial authority and resources, Ferdinand I was not in a position to defend his lands adequately, let alone drive the Ottomans back. Ferdinand I believed that he had been left to shoulder the responsibility of defending Christendom against the Turks but had been deprived of the means to do so. By dint of constant pressure and reminders that God had given Charles V imperial authority to deal with the Turks, he secured almost all the contributions of the imperial Diet to defend the region. Charles V resented this diversion of funds and came to believe that his brother was exploiting him and the German lands to fund his expansion into Bohemia and Hungary<sup>18</sup>.

By 1550 he also suspected that Ferdinand I was attempting to usurp imperial authority, and declared that he was going “to establish whether he is emperor or I am”. The matter is worth rehearsing here as it has some relevance to the later conflicts. Since Charles V could not reside in the Holy Roman Empire, Ferdinand I had acted as his deputy in his frequent absences. To buttress his authority and reward him, Charles V arranged for Ferdinand to be elected King of the Romans in 1531, that is, to gain the title normally given to the emperor-elect. Thereafter, Ferdinand I expected to succeed to the imperial title. He sought to increase his power by acquiring states in German lands and North Italy which were part of the Holy Roman Empire. Charles V impeded this and after 1548 significantly undermined the authority and territorial integrity of the empire in favour of his son and successor, Philip II. He transferred Milan and Sienna, and reconstituted the Low Countries into a more unified polity all but freed from imperial authority. Until 1548 the Low Countries had been designated as the dowry of his eldest daughter, the Infanta Maria. But when she married Archduke Maximilian that year, Charles V rescinded the promise and assigned them to Philip II as well. Maximilian had cause for resentment, both on a personal level, and as potential future emperor. But worse was to come. Charles V also attempted to secure the succession to the title of Holy Roman Emperor for Philip II. Ferdinand and Maximilian fought effectively against this, helped by the hostility the measure provoked in the Holy Roman Empire.

<sup>18</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: “Charles V and the dynasty”, in H. SOLY (ed.): *Charles V 1500-1558*, Antwerp 1999, pp. 27-111, this at p. 106.

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Although Ferdinand I signed a family pact in March 1551 in which the imperial title would alternate between the two branches of the family, after the rebellion of 1552 Philip II realised the folly of putting himself forward as a candidate, and did his utmost to help Ferdinand I obtain the imperial title. Both sides had witnessed how dangerous the division of the dynasty had been<sup>19</sup>.

Despite the good will on both sides after 1558, the Low Countries, North Italy and the imperial title would repeatedly provoke conflicts between them. Increasingly, they were also divided by religious issues. The gulf was evident by the 1550s when Charles V and Ferdinand I espoused contrary solutions for the conflict between Catholic and Protestant in the Holy Roman Empire. It is generally assumed that these tensions increased under Philip II because he has a reputation as an uncompromising and inflexible Catholic. This is not the case. Christendom was more deeply divided as early attempts to unify Christendom failed and fundamentalists came to the fore. Philip II had to balance his desire to preserve the Catholic Church with an equally powerful determination to preserve his empire. In this, he was no different from Ferdinand I or Rudolf II. Religious affairs were not detached from issues of authority and security. Matters of faith habitually fused with questions of honour. One example suffices to illustrate the complexity and the nuanced way in which both sides negotiated this contested space. Ferdinand I asked the papacy to make concessions to the Protestants over the marriage of priests and communion. Philip II thought this was dangerous and would compromise Catholicism. He tried to convince his uncle with reasoned arguments. Having failed, he put pressure on the pope to reject the request. Ferdinand I responded by insisting that Philip II show respect for “his position and imperial authority”<sup>20</sup>. Philip II argued that he was compelled to act thus because of his religious and moral principles. It was not his intention to challenge or undermine the emperor’s power but to defend the faith. For good measure he added that he had acted on the advice of “the wisest” of his advisers. He emphasised that he:

<sup>19</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: “Charles V and the dynasty”, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–109; M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: *The Changing Face of Empire*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 33–40, 103–104; “Fragmentación y ocaso del imperio Carolino”, in B. GARCÍA GARCÍA (ed.): *El imperio de Carlos V: procesos de agregación y conflictos*, Madrid 2000, pp. 47–79. F. EDELMAYER: “Los hermanos, las alianzas dinásticas...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 173–175.

<sup>20</sup> AGS, Estado, 651, fol. 49, Count of Luna to Philip II, 21 May 1562. I am grateful to Ignasi Fernández Terricabras for reminding me of this letter.

would truly have preferred not to intervene in this, because, apart from our kinship and the natural bonds between us, there is such true love and complete convergence of our will, that I earnestly wish to act in conformity with you everywhere and in all things<sup>21</sup>.

According to Fichtner, religion proved the most divisive factor during the reign of Maximilian II<sup>22</sup>. The point is emphasised by Louthan, who paints a picture of irreconcilable conflict between the irenicism and a *via media* espoused by Maximilian and “the burning catholic zeal of the Spanish king”<sup>23</sup>. There was certainly a great deal of discussion and profound concern over Maximilian II’s religious proclivities, but in this Philip II did no more or less than Ferdinand I, successive popes and the empress Maria, to keep Maximilian in the established faith. The two monarchs clashed frequently on the fundamental issue whether concessions were a better solution to the growing unrest in Christendom than the forcible imposition of orthodoxy, both putting pressure on the other. As the years passed, it was evident that neither policy had succeeded. Philip II was aware that some of Maximilian’s concessions to the Protestants, including the controversial policy he applied in Austria during 1568-1569, were more a question of authority than religious belief and acted accordingly<sup>24</sup>. The policy of compromise adopted by the imperial branch paradoxically strengthened Philip II’s authority. The emperor was, by tradition and expectation, the secular head of Christendom, and was expected to defend the established church both from heresy and infidels. As the Austrian branch signed pacts with Protestants and humiliating capitulations with the Turks, Philip II’s aggressive policies on both counts earned plaudits. His power was greater; his aims more in tune with old traditions, consequently he was presented

<sup>21</sup> HHStA, Spanien Hofkorrespondenz 1, fasz.1, mappe 6, fols. 45-46, Philip II to Ferdinand, 23 March 1564:

*“siendo yo mouido con fundame[n]to tan forçoso, como es el de la consçiencia y el de la religion”; “quisiera mucho escusar de interponerme enello, desseando como yo tanto desseo que assi como demas de los vinculos y razones naturales ay entre nos tan verdadero amor, y tanta conformidad de voluntad, assi en todas partes y lugares y ent todas cosas huuiesse esta correspondencia”... “aunque el paresçer sea diuerso, la voluntad y fin es vno”.*

<sup>22</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-116.

<sup>23</sup> H. LOUTHAN: *The quest for compromise...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-133, quote at p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, chp. X, “Christians divided”, and in particular, pp. 153-154.



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–and saw himself– as the leading prince in Christendom. Moreover, as the legitimate heir of Charles V he could rightly claim to be the head of the House of Habsburg. This lies at the heart of the complaints against “Spanish pride” in the imperial court. The two sides were engaged in a longstanding dispute about status and supremacy.

The imperial title was the only element that allowed the Austrian branch to claim superiority. When Philip II withdrew as a candidate he hoped in exchange to get a share of imperial power: the coadjutorship of the north Italian fiefs. This would have allowed him to exercise imperial authority in that region, greatly facilitating the defence of Milan and reinforcing his power over the north Italian states. Ferdinand I refused his request, arguing that such a major reduction in the power of the emperor would be disastrous. Significantly, Philip II backed down, putting his alliance with the imperial family first<sup>25</sup>. This left him as a imperial feudatory in Milan and Sienna – and, the imperialists argued, in much of the Low Countries. The problem was that the emperor no longer had the military and political power to police the region and guarantee the security of Philip II’s lands. The outbreak of rebellion in the strategically-positioned imperial fief of Finale in July 1558 brought this issue to the fore and almost destroyed the family alliance. As duke of Milan and protector of the Republic of Genoa, Philip II would not tolerate instability in the region that might lead to French incursions. As emperor, Ferdinand I had the legal authority to intervene and insisted on his right to impose an agreement between the rebels and their lord. He failed to settle the matter and was forced to call upon Philip II to intervene militarily and prevent neighbouring states from annexing the area. Yet he would not allow him to annex Finale<sup>26</sup>.

Not long after Maximilian II became emperor, a second rebellion broke out and the situation was repeated. Losing patience, in 1571 Philip II’s governor in Milan invaded the principality. Maximilian II was outraged and demanded its immediate restitution<sup>27</sup>. The issue for him was stark: Philip II had “undermine[d] my jurisdiction and reputation”. For two years the two monarchs

<sup>25</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: *The Changing Face of Empire*, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-167.

<sup>26</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Maximilian II., Philipp II. und Reichsitalien*, Stuttgart 1988, pp. 7-13.

<sup>27</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, emphasises the force of Maximilian’s reaction, p. 88: “sintiéndolo mucho el emperador”, p. 89: “auiéndolo tomado tan a pechos el César”. He refers to it as “negocio tan graue”; “negocio... de tanto peso”.

argued over “this dark matter” as Philip II called it, with Maria mediating<sup>28</sup>. Angry as they were, neither man lost sight of the fact that they must not allow such differences “to break their friendship”. Arguing that his authority would be entirely compromised in Germany as well as Italy if Philip II did not recognise his superior, imperial authority, Maximilian quoted back to Philip II the words the king often addressed to him: “our affairs must be as one”. He promised both to serve Philip II and to be “as good a brother as is required for the good of our House”<sup>29</sup>. Philip II capitulated, and withdrew his troops from Finale.

Despite this victory, Fichtner argues that the conflict “reduced Maximilian’s stature among German princes”<sup>30</sup>. While acknowledging the emperor’s military weakness and his inability to impose his legal and political policy, Edelmayer claims that Maximilian’s actions saved the authority of the Holy Roman Empire in North Italy. This too is arguable, since it had survived the loss of Milan and Sienna. But Edelmayer is surely right to argue that the Finale crisis was the highpoint of Habsburg family conflict over North Italy, and that the imperial family won. Philip II never again attempted a military solution in the region<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> AGS, Estado, 1232, fol. 151, Maximilian to Philip, 22 May 1571, cit F. EDELMAYER: *Maximilian II., Philipp II. und Reichsitalien*, op. cit., p. 83 note 135: “suplico a Vestra Alteza no permitto que el ni naidie trate cosa en perjuicio de my jurisdicion y reputacion” (sic.). Edelmayer offers a detailed account of the conflict, pp. 13 ff. María emphasised that Maximilian was trying to save his reputation and he had a point – J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, Madrid 2004, n. 44, p. 239: “questa negra rreputaçion nos haze salir de seso, y aun a las vezes del mundo” .... “vos ve que [no] deja el Emperador de tener rrazón”; n. 45 p. 240, to Philip II, 13 February 1572 and again on 31 July 1571, where she refers to “negro negoçio de Final, como vos le lla[ma] con mucha rrazón”, stressing: “conçertar será el mejor remedio”, n. 34 p. 219.

<sup>29</sup> CODON, 112 vols., Madrid 1842-1896, CIII, pp. 21-22, Maximilian II to Philip II, 25 January 1575: “el negocio del Final..., como es cosa de mucha importancia, y tal que no solamente en Italia, mas toda Alemania echa el ojo” (p. 21); “pues, como dice, nuestras cosas han de ser todas unas, y yo deseo servirle, y le he de ser tan buen hermano como conviene al bien de nuestra casa” (p. 22). H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, op. cit., p. 90: “le mandó que hiziese nueuas instancias procurando que no huuiesse rompimiento en la amistad que auía entre estos dos príncipes”.

<sup>30</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, op. cit., p. 175. The matter is dealt with briefly in pp. 174-175.

<sup>31</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Maximilian II., Philipp II. und Reichsitalien*, op. cit., II, pp. 211-215. “Hätte er das nicht getan, wäre das gleichbedeutend gewesen mit dem Ende der kaiserlichen

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When rebellion tore Genoa apart, Maximilian II stepped in at once and insisted that as Emperor he had sole authority to act as judge between the contending parties. But he acknowledged that it was imperative for him to avoid an open clash with Philip II who was their protector, not least because this would open the door to interference from the pope and France<sup>32</sup>. Somewhat disingenuously he claimed that he had not intervened to establish his “superiority” but to impose peace. Philip II chose to avoid conflict, intervening covertly. But once peace was restored he insisted that the emperor should continue to use the Spanish embassy in Genoa rather than to have separate diplomatic representation<sup>33</sup>. Not all interactions in the region led to conflict. The two branches were quick to cooperate when their interests converged as in the case of containing the ambitions of Florence<sup>34</sup>.

A similar pattern of cooperation and conflict characterises relations over the Low Countries. In order to demonstrate their subjection to imperial authority, Maximilian II attempted repeatedly to intervene in the region. There was a practical reason as well: to enforce the right to collect taxation from imperial fiefs for defence. Philip II managed to protect his lands from this financial burden and he would recognise no superior when it came to devising a suitable policy to quell the rebellion that broke out after 1566. He opted for a military

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*Lehenshoheit in Italien*” (p. 214). L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II, Rey de España*, ed. J. Martínez Millán & C. J. de Carlos Morales, Salamanca 1998, 4 vols., III, pp. 1644-1647 summary of the conflict.

<sup>32</sup> *CODOIN*, CXIII, pp. 332-324, Monteagudo to Philip II, 16 February 1575.

<sup>33</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-113; G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, n. 215 p. 579, Vincenzo Tron to the Doge, 9 December 1575 reports Maximilian’s comments:

*“soggionse: ‘Li Spagnuoli vennero in gelosia di me, quando mandai li miei ambasciatori in quella città. Ma io mi sono lassato intender à loro et à tutti di haverli mandati, non per pretensione ch’io habbia di superiorità in quella città, ma per satisfar à quello ch’io sono tenuto: che è di procurar la pace sempre et la commune quiete d’Italia et della christianità’”*.

Philip’s instructions to Monteagudo on the ambassador, *CODOIN*, CXIII, p. 403, 30 June 1576.

<sup>34</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, n. 198 pp. 502-504, Giovanni Micheli to the Doge, 19 October 1570; also, n. 197 pp. 497-499; n. 210 pp. 557-559, Vincenzo Tron to the Doge, 7 February 1575; *CODOIN*, CXIII, pp. 334-335, Monteagudo to Philip II, 16 February 1575.

solution, which Maximilian II vehemently opposed, largely for ideological reasons. But just as the imperial family suspected Philip II and his successors of coveting the imperial title, so did the Spanish branch believe that they continued to covet the Low Countries. It took years of failure and a financial collapse to make Philip II appreciate the value of attempting a compromise solution. In 1575 he intimated that he would like Maximilian II to mediate a settlement. The emperor was happy to oblige, but wanted to maximise the gain in reputation by making Philip II request his help publicly, and he demanded freedom to determine the conditions – as if he were indeed their sovereign. Besides the loss of honour of a public request for aid, Philip II did not trust him sufficiently to give him a free hand. The intransigence of the Spaniards became a habitual complain in the imperial court, but eventually Maximilian II appreciated that both sides were equally intransigent and, as in the case of his own lands, towards the end of his life he refused to take sides, despairing over the violent world around him<sup>35</sup>.

Notwithstanding these political, territorial and religious divisions, the Habsburg alliance held. Their willingness to compromise was prompted partly by their affection for each other and for the dynasty. They had all lived together at some stage of their lives, reinforcing personal and cultural bonds, which were in turn strengthened by intermarriage between the court nobility. Maximilian and Maria in particular had encouraged these and Philip II lent his support for further unions later. People and not just royal titles united the Spanish realms, the Italian states, the German lands, Hungary and Bohemia<sup>36</sup>. Above all, the

<sup>35</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, n. 187 pp. 447-450, Micheli to the Doge, 15 July 1568; n. 188, pp. 455-457, 16 September 1568; n. 194, 28 August 1569, p. 486, Micheli reported his words: “*in questo negotio et dissidio di religione il rimedio dell’armi et della forza non solo non è buono, ma è pessimo*”; n. 209 p. 556, Tron to the Doge, 19 January 1575: “*haveva nondimeno trovato nelli signori di Spagna più durezza di quella che haverebbe mai pensato*”. Maximilian’s view of Philip’s choices: Tron to the Doge, 13 March 1575, n. 211, pp. 559-562. More on these negotiations in CODOIN, CXIII, esp. pp. 47-50, Monteagudo to Philip II, 18 March 1575. See also P. RAUSCHER: “Kaisertum und hegemoniales Königium: Die kaiserliche Reaktion auf die niederländische Politik Philippps II. von Spanien”, in F. EDELMAYER (ed.): *Hispania-Austria II. Die Epoche Philipps II. (1556-1598)*, Vienna 1999, pp. 57-88; P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-187 on his policy towards the Low Countries.

<sup>36</sup> P. MAREK: “Las damas de la emperatriz María y su papel en el sistema clientelar de los reyes españoles. El caso de María Manrique de Lara y sus hijas”, in J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

Habsburgs were united in their determination to keep their lands in the hands of the dynasty and the best way to achieve this was by marriage among the kin group. The level of endogamy in the family was unusual, and created such complex relationships language had to be stretched to describe them. When Philip II married his niece Anna, the empress Maria reminded became brother's mother-in-law, as she gleefully reminded him. She also took some delight in calling her daughter "my sister-in-law"<sup>37</sup>. When the couple produced their first son, however, even Maria became hopelessly entangled:

I don't think I could call him 'The lord prince, my grandson'. When I address him I will call him my nephew and my lord. I scarcely know by what name I will love him more!<sup>38</sup>.

She later addressed Philip III as "The King, my Lord", ending her letters: "I kiss Your Majesty's hands, Your grandmother"<sup>39</sup>. Some found these transformations difficult. After her marriage to Archduke Albert, the Infanta Isabel Clara Eugenia went to visit Maria who was now "her aunt and mother-in-law", but was so used to calling Albert "cousin" that she could not call him "husband"<sup>40</sup>.

The benefits of this policy were clear at the start of Philip II's reign. In 1559, after two marriages he had only one son, whose physical and mental faculties were so defective as to make people doubt his capacity to rule. He contracted a

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& M<sup>a</sup>. P. MARÇAL LOURENÇO (eds.): *Las Relaciones Discretas entre las Monarquías Hispana y Portuguesa: Las casas de las reinas (siglos XV-XIX)*, 3 vols., II, Madrid 2008, pp. 1003-1036. At the court of Philip II Khevenüller presided over further marriages, *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-315; p. 341; p. 429.

<sup>37</sup> María to Philip, [1570], "*el camino de la Reyna, y de my cuñada, que mucho uelgo de llamárselo... de serle suegra...*", en J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, n. 28, p. 207.

<sup>38</sup> María to Philip, 16 January 1572, "*más no será posible que yo le llame el señor Príncipe, mi nieto. Cuando esto uviere de ser le llamaré sobrino y mi señor y no sé por cual nombre le querré más*" (J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, n. 41, p. 232).

<sup>39</sup> J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, n. 65, p. 272: "*Besa las manos a vuestra Majestad su güela. Al Rei, mi señor*".

<sup>40</sup> My thanks to Luc Duerloo and Almudena Pérez de Tudela for reminding me of this. H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 479 mentions that "*la nueva desposada vissitó y saludó con mucho amor a su tía y suegra*".

third marriage to seal the peace with France. Since Elizabeth of Valois was thirteen years old she was not expected to produce heirs for some time, if at all. Consequently, Ferdinand I reckoned that one of his grandsons might well inherit the Spanish Monarchy<sup>41</sup>. Philip II thought likewise, and begged Maria and Maximilian to send some of their sons to be educated in his court, which happened to be in Castile at this point. Maria was delighted, hoping to protect her children from what she considered to be pernicious and dangerous influences at the imperial court. Maximilian II hesitated for cogent reasons. Sending a son to another's court was common but was regarded as the action of an inferior. By giving his sons an education in a Catholic court, he would be seen to have privileged this camp over the Protestants and so make a difficult situation in the Holy Roman Empire worse. His own residence in Charles V's court during 1544–1548 had been an unhappy experience. He commented that the only thing he learnt there was the art of dissimulation<sup>42</sup>. Even if that were the case, it would have been worth the stay, as this was a vital skill. Ultimately, the possibility of getting a fabulous inheritance and securing Philip II's support for his growing family was too important to pass over and Maximilian sent his two eldest sons.

On the 17 March 1564 Rudolf and Ernest arrived in Barcelona where Philip II was waiting impatiently to greet them. Unable to land where a covered coach awaited them – a sign of great distinction – they had to disembark on a nearby beach. Instead of following protocol and waiting at a distance, Philip II headed out along the beach and embraced them. The king's joy was such that the Portuguese ambassador commented that all his worries and anger had vanished in that instant<sup>43</sup>. Until 1570 the two archdukes lived at Philip II's court, as much an integral part of his private life as of all public functions<sup>44</sup>. Maximilian II had not expected them to stay so long but Philip II was desperate to keep them there, especially after the imprisonment of don Carlos in January 1568.

<sup>41</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, p. 43, p. 51 and p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> ANTT, Consello Geral do Santo Oficio, Libro 105, fol. 101. Francisco Pereira to Sebastian I, 20 March 1564.

<sup>44</sup> E. MAYER-LÖWENSCHWERDT: *Der Aufenthalt der Erzherzoge Rudolf und Ernst in Spanien 1564–1571*, Vienna & Leipzig 1927.

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He wrote with some pathos: “I thought that while I no longer have him now, at least I have my nephews as my sons”<sup>45</sup>. He cared for them as if they were his own children. He stayed up all night with them when they were ill; he bought them presents; he treated them with fatherly affection; he arranged for their first communion to be done in good time. Although the emperor kept a close eye on their education, it was Philip II who inducted them into a public functions appertaining to royalty and who influenced them in many ways<sup>46</sup>.

Since it was unclear whether he or the emperor could rightly claim to be the Head of the dynasty, Philip II found himself without the authority his father had wielded to impose his will on the marriage of the Austrian archdukes. There were sharp clashes during the 1560s over the marriage of archduchess Elizabeth. Philip II and his sisters wanted her for Sebastian I of Portugal; Maximilian II wanted to raise the status of his family by a marriage to the king of France, and she was duly married to Charles IX<sup>47</sup>. The emperor was also adamant that his eldest daughter Anna must marry Don Carlos, opposing other matches proposed for him and sweeping aside Philip II’s later arguments that it would be better for him not to marry. He even offered to arrange for Carlos to be elected as King of the Romans in 1568 to make the match more attractive. As he explained to the Venetian ambassador, with six sons and three daughters and without means to sustain them, he had to tap into the resources of the Spanish Monarchy. He also hoped Rudolf would marry one of Philip II’s daughters<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> “*Tampoco puedo dexar de confesar que he sentido tiernamente esta demanda por haber venido puntualmente sobre el caso del Príncipe, que me tiene tan lastimado como podéis juzgar, y parésceme que en falta dél me quedaban mis sobrinos por hijos*”, Philip II to Maximilian, 28 January 1568, cit. J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, op. cit., p. 60 from CODOIN, CI, p. 358

<sup>46</sup> E. MAYER-LÖWENSCHWERDT: *Der Aufenthalt der Erzherzoge Rudolf und Ernst...*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> It caused great offence to the Portuguese as can be seen in the correspondence of the ambassador at Philip II’s court, ANTT, Consello Geral do Santo Oficio, Libro 105.

<sup>48</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, op. cit., III, n. 180, Micheli to the Doge, Vienna, 13 November 1567, pp. 415-416. Bemoaning “*l’oppressione et totale desolatione di questa fameglia*”, Maximilian gave Micheli to understand that his chief aim “*è il stabelimento [!] di casa sua mediante la unione con quella di Spagna*”, p. 415. P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, op. cit., pp. 109-110 emphasises Maximilian’s insistence on the marriage with Carlos.

After Carlos' death, he readily agreed to a match between Anna and Philip II and marked it with the most lavish celebrations of his reign <sup>49</sup>.

Anna set out for Spain in 1570 with another two brothers, Albert and Wenzel, who were “to be the companions of His Catholic Majesty and fill the gap that will be left by the departure of those who must return now”. Reluctantly parting from Rudolf and Ernest, Philip II was duly grateful: “to have them here will be as pleasing to me as if they were my sons” <sup>50</sup>. Rudolf must have left Spain with very mixed feelings. From a young age, in the imperial court, he had been taught that he would one day wear the imperial crown, the most elevated title in the world, and so become the head of Christendom, as well as head of the house of Habsburg. When he arrived in Spain the Portuguese ambassador was struck by the twelve-year old's great authority – “tem autoridade domén” <sup>51</sup>. That sense of majesty and power must have deepened over the following years when he was regarded and treated as the heir to the Spanish Monarchy. He was groomed to succeed to two great empires. The birth of his cousin-nephew, Fernando, in 1571 displaced him from the succession. At the very least he must have felt disappointed and one wonders if this explains why, for a time, he refused to write to Philip II <sup>52</sup>. For his part, the king continued to use paternal language. He instructed his ambassador to congratulate Rudolf on his coronation as king of Hungary and to say that: “he will find in me all the favour and support he would have if he were my son, for that is what I consider him to be” <sup>53</sup>. Maria claimed

<sup>49</sup> T. DACOSTA KAUMANN: *Variations on the Imperial Theme in the age of Maximilian II and Rudolf II*, New York & London 1978, pp. 28–33; K. VOCELKA: *Habsburgische hochzeiten, 1500–1600*, Vienna etc. 1976, chp. VI, festivities for Anna and Elizabeth in 1570.

<sup>50</sup> J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, p. 62: “hicieren compañía a S. M. Católica y suplan la soledad que le ha de causar la ausencia de los que agora se van”; “sera para mí el tenerlos acá de tanto contentamiento como si fueran mis hijos”.

<sup>51</sup> ANTT, Consello Geral do Santo Oficio, Libro 105, fol. 101, Francisco Pereira to Sebastian, Barcelona 20 March 1564.

<sup>52</sup> J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, n. 57 p. 261, María to Princess Juana, 20 september [no year] “nunca he podi[do] acabar , que Rodolfo escriba a mi hermano como es rrazón”.

<sup>53</sup> CODOIN, CXI, Philip II to the count of Monteagudo, 14 November 1572, p. 53: “asegurándole que en mí terná para ello todo el favor y asistencia que si fuera mi hijo, que en este grado le tengo”.



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that Rudolf shared such sentiments “and does not consider the emperor to be more of a father than my brother is”<sup>54</sup>.

The young man who had expected to get so much found himself for a time in danger of not getting the Holy Roman Empire either. As Maximilian II's health deteriorated he was under pressure to secure the imperial succession for the Austrian Habsburgs by ensuring one of them was elected as King of the Romans. The last time there was an open election, Francis I, Henry VIII and the duke of Saxony had attempted to take the title and now they did not have the financial resources of Charles V to bribe the electors. Moreover, several of them were now Protestants, making it more difficult to fix the election for a Catholic Habsburg. It was argued, however, that the King of the Romans had to be an adult, ready to take over the empire if the Emperor was ill or busy in own territories – much as Ferdinand I had done for Charles V. Archduke Charles was an obvious choice, but rejected because he was too poor. That was the other key criterion. The title-holder required substantial means and authority which only a considerable territorial base guaranteed. Maria initially supported Charles' candidacy, considering Rudolf too young to be given such a weighty office. Later, she appreciated that if Rudolf was not elected King of the Romans now he might never become emperor<sup>55</sup>.

In 1574, having secured Rudolf II's election to the thrones of Bohemia and Hungary, Maximilian II prepared his election as King of the Romans. He sent special envoys to Madrid to obtain Philip II's support. He also asked for aid to ensure that one the archdukes became king of Poland and requested substantial offices and titles for archdukes Albert and Wenzel. Philip II agreed to all of this and added that he did so with “pleasure and contentment”. The imperial family thanked him and assured him they would know how to reciprocate such generosity with loyalty and service<sup>56</sup>. On 9 October 1575 Rudolf was duly crowned King of the Romans<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> CODOIN, CX, p. 56, Monteagudo to Philip II, 17 November 1572: “*mi hijo... no reconoce al Emperador por más padre que á mi hermano*”.

<sup>55</sup> J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria*, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>56</sup> CODOIN, CXIII, p. 39, Philip II to Monteagudo, 26 February 1575: “*sabeis el gusto y contentamiento que terné de entenderlo; lo mismo será de lo de Polonia*”. Reaction of the imperial family: “*hallándose cada día de nuevo obligados á servir y reconocer la merced que Vuestra magestad*

It is worth noting that Philip II was behaving as a responsible and caring head of House. “As I hold Prince Ernest, my nephew, in place of my own son...” was how he prefaced his orders to support the archduke’s bid for the Polish throne. To encourage those who had not come to his court, he assured them he would favour them also “as if they were my own sons”. His nieces were addressed in fatherly fashion: “speak to them of the love I have for them all”, he wrote in 1576, “which, as you know is no less than if they were my own children”<sup>58</sup>. Words were backed by deeds. He provided money as well as his enthusiasm to support Ernest and Maximilian’s bid for Poland, and for years he tried to arrange suitable marriages for them. Fichtner describes Maximilian II’s attitude in this respect as “inexplicable”. Other than the two eldest girls and Rudolf, he made virtually no provision for his children. Indeed, she argues that his “apparent indifference” to his sons’ interests in Poland led to their failure to secure that crown<sup>59</sup>. By contrast, Philip II’s credentials as father and head of the dynasty were impeccable. In 1576 he supported Rudolf II’s election as Holy Roman Emperor. It was generally believed it would soon be followed by his marriage. Doubtless, Philip II expected some say in the matter.

*THE MAKING OF A PERFECT MATCH: 1570-1582*

From the moment that Elizabeth of Valois was known to be pregnant there was speculation that if it was a girl she would marry Rudolf. The rumour may

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*les hace, y así usarán della en su tiempo, aunque desean no dar pesadumbre á Vuestra Magestad sino servir en esta conformidad.”; pp. 54-55, Monteagudo to Philip II, 18 March 1575. H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.*

<sup>57</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>58</sup> CODOIN, CXIII, p. 145, Philip II to Monteagudo, 14 July 1575: “*Por tener en lugar de hijo al Principe Ernesto, mi sobrino, he holgado mucho de entender el buen camino que parece se lleva en el negocio de Polonia*”; p. 149, 14 July, “*he de procurar todo su bien como si fueran mis hijos*”; p. 402, 30 June 1576, speak to my nieces and nephews, “*representándoles el amor que á todos les tengo, pues sabeis no es menos que si fueran mis hijos*”.

<sup>59</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, p. 202: “Maximilian’s neglect, not only of Rudolf but of all his sons’ marital needs, is inexplicable”. She alludes to his “apparent indifference” over Poland, pp. 202-205; first communion rows pp. 212-213.

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have been part of a strategy to hinder negotiations for him to marry a French princess, but it was a realistic prospect despite the age gap<sup>60</sup>. Isabel Clara Eugenia was born on 12 August 1566, and she was followed by a sister, Catalina Micaela. In 1568 Philip II commented: “the greatest consolation I have ... is to think that my sisters have sons and I have daughters”. A year later he indicated his willingness to consider a match between Rudolf and Isabel<sup>61</sup>. In 1570 the empress Maria made the proposal. Since the minimum marriageable age for girls was 12 and Rudolf was already 18, there was considerable opposition to this since it would delay his marriage and the chance of producing heirs. Maria argued that he could afford to wait and that the prospect of such a valuable marriage would have a salutary effect on him, ensuring he behaved well and remained a good Catholic. Significantly, she added that the match would facilitate Rudolf’s succession to the Spanish Monarchy. Later, aware of the powerful opposition to the unification of the two Habsburg empires, she assured Philip II that if Rudolf succeeded in Spain “he would have no difficulty” in abandoning his kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, “even if he were already King of the Romans”. The advantage for Philip II of agreeing to the match at this stage was to take Rudolf out of the marriage market, yet he decided not to pursue the match at this stage since his daughter was so young. Much could happen in the intervening years to break the marriage. Maria assured him that because of Isabel’s age, no one would blame him if he subsequently withdrew from the commitment<sup>62</sup>. The king wisely avoided putting himself in such a situation. It invariably led to conflict.

<sup>60</sup> F. EDELMAYER & A. STROHMEYER (eds.): *Die Korrespondenz der Kaiser mit ihren Gesandten in Spanien, I. Briefwechsel 1563-1565*. Munich 1997, n. 80, p. 335, Dietrichstein to Harrach, Madrid, 9 February 1565.

<sup>61</sup> “*El mayor consuelo que tengo para lo presente y de adelante es considerar que mis hermanos tienen hijos y yo hijas*”, Philip II to Maximilian II, 28 January 1568, cit. J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria, op. cit.*, p. 60 from *CODOIN*, CI p. 358; Philip to Maximilian, 10 March 1569, *CODOIN*, CIII, pp. 159-160.

<sup>62</sup> María to Philip, 29 May 1570 in J. C. GALENDE DÍAZ & M. SALAMANCA LÓPEZ: *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria, op. cit.*, n. 21 p. 182; 29 November 1570, n. 27, pp. 200-201, “*es el mayor freno... para que sea bueno... Y para mi sobrina no me parece ques inconveniente, pues todas las vezes que vos quixere, u cu[an]do ella fuese de edad, está en manos de vos no pasar por esto*”, also pp. 64-65, and p. 94 where *CODOIN*, CIII, p. 412 is quoted: “*pide*

He might well have regretted it over the following years, however. Rumours of a marriage between Rudolf and Margaret of Valois suggested that the Austrian branch was drawing closer to the French<sup>63</sup>. Worse still, in 1574 news spread that he might marry Dorothea of Saxony. Her father was the leading Lutheran prince and one of the most powerful figures in the Holy Roman Empire and his support would have substantially strengthened the young emperor within the Empire and against the Turks. It was said that Philip II was horrified at the thought of Rudolf marrying a Protestant and that he wanted the emperor to marry his daughter Isabel<sup>64</sup>. When Maximilian II visited Saxony in 1575, rumours spread that it was to conclude the marriage, but Philip II's ambassador, the count of Monteagudo, reassured him that the Austrians were too dependent on his support to do something he was so vehemently opposed to<sup>65</sup>.

In fact, the journey had been part of a charm offensive to gain support for Rudolf's election. The German nobles were deeply suspicious of possible Spanish influences, exacerbated when on his return he appeared at a tournament as the Spanish Knight<sup>66</sup>. Many suspected that Rudolf was not just *pretending* to be a Spanish knight. Criticisms of Rudolf had spread rapidly, fanned by countless, unsubstantiated rumours<sup>67</sup>. By 1575 Maximilian II was sufficiently concerned to take action. It appears that Rudolf:

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*con instancia que Rudolfo vaya a todo en lo de su casamiento, quanto la edad lo sufriere, diciendo que si acaso viniere a ser Rey de acá, sin dificultad podría dexar lo de allá, aunque fuese rey de Romanos*". There are other letters relating to the match in this volume, as well as in *CODOIN*, vols. 110 and 111.

<sup>63</sup> K. VOCELKA: *Habsburgische hochzeiten...*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>64</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, n. 207, pp. 548-549, Tron to Doge, 26 November 1574: "*Li Spagnoli non lo possono consentire*"; n. 212 p. 564, Vincenzo Tron to the Doge, 4 April 1575. Rumours she might marry a French prince in 1571 p. 544 note 2.

<sup>65</sup> *CODOIN*, CXIII, pp. 90-93 (to Philip II, 8 April 1575), p. 96 resumé of letters from March and April.

<sup>66</sup> K. VOCELKA: *Habsburgische hochzeiten...*, *op. cit.*, ch. IV, detailed description of the multiple ceremonies organised for the marriage of archduke Charles and Maria of Bavaria, also T. DACOSTA KAUMANN: *Variations on the Imperial Theme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>67</sup> P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

was perceived to be very Spanish (*muy españolado*) in his eating and drinking habits, in his excessive concern with authority and ceremonial, and in the great hypocrisy he demonstrated on ecclesiastical matters.

The man in charge of his household, Adam Dietrichstein, was considered too partial to Spain, but the emperor ordered him to deal with the matter; change the offending customs and ensure that Rudolf adapted his manners to those of his subjects. Dietrichstein defended Rudolf and the ensuing row cost him Maximilian's favour and his position at court<sup>68</sup>. Perhaps this explains why soon after Maximilian avoided an open conflict with his sons when Matthias and Maximilian made their First Communion. He allowed them to choose how they would take communion. They all chose the traditional, Catholic style<sup>69</sup>. Clearly, one did not need to have been resident in Spain to remain a traditional Catholic.

When the Duke of Saxony and the marquis of Brandenburg met Rudolf II in May 1575, however, they declared that his behaviour and character were quite unlike what they had heard and feared<sup>70</sup>. Whether this was true or proof of their tact, expectations continued to affect how people responded to him. They assumed he would be "Spanish" and the association with Spain was usually pejorative, especially in the context of religion. When the English Protestant nobleman, Sir Philip Sydney, met Rudolf II in 1577 he declared him "extremely Spaniolated", essentially because he was a man of "few of wordes, sullein of disposition, very secrete and resolute"<sup>71</sup>. Lazarus Schwendi claimed Rudolf's revocation of some concessions made to the Protestants was due to his "Spanish

<sup>68</sup> Dietrichstein's fate in F. EDELMAYER: *Söldner und Pensionäre. Das Netzwerk Philipps II. im Heiligen Römischen Reich*, Vienna 2002, p. 81 and p. 83 note 115. Monteagudo to Philip II, 28 March 1575, *CODOIN*, CXIII, p. 87:

*"ciertos avisos del Imperio que contienen las faltas que algunos ponian en la persona del Rey Rodolfo, y la sustancia de todas era notarle de muy españolado en el comer y en el beber, y en el guardar autoridad y ceremonia demasiada, y el ser muy hipócrita cerca de las cosas eclesiásticas, que es á donde á estos les debe más de doler"*.

<sup>69</sup> *CODOIN*, CXIII, p. 89. Monteagudo to Philip II, 8 April 1575.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 117. Monteagudo to Philip II, 26 May 1575.

<sup>71</sup> Sidney's comment to Secretary Walsingham, 3 May 1577, cit by R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 122. In p. 50 he stresses Rudolf's "Spanishness". P. S. FICHTNER: *Emperor Maximilian II*, *op. cit.*, describes Rudolf II as "an enthusiastic hispanophile" pp. 107-108.

prejudices”<sup>72</sup>. In September 1585 a German informant assured the English government that the German Catholics were seeking to extirpate Protestantism with the support of the “*espagnolizé*” emperor and his supporters, chiefly the Jesuits, and the association of Spain with an intolerant, Jesuit-inspired Catholicism has become commonplace<sup>73</sup>. This is ironic. Philip II certainly used them, but he resisted all attempts to introduce them into the court. That happened after his death and against his express orders, when Margaret of Austria, wife to Philip III, was allowed to keep her Jesuit confessor. It was the Austrian branch that brought them into the inner sanctum and allowed them direct influence over government policy, not the other way round<sup>74</sup>.

The extent to which Rudolf’s court was “Spanish” has been much debated. His love of the language and fashions are indisputable, and he was naturally surrounded by people who had been with him there. It is easy to see how some of his habits and tastes might have been acquired from Philip II. But as Evans and Vocelka have been at pains to point out, Rudolf II’s policies, not least on religious matters, were close to those of Maximilian II. He kept his father’s advisers and even his painters and courtiers<sup>75</sup>. Moreover, it is now widely realised that it is impossible to speak of a purely “Spanish” court. Philip II was in the process of shaping an extraordinary amalgam of courtly traditions –Castilian, Aragonese, Portuguese and Burgundian– into something congenial during the years Rudolf lived there. The imperial court was similarly shaped by the mixed experiences of Ferdinand I who introduced new ordinances in 1527 and 1537, blending Habsburg traditions with those of the court of the Catholic

<sup>72</sup> Cit. H. LOUTHAN: *The quest for compromise...*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

<sup>73</sup> *Calendar of State Papers...*, *op. cit.*, vol. XX, pp. 49–50, J. Schwartz to Davison, 29 September 1585. H. HAUPT: “Kaiser Rudolf II. in Prag...”, *op. cit.*, p. 48 refers to “*dem spanisch-jesuitischen Katholizismus wegen der ihm innewohnenden Intoleranz ablehnend gegenüberstand*”.

<sup>74</sup> E. JIMÉNEZ PABLO: “Los jesuitas en la corte de Margarita de Austria: Ricardo Haller y Fernando de Mendoza”, in J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN & M<sup>a</sup>. P. MARÇAL LOURENÇO (eds.): *Las Relaciones Discretas...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 1971–1120, esp. 1074–1085; M. S. SÁNCHEZ, “Confession and complicity: Margarita de Austria, Richard Haller, S.J., and the court of Philip III”, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 14 (1993), pp. 133–149.

<sup>75</sup> A key theme of R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.* K. VOCELKA: *Rudolf II. und seine Zeit*, Vienna 1985, p. 52, where he also claims the Spanish court was characterised by “*strengen katholischen Atmosphäre*”.

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Monarchs in which he was raised and the Low Countries where he had lived<sup>76</sup>. The most distinctive characteristic of the early-modern princely courts is the cosmopolitan nature of their culture and customs and their active emulation of others.

The negative association with Spain had some positive aspects. When Rudolf II did something pleasing, praise was attached only to him, as the exchange with the Venetian ambassador in October 1576 demonstrates. Tron informed him that the world expected a great deal from him, not least because of his regal and singular qualities Rudolf's reply was textbook perfect: without a doubt they would realise that he was inferior to his predecessors in all but his esteem and affection for the Venetian Republic. It was the kind of thing Philip II would have said, but Tron made no allusion to Spanish influences. Instead he praised Rudolf's assured handling of the situation and the moderation he had shown, noting that it exceeded their expectations of him<sup>77</sup>. It is interesting to note that the seemingly insidious influence of "Spain" does not appear in connection with Ernest, who was just as exposed as his brother, arguably at a more impressionable age.

<sup>76</sup> Useful starting points in English on the court: J. DUINDAN: "The Archduchy of Austria and the Kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary. The Courts of the Austrian Habsburgs c.1500-1750", in J. ADAMSON (ed.): *The princely courts of Europe, 1500-1700*, London 1999, pp. 165-187; and G. REDWORTH and F. CHECA: "The Kingdoms of Spain. The Courts of the Spanish Habsburgs, 1500-1700", *ibidem*, pp. 42-65. J. ELLIOT: "The court of the Spanish Habsburgs: a peculiar institution?" in his *Spain and its World, 1500-1700*, London 1989; M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "The court of Philip II of Spain", in R. G. ASCH and A. M. BIRKE (eds.): *Princes, Patronage and Royalty, 1400-1800*, Oxford 1991, pp. 205-244, and "Honour and profit in the court of Philip II of Spain", in M. AYMARD and M. A. ROMANI (eds.): *La Cour comme institution économique*, Paris 1998, pp. 67-86. J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN has coordinated an impressive series of publications in Spanish on the theme including: *La corte de Felipe II*, Madrid 1994; *La Corte de Carlos V*, 5 vols, Madrid 2000; *La Monarquía de Felipe II. La Casa del Rey*, 2 vols., Madrid 2005, as well as multi-volume conference proceedings cited in these notes. Ch. HOFMANN's *Das Spanische Hofzeremoniell von 1500-1700*, 1985, remains a useful source.

<sup>77</sup> G. TURBA (ed.): *Venetianische Depeschen...*, *op. cit.*, III, n.220 p. 599, Tron to the Doge, Regensburg, 12 October 1576:

*"superando l'aspettatione di tutti con molta prudentia et circospettione ha licentato la dietta ... nell'audientia ... vendo à dirle quanto aspettava il mondo et la Ser.tà Vostra ancora dalle regie et singular qualità sue, ... mi disse che senza fallo si scoprirebbe inferiore di qualità alli Imperatori passati, ma non già in amar et stimar quella sern.ma republica, quanto ella merita".*

Much can be learnt about Rudolf II's world view from his actions immediately after his father's death. They reveal a man determined to realise the majesty of his office as Holy Roman Emperor. He identified with and sought to emulate Charles V – according to Haupt a direct influence from his residence in the Spanish court. But he showed similar veneration for Maximilian I and other successful emperors. He encouraged works on the Habsburg dynasty as part of his lavish patronage of the arts which contributed to his image as God's appointed, destined to rule over the empire and the House<sup>78</sup>. Perhaps his fears that he would not get the imperial title help to explain the extraordinary funeral obsequies he organised for his father, which far exceeded the grandeur of earlier ceremonies. Choreographed to the last detail, the funeral journey from Regensburg to Prague between 12 October 1576 and 22 March 1577 was used to project a majestic image of the emperor. He was the embodiment of the heroic warrior, the just lawgiver, the virtuous ruler, the patron of the arts and protector of the weak. A harbinger of peace and prosperity. None of this was new, nor the heavy reliance on imperial symbolism and the dynasty's commitment to Catholicism. But the scale was grand and the ambition palpable. The official funeral oration linked Maximilian and Rudolf with the emperor Constantine. One aspect is worth noting: the decision to create a new mausoleum for the dynasty in Prague. St Vitus' cathedral had an ancient mausoleum for Bohemian kings. Ferdinand and Anna were buried there and the cathedral is still decorated with the coats of arms of their respective lands, including the various Spanish kingdoms. But Maximilian wanted to be buried in Vienna. Rudolf II ignored this and planned a major mausoleum where only his branch of the dynasty had its roots. There are parallels here to what Philip II was doing in the monastery of San Lorenzo el Real in El Escorial which Rudolf had visited. Both were potent, symbolic acts, creating a distinct sacred space for their independent and great dynasties<sup>79</sup>.

<sup>78</sup> H. HAUPT: "Kaiser Rudolf II. in Prag...", *op. cit.*, p. 47 and p. 50; R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 15; K. VOCELKA: *Rudolf II. und seine Zeit*, *op. cit.*, confirms influence of Charles V's image, p. 52.

<sup>79</sup> T. DACOSTA KAUMANN: *Variations on the Imperial Theme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-15, p. 22ff. his ceremonies and funeral; H. LOUTHAN: *The quest for compromise...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-141 funeral and orations; R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14 Habsburg historiography; pp. 60-62 funeral and mausoleum.



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Rudolf's concern to establish his superior status was evident in other ways. In 1578 he insisted that his brothers should acknowledge his overlordship formally. Later, he would make his cousin Maximilian of Tyrol promise total obedience and "humbly and completely bow ... before Yr Majesty's gracious and sovereign will"<sup>80</sup>. This may explain the way he reacted to Philip II. The king's ambassador at the imperial court was exposed to a degree of harshness he had not expected, or it seems, experienced. Edelmayer reckons that Monteagudo's complaints were the cause of his frustration and weariness. He had been there too long. Yet Monteagudo had a point. Rudolf II did not overturn many of his father's policies or reinstate the pro-Spanish Dietrichstein<sup>81</sup>. More to the point, and contrary to expectations, he refused to cede Finale to Philip II, declaring that he would not tolerate any breach of imperial authority in the region. He negotiated with the Grand-Duke of Tuscany without informing Philip II, thus showing his desire to act independently in the region<sup>82</sup>. It was not until 28 February 1579, well after Philip II had offered to "swear faithfully and render homage" for Milan and Pavia, that the official documents for his investiture and confirmation of his powers to subinfeudate Siena were issued<sup>83</sup>.

It did not take long for their relations to become strained as a result of events in the Low Countries, and yet it appeared at first as if the situation there would bring them closer. Shortly before Rudolf II became emperor Philip II had lost control over the region. His unpaid army had run amok and all but one of the provinces allied to drive out "the Spanish army". The king turned to Rudolf II, who was eager to intervene and mediate a settlement<sup>84</sup>. Archduke Matthias put paid to this initiative by accepting the invitation of a group of rebels to go there and take over the governorship. It is still not clear what part Rudolf II played in

<sup>80</sup> Cit. in R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 39, also his remarks on p. 14.

<sup>81</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Söldner und Pensionäre...*, *op. cit.*, p. 84. Philip II now worked with Leonhard von Harrach, pp. 88-90.

<sup>82</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 162 complaints of Monteagudo, by then marquis of Almazán.

<sup>83</sup> AGS, PR, 44, doc. 26, draft of powers from Philip II to Don Juan de Borja to request the investiture of Milan s.d.; PR, 44, doc. 18, Investiture for Milan etc.; PR, 46, doc. 68 ns. 1 & 2 Siena.

<sup>84</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 117-120.

this extraordinary action. Philip II initially blamed him but when Rudolf II denied any involvement, the king either accepted his word or dissimulated, which amounted to the same thing. Rudolf II appears to have known about it, and at the very least, did nothing to prevent his brother's bid for the Low Countries. This is in keeping with his actions in Italy: he was doing everything in his power to preserve or recover imperial lands and authority. Still desperate for a solution, in 1578 Philip II once again entrusted him with negotiations for peace. Interestingly, the rebels responded by trying to persuade Rudolf II to join them by providing support for Mathias. They argued that the region was part of the Holy Roman Empire and therefore "the cause rightly appertains to your Cesarian Majesty and is within your authority". They asserted his right to act as judge and arbiter and their belief that he had "power to settle all divisions and differences in the whole of Christendom"<sup>85</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, many of Philip II's advisers feared Rudolf II's intervention. Monteagudo, recently arrived from the imperial court, argued vehemently against giving him any influence over the Low Countries. After all, neither he nor his predecessors had helped Philip II in the past. The imperial ambassador in Madrid commented provocatively that this was true: they could not have taken the side of injustice. Monteagudo angrily retorted that they should not be surprised, therefore, if Philip II revenged himself by allowing a Turkish invasion of Eastern Europe. Both men were reproved for their bad-tempered exchange, but it indicates the depth of passion that surrounded these debates. Some counsellors, including the duke of Alba, were in favour of the emperor's intervention. But when he was informed of the conditions Rudolf II wanted to impose, he commented that either Rudolf II had no understanding whatsoever of the issues at stake, or else he had been seduced by the "malcontent" rebels<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 128 (Mathias) pp. 154-168 peace negotiations. Cits. p. 155:

*"suplican y ruegan a su magestad cesárea que tenga misericordia de las prouincias de Flandes, que no son la menor parte del Imperio, y acuda a su hermano Mathías y a los estados en la causa que toca priuatiuamente a su magestad cesárea, y con su autoridad, con la qual como juez y árbitro señalado tiene poder de componer todas las dissenciones y diferencias del orbe christiano, haga de suerte que apagado con breuedad antes que más se encienda el fuego de las guerras ciuiles se haga paz en estas prouincias con igualdad y justicia"*.

On Mathias see also H. LOUTHAN: *The quest for compromise...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-151.

<sup>86</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-163.

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The French invasion, led by the duke of Alençon, caused further alarm and exacerbated the problems. The Holy Roman Empire was now directly threatened by the instability in the region. The French had alliances with the Turks and with some of the German princes who opposed the emperor. Rudolf II argued that if Philip II lacked the power to prevent the conquest of the region he would act as befitted his own interests. These unspecific threats were accompanied by suggestions that Philip II should end the crisis by supporting Mathias and grant religious toleration, and by demands that he give Rudolf II full powers to negotiate a settlement. Khevenhüller suggested that Philip should “tell him that since he is your nephew and you consider him not just this, but also your son, you entrust the matter in his hands without conditions”. Some ministers were willing to give Matthias a chance now, but neither they nor Philip II would go this far<sup>87</sup>. Nevertheless, Rudolf II mediated in the ensuing negotiations only to find that the rebels were as intransigent as the king. The settlement failed and not long afterwards, in October 1581, Matthias left the Low Countries in disgrace.

Throughout the crisis, Philip II tried carefully, not only because he was anxious to have good relations with his nephew, but because he was soon made aware that Rudolf II was unwell and probably not in control. From 1578 to 1581 he fell ill intermittently. In May 1579 don Juan de Borja informed Philip II that Rudolf II was melancholic and mistrustful. At times he was so gripped by fear that he would wake up at night repeatedly and call his servants. If it happened during the day, he would refuse to leave his chamber. He showed no interest in government, leaving matters unattended while he devoted all his time and energy to the arts and scientific pursuits, or to games<sup>88</sup>. Fears for his health

<sup>87</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*:

*“que su mag[esta]d cesárea mirasse por sí y por los suyos primeram[en]te porque se podía temer que si al francés le sucedían bien las cosas en Flandes que auía de intentar lo mismo en el Imperio, no sin gran daño ... principalmente porque el francés hallaría en el Imperio muchos que le fauorecerían ... y se vniría con el turco”* (p. 165);

*“para atapar y remediar en parte este neg[oci]o v[uestra] mag[esta]d lo remitiesse libremente en manos del emperador sin reseruación ninguna ...dos ringlones de su propia mano, diziéndole que siendo su sobrino y teniéndolo no solo por tal pero también por hijo se lo remite libremente en sus manos, teniendo por cierto que mirará tanto por lo que toca a la autoridad y honrra de v[uestra] mag[esta]d como la sua propia”* (pp. 166-167).

<sup>88</sup> B. CHUDOBA: *España y el Imperio*, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

made the question of his marriage urgent because it put a premium on the succession. According to Khevenhüller, however, what prompted Rudolf II to raise the matter was the rumour that there were negotiations –supported by the pope– for the infanta Isabel to marry the duke of Alençon<sup>89</sup>. Another, simpler explanation can explain the timing of the proposal: Isabel had reached the minimum marriageable age. What matters most is that, as the empress Maria reminded her son later,

it was he who had first proposed and made a bid for this marriage, and who not only tried to persuade the king, don Philip, to allow it and give his consent, but even urged all haste”<sup>90</sup>.

As was to happen repeatedly, the marriage was inextricably mixed with other matters. Since Maximilian II's death, Maria had asked to be allowed to return to Spain. Philip II urged her to stay at the imperial court. She was invaluable to him there. His ambassadors had constant recourse to her and thus an open door to the court where she remained influential<sup>91</sup>. By the same token she was useful to Rudolf II since she provided an alternative and informal vehicle for communicating with Philip II. In 1579 she again asked permission to go to Spain, arguing that this would facilitate the marriage negotiations. Philip II let it be known he was favourable to the match but neither he nor Rudolf II wanted Maria to leave the imperial court. Chudoba suggests that Rudolf's hostility to her departure was due to his hostility to Spain, but provides no evidence. The death of Queen Anna in 1580 changed Philip II's attitude. He wanted his sister back either to step into her daughter's role of looking after the royal children

<sup>89</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Venetian*, vol. VIII: 1558-1580, ed. Rawdon Brown and G. Cavendish Bentinck, London 1890, n. 799 p. 635, Lorenzo Priuli from the French court, 24 March 1580, and p. 636.

<sup>90</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 315: “*auéndolo él mismo primero mouido y intentado y aun dado prisa y persuadido al rey don Felipe que viniessse en ello y diessse su consentimiento*”.

<sup>91</sup> Philip II to María, 13 December 1576 in L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 1489-1490. Her role briefly explored in: M. S. SÁNCHEZ: “Los vínculos de sangre: la emperatriz María, Felipe II y las relaciones entre España y Europa central”, in J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN (ed.): *Felipe II (1527-1598). Europa y la Monarquía Católica*, 3 vols, 1(2) pp. 777-793; J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN: “La emperatriz María y las pugnas cortesanas en tiempos de Felipe II”, in J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN (ed.): *Felipe II y el Mediterráneo. La monarquía y los reinos (I)*, vol. III, Madrid 1999.

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and providing a fitting head for the women at court, or to act as a governor for one of the many states of the Monarchy. Rudolf II reluctantly gave in; partly it appears because he was persuaded that this was the best and quickest way to conclude the marriage negotiations<sup>92</sup>.

Speed was of the essence since Rudolf II was under a great deal of pressure from members of the family to appoint a successor. In 1581 Charles of Styria requested the election of one of the archdukes as King of the Romans. Rudolf II refused and Evans reckons that from this moment onwards he became mistrustful of his immediate family, and determined to force them to acknowledge his superiority, even to the point of humiliating them and meddling in their internal affairs. He demonstrated the same, obsessive concern for loyalty and obedience from his advisers. His “exalted code of majesty would brook no half measures”, Evans argues, prompting him to refuse to go to Rome to be crowned emperor because it might be interpreted as “a gesture of Imperial submissiveness”<sup>93</sup>. This might well have influenced him, but Rudolf II had other reasons for opposing the coronation. It would have raised expectations of an immediate election for King of the Romans. Another way in which he sought to impose his imperial authority was by attempting to halt the levy of German troops by foreign powers. When Philip II reminded him that his predecessors had accepted these arrangements, Rudolf II brushed this aside and did what he could to prevent new contracts. He was no more effective than his predecessors<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-189, pp. 220-211, p. 251-256. B. CHUDOBA: *España y el Imperio*, *op. cit.*, pp. 259-260.

<sup>93</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 55, pp. 58-59, ministers p. 63ff and quote p. 64, Rome p. 87. He reckons Rudolf opposed Matthias' activities in the Low Countries because he was “stealing the wind from his own sails”, p. 60

<sup>94</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Söldner und Pensionäre...*, *op. cit.*, p. 166. He opposed Ferdinand's pension in 1578.

*THE CRUEL GAME OF MARRIAGE: 1582-1590*<sup>95</sup>

The empress Maria left Prague in August 1581, much later than expected, due to financial problems and the difficulty of finding a suitable retinue<sup>96</sup>. She arrived in Madrid in March 1582 and from there travelled to Lisbon for talks with Philip II. It did not take long for them to come to an agreement. On 2 June 1582 the emperor was asked to send the formal authorisation to conclude the marriage. Two unfinished documents in the Viennese archives dated February and August 1582 demonstrate that the process of drawing up the requisite papers had started but they were never completed. For Vocelka they prove the emperor's chronic indecision<sup>97</sup>. For three years, Rudolf II refused to address the issue. This situation was so unusual and so delicate, involving as it did, family relations and the honour of Philip II and his eldest daughter and potential heir that much of the ensuing negotiations were done in secret. To piece them together we have to rely on limited and sometimes coded information, being heavily reliant on the account of Khevenhüller. The substantive negotiations were carried out by word of mouth and this was not always easy. As Archduke Ernest commented in a letter to Guillén de San Clemente, then Philip II's ambassador at the imperial court, the matter "cannot be dealt with in letters. I am sorry that I cannot do it by word of mouth either, as there is no lack of material to discuss"<sup>98</sup>.

The emperor's silence was embarrassing and painful not just because Isabel's fate hung in the balance, but because it affected her sister Catalina. It was honourable and normal for the eldest female to marry before her younger female siblings, particularly if she had important dynastic rights. Philip II had been under pressure since 1580 to agree to the of Carlo Emanuele of Savoy and Catalina and gave his assent in 1583 when he still expected Isabel's marriages to go ahead. He

<sup>95</sup> *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland (1584/5-1590). Die Nuntiatur am Kaiserhofe. Erst Hälfte. Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Sega*, ed. R. Reichenberger, Paderborn 1905, n. 130 pp. 291, "*non mostrando S. Maestà molta inclinazione di sottoporsi al gioco del matrimonio*".

<sup>96</sup> E. SCHODER: "Die Reise der Kaiserin Maria nach Spanien (1581/82)", in F. EDELMAYER (ed.): *Hispania-Austria II...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-179, esp. pp. 152-157, 178.

<sup>97</sup> K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1576-1612)*, Vienna 1981, pp. 174-175.

<sup>98</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia inédita de Don Guillén de San Clemente*, Zaragoza 1892, n. LXXXV, p. 175, 25 December 1590, "*De los otros negocios no ay q.e tratar por cartas. Pésame no poderlo hazer de boca, q.e no faltaría q.e dezir*".

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delayed Catalina's match as long as he could, but he could not risk alienating or dishonouring Savoy, who might turn to France. Reluctantly, in 1585 he allowed the marriage to go ahead despite the dishonour this entailed for Isabel<sup>99</sup>.

Rudolf's motives remain a mystery. Initially, the delay could be linked to another bout of illness. After 1583 he may have been influenced by his passionate affair with one of Jacopo Strada's daughters, which eventually resulted in six illegitimate children. By all accounts Rudolf II doted on one of them, Giuglio, born in 1585. The hostility of some imperial counsellors to the Spanish match may have played a part – some preferred an Italian or German princess<sup>100</sup>. It may be, as Evans argued, that he now believed the marriage to Isabel might compromise his position as an arbiter in Christendom, since it would place him irrevocably in the Catholic camp<sup>101</sup>. I would argue that another aspect needs to be put into the equation: the imperial succession. Rudolf II was under such pressure to appoint a successor in 1582 that he asked the opinion of both his mother and Philip II on the matter. Their response was unanimous: although they believed he would have legitimate children, the danger of an interregnum in the Holy Roman Empire was so great that it was imperative to elect an adult Habsburg as King of the Romans immediately. They agreed that the best candidate was Ernest, and that giving him the succession was “tantamount to passing it on to a son”. Later, aware that Rudolf II might consider the election a threat to his own progeny, they suggested that Ernest could be made to agree to elect the emperor's son as his own successor. Rudolf II appeared to accept their recommendations<sup>102</sup>. The two issues were inextricably linked – and on both the emperor was silent.

<sup>99</sup> P. MERLIN: *Tra guerre e tornei. La corte sabauda nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I*, Turin 1991, pp. 4-6.

<sup>100</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-58; *Prag um 1600*, *op. cit.*, I, p. 20; K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>101</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>102</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 268 (1582):

*“passando en su hermano Ernesto era como si passara en vn hijo y que transfiriéndole en Ernesto era tener atención a que su magestad no tenía successión. Pero que si succediese a caso tener hijos su magestad, el mismo Ernesto su hermano con todas sus fuerzas auía de procurar el hijo de su hermano succediese en el lugar que tenía él”.*

K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-179 makes it clear Ernest had initiated the consultation.

Ernest was anxious to be the next King of the Romans and so was Archduke Ferdinand. Both sought support within and outside the empire. Because Ernest had the backing of Philip II and Maria, Ferdinand appealed to Rome. Concerned about a possible Protestant succession, Rudolf II's confessor entered the fray, and urged the Archdukes to raise the matter during the family reunion that Rudolf II organised in Prague in 1585 on the occasion of receiving the Order of the Golden Fleece. They duly talked to him and he promised he would soon make a decision <sup>103</sup>. When this failed to materialise, the Pope demanded that Rudolf II make immediate provision for the succession, by marrying or by other means. He was convinced that if there was an interregnum, Saxony and the Palatinate would engineer the election of a Protestant emperor. Jealous as he was of Spanish power, he did not particularly favour the match with Isabel, but what mattered most was to have a legitimate heir <sup>104</sup>.

The empress Maria enlisted the help of three of her children to try to bring an end to the matter – archdukes Ernest and Charles and Maria, now duchess of Bavaria, who was close to Rudolf II. She wanted him either to marry Isabel or to withdraw his candidacy, leaving her free to marry someone else. They were enjoined to the strictest secrecy, but Ernest was empowered to enlist anyone with sufficient influence over Rudolf to help secure a decision. By now both Maria and Philip II were so uncertain of Rudolf II's will to marry that they favoured Isabel's marriage to Ernest and there was already talk of giving them the Low Countries <sup>105</sup>. This greatly facilitated Ernest's election as King of the Romans, since it gave him a solid territorial and political base. Increasingly, Maria's efforts would focus on persuading Rudolf that if he did not wish to marry Isabel he must allow Ernest to do so, and on Ernest's election. He was thus the favoured candidate for both these roles. Not surprisingly, Rudolf II became

<sup>103</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente*, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48. Ernest recalled 13 May 1589, p. 147:

*“me acuerdo muy bien lo q.e me habló de él estando allí en Praga, y aun á los otros Archiduques q.e entonces todos juntos lo acordamos á su Mgs. q.e nos respondió se resolvería presto y tendría cuydado dél”.*

<sup>104</sup> *Nuntiatyberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Sega*, *op. cit.*, n. 100 p. 212, Malaspina to Sixtus V, Prague, 28 January 1586.

<sup>105</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 268, pp. 288-292 and the comments on p. 314 which show Philip II's intention to give her the Low Countries.



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suspicious and even jealous. Maria found herself having to reassure him that she did not prefer Ernest, and had not been advancing the latter to Rudolf's detriment. What was at stake was to stop a stranger gaining Isabel's hand and with this, the Spanish Monarchy. Rudolf II continued to hold back from making any commitment, but at some stage now he asked Maria to raise with Philip II the transfer of the duchy of Milan. Both the empress and the imperial ambassador were appalled. They argued that this was not the time to put forward such a controversial request, and that if it were made a condition of the marriage negotiations, it would effectively terminate them. Maria asked him to desist and he did. Both she and Khevenhüller persisted with their demands that Rudolf II should make up his mind about Isabel and must recognise Ernest as King of the Romans immediately <sup>106</sup>. The marriage and the succession continued to be dealt with jointly until 1598.

Khevenhüller blamed Rudolf's inexplicable behaviour on the pernicious influence of one of his chief advisers, Wolf Rumpf zum Wielroß. A powerful figure in the emperor's court from the outset of the reign, the ambassador claimed he had persuaded Rudolf II against marrying Isabel and encouraged his obsession with alchemy and art to the point where the emperor would do nothing else, refusing to attend to matters of government <sup>107</sup>. It is difficult to reconcile this with the fact that Rumpf was well thought of by Philip II and his court. He had been with the archdukes in Spain and had executed some of Maximilian's more difficult missions during 1574-1576. He was married to a Spanish noblewoman, Maria de Arco, and received a handsome pension from Philip II after 1579 and various other favours in the 1590s. When he fell from grace in 1600 the Spanish court considered it a great tragedy <sup>108</sup>. It seems more likely that Rudolf II had, as Khevenhüller put it, "great confusion in his soul and in his mind" regarding the match, which rendered him insensitive and

<sup>106</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 315-316

<sup>107</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 314-315. R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72 claims Rumpf "came to control most important decisions" from the late 1580s until 1600 when he was dismissed.

<sup>108</sup> Edelmayer includes him as a key Spanish ally in the imperial court –*Söldner und Pensionäre...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-94– and does not mention Khevenhüller's claim, nor does P. MAREK: "Las damas de la emperatriz María...", *op. cit.*, pp. 1013-1014, where he describes his Spanish connections.

unresponsive to the raft of arguments he and Maria employed to persuade him to marry and to elect an emperor-in-waiting<sup>109</sup>.

There is an interesting secret report by one of Khevenhüller's secretaries, Joel Ladronner Schwartz, sometime before the end of December 1585, which claims that Rudolf II would not marry because of his "ill health", and that he had also rejected Isabel because of "the perpetual residency which her husband is to make in Spain". Due to Philip II's advancing age and the rapid death of his sons –Carlos Lorenzo in 1575; Fernando 1578, Diego in 1582– it was now widely believed that Isabel would inherit the Spanish Monarchy. His remaining son, Philip, was reputed to be sickly and unlikely to survive. Schwartz claimed that Philip II was under pressure by the Cortes to settle the succession by ensuring that Isabel married someone who would reside in Spain. Some favoured her marrying archduke Albert and wanted Philip II to seek papal dispensation for him to abandon his clerical status so that he could do this. Others supported a marriage between Isabel and Ernest and wanted the archduke to be sent as governor of the Low Countries immediately. Rudolf II was to be asked to mediate in peace negotiations with the rebels and with Elizabeth I<sup>110</sup>.

Some clues to Rudolf II's state of mind in 1585 may be gained once again by examining what he was doing. The pageants he organised on the occasion of his election to the Order of the Golden Fleece were the most lavish of his reign. Of course, they were primarily a demonstration of his status and magnificence, and provided an occasion for him to display his superior position with regards to other males in his family<sup>111</sup>. Yet he could not escape the fact that it was Philip II who had the power to distribute this coveted honour. Charles V had handed the most prestigious chivalric order in Christendom to his son rather than

<sup>109</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 315: "*le pesaua mucho que el emperador tubiese tanta confusión en su alma y entendimiento*".

<sup>110</sup> *Calendar of State Papers...*, *op. cit.*, vol. VII, pp. 207-208, 1585 (s.d. after 10<sup>th</sup> December). "Observations on the state of Spain in November 1585, by Joel Ladronner de Schwaz, gentleman, born in Tyrol, who has been fourteen years in Spain with the Emperor's ambassador Johannes Kevenhuller ... whose secretary this Joel Ladronner was for six years in the Dutch tongue".

<sup>111</sup> T. DACOSTA KAUMANN: *Variations on the Imperial Theme...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 44ff.; the 1585 ceremonies pp. 46-47; 1597, pp. 47-48. He was struck by the way in which the Golden Fleece appears in many of Arcimboldo's works, pp. 92-94.

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leaving it in the hands of the Holy Roman Emperor. The Austrian Habsburgs had discussed creating a new Order of their own. The Order of the Lion of Bohemia was touted under Maximilian II, but nothing had come of it<sup>112</sup>. Was the grandeur with which Rudolf II invested the occasion in 1585 a way to associate himself indelibly with the Order, and to demonstrate that he should possess it, because he alone had the status to sustain its superior position in Christendom?

Not long after, Archimboldo unveiled one of his most enigmatic portraits of Rudolf II as Vertumnus. The emperor's bust is made up of multiple elements. The genre had developed under Maximilian II but this was its apogee. Using the interpretations of Archimboldo's collaborators, Giovanni Baptista Fonteo and G. Comanini, DaCosta Kaufman claims that the painting is the ultimate projection of imperial power:

the world is composed of the elements, and he who rules the elements controls the world; so will the Emperor control the world of affairs and break the power of the Turks.

The elements have been:

compelled to take new form by their Lord (the *Dominus mundi*, overlord of all the kings of the world), because he holds the empire of the world, which consists of the elements and is ruled during the seasons of the year.

In *Vertumnus* the emperor "has undergone an apotheosis into the god of the seasons", who heralds the golden age<sup>113</sup>. It is pertinent to note in this respect Evans' comment that the extraordinary collections Rudolf II was painstakingly gathering, as well as his intellectual and wider patronage, were deliberately intended to be on a grander scale than any others<sup>114</sup>. The clearest manifestation of his intent was the new imperial crown which was not finished until 1602. Based on Dürer's designs for Maximilian I it provided a link to that now idealised monarch, but also to Charlemagne, whose crown it was intended to emulate. Charlemagne was regarded as the greatest emperor after the fall of Rome and since the twelfth century was regarded as a saint for his wars against

<sup>112</sup> T. DACOSTA KAUMANN: *Variations on the Imperial Theme...*, *op. cit.*, p. 134 note 13.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem*, Archimboldo's imperial allegories pp. 76-102, *cits.* p. 90, p. 100 and p. 87 respectively. Comanini and Vetumnus, pp. 99-101.

<sup>114</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

Turks and heretics<sup>115</sup>. Such extreme displays of magnificence and the emphasis on Rudolf II's superiority suggest that he would be extremely sensitive to anything he might interpret as an assault on his status, or to anyone who might undermine or compete with him. Both the appointment of a successor and the possibility that someone else would marry the most powerful heiress in Christendom fell clearly into these categories.

Rudolf's silence on these two important issues was public knowledge and it was grist to the rumour mills, which generated some ludicrous stories. In March 1586 William Norris, recently arrived from Gibraltar, informed the English government that prince Philip suffered from leprosy and was kept alive by his physicians; that Philip II had fallen in love with his daughter Isabel, who was "a fair woman", and had asked the pope to allow him to marry her. Accurate information also circulated, such as the news from Prague in April 1586 which confirmed that the emperor was still silent on the marriage, and that Archduke Ernest had gone to speak with him in order to force a resolution<sup>116</sup>. The papal nuntio, Filippo Sega, communicated the failure of Ernest's endeavours to the pope while noting approvingly how, throughout the summer of 1586, Ernest was courting the electors to secure his nomination as King of the Romans. Archduke Ferdinand had objected and demanded that Ernest stop these negotiations. Ministers had started to take positions too. Rudolf II signalled his disapproval by punishing two of them, but did nothing to his brothers. In June, Sega reported that Rudolf II had decided not to marry and approved of Ernest marrying Isabel, but had not made this public because he had not yet decided whether Ernest should also become King of the Romans<sup>117</sup>. By October rumour

<sup>115</sup> K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-310; R. DISTELBERGER: "Die Kunstkammerstücke", in *Prag um 1600*, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 449-450; also p. 441. R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80; p. 14 historiography.

<sup>116</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series of the reign of Elizabeth*, vol. XX: *September 1585-May 1586*, ed. S. Crawford Lomas, London 1921, p. 490, 4 April 1586; p. 570, News from Prague 9 April 1586; p. 622, Prague 22 April.

<sup>117</sup> *Nuntiatuerberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Sega*, *op. cit.*, n. 122 p. 260, Sega to Azzolino, Prague, 24 June 1586 where he also commented that Ernest "si vede prudente et benissimo disposto alla conservazione della religione cattolica"; n. 130, pp. 290-291, 29 July:

*"da questo punto del re de Romani pendesse, secondo ch'io intendo, la risoluzione che l'imperatore si contentasse, che Ernesto si casasse con l'infanta di Spagna, non mostrando*

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had it that the election had been hindered by strong opposition against giving the title to Ernest since he was poor and had no state. Consequently, Rudolf II was considering ceding the Kingdom of Hungary to him. Segá also reported that the emperor had decided that if the Protestants continued to oppose Ernest's election, he would resign his imperial title to Ernest, keeping only the kingdom of Bohemia. Either way, Ernest was to marry Isabel. Philip II was said to have approved these plans. Segá reported as if it were perfectly natural that Rudolf II considered himself unfit to rule and to marry as a result of his "ill health". He added that Rudolf lacked the character and the desire to govern effectively, as he was unable to endure the constant pressure of business<sup>118</sup>.

Yet Rudolf II continued to endure the sustained pressure from his family and the papacy to make a decision on the succession and the marriage<sup>119</sup>. If we accept Rudolf's own statement that he did not wish to marry, it is not difficult to explain his predicament. If Ernest married Isabel, as so many people wanted, the archduke would be in a powerful position to demand the succession. If he had the succession, he was the obvious bridegroom for Isabel. Either way, Rudolf II would face a powerful rival. Besides blocking his way in this, the emperor did all he could to prevent Ernest getting more powerful. When another chance to win the Polish crown arose in 1586 a number of Polish nobles again supported his election to the crown, and he was supported also by Philip II, the pope and the empress Maria. The pope showed his favour by sending him a blessed sword. Rudolf II resented this and Ernest knew it. Somewhat disingenuously he wrote: "I cannot think what my brother or the world are afraid of". Rudolf II's strategy shows cunning: he insisted that all the archdukes be presented as candidates for the throne and refused to declare for any of them. Seizing the opportunity, Archduke Maximilian set out to win over as many Poles and Germans as he could and was rumoured to have Rudolf II's support<sup>120</sup>. The

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*S. Maestà molta inclinazione di sottoporsi al gioco del matrimonio, resta dalla prima confusione questo punto parimenti in sospeso" (p. 291).*

<sup>118</sup> *Nuntiatúrberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Segá, op. cit., n. 146, pp. 327-329, Segá to Azzolino, Prague, 14 October 1586.*

<sup>119</sup> *Nuntiatúrberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Segá, op. cit., n. 169, p. 398*

<sup>120</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente, op. cit., pp. 74-76, Vienna, 7 April 1587: "no sé yo lo q.e my hermano ni el mundo podrían temer, aunque entendiese*

emperor played a key role in securing Ernest's withdrawal of his candidacy in favour of Maximilian subsequently<sup>121</sup>, forcing Philip II to back Maximilian as well<sup>122</sup>.

Ernest suffered further disappointment when Rudolf II blocked his acquisition of the strategic Italian states of Modena and Reggio. The opportunity came about when the childless duke of Ferrara decided to cede these lands to his cousin, Cesare d'Este. Sovereignty over these territories was disputed between the papacy and the emperor. Knowing that the pope would seize these lands if he could, Ferrara appealed to Rudolf II to endorse his concession. Without military forces, the emperor asked for Philip II's support, but he argued that Rudolf II that he should cede these lands to one of his poor but worthy brothers<sup>123</sup>. Early in 1588 Ernest asked Philip II to help him get the two duchies and the king readily agreed. Rudolf II now resorted to delay and obfuscation<sup>124</sup>. As Ernest realised, without his brother's favour, his chances were slight<sup>125</sup>. When Rudolf II finally made a decision in favour of the duke in 1590 he tried to keep it secret from Ernest, who guessed that he was being kept in the dark because it had gone against him. He was eventually informed by an imperial official who tried to cause mischief by giving him the false information that Philip II had put pressure on Rudolf II to favour the duke of Ferrara<sup>126</sup>.

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*q.e se inclina Su Santidad más á my q.e á otro*"; n. LIII, p. 84 (7 June) Rudolf's decision "*q.e se propongan todos*". Segá reported this to Montalto on 10 March – *Nuntiatúrberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Segá, op. cit.*, n. 171, p. 407. Maximilian's energetic efforts and Rudolf's support, n. 169, p. 397 and p. 399, Segá to Montalto, Prague 24 February.

<sup>121</sup> *Nuntiatúrberichte aus Deutschland... Germanico Malaspina und Filippo Segá, op. cit.*, n. 170, pp. 403–406, Segá to Montalto, Prague, 3 March 1587.

<sup>122</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente, op. cit.*, pp. 84–85, pp. 90–92, pp. 95–98, p. 103.

<sup>123</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>124</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente, op. cit.*, LXI, pp. 107–108, 7 January 1588; Philip's positive response; n. LXII, pp. 112–113, 8 February; Rudolf's response, LXV, pp. 120–121, 5 June.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, n. LXX, p. 130, 31 December 1588.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibidem*, n. LXXXIII, pp. 169–170; LXXXV, p. 175, 25 December 1590.

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Such a blatant attempt to divide Ernest and Philip II demonstrates the unease felt in the imperial court at their cooperation.

While Ernest had little option other than to wait on his brother, Philip II had sufficient power to end the long saga of his daughter's marriage, so the question arises why he did not. It is true that until Rudolf II withdrew officially from the match, Isabel was considered to be engaged to him and Philip II wanted to avoid direct conflict with the emperor. Ultimately, however, his daughter's interests and securing the succession to the Spanish Monarchy and the Holy Roman Empire were more important. The speed with which the Catalina and Carlo Emanuele produced their numerous progeny, while delighting him on one level<sup>127</sup>, had focused attention on the succession. Unless Isabel married a Habsburg, if Prince Philip died the Spanish Monarchy would fall to the house of Savoy. However, circumstances favoured delay. For much of the period 1586–1589 Philip II's energies were focused on the preparation of a campaign against England. If the invasion was successful, Elizabeth I would be deposed. Philip II believed he had the strongest dynastic rights, but as early as 1586 had declared he would transfer his rights to Isabel, who had strong claims of her own to the English throne. Her chances could be enhanced or weakened by the choice of husband for her. Rudolf II was not the best candidate, since his extensive empire required his presence and he would be an absent monarch. One of the archdukes would be better, but there was some wisdom in leaving her unmarried and keeping open the prospect of an English candidate<sup>128</sup>. Under the circumstances, continuing the unresolved negotiations at a low level was not unwelcome, and as they were handled by the empress, it created a certain distance which protected the king's honour. Occasionally, as in July 1588, Rudolf II would make a statement that suggested he would soon come to a resolution. In this instance he commented that had no desire to take on further burdens<sup>129</sup>.

<sup>127</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1142, mentions his delight at being a grandfather.

<sup>128</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "The Anglo-Spanish war: the final episode in the 'Wars of the Roses'?", in M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO & S. ADAMS (eds): *England, Spain and the Gran Armada, 1585-1604*, Edinburgh 1991, pp. 1-44.

<sup>129</sup> "also geschaffen ..., daß ich khainen lust gehabt, mir mehrern last auf den halß zu laden", *cit.* K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

It is no coincidence that Ernest was charged to raise the marriage and the succession with Rudolf II after the invasion of England had failed. Once again, Rudolf refused to give an answer<sup>130</sup>. Ernest wrote despairingly to Philip II's ambassador that he saw no prospect of a resolution as Rudolf would not touch these matters<sup>131</sup>. In May 1589 the emperor's confessor intervened again, begging Ernest to make another effort. Although he agreed, Ernest was resigned to failure. The death of Archduke Charles some months later depressed him further as he thought Charles was the only one who might have persuaded Rudolf to appoint a successor at least<sup>132</sup>. Khevenhüller's efforts were equally fruitless. In vain he argued that Isabel's future husband stood to gain enormous power: the Low Countries as dowry and a good chance of taking "the whole Spanish Monarchy if Prince Philip, who is a very sickly child, should die". He stressed that Philip II wanted Isabel's children to inherit. In August 1589 Rudolf II again made a move: he requested a further four-months to decide on the marriage. At the same time he declared that he could not marry a woman he had never seen. He was reminded that this was the way every other prince arranged their marriage and besides, he had known Isabel as a child<sup>133</sup>. A succession of portraits, descriptions and reassurances followed which impressed him sufficiently to declare that he considered Isabel to be without equal in terms of wealth, virtues, blood, personal qualities and good looks<sup>134</sup>. Still, the period of grace expired without the hoped-for declaration.

The anxiety felt in Rome, never mind Madrid or Prague, was acute. The pope had written repeatedly urging Rudolf II both to marry and to arrange for Ernest to be elected as King of the Romans as soon as possible. In September 1589 he again pressed for Ernest's election<sup>135</sup>. From Prague, the papal envoy

<sup>130</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente, op. cit.*, n. LXIX, pp. 128-129, from Ernest, 8 November 1588.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, n. LXX, p. 131, New Year's Eve, 1588: "Terrible cosa es q.e en el otro negocio no siga resolución: ni aun principio ueo para comenzar á tratar dél".

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*, LXXV, p. 147-148, 13 May 1589. Ernest commented at the start of 1590 (p. 164) that Charles was most likely to get a solution "en el negocio de la sucesión".

<sup>133</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-377.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 329.

<sup>135</sup> *Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland, 1589-1592. Zweite Abteilung Die Nuntiatur am Kaiserhofe. Dritter Band. Die Nuntien in Prag. Alfonso Visconte 1589-1591 & Camillo Caetano,*



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reported that Rudolf II was still considering ceding Bohemia and Hungary to Ernest to facilitate his candidature. His correspondence confirms that Ernest was now considered there to be the prime candidate for Isabel's hand<sup>136</sup>. Not surprisingly, Ernest demanded again to see Rudolf in person so as to get a resolution on both these matters. Permission was only reluctantly conceded, but his visit, which lasted from 19 February to 3 April 1590, resulted in empty promises of a prompt resolution in the future. When the emperor sent an urgent courier shortly after to Spain, hopes were raised that he had finally made up his mind, but it was merely another request for more time to think. The empress was so distressed that she fell ill. It was said that she alone now was committed to Rudolf II's marriage with Isabel<sup>137</sup>.

#### *THE STAR-CROSSED BRIDE, 1590-1598*

It is pertinent to ask whether the emperor's behaviour might be due in some measure to an increase of tensions along the fracture lines we noted earlier. The answer is negative. Both monarchs were at peace with the Turks and while there were periodic scares neither side had confronted the other with serious demands for aid. Only in 1593 would the issue arise in this acute form. As for religion, Rudolf II's policies might well add up to little more than "spasms of orthodox zeal", as Evans puts it, but they were still in line with Catholic world, and in 1597 he even withdrew some of his father's concessions to the Protestants in the Habsburg heartland. Even later, when he demonstrated greater partiality for Protestants his court contained militant Catholics<sup>138</sup>. In one respect at least, there was less tension on Philip II's part since his

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1591-1592, ed. J. Schweizer, Paderborn 1919, n. 34, p. 55, Montalto to Visconte, Rome, 16 September 1589. K. VOCELKA: *Die Politische Propaganda...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-189.

<sup>136</sup> *Nuntiatuerberichte aus Deutschland...* Alfonso Visconte & Camillo Caetano, *op. cit.*, n. 63, p. 131, Visconte to Montalto, Prague, 26 December 1589.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibidem*, the visit p. 143; the rumours, n. 83, p. 162, Visconte to Montalbo, 3 April 1590; María's position, p. 55, note 3.

<sup>138</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 35; chapter on the emperor's faith, pp. 84-115; advisers at court pp. 65-72; L. PEARSALL SMITH: *The life and letters of Sir Henry Wotton*, 2 vols, Oxford 1907, I, n. 40, pp. 304-305, to Lord Zouche, 30 October 1597.

dependence on German soldiers was not as great. The Austrian lands and the Holy Roman Empire were crucial recruiting grounds and important for the passage of troops. Using Parker's figures, it appears that German troops made up some 40% of the total forces of the Army of Flanders<sup>139</sup>. Quite acute conflicts with archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol after 1567 when he set out to monopolise and control the king's military operations in the region –as Philip II put it, “what he wanted was, in effect, to tie my hands”– had made him redouble his efforts to find alternative sources of supply and passage. The result was closer ties with several German princes, both Catholic and Protestant<sup>140</sup>. Then, in 1587 his assiduous courting of Swiss Catholic cantons resulted in a formal alliance<sup>141</sup>. Philip II got his revenge later, rejecting Ferdinand's daughters in favour of those of Archduke Charles when selecting a bride for Prince Philip<sup>142</sup>. Nevertheless, he continued to levy German troops and the emperor was no more reconciled to this practice now than he had been earlier.

Italy continued to be a source of tension, with periodic crises which caused intense exchanges, but no crisis arose to match earlier conflicts. Similarly, while they frequently disagreed on policy towards the Low Countries, Philip II more than once welcomed the prospect of the emperor's mediation. In 1590 when Rudolf II argued that he alone had sufficient authority to bring peace and stability to the region and that only if he intervened personally and guaranteed the peace would it hold, Philip II thanked him and asked for details of how he thought this could be achieved<sup>143</sup>. The initiative ended badly for Rudolf II. The rebels refused to admit the imperial embassy. It was a sign of their confidence and independence and a grave dishonour for the emperor<sup>144</sup>.

<sup>139</sup> G. PARKER: *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659*, Cambridge 1972, appendix p. 271, details of levies pp. 38-39, 53-56.

<sup>140</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Söldner und Pensionäre...*, *op. cit.*, details of Philip II's relations with German princes in chps. 5, 6 and 7; and with Ferdinand in pp. 147-173, *cit.* from p. 154, note 194. See also F. REDLICH: *The German military enterpriser and his work force*, 2 vols, Wiesbaden 1964-1965.

<sup>141</sup> R. BOLZERN: *Spanien, Mailand und die katholische Eidgenossenschaft*, Stuttgart 1982.

<sup>142</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1634.

<sup>143</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 380-381.

<sup>144</sup> *List and analysis of State Papers, Foreign Series, Elizabeth I*, vol. III: *June 1591-april 1592*, ed. R. B. Wernham, London 1980, pp. 175-178.

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In 1590 the situation changed dramatically. The crisis started on 1 August 1589 when the last Valois king of France died, naming the Protestant Henry IV as his successor. France was plunged into another, devastating civil war. Early in the new year, Philip II reluctantly accepted he would need to intervene on behalf of the Catholic League and delay his planned invasion of England. It meant diverting resources from the Low Countries as well. As in the case of England, he decided not to pursue his own dynastic claims, but was determined from the outset to press the strong claims of the Infanta Isabel, both to the duchy of Brittany where there was no salic law, and to the French crown, if that law was rescinded. This attempt to place Isabel on the French throne split the Catholic world. Many Catholics, including the pope, did not want to give the Spanish Habsburgs further power. But Philip II was adamant that his daughter's rights must be upheld<sup>145</sup>. One again, her marriage became a contested issue. Her chances of gaining the crown could be enhanced by a match with a French Catholic, especially those who like the son of the duke of Lorraine or the duke of Guise, had some claims of their own. The problem was that their status was greatly inferior to hers and that it still exposed the Spanish Monarchy to being taken over by a foreign dynasty. According to Khevenhüller the prospect of her marriage to a Frenchman goaded Rudolf into action. He requested another year to decide if he wanted to marry Isabel. Maria and Khevenhüller were now in a panic; convinced that they would lose her unless Rudolf II withdrew and supported Ernest's suit for the match and the imperial succession. The sense of crisis was such that Rudolf II ordered Khevenhüller to go to Prague immediately for talks, promising it would result in a final decision. Some claimed that it was the Spanish monarch, others that it was Maria, who sent him on this mission<sup>146</sup>. Since it was widely known that Philip II now preferred Ernest to marry his daughter, rumours spread that he did not take this round of negotiations with Rudolf II seriously<sup>147</sup>.

<sup>145</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "Philip II and the post-Armada crisis: foreign policy and rebellion, 1588-1594", in *Después de la Gran Armada: La Historia Desconocida (1588-16..)*, Cuadernos Monográficos del Instituto de Historia y Cultura Naval. Suplemento al n° 20, Madrid 1993, esp. pp. 79-81, 83, 86-88; D. L. JENSEN: *Diplomacy and Dogmatism. Bernardino de Mendoza and the French Catholic League*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1964, pp. 193-196.

<sup>146</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 386-387, pp. 402-404.

<sup>147</sup> *Nuntiatyberichte aus Deutschland... Alfonso Visconte & Camillo Caetano*, *op. cit.*, n. 63, p. 131, Visconte to Montalto, Prague, 26 December 1589 noted the belief that Philip II preferred Ernest; n. 192, p. 381, Caetano to Sfondrato, Prague, 27 August 1591 on Khevenhüller's

The question is, was Rudolf II serious? When informed of Khevenhüller's mission Ernest hoped that it would bring about a resolution, but was inclined to believe that nothing short of a miracle would prompt a decision from his brother <sup>148</sup>. He was becoming bitter and disillusioned <sup>149</sup>. Seen from Rudolf's perspective, the dangers of any decision were apparent. Isabel was undoubtedly a great prize: her dowry fixed as Low Countries, and if Prince Philip died as so many said he would, the Spanish Monarchy. She might also get Brittany and even the French throne. All this could be united with the imperial title and authority, the Austrian provinces, Bohemia and Hungary. The power Rudolf II might exercise in future must have been tempting. But Christendom would surely not allow the creation of this universal Habsburg monarchy. Would it not condemn him to endless conflict? Quite apart from his own disinclination to marry, this was a powerful disincentive. But Rudolf II was aware that Ernest was the favoured candidate for Isabel's hand. The matter was openly discussed in France and elsewhere, and he remained the natural candidate for the title of King of the Romans. If he allowed that marriage to go ahead his younger brother would be almost as powerful, and potentially far more powerful, than he was. Of course, he could try to block this by electing one of the other archdukes, but this too had its dangers. It could make an enemy of Ernest and of Philip II. Rudolf II's way to deal with these tough choices was to stall on all fronts <sup>150</sup>. Maria eventually appreciated that they had blundered by linking the marriage and the succession and tried to disentangle them. She urged Rudolf II to get Ernest elected as King of the Romans immediately, suggesting he could be forbidden from marrying thus guaranteeing the succession to the imperial title for Rudolf II's sons <sup>151</sup>. It made no difference.

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mission; n. 200, p. 396, Giovanni Dolfin to the Doge of Venice, Prague, 1 October 1591 also on this and the rumours it provoked.

<sup>148</sup> Marqués de AYERBE (ed.): *Correspondencia... Guillén de San Clemente*, *op. cit.*, n. XC, p. 188, 16 September 1591: "*sin duda no podrá dexar de resultar della resolución en muchas cosas*"; n. XCI, p. 192: "*Si la uenida de Keuenhuiller no haze milagros, no sé q.e esperar*".

<sup>149</sup> *Ibidem*, Ernest's state of mind in late 1590 and in 1591: ns. LXXXV, LXXVII, LXXXVIII, pp. 174-184.

<sup>150</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 404 (1591); p. 415 the dream/nightmare scenario.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 316-317.

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

An attempt on the emperor's life early in 1591 raised new fears that the Habsburgs would lose the imperial title<sup>152</sup>. The lack of firm government and uncertainty about the future combined to undermine obedience and respect. The English noble, Sir Henry Wotton, remarked on the fact that Rudolf II was deliberately keeping his brothers short of money – another tactic he used to contain them. Instead of enhancing his authority, however, he “rather now seems to bear the title of Emperor for fashion sake, than authority to command by virtue of it”. Hardly anyone besides the Bohemians was providing funds. Wotton concluded that unless he made a bid for Protestant support by allowing religious freedom, he would lose the empire<sup>153</sup>. In a similar vein, the Venetian ambassador Contarini commented in 1596 that Rudolf II had “*dignità e non autorità*”. The imperial princes and the estates of his own lands enjoyed great autonomy and did not provide sufficient money to allow him to play the leading role in Christendom that he wanted or felt he deserved<sup>154</sup>. Observers could not agree, however, on why Rudolf II was such a failure. Some –including Contarini– resorted to the old and convenient stereotype: it was his Spanish habits which made him unpopular with Germans. Wotton was more reflective, but could not decide whether it was due to his great ambition or his prodigality; his decision to enforce religious orthodoxy, “or lastly, lust and pleasure”. Whatever the cause, Rudolf II had brought about the decay of “almost the noblest house of Christendom”<sup>155</sup>.

During the long gap between the announcement that Khevenhüller would go to Prague and his arrival there, a veritable flood of rumours surfaced. The papal nuncio thought that archduke Maximilian was now the one “for whom they would secure the title of King of the Romans” and Isabel – perhaps this was a

<sup>152</sup> L. PEARSALL SMITH: *The life and letters of Sir Henry Wotton, op. cit.*, I, p. 251, to Zouche, Vienna, 9 January 1591.

<sup>153</sup> L. PEARSALL SMITH: *The life and letters of Sir Henry Wotton, op. cit.*, I, p. 267, to Zouche, Vienna, 17 April 1591 on the annuities, cit. p. 268.

<sup>154</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-80. He comments on p. 52 that one of the most distinguishing aspects of Rudolf's character was his desire for political activity and “the striving for an international role which proved hopelessly unrealizable”.

<sup>155</sup> L. PEARSALL SMITH: *The life and letters of Sir Henry Wotton, op. cit.*, I, pp. 268-269, to Zouche, 17 April 1591. Contarini's Relazione of 1596 cit. H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 29, note 104: “*Il presente Imperatore non ha l'Imperio favorevole per grazia, perché per i costumi spagnoli non è punto amato*”.

slip on his part rather than a new policy. It was generally believed that Philip II could not longer bear to part with his daughter, who had become his closest companion, so the archduke would go to Spain for the marriage and remain there<sup>156</sup>. Philip II still avoided committing himself openly. He asked the French Catholics to accept Isabel and “one of the Archdukes” as their sovereigns. But Ernest’s name was frequently mentioned<sup>157</sup>. By contrast, imperial officials insisted that Rudolf II would marry Isabel. One minister told the Venetian ambassador towards the end of January 1591 that the match was almost finalised and an announcement imminent<sup>158</sup>. The same message was put about The Hague a year later by Otto Heinrich von den Bilandt, a member of the imperial peace mission to the Low Countries. The match was an essential part of the negotiating stance of this commission. They argued that as the Low Countries would be ceded to Rudolf II as Isabel’s dowry, the rebels could surrender to the emperor rather than to Philip II, and peace would be restored<sup>159</sup>. Bilandt, who was a Protestant, later informed Thomas Bodley, the English representative in The Hague, that Philip II did not want Isabel to marry Rudolf II because the two sovereigns were in constant conflict – there were “many crossings and secret dislikes” between them. The marriage proposal was “not seriously intended” by Spain, but Rudolf II was so keen that he had undertaken this peace mission “out of hope of having the King’s daughter with the Low Countries as her dowry”<sup>160</sup>.

There was widespread fear that Rudolf II would unite the two Habsburg empires and become “a great enough monarch to command the rest”<sup>161</sup>.

<sup>156</sup> Pietro Millino to Bertinoro, secretary of Clement VIII, 10 January 1592, cit. J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey. Felipe II visto desde la nunciatura de Madrid 1594-1598*, Madrid 2001, p. 15.

<sup>157</sup> *List and analysis of State Papers... Elizabeth I, op. cit.*, III, pp. 302-303, based on Sir Henry Unton to Lord Burghley, Noyon, 15 October 1591; pp. 390-393 dispatches from debates of the spring of 1592.

<sup>158</sup> *Nuntiatuerberichte aus Deutschland... Alfonso Visconte & Camillo Caetano, op. cit.*, n. 220, p. 441, Dolfin to the Doge, Prague, 21 January 1592.

<sup>159</sup> *List and analysis of State Papers... Elizabeth I, op. cit.*, III, ns. 222-223, pp. 181-182, T. Bodley’s dispatches to Burghley, 2 February 1592.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, III, p. 183, Bodley to Burghley, 15 March 1592.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*, III, reports of N. L. De Mouy to Burghley, from Aachen, March 1592, p. 472 and p. 475 where the quote is taken.

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

Interestingly, there were rumours by March 1592 that Isabel was not eager to marry Rudolf II because she believed he had syphilis<sup>162</sup>. For a time it was widely rumoured she would marry Henry IV – unlikely as it would seem that Philip II would give his daughter to a married, Protestant man he considered a heretic and usurper. Elizabeth I was sufficiently alarmed by the news she demanded to know the truth. Henry IV confirmed in April 1592 that he had been offered Isabel’s hand on condition he returned to the Catholic fold, and that he had rejected it because he would never forsake his religion. Later he assured her he could not accept the Infanta because his affections were already engaged to the English Queen. This touch of gallantry brings the rumours down to earth and confirms that he was using them to frighten Elizabeth I into giving him more aid to continue the war<sup>163</sup>. Some argued that Philip II would only allow Isabel to marry an archduke “for fear of the death of his son”. Others reckoned that what concerned him was to ensure that Isabel’s husband was not powerful enough to “seek to displace his weak son of his succession to his crown”; consequently he no longer wanted Rudolf II. Rumours also spread in France that Philip II preferred a match between Isabel and Archduke Albert, who had not yet taken holy orders<sup>164</sup>.

When he finally reached Prague, Khevenhüller found the emperor more irresolute than ever,

contradicting himself and full of doubts; he could not decide whether to accept the marriage, nor would he say that he preferred to be replaced by one of his brothers.

In vain he reminded Rudolf of the many lands Isabel would bring and that she was, in every sense, a desirable woman. Against all expectation, Rudolf II ordered the ambassador to return to Spain with nothing more than his word that he would declare his decision in future. Under instructions from Maria and Philip II, Khevenhüller consulted in secret both the marriage and the

<sup>162</sup> *List and analysis of State Papers... Elizabeth I, op. cit.*, III, p. 393, from Sir Henry Unton to Burghley, Diepper, 19 March 1592, *ibid*, 20 March, repeated and expanded, p. 472.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*, III, p. 369, January 1592 and p. 380, which also contains Henry’s answer of 1 April and p. 383 his comments of 8 April to Wilkes.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibidem*, III, p. 388 and quotes in 393 from Unton’s reports 19 March 1592 and 23 March respectively and further quotes p. 472.

succession with archdukes Ernest, Charles and Maximilian<sup>165</sup>. The failure of this mission and the need to make a declaration with regards to Isabel's marriage persuaded Philip II to act unilaterally. He decided that Isabel would marry Ernest, on whom he bestowed the government of the Low Countries. Rudolf II was outraged at this decision. He complained formally and vociferously both about the appointment and the match. He argued that Philip II did not have the authority to command or appoint the archdukes without permission from Rudolf II, who was their overlord, nor did Ernest have the right to accept such service or marry without assent from his sovereign. Philip II replied curtly that it was entirely Rudolf's fault. Isabel and the Low Countries had been destined for him and he had chosen to reject them<sup>166</sup>. It is worth noting that at the time these exchanges occurred, Philip II drew up another will<sup>167</sup>. He sensed his life ebbing away and was determined to provide for his daughter.

Rudolf II would not let the matter drop. He did all in his power to hinder the marriage<sup>168</sup>. He also tried to persuade Ernest that he was making a serious mistake. If he became governor in the Low Countries on Philip II's behalf he would seriously damage his chances of becoming the next Holy Roman Emperor. Marrying Isabel would definitely put him out of contention. He would be compromised by this association with the Catholic camp and closeness to a hated, foreign prince. Perhaps similar arguments had dissuaded Rudolf from the match in the past. According to Cabrera de Córdoba, he also told Ernest that as he could not have children, the succession was guaranteed for him. The arguments were cogent enough to make Ernest hesitate. Ultimately, however, the prospect of a royal marriage, the Low Countries, and possibly the French throne and that of England, not to mention the Spanish

<sup>165</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-477, cit. pp. 415-416: "el emperador... contradiziéndose entre sí mesmo, lleno de dudas, nunca se acauaua de resolver a aceptar aquel matrimonio, ni declaraua que gustaua que sucediese en él alguno de sus hermanos". He was also charged to explore a marriage for Prince Philip. L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 1463-1464.

<sup>166</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 418-419.

<sup>167</sup> It was sealed on 7 March 1594, Tellechea: *Nunciatura*, n. 6 & 7, pp. 124-125, Camillo Caetani to Pietro Aldobrandini, 10 March 1594, and *Avvisi* (Newsletter) 26 March.

<sup>168</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 432.



*I love him as a father loves a son...*

Monarchy, were too tempting to reject. He took the first step towards a brilliant future by assuming the governorship of the Low Countries <sup>169</sup>.

Matters had reached crisis point at a bad time for Rudolf II. When the Turks declared war in 1593 he turned to Philip II for aid. His requests did not find favour: “Not a word nor anything else should be given” was Philip II’s reaction. True, he was then at war in France and against England and the Low Countries, but after the way Rudolf II had behaved, there was no sympathy for him in the Spanish court. Only sustained pressure from the papacy prompted Philip II to send 300,000 ducats in 1594 and another 300,000 the following year, with 100,000 escudos to the prince of Transilvania <sup>170</sup>. Some commentators noted sharply that this support should have come automatically given the king’s duty to his house and his kin as well as to Christendom <sup>171</sup>. By the same token, Rudolf II should have helped Philip II in France, as he had been urged to do by the other Catholic powers since 1589, and in the Low Countries, and he had done neither. In April 1596 Philip II informed the papal nuncio that he was willing to support papal initiatives against the Turks in the Mediterranean but given the wars he was engaged in, he could do nothing more for Hungary. Similar arguments were used to counter the nuncio’s spirited demands for aid the following year <sup>172</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1463:

*“Juzgaba se metía con esto en las cosas del Rey su tío, tanto aborrecidas sumamente de los príncipes sectarios, que le obstaría mucho para ser creado César, pues su hermano no tenía hijos ni esperanza y facultad para tenerlos, por no estar casado y no darle habilidad sus enfermedades. Dubdó mucho [Ernesto] en aceptar el gobierno de Flandes, mas conociendo su importancia y cercanía para estar pronto a entrar en Francia, si era electo rey, como se trataba, con la Infanta su prima...”*

<sup>170</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 445 and p. 455; J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, n. 17, p. 131, Caetani to Aldobrandini, 13 June 1594; n. 34, p. 142, 20 October; n. 40, p. 147, 13 December; n. 41, p. 148, 23 December.

<sup>171</sup> R. GONZÁLEZ CUERVA: “Cruzada y dinastía: Las mujeres de la Casa de Austria ante la larga guerra de Hungría”, in J. MARTÍNEZ MILLÁN & M<sup>a</sup>. P. MARÇAL LOURENÇO (eds.): *Las Relaciones Discretas...*, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 1149–1186, esp. pp. 1150–1154; he quotes on p. 1153, n. 14, Philip II’s holograph comment, 20 November 1593, from AGS, Estado, 2855, s.n.: “*En lo del ayudar a lo del turco no se den palabras ni cosa*”.

<sup>172</sup> J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, n. 71, p. 165, Caetano to Aldobrandini, 30 April 1596; n. 121, p. 218, 18 July 1597.

By then he was involved in another, unpleasant row with Rudolf II. Ernest's success, so long awaited, was limited and short-lived. The majority of French Catholics rejected his joint candidature for the throne in the spring of 1593<sup>173</sup>. Although Philip II continued to demand recognition of Isabel's rights to Brittany and France, by 1595 it was clear that the cause was hopeless and that a general peace was the best way to settle affairs. When Ernest arrived in the Low Countries he was charged with exploring peace. The process had hardly started when death overcame him in February 1595<sup>174</sup>. Once again, the Infanta Isabel had lost a potential husband.

*A MARRIAGE CONCLUDED AND A GREAT SECRET UNVEILED*

News of this disaster arrived at a court that was already seriously unsettled by Philip II's seriously illness, which lasted from April to July 1595. In fact, it may well have made him worse. Yet it also prompted him to act with great alacrity in order to provide for his unfortunate daughter. Without hesitation, he made arrangements for the archduke Albert to succeed both as governor of the Low Countries and as her future husband. Albert had recently become Archbishop of Toledo and was within an ace of taking his final vows when he was sent to the Low Countries<sup>175</sup>.

As early as 1576 Philip II had described Albert with evident fondness as "the best" of Maria's many sons. Since 1570 he had educated and nurtured him and Albert responded with loyalty and affection. He had proved an effective viceroy of Portugal, and in 1590 the king had already considered sending him to the Low Countries. When he felt too ill and old to govern alone, he called Albert to serve as his aide. When the archduke arrived at court, the king manifest great love and respect for him in public, placing him between himself

<sup>173</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 1465, 1471-1475.

<sup>174</sup> M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "«Ni cerrando ni abriendo la puerta». Las negociaciones de paz entre Felipe II e Isabel I, 1594-1598", in: A. MARCOS MARTÍN (ed.): *Libro Homenaje para el Director José Luis Rodríguez de Diego*, Valladolid 2010 (en prensa).

<sup>175</sup> J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157, the king's health; p. 157, 15 July 1595, confirming he was preparing Albert's departure; M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "«Ni cerrando ni abriendo la puerta». Las negociaciones de paz...", *op. cit.*

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

and prince Philip, who was clearly discomforted when forced to walk on the left hand of the cardinal-archduke rather than at his father's right-hand. It was a real as well as a symbolic move. Philip II's absolute trust and reliance on Albert led him to delegate much business to his nephew and he could be forgiven if he thought that providence had ordained he should end up in a position to marry Isabel just before taking his final vows. Sweeping aside opposition from his ministers both to Albert's governorship and to the separation of the Low Countries from the Spanish Monarchy, Philip II pressed ahead with all haste for the marriage and the partition of the empire. The pope was asked to accept his reversion to secular status and to permit the marriage of the two cousins<sup>176</sup>.

Philip II had not consulted Rudolf II on any of this. Cabrera de Córdoba asserts that it was not until all the pre-requisites for the marriage were complete that he decided to inform the emperor. It was carefully coordinate. He informed Albert that they would both inform the pope and Rudolf at the same time. He specified that Albert should give Rudolf the news "without going into details, try to get his approval". At the same time they would both demand that Albert be elected as King of the Romans. The pope was asked to support both initiatives<sup>177</sup>. This account differs from that of Khevenhüller in one important respect: the ambassador claims that Philip II sought the emperor's agreement for the match but tried to "dispel the suspicions he had conceived that as a result of this marriage the succession to the Holy Roman Empire would fall to Albert". Indeed, he "had never even imagined this, nor did he ever aim for this". This apparently "reassured the emperor somewhat"<sup>178</sup>. But if this were

<sup>176</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1490: "*prometo a vuestra Alteza*", Philip had written to María in December of 1576, "*que creo yo que Alberto tiene más partes que ninguno*". Possible appointment to the Low Countries, p. 1249; called to Madrid, p. 1347; pp. 1484-1485 details of his reception and his new role; opposition to his appointment, p. 1642. Also H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 436-437. Albert's reception and actions in the Low Countries, pp. 447ff.; and M. J. RODRÍGUEZ SALGADO: "«Ni cerrando ni abriendo la puerta». Las negociaciones de paz...", *op. cit.* Ordination: J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, n. 39, p. 146, Caetani to Aldobrandini, 3 December 1594.

<sup>177</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1635: "*dándole parte dello, sin entrar en particularidades, procure que lo apruebe... para atraer al Emperador a lo que le han de pedir en lo del Rey de Romanos para vos...*", pp. 1635-1636 instructions for dealing with Rome.

<sup>178</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, p. 469:

the case, one would expect Rudolf II to have been less extreme in his reaction against the announcement. Khevenhüller claims that Rudolf II's response to the news was as before. He ordered his officials to do everything possible to prevent the marriage. Furthermore, he now apparently accused Philip II of misconduct in the marriage negotiations. He claimed that he had not been treated as other suitors. He had never been offered the Low Countries as a dowry, nor had the king responded to his request for Milan. By way of response, Philip II reminded him that they had waited thirteen years for him to make up his mind, and that Isabel was now 31 and it was imperative for her to marry at once. As for ceding Milan, since Rudolf had never declared openly that this was a condition of the marriage, he had not been obliged to address the issue. In his account, Cabrera de Córdoba confirms that Rudolf refused to accept both Albert's appointment as governor of the Low Countries and as husband to Isabel, but claims that he argued that Albert had more than enough power and status as Archbishop of Toledo and that Isabel should be married to archduke Maximilian, who was poor and had no title. If so, it was a rather belated recognition on Rudolf II's part of how little he had done for his siblings<sup>179</sup>.

Khevenhüller advised his master to dissimulate rather than exacerbate the conflict, but Rudolf II would not relent. He was so angry that he decided to have his revenge by offering marriage to Marie de'Medici, a niece of the Grand-duke of Florence, with whom Philip II was then on bad terms. Had this gone ahead, Isabel would have been dishonoured and the emperor could have destabilised North Italy. But nothing came of it<sup>180</sup>. To demonstrate his imperial authority and meddle in his brother's business, Rudolf II decided to intervene in the Low Countries. Both Philip II and Albert were minded to negotiate peace so they did not object openly, although they were wary of him. As before, the rebels did not want peace, and sent an envoy to the imperial court requesting that he should not interfere; leaving him in no doubt that if necessary they

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*“que su mag[esta]d cesárea persiesse la sospecha que auía concebido que no por este cassamiento se deriuaua en Alberto la successión en el Imperio, porque su magestad del rey don Filipe no lo auía aun imaginado, ni aun tenía tal intento ni era deste parecer. Con esta respuesta se sosegó algún tanto el emperador”.*

<sup>179</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-469. Detail about Albert and Maximilian in L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1636.

<sup>180</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-469.

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

would openly reject his authority<sup>181</sup>. He suffered a further, significant setback in that other disputed area, Italy. In May 1598 Philip II brought to an end the long-running saga of Finale. Protracted and patient negotiations had persuaded the elderly and childless marquis to sell it to him. Rudolf II refused to accept the settlement. Edelmayer argues that this was because of the protests from other competitors<sup>182</sup>. This might well have made matters worse, but his hostility was surely another manifestation of his desire to impose his superior, imperial authority in the region, and to prevent the Spanish branch from expanding at the expense of imperial fiefs.

Such clashes caused resentment which was sometimes expressed in terms of antipathy towards “Spain”. But there is nothing to suggest that Rudolf II’s rejection of Isabel was determined by xenophobic sentiments. In 1612 Melchior Godast characterised Rudolf’s attitude towards his neighbours thus: “the Spaniard he would never trust, the Pope he disagreed with, the French he viewed with ill-humour...”<sup>183</sup>. This balanced picture is far more convincing than the anti-hispanism pervading some recent works on Rudolf. The emperor’s suspicion and hostility were broadly aimed and not just targeted against Spain. Even if he had acted differently, Philip II’s very power would have been a challenge to the emperor. Moreover, Rudolf II had ample cause to be aggrieved, as some shrewd observers noted. Having commented on the extraordinary affection and favour Philip II had for Albert, Cabrera de Córdoba offered an enigmatic and unexplained comment: “His Majesty had forgotten the meaning of Tacitus” saying: “The great secret was now revealed that emperors could be made outside Rome”<sup>184</sup>. This allusion to the usurpation of the imperial title by a ruler from Spain –Galba marched on Rome and took the imperial crown– was apposite in more than one respect. Of course, Philip II was only one of many who repeatedly pressed Rudolf to name a successor. But after 1585 he took a leading role in attempting to secure the title for the archduke that was to marry his daughter. He was determined to “make the emperor”, paving

<sup>181</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 464-465.

<sup>182</sup> F. EDELMAYER: *Maximilian II., Philipp II. und Reichsitalien*, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>183</sup> Cit. R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>184</sup> L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, p. 1490: “no se acordaba su majestad de la interpretación del decir Tácito: “Se divulgó el gran secreto de que se podían hacer los emperadores fuera de Roma”. “It is taken from the beginning of Tacitus” *Histories*.

the way for imperial honour and power to fall on Isabel's sons. It is not too far-fetched to speculate that from Rudolf's point of view he had crossed the sacred line; he was attempting to usurp a function that appertained exclusively to Rudolf II and the electors. The matter was made graver by the extreme aversion he manifested from the outset to the designation of a successor. Even after 1598 Rudolf II continued to resist this on the grounds that it would diminish his authority<sup>185</sup>.

The long and cruel game of retaining the option to marry Isabel Clara Eugenia and thus prevent her from marrying anyone can be seen as his revenge and linked with Rudolf II's obsessive concern for supreme authority. Patriarchs had power to determine the marriage strategy of the dynasty. For more than thirteen years, he held Philip II and Isabel in thrall, exercising the ultimate power over members of the House. In similar fashion, he hindered the marriage of his siblings. At best, this worked well in the short term, allowing Rudolf II to manifest his power. Ultimately, however, this policy and his obdurate refusal to appoint a successor, had disastrous results for him personally, for the dynasty, for Bohemia and Hungary, and for the Holy Roman Empire, when archduke Matthias finally broke ranks and led a rebellion to usurp his crowns. Moreover, he lost the chance of re-unifying the Low Countries with the Holy Roman Empire and so strengthening the Austrian branch.

Philip II too had ample cause to be resentful of the way Rudolf II had acted, with such utter disregard for the honour of Isabel and the future of the Spanish Habsburg branch. He had expected that Rudolf would show gratitude and affection and found only competition. Such was the nature of politics. He refused to acknowledge inferiority and when it suited him, had no compunction in offering Rudolf's fiancée to others. The Infanta Isabel was an innocent victim of these power struggles, which blighted her life for many years.

Even the final steps to her marriage were marked by high drama. The papal dispensations were not issued until April 1597 and further adjustments had to be made before the requisite ceremonies could be carried out and Albert was free to marry<sup>186</sup>. It was not until 8 May 1598, with Philip II too ill to leave his

<sup>185</sup> R. J. W. EVANS: *Rudolf II and his world...*, *op. cit.*, p. 58: "kann man auch einen Römischen König ungeschmarlert meiner reputation machen?"

<sup>186</sup> J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El Papado y Felipe II. Colección de Breves pontificios (1572-1597)*, vol. II, Madrid, 2000, pp. 275-277 papal dispensations 12 April 1597 and 3 July; J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, p. 249, note 1.

*I love him as a father loves a son...*

bed, and in the presence of the empress Maria, that a simple ceremony was held in chamber to mark the signing of the marriage contract<sup>187</sup>. Before it was final, however, the marriage had to be carried out in person and consummated. Philip II wanted to be present at the ceremony and ordered Albert to return to Spain, but also charged him with escorting Prince Philip's bride, Margaret of Austria, to Spain. To his distress, the king died in September 1598 before Albert returned. This gave those who opposed the marriage and the separation of the Low Countries from the Spanish Monarchy a chance to argue for a revocation of Philip II's policies. To his credit, Philip III decided to honour his word<sup>188</sup>. While he would do all he could to curb Albert's power, he arranged a spectacular double wedding in 1599 which finally ended the long and agonising saga of Isabel's marriage.

<sup>187</sup> H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-479; conditions in L. CABRERA DE CÓRDOBA: *Historia de Felipe II...*, *op. cit.*, III, pp. 1641-1643.

<sup>188</sup> J. I. TELLECHEA IDÍGORAS: *El ocaso de un rey...*, *op. cit.*, n. 213, p. 296, Caetano to Aldobrandini, 18 September 1598; H. KHEVENHÜLLER: *Diario...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 484-485, 487-490, 499-502.