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PREFACE

In the Spring of 1966, the Loyola Student History Association had its inception. This journal is a direct outgrowth and natural function of this association. This journal encourages scholarly research on the part of student contributors and to make public the results of these historical investigations.

The officers of LUSHA and PHI ALPHA THETA would like to thank the Student Government Association which provided the funding for this volume. We would also like to thank the working faculty of Loyola University for its cooperation and would like to extend special gratitude to Dr. Bernard Cook and Dr. David Moore for their help in the preparation of the journal. The officers would also like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Alvin J. Bedgood for their assistance in preparing this volume.

WHY IN '60 AND NOT IN '28? THE CATHOLIC ISSUE IN THE CAMPAIGNS OF KENNEDY AND SMITH

By

Paul Dusseault

Hoover was not Nixon; 1928 was not 1960; Smith was not Kennedy. But in both of these presidential campaigns, there appeared the persistent "Catholic issue." And while the Catholic background of candidates Smith and Kennedy played a major role in their respective campaigns, it probably did not play a decisive role in either.

This discussion will parallel the situations of Smith and Kennedy including treatment of the Catholic issue by the press, activity of anti-Catholic groups and the extent to which the shared religion of these two Democratic presidential candidates influenced their campaigns.

National periodicals latched on to the Catholic issue as soon as it became apparent that Alfred Smith, Governor of New York and a Roman Catholic, would receive his party's nomination for President. This is not to say that the press had been silent about Catholics in public office prior to the late 1920's, but the prospect of a Catholic in the White House seemed to renew America's interest in the influence of Rome in Catholic American office holders. The Catholic issue was a common topic for newspaper and magazine reporters and editorialists of the time. In the early months of the campaign, Governor Smith's religion was as major an issue as any in the pages of the American press. And while few publications dismissed Smith solely on the grounds of his Catholicity, nearly all pundits who favored Smith over Hoover felt obliged to defend the Governor against charges of Romanism leveled by prejudiced Americans. Norman Hapgood's Nation article is typical.

His appointments (as Governor of New York) are regardless of religion, and hundreds know the severity with which he treats emissaries who tell him what the church desires.¹

By mid-1927, it was apparent to most political observers that Smith had a good chance of being the Democratic candidate in the 1928 Presidential election. And though hundreds of pages had already been devoted to the topic of Smith's religion, the issue would not go away. The major cause for the persistence of the Catholic issue was probably its emotional impact on the electorate. It was an issue people had to take a stand on; it was not an issue people could leave alone. A demand for clearing the air finally resulted in the Marshall-Smith letters.

Charles C. Marshall, a prominent New York attorney, authored "An Open Letter to the Honorable Alfred E. Smith" that appeared in the April, 1927 issue of the popular periodical, the Atlantic Monthly.² Marshall's letter was a polite though presumptuous address that pointed out several seemingly glaring inconsistencies in upholding the Roman Catholic religion while upholding the United States Constitution. The letter did not portray the hateful, derogatory accusations that appeared in the literature of such anti-Catholic groups as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nativists, but rather expressed a sincere and well-presented reiteration of the inquiries Protestants had been making for years about how American Roman Catholics had reconciled their allegiance to the Constitution and adherence to their church.

For this reason, the nation turned its attention to the Atlantic Monthly. The letter by Marshall was appraised in numerous editorials and the reply of Governor Smith was heralded with uncharacteristic anticipation. "What will Governor Smith have to say," queried one prominent editor whose magazine published in the interim, "to this logical presentation of a clash of creeds?"³

The May issue of the Atlantic Monthly carried a headline over the magazine's own logo: "Governor Smith Replies." Inside was a letter signed by Smith "but probably ghost, written by Fr. Francis Duffy, editor of the progressive New York Review"⁴ entitled "Catholic and Patriot."

Accept this answer from me not as a candidate for any public office, but as an American citizen honored with high elective office meeting a challenge to his patriotism and intellectual integrity.⁵

The author admits, "My first thought was to answer you with just the faith that is in me," going on to say, "But I know instinctively that your conclusions could logically be proven false."⁶

Without going into needless detail, it can be safely asserted that the Smith letter addressed each of Marshall's arguments in such a way as to leave no doubt that the accusations of April came from an ignorant, if not bigoted, mind.

The Smith reply was analyzed, reprinted and praised as the last word in the Catholic controversy by much of the American press. One Catholic magazine stated:

Editors of newspapers in various cities commented on Governor Smith's reply, declaring it frank and straightforward, expressing the hope that it would clear away forever all religious bigotry in political life.⁷

Characteristic of the secular press', assessment of the Smith reply is that which appeared in the Nation.

That (the reply) will overcome crass ignorance or bigoted prejudice is of course too much to expect. But as a political argument, the Governor's statement will certainly advance his claim to the Presidential nomination.⁸

However, far from being the "Last Word" on the Catholic issue, the Atlantic Monthly features probably fanned the flames of anti-Catholic sentiment, spurring anti-Catholic groups into drawing attention to their own discussion of Smith as a Presidential prospect.

An article entitled "The Catholic Question as Viewed by the Ku Klux Klan" appeared in the July, 1927 issue of Current History. Authored by the Klan's Imperial Wizard, H. W. Evans, this article signifies three important points. First, it picks up where Marshall left off. In other words, Evans answers Smith's answers, saying in effect, "No matter what you say, this thing may ping-pong right up on election day." Second, it manifests the strength and social acceptance enjoyed by the KKK in the 1920's. Certainly the KKK of 1960 with its reputation as a terrorist brigade of white trash could not have gained access to such a respected national publication as Current History. Third, Evans follows a pattern of argument that could easily sound logical to the reader who did not stop to question the unfounded assumptions upon which Evan's conclusions are based.

The picture Evans paints of Smith is one of a confused and misinformed catechism drop-out, desperately grasping at straws and attempting to placate his Protestant critics. In the rhetoric typical of the Klan, Evan writes:

Mr. Smith tells us that he appointed thirteen Protestants and only two Catholics in his Cabinet (as Governor of New York). This seems beside the question but it flatters us that Mr. Smith, seeking the best counselors without thought of their religion, should choose only two Catholics to thirteen Protestants in a state where 63 per cent of all church membership is Catholic. The proportion should have been nine Catholics to six Protestants; evidently, Mr. Smith himself finds his fellow-communicants far below Protestants in fitness for public service.⁹

It must be emphasized here that anti-Catholic attitudes were not confined to uneducated Americans. There were many intelligent, educated voters who sincerely believed that Rome had designs on American liberties. The writings of Evans, Marshall and others reflected the anti-Catholicism of the senselessly biased, as well as, the sophisticated portions of the American electorate.

The question must now be raised, could Smith's religion have won him any votes in the election of 1928? The answer is a qualified yes.

While securing the "Catholic vote," if indeed there was such a thing in 1928, won Smith the states with the heaviest concentration of his churchmen, (Massachusetts and Rhode Island, for example), the mid-western, southern and western states with their largely Protestant populations could not be won with the "favoriteson" approach. The states Smith won on this score did little to help him in an election on as grand a scale as that of the President of the United States.

However, the controversy aroused by Smith's religion may have made many non-Catholic Americans lean to Smith just to prove in practice the American ideal of a pluralistic society. After all, Catholics had held high public office for many years prior to Smith's campaign and Rome hadn't assumed control in those cases. How can Catholics be allowed into the Senate, the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court and then be barred from the nation's highest office? If the Smith campaign could have gotten people to stop long enough to ask themselves these questions, he could have secured the "liberal vote."

Keeping this in mind we must ask, did Smith use the Catholic question to divert attention from his unpopular stands on the other issues? The answer is another qualified yes.

The matters of state at the forefront of the American consciousness in 1928 included prohibition (the Volstead Act of 1919 would not be repealed until 1933), foreign affairs (Mexico was at odds with the United States; China was wracked by rebellion), and the League of Nations (an important organization waning due to lack of U.S. participation). While the press concentrated primarily on the Catholic question, many times issue statements were requested of the New York Governor. Smith repeatedly denied that he spoke for Home and emphatically stressed his policy of strict separation of church and state, but he remained silent on many other questions directed toward him by the press, at least initially.

Undoubtedly, the American press is also partly at fault for over-emphasizing the Catholic issue. With every mention of Smith as a potential president came a mention of his faith. Page after page was devoted to Smith's Catholicity prior to the election and though the vast majority of publications took the liberal stand that Smith's religion should not be a hinderance to him, the volume of type concerning the issue indicated that Catholicism for a presidential aspirant was a heavy cross to bear.

If Smith's campaign strategy was to shoot for this sympathetic, liberal portion of the electorate, we must conclude that he failed. The Democrats were beaten in 1928 as they had never been beaten before. This defeat, however, can only be attributed in part to an anti-Catholic vote. Smith must have lost his "liberal" support somewhere along the line, but where?

The answer lies in the coverage of the issues by the press. As the election drew nearer, the press began to focus more and more on the real issues of the day. Smith could no longer remain silent and was forced

to take stands on touchy and volatile issues.¹⁰ The cutting issue of the campaign was undoubtedly the wet/dry issue. Smith was a "wet" when most of the country supported "dry" legislation.

At any rate, by the summer of 1928, Smith found himself fielding political line drives from his Republican opposition and critics of his political, not personal beliefs. Discussion of religion had been exhausted and he was no longer deflecting accusations of being a papal puppet. His political positions as expressed in the final months of the campaign gave even the liberal voters reasons to vote against him.

His political stands began to work against him in another way, too. Closet bigots could now come out strongly against Smith with a guilt free conscience. On this point, the Catholic World stated:

There is a great deal of truth in the...charge that half the hypocrites who are yelling about Al Smith's wetness don't mean that at all; what they mean is that he is a hated Catholic.¹¹

After the votes had been counted and the Democrats had realized their humiliating defeat, the New Republic, having endorsed Smith for President had this to say of the effect of the Catholic issue on the electorate:

That Governor Smith's religion was a factor of great importance in rolling up the monumental vote against him is suggested by the fact that Protestant Democrats running with him in various parts of the country, proved stronger than he. No one can say how many votes cast their ballots against Smith rather than for Hoover, on religious or other grounds, but the number must have been tremendous.¹²

At the time of Smith's defeat, another Irishman was in a position of prominence -- but not in politics. Joseph F. Kennedy was a name to know in the financial circles of the northeast. This brings up a very important difference between Smith and the man who was to secure the office Smith could not reach. John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born rich. Smith had been born poor. The financial resources of Kennedy's fingertips for his presidential campaign dwarfed Smith's life-time earnings.¹³

Another important difference between Kennedy and Smith was education. Kennedy was a Harvard graduate and well-travelled before he entered public life.¹⁴ Smith's path lead from a modest schooling in New York's lower east side, through the Fulton Fish Market and into the arms of Tammany Hall.¹⁵

Not only did Kennedy's educational credentials assure him a place of favor in the minds of America's intellectuals, but it also provided him with powerful contacts that would prove invaluable in his political career. Smith had no such advantage.

Yet another important difference was the change in the nature of the press. Kennedy had access to America through an electronic media that Smith could not have dreamed of. On camera, Kennedy came across as a handsome, articulate young man. Television, many argue, is what put John Kennedy in the White House. Without going out on such a limb, it would be safe to assert that television carried Kennedy very favorably.

Two points about the Democratic party must be considered here before discussing the Catholic issue as it appeared in Kennedy's campaign. First, most observers agree that 1928 was not a Democratic year.¹⁶ In other words, it is very unlikely that a Democrat could have been elected President in 1928 regardless of his religion or politics. The scandal-ridden Harding administration had been succeeded by the do-nothing administration of Calvin Coolidge. But this sort of "do-nothingism" represented for many the "normalcy" they were looking for under Harding. Production was up, income was up and there seemed to be no reason for making a change.

Conversely, 1960 was probably a Democratic year.¹⁷ America was ready for a change from the eight years of do-nothingism they had had under Dwight Eisenhower. Though Kennedy's victory was a squeaker, most agree that Nixon could have been beaten by either Lyndon Johnson or Hubert Humphrey.

The second significant difference between the Democratic parties of 1928 and 1960 was the unity, or lack thereof, within the party itself. Kennedy had the Democratic nomination pretty well wrapped up by the summer of the election year, securing overwhelming victories in most primaries. It took 761 delegate votes to win the party nomination in 1960. Five months before the election and five weeks before the convention, Kennedy had 330½ votes.¹⁸ Johnson ran a distant second with 111 votes.¹⁹

Smith, on the other hand, faced serious and strong competition from anti-Catholic and prohibitionist factions within his own party for the nomination.²⁰

The World War that occurred in the years between 1928 and 1960 did much to break down prejudice of all kinds in American society. The United States of the 1940's was a nation united by crisis. There was little room for division or factionalization. It comes as a surprise then, to discover the tremendous amount of media attention given to the Catholic question in the 1960 campaign. Religion was undoubtedly the least substantial issue of the time. Still, Kennedy was asked to answer the same questions that Smith had answered three decades before.

This is not to say that the American press sensationalized the issue as soon as Kennedy's name reached the front page. Most, in fact, considered even raising the issue, an example of "monstrous" bigotry²¹-- at least initially.

Yet, the entire country was startled when the Bay State Senator came a whisper away from securing the party's vice-presidential nomination in

1956. Groups like Protestants and Other American United wasted no time in dropping their parlor manners. The POAU, an organization founded to prevent the "subversive action by foreign despots in the name of religion"²² proclaimed it was shocked that not a single newspaper asked the American people "to analyze and candidly discuss the significance of a Catholic President in the development of our national life."²³ It seems the leaders of the POAU were either ignorant of, or not satisfied with the coverage of the issue in the Atlantic Monthly a scant thirty years before. The POAU charged that the American press had remained silent on the issue for fear of "Catholic political reprisals."²⁴

The eventual play of Kennedy's religion in the media may have been due to the prodding of the POAU and other such groups, but it is more likely that it came from the press' concern with being thorough when it comes to potential Presidents. Whatever the reason, the Catholic issue was back on the front pages of America's newspapers the day Kennedy announced he was running for the position of Chief Executive.

In the tradition of Charles C. Marshall, Look magazine grilled the Massachusetts Senator on the "inconsistencies" of upholding both the Constitution and the Roman Catholic Church. The interview appeared in the February issue of 1959.²⁵ Kennedy answered the question thoroughly and politely, obviously wishing to get the whole thing out of the way at this early date in the campaign.

Recalling historical precedents, the Jesuit magazine, America wrote of the Look interview:

Presumably, many people are unaware of the profound indignation felt by the American Catholic in public life by the kind of questions Senator Kennedy "had" to answer...

It is humiliating for Catholics that even a man with as brilliant a war record as that of Senator Kennedy thought himself obliged to answer questions that everyone knows are the remnants of know-nothingism.²⁶

So, just as in the Smith campaign, discussion of the issue began early. But unlike the Smith campaign, the press kept Kennedy's Catholic background high on the list of issues right up to election day.

An important point should be made here. The press of the 1920's labeled Smith's religion an issue. Fearing even the hint of bias reporting, the press of the late 1950's did not, in the strictest sense, make Kennedy's faith an issue. In fact, the press made an issue of not making religion an issue. An example of this can be seen in the propensity of editors to put quotation marks around the words "Catholic issue," implying that someone else had made it an issue, not them.

But while trying to remain impartial disseminators of information, the American press could hardly ignore the emotional dynamite of Kennedy's faith. Louis Beam of New Republic magazine spoke for many when he observed:

Religion is sometimes a more powerful factor in distorting normal political behavior than economic interests or even issues of war and peace.²⁷

But try as he might, Kennedy never did succeed in shaking the label of "Catholic candidate." He expressed his frustration with the persistence of the issue in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April of 1960.

I spoke in Wisconsin..on farm legislation, foreign policy, defense, civil rights, and several dozen other issues. The people in Wisconsin seemed genuinely interested in these addresses. But I rarely found them reported in the press--except when occasionally sandwiched between descriptions of my handshaking, my theme song, family, haircut and inevitably, my religion.²⁸

And Kennedy could appreciate the situation as a student of history.

Some may say we treat the Presidency differently because we have had only one previous Catholic candidate for President. But I am growing weary of that term. I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I do not speak for the Catholic church on issues of public policy--and no one in that church speaks for me.²⁹

But by this time, the Catholic issue had become too major a character in the Kennedy show to be yanked off the stage. The persistence of the question is exemplified by the article featured in U.S. News and World Report only a month before election day entitled "Both Sides of the 'Catholic Question'."³⁰

That Kennedy's religion figures in the outcome of the election is a foregone conclusion. Certainly, many Americans voted "Nixon" for no other reason than to keep a Catholic out of the White House. Just as certainly, many Americans voted for Kennedy solely because he was Catholic. Here is where another parallel can be drawn between 1928 and 1960. Kennedy probably got the "pride" vote. He got the vote of the American Catholics due to the "Favorite son" effect. But he also got the vote of Americans who were proud to see that the nation had finally risen above religious bigotry. The latter is the same "liberal" vote that Smith may have aimed for in 1928. Kennedy succeeded where Smith failed because there was no "cutting issue" in 1960 like there was with the wet/dry issue in 1928.³¹

The similarities, then, between the election of 1928 and 1960 center largely around the Catholic issue. The difference in the men, the electorate, and the situations were great; and while Catholicism probably did not play a deciding role in either election, it was undoubtedly a major factor in both. It was played upon by the press, it was denied as an issue by the candidates, and it was likely worked into the overall strategies of the Democratic nominees. Still, evidence points to the conclusion that Smith, were he Protestant, would have lost in 1928 just because he was Smith. Similarly, Kennedy, were he Protestant, would have won in 1960 just because he was Kennedy.

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⁷*The Open Letters of Marshall and Smith*, Catholic World, May, 1927, p. 246.

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²⁶*The Third Degree For Catholics*, America, March 4, 1959, p. 675.

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²⁸*I am Not The Catholic Candidate For President*, U.S. News and World Report, May 2, 1960, p. 90.

²⁹Ibid., p. 92.

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³¹*Now Let's Talk Issues*, Life, May 23, 1960, p. 54.

COMPARING THE THIRD AND WEIMAR REPUBLICS

By

Lilly Smith

The Third French Republic and the German Weimar Republic span fascinating periods in the history of their countries. Politically complex and rich with intellectual activity, the two republics bear numerous similarities to one another, and these similarities are nowhere so striking as in their early stages of government, when both nations were occupied with reconstruction of war damages and the establishment of a new republican constitution after the abdication of their former rulers. A comparison of the two republics during their early years-- roughly 1871-1875 in France and 1918-1920 in Germany--reveals a remarkable number of parallels, both in their origins and in their political problems and objectives. Given these parallels, however, it is intriguing to note that while the Third Republic endured seventy years and fell only to German invasion in 1940, the Weimar Republic, crumbled after only fifteen years and gave way to the forces of Nazism. With so many early similarities, it is curious that the two republics should fall so differently. Closer examination, however, reveals that beneath the exterior parallels there lies significant differences which, even at their earliest periods, point towards widely different futures for the new government.

To understand the similarities between the two republics, it is necessary to return to their origins, for a number of parallels existed even before the new governments came into being. Both the Emperor Napoleon and the Kaiser Wilhelm drew their support from the military and gave it special status,¹ and although both regimes included legislative bodies, authority remained largely in the hands of the two rulers. In addition, Napoleon and Wilhelm shared diplomatic ineptitude, and their active interference in foreign affairs wreaked havoc with the diplomatic relations of both countries.² They blundered into the War of 1871 and World War I respectively, only to collapse under the weight of humiliating military defeat, leaving their republican successors to confront the consequences of their past mistakes.

In the chaos following the surrender of Napoleon in September of 1870 and the abdication of the Kaiser in November of 1918, the republic was proclaimed to groups of workers in Paris and Berlin, and the two new republics were abruptly created. Power devolved almost accidentally upon the unprepared parliaments, so that the new governments were not freely chosen by their peoples as positive alternatives, but rather were seized upon as emergency measures to fill the void left by the downfall of the

former regimes.³ As a result of these chaotic origins, both governments had to defend their political authority in the early periods, and despite the initial enthusiasm of the masses for the republic, both the Third⁴ Republic and the Weimar Republic faced challenges to their legitimacy.

The new republican governments, leaping hastily into the breach left by their fallen rulers, were faced with the similar task of making peace after the war and providing the new governments with a constitution. These goals, already challenging, were complicated by bitter political division, which led to violent internal conflict among radical political factions and stubborn opposition within the Assemblies. Thus, both the Third Republic and the Weimar government were plagued by internal conflict in addition to dealing with the aftermath of their defeat in external wars.

Of the many tasks to be accomplished, obviously the most important, for both the Weimar government and the Third Republic was the restoration of peace and order after the war, and the two governments confronted parallel obstacles in achieving these goals. First, the moral consequences of both wars were difficult to shoulder, and although Germany felt it in the extreme, both governments inherited the guilt and humiliation of wars that had begun as glorious nationalistic adventures but ended in humiliating defeat.⁵ As a consequence, both new governments labored under rigorous peace conditions, and in fact, the treaties of Frankfurt and Versailles are remarkably similar. Both France and Germany suffered a large loss of territory, in particular Alsace-Lorraine and its industries and population, as well as huge war reparations; and it is somehow ironic that Bismarck's vindictiveness of Frankfurt should be so closely paralleled by that of Clemenceau at Versailles.⁶

Finally, both the Third Republic and the Weimar government faced the job of reconstructing their countries after the peace had been made, restoring political order and economic stability, for both wars involved damage to industry and agriculture⁷ as well as political disorder resulting from defeat and occupation. As long as these problems remained, the primary task of both governments was to expiate the sins of their predecessors and help their peoples recover from remarkably similar damages.

Second, only to the peace in its importance was the task of drafting a republican constitution, and despite some differences, the two republics developed comparable plans of government. Both the Third and Weimar Republics established parliamentary democracies based on universal suffrage (although in France this was not extended to women) with at least some direct representation of the electorate.⁸ Parliamentary assemblies were elected to fulfill legislative functions, and a presidential executive appointed to Prime Minister, initiated dissolution of the Chamber, and acted as the head of the national government and representative abroad. There were, of course, qualifications and differences peculiar to the two nations, such as the voting system and the relative power of the executive, but the broad lines of their governments ran parallel.⁹

Added to the challenges of reconstruction and the constitution was the problem of political division, both on the national level and with the Assemblies themselves, for in both France and Germany the moderate republican government came under violent attack from political extremists. In France, the extreme Left, adhering fanatically to all the traditions of the French Revolution, agitated for a sustained war effort and the establishment of the Commune.¹⁰ As early as October 31, 1870, Leftist insurgents stormed the Hotel de Ville demanding the Commune, and a similar attempt in January, 1871 had to be repulsed by the National Guard as the dissension of the Left grew under the siege. Finally, however, the entrance of the Prussians in March brought matters to a crisis, and the beginning with the assassination of the generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas, the revolutionary Left seized control of Paris and established a Commune in the French revolutionary tradition. During a bloody two-month reign, the insurgents executed hostages, abused prisoners, and burned monuments in a vicious civil war, and the violence ended only through the intervention of the Republican army. The radical, idealistic Communnards were bitterly opposed to the new republic, which they regarded as too moderate, and they attacked the government of the Third Republic both during the Commune and after its dissolution.¹¹

The Weimar government was also plagued by political violence not only from the extreme Left, but from the reactionary Right as well. In the weeks following the proclamation of the Republic, division of the Left erupted into Spartacist uprisings in Berlin,¹² and hostility intensified when increased unrest and violence in the capital occasioned the creation of the Freikorps, composed of former soldiers and career officers (of primarily conservative tendencies), to stamp out Leftist violence. Use of Right-wing military force to quell the Left resulted in a deep hatred of the Social Democrats by their former allies, the Communists, who, like the Communnards, saw the moderate republican government as a betrayal of the ideals of the Left. Violence of the Right took the form of the assassinations of Left-wing leaders such as Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, and Kurt Eisner. Finally, both Left and Right, hoping to establish radical governments, attempted putsches against the more moderate Social Democrats. In 1919, a revolutionary Central Council in Munich proclaimed the Soviet Republic of Bavaria, which rejected "any collaboration with the despicable Ebert-Scheidemann-Noske-Erzberger regime"¹³ and which had to be overthrown by regular troops called in by the government; and the Kapp putsch, attempted in Berlin by army divisions under the revolutionary Right, was defeated only by a general strike of workers and the passive resistance of higher civil servants.¹⁴ In short, the moderate SPD government found itself under fire from both the Left and the Right, for both political extremes, like their French counterparts, found the new government too moderate and compromising for their standards.

The political violence and extremism which both republics had to confront in the streets was paralleled by corresponding polarizations in the Assemblies which crippled the new governments as they tackled the problems of restoration. For the Third Republic, this polarization was

accompanied by political splintering on both ends of the political scale. Although on the Right there was a strong royalist majority in the Assembly, it was divided into two factions, the Legitimists and the Orleanists, who supported the two different lines of the royal family; and their constant and profound opposition to each other as well as to the Republicans made their majority virtually ineffective. On the Left, the Republicans were opposed by radical Socialists who had supported the Commune and its revolutionary ideals, and bitterly resented the more moderate government's repression of the Communards. These political divisions, added to the unpredictability of the reactionary Legitimists, made stable coalition virtually impossible, and the Republicans, incapable of pursuing an organized and coherent policy, were reduced to hand-to-mouth politics, exploiting the weaknesses of the opposition wherever possible in order to gain a little ground for the Republic. Political division and instability on both the Left and the Right plagued the Third Republic from its beginning.¹⁵

The Weimar government involved a strikingly similar political division, for here as well both the extreme Right and the extreme Left violently criticized the moderate Social Democratic government, which, like its French counterpart, was to the left of the center. On the extreme Right, the National People's Party, like the French Legitimists, remained essentially monarchist; they opposed both the new constitution and the Versailles treaty, and later when they supported Hindenburg as a presidential candidate, it was a part of a monarchist scheme to gain control of the government.¹⁶ The Nationalists viciously attacked the Weimar government to further their own political ends¹⁷ and fostered division by means of slander and such political weapons as the "stab-in-the-back" propaganda.¹⁸ At the other extreme the Apartacists, or Communist party, despised the bourgeois Social Democrats as too conservative, and, like the French Communards, viewed the government's repression of the Left as a betrayal of revolutionary ideals.¹⁹ They too aimed their political venom not at the extreme Right, but at the moderate Left government. The effects of this bitter opposition from both political extremes can be seen in the increasingly fragile coalitions under the Weimar government, which reflect the political division from which Weimar, like the Third Republic, never escaped; and both republics suffered from political splintering which diminished their effectiveness and hurt their credibility.

In the face of these striking parallels between the two republics, however, one is confronted by the fact that despite the numerous similarities of background and of early problems, the Third Republic and the Weimar Republic had widely different futures. While the Third Republic fell to foreign invaders only after seventy years of government, the Weimar Republic crumbled, after only fifteen years, under the growing strength of the German National Socialist party. With so many parallels in their backgrounds and early periods, why were the futures of the two republics so different? Several causes of the difference can be seen even in the early period, some residing within the governments themselves, others beyond their control. Of those factors beyond their

control, the most obvious was the proportion of the disasters which gave birth to the republics, but a second factor, equally important, was the popular mind and its readiness and capability to accept the idea of a republican government. There was also, however, contrasts between the two republics within their governments themselves, for despite their constitutional similarities, there was a wide contrast in the ways the two assemblies confronted the task of governing.

The most obvious difference between the two republics which could account for their success or failure was the magnitude of the problems they confronted, for although both faced the tasks of reconstruction and fulfillment of peach conditions, the scale of these tasks was far greater for the Weimar Republic than for the Third Republic. Despite the damages of the war, the French economic system was basically sound and led to a fairly rapid recovery as soon as a stable government was established;²⁰ and it is indicative of the "fundamental solvency"²¹ of the French that they met their war reparations by means of a public loan, reflecting a prosperity undreamed of in Germany after World War I. The Germans had suffered through four years of one of history's most devastating wars only to face runaway inflation and unemployment in its wake, and, even more importantly, after four years of undernourishment, hunger in Germany was reaching starvation proportions.²² In addition, the Versailles treaty was much harsher than the Frankfurt treaty; its much larger reparations were accompanied by continuation of the commercial blockade of Germany and Allied exploitation of German markets,²³ provisions which effectively cut off any hope of restoration for the exhausted nation. Under these more harsh conditions, it was much more difficult for the Weimar Republic to get its feet on the ground than it had been for its French counterpart fifty years earlier.

A second difference was the Third Republic's strong tradition of revolution and republicanism, for although there were mixed emotions in both countries, by and large the French were more capable of accepting the Republic than were the Germans. To begin with, the French were able to draw on a hundred-year-old tradition to justify the Republic, and in fact, followed the revolutionary pattern religiously when, against all reason, they continued to fight against the Germans, and when the Commune was established in Paris.²⁴ The dominant German tradition, by contrast, was one of strong authority, unity, and duty to the common good.²⁵ In addition, up to the time of the Third Republic, democracy had been a growing force in France, as demonstrated by the increasing power which the parliament, though still not dominant, had forced Napoleon to concede to it.²⁶ Germany under the Kaiser, on the other hand, had seen a decline in the democratic tradition, and by the time of his fall, the Germans were uncomfortable in the absence of a monarch and regarded a parliamentary republic as suspicious and un-German.²⁷ These political traditions strongly influenced the success of the two republics in spite of misleading results in the first election; despite the large majority of Royalists in the Assembly (whose politics had been less important than their support of the Armistice), France was fundamentally republican and gave increasingly more support to the Republican party.²⁸

while in Germany, a republican majority gradually lost votes as the fundamentally monarchist Germans voted increasingly to the right in later elections.²⁹

In addition to these differences in their circumstances, however, there also existed a number of political differences within the governments themselves which point toward widely different futures for the two republics. It is important to note that, while the Third Republic enjoyed very good leadership and profited by an absence of leadership among the forces opposing it, the reverse was true in the Weimar Republic. The magnetic, politically aggressive figures of Thiers and Gambetta had no rivals on the extreme Right and Left capable of galvanizing action as Thiers did in raising the reparations loan or as Gambetta did in organizing the war effort. Ebert and Scheidemann, on the other hand, themselves rather weak and ineffectual politically, confronted strong personalities such as Hindenburg and Ludendorff on the Right, and aggressive Communists such as Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. As a result, the Social Democrats, who were neither ambitious nor politically assertive,³⁰ took a real beating from their more forceful opponents. In addition, the political weight of the army supported Thiers in France but did not support Ebert in Germany,³¹ so that Thiers could call on the regular army to put down the violence of the Commune, while Ebert was reduced to a makeshift force under Gustav Noske to quell the parallel uprisings of the Left in Germany. Better leadership and more powerful support of the government let the French people, unlike the Germans, to place their confidence in the Republic despite its opponents, and helped establish a more stable and enduring government.

Perhaps as a result of their greater strength and leadership, the French Republicans secured yet another advantage for the Third Republic by manipulating the division of their extremist opponents. The Republicans gained ground for the Republic by exploiting the inaction of the Royalists, who, unwilling to compromise their reactionary views, hoped to block action until the monarchy could be restored.³² In addition, the Republic benefitted from division within the Right, for the Legitimists often split unexpectedly from the Orleanists to vote with the Republicans or Bonapartists.³³ By contrast, the SPD had no such lever against the Nationalists, and its "weak, irresolute"³⁴ leaders "always chose the line of least resistance."³⁵ Thus, political division, although it was a source of instability and weakness for both republics, was turned to profit by the French and became a positive force for the Republic, while the Germans felt only its negative effects.

Finally, and very importantly, the early periods of both republics reflect a major difference in the approach to government taken by the Republicans and the Social Democrats. The French demonstrated a practicality in government which was wholly lacking to the Germans, and in the difficult situation presented by the political splintering and opposition of the early period, practicality was their saving grace. The "constitution" of the Third Republic was in reality a collection of laws passed haphazardly over a period of several years, and had no one single author, nor even a central idea³⁶ which could be consistently

followed. Snatched in bits and pieces from the opposition, the constitution was thoroughly practical and based on compromise, and thus the ideals of republicanism were modified in order to make them practicable. For example, universal suffrage did not include women, and sovereignty of the people was only direct in the Chamber of Deputies.³⁷ The Weimar Constitution, on the other hand, was a highly unified document, written largely by one man, Hugo Preuss, and it pursued the democratic ideal to its extreme even when its practical consequences proved harmful. This kind of relentless consistence carried universal suffrage to women who were not ready for it³⁸ and did not know how to use their votes, and adopted the proportional ballot as the system giving equal weight to all votes, despite the political splintering and instability that it caused.³⁹ The contrast of French pragmatism with this theoretical purity on the part of the Germans is particularly well illustrated by comparing Leon Gambetta, who orchestrated much of the constitutional legislation, with Hugo Preuss, who drafted the Weimar Constitution, for Gambetta was a legislative opportunist and Preuss a theoretician. Although it may seem paradoxical that incoherence in their constitution led to a more stable government, it was nonetheless the French ability to compromise which helped the Third Republic outlast Weimar.

Ultimately, however, much of the Weimar government's failure can be traced to the harshness of the Versailles treaty, in which the Third Republic had a large share, and after comparing their individual characteristics, it is interesting to reflect on the interaction of the two republics. Their interrelationship, and to some extent their fortunes, were largely influenced by Bismarck's harshness in the early days of the Third Republic, for with the treaty of Frankfurt he intensified French-German hostility into a vindictiveness which lasted beyond World War II. Through the good fortune of strong leadership and a strong republican tradition, the Third Republic recovered fairly rapidly from the defeat, only to visit their revenge on the Weimar Republic, whose situation was identical to that of France in 1871. In 1918, at least, the historical parallels are no coincidence, for at Versailles Clemenceau deliberately carried Bismarck's tactics to the extreme. The cycle continued in 1940 when the Third Republic fell to the Nazis, who had come to power through the failure of the Weimar Republic, which France had helped to crush. In this unflattering context, it is somewhat easier to understand the contrasting fortunes of the two republics, but nonetheless, it is somehow ironic that the Third Republic's greatest advantage in the comparison was that she did not bear the burden of viciousness which she herself helped place on the shoulders of the Weimar Republic.

NOTES

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⁴Laqueur, Walter, *Weimer: A Cultural History 1918-1933*, New York: Perigee Books, 1974, p. 7, p. 50.

⁵Hanotaux, p. 17.

⁶Eych, Erich, *A History of the Weimar Republic*, United States: Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 19.

⁷Coban, pp. 15-16.

⁸Hanotaux, pp. 26-27.

⁹Cobban, p. 10.

¹⁰Laqueur, pp. 19-21.

¹¹Hanotaux, pp. 84-84.

¹²Halperin, S. William, *Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of The Reich From 1918 to 1933*, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1946, pp. 98-99.

¹³Thomson, David, *Democracy in Franch Since 1870*, United States Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 100.

¹⁴Thomson, p. 92.

¹⁵Eyck, p. 71.

¹⁶Recouly, Raymond, *The Third Republic*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928, p. 6.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 14, p. 18, p. 30, p. 40.
¹⁸deCastries, p. 482.

¹⁹Rodes, p. 195.

²⁰Eych, p. 78.

²¹*Ibid.*, pp. 148-150.

²²Recouly, P. 69.
²³Cobban, p. 23.

²⁴Halperin, p. 240.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 204.

²⁶Rodes, p. 185-186.

²⁷Eyck, p. 48.

²⁸Brogan, p. 114.

²⁹*Ibid.*

NOTES (CONT'D)

- 22 Halperin, pp. 98-99, pp. 102-103.
23 Ibid., pp. 140-141.
24 Hanotaux, p. 20.
Recouly, p. 6.
25 Laqueur, pp. 4-5.
26 de Castries, pp. 466-467, p. 468.
27 Laqueur, pp. 4-5.
28 Recouly, p. 69.
29 Halperin, p. 195.
30 Laqueur, p. 50.
31 Ibid., p. 14.
32 Recouly, p. 70.
33 Ibid.
34 Laqueur, p. 50.
35 Ibid., p. 7.
36 Recouly, p. 79.
Thomson, p. 100.
37 Thomson, p. 101.
38 Eyck, p. 69.
39 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

THE SALT WARS:
A LAST STAND IN THE BATTLE
FOR NON-OWNERSHIP

By

Salvador Colon, S.J.

In Texas, in the year 1877, a group of salt lakes, approximately 110 miles northeast of El Paso, were the cause of the worst violence in the El Paso area known in modern times. These salt lakes occupy, even today, a little over one hundred acres.¹ Their surface was strong enough to support the weight of a loaded wagon, and they were a source of salt for places as far away as Chihuahua.² The livelihood of many small villages along the Rio Grande depended, to a large extent, on the sale of salt from these lakes. People from the countryside would collect the salt in wagons and sell it to the people of El Paso and El Paso del Norte (which was later renamed Ciudad Juarez).

The series of violent incidents in 1877 was important enough for historians to refer to them as the Great Salt Wars. To understand these wars, it is necessary to understand a few facts about El Paso and El Paso del Norte, their governments and their history.

At this time, the government of El Paso was for all intents and purposes non-existent. Although there was a city council elected by the people, there is no evidence that it even met between August of 1875 and July of 1880. There are several reasons for this, not the least of them being the fact that the people themselves did not support the governing apparatus, even refusing to pay taxes.³ The majority of the people considered themselves Mexicans, and they had little in common with the U.S. and its government. Furthermore, El Paso was still a very small city. In 1859, the town is reported to have had a population of about three hundred Mexicans and forty-four Anglos.⁴ To add to the weakness of an already heavily outnumbered minority, most of the Anglos left the city during the Civil War.⁵ In 1878, Col. James Marr reported the ratio as 23 Anglos to 150 Mexicans,⁶ making the percentage of Anglos in the city only slightly larger than it was in 1859, while reporting a drop in total population that makes it appear that the city was dying.

The population of the entire County of El Paso during the late 1870's is reported to have been around 5,000. Of these, all but 80 were Mexicans.⁷ There was at least one Italian (or Frenchman),⁸ and probably a small number of native Americans. The very smallness of the town probably made the people feel that a governing body was superfluous.

The later half of the 19th century was a time of upheaval in the territory conquered from Mexico. In fact, problems for the U.S. began

as soon as the war with Mexico ended. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo contained a stipulation that the U.S. would pay the expenses of any person wishing to emigrate to Mexico within a year of the signing of the treaty in 1848. In New Mexico, an entire town decided to repatriate, much to the amazement of the U.S. government which was not prepared to pay for the emigration of that many people. The authorities, in desperation, were compelled to develop a complicated bureaucratic stall tactic. In this way, the year elapsed before the people of the town were processed and the U.S. government saved itself what could have been a great expense.⁹ Despite the presence of such tensions, however, there was little armed resistance against the U.S. government in these territories.

This is not to say that peace and quiet eternally prevailed. Crime was a problem, and an area of concern for many citizens from both countries. From the close of the Civil War until December of 1876, Ft. Bliss had been occupied by U.S. troops for protection against possible "Indian" raids and also against Mexican bandits. After the troops left this fort near the city of El Paso, both the U.S. and Mexican sides of the Rio Bravo were periodically victimized by serious bandit raids. Soon after the troops left, to be stationed either in New Mexico (near Silver City) or Ft. Davis, a man calling himself Senor de Su O crossed the river into Mexico. He and his men kidnapped the mayor and city council of El Paso del Norte and held them for ransom. Afterwards, the men simply crossed the river into Texas and divided the ransom money among themselves.¹⁰ On May 28, 1877, Col. Machora took over the central part of the city and controlled it for six or seven days before the people organized and forced him back to the U.S.¹¹

It is against the backdrop of such circumstances that the events of the Salt Wars took place. Several attempts had been made to claim the lakes as private property. A. J. Fountain and W. W. Mills formed a company and secured a land certificate, but through legal carelessness, the company dissolved. Mills then formed his own group and filed a claim. This group came to be known as the Salt Ring. Fountain retaliated by forming the Anti-Salt Ring, promising ownership of the lakes to the residents.¹² The people themselves had always considered the salt lakes as their common property.

Fr. Borajo, a priest from the small Mexican town of Guadalupe (near San Elizario, Texas) helped Fountain become a state senator. He then suggested that the two form a company and divide the profits from the sale of the salt between themselves. Fountain rejected the offer. Borajo thereafter attempted to drive Fountain from the senate, and after failing at this, he allied himself with Charles Howard and Luis Cardis to take control of the lakes.¹³

Cardis was popular with the people. It is possible that he wanted to secure possession of the salt lakes for himself, but it is equally possible that he knew the people would resist such attempts. Borajo must have realized the impossibility of his coming into control of the salt,

especially after the death of Cardis and the violent reaction of the people. By the time of the battles in San Elizario, Borajo was one of the leaders of the people's movement to secure free salt.

Luis Cardis, who was probably an Italian,¹⁴ is described by one historian as "well educated and intelligent".¹⁵ He is the central figure in the revolt. He had come to El Paso years before and quickly became a trusted friend and advisor to the Mexican community. It was largely through Cardis that Charles Howard was able to secure strong support for the Democratic Party in the county, which before had been one of the few Republican counties in the state. Consequently, Charles Howard was elected district judge and Luis Cardis was elected to the state legislature.¹⁶

Cardis and Howard later developed a dislike for each other. They had some fist fights, one in San Antonio and one in Austin. Cardis' friends criticized him for not challenging Howard to a dual after Howard won both fights.¹⁷

Judge Charles Howard registered the property of the salt lakes, which were public property and therefore available to anyone who could pay for them, in the name of his father-in-law, Major George B. Zimpleman. He notified people on both sides of the river that from that point on they would have to pay for any salt they took from the lakes.¹⁸

The Mexicans immediately sought advice from Cardis. He advised the people that the salt belonged to them and they should seek legal remedies.¹⁹

An armed struggle ensued, largely using the Mexican side of the border as a base. One of the key organizers of this armed resistance was Fr. Borajo, from his parish in Guadalupe, about twenty miles east of El Paso on the Mexican side of the river.²⁰

Although the resistance was organized, the violence was touched off by Howard himself when he caused two Mexicans to be arrested for having stated that they were going to get salt whenever they wanted no matter what Howard said. Immediately after this arrest, Howard left El Paso headed either for San Antonio or Austin. He was stopped in Ysleta, about 12 miles outside El Paso, by an employee named McBride who had overheard a plot against Howard. Meanwhile, the people had organized themselves and surrounded the house in Ysleta where Howard, McBride and a couple of friends were staying. They demanded that Howard come out. Howard and his friends went on the roof, but the crowd set fire to the house and the four came down. They were promptly seized by the crowd and taken before the justice of the peace.

When the justice of the peace refused to grant them a favorable ruling, they then seized the judge and took him, along with the other prisoners, before the county judge. When he also refused them a favorable ruling, they seized him and the sheriff, placing all the prisoners in a house under guard.

Cardis was sent for and it was decided that Howard would be released if he promised to relinquish all title to the salt lakes and leave the county. To make sure of this, Howard was placed under a \$12,000 bond, provided by the prominent John G. Atkinson and Charles Ellis.

The seizure occurred on October 1, 1877, and the negotiations ending with the signing of the bond and the release of Howard took three days. Howard then left for New Mexico.

Some of the residents had called on the troops stationed in New Mexico to come and restore order. Howard met them in Mesilla and returned with the troops to El Paso. These troops were under orders to preserve the peace but not to take sides.

On October 10, Cardis was killed by Howard at the store of Samuel Shutz and Bros. Cardis had apparently gone there so the bookkeeper, A. Krakauer, could draft a letter for him (Cardis seems to have been weak in English writing), appealing to the people of the towns of San Elizario, Ysleta and Socorro (all on the U.S. side of the border) to enter into conference with their commissioners to restore order.²¹ Whether or not this was the case, there is reason to doubt that an English letter would be drafted to a people whose primary language was Spanish (unless the letter was intended only as a legal document), the letter was never finished. Howard entered with a double barreled shotgun and killed Cardis in cold blood. Howard was left unmolested and returned to Mesilla.

A crowd formed and made public threats against Atkinson and Ellis, who barricaded themselves in a house with some friends and sent a request to El Paso for troops to come to their aid. Troops did not respond. Sheriff Kuber, with two deputies, promised the group assembled that if Howard ever returned to Texas, he would be arrested and tried for murder. He thus pacified the crowd.²²

On November 16, Howard returned to El Paso. After surrendering himself to Major Jones, he secured \$4,000 in bail from Joseph Magoffin. He returned to Mesilla.²³

On December 1st, a wagon train left San Elizario for the salt lakes, planning to return on December 12th. Howard returned with a few men and was met by a crowd on December 12th in San Elizario. He had instituted legal proceedings against any persons taking salt, and had arranged for Lt. Trays of the Texas Rangers to serve the writs demanding payment. Lt. Trays commanded Howard's escort. Howard also arranged for federal troops to intervene in case they were necessary.²⁴

Two hundred yards from the house where Howard and his men were finally barricaded, the troops were met by Chico Barela, who threatened the troops with an ambush and convinced them to turn back. First, he had tried to convince the army men that the problem was none of their business and was strictly between the citizens and the State of Texas.

Howard, McBride and Ellis were taken out and executed. The Rangers were allowed to leave. Their money was taken and homes were looted. San Elizario was in a state of disorder until U.S. troops entered the city later.²⁵

The Salt Wars are an important episode in the story of U.S. expansion. They are important first of all because they are a case of race warfare. Clearly the fact that even after his arrest for cold blooded murder, Charles Howard could lead a contingent of Texas Rangers, as well as arrange for back-up by federal troops, against a wagon train bent on the collection of salt, is indicative of U.S. relations with and attitudes toward the Mexican community. The Salt Wars were also a conflict between a conquered people and their conquerors, between two peoples caught in the midst of developing national identities, and also between two peoples caught in the midst of two very different economic philosophies.

Why didn't this revolt escalate into full scale war against the United States?

While the people of El Paso County and its surroundings did not easily identify themselves with the United States, they also had difficulty identifying themselves with a united Mexican government. At this time, Mexican unity was only beginning to be attained. Up to this point, violence and discord had been the standard feature of the Mexican nation.

The major struggle between the federalists and the centralists in Mexico was not resolved until the presidency of Benito Juarez in the 1860's. Juarez was able to establish a strong central government by creating a strong central rural police force answerable only to the national government. In this way, he was able to dash the hopes of the federalists, who insisted on a federation of loosely bound states instead of a strong central government.²⁶ In order to achieve a Mexican state that was strongly united, it was essential to defeat the federalists. In gaining this victory, Juarez also paved the way for the strong national control exercised by President Porfirio Diaz. A consciousness of Mexican unity, however, lagged behind the establishment of national control. The northern part of Mexico in particular was notorious for its independent spirit and its alienation from the rest of the country.²⁷

It was probably difficult for the people around El Paso to take the border seriously. The Mexican side and the U.S. side of the Rio Grande (or Rio Gravo, as it is known in Mexico) were, after all, only two different sides of the river. This lack of organized governmental control also explains the banditry that from time to time victimized both El Paso and its sister city.

It is interesting that there are no reports of large numbers of people from either of the two cities participating in the Salt Wars. This is probably because the people of the cities were not merchants of salt,

they were only consumers. Their lives were not directly affected by who received payment for the salt.

The role of government is ambiguous at best. The people not only resisted U.S. government control, but any government control. Furthermore, the governing bodies seem to have accepted their passive roles. The citizens of El Paso did not pay taxes, but one must wonder if they actually could be accused of refusing to pay. There seems to have been no effort made to collect taxes, and one can hardly fault the people for not funding a city council that went five years without a meeting.

The question of how leadership emerged is important. The two men most trusted by the people were Luis Cardis (a foreigner, southern European, and Catholic) and Fr. Borajo, a priest. What political power Cardis obtained officially he obtained because the people trusted him. The opposite, that people trusted men because of the fact they held political office, was not the case.

The political governing body, with the exception of state representative Luis Cardis, seems to have been an honorary Anglo club, concerned only with promoting and protecting Anglo interests. It seems that these Anglos never did come to perceive their interests as being seriously threatened, even during the siege and execution of Howard and his allies.

Borajo was clearly a strong leader of the people when they were in battle. This despite the fact that he never appeared on the battle field. There are numerous accounts of people saying that they thought Borajo had ordered the execution of Howard, McBride and Ellis. He is even reported to have promised absolution to anyone who killed them.²⁸ These reports, however, all come from people who heard that the priest had told someone else to carry out the executions. There are no reports from anyone saying "he told me" or I heard him tell him."

That the struggle did not spread or even continue is quite understandable. Certainly, if the citizens of the town of San Elizario and their allies were strong enough to ward off the Texas Rangers and execute Howard while the Rangers were nearby, they could have regrouped and taken on the army forces that arrived in the aftermath. Yet, there was never any real threat of a mass uprising against the U.S., and one can quite understand why. There was no organized political alliance between those immediately effected by the Salt Wars and those not so directly effected. The resolution of the conflict appears extremely bland. Howard was dead and the government promised an investigation. Borajo was either assigned to another parish or defrocked.²⁹

Of course, the major point of interest should be the question of control of the salt lakes. This was, after all, the question that directly sparked the revolt. The central issue at stake was that of common ownership of land versus the rapidly encroaching threat of private speculation. There is no basis for believing that the Mexican people of that time were any more disposed toward common ownership of property than anyone else.

The famous reform laws of the 1850's (La Reforma) had as one of their goals, the elimination of corporately owned property. In Mexico, the question was framed in terms of Church ownership of land.

At this time, the Church controlled vast amounts of land, which the Mexican government wished to free for private ownership.³⁰ Because of the way the law was written, however, the Church was not the only institution effected by La Reforma. The Indian tribes in Mexico, including President Juarez' own tribe, lost all their commonly held lands.³¹

This crisis was not experienced only in Mexico. Cattlemen in the U.S. were also experiencing a radical change in their methods of raising cattle as the vast areas of open range were fenced in by individual ranchers.

Common ownership of land was rapidly ending. The forces of private ownership were defeating the earlier establishment. Part of the reason for this is the fact that there was never any legal common ownership in this country, except in very rare instances.³² In the case of the salt lakes in west Texas, as in most other instances of community property, there was an absence of ownership, something quite different from legally documented ownership. There is no evidence to support the view that the people of El Paso County supported community property as an institution more than they did private property. At least, they did lay private claims to their own lands. It seems that in this one case there was a discovery of a rich mineral in a distant location and nobody personally tried to claim the mineral, at least until Howard. The distance may have been too great from the small towns outside El Paso to the salt lakes to encourage anyone from trying to own them. It may also be that since all residents were already profiting from the sale of the salt, there was no need to claim the actual lakes. And since the community de facto controlled the lakes, there was no need for a legal document to be filed setting the lakes apart as community property. This is especially likely since the prevailing attitudes towards official government make it seem that the people would have little use for official documents.

Private ownership seems to have grown in reaction to lack of ownership. Only when individuals started claiming property as their own did the very notion of ownership occur. Had the community thought to legally claim title to the salt lakes as a corporate entity, perhaps their claim would have been respected. But there is no reason why they would have filed a document setting the lakes apart as public domain. There seemed to be no need for such a document.

And perhaps even if such a claim had been filed, it would not have been respected. Indian tribes lost their lands, although these were much more important to the white conquerer than the salt lakes. It is true, however, that the liberal philosophy of the time advocated the development of private ownership and private enterprise. From this point on, all control, even common control, of property would have to be defined in terms of ownership, legally documented. The Salt Wars are a final episode in the era of unclaimed common property, and this was as much the reason for the revolt as was anything else.

Ultimately, the Salt Wars helped the U.S. establish clearly and definitively its political control of the area. Ft. Bliss was reopened, and U.S. control was brought to the county. If this legal reality did not directly affect the majority of the people, it was because they spoke a different language from that of the government and because the problems of the poor in general seldom involve the ruling authorities. The awareness of being part of a nation, however, was beginning to surface, however weakly and even if only as an awareness of being strangers in a nation.

NOTES

¹White, Owen, *Out of The Desert (The Historical Romance of El Paso)*, The McMath Co., 1923, pp. 98-99.

²Ibid., p. 99.

³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴Ibid., p. 96.

⁵Sister M. Lilliana Owens, S.L., *Carlos M. Pinto, S.J.*, Revista Catolica Press, El Paso, 1951, pp. 32-33.

⁶White, p. 96.

⁷Martinez, Elizabeth Sutherland and y Velasquez, Enriqueta Longeaz, set the population of the county at 12,000 at this time, *Viva la Raza*, Doubleday and Co., Inc., Garden City, New York, 1947, p. 83. Most other historians agree on the 5,000 figure.

⁸*Voice of the Mexican Border*, Marfa Texas, reported that Luis Cardis was a Frenchman, but all other references identify him as an Italian, *Voice of the Mexican Border*, compiled and copywrite 1933, by Mrs. Jack Dolan, Marfa.

⁹Reverand Ricardo Ramirez, Associate Director, Mexican American Cultural Center, San Antonio, Texas: unpublished.

¹⁰White, p. 96.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Parra, Jose Antonio, *The Battle For the Salt of the Earth*, Nuestro Magazine, August, 1979, New York, p. 55.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Cf. #8 above.

¹⁵White, p. 97.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 100.

NOTES (CONT'D)

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 100-101.

²⁰It should be noted that this priest was not the pastor from San Elizario, where the battles took place, but was an Italian pastor of a small Mexican parish. For further note on the influence of this priest in Church as well as secular politics, see Owens, p. 33. She spells his name Borrajo, and states that in 1872, Fr. A. S. Borrajo and the Mexican curates delayed for a year the appointment of a curate to Ysleta, who would also serve San Elizario and Socorro.

²¹White, p. 104.

²²Ibid., p. 105.

²³Ibid., p. 106.

²⁴Ibid., p. 107.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 107-112.

²⁶Meyer, Michael C. and Sherman, William L., *The Course of Mexican History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1979, pp. 313-322.

²⁷There are several reasons for this. First of all, the population was scarce. Even when U.S. immigrants arrived in Texas, they did not penetrate beyond the central state, except along the Gulf Coast. The immigrants also brought problems and ultimately secession. Therefore, the immigrants themselves, whom Mexico had thought would help by at least populating the state, were themselves another problem. Furthermore, the people of northern Mexico had suffered not only during the war with the U.S., but also when French and Mexican troops marched through their lands just ten years before the Salt Wars. Further complicating the situation was the distance between the central part of Mexico and the northern border regions. Also not to be ignored was the treatment of the Native Americans by the Mexican government. Cf. Meyer and Sherman, pp. 416-420, Evelyn Hu-Dehart, *Pacification of the Yaquis*, Published in *The Age of Porfirio Diaz*, University of New Mexico Press, Albuquerque, 1977, Carlos B. Gil, editor.

²⁸Published testimony before the Senate Investigation Committee that was created for this investigation does have several instances of witnesses making this claim.

²⁹White claims he was defrocked, Parra that he was transferred (White, p. 112, Parra, p. 56.) It is curious that the life of this man has not been better documented.

³⁰*Ley Lerdo*, 1856.

³¹Meyer and Sherman, p. 378.

³²This of course, does not include corporations, which are legally defined as persons in this country.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND LABOR: THE ROUGH RIDE TO A SQUARE DEAL

By

Stephen Schwed

In Abraham Lincoln's First Annual Message to Congress, he said that "Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much higher consideration."¹ But in late 19th century America, these ideas were definitely not in vogue. Despite the fact that Lincoln believed labor deserved more consideration than capital, workers received virtually no attention. Even a man like Theodore Roosevelt, who instinctively resented injustice done to those who could not help themselves, overlooked the plight of labor.

In the late 19th century, Roosevelt's attitude towards labor showed few signs of the obsession with justice which otherwise characterized his career. His actions were primarily dominated by the doctrines of the upper middle class. Thus, his social philosophy encompassed little more than the Republican pre election for low taxes and minimal social services. Furthermore, his initial attitude toward labor legislation indicated a lack of sympathy for labor's aspirations.

It was difficult for Roosevelt to empathize with labor because there was nothing in his background to give him any special understanding of the workingman. Growing up in an upper middle class family and attending Harvard University hardly provided the opportunity for much contact with laborers. This sheltered existence made him oblivious to the harsh realities of life. His naivete enabled him to self-righteously declare: "every man should stand on his own bottom". But he was quickly reminded that "his own bottom was an inheritance from his father."² Even though he received the best education money could buy, he was blind to the problems of the average workingman.

The few ideas he had concerning labor were completely biased. Many of the laborers emigrated from Southeastern European countries which Roosevelt considered "backward". In addition, these people were almost without exception poor and uneducated. Roosevelt believed that "if the parents are good and wise, the son generally does pretty fairly too."³ Accordingly, he expected most laborers to be like their parents--poor, uneducated and "backward". In general, his background fostered a bias against workingmen.

Even if he would have been more knowledgeable of labor's problems, his solution would have been unchanged. He believed that only by "that capacity for steady, individual self-help which is the glory of every true American" could the problems that plagued labor be solved.⁴ He was convinced that the object of all philanthropy should be to help others help themselves. Consequently, in 1884, he opposed a bill to reduce the working time of streetcar conductors to twelve hours per day. He exclaimed: "To offer a worker such protection was both un-American and insulting!"⁵ He stubbornly touted self-help as the solution to most problems.

Thus, he had no sympathy for laborers when they resorted to violence. His views on the Haymarket riots, as this letter expresses, typified this attitude: "My men are hard working, laboring men, who work longer hours for no greater wage than most of the strikers; but they are Americans through and through. I believe nothing would give them greater pleasure than a chance with rifles at one of the mobs...I wish I had them with me and a fair show at ten times our number of rioters; my men shoot well and fear very little."⁶ Obviously, he refused to belittle labor violence simply due to extenuating circumstances. He was also reluctant to place labor agitation in its proper context. Roosevelt regarded all lawbreakers as lawbreakers, regardless of why they were rebelling.

This dislike of agitators did not only apply to those who used violence to achieve their goals. During the Pullman strike of 1894, he opposed labor's peaceful demonstrations. He praised Cleveland's military and legal aid to management which coerced labor to end the strike.⁷ At least during this period of Roosevelt's career, it appears as though he opposed labor's agitations regardless of their cause or methods.

A few years later, he regretted this hostility towards unions. In his Autobiography he said: "One partial reason for my slowness in grasping the importance of action in these matters was the corrupt and unattractive nature of so many of the men who championed popular reforms, their insincerity, and the folly of the actions which they advocated."⁸ But, his frequent contact with well-intentioned moderate union leaders such as Samuel Gompers and John Mitchell convinced him that they were often more virtuous than corporate leaders. This was particularly evident during the 1902 Anthracite coal strike. In describing the contact with the leaders of the operators and the miners he said: "The representatives of the miners included as their head and spokesman John Mitchell, who kept his temper admirably and showed to much advantage. The representatives of the operators, on the contrary, came down in a most insolent frame of mind, refused to talk to arbitration of other accommodations of any kind, and used language that was insulting of the miners and offensive to me."⁹ This insight into the character of the representatives of labor and capital shattered one of the premises on which his prejudice against labor rested.

His contact with poor urban workers also affected many of his earlier beliefs. In his Autobiography, he said that these experiences "gave me personal insights into some of the problems of city life. It is

one thing to listen in perfunctory fashion to tales of overcrowded tenements, and it is quite another to actually see what that overcrowding means."¹⁰ He concluded: "Whatever the theories might be, as a matter of practical common sense, I could not conscientiously vote for the continuance of the conditions which I saw."¹¹ Clearly, he was becoming more pragmatic and less theoretical in his approach to human problems.

He was also beginning to adapt his theories to the realities of industrialization. In his Autobiography, Roosevelt said: "A simple society can exist as a democracy on a basis of sheer individualism. But a complex industrial society cannot so exist; for some individuals, and especially those artificial individuals called corporations, become so very big that the ordinary individual is utterly dwarfed beside them, and cannot deal with them on terms of equality. It therefore becomes necessary for these ordinary individuals to combine in their turn, first in order to act in their collective capacity through that biggest of all combinations called the Government, and second, to act, also in their own self-defense, through private combinations, such as farmer's associations and trade unions."¹² He then went on to say that "Everything possible should be done to secure the wage-workers fair treatment."¹³

In response to the novel problems presented in a complex industrialized nation, he firmly believed that we should "modify the principles or doctrines on which we manage our system of government."¹⁴ For the first time, he was beginning to recognize the bleak fact that the American economic system shortchanged millions of workers.

For these criticisms of an unregulated capitalist economy, he was often called a Socialist. He responded to these charges in his Autobiography "When I recall how often I have seen Socialists and ardent non-socialists working side by side for some specific measure of social reform, and how I have found opposed to them on the side of privilege many shrill reactionaries who insist on calling all reformers Socialists, I refuse to be panic-stricken by having this title mistakenly applied to me."¹⁵ Regardless of what his opponents claimed, Roosevelt was certainly not a Socialist. He merely sought an equilibrium between the contending forces of capital and labor.

Concerning this effort, Richard Hofstadter noted: "They were living in a society that wanted to reap the benefits of large-scale enterprise, as well as to prevent the evils of monopolization; and on the whole, men like Teddy Roosevelt were aware that they did not know how to arrive at a quick and satisfactory solution to the problem."¹⁶ In response to this dilemma, Roosevelt conveyed his feelings in generalities such as "I am neither for labor nor capital, but for the decent man against the selfish and the indecent men who will not act squarely."¹⁷

Giving labor the impression that he was sincerely interested in helping them was an easy task since they were accustomed to blatant mistreatment from the federal government. But, surprisingly, he also managed to reassure capital that their interests were not being surrendered. His success at accommodating labor and capital simultaneously can be seen in an article in the Wall Street Journal less than a year after the Arthracite

coal strike, which said: "The President makes clear that his policy, neither in intention or fact, is directed against wealth. We admire the courage and strength of the President."¹⁸ Roosevelt truly gave labor, capital and all Americans a "square deal". Of all his accomplishments, it is this one that he will probably be remembered for.

Interestingly, his reputation for giving a "square deal" obscured the fact that the beginning of his political career was marred by a bias against laborers and a predilection for capitalists. But as Ralph Waldo Emerson would have said: "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds". Luckily, for labor in particular, and America in general, Theodore Roosevelt did not have a little mind.

NOTES

¹Wagenknecht, Edward, *The Seven Worlds of Theodore Roosevelt*, New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1958, p. 218.

²Harbaugh, William Henry Harbaugh, *Power and Responsibility The Life of T.R.*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961, p. 32.

³Chessman, G. Wallace, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969, p. 22.

⁴Pringle, Henry F., *Theodore Roosevelt A Biography*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1-31, p. 13.

⁵Harbaugh, p. 31.

⁶Pringle, p. 608.

⁷Blum, John Morton, *The Republican President*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, p. 59.

⁸Theodore Roosevelt, *An Autobiography*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919, p. 217.

⁹Roosevelt, p. 506.

¹⁰Roosevelt, p. 219.

¹¹Chessman, p. 37.

¹²Roosevelt, p. 512.

¹³Roosevelt, p. 525.

¹⁴Harbaugh, p. 34.

¹⁵Roosevelt, p. 523.

¹⁶Hofstadter, Richard, *The Paranoid Style of American Politics*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966, p. 192.

NOTES (CONT'D)

¹⁷Riis, Jacobs A., *Theodore Roosevelt the Citizen*, New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1904, p. 373.

¹⁸Pringle, p. 351.