

= Zita of Bourbon @-@ Parma =

Zita of Bourbon @-@ Parma ( Zita Maria delle Grazie Adelgonda Micaela Raffaella Gabriella Giuseppina Antonia Luisa Agnese ; 9 May 1892 ? 14 March 1989 ) was the wife of Emperor Charles of Austria . As such , she was the last Empress of Austria , Queen of Hungary , and Queen of Bohemia .

Born as the seventeenth child of the dispossessed Robert I , Duke of Parma and his second wife Infanta Maria Antonia of Portugal , Zita married the then Archduke Charles of Austria in 1911 . Charles became heir presumptive to the Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria in 1914 after the assassination of his uncle Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria , and acceded to the throne in 1916 after the old emperor 's death .

After the end of World War I in 1918 , the Habsburgs were deposed when the new countries of Austria , Czechoslovakia , Hungary and the State of Slovenes , Croats and Serbs were formed . Charles and Zita left for exile in Switzerland and later Madeira , where Charles died in 1922 . After her husband 's death , Zita and her son Otto served as the symbols of unity for the exiled dynasty . A devout Catholic , she raised a large family after being widowed at the age of 29 , and never remarried .

Asteroid 689 Zita is named in her honour .

= = Early life = =

Princess Zita of Bourbon @-@ Parma was born at the Villa Pianore in the Italian Province of Lucca , 9 May 1892 . The unusual name Zita was given her after a popular Italian Saint who had lived in Tuscany in the 13th century . She was the third daughter and fifth child of the deposed Robert I , Duke of Parma and his second wife , Maria Antonia of Portugal , a daughter of king Miguel of Portugal and Adelaide of Löwenstein @-@ Wertheim @-@ Rosenberg . Zita 's father had lost his throne as a result of the movement for Italian unification in 1859 when he was still a child . He fathered twelve children during his first marriage to Maria Pia of the Two Sicilies ( six of whom were mentally retarded , and three of whom died young ) . Duke Robert became a widower in 1882 , and two years later he married Infanta Maria Antonia of Portugal , Zita 's mother . The second marriage produced a further twelve children . Zita was the 17th child among Duke Robert 's 24 children . Robert moved his large family between Villa Pianore ( a large property located between Pietrasanta and Viareggio ) and his castle in Schwarzenau in lower Austria . It was mainly in these two residences that Zita spent her formative years . The family spent most of the year in Austria moving to Pianore in the Winter and returning in the Summer . To move between them , they took a special train with sixteen coaches to accommodate the family and their belongings .

Zita and her siblings were raised to speak Italian , French , German , Spanish , Portuguese and English She recalled , " We grew up internationally . My father thought of himself first and foremost as a Frenchman , and spent a few weeks every year with the elder children at Chambord , his main property on the Loire . I once asked him how we should describe ourselves . He replied , ' We are French princes who reigned in Italy . ' In fact , of the twenty @-@ four children only three including me , were actually born in Italy .

At the age of ten , Zita was sent to a boarding school at Zanberg in Upper Bavaria , where there was a strict regime of study and religious instruction . She was summoned home in the autumn of 1907 at the death of her father . Her maternal grandmother sent Zita and her sister Franziska to a convent on the Isle of Wight to complete her education . Brought up as devout Catholics , the Parma children regularly undertook good works for the poor . In Schwarzenau the family turned surplus cloth into clothes . Zita and Franziska personally distributed food , clothing , and medicines to the needy in Pianore . Three of Zita 's sisters became nuns and , for a time , she considered following the same path . Zita went through a patch of poor health and was sent for the traditional cure at a European spa for two years .

= = Marriage = =

In the close vicinity of Schwarzaau castle was the Villa Wartholz , residence of Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria , Zita ? s maternal aunt . She was the stepmother of Archduke Otto , who died in 1906 , and the step @-@ grandmother of Archduke Charles of Austria @-@ Este , at that time second @-@ in @-@ line to the Austrian throne . The two daughters of Archduchess Maria Theresa of Austria were Zita ? s first cousins and Charles ? half @-@ aunts . They had met as children but did not see one another for almost ten years , as each pursued their education . In 1909 , his Dragoon regiment was stationed at Brandeis an der Elbe ( Brandýs on the Elbe ) , from where he visited his aunt at Franzensbad . It was during one of these visits that Charles and Zita became reacquainted . Charles was under pressure to marry ( Franz Ferdinand , his uncle and first @-@ in @-@ line , had married morganatically , and his children were excluded from the throne ) and Zita had a suitably royal genealogy . Zita later recalled , " We were of course glad to meet again and became close friends . On my side feelings developed gradually over the next two years . He seemed to have made his mind up much more quickly , however , and became even more keen when , in the autumn of 1910 , rumours spread about that I had got engaged to a distant Spanish relative , Don Jaime , the Duke of Madrid . On hearing this , the Archduke came down post haste from his regiment at Brandeis and sought out his grandmother , Archduchess Maria Theresa , who was also my aunt and the natural confidante in such matters . He asked if the rumor was true and when told it was not , he replied , ' Well , I had better hurry in any case or she will get engaged to someone else . ' "

Archduke Charles traveled to Villa Pianore and asked for Zita ? s hand and , on 13 June 1911 , their engagement was announced at the Austrian court . Zita in later years recalled that after her engagement she had expressed to Charles her worries about the fate of the Austrian Empire and the challenges of the monarchy . Charles and Zita were married at the Schwarzaau castle on 21 October 1911 . Charles 's great @-@ uncle , the 81 @-@ year @-@ old Emperor Franz Joseph attended and , relieved to see an heir make a suitable marriage , was in good spirits , even leading the toast at the wedding breakfast . Archduchess Zita soon conceived a son , and Otto was born 20 November 1912 . Seven more children would follow in the next decade .

= = Wife of the heir to Austrian throne = =

At this time , Archduke Charles was in his twenties and did not expect to become emperor for some time , especially while Franz Ferdinand remained in good health . This changed on 28 June 1914 when the heir and his wife Sophie were assassinated in Sarajevo by Bosnian Serb nationalists . Charles and Zita received the news by telegram that day . She said of her husband , " Though it was a beautiful day , I saw his face go white in the sun .

In the war that followed , Charles was promoted to General in the Austrian army , taking command of the 20th Corps for an offensive in Tyrol . The war was personally difficult for Zita , as several of her brothers fought on opposing sides in the conflict ( Prince Felix and Prince René had joined the Austrian army , while Prince Sixtus and Prince Xavier lived in France before the war and enlisted in the Belgian army . Also her country of birth , Italy , joined the war against Austria in 1915 , and so rumours of the ' Italian ' Zita began to be muttered . Even as late as 1917 , The German ambassador in Vienna , Count Otto Wedel would write to Berlin saying " The Empress is descended from an Italian princely house ... People do not entirely trust the Italian and her brood of relatives . "

At Franz Joseph 's request , Zita and her children left their residence at Hetzendorf and moved into a suite of rooms at Schönbrunn Palace . Here , Zita spent many hours with the old Emperor on both formal and informal occasions , where Franz Joseph confided in her his fears for the future . Emperor Franz Joseph died of bronchitis and pneumonia at the age of 86 on 21 November 1916 . " I remember the dear plump figure of Prince Lobkowitz going up to my husband , " Zita later recounted , " and , with tears in his eyes , making the sign of the cross on Charles 's forehead . As he did so he said , ' May God bless Your Majesty . ' It was the first time we had heard the Imperial title used to us . "

= = Empress and Queen = =

Charles and Zita were crowned in Budapest on 30 December 1916 . Following the coronation there was a banquet , but after that the festivities ended , as the emperor and empress thought it wrong to have prolonged celebrations during a time of war . At the beginning of the reign , Charles was more often than not away from Vienna , so he had a telephone line installed from Baden ( where Charles 's military headquarters were located ) to the Hofburg . He called Zita several times a day whenever they were separated . Zita had some influence on her husband and would discreetly attend audiences with the Prime Minister or military briefings , and she had a special interest in social policy . However , military matters were the sole domain of Charles . Energetic and strong willed , Zita accompanied her husband to the provinces and to the front , as well as occupying herself with charitable works and hospital visits to the war wounded .

= = = The Sixtus affair = = =

By the spring of 1917 , the War was dragging on towards its fourth year , and Zita 's brother Sixtus of Bourbon Parma , a serving officer in the Belgian Army , was a main mover behind a plan for Austria Hungary to make a separate peace with France . Charles initiated contact with Sixtus through contacts in neutral Switzerland , and Zita wrote a letter inviting him to Vienna . Zita 's mother Maria Antonia delivered the letter in person .

Sixtus arrived with conditions for talks which had been agreed with the French : the restoration to France of Alsace Lorraine ( annexed by Germany after the Franco Prussian War in 1870 ) ; restoration of the independence of Belgium ; independence for the kingdom of Serbia ; and the handover of Constantinople to Russia . Charles agreed , in principle , to the first three points and wrote a letter to Sixtus dated 25 March 1917 which sent " the secret and unofficial message " to the President of France that " I will use all means and all my personal influence " . This attempt at dynastic diplomacy eventually foundered . Germany refused to negotiate over Alsace Lorraine , and , seeing a Russian collapse on the horizon , was loath to give up the war . Sixtus continued his efforts , even meeting Lloyd George in London about Italy 's territorial demands on Austria in the Treaty of London of 1915 , but the Prime Minister could not persuade his generals that Britain should make peace with Austria . Zita managed a personal achievement during this time by stopping the German plans to send airplanes to bomb the home of the King and Queen of Belgium on their name days .

In April 1918 , after the German Russian Treaty of Brest Litovsk , Austrian Foreign Minister Count Ottokar Czernin made a speech attacking incoming French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau as being the main obstacle to a peace favouring the Central Powers . Clemenceau was incensed and , after seeing the Emperor Charles 's letter of 24 March 1917 , had it published . For a while , the life of Sixtus appeared to be in danger , and there were even fears that Germany might occupy Austria . Czernin persuaded Charles to send a ' Word of Honour ' to Austria 's allies saying that Sixtus had not been authorised to show the letter to the French Government , that Belgium had not been mentioned , and that Clemenceau had lied about the mentioning of Alsace . Czernin had actually been in contact with the German Embassy throughout the whole crisis and attempted to persuade the Emperor to step down because of the Affair . After failing to do so , Czernin resigned as Foreign Minister .

= = = End of Empire = = =

By this time , the war was closing in on the embattled Emperor . A Union of Czech Deputies had already sworn an oath to a new Czechoslovak state independent of the Habsburg Empire on 13 April 1918 , the prestige of the German Army had taken a severe blow at the Battle of Amiens , and , on 25 September 1918 , King Ferdinand of Bulgaria broke away from his allies in the Central Powers and sued for peace independently . Zita was with Charles when he received the telegram of Bulgaria 's collapse . She remembered it " made it even more urgent to start peace talks with the

Western Powers while there was still something to talk about . On 16 October , the emperor issued a " People 's Manifesto " proposing the empire be restructured on federal lines with each nationality gaining its own state . Instead , each nation broke away and the empire effectively dissolved .

Leaving behind their children at Gödöllő? , Charles and Zita travelled to the Schönbrunn Palace . By this time ministers had been appointed by the new state of " German @-@ Austria " , and by 11 November , together with the emperor 's spokesmen , they prepared a manifesto for Charles to sign . Zita , at first glance , mistook it for an abdication and made her famous statement " A sovereign can never abdicate . He can be deposed ... All right . That is force . But abdicate ? never , never , never ! I would rather fall here at your side . Then there would be Otto . And even if all of us here were killed , there would still be other Habsburgs ! " Charles gave his permission for the document to be published , and he , his family and the remnants of his Court departed for the Royal shooting lodge at Eckartsau , close to the borders with Hungary and Slovakia . The Republic of German @-@ Austria was pronounced the next day .

= = Exile = =

After a difficult few months at Eckartsau , the Imperial Family received aid from an unexpected source . Prince Sixtus had met King George V and appealed to him to help the Habsburgs . George was reportedly moved by the request , it being only months since his imperial relatives in Russia had been executed by revolutionaries , and promised " We will immediately do what is necessary . "

Several British Army officers were sent to help Charles , most notably Lieutenant @-@ Colonel Edward Lisle Strutt , who was a grandson of Lord Belper and a former student at the University of Innsbruck . On 19 March 1919 , orders were received from the War Office to " get the Emperor out of Austria without delay " . With some difficulty , Strutt managed to arrange a train to Switzerland , enabling the Emperor to leave the country with dignity without having to abdicate . Charles , Zita , their children and their household left Eckartsau on 24 March escorted by a detachment of British soldiers from the Honourable Artillery Company under the command of Strutt .

= = = Hungary and exile in Madeira = = =

The family 's first home in exile was Wartegg Castle in Rorschach , Switzerland , a property owned by the Bourbon @-@ Parmas . However , the Swiss authorities , worried about the implication of the Habsburgs living near the Austrian border , compelled them to move to the western part of the country . The next month , therefore , found them moving to Villa Prangins , near Lake Geneva , where they resumed a quiet family life . This abruptly ended in March 1920 when , after a period of instability in Hungary , Miklós Horthy was elected regent . Charles was still technically King ( as Charles IV ) but Horthy sent an emissary to Prangins advising him not to go to Hungary until the situation had calmed . After the Trianon Treaty Horthy 's ambition soon grew . Charles became concerned and requested the help of Colonel Strutt to get him into Hungary . Charles twice attempted to regain control , once in March 1921 and again in October 1921 . Both attempts failed , despite Zita 's staunch support ( she insisted on travelling with him on the final dramatic train journey to Budapest ) .

Charles and Zita temporarily resided at Castle Tata , the home of Count Esterházy , until a suitable permanent exile could be found . Malta was mooted as a possibility , but was declined by Lord Curzon , and French territory was ruled out due to the possibility of Zita 's brothers intriguing on Charles 's behalf . Eventually , the Portuguese island of Madeira was chosen . On 31 October 1921 , the former Imperial couple were taken by rail from Tihany to Baja , where the Royal Navy monitor Glow @-@ worm was waiting . They finally arrived at Funchal on 19 November . Their children were being looked after at Wartegg Castle in Switzerland by Charles 's step @-@ grandmother Maria Theresa , although Zita managed to see them in Zurich when her son Robert needed an operation for appendicitis . The children joined their parents in Madeira in February 1922 .

= = = Death of Charles = = =

Charles had been in poor health for some time . After going shopping on a chilly day in Funchal to buy toys for Carl Ludwig , he was struck by an attack of bronchitis . This rapidly worsened into pneumonia , not helped by the inadequate medical care available . Several of the children and staff were also ill , and Zita ( at the time eight months pregnant ) helped nurse them all . Charles weakened and died on 1 April , his last words to his wife being " I love you so much . " After his funeral , a witness said of Zita " This woman really is to be admired . She did not , for one second , lose her composure ... she greeted the people on all sides and then spoke to those who had helped out with the funeral . They were all under her charm . " Zita wore mourning black in Charles 's memory throughout sixty @-@ seven years of widowhood .

= = Widowhood = =

After Charles 's death , the former Austrian imperial family were soon to move again . Alfonso XIII of Spain had approached the British Foreign Office via his ambassador in London , and they agreed to allow Zita and her seven ( soon to be eight ) children to relocate to Spain . Alfonso duly sent the warship Infanta Isabel to Funchal and this took them to Cadiz . They were then escorted to the Pardo Palace in Madrid , where shortly after her arrival Zita gave birth to a posthumous child , Archduchess Elisabeth . Alfonso XIII offered his exiled Habsburg relatives the use of Palacio Uribarren at Lekeitio in the Bay of Biscay . This appealed to Zita , who did not want to be a heavy burden to the state that harboured her . For the next six years Zita settled in Lekeitio , where she got on with the job of raising and educating her children . They lived with straitened finances , mainly living on income from private property in Austria , income from a vineyard in Johannisberg , and voluntary collections . Other members of the exiled Habsburg dynasty , however , claimed much of this money , and there were regular petitions for help from former Imperial officials .

= = = Move to Belgium = = =

By 1929 , several of the children were approaching the age to attend university and the family sought to move somewhere of a more congenial educational climate than Spain . That September , they moved to the Belgian village of Steenokkerzeel near Brussels , where they were closer to several members of their family . Zita continued her political lobbying on behalf of the Habsburg family , even sounding out links with Mussolini 's Italy . There was even a possibility of a Habsburg restoration under the Austrian Chancellors Engelbert Dollfuss and Kurt Schuschnigg , with Crown Prince Otto visiting Austria numerous times . These overtures were abruptly ended by the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938 . As exiles , the Habsburg family took the lead in resisting the Nazis in Austria , but this foundered because of opposition between monarchists and socialists .

= = = Flight to America = = =

With the Nazi invasion of Belgium on 10 May 1940 , Zita and her family became war refugees . They narrowly missed being killed by a direct hit on the castle by German bombers and fled to Prince Xavier 's French Castle in Bostz . The Habsburgs then fled to the Spanish border , reaching it on 18 May . They moved on to Portugal where the U.S. Government granted the family exit visas on 9 July . After a perilous journey they arrived in New York on 27 July , having family in Long Island and Newark , New Jersey . ; at one point , Zita and several of her children lived , as long @-@ term house @-@ guests , in Tuxedo Park , New York .

The Austrian imperial refugees eventually settled in Quebec , which had the advantage of being French @-@ speaking ( the younger children were not yet fluent in English ) . As they were cut off from all European funds , finances were more stretched than ever . At one stage , Zita was reduced to making salad and spinach dishes from dandelion leaves . However , all her sons were active in the war effort . Otto promoted the dynasty 's role in a post @-@ war Europe and met regularly with

Franklin Roosevelt ; Robert was the Habsburg representative in London ; Carl Ludwig and Felix joined the United States Army , serving with several American @-@ raised relatives of the Mauerner line ; Rudolf smuggled himself into Austria in the final days of the war to help organise the resistance . In 1945 Empress Zita celebrated her birthday on the first day of peace , 9 May . She was to spend the next two years touring the United States and Canada to raise funds for war @-@ ravaged Austria and Hungary .

= = Post @-@ War = =

After a period of rest and recovery , Zita found herself regularly going back to Europe for the weddings of her children . She decided to move back to the continent full @-@ time , in 1952 , to Luxembourg , in order to look after her aging mother . Maria Antonia died at the age of 96 in 1959 . The bishop of Chur proposed to Zita that she move into a residence that he administered ( formerly a castle of the Counts de Salis ) at Zizers , Graubünden in Switzerland . As the castle had enough space for visits from her large family , and a nearby chapel ( a necessity for the devoutly Catholic Zita ) , she accepted with ease .

Zita occupied her final years with her family . Although the restrictions on the Habsburgs entering Austria had been lifted , this only applied to those born after 10 April 1919 . This meant Zita could not attend the funeral of her daughter Adelheid in 1972 , which was painful for her . She also involved herself in the efforts to have her deceased husband , the " Peace Emperor " canonised . In 1982 , the restrictions were eased , and she returned to Austria after having been absent for six decades . Over the next few years , the Empress made several visits to her former Austrian homeland , even appearing on Austrian television . In a series of interviews with the Viennese tabloid newspaper Kronen Zeitung , Zita expressed her belief that the deaths of Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria and his mistress Baroness Mary Vetsera , at Mayerling , in 1889 , were not a double suicide , but rather murder by French or Austrian agents .

= = = Death = = =

After a memorable 90th birthday , where she was surrounded by her now vast family , Zita 's strong health began to fail . She developed inoperable cataracts in both eyes . Her last big family gathering took place at Zizers , in 1987 , when her children and grandchildren joined in celebrating Empress Zita 's 95th birthday . While visiting her daughter , in summer 1988 , she developed pneumonia and spent most of the autumn and winter bedridden . Finally , she called Otto , in early March 1989 , and told him she was dying . He and the rest of the family travelled to her bedside and took turns keeping her company until she died in the early hours of 14 March 1989 . She was 96 years old .

Her funeral was held in Vienna on 1 April . The government allowed it to take place on Austrian soil providing that the cost was borne by the Habsburgs themselves . Zita 's body was carried to the Imperial Crypt under Capuchin Church in the same funeral coach she had walked behind during the funeral of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1916 . It was attended by over 200 members of the Habsburg and Bourbon @-@ Parma families , and the service had 6 @, @ 000 attendees including leading politicians , state officials and international representatives , including a representative of Pope John Paul II . Following an ancient custom , the Empress had asked that her heart , which was placed in an urn , stay behind at the monastery of Muri , in Switzerland , where the Emperor 's heart had rested for decades . In doing so , Zita assured herself that , in death , she and her husband would remain by each other 's side .

When the procession of mourners arrived at the gates of the Imperial Crypt , the herald who knocked on the door during this traditional " admission ceremony " introduced her as Zita , Her Majesty the Empress and Queen .

= = Cause of beatification = =

On 10 December 2009 , Mgr Yves Le Saux , Bishop of Le Mans , France , opened the diocesan

process for the beatification of Zita . Zita was in the habit of spending several months each year in the diocese of Le Mans at St. Cecilia 's Abbey , Solesmes , where three of her sisters were nuns .

The actor is the French Association pour la Béatification de l'Impératrice Zita .

The postulator for the cause is Father Alexander Leonhardt . The judge of the tribunal is Father Bruno Bonnet . The promoter of justice is the Father François Scrive .

= = Titles , styles , honours and arms = =

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9 May 1892 ? 21 October 1911 : Her Royal Highness Princess Zita of Bourbon @-@ Parma

21 October 1911 ? 21 November 1916 : Her Imperial and Royal Highness Archduchess and Princess Zita of Austria , Princess of Hungary and Bohemia , Princess of Bourbon @-@ Parma

21 November 1916 ? 11 November 1918 : Her Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty The Empress of Austria , Apostolic Queen of Hungary

11 November 1918 ? 14 March 1989 :

Her Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty Empress Zita of Austria , Apostolic Queen of Hungary ( used outside Austria )

Zita , Duchess of Bar ( inscribed in her passport )

Zita Habsburg @-@ Lothringen ( used in Austria )

= = = Honours = = =

Zita was Grand Mistress of the following orders : Order of the Starry Cross

Order of Elizabeth

Order of Elizabeth and Theresa

She was the last grand mistress of these orders to be an effective empress .

= = Children = =

Charles I , Emperor of Austria and Zita of Bourbon @-@ Parma had eight children and thirty three grandchildren :

= = Ancestry = =