

*Military Political Identity and
Reformism in Independent Mexico*
*An analysis of the Memorias de Guerra
(1821-1855)*

Will Fowler

a mi padre
W.S. Fowler
que me contaba las hazafías
del Duque de Wellington
cuando tenía yo tan sólo tres años

MILITARY POLITICAL
IDENTITY
AND REFORMISM IN
INDEPENDENT MEXICO

AN ANALYSIS OF THE
MEMORIAS DE GUERRA
(1821-1855)

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Preface

Since I started to study the early national period in Mexico, from independence in 1821 to the fall of General Antonio López de Santa Anna's last government in 1855, what has become obvious to me is the absence of a clear ideologically-based interpretation for this period. To quote David Brading (*The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, (Cambridge, 1985), p.70), this period 'awaits a historian capable of tracing the intersection of ideology and constituency and able to delineate the full range of its complexities and contradictions'. It has been this need, to understand the thinking behind all of the movements, actions and conflicts which gave this period its much exaggerated fame for being an era of instability or even an 'age of chaos', which has led me to focus on the ideological discourse and behaviour of some of its politicians and institutions.

This study does not aim to provide an ideological understanding of the events which shook Mexico for three decades following the achievement of independence. Such a study would require a far more extensive analysis. Its main objective is, however, to focus on the political identity of one of the most influential institutions of the period, thus providing a new insight into the more general overview of Mexican political thought in its early national period. It is evident from the title that this study does not even seek to interpret the ideology of the entire regular army. Its parameters are far more limited: it is essentially concerned with the beliefs and the behaviour of the military élite, especially the beliefs and the behaviour of those high-ranking officers who served as Ministers of War between 1822 and 1852. As a result, the conclusions which are reached must not be taken to be necessarily representative of the regular army at large. They strictly refer to those individuals, who, belonging to a privileged minority within the army, developed throughout these years a series of political beliefs, which can be perceived to have been shared by most of them. However, although the main focus of this study is clearly limited, by concentrating on the views of the Mexican army's decision-makers, it does provide a more general interpretation of what the political orientation of the army was – even if the army was characterised by its largely heterogeneous nature, highlighting what the army's *jefes* were seeking to achieve.

In a move away from recent trends in the historiography which have tended to argue that the regular army either had no ideology or contained as many ideologies as there were in society at large, this study shows that amongst the members of the military élite, specifically amongst those high-ranking officers who acted as Ministers of War during this period, there was a common political agenda; and that this political agenda, whilst retaining what could, in very general terms, be deemed to be a conservative/traditionalist view of society with a strong corporate interest, was, above all, of a deeply reformist character. Such a thesis is defined in four separate, yet interrelated, focal-points of analysis. Thus, this study consists of an analysis of the existing historiography on the political role of the army; an analysis of those issues which prove that the

predominant views remain unsatisfactory and misleading; an analysis of the reforms which were proposed by the Ministers of War, namely, those which were advocated by General José María Tornel y Mendivil; and, finally, a concluding analysis of the views which were generally upheld by most of the Ministers of War. I hope to demonstrate that the military élite did uphold, as a class, institution or caste, a strong common sense of political identity, and that this, in turn, was of a committed reformist nature, so that future studies in political history of the Mexican early national period will cease to view the military either as an unpredictable force of chaos or as a purely cynical and individualistic institution drenched in rampant predatory praetorianism.

Military Political Identity and Reformism in Independent Mexico: An Analysis of the *Memorias De Guerra* (1821-1855)

The Importance of the Military in Independent Mexico: Four Interpretations of Military Political Behaviour

The importance of the military in the political life of Mexico following the end of the War of Independence in 1821 cannot be stressed enough. In the period which has come to be known as the 'age of Santa Anna', and which can be seen to cover the years 1821 to 1855, twenty-five individuals served at one point or another as president of the Republic. Of these twenty-five only seven were civilians. Moreover, four of these seven were only President for a matter of days or, at most, a couple of weeks.¹

It is, therefore, a truism to say that following independence Mexico was governed (or misgoverned) by a number of high-ranking officers who had emerged in the eleven-year war against Spain (1810-1821). Regardless of whether they had fought for or against independence prior to the Plan of Iguala, the military became the arbiters of Mexico's destiny. To use Edwin Lieuwen's words, 'the collapse of Spanish authority (...) ushered in an era of predatory militarism'.²

Eighteen different generals rose to power in thirty-four years, with individuals such as General Antonio López de Santa Anna becoming president on eleven separate occasions. The main events of the period such as the uprising of La Acordada in 1828, the revolt of Jalapa in 1829, that of Veracruz in 1832, the Triangular revolt of 1841 or General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga's uprising of 1845, to name only a few, were led and fought out by the military and the military were the main players. Walter Little estimates that Mexico witnessed sixteen successful *golpes de estado* during these years, having the highest rate of military intervention in politics in the whole of the Latin American continent after Peru (coming second by only one coup).³

¹ José María Bocanegra (18-23 December 1829), Pedro Vélez (23-31 December 1829), Valentín Gómez Farias (30 March – 16 May 1833; 3 – 18 June 1833; 5 July – 27 October 1833; 16 December 1833 – 24 April 1834; 23 December 1846 -21 March 1847), José Justo Corro (27 February 1836 – 19 April 1837), Javier Echeverría (22 September – 10 October 1841), Manuel de la Peña y Peña (26 September – 13 November 1847; 8 January – 3 June 1848) and Juan Bautista Ceballos (6 January – 8 February 1853).

² Edwin Lieuwen, *Arms and Politics in Latin America* (New York, 1961), p. 17.

³ Walter Little, *Military Power in Latin America: An Overview* (Liverpool, 1986), p. 3. These figures serve to indicate the extent to which the military intervened in Mexico in comparison to the rest of Latin America. Evidently, the reasons for these

However, although the involvement of the military in the politics of the period was dominant and overpowering,⁴ scant attention has actually been given to the political nature or even the ideology of the army at the time.⁵ The interpretations that exist tend to support what can be synthesised into four different, although not altogether opposed, views about the political resolve of the army, and three of these are based on the belief that the army, like Santa Anna, did not have any real political ideology. For the sake of definition, these four interpretations can be conveyed with the following headings: (1) the rise of predatory praetorianism; (2) the conditions of the military: the need for regular pay and secure employment as the cause for intervention; (3) the army at the service of the politicians, and (4) the army as a reflection of the beliefs upheld in society.

The Rise of Predatory Praetorianism

The classical (and perhaps still the most popular) view⁶ is that the military had no ideology and that the different caudillos or officers merely intervened to further their careers.⁷ The sudden absence of a King, to whom the military had traditionally given their absolute loyalty,⁸ which came about as a result of the

interventions not only differed from one another within Mexico during this period, as will be seen further on, but there were also different political and historical backgrounds to the uprisings in comparison to Peru. It is not the intention of this study to compare the different political contexts of Mexico and Peru in terms of, for example, whether more *golpes* were led by Royalist officers than revolutionary chieftains, or whether the military intervened to a lesser or greater extent as an autonomous entity in one country or another. Although such a comparison certainly merits an article in its own right, the use of Little's figures in this study simply illustrates the extent to which the military played a fundamental role in the politics of independent Mexico.

⁴ It must not be forgotten that a very high percentage of high ranking officers were actively involved in the politics of the period, working as deputies, senators, ministers, etc. Moreover, the existence of the *comandancias generales* and the power which was vested in them also meant that the army had a very significant influence over the civilian prefects at a provincial and local level.

⁵ The notable exception is Frank N. Samponaro, 'The Political Role of the Army in Mexico', unpubl PhD Diss, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1974.

⁶ See José María Luis Mora, *México y sus revoluciones* (Mexico, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 92, 120, 351-77, and by the same author, *Obras Sueltas* (Mexico, 1963), pp. 71-72, 549-56.

⁷ Lieuwen, for instance, argues that 'undisciplined, ambitious local chieftains vied for supreme power', with politics becoming subjected to 'the whims of army-officer politicians who ruled by the sword, perverted justice, and pillaged the treasury', Lieuwen, *Arms and Politics in Latin America*, p. 17.

⁸ According to Archer 'although several units went over to the rebel side (at the beginning of the war of independence), the great majority of the regular and provincial forces remained loyal'. Christon Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico, 1760-1810* (Albuquerque, 1977), p. 299. For an account, albeit a revisionist one, of a highly

French occupation of Spain in 1808, accelerated the process by which the army became increasingly insubordinate to the interim authorities. The state of emergency created by the war of independence further granted the different *comandantes generales* greater political power. By the time General Agustín de Iturbide proclaimed the Plan of Iguala (24 February 1821) which brought the war to an end, the army commanders were not willing to relinquish their power. Moreover, the moment Iturbide became Emperor Agustín I, on 21 May 1822, preventing a European monarch from having access to the Mexican throne as had been stipulated in Iguala and later in the Treaties of Córdoba (24 August 1821), he set the precedent by which anybody, as long as they could secure all forms of promotions to the troops, could, through the means of a *pronunciamiento*⁹ or a coup, rise to power. What emerged as a result was a military class made up of ambitious officers who believed that if they conspired well enough and established the right kind of contacts and allegiances, they could one day become president themselves. As the last viceroy of Peru, General Joaquín de la Pezuela, faced by the same lust for power among the officers who overthrew him, lamented:

Having become accustomed in Spain to revolutions and to overthrowing their leaders and to disobeying the King (...) they were responsible for all kinds of upheavals. Turmoil and ungodliness together with insubordination were even more prominent among the leaders than among the soldiers. Each one of them believed that he was capable of ruling an army and even a kingdom.¹⁰

The classical view that independent Mexico was dominated by predatory praetorianism develops this notion that the military were an untamed, irresponsible, self-motivated and unpredictable force, by further arguing that the different generals, colonels and officers used civilian politics to serve their own ends. Although John Johnson's interpretation could be deemed simplistic and dated, it illustrates the essential beliefs of the classical view very clearly:

Battles transformed leaders into heroes, heroes into politicians, and fighting forces into political parties. The land was infested with men of

politically motivated Royalist Officer who became the effective ruler of Jalisco for a decade (1810-1821), see the depiction of Brigadier José de la Cruz's activities in Nueva Galicia in Archer, 'Politicization of the army of New Spain during the War of Independence, 1810-1821', in J.E. Rodríguez O. (ed.), *The Evolution of the Mexican Political System* (Wilmington, 1993).

⁹ For a clear definition of what a *pronunciamiento* consisted of, what it entailed and what it generally had as its main purpose, see Stanley G. Payne, *Ejército y sociedad en la España liberal, 1808-1936* (Madrid, 1977), pp. 27-28

¹⁰ Quoted in Marqués de Rozalejo, *El Conde de Cheste* (Madrid, 1935), pp. 24-25.

predatory egotism who sought public office for concrete and personal gain. Once in office they did not have to test their avowed political beliefs, because public opinion did not exist and power, not doctrine, was decisive.¹¹

It is within this school of thought that the figure of Antonio López de Santa Anna appears as the archetypal predatory praetorian. As John Lynch argues, 'Santa Anna did not have a policy or a political party to express it. So he allowed the politicians their space and waited for the next step'.¹² Furthermore, 'he did not subscribe to any ideology, conservative, liberal, federal or radical (...). He moved with the times and according to circumstances, to obtain the advantages which this gave him'.¹³ Santa Anna, like the other generals used the different parties, changed sides indiscriminately, and upheld no political values of notable consistence in order to rise to power. In the succinct and expressive words of Enrique Krauze, 'the old military class had done whatever it had pleased with the country since 1821'.¹⁴

Pay and Employment Conditions

Following on from this interpretation of the military, there is the view favoured by economists that the military, devoid of any political beliefs, rebelled time and again in the hope of obtaining regular pay and secure employment.¹⁵ In other words the rank and file followed their leaders and joined any revolt which might improve their condition with a chance of regular pay, promotion, and even some clothes to wear. As the popular saying of the period proclaimed, 'when salaries are paid, revolutions fade'.¹⁶ A perfect example of this is the way

¹¹ John J. Johnson, *The Military and Society in Latin America* (Stanford, 1964), p. 38. Timothy Anna argues that scholarship has failed to understand the period precisely because it has been subjected to this classical view which he defined as the 'chaos school', the 'disintegration school', and the 'caudillo school'. T.E. Anna, 'Demystifying Early Nineteenth Century Mexico', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* vol. 9, no. 1 (Winter, 1993).

¹² John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800-1850* (Oxford, 1992), p. 321.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁴ Enrique Krauze, *Siglo de Caudillos: Biografía Política de México, 1810-1910* (Barcelona, 1994), p. 230.

¹⁵ E. Christiansen illustrates very convincingly how reductions in troop numbers, redundancy and the difficulties that the different administrations had in actually paying and feeding the army in Spain, between 1800 and 1854, all played significant roles in turning the army into a praetorian interventionist force. See Christiansen, *The Origins of Military Power in Spain, 1800-1854* (Oxford, 1967).

¹⁶ See Donald Fithian Stevens, *Origins of Instability in Early Republican Mexico* (Durham and London, 1991), p. 10. The original line goes as follows, 'cuando los sueldos se pagan, las revoluciones se apagan'.

the army turned against Iturbide in 1823. General José María Tornel,¹⁷ Santa Anna's loyal friend throughout the period, Minister of War on six separate occasions, and someone who was perfectly aware of the importance of pleasing the troops each time Santa Anna rose to power, Tornel believed that 'the Empire fell because the immortal Iturbide was unable to pay the wages of the soldiers he had just led to victory'.¹⁸ As a popular song of the period stated:

I am a soldier of Iturbide,
I wear the Three Guarantees,
I patrol barefoot
And I fast everyday.¹⁹

Even Joel Poinsett, who was to become the American Minister Plenipotentiary in 1825, jotted down prophetically in his notes, after meeting Iturbide on a previous visit to Mexico, that as long as the Emperor could afford to pay and reward the military he would survive, but that the moment he ran out of money they would overthrow him.²⁰

The theory that the financial condition of the army determined whether they intervened against the government or remained loyal to the administration in office, regardless of political belief or ideology, is certainly well documented. In contrast, an example of how the regular army defended the government at a time of economic expansion can be seen in 1832. As the then Minister of War, General José Antonio Facio stated in his Annual Ministerial Report:

(the) corps in general were nothing more (...) than a few cadres of armed people, with no discipline, no subordination, no morality, and many of them did not even have clothes, weapons or horses; however, in the last year the different corps have striven to increase their force as much as possible; those belonging to the cavalry have horses, and these together with those belonging to the infantry are, in their majority, brilliantly dressed, armed and equipped with all that is necessary; both their instruction and their discipline have made considerable progress;

¹⁷ For more on Tornel see Will Fowler, 'José María Tornel y Mendivil, Mexican General/Politician (1794-1853)', Unpubl. PhD Dissertation, University of Bristol, 1994. Carmen Vázquez Mantecón has also written a bibliographical study of Tornel which is due out in 1997, and is to be published by UNAM.

¹⁸ José María Tornel y Mendivil, *Manifestación presentada a la cámara de senadores por el General Tornel, Apoderado de las diputaciones de cosecheros de tabaco de las ciudades de Orizava y Jalapa* (Mexico, 1841), p. 6.

¹⁹ Krauze, *Siglo de Caudillos*, p. 111. In the original: 'Soy soldado de Iturbide,/visto las tres garantías,/ hago las guardias descalzo/ y ayuno todos los días'.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

in each corps there is a conscious effort to ensure that there is subordination and that the ordinances and the current laws are strictly abided by; they are taught morality, love to the service, valour and patriotism.²¹

As Barbara Tenenbaum points out, under the Presidency of General Anastasio Bustamante (1830-1832), '\$10,450,251 were spent on the army alone, the largest sum registered in the history of the Republic until then'.²² Evidence that Facio, under the Bustamante-Alamán administration of 1830-32, succeeded in satisfying the needs of the troops is that they remained loyal to the government against Santa Anna's *impulso de Veracruz*. In fact, in the summer of 1832, Santa Anna had to overthrow General Anastasio Bustamante with the sole help of the civic militias.²³ The dialectic which was established between the political roles of the regular army and the civic militias will be looked at further on.

To quote Carmen Vázquez Mantecón, 'the duration of the governments depended on the loyalty of the military, and this in turn depended on a regular pay and the concession of multiple privileges'.²⁴ A French general, on seeing that the Spanish regular army gave assistance to the French authorities against the Spanish people during the famous Madrid rising of 2 May, stated 'Toutes les troupes espagnoles se réunissent a ceux qui les payent'.²⁵ According to this interpretation this was certainly applicable to Mexico.

The Army at the Service of the Politicians

An interpretation which is far more subtle than that of the rise of predatory praetorianism, and which avoids the simplistic generalisation which is implicit in the belief that the military's motivations were exclusively those of attaining power, whatever the cost, is the one which has as its premise the belief that it was in fact civilian politicians who invited the intervention of the armed forces. This view does not necessarily grant the army any significant ideological presence. Neither does it deny that the main motivation of the generals who were persuaded to side with one cause or another was, in essence, that of seeking power for its own sake. However, it does uphold an altogether different

²¹ José Antonio Facio, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra, presentada a las cámaras el día 24 de enero de 1831* (Mexico, 1831), p. 5.

²² Barbara A. Tenenbaum, *México en la época de los agiotistas, 1821-1857* (Mexico, 1985), p. 60.

²³ See Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, 'Iglesia, Ejército y Centralismo', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. xxxix, no.1 (Mexico, 1989).

²⁴ Carmen Vázquez Mantecón, *Santa Anna y la encrucijada del Estado: La dictadura (1853-1855)* (Mexico, 1986), p. 25.

²⁵ Christiansen, *The Origins of Military Power*, p. 11.

perspective by stressing that the cause of military intervention was not military ambition but that it was, on the contrary, the consequence of the actual nature of the political beliefs and strategies which were adopted by the main factions, cliques or parties of the period. In other words, the army was used, for example, either by traditionalist civilians such as Lucas Alamán, as was the case with General Bustamante in 1830, or by liberal civilians such as Valentín Gómez Farías, as was the case with General Santa Anna in 1846, in their own political struggle to acquire or retain power. In the words of Brian Hamnett:

In Mexico, perhaps more so than in other Latin American countries, the repeated military interventions happened in a context in which the political issues were defined by civilians (...) The intervention of military politicians was not motivated to promote the objectives of the army, it was determined by the nature of the constitutional conflict which existed between the civilians.²⁶

Needless to say, this interpretation has arisen in recent years as research has gradually shown that the political beliefs and movements of the period were important in determining the conduct of the different governments and politicians of the period. According to Donald Stevens:

The apolitical caudillo has played a useful role in cutting through the complexity of political conflict of this period (...) But the caudillo model of the relationship between the economy and political conflict is not consistent with available historical data (...) The time has come to move beyond the myth (...) Instability requires an explanation that takes political differences seriously.²⁷

The fact that the politics of the period have started to be taken seriously has had a major impact on the simplistic view that the early national period was one of 'chaos' or of brutal military domination. The two traditional views that the first three decades of independent life were either 'an age of caudillos' or even the 'age of Santa Anna' have been thoroughly revised through major research in the politics of the period. The work of Costeloe has been fundamental in providing an interpretation of these years which is not inexorably tied to the notion that the figure of Santa Anna was the be all and end all of Mexico's

²⁶ Brian Hamnett, 'Partidos políticos mexicanos e intervención militar, 1823-1855', in A. Annino et al (eds.), *América Latina dallo stato coloniale allo stato nazione* (Milan, 1987), p. 574. This view has been further developed by Josefina Zoraida Vázquez in her article 'Political Plans and Collaboration Between Civilians and the Military, 1821-1847', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 15, no.1 (January, 1996), pp. 19-38.

²⁷ Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, p. 27.

development at the time.²⁸ Similarly, Stevens has made an equally important contribution to our understanding of the period by departing from the conventional view that there were only two significant political factions,²⁹ the conservatives and the liberals, giving as much attention to the beliefs expounded by the moderates.³⁰ Moreover, recent research has also shown that the *santanistas* were another ideological movement during these years, and not just a gang of opportunists as has also been generally stated.³¹

It is understandable that, within this recent approach, military interventionism has come to be seen more as a result of the turbulence of civilian politics than as the sole and exclusive cause for the continuous upheavals which characterised these years. It is interesting, however, that this notion that the military were used by the political factions was in fact echoed by the army throughout most of Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century. In effect it is the essence of what Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies defined as the ‘politics of antipolitics’.³² In other words, the military, in countries such as Peru, contemplated the history of their nation and arrived at the conclusion that the permanent instability which had plagued their mother-country was the fault of politics and above all of civilian politicians who had used the army for their own party interests rather than for the good of the nation. A perfect example of this can be found in a statement signed in 1921 by seventeen Peruvian army officers which read as follows:

²⁸ See Michael P. Costeloe, *La Primera República Federal de México (1824-1835)* (Mexico, 1975) and *The Central Republic in Mexico 1835-1846. Hombres de Bien in the age of Santa Anna* (Cambridge, 1993).

²⁹ As, for example, in Krauze, *Siglo de Caudillos*, pp. 146-88 and E. Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (Harmondsworth, 1992), pp. 234-47 and 258-65.

³⁰ See Stevens, *Origins of Instability*. For a critical study of the view that political thought developed along two main ideological streams, one of conservatives, the other of liberals, see W. Fowler, ‘Dreams of Stability: Mexican political thought during the “forgotten years”’. An analysis of the beliefs of the creole intelligentsia (1821-1853)’, *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 14, no. 3 (September, 1995), pp. 287-312. Edmundo O’Gorman had already argued in 1977 that conservatives and liberals offered ‘dos tesis que acaban postulando lo mismo’, in his *México. El Trauma de su Historia* (Mexico City, 1977), p. 33. The use of the term ‘conservative’ is also in itself problematic, given that it is an anachronism when applied to the 1820s, 1830s and early 1840s. This why I have tended to use the term ‘traditionalist’ rather than ‘conservative’ in this study. For a redefinition of Mexican ‘conservatism’ in the nineteenth century, and a collection of essays which challenge the traditional view on the subject, see W. Fowler and H. Morales Moreno (eds.), *El conservadurismo mexicano del siglo diecinueve* (Puebla, forthcoming).

³¹ See W. Fowler, ‘The Repeated Rise of General Antonio López de Santa Anna’, in W. Fowler (ed.) *Authoritarianism in Latin America Since Independence* (Westport, CT, 1996), pp. 1-30.

³² See B. Loveman and T. Davies (eds.), *The Politics of Antipolitics : The Military in Latin America* (Nebraska, 1978).

For some time now, since politics infiltrated the army, we military officers have been serving as steppingstones for unscrupulous politicians. They use our services, and then they promote us. This must stop. (...) We (must) assume the reins of government of the country in order to root out political influence, the worst of all plagues (...) The army, drawn from all social classes of the nation, must intervene directly in the management of the affairs of state.³³

In brief, military intervention was to become, in countries such as Peru, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a crusade against politics; something which was not too distant from Porfirio Díaz's own technocratic state. The idea that generals like Santa Anna represented, to a certain extent, an early interpretation of antipolitics will be looked at further on.

The Army as a Reflection of Society

Finally, following on from the increasing awareness of the importance of politics and ideology at the time, there is the interpretation which does grant the military a political ideology. To quote Costeloe, 'the military-civilian distinction at the time was blurred, and many senior army officers devoted most of their time and energies to political intrigue'.³⁴ Although they did not represent a military ideology as such, and neither did they intrigue for a specifically homogeneous praetorian political system, individual generals, colonels and officers upheld serious ideological beliefs: the stress of this interpretation being that these ideological beliefs were as varied as those which could be found in society. In other words, the military did uphold and defend political views, but not as a homogeneous class or entity. To quote Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, the army was not 'a monolithic entity, like the clergy and, as a reflection of the nation itself, it was a mosaic of ideas and attitudes'.³⁵

It is under this interpretation that, for instance, an analysis of the beliefs of General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga shows that he had very strong convictions regarding the role of the army and the kind of society that he hoped to create in Mexico.³⁶ He believed that it was imperative to forge an alliance between the

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, p. 15.

³⁵ J.Z. Vázquez, 'Soldados alemanes en las huestes santanistas', *Jahrbuch Für Geschichte Von Staat, Wirtschaft Und Gesellschaft LateinAmerikas*, vol. 25 (Sonderdruck, 1988), p. 417.

³⁶ See Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, and 'The Triangular Revolt in Mexico and the fall of Anastasio Bustamante, August-October 1841', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 20 (1988), pp. 337-60, and 'Los generales Santa Anna y Paredes y

army and the upper classes, without excluding the Church. He argued that the proletariat had to be kept away from the political process, preventing members of the working classes from being elected to Congress. The reins of government had to lie with the 'upper classes, which are to politics what Generals are to War'.³⁷

In contrast, an analysis of the beliefs of General José Joaquín de Herrera shows that he was, unlike Paredes, a moderate liberal federalist, who did believe in representative government.³⁸ As President of the Republic in 1845 he carried out reforms in the army which were extremely unpopular among the more reactionary military officers. His speeches to Congress of 15 December 1844 and 1 January 1845 illustrate very clearly the extent to which he upheld reasoned political beliefs with the objective of directing a moderate course of change.³⁹

A synthesis of these four interpretations does offer what could be considered a fairly convincing portrait of the role of the military during this period. The break with monarchic and European rule brought about a vivacious conflict among the members of the creole oligarchy who had attained political power. Almost immediately after independence was achieved, lawyers, writers, landowners and high-ranking military officers became deeply involved in the political debates of the period, sustaining ardent convictions over issues such as federalism vs. centralism, absolutism vs. constitutionalism, free market economic policies vs. state protectionism, secularism vs. Church power, etc. disintegrating into opposed masonic lodges, cliques and eventually parties. The military were as much a part of this process as the civilians. However, the absence of an arbitrating institution or figure inspired some members of the military to use force to resolve the political problems which were surfacing as a result of the virulent opposition of the different political factions. In some cases it was the civilian politicians who invited the intervention of the military; in others, generals with firm political convictions opted to intervene in favour of the cliques who represented their views; and, inevitably, there were also instances where a straightforward lust for power motivated some generals to revolt, using the political discourse of the period as an excuse. Moreover, with a backdrop of financial distress in which the troops were generally hungry, badly dressed, poorly equipped, and unpaid for most of the time, there was nothing for them to lose by joining a revolt. Thus, the history of the first decades of

Arrillaga en México, 1841-1843: Rivalés por el poder o una copa más', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. 39 (1989), pp. 417-40.

³⁷ Correspondencia 'Paredes y Arrillaga – Santa Anna', 29 April 1842, in Genaro García, *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México*, vol. 56 (Mexico, 1974).

³⁸ See T.E. Cotner, *The Military and Political Career of José Joaquín de Herrera, 1792-1854* (New York, 1969).

³⁹ *El Siglo XIX*, 15 December 1844 and 2 January 1845.

independent life in Mexico remains one of political-military upheaval. The difference is that the view that this was exclusively the result of the behaviour (or misbehaviour) of an apolitical and predatory army has been challenged convincingly with the understanding that political beliefs and activities were a fundamental part of the developments of the period.

Nevertheless, the mainstream view that the army did not have an ideology, or that if it did it was not as a united force, but more a matter of different individuals sustaining different political beliefs, is still not entirely satisfying.

Military Ethos : Three Reasons for Questioning Mainstream Views on the Heterogeneous Nature of the Mexican Army

There are three important reasons for questioning the belief that there was not a sense of corporateness in the army which by its very nature could represent a certain political ideology: (1) the regular army-civic/provincial militia dialectic; (2) the military ethos of 'civilised warfare', and (3) the importance of the *fuero militar*.

The Regular Army vs Civic/Provincial Militia Dialectic

Howard Cline's brief sketch of the beliefs which divided the centralists-conservatives from the federalists-liberals significantly highlights the contrasting views these two factions had over the need for having a regular army or a civic/provincial militia:

Ostensibly the issues of politics split Mexico into several groups. On the one hand were the Centralists, who favoured a strongly centralized Government, with little room for state or provincial autonomy or variations; this position was in general supported by the more conservative elements of society, especially Church and army. Opposed were Federalists, really in favour of confederation, to reduce the power of Mexico City by substituting local militia for the army, and limiting the functions of the national Government to the bare minimum.⁴⁰

The notion that, in general terms, liberals favoured local militias while conservatives advocated sustaining a large regular army is well researched.⁴¹ In

⁴⁰ Howard F. Cline, *Mexico: Revolution to Evolution, 1940-1960* (London, 1962), p. 18.

⁴¹ See Pedro Santoni, 'A Fear of the People: The Civic Militia of Mexico in 1845', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 68, no.2 (May 1988), pp. 268-88 and Ray

Stevens's words:

Conservatives relied on the national army and planned to abolish the provincial and civic militias. Radicals, in contrast, depended on the civic and provincial militias and hoped to use them to replace the national army. (...) Moderates hoped to restrict the power and privileges of the national army while limiting the militia units to those controlled by the propertied classes.⁴²

Needless to say, this conflict had been as much an issue in Bourbon Mexico as it became with independence.⁴³

Evidently there were financial arguments and there were strategic arguments in the conflict which developed over the need to increase either the regular army or the militias. However, it is obvious that the main issue was a political one. In Bourbon Mexico, weakening the regular units whilst strengthening the militia units was perceived by the Spanish authorities as a dangerous strategy which essentially gave military power to the Mexican people.

Following independence, these political considerations were not significantly different. Traditionalists believed in strengthening the regular army because it was the safeguard of a strong and conservative government. Radicals, in contrast, believed in strengthening the militias so that an anti-progressive militaristic regime could be controlled, or even overthrown, by armed civilians who did not belong to the reactionary regular army. In the United States the liberal view of the military was no different from that in Mexico. As Samuel Huntington points out, US liberals believed that, '(1) Large military forces are a threat to liberty (...) (2) Large military forces are a threat to democracy (...) (3) Large military forces are a threat to economic prosperity (...) (and) (4) Large military forces are a threat to peace'.⁴⁴ A brief look at the opinions which were expressed by liberal civilians and high-ranking army officers illustrates quite clearly how this conflict remained deeply political in independent Mexico.

Valentín Gómez Farías, who, according to Stevens, 'controlled the Sixth Battalion in 1833 and provided the men with three meals a day', whose son led

Broussard, 'The Mexican Liberals and the Curbing of the Military's Powers: Success or Failure', *Annals of the Southeastern Conference on Latin American Studies* (March 1979), pp. 5-14.

⁴² Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, p. 34.

⁴³ See Archer, *The Army in Bourbon Mexico*; Lyle N. McAlister, *The 'Fuero Militar' in New Spain, 1764-1800* (Westport, 1974) and 'The Reorganization of the Army of New Spain, 1763-1766', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol 33, no.1 (February, 1953); María del Carmen Velázquez, *El Estado de Guerra en Nueva España, 1760-1808* (Mexico, 1950).

⁴⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York, 1957), p. 156.

the 'Libertad' Battalion,⁴⁵ and who, according to Frederick Shaw, supported these militia units as if they were his own 'private army',⁴⁶ argued, for instance, in 1845, faced with the threat of the restoration of a monarchy, that if the people were to be armed, 'they would vigorously oppose those that want to give us a king'.⁴⁷ His strong belief in arming the people and wresting power from the traditionalist military was evident in his reforms as acting President in 1833 and 1834. In the view of Ricardo Delgado Román, 'Gómez Farías (...) hoped to establish his own political consolidation with a military balance between all the federal entities of the Republic'.⁴⁸ It was under his administration that, albeit cautiously, reforms were carried out which strengthened the militias and curtailed the power of the regular army.⁴⁹

In contrast, under the traditionalist Bustamante-Alamán administration of 1830-1832, the militias were drastically reduced. Facio's explanation for this measure, in his annual ministerial report of 1830, rested on economic grounds:

if peace is consolidated in the States and the rumours of another Spanish invasion have disappeared completely, there should be no need for an Active Militia; (its members) will be able to retire, and then the public treasury will no longer have to bear the burden of paying their expenses.⁵⁰

The reasoning behind such a reform was, nevertheless, evidently political. As events would show later, it was with those politicised and federalist militias which had not been eradicated that Santa Anna was able to bring down the administration of Bustamante in 1832.

To the more traditionalist generals such as Juan Nepomuceno Almonte (Minister of War 1840-41 and 1846), who, despite being the son of the revolutionary insurgent hero, José María Morelos, dedicated the latter part of his life to supporting the Empire of Maximilian, the militias represented a social

⁴⁵ Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, p. 34.

⁴⁶ Frederick Shaw, 'Poverty and Politics in Mexico City, 1824-1854', unpubl. PhD Diss. University of Florida, 1975, pp. 330-1.

⁴⁷ Letter from Valentín Gómez Farías to Manuel González Cosío, 25 October 1845, quoted in Santoni, 'A Fear of the People', p. 286.

⁴⁸ Ricardo Delgado Román (ed.), *Valentín Gómez Farías: Ideario Reformista* (Guadalajara, 1958), p. 144. For samples of the legislation he proposed concerning the militias see pp. 145-56. On Valentín Gómez Farías as a reformist rather than as radical, see W. Fowler, 'Valentín Gómez Farías: Perceptions of Radicalism in Independent Mexico, 1821-1847', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 15, no.1 (January, 1996), pp. 39-62.

⁴⁹ See Costeloe, *La Primera República Federal*, p. 378.

⁵⁰ Facio, *Memoria (...) 1830*, p. 1.

as well as a political threat. The arming of the populace was detrimental to peace and stability. In 1845, his views on the militia, could not be clearer:

Since no judgement was used in arming the people, I have very grave fears that they will indulge in all kinds of excesses, thus repeating the scenes of 1828. In that event, I shall be occupied in controlling the mob, and I shall even send the troops against them if need be.⁵¹

In fact, what becomes increasingly obvious by looking at the annual ministerial reports of the Ministers of War from 1822 to 1852,⁵² is that there was almost a general consensus among the different generals who assumed this office throughout the three decades regardless of the fact that they were, on paper, representing different administrations with ostensibly different political agendas, that the regular army needed to be strengthened whilst the militias needed to be weakened, if not completely disbanded.

In 1826, although the army was meant to consist of 22,750 regular troops and 42,047 militia troops, the reality already pointed to the fact that of the two kinds of regiments, only one of them had received the serious attention which was required to fill the number of vacancies. There were 22,750 regular troops: the expected number, but only 21,577 militia troops. Although General Manuel Gómez Pedraza (Minister of War 1825-28) believed in 1826 that a different form of recruitment could improve the militias, and was also prepared to state that ideally there could be ‘nothing more useful or commendable than (a group of men) instructed in military manoeuvres who, without burdening the public treasury, are prepared at all times to defend the rights of the nation’,⁵³ by 1827 he had arrived at the conclusion that ‘the bases upon which the formation of the active militia was established are no longer suitable for its purpose, and (...) it is necessary to change direction’.⁵⁴ During his term in office, the regular army increased to 32,161 men in 1827,⁵⁵ and to 33,373 men in 1828.⁵⁶ Moreover, unlike the militias:

the soldiers, with a strong sense of duty and without listening to any other voice but that of the law, march to wherever the government sends them, calming political disagreements, reestablishing (law and) order

⁵¹ Quoted and translated in Santoni, ‘A Fear of the People’, p. 287.

⁵² These *Memorias de Guerra* can be found in the British Library, Tl 1-38.

⁵³ Manuel Gómez Pedraza, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra presentada a las cámaras en enero de 1826* (Mexico, 1826), p. 6.

⁵⁴ M. Gómez Pedraza, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra presentada a las cámaras en enero de 1827* (Mexico, 1827), p. 10.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ M. Gómez Pedraza, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra presentada a las cámaras en enero de 1828* (Mexico, 1828), p. 6.

and guaranteeing public peace.⁵⁷

By the time Valentín Gómez Farías became acting vice-president and pressed for strengthening the militias, there were less than 5,509 men serving in the militia.⁵⁸

The *santanista* General José María Tornel (Minister of War 1833, 1835-37, 1839, 1841-44, 1846 and 1853), not surprisingly used the militias to his advantage when conspiring against the government. For instance, according to him, the reason he was suspended as Governor of the Federal District in October 1828 was because he had four thousand men of the militia at his command, and it was feared, following the news of Santa Anna's uprising in Jalapa, that he would use them to take over the National Palace.⁵⁹ However, despite his decision in 1839 to increase the number of militias as an emergency measure in the war against France, once in office he was equally dedicated to increasing the regular army and reducing the militias. In 1835, he stressed that 'the superiority of a disciplined and hardened army over irregular masses is as clear as that of light over darkness, of science over ignorance'.⁶⁰ In 1839, even though he advocated increasing the militias when confronted with the threat of a French invasion, giving them the new name of *Defensores de la Patria*, he still associated the past militias with an 'organización viciosa'. His *Defensores* were merely a product of the need to 'adjust to the demands of war'.⁶¹

Similarly, General Mariano Arista (Minister of War 1848-51) defended the regular Guardia Nacional and an army in which more than two thirds of the recruits belonged to the regular regiments as opposed to the militias. Although this regular army was much reduced from past years, being made up of 4,744 men in 1851 (the militias consisted of 262 individuals)⁶², he was convinced that

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁸ José Joaquín Parres, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra presentada a las cámaras el día 26 de abril de 1833* (Mexico, 1833), p. 1.

⁵⁹ J.M. Tornel y Mendivil, *Breve reseña histórica de los acontecimientos más notables de la nación mexicana* (Mexico, 1985), p. 339.

⁶⁰ J.M. Tornel y Mendivil, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Guerra y Marina, leída en la Cámara de Representantes en la sesión del día veinte y tres de marzo y en la de Senadores en la del veinte y cuatro del mismo mes y año de 1835* (Mexico, 1835), p. 6.

⁶¹ J.M. Tornel y Mendivil, *Memoria de la Secretaría de Estado y del Despacho de Guerra y Marina, leída por el Excmo. Sr. General José María Tornel, en la Cámara de Diputados el día 7 de enero de 1839, y en la de Senadores el 8 del mismo* (Mexico, 1839), p. 16.

⁶² Mariano Arista, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado del Despacho de Guerra y Marina leída en la Cámara de Diputados el 3 y en la de Senadores en 4 de enero de 1851* (Mexico, 1851), Estados num.7 and num.12.

as the troops were made up of dedicated volunteers their service to the nation was impeccable.⁶³

The only general of any significant importance who appeared to support the militias was General José Joaquín de Herrera (Minister of War 1833-34). As Minister of War in 1834 he proposed reforming the recruitment of the militias so that it would be made up of individuals who were dedicated to the cause. In his words, those who would voluntarily join the militias would thus make ‘a very sacred contract with society’.⁶⁴ However, as Pedro Santoni has shown, even Herrera as President in 1845 was not completely convinced of fully restructuring the army to the extent that the civic militia would become the dominant core of the Mexican army. Moreover, to quote Santoni, ‘Herrera’s initial lack of confidence in the civic militia had dire consequences for his regime’.⁶⁵ As he did not strengthen those forces which would have defended the liberal government he represented, General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga was able to overthrow him with the traditionalist regular army.

It is evident that high-ranking officers, as a group, supported the strengthening of the regular army and the weakening of the militia. In other words, as a group, they opposed the liberal attempts to give military power to the people. Moreover, it is implicit in the way that the liberals criticised the regular army and in the way that traditionalists and high ranking officers criticised the militia that there was, inevitably, a political standpoint, shared by the majority of generals, which was in essence conservative. If the military view of the militias was a unifying factor among the military, more so was what can be defined as the military ethos of ‘civilised warfare’.

‘Civilised Warfare’

It is a well known fact that in Europe in the eighteenth century officers did not shoot to kill other officers of the enemy army. In the words of Alfred Vagts:

1851 (Mexico, 1851), Estados num.7 and num.12.

⁶³ The US military historian R.S. Ripley pointed out in 1849, that ‘The effect of the war upon Mexico has been and will continue to be greatly beneficial’, arguing that by having on the one hand swept away the prestige of the army and having on the other hand had the consequence of a drastic reduction in the existing number of troops, there was now ‘comparative quietude’ and ‘apparent stability of a government administered upon republican principles’. *The War with Mexico* (New York, 1970) quoted in Jan Bazant, ‘From independence to the Liberal Republic, 1821-1867’, in L. Bethell (ed.), *Mexico since independence* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 26.

⁶⁴ José Joaquín de Herrera, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de la Guerra, leída en la Cámara de Diputados el día 11 de abril de 1834, y en la Senadores el día 12 del mismo* (Mexico, 1834), p. 13.

⁶⁵ Santoni, ‘A Fear of the People’, p. 288.

Owing to intermarriage among the nobility of Europe and the sense of class solidarity, European army officers (were) (...) rather tender of one another even when arrayed on opposing sides, by sticking to certain points of 'honor', as they conceived it, they (...) refused to resort to certain 'tricks' even to gain advantages in war.⁶⁶

In independent Mexico a similar sense of honour and class solidarity developed among the high ranking officers. Although they did not belong to a feudal aristocracy as had been the case in Europe, they did belong to the creole élite which had come to power as a result of the break with Spain. Evidence of this can be found in the bloodless nature of most of the interior revolts and armed conflicts of the period and in the way that, time and again, those generals who had started unsuccessful *pronunciamientos* were forgiven fairly soon after the event.

To quote Ruth Olivera and Liliane Crété, 'Contrary to the rule elsewhere, Mexican revolutions were seldom sanguinary. Contemporary observers even had the feeling that Mexicans fired upon each other from safe distances in order to avoid casualties'.⁶⁷ It is worth noting here a few examples of how this military ethos of 'civilised warfare' was apparent in independent Mexico.

The build-up to the revolt of Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Montañó in December 1827 and the events which transpired in the resulting battle of Tulancingo on 7 January 1828 exemplify the notion that high ranking officers in the Mexican army belonged to a military brotherhood. As early as a month before the revolt began, the President General Guadalupe Victoria was not only aware that there was an *escocés*⁶⁸ conspiracy to overthrow him, but he also

⁶⁶ Alfred Vagts, *A History of Militarism: Civilian and Military* (London, 1959), p. 96.

⁶⁷ Ruth R. Olivera and Liliane Crété, *Life in Mexico under Santa Anna, 1822-1855* (Norman and London, 1991), p. 167.

⁶⁸ *Escocés* was the name given to the members of the Scottish Rite of Masons. This masonic organisation was introduced in Mexico during the War of Independence. Although it was perceived as a kind of loosely-defined liberal political organisation to begin with, and played a significant role in bringing down Iturbide's Empire, advocating, as a result, an anti-absolutist agenda, it nevertheless became, during the first three years of the First Federal Republic, the forum where the more traditionalist (and affluent) members of the creole élite discussed the politics of the Republic. In contrast, the masonic Rite of York, which was formally consolidated in Mexico in 1825 through the exertions of the American Minister Plenipotenciary Joel Poinsett, was far more populist in its inclinations, with a stress on promoting US, as opposed to European, political values. By 1826, the Congressional elections were fought out between the *escoceses* and the *yorkinos*; and the politics of the subsequent two years (1827-28) witnessed an accentuated power struggle between members of these two masonic

knew that General Nicolás Bravo was going to lead the *pronunciamiento* against him. According to Tornel, his then personal secretary and adviser:

Sr. Victoria, with the greatest grief, found out in time about the deals of his friend and colleague Sr. Bravo, and he commissioned individuals he confided in to dissuade him from his purpose. However, this was to no avail...⁶⁹

Bravo could not be persuaded to abandon the revolt. However, even then, other than advising him against revolting, no serious actions were taken to end the uprising before it started. Furthermore, even when Montañó pronounced in Otumba, and Bravo set off to Tulancingo, north-east of Mexico City, to take on the leadership of the revolt, Victoria decided not to intervene immediately:

even when he was told the time of (Bravo's) departure and his destination, (Victoria) vigorously refused to authorise his imprisonment (...). 'In order to justify', he said, 'the measures of the government against Sr. Bravo, it is indispensable that he himself exposes his conduct to the eyes of the nation'.⁷⁰

Clearly, once Bravo openly embraced Montañó's plan, Victoria had no other alternative but to end the revolt by force. As a result General Vicente Guerrero, at the command of 1,500 men, set off to Tulancingo to fight the rebels. Bravo only had 600 men from the Battalion of Mextitlán. The actual battle was no different from the majority of the armed conflicts of the period. At the crack of dawn, Guerrero launched his attack on the village of Tulancingo from the outskirts of the Hacienda of San Antonio Ahuehuetitla. Bravo's men, in a matter of minutes, dispersed and ran away. Only eight men were actually killed in the battle and there were hardly any wounded. Not far from Tulancingo, all of the ringleaders of the revolt were caught and made prisoner.⁷¹ Although, in terms of the politics of the period, Bravo's defeat came to represent the end of the *escoceses*' hopes to acquire power and allowed the *yorkinos*⁷² to become overtly dominant in government, especially as Bravo's revolt was made to appear as a pro-Spanish uprising in the wake of the expulsion laws of December 1827, it was not long before members of the military, even when they were outspoken *yorkinos*, proposed offering Bravo and his comrades a general amnesty. Only three months after Tulancingo, on 15 April 1828, Tornel, the 'Enemigo de

organisations. For a closer look at ideologies they sustained see my *The Liberal Origins of Mexican Conservatism, 1821-1832* (Glasgow: Institute of Latin American Studies, forthcoming).

⁶⁹ Tornel, *Breve reseña histórica*, p. 178.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-1.

⁷² See footnote 68, above.

Escocia decidido',⁷³ proposed to the Chamber of Deputies that an amnesty be granted to all those members of the military who had been involved in the Plan of Montaño, including Bravo.⁷⁴ Although the prisoners of Tulancingo were not granted the amnesty, they were exempted from the death penalty. Moreover, generals Bravo and Miguel Barragán, albeit sentenced to exile, were allowed to receive half of their pay as *generales de división*.⁷⁵ They were all back in Mexico by 1829.

Other instances of battles and military actions which were brief in their duration and which were resolved without bloodshed may be noted: Victoria's showdown in Huajuapán against the revolt of Colonel Antonio León and his brother Manuel in August 1824,⁷⁶ the military actions which brought about the fall of Vicente Guerrero's government in 1829 following the Plan of Jalapa; the *pronunciamientos* which brought an end to Gómez Farías's liberal administration in 1834 following the Plan of Cuernavaca; the battle of Guadalupe in Zacatecas of 11 May 1835 between Francisco García and Santa Anna; the Triangular Revolt of 1841, etc. As one US staff officer wrote, following the American intervention in Mexico of 1847: 'this matter of being killed was not...what they had been accustomed to'.⁷⁷ Even the liberal uprising of 15 July 1841, in which many inhabitants of Mexico City were killed or wounded in the streets, was, as witnessed by Fanny Calderón de la Barca: 'like a game at chess, in which kings, castles, knights and bishops, are making different moves, while the pawns are looking on or taking no part whatever'.⁷⁸

Evidently there were exceptions. However, these were few and are worth noting because of what they tell us about this sense of class solidarity which was apparent in the behaviour of the high ranking officers towards each other. These exceptions include the executions of Iturbide in 1824, Guerrero in 1831 and General José Antonio Mejía in 1839. The death of Iturbide is the least

⁷³ *El Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, 22 February 1828.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29 May 1828.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ In August 1824, as the first general elections were approaching, Colonel Antonio León and his brother Manuel started a revolt in Oaxaca demanding the expulsion of all Spaniards. Victoria, one of the presidential candidates, was chosen to go and quell the uprising. According to Tornel, it was Alamán's and Terán's decision to send Victoria to Oaxaca because 'cualquiera que fuese el partido que adoptara para terminar la sedición, sería siempre de pérdida para su crédito, y lo alejaría del supremo mando de la república'. As it happened, Victoria succeeded in quelling the revolt without any blood shed, and it was a decisive factor in the victory in the forthcoming election. See Tornel, *Breve reseña histórica*, p. 22.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Olivera and Crété, *Life in Mexico*, p. 167.

⁷⁸ Fanny Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (London, 1987), p. 412.

relevant of these three, mainly because the order of execution was issued by a Spaniard. His death was lamented by the Mexican military as a whole, and, indeed, the initial news of his execution came as a horrible shock to a generation of high ranking officers who already possessed a sense of 'civilised warfare'.⁷⁹ The case of Guerrero, however, is far more representative of the ways in which a military class of creole officers had emerged in the war of independence. As Jan Bazant argues:

The cruel treatment of Guerrero requires an explanation. Bravo had been defeated in 1827 but was merely exiled and there were other similar cases. It is reasonable to ask, therefore, why in the case of Guerrero the government resorted to the ultimate penalty. The clue is provided by Zavala who, writing several years later, noted that Guerrero was of mixed blood and that the opposition to his presidency came from the great landowners, clerics and Spaniards resident in Mexico. These people could not forget the war of independence with its threat of social and racial subversion. Despite his revolutionary past, the wealthy creole Bravo belonged to this 'gentleman's club', as did the cultured creole Zavala, even with his radicalism. Hence Guerrero's execution was perhaps a warning to men considered as socially and ethnically inferior not to dare to dream of becoming president.⁸⁰

As for Mejía, in 1839, the explanation resides in the fact that Mejía was responsible for committing treason on two fronts: (1) he had played a significant part in illegally selling large areas of Texas to American colonisers in 1831⁸¹ and (2) he had turned against the government in 1839, at a time when the nation was in arms fighting off a foreign attack on the integrity of their country. Nevertheless, even then, this was seen to be an extreme measure, as can be seen in the memoirs of Colonel Manuel María Gómez, who carried out the order with disgust.⁸²

In brief, the way high ranking officers were exiled for short periods of time and then forgiven for rebelling against the different governments of independent Mexico, together with the fact that there was a conscious effort on their part to avoid serious warfare during the many internal conflicts of the era, adopting a 'gentlemanly' conduct with one another, points to the fact that (1) high ranking officers in their majority belonged to the same creole social class, and (2) that

⁷⁹ See Tornel, *Breve reseña histórica*, pp. 17-8.

⁸⁰ Bazant, 'From independence to the Liberal Republic', p. 12.

⁸¹ José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente, 1822-1846*, Tomo 1 (Mexico, 1982), p. 548. See also Tornel, *Manifestación del C. J.M. Tornel* (Mexico, 1833).

⁸² Genaro García (ed.), *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México. Tomo XXXIV, Memorias del Coronel Manuel María Giménez* (Mexico, 1911), pp. 78-9.

this class consciousness, paired with a military ethos which belonged exclusively to the high ranking officers of the army, acted as a unifying factor which in many ways levelled the political differences of separate individuals and created what could be considered a class which had its own rules of conduct. The notion that the military belonged to a separate class with its own codes of behaviour and where individual differences came second, to a certain extent, to a sense of belonging to a privileged club of people, which by its very nature allowed individual rebellions to be forgiven as long as they had been perpetuated by a high ranking officer/member of the clan,⁸³ was certainly enhanced by the *fuero militar*.

The Importance of the *Fuero Militar*

Lyle McAlister's in-depth study of the *fuero militar* in Bourbon Mexico provides a very clear explanation of how it came to be one of the founding pillars upon which this military class was formed. To quote McAlister:

the privileges granted to the Army of New Spain were probably the most important factor in the creation of the praetorian tradition in Mexico.(...) The possession of special privileges enhanced (the military's) sense of uniqueness and superiority, and at the same time rendered it virtually immune from civil authority. (...) As the prestige of the monarchy declined (...) the army emerged as an autonomous (...) institution.⁸⁴

The *fuero militar*, by which members of the military could avoid being punished by the civilian authorities, and which dated back to seventeenth century Spain, remained intact following independence. It is evident that this privilege continued to enhance the sense that the military belonged to a separate class. With this in mind it comes as no surprise that when the Gómez Farías administration in 1834 attempted to end the *fuero*, the regular army rose up against the radicals in a unanimous call of 'Santa Anna y los fueros'. There were *pronunciamientos* in Puebla, Orizaba, Jalapa, Oaxaca, Cuernavaca, Cautla, Jonocate, Miacatla, Tetecala, Temascaltepec, Cholula, Huejocingo, Tepeaca and San Martín, to name but a few.⁸⁵

⁸³ It is worth noting here that those rebellions which were carried out by people who did not belong to this military class were brutally repressed by the government troops. The wars with the Yaqui Indians in the north of Mexico (1841-43) and the Maya Indians in Yucatán during the Caste War of 1847-48 were unquestionably bloody.

⁸⁴ McAlister, *The 'Fuero Militar' in New Spain*, p. 14.

⁸⁵ See Costeloe, *La Primera República Federal*, pp. 428-9.

In fact, the reforms which were proposed by a predominantly liberal and civilian administration in 1834, and the predominantly traditionalist and military response they received, is the clearest example, at a time when the civilian-military divide was often blurred, of there having been two opposed groups as defined by their profession which embraced opposed political ideologies. Again, if the attitude of the military as a whole towards the roles of the militias and the regular army suggests that the military supported those views which were sustained by the traditionalists, the same applies here. The army revolted against the liberals because they were curtailing their privileges, and in doing so supported the traditionalist/conservative claim of preserving as much of the colonial system as was possible. Although more research needs to be dedicated to the *fuero militar* in independent Mexico, it is evident, from the army's united reaction to Gómez Farías's reforms in 1834, and the support the *fuero* received in the various annual ministerial reports of the Ministry of War throughout the age of Santa Anna, that it remained one of the most important features of the legal system of the time in perpetuating a sense of class solidarity among the military. Even in 1852, as certain reforms in the *fuero* started to be discussed in an attempt to bring the army within civilian jurisdiction, General Manuel Robles (Minister of War 1851-1852) continued to protect those essential aspects of the privilege by which the regular army would continue to be treated as a distinct and separate class:

There will only be one *fuero de guerra*, and it will be enjoyed exclusively in criminal matters, with the known exceptions previously established by law, and in those cases in which the misdemeanours or offences are strictly military-related.⁸⁶

As will be seen, these considerations are important in analysing the politics of the high ranking officers of the Mexican Army.

The Reformism of the Ministers of War

In order to arrive at a definition of the political ideology or identity of the regular army in Mexico it is necessary to pay special attention to two issues, which, further to those questions which have already been noted (the regular army vs. militia dialectic; the military ethos of 'civilised warfare'; and the importance of the *fuero militar*) include an analysis of *santanismo* within the context of early professionalisation concentrating on the enlightened reformism of the *Memorias de Guerra*, and an analysis of the views which were upheld by the majority of influential high ranking officers (namely the Ministers of War) between 1822 and 1852.

⁸⁶ Manuel Robles, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Guerra y Marina, leída en la Cámara de Diputados los días 30 y 31 de enero, y en la de Senadores en 13 de febrero de 1852* (Mexico, 1852), p. 116.

General José María Tornel y Mendivil

The reformism of the Ministers of War during this period was acute. Improving the education of the army, forging an effective engineers corps, developing an equally efficient medical corps, reforming the existing systems of recruitment and discipline, finding a fairer system of incentives and means of encouragement, and attempting to guarantee pensions for retired army officers and/or for their widows and families are concerns which can be found in all of the *Memorias de Guerra*. A closer look specifically at General José María Tornel's ministerial reports for 1835, 1839 and 1844, serves as an important starting point for understanding the extent to which the Ministers of War were reformists. Concentrating on Tornel, in particular, is also important because, of all the Ministers of War, he was the one who held the office on more occasions and for a longer period of time than any of the others during this period. Whilst he was more emphatic in his reformism than the rest, it is nevertheless clear from analysing all of the ministerial reports of the period that his initiatives and proposals reflected a common and generalised concern among the Ministers of War to improve the nature of the Mexican army.

When he became Minister of War in 1835, one of the main problems he said he encountered was the army's general lack of education. As most of the soldiers were recruited from the peasantry, the working classes and the marginal sectors of society, few could read or write:

Having destined members from the most ignorant and lowest sectors of society to make up the ranks of the army, there have been cases where in certain corps there was not a single individual who could be promoted to the rank of corporal or sergeant, given that nobody satisfied the requisites specified in the ordinance.⁸⁷

He did not hesitate to pin the responsibility for their impoverished and ignorant state on the Spanish government: 'the Spanish government opposed the idea of providing an elementary education to the people'.⁸⁸ Moreover, 'education was so poor that a man who knew the first letters of the alphabet became the wise man of the village, the perpetual secretary of the town hall and the assessor of the municipal authorities'.⁸⁹ However, by 1835, fourteen years had passed since independence had been achieved. Tornel was aware of this,

⁸⁷ José María Tornel, *Memoria del secretario...de guerra y marina (J.M. Tornel)*, leída en la cámara de representantes en la sesión del día veinte y tres de marzo, y en la de senadores en la del veinte y cuatro del mismo mes y año de 1835 (Mexico, 1835), p. 21.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

and made a point of admitting that little had been done to improve this Spanish legacy of illiteracy and ignorance: 'Having achieved our independence, education did not receive the attention which was to be expected'.⁹⁰ He did not criticise any of the previous Ministers of War for this. As can be seen from the introduction to the ministerial report, in Tornel's mind internal conflicts had made it very difficult for the army to carry out any of its long term reforms. In the true spirit of the enlightenment,⁹¹ he argued that a primary education was the foundation of all sciences, and that it was, moreover, 'necessary to improve the social condition of the people'.⁹²

To support his views, he referred his audience to the resolutions which had been made by the Duke of Kent to cure this same disease of ignorance inherent in his Royal Scottish Regiment. Apparently, according to Tornel, the prince 'of sweet and pleasant memory to all philanthropists and lovers of knowledge' had founded a school for his soldiers which was to be run by a sergeant who had been educated with the Lancastrian methodology. Furthermore, in November 1811, 'the Duke of York, general and head of the British Army, established regimental schools, by order of the government, awarding the teachers the salary and privileges of a sergeant'. Tornel argued that they ought to follow this example: 'Mexicans are convinced (...) of the need to adopt this happy policy in all of the corps of the army'.⁹³

Therefore, on 23 March 1835 he proposed that a sergeant be made responsible for teaching the alphabet to the soldiers in each company. Initially this sergeant would teach eight soldiers at a time. Moreover, these soldiers would not be expected to perform any other duty while attending classes, and he proposed that as an incentive, those who made the most of these lessons, 'the most hardworking', could be promoted to either corporals or sergeants. He offered twenty-five pesos as a monthly payment to each corps in order to cover the expenses of this educational programme. Books were to be provided

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Tornel's belief that it was the duty of a benevolent and philanthropic government to provide a basic education to the ignorant and illiterate masses of its country dates back to the previous century, and is characteristic of the so-called age of enlightenment which was experienced in France, Britain, Spain and Prussia under the auspices of benign despotism. Among Spain's exponents of 'La Ilustración' and the promotion of primary education, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos clearly influenced Tornel with his beliefs, professing maxims such as: 'Si desais el bien de vuestra patria, abrid a todos sus hijos el derecho de instruirse, multiplicando las escuelas de primeras letras'. See G.M. de Jovellanos, *Memoria sobre la educación pública* (Madrid, 1936), p. 123. For the Mexican élite's 'enlightened' approach to education in the independent Mexico, see W. Fowler, 'The Compañía Lancasteriana and the élite in independent Mexico 1822-1845', *TESSERAÉ, Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, vol. 4 (Summer, 1996), pp. 613-42.

⁹² Tornel, *Memoria...1835*, p. 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-4.

separately by the serving Minister of War who was also obliged to inform Congress of the progress of these schools, making any necessary observations arising from the experience as a whole.

His concern about education was not limited solely to the teaching of the elementary principles required to achieve a basic level of literacy. In the same report he showed concern over what he defined as 'Military Scientific Education'. This referred mainly to the corps of Engineers he had helped to create in 1827. It was also concerned with the training of the Medical Corps, as will be seen further on.

The Engineers Corps, founded in 1827, had never become the thriving scientific division he had hoped for in his initial proposal of 5 November. In fact, on 16 November 1834, the small number of existing engineers had been further reduced. Tornel stated that this was scandalous, that it was imperative, if they were to become a truly civilised nation, to be able to boast of a functional Engineers Corps. To achieve such an aim, it was fundamental for the army to have an efficient and fully organised school which could provide them with the right number of adequately trained engineers.

One of the initial problems that had to be overcome was that ever since the Engineers Corps had been created, there had been little incentive for bright students to enrol. The reason for this was obvious: 'A young educated man finds better and more stimulating prospects in any other career than in the army. It is fundamental, if we want to count upon the services of worthy men, to ensure that their future is (...) secure in the army.'⁹⁴

In other words, it was absurd to expect to have an Engineers Corps made up of volunteers with no stable income and no pension guaranteed. The military hospitals were suffering from an identical problem. Doctors, like engineers, made a better living outside the army than in it. For this reason, Tornel advocated a well-organised school that guaranteed a complete apprenticeship in the army as well as a respectable wage which would encourage those who had plans of becoming either engineers or doctors to do so within the military profession.

Nevertheless, for this to happen some essential reforms were needed to complete the organisation of the existing school of engineers. To begin with, Tornel stressed the fact that no soldier could become an officer within the Engineers Corps without being examined first. Until 1835, the situation was still one in which personal contacts were almost officially recognised and valued

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

more than the knowledge required to achieve promotion, and the Engineers Corps was consequently in danger of becoming run by completely ignorant and incompetent officers.

The second reform he proposed regarding the Engineers Corps was also a display of common sense. Until 1835, the lack of funds had meant that the School of Engineers was based on exclusively theoretical lessons. Tornel emphasised the notion that this was not enough to create a practical and technically-minded functional and serviceable corps of engineers: 'Scientific principles are not enough in themselves to form officers in Engineering; without practice they are as useless as isolated theories are'.⁹⁵ Consequently he proposed that the school be established in the old fortress of Perote, which would enable the students to put their theories into practice:

It is fundamental that we establish a school of (engineering) practice, in which the exactitude of the rules can be measured and where what has been learnt through calculations can be executed in practice. The school of practice could be established in the Fortress of Perote, and there, the engineers could carry out all the necessary exercises to enable them to develop their skills in preparing either the attack or defence of fortresses.⁹⁶

Once more, Tornel referred his audience to the successful and living example of the British Army. In 1771 the Academy of Artillery and the Academy of Engineers had been united in Woolwich. As these two forces were complementary they could aid each other with their education. He argued that this example deserved to be followed, 'allowing our officers from the two separate corps to study together those subjects which they share in common'.⁹⁷ For those few outstanding students, he suggested the incentive of sending them for a brief spell of time to West Point Academy in the United States and the French Polytechnic School of Paris.

In theory, the time was ripe to execute all of these reforms. The only obstacle which could essentially prevent their successful execution was the disruption which came hand in hand with war; either internal or against a foreign power. Tornel made a point of remarking upon the way the internal turmoils of their country had consistently thwarted the implementation of their idealistic plans: 'if the political turmoils had not distracted our young engineers from their studies, our expectations, which seemed to be so well-founded in 1831, would have been fulfilled'. As he lamented in this same report: 'It is and will always be lamentable that our constant political earthquakes prevent us from consolidating those establishments in which the honour, utility and glory

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

of the nation are best served'.⁹⁸

By the time he wrote his next report in 1839, the list of continuous political upheavals included the disastrous war in Texas, and an equally disruptive conflict with France. The President had even been taken prisoner by US soldiers for an entire year. There had been violent revolts against General Anastasio Bustamante in San Luis, Río Verde, Nuevo México, Sonora, Ixtlahuaca and Real del Monte. They had had to survive what Tornel grimly defined as 'a crisis which could have driven society to madness and which has certainly shaken its foundations'.⁹⁹ While he spoke in Congress on 7 January 1839, there were two wars that were still very much alive: the on-going French Pastry War and the major federalist revolt of Generals Urrea and Mejía in Tamaulipas:

It is fundamental that we attend to two wars. We need to prepare and combine our defence mechanisms at a time when we lack resources. We need to quell internal revolts at a time when opinion is fatally divided. We need to bring about the triumph of the Mexican people against a foreign invader and sweeten at the same time our political passions, providing the nation with a firm direction so that it is not ruined, tormented or weakened any more than it has been as a result of our innumerable errands...¹⁰⁰

With this kind of agenda it was clear that reforms in education, which had been so strongly commended in 1835, had had to be delayed, not being an essential priority.

Nevertheless, Tornel did not totally discard the philanthropic plans of 1835. Although the economic constraints on the country had meant that Chapultepec Castle had not been converted into a military school as foreseen in 1833, and the 'regular school of the army' had suffered the temporary blow of being closed down on 2 May 1837,¹⁰¹ some progress had in fact been made since 1835. In January 1838 the regular school had been reopened. Congress had agreed to spend 36,000 pesos every year on Tornel's educational reforms. The number of soldiers learning to read and write had increased from the initial figure of eight at a time to two hundred in each company. Moreover, by 1838, not only were 'endowed individuals' being educated, but 'the military's orphans and children'. Tornel used this fact to defy all criticism; even when wars were crippling their country: 'the unjust enemies of our national representation will take back their criticisms in spite of themselves when they see that never before

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁹⁹ Tornel, *Memoria...1839*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

have the soldier's conditions been better than they are now'.¹⁰² Even though the plans of 1835 had not been completely put into practice, soldiers were being educated. Tornel did not allow the main preoccupation of Congress – that of ending the existing wars – to prevent him from reminding them that 'to educate the people results in securing its firm and permanent happiness'.¹⁰³

However, it was not until 1844 that Tornel, after three years of being in power, could feel a sense of satisfaction with the progress made in education within the military profession.¹⁰⁴ Three years of uninterrupted work in the ministry¹⁰⁵ meant that he had been able personally to ensure the implementation of his reforms. The schools he had talked of as a desirable aim were now a concrete part of military life to which he could refer in the present tense: 'A regular school is for the Mexican army a good, liberal and philosophical plan; the chosen means by which it has been established and developed have been appropriate and effective'.¹⁰⁶

The only improvements that he considered could be added to the present system were, relatively speaking, minor. He stated that their methodology could be revised; that it would be worth finding out whether the teachers were all capable 'abecedarians'; that it would also be recommendable to find a means of ensuring that time was not wasted; and that one would hope that all instructors followed the glorious example of the ex-deputy director of the school who was now unfortunately involved in even greater concerns of public interest.¹⁰⁷ The fact remained, that after three years of Tornel as head of the armed forces, everything possible was being done, 'to achieve perfection in primary education'.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁰⁴ The period between October 1841 and June 1844 was the longest period of time in which Tornel served as minister without having to contend with any major catastrophes (ie. a war with a foreign power or a revolt/ *coup d'état*/ rebellion with widespread support). Although it was not a particularly peaceful period – compared to the 1830s which saw the war between Bustamante's administration and Guerrero's followers, Santa Anna's revolt which overthrew Bustamante, the Texan debacle, the major revolts of Urrea and Mejía and the French Pastry War – it was a time of relative peace in which certain reforms had the opportunity to develop in ways that had not been possible in the previous decade. The complacency inherent in the 1844 report is evidence of this.

¹⁰⁵ Although Tornel left José María Díaz Noriega in charge of the Ministry of War for just over a month in the autumn of 1843, and then again for a fortnight in the spring of 1844, from October 1841 to June 1844, Tornel was responsible for the Ministry of War without interruption

¹⁰⁶ Tornel, *Memoria...1844*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁷ General Pedro García Conde, the ex-deputy of the school was now director of the school of the Corps of Engineers.

¹⁰⁸ Tornel, *Memoria....1844*, p. 75.

This same sense of achievement and fulfilment applied to the education of the Corps of Engineers. In fact, there was more reason for him to be satisfied with the improvements which had been carried out in this force, as it had been the one to suffer most directly from the previous years of wars and revolts. In March 1839 there were only five students. In subsequent years, once he had returned to assume the Ministry of War, the number of students had risen to 234. They had a good pass rate as well: 203 of their students had gone on to become officers. There were presently 62 students in the process of taking their exams, showing very promising work. The exams taken in December 1843 had been very satisfactory. Tornel was confident: 'in the years to come this national creation will provide even more abundant and reasoned fruits, and it will be considered one of the glories of independent Mexico'.¹⁰⁹

As was the case with education, Tornel also displayed a reiterated concern, throughout his career as Minister of War, for improving the medical service of the army. In his 1835 report he strongly advocated rescuing the Medical Corps from oblivion. The *Cuerpo de Sanidad Militar*, originally founded in 1829, had suffered a similar fate to the Engineers Corps due to the political upheavals the country had undergone following the Plan of Jalapa and Bustamante's rise to power. Alleged limited resources and a reduced number of medical staff had led the Bustamante regime to reduce the Medical Corps' funds in order to finance other enterprises. Tornel thought that it was fundamental:

that such a branch which is as important and worthy of our consideration as the health of those who fight to defend the nation, is put right, not only to show that our nation is a munificent one, but to prove that it does not affect ignorance of the fortunes of those who risk their lives for it and serve it so advantageously.¹¹⁰

The two main problems that needed to be confronted were the obvious lack of funding and the absence of any significant number of fully-trained medics or nurses. The result of this was that; 'Medical assistants and practitioners full of ignorance form the majority of a medical corps which has inflicted worse wounds on our troops than enemy bullets have!'.¹¹¹

Returning to his firm belief in the benefits of investing in an efficient educational programme, he reminded his audience that: 'Ignorance in this art has always figured in our catalogue of plagues'.¹¹² As the funds spent on the Medical Corps were limited, fully-trained medics preferred to make a living

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹¹⁰ Tornel, *Memoria...1835*, p. 29.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

outside the military profession not only because they were better-off as civilians but also because there was no incentive for them to abandon their 'comforts to follow the departing troops and to participate in their dangers'.¹¹³

Tornel's plans to regenerate the Medical Corps were, however well-intentioned, limited in their effectiveness. Whilst he had insisted that education needed funds urgently and went on to demand them, in the case of the Medical Corps he was more prepared to accept that the severe economic crisis Mexico was undergoing meant that its economy could not be further taxed at present and, therefore, little could be done other than voice his concern and distress. He succeeded in obtaining an increase of 46,000 pesos on the budget of 1833, but admitted that this was 'a very small increase if one considers those improvements which our corps and hospitals need'.¹¹⁴ Essentially, all he claimed he could do, at the time, was to promise to allocate whatever funds might be necessary to regenerate the Medical Corps whenever they were made available: 'The government abstains for the time being, albeit with regret, from adopting the aforementioned project, because it requires funds which cannot be obtained without further crippling our treasury'.¹¹⁵

Faithful to his promise, however, a year and a half later, on 6 August, the *Cuerpo de Sanidad Militar* was formed, 'with the aim of providing hospitals and troops with medical assistants'.¹¹⁶ Tornel actually succeeded in creating a corps which consisted of one director general, two inspectors, a director in charge of each hospital, with a surgeon allocated to each corps of the permanent and active militia, and with 'the respective medical assistants, to work in regular hospitals as well as in blood hospitals'.¹¹⁷ If in 1835 the Medical Corps could not rely on an adequate number of competent medical and nursing staff to serve their provisional and permanent hospitals, by 1839, 'both kinds have been generally provided for; the majority of corps have medical assistants now and for the troops the necessary number of practitioners has been supplied'.¹¹⁸

Furthermore, those who had chosen to follow a medical career in the army had not abandoned their corps on becoming qualified doctors or surgeons. In spite of the 'renowned dire straits of the treasury', he claimed that their newly-trained medics had at last been rewarded. The government had succeeded in providing them with 'general and particular power for each class, their corresponding privileges and the right to a pension'. Moreover, in the existing hospitals they had found the resources to provide the 'wages of the employed medical assistants and domestic staff'. At the time, on 7 January 1839, this was

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Tornel, *Memoria...1839*, p. 23.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the one part of his report with which he could allow himself to be, to a great extent, satisfied. What in 1835 might have been received as a politician's empty promise was by 1839 a project which had been fulfilled in more ways than one. If there was one thing which he considered could produce 'the most healthy effect on the good of humanity and specifically on that of the worthy troops' at such a time of war and turmoil it was definitely the *Cuerpo de Sanidad Militar*.¹¹⁹

Therefore, it is ironic that in his 1844 report, when in almost every other field Tornel could be described as satisfied (even complacent), and when he had been in charge of the Ministry of War for three years, the one area which had suffered greatly since 1839 was the Medical Corps. When in 1839, at a time of crisis, he had been able to produce a very satisfactory report on the reforms which had revitalised it, in 1844, when there had been the time and the continuity to allow such reforms to flourish, the opposite had been the case:

All the attempts and efforts of the legislator and the government to reform this corps have by one fault or another come to nothing, and our soldier continues to lack that necessary assistance during campaigns which he deserves so much as he sheds his blood in defence of the nation.¹²⁰

He offered no explanation. His concern was expressed in the same usual terms of disappointment and disgust, and he reiterated the need to rescue this all-important and tragically neglected corps. He stated that the government had succeeded in establishing the law of 6 August 1836 once more, as it had been cancelled on 25 February 1843, and hoped that this would help the Medical Corps to recover from its temporary oblivion.

Although he deplored the abandon the Medical Corps had been subjected to, it must be stated that there were working hospitals where there had not been any only ten years before.¹²¹ Where this neglect needed to be overcome with a certain degree of urgency was out in the desert lands of the north. Those soldiers who were wounded in the constant skirmishes which took place against the Comanche and the Apache had to be attended by any nearby settlers. The divisions which departed to face the hardships of a campaign were still in desperate need of doctors and nurses who were prepared to go with them.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹²⁰ Tornel, *Memoria...1844*, p. 63.

¹²¹ In 1844 there were working military hospitals in Veracruz, Tampico, San Luis Potosí, Chihuahua, Matamoros, Tabasco, Perote, Acapulco, Guadalajara, Jalapa, the Hospital General de San Andrés in Mexico City, and there were three provisional hospitals in Mazatlán, Bravos and Chilapa.

Tornel emphasised the extent to which this problem had to be addressed by Congress:

This is an evil which requires an immediate and effective remedy, because it is painful and a matter of concern to the troops who suffer the fatigues and hardships of service, that they lack the adequate assistance. Specifically in the case of those divisions who march to fight in campaign it is fundamental that they are provided with a cohort from the Medical Corps, with the adequate number of surgeons, first aid kits and all the necessary medical utensils to ensure that our troops can be cured.¹²²

The root of all this evil, according to Tornel, was the same as it had been in 1835 – the lack of funds. In Mexico City's General Hospital patients were not being attended adequately because the doctors were not being paid with consistency. There was a very damaging moratorium in the payment of their wages. Tornel hoped that by handing the doctors' wages over to the Director of the Medical Corps to give to them on his obligatory daily round of visits, further bureaucratic delays could be avoided, thus making their pay readily available.

If improving the education and the health care of the regular army were two key reformist concerns of the military élite, so was the actual social composition of the troops. In a way, specifically in terms of who made up the regular army, there were two almost incompatible aims which were shared by most of the Ministers of War of this period; the first was that the army needed to be large, and the second was that its men needed to be recruited from the more educated sectors of society.

As Cambas rightly points out, Tornel 'always believed in having a large army'.¹²³ In 1835 he opened his ministerial report with a long exposition on the need to have a well-kept army.¹²⁴ He challenged the liberal view, which appeared soon after independence was achieved, which argued that it was a contradiction to be a free country and to have a regular army.¹²⁵ He agreed that

¹²² Tornel, *Memoria... 1844*, p. 63.

¹²³ M.R. Cambas, *Antonio López de Santa Anna* (Mexico, 1958), pp. 200-1.

¹²⁴ This exposition, entitled 'Necesidad del ejército', was reprinted with an introduction, in a beautifully bound commemorative book which can be found in the Edmundo O'Gorman Collection at the Nettie Lee Benson Library, University of Texas, Austin: *Ejército Mexicano. Memoria sobre la organización que se dió al Ejército Mexicano, y que se dedica al Excmo. Sr. Benemérito de la Patria, General de División Presidente de la República Mexicana D. Antonio López de Santa Anna, constante defensor de sus compañeros de armas* (Mexico, 1853).

¹²⁵ For a further discussion on the liberal-conservative divide over the need for a regular army instead of a militia see J. Z. Vázquez, 'Iglesia, Ejército y Centralismo', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. XXXIX, no.1 (Mexico, 1989), p. 210.

war was clearly a despicable evil which humanity had to contend with, and that ideally, in a world in which such horrors could be avoided, armies would then no longer be necessary. However:

if evil exists, if men cannot find a way to ensure that everybody is fair, respecting each other's rights, then it cannot be denied that to repel a force it is fundamental that another force is created. Defence is a natural and justifiable right of nations in the same way that it is of individuals. To order and to regulate this defence is not only a question of prudence, it is a necessity.¹²⁶

These considerations appeared fourteen years after the war of independence had ended; fourteen years in which all the conflicts which had taken place with the exception of the Barradas expedition of 1829, had been the direct result of military interventions and uprisings. Although Tornel insisted that 'our army is the organised defence of a nation' it was clear from the experience of the past few years that it had been that very same army which had been responsible for most of the wars and conflicts which the country had witnessed since it had become independent. Tornel refuted this fact with the significant allegation that the army had not been the perpetrator but the victim of these internal turmoils: 'those very ones who are probably the true instigators of the disasters our nation has suffered in so many upheavals, claim that the army, which has been either the victim or the unwilling instrument, in all of these events, has been responsible for these casualties'.¹²⁷ In other words, displaying an early version of the antipolitics which will be discussed further on, he blamed the factions and the parties, the civilian politicians, and cleared the army of all blame. It must be noted that the way he always protected the values and the rights of the military would clearly contribute towards guaranteeing him and Santa Anna their support time and again.

He stressed that of all their institutions it was the army they were indebted to: 'The Mexican army conquered independence; the nation owes its freedom to its efforts; and the federation was proclaimed and established by the army'. Therefore, it was fundamental, in order to consolidate peace and harmony in the republic, to ensure that the army was not alienated from society. This was a direct allusion to the reforms which Gómez Farías's liberal administration had started to impose, limiting the privileges of the army as well as the clergy, and which had eventually provoked the Plan of Cuernavaca which Tornel himself had drafted and orchestrated in 1834.¹²⁸ The army, as well as being necessary,

¹²⁶ Tornel, *Memoria...1835*, p. 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Tornel played a main role in organising the long list of *pronunciamientos* which

needed to be well-kept and the military needed to be treated as a respected and integral part of society: 'to separate the soldiers from the interests of society is to fight society; it means to turn into enemies those who are awarded a privileged condition so that they can better serve society'.¹²⁹ If the army had as its main purpose to protect the integrity of the nation and to preserve society as it was versus the threat of the forces of anarchy, it was foolish to criticise and to attack it. Without the army, 'society would have been dissolved, property would not have been protected, roads would not have been used except by bandits'. Therefore, in Tornel's mind, the need for an army stemmed from the notion that it was fundamental to the safe-keeping of society as it had developed after independence. The army deserved to retain its privileged condition because it was the sole force which could protect the properties of the landowning and propriety classes from the ever-present threat of banditry and social unrest.

The other reason Tornel offered to justify his belief in maintaining a large regular army was the fact that Mexico had to contend with the dangers of foreign ambition. He reminded Congress of the proximity of Cuba, of the Arenas Conspiracy of 1827 and the Barradas expedition of 1829. Although after Ferdinand VII had died there was the possibility that relations between Spain and Mexico could change for the better, a renewed attempt to re-conquer Mexico was not out of the question. Given that it was likely that Mexico might have to confront a foreign invader, not to have a regular army would be a recipe for disaster. An untrained popular army made up of volunteers on the spur of the moment could never defend a country adequately:

When the people rise *en masse* to fight a war against a foreign invader or a domestic tyrant, all of their labours are abandoned, labours which constitute a true wealth of a nation, which provide it with its subsistence. Hoards of shapeless masses with no guns or discipline do not have either caution, confidence or a sense of subordination to the leaders who are unfortunately destined to command them.¹³⁰

On the one hand, the land would be deserted by this method of emergency recruitment leaving the country without an adequate means of sustaining itself financially as well as in terms of having a means of feeding its people. On the other hand, these improvised troops, having had no military training, would not know how to obey their superiors' orders. When the actual battle began and it was essential that the troops could immediately act on demand, aware of strategy and war tactics, their complete ignorance in military matters would inevitably lead to chaos and defeat. Therefore, having established that Mexico

followed the Plan of Cuernavaca. To quote Cambas: 'El Plan tuvo por jefe aparente al general D. Angel Pérez Palacios, pero en realidad fue dirigido por D. José María Tornel.' Cambas, *Santa Anna*, p. 30.

¹²⁹ Tornel, *Memoria...1835*, p. 3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

needed a large and regular professional army, he focused on two aspects which were clearly related to the means of achieving this; one was the system of recruitment and the other was the control of desertions.

In his opinion the system of recruitment was catastrophic as it was practised at the time because it sent criminals and *léperos* into the army as a form of punishment, and there was no consistency in it. The consequence of this was that on the one hand the army had become one of bandits and assassins nobody would want to entrust with the defence of the nation, and on the other hand, because of the lack of a regular system of recruitment, it was also afflicted with the problems of having men of all ages and occupations who either could not possibly survive a day's combat or whose talents were being wasted having been taken away from their valuable professions in civilian society through arbitrary and forced levies. Faced with this scenario desertions were quite understandably a probability; those who had decent professions were propelled to leave by a sense of injustice; the criminals chose to escape taking with them a free source of supplies, only to become even more dangerous and successful as bandits on Mexico's highways.

The reforms Tornel proposed in 1835 were certainly enlightened in comparison with the way soldiers were being recruited at the time. He proposed the enforcement of military service. It would be carried out by all men with the exception of 'the physically impaired, and those individuals whose professions or jobs are more useful to the nation in postings which lie outside the military profession'.

Moreover, he stated that the military service would have to have a time limit. It could not last indefinitely as had been the case until then, inspiring many to desert. It was logical that as it would now be a service which the majority of men would have to carry out, the period of time each individual would have to serve would be the minimum: 'the law must lay out that by affecting a larger number of men, the service will be all the lighter and more tolerable'.

To avoid arbitrary decisions and personal feuds this new method of recruitment was to be effected with a form of lottery. Each year it was to be the duty of the local authorities to recruit the adequate number of soldiers, taking into consideration the population size of the community in question, by drawing lots, starting with men who were between 18 and 22 years of age, and moving on to the 23 to 26 age group if there were not enough men in the first group.¹³¹

¹³¹ This was a major innovation considering that until then men of all ages could find themselves being recruited, when they had businesses to run and families to maintain. Tornel was very clear in stating that this was to be avoided in future: 'Así no

Eight days were to be allocated for these men to check whether their names had been drawn, during which they could make any appeals for exemption if they believed they were unfit to do the military service for medical or other reasons. Those who had no address or property did not participate in this lottery and were to be sent to serve the coasts and the frontier posts, and were to be used, although this was not expressed, as cannon fodder.¹³²

Tornel's new system of recruitment supplied the army with a constant large number of men. Ideally it pleased the generals who had seen their troops reduced by the law of 16 November 1833; it pleased the nation, granting it an army which was not exclusively made up of criminals and which would be disciplined thanks to its regularisation and training; and it pleased the working population as it only took men away from home for a maximum period of two years and from a limited age group. The large Indian population who had no property and no choice in the matter did not benefit from Tornel's proposal; but then, for Tornel and his class, they did not really count as people.

Regarding the recurrent problem of desertions that the army was plagued with, Tornel hoped that these reforms would at least reduce to a considerable extent those cases in which the motivation for leaving the army was based on the previous arbitrary process of selection and the fact that service could go on interminably without any consideration given to the individual's age or marital/professional background. However, to ensure that desertion was controlled, in his 1835 proposals, he advocated sending those deserters who were caught to frontier posts. He also recommended this same destination for criminals. It was important that the army be made up of 'useful and principled people'.¹³³

However, Tornel's plans were not fully implemented in the years following his proposal due to the internal conflicts and the wars which erupted almost immediately after the publication of his report. The Texan campaign as well as the French Pastry War were important factors in determining that these reforms were not properly implemented. In 1839, Tornel lamented that 'The 1835 administration dedicated itself constantly to achieving the resurrection of the army; however, its work could not be perfect because the corps it created one day had gone to fight the enemy on the next'.¹³⁴ He argued that they had not had

estarán los hombres amenazados siempre de ser soldados, podrían contraer matrimonios que tan útiles son a la sociedad, y dedicarse a alguna profesión útil que pueda ser la ocupación de toda su vida'.

¹³² 'The misery of the Indians increased in time of war because their men were used as cannon fodder'. Olivera and Crété, *Life in Mexico*, p. 162. The whole chapter, 'Mexicans at War' (pp. 159-80) offers a fascinating insight into the conditions soldiers lived in at the time.

¹³³ Tornel, *Memoria...1835*, p. 15.

¹³⁴ Tornel, *Memoria...1839*, p. 12.

the time to implement the reforms adequately. Given a long period of peace and political stability he was convinced that the Mexican army would be more than ready to go to war: 'A long period of peace would result in the establishment of an army which was worthy of its objectives, and the most suited to ensure the progress and stability of wishes that may be deemed to be the true pleasure of the people'.¹³⁵ What he considered to be the most tragic aspect of the lamentable situation the army was in at that time, was that his reforms had not been given the opportunity to prosper because of the constant civil and internal wars which had divided Mexico: 'Internal divisions destroy and rock even those establishments which seem to be the most solid ones'. The conclusion was an obvious one: 'in order that an army which is useful in war is organised, it is fundamental that it be formed in times of peace and stability'.¹³⁶

In January 1839, at war on two fronts, the main priority was to crush Urrea and Mejía's rebellion and to repulse the French offensive. Considerations as to how recruitment could be improved were secondary to the actual endeavour of winning both wars. Therefore, rather than obey laws which had been legislated during a time of peace, it was important for them to adapt to the present context and act accordingly without allowing previous theories to obstruct their actions. Therefore, although there were allegedly 32,442 men recruited under the terms which had been passed in 1835, the present emergency demanded an urgent increase in the number of soldiers to ensure a Mexican victory. As has been noted, according to Tornel, they needed to be able to create in a question of hours a temporary army of civilians in case the French launched another offensive and proceeded to move inland. In order to achieve this he created an emergency corps of urban militias and gave them the name of *defensores de la patria*. He estimated that now, 'in a month fifty thousand men from the urban militias can be called to arms' if such a measure became necessary. These urban militias were to be made up of civilians of all ages who were to be given a basic military instruction so that they could provide an effective defence versus any foreign invaders. However, their military contribution would only be necessary in times of war. In peace time these civilians could go back to their everyday activities without further ado. In other words, the *defensores de la patria* were simply civilians who had been drilled to be able to survive a military attack and combat it if such an event occurred. Although this latter appendage to Tornel's reforms in recruitment contradicted in essence his belief in maintaining one permanent regular and disciplined force, he had no qualms in embracing it if it meant repelling the French: 'When forces are organised according to the rules, the results are all the more important and fewer sacrifices are needed; however, if all of our efforts are necessary to win this ignoble war which the French have

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

provoked, then the whole nation will be armed'.¹³⁷

In January 1844 the situation was very different. As has been noted, Tornel had been responsible for the Ministry of War since October 1841, and although there had been internal wars in Yucatán, Sonora and the South of Mexico, and the campaign in Texas was still consuming lives and forces, compared to the previous decade these had been three years of relative peace. Tornel's ministerial report of 1844 clearly reflects this. To begin with he could afford the time to look back and refer his audience in Congress to the report he had delivered in 1835: 'It was ten years ago now, that standing in this august building, reading another report, I insisted on proving the need for an army'. He remained convinced of this need. Moreover, he claimed that had there not been 'a more or less organised force' Mexico would have disintegrated either from its internal conflicts or from the French intervention. He was full of praise for the army:

in spite of the fact that it has not yet been possible to raise it to a state of absolute perfection, due to the continuous civil conflicts, it has been loyal to its mother-country, it has gone to look for its enemies in remote and deserted frontiers, it has marched to the extremes of the Republic, and it is always ready to expose itself to danger.¹³⁸

After three years of relative peace in which his system of recruitment had been given time to develop, certain results were clearly visible, albeit not to the extent that would have been expected. In the infantry there was a total of 20,700 men – in other words, 8,378 more than there were in October 1841. In the cavalry there was a total of 8,693 men, 3,663 more than in 1841. Although he was hoping to have an infantry of 52,983 men and a cavalry of 19,940 men, he was pleased to see the increases which had come about during his time in office.

However, many of the problems he had hoped to cure with his 1835 reforms remained unresolved. His lottery system of recruitment, 'the most liberal and republican system', was not working as he had intended it to: 'the lottery finds in the Mexican Republic a constant and open opposition, which has not been appeased either by the philosophy of its legislators or by the active efforts of the governments'.¹³⁹ The major problem was that the local authorities continued to accept the appeals for exemption of those 'useful and hardworking men' they were acquainted with and with whom they sympathised, exempting them from doing their military service. On the other hand, they continued to send the 'beggars, depraved individuals and criminals' to swell the ranks of an army which was meant to be made up of all of Mexico's sons. Tornel exclaimed, 'How can we expect the Mexican army to be a paragon of virtue and morality

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹³⁸ Tornel, *Memoria... 1844*, p. 60.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

when it is formed of the scum of the people?!’ It is clear that desertion remained as much of a problem as it had been in 1835. Tornel asked the local authorities to recruit ‘good citizens’ and to prevent criminals from infecting the army, giving them the ‘prostituted title of defenders’.¹⁴⁰ What was apparent was that in war or in peace the system of recruitment Tornel had designed in 1835 was still not working in 1844. In brief, Tornel, like all of the Ministers of War, as will be seen further on, wanted the army to be made up of the sons of the *hombres de bien*, and the sons of the *hombres de bien*, for obvious reasons, did not want to lose two years of their lives suffering in some squalid barrack.

Waddy Thomson’s recollections of the Mexican army in 1843 are certainly worth noting here, even when they are tainted with the partiality which would be expected from a minister plenipotenciary of the United States who actually promoted the annexation of the entire country. In terms of discipline, he believed that ‘The inequality between disciplined and undisciplined troops is estimated by military men as one to five’,¹⁴¹ making a mockery of Tornel’s attempts to enforce discipline and instruction in all regular soldiers. Regarding the system of recruitment as it was practised in reality rather than as Tornel had intended it to be:

The soldiers of the Mexican army are generally collected by sending out recruiting detachments into the mountains, where they hunt the Indians in their dens and caverns, and bring them in chains to Mexico; there is scarcely a day that droves of these miserable and more than half naked wretches are not seen thus chained together and marching through the streets to the barracks, where they are scourged and then dressed in a uniform made of linen cloth or of serge, and are occasionally drilled.¹⁴²

Desertions were to continue into the next two decades in such a way that it comes as no surprise that Ignacio Altamirano’s novel *El Zarco*, one of the best exponents of the nineteenth century novel in Mexico, was precisely about an army of deserters, *los plateados*:

(who) had organised themselves into parties of a hundred, two hundred and even five hundred men (...), who roamed the province, living off the land, imposing high taxes on the haciendas and the villages, establishing tolls in the roads and practising kidnaps every day; in other words, the kidnapping of people they did not release unless they

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ W. Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York and London, 1847), p. 170.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 172-3.

received a very large ransom.¹⁴³

In the words of Olivera and Crété, 'Discipline was poor: desertion commonplace'.¹⁴⁴

In fact, Tornel's failure, like that of the other Ministers of War, was highlighted when war broke out with the United States in 1846. It could have been presumed, taking into account his intentions and the results they were meant to achieve, that after approximately nine years of active involvement in the Ministry of War, the outcome of the war would have been different. Regardless of the increased numbers of soldiers of the emergency militias, of the constant endeavours to drill, train and prepare Mexico's soldiers and civilians for war, in 1847, General Winfield Scott and his comparatively small army succeeded in defeating

the whole Mexican army of (at the beginning) thirty-odd thousand men – posted, always, on chosen positions, behind entrenchments, or more formidable defenses of nature and art; killed or wounded, of that number, more than 7,000 officers and men; taken 3,730 prisoners, one seventh officers, including 13 generals, of whom 3 had been presidents of this republic; captured more than 20 colors and standards, 75 pieces of ordinance, besides 57 wall-pieces, 20,000 small arms, and immense quantity of shots, shells, powder, etc.¹⁴⁵

Even then, Tornel was to return to assume the post of Minister of War once more in 1853. Needless to say, as will be discussed now, the success of *santanismo*, as a political ideology, paired with its strong commitment to defending the regular army's institutional interests, was key, not only to General Santa Anna's repeated rise to power, and by default, Tornel's own successful career, but also to the emergence of a corporate military identity amongst the high ranking officers of the period.

Santanismo : An Early Exponent of Antipolitics

Recent research, notably into the works of the main ideologue of the *santanistas*, General José María Tornel, has shown that the *santanistas* were not necessarily a group of unprincipled opportunists, but that, in fact, they belonged to a clique, faction or party which represented an ideology in its own right. *Santanismo* offered a republican system which was seen to represent boldly and effectively the main interests of the élite, regardless of whether its individual members subscribed to the liberal, the moderate or the traditionalist-

¹⁴³ I.M. Altamirano, *El Zarco* (Mexico, 1984), p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Olivera and Crété, *Life in Mexico*, p. 161.

¹⁴⁵ Scott's report is quoted in Olivera and Crété, *Life in Mexico*, p. 166.

conservative cause.¹⁴⁶ This was particularly important at a time when the differences between liberals and conservatives were not as significant as Alamán and Mora portrayed them, and when, at the end of the day, notions such as law and order and the defence of the hegemony of the *hombres de bien* were far more important to the creole oligarchy which had achieved political power with independence than any strict ideological definitions. Once this interpretation is adopted it becomes evident that the many changes that were carried out by the politicians of the period were clearly not as dramatic as they have been made out to be. In the words of Charles Hale, 'Social assumptions ran deeper than the liberal-conservative conflict'.¹⁴⁷ As Costeloe has also noted, for the typical *hombre de bien*, 'his political views were not significant in the social environment in which he moved, and in any case his opinions were likely to be fluid, changing to some extent in accordance with experience and the prevailing circumstances'.¹⁴⁸

However, even then, the élite in Mexico was unable to find the kind of political consensus which its counterpart in Chile succeeded in establishing. Factionalism, masonic rivalries, personality clashes and strong regional tensions all contributed to preventing the creole oligarchy from consolidating the stable government which Diego Portales was able to create in Chile. It is specifically in this context of bitterly opposed cliques, who, with the help or inspiration of certain individual high ranking officers, used force to oust each other from power, that *santanismo*, unlike liberalism or conservatism, emerged as the ideology of an antipolitical and patriotic professional army.

It is evident from Santa Anna's memoirs that he disliked the actual burden of governing Mexico. He allegedly preferred 'the sweet aspects of family life, with no other distraction than my own affairs',¹⁴⁹ at first, in his hacienda of Manga de Clavo, and later in El Encero, Veracruz. However, according to his own account of events, he was asked to intervene time and again, and, for the sake of the nation, *la patria*, he sacrificed his quiet retirement and led the army whether it was against foreign invaders or a 'despotic' government, because it was his duty. The following lines from his memoirs illustrate this point clearly: 'I believed that it was my honour to lead the avant-garde of the defenders of the Mexican nation'; 'I could not be indifferent to the pleas of my fellow-countrymen'; 'with a love of the *Patria* deeply engraved in my heart since I

¹⁴⁶ See W. Fowler, 'Dreams of Stability'.

¹⁴⁷ Charles A. Hale, *El liberalismo mexicano en la época de Mora 1821-1853* (Mexico, 1987), p. 303.

¹⁴⁸ Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, p. 21.

¹⁴⁹ Antonio López de Santa Anna, *Historia Militar y Política*, in Genaro García, *Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México*, vol. 59 (Mexico, 1974), p. 22.

was of the tenderest age (...) I ran frantically to the place of combat'; 'My voice would then be confused with the roar of the canons: there where it was imperative to defy death, for her, there was I (...) My mother-country has always been my idol; and her soldiers, my brothers'.¹⁵⁰

At a time when the concept of nationhood was as yet unclear and when many Mexicans felt that they owed their loyalty more to their province or region rather than to the new and abstract concept of Mexico as a one and indivisible mother-country,¹⁵¹ Santa Anna's patriotic rhetoric was probably not as appealing to the troops as he believed it to be. However, it can be presumed that it had a certain resonance among the high ranking officers who belonged to the generation which had embraced the cause of independence in 1821. If in France in the post-Napoleonic years memory became militarised with the romanticisation of the past war experience,¹⁵² in Mexico there was a similar idealisation of the war of independence which inevitably paid tribute to the patriotism of the military. As can be seen in the annual ministerial reports of the Ministry of War throughout the period, the Chambers of Deputies and Senators were reminded time and again that they owed their independence to the army. To quote only a few examples: Gómez Pedraza, in 1827, stated that, 'the army, virtuous and organised (...), with all its glory, had made independence possible';¹⁵³ Facio, in 1830, further argued that 'It is to the army (...) without a doubt, that the nation owes its independence';¹⁵⁴ likewise, Tornel, in 1835, expressed the belief that 'The Mexican army won independence: the nation owes its freedom to (the army's) endeavours';¹⁵⁵ and General Pedro García Conde (Minister of War 1844-45), in 1845, reiterated the view that 'there is no doubt, gentlemen, that the army accomplished (our) national independence'.¹⁵⁶ If there was not a consciousness of patriotism among the troops, there was one among the high ranking officers. In the same way that they congratulated themselves on being the authors of independence, they also prided themselves on being the one institution which could safeguard Mexico's national integrity against any form of foreign aggression. In the midst of this romantic notion that the officers belonged to a privileged élite which had been responsible for the present existence of their *Patria*, Santa Anna's particular rhetoric was effective.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15, 22 and 76.

¹⁵¹ See David Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1985) and Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *El nacimiento de Hispanoamérica: Vicente Rocafuerte y el hispanoamericanismo, 1808-1832* (Mexico, 1980).

¹⁵² Vagts, *A History of Militarism*, p. 19.

¹⁵³ Gómez Pedraza, *Memoria (...) 1827*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁴ Facio, *Memoria (...) 1830*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Tornel, *Memoria (...) 1835*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁶ Pedro García Conde, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Guerra y Marina, leída en la Cámara de Senadores el día 10 y en la de Diputados el día 11 de marzo de 1845* (Mexico, 1845), p. 15.

However, what is more significant is that he was able to turn this notion of patriotic responsibility into one of political responsibility; one which had as its premise that the army did not belong to the factionalist and divided world of the civilian politicians. The army was above politics. The claim was that the army's sole concern was Mexico as opposed to the political success of one faction or another. Santa Anna's 'farewell' speech of December 1838, after he had been badly wounded in the leg fighting the French, is particularly relevant to this point. First, he depicted himself as having sacrificed his life to defend Mexico's sacred integrity against the French aggressors: 'I was wounded in this last effort and probably this will be the last victory that I shall offer my native land'. Second, he conveyed the notion that he was detached, far-removed from the divisions inherent in party politics; like a benevolent father-figure he was glad that as he died there might be an end to the disruption for which such factions were responsible: 'On closing my career, I cannot refrain from expressing my joy at seeing the beginning of reconciliation among the Mexican factions'. And finally, he appealed to his audience's emotions, their patriotic and nationalistic sentiments in particular: 'May all Mexicans, forgetting my political mistakes, not deny me the only title which I wish to leave my children: that of a 'good Mexican'.¹⁵⁷ There is no doubt that his bold action in Veracruz against the French, together with these patriotic words, had an impressive effect on the high ranking officers. The same man who only two years earlier had been responsible for the disastrous defeat at San Jacinto, who had gone on to be taken prisoner by the Texan rebels, and who had allegedly agreed unpatriotically to sell Texas for a large sum of money, suddenly found that all was forgiven as a direct result of his valour and the successful way in which he portrayed himself as a man detached from the pettiness of factional political squabbling. Incredible as it may seem, Santa Anna was President of the Republic again in 1839.¹⁵⁸

This belief, upheld by high ranking officers, that they were above or outside party politics, in what has been defined as antipolitics, was one of the immediate results of early military professionalisation in the Hispanic world. In Spain, for instance, one of the military bulletins argued in 1841 that 'We cannot and will not say "we are the state", but we do say, "We are the nation", or if you prefer, "the most pure part of the nation"'.¹⁵⁹ In cynical terms, this detachment from civilian politics or pose of non-alignment with any of the parties, allowed those generals who were praetorian predators to intervene whenever they thought fit, arguing that they were doing so for the sake of the nation. In the

¹⁵⁷ The translation of Santa Anna's speech is taken from W.H. Callcott, *Santa Anna: The Story of an Enigma Who Once Was Mexico* (Connecticut, 1964), p. 159.

¹⁵⁸ He was asked to serve as Interim President, whilst Anastasio Bustamante left Mexico City to crush General Urrea's revolt, from 20 March to 10 July 1839.

¹⁵⁹ Payne, *Ejército y Sociedad en la España Liberal*, p. 41.

case of Santa Anna, Lynch has argued that it was specifically because he did not align himself with one party or another that he became the 'temptation of all the parties'.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the Liberals asked him to intervene for their cause in 1832 and in 1846, and the Conservatives did the same in 1853.

Although the concept of antipolitics does not provide a definition of the political ideology of the regular army, it does help to account in part for Santa Anna's appeal to the military. There was a curious romantic dignity for professional officers in adopting this stance of political detachment, or even political superiority. Like an idealised Royal Family of the past, the military were above party politics. They intervened as an arbitrating force when civilian politicians reached a dead end, without, in theory, becoming sullied in the bickering inherent in constitutional debate. What is more, officers were justified in being proud as it had been thanks to them that independence had been achieved. Like Santa Anna, who was clearly the most popular general of the period, the army, associated with him, represented the *patria*, or, to echo the view of the Spanish officers, the 'parte más pura de la patria'.

Evidently, once the army is seen to have been mainly supportive of Santa Anna throughout most of the period, a political definition can be found. Given that the *santanistas* did sustain a political ideology, and that Tornel was the main ideologue of Santa Anna's supporters, it is in his annual ministerial reports as Minister of War that an idea of the nature of the beliefs which were most representative of the high ranking officers can be discovered.

Tornel believed that the army was not a passive or indeed isolated institution, its history, its story, was that of the country: 'its history is that of the politics of the nation to which it belongs'.¹⁶¹ Tornel's views on the army were a reflection of his views on politics and society. What he attempted to achieve as Minister of War within the army in 1833, from 1835-37, from 1838-39, from 1841-44, in 1846 and in 1853, was not dissimilar from what he hoped to achieve in society. In summarising the essence of his reforms and demands throughout his career in the Ministry of War, the following points can be seen to emerge. Tornel wanted Mexico to have:

- (i) a large army made up of honourable hard working young men, i.e. members of the middle class;
- (ii) an army with fully qualified doctors and engineers who would contribute in assisting the civilian community with good hospitals and modern roadworks;
- (iii) an army with educated and literate troops, instructed through the Lancasterian method of teaching;
- (iv) an army in which prizes, awards and promotions would only be given

¹⁶⁰ Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America*, p. 334.

¹⁶¹ Tornel, *Memoria (...) 1844*, p. 2.

for outstanding acts of valour against a foreign enemy, and not for supporting a successful *pronunciamiento*;¹⁶²

(v) an army with an effective system of pensions for the widows and orphans of the dead;

(vi) a large and civilised army which would have as its main priority to maintain law and order in Mexico and to protect its national integrity.

These ideals were respected by the most influential core of the army. What is more, they can almost all be found consistently in the majority of the annual ministerial reports of the Ministry of War of the period.

The following quotes exemplify what the different Ministers of War thought about the social background of the people who constituted the rank and file of the army, and what they hoped would be the social background of the troops in an ideal world. In 1826, Gómez Pedraza lamented, for instance, that the army was made up of 'idle men, with no address or home, the result of which is that the army (...) will become but a gang of villains, or at least of people without patriotism or honour'.¹⁶³ Herrera, in 1834, reiterated this point in stating that 'the worst kind of people are sent by the communities to serve (the army)'.¹⁶⁴ Almonte, in 1840, argued that it was fundamental for the army to ensure that 'the corps are made up of useful people'.¹⁶⁵ Arista, in 1849, was persuaded that in his drastically reduced regular army there was 'hope that the army may be made up of chosen people'.¹⁶⁶ However, Robles, in 1852, arrived at the

¹⁶² Tornel condemned in each one of his *Memorias de Guerra* all promotions and prizes which had been given based on the soldier's questionable merits in fighting his own countrymen. In fact, in 1835, he argued that it was the obligation of all republican governments to prevent the creation of 'órdenes militares que formen en el estado un nuevo cuerpo privilegiado', warning Congress that 'la aristocracia militar es la más peligrosa' (p. 16). However, whilst in theory he clearly believed that awarding promotions to those soldiers who joined a successful revolt was detrimental to any sense of discipline and morality the army might have, it is clear from the historical data available that Tornel had no qualms in awarding prizes and promotions to all those high-ranking officers who participated in the rebellions he himself organised or participated in. See my 'José María Tornel', pp. 156-8. Again, this view was expressed in most of the annual ministerial reports of the period. Facio went as far as stating in his 1830 *Memoria* that, 'La distribución de grados que se prodigó con asombro, originó igualmente el poco aprecio y minoró el entusiasmo; (...) viéndose desde entonces divisas militares de todas clases portadas por muchos hombres sin mérito y sin virtudes' (p. 7).

¹⁶³ Gómez Pedraza, *Memoria (...) 1826*, p. 9.

¹⁶⁴ J.J. de Herrera, *Memoria (...) 1834*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, *Memoria del Ministro de Guerra y Marina presentada a las Cámaras del Congreso General Mexicano en enero de 1840* (Mexico, 1840), p. 6.

¹⁶⁶ Mariano Arista, *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Guerra y*

conclusion that the pay in the army was not enough to attract ‘that section of the population which would be the most suited to carry out the military service’.¹⁶⁷ In brief, there was a consensus among those generals who became Ministers of War throughout the period that the army needed to be made up of members of the middle classes. The sub-class which in fact made up the rank and file of the army, levied by force from Indian communities outside the main cities and marched into the garrisons in chain gangs,¹⁶⁸ was clearly one which they hoped to eradicate from their regiments. After all, the desertion rate was extremely high as a result of the kind of people who were levied.

Like Tornel they all embraced the belief that there was a need for good doctors and engineers, and similarly advocated installing an effective educational system. In a similar vein, there was a consistent philanthropic demand for pensions, and most of them agreed that the proliferation of promotions which had followed Iturbide’s rise to power had been damaging to the discipline of the army. After all, as the US Minister Plenipotenciary Waddy Thompson noted in 1846, ‘They have more than two hundred generals, most of them without commands’.¹⁶⁹ Evidently, they all believed that it was the army’s duty to ensure that law and order was enforced in Mexico.

If, following Tornel’s view that the ideal army was the reflection of an ideal society, these beliefs are translated into a political interpretation of the kind of system high ranking officers wanted for Mexico, the following conclusions can be obtained. In essence, the majority of generals who acted as Ministers of War believed that their society needed to be regimented, disciplined and hierarchical. They clearly inherited the philanthropic beliefs of the enlightenment in providing Mexico with a basic education. Similarly, for people of their own class, in the tradition of the Masonic lodges, they hoped to provide pensions for those in need and a reliable medical service. Faced with the external pressures of industrialisation they favoured the existence of well-qualified engineers. However, the most significant belief which was shared by liberal, moderate, *santanista* and traditionalist generals was the one regarding the constitution of the army in terms of social class. Echoing Paredes y Arrillaga’s conviction that the proletariat had to be kept outside the political debate, most generals wanted the army and society to be made up of people who belonged to the middle and upper classes. In this sense, their views paralleled those of the *hombres de bien*, the *gente decente*, who, including moderate liberals such as Mora, and conservatives such as Alamán, were convinced that the right to vote had to be restricted to property-owning citizens. This suggests that the high ranking officers were, in their majority, traditionalist/conservative in their political

Marina leída en la Cámara de Diputados el día 9, y en la de Senadores el 11 de enero de 1849 (Mexico, 1849), p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Robles, *Memoria* (...) 1852, p. 67.

¹⁶⁸ See Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico*, pp.172 -3.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

values and, if not conservative, *santanista*. Given that most of the moderates were *santanistas* at one point or another, as *santanismo* was essentially an amalgam of those views which traditionalists and liberals shared in common, and that high ranking officers together with the *hombres de bien* welcomed more often than not the repeated rise of Santa Anna and Tornel's management of the army, it is possible to claim that the high ranking officers of the regular army represented, to a certain extent as an estate or a class, those political beliefs which were upheld by the traditionalist and the moderate/*santanista* cliques of the early national period. Evidence of this can be found in an analysis of the views which were expounded by the Ministers of War.

The Beliefs of the Ministers of War (1822-53)

Of the Ministers of War who were in post long enough to produce the annual ministerial reports which have been analysed in this study, four of them were moderates (Arista, Gómez Pedraza, Herrera, Parres), three of them were traditionalists (Almonte, Facio, Robles) and two of them were *santanistas* (García Conde, Tornel). It is significant that none of them were radical liberals.

Furthermore, a glance at Stevens's definition of the political allegiances of individual high ranking officers who were cabinet ministers and presidents between 1824 and 1867 shows that the majority of influential high ranking officers were either traditionalists/conservatives or moderates/*santanistas*.¹⁷⁰ The notable exceptions are generals Vicente Guerrero and Juan Álvarez,¹⁷¹ both originating from the present state of Guerrero.

Although further research needs to be carried out into the individuals who made up the officer corps of independent Mexico, in order to arrive at a more complete definition of the ideology of the regular army, the statistics regarding those generals who took an active part in the political arena of the capital suggest that the regular army was, in essence, a traditionalist-*santanista* force which did not favour the more radical reforms that civilian liberals such as Valentín Gómez Farías had in mind for Mexico. The views which were expressed by the Ministers of War during this period on society, on what the main goals of a worthy government consisted of and the lives they led, clearly illustrate this point.

¹⁷⁰ Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, pp. 120 -7.

¹⁷¹ However, according to Brian Hamnett, even Juan Álvarez's 'radicalism' is questionable: 'Although frequently associated with the 'radicals', Álvarez himself was not a *puro* but rather the able forger of flexible popular alliances that incorporated lower social and ethnic groups, though usually in order to pre-empt their own autonomous actions and defuse their radical potential'. See Hamnett, *Juárez* (Harlow, 1994), p. 57.

Gómez Pedraza (1789-1851), fought against the insurgents during the war of independence at the head of the 'faithful of Potosí' and even contributed to the capture of Morelos.¹⁷² Although he became one of the *yorkino* leaders during the 1820s after the fall of Iturbide, his credentials as a moderate were clearly significant in that the radicals overthrew him by force and replaced him with Guerrero when he won the elections in 1828. Moreover, although he invited the more radical federalists Gómez Farías and Francisco García to be part of his ministerial cabinet when he was returned to the presidential seat by Santa Anna in 1833,¹⁷³ he went on to serve as Minister of Relations under the traditionalist Bustamante regime in 1838, and under Santa Anna in 1841. In fact by the 1840s Gómez Farías had arrived at the conclusion that Gómez Pedraza was filled with pride, false, ungrateful and someone who thought he was entitled to everything.¹⁷⁴ Essentially, although Gómez Pedraza represented the moderate wing of the liberal faction at different stages in his career he was more inclined to support a government which favoured the interests of the privileged classes, church and army, than one which stood for 'pure' liberalism. As Costeloe points out, Gómez Pedraza 'joined with conservatives in defence of order, property and privilege'.¹⁷⁵ Like the conservatives, he was convinced in 1849 that the main mistake they had made in the 1820s had been to impose a representative system for which the people of Mexico were not ready. Mexico needed to be directed by an enlightened minority until it acquired the political maturity required for it to feature alongside modern democratic nations such as the United States.¹⁷⁶

José Joaquín de Herrera (1794-1854) was another moderate who actively fought against the insurgents during the war of independence. Although he was Minister of War during the Liberal experiment of 1833-34 he did not immediately resign when Santa Anna brought the Gómez Farías administration to an end, and went on to take the respectable post of Inspector General of the Army under the *santanistas* and under Bustamante from August 1834 to December 1837. As has been noted, he advocated a programme of moderate reform during his Presidency in 1845. However, he was considered by liberals such as Gómez Farías as a centralist and a traitor. In fact, the liberals conspired to overthrow Herrera because they feared he had monarchist inclinations.¹⁷⁷ In the plan they drew up in May 1845 they argued that Herrera's government was suffocating the desires of the people for the re-establishment of the constitution

¹⁷² *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia, Biografía y Geografía de México* (Mexico, 1976).

¹⁷³ Nettie Lee Benson Collection (henceforth referred to as NLBC), Valentín Gómez Farías Papers, Letter from Gómez Pedraza to Gómez Farías, 14 December 1832.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter from Gómez Farías to Santa Anna, 2 October 1846.

¹⁷⁵ Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁶ See Gómez Pedraza's speech of 13 March 1849, printed in *El Siglo XIX*, 22 March.

¹⁷⁷ Santoni, 'A Fear of the People', pp. 285-6.

of 1824, and that it was entering into ‘furtive and treacherous negotiations’ with the rebellious Texans.¹⁷⁸

Joaquín Parres (1793-1848) also fought in the Royalist forces during the war of independence. Having been under the orders of the Spanish general Pedro Celestino Negrete he went on to embrace Iturbide’s Plan of Iguala in 1821 and participated in the entrance into Mexico City of the Army of the Three Guarantees on 27 September. He was among those constitutionalist liberals and reactionary traditionalists who conspired against Iturbide after he proclaimed himself Emperor and went on to close down Congress.¹⁷⁹ He was responsible for the military intervention of 10 April 1827 which brought an end to the violent confrontation which had escalated in Durango between the radical *chirrines* and the traditionalist forces of one González over the expulsion of Spaniards,¹⁸⁰ and went on to advocate moderate policies as Governor of Jalisco, and later Deputy for Guanajuato. However, it is clear that he was perceived to be a *santanista* by the mid-1830s as he came close to being elected interim president following Barragán’s death in 1837 whilst Santa Anna was away.¹⁸¹ It must also be noted that he was, regarding the role of the army, a devout defender of its privileged status. Significantly, his defence of military values was such that in 1846 Paredes y Arrillaga invited him to act as Minister of the Exchequer in his reactionary regime.¹⁸² Whilst not displaying any clearly consistent political convictions in Congress, he nevertheless expressed a certain element of militaristic fanaticism by actually arguing that the army’s behaviour during the turmoils of 1828-33 had been exemplary. It had obeyed its orders and fought with valour: ‘Where else can you find soldiers like these? Mexicans can be proud of having an army which has suffered terrible losses [because](...) of its valour and enthusiasm’.¹⁸³

Almonte (1803-69), younger than Gómez Pedraza, Herrera and Parres, was only seven years old when the war of independence broke out. He accompanied his father Morelos during the first years of the revolution. However, at the age of twelve he was sent to the United States, where he became a student in New Orleans, not returning to Mexico until Iturbide had been crowned Emperor. Although he was a federalist in the 1820s, the Texan campaign of 1836, in

¹⁷⁸ See Cecil A. Hutchinson, ‘Valentín Gómez Farías. A Biographical Study’, unpubl. PhD Diss, University of Texas, Austin, 1948, pp. 556-7.

¹⁷⁹ Enrique González Pedrero, *Pais de un solo hombre: el México de Santa Anna* (Mexico, 1993), pp. 143, 162 and 182.

¹⁸⁰ José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente, 1822-1846*, vol. 2 (Mexico, 1987), p. 394.

¹⁸¹ Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, p. 78.

¹⁸² Bocanegra, *Memorias*, vol. 3, p. 349.

¹⁸³ Parres, *Memoria...1833*, p. 2.

which he was involved and in fact made prisoner, converted him into a dedicated centralist. A friend of Santa Anna's, with whom he shared the adventure of El Álamo and the misadventure of San Jacinto, he also saw party politics as one of the main causes for Mexico's civil strife and misfortunes. To achieve unity it was fundamental to encourage a proper sense of nationalism; a centralist national movement devoid of 'politics' with patriotism representing the main 'conservative principle of society'. Thus, advocating the 'antipolitics' of *santanismo*, Almonte stressed, as Minister of War, that the 'spirit of independence' needed to be regained.¹⁸⁴ Almonte, in fact, went on to join the Conservative Party in 1850, supported the Conservative-*santanista* alliance of 1853, and went on to fight for the conservatives in the War of the Reforma.

As is well known, Arista (1802-55) despised the radical wing of the liberal faction. In a letter to Herrera on 24 August 1845 he proclaimed that it was his main objective 'to stifle any attempt at sansculottism'.¹⁸⁵ Although his enemies accused him of being a 'socialist' when he became president in 1851, he denied such accusations and further argued that he was a Roman Catholic who recognised the authority of the Church.¹⁸⁶ Although he was only a year older than Almonte, he became a cadet in the Royalist forces of Puebla at the age of 15. His traditionalist militarism in 1832 meant that he fought for Bustamante's administration against Santa Anna and was subsequently exiled in 1833. However, once Santa Anna brought the Gómez Farías liberal administration to an end in 1834, Arista returned supporting the ideals upheld in the Plan of Cuernavaca. Although Arista did not advocate obvious traditionalist values he did embrace the nationalist sentiments and rhetoric which characterised the *santanistas*. His passion for Mexico was such that after he died in exile, off the shores of Portugal on his way to France in 1855, his heart was transported back to Mexico where it was buried.¹⁸⁷

Facio (1790-1836) was an extreme reactionary educated in Ferdinand VII's *Guardia Real* in Spain. He was actively involved in Bravo's *escocés* revolt of 1827 and has been generally portrayed as the individual who was responsible for issuing the order of Guerrero's execution in 1831.¹⁸⁸ He was committed to Alamán's administration of 1830-32 and believed in restoring the values of the colonial era.¹⁸⁹ His extremism was such that the atypical traditionalist Carlos

¹⁸⁴ Almonte, *Memoria...1846*, p. 9.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Costeloe, *The Central Republic*, p. 278.

¹⁸⁶ Moisés González Navarro, *Anatomía del poder en México 1848-1853* (Mexico, 1977), p. 94.

¹⁸⁷ *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia*.

¹⁸⁸ He was formally accused of murdering Guerrero after the fall of Bustamante on 6 April 1833.

¹⁸⁹ See Facio, *Memoria que sobre los sucesos del tiempo de su ministerio, y sobre la causa intentada contra los cuatro ministros del Vice-Presidente D. Anastasio Bustamante, presenta José Antonio Facio* (Paris, 1835).

María de Bustamante, in August 1831, accused him of being responsible for the repressive nature of the regime.¹⁹⁰ His committed dedication to improving the state of the army, above all other considerations, has already been noted. Likewise he advocated strengthening the separate privileges of the regular army. As he stated in his ministerial report of 1830, 'prestige has always been the fundamental foundation upon which all good order and military discipline are based upon'.¹⁹¹

For Robles (1817-62) the most important desire of the people was to be safe and protected. It was the government's duty to provide this security and to ensure that there was law and order. Once this was achieved the progress and prosperity of the nation could be encouraged. Evidently, as was perceived by the traditionalists, the importance of discipline and authority in such a society, this 'foundation of the greatness and power of nations', depended entirely on the existence of a strong regular army. For Robles the army remained the most important institution of the republic.¹⁹² Unlike the afore-mentioned ministers, however, Robles was of a different generation; one, which in fact did not actively participate or even remember the war of independence. He belonged to a military generation whose political formation developed precisely at a time when the privileges of the army were considered unviolable by the different Ministers of War whilst liberal civilian politicians attempted to curtail them. He was, in this sense, of a similar generation to colonels Luis Osollo and Miguel Miramón, who moved into revolt in 1858 precisely to reassert military predominance. As David Brading has pointed out, it cost 'the liberals three years of bitter civil war to destroy the last remnants of an institution which since the days of Calleja had embodied national sovereignty'.¹⁹³ Robles advocated strong conservative, but above all militaristic principles, and actively fought against the Liberals in the War of the Reforma. Captured by General Ignacio Zaragoza on his way to assist Almonte in supporting the French intervention of 1862, he was executed in San Andrés Chalchicomula.

García Conde (1806-51) was another minister who openly advocated a political standpoint which condemned party politics. In his mind the revolt of 6 December 1844 was successful because 'political beliefs had been put aside'. The country needed a 'national movement' and it was the army which could provide this. Whilst the parties had contaminated society with 'political fanaticism', the army intervened to rescue the nation. Like Robles he stressed

¹⁹⁰ *La Voz de la Patria*, 31 August 1831.

¹⁹¹ Facio, *Memoria...1830*, p. 7.

¹⁹² Robles, *Memoria...1852*, p. 90.

¹⁹³ Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, p. 69.

that the army was the most 'indispensable social element' of society.¹⁹⁴ Like Arista he became a cadet in the Royalist forces in 1817, and, typically, joined the Plan of Iguala in 1821. He displayed his committed centralist militarism fighting for the Bustamante regime in 1832, in the Battles of El Gallinero and in the siege of San Luis Potosí. Like Arista, once Santa Anna ended the liberal administration of 1833-34, García Conde became a loyal *santanista*, accompanying Santa Anna in the offensive against Governor Francisco García's federalist rebellion of Zacatecas of 1835. Similarly, he led the cadets who defended the government during Urrea and Gómez Farías's federalist revolt of July 1840. He supported the *santanista Bases de Tacubaya* of 1841, representing the province of Sonora, and he shared Tornel's *santanista* reformist concern for education, acting as a teacher in the Corps of Engineers (1828-31), and as Director of the Colegio de Minería (1837-43).

Clearly, just by considering the beliefs and political behaviour of those Ministers of War who were in office long enough to produce the corresponding annual reports, certain patterns start to emerge. These patterns are not dispelled if those other high ranking officers who acted as Ministers of War between 1822-52, but who did not publish their reports, are taken into account. The following ministers were traditionalists/conservatives: Antonio Medina, Manuel de la Sosa Riva, Francisco Arrillaga, José Ignacio García Yllueca, José Castro, Manuel Rincón, Cirilo Gómez Anaya, Francisco Gómez Parada, Miguel Barragán, Ignacio de Mora y Villamil, Ignacio del Corral, Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga, Joaquín Velázquez de León, Lino José Alcorta and Santiago Blanco. The following ministers were moderates: Manuel de Mier y Terán, José Ignacio Esteva, Francisco Moctezuma, Mariano Michelena, José Morán, Isidro Reyes, Pedro María Anaya, Manuel María Sandoval, Ignacio Gutiérrez and Luis de la Rosa. The following ministers were *santanistas*: Ignacio María de la Barrera, José María Díaz Noriega, Ignacio Basadre, Valentín Canalizo, Antonio Vizcaíno, Luis de Ormaechea and Juan Suárez Navarro. Only Vicente Guerrero, Juan Pablo Anaya and Benito Quijano were radicals. In other words, including those ministers which have been looked at in detail, of a total of 44 high-ranking officers who served as Ministers of War between 1822 and 1853, 18 were traditionalists/conservatives, 14 were moderates, nine were *santanistas* and three were radicals. Having said this, the mentioned radicals were not Ministers of War for longer than a couple of weeks, and, in contrast, it was the *santanistas* who held office for a longer period of time. Moreover, of these 44 high-ranking officers, with the exceptions of Vicente Guerrero, José María Tornel, Manuel Rincón, and, theoretically speaking, Juan Nepomuceno Almonte, the rest of those who were old enough to fight in the war of independence invariably fought in the Royalist Army of New Spain. A glance at a list of Division and Brigade Generals at the end of 1840 further confirms that out of a total of 39 generals, 29 of them had fought against the insurgent forces

¹⁹⁴ García Conde, *Memoria...1845*, pp. ii and 15-6.

before the pronouncement of the Plan of Iguala.¹⁹⁵

There is no doubt that the common experience of the war of independence, especially for a majority of high ranking officers who had fought for the colony, was a determining factor in creating a sense of corporateness in the regular army. Moreover, the sense of their social and political importance was further enhanced by the fact that it was they who achieved independence with the Plan of Iguala and not the insurgents. This importance was certainly celebrated in all of the *Memorias de Guerra*, and legally consolidated with the survival of the *fuero militar*. It is evident that the great majority of high ranking officers, regardless of certain apparent individual political differences, believed that they formed part of a separate privileged institution. As Brading has pointed out, 'the Mexican army constituted an autonomous power structure, not merely parallel with but often superior to the civil authority'.¹⁹⁶ It is also evident that the defence of their estate and privileges was a main priority. Thus whenever their privileges were under threat, as was the case in 1833-1834, all party divisions were put aside and a united front became apparent. Generals Anastasio Bustamante and Santa Anna were clearly the most popular presidents of the period among the high ranking officers because they insisted on upholding the interests of the army as a fundamental priority. If high ranking officers eventually revolted against them at different turning-points in this period, it was in most cases because they were unable to find sufficient funds to continue to provide the military élite with the opulence they had come to expect following the rise of General Iturbide.

Futhermore, as has been noted, the emphasis which was placed on creating a sense that the army, if anything, was a victim of the politicians' intrigues, and that it represented, in fact, the purest interests of the nation, remaining detached and above the constitutional squabbling of Congress, meant that its repeated interventions could be perceived as the actions of a selfless institution whose main role was that of arbitrating over the virulently divided factions of independent Mexico. *Santanismo*, as an early exponent of antipolitics, was clearly popular among the high ranking officers precisely because it offered them a moral justification for intervention.

However, the militarism which came hand in hand with *santanismo* also

¹⁹⁵ These statistics are taken from a variety of sources, namely: Frank Samponaro, 'The Political Role of the Army in Mexico', pp. 394-401; Gabriel Valencia, *Jefes del ejército mexicano en 1847* (Mexico, 1914); Francisco Sosa, *Biografías de mexicanos distinguidos* (Mexico, 1884); Donald Stevens, *Origins of Instability*, pp.120-31; and the *Diccionario Porrúa de Historia, Biografía y Geografía de México*, pp. 1200-19.

¹⁹⁶ Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, pp. 67-8.

contained an ideological slant which meant that most of the *hombres de bien* and most of the high ranking officers who came from middle class creole origins supported the repeated return to power of Santa Anna. As has been noted, all of the *Memorias de Guerra* stressed the importance of turning the army into a middle-class institution. High ranking officers as a class believed likewise that the electorate had to be restricted to property-owning citizens. It must also be stressed that this particular brand of militarism was also acutely reformist. None of the *Memorias de Guerra* of the period attempted to stop the clock or go back in time. There was a constant attempt to improve the condition of the soldier and, by extension, that of society at large. To claim that the regular army was simply a traditionalist/conservative militaristic institution would be misleading. The Ministers of War, whether they were traditionalists, moderates or *santanistas* shared what could be defined, for want of a better term, as a progressive form of conservatism; one which was deeply republican, and one which advocated promoting an enlightened reformism which would bring about the creation of a fairer system of recruitment, a far-reaching educational and health care programme, and a technological/industrial revolution, whilst allowing the army to retain the privileges it had inherited from the colony.

Conclusions

Evidently, as has been noted, the so-called 'age of Santa Anna' was a period of predatory praetorianism in which many officers pronounced against one government after another in the hope of rising to power for no other reason than being in power themselves. It is also clear that the economic distress of the army throughout most of the period motivated many officers and soldiers to show little loyalty to the government when a revolt began. Recent research has also shown that the struggles of the civilian politicians to gain power played a fundamental part in enhancing a praetorian tradition in the army as one faction after another invited the military to intervene for their cause, be it traditionalist or liberal. Similarly, the fact that the beliefs of different high ranking officers have started to be taken seriously has also demonstrated that within the army there was a mosaic of political opinions and allegiances which mirrored those of society as a whole.

However, without necessarily contradicting any of these points, it also becomes clear that a certain corporateness existed among the high ranking officers who had emerged during the war of independence which did, in general terms, result in them supporting a political system which excluded the vast majority of the population, which relied heavily on privileges which had been inherited from the colonial period and which, whilst not being entirely autocratic, required a strong central government. The regular army in independent Mexico was traditionalist yet reformist in its political ideology in the broadest sense possible of the term, and *santanista* in practice.

Furthermore, the invasion of 1846 by an army which in theory belonged to the ideal liberal state represented by the United States had the opposite effect of inevitably confirming the traditionalist beliefs of the Mexican high ranking officers. It comes as no surprise, with this in mind, that by 1853 conservatives and *santanistas* were working together. It is equally significant that those high ranking officers who had emerged during the war of independence, and who were still alive in 1858, invariably fought for the conservatives in the violent three year War of the Reforma. Generals such as Almonte even went on to welcome the arrival of Emperor Maximilian in 1864. The arguably liberal ideology which the army came to uphold under General Porfirio Díaz was supported by a new generation of officers whose formation was no doubt very different to that of those men who had fought in the war of independence. The officers who in their majority defended the colony at the beginning of the war of independence, or who otherwise accepted the *indulto*, and went on to support the Plan of Iguala in 1821, emerged in independent Mexico as a privileged class, whose corporate ideology was, in essence, of a reformist traditionalist-*santanista* tendency. Although individual generals supported different cliques, Santa Anna's antipolitics allowed the regular army to detach itself from the party politics of the civilians, and support whoever appeared most likely to impose a law-abiding and ordered society in which the destiny of the country would be dictated by members of either the creole élite or the military. To ignore the importance of the essentially traditionalist yet reformist ethos of the Mexican military in independent Mexico and the effect it had in preventing liberalism from surviving in government will only further obscure our understanding of this period.



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