

FROM THE EMPRESS TO THE AMBASSADOR: THE “SPANISH FACTION” AND THE LABYRINTHS OF THE IMPERIAL COURT OF PRAGUE, 1575- 1585

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I. Dynastic diplomacy

Ferdinand I and his nephew Philip II began to rule the Austrian and Spanish Monarchy respectively in 1555-6, but they did not interchange ambassadors until 1558.¹ Such a delay was not a symptom of poor relations, but rather the proof of a familial style of negotiation. Throughout the previous decades, Emperor Charles V had maintained close ties with his relatives Ferdinand I in Austria, Mary of Hungary in the Low Countries and Philip II in Spain through direct correspondence and informal agents *ad hoc*.² In contrast, sending ordinary ambassadors was often regarded mistrustfully as the delivery of an honourable spy. The successful, though imperfect, alliance between the two branches of the House of Austria needed skilful ambassadors, agents and mediators, but the clue of the system was elsewhere, in the personal entente between the members of the dynasty. Along his reign, Philip II had to manage with his uncle Ferdinand I, his cousin Maximilian II, and his nephew Rudolf II. Every individual had different preferences and styles of negotiating, but a factor of continuity remained: the mediation of Empress Mary of Austria (1528-1603), wife of Maximilian II and loyal sister of Philip II. She represented the authority and patronage of his Spanish brother as an active mediator.

Mary of Austria arrived to the imperial court in 1552, much before any ambassadors, and remained there until 1581, while the successive ambassadors she dealt with (Count of Luna, Lord of Chantonnay, Count of Monteagudo, and Juan de Borja) held the office for only around five years. Aside from the continuity of her presence, Mary had an undisputed ceremonial position as second role at court after his husband Emperor Maximilian II and then her son Rudolf II. The ambassadors of Philip II were far from being marginal figures; they were granted special rights of access to the Emperor, who relied on them as intimate counsellors, and built a network of informants, at times more efficient than the Emperor's one.³ In 1577, the

¹ José Carlos Rueda Fernández and Friedrich Edelmayer, “Del caos a la normalidad: los inicios de la diplomacia moderna entre el Sacro Imperio y la Monarquía Hispánica,” in *Actas de la IV Reunión Científica de la Asociación Española de Historia Moderna*, ed. Pablo Fernández Albaladejo *et al.* (Alicante: Universidad de Alicante, 1997), I, 631-640; Pavel Marek, *La embajada española en la corte imperial (1558-1641). Figuras de los embajadores y estrategias clientelares* (Prague: Karolinum, 2013), 53-55.

² Christopher F. Laferl, *Die Kultur der Spanier in Österreich unter Ferdinand I. 1522–1564* (Wien: Böhlau, 1997), 62-76, 120-131.

³ Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Vienna, 19 January 1572, in *CODOIN*, CX, 348-356; Idem to Luis de Requesens y Zúñiga, Vienna, 6 October 1574, AGS, E, leg. 671, n. 47; Xavier Sellés-Ferrando, *Spanisches Österreich* (Wien: Böhlau, 2004), 231-232.

Ferrarese representative considered them the most important ministers at court.⁴ However, they could not escalate from that rank. By contrast, Mary had within reach the means and occasions to develop an able interlocution with the Emperor and his ministers thanks to her prerogatives in court life. The early modern court was a space of power and thus a space of communication.⁵ Empress Mary had frank and intimate access to the Emperor and her own platform of power, her household, through which she was able to co-opt and reward individuals with advantageous marriages, offices and pensions.⁶

II. Mary of Austria and her Household in life of Maximilian II (1548-1576)

The Spanish ambassadors were able to develop their duties primarily thanks to the backing of the Empress and her entourage. To have a clearer idea on proportions, the embassy (excluding lower servants) employed 3-5 officials and at times was virtually inexistent, whereas Mary's household included around one hundred individuals. Financing and monitoring this retinue was a chief interest of Philip II, who deliberately used it as his bridgehead in the imperial court. According to the marriage contract of 1548, Charles V and thereafter Philip II agreed to send Mary an annual allowance. In contrast with the dominant ambient of mid-16th century Vienna, the household of Mary was an exotic island of severe Catholic theologians and Spanish aristocrats.⁷ This striking profile was very different from Maximilian II's entourage: to the scandal of Mary, he was confessionally near to Lutheran positions and expelled almost every Spaniard in his service. He had just reasons to resent the influence that they exerted as a lobby on behalf of Philip II over both his father Ferdinand I and his wife Mary. Maximilian's attempts to transform Mary's household were not a domestic issue but instead led to a diplomatic crisis. Philip II ordered two missions (Venegas de Figueroa in 1555 and Count of Luna in 1560) to reform Mary's household and reach an agreement with Maximilian II on this issue.⁸

⁴ Valentino Florio to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Prague, 26 April 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 10.

⁵ Mark Hengerer, "Court and communication: integrating the nobility at the imperial court (1620-65)," *The Court Historian* 5 (2000): 223-229; Rudolf Schlögl, "Der frühneuzeitliche Hof als Kommunikationsraum. Interaktionstheoretische Perspektiven der Forschung," in *Geschichte und Systemtheorie: Exemplarische Fallstudien*, ed. Frank Becker (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2004), 185-226; Ronald Asch, "The Princely Court and Political Space in Early Modern Europe," in *Political Space in Pre-industrial Europe*, ed. Beat Kümin (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013), 43-60.

⁶ Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Vienna, 14 April 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 27.

⁷ Rafaela Rodríguez Raso, ed., *Maximiliano de Austria gobernador de Carlos V en España: cartas al emperador* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1963), 30, 273-6; Laferl, *Die Kultur der Spanier*, 125-131.

⁸ Charles V to Philip II, Brussels, 16 February 1554, in *Corpus documental de Carlos V*, ed. Manuel Fernández Álvarez (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1973 – 1981), IV, 653; Luis Venegas to Charles V and Philip II, Vienna, 10 October 1555, AGS, E, leg. 649, n. 38; Count of Luna to Philip II, Vienna, 12 January 1560, in *CODOIN*, XCVIII, 109; R. Ceñal Lorente, SJ, "La emperatriz María de Austria: su personalidad política y religiosa" (Doctoral Thesis, University Complutense of Madrid, 1991), 425; Joseph F. Patrouch, *Queen's Apprentice. Archduchess Elizabeth, Empress Maria, the Habsburgs, and the Holy Roman Empire, 1554–1569* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 32-33.

The two crucial sections of Mary's household were her chapel and her chamber. The first one constituted a fine show of Spanish Catholic orthodox theologians; for example, her confessor Francisco de Córdoba was also a leading religious counsellor of Emperor Ferdinand I and took part on his behalf in the last session of the Council of Trent.⁹ Meanwhile, in Mary's chamber several ladies-in-waiting, from both Spain and Central Europe, found a place. Mary took full benefit of her role as patron and displayed an intense activity finding high-rank husbands for her ladies-in-waiting. Furthermore, she warranted those marriages through a generous dowry, which was paid by her brother Philip II.¹⁰ Thanks to this longstanding and discreet activity, three out of the four high officials of Rudolf II's household were married to former ladies-in-waiting of Empress Mary.¹¹

The familiar alliances and the sharing of patronage favoured a certain group conscience among these courtiers, who were characterised as zealous Catholics and loyal servers of both branches of the dynasty. Nevertheless, they did not refer to themselves as members of a faction because it was a discredited label, but as friends.¹² Apart from the Spanish patronage, other courtiers were regarded as «dependents» of the Pope,¹³ but the reality is that both groups tended to intertwine and that no other external patron was as generous and present as the Spanish King. The two other sovereigns continuously accredited in the imperial court were the Pope and the Republic of Venice, but their initiatives of patronage (courteous letters and gastronomic gifts) were very far from the vast array of honours and money granted by the Spanish King.¹⁴

⁹ Stefan Steinherz, ed., *Nuntius Delfino 1562 - 1563*, in *NBD*, II/3, 491-495; Klaus Ganzer, "Ein unbequemer Reformier am Rande des Konzils von Trient: Der Franziskaner Franziskus von Córdoba als Berater Kaiser Ferdinands I.," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 104/2 (1984): 309-347. In the chapel of Mary were also the composer Mateo Flecha and the Hebraist and lexicographer Bartolomé Valverde. Michael Zywiets, "Spanien, das Haus Habsburg und Prag: Las ensaladas de Flecha (Prag 1581) und ihr Kontext," *Anuario musical* 64 (2009): 47-56; Francisco Cantera Burgos, "Bartolomé Valverde y su desconocido léxico hebraico," in *Homenaje a Juan Prado* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1975), 607-643.

¹⁰ Bianca María Lindorfer, "Las redes familiares de la aristocracia austriaca y los procesos de transferencia cultural entre Madrid y Viena, 1550-1700," in *Las redes del imperio: élites sociales en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica, 1492-1714*, ed. Bartolomé Yun Casalilla (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2009), 265, 272-5.

¹¹ High Steward Adam von Dietrichstein married with Margarita Folch de Cardona, Lord Chamberlain Wolfgang Rumpf with María de Arco y Meneses, and Master of the Horse Claudio Trivulzio with Catalina Laso de Castilla. These women were, respectively, a Catalanian, an Italian and a Castilian, and born vassals of the Spanish King.

¹² Juan Manrique to Adam von Dietrichstein, Vienna, 4 November 1568, HHStA, SDK, 7/35, fol. 12. In this letter Jiri Pruskovsky, Alonso Gámiz, and Wratisslaw von Pernstein, noted members of the pro-Spanish group, are mentioned as common friends of the correspondents.

¹³ Valentino Florio to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Prague, 20 April 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 9

¹⁴ Cardinal Borromeo to nuncio Delfino, Rome, 22 August 1562, *NBD*, II/2, 110; *Relazion del Nobile homo S. Zuan Michiel Cavallier*, Venice, 22 July 1564, in Joseph Fiedler, ed., *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter über Deutschland und Österreich im sechzehnten Jahrhundert* (Wien: Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1870), 249.

Given this context, the success of the Spanish faction during the reign of Maximilian II is mostly witnessed beyond concrete actions, in the sphere of soft power. The active mediation of Empress Mary and her entourage allowed Maximilian II to maintain the image of a Catholic prince albeit his undeniable confessional heterodoxy, and thus the links with the Papacy were never broken.¹⁵ Furthermore, the majority of Maximilian and Mary's children received a Spanish education. Mary raised the two daughters, Anne and Isabella, as Spanish princesses, while four out of six male descendents were sent to the court of Madrid to learn the majestic style of their uncle Philip II.¹⁶ The underlining hope, that the next generation of the imperial family would be more attached to Spanish uses and interests than Maximilian II, was partially achieved.¹⁷

From 1564, Archdukes Rudolf (future Emperor Rudolf II), Ernest, Albert and Wenzel followed one another in Madrid. The dynastic presence was still more powerful between 1571 and 1580, when their sister Anne of Austria stayed in Spain as Philip II's fourth wife. The households of both the Archdukes and the Queen replicated the communication functions that Empress Mary's household developed in the Empire.¹⁸ These fluid contacts eased the contacts between Philip II and Maximilian II: the common interests and dependency were so high that the frequent moments of crisis never arrived to an open crisis and the image of dynastic harmony was reasonably kept alive. The conflicts derived from the conquest of Finale, the rebellion of the Low Countries and the attitude towards the Ottoman Empire were serious enough, but they were successfully channeled through Empress Mary and the pro-Spanish courtiers in Vienna together with their counterpart in Madrid.¹⁹

Notwithstanding, the cooperation was far from being idyllic. On the one hand, Philip II expected much more support from Maximilian II against the Dutch rebels; on the other hand, the Emperor fruitlessly demanded money for the crowning of Archduke Ernest King of Poland and military support against

¹⁵ Francisco de Córdoba to Philip II, Madrid, 30 May 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 43; Idem, Madrid, 13 July 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 41

¹⁶ The other two, Mathias and Maximilian, remained at the imperial court, but his uncle Philip II and his representatives no less monitored their progresses and inclinations. Count of Monteagudo to Gabriel de Zayas, Vienna, 13 April 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 23.

¹⁷ Rudolf II to Philip II, Prague, 27 January 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 167. This was especially the case of Archduke Albert, who developed almost all his career in the Spanish world. Luc Duerloo, *Dynasty and Piety: Archduke Albert (1598–1621) and Habsburg Political Culture in an Age of Religious Wars* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012).

¹⁸ Johann Khevenhüller to Maximilian II, Madrid, 17 December 1571, HHStA, SDK, 8/2, fol. 38; Ruiz de Azagra to Maximilian II, Madrid, 28 April 1574, HHStA, SDK, 9/7, fol. 7; Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Vienna, 14 April 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 27.

¹⁹ For the fief of Finale, see Empress Mary to Philip II, Vienna, 31 July 1571, in Juan Carlos Galende Díaz and Manuel Salamanca López, eds., *Epistolario de la emperatriz María de Austria* (Madrid: Nuevos Escritores, 2004), 219; Friedrich Edelmayer, *Maximilian II., Philipp II. und Reichsitalien* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1988), 83. For the conflicts with Florence, Marquis of Vélez to Philip II, 21 September 1575, AGS, E, leg. 653, n. 57. For Flanders, Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Regensburg, 24 October 1575, AGS, E, leg. 673, n. 78. For the Ottoman Empire, idem, Vienna, 14 April 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 27.

the Turks.²⁰ The sudden death of Maximilian II on 12 October 1576 paved the way to Rudolf II's succession. The new ruler was raised in Spain and appreciated Spanish culture and customs. Great expectations were laid upon him, the beginning of a golden age in the dynastic entente.

III. Hope and Despair: the Beginnings of Rudolf II (1576-1577)

In July 1577, some months after the accession to the throne of Rudolf II, Gabriel de Zayas, Philip II's secretary, encouraged the royal agent in Vienna, Flaminio Garnier, to report all the possible news on the imperial court. According to Zayas, for Philip II and his wife Anne of Austria «there is nowadays nothing in the world so cherished as the things coming from there».²¹ The first steps of Rudolf II were especially promising for the Spanish court. One of his first decisions as Emperor was to expel all the Protestant servers of the imperial household.²² Furthermore, the Spanish ambassador, Count of Monteagudo, stressed that the relationship between Rudolf and his mother Mary was excellent. Thanks to this, Monteagudo consulted her before Rudolf's audiences and agreed on how to put forward Philip II's instructions.²³

The new configuration of power seemed to be very favourable to Spanish interests. Foreign observers considered the appointments and task distribution in the Secret Council and the imperial household, which were regarded as the two decisive spaces of power. Three out of the four top officers of the imperial household (Dietrichstein, Rumpf, and Trivulzio) were renowned clients of Philip II and married to former Mary's ladies-in-waiting. The other was grand marshal Schwarzenberg, who was labelled as a good Catholic, but closer to the Duke of Bavaria. As happened during the reign of Maximilian II, the Dukes of Bavaria and the ministers linked to them counterbalanced the Spanish influence and eased an alternative Catholic alliance with the court of Munich.²⁴

In spite of the respectful image of the Secret Council as the supreme forum in policy-making, at times the most fruitful channels of influence were those articulated through the household. High Steward Dietrichstein refused to enter the Secret Council: he preferred to keep Rudolf's favour and direct communication without public exposure and bureaucratic responsibilities.²⁵

²⁰ Count of Monteagudo to Gabriel de Zayas, Vienna, 21 December 1575, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 1; Philip II to Johann Khevenhüller and Wolfgang Rumpf, Madrid, 23 December 1575, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 84.

²¹ «No tienen oy en el mundo cosa mas cara que lo que viene de ay.» Gabriel de Zayas to Flaminio Garnier, Madrid, 16 July 1577, AGS, E, leg. 680, n. 43.

²² Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Prague, 16 January 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 76. Actually, the expulsion was limited to top positions; in lower echelons Protestants were decreasing but still present. Jaroslava Hausenblasová, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II. Eine Edition der Hofstaatsverzeichnisse 1576-1612* (Prague: Artefactum, 2002), 115-117.

²³ Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Prague, 20 January 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 82.

²⁴ Idem, Prague, 16 January 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 77; Maximilian Lanzinner, "Geheime Räte und Berater Kaiser Maximilians II. (1564-1576)," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 102 (1994): 298, 301, 309-11.

²⁵ Dietrichstein «sempre sta alle orecchie di S. M. ne mai in alcuna occas.e l'abbandona, parendosi forse che q.ta strada far più che con q.ta altra.» Valentino Florio to Alfonso II,

Dietrichstein proved to be a key mediator for Philip II's initiatives, as in the case of the League of Landsberg's negotiation, an alliance of German Catholic princes to support his policy against the Dutch rebels. In this case, Dietrichstein helped speaking directly with Rudolf II and convincing his intimate friends Harrach and Pernstein, who were secret councillors and Spanish clients.²⁶

Dietrichstein and Pernstein appeared as the two more loyal and trusted pro-Spanish ministers. Their attachment with Empress Mary was so close that the Spanish ambassador Monteagudo assured that both men could replace him.²⁷ Actually, the support of these individuals, their families and clientele was crucial to create a dynastic infrastructure which would be hard to develop without their mediation. For example, when the Admiral of Castile arrived to the Empire in September 1577 as extraordinary ambassador of Philip II, Dietrichstein and Pernstein were in charge of advising him and lodging his retinue in their Vienna and Prague's palaces. Some months earlier, another representative of Philip II arrived, the Count of Galve, whose main merit was being the son-in-law of Dietrichstein.²⁸

Italian agents were especially heedful to the oscillations of Rudolf II's grace: Pernstein, a key element for Spanish policy, seemed to be displaced and near to retirement, while Harrach held a more solid position and the Spanish Crown was anxious to assure his commitment and fast in rewarding him with the Golden Fleece.²⁹ Notwithstanding, the new star in Rudolf's entourage was his future favourite, Wolfgang Rumpf, as discussed below.

Alongside the process of consolidation of the new elite around Rudolf II, a replacement in the Spanish representation was developing. The Count of Monteagudo had been the ambassador since 1570 and was anxious to return to Castile. His substitute, Juan de Borja, was delaying his departure from Spain and Empress Mary authorised Monteagudo to leave the imperial court without waiting for his successor. Aside from proving Mary's authoritative role in dynastic relations, this decision showed the preponderance of her particular interests: she conceded Monteagudo this long-desired permission in order to have a trustful advocate near to her brother Philip II.³⁰ After the death of Maximilian II, Mary's only will was retiring to Spain. She never integrated in the imperial *milieu* and believed that her mission had finished. Her position as Dowager Empress also meant a decreased ceremonial role: she lived her mourning almost in seclusion and depressed, while Rudolf II travelled without her across his new possessions to be recognised as sovereign. Mary settled in the Castle of Prague assisted by Khuen, Pruskovsky and Pernstein while

Duke of Ferrara, Prague, 2 March 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 2. See also Fiedler, *Relationen venetianischer Botschafter*, 372.

²⁶ Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Almazán, 13 July 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 114, fol. 3r.

²⁷ Idem, Prague, 2 January 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 74, fol. 2v.

²⁸ Flaminio Garnier to Gabriel de Zayas, Vienna, 20 October 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 31; Count of Monteagudo to idem, Vienna, 20 April 1576, AGS, E, leg. 675, n. 47, fol. 8r.

²⁹ Valentino Florio to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Prague, 16 March 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 4, fol. 3; Idem, 20 April 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 9.

³⁰ Renato Cato to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Prague, 12 January 1577, ASMo, Germania, 33, s. n.

Monteagudo and her servants, like her chaplain Juan de Espinosa, started to insist with Philip II that she would be allowed to return to her native Spain.³¹

With the absence of Mary and the retirement of Monteagudo, the quality of Philip II's interlocution dramatically decreased: near to Rudolf II remained only Flaminio Garnier, the secretary of the Spanish embassy. Due to his low profile and lack of autonomy, Garnier was not granted access to the Palace and was dependent on Dietrichstein's mediation. The most urgent necessities were for Flanders, where levies of German infantry were required, and Northern Italy, about the investiture of fiefs. In both cases, Dietrichstein acted as officious ambassador.³² The obvious problem was that Dietrichstein had conflicts of interest, especially in the Finale's crisis, and was unable to support fully Spanish interests. To overcome this limitation, Garnier began to rely on the younger Lord Chamberlain Wolfgang Rumpf, who was favoured by Rudolf II as well as closely attached to Philip II's service. As Garnier pointed out, Rumpf could exert pressure in the Secret Council through his uncle Harrach and «he was eager to being taken as proxy.»³³

The necessity of a constant and intense monitoring was undoubted, and this lack partially explains one of the most severe blows in dynastic relations: the secret flee of Archduke Matthias from the imperial court to lead the Dutch provinces, which had rebelled against Philip II. This scandalous episode happened in October 1577 while no official representative of the Spanish King resided next to the Emperor.³⁴ The scandal was enormous and the lack of a powerful Spanish representation led to acts of mockery and revenge in Vienna against Philip II's prepotency.³⁵ Soon thereafter, the extraordinary ambassador Admiral of Castile arrived, who Garnier was anxiously waiting to offer a proper offended response.³⁶ According to the official version, only Mathias's closest brother, Archduke Maximilian, knew about this plan, but mistrust against Rudolf II spread at Madrid. This critical occasion served as a test bench of loyalty: Empress Mary reacted with authentic despair and Dietrichstein hastened to report Philip II what was going on. Rudolf II planned sending either Dietrichstein or Rumpf to Madrid to justify his innocence, but at the end, the traditional message was imposed: the misunderstandings between the courts were due to bad counsels of envious

³¹ Count of Monteagudo to Philip II, Genoa, 29 May 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 88; Fray Juan de Espinosa to Gabriel de Zayas, Prague, 24 April 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 4.

³² Flaminio Garnier to Gabriel de Zayas, Olomouc, 4 July 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 112; Philip II to Adam von Dietrichstein, San Lorenzo, 15 August 1577, AGS, E, leg. 680, n. 115.

³³ Rumpf «me parece mas entremetido y desseoso q se valgan del, como porque puede mucho con el Baron de Harach su tio.» Flaminio Garnier to Marquis of Ayamonte, Vienna, 19 October 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 33, fol. 2v.

³⁴ Howard Louthan, *The Quest for Compromise: Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 145-151. The image of omnipotence of Philip II was so developed that the Ferrarese agent was sure that Mathias's adventure was impossible without the King's approval. Valentino Florio to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Vienna, 6 October 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 33.

³⁵ Idem, Vienna, 2 November 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 39, fol. 2v.

³⁶ Flaminio Garnier to Gabriel de Zayas, Vienna, 4 October 1577, AGS, E, 679, n. 27.

imperial ministers.³⁷ At the end of 1577, the new ordinary ambassador Juan de Borja arrived with a clear commitment: to win back the Emperor's counsellors and courtiers.

IV. A defective Tandem: Borja and Mary

On 6 December 1577, the ambassador Juan de Borja was approaching Vienna and a few kilometres before the capital a friendly group received him: Dietrichstein, Rumpf, Trivulzio, and other courtiers with their wives greeted the new representative «and all of them showed great affection to Your Majesty's service».³⁸ The main problem endured: the situation in the Low Countries was almost out of control, the brother of Rudolf was supposed to lead the rebels and the imperial help was essential. Notwithstanding, the Emperor fully disappointed Philip II's expectations. Rudolf stayed seven years at the Spanish court (1564-1571) and his uncle Philip II expected to forge with him a bond of trust and loyalty, by contrast with the tortuous personal relation Philip had maintained with Rudolf's father, Maximilian II. Surprisingly, Maximilian II's times were remembered as a better phase in dynastic relations. Rudolf was an enthusiastic follower of Spanish fashion and culture and had no xenophobic attitude towards Spaniards: the delicate point was his fierce defence of his authority, which he saw menaced by his overbearing uncle Philip II, and his melancholic humour, which worsened along the years until his final secluded life of manic depression.³⁹

Rudolf showed to be an ill and unreliable individual and his mother acknowledged to have lost all influence upon him.⁴⁰ Thus, the main effort of Philip II and Juan de Borja was to surround him of trustful servers and counsellors. The Dutch crisis proved that the Spanish faction was strong in the high ranks of the imperial household and relied on the committed services of Empress Mary, Dietrichstein, Rumpf and Pernstein. Their actions, however, were largely ineffective as long as in the Secret Council and the imperial chancellery, where actual decisions were taken and enforced, would survive «disinclined» ministers. The question of winning the will of the ministers arose in 1577: Philip II asked for concrete measures, avoiding the payment of regular pensions because «they will receive it as an annuity and therefore will attend my issues with less care».⁴¹

³⁷ Adam von Dietrichstein to Philip II, Vienna, 4 October 1577, AGS, E, leg. 679, n. 42-43; Valentino Florio to Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, Vienna, 14 December 1577, ASMo, Germania, 34, n. 47; Philip II to Juan de Borja, Madrid, 20 December 1577, AGS, E, leg. 680, n. 144.

³⁸ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Vienna, 14 December 1577, AGS, E, 680, n. 87, fol. 3r. "For Borja's embassy in general, see Vojtěch Kroužil, "Diplomatické mise dvou větví habsburské dynastie 1577-1583" (Master Thesis, University Masaryk of Brno, 2010)."

³⁹ María J. Rodríguez-Salgado, "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," in *La dinastía de los Austria: las relaciones entre la Monarquía Católica y el Imperio*, ed. José Martínez Millán and Rubén González Cuerva (Madrid: Polifemo, 2011), I, 349-351.

⁴⁰ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Prague, 13 May 1579, AGS, E, leg. 687, s. n., fos 1v-2v; Guillén de San Clemente to idem, Prague, 8 August 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 94.

⁴¹ «Es mejor darles algo de quando en quando porque con aquella esperança andaran mas finos, que teniendo la pension haran quenta que es juro de por vida y acudiran con menos cuydado a lo que me tocare.» Philip II to Juan de Borja, Madrid, 24 December 1577, AGS, E,

Borja's course followed the tracks of a 1572's precedent: the plan of gratifications for ensuring the Emperor's approval for the Spanish acquisition of the imperial fief of Finale, in the Liguria coast. In both cases, it was evident that the aristocratic style of management followed by Empress Mary and the Spanish ambassadors favoured noblemen of the imperial court but marginalised lawyer ministers. In the Secret Council, the closest to Philip II's service was Harrach, also the most ennobled, while the others were good Catholics but not especially inclined towards the Spanish branch of the dynasty. Among the secretaries and officers, the tendency was to reward the vice-chancellor as key of the system. This style could work in the times of authoritative vice-chancellors as Georg Sigismund Seld (1559-1565), but not in a transition period like the one between the interim Johann Baptist Weber and Siegmund Vieheuser.⁴² In contrast with the aristocratic image of gravity, these ministers held a negative reputation of venality. Juan de Borja had to enter a reserved but fierce competition to attract them, against other princes with competing interests at the imperial court, namely the Marquis of Finale and the Duke of Florence.⁴³

Borja shared Monteagudo and Philip II's negative vision about pensioning such unreliable individuals and preferred occasional payments after positive services. According to him, the only one deserving a fixed payment was Juan Saravia, valet of Rudolf II. Saravia could be trusted because he was a Spanish vassal and a low rank member of the imperial household. Leaning on servers of Rudolf's chamber would become one of the main trends during this reign.⁴⁴ Juan de Borja was trying to react to a generational crisis: Empress Mary was secluded and obsessed with a retirement in Spain, Dietrichstein also desired to abandon the management of affairs and returning to his lands, and the Spanish embassy resented the lack of experienced officials in his embassy. Apart from Flaminio Garnier, Borja did not count with German experts and asked for them in the Low Countries.⁴⁵

leg. 680, n. 142, fol. 2v. See also Lothar Gross, *Die Geschichte der deutschen Reichshofkanzlei von 1559 bis 1806* (Wien: Selbstverlag des Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs, 1933), 5-22.

⁴² Juan de Borja to Philip II, Bratislava, 5 April 1578, AGS, E, leg. 685, s. n.; *Lista de los ministros del Emperador y oficiales de su cancellería a los quales parece se podrá o habrá de dar alguna gratificación de parte de su Md. Catca.*, s. d., AGS, E, leg. 685, s. n.; Ernst Laubach, *Der Reichsvizekanzler Georg Sigmund Seld im Dienst der Kaiser Karl V. und Ferdinand I.* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus, 2010), 60-61, 69-70.

⁴³ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Vienna, 21 December 1577, AGS, E, leg. 680, n. 90, fos 2r-2v; Idem, Prague, 14 May 1579, AGS, E, leg. 687, s. n., fol. 2r.

⁴⁴ Idem, Bratislava, 5 April 1578, AGS, E, leg. 685, s. n., fol. 2r. Juan Saravia de la Riba († ante 1596) was *ayuda de cámara* of Rudolf II since his stay in Spain. In 1571, Saravia joined Rudolf to the Empire, where he married Leonor de Guzmán, lady-in-waiting of Empress Mary. In spite of Borja's request, Saravia lamented in 1583 that he had not received yet any reward. Valerianus Meysztowicz, ed., *Elementa ad fontium editiones VIII. Documenta Polonica ex Archivo Generali Hispaniae in Simancas. I Pars* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Polonicum Romae, 1968), 77-79; Ruiz de Azagra to Maximilian II, Madrid, 26 January 1572, HHStA, SDK, 7/32, fol. 26r; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Vienna, 21 June 1583, AGS, E, leg. 691, s. n.

⁴⁵ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Prague, 27 February 1580, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 53; Idem, Prague, 17 September 1580, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 68.

Meanwhile, a new solution was searched for the conflict in Flanders: the implication of the Imperial princes and the peace mediation of Rudolf II through the Conference of Cologne (1579).⁴⁶ This failed negotiation was encouraged in Madrid by pro-imperial ministers (the ambassador Khevenhüller, the High Steward of the Queen Marquis of Vélez, and the former ambassador in Vienna, Monteagudo) while Juan de Borja tried to include in the imperial delegation in Cologne a loyal pro-Spanish minister. Secret counsellor Harrach was opportunely appointed, but he never travelled to the conference, which ended without success.⁴⁷ Notwithstanding, Philip II was well aware of the necessity of powerful allies in the imperial space to keep the Low Countries. This warfront became his first priority after securing the throne of Portugal in 1581. Once the Portuguese Courts of Tomar were under control, he announced his will to concede new collars for the prestigious Order of the Golden Fleece. The negotiations developed between 1581 and 1585, and an important imperial representation was included. Philip II granted this honour to his nephews Rudolf II and Archduke Ernest, and to his cousin Archduke Charles of Styria. Furthermore, the Spanish King was eager to accept the recommendations of Rudolf and Empress Mary and enlarge the circle with the allegedly most important aristocrats of Austria and Bohemia: Leonhard von Harrach and Wilhelm von Rosenberg.⁴⁸

V. The lonely Ambassador: the new Management of Guillén de San Clemente

In spite of her relative isolation, Empress Mary was still a crucial mediator for Spanish interests in the Empire. After five years of insistent pleas, in 1581 both Rudolf II and Philip II agreed to her request of returning to Spain. The question was solved due to the premature death of Queen Anne of Austria on 26 October 1580. Philip II remained widower in charge of his minor children, thus he needed his sister Mary in case of a regency, to substitute him in the government of the recently acquired crown of Portugal, and to mediate for the marriages of the next generation of the dynasty. Mary travelled to Spain in the summer of 1581 escorted by a large retinue under the direction of Juan de Borja. The ambassador also desired to return to Spain and linked his fortune to Mary's, whom he served since then as her High Steward.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Peter Limm, *The Dutch Revolt 1559 – 1648* (London: Routledge, 2014), 52.

⁴⁷ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Prague, 24 February 1579, AGS, E, leg. 687, s. n.; Idem, Prague, 23 February 1579, AGS, E, leg. 687, s. n.

⁴⁸ Philip II to Juan de Borja, Tomar, 14 May 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 182; Idem, Lisboa, 25 September 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 188; Alfonso Ceballos-Escalera y Gila, ed., *La insigne Orden del Toisón de Oro* (Madrid: Real Sociedad Económica Segoviana, 2000), 312-317; Marek, *La embajada española*, 64, 71-72.

⁴⁹ Rubén González Cuerva, "Anne, Margaret and Marianne of Austria: Queens of Spain, Archduchesses of Austria and dynastic Links," in *Kaiserinnen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Katrin Keller and Matthias Schnettger (Wien: Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung, 2015), in press. For the correspondence of Borja as High Steward of Mary, see BL, Add. Ms, 28426-7.

Borja and Mary's anxiety for leaving Prague led to a lumbering transition similar to Monteagudo's retirement in 1577. On this occasion, as Philip II did not find a suitable ordinary ambassador, an interim representative was sent in the meantime. Borja advised against such a provisional solution, even more if the appointee was an inexperienced Spaniard: he preferred a well-rooted member of the Spanish faction as the Castilian Juan Manrique, brother-in-law of the secret counsellor and chancellor of Bohemia Wratisslaw von Pernstein.⁵⁰ Borja was not listened to: his successor would be Guillén de San Clemente y Centelles, a Catalan knight whose mission was successively prorogued until his death in 1608.

San Clemente arrived to Prague on 13 July 1581 as Borja was finishing the preparations for leaving the city and found no time to properly instruct and advise his successor. San Clemente was in despair: he soon realised the difficulty of negotiating at the imperial court especially since Mary's absence meant the curtailing of the Spanish system. The remaining strength was not the embassy, where only two secretaries stayed, but the network of affectionate courtiers led by Dietrichstein, Rumpf and Pernstein. San Clemente faced a grave challenge, which is to say to efficiently coordinate such a group without the authority and backing of Empress Mary.⁵¹

The day after the departure of Mary and her household, San Clemente found himself with a slight idea of the political line to follow, and neither enough money to enhance his authority nor the formal title of ambassador, which had negative ceremonial repercussions.⁵² San Clemente encountered the same limitations as Borja: Dietrichstein and Rumpf were his safest supporters but they were out of the Secret Council, where the general political decisions were taken. Only the third column of the faction, Pernstein, was a member of the Secret Council, but paradoxically had to moderate his positions in order not to become more suspicious to his peers in the council. Furthermore, Pernstein was old and frequently ill; he was progressively retiring and died on 27 October 1582.⁵³ In this moment of necessity, San Clemente tried to please Dietrichstein mediating actively for his children claims of graces.⁵⁴

Philip II's order of raising a regiment of Bohemian sappers for Flanders in early 1582 offers a good example of San Clemente's early management of affairs. Without previous experience on these commissions, he obtained Rudolf's permission thanks to Dietrichstein and Rumpf's pressure. Thereafter, San Clemente successfully executed the order because Wilhelm von

⁵⁰ Juan de Borja to Philip II, Prague, 27 April 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 130.

⁵¹ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague, 25 July 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 90; Idem to Juan de Zúñiga, Prague, 25 July 1581, in *Correspondencia de Guillen de San Clemente, embajador en Alemania de Felipe II y III*, ed. marqués de Ayerbe (Zaragoza: La Derecha, 1892), 292.

⁵² Guillén de San Clemente to Juan de Idiáquez, Prague, 17 October 1581, AGS, E, leg. 688, n. 111; Idem to Philip II, Vienna, 16 January 1582, AGS, E, 689, n. 4, fos 2r-2v.

⁵³ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Vienna, 2 November 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 95; Idem, Vienna, 23 November 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 94, fol. 1v.

⁵⁴ Idem to Juan de Idiáquez, Bratislava, 6 February 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 29; Idem to Philip II, Vienna, 3 April 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 165.

Rosenberg, High Burgrave of Bohemia and Pernstein's ally, fully assisted him.⁵⁵

The first important task he had to deal with was the Imperial Diet of Augsburg of 1582. At the end, San Clemente defined this assembly as a ruthless market of pensions and bribery in which the French side of the Duke of Alençon took full advantage.⁵⁶ The ambassador struggled to maintain and finance a good staff of informers and agents in the Empire to improve the management of imperial affairs. He searched for a new German secretary for the court of Madrid, remunerated the Bavarian counsellor Ludolf Halver and attracted Johann Barvitijs.⁵⁷ This last case is a good example of the patient and efficient work of San Clemente: Barvitijs, a loyal Dutch vassal, was first employed as Spanish informer in Cologne (1582). In 1588, Barvitijs entered Rudolf II's service as his Latin secretary. After a distinguished career in which he gained Rudolf's trust and kept being San Clemente's informer, he was promoted to the Secret Council in 1608.⁵⁸

VI. Conclusions

Without Mary of Austria, San Clemente had lost many subtle means of mediation and more extensive tools of patronage through the integration in the Empress's household. The ambassador needed a privileged interlocutor with Rudolf II, someone destined to concentrate the biggest share of the Spanish graces. Dietrichstein seemed to be the ideal candidate at the beginning of the 1580s and consolidated his leading position in the Spanish faction. However, as Dietrichstein grew old and Rudolf II focused his favour on Wolfgang Rumpf, this server became the main protégé of Philip II. Around 1590, Rumpf moved that step forward that Dietrichstein refused to take, by passing from household servant to minister. This double role homologated him with a favourite, a condition Philip II and San Clemente had supported and partially promoted. Counting on a propitious favourite seemed a dream had come true, but soon thereafter became a nightmare: Rumpf had conquered an autonomous position and, while continuing to demand Spanish patronage, he followed a more independent political line. The rest of ministers resented San Clemente's favour towards Rumpf and showed more reluctant to Spanish interests.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Vienna, 6 March 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 35; Idem, Vienna, 27 March 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 49; Gonzalo de Redondo to Guillén de San Clemente, Prague, 26 April 1582, AGS, E, 690, n. 19.

⁵⁶ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Augsburg, 8 August 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 114.

⁵⁷ Philip II to Guillén de San Clemente, Lisbon, 14 June 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 71; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, 1582, AGS, E, leg. 690, n. 22; Idem, Vienna, 17 September 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 80; Friedrich Edelmayer, *Söldner und Pensionäre: das Netzwerk Philipps II. im Heiligen Römischen Reich* (Wien: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 2002), 136-137, 141-142.

⁵⁸ Philip II to Guillén de San Clemente, Lisbon, 16 July 1582, AGS, E, leg. 689, n. 77; Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Vienna, 4 October 1583, AGS, E, leg. 691, n. 12; Baltasar de Zúñiga to Philip III, Prague, 25 May 1611, AGS, E, leg. 2497, n. 60.

⁵⁹ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip II, Prague, 19 January 1593, AGS, E, leg. 700, n. 41; Idem to Juan de Idiáquez, Graz, 26 April 1593, AGS, E, leg. 700, n. 76, fol. 1v.

The other troubling factor was Rudolf II's erratic attitude. Along the 1590s, it was evident that his mental illness meant a serious burden for the Empire's government and the dynasty's continuity. While in Madrid, Mary of Austria attempted to keep her role as a match-maker, but Rudolf's lack of support and unwillingness to accept the conditions for marrying his cousin Isabella, Philip II's daughter, caused his final isolation.⁶⁰ Rudolf's paranoia against his ministers, who he blamed to serve the Spanish King rather than himself, in part led to Rumpf dismissal in 1599. Due to the Emperor's complicated communication with his councils, the imperial chamber remained as the most effective space of political communication, and San Clemente resorted to gratify the lower servers who actually could mediate with Rudolf.⁶¹ The ambassador proved to be flexible and attentive to adapt his patronage capacities to the voluble context of the Prague court.

⁶⁰ Johann von Trautson to Empress Mary, Prague, 1586, HHStA, SDK, 11/4, fol. 83; Rodríguez-Salgado, "Philip II's relations", 386-390.

⁶¹ Guillén de San Clemente to Philip III, Prague, 19 August 1600, AGS, E, leg. 706, s. n., fol. 2v; Ayerbe, *Correspondencia de Guillen de San Clemente*, 315-399; Heinz Noflatscher, "Regiment aus der Kammer? Einflußreiche Kleingruppen am Hof Rudolfs II.," in *Der Fall des Günstlings. Hofparteien in Europa vom 13. bis zum 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini (Stuttgart: Jan Thorbecke, 2004), 216-229.