PAPERS
OF THE
SECOND PALO ALTO CONFERENCE

A conference on the War Between Mexico and the United States, its causes, and its consequences with participants from the United States and Mexico. Brownsville, Texas, February 11-12, 1994

Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site
University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College

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Papers
of the
Second Palo Alto Conference

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INTRODUCTION

On May 8, 1993, formal ceremonies were held to dedicate the Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site. The law that created the park contained a far-reaching mandate to study the causes and consequences of the Battle of Palo Alto and the Mexican-American War. Interpretations were to reflect sources from and perspectives of both the United States and Mexico. Consequently, amid the pomp and celebration surrounding the successful establishment of the National Park Service site, Palo Alto began operations with a small gathering of researchers and scholars in a round-table event that became known as the Palo Alto Conference. Dealing with a war that continues to evoke strong feelings despite the passage of time, this conference emerged as an opportunity to bring together citizens of the two nations, to create a dialogue among them, and to establish a foundation for future park activities.

Positive reaction to the 1993 conclave led to the decision to reconvene on an annual basis. In an effort to broaden the base of participation, Palo Alto personnel joined with Social Science faculty at the University of Texas at Brownsville to plan a second binational conference scheduled for February 1994 in that city. Affiliation with the university changed the format of the conference from a round-table approach to a series of thematic sessions. Keynote speaker Josefina Zoraida Vázquez of El Colegio de México highlighted an expanded list of diverse participants.

Emphasis at the Second Annual Palo Alto Conference continued to be on establishing lines of communication between citizens of the United States and Mexico on the controversial Mexican-American War. The planning committee encouraged the participation of established professionals, beginning scholars, military officers, trained archivists, and subject-area enthusiasts--including many who might not normally attend this type of academic forum. The call for papers in English or Spanish was open to anyone interested in the subject area, and screening of proposals was kept to a minimum. The volume of papers presented at the bilingual conference reflected this spirit of widespread participation.

To extend the dialogue beyond the conference hall, participants were encouraged to submit their formal papers or informal comments for publication. As with the conference itself, the only limiting factor was a desire to participate. All submissions were accepted. Each was screened for basic punctuation, spelling, and readability, but, within reasonable limits, the editors left each presentation intact. Although some pieces clearly display greater depth, more research, and better accuracy than others, the collection as a whole provides insight into the broad range of perspectives, opinions, and interest generated by the Mexican-American War both inside and beyond the academic arena.

At the most basic level, this collection also underscores an inability to achieve consensus even on the name of the war, much less on more controversial issues. The authors represented here have offered as many as a dozen distinct titles for the conflict, often with strong justification for the designation

of choice. To avoid taking sides in this unwinnable war of words, the editors have elected to allow each writer his or her own term of preference. Nevertheless, whether they speak of the Mexican War, the Mexican-American War, the Mexican-United States War, the War Between Mexico and the United States, the War with Mexico, la guerra de '47, la intervención norteamericana, la guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos or any of the other name variations, all of the contributors are speaking of the same historic event--one that continues to elicit strong emotions and conflicting interpretations 150 years after the fact.

Finally, the editors wish to acknowledge several people whose efforts facilitated the publication of this book. Thanks go to Dr. Anthony Zavaleta, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College, for providing office support. Gabriela Sosa, Liberal Arts secretary, went above and beyond the call of duty by spending many hours--often on her own time--scanning papers, making corrections, and performing other tasks. Betty Burch and Mary Jo Pickens of the University of North Texas also provided valuable secretarial assistance. Radonna Fillmore of Brownsville utilized her computer skills in the latter stages of this project to help bring it to completion. Their efforts were greatly appreciated.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

February 11, 1:00 p.m.

Welcome

Dr. Anthony N. Zavaleta, Dean College of Liberal Arts, The University of Texas at Brownsville/Texas Southmost College

Keynote Address

Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, El Colegio de México
"Algunas consideraciones olvidadas para la comprehensión de la Guerra entre México y los Estados Unidos"

February 11, 2:00-3:30 p.m.

Presidios and Battlefields

"The Western Presidios in the Mexican-American War"
Jack S. Williams, The Center For Spanish Colonial Archaeology, Mesa, Arizona

"Surveying Mexican-American War Battlefields in the United States through the American Battlefield Protection Program"
Neil C. Mangum, National Park Service, Santa Fe, New Mexico

"Historic Sites of the Mexican War in the United States"
Steven R. Butler, Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, Richardson, Texas

Chair: Douglas Murphy, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, Brownsville, Texas

Images and Perceptions

"Encountering the Other: American Soldiers in the Mexican-American War"
Frank Koscielski, Wayne State University

"We Shall Beat Them Wherever We Meet Them"
Christopher S. Stowe, University of Toledo

"War Correspondents on the Rio Grande: The Press and America's First Foreign War"
Mitchel Roth, Sam Houston State University

Chair: Harriett Denise Joseph, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 11, 3:45-4:45

Matamoros/Brownsville: Municipal and Military Perspectives

"Las funciones municipales en Matamoros y las villas del norte de Tamaulipas durante la ocupación norteamericana"
Juan Fidel Zorilla & Octavio Herrera, Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas

"Arista's Generals in the First Battles of the Mexican War"
Joseph P. Sánchez, Spanish Colonial Research Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico

"The Fortifications of H. Matamoros"
Thomas Carroll, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, Brownsville, Texas

Chair: Milo Kearney, University of Texas at Brownsville

The Men Who Fought and Led

"The Mexican-American War Veterans"
Carlos Larralde, Long Beach, California

"David Twiggs in the Mexican War"
Jeanne T. Heidler, United States Air Force Academy, & David S. Heidler, Salisbury State University

Chair: Jere Light, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 11, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Reception

Hosted by the Historic Brownsville Museum

Music by Omar Rodríguez

An Evening with Fanny Calderón de la Barca, a dramatic presentation
Carol Diehl, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 12, 9:00-10:00 a.m.

The Role of Women

"Women and the Mexican War"
Linda Vance, Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, Austin, Texas

"A Thread of Brittle Texture"
Shannon L. Baker, Texas Christian University

Chair: Sondra Shands, University of Texas at Brownsville

Effects of the Mexican War On and In New Mexico

"The New Mexican 'Revolt' of 1847 and its Effect on American Jurisprudence, 1860-1912"
Robert J. Torrez, State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico

"Migración de Nuevo México a Chihuahua tras la guerra contra los Estados Unidos, 1848-1853"
Martín González de la Vara, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Cd. Juárez, Chihuahua

Chair: Jim Sullivan, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 12, 10:15-11:15 a.m.

Those Who Fought and Those Who Died

"The Regiment of the Voltigeurs, USA: A Case Study of the Mexican-American War"
Erik D. France, Temple University

"The Immigrant Soldier in the Regular Army"
Dale R. Steinhauer, US Army General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Chair: Ben R. Neece, Brownsville Historical Association

Mexico and the United States

"La beligerencia mexicana durante la Guerra con los Estados Unidos"
Jesús Velasco-Márquez, Universidad de las Américas

"'At the Throat of Paso del Norte,' Pedro García Conde and the Bartlett-García Conde Compromise of 1850"
Harry P. Hewitt, Midwestern State University

Chair: Manuel Medrano, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 12, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

President Polk and the Mexican-American War

"James K. Polk: A Study of Presidential Wartime Powers"
Kathleen O'Kray Peltier, Wayne State University

"Mr. Polk's Generals"
Richard Bruce Winders, Texas Christian University

Chair: Steve Lewis, Laredo Community College

After the War, 1848-1875

"'Ho! For Yucatán!': Los voluntarios norteamericanos después de la guerra con México"
Lorena Careaga Viliesid, Universidad de Quintana Roo

"The Texas Devils: McNelly's Company of Rangers and the Palo Alto Fight of 1875"
Michael L. Collins, Midwestern State University

Chair: Anthony Knopp, University of Texas at Brownsville

February 12, 2:00-3:00 p.m.

The Battle of Buena Vista

"A Change of Plans: An In-Depth Look at the Mississippi Infantry's Charge at the Battle of Buena Vista"
Michael Cunningham, Kopperl Independent School District; Les Farmer, Hubbard Independent School District; and Carl Foster, Kopperl Independent School District

"Buena Vista--All Wool and a Mile Wide"
Bob Burke, Descendants of Mexican War Veterans, Dallas, Texas

Chair Bill Adams, University of Texas at Brownsville

Palo Alto

"Natural History of the Palo Alto Battlefield"
Norman L. Richard and Alfred T. Richardson, University of Texas at Brownsville

"Palo Alto: Sacred Ground"
Joseph C. O'Bell, Palo Alto National Park Committee, Brownsville, Texas

Chair: Aaron Mahr, Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site, Brownsville, Texas

RECONSIDERACIONES SOBRE LA GUERRA ENTRE MEXICO Y LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

Josefina Zoraida Vázquez
El Colegio de México

México apareció como país independiente sin la suerte que el destino reservó a los Estados Unidos. Estos habían contado con aliados en su lucha indepentista contra una Gran Bretaña aislada diplomáticamente, en una guerra ni muy larga ni muy sangrienta y terminada con el reconocimiento formal del nuevo país a escasos siete años. La suerte le concedió además otras bendiciones. Al tiempo de aprobarse su segunda Constitución, se desató la Revolución Francesa que crearía veinticinco años de conflictos en el sistema internacional. De esa manera, el nuevo Estado pudo experimentar su nuevo sistema de gobierno sin la interferencia de los poderes europeos, aprovechar su status de poder neutral para comerciar con los contendientes, pagar la deuda de la guerra de independencia, beneficiarse con la emigración que arrojaban los beligerantes y aprovechar la oferta de Napoleón en 1803 de comprar la Luisiana.

En 1804, los Estados Unidos y el Reino de la Nueva España eran comparables en territorio y población. Mas el rico reino, puente entre continentes, cuya minería lo había hecho legendario, con una agricultura, una ganadería y un comercio florecientes, entraba en una lenta bancarrota debido al costo de las desacertadas guerras de su metrópoli y de las reformas realizadas para modernizar el Imperio para obtener mayores recursos de los reinos americanos. Para principios del siglo XIX, la Nueva España se había descapitalizado, situación que se agravaría con la larga y sangrienta guerra de independencia, enfrentada sin aliados y que, además de fragmentar su sociedad y su territorio, arruinaría su economía y le haría perder la mitad de la fuerza de trabajo.

El nuevo Estado entró al concierto de las naciones en un momento poco propicio. España, fortalecida por la Santa Alianza y el legitimismo surgido en el seno del Congreso de Viena, pudo amenazar constantemente a su excolonia, a la que no reconoció sino quince años más tarde, forzándola a endeudarse para defenderse. En circunstancias poco propicias, el nuevo Estado inició la búsqueda del sistema de gobierno que iba a regirla y el liberalismo que le sirvío de guía, resultó una fuerza desestabilizadora como en otras partes. Por si fuera poco, la importancia del país para el comercio o para las ambiciones territoriales de las nuevas potencias económicas, la haría víctima de amenazas constantes y de interferencia en sus asuntos internos, pues su inestabilidad muchas veces fue fomentada por comerciantes y ministros extranjeros.

La utopía de Texas y sus resultados:

México heredó un gran territorio que estaba poblado de manera desigual, los habitantes se concentraban en el centro y en el sur. Testigo de los buenos resultados que había obtenido su vecina del norte, no encontró objeción a continuar con el plan de colonizar el norte con norteamericanos, que habían obtenido ya permiso del gobierno español al independizarse y mantuvo las condiciones, es decir, concesión gratís de tierra pero limitando la admisión a católicos, prohibiendo la esclavitud y la venta de las tierras concesionadas y exigiendo respeto a sus instituciones, que en el momento de la primera y más importante concesión, eran monárquicas y centralistas, lo que desligitima las protestas posteriores por la intolerancia religiosa y el cambio de sistema gubernamental. En realidad, las verdaderas causas de la independencia de Texas fueron el antiesclavismo mexicano, los intereses de los especuladores y expansionistas norteamericanos y la apertura de las primeras Aduanas al cumplirse la exensión concedida para pago de impuestos.

El fracaso del experimento texano provocó una amargura. El gobierno había hecho toda clase de esfuerzos para sentar las bases privilegiadas que permitieran liberar la fértil área del norte, de todos los problemas heredados del colonialismo y convertirla en un área de progreso que enriqueciera a la nación y sirviera de modelo para el desarrollo de todo su septentrión. Los texanos no aquilataron los privilegios concedidos y no sólo se atrevieron a enajerar la tierra recibida, sino que reclamaron fronteras que Texas nunca había tenido y desataron toda una campaña de descrédito contra México, para convencer al público norteamericano que su lucha era paralela a la gesta del 1776. La campaña fue tan exitosa que todavía se atribuye la independencia texana a una "lucha por libertad", contra la instauración del centralismo y la dictadura militar. Se pasa por alto la paradoja de que al mismo tiempo se extendiera el área de la esclavitud.

Era natural que el asunto de Texas afectara las relaciones entre México y los Estados Unidos, sobre todo por las viejas ambiciones de Estados Unidos al territorio de Texas desde la compra de Luisiana, pero también por el apoyo popular a la lucha texana, con el patente disimulo de las autoridades norteamericanas, lo que fue causa inevitable de ruptura de relaciones.

Es probable que los mexicanos confundieran la opinión pública con la acción gubernamental, pero no faltaban bases para ello, pues el presidente Jackson se declaró neutral, pero sin aplicar las leyes de neutralidad vigentes y ordenando en forma provocadora la movilización del éjercito del general E. P. Gaines frente a Nacogdoches y autorizado para ocupar esa plaza, como lo haría.[1] El ministro mexicano, Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza presentó constantes protestas ante el gobierno norteamericano, pero fueron ignoradas y en marzo de 1837 se extendío el reconocimiento.[2]

Las causas de la guerra:

A los ojos de los mexicanos, la independencia de Texas se constituyó en la causa de la guerra posterior, sobre todo después de que se anexó a los Estados Unidos en 1845. No obstante, durante mucho tiempo, los federalistas conservaron la idea de que si México restablecía la Constitución de 1824, los texanos volverían a unirse. Ello llevó a Santa Anna en 1843 a enviar un agente, ofreciendo conceder la más amplia autonomía, juzgando que se trataba de un caso semejante al de Yucatán, lo cual era absurdo. Claro que en 1840 y en 1845 se hicieron planes para reconocer la independencia de Texas, con ciertas condiciones: la frontera del río Nueces, que era la tradicionalmente aceptada; el compromiso de no adherirse a otra nación; la garantía franco-británica de la frontera y el pago de una indeminización. Es posible que la insistencia texana de la frontera del río Bravo o del Norte haya sido el gran obstáculo para extender el reconocimiento, aunque Texas se convirtió en tema favorito en la lucha partidista. Los norteamericanos suelen mencionar como causas de la guerra, el no reconocimiento de la independencia texana, la falta de pago de las reclamaciones de los norteamericanos al Estado mexicano, la obstinada

actitud mexicana de no vender el territorio deseado por el expansionismo, a pesar de la bancarrota hacendaria, sabiendo que tarde o temprano lo perderían de todos modos.

En la declaración de guerra de Polk mencionó las constantes agresiones e insultos mexicanos, que podemos interpretar como el cúmulo de reclamaciones de los ciudadanos norteamericanos contra el gobierno mexicano, que el especulador texano Anthony Butler había acumulado sin discriminación alguna, para presionar al gobierno y obtener la venta de Texas. Se trataba de una maraña de reclamos, algunos de la época colonial y de la lucha independentista y muchas eran a todas luces inaceptables. La mayor parte atañían al área comercial y fiscal: préstamos forzosos, doble cobro de impuestos, daños en propiedad durante disturbios; otros se referían al ejercicio de la justicia ante la conducta de sus nacionales: acusaciones de concubinato, asesinato, participación en invasiones o introducción de efectos no prohibidos expresamente, como en el intento de un capitán norteamericano de descargar una nave cargada de moneda falsa de cobre.

El gobierno mexicano insistía en que las reclamaciones se presentaran ante sus tribunales y sólo ante la denegación de justicia, los casos se presentaran diplomáticamente, pero franceses y norteamericanos no sólo se negaron y ni siquiera juzgaron su pertinencia como el Foreign Office británico que sólo admitió las que violaban convenios o garantías amparadas por el Tratado entre los dos países. También instó a sus nacionales a presentarlas ante los tribunales mexicanos, por eso fueron mejor atendidas.

Durante la guerra de Texas, el nuevo ministro norteamericano, Powathan Ellis, recibió órdenes de presionar su inmediato pago de las reclamaciones, esperando que la comprometida situación convencería al país a vender la provincia. No se pudo evitar el rompimiento de las relaciones, pero la depresión económica y los enfrentamientos partidistas en Estados Unidos, dieron un respiro a México y Estados Unidos aceptó en 1838 la oferta del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Luis Gonzaga Cuevas, de someter las reclamaciones a arbitraje. Las reclamaciones presentadas importaban 7 585 114 pesos que quedaron reducidas a 2 016 139.[3] El gobierno norteamericano se negó a incluir las reclamaciones mexicanas, por su "carácter nacional", lo que inició la práctica de dejar las mexicanas, relegadas y sin reparación. El pago mexicano estuvo sujeto a los vaivenes de la hacienda pública, pero hay que recordar que muchos estados de la Unión norteamericana tampoco podían cubrir sus compromisos.

El interés de Francia y Gran Bretaña por el comercio y la posibilidad de detener el expansionismo norteamericano, los condujo a extender el reconocimiento a Texas y a insistir a México que también lo hiciera para impedir que se anexara a Estados Unidos.

Hoy se ha aceptado que el móvil principal de la guerra fue el expansionismo norteamericano. Para los años cuarenta empezaba a convertirse en verdadera fiebre expansionista, por lo que tanto el presidente Tyler como el candidato James Polk lo utilizarían en su retórica política. La prensa y los políticos no tenían la menor pudor. Mientras los texanos, apremiados por las deudas, deseaban negociar y comprometieron a la Gran Bretaña en mediadora con México y hasta se atrevieron a ofrecer un soborno a Santa Anna a través del ministro británico en México.[4]

De cualquiera manera para principios de 1840, para los Estados Unidos la prioridad no era Texas, que se consideraba un fruto maduro que no tardaría en caer, sino California. Desde 1836, el presidente Jackson le había expresado a Santa Anna su interés por comprar el norte de California con la bahía de San Francisco. El Departamento de Marina realizó entre 1838 y 1842 una inspección de la costa del Pacífico, al tiempo, que aparecían publicaciones que difundían las riquezas de la región y la conveniencia de anexarla, lo que alimentó las ambiciones territoriales.[5] Uno de los contagiados fue el Secretario de Estado Daniel Webster,[6] a quien el Ministro en México había asegurado que México canjearía Texas y California por las reclamaciones norteamericanas.

Podemos intuir que había ya planes secretos a través del incidente provocado por el Comandante del Escuadrón Naval en el Pacífico Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, que el 19 de octubre de 1842 ocupó sorpresivamente el puerto de Monterrey, ante la noción "errónea" de que existía estado de guerra entre

los dos países. El ministro Waddy Thompson explicó al gobierno mexicano que había actuado sin instrucciones, pero nunca fue sancionado.

Nadie intentaría soslayar la responsabilidad del gobierno mexicano que, por falta de recursos, mantuvo abandonado el remoto y deshabitado departamento. Las escasas tropas que lo vigilaban carecían de armas, uniformes, alimento y, por supuesto, sueldo. El abandono atizó movimientos federalistas. En ellos se sospechó intervención norteamericana y el gobierno mexicano trató de prohibir la residencia de norteamericanos en los departamentos del noroeste,[7] pero Thompson y otros diplomáticos alegaron que violaba los tratados vigentes[8] y la medida tuvo que ser abolida.

México fue incapaz de detener la avalancha expansionista. La marcha espontánea hacia el oeste, desde tiempos de Jefferson empezó a estar coordinada desde la Casa Blanca. En medios comerciales y políticos privaba la idea de que California bien valía una guerra, pero se confiaba en que la pobreza del erario, obligara al gobierno mexicano a venderla.

De todas formas, Texas estuvo presente en los problemas entre los dos países. Para fines de 1843, los planes anexionistas se habían consolidado, pero el tema provocaba disensiones entre los partidos y las regiones, a causa del esclavismo. Dentro de ese marco, los rumores sobre proyectos abolicionistas británicos, iban a proporcionar una justificación. Un agente texano llegó afirmar que los británicos pretendían convertirla en "un refugio de esclavos fugitivos de los Estados Unidos y después en una nación negra, una especie de Haití".[9] Las disensiones entre el norte y el sur, presentaban a los anexionistas el dilema de que la anexión no fuera asociada con la esclavitud y con una guerra con México. Es por ello que el Secretario Abel Upshur se concentró en negociar con el ministro mexicano, al que trató de convencer que Estados Unidos tenían que anexarse Texas para neutralizar la influencia inglesa, los problemas del contrabando y de los esclavos fugitivos, pero que México obtendría "total justicia", en su compensación por la perdida de Texas. Para el ministro Juan N. Almonte esto significaba un reconocimiento de los Estados Unidos a los derechos mexicanos sobre Texas.[10] Mas Upshur murió en un accidente y su sucesor, el líder y teórico del esclavismo, John C. Calhoun, tenía prioridades diferentes y se atrevió a aceptar la exigencia de Houston de que los Estados Unidos garantizaran la defensa de Texas en caso de ataque mexicano, aunque sobrepasaba las facultades constitucionales del ejecutivo[11] y el 12 de abril se firmó el tratado para someterlo al Senado.

Calhoun mantuvo una actitud conciliadora con México y le preguntó a Almonte si México aceptaría una compensación. El ministro mexicano contestó que era posible si se le garantizaban las fronteras vigentes, es decir, el Río Nueces. Pero como el tratado se firmó sin consultar a México, lo que Almonte consideró hería la dignidad nacional, pero confió en no se aprobaría. De todas formas recibió instrucciones de que de aprobarse la anexión, presentara una protesta vigorosa y pidiera sus pasaportes.[12]

El primer intento de anexión fracasó en el Senado. El Conde de Aberdeen, ministro británico de Asuntos Extranjeros, que promovía el reconocimiento mexicano de Texas, influyó en cierta forma. En un despacho a su ministro en Washington, definió que la Gran Bretaña no tenía ningún designio de dominio, le interesaba el comercio y, también "ver abolida la esclavitud".[13] El Secretario de Estado Calhoun se indignó y confesó abiertamente su credo esclavista, lo que condujo al fracaso del tratado en el Senado, el 8 de junio. Tyler no se dió por vencido y logró su aprobación como Resolución Conjunta de las dos cámaras, en febrero de 1845.

Para entonces, James K. Polk, candidato demócrata, había logrado conjugar la simpatía del norte y del sur clamando "la **reanexión** de Texas" y la "**reocupación** de Oregon". California no se mencionaba, pero los expansionistas empezaban a invadirla.

Los errores mexicanos:

El fracaso de la utopía colonizadora en la que los mexicanos habían puesto tantas esperanzas, había convertido el tema texano en tabú en la política mexicana, aunque casi todos estaban convencidos

de que Texas se había perdido. La excepción fue el ministro Juan de Dios Cañedo, quien se atrevió a proponer el reconocimiento ante el Consejo de Gobierno, en 1840. Se encargó a una Comisión encabezada por Lucas Alamán el estudió y dictaminó positivamente, con condiciones.[14] Uno de los miembros filtró la noticia a la prensa y el escándalo condujo a que se suspendiera su discusión. No se volvieron a recibir agentes texanos, pero en 1844, poco antes de caer del poder, el general Santa Anna aceptó fijar las condiciones para el reconocimiento de Texas ante el ministro británico Charles Bankhead.[15] Santa Anna no había aquilatado la oferta hecha por el Conde de Aberdeen al ministro mexicano el 29 de mayo de 1844, ofreciendo la garantía franco-británica para la frontera mexicana, a cambio del reconocimiento de Texas, que se comprometía a no anexarse a otro país.[16]

Ante la noticia de la aprobación de la anexión, Aberdeen y su ministro en México decidieron hacer un último intento e instaron al nuevo gobierno mexicano a extenderla, pero la oferta mexicana para iniciar la negociación, llegó al tiempo que la oferta de Estados Unidos, que fue ratificada por una Convención texana en julio de 1845.

La llegada de la noticia oficial de la resolución conjunta llevó al ministro de Relaciones Luis Gonzaga Cuevas a comunicar al representante norteamericano la decisión del gobierno de México de interrumpir las relaciones.[17] Pero el fracaso del último intento por resolver la cuestión texana selló la suerte del mejor gobierno que había regido a México. Para los norteamericanos, ahí terminaba el asunto de Texas, pero no para los mexicanos, que a pesar de la falta de recursos, trató de prepararse para la guerra anunciada con la llegada del expansionista Polk a la Casa Blanca. Su agente en Texas, Robert Stockton, aparentemente buscó provocar una guerra con México, que justificara que Estados Unidos interveniera en defensa del nuevo estado.[18]

La guerra inevitable:

La fiebre del "Manifest Destiny" permeaba el ambiente. La retórica hablaba de "resistir la invasión", aunque la flota norteamericana asediaba los puertos mexicanos. Consolidada la anexión de Texas, se clamaba por todo el Oregón (54° 40'or fight!), y como según afirmaba Polk, los títulos sobre esa región eran incuestionables, los norteamericanos se preparaban "para ratificarlos ocupándolo con sus esposas e hijos".[19] Esto despertó una esperanza mexicana de una guerra entre Gran Bretaña y Estados Unidos, que cancelara la declaración de neutralidad británica.

Para todos era evidente que California era la verdadera meta de Polk. Su situación era débil, con una población de 24 800 mexicanos, divididos políticamente, y 680 extranjeros. Como en el caso de Texas, se insistió en el peligro de que la provincia se convirtiera en protectorado británico y los expansionistas iniciaron la invasión. En México se vió con pesimismo el destino de California y se llegó a sugerir la conveniencia de venderla o cederla a Gran Bretaña a cambio de la deuda.

México no tenía ningún aliado. Aberdeen lamentaba la ocupación norteamericana de California, pero consideraba más importante "el equilibrio europeo" y no comprometer la cuestión del Oregón,[20] por lo que se limitó a aconsejar que México evitara declarar la guerra para que los Estados Unidos "no tuvieran derecho a ocupar ninguna parte de su territorio".[21] Los norteamericanos afirmaban "lamentar sinceramente que el gobierno de México se hubiera ofendido" por la anexión de Texas y enviaron un agente confidencial para convencer al gobierno mexicano de que era en "el verdadero interés de su país . . . renovar relaciones amistosas",[22] pero no fue recibido, por lo solicitaron que el gobierno mexicano admitiera recibir un comisionado especial.[23] El gobierno mexicano puso como condición de que tuviera "con pienos poderes . . . para **arreglar** de un modo pacífico, razonable y decoroso la **contienda presente**", y que se retirara la totalidad de "la fuerza naval que está a la vista en nuestro puerto de Veracruz."[24] Por contienda presente el gobierno mexicano entendía el asunto de Texas. Esto contrastaba con el objetivo norteamericano, evidente cuando se envió a John Slidell, con el carácter de **enviado muy ministro plenipotenciario** para arreglar las reclamaciones, "que habían puesto a prueba la paciencia de

los Estados Unidos" y como "es hecho bien sabido a todo el mundo que el gobierno mexicano no está en condiciones de satisfacer estas reclamaciones por pago directo", se le conminaba a cumplir con un ajuste de la frontera a cambio de su pago, que asumiría el gobierno norteamericano. Se insistía en que la frontera justa era el Río Grande, **tanto por la declaración del Congreso texano en 1836 como por haber sido parte de la vieja Luisiana.** En contradicción con esa afirmación se ofrecía a México que los Estados Unidos asumirían las reclamaciones si aceptaba la línea del río Bravo, desde su desembocadura hasta su nacimiento. Además se incluían ofertas de compra e intrucciones para restaurar las relaciones amistosas, contrarrestar la influencia europea contraria a Estados Unidos[25] y como "materia de suma importancia", averiguar los designios de México para ceder California a Gran Bretaña y Francia, porque

> la posesión de la bahía y puerto de San Francisco es de gran importancia para E.U. . . . . California es apenas nominalmente parte de México . . . el presidente desea que Ud. ponga sus mejores esfuerzos en obtener una cesión de esa provincia. . . . El dinero no será problema, comparado con el valor de la adquisición . . . el presidente no dudará en dar, además de el pago de las reclamaciones . . . veinticinco millones de dólares por la cesión. . . . No necesito prevenirlo de que no vaya herir la vanidad nacional . . . sería difícil que hubiera un problema de honor entre los E.U. y un poder tan débil y degradado como México.[26]

Aunque la misión estaba condenada al fracaso porque para la mentalidad mexicana el esquema mismo era un insulto, Slidell llegó en un pésimo momento. Rumores de que el gobierno estaba a punto de **vender** Texas y California, conjugado con el carácter que se le había otorgado a Slidell, impidieron que se le recibiera, puesto que el gobierno enfrentaba también un movimiento militarista, en connivencia con la conspiración monarquista patrocinado por la corona española que, antes de terminar el 1845 lo había derribado. Slidell comunicó a Polk la noticia y decidió esperar para ver si tenía éxito con el nuevo gobierno, pero tampoco lo recibió.

México se encontraba en la peor encrucijada de su historia. A la bancarrota total y el acoso de sus acreedores se sumaba la ruptura de relaciones con Francia, por un incidente baladí y la discordia causada por los militares y los monarquistas. La Corona española no podía haber elegido peor momento para patrocinar la reinstauración monárquica en México, proyecto que contaba con el visto bueno de Francia y Gran Bretaña.[27] México quedaba sin aliados, al tiempo que se introducía otra causa de disidencia.

Al recibir las noticias del fracaso de Slidell, Polk ordenó el avance de las tropas del general Zachary Taylor hacía el Río Grande, es decir, dentro de territorio mexicano o en el peor de los casos **territoria de disputa**. Para marzo de 1846, Taylor había llegado a la boca del Río Grande. El coronel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, confiaba a su diario: "no tenemos una partícula de derecho de estar aquí . . . parece como si el gobierno hubiera enviado una pequeña fuerza para provocar la guerra y tener un pretexto para tomar California."[28]

El 25 de abril, tuvo lugar el incidente que Polk ansiaba al producirse un tiroteo entre soldados de los dos países en el Río Grande. El mensaje lacónico de Taylor: "las hostilidades pueden considerarse iniciadas", llegó a Washington el 9 de mayo. Polk tenía listo su mensaje de declaración de guerra, al que sólo agregó la frase "sangre norteamericana se ha derramado en **suelo norteamericano**" y lo envió al Congreso. El mensaje hacía un largo recordatorio de "los agravios perpetrados por México en nuestros ciudadanos desde hace mucho tiempo" y puesto que había iniciado la guerra, era necesario vindicar el honor, los derechos y los intereses del país.[29]

Los recursos solicitados por Polk para la guerra fueron aprobados por una enorme mayoría de diputados. En el Senado hubo una pequeña oposición a la afirmación, a todas luces falsa, de que la guerra hubiera sido iniciada por el vecino país. A muchos whigs les preocupaba el carácter que tendría la guerra y que el territorio conquistado extendiera la "institución peculiar", pero no se atrevieron a negar recursos

porque la guerra era popular.

La táctica de ataque comprendió el bloqueo y ocupación de los puertos mexicanos del Pacífico y del Golfo por la escuadra norteamericana. Cuatro ejércitos se dirigieron a diversos puntos del país. Taylor seguiría de norte hacia el centro; el general Wool hacia Chihuahua; el general Stephen Kearny, estacionado en Misouri, avanzaría hacia Nuevo México y California, la verdadera meta de la guerra y el general Winfield Scott seguiría la "ruta de Cortés", de Veracruz a la capital de la república. Se ordenó a los generales que ocuparan plazas del norte o de la costa, favorecer el secesionismo, con el objeto de repetir la historia texana. Se envió un agente católico para neutralizar a la jerarquía de la Iglesia, convenciéndola de que no debía temer, puesto que en los Estados Unidos se ejercía la religión con toda libertad y se ordenó que se emitieran proclamas para informar que la guerra era contra el gobierno y que

> su religión, altares e iglesias, la propiedad de estas y de sus ciudadanos, el emblema de su fe y sus ministros serán protegidos y permanecerán inviolables. . . . En cada ciudad y villa de la Unión, existen iglesias católicas y los sacerdotes desempeñan sus funciones sagradas en paz y seguridad.[30]

Polk deseaba sólo una pequeña guerra, "suficiente para requerir un tratado de paz", que obligara a México a ceder territorio; prefería evitarla por los costos materiales y las diferencias regionales. Por ello también había entablado negociaciones con el general Santa Anna, que estaba exilado en La Habana, quien simuló estar de acuerdo en ajustar la frontera entre los dos países en el Río Grande[31] y en ceder Nuevo México y California por 30 millones de dólares o pesos, que estaban a la par, para poder cruzar el bloqueo. Pero el arreglo trascendió a la prensa y despertó dudas sobre la lealtad del jefe del ejército, constituyendo un factor más de la desmoralización mexicana.

Las primeras derrotas mexicanas ante las tropas de Taylor en mayo de 1846, terminaron por desacreditar a la administración de Paredes y al ejército mexicano, lo que facilitó el triunfo federalista el 4 de agosto del mismo año. Antes de terminar ese mes, Santa Anna había vuelto a México. De inmediato se dirigió a San Luis Potosí para organizar la defensa, al tiempo que Monterrey caía en manos de Taylor.

La movilización de voluntarios sin entrenamiento, la falta de recursos y escasez y atraso técnico de la artillería, convertirían en sangriento el intento de defensa. Nuevo México y las Californias estaban prácticamente indefensas y sus habitantes fueron incapaces de evitar que Kearny y la escuadra norteamericana consolidaran la conquista primero de Nuevo México y, en enero de 1847, de California. Las dos provincias se declararon anexadas.

Taylor enfrentó la mayor resistencia de la guerra cerca de Saltillo en la Angostura, el 21-22 de febrero. Santa Anna se había multiplicado para reunir dinero, armas y hombres; había pensado entrenar sus voluntarios, pero la falta de municiones y la acusación de traición por el retardo necesario, lo decidió avanzar por el extenso semidesierto entre San Luis y Saltillo, sin los debidos abastecimientos, en lugar de dejar a Taylor acometiera esa empresa. La derrota desarticuló el ejército mexicano y por ello, en adelante, el norteamericano se enfrentaría sólo a los restos del ejército que haría intentos desesperados en Churubusco y Chapultepec. En Veracruz y la ciudad de México resistió el pueblo.

Desde los primeros meses de 1847, Polk había nombrado a Nicholas Trist como ministro plenipotenciario para unirse a las fuerzas de Scott y estar dispuesto a negociar la paz. Aunque Santa Anna hubiera querido cumplir con el "compromiso" hecho con Polk, no hubiera podido hacerlo porque el Congreso mexicano le arrebató al ejecutivo la facultad de negociara la paz.

Trist llegó en junio y se reunío al ejército de Scott que avanzaba lentamente, amagado por las guerrillas mexicanas.Sus instrucciones incluían ofertas de compra por diversas extensiones de territorio, con un máximo de indemnización de 30 millones. Las adquisiciones prioritarias eran California y Nuevo México, pero se incluía a la Baja California y el libre y perpetuo tránsito por el Itsmo de Tehuantepec. El Comisionado anunció al gobierno mexicano su presencia a través de los británicos e hizo algunos intentos por sobornar a Santa Anna, quien de nuevo simuló aceptar para ganar tiempo y organizar la

defensa de la ciudad de México.

Sin dinero y con un ejército en deplorable estado, las derrotas se sucedieron. Después de las batallas de Churubusco y Padierna, en el Valle de México, a fines de agosto se negoció un armisticio, durante el cual tuvieron lugar las primeras pláticas entre Trist y los comisionados mexicanos, que consideraron desproporcionadas las exigencias territoriales de Estados Unidos e hicieron una contrapropuesta. No aceptaban la frontera del Bravo, porque hubiera dado razón al argumento norteamericano de la causa de la guerra y proponían la cesión hasta el paralelo 37°, incluyendo San Francisco, pero no Monterrey y, desde luego, no Nuevo México. Las limitadas facultades de los comisionados y las exigencias de Trist rompieron las negociaciones y al reanudarse las hostilidades no tardó en caer la capital de la República.

Después de la batalla de Chapultepec era evidente que se carecía de recursos para defender la capital. Santa Anna decidió ordenar la retirada y renunciar a la presidencia. El pueblo hizo los más desesperados esfuerzos por defender su ciudad, pero a pesar de las grandes bajas inflingidas al invasor, fue ocupada el 15 de septiembre.

La acefalia del gobierno creó gran incertidumbre, pero por fortuna, Manuel de la Peña, presidente de la Suprema Corte de Justicia, indicado por la Constitución para suceder al presidente, aceptó el difícil reto y se trasladó a Querétaro. Se logró el reconocimiento de los gobiernos de los estados y la reunión del Congreso Nacional, a pesar de las diferencias partidistas.

No cabía duda de que era una guerra de conquista y no de reparación de "agravios inflingidos por México", pero las victorias habían aumentado el apetito de los expansionistas que despertaron un movimiento para anexar todo México. Polk también decidió exigir los estados deshabitados al norte de la Sierra Madre y, en septiembre, ordenó el regreso de Trist. En diciembre 7, Polk advirtió que su testarudez ocasionaría mayores pérdidas a México.

De la Peña logró de organizar el gobierno y hasta arrebatar el mando del ejército a Santa Anna. Trist se dirigió al ministro de Relaciones en octubre, pero cuando éste había nombrado a los nuevos comisionados, el comisionado anunció su partida pues había recibido las órdenes de Polk. Scott y los británicos lo instaron a quedarse, puesto que las negociaciones podían considerarse iniciadas y existía el peligro de que los partidarios de continuar la guerra, radicales y conservadores, hicieran desaparer un gobierno con quien poder negociar. Trist vaciló, pero convencido de los deseos de su país de hacer la paz, terminó por quedarse.

Los comisionados mexicanos Bernardo Couto, Luis G. Cuevas y Miguel Atristáin cargaron con la amarga tarea de negociar el ingrato tratado de paz. Media República estaba ocupada, por lo que su misión era salvar lo posible. Trist, ante el problema de haber desafiado órdenes de volver, tenía menos flexibilidad y tuvo que ceñirse estrictamente a las instrucciones originales y exigió ese San Diego, el valle del Gila y la frontera hasta el Río Grande. Los comisionados pudieron salvar Baja California y que quedara unida por tierra a Sonora y evitar hacer concesiones sobre Tehuantepec. Preocupación primordial de los comisionados mexicanos fue asegurar los derechos de sus conciudadanos que vivían en las zonas cedidas.

El artículo 5 fijó la frontera entre los dos países de acuerdo al mapa de Disturnell de 1847 que contenía varios errores que resultaron costosos a México. Los artículos 7 y 9 garantizaban los derechos de los mexicanos que decidieron permanecer en aquéllas regiones:

> . . . those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and right of Mexican citizen, or acquire those of citizens of the United States. . . . In the said territories property of everykind, now belonging to Mexicans now established there, shall be inviolably respected.

Para evitar cualquier duda, el artículo 9 insistía en que los mexicanos que no expresaran mantener su nacionalidad mexicana, adquirirían la norteamericana con

> all the rights of the citizens of the U.S. according to the principles of the Constitution .

. . and secured in the free exercise of their religion, without restriction.

El único artículo favorable a los intereses mexicanos fue el 11, que garantizaba protección de la frontera norte de los ataques indígenas. Trist aceptó el compromiso puesto que su gobierno había utilizado la incapacidad mexicana para controlar esas incursiones, como argumento para presionar la venta del territorio:

> Considering that a great part of the territories which, by the present Treaty, are to be comprehended for the future within the limits of the United States, is now occupied by savage tribes, who will hereafter be under the exclusive control of the Government of the U.S. and whose incursions within the territory of Mexico would be prejudicial in the extreme: it is solemnly agreed that all such incursions shall be forcibly restrained by the Government of the U.S., whensoever this may be necessary and that when they cannot be prevented, they shall be punished by the said Government, and **satisfaction** for the same shall be exacted: all in the same way, and **with equal diligence and energy**, as if the same incursions were mediated or committed within its own territory against its own citizens.

El artículo 12 fijó una indemnización de 15 millones, que no pagaba la tierra **conquistada por las armas**, sino que se consideraba como el prorrateo que correspondía a los territorios perdidos, de la deuda exterior adquirida por la nación.

El tratado fue firmado en la Villa de Guadalupe el 2 de febrero de 1848. Trist lo envió y Polk lo recibió en Washington el 19 de febrero, causándole un gran disgusto, pero el curso de las elecciones y el hecho de que Trist hubiera seguido las instrucciones originales, lo decidió a enviarlo al Senado sin recomendación. Para el 10 de marzo, después de pequeños cambios y eliminar el artículo 10, el Senado lo aprobó por considerable mayoría.

La situación del gobierno mexicano era más delicada. De la Peña lo presentó al reunirse el Congreso el 7 de mayo, con un sencillo discurso, en el que recordó las terribles circunstancias en las que se habían llevado a cabo las negociaciones y la importancía que tenía que se hubiera salvado "la nacionalidad del país" y sus instituciones. A pesar del desacuerdo, el Congreso comprendió su responsabilidad y el Tratado fue ratificado. El 30 de mayo se intercambiaron en Querétaro las ratificaciones.

El Tratado fue decisivo para los dos países. Para los Estados Unidos el tratado significó el medio para consolidar los sueños de convertirse en una potencia continental. Para México significó la renuncia al brillante destino que parecía prometerle su gran territorio y la prosperidad y poder que había tenido el Reino de la Nueva España. La amarga realidad obligó a sus habitantes a definir sus proyectos de nación y a reorganizarse. La guerra permitió una ampliación de la conciencia nacional que fortalecería al país y le permitiría enfrentar con éxito el embate imperialitas francés en la década de 1860.

NOTAS

[1] *Don Manuel Eduardo de Gorostiza y la cuestión de Texas* (México, SRE, 1924), 51-59.

[2] La presión de los abolicionistas obligó a Jackson a descartar la anexión de Texas y retardar el reconocimiento, según mencionó en su mensaje anual de 1836, para evitar la suspicacia de los otros países, pero antes de entregar el mando a su sucesor, el 7 de marzo de 1837, el presidente reconoció a la nueva república. Jackson al Congreso, Washington, 21 de diciembre de 1836, W. A. Richardson (ed), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), IV, 1484-1488.

[3] Francisco de Arrangóiz, *México desde 1808 a 1867* (México: Porrúa, 1974), 308.

[4] Pakenham a Aberdeen, 17 de febrero de 1842, Public Record Office (PRO) FO 50, 143-146.

[5] Entre ellos, las conferencias y artículos publicados por John J. Warner durante su visita al este en 1840-1841, que predicaba la incorporación del territorio y la construcción de un ferrocarril transcontinental para evitar que cayera en manos británicas. Alexander Forbes publicó un libro en el que ensalzaba clima, recursos y puertos y se avocaba por que Gran Bretaña se apoderará del territorio.

[6] El Ministro Waddy Thompson le hacía el entusiasta comentario: "Texas tiene poco valor comparado con California, la tierra más rica, la más hermosa y saludable".

[7] Tornel al Gobernador y Comandante General de Sinaloa, 4 de julio de 1843, PRO FO 50, 165, 101-102.

[8] Bocanegra a Thompson, 21 de julio y 23 de agosto de 1843, William R. Manning, *Diplomatic Correspondence*, VIII, 547-548 y 555-557.

[9] Smith a Calhoun, 19 de junio de 1843, citado por David Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1973), 80.

[10] George Lockhart Rives, *The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), I, 600-601.

[11] Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, I, 608-609.

[12] Bocanegra a Almonte, 10 y 30 de mayo de 1844, in Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 154.

[13] Bocanegra a Almonte, 10 y 30 de mayo de 1844, in Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 154.

[14] "Dictamen sobre la Independencia de Texas", en Lucas Alamán, *Obras* (México: Jus, 1945), 545-551.

[15] Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, "Santa Anna y el Reconocimiento de Texas," *Historia Mexicana*, XXXVI:3 (1987), 553-562.

[16] Aberdeen a Bankhead, 3 de junio de 1844, PRO, FO 50, 172, 33-36; Memorandum, 31 de mayo de 1844, PRO, FO 50, 180, 21-25.

[17] Cuevas a Shannon, 2 de abril de 1845, PRO, FO 50, 185, 6-7.

[18] Glenn W. Price, *Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1967).

[19] Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV.

[20] Murphy a Relaciones, 1 de febrero 1846, PRO, FO50, 62-64.

[21] Murphy a Relaciones 1 de agosto de 1845; Antonio de la Peña, *Lord Aberdeen, Texas y California* (México: SRE, 1935), 36-38.

[22] Buchanan a Parrott, 28 de marzo de 1845; Carlos Bosch García, *Las reclamaciones, la guerra y la paz* (México, UNAM, 1985), 474-476.

[23] Buchanan a Black, 17 de septiembre de 1845, en Bosch, *Las reclamaciones, la guerra y la paz*, 584-585.

[24] De la Peña a Black, 15 de octubre de 1845, en Bosch, *Las reclamaciones, la guerra y la paz*, 613-623.

[25] Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, II, 67-69.

[26] Buchanan a Slidell, 10 de noviembre de 1845, en Bosch, *Las reclamaciones, la guerra y la paz*, 613-623.

[27] Papeles del Ministro en México, Salvador Bermúdez de Castro, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, *Estado*, leg. 5869.

[28] W.A. Croffut (ed.), *Fifty Years in Camp and Field: Diary of Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock* (New York: Putnam's and Sons, 1909), 213.

[29] Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, V, 1382-1414.

[30] Proclama Enviada por Marcy a Taylor, 4 de junio de 1846, en Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, 228.

[31] 13 de febrero de 1846 en el diario de Polk, citado por Rives, *The United States and Mexico*, II, 119-120.

LA BELIGERENCIA MEXICANA DURANTE LA GUERRA CON ESTADOS UNIDOS

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La guerra entre México y Estados Unidos es un acontecimiento crucial en la historia de cada uno de los países, así como en la historia de sus relaciones. Su importancia, radica no sólo en sus causas y desenlace, sino también en las lecciones que de esa confrontación debemos extraer. El proceso que se inició desde la apertura de la colonización americana en Texas y que culminó con la cesión forzada de territorio mexicano, a través del Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo, nos desafía con una gama enorme de cuestionamientos. Uno de éstos corresponde a la beligerancia mexicana. El historiador americano Justin Smith afirmó en su clásica obra que:

> The [Mexican] press clamored for war; the government was deeply committed to that policy; and the great majority of those who counted for anything, panting feverishly, though with occasional shivers, to fight the United States, were passionately determined that no amicable and fair adjustment of the pending difficulties should be made.[1]

No obstante, posteriores investigaciones han demostrado que tal interpretación, en el mejor de los casos, no es del todo correcta. La historiadora Josefina Z. Vázquez[2] ha demostrado fehacientemente la disposición de los diversos gobiernos mexicanos para encontrar solución a los problemas que confrontaban a los dos países. En el caso del gobierno de José Joaquín Herrera está demostrado que se trato de evitar el rompimiento de hostilidades, por los medios disponibles; pero tampoco puede negarse que, en México se manifesto un espíritu beligerante que fundamentalmente fue expresado a través de la prensa, la que a su vez representó a las diversas corrientes políticas de la época. Sin embargo, cabe señalar, que la beligerancia mexicana nunca tuvo las características que le atribuye Justin Smith; en primer lugar porque no fue constante, y en segundo porque no soslayó las desventajas que presentaba México frente a Estados Unidos. Frente a estas condiciones cabe preguntarnos: ¿por que los gobiernos mexicanos no pudieron evitar la guerra? y ¿como se justificó la beligerancia de la prensa a pesar de reconocer las desventajas que presentaba el país frente al enemigo?

Para dar respuesta a la primera pregunta hay que tener presentes dos elementos fundamentales. Uno fue la precariedad de la autoridad en México y el otro fue la presión que ejerció el gobierno del Presidente Polk. Entre junio de 1844 y septiembre de 1847 se sucedieron en México seis presidentes. Con excepción de Manuel de la Peña y Peña, todos los demás ocuparon la presidencia como resultado de levantamientos populares o militares contra su antecesor, y por consiguiente, tuvieron que enfrentar a una

oposición que cuestionaba su legitimidad y que estaba al acecho de la oportunidad para derrocarlo. En estas condiciones, el gobierno de Herrera contó con un consenso muy precario para negociar primero con el gobierno de Texas, en abril y mayo de 1845, y después para recibir al enviado americano John Slidell a fines del mismo año. Lo mismo sucedió con Mariano Paredes en 1846. Estas condiciones que restringieron la capacidad de negociación de los gobiernos mexicanos fueron del conocimiento de president Polk, ya que desde 1844 el ministro americano Wilson Shannon había comunicado a su gobierno:

> . . . many intelligent Mexicans privately entertain and express opinions favorable to the amicable arrangements of the difficulties. . . . But there are few, who have the boldness to express these opinions publicly, or who would be willing to stem the current of popular prejudice by undertaking to carry them out.[3]

Ante estas condiciones la posición asumida por el gobierno de Polk, tal y como quedó consignada en las instrucciones a John Slidell, no abrían posibilidades de negociación; por el contrario, obligaron a los gobiernos de José Joaquín Herrera y Mariano Paredes a adoptar una actitud que parecía inflexible y desafiante y que a fin de cuentas produjo dos efectos: por una parte justificar la agresión americana, y por la otra, precipitar su caída. En 1846, por ejemplo, un periodista, describía la misión diplomatica de John Slidell como

> . . . un lazo grosero que se nos intentó tender con fin maquiavélico y ultrajante. Porque el dilema era muy sencillo, o admitía el gobierno mexicano a un ministro ordinario de la Unión, lo cual equivalía a restablecer sin satisfacción las relaciones amistosas entre ambos países, sancionando la usurpación de Tejas . . . o como era más probable, no se prestaba el gobierno mexicano a este exceso de humillación, y entonces había un pretexto para apelar a la guerra y consumar nuevas usurpaciones. . . .[4]

En abril de 1847, el gobierno de Polk designó un nuevo comisionado para entablar conversaciones de paz con el de México. Las instrucciones de Nicholas Trist no sólo contenían las demandas anteriores, sino que las ampliaban. Además, para entonces el norte de México había sido invadido y ocupado, a la vez que se iniciaba el avance del ejército de Winfield Scott desde Veracruz, lo cual contradecía los argumentos originales con que el presidente Polk había solicitado al Congreso la Declaración de Guerra. Para entonces ocupaba la presidencia de México Antonio López de Santa Anna, y desde su regreso al país se había proyectado la sospecha de que era parte de una conspiración para acceder a las demandas territoriales de Estados Unidos, y de esto además, Polk tenía no sólo conocimiento sino que de alguna manera estuvo involucrado.[5] En estas circunstancias resultaba difícil que el presidente Santa Anna accediera a recibir al comisionado americano. En consecuencia, las posibilidades de negociación estaban de antemano limitadas por las demandas americanas, por el avance del ejército americano y por las condiciones políticas internas de México. Ante esto la prensa respondió que "la guerra y nada más que la guerra", era el único camino que México debía seguir[6] y, pese a que la situación del país era "ciertamente deplorable", si quería conservar ilesa su "nacionalidad", no podía dar muestras públicas de impotencia. La nación debía combatir, e inclusive sucumbir, "pero con honor y con dignidad".[7] Una vez que el país hubiese recobrado su prestigio, podría ofrecer a sus enemigos la oliva de la paz, ya que entonces

> . . . la cuestión sería puramente de límites, sería de igual a igual, y una vez recobrada nuestra reputación antigua, la cuestión de intereses aparecía con un carácter secundario y de poca importancia[8]

El comentario de Wilson Shannon, citado anteriormente, planteaba, por otra parte, que existía en México un prejuicio popular desfavorable hacia Estados Unidos. Este se había desarrollado progresivamente desde la gestión diplomática de Joel R. Poinsett, pero se había intensificado a partir de la separación de Texas, hasta alcanzar su clímax en 1844, al darse los primeros pasos para su anexión. Para entonces este prejuicio popular adoptó un tono agresivo y en muchas ocasiones beligerante, y habría

de mantenerse hasta la ocupación de la ciudad de México por el ejército del general Scott. Pero, a la vez, no se dejaron de considerar las condiciones desventajosas en que se encontraba el país. Por ejemplo, el diario *El Tiempo*, que dirigía Lucas Alamán, describía las condiciones del país a principio de 1846, en los siguientes términos:

> Una administración desorganizada, una hacienda perdida, deudas enormes que nos consumen, las rentas hipotecadas a nuestros acreedores, el soldado mendigando de la basusra su escasa subsistencia, los servidores del estado desatendidos, la justicia descuidada, los bárbaros haciendo retroceder las fronteras de la civilización . . . los Estados Unidos ocupando nuestro territorio; y todo esto sin marina con que defender nuestras costas, y sin poder proporcionar los recursos necesarios a nuestro ejército para expeler del suelo de la patria a sus osados invasores.[9]

Es verdad que, en apariencia, resultaba paradójico que se combinara esa beligerancia con la conciencia de las limitaciones nacionales; no obstante, la contradicción se desvanece cuando encontramos que la primera respondía tanto a la necesidad de afianzar la seguridad nacional y defender principios de legalidad internacional, como a un sentimiento de vulnerabilidad.

Los políticos e intelectuales mexicanos de la primera mitad del siglo XIX no dejaron de percibir las tendencias expansionistas de Estados Unidos. La Memoria sobre la negociaciones entre España y los Estados Unidos de América, sobre el Tratado Transcontinental de 1819, escrita por el negociador español Luis de Onís se había difundido ampliamente y en ella se señalaba con particular énfasis el carácter expansionista de los americanos. Más tarde las sugerencias y propuestas para la compra de territorio, así como la misma separación de Texas confirmarían, desde la perspectiva mexicana, que el pueblo y el gobierno del país vecino acechaban las oportunidades para apoderarse del territorio mexicano. La similitud entre lo ocurrido en Florida y la separación de Texas no era una simple coincidencia. Para 1845, el peligro era aún mayor, pues el expansionismo se había convertido también en un medio para unificar al país que empezaba a dar síntomas de división. Al menos así lo demostraba la campaña presidencial de 1844 con el correspondiente triunfo de James K. Polk.[10] En conclusión, a los americanos "sus circunstancias los impelían a la conquista"[11] y por ello aspiraban a la absorción de parte o de todo el territorio mexicano y esto los convertía en los enemigos "naturales", el implacables "que la Providencia" había designado a México.[12]

Como resultado de este análisis se deducía el riesgo a la integridad territorial, y por lo tanto a la seguridad nacional, lo cual ha sido siempre, uno de los fundamentos esenciales para la supervivencia de los estados y las naciones. Aún hoy día, es evidente que las negociaciones internaciones mas complicadas están relacionadas con este tipo de problemas, ya que afectan directamente a la la soberanía de los estados. Más aún, en la anexión de Texas, el gobierno de Estados Unidos acudió a consideraciones de seguridad nacional, aludiendo una supuesta amenaza europea, y posteriormente, cuando se trató de justificar la conquista de California, se usaron argumentos similares. Para México, de igual manera, las intenciones expansionistas de Estados Unidos, constituían una amenaza a su existencia como estado soberano, ante lo cual la guerra estaba justificada, por lo que ésta tenía sólo un carácter defensivo.[13] Cierto que tanto Slidell como Trist, presentarón propuestas que contenían una compensación por el territorio que se deseaba adquirir, pero de acuerdo a los mexicanos la vinculación entre la venta de territorio, y las indemnizaciones y la misma compensación, era una forma de presión y, lejos de aminorar el riesgo a la seguridad nacional, sentaba un precedente que lo incrementaba. En consecuencia, la guerra tenía como objetivo principal impedir los primeros pasos "en la carrera de las usurpaciones" y para fijar un hasta aquí a "ese Mar del Norte que se ha alzado para invadirnos".[14]

Intimamente ligado con el problema de la seguridad nacional estaba el de la preservación del derecho internacional. Desde la perspectiva mexicana la anexión de Texas, ya fuera por medio de un tratado entre ésta con Estados Unidos, como se intentó realizar al principio, o por medio de una Resolución Conjunta del Congreso como finalmente se llevó a cabo, carecían de sustento legal, puesto

que entre México y Estados Unidos se había firmado un tratado de límites en el que se aceptaba que Texas formaba parte de México. Por otra parte, el conflicto entre los texanos y México eran un problema interno; y dicho sea de paso, una posición similar adoptó el gobierno del Presidente Lincoln durante la Guerra Civil. Pero si en el caso de Texas podía haber cuestionamientos legales, en el de sus límites territoriales no los había, y menos aún en la ocupación de los territorios de Nuevo México y California, y con ello se derrumbaba toda la argumentación legal de Polk al declarar la guerra a México. En estas circunstancias, México no solo estaba política, moral, y legalmente autorizado para "defender al país", como lo decretó el Congreso Mexicano en julio de 1846, sino que con esta acción también estaba defendiendo las bases más elementales de la convivencia internacional.[15]

Por último, el sentimiento de vulnerabilidad que dominaba a los mexicanos para 1845, era el resultado de las condiciones internas y de las amenazas externas. Texas se había separado y no había duda alguna que su exitosa secesión se debía en gran medida al apoyo americano. Las potencias europeas, particularmente Francia, no sólo adoptaban una actitud arrogante sino agresiva, y ya para entonces se había padecido una intervención armada de su parte. Los ministros americanos había mostrado un insultante desprecio en su trato con los mexicanos, y para entonces se habían difundido en México los conceptos en que se apoyaba el Destino Manifiesto, con su agresivo etnocentrismo, y sus acentos racistas.[16] Todo esto estimuló la idea de que existía una conspiración cuya meta final sería hacer desaparecer a por completo a México como nación independiente y el sometimiento permanente de sus habitantes. La ocupación del territorio en disputa entre los ríos Nueces y Bravo por el ejército al mando del general Taylor, la presencia de la fuerza naval americana en las costas del Golfo de México y el Pacífico y posteriormente la conquista de Nuevo México y California, y la invasión de casi todo el país, incrementaron progresivamente este sentimiento popular de amenaza; por lo tanto, ya no se trataba solo de defender la seguridad de la nación, o principios legales, sino la misma libertad y supervivencia habitantes. Esto explica, en gran medida, que, pese la las constantes derrotas militares y a las crisis políticas y financieras que padeció México durante la ocupación americana, sólo hasta después de la caída de la ciudad de México, el gobierno de Manuel de la Peña y Peña pudiera entablar negociaciones. De hecho estas fueron, en gran medida posibles, porque para entonces se percibió que de no llegar a hacerlo, el mismo riesgo que se había tratado de evitar con la resistencia, ahora existía de continuarse ésta.

En conclusión, podemos afirmar que en primera instancia los mexicanos no deseaban ni promovieron la guerra con Estados Unidos, y que cuando surgió un sentimiento beligerante, este no fue el producto ni de la arrogancia, ni de la irresponsabilidad. Por el contrario, respondió a los argumentos y a las acciones del gobierno y del pueblo americanos, y, aunque en ocasiones hubo algunas voces de agresividad estridente, la mayor parte de la beligerancia mexicana tuvo un tono defensivo.

NOTAS

[1] Justin Smith, *The War with Mexico* (Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1963), I, 116.

[2] Josefina Z. Vázquez y Lorenzo Meyer, *México frente a Estados Unidos, un ensayo histórico, 1776-1980* (México, El Colegio de México, 1982), 42; Josefina Z. Vázquez, *Mexico ante el mundo: historia de sus relaciones exteriores* (México, El Senado de la República), I, 118 ss.

[3] Wilson Shannon a John C. Calhoun, 28 de octubre de 1844, en: Carlos Bosh García, *Documentos de la Relación de México con los Estados Unidos* (México, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1983), IV, 35.

[4] "La cuestión del día", *El Tiempo* (México), 5 de abril de 1846.

[5] Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, *México ante el mundo*, 131.

[6] "Guerra a muerte", *El Republicano* (México), 23 de abril de 1847, 4.

[7] "Invervención de Inglaterra", *Don Simplicio* (México), 24 de abril de 1847, 4.

[8] "La paz", *Diario del Gobierno* (México), 25 de julio de 1847, 4.

[9] "Nuestra profesión de fe", *El Tiempo* (México), 12 de febrero de 1846, 1.

[10] "Tejas y el ejército", *La voz del pueblo* (México), 19 de marzo de 1846, 2; "Paz con los Estados Unidos", *El Siglo XIX* (México), 19 de abril de 1845, 1.

[11] "Sistema de guerrillas", *El Republicano* (México), 21 de noviembre de 1846, 3.

[12] *Boletín de Noticias* (México), 21 de diciembre de 1844, 4.

[13] "Declaración de guerra", *El Siglo XIX* (México), 27 de julio, 8 de agosto y 15 de agosto de 1845, 4.

[14] "Porvenir", *El Siglo XIX* (México), 25 de marzo de 1845, 3.

[15] "Tejas", *El Siglo XIX* (México), 24 de enero de 1845, 4; "Nuestra profesión de fe", *El Tiempo* (México), 12 de febrero de 1846.

[16] Gene M. Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846* (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1975).

JAMES K. POLK AND PRESIDENTIAL WAR POWERS: AN UNEXPLORED FIELD OF THE CONSTITUTION

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During the Mexican-American War, James K. Polk broadened the interpretation of presidential war powers and brought definition to the role of Commander-in-Chief. Historians rarely address Polk's use of presidential wartime powers, generally casting Polk only as a precursor to Lincoln and his Civil War presidency.[1] They offer either an extremely negative view of his policies, or praise for his dogged determination to continue on a set course, regardless of the consequences. Yet, throughout the Mexican-American War, Polk faced intense criticism for his interpretation and use of presidential war powers.

Much of the criticism levelled at Polk for supposed abuse of war powers came from members of the Whig party who used clearly partisan language while raising crucial constitutional issues. This criticism drew national attention to several topics. Initially, discussion centered on whether the Mexican War was defensive or offensive in nature. In particular, if defensive, did the president possess any military powers when Congress was in session? Polk and his fellow Democrats repeatedly addressed these concerns. However, Whigs, unsatisfied with Democratic responses, persisted in their quest to determine the roots of the war.

Whigs raised additional constitutional questions once the war was underway. The establishment of temporary territorial governments in Mexico and California came under heavy fire as Congress and the Whig press looked for the source of Polk's presidential wartime power. Polk's decision to levy monetary contributions from the Mexicans in order to help defray military costs resulted in Whig charges of monarchical use of war powers. In this area, the Whig press, as well as many Congressmen, believed that Polk, when he invoked military prerogative found in the Commander-in-Chief clause, usurped Congressional powers.

Polk interpreted the Commander-in-Chief role broadly and involved himself in areas which Congressmen believed were their constitutional responsibility. During the Mexican-American War, many people, even some Democratic Congressmen, held a narrow view of the presidential war powers found in the Commander-in-Chief clause. Whigs interpreted constitutional war powers by placing the greatest emphasis on Congressional involvement and direction.[2] The president as Commander-in-Chief under this arrangement was subordinate to Congress. Polk, however, saw his wartime role as more than simply being a tool of Congress.

On May 11, 1846, Polk sent a message to Congress which requested recognition of the existence of

war between the United States and Mexico. This request followed a conflict between the American and the Mexican armies. Polk cited two reasons for Congressional recognition rather than declaration of war: first, that "Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil," and second, "She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war."[3] This request for a recognition of war, rather than a declaration of war, elicited a maelstrom of criticism because it appeared to strip Congress of its constitutional duty to declare war.

With the onset of war, many Congressmen believed Polk had exploited Mexico's political turmoil in order to begin a war of conquest. Early congressional discussion centered on whether the war was defensive or offensive. Many Whigs believed Polk's military actions in Texas were offensive in nature, rather than defensive, and therefore usurped Congressional war-making power.

Congress knew before the war began that Polk proposed a military solution to the annexation of Texas. Polk's First Annual Message, given on December 2, 1845, fully six months before the beginning of the war, addressed American and Mexican diplomatic negotiations. Mexico, Polk explained, "has been marshaling and organizing armies, issuing proclamations, and avowing the intention to make war on the United States."[4] As a result, during the Summer of 1845, Polk had ordered, at the request of Texas, an army of occupation into the disputed area between the Nueces and del Norte rivers.[5] In the *Congressional Globe* there is no discussion of Polk's troop placement. It is interesting therefore that Congressmen, particularly the Whigs, were so surprised when Polk's war message came.

The Democratic Party split on its interpretation of events on the del Norte. Discussion centered on Polk's role in repelling Mexico's invasion, not on Mexico's belief that war existed. Senator John C. Calhoun believed Polk overstepped the bounds of presidential war powers by asking Congress to recognize an existing state of war. The President had a constitutional responsibility to repel invasion, Calhoun conceded, but Congress alone could determine if war existed or should be declared. An invasion, to Calhoun, was not synonymous with war.[6]

Senator Thomas Benton responded that the President not only had constitutional authority but a duty to repel invasion. The President in performing this function was to use "all the means that the law has put into his hands."[7] In Benton's estimation Polk acted entirely within prescribed presidential power.

Over the course of the war, Polk's critics raised additional constitutional issues. Many, both in the Congress and in the press, were concerned with the military establishment of territorial governments in New Mexico and California. When the war began, Polk ordered Colonel Stephen Kearny to Santa Fe. After taking possession of Santa Fe, Kearny announced that the citizens of that region no longer owed allegiance to Mexico, but were now American citizens.[8] Congress, as well as the Whig press, held Polk directly responsible for Kearny's actions.

In his Second Annual Message, Polk defended his policy on occupied territory. He cited the laws of nations as his guide in the military possession and treatment of New Mexico.[9] Polk never intended the military government in New Mexico to be permanent, since using international law as his guide, this would have been a strict violation of its precepts.

Polk's use of the laws of nations as a supplement to war making under the Constitution was debated in Congress. Representative Isaac E. Holmes looked at Emer de Vattel's *Law of Nations* and its prescription for the temporary establishment of military governments. These governments could be established as a matter of self defense, and the commanding general was bound to treat the conquered people with clemency. Polk did not, in Holmes' estimation, authorize the establishment of permanent military governments since it would have directly violated the law of nations.[10]

Congressmen remained deeply troubled over Polk's use of presidential war power to establish temporary military governments. In December, 1846, after learning of Kearny's actions, the House requested all papers and reports from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy regarding any orders or instructions related to the establishment of temporary governments.[11]

In his response to Congress, Polk agreed that Kearny had been wrong to offer American citizenship to the residents of New Mexico. Kearny had acted not to usurp congressional authority, but from a "patriotic desire to give to the inhabitants the privileges and immunities so cherished by the people of our own country."[12] Polk emphasized these governments were temporary, a fact which his critics ignored.

The congressional discussion which followed was important in the legislative and executive struggle to define war powers. Representative James A. Seddon explored whether Polk was exercising legitimate belligerent rights under the law of nations. Seddon felt two clauses of the Constitution gave Polk his wartime power. There were the Commander-in-Chief clause in Article II, Section 2, and the "take care" clause in Article II, Section 3, which charged the President with the faithful execution of the laws of the United States. The President, in the opinion of Seddon, possessed wartime powers, but Congress could through "prudent legislation," define and limit the Executive, who was merely commander of the forces. Seddon called his fellow Congressmen not only to question Polk's exercise of belligerent rights, but to look for the source of Executive wartime power. He saw presidential war powers as an "unexplored field of the Constitution."[13]

As the discussion on the wartime relationship between the President and Congress continued, Representative Joseph A. Woodward offered the opinion that the Constitution gave the President limited power. Woodward, like Seddon, subordinated the President to Congress. Woodward, however, was more strident in his viewpoint. The President "was purely, and exclusively, a military officer . . . he was wholly subordinate to Congress and to the civil authority." The Commander-in-Chief, in Woodward's estimation, "who commanded the army was not the President who approved or vetoed bills, who received foreign ambassadors . . . and made treaties . . . he was commander of the army only, and as such was divested by the Constitution of every political relation." Woodward did not believe Polk usurped any power which did not belong to the Commander-in-Chief.[14]

Polk's authorization of territorial governments, under the laws of nations, remained a volatile issue throughout the war. In 1847, Kearny issued another proclamation upon possession of California. In this instance, he claimed American citizenship for the Californians and proclaimed himself governor of the new territory. The issue of Polk's role as Commander-in-Chief once again came under heated discussion.

With the ratification of the final treaty with Mexico, Polk again asked Congress to provide territorial governments and noted his own wartime power, in this area, had ceased to exist.[15] The House was not appeased and continued to question Polk's right to establish military territorial governments. On July 24, 1848, again citing the laws of nations, Polk reiterated he had exercised only legitimate rights of war.[16] Polk believed his constitutional duty as Commander-in-Chief was to protect the belligerent interests of the United States. This issue remained unresolved between Polk and Congress.

Another issue which troubled many, both in Congress and in the press, was Polk's use of blockades on Mexican ports. They questioned not the military right to place blockades, but rather Polk's decision to open them up to international trade and to seize tariffs. In 1847, war expenses were high, and Polk sought ways to expand revenue. Polk consulted several Congressmen and his Cabinet for their opinion on whether or not he had the power to open Mexican ports to foreign commerce and to levy a tariff.[17] All agreed Polk possessed that wartime power.

As a result, Polk issued an Executive Order to the Secretary of the Treasury to seize tariffs from blockaded Mexican ports. "It is the right of the conqueror," Polk explained, "to levy contributions upon the enemy in their seaports, towns, or provinces . . . and to apply the same to defray the expenses of war."[18] Polk believed these were unquestioned rights of war and hoped the policy would impose a burden on the enemy, as well as provide revenue for the United States.

Polk's seizure of Mexican tariffs outraged Whigs. These monies were not deposited in the national Treasury, but retained in Mexico, for direct use by the American military. The *National Intelligencer*, the official Whig newspaper, saw this as the end of the Constitution.[19] In its opinion, Polk first circumvented the law-making power of Congress concerning revenues and then he failed to order the

return of money collected to the United States for formal disbursement. This appeared to many Whigs the ultimate usurpation of power.

The *Daily Union*, Polk's official newspaper, offered a military explanation for the failure to channel funds through the United States Treasury. It stated that over the course of war military contributions could be levied and received in the form of ordnance, ammunition, provisions, or means of transportation. These military contributions would normally be held and disbursed by the appropriate military office, for example, the Ordnance Department or the Quartermaster's Department. Military contributions, therefore, in the form of money, rightfully belonged to the Paymaster's Office. These military contributions did not come under the revenue laws of the United States, but were the result of military occupation. If Congress controlled these revenues, they might not meet the purpose intended.[20] Congress possessed the power to tax, but military contributions, whether money or supplies, stayed with the military to support itself.[21]

Like the press, Congress persisted in its examination of Polk's use of presidential war powers. In December 1848, well after the end of the war, the House requested information on the law or provision of the Constitution which gave Polk the right to establish a tariff of duties or to use the funds to support the military.[22]

Polk reiterated that it was a principle of war that a nation shift the financial burden from itself and impose it on the enemy by exacting military contributions.[23] The Constitution placed the power to declare war in Congress and its prosecution in the President, as Commander-in-Chief. In Polk's opinion, since the Constitution offered no specific method to execute this duty, international law, recognized by all civilized nations, filled the void.

Polk wrote this response to Congress after the conclusion of a long and bitter war, during which he was constantly berated and criticized for his actions. Polk disagreed with the Whigs that the President, as Commander-in-Chief, was subordinate to Congress. He carefully pointed out that when Congress declared war, it gave no instructions about how to conduct the war, and in any case it would be impracticable for Congress to provide for all the details of a campaign. In Polk's estimation, campaigns could not be halted, while field commanders waited for Congressional acts authorizing them to proceed.[24]

Polk believed both the Constitution and the laws of nations were necessary elements in the role of Commander-in-Chief. When Congress declared or recognized war, the President, as Commander-in-Chief, was bound to prosecute it vigorously and effectively. This did not mean presidential subordination to Congress. Polk reached this decision, not because he desired to claim royal prerogatives for himself, but because it would have been impractical for the Commander-in-Chief, or any military officer, to receive orders directly from Congress.

Questions about the division of legislative and executive war powers remained unanswered during the Mexican-American War. But a critical debate had been started. These questions emerged from the intense political rivalry of the 1840s, amid emotional charges of power usurpation. Criticism of Polk for his actions was extensive and came from both Democrats and Whigs. Whig partisanship and political jealousy within the Democratic party formed the basis for much of the debate. Yet the language used reflected not just dissatisfaction with Polk but a genuine fear for the future of the nation. The Mexican-American War raised national concerns as people grappled with the problem of reconciling executive power in a republic.

ENDNOTES

[1] Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1987), xii; Robert W. Johannsen, *To The Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 15; Charles A. McCoy, *Polk and the Presidency* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1960), 140. McCoy, acknowledged as a leading authority on Polk's management of the Mexican-American War, addresses Polk's interpretation of this important Executive responsibility. Using the Polk Diary as his principal source, McCoy focuses on Polk's relationship with those around him, in particular Generals Scott and Taylor, his Cabinet and the Secretary of War. McCoy, however, overlooks the constitutional issues that arose from Polk's exercise of executive wartime power. Polk's greatest strength, McCoy believes, was that without any previous military experience he controlled the war. In McCoy's estimation, Polk "asserted the President's prerogative to know and to decide even the minute details of military operations, thus establishing for all succeeding Presidents the right and responsibility of the President to oversee the details of military administration."

[2] Edward S. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers, 1787-1957* (New York: University Press, 1962), 17-18. Corwin briefly discusses the quasi-monarchical versus the ultra-Whig conceptions of the presidency in general. The example he provides is Jefferson's idea of executive power which Corwin says is "more Whig than that of the British Whigs themselves" with regard to subordinating the executive to the "supreme legislative power."

[3] W. A. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897), VI, 2292.

[4] Richardson, *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, V, 2238.

[5] There are differing dates in the Summer of 1845 cited by Polk and noted historians regarding the deployment of General Zachary Taylor and his troops into the disputed area of Texas. In Milo M. Quaife (ed), *Diary of James Polk* (4 vols., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1910) I, August 29, 1845, Polk states that the orders given to Taylor and Commodore Conner were officially sent on August 31, 1845. Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk Continentalist*, 226, places June 15, 1845, as the date when orders were sent to Taylor to move troops to the Gulf coast to embark "on or near the Rio Grande." Paul H. Bergeron, *The Presidency of James K. Polk*, 63, notes that in July, Taylor and his troops were present at the Nueces. These two historians emphasize that Polk's program was non-aggressive. Sellers asserts that the deployment of the nation's military and naval power was designed to reinforce Polk's sword-and-olive-branch diplomacy toward Mexico.

[6] *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess. (May 11, 1846), 784.

[7] *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 1 Sess. (May 11, 1846), 784.

[8] *The Daily Union*, October 5, 1846, 531. The *Union* published a copy of Kearny's proclamation in New Mexico.

[9] Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, V, 2344.

[10] *Congressional Globe*, 30th Cong. 1 Sess. (December 9, 1846), 13-18.

[11] *Congressional Globe*, XVI, (December 8, 1846), 12.

[12] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2357; Quaife (ed), *Diary of James Polk*, II, December 19, 1846.

[13] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2357; Quaife (ed), *Diary of James Polk*, II, December 19, 1846.

[14] *Congressional Globe*, 29 Cong., 2 Sess., (December 10, 1846), 26-27.

[15] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2439.

[16] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2445.

[17] Quaife (ed.), *Diary of James Polk*, II, March 12, 1847.

[18] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2373.

[19] *Daily National Intelligencer*, April 3, 1847, 3.

[20] *Daily Union*, April 3, 1847, 2.

[21] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, V, 2501. In his Fourth Annual Address Polk noted that $769,650 of the military contributions collected in Mexico had been applied toward the first installment due to Mexico under the treaty. An additional $346,369.30 had been turned over to the Treasury. Richardson, V, 2527. Polk reported to the House on January 2, 1849 that all monies collected in Mexico "that were unexpended at the close of the war, as far as the accounts of collecting and disbursing officers have been settled, have been paid into the Treasury in pursuance of an order for that purpose. . . ."

[22] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2522.

[23] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 2523.

[24] Richardson (ed.), *Compilation of Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, VI, 2525, 2527.

"A THREAD OF BRITTLE TEXTURE": ANN CHASE AND MANIFEST DESTINY

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Referring to the conviction that God had ordained the United States to spread democracy throughout the world, Manifest Destiny emerged as a popular if controversial concept in 1845, sparking vigorous debates. Adherents, for instance, disagreed about the amount of territory to be acquired. Arguments regarding the Mexican ability to adopt liberal institutions also ensued, with many contending that Anglo-Saxons were the only ethnic group capable of participating actively in a democracy--other people were inherently inferior. Lively discussions concerning Manifest Destiny thus abounded during the mid-nineteenth century, demonstrating people's varying beliefs.[1]

One of its proponents was Ann McClarmonde Chase, an Irishwoman devoted to United States expansion while living in the Mexican port of Tampico from 1834 until 1870. She had moved to the United States at age nine and embraced its Constitution, accepting its precepts as her own. In 1836 she married United States Consul Franklin Chase, who provided her with the opportunity to meet prominent Americans in Mexico and further strengthen her affiliation with the United States government. She demonstrated fierce loyalty during the Mexican-American War by secretly supplying vital information to the United States Navy regarding Mexican troop movements both in the Matamoros and Tampico regions. When the Mexican government suspected her of spying, it placed maids (actually informants) in her house. But Ann Chase soon discovered their purpose and deliberately supplied them false information. She stated that between 25,000 and 30,000 United States troops were heading to Tampico, thereby convincing General Antonio López de Santa Anna to evacuate the area. She then notified the United States Navy that the city was devoid of armed forces. Because of such actions, American troops incurred no losses in seizing Tampico.[2]

While living in Mexico, Chase wrote extensively. Besides maintaining diaries about day-to-day happenings in Tampico, she composed a multi-volume account of Mexican history during the 1850s in which she expressed opinions about Mexico and the United States' potential to acquire its territory. She espoused the ideals of Manifest Destiny, while patronizing observations regarding Mexican society further reinforced her perspective. Her journals expressed convictions similar to those found in editorials and travelogues written during the Mexican-American War, despite the fact that she did not have extensive access to such documents. Her writings, furthermore, reflected that she maintained such expansionist beliefs even after the war had ended.[3]

During the war, the primary debate regarding Manifest Destiny focused on how much, if any, Mexican territory the United States should annex. Virtually all Americans expected to acquire Mexico's northern region, with some believing that their government would eventually incorporate the entire nation, if not all of the Western hemisphere. Some opposed annexation because they feared that the seizure of Mexican land would lead to the subjugation of the entire nation, thus incorporating many "inferior" *mestizos* into the Union. Others, opposed to the extension of American slavery, feared that the acquisition of Mexican territory would increase the number of slave states. As hostilities escalated and the Mexican reparations owed to the United states increased, many who first objected to expansion viewed the acquisition of territory as a means for Mexico to pay war debts.[4]

In her journals, Chase described Mexican troops as the representatives of "an expiring nation"--one that would soon lose its independence to the United States. When discussing the causes of the conflict, Chase stated that Mexico was an "easy target for any country willing to make the effort." While the United States had constantly expanded its territory and was destined to grow even larger, she wrote, Mexico had become entangled in civil wars, thereby dooming itself to certain destruction. Any further governmental attempts to improve conditions would repress the people, halt progress, and ultimately lead to anarchy, she contended. Referring to the land acquired through the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, Chase stated that the United States would surely gain the remaining territory because the death of Mexico was a "settled point."[5]

In the United States, newspaper editors waged written battles about how much territory the American government should annex. William Swain, the editor of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, argued that the United States should annex all of Mexico, arriving at the same conclusions that Chase later expressed in her journals. In one editorial he contended that the United States would appear weak to Europe if its troops retreated from Mexico before collecting an indemnity; therefore, military occupation would be necessary. The article stated that annexation would naturally result, because in the years of occupation Americans would settle in Mexico, bringing with them the benefits of their industry. Many Mexicans would come to accept the United States and would, in fact, choose annexation. Instead of carrying out the guise of an occupation, Swain proposed, the United States should attach Mexico immediately after the war. In another edition Swain wrote that "Our own project, long since proclaimed, is the entire Conquest of Mexico."[6]

James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *New York Herald*, maintained less extreme opinions than either Chase or the *Public Ledger*. He did not believe that the United States should necessarily control all of Mexico, but did assert that, as reparations grew, the United States gained the right to acquire more territory. If the Mexican government conceded to defeat before its deficit became too large, the United States would only annex part of the country. But, according to Bennett, if Mexico refused to surrender, the United States would justly take control of the entire nation in return for debts accrued during the hostilities.[7]

In contrast to Bennett, editor John L. O'Sullivan of the *New York Morning News*, who coined the term Manifest Destiny, maintained that the United States should not force its rule on an unwilling nation. He stated that the nation had a mission to spread its liberal institutions throughout the continent, but would "never be the forcible subjugator of other countries." Instead, he argued, other nations would join the democracy voluntarily. During the Mexican-American War, he advocated the acquisition of northern Mexico (the land extending from the Rio Grande to the Pacific), but only "if the inhabitants of the territory are willing to be transferred to us."[8]

The divisiveness among these newspaper editors emphasized another debate regarding Manifest Destiny: whether Mexicans were intellectually capable of accepting liberal institutions. Those who blamed racial inferiority for Mexico's weakness posited that the people did not possess the innate abilities required to embrace democracy. The United States, therefore, would have to subject that nation to military rule in order to insure adequate control. Others maintained that an ineffectual government was

at fault, thus contending that instructing Mexicans about liberty would render annexation successful.[9]

Based on her own observations, Chase described Mexicans as victims of their government and stated that education could reform them. She portrayed the constant change in leadership as an exchange of masters and stated that lower classes remained ignorant because political leaders dedicated more resources to civil wars than to internal improvements. She concluded that Mexico remained incapable of changing these patterns and could not successfully educate even the Indians, who--according to Chase--constituted the most unenlightened group. Mexico had not improved its citizens' minds in any way. If well-governed by a democracy, the nation would foster both agricultural development and urban growth because liberty would breed prosperity. Chase, therefore, believed that Mexicans, with education, could live in a democracy, but she did not think their government was capable of establishing one.[10]

Some newspaper editors, such as Swain and O'Sullivan, also maintained that the United States could successfully teach most Mexicans about democratic institutions despite some obstacles. While O'Sullivan believed that Mexicans could understand the concepts of democracy with the proper instruction, he cautioned that Mexico should not join the United States until it had completed its education. Swain contended that the Mexican population could not rule itself, but argued that *mestizos* comprised an intelligent group that the United States could "train" to practice better morals. Although the Indians were "dolts," he believed that they nonetheless constituted a submissive group that the United States could easily control. Under territorial governments, Mexico would learn to reform its political and social abuses, and its people would master English, as well as the customs necessary for American citizenship. "We see no insuperable obstacle in these vices of Mexican character," he wrote, "which are merely the growth of bad government."[11] The majority of Americans disagreed with the beliefs of O'Sullivan and Swain; such convictions also placed Chase in the minority. Bennett, for instance, contended that Mexicans were racially inferior and could not advance through education alone. He stated that the United States would need to overthrow the Mexican government and replace it with military and territorial political systems that would further industrialize the nation, thus producing greater profits. The government, furthermore, should not allow Mexican states to enter the Union with full equality until a "sufficient admixture of our own [American] blood" existed in their population.[12]

But Chase, in Mexico, regarded Manifest Destiny as more than a political mission that people had crafted to spread democracy; it encompassed a religious objective, directed by God, to expand the Anglo-Saxon race and moral principles throughout the hemisphere. In her diary, for example, she wrote about a ship that Mexicans had sunk in the River Panuco at Tampico in order to block United States' vessels from entering the port. When a rainstorm occurred, the river flooded and tore the sunken ship apart, thereby allowing American ships to pass into the harbor. God had caused the storm, she believed, in order to punish the Mexicans for acting against his laws.[13]

She described the war in her journals, often discussing the United States' divinely ordained mission. An "overruling providence" seemed to dictate that the United States would easily conquer Mexico. She further stated that God had willed the Mexican-American War, as well as the complete fall of Mexico. As Anglo-Saxons expanded their influence southward, they would fulfill God's prophecy by spreading liberal institutions and the Anglo-Saxon religion. Offering Europe as an example, she stated that Catholic countries suffered "spiritual darkness" and poverty, while the Protestant nations prospered. According to Chase, therefore: "It is [the] Anglo-Saxon spirit that must dominate."[14]

Her claims of religious superiority related to a trend, emerging in the decade preceding the war, in which Americans searched for justifications to explain their political and economic success. United States citizens blamed weaknesses in different societies on racial inferiority, thereby denying that their quest for power, wealth, and Mexican territory harmed others. Proponents of both partial and complete annexation, for example, contended that the "mongrel" population was incapable of taking advantage of its resources. Americans also cast disparaging remarks about Mexicans who--they believed--had interfered with Anglo ambitions.[15]

Chase criticized many aspects of Mexican society, thereby reflecting her own racist beliefs. In repeated references to Mexico's untapped natural assets she concluded that its "unmotivated, miserable" population had hindered industrial development. She described the Mexican propensities to gamble as a "moral weakness" and characterized the government as "tyrannical," claiming that its oppressive policies could only lead to anarchy; indeed, she noted that the nation could not advance under its own rule, because "she stands a feeble nation strong in her weaknesses! . . . And without the elements of self-government . . . there is no help for her, at least under Mexican rule." Comparing Mexico's tyranny with the freedom of the United States, she wrote: "It [Mexico] may force a temporary obedience, but it is a thread of brittle texture, that the slightest touch will snap asunder, whence as love, liberty, and respect, are, the strong cords that bind us together as a people, and as a nation."[16]

Others who had spent time traveling in Mexico endorsed the extension of the American political system in travelogues, a popular literary genre during the Mexican-American War. Charles Joseph Latrobe and Benjamin Moore Norman, who toured Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century, illustrated beliefs related to Manifest Destiny in their writings. These narratives seldom mentioned annexation, but they did express the attitude of Anglo-Saxon superiority inherent in the United States' expansionist mission. Because of their wide readership, writings such as these certainly influenced public opinion in favor of subjugation.[17]

Latrobe, an English citizen who had originally studied to be a minister, dedicated his life to traveling. Before exploring Mexico with American writer Washington Irving in 1834, he journeyed to the Swiss Alps and the United States. Recording his Latin American experiences in *The Rambler in Mexico*, he justified United States' control over Mexico. He referred to the country as "semi-barbarous" and its government as inadequate. At Tampico he noted a largely *mestizo* population--a mark of inferiority to Anglo-Saxons. Even the port's most destitute residents did not have the initiative to look for a job themselves, he observed, but only worked when sought out for employment. "Degraded ultra-Catholicism" did nothing, he asserted, to improve the Mexican character, and the populace had no interest in books, literature, or natural history, implying that they possessed no concern for education.[18]

Norman, born in 1809 at New York, owned a publishing company in New Orleans and traveled extensively in Europe and the West Indies, as well as in Mexico. His research based on travels in the Yucatan had brought him international acclaim. In *Rambles by Land or Water*, he made negative observations based on his Mexican travels during the 1840s. He stated that Mexicans did not display any interest in the fine arts and contended that this lack of enthusiasm was a sign of an inferior culture. Describing the government as unstable, he noted that leadership changed sporadically. The Mexican soldiers were "semi-civilized" and ruled by cruel leaders. Norman posited that one company of Anglo-Saxon soldiers could defeat an entire Mexican army. Like Latrobe, he noted the heterogeneity of Tampico's population and further described it as "beggarly-looking." He stated that the people were addicted to gambling, as well as being uneducated, lacking both morals and ambition. In fact, the Indians were an inferior class, Norman commented, "ignorant, indolent and unthrifty to the last degree."[19] Editorials provided another source of anti-Mexican bias. On December 9, 1847, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* printed a column that outlined plans for complete annexation. Swain declared Mexico unfit for self-government and argued that the United States could impose effective leadership to reform the Mexican population. He also portrayed the creole leaders as tyrants, the *mestizos* as an ignorant and disorderly group whom the military leaders exploited as the tools of revolution, and the Indians as submissive and "about as intelligent as their cattle." The *New York Herald* made derogatory remarks about Mexico, describing that nation as a "pompous and pretentious enemy." Another article described Mexico's inhabitants as ignorant and malicious. The New York *Morning News*, in addition, referred to Mexico as a "miserable little adversary."[20]

Newspapers, still maintaining their racist attitudes, divided along party lines in their discussions

of Manifest Destiny. While the Democrat press used racism to justify expansion, editors of Whig newspapers, such as The *Richmond Whig* and *Cincinnati Herald*, utilized it to argue against annexation. Extension of the United States' boundaries would bring many *mestizos* into the Union. The Whigs despised interbreeding and believed that "mongrels," whom they argued were incapable of living in a democracy, would create problems for the United States.[21]

Chase emerged as a strong adherent of Manifest Destiny when compared to the travel writers. Studying authors such as Latrobe and Norman in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writings and Transculturation*, linguist Mary Louise Pratt contended that female writers did not assess foreign countries with potential profit in mind, while male travel writers did. Chase proved an exception to Pratt's theory. She, like Norman and Latrobe, had described Mexico's unexploited resources and "lazy" work force. Having worked in the mercantile business with her brother and husband, she was compelled to view her surroundings with business acumen rather than romantic sentimentality.[22]

This strength of purpose was also apparent in comparison to newspaper editorials. The majority of Americans did not support the complete and forceful subjugation of Mexico, as evidenced by newspapers such as the *New York Morning News*. They also maintained that the United States could not successfully integrate Mexico into its government. Chase reflected the minority, paralleling the ideas of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, by supporting complete annexation and maintaining that Mexicans could become productive citizens through education. Unlike the other people analyzed, Chase had lived in Mexico for many years and did not partake in the interactive debate occurring during the war. Even so, her views closely mirrored those of extreme adherents of Manifest Destiny. Certainly her experience in Mexico, as well as her religious beliefs, had strengthened her convictions. Arguing that United States expansion was an inevitable part of God's plan for Anglo-Saxon domination, she argued that Mexico could not prevent its fate, as "it would appear as if an overruling providence had directed the steps of other citizens and subjects to throw it into the scale, with but little effort and scarce any opposition."[23]

ENDNOTES

1. Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 24, 27; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 208, 226-229.

2. "Chase, Ann," *Appleton's Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1874), XIV, 662-663; Ann Chase MSS, I, 2, Franklin and Ann Chase Collection (Dallas Historical Society, Dallas, Texas), hereafter cited as Chase Collection; John Crandall Glover, "The Heroine of Tampico," M.A. Thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1947, 13-16.

3. *Appleton's Annual*, XIV, 662-663; Ann Chase MSS, I, 2-3; VI, 754-770 ff, Chase Collection.

4. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 208, 236, 238-239; Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 111-112, 167.

5. Ann Chase MSS, Diary, June 17, 1846; VI, 755-759 ff, Chase Collection.

6. Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 56; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 12, 1847, December 9, 1847.

7. *New York Herald*, October 8, 14, 28, 1847; Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 35, 112.

[8] Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 35, 107; *New York Morning News*, November 15, 20, 1845; August 8, 1846.

[9] Robert W. Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 23; Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 24; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 229-230, 240, 243.

[10] Ann Chase MSS, I, 18; VI, 616, 761, 766-767, Chase Collection; Diary, June 26, 1846.

[11] Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 24-25, 123; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, November 12, 1847, December 9, 1847.

[12] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 243; Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 35; *New York Herald*, October 8, 1847, October 28, 1847.

[13] Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 24; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 208; Ann Chase MSS, Diary, June 26, 1846, Chase Collection.

[14] Ann Chase MSS, IV, 393; VI, 758-761 ff, Chase Collection.

[15] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 210; David J. Weber, "The Spanish Legacy in North America and the Historical Imagination," *The Western Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (February, 1992), 7; Johannsen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 290-291.

[16] Ann Chase MSS, I, 4, 10, 16, 18, 35; IV, 388; VI, 758, Chase Collection.

[17] Magnus Mörner, *European Travelogues as Sources for Latin American History from the Late Eighteenth Century Until 1870* (Stockholm, Sweden: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1981), 3-4; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writings and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 149-162 ff; Charles Joseph Latrobe, *The Rambler in Mexico* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), 24-26; Benjamin Moore Norman, *Rambles by Land or Water or Notes of Travel in Cuba and Mexico: Including a Canoe Voyage Up the River Panuco, and Researchers Among the Ruins of Tamaulipas, etc.* (New York: Paine and Burgess, 1845), 102-104; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 234.

[18] "Latrobe, Charles Joseph," *Dictionary of National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), XI, 623-624; Latrobe, *The Rambler in Mexico*, 13, 24-25, 27; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 208.

[19] "Norman, Benjamin Moore," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* (New York: James T. White & Company, 1922), XVIII, 190-191; Norman, *Rambles by Land or Water*, 102-104, 107.

[20] *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, December 9, 1847; *New York Herald*, October 5, 1847; January 22, 1848; *New York Morning News*, May 13, 1846.

[21] Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 238-239; Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission*, 153. Newspapers such as the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, cited throughout the text of this paper, represent the opinions of the Democrat press.

[22] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 148-152, 157-159; "Chase, Ann," XIV, 662-663, Chase Collection.

[23] Ann Chase MSS, VI, 758, Chase Collection.

"WE SHALL BEAT THEM WHEREVER WE MEET THEM": CIVIL WAR OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF MEXICO, 1846-1848

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Historians have consistently cited Ulysses S. Grant as among the most vociferous critics of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. Much, if not all, of their evidence is derived from Grant's own *Personal Memoirs*, a two-volume reminiscence written near the end of his life and published in 1885, one year after his death. In volume one, Grant outlined his bitter opposition to the war, which he considered

> one of the most unjust ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation. It was an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies, in not considering justice in their desire to acquire additional territory.[1]

He condemned the actions of General Zachary Taylor's Army of Observation as precipitating the conflict and made a critical connection between "Mr. Polk's War" and the Civil War of fifteen years hence. "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican War," declared Grant, adding that "nations, like individuals, are punished for their transgressions, [and] we got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expensive war of modern times."[2]

One should, however, scrutinize Grant's opinions carefully. Written almost forty years after the close of the war, the memoirs were the result of considerable reflection and hindsight after a personal career of international importance. As a former president and world celebrity, Grant doubtless considered the opinion of his reading public in asserting his points. The events of the Civil War and Reconstruction had convinced many Americans that the War with Mexico had been fought ostensibly for the benefit of Southern slaveholders. Moreover, it may be that his own thoughts matured over time, for his wartime letters do not support his subsequent stance as a critic of the Mexican-American War.

The few signs of disaffection with the war effort in his correspondence reflect not any moral convictions, but rather a feeling of overwhelming loneliness. In his letters, written primarily to his fiancée Julia Dent, Grant expressed a desperate desire to return home and be close to the woman he loved. Grant's own views about the actual combat, however, simply reflected prevailing opinion. In reality, he harbored pejorative views toward Mexicans, whom he considered "more like Indians [sic] in looks and habits than white men."[3] Moreover, he had no respect for the Mexicans' military capacity. After the initial American victories at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, Grant held his adversaries in complete contempt. His confident assertion that "we are bound to beat the Mexicans whenever and where ever we meet them" presents a stark contrast to the sharp condemnation of the American war effort as presented

in the memoirs.[4]

The most telling evidence that Grant's wartime opinion did not correspond to the high sentiments expressed in his memoirs is in the censoring of his own letters. There exist curious gaps in passages descriptive of the Mexican people, gaps which often result in altered meaning or even in incoherence. William S. McFeely, Grant's most recent biographer, asserts that Grant's own descendants performed this literary surgery in the twentieth century.[5] Whatever the reason and whoever was in fact responsible, these deletions question the credibility of Grant's later views of the war with Mexico.

The scholarly misinterpretation of U.S. Grant's attitude is symptomatic of historians' general disregard for the details of the Mexican War--a conflict usually relegated to the backwaters of the American experience. Due in part to its relatively short duration, its negative image in subsequent historiography, and perhaps most crucially, its eclipse by the Civil War, the conflict with Mexico has attracted little scholarly attention.

Concluding only thirteen years before the War between the States, the Mexican War is often regarded as nothing more than a proving ground for American officers who later performed heroically for both the North and South. Yet, these very officers regarded their adventures in Mexico as a salient period in their lives. The rambling discussion between Grant and Robert E. Lee at Appomattox before the latter's surrender focused not upon the relevancies of the day, but upon their shared experiences in Mexico over a decade earlier. This scene repeated itself numerous times throughout the conflict, as old friendships were often rekindled with the discussion of exploits south of the Rio Grande. Surely, these men did not consider the Mexican War a mere training mission.

Unfortunately, secondary works, while useful, present little of U.S. officers' opinions regarding the enemy, the country invaded, or the entire war effort. Nevertheless, some generalizations are made that infer officers' views. In his thorough military history of the war, *So Far From God*, John S.D. Eisenhower notes that Mexicans were viewed as a "less than 'civilized' people, undeserving of rights generally accorded to Europeans. It is not surprising, therefore, that rationalizing unjust acts against Mexico would become easy."[6] Otis Singletary's popular monograph, *The Mexican War*, also reached this conclusion, stating that Americans generally held the "careless contempt of the anglo-saxon for 'inferiors,'" a category that included the Mexican populace.[7]

Many Americans, officer and civilian alike, believed that Mexicans, as a "backward" people, should be schooled in civilization and democracy. George Winston Smith and Charles Judah, in their documentary history *Chronicles of the Gringos*, remark that

> many soldiers who had fought in Florida in the Seminole War seemed to regard the peoples of the lower Rio Grande Valley as comparable to the Seminoles. Moreover, the idea of liberation, however mistaken, was sincerely held by many.[8]

The concept of Manifest Destiny, which pervaded and defined the era, became all the more justifiable when applied to Mexico.

Furthermore, officers, though adhering to such pejorative views, cared little for moralizing or debating the virtues of the combatants. Motivated by the prospect of promotion, these young men viewed a shooting war as the opportunity of a lifetime, as a chance to earn a favorable reputation in their profession. For all they knew, this war might be their last hope for advancement. And recognition they did receive--of 523 West Point graduates who served in the conflict, 452 were awarded wartime brevets for gallantry under fire.[9] Without the professionalism of the Academy's graduates, the war, according to General Winfield Scott, might have lasted much longer, perhaps years, with many more defeats than victories in the early going.[10]

In military history, political opinion usually receives scant treatment; again, generalizations are made that fail to address the wide variation of sentiment toward the conflict by the participants. One author, for example, simply states that the war was unpopular among New England Whigs and abolitionists, who feared the expansion of slavery for political and moral reasons and who disliked

President James K. Polk and his unfortunate predecessor, John Tyler.[11]

This trend has continued until only recently. In 1992, James M. McCaffrey provided a work that bridged the existing gaps between military, political, and social history. His *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* does much more than recount the battlefield heroics and body counts. It includes an extensive treatment of American soldiers' views towards the war, the enemy, and the invaded territory south of the Rio Grande. Written in the tradition of James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender's *A Respectable Army*, McCaffrey's monograph successfully details the pro- and anti-war sentiment among the American soldiery, as well as the desire for glory and promotion which motivated many officers as effectively as any "just cause." Nonetheless, McCaffrey's study does not detail specific Civil war officers' experiences in the Mexican conflict, though this is admittedly not his goal.[12]

Biographies of individual officers suffer from many of the same deficiencies as most military histories. Biographers of the "great captains" of the Civil War--those army or corps commanders who attained lasting fame--concentrate upon military matters without regard for their subjects' political views and perceptions of Mexico. Indeed, the studies of James Longstreet, John Pope, and George Thomas fail to mention their subjects' perceptions of the Mexican War. Moreover, because these men attained their greatest fame during the Civil War, their careers in Mexico at mid-century receive minimal treatment. Only three biographies of "principal officers"--Freeman Cleaves' *Meade of Gettysburg*, Lenoir Chambers' *Stonewall Jackson*, and Douglas Southall Freeman's mammoth *R.E. Lee*--devote more than one chapter to these leaders' antebellum careers.[13]

If one is to achieve a better understanding of leading Civil War officers' views toward their Mexican War experiences, the study of secondary works will not suffice. These men kept diaries, wrote frequent, poignant and perceptive letters, and detailed their Mexican exploits in their memoirs. The scrutiny of these sources can lead to a richer understanding of this neglected period in American history, for they provide insight into the lives of these famous soldiers--men who regarded their times in Mexico as much more than merely preparation for a larger, more fierce conflict.

For the young men who had spent much of their professional lives in the peacetime service or in sundry campaigns against Indians throughout the frontiers, the prospect of a textbook, "stand-up" war was irresistible. Lieutenant Pierre Beauregard, locked into domestic service at the outbreak of hostilities, chafed at the opportunity to see a real fight. Eager to transfer to any unit that might see battle, his own desire for military laurels was all-consuming. Even before his voyage south to Tampico in December of 1846, he had decided that he would prefer to make the journey with the twin bars of a captain already upon his shoulder straps.[14]

The desire for honor and glory played upon even the most moderate of officers. U.S. Grant remarked to his fiancee Julia Dent that "I am perfectly rejoiced at the idea of going there myself for the reason that in the course of five or six months I expect to be promoted."[15] George Gordon Meade, though desirous of returning to his wife and initially lukewarm in support of the war, nonetheless saw the opportunity for personal gain. To his wife he stated that "Promotion, by brevet, as it is called, which is the reward of distinction and gallantry, is open to me; and I trust if I meet the enemy I may have the chance to come back a captain." Meade, however, emerged disappointed after his first two encounters with the enemy, at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. The thirty-year-old second lieutenant found himself praised by the army's commander, General Zachary Taylor, but still without the brevet he so coveted. After he reflected upon the matter for some time, he wrote his wife, whose own disappointment perhaps eclipsed his own, that "knowing how these things [promotions] are done, I was fully prepared for my not being noticed."[16] A belated brevet did come to Meade, but only as his term of service came to a close on a steamer destined for home.

Indeed, the slowness of actual promotion rankled most regular army officers serving south of the Rio Grande. Young George B. McClellan found that the volunteer establishment offered a much more rapid rate of advancement than did the regular service. In his diary he exclaimed "every confounded

voluntario ranked me--to be ranked and put aside for a soldier of yesterday, a miserable thing with buttons on it, that knows nothing whatever is indeed too hard a case." "I have pretty much made up my mind," he continued, "that if I cannot increase my **rank** in this war, I shall resign shortly after the close of it. I cannot stand the idea of being a Second Lieutenant all my life."[17]

The subtropical beauty of the Mexican countryside was almost universally praised by the young Americans. The warm climate and lush mountain valleys awed the "gringos" as they swept south into the heart of the Mexican republic. Many men found the land here far superior to their own homes in the States. Robert E. Lee claimed that "Jalapa is the most beautiful country I have seen in Mexico, and will compare with any I have seen elsewhere. I wish it was in the United States, and that I was located . . . in one of its rich, bright valleys." U.S. Grant echoed the praises made by his future adversary, calling Jalapa "the most beautiful place I ever saw in my life." He found Monterrey to be equally delightful, arguing, "If it was an American city it would be concidered [sic] the handsomest one in the Union."[18]

George Meade shared his comrades' love for the Mexican countryside. On the march toward Monterrey, he beheld the landscape near Cerralvo, and proclaimed it

> magnificent, the air balmy and pure, all the tropical fruits growing and we are just entering a level tableland, which leads to the mountains, twenty-five miles off. . . . Indeed, if I were single, I should be tempted to spend my days in this lovely climate.

He entertained similar thoughts of Saltillo and Tampico, admiring the latter's cosmopolitan qualities, considering it

> really quite delightful. There is a large foreign population of merchants, and in consequence the town has all such comforts as good restaurants, excellent shops, where everything can be purchased, and is in fact quite as much a place as New Orleans.[19]

The praise of Mexico's beauty shared by Lee, Grant, Meade, and others was not universal--even these men found certain areas of the invaded territory distasteful. The squalor in Victoria, the capital city of Tamaulipas province in northeastern Mexico, disgusted Edmund Kirby Smith. Meade found the area surrounding the army's first encampment at Corpus Christi particularly "comfortless," an opinion not shared by his future commander Grant, who proclaimed south Texas "beautiful and promising." Nevertheless, as American forces advanced steadily south, the admiration for the Mexican countryside increased. Indeed, they believed that they had entered a kind of paradise. Winfield Scott Hancock, in a moment of wonder and amazement, proclaimed to his twin brother: "Think of opening a fine, fresh, ripe watermelon, in the month of January."[20] For the young boys in blue, it was a novel sight indeed.

The Mexican people, with the notable exception of women, were viewed in almost universally negative terms by those American officers who later fought on the battlefields of the 1860s. Appalled by the poverty and want of the large portion of the Mexican population, these men displayed bitter contempt for what they believed to be an inferior race. This, in turn, justified the entire war effort for many; the American presence would introduce civilization and democracy to a depraved and destitute people.

Ambrose Powell Hill, future commander of the Army of Northern Virginia's famous "Light Division," spoke for most when he characterized the citizens of Puebla as "expert robbers and assassins." Meade concurred, asserting to his wife that their soldiers were "just like Indians, hiding in the bushes whenever a force comes after them, and seizing upon all single individuals they find on the road." Thomas J. Jackson, later to earn the sobriquet "Stonewall" for his heroism at First Manassas, flatly declared that "the term corruption expresses the state of this unfortunate people better than any other in the English language."[21]

With such opinions so pervasive among the American officer corps, the Mexican people were degraded to almost subhuman status. Edmund Kirby Smith was convinced that the Mexican citizenry was "apparently a great deal below and more ignorant than either [the Indian or Negro] race." George McClellan was equally harsh, noting in his diary that "They are certainly the laziest people in existence--

living in a rich and fertile country (the banks of the [Rio Grande] river at least) they are content to roll in the mud, eat their horrible beef and tortillas and dance all night at their fandangoes." Grant echoed his comrade's sentiments, stating that "no other people are blessed by nature as the inhabitants of this part [Puebla] of Mexico." He attributed their abject poverty to the ruling class, who "keep down the poor with a hardness of heart that is incredible."[22]

Jefferson Davis, West Point graduate, United States congressman, colonel of the Mississippi Rifles, and future president of the Confederate States of America, eloquently expressed views that were often only faintly understood by many of his comrades. For Davis, the war effort was part of a natural process of democratization for the autocratic Mexican republic. This of course was an underlying tenet of Manifest Destiny, the holy mission of the United States to spread liberty throughout the hemisphere. "The common desire of our countrymen to see the principle of self-government extended over this continent, and recognized as the policy of America," provided the moral justification to subdue a sovereign nation. This lust for power and wealth was characteristic of the slaveholding class, of whom Davis himself was a leading spokesman.[23] That this position allowed for the usurpation of a vast amount of Mexican land is a testimony to the contempt of many Americans for the Mexican people.

This prevailing view, however, was less rigorous--when applied to Mexican women. Most American soldiers, including the young officers, set aside their prejudices when meeting a señorita. The pursuit of females served to break the monotony of camp life and satisfied natural urgings. This double standard illustrates just how far Americans would go in their denunciation of the Mexican "race." To them, Mexican women were an exotic, pure people, unencumbered by the social restraints that so characterized their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. The young men who entered Mexico were delighted at the opportunity to indulge in the chase, and many were quite successful. Winfield Hancock enjoyed liaisons with many señoritas during his stay in Mexico. Apparently his dashing good looks, muscular frame, and blonde hair--considered an oddity by the darker peoples of Mexico--enthralled the ladies there. A.P. Hill enjoyed similar experiences, remarking that "The ladies of Mexico are beautiful, oh how beautiful. However, very few of them read Wayland's 'Moral Science.'" His concern for their virtue must not have been too overweening, however, for he boldly inquired of his father, "How would you relish a Mexican as a daughter-in-law? . . . 'Tis Sunday again, and the bells [sic] called me to my devotion."[24]

Even unlikely sorts found themselves captured by the Mexican ladies. Thomas J. Jackson, according to a biographer, soon "found himself within the sphere of feminine attractions." He attempted to learn Spanish and even tried his hand at dancing--activities quite inconsistent with the popular myth assigned to the mighty "Stonewall," the devout, almost fanatical Christian warrior whose intense religiosity matched his singular ferocity in battle. Jackson, however, proved to be unlucky in love; he came close to losing his heart to an unidentified señorita.[25]

George Meade, though happily married, nonetheless found time to indulge in innocent play. Accompanied by two friends, the young Meade tried to conceal his wedded status and embarked in the sort of pursuits popular with his comrades. He unabashedly described his adventures to his wife, to whom he had been married for five years. Meade apparently felt that such indiscreet behavior would not incur her wrath. Some weeks later, however, the overzealous lieutenant changed his tune, describing the women of Matamoros as "nothing but old hags, worse looking than Indians." Mrs. Meade remained unmollified. In a later note Meade stated that "You must not be concerned about the pretty girls, for I will frankly confess as yet I have seen but one sufficiently good looking to stop me, and she evinced no disposition to cultivate my acquaintance."[26] What response Mrs. Meade may have had to this tactless attempt at rationalization remains open to conjecture--her letters to her husband do not survive.

The prevailing views toward both the Mexican people and their style of government explain why the war was not debated in earnest by the American soldiery. The men who would choose their allegiance between North and South with such vehemence reflected little upon the righteousness of this "War of Manifest Destiny." Furthermore, the sense of duty inherent in all professional soldiers contributed to the

lack of anti-war discussion. Though the war was hotly debated at home, and especially so in New England, American soldiers rarely entertained opinions considered contrary to U.S. policy.

Even those who had tendered early reservations about the war changed their views after a few months' campaigning. George Meade, who wrote voluminous and insightful letters to his wife, the daughter of Whig congressman John Sergeant, consistently analyzed the American war effort and the motives of the Mexican government, as well as the international scene. His letters show an unusual level of political astuteness, and he did not hesitate in voicing his opinion to his wife and confidante.

Meade arrived at the Rio Grande with many misgivings; he was likely influenced by Whig compatriots among his friends and family. After some months, however, his outlook had changed. Meade became increasingly disenchanted with what he perceived as Mexican duplicity in its dealings with American minister John Slidell. "I must confess my sympathy with this unfortunate nation is much diminished by the foolish manner in which she has behaved towards us," he remarked. "Her refusal to receive our Minister renders active operations on our part more justifiable."[27]

The events that precipitated the actual American invasion, including the deaths of Colonel Trueman Cross and Lieutenant Theodoric Porter at the hands of Mexican forces, convinced Meade that coercion was warranted. His tone was one of unmitigated wrath when he proclaimed that, "if we once get to blows [,] we will make them repent their dastardly murders." For Meade, the conversion was complete, and he confidently guaranteed victory after the initial battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. "We shall beat them wherever we meet them, and in whatever numbers," he remarked in words that echo those of his comrade, U.S. Grant.[28]

Meade shared the disdain for President Polk's volunteer system that so offended his younger comrade George McClellan. Indeed, this distrust for the "voluntarios" was a common thread of discussion among the proud West Pointers. Yet, most of Meade's criticism was levied not upon Polk Democrats, but upon the activities of prominent members within his own Whig party. He found the rhetoric of Massachusetts senator Daniel Webster disastrous to the war effort by strengthening Mexican resolve. He cautioned against continued anti-war agitation in a letter to his wife, remarking

> Let us show a bold and united front, forget *party* for an instant; now that we are in the war, prosecute it with all possible vigor . . . blockade them in reality, and not nominally . . . threaten her from Saltillo and Vera Cruz with armies, each of twenty-five thousand men and you may rest assured that if she is going to make peace, she will do it then, and only then.[29]

Scholars have largely overlooked the views of young West Point officers toward their Mexican enemies, the Mexican countryside, and their feelings toward the entire war itself. This is natural, as many of these men achieved immortality not through their exploits south of the Rio Grande, but from the fratricidal bloodletting that claimed over six hundred thousand lives during the 1860s. This emphasis, however, does injustice to these officers' early careers, as well as to the crucial decade of the 1840s. Motivated largely by the prospect of military glory and promotion, these young men rushed into the Mexican conflict without the misgivings that many of their countrymen possessed. These officers embraced the prevalent Anglo-Saxon world view of the day, which relegated Mexicans to an inferior status, as a people to be conquered in the name of democratic institutions. They had no doubt that the United States would provide the necessary hand of democracy, regardless of the price in lives and sovereignty.

If we are to gain a full understanding of these men's lives, we must critically examine contemporary source material. Reliance upon later reminiscences and memoirs might only serve to cloud an already hazy picture, as a look at Grant's *Personal Memoirs* attests. The misgivings belatedly offered by Grant were notably absent from his wartime letters. Therefore, primary emphasis must lie with surviving correspondence or private diaries of those who participated in the events of the day. Otherwise, we will only perpetuate a basic misunderstanding of this time that was so central to these men's lives.

ENDNOTES

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[2] Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, 56.

[3] Quoted in John Y. Simon (ed.), *The Papers of U.S. Grant*, (2 vols., Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), I, 88.

[4] Simon, *Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, I, 105.

[5] William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: H. W. Norton & Co., 1981), 40.

[6] John S.D. Eisenhower, *So Far from God: The U.S. War with Mexico, 1846-1848* (New York: Random House, 1989), xix.

[7] Otis A. Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 22.

[8] George Winston Smith and Charles Judah (eds.), *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967), xvii.

[9] Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1988), 24.

[10] Grady McWhiney and Sue McWhiney (eds.), *To Mexico with Taylor and Scott, 1845-1847* (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Publishing Co., 1969), ix.

11. Singletary, *The Mexican War*, 23.

[12] James M. McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic* (Arlington Heights, Illinois: H. Davidson, 1982)

[13] Freeman Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960; Lenoir Chambers, *Stonewall Jackson* (New York: W: Morrow, 1959); Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee* (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935-36)

[14] T. Harry Williams, *P.G.T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 12-14.

[15] Simon (ed.), *Papers of U.S. Grant*, I, 48.

[16] George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade* (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), I, 64, 128.

[17] William S. Meyers (ed.), *The Mexican War Diary of George B. McClellan* (Princeton, N.J.: The Princeton University Press, 1917), 16.

[18] William J. Jones, *Life and Letters of Robert E. Lee, Soldier and Man* (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1906), 52; Simon (ed.), *Papers of U.S. Grant*, I, 132, 113.

[19] Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 131, 175.

[20] Joseph Howard Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith, C.S.A.* (Baton Rogue: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), 57-58; Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 37; Simon (ed.), *Papers of U.S. Grant*, I, 69; James M. McCaffrey, *Army of Manifest Destiny*, 67; David M. Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier's Life* (Bloomington, Ind.: The Indiana State University Press, 1988), 17-18.

[21] Quotes, in order, from, James I. Robertson, Jr., *General A.P. Hill: The Study of a Confederate Warrior* (New York: Random House, 1987), 16; Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 66; Lenoir Chambers, *Stonewall Jackson*, (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1959),I, 130.

[22] Parks, *General Edmund Kirby Smith*, 52; Myers (ed.), *Mexican War Diary of George B. McClellan*, 11-12; Simon (ed.), *Papers of U.S. Grant*, I, 143, 149.

[23] Quoted in Haskel M. Monroe, Jr. and James T. McIntosh, (eds.), *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971),III, 207-208.

[24] Jordan, *Winfield Scott Hancock*, 17-18; Hill quoted in Robertson, *General A.P. Hill*, 17.

[25] G.F.R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1961), 39; Chambers, *Stonewall Jackson*, 135-36.

[26] Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 47, 86, 90-91.

[27] Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 63.

[28] Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 85.

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ENCOUNTERING THE OTHER: AMERICAN SOLDIERS IN THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR, 1846-1848

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From a late twentieth-century point of view, the Mexican-American War was an expansionist attack on a poor, weak, and politically unstable nation. Yet for the many thousands of men who joined the ranks of the volunteers and answered the call of duty, as well as the thousands more who were turned away, the war was their patriotic obligation, a justifiable response to provocation by a foreign enemy. In this essay, I hope to demonstrate that American soldiers who fought in the Mexican-American War, despite being influenced by the racist rhetoric of the media of the day, developed much more diverse and complex images of Mexico and Mexicans based on their experiences in that country.

Most soldiers, at least those who left a written diary or journal, demonstrated a shift in attitude towards Mexico and Mexicans after actual contact; something that those at home and elites both in the U.S. and Mexico never experienced. Volunteers and common foot soldiers seemed to be more open-minded and more likely to identify with their Mexican counterparts, although some officers also demonstrated these traits. These ideas run somewhat contrary to the view many historians carry of American soldiers in this conflict. This is not to say that there were not terrible atrocities on both sides as well as plenty of racist rhetoric, just that one-on-one human encounters, with a demonized other, often change attitudes.

In *Race and Manifest Destiny*, Reginald Horsman argues that a belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority and Mexican inferiority drove Americans to conduct a racist crusade against Mexico. In his formation of the Anglo-Saxon argument, however, Horsman relies primarily on newspapers and elites for support. Certainly, the rhetoric of some of the leading politicians and statesmen of the day are full of Anglo-Saxon hubris and racist slander. Nevertheless, an examination of some soldiers' journals and diaries indicates that they carried various perspectives and attitudes toward Mexico and Mexicans. Although most are tinged with varying degrees of racism, none that I examined actually embraced Anglo-Saxonism as an ideology.

It was interaction with the people of Mexico that altered many soldiers' preconceptions and stereotypes. Some credited Mexican troops with great gallantry and bravery, but condemned the Mexican leadership and government. Others discovered warmth and cordiality in the Mexican people and beauty in the land. Some were strongly attracted to Mexican women and showed a certain amount of respect, deference and admiration. Others, of course, did not. Still others demonstrated compassion and pity for

the enemy.

Soldiers compared Mexico and Mexicans with America and Americans. Pvt. George C. Furber wrote: "We had been at Matamoros . . . the inhabitants of which we found so very different in appearance, dress, manners and customs of living, language, religion, and almost every other particular, from those of our own country, or any that the most of us had ever seen before."[1]

Certainly, the soldiers who fought the war reflected the culture and society of the United States, carried the prejudices of the age, were products of their time, and had imbibed the race-based theories of the age. It is safe to say that very few soldiers were disposed to look favorably upon Mexico and its people. The worst of all worlds was presented by poet James Russell Lowell, who condemned the war and its racist nature in the *Bigelow Papers*, as he offered this soldier's statement: "Afore I come away from hum I hed a strong persuasion the Mexicans worn't human beans,--an ourang outang nation, a sort o'folks a chap could kill an'never dream on't after. . . ."[2] Yet, there was more to the relationship between American soldiers and Mexico than this. The soldiers' journals I examined are full of contradictions. Some expressed varying degrees of prejudice and racism, yet all were tempered by their writers' experiences in Mexico itself.

Lieutenant John James Peck pitied the Mexican people and just prior (November 1, 1845) to the outbreak of hostilities was convinced that there would be no war: Mexicans, who had come to trade at Corpus Christi, "are a poor and dejected people. They are too weak, and too much divided by civil dissensions, to even think of making war with us." Nevertheless, he felt that "a little muss" with Mexico would be of great benefit to the army and the nation, as it would help heal national divisions and strife by bringing the country together in a common cause. He also believed that the United States could "gain this fine country" without too much trouble.[3] As it turned out, Peck fought in nearly every major battle of the war and found it more than "a little muss."

The first battle occurred at Palo Alto on May 8, 1846. Private George C. Furber claimed that the Mexicans' "intrepid bearing was the theme of universal admiration." After the Battle of Resaca de la Palma, on the following day, Lieutenant Peck writes, "after the excitement of battle had passed away our sympathies were aroused and I felt keenly all the horrors of war. . . . The Mexicans behaved well and stood fire finely." Furber was moved to comment that, "The courage with which the Mexicans fought in both actions was worthy of the days of chivalry and redeemed the reputation of the whole nation." The victors gathered up the enemy dead, along with their own, and buried them in a common cemetery. According to several accounts, they treated the dead and wounded on both sides equally, moving Furber to remark that "The humanity displayed by the officers and men toward the vanquished adds much to their renown, and sheds a bright ray of glory upon the victories of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma."[4]

After the battle of Matamoros, the defeated Mexican army left four hundred wounded Mexican soldiers in the city unattended. American surgeons cared for them and General Taylor gave several hundred dollars for their benefit.[5] "Keep an account of all that you disburse for them, and of what medicine they have from the army chest," said Taylor, "if the War Department grumble, I'll foot the bills."[6]

Reflecting on the aftermath of the battle of Monterrey, Lieutenant Peck exclaimed: "May this scene of blood be the last that shall blot the pages of American history. . . . My experience proved that the Mexican soldiers were as brave as our own, and only needed competent officers to lead them on to glory." A common observation among American soldiers is that the Mexican troops lacked proper leadership and "neither the cool judgement of Arista at Palo Alto or the wonderful genius of Santa Anna could ever counterbalance this great defect in their armies."[7] Just prior to the battle of Vera Cruz, U.S. General Winfield Scott vowed to minimize American casualties. This was accomplished by bombing the walled city continuously for three days and nights, beginning on March 22, 1847, in order to force an unconditional surrender. Lieutenant Peck's words echo others who reported on the battle: "The town

is crumbling to pieces under this iron rain. . . . The cries of the poor, of the women and children and wounded must be appalling. Lord have mercy on them."[8] Interestingly, he blamed the Mexican military for attempting to maintain its honor. Only seventeen Americans died in this event and General Scott was hailed for this "almost bloodless triumph" as "one of the most humane men in the world."[9]

Lieutenant Colonel D.C. Kitchen described the scene of the surrender of Vera Cruz as a "glorious and yet a sad scene." The Mexican defenders marched out "with colors streaming and presenting a grand sight." Upon their surrender "not a word was spoken--no cheer went up to show the gladness which animated every heart. Respect for a gallant fallen foe closed every lip . . . and the brave defenders of Vera Cruz took up the line of march for the interior."[10]

The last major battle of the war occurred at Huamantla, described by Lt. William D. Wilkens as "a beautiful town with a population of about 8,000." This battle occurred on October 9, 1847, after Mexico City itself had been captured. Santa Anna was defeated here and six days later resigned his command. The battle resulted in the complete rout of Mexican forces but in the process, Captain Samuel H. Walker was killed. As a result, General Joseph Lane ordered his troops to "avenge the death of the gallant Walker, to break open [every? MS torn] house and take all we could lay hands on. . . . And well and fearfully was his mandate obeyed. . . . Such a scene I never hope to see again. It gave me a lamentable view of human nature, stripped of all disguise and free from all restraint, and made [me] for the first time, ashamed of my country."[11]

Off the battlefield, United States military personnel continued to make comparisons between the lives they knew and what they experienced in Mexico. They found that many parts of Mexico were places of great natural beauty. Every soldier's account tries to bear witness to this fact but occasionally one would wax rhapsodic. Lieutenant Kitchen, in describing Jalapa said, "In these lands of perpetual radiance, where the children of nature, nourished by fruits unbent by labor and untouched by care, where the maiden, with rippling curls floating in the wind, with eyes now sparkling like the dew and now soft and dreamy as the gazelle's play, like water nymphs in the emerald pools. . . ."[12]

American soldiers also found beauty of another sort with corresponding contradictions: Many found Mexican women very beautiful and attractive. Lieutenant Peck was typical: "Ladies are dark, but surpass ours in the symmetry of form, smallness of their delicate hands, and their elegant rebozos [shawls] worn so gracefully.[13] Some admired Mexican women because of active hormones and loneliness, while others felt that Mexico might improve its breeding stock by intermarriage between American men and Mexican women. Then there was William D. Wilkens who reported that "the dark eyed Señoritas chat, sing[,] ride or promenade with us, as if we were true Sons of Arahueac [sic]... . One in particular . . . were it not for stronger and dearer ties at home, I might when I return introduce the Señorita Constancia Gonzales as 'Mrs. Wilkins Jr.'[!]"[14]

In the area of technology, Americans were convinced of their superiority, but there were surprises here as well. Private Furber claimed that Mexican farm implements were inferior. He described a Mexican plow saying that "the furrow that it makes is but a scratch in the ground" and that their carts were "extremely rude."[15] At the same time, several Americans, including Furber, were absolutely fascinated with the lariat or lasso and amazed at the "unfailing skill" that Mexican riders used to capture horses, soldiers, and other animals at high speed. "How this was done, we could not understand."[16] William H. Richardson called the lariat a "formidable weapon."[17] Pvt. Furber also noticed that dams, water wells, and bridges in Mexico were built to withstand the test of time. "These Mexicans are singular people . . . if they build a dam [it] is as good now as it was one hundred and eighteen years ago . . . if they fix a well it bids defiance to the destroying hand of time . . . . If they undertake a bridge, its lofty stone arches are not made in the light manner of those few seen in our country."[18]

The churches in Mexico were also built to last, as was the religion of the nation, Roman Catholicism. The United States was primarily a Protestant country and many soldiers saw fit to compare religions. Some were willing to live and let live, such as Private Tennery, who spoke of a Catholic

service with some respect and said that he was "struck with reverential awe and devotion . . . . The ministerial garments appeared absurd to us but we could not censure a form because it did not concur with our preconceived opinions of religion."[19] Lieutenant Kirkham liked the Catholic service so much that he remarked, "I believe I should become a strict Catholic should I live in a Catholic country for I do like an everyday religion."[20] Others, however, were not so kind and blamed the Catholic clergy for the country's problems as well as accusing the people of superstition for their belief in Catholicism. Many of the priests were men of privilege and this rankled Americans who retained the republican ideals of the Revolution. To William D. Wilkens, priests were the enemy: "Our most violent and deadly enemies in this Country, are the priesthood, and if the army had their will, we would blow up every church."[21]

An Irish-Catholic group, the San Patricios, who fought for Mexico, provide an example of some common soldiers' sympathy for Mexicans. Led by John Riley, the original group numbered forty-eight, but by 1847 they numbered more than two hundred. According to Robert Miller, author of *Shamrock and Sword*, even though religious differences may have been a factor, they were not all Irish or Catholic. But naming themselves after an Irish-Catholic saint gave them a symbol and sense of cohesion. This group fought its last battle at Churubusco on August 20, 1847. The Mexicans lost and the ranks of the San Patricios were devastated. Eighty were captured. Forty-two were tried, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged, pending the approval of General Scott. He decided that twenty-seven were to be hanged, and fourteen were to be stripped to the waist, receive fifty lashes, and be branded on the cheekbone with the letter D. John Riley was unconditionally pardoned due to a technicality involving his original enlistment.[22]

This was America's first war fought exclusively on foreign soil in an exotic land. For some, the war was a romantic adventure that inspired a great outpouring of literature, poetry, and art. However, it also brought out the worst possible characteristics of people: racism, greed, and xenophobia. Some of the soldiers were uncontrollable as they raped women and pillaged the Mexican countryside (in at least one case by order of the commanding general). After the destruction of the village of Puntiagudo (near Monterrey) Soldier Compton Smith remarked: "Such are the horrors of war: the innocent and friendly peasantry are oftenest made to suffer the penalties."[23]

In the end, President Polk was presented with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo by a man he had fired, Nicholas Trist, and had no choice but to accept it as anti-war fervor built. Americans wanted peace, but they did not want all of Mexico as a colony or as a state, since this would mean creating a large bloc of non-white voters. Even some of the generals had turned against the war: Zachary Taylor, for one, became the next president. The United States paid fifteen million dollars and assumed the claims of American citizens, one of the issues that provoked the war. In return, America was enriched and Mexico impoverished in so many ways. Besides the loss of territory and infrastructure, it lost about fifty thousand men. Prejudice against Mexico and Mexicans still existed and continued, yet in the minds of not a few soldiers, a different view remained.

Political elites and the well-to-do are first with rhetoric and last to pick up a gun. Yet it appears that in most cases they were quick to embrace Anglo-Saxonism and quicker yet to condemn Mexico and Mexicans. Volunteers and common soldiers were more apt to accept events at face value and appreciate their experiences more. Those American volunteers from both the North and the South, who had not succumbed to disease or battle wounds, returned home; little did they realize that peace would be short-lived and the dogs of war would soon be unleashed again, this time turning Americans against one another.

ENDNOTES

[1] George C. Furber, *Twelve Months Volunteer: or, Journal of A Private in the Tennessee Regiment of Cavalry, in the Campaign, in Mexico 1846-7* (Cincinnati: J.A. and U.P. James, 1848), 188.

[2] Blanche Wiesen Cook, "American Justification for Military Massacres from the Pequot War to Mylai," *Peace and Change*, III: 2-3 (Summer/Fall 1975), 8-9.

[3] John James Peck, *The Sign of the Eagle: A View of Mexico--1830-1865* (San Diego, Union-Tribune Pub. Co., 1970), 135.

[4] Furber, *Twelve Months Volunteer*, 27, 26, 38.

[5] Furbur, *Twelve Months Volunteer*, 27.

[6] Zachary Taylor, Text-fiche, Pamphlets in American History, MW 6.

[7] Zachary Taylor, 51.

[8] Zachary Taylor, 75.

[9] Cook, "American Justification for Military Massacres," 9.

[10] Lieutenant Colonel D.C. Kitchen, "Record of the Wyoming Artilerists," (Alvin Day printer, 1874), 15. Text-fiche, Pamphlets in American History, MW 10.

[11] Lt. William D. Wilkens, Puebla, to Ross Wilkens (Detroit) October 22, 1847, Burton Historical Collection, (Detroit Public Library Main Branch, Detroit, Michigan.) Hereafter abbreviated BHC.

[12] Kitchen, "Record of the Wyoming Artilerists."

[13] Peck, *Sign of the Eagle*, 29.

[14] William D. Wilkens (Cuernavaca), to Ross Wilkens, February 16, 1848, BHC.

[15] Furber, *Twelve Months Volunteer*, 219.

[16] Furbur, *Twelve Months Volunteer*, 15.

[17] George Winston Smith and Charles Judah (eds.), *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Combatants* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 137.

[18] Furber, *Twelve Months Volunteer*, 306.

[19] Thomas D. Tennery, *The Mexican War Diary of Thomas Tennery* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 28.

[20] Robert Ryal Miller (ed.), *The Mexican War Journal and Letters of Ralph W. Kirkham* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1991), 10.

[21] William D. Wilkens (Cuernavaca), to Ross Wilkens, April 22, 1848, BHC.

[22] Robert Ryal Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick's Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989).

[23] Compton Smith, *Chile Con Carne* (New York: Miller and Curtis, 1857), 315-316.

WAR CORRESPONDENTS ON THE RIO GRANDE: THE PRESS AND AMERICA'S FIRST FOREIGN WAR

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In 1981 a rare book dealer contacted the Amon Carter Museum of Fort Worth with information concerning some old photographs from the Mexican War. At that time the only photographic images known to have been taken in Mexico during this period, and to still survive, resided in the Beinecke Rare Book Room at Yale University. Aware of the Amon Carter's ongoing interest in Mexican War lithographs, the book seller notified it that these daguerreotypes were about to be offered for sale to a military museum. After secret negotiations worthy of some Cold-War thriller, the Amon Carter came into possession of thirty-eight daguerreotypes. Examination of these photos revealed not only portraits of recognizable military figures, but also rare scenes of Mexico, some of these actually variations of those housed at Yale. This tantalizing relationship between the daguerreotypes led to a further investigation of the daguerreotypist responsible for them. However, to this day the identity of this individual, who was probably the world's first war photographer, remains a mystery.

The first war correspondent, like the first war photographer, remains a somewhat shadowy figure. Although this person was probably male and from New Orleans, the evidence remains sketchy due to the exigencies of newspaper reporting in the 1840s. Until recently the history of the war correspondent has been neglected in part due to the impersonality of this journalistic enterprise. Seldom were by-lines used. Instead reporters were occasionally recognizable by their infrequent use of initials or clever pseudonyms. But more often than not, dispatches were published anonymously. While the Mexican War produced the first identifiable war correspondents, sketch artists had long recorded the glories and horrors of the battlefield. However, with technological advances in printmaking and the advent of photography in 1839, news took on a greater immediacy, especially with the clarity provided by the photographic image. Eyewitness reports ranged from on-the-spot coverage to reports gleaned second-hand days or weeks later. Sketches from field artists were later translated by lithographers far from the battlefield, sometimes losing accuracy in the process.[1]

War with Mexico was declared barely two years after the advent of the telegraph. In the words of Mexican War historian Robert W. Johanssen, "The war coincided with the era of the penny press, in an era when technology, marketing innovations, and a dramatic increase in literacy combined to produce a veritable print explosion."[2] By September of 1846 over 1200 miles of telegraph lines connected the great cities of America.[3] This compared to only 175 miles in England. However, the expense of

transmitting the news over immense distances was prohibitive for most papers. It quickly became apparent that the demand for national news stimulated by the Mexican War would continue unabated. The Mexican War showed the value of news to get circulation. With the growth of the penny press the newspaper field became an increasingly lucrative endeavor.

Newspapers relied on the horse express as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century. Late in 1847 the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, the New York *Herald*, and the Baltimore *Sun* banded together to share the costs of a pony express service from New Orleans. The *Sun* went as far as to publish an account of its Overland Pony Express, in which it claimed that the news was delivered by an unbroken chain of horsemen from New Orleans to Baltimore, when in reality horsemen were employed to cover only those stretches not traversed by rail or telegraphic service. This accommodation between the news services contributed ultimately to the establishment of the first Association Press service in May 1848.[4]

With the outbreak of hostilities in Mexico, New Orleans became the chief source of news concerning the War with Mexico. Even before the outbreak of the conflict, New Orleans had established itself as both the army's base of supplies and the chief news center. Prior to the advent of the war correspondent, newspapers were dependant on dispatches from field commandants and letters written by individual soldiers and officers. In order to insure swift and dependable service from New Orleans, antebellum newspapers, such as the Baltimore *Sun*, employed the full range of transportation and communication possibilities, including telegraph, railroads, steamboats, stagecoaches and "sixty blooded horses," which signified the number of horses used to forward the news.[5] News of the fighting came by government courier or news messengers, who often risked life and limb as they crossed bandit-infested wilderness and evaded Mexican guerrillas. Upon reaching Point Isabel on the Gulf of Mexico, messengers travelled by steamer to such southern ports as New Orleans and Mobile, before making their way by railroad to the nearest telegraph outpost. The telegraph revolutionized news reporting and introduced the modern war correspondent to a burgeoning literate public, hungering for news of America's first foreign war.

The newspapers of New Orleans were at the forefront of battle reportage during the birth of this most dangerous profession. These papers received much of the credit, since it was upon their reports that all other American newspapers chiefly relied for war news. Most accounts of the Mexican War were picked up from the various New Orleans newspapers, the *Picayune*, the *Delta*, the *Crescent City*, the *Tropic*, and the *Bee* being the most prominent. Eastern papers depended on the Crescent City, due to its strategic location on the Mississippi River and its proximity to Texas, to provide them with dispatches. Among the innovations in newspaper publication during this era was an increasing use of headlines. In a day when headlines were almost unknown, and when even the most cataclysmic news was set in five-or six-point type, ten-point headlines such as those heralding the war in the New Orleans *Jeffersonian* must have made the event seem of monumental importance to its readers.

Newspapermen were not only among the first to arrive in Mexico but also served early on as fighting men as well. The number of war reporters in the field was at least partly due to the fact that so many newspapermen had volunteered to fight the Mexican army. At least twenty New Orleans printers could be found within the ranks of a single company of volunteers.[6] Among them were three correspondents of the New Orleans *Delta*, including James Freaner, who became one of George Wilkins Kendall's strongest competitors for news gathering. The other *Delta* war correspondents were J.G.H. Tobin, whose vignettes were printed under "From Captain Tobin's Knapsack," and John H. Peoples, who used the pseudonym "Chaparral." The well-known southwestern humorist Thomas Bangs Thorpe, after purchasing a share of the New Orleans *Tropic*, likewise left to report south of the Rio Grande.[7]

The most celebrated correspondent of the Mexican War was George Wilkins Kendall.[8] Contrary to the status accorded him as being the first war correspondent, there were probably other representatives

of New Orleans' nine newspapers who could have claimed a similar distinction.[9] Born in Mount Vernon, New Hampshire, in 1809, Kendall gained experience first as a printer in Vermont and on Horace Greeley's *New-Yorker*, before relocating to New Orleans where he co-founded with Francis Lumsden the first cheap daily newspaper in the city, the *Picayune*, in 1837.

Soon after war broke out along the Rio Grande, Kendall attached himself to General Zachary Taylor's command. Lusting to see the battle front first-hand, he joined the Texas Rangers under Captain Ben McCulloch. His reputation grew as he covered most of the battles of Generals Taylor and Scott, taking a bullet in the leg in the process at Chapultepec. At the fall of Monterrey he even captured a Mexican flag which he sent home to his paper as a trophy. His reputation as an unofficial adviser to generals led a sarcastic President Polk after the battle of Buena Vista, in which Taylor was cut off from the rest of the army, to send word that "Old Rough and Ready" was relying too much on his "advisers." Kendall is credited with inventing Taylor's famous order "A little more grape, Captain Bragg." Several versions of the general's command have been uncovered, such as "Take that damned battery. . . . Give 'em Hell. . . . And now is the time to give them to little jesse." Historians have surmised that Kendall probably cleaned up the more colorful vernacular of Taylor for home consumption.

Kendall organized his own pony express in Mexico, which doubled as a courier service for official dispatches as well. Among the letters carried by these riders was one from a soldier which testified that "All plants here have thorns, all animals stings or horns and all men carry weapons." New Orleans journalists like Freaner and Kendall organized swift courier services for their papers, but more than one of their messengers were waylaid, found hanged by the neck with a grotesque note pinned to his clothing such as "Correo de los Yanquis" or return to sender.

Kendall witnessed such events as the capturing of the San Patricio Flag at the strategic battle of Churubusco, the carnage at Cerro Gordo, and many incidents of equal importance. At Churubusco, he was present for one of the most controversial episodes of the war when the seventy-two members of the captured San Patricio battalion were accused of desertion, a capital offense. Kendall was not the lone witness from the press corps. Editors from the *American Star*, which provided the American army with news services, reported the whipping and branding accorded those prisoners not sentenced to be executed. However, most of the American servicemen and many representatives of the press felt that the punishment was not unduly harsh due to the wartime circumstances. William Tobey, editor and publisher of the *North American* in Mexico City during its occupation, noted that "We can paint no man, however cursed by conscience and despised by all . . . so infamously degraded as the traitor. . . . There is no punishment too severe for the traitor; no infamy too blackening for his name."[10]

Kendall's methods as a war correspondent provided a model for others performing similar services. His system contrasted with the rudimentary reportage which preceded his modern methods. An ingenious system which he devised competed with government dispatches to get the news to an eager public. His fleet of couriers with the help of steamers became known as "Mr. Kendall's express." One report has Kendall chartering a steamer to deliver a dispatch from Vera Cruz to New Orleans at the cost of $5,000. The *Picayune*, under the aegis of Kendall, became a model of efficiency, with fast sloops actually carrying printers and their type cases to meet the slower steamers from Vera Cruz with the news, insuring that by the time the printers debarked at the Crescent City the news was already set in type and ready for press.

Kendall's partner, Frances Lumsden, later joined him in Mexico, becoming a captain in the army and raising his own Orleans regiment. However, he ended his recruiting drive when a mounted company from Georgia, which had equipped itself and was better funded, passed through New Orleans on the way to the border and elected Lumsden to helm their company.[11] Another representative of the *Picayune* was Christopher Mason Haile, a protegee of Kendall's and the first member of his elaborate staff. A graduate of West Point, he entered Scott's army as a first lieutenant during the siege of Vera Cruz. While on the staff of the *Picayune*, he developed a reputation for his whimsical pieces, signed "Pardon Jones."

One of Kendall's chief rivals was James L. Freaner, correspondent for the New Orleans *Delta*, who published his war dispatches under the pseudonym "Mustang." He acquired his sobriquet at the battle of Monterrey, where he killed an officer of the Lancers in hand-to-hand combat and seized his charger, hence the name which he adopted as his by-line in the fashion of the day. On two occasions he was chosen to relay official dispatches to Washington for General Scott in November 1847. After the cessation of hostilities in February 1848, Nicholas Trist delegated him to carry the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Washington.[12]

Although newspapers outside of the deep South tended not to send correspondents, there were some in evidence. While most Missouri papers reprinted accounts of the Mexican War from New Orleans papers, as did sister papers to the east, newspapers such as the Jefferson *Inquirer* were represented along the Rio Grande. From mid-1846 through the end of the war, Lucian J. Eastin, an officer among the Missouri volunteers as well as a staff member of the capital city *Inquirer*, sent back interesting, often laconic, copy: "During the day we encountered a ferocious enemy in the form of gnats . . . travelled 18 miles and reached the Little Arkansas; suffered much from want for water; frequently drank out of wagon ruts." Eastin's stories, published under the initial "E," ran the gamut from ordinary tales of camp life to brief reports of skirmishes with the enemy, including one which described "our loss, one killed, one mortally wounded, and seven so wounded as to recover without any loss of limbs."[13]

In September 1846 the New York *Herald* could claim five correspondents in Mexico, "boasting that the group had more talent than those of any other paper."[14] In May of 1847 the *Herald* announced its intention to describe the leading stories "as daguerreotype reports--written accounts with the accuracy and immediacy of a photographic view."[15] Other papers followed the *Herald's* lead, including the New York *Sun*, which published the dispatches of Jan McManus Storms, the only known female correspondent to cover the war from the front lines.[16] A well-known, somewhat iconoclastic letter-writer in Washington in the 1840s and 1850s, Storms had met President Polk and prominent members of his cabinet. According to one account, she arrived in Mexico City on a clandestine wartime peace mission and in the process became the only correspondent to report from behind the Mexican lines.[17] Under the pseudonyms "Montgomery" and "Cora Montgomery" she had well-established credentials by the time she filed her first battle report. Writing from the Mexican seaport of Vera Cruz on January 13, 1847, she prophesied that the city would resist the American invasion and in the process "prove themselves better soldiers than the regular army . . . for they are animated by a proud, inflexible Spanish resentment against their invaders." In another dispatch she noted that "The deplorable inefficiency of the navy has added at least a year to the . . . war." She continued to unleash a withering barrage of criticism at the ineptitude of the navy, writing: "U.S. Commodore David E. Conner could easily have taken the city seven months earlier, before the scurvy decimated his men." Despite her penchant for scathing invective, Storms was held in such good stead with American authorities that she was chosen to tackle the hazardous journey to Vera Cruz, some two hundred miles away, to inform General Scott of events taking place in Mexico City. Storms virtually stood alone among the correspondents by acknowledging Kearny's achievements in the West, which had been previously overlooked. She compared his tactics with the more bellicose proclivities of Taylor, noting that Kearny did not "come in garnished with dead and wounded" and that by using the "wise, explanatory, protecting system" of Kearny it would be possible to march on Mexico City without the loss of a single man. However, if Taylor followed in the truculent footsteps of Scott, "it will cost many lives, much treasure and still more time to conquer peace."[18]

Jane McManus Storms was one of the few correspondents to criticize American military efforts as well as the actions of her fellow war reporters. While many reporters were sent from desk duty to the field, others had made arrangements before enlisting with their hometown newspapers to send home dispatches. Editors as well as their underlings served in the army, with sixteen from Massachusetts alone. Virtually every company of volunteers counted at least one printer within their ranks. There was little to distinguish the newspaperman from the printer in this era, hence "Printer" became synonymous with

reporter during the War with Mexico. Even typesetters, experienced in most functions of the newspaper business, were viewed as potential war correspondents. A new development in newspaper reporting which occurred during this war was the camp newspaper, with nearly a score published by soldier-printers on small hand-presses to serve the various army corps. During the war an army newspaper could be found in virtually every camp. The most important of these was the *American Flag*, serving Scott's army. This was first published at Matamoros and was used by many papers as a chief source of news from the front. Among the other army papers were *The American Star* at Jalapa, *The Eagle* at Vera Cruz, and *The Picket Guard* at Saltillo. Storms criticized the biased journalism of these papers, noting that one of them was "too devoted to their army to be entirely just." Concerning this form of enterprise as a whole, she noted, "Truth always goes home from the seat of war dressed exclusively in robes of American manufacture."[19]

There were numerous correspondents and printers who founded their own newspapers in Mexico's occupied cities, rather than simply report the news back to their bases of operation in the States. These fledgling enterprises became known collectively as the "Anglo-Saxon press." Beginning with the Corpus Christi *Gazette*, they would eventually number twenty-five in fourteen cities. Most of them were of ephemeral nature, although some lasted until the end of the conflict. The first English-language newspaper to be published in Mexico City was the *American Star*, founded during the occupation of the Mexican capital by two enterprising journalists from New Orleans, John H. Peoples and John R. Barnard. Having already established the Vera Cruz *Eagle* and other papers, they set to work in Mexico City publishing proclamations and orders of American military commanders as well as other sundry news items. The real significance of these papers to the American public was that they offered more reliable news from releases coming by way of official and military channels.

There were several types of newspaper correspondents during the Mexican War. Besides the full-time correspondents, of which there were probably less than ten, all of whom represented New Orleans papers, were numerous free-lancers. These part-timers could be found in the army, traveling along the battle front, working as printers in Mexican towns, anywhere there was an army presence. In order to solidify their relationship with the army and its personnel, it was in their best interests to offer a sympathetic portrait of the American war effort. Jane McManus Storms stands out as a rarity, not just because of her gender but her critical assessments as well. Perhaps it was her gender that allowed her to be more critical.

An examination of Mexican War coverage reveals that newspapers largely made their own arrangements for dispatches from the war front. Dispatches, while telegraphed from the southern-most penetration of the telegraph, were filed by individual correspondents who took the most expedient route to the telegraph terminus--ship, mail, or pony express. Among the New Orleans corps of reporters Kendall remains the best known and probably most often quoted, partly due to his having the best sources among the military commanders. Haile, Freaner, and Peoples enjoyed similar good relations with American officialdom. Unlike her male counterparts, McManus was not privy to the same sources or the same forced male camaraderie, therefore her trenchant analysis becomes more compelling and reliable, since it was the result of her observation and hers alone.[20] Thanks to innovations in technology and the ingenuity and courage of the scores of correspondents who reported the Mexican-American War, the transmission of news became more rapid and reliable from the battle front to the home front, heralding the modern era of news gathering.

ENDNOTES

[1] Martha A. Sandweiss, Rick Stewart, and Ben W. Huseman, *Eyewitness to War: Prints and Daguerreotypes of the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum, 1989); Ron Tyler, *The Mexican War: A Lithographic Record* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973).

2. Robert W. Johanssen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas: The Mexican War in the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 16.

[3] Frank M. O'Brien, *The Story of the Sun, New York: 1833-1928* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1928), 113.

[4] Oliver Gramling, *AP, The Story of News* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978), 19-21.

[5] Gerald Johnson, Frank R. Kent, H.L. Mencken, and Hamilton Ownens, *The Sunpapers of Baltimore, 1837-1937* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1937), 74; J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County* (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881), 619.

[6] Johanssen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 17.

[7] See M. Thomas Inge, (ed.), *The Frontier Humorists* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1975), 105-117; Milton Rickels, *Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Humorist of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1962), 49-62.

[8] Fayette Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943; reprint edition 1970). This is the only full scale biography of the life and times of Kendall, based upon his unpublished manuscript of some one thousand pages. It should be noted, however, that Kendall wrote his recollections almost twenty years after the war, lending it a perspective that blunts its value as a contemporary source for the Mexican War.

[9] John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 40.

[10] Quoted in Robert Ryal Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: The Saint Patrick's Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 109.

[11] Copeland, *Kendall of the Picayune*, 155.

[12] F. Lauriston Bullard, *Famous War Correspondents* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1914), 362-363.

[13] Quoted in William H. Taft, *Missouri Newspapers* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1964), 44.

[14] Johanssen, *To the Halls of the Montezumas*, 18.

[15] Sandweiss et al., *Eyewitness to War*, 18.

[16] See Tom Reilly, "Jane McManus Storms: Letters from the Mexican War, 1846-1848," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXXXV (July 1981), 21-44.

[17] Reilly, "Jane McManus Storms," 23.

[18] Quoted in Reilly, "Jane McManus Storms," 23, 31.

[19] Quoted in Lota M. Spell, "The Anglo-Saxon Press in Mexico, 1846-1848," *American Historical Review*, XXXVIII (October, 1932).

[20] Reilly, "Jane McManus Storms," 43.

WOMEN AND THE MEXICAN WAR

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Last September I embarked on a project to identify women, Anglo and Hispanic, who were connected, in one way or another, to the Mexican War effort. Quite frankly, in the beginning I didn't know if such an undertaking was even viable, or if sources were available, or if any previous research had been done. But, now, after a few months I can say with certainty that the subject is more extensive than I imagined and that there is a very small, but growing, literature available. I have not set rigid deadlines for completion of this undertaking, but for now see the project as an open-ended search, where, when a logical stopping-point is reached, my material will either be published or be turned over to the Garrett Collection at U.T.-Arlington, so it can be used by others.

I have been able to find only one work which provides an overall survey of women and the war. That is Peggy Cashion's 1990 U.T. Arlington Thesis, straightforwardly titled "Women and the Mexican War, 1846-1848."[1] It is well-researched and written and includes an overview of women's connections to the war. The sources she draws upon include everything from diaries, letters, and family manuscripts, to books, journals and articles. Perhaps her thesis will be published someday.

U.S. WOMEN

While the term camp followers is pejorative, conjuring up images of assorted unsavory females, the truth is that camp followers did perform essential services and from ancient times had been an integral part of every field army.[2] The women who followed the troops in this war included, legitimate wives and sweethearts, cooks and nurses, seamstresses and laundresses, and painted-ladies. In most cases many of the women combined several of these roles, and many of them had children who traveled along as their mothers ministered to the troops. Many of the women were immigrants, mainly Irish, as were the enlisted men.

Camp followers were attached to both armies. Both groups, whatever their merits, made the lives of the ordinary soldiers a little more bearable, but, of course, in the case of the painted-ladies, a little more debauched, too. Army posts and camp grounds were wild and wooly places. It took strong, individualistic women to led such a life, one not for shrinking-violets. When the U.S. Army was camped at Corpus Christi, Major Ethan Alan Hitchcock observed that while there were only a handful of women there, there were also no ladies![3]

Because most camp followers came from the lowest classes and could neither read nor write,

there are no first-hand accounts of their activities and experiences. What we do know of them comes from newspapers, soldiers' journals, and the writings of officers' wives. The most famous of the U.S. camp followers was, of course, Sarah Borginnes, "The Great Western."

Everything about The Great Western was larger than life--including her reputation. At 6' 2 ", two hundred pounds, with flowing red hair, a booming voice, and a lusty, bawdy nature, she was a favorite of Zach Taylor's troops. Much admired for her bravery, stamina, and esprit de corp, she worked as a laundress, cook and nurse. Free and easy with her affections, she "changed husbands and partners freely and frequently."[4] During her lifetime she was known variously as Sarah Aue, Sarah Bourdette, Sarah Davis, Sarah Borginnes, and Sarah Bowman. Whatever her name, those who met her never forgot. One soldier remembered her as follows: "She was an immense woman, would whip most anybody in a rough and tumble fight. . . . You can imagine how tall she was [for] she could stand flatfooted and drop [her] little sugar plums right into [a soldier's] mouth. . . ."[5]

At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Sarah was thirty-four years of age and apparently had been attached to the army for nearly ten years. Though her history is mysterious, supposedly she had married at Jefferson Barracks and followed her first husband to Florida during the Seminole War. Whatever, by the time of the Mexican War she was a veteran camp follower. During the northern campaign she served U.S. troops with honor and great bravado at Corpus Christi, on the trek to south Texas, during the bombardment of Fort Brown (Fort Texas), and at Monterrey and Buena Vista, rightly earning the sobriquet "Heroine" of the army. After Buena Vista she held sway over various hotels and saloons in Mexico, El Paso, and Arizona.

Most camp followers had a much grimmer relationship with the army than did Sarah Borginnes. Helen Chapman tells several stories of women who accompanied Taylor's troops, including the story of a Mrs. Williams, who, while in Matamoros, earned money by sewing for Chapman. Chapman wrote about Mrs. Williams:

> She . . . has two children and came with the Army to Corpus Christi . . . in the confusion of baggage moving from Corpus Christi, she lost all her clothing. . . . She with many others listened . . . to the firing at Palo Alto whither her husband had gone leaving her behind at Point Isabel. The next morning she was sitting in her bed kissing her baby, when she heard the firing recommence at Resaca de la Palma. [Mrs. Williams says] four women went on with the army and were in the wagons during the battles. One of them whose husband was killed [at Resaca] sought out his body on the field, prepared it for the grave as decently as possible and watched by it through the night, her little boy sitting by her side. . . . A great number of women who have followed the Army have been left in utter destitution. Seventeen children were buried in one week at Point Isabel, one of who was a little child of . . . Mrs. Williams.[6]

Other women who followed their husbands include the middle-class women who accompanied the Mormon Battalion. Let me tell you the abbreviated story of just one of those women--Phoebe Draper--who was a member of a midwestern Mormon community and the mother of ten children. On July 16, 1846, five companies of men were mustered into service at Council Bluffs, Iowa. Each company was allowed four laundresses, one of whom was Phoebe. Her husband and one of her sons were members of her company. Accounts tell us that the twenty laundresses were accompanied by nearly eighty children. The day the force reached Santa Fe, Phoebe turned forty-nine. As the oldest and most experienced woman among the laundresses, she was one of only four women who continued with the Battalion on its march to California. After many adventures and hardships the ragged band reached its destination. Today there is a memorial plaque in San Diego to those four intrepid women who washed, cooked, and nursed their way across the southwestern United States, Phoebe Draper being one of them.[7]

Bridget Noonan Flynn was born in County Kerry, Ireland. As a young woman she immigrated to Michigan. When the Mexican War broke out she went along with her husband, Corporal Edward

Flynn, a member of Co. H, 2nd Infantry, under Colonel Bennett Riley. She served as a nurse throughout the campaign. Early in October, 1847, she gave birth to a baby boy in the Presidential Palace in Mexico City. When he was baptized on October 11, she gave her son the proud name of Edward Montezuma Flynn.[8]

Letitia Richardson, wife of Henry Richardson, a member of Duncan's Co. A, 2nd Artillery, accompanied her husband to war and cooked for the officers of that regiment. Shortly before the battle of Cerro Gordo, at Plan de Río, she and her husband buried one of their children. According to their descendants, they brought back from the war a little Mexican girl.[9]

Not all women who attached themselves to the army were camp followers. There is the amazing story of Elizabeth C. Smith, who dressed as a man and, using the alias "Bill Newcomb," enlisted in the Missouri Volunteers and served honorably for ten months under Col. William Gilpin, training and fighting Indians in New Mexico and Kansas. Before the force could be transferred to Mexico, Smith's sex was found out at Santa Fe, and she was summarily discharged from the service and sent back to Missouri, but apparently she served with enough viability and distinction that she was awarded a Mexican War veteran's land bounty, receiving her duly earned 160 acres and back pay to boot![10]

Maria Kenzies Hunter, a well-educated, rich heiress from a prominent Chicago family, traveled with General Wool's troops, her husband, Major David Hunter, being Wool's paymaster. Apparently, Maria Hunter was the only officer's wife who joined troops in the field. To Josiah Gregg, chronicler of Wool's march, her presence wasn't universally popular among the officers and men, but regardless, she proved to be "truly the heroine of [the] campaign, [being] the only respectable female in the army." He also states that she suffered "innumerable sacrifices, privations and dangers," all for the love of her husband.[11]

A personal friend of Zachary Taylor and his family, Maria had been a member of Baton Rouge and New Orleans society. Helen Chapman described her as a clothes-horse who dressed very elegantly and " . . . about 40 years of age . . . loves to talk . . . loves attention . . . has lived among Indians and extreme fashionables in great style and in log houses and tents. . . ." About her marriage, Chapman observed, "[Major Hunter] has the feminine, she the masculine qualities and she controls . . . however, his chains hang very lightly, for she never annoys . . . adapts herself perfectly . . . never frets . . . [and] makes him perfectly comfortable. . . ."[12]

There were several American women who were not involved directly in the field war, but who had close and important connections to the war. They included the following:

1) Helen Blair Chapman, wife of the U.S. Army Quartermaster at Brownsville. She left an invaluable set of letters which give a wonderfully colorful picture of the individuals and events that swirled around Brownsville between 1848 and 1852.[13]

2) Susan Shelby Magoffin, the wife of a Santa Fe trader, who spent fifteen months on the trail and who left an important journal which described New Mexico society, Col. Stephen Kearny's Army of the West, and her impressions upon meeting General Zachary Taylor.[14]

3) Finally, there was that attractive adventuress, Jane Cazneau, alias Cora Montgomery, former paramour of Aaron Burr, Texas land speculator and filibuster, newspaper correspondent, and, apparently, diplomatic spy, who wrote a book about her opinions on the relations between the U.S. and Mexico and her observations of life in and around Eagle Pass.[15]

MEXICAN WOMEN

Mexican women played a major role in the war, because it was they who, to quote Cashion, "fed, nursed, prostituted, danced, prayed with, married and buried" the soldiers of both armies.[16] In a war as brutal and grizzly as this one, it was the women who brought a touch of civilizing humanity to the relentless cruelty and violence. But the Mexican woman's lot was no easier than her Anglo counterpart's,

for they were, at all times, subject to rape and abuse by undisciplined troops from both armies, and they were subject to deadly revenge by their patriotic countrymen who might brand them "Yankeedos" for fraternizing with the enemy.

To most American soldiers Mexican women seemed incredibly exotic and seductive, since American men were not only used to fair-haired, pale-skinned females but also to women who were sexually remote, protected, as American women were, by rigid codes of Victorian formality and protocol and by modes of dress that smothered them in mounds of clothing, including high-necked collars, stays-corsets-bustles, face-hiding hats, hand-hiding gloves, leg-hiding black stockings, and feet-hiding high-topped shoes.

Not so Mexican women, who enthralled American soldiers with their languid casualness and their provocative dress. Soldiers' letters and journals were filled with descriptions of the native women--their long, dark, free-flowing hair; their large, expressive black eyes; their low-necked, off-shoulder blouses, which exposed arms and hands; and their short, feminine and colorful skirts, which swayed with the movement of their hips and which exposed legs, ankles, and feet.

Carl Nebel, a contemporary artist, was entranced by Mexican women. He stated, "Mexican women are sweet and affable, calm and modest, in their conversation. They are frank and natural, unaffected, in their treatment even of strangers."[17]

Lt. John Peck described the women of Saltillo as elegant, graceful and polite. "Their walk is natural and beautiful." They spend much time sitting on their balconies "conversing with their passing beaus and friends. These are flirtation windows . . . [the women] are fairies in wire cages. Oftentimes they strike the light guitar. In going to my meals I pass some beautiful creatures."[18]

Of the numerous American soldiers who deserted their posts during the war, many were drawn away not by fear of battle, but by the allure of amour with a lovely Latin señorita. Flirtations, sexual dalliances, and shenanigans of all kinds apparently occurred with some frequency at the fandangos, taverns, and bordellos that the men visited. Many of the soldiers had full-time mistresses, a practice not only confined to the lower ranks but also indulged in by officers. Army surgeon Morton, whose mistress "dressed in men's clothing, shouldered a musket and rode" with the army so as to stay close to her doctor, stayed in his tent and was frequently seen "living with him in the most public manner."[19]

The lusty Lt. Sam Chamberlain, whose sexual escapades were probably unrivaled and who years later named his daughters after his three favorite mistresses--Carmeleita, Tranceita, and Delorious--states that "all the Americans quartered in town, kept house with a good-looking señorita." He also mentions that Brigadier General Caleb Cushing, in charge of Massachusetts volunteers was so enamored "by one of the most ravishing beauties the world has seen since Helen of Troy" that he kept his troops waiting more than two hours while he spent time with her.[20]

Mexican soldiers, too, apparently fought the war with one eye glued on the fairer sex, for General Minon supposedly "lost" the battle of Buena Vista because he allowed himself to be seduced and preoccupied by a "Yankee mill girl" at Saltillo, preventing him from cutting-off American supply lines as he was supposed to do. Some accounts say it was a traitorous "Mexican Delilah" who deliberately seduced him.[21] Even Santa Anna himself is said to have traveled the campaign with carriages full of servants and ladies of favor.

Of course most Mexican women did not provide sexual favors but only had contact with troops to earn money by selling the soldiers vegetables, tortillas, and other goods, by doing the men's laundry, and performing other domestic chores. Elizabeth Salas in *Soldaderas in the Mexican Army*, states that "many Mexican women regarded their service as soldaderas for domestic or foreign troops as work rather than as evidence of disloyalty." Among Mexican women there was a long tradition of them aiding armies, for "soldiering has over many centuries been a traditional and commonplace life experience for thousands of Mexican women" because of the constant wars and revolutions from 1519 onward.[22]

Mexican women are recorded as acting as nurses and compassionately caring for the wounded

and sick of both armies. At the battle of Monterrey the following event was described by Lt. Edmund Bradford:

> Some two or three hundred yards from the fort, I saw a Mexican female carying water and food to the men of both armies . . . tending . . . [binding] wounds. . . . She went back for more food and water. As she was returning I heard the crack of one or two guns, and she, poor good creature fell . . . . She was dead.

The next day he and others went out on the battlefield and buried her, thus did María Josefa Zozaya become known as the "Maid of Monterrey."[23]

An anonymous contemporary article in *Harper's Monthly* tells of one American soldier losing his arm, being nursed by a Mexican girl, and then marrying her after avenging an attack upon her by Mexican patriots.[24] We do not know if the marriage was true or bogus.

Not only did Mexican women serve in the more traditional ways of nursing and cooking but also apparently the carrying and use of arms in battle was not unusual. Frances Calderón de la Barca noted that in Santa Anna's army, among the chusma, literally a mob of people that went with the army, there were "various masculine women with serapes . . . and large straw hats tied down with colored handkerchiefs, mounted on mules or horses. . . . Various Indian women trotted on foot in the rear, carry their husbands' boots and clothes."[25]

María de Jesús Dosamantes apparently served in General Ampudía's army with the rank of captain, wore a uniform with full regalia, and served bravely. And, in the town of Huamtla, Josefa Castelar supposedly manned a cannon and faced the American forces alone, until overwhelmed by superior firepower.[26]

Upon the occupation of the capital city, with its "majestic avenues, spacious plazas, glitering churches [and] palatial residences," American soldiers came in frequent contact with women from the *gente decente*, the upper classes and aristocracy. In 1848 women constituted 59% of the Capital's population.[27]

Lt. John Peck described time spent in Mexico City thusly, "[We are] still living in elegant style on the Alameda and spend sometime daily in gazing at the expensive carriages of the aristocracy as they roll by laden with beauty and wealth . . ." and, we "visit some, ride, walk a good deal, [and] attend the opera and theater. . . ." "Theatricals receive the largest share of attention. . . . The principal actress is Carete [who] has for years enchanted and enchained the beauty and fashion of Madrid, Havana and Mexico. . . . [She] is all the talk [another] actress declined playing for the Yankees, She feared the indignation of the Mexicans . . . (so) we have taken [Carete] into our hearts. She has a full house every night." "Last night we gave [her] a benefit . . . two thousand tickets were sold. Every officer . . . was there. . . . [she] gave us a neat little speech in English, written by Colonel Duncan for the occasion."[28]

ENDNOTES

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[4] Sandwich, *The Great Western*, jacket.

[5] A. Russell Buchanan, "George Washington Trahern: Texan Cowboy Soldier from Mier to Buena Vista," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, (July 1954), 60; Quoted in Sandwich, *The Great Western*, 4.

[6] Caleb Coker (ed.), *The News from Brownsville: Helen Chapman's Letters from the Texas Military Frontier, 1848-1852* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1992), 35.

[7] Letter to author from Mildred Heiden, December 28, 1993. See also Carl V. Larson, *Women of the Mormon Battalion* ([Salt Lake City?]: Mormon Battalion Auxiliary, n.d.).

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[9] Letters to author from Dorothy Nash Roberts, November 22, 1993; January 25, 1994.

[10] "Elizabeth C. Smith, Mexican War Soldier," *Missouri Historical Review*, 33, 408-411.

[11] Maurice Garland Fulton, (ed.), *Diary and Letters of Josiah Gregg* (2 Vols., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1944); Quoted in Paul Horgan, *Great River, The Rio Grande in North American History* (2 vols, New York: Rinehart & Co., 1954), II, 738, 782.

[12] Coker (ed.), *The News From Brownsville*, 26.

[13] See Coker (ed.), *The News From Brownsville*.

[14] Stella M. Drumm (ed.), *Down the Santa Fe Trail and into Mexico, The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982).

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[16] Cashion, "Women and the Mexican War," 120.

[17] Carl Nebel, quoted in James Copley, *The Sign of the Eagle, A View of Mexico-1830 to 1855* (San Diego: Union-Tribune Publishing Co., 1970), 28.

[18] Quoted in Copley, *The Sign of the Eagle*, 63.

[19] Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military, Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 32.

[20] Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 32. See also William H. Goetzmann, *Sam Chamberlain's Mexican War: The San Jacinto Museum of History Paintings* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1993), 166.

[21] Goetzmann, *Sam Chamberlain's Mexican War*, 13-14.

[22] Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 28, xi.

[23] Quoted in Salas, *Soldaderas...*, 31.

[24] "Memories of Mexico," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* (June-November, 1851), 461-466, Listed in "The Mexican War," *Special Bibliographic Series* 7, (Carlisle, Pennsylvania, United States Military History Institute, 1973), 54.

[25] Frances Erskine Calderón de La Barca, *Life in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 433-434.

[26] Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 31.

[27] Silvia Marina Arrom, *The Women of Mexico City, 1790-1857* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 7, 105.

[28] Quotes from Copley, *Sign of the Eagle*, 138, 142, 147.

THE IMMIGRANT SOLDIER IN THE REGULAR ARMY DURING THE MEXICAN WAR

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The people of the United States have ambiguous feelings concerning who serves in the enlisted ranks of the armed forces. We now closely regulate the number of women in uniform. We monitor the quality of recruits, usually measured by the proportion of high school graduates. Still, in the past, we have ordinarily paid little attention to the composition of the army, navy, marines, and air force in periods of peace. Historically our peacetime regular army has been an all-volunteer force, except for a number of years between the end of World War II and the onset of the Vietnam War. The attitude of most Americans has been, let those who want to join up do it. Even with little knowledge of the composition of the peacetime armed forces, we probably would assume that the all-volunteer armed forces are not an accurate reflection of society as a whole. We most likely assume that the enlisted soldier in 1994 is not like us.

We pay much more attention to who serves in the ranks of the armed forces in war than in peace. We assume that our fighting forces are more reflective of the composition of our society as a whole. We worry when one race or ethnic group is over-represented in our wartime armed forces. If a disproportionate share of one group fill the ranks, then they will certainly suffer commensurate battlefield casualties. Here we should note that the General Accounting Office has already come out with statistics on the ethnic composition of the force we deployed to the Persian Gulf during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. We know that Black Americans constituted 24.1 percent of these forces, though they represent only 12.1 percent of our nation's population. Almost one-third of enlisted personnel deployed by the army were Black Americans.[1] Since the Gulf War produced only a few dozen American combat casualties, the composition of the army never fully emerged as an issue. Nevertheless, a minor debate raged between those who argued that the all-volunteer armed forces offered opportunity to Black Americans and, on the other hand, those who felt that the United States was sending minority Americans to their deaths.

The over-presence of Black Americans in the ranks of our present-day army pales in comparison with the distorted representation of another distinctive social group in the regular army of the United States before the Civil War. The American army, particularly in the years after the Mexican-American War, was an army whose ranks were filled by immigrants. Historians have long recognized this

significant presence of foreign-born soldiers in the enlisted grades of the antebellum army. Here we should note that the army meticulously maintained registers of enlistment noting down in neat columns such information as the age, height, occupation, and birthplace of each new recruit or re-enlisting soldier.[2] We cannot always trust the honesty of the recruit in stating his birthplace, but foreign birth was in itself not a reason for barring a young man from enlisting, so the Irish- or German-born soldier had little reason to try to mislead the recruiting officer. Those men who lied about their birthplace certainly amounted to less than 5 percent of all recruits.[3]

Three decades ago one historian made a manual count through the more than nineteen thousand enlistments recorded between 1840 and 1845 to determine how many were of foreign birth. From his count, Edward J. Nichols estimated that 47 percent of "Zach Taylor's Little Army" that went to war with Mexico in 1846 were immigrants.[4] Here we should note that in 1850, four years later, the foreign-born constituted 12.4 percent of the white male population of the United States.[5] Assuming that a certain small proportion of immigrants misrepresented their birthplace when enlisting, we can probably assume that about half of the army was of foreign birth--or four times what we would expect if we assumed that the ranks of the armed forces accurately reflected the white male population.

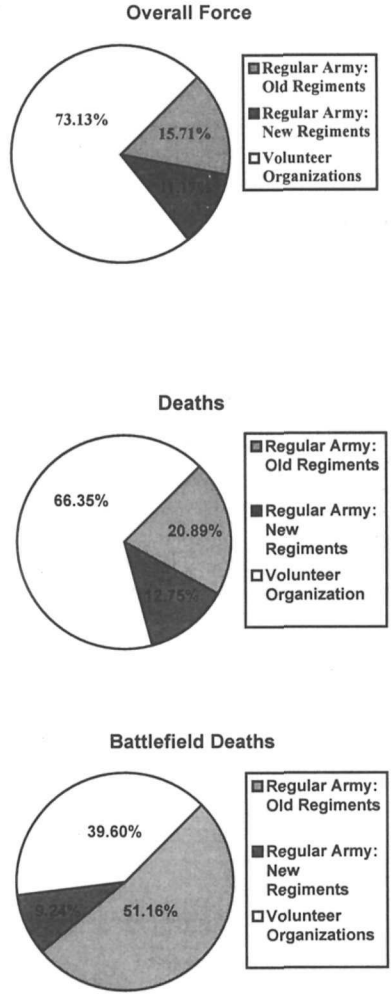
While native-born Americans allowed the enlisted grades of the peace time army to be filled with new arrivals to the nation, they retained the belief that in time of war the virtuous native-born citizenry would rise and take up arms to defend the interests of the nation. This was one of the principal tenets of the prevailing ideology of republicanism. Republicanism held that the military strength of the nation rested not in a professional army, that is, the regular army or the standing army. Instead republicanism saw the strength of the nation as residing in citizen soldiers, the part time soldiers who served in local or state volunteer military organizations. These were men who farmed, worked at trades, owned businesses, or worked as laborers, but in times of crisis they were available to bear arms for the defense of the nation. Republicanism distrusted standing armies, because they posed a potential threat to liberty. Republicanism distrusted the regular army enlisted soldier, regarding him as one who served only for the meager pay and not out of a sense of patriotism. Americans only reluctantly accepted the existence of a regular army and then they kept it small. On the eve of the Mexican-American War, our standing army consisted of less than ten thousand officers and enlisted men.[6]

Republicanism distrusted the immigrant, whose loyalty to his adopted country was questioned. Republicanism insured that the army's officer corps was filled almost exclusively by native-born Americans, but its advocates did little more than grumble about the large presence of the foreign-born in the ranks. Few native-born Americans were anxious to give up their personal liberty for a five-year enlistment term and serve under often tyrannical and abusive officers. Many army officers who would have preferred to have enlisted American-born soldiers recognized that the only way that the army could keep its ranks full was by accepting the many immigrants who offered to enlist for service. Some officers even recognized the superiority of the immigrant soldier who had fewer qualms about giving up his personal liberty.

The Mexican-American War offers a test case for the theories of republicanism with regards to the citizenry's response in time of war and the superior performance of the native-born soldier as compared with the foreign-born soldier. On the surface, the Mexican War seems to have confirmed republican ideas concerning citizen soldiers. In terms of manpower, regular army soldiers were out numbered by citizen soldiers in volunteer organizations by a ratio of nearly three to one. (See Chart 1.) Even a significant portion of the regular army consisted of soldiers who served under conditions that were not much different from those of volunteer organizations. This portion of the regular army consisted of ten "new regiments" created by an act of Congress early in 1847 to supplement the fifteen "old" regiments. (See Chart 2.)

The public perception was that the volunteer organizations that sent about seventy thousand men to fight in Mexico and the new regiments that added over ten thousand more men consisted principally

Chart 1
Overview of American Forces in the Mexican War



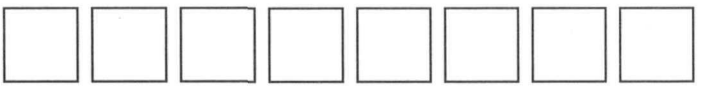
Source: *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States...from January 1839, to January 1855* (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856), 606.

Chart 2

Structure of the Army
1846-1848

Old Regiments (15+)

Infantry (8)



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Artillery (4)

1 2 3 4

Soldiers of the Old Regiments served five-year terms of service

Dragoons (2)

1 2

Added in 1846 (1+)

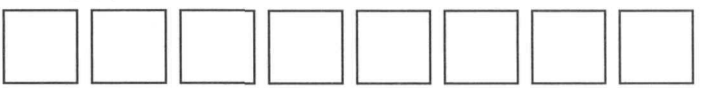
Mounted Rifles

Soldiers of the Rifles and Engineers enlisted for five years, but were discharged by years, but were discharged by Act of Congress shortly after the end of the war

Engineer Company

New Regiments (10)

Infantry (8)



9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

Dragoons

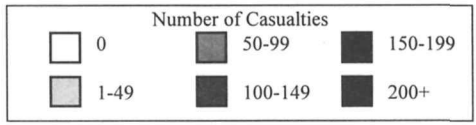
Voltigeurs

Soldiers of the New Regiments served for the duration of the war

Chart 3

Battlefield Casualties by Regiment and Rank (#)

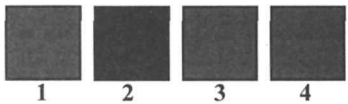
(Casualties include killed in action, died of wounds, and wounded)



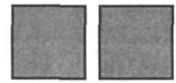
Old Regiments

Infantry

Artillery



Dragoons



Added in 1846 (1+)

Mounted Rifles

Engineer Company

New Regiments

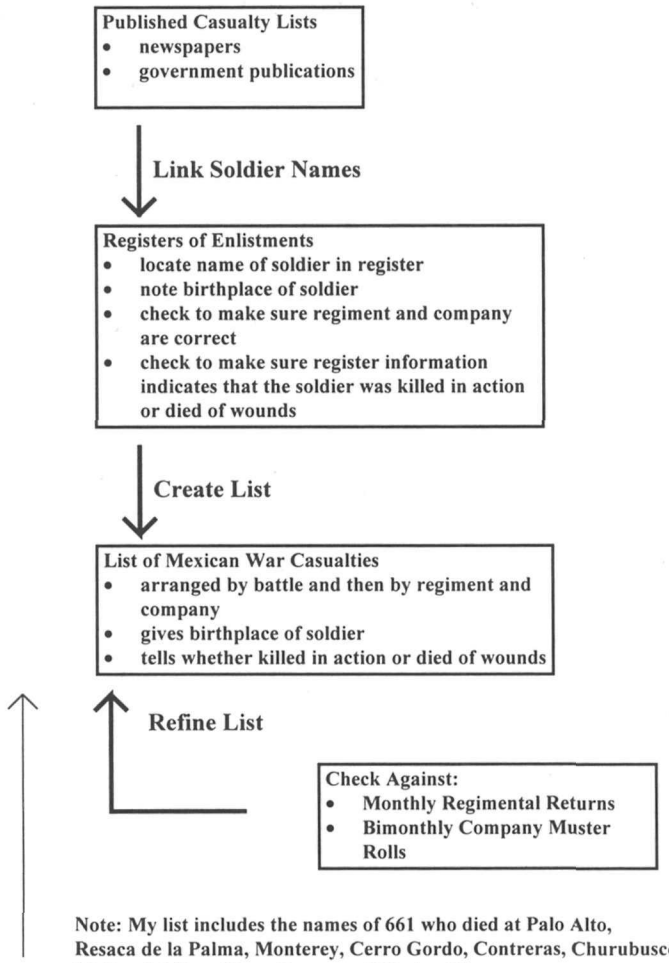
Infantry (8)

Dragoons

Voltigeurs

Chart 4

Methodology for Determining Battlefield Casualties and their Birthplaces



Note: My list includes the names of 661 who died at Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterey, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, and Mexico City.

Chart 5

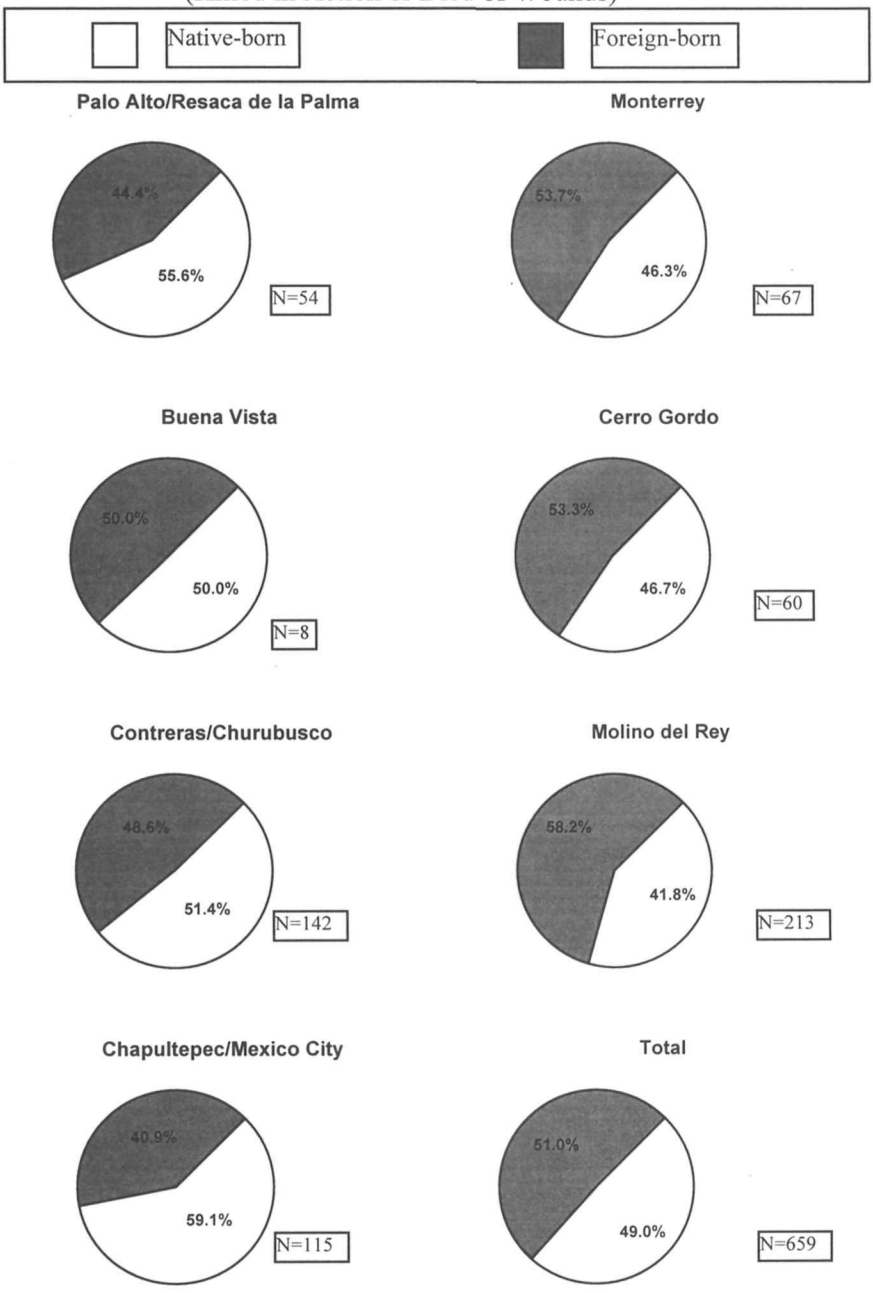
Birthplaces of Regular Army Soldiers Killed in Action or Died of Wounds

(including Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, Monterrey, Buena Vista, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey, Chapultepec, Mexico City)

Birthplace	Number	Percent
New England States	62	9.4
Middle Atlantic States	161	24.4
Slaves States	69	10.4
Other States	31	4.7
Total Native Born	323	48.9
Ireland	157	23.8
Germany	93	14.1
England	26	3.9
Canada	17	2.6
Scotland	17	2.6
Other	26	3.9
Total Foreign Born	336	50.8
Not Given	2	0.3
Total	661	100.0

Chart 6

Regular Army Enlisted Casualties By Battle and Place of Birth
(Killed in Action or Died of Wounds)



of native-born Americans. Furthermore, the public believed that two new organizations added to the "old regiments" in 1846--a regiment of Mounted Riflemen and a company of Miners, Sappers, and Pontoniers (the Engineer Company)--were almost exclusively native-born. In short, the public probably acknowledged that there was a significant presence of foreigners in the army's "old regiments," but these regiments represented less than one-sixth of our force during the Mexican-American War.

The statistical evidence for a strong native-born presence even in the regular army is found in published statistics of the army. This data, published in 1856, pointed out that 70 percent of those who joined the regular army--including both the "old" and "new" regiments--in 1847 were native-born. This indicates that American's native-born citizenry was not only willing to join volunteer organizations, but also the regular army.[7] My own exhaustive examination of the recruits for the Engineer Company, the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen, and Maine enlistees in the 9th Infantry Regiment further confirms public perceptions of an overwhelming native-born force.[8]

Published data regarding the battlefield deaths (killed in action or died of wounds) suffered by American forces in Mexico raises questions with regards to who carried the burden of the fighting in the war. While the "old regiments" of the regular army accounted for less than one sixth of the force sent to Mexico, they suffered just over one half of the battlefield deaths. (See Chart 1.) In other words, that portion of the American force that had the greatest concentration of immigrants was also the part that suffered the most casualties. The "old regiments" carried the main burden of the fighting in all of the principal engagements of the war except Buena Vista. If the foreign-born constituted 47 percent of the American regular force at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, their casualties would approximate this proportion. Assuming that the flood of native-born recruits altered the composition of the regular force, the later important engagements from Monterrey to Mexico City would show smaller and smaller proportions of immigrant casualties.

Published and unpublished records offer the opportunity to test these hypotheses. Casualty lists for all of the major battles were printed in the Congressional Serial Set or newspapers or both.[9] Most of the lists are arranged by unit affiliation and otherwise give only the soldier's name, his rank, and whether he was killed in action, died of wounds, or wounded. Sometimes the names on the lists were misspelled beyond recognition. Frequently a soldier listed as merely wounded later died of his wounds. Despite their imperfection, these lists provide a starting point for determining who was killed in action or died of wounds received in battle.

The second step is to link the names of those on the casualty lists with the names in the army's registers of enlistments where the birthplace of each recruit or re-enlisting soldier is recorded. (See Chart 5.) Army clerks regularly performed this task of linking names from bimonthly company master rolls in order to note down in the enlistments registers any changes in the status of a soldier. Thus, the entire career of a soldier is recorded on one long line in a register of enlistments: his enlistment, his assignment to a regiment and company, his attempts to desert, and his final exit from the army (whether that be by desertion, death, sentence of a general court martial, disability, or expiration of term of service). Indeed a researcher can easily scan the appropriate columns and spot those who were killed in action or died of wounds in any of the Mexican-American War's main engagements.

Linking names, army clerks actually compiled a list of the casualties in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, giving the soldier's name, rank, unit affiliation, age at enlistment, birthplace, occupation, and whether they were killed in action, died of wounds, or wounded in action.[10] Unfortunately army clerks did not prepare similarly detailed lists for the casualties in other engagements of the war. Though the army did not summarize the data on birthplaces for those casualties at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, a simple count reveals that 80 of the 152 casualties were native-born. The foreign-born accounted for 72, or 47.4 percent of the total, close to what might be predicted from Nichols's 47 percent estimate for "Zach Taylor's Little Army." Focusing just on the 54 men who were killed in action or died of wounds, immigrants accounted for 24, or 44.4 percent.

Reconstructing lists similar to the one for the Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma casualties for the other battles of the war is possible, linking the names on published casualty lists with names in the registers of enlistments. This linking reveals that the proportion of foreign-born who gave their lives for the United States increased rather than decreased as the war progressed. If native-born citizens flooded into the ranks, immigrants in the old and new regiments of the regular army still were present in large numbers wherever there was fighting. Indeed considering all of the major battles together, the foreign-born accounted for 50.8 percent of the casualties. (See Chart 7.)

A closer look at the regular army casualties in the principal engagements reveals that nearly one-quarter were Irish-born, while one in seven were of German birth. (See Chart 6.) Together the Irish and Germans constituted three-quarters of the foreign-born casualties.

The American people never realized the important part played by immigrants in the Mexican-American War. Certainly there were those who noted their contribution. After the release of the names of the casualties in the capture of Monterrey, the editor of the Albany *Evening Journal* wrote: "It is only necessary to read the names to see that two-thirds if not three-fourths, of all who shed their blood in that gallant action, were Irishmen."[11] In a private letter Major General Winfield Scott acknowledged that Irish, German, and other immigrant soldiers constituted "a very large proportion of the men under my command." He went on to add:

> I witnessed with admiration their zeal, fidelity, and valor in maintaining our flag in the face of every danger. Vieing with each other and our native-born soldiers in the same ranks, in patriotism, constancy and heroic daring, I was happy to call them brothers in the field, as I shall always be to salute them as countrymen at home.[12]

These testimonies to the credit of immigrant soldiers did not reach the American people in an age when nativism was on the rise.

American nativists had no difficulty in denigrating the role of the foreign-born in the Mexican-American conflict. Without a question, the foreign-born were much more prone to desert. The Mexicans actively encouraged Roman Catholics in the American army to desert, appealing to the common religious faith they shared with the Mexican people. If the vast majority of Irish and German Catholics remained faithful to their adopted nation, the American people were much more apt to read of the several dozen American soldiers who switched sides and fought against their former comrades. The San Patricio Brigade, a Mexican army unit consisting of Americans deserters who changed their allegiance, was a frequent topic in newspapers particularly after seventy were captured and fifty hanged. A clear majority of those in this deserter brigade were men of foreign birth, and the very name of the brigade suggests its Catholic and Irish elements. For American nativists, the San Patricio Brigade and its foreign-born turncoats confirmed the unworthiness of the immigrant to be an American and enjoy the benefits of citizenship.

The flood of returning war veterans in the months immediately following the war served to help shape the public's notion of an overwhelming native-born force that fought the Mexicans. The discharged units--the volunteer organizations together with the army's ten "new regiments"--were largely filled with American-born men. While the veterans of the regular army remained in the ranks to serve out their five year terms of enlistment, those who served just for the duration of the war were the ones who returned home en masse when memories of the war were fresh. Furthermore, Congress passed legislation discharging the soldiers of the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen and the Engineer Company of Miners, Sappers, and Pontoniers, the two units with the lowest proportion of foreign-born, though ironically the highest ranking noncommissioned officer in each of these units was an immigrant.[13] In the case of the Mounted Riflemen, the soldiers hired a lobbyist to convince Congress that they should be discharged. Seemingly the greatest reward that the nation had to offer to the enlisted soldier was an early discharge.

The departure of so many native-born Americans from the ranks of the army corresponded with the arrival of a crisis period for the peacetime military establishment. Desertion plagued the army as the

California goldrush attracted many otherwise faithful soldiers. The lure of civilian life was never greater to ill-paid soldiers, whether they were native- or foreign-born. A significant drop in re-enlistments resulted in an army that lacked an adequate supply of experienced noncommissioned officers and privates. The men most anxious to serve in this army in crisis were the impoverished immigrants who arrived in America without the means to support themselves. According to my 5 percent sample of recruits, the foreign-born accounted for at least two-thirds of all recruits in every year between 1849 and 1854. Though the high proportion fell slightly in the years immediately before the Civil War, probably 70 percent of the army's enlisted men at the outset of that conflict were immigrants. Of the 233 enlisted men at Fort Brown in 1860, two-thirds were of foreign birth according to the federal census schedules.

Wars have sometimes served as stepping stones for less powerful elements of American society. The Civil War and World War II did much to establish and at least begin to secure the rights of Black Americans. The Mexican-American War did not give a similar boost to immigrants, whose significant role in securing a victory for their adopted nation has never been fully recognized. Like Americans of the postwar period, historians have shown a good deal of interest in the few members of the San Patricio Brigade and little interest in the many Irish and German soldiers who gave their lives for the United States in Mexico. The unusual anecdote may be titillating, but the San Patricio soldiers were not representative of all foreign-born in the ranks. Only a systematic and holistic study of the army can secure the proper place of the immigrant soldier in the Mexican-American War.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. General Accounting Office, *Operation Desert Storm: Race and Gender Comparison of Deployed Forces with All Active Duty Forces*, (Washington: G.A.O., 1992), 16-18, 48-49.

2. Registers of Enlistments in the U.S. Army (National Archives Microfilm M233).

3. Recruits frequently misrepresented their names and ages, but much less often their birthplaces. Edgar Allan Poe, who enlisted in 1827, gave an alias and added four years to his age, but he accurately stated his birthplace as Boston, Massachusetts. Samuel Chamberlain, who served in the Mexican War and wrote *My Confession*, gave his correct name, but lied about his age and his birthplace, giving Boston, rather than Belknap County, New Hampshire. Alphonso Freeman, ancestor of Palo Alto Conference participant Dr. Linda Vance, gave his birthplace as Monroe, New York, though compelling evidence suggests that he was born in Ireland. Dr. Vance believed that he lied about his birthplace "not wanting to be 'a paddy.'"

4. Edward J. Nichols, *Zach Taylor's Little Army* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963), 33. This method of determining the composition of the Army is far from reliable because it assumes that native- and foreign-born soldiers were equally likely to complete their terms of service. In practice the average immigrant served a greater portion of his term of enlistment than the average American-born soldier.

5. J.D.B. DeBow, *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850* (Washington: Robert Armstrong), xxxviii. The foreign-born numbered 1,239,434 of 10,026,377 white males.

6. *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington: Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, 1975), 1142. The Army had 826 officers and 7,683 enlisted men in 1845.

[7] *Statistical Report on the Sickness and Mortality in the Army of the United States . . . from January 1839, to January 1855* (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1856), 628.

[8] Dale Richard Steinhauer, " 'Sogers,' Enlisted Men in the U.S. Army, 1815-1860" Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1992, 107-108.

[9] For example, Monterrey casualties were listed in *Niles' National Register*, 71 (21 November 1846), 183-184.

[10] Senate Report No. 4, (29th Congress, 2d session): Congressional Serial Set 494: 1-8.

[11] "The Killed and Wounded at Monterey," reprinted in New York *Daily Tribune* (18 November 1846).

[12] Major General Winfield Scott to W.E. Robinson, 29 May 1848, quoted in Charles Winslow Elliott, *Winfield Scott: The Soldier and the Man* (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 592.

[13] German-born John Green was sergeant major of the Mounted Rifles, while Irish-born David H. Hastings was the first sergeant of the Engineer Company. Both later secured commissions as regular army officers.

THE REGIMENT OF VOLTIGEURS, U.S.A.: A CASE STUDY OF THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

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The creation and organization of the Voltigeurs was made possible by two public laws passed by the Twenty-ninth Congress of the United States. The key laws were approved and enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives and were signed by President James Knox Polk on February 11 and March 3, 1847, prior to the Siege of Veracruz (or Vera Cruz) directed by Major General Winfield Scott in Mexico. The first law was printed in droll nineteenth-century American political dialect. Entitled "An Act to raise for a limited Time an additional military Force, and for other Purposes," it called for the creation of new regiments for exclusively wartime service, but primarily provided details about the enlisted men. The second law, "An Act making Provision for an additional Number of general Officers, and for other Purposes," provided more details about commissioned and non-commissioned officers and addressed other organizational matters.[1]

To spark enthusiasm for new enlistment and to curtail desertion of those already serving in the ranks, non-commissioned officers, musicians, privates, and surviving immediate relatives of men who served a minimum of twelve months or who were killed or discharged honorably prior to a year, were guaranteed "a certificate or warrant" for 160 acres of public land or an official "scrip" for $100 "bearing 6 per cent. interest." Earlier "six months volunteers" who had left for home were promised forty acres of land or $25 in bounty for their services. Thus, the noncommissioned officers and men who enlisted and served in the United States Army during the Mexican War had a tangible incentive and reward for doing so. This approach brought in large numbers of new recruits in 1847, far more than were actually needed to win the war.[2]

The act approved February 11, 1847, authorized ten new regular regiments (nine infantry and one dragoon) to serve for the duration of the war. The following stipulation enabled President Polk to create the Voltigeurs:

> **Provided**, that one or more of the regiments of infantry authorized to be raised by this section may, at the discretion of the President, be organized and equipped as voltigeurs, and as foot-riflemen, and be provided with a rocket and mountain howitzer battery.[3]

No explanation as to how voltigeurs and foot riflemen were supposed to be equipped was made within this act, nor was any rationale given for why such regiment(s) would be "provided with a rocket and mountain howitzer battery." The specific origin of this part of the bill has been difficult to trace. Its

general origin, aside from the attached special artillery, can be deduced from the designation "voltigeurs" and "foot-riflemen."

The French word "voltigeur" as a noun is defined in one twentieth-century French and English dictionary as a "performer on horseback, on the slack rope, on the flying trapeze" and as "light infantryman; rifleman." The "Flying Dutchman" of literary myth roughly translates as "le grand voltigeur hollandais."[4] An early twentieth-century military dictionary defines voltigeurs in specifically military terms: "Picked companies of irregular riflemen in French regiments. They are selected for courage, great activity, and small stature. It is their privilege to lead the attack."[5]

Voltigeurs were trained to deploy in loose skirmish formation. Unlike the bulk of line infantry, they were supposed to harass enemy battle formations with individually aimed fire. Most eighteenth and early-to-mid-nineteenth century line infantrymen were armed with smoothbore muskets that were best fired in massed volleys. Whereas the line infantry depended on volume of musket fire aimed in the general direction of enemy formations, voltigeurs armed with rifles tried to pick off individual targets. Because rifles were harder to load, they required more skill and steadiness than smoothbore muskets. Rifles, however, had an effective range considerably greater than smoothbore muskets. Whereas a typical musket was reliable only within about fifty yards of an enemy formation, rifles could hit targets between two and four hundred yards away. Voltigeurs were to fight in flexible skirmisher formations, more like trapeze artists than the typical automaton-like line infantry fighting in ranks two or three deep.[6]

The use of voltigeurs became widespread in the French Revolutionary and especially in the Napoleonic armies. Formed in companies, usually one per battalion, they were often detached in battle to deploy as skirmishers in advance of the main battle line. They were roughly equivalent to the one company of light infantry attached to each battalion in the British Army. Voltigeurs in particular (and skirmishers and light infantry in general) became more prominent in Napoleon's armies. They were increased from one company per nine-company battalion (circa 1805) to one company per six-company battalion (circa 1808).[7]

When Congress gave the President the option of creating Voltigeur regiments out of the nine new regular infantry regiments created for the Mexican War, it was clearly reflective of French influence in the United States Army. Officers in the Army apparently found willing sponsors of this section of the additional force bill in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The additional name of "Foot Riflemen" both distinguishes the type of unit envisioned from the Regiment of Mounted Riflemen created in 1846, and possibly reflects an affinity for British rifle regiments of the Napoleonic period. Perhaps the Voltigeurs and Foot Riflemen were envisioned as especially suited for campaigning in the rugged terrain of Mexico, much as French voltigeurs and British riflemen had been deployed for campaigning against each other in the Napoleonic campaigns in Spain, Portugal, and Southwest France.[8]

Furthermore, the Voltigeurs were considered something of an elite. In February, 1847, President Polk himself reportedly described the "Corps of Voltigeurs" as a unit "'of higher rank.'"[9] What is less clear is why the President opted to make only one of the new regular infantry regiments an elite light infantry unit. It may be that he did not wish to denigrate the rest of the infantry. Intellectuals in the French Army around the same time "complained . . . of the enervating effect of picked corps which made the mass of the army a mere residuum" or residue.[10]

The act approved March 3, 1847, authorized the formation of the ten additional regular regiments into brigades of three or more regiments and divisions of two or more brigades. Alternately, new regiments could be added to existing brigades and divisions. The President was authorized to appoint, with the "advice and consent of the Senate," up to three new brigadier generals and up to two new major generals. Officers assigned to the ten new regular regiments were to be discharged from their duties at the end of the war.[11] The military practices and situation resulting from this and the February 11 act were somewhat improvised. General Winfield Scott continued to prepare for his Veracruz-to-Mexico City campaign, of necessity relying on assurances from government officials that these reinforcements would

join him during the campaign. The War Department stepped up its issuing of orders, attempting to coordinate troop movements within and outside the United States in a coherent manner.

On March 4, 1847, Army Adjutant General Roger Jones ordered official commencement of recruiting and organizing of the ten new regular regiments. Each regiment was to recruit for ten complete companies with a proscribed minimum of eighty men per company. The Regiment of Voltigeurs were to enlist men and form companies in six states: three companies in Maryland; two in Pennsylvania and two in Virginia; and one respectively in Mississippi, Georgia and Kentucky. The regimental headquarters, which included recently appointed commanding officer Colonel Thomas Patrick Andrews, was situated in the city of Washington. The first seven companies were to concentrate at Fort Monroe, Virginia, prior to embarkation for Mexico. The remaining three were directed to "proceed direct to Mexico, under their respective captains, as soon as organized."[12]

Colonel Andrews had sent out a circular to his new company commanders on March 3 ordering them to instruct their recruits in squad and company drill. "Let the enlisting and drilling go on together," he directed, "and both with all possible energy. . . . We are compelled to take the field immediately that the Corps is filled up, and unless the drilling keeps pace with the recruiting, we shall go under every disadvantage."[13] The companies were to drill according to the "Scott system," which for the infantry officers entailed consultation of the three-volume *Infantry Tactics, or, Rules for the Exercise and Maneuvers of the United States' Infantry*, written in 1835 by Winfield Scott and loosely based on French infantry drill manuals.[14]

On February 27, 1847, *Niles' National Register* listed the names and ranks of officers appointed by President Polk with the advice and consent of the Senate, revealing that the largest contingent came from Pennsylvania. Colonel Andrews of the District of Columbia, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Johnston of Virginia, and Captain Charles J. Biddle of Pennsylvania were just a few of the ambitious men who received appointments. Andrews emigrated to the United States from Ireland sometime between his 1794 birthdate and the War of 1812. In 1813, he volunteered as a naval officer's aide and was commissioned in 1822 as a paymaster in the United States Army. He served in this staff capacity until his appointment to command the Voltigeurs.[15] It is difficult to surmise why he was chosen to lead a specialized light infantry unit or even a combat unit. He may have been chosen for his Irish ethnicity as an inspiration for foreign-born recruits. At fifty-three, he was also older and had served the Army competently for twenty-five years.

Forty-year old Joseph E. Johnston, second-in-command of the Voltigeurs, graduated from West Point in 1829. His military experiences before the Mexican War were varied, including field and staff appointments and service in the Black Hawk War expedition of 1832 and in the Second Seminole War (1837-1842). He was commissioned a first lieutenant (brevet captain) in the newly created elite Topographical Engineers in 1838. In 1845 he married Lydia McLane, daughter of Louis McLane, former Senator from Delaware, Secretary of the Treasury under Andrew Jackson, first president of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and Minister to England. Johnston served with distinction in the Topographical Engineers at the Siege of Veracruz, and on April 12, 1847, he was wounded reconnoitering the Mexican lines prior to the Battle of Cerro Gordo.[16] Given his professional education and experience, Johnston was actually more suited for command of the regiment than Colonel Andrews.

Under a provision (section three) of the February 11 act, each regiment, old and new, was authorized to have two majors, rather than the traditional one, for additional help with command and control of new recruits. George Alfred Caldwell and George H. Talcott became majors of the Voltigeurs. Caldwell, born in Columbia, Kentucky, in 1814, became a lawyer and served for the 1839-1840 term in the Kentucky House of Representatives. He had subsequently been elected as a Democrat to the House of Representatives in the Twenty-eighth Congress from 1843 to 1845 and was thirty-two years old at the time of his appointment to his majority. Talcott, a native New Yorker, overlapped Joseph E. Johnston at West Point, graduating in 1831 and serving in the artillery and ordnance. He was about thirty-eight

years old at the time of his appointment to majority.[17]

The ten original company commanders included Captain James Jay Archer of Stafford or Bel Air, Maryland, and Captain Charles John Biddle of Philadelphia. Archer, a Princeton graduate and lawyer, was twenty-nine years old when appointed to the Voltigeurs. Captain Biddle, son of former Bank of the United States President Nicholas Biddle, was just under twenty-eight years old when commissioned. Like Archer, he was a Princeton graduate lawyer.[18]

Biddle assertively pursued his appointment as captain in the Army even before the creation of the Voltigeurs. More than a week before the first ten-regiment act was approved, he wrote directly to President Polk, who learned from Biddle's friends in Congress that the aspiring young lawyer was, like the President, a Democrat. Not only had Biddle raised the informal minimum of sixty-four enlistees for an infantry company, he had also found two men to serve as his lieutenants who were "both gentlemen of mature judgment."[19] Furthermore, he traveled to the Capitol to lobby personally for a commission. A friend wrote to him from Washington after he returned to Philadelphia regarding the scramble for new commissions: "Since you left here, there has been a desperate growl among all the hungry applicants and some of them have been impudent enough to question the propriety of your appointment," which by then had been promised.[20]

On To Mexico City

The United States Army under Major General Winfield Scott successfully captured Veracruz on March 29, 1847. It moved inland and defeated an army under the primary and ubiquitous Mexican commander General Antonio López de Santa Anna at Cerro Gordo on April 18. The American Army captured the town of Jalapa the same day and moved on to occupy the city of Puebla--subsequent base of operations in the interior--on May 28, 1847. Meanwhile, officers of the Voltigeurs prepared to rendezvous in the field and continued to receive rapidly changing news and orders.

Captain Charles J. Biddle's company of Voltigeurs was without weapons and was destined to remain so until its arrival in Mexico. This was probably true of the other companies also. Captain Biddle was informed at Fort Mifflin, Pennsylvania, that his men would be supplied with percussion rifles and accoutrements at Fort Monroe. Late in March he was directed by Colonel Andrews to ready his company for transport by rail to Baltimore, for embarkation on transports at Fort McHenry, and for assembly at Fort Monroe. This plan was changed to assembly at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and movement by land and river transport to New Orleans, Louisiana, where equipment would be distributed. However, even when most of the Voltigeurs had assembled in Mexico at Veracruz and prepared to march inland to join Scott's army at Puebla, their rifles had still not been distributed. Biddle complained in a letter to a friend that ". . . my men are certainly ignorant of the use of any weapons. They are to be armed with the rifle which particularly requires long exercise as it is necessary for the men to be marksmen to be at all effective as light troops." He was furthermore disgusted that he and many of his men were sick. "We live in a degenerate age," he continued to his friend, "and men can stand nothing."[21]

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Johnston, recuperating from wounds suffered at Cerro Gordo, quartered in Jalapa with his nephew, First Lieutenant John Preston Johnston of the First Artillery. On June 3, the younger Johnston wrote to his sister Eliza in Virginia about their "Uncle Jo," who was able to walk "without his crutch being only troubled by the **stiffness** of his right arm and leg." Further, he wrote, the lieutenant colonel was beginning "to be impatient" for the arrival of his regiment.[22]

Brigadier General George Cadwalader, one of the newly appointed brigadiers, soon marched into Jalapa with his brigade of new regulars, including the Voltigeur Regiment. Johnston assumed his role as second-in-command of the Voltigeurs, and the column proceeded toward Scott's main force in Puebla. As the column was harassed by Mexican irregulars, it proceeded carefully. The threat of Mexican guerrillas probably helped prevent straggling: undoubtedly few of the invaders wished to risk capture or

death at the enemy's hands.[23]

Major General Gideon Pillow, newly appointed as division commander over Cadwalader's brigade, joined Cadwalader at Perote with more reinforcements by the end of June. Pillow ordered the whole column to head out for Puebla, placing a detachment of dragoons, the Voltigeurs, and the Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery in the vanguard. In this order of march they reached Puebla on July 8, 1847.[24]

For the next month, the Voltigeurs drilled and prepared for combat against the Mexican regular forces defending the approaches to Mexico City. Meanwhile, General Scott reorganized his army to incorporate the new regiments arriving from Veracruz. By August 7, Scott's forces in Puebla amounted to less than eleven thousand combat-ready effectives: over three thousand more were sick or otherwise incapacitated.[25]

The Voltigeurs were unique in Winfield Scott's army, because they had their own specially equipped attached battery. They were one of probably three units armed with rifles rather than smoothbore muskets. An Ordnance Department statement listing equipment "issued to troops ordered to Mexico" between June 30, 1846, and June 30, 1847, includes 3,722 rifles. Since less than 1,200 men served in the Voltigeurs, it is likely that a rifle was issued to each enlisted man serving in the regiment. The actual type of rifle issued was probably the Model 1841 United States "Windsor" or "Jager" rifle. In addition to having rifles and their own battery, the Voltigeurs were supposed to have been issued their own unique gray cloth rather than the standard infantry colors of light or dark blue. However, as late as January 8, 1848, the gray uniforms had not been received in the field; instead, the men wore "Infantry clothing, none else being on hand."[26]

The Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery was officially "assigned to duty" with the Voltigeurs on July 17, 1847. The Battery (or Company, as it was sometimes called) fielded four to six Model 1835 bronze smoothbore twelve-pounder howitzers with effective range of about one thousand yards. The gun carriages were light and relatively easy to disassemble and pack on mules for added mobility in difficult terrain. The rocket component consisted of a stockpile of Hale's rockets and specially manufactured launchers. The rockets had been designed by William Hale, an American or English inventor (sources conflict), and were supposedly effective to 2,200 yards; the Army acquired rights of use in December, 1846, and decided to try them out in the field. Second Lieutenant Jesse Reno commanded them as a section of the Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery. The Ordnance Department sent 1,328 rockets to the Army in Mexico, and the battery fired at least 130 of them while engaged against the Mexicans.[27]

Even before its attachment to the Voltigeurs, the Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery had proven its usefulness, flexibility, and compatability with riflemen. Rockets and howitzers had been used against Mexican cavalry during the Veracruz landings and at Cerro Gordo, in conjunction with a detachment of the Mounted Rifle Regiment, against Mexican infantry and artillery. To facilitate the new arrangement, some of the officers from the Voltigeurs were instructed in the handling and firing of Hale's rockets. On April 6, 1847, Colonel Timothy P. Andrews described his experiences firing them in a letter to Captain Charles J. Biddle. Mounted on a "stand," the rockets were to be aimed low and lit with a quick match. "I found a **low** elevation very necessary for all distances under a longe range," Andrews wrote, describing the stand as "a good one, as it is strong, & can be elevated or depressed at pleasure, but I think it is too heavy. . . ."[28] Through its association with the Voltigeurs the battery could be employed in separate sections mixing rockets and howitzers as needed and in numerous combinations as desired by the officers.

The Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery and the Voltigeurs were frequently drilled during their month at Puebla in preparation for the final advance on Mexico City. Drilling each morning lasted from seven to ten o'clock, and again in the afternoon from three to five o'clock. Somewhat better prepared for combat, the regiment marched out of Puebla on August 7, forming the rearguard of Pillow's Division.

At Contreras/Padierna on August 19, 1847, Mexican General Gabriel Valencia's artillery opened up on the van of the American column advancing near the southwest corner of the rugged Pedregal. The Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery was ordered up together with Captain John B. Magruder's Battery to engage Valencia's twenty-two guns. The American howitzers took a heavy pounding, facing between two and three times their number at a range of about eight hundred yards. Both Captain John Magruder and Lieutenant Frank Callender went down seriously wounded. Lieutenant John Preston Johnstone of Magruder's Battery was cut down by an eighteen pound ball. Lieutenant Jesse Reno kept his own rocket section firing after most of the two batteries' howitzers were disabled or withdrawn. Reno fired all one hundred rockets on hand and then retired to a sheltered position for the night.[29]

During the night, the Voltigeurs advanced through the Pedregal with several other regiments and moved into position behind and overlapping Valencia's right flank. Early on the morning of August 20, the Voltigeurs, under the immediate command of Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Johnston, joined in a surprise attack that routed Valencia's troops in less than half an hour. They then joined in the subsequent attack on the Mexican defenses at Churubusco. There, rather than rush across an "uncovered" expanse swept by artillery and small-arms fire, the Voltigeurs lay down behind piles of dead horses and rubble and fired their rifles.[30] The Voltigeurs suffered only eight casualties at Contreras/Padierna and Churubusco; the Rocket and Howitzer Battery, however, suffered heavily, with three killed and twelve wounded. Whereas the American artillery had engaged in a direct duel with Valencia's large concentration of artillery, the Voltigeurs had engaged in a surprise flank attack and protected covering fire.

At the Battle of Molino del Rey on September 7, 1847, the Voltigeurs constituted about ten percent of the attacking force. During the engagement they performed a variety of missions. They provided close support for the initial assault, worked together with the American dragoons to repulse a Mexican cavalry attack, and fought detached in groups of one or two companies. Here the Voltigeurs suffered heavily: 102 killed, wounded, or missing out of 341 officers and men engaged.[31]

The Voltigeurs received their "privilege to lead the attack" at Chapultepec, September 13, 1847, following a sharp thirty-minute artillery barrage. Lieutenant Jesse Reno deployed the serviceable howitzers of the Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery in front of the Molino del Rey building complex and fired into a copse of woods at the base of the Chapultepec castle. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph E. Johnston led the infantry attack on the right with a temporary four-company battalion of Voltigeurs; Colonel Timothy P. Andrews led a similar battalion on the left. Johnston's battalion "deployed in a run, each company firing as soon as it deployed, drove the enemy from the parapet [below the castle] before the rear company was in line," and spread out in skirmish formation to fire with rifles at the castle defenders. When Reno advanced with two mountain howitzers, Johnston ordered him to fire at close range on the main gate from which the Mexicans might try to escape. Other storming parties moved up and mingled with the Voltigeurs. Captain Samuel Mackenzie, commanding a 260-man storming party, found the Voltigeurs firing from prone or crouching positions on the rocky slope of Chapultepec; his men were less than enthusiastic about charging through their rifle fire and "showed a disposition to take cover with them." The assault continued when another detachment brought up ladders to mount the castle ditch and walls. Johnston and several other officers spurred the men over the walls and into the castle complex. The position was quickly overrun. Within twenty-four hours Mexico City fell to the American Army. The Voltigeurs had five killed, four missing, and forty-three wounded. The Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery had suffered one mortality and five wounded.[32]

After The Fighting

The Voltigeurs performed routine garrison and occupation duties until their disbandment in mid-1848. They frequently operated in and around Mexico City, but detachments occasionally escorted

columns of wagons and troops between the capital and Veracruz. Eleven officers of the regiment joined the Aztec Club in Mexico City, a social organization which supposedly included "none but gentlemen." In the Aztec Club, the Voltigeurs provided the largest contingent from a line unit in Scott's army.[33] By its very formation, the Aztec Club reinforced the ideological separation of the officer corps from the enlisted ranks, echoing the Society of the Cincinnati formed by Continental Army officers at the end of the American Revolution.

The Voltigeurs were officially disbanded on August 25, 1848, though Colonel Andrews, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, and Major George Talcott rejoined their old regular units with lower peacetime ranks on July 19-20. There was, however, a movement among the former regimental officers to reconstitute the Voltigeurs late in 1848. Apparently, Joseph E. Johnston, back in the Corps of Topographical Engineers, was working to add the Voltigeurs to the permanent Army. William S. Walker, former lieutenant in E Company, wrote to Charles J. Biddle that Johnston "says he would rather go to the North Pole a Colonel than remain in his present position." The Voltigeurs were never reorganized.[34]

Several former officers of the Regiment of Voltigeurs and Foot Riflemen continued in public service after the regiment was disbanded. Timothy Andrews resumed his position as Army Paymaster, and in this capacity contributed to the Union war effort during the American Civil War. He died in the District of Columbia in 1868, still serving in the Army. Joseph E. Johnston continued in the United States Army until 1861, when he resigned his post as Quartermaster General and joined the Confederacy to become one of its most prominent and controversial generals. After the war he was elected as a Democrat to the House of Representatives (1879-1881) and was appointed Commissioner of Railroads in 1885. He died in 1891, still in public service.

Several former captains and lieutenants of the Voltigeurs received commissions of considerably higher rank during the Civil War. James J. Archer, Birkett D. Fry, William S. Walker, and James E. Slaughter all served as Confederate brigadier generals. Before siding with the Confederacy in 1861, Fry moved to California in 1849, joined William Walker (not William S. Walker of the Voltigeurs) in his filibustering expedition to Nicaragua, and served as a brigadier general in Walker's army. Charles J. Biddle had the rare opportunity, in 1861, of choosing between accepting a commission as brigadier general in the Union Army or taking a seat in the United States House of Representatives. A Democrat, he chose the Thirty-seventh Congress. Later in the war he became editor of a Democratic newspaper in Philadelphia. He died in 1873 at or near the age of fifty-four. Of the Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery, Jesse L. Reno remained with the Ordnance Department until he was requested to serve as an infantry brigade commander by Union Major General Ambrose E. Burnside during the Civil War. In less than a year, Reno was promoted from ordnance captain to major general in command of the IX Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Having survived serious wounds in the Mexican War, he was killed in action at the Battle of South Mountain on September 14, 1862.

Did the United States Army learn anything from its Mexican War experiment with the Regiment of Voltigeurs and Foot Riflemen with attached Rocket and Mountain Howitzer Battery? The Army as a corporate entity does not seem to have absorbed much in the way of innovative tactical experiences with rocketeers or riflemen. Hale's rockets were apparently scarcely used in the Mexican War after Contreras despite their successful employment in action at that battle, at Cerro Gordo, and near Veracruz. One drawback may have been that they "lacked an adequate guidance system and inaccurately dispersed their fire over a very large area."[35] Even so, rockets had the advantage of being relatively light, mobile, and easy to fire. The Army should have adopted them on a larger scale for further experimentation and innovation. They had already proven useful against cavalry and would probably have been useful against the Western Plains Indians.

The Army did not opt to retain or add voltigeurs to their roster of standing peacetime regiments. Neither the Confederates nor the Union Army designated any of their regiments as voltigeurs during the Civil War. However, more fancifully-uniformed Zouave companies and regiments were raised for militia

and volunteer service in the 1850s and 1860s, continuing one form of French influence in the American Army.[36]

A few individual officers seem to have learned about the killing capacity of the percussion rifle before the Civil War. Kirby Smith of the Light Battalion, Persifor Frazer Smith of the Mounted Rifles, and Joseph E. Johnston of the Voltigeurs were experienced combat officers of units armed with such weapons. Of these three, Kirby Smith was killed at Molino del Rey on September 8,1847, and Persifor Smith died in 1858. Johnston seems to have tried to kindle interest in a permanent Voltigeur Regiment after the Mexican War, and failing that, applied for the colonelcy of a new rifle regiment in 1854.[37] If the American Army learned anything from the Voltigeur experiment, Johnston was the chief recipient and exemplar of that knowledge. For most officers, it was not the Mexican War but the Civil War that taught the primacy of the rifle. Though the United States Army did not form new voltigeur regiments after the Mexican-American War, by the end of the American Civil War the widespread distribution and use of rifles inevitably caused the American infantrymen to fight more in the manner of voltigeurs.

Aside from tactical innovations, the experience of the Regiment of Voltigeurs reflected socio-economic differences between the officer corps and enlisted personnel in the American Army--something akin to, but more pronounced than, modern-day differences between salaried employees and hourly wage workers. Officers presided over enlisted troops in a strict hierarchical social organization. Officers usually came into their positions laterally with the help of previous socio-political connections or prior professional training. Through their Mexican War service, the officers gained a sort of social capital to aid them in their quest for advancement up the social hierarchy. Service as an officer in wartime was especially coveted by men who were influenced by the age's Romantic ideology. Rather than use family influence to evade service, these Romantics actively sought glory on the battlefield.

Indeed, many of the surviving officers of the Voltigeurs benefitted from their Mexican War service. The enlisted personnel also benefitted from their Mexican War service, but in a different way. Each man or surviving relative received from the government a material piece of "Manifest Destiny" in the way of a capital grant of 160 acres in land or $100 in government scrip after the war. By providing them with start-up capital, this government policy promoted the modest integration of low-income foreign-born and native-born families into the expanding market economy. Nearly 88,000 Mexican War bounty land warrants involving over thirteen million acres had been issued by 1855.[38] Whereas the Mexican War officers received social capital, the enlisted veterans received land or cash.

The Mexican-American War promoted a revival of martial fervor throughout much of the United States. This was especially evident in the Army officer corps and amongst those political appointees of 1847, who after the peace assumed or resumed influential posts in their respective state militias and volunteer organizations. The officer corps had suffered from a severe malaise during the bitterly contested Second Seminole War which ended in 1842. The successfully fought battles of 1846-1847 restored confidence and resurrected passion for Napoleonic-style glory and Romantic idealism.

The Civil War fourteen years later provided the next major opportunity for Romantic fulfillment of soldierly ambition. The nearly complete technological changeover to the rifle by the mid-1860s, which should have prompted a consequent change towards more cautious tactical thought, could not overturn enthusiasm for the romance of direct Napoleonic frontal assault. Malvern Hill, Fredericksburg, and Pickett's Charge might have been less disastrous for the attackers if their commanders had brought with them more than just the Romantic inspiration of Chapultepec. Application of the specialized assault tactics of the Voltigeurs and other improvised storming parties might have brought not only the spirit of Chapultepec, but the victory as well.

ENDNOTES

[1] *United States Statutes at Large* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Dennis & Co., 1964), IX, 123-126, 184-186. Hereafter cited as *Statutes at Large*.

[2] *Statutes at Large*, 125-126; Emory Upton, *The Military Policy of the United States, Fourth Impression* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1917); U.S. War Department, Doc. No. 290, Office of the Chief of Staff), 210-222. James M. McCaffrey, in *Army of Manifest Destiny: The American Soldier in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 176, claims that despite the land bounty and other bonuses, "recruiting was slow." He underestimates both the effectiveness of recruiting and the importance of the land bounty.

[3] *Statutes at Large*, 124.

[4] J.E. Mansion, *Harrap's Standard French and English Dictionary* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1934), I, 898.

[5] Edward S. Farrow, *A Dictionary of Military Terms* (London: The Library Press Limited, [1918]), 653; See also Le General LeCouturier, *Dictionnaire portatif et raisonne des connaissances militaires* (Paris: Chez Pierre Blanchard, Libraire, 1825), 517-518.

[6] E.M. Lloyd, *A Review of the History of Infantry* (London, 1908), 231-236; Steven Ross, *From Flintlock to Rifle: Infantry Tactics, 1740-1866* (London: Associated University Presses, 1979), 162-164; David G. Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1979), 432; R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present* (New York, 1986), 732-735.

[7] Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars*, 208, 432.

[8] The Mounted Riflemen were also created by public law. See "An Act to provide for raising a Regiment of mounted Riflemen...," in *Statutes at Large*, 13-14; Chandler, *Dictionary of the Napoleonic Wars*, 288, 433.

[9] Charles John Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa. to President James K. Polk at Washington, D.C., February 2, 1847, Charles J. Biddle Series, Biddle Family Papers, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.) This collection hereafter cited as Biddle Papers.

[10] Lloyd, *A Review of the History of Infantry*, 244.

[11] *Statutes at Large*, 184-186.

[12] "General Orders, No. 8," War Department, Adj't General's Office, Washington, D.C., March 4, 1847, in *Niles' National Register*, March 13, 1847, Facsimile reprint (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 218-219.

[13] Circular, Col. T.P. Andrews at Washington, D.C., "To the Company Commanders of the Voltigeur Regiment," March 3, 1847, addressed to Capt. C.J. Biddle, U.S. Voltigeurs, Philadelphia, Pa., in Biddle Papers.

[14] *Niles' National Register*, March 13, 1847, 19; [Winfield] Scott, *Infantry Tactics, or Rules for the Exercise and Maneuvres of the United States' Infantry* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1857). Originally adopted by the U.S. Department of War in 1835 and copyrighted by the author in 1840.

15. The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York James T. White & Co., 1893), IV, 321-322.

[16] See Craig L. Symonds, *Joseph E. Johnston: A Civil War Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992).

[17] *Who Was Who in American History--The Military* (Chicago, Ill.: Marquis Who's Who, Inc., 1975), 80; George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point* (2 vols., Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1891), I, 474.

[18] Another captain, James N. Caldwell, remained in Ohio on recruiting service. Mark Mayo Boatner, III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay Co., 1959), 23; Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 11; *Who Was Who in American History*, 14; Cullum, *Biographical Register*, II, 48-49; *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, XI, 395-396.

[19] Charles John Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa., to President James K. Polk at Washington, D.C., February 2, 1847, Biddle Papers.

[20] Benjamin H. Brewster at Washington, D.C., to Charles J. Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa., February 14, 1847, Biddle Papers. It should also be noted that of the approximately ten first lieutenants and nineteen second lieutenants, several had received military schooling (at places such as the Virginia Military Institute) and were sons of well-to-do fathers. It can be surmised that social class and education played a major role in the appointment of all the officers.

[21] George Talcott, Ordnance Office, at Washington, D.C., to Capt. Charles J. Biddle at Fort Mifflin, Pa., February 26, 1847; Col. Timothy P. Andrews at Washington, D.C., to Capt. Charles J. Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa., March 21, 1847; Capt. Charles J. Biddle at Vera Cruz, Mexico, to [?], June 1, 1847, Biddle Papers.

[22] Lt. John Preston Johnstone at Jalapa, Mexico, to Eliza Johnston at Abingdon, Va., June 3, 1847, Robert Morton Hughes, Jr., Papers, (Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia). Both nephew and uncle alternated the spelling of the family name between Johnston and Johnstone. Though Joseph later used only Johnston, his name often appears as Johnstone in Mexican War documents.

[23] Brig. Gen. George Cadwalader at Puebla, Mexico, draft, "Review of incidents on march from June 7 [1847]," July 11, 1847, George Cadwalader Papers, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.) Herinafter cited as Cadwalader Papers.

[24] "General Orders," Head Qrs Pillow's Div., Perote, Mexico, July 2, 1847, in Cadwalader Papers. See also Nathaniel Cheairs Hughes, Jr., and Roy P. Stonesifer, Jr., *The Life and Wars of Gideon J. Pillow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 79.

[25] Justin H. Smith, *The War with Mexico* (2 vols., New York: The MacMillan Co., 1919), II, 77.

[26] "Report from the Ordnance Department," Lt. L.A.B. Walbach and Lt. Col. G. Talcott at Washington, D.C., to Secretary of War William L. Marcy, November 20, 1847, in [United States Government,] *Executive Documents Printed by Order of the Senate* (Serial Set 503) (Washington: Printed by Wendell and van Benthuysen, 1847-1848), I, 685, volume hereafter cited as Sen. Exec. Doc.; Col. Timothy P. Andrews, January 8, 1848, quoted in Philip R.N. Karcher, *The Mexican-American War, 1846-1848* (London: Osprey Publishing Limited, 1976), 13. Karcher does not provide further contextual details about this document.

[27] Lester R. Dillon, Jr., *American Artillery in the Mexican War, 1846-1847* (Austin, Tex.: Presidial Press, 1975), 12, 17. Dillon states that Hale was an American inventor. "Report from the Ordance Department," Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 685, 697, states that Hale was "of England."

[28] Col. Timothy P. Andrews at Washington, D.C., to Capt. Charles J. Biddle at [?], April 6, 1847, Biddle Papers; for previous engagments see *Niles' National Register*, June 5, 1847, 218-219.

[29] See after-action report of Contreras and Churubusco, Lt. J.L. Reno to Col. T.P. Andrews, no date, in Appendix, Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 123-124.

[30] See after-action report of Contreras, Lt. Col. J.E. Johnstone at Mixcoac, Mexico, to Col. T.P. Andrews, August 24, 1847, in Appendix, Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 123.

[31] See Smith, *The War with Mexico*, II, 140-147, 400-404; "Field return of troops engaged at Molino del Rey, September 8, 1847, under command of Brevet Major General Worth," W.W. Mackall, A.A.G. and Brevet Maj. Gen. W.J. Worth, in Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 368-369; "Tabular statement of casualties in the command of Major General Worth, in the action of Molino del Rey, September 8, 1847," Capt. W.W. MacKall, A.A.G., in Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 371.

[32] See after-action report, Lt. Col. J.E. Johnstone at Mexico City to Col. T.P. Andrews, September 17, 1847, Sen. Exec. Doc., Appendix (Serial Set 503), 210-211; After-action report, Capt. S[amuel] Mackenzie at Mexico City to Capt. W.W. Mackall, A.A.G., 1st division head-quarters, Sen. Exec. Doc., 231; T. Harry Williams (ed.), *With Beauregard in Mexico: The Mexican War Reminiscences of P.G.T. Beauregard* ([Baton Rouge]: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 79-83; H.C. Longnecker, Adjutant,"Casualties incident to the U.S. Voltigeur regiment in the storming of the fortress of Chapultepec on the 13th September, 1847, near the city of Mexico," September 16, 1847, in Sen. Exec. Doc. (Serial Set 503), 208-211; "Return of the killed, wounded and missing of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Division, during the attack on Chapultepec and the City of Mexico, on the 13th and 14th Sept., 1847," Cadwalader Papers.

[33] Stephen W. Sears, *George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1988), 26; see "List of Original Members of the Aztec Club," in Cadmus M. Wilcox, *History of the Mexican War* (Washington, D.C.: The Church News Publishing Company, 1892), 710-711.

[34] William S. Walker at Washington City, D.C., to Charles J. Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa., November 6, 1848, Biddle Papers.

[35] Dillon, *American Artillery in the Mexican War*, 59.

[36] Boatner, *Civil War Dictionary*, 880, 954. Boatner makes a direct comparison between Zouaves and voltigeurs, and states baldly that "a number of Voltigeur units appeared before and during the Civil War." (Boatner, 880). Evidence of Zouave units is readily available, but not of voltigeur units; see also Lloyd, *A Review of the History of Infantry*, 236, and Ross, *From Flintlock to Rifle*, 162-164, 181.

[37] William S. Walker at Washington City, D.C., to Charles J. Biddle at Philadelphia, Pa., November 6, 1848, Biddle Papers; J.E. Johnson at Louisville, Ky., to General George Cadwalader at Philadelphia, Pa., February 11, 1854, Cadwalader Papers.

[38] Thomas A. Hendricks, "Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office," November 30, 1855, in *The New American State Papers. Public Lands, Volume 2: Administration* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1972), 396.

MR. POLK'S GENERALS

Richard Bruce Winders
Texas Christian University

The truth is neither Taylor nor Scott are fit for the command of the army in the great operations in progress and which are contemplated.
James Knox Polk
January 14, 1847

. . . but I can assure gentlemen that all the clamor they may get up here against the old veteran [Taylor] will only attract more attention to his merits, and add new fuel to the flame already burning at the bare idea of his being superseded in his command, or being subjected to the dictation of a political general, fresh from the Halls of Congress.
Thomas W. Newton,
Whig Congressman
February 26, 1847

The war with Mexico had become a paradox for James K. Polk. In a conflict largely perceived as a Democratic endeavor, a Whig was receiving the credit for American victories on the battlefield. The wartime press had seized upon Major General Zachary Taylor and presented him to the public as a folksy, frontier hero. Letters from Mexico described the general as unrefined and uncouth, but a man of the common people. The combination of military glory and mass appeal were not lost on Polk and the Democrats: America had sent successful generals to the nation's capital before. George Washington, hero of the revolution, established the precedent. Andrew Jackson, victorious over the British at the Battle of New Orleans, followed Washington's example. In the Election of 1840, the Whigs learned to tap into this tradition and put their own hero, William Henry Harrison of Tippecanoe fame, in the White House. Polk recognized the danger Taylor presented to the Democratic party and made up his mind that "Old Rough and Ready" must go.[1]

Obstacles existed in finding a suitable replacement for Taylor. First, although Polk held the title commander-in-chief, popular opinion, protocol, and law prevented Taylor's recall without a valid reason. The public loved this tough old general and a move to oust him could backfire and give him even more support. Second, the army traditionally promoted officers on the basis of seniority and the list of general officers available to replace Taylor offered Polk no solution as he found them equally unsuitable. Finally,

by law Congress must vote to confirm new appointments and it was unlikely that its members would go along with such a plot. Throughout the war, however, Polk worked to overcome these obstacles and provide the Democratic Party with a military hero of its own.[2]

The obvious solution to Polk's problem was to send Taylor's immediate superior, Winfield Scott, to Mexico to assume command. But Polk disliked Major General Scott--the general-in-chief of the army--even more than Taylor. Although Polk thought Taylor "brave" but unresourceful, he reserved much harsher criticism for Scott. According to the president, Scott was not only directed by a quest for personal glory, but disloyal to the administration, and unwilling to "lay aside the technical rules of war found in books" and prosecute the war with vigor. "The truth is," confided Polk to his diary, "neither Taylor nor Scott are fit for the command of the army."[3]

Polk held other high ranking army officers in contempt as well. The president decried the fact that other top generals such as John E. Wool and Roger Jones were Whigs. Regular army officers, charged Polk, were jealous of their positions and worked to defeat the appointment of new volunteer generals. "These officers are all Whigs and violent partisans," he wrote in one passage in his diary. Furthermore, he believed these Whig generals " . . . seem disposed to throw every obstacle in the way of [his] prosecuting the Mexican War successfully."[4]

Polk disliked career officers for more than just their politics: he was convinced that years of inactivity had made them slow and unimaginative. Remarked the president, "the old army officers have become so in the habit of enjoying their ease . . . that most of them have no energy." He wanted decisive action and he believed tradition-bound generals incapable of giving him a quick victory. These men also seemed needlessly to waste public funds by their mismanagement. Taylor, for instance, insisted on demanding expensive wagons for his army when pack mules would be more suitable on some Mexican roads. And could not the army purchase Mexican horses, thus saving the cost of transporting them from places as distant as Ohio? Although confessing to Quartermaster General Thomas Jessup that he had no military experience himself, simple solutions such as these seemed obvious to Polk. To rectify the problem, the president vowed to become more active in directing army operations.[5]

One way Polk exerted control over the army was in the appointment of new generals. On June 26, 1846, Congress authorized positions for eight new generals to lead the army being raised for service in Mexico. Five of these new generals bore the title "general of volunteers" to distinguish them from generals of the permanent army. On March 3, 1847, Congress again voted to increase the number of volunteer generals and added two more major generals and five more brigadier generals to the army. Although the commissions were to expire at the end of hostilities, their creation enabled Polk to appoint men who he believed would not only push the war forward, but even more importantly, were loyal to his administration and the Democratic Party.[6]

The appointment of volunteer generals illustrates several of Polk's tenets regarding Democratic doctrine characteristic of the party established by his predecessors. First, his appointment of Democrats to fill these positions underscored his belief in rewarding party loyalty. After all, Polk's secretary of war was none other than William L. Marcy, who popularized the phrase, "To the victors belong the spoils." Thus, filling these positions with loyal Democrats can be viewed as an extension of the spoils system. Secondly, Polk resented career army officers, because, in his opinion, they lived privileged lives and were the antithesis of the common man. By appointing men from civilian life, Polk hoped to prove that these American Cincinnati could perform just as well as--if not better--than the regular generals. His belief in the ability of the common man extended down to the men in the ranks. "Our forces are the best troops in the world, and would gain victories over superior forces of the enemy, if there were not an officer among them." Polk even favored promoting privates to vacant officers positions. Basic Jacksonian principles guided Polk's selection of men to fill military posts.[7]

Polk viewed the army as a political battleground between Whig and Democratic officers and sent reinforcements to aid his party in the form of volunteer generals loyal to the Democratic Party. Although

Polk claimed that he was "wholly uninfluenced by any reference to the political opinions of the officer[s] of the army," his actions fail to uphold this assertion. While no direct evidence exists to prove that Polk planned to fill the army's officer corps with Democrats, his wartime diary, with its numerous tirades directed at Whig officers, holds important clues. Taylor, the president claimed, had betrayed him by falling under the spell of "political partisans" despite the kindness shown in promoting him to major general. The general's camp, he lamented, had become a "political arena" where "injustice has been done to many officers of high merit who happen to be Democrats." In one such incident, Polk praised Colonel William S. Harney--a "Democrat in politics" and "one of General Jackson's personal friends"--and sided with Harney in that officer's dispute with Scott. The president accused Scott and Taylor of arbitrary and tyrannical conduct not only towards Harney, but against other men he described as "gallant Democratic officers.[8]

An examination of the careers of the volunteer generals prior to their appointments--Mr. Polk's Generals, to put it bluntly--adds weight to the argument that these men were chosen for their political affiliation. In all, the president appointed, and Congress confirmed, thirteen volunteer generals. Although some had previous military experience, these men had one trait in common--they were loyal Democrats with years of service to the party. Nine of the thirteen had been Democratic state legislators; five had served as Democrats in the U.S. Congress. Two of Polk's volunteer generals--Thomas L. Hamer and Cabel Cushing--even participated in political races while with the army in Mexico. One future volunteer general--Sterling Price--resigned his seat in Congress to lead troops against Mexico. These men, however, did not set aside their politics when they accepted their commissions.[9]

The pattern of appointing Democratic politicians to the army can even be seen in cases of men who declined commissions. When Sam Houston spurned an appointment as major general of volunteers, the president offered it to Thomas Rusk, the other Democratic senator from Texas, but again was rebuffed. Polk hoped to fill the brigadier generalship created by Gideon J. Pillow's promotion to major general with Jefferson Davis, Democratic Congressman from Mississippi and hero of Buena Vista. But Davis, still suffering from a painful wound, turned down the commission and return to Congress instead.[10]

Polk's plot to advance Senator Thomas Hart Benton over both Taylor and Scott dramatically demonstrates the president's fervent desire to gain control of the army. Benton, a colonel in the War of 1812 and member of the U.S. Senate since 1821, had become a trusted confidant. The president discussed the problem of Whig generals on several occasions with the Missouri senator who expressed both sympathy and concern. In the fall of 1847, Benton approached the president with a solution: appoint Benton lieutenant general. This rank (last held by George Washington) would make the Democratic Congressman the highest ranking officer in the army. Polk was intrigued, but acknowledged the plan would meet stiff opposition in Congress. Consulting key Democrats on the matter, Polk learned that the move would likely fail. In December, nevertheless, the president presented Benton's proposal to Congress. The measure passed the House, but failed in the Senate. Whigs balked at the idea of sending a *"political* general" to replace the beloved Taylor. The senator, it seems, had also made powerful enemies in his own party during his long tenure in Washington who feared the power the rank would give Benton. Offered the lower position of major general of volunteers, Senator Benton with his pride hurt declined. Although the plot to resurrect the rank of lieutenant general failed, it demonstrates that Polk attempted to enlist Congressional aid in order to accomplish his goal of placing a reliable Democrat at the head of the army.[11]

The opportunity finally came in early in 1848, four months after the fall of the Mexican capital. With fighting at an apparent end, Taylor had returned to the United States in November on a leave of absence. In Mexico City, a controversy erupted over missing war trophies and slanderous letters. The principals in the dispute were Polk's nemesis, Winfield Scott, and his old law partner and now general, Gideon J. Pillow. Scott contended that Major General Pillow had taken two cannons captured at

MR. POLK'S GENERALS:
GENERALS OF VOLUNTEERS, 1846-1848

NAME	STATE	PARTY	POLITICAL EXPERIENCE	RANK & TERM OF SERVICE
William Orlando Butler	Kentucky	Democrat	Democratic Candidate for governor in 1844 (lost the election)	Major General of Volunteers June 29, 1846 to August 15, 1848
Robert Patterson	Pennsylvania	Democrat	Delegate to the 1824 Democratic convention at Harrisburg that nominated Andrew Jackson	Major General of Volunteers July 7, 1846 to July 20, 1848
Gideon Johnson Pillow	Tennessee	Democrat	Polk's former law partner never held an elected office but had gained a reputation as a powerful man behind the political scene.	Major General of Volunteers April 14, 1847 to July 20, 1848 Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to April 13, 1847
John Anthony Quitman	Mississippi	Democrat	Chancellor of Mississippi Superior Court from 1828 to 1831 and again from 1832 to 1835	Major General of Volunteers April 14, 1847 to July 20, 1848 Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to April 14, 1847
Thomas Marshall	Kentucky	Democrat	Brother of Chief Justice John Marshall; Served in Kentucky Legislature, rising to post of Speaker of the House	Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to July 20, 1848
Thomas Lyon Hamer	Ohio	Democrat	Ohio Legislature in 1825 Three terms in U.S. Congress elected to Congress while serving in Mexico.	Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to December 2, 1846 died Dec. 2, 1846 at Monterey, Mex.

NAME	STATE	PARTY	POLITICAL EXPERIENCE	RANK & TERM OF SERVICE
Joseph Lane	Indiana	Democrat	Indiana Legislature; U.S. Senator	Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to July 20, 1848
James Shields	Illinois	Democrat	Illinois Legislature; state auditor, state supreme court judge; state land commissioner	Brigadier General of Volunteers July 1, 1846 to July 20, 1848
Franklin Pierce	New Hampshire	Democrat	New Hampshire Legislature; U.S. House of Representatives; declined post of U.S. Attorney General	Brigadier General of Volunteers March 3, 1847 to July 20, 1848
George Cadwalader	Pennsylvania	Democrat	Lawyer	Brigadier General of Volunteers March 3, 1847 to July 20, 1848
Enos D. Hopping	New York	Democrat	Lawyer	Bragadier General of Volunteers March 3, 1847 to Sept. 1, 1847 (Died Sept. 1, 1847 at Mier, Mex.
Caleb Cushing	Massachusetts	Democrat	U.S. House of Representatives; rejected by the Senate as President John Tyler's choice for Secretary of Treasury; Commissioner to China; Massachusetts General Court; Involved in gubernatorial race while in Mexico	Brigadier General of Volunteers April 14, 1847 to July 20, 1848
Sterling Price	Missouri	Democrat	Missouri Legislature, Speaker of the House; U.S. Congress, resigned seat to command a regiment of Missouri volunteers.	Brigadier General of Volunteers July 20, 1847 to Nov. 25, 1848

Churubusco and planned to carry them back to Tennessee. Although the missing guns were found among Pillow's baggage train, he disavowed any larcenous intention on his part and turned the two guns over to the Ordnance Department. About the same time, letters began appearing in newspapers naming Pillow as the real genius behind the capture of Mexico City and downplaying Scott's role in the victory. Citing a regulation prohibiting officers from publishing private accounts of military operations, Scott placed Pillow and others implicated in the scheme under arrest. The army divided into two camps: supporters of Scott and supporters of Pillow. With his longtime disdain for Scott well-established, Polk quickly sided against the general-in-chief and judged the time right to oust him. As for a replacement, Polk ignored suggestions from some of his own Cabinet members that Taylor be recalled from leave and ordered back into the field. He dispatched orders firing Scott and appointed Major General William Orlando Butler as his replacement. At last both Taylor and Scott were gone and a Democratic general commanded the army in Mexico.[12]

The victory, though, rang hollow. Polk, who had exerted tremendous effort to find a Democratic general, seemed to withdraw from party concerns as his term neared its end. Without a strong candidate of their own, fellow Democrats asked him to renounce his pledge to serve only one term and to run again: the president refused. Furthermore, he failed to suggest a successor, merely saying he would support whomever the party selected. In need of a champion, the Democrats ironically passed over Polk's generals and picked an older war horse, Lewis Cass. A general in the War of 1812, Cass had served as secretary of war in Jackson's Administration. Scott's replacement in Mexico, William Orlando Butler, joined the ticket as the vice-presidential candidate. The combined appeal of these two generals, however, was not enough to overcome the popularity of Zachary Taylor, who carried the election by 140,000 votes.[13]

For Polk and the Democrats the war had assumed a significance greater than mere victory over Mexico: the future of the party was a stake. The Mexican War had become a battle between rival parties for national supremacy. As Polk recorded in his diary after one visit from Benton, "He alluded to what was apparent to everyone, that the Whigs were endeavoring to turn this war to party and political advantage." The president and his party counted on Democratic generals to counter the threat. And although the tactic failed in 1848, it triumphed four years later when voters elected former Brigadier General Franklin Pierce president, at last placing one of Polk's generals in the White House.[14]

ENDNOTES

[1] Allan Nevins (ed.), *Polk: The Diary of a President* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1952), 148; Justin Smith, *War with Mexico*, (2 vols., Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1963), I, 179; Zachary Taylor, *Letters of Zachary Taylor From the Battle-Fields of the Mexican War* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), 22. Whigs began mentioning Taylor's name as a possible presidential candidate soon after the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. As early as July, 1846, Taylor felt compelled to deny that he sought the office. Polk began openly expressing concerns over Taylor in September 1846.

[2] H.L. Scott, *Military Dictionary: Comprising Technical Definitions; Information On Raising and Keeping Troops, Including Makeshift and Improved Matériel; And Law, Government, Regulation, and Administration Relating to Land Forces* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1864), 27, 166-167; Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 145, 200.

[3] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 100, 144, 145, 185, 205; William A. Ganoe, *The History of the Army*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1924), 143. Polk's remark about the "technical rules of war" was specifically aimed at Scott who had prepared the infantry manual used by both the army and militia, entitled *Scott's Tactics*.

[4] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 100.

[5] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 143-144, 204; Smith, *War with Mexico*, I, 490-491; Taylor, *Letters of Zachary Taylor*, 46, 185-186. The matter of wagons was a sore point with Taylor who came to believe that they may have been withheld to impede his advance in order to diminish his political chances. Both Polk and Justin Smith blame Taylor's transportation problems on poor planning by the general.

[6] Charles K. Gardner, *A Dictionary of All Officers Who Have Been Commissioned, Or Have Been Appointed and Served, in the Army of the United States* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Co., 1853), 29, 31; Francis Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army* (2 vols., Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), I, 20, 21.

[7] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 218, 219, 221, 233, 273; Ivor Debenham Spencer, *The Victor and the Spoils: A Life of William L. Marcy* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1959), 59-62, 137-174. For discussion of the Spoils System, see Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press, 1969), 336-340.

[8] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 100, 167, 198.

[9] Heitman, *Historical Register*, I, 20-21. Polk's Generals: William Orlando Butler, Robert Patterson, Gideon Johnson Pillow, John Anthony Quitman, Thomas Marshall, Thomas Lyon Hamer, Joseph Lane, James Shields, Franklin Pierce, George Cadwalader, Enos D. Hopping, Caleb Cushing, and Sterling Price. After identifying all generals of volunteers appointed during the Mexican War, the author was able to examine the backgrounds of these officers. It quickly became apparent that these men were "political generals." Only the background of one man, Enos D. Hopping, is unclear, but based on the evidence of the other twelve volunteer generals, it is assumed at this point in the research that, like the other twelve, he owed his appointment to political affiliation.

[10] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 200, 232.

[11] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 163, 165, 169, 175, 176, 178, 179, 185, 190, 200, 201; Thomas H. Benton, *Thirty Years' View: Or, A History of the Working of the American Government for Thirty Years, From 1820-1850* (2 vols., New York: Appleton & Co., 1856), 678-679; Scott, *Military Dictionary*, 167; "Speech of Mr. T.W. Newton Made on February 26, 1847," *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 16:430; Smith, *War with Mexico*, 2:75, 365. The premise behind the plan rested on the "Articles of War," which state that although the president cannot place a junior officer over one who is senior, Congress does have the power to create new military rank. This loophole would allow Polk to appoint Benton to the higher rank, as long as Congress went along with the scheme. Benton blamed his defeat on three of Polk's own Cabinet members: Secretary of War William L. Marcy, Secretary of the Treasury Robert J. Walker, and Secretary of State James Buchanan. In reality, John C. Calhoun was one of the most active opponents to Benton's appointment. Told by Congress he would appoint Benton as commander of the army with the rank of major general, Polk saw that he would still have had to recall Scott, Taylor, Butler and Patterson first. While willing to remove the first two, he had no ill feeling towards the two Democratic generals. Polk's close relationship with Benton soured from this point and finally completely ruptured over the court-martial of John C. Frémont, Benton's son-in-law.

[12] Taylor, *Letters of Zachary Taylor*, 150; Smith, *War with Mexico*, II, 185-188; Nevins, ed., *Diary of a President*, 288-293. Two other Democratic officers, Brevet Brigadier General William J. Worth and Captain James Duncan, were Pillow's confederates in the letter writing campaign against Scott.

[13] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 286, 319. The presidential election had turned into a three-way race: Whigs (Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore) 1,360,099 popular votes and 163 electoral votes; Democrats (Lewis Cass and William O. Butler) 1,220,544 popular votes and 127 electoral votes; Free Soilers (Martin Van Buren and Charles Francis Adams) 291,263 popular votes and no electoral votes.

[14] Nevins (ed.), *Diary of a President*, 164.

"CERRO GORDO SHOUT": DAVID E. TWIGGS AND THE UNITED STATES-MEXICAN WAR

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After the Battle of Cerro Gordo, after the Americans had taken a prominent hill called El Telégrafo making Cerro Gordo indefensible, the victors took stock of captured Mexican stores. In addition to prisoners, they had captured Santa Anna's carriage of state, about $20,000, and a large amount of equipment. As the men pillaged these supplies and Santa Anna's belongings, a strange looking man appeared, startling them. He sported long silver hair, a beard and mustache, and he wore the partial uniform of an American general officer topped off by a "palm-leaf sombrero, which extended over his shoulders." He waved a Mexican lance and had a brass Mexican snare drum slung on his back. The men were delighted. Unlike the "staid generals," Old Davy knew how to have a good time.[1]

Old Davy was General David Emmanuel Twiggs, career American military officer, whose primary notoriety was not to be produced by his exploits during the American invasion of Mexico. Many would only remember Twiggs for his surrender of U.S. troops to Confederate forces in Texas on the eve of the Civil War, an act that would brand him with the calumnious nickname "Traitor" Twiggs and cause his vilification by the U.S. military at the time and many historians since.[2] Yet that sunny April afternoon near Cerro Gordo was years away from the dark hours that awaited him in Texas. Old Davy was not just having a good time; he was having the time of his life.

When the annexation of Texas in 1845 strained relations between the U.S. and Mexico, David E. Twiggs had spent over three decades in his country's military service and had risen to the rank of colonel for his trouble. As a veteran of the War of 1812, he had in his twenties served with a major's commission in the First Seminole War and as a lieutenant colonel in the Second. The Indian wars in Florida had not been happy or productive times for Twiggs, and his career during peacetime had proved unremarkable and marginally worthwhile.[3]

So longevity rather than accomplishment marked his rise through the ranks, and he had served as a Colonel of the Second Dragoons for nine years when Brevet Brigadier General Zachary Taylor visited him at Fort Jesup in June 1845. Twiggs could not have known it, but he would now embark on the greatest and most rewarding service of his career.

Taylor's errand was part of a larger effort to take a sizeable military expedition into Texas. On 15 June, he received orders from Washington to proceed to New Orleans and from there ferry most of his people by sea to Corpus Christi. Twiggs would march overland with sixty supply wagons. This first

exploit would characterize his service in Mexico. Many regarded Twiggs' designated route as too arduous and predicted that many of his men would perish along the way. Indeed, shortly after Twiggs led the Second Dragoons out of Fort Jesup in late July, he became seriously ill and about fifty of his five hundred men deserted rather than risk the journey. However, only three of his men died enroute, and when he arrived at Corpus Christi at the end of August, he was feeling his old self again, so much so he nearly caused himself a major embarrassment.[4]

Members of the modern military know a phrase that has always been part of the unwritten service lore: "Better lucky than good." In many respects, such a sentiment precisely depicts Twiggs in the Mexican campaign. Twiggs expected to meet Taylor outside Corpus Christi at San Patricio, but Taylor had preceded him into Corpus Christi. Primed by rumors that Mexicans amassing across the Nueces River planned to surprise the main United State Army at Corpus Christi, Twiggs and his staff mistook a thunderstorm over the city on 24 August for the Mexican assault. As he rushed to relieve the beleaguered Taylor, Twiggs encountered none other than Taylor on a leisurely progress at the head of his staff, his object to greet Twiggs and inspect the encampment at San Patricio. Saved from the indignity of storming into peaceful Corpus Christi, Twiggs took up a position on the right of the camp along Corpus Christi Bay.[5]

Soon, news that Mexicans at Matamoros on the Rio Grande expected reinforcements spurred preparations for war in earnest. Part of these preparations sent Colonel Twiggs and the Second Dragoons back to San Patricio on the Nueces. Reports of Mexican reinforcements proved exaggerated, but the War Department wanted vigilance to prevent any Mexican encroachments north of the Rio Grande.[6]

However, for Twiggs, the main problem of the moment did not so much concern Mexicans as it did a fellow officer. In October, the arrival of Brevet Brigadier General William Jenkins Worth brought on a controversy involving Twiggs that disrupted the regular operations of the army and very nearly destroyed the morale of Taylor's entire command. Until Worth's appearance Twiggs had been second-in-command of the Army of Observation, but that threatened to change with the entrance of Worth, a difficult and ambitious officer.

The difficulty concerned seniority. Twiggs' colonelcy predated Worth's, but Worth's service in the last Seminole conflict in Florida had earned him a brevet to the rank of brigadier general. As the vituperative argument threatened to get out of hand, General Winfield Scott, who did not like Twiggs, stepped in to rule for Worth. However, Secretary of War William L. Marcy insisted that President Polk would make the final decision. Before Polk did so, Taylor, with no other authority except that he was on the scene, overruled Scott in favor of Twiggs.[7]

For an army that lived and died on the basis of seniority, this dispute became a matter of paramount concern, reaching beyond Twiggs and Worth to every officer in the service. Twiggs hoped a brevet of his own would solve the problem, so it was probably at his urging that Quartermaster General Thomas Jesup recommended him for one to the President. Moreover, Old Davy hoped for a brevet dated retroactively so it would antedate Worth's. He also signed a memorial to the Senate, instigated by Ethan Allen Hitchcock, on the subject of brevets. One hundred fifty-eight officers signed this memorial criticizing General Scott for interfering in a matter where his personal feelings colored his decision. The officers called on Congress to solve the problem.[8]

Here then was a fine mess whose widening circle of participants threatened to transform it into a political firestorm. Twigg's involvement could not have raised him in the estimation of his military and civilian superiors back in Washington, and as for Worth, he enjoyed little popularity among regular officers in the field. Some, like D.H. Hill, believed that Worth's aspirations for high political office caused him to push regulars to their limits while coddling volunteers. As dissension among officers and men continued to erode morale, Taylor tried to bolster the authority of his ruling for Twiggs by scheduling a review of the troops for 25 February over which Twiggs, as senior officer, would preside. Instead of fixing Taylor's authority, the announcement of the review sent Worth into a rage. He asked

to leave the army. Inclement weather and Worth's attitude so diminished the appeal of the review for Taylor that he canceled it.[9]

By the time the army was preparing to move south into disputed territory between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, the Twiggs-Worth controversy had damaged morale and portrayed Taylor as an awkward vacillator. Everyone was probably relieved when word from Washington brought Polk's decision for Twiggs and linear rank, especially because the news goaded Worth to resign and leave. He impetuously stormed off to Washington to put matters right. Unhappily for the army, he would return once hostilities began, but by then his support had dwindled under the weight of his petulance. As George Gordon Meade observed, Worth's rash actions had made him, in the eyes of many fellow officers, "unfit to command."[10]

As for Twiggs, he emerged from the controversy relatively unscathed and unmarked, and the army soon had enough to do to require putting the contentious dispute behind it. Twiggs, again, was more lucky than good.

On 20 March, Taylor gave Twiggs the important job of leading the army across the Arroyo Colorado. As his brigade crossed the river, about thirty Mexicans on the south bank watched warily and made threatening gestures but did not open fire. Once Twiggs was across, Taylor brought over the rest of the army and promptly received a message from Brig. Gen. Francisco Mejía that described the Colorado crossing as a declaration of war. Nonetheless, as the American army transformed from one of observation to one of provocation, it inexorably continued south. On 24 March, it halted within twelve miles of Matamoros so that Twiggs' brigade could escort a supply train to Point Isabel on the coast.[11]

Twiggs and Taylor approached Point Isabel tentatively because the Mexicans there under Brig. Gen. José María García appeared willing to resist. When Twiggs threatened, however, the Mexicans withdrew after burning most of their stores. Twiggs' men extinguished some of the fires, and the town became the supply base for Taylor's army.[12]

The army moved within sight of Matamoros on the north bank of the Rio Grande, Twiggs positioning the Second Dragoons and setting up headquarters at the newly named Camp Twiggs by the end of March. These provocative movements brought the desired results by the third week in April when Mexicans attacked a dragoon reconnaissance party sent out by Twiggs to check reports about Mexican soldiers crossing the Rio Grande. The United States Army in Mexico considered the attack a declaration of war. Since arriving at the Rio Grande the army had been constructing Fort Texas, later called Fort Brown, and Taylor's immediate concern was to protect his supply route to Point Isabel. Information that a large contingent of Mexican soldiers had crossed the Rio Grande convinced him that their object was to cut his communications to the coast. So on 1 May, he left five hundred men to hold the fort and took the remaining two thousand soldiers in two brigades commanded by Lieut. Col. Williams G. Belknap and Twiggs to Point Isabel.[13]

On 7 May when Taylor started back to Fort Texas, signs that a large Mexican force stood between him and the fort set the stage for the first real engagements of the Mexican War. The next day, scouts told Taylor that Gen. Mariano Arista's men occupied positions on the road only one mile ahead. The Americans filled their canteens at Palo Alto water hole and moved forward to face the enemy.[14]

Twiggs and his brigade took positions on the right wing. About 2:00 p.m., as the entire army approached the Mexican position, Mexican artillery opened fire. The United States artillery answered, throwing back the Mexican left, leaving Twiggs the task of driving it off the road. However, Arista attempted to turn the American right by flanking Twiggs' Fifth Infantry with lancers, a maneuver foiled by the American position and the tenacity of the men holding it. When the Fifth Infantry tried to counter-charge, however, blinding smoke from grass ignited by United States artillery stymied the effort. The day devolved into a stalemate, ending with the Mexicans in their original lines and the stubborn left still offering a fight.[15]

So the Battle of Palo Alto marked a limited success for the United States and mainly because of

Twiggs' brigade. Yet many officers feared that the next day would tell a different story, and Twiggs relayed their preference to stay put and fortify their positions. However, Taylor, anxious to reach Fort Texas, ordered the army to resume its march the next morning, 9 May, only to encounter the Mexicans in a very defensible position at an old river bed called Resaca de la Palma. About ten feet deep, several miles long, and covered with trees, the depression provided excellent shelter for opposing the American advance. The two forces made contact at 2:00 p.m. with Twiggs' brigade again manning the right. Taylor believed that the fate of Mexican artillery would decide this engagement, but his initial attempts to reduce the batteries met little success. Twiggs then ordered the Fifth Infantry forward as advance skirmishers so his extreme right could move ahead to capture a key battery. By then, the Fourth Infantry had overrun another Mexican battery causing a panicked Mexican rush across the Rio Grande.[16]

Twiggs' performance in these opening engagements would impress important people at home as it did Taylor in the field. Old Rough and Ready commended Old Davy for being "particularly active on both days in executing my orders and directing operations of the right wing."[17]

When the war became official and the American invasion commenced in earnest, the United States Army entered undefended Matamoros on 17 May with Twiggs' regimental bands blaring "Yankee Doodle."[18] He had the almost complete confidence of Taylor, who appointed Twiggs military governor of the town with orders to seize all military stores left behind by the retreating Mexican Army. However, in June when Congress created ranks for additional general staff officers and Polk elevated Taylor to major general and made Stephen W. Kearney and David Twiggs brigadiers, the reward was alloyed for Twiggs. Winfield Scott wrote to Secretary Marcy that Kearney had received the first slot, making him the senior brigadier even though Twiggs' colonelcy had precedence. Taylor made no move to intercede as he had in the Worth controversy.[19] In fact, Taylor worried about his nettlesome old veteran, warning a friend that Twiggs was "quite uncertain in his friendships, [and that] he [was] a man that one should never place himself in the power of."[20] Nevertheless, by the end of June 1846, Twiggs finally had become a regular general officer.

Twiggs and Taylor both believed that Mexico would soon sue for peace, but soon it became apparent that the Mexican Army massed near Monterrey had no intention of laying down arms. Taylor made plans to move on the town by way of Camargo. Twiggs again marched overland to secure supply lines from the coast, arriving in Camargo on 21 August to find General Worth, who had returned to the army. With the Mexicans in front of them, however, the American officers had no time to indulge personal animosities.[21]

Taylor's plan for assailing Monterrey called for Twiggs to divert attention by assailing two formidable artillery emplacements at the northeast while Worth staged the main attack and enveloped the town from the northwest. However, Mexican vigilance compelled Taylor to reverse the role of his two commanders, much to Twiggs' chagrin.[22] When Taylor ordered Twiggs to attack early on 21 September, he caught Old Davy more than by surprise--he caught him indisposed. Twiggs later explained that he "took a dose of medicine last night, as [he] always [did] before a battle so as to loosen [his] bowels; for a bullet striking the belly when the bowels are loose might pass through the intestines without cutting them."[23] Had he known that the battle was going to start so early, he would have taken the medicine earlier, but as it was, he had to turn over his command to a subordinate while he nursed a case of self-inflicted diarrhea.[24]

Twiggs did not appear on the field until shortly after noon. Jefferson Davis' Mississippi Volunteers had taken the outer bastion called Fort Tenería and were suffering a withering fire from an interior fort called El Diablo. Although still weak, Twiggs marshalled his faculties, shouting, "Go on! Go on! Secure your victory!" And "in his striking peculiar manner,"[25] he rallied his men, urging pursuit and placing batteries so that El Diablo was successfully assailed from the rear.[26]

Though Twiggs had inspired his men at Monterrey, it must have been difficult to overlook his absence at the start of the engagement. Taylor, preparing for a final assault the next day, placed Twiggs

in command of the reserves and intended to use Worth's regulars and John A. Quitman's volunteers to take the city. In the three days of fighting, Twiggs lost 179 officers and men killed and wounded in some of the fiercest fighting of the war. But he had also been missing from the field during crucial moments.[27]

It was perhaps another stroke of good fortune then that James Polk and his War Department had decided that Taylor's army, isolated in northern Mexico, could not strike the decisive blows to win the war. Polk authorized a more direct approach calling for an army to land at Vera Cruz and march inland to Mexico City. Winfield Scott, not the increasingly popular Zachary Taylor, would lead this expedition. So Taylor received "Scott's sugared letter" informing him that he was taking most of Taylor's men, and by 4 January 1847 regulars were already departing for Scott's rendezvous point at Tampico. Twiggs and his men formed part of this transfer, leaving for Tampico on 14 January, uncertain of his future because his new commanding officer, Winfield Scott, had never liked Twiggs and had taken no pains to hide that. Old Davy was convinced that the next two months would be the determining ones for his career.[28]

It is not apparent why Scott disliked Twiggs. Scott considered William Worth a friend--although that could change-- so it was possible that the Twiggs-Worth controversy had colored Scott's opinion. During the coming campaign, Scott would remark that Twiggs was not a qualified general "in the presence or in the absence of the enemy," but even so, Scott had to admit that Old Davy's men mysteriously performed better than those under other officers.[29]

Hence, Twiggs' objective in the second phase of the Mexican War became as much winning over Winfield Scott as it did defeating Santa Anna. He partly addressed the problem with traditional obsequiousness: he exclaimed loudly and often that General Scott was the greatest general of his time and that Taylor should not even be compared to him. Scott, after all, had proven susceptible to such blandishments. However, Old Davy's rapport with his men remained the most productive way to impress his suspicious superior.[30] He took care to see that they were fed and comfortable, and his quartermaster Captain Robert Allen, proved so efficient that Twiggs boasted "that his division was the best supplied in the army."[31]

He also spruced himself up, undoubtedly aware of the different temperaments of Zachary "Old Rough and Ready" Taylor and Winfield "Old Fuss and Feathers" Scott. So Twiggs trimmed his hair and beard, the latter having grown down over this large chest to make his resemble, in the words of one observer, a biblical prophet. The grooming also had the felicitous result of depriving the ticks infesting Tampico of a home.[32]

Twiggs also would perform adequately within Scott's strategic plans, beginning with the siege of Vera Cruz. The American landing on 9 March came ashore unchallenged at Collado Beach, but Vera Cruz intended to resist, so Scott planned a siege. Twiggs' division, ashore last, had farther to march to its positions northwest of the city, pushing through rough terrain and encountering stiff opposition at Vergara. Yet by the thirteenth, Twiggs was in place to begin what became a miserable and occasionally deadly siege. It lasted seventeen days, each of which saw Twiggs and the rest of the army inching closer to the city, frequently without American artillery support. "My boys will have to take it yet with their bayonets," Twiggs said, but the engineers finally brought enough guns to bear to force the city to surrender on the twenty-ninth.[33]

From this good start, Twiggs' performance only improved. Scott had him lead the march from Vera Cruz toward Jalapa in spite of Worth's waspish objections and he apparently trusted Twiggs to exercise initiative and prudence in the process. The march toward Jalapa emboldened him, because discarded clothes and knapsacks revealed an enemy in flight. Doubling his pace to catch the Mexicans before they could dig into a defensible position, Twiggs encountered picket fire and pulled within four miles of Santa Anna's fortifications at Cerro Gordo, stopping there on 11 April to begin demonstrating why he was an adequate, but never brilliant field tactician. Prudence won out over initiative and the urging of subordinates who pleaded with Twiggs to attack.[34]

Reconnaissance on the twelfth revealed Mexican weaknesses, but a high pass overlooked by two

large hills, El Telégrafo and Cerro Gordo, and a smaller one, La Atalaya, seemed to hide dangers and pose perils too daunting for Old Davy. He sent messages to Scott, who moved forward briskly and who also dispatched Captain Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant P.G.T. Beauregard to help Twiggs scout enemy positions. Beauregard confirmed the earlier report that the Mexican left was weak, so Twiggs scheduled an attack for the fourteenth. That attack never happened because an even more prudent officer, Major General Robert Patterson, believed the Mexican position spelled disaster. He overruled Twiggs and canceled the attack. Not until Scott arrived and Robert E. Lee reconfirmed the vulnerability of the Mexican left was the American assault finally scheduled for the fifteenth. The delay would be costly.[35]

"Charge them to hell," Twiggs told his men as they prepared to reduce La Atalaya from the path Capt. Lee had discovered the day before.[36] Yet Scott only wanted Twiggs to take the hill and send a brigade to cut off the Mexican retreat. He accomplished his first objective, but he failed to cut off the enemy's retreat and haplessly charged the heavily fortified El Telégrafo instead. On the next day, supported by batteries now atop La Atalaya, Twiggs did take El Telégrafo, moving through difficult terrain covered thickly with trees, mesquite, and cactus. Yet again he did not cut off the Mexican line of retreat, so Santa Anna and about half of his army escaped.[37]

However, Scott forgave the error. He had seen Twiggs leading the chase of fleeing Mexicans down El Telégrafo and was gratified by the capture of more than three thousand soldiers and most of the Mexican supplies. Twiggs' charge, he said, was "the most beautiful sight that he had ever witnessed,"[38] and his official report to Secretary of War William Marcy lauded "Twiggs, who was in the immediate command of the advanced forces," for earning "high credit by his judgment, spirit and energy."[39]

A true mark of Twiggs' ascendancy in Scott's estimation was the declining fortunes of William Worth. Immediately after investing Vera Cruz, Twiggs and Worth had resumed their feud over rank. Worth had recently been brevetted to major general; so Twiggs had enlisted the help of "friends [who would] succeed in getting a brevet for him, bearing the same date, or an older one than Gen. W," as one of the junior officer noted, adding that Old Davy was "too cunning to permit Gen. W. to outgeneral him."[40] In the foreground of such activity, Worth did little to help his status when he protested Scott's choice of Twiggs to lead the advance from Vera Cruz. Scott impatiently told Worth that such duties would rotate, that "others shall have it in turn, and I will not do injustice to please my best friend."[41]

Worth's behavior after Cerro Gordo sealed his fate. Sent ahead to secure the important town of Puebla, he did so without a fight but only by granting a generous concession to its inhabitants that allowed Mexicans accused of killing American soldiers to be tried by Mexican courts. When Scott and Twiggs arrived in Puebla, they found Worth's men disgruntled by the peace convention and Worth himself unnerved by fears that the Mexicans were trying to poison the entire American army. Scott tried to put things right, gently setting aside the convention and soothing his temperamental friend, but Worth was deeply offended and demanded a Court of Inquiry. Scott obliged him, but it shows the degree of his impatience that he appointed Twiggs as one of the presiding board. The Court not only endorsed Scott's action on the convention, it also recommended a public reprimand of Worth. That Scott would not do, but he did circulate the reprimand to divisional and brigade commanders, an act that earned him Worth's everlasting hatred. Scott was on a growing list.[42]

As for Twiggs, Cerro Gordo was to be the high point of his war in Mexico. Although he would accompany Scott to Mexico City, participating in the rescue of Gideon Pillow's command at San Gerónimo and the assault on the convent of San Mateo at Churubusco, and finally providing a diversion at the south gate of Mexico City during the assault on Chapultepec, his exploits would never match his attack at El Telégrafo. After the truce, Scott assigned him to clean up the inefficiencies of supply from Vera Cruz, an important if unglamorous job, as was his service as military governor of Vera Cruz during the long armistice that awaited the final peace. Twiggs proved himself reliable and steady while in Vera Cruz from which he departed fifteen days after the ratification of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.[43]

The Mexican War had boosted David E. Twiggs' career. His political connections and his reliable

conduct during the war rapidly swept him along in the tide of wholesale promotions that would again become scarce in the peacetime service. As many younger men resigned their commissions for the greener pastures of civilian life, Old Davy stayed in the military, the only life he knew, and one in which it was as likely for a man to prosper as much by his luck as his talents. And in the event of another war, he believed he could rise still higher.

For good fortune smiles also on the steady, and success need not bless only the brilliant. On the morning of 7 August 1847, David E. Twiggs had ridden into Puebla's town square to wave his hat and shout above the din of stamping horses, "Now my lads, give them a Cerro Gordo shout!"[44] In one voice his boys had answered him, and the twenty-one piece band had led the way out of town toward Mexico City and the sure success of the vigilant and the quick, the lucky and the good, all among whom Twiggs could that day count himself. Mercifully, he could not have known that his time had come--and was already on the wane. Next time, in the next war, he would not be so lucky.

ENDNOTES

[1] William H. Browne, "My Campaign Reminiscences," *Knickerbocker Magazine*, 45 (1854), 2: 118-19.

[2] Jeanne T. Heidler, "Embarrassing Situation: The Surrender of United States Forces in Texas, 1861," *Military History of the Southwest*, 21 (Fall 1991): 157-172.

[3] Jeanne T. Heidler, "The Military Career of David E. Twiggs," Ph.D. Dissertation, Auburn University, 1988.

[4] Theophilus Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons; An Authentic Account of Service in Florida, Mexico, Virginia, and the Indian Country Including the Personal Recollections of Prominent Officers* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, Publisher, 1875), 93; also see W.A. Croffut (ed.), *Fifty Years in Camp and Field: Diary of Major-General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, U.S.A.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 43-44.

[5] Darwin Payne, "Camp Life in the Army of Occupation: Corpus Christi, July 1845 to March 1846," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, 73 (1970): 331; Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 94; K. Jack Bauer, *Zachary Taylor: Soldier, Planter, Statesman of the Old Southwest* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 120-21; and John S.D. Eisenhower, *So Far From God: The U.S. War with Mexico* (New York: Random House, 1989), 34.

[6] K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1974), 19.

[7] Twiggs was senior to Worth by two years as colonel, having been made colonel of the Second Dragoons on 8 June 1836. Worth was promoted to Colonel of the Eighth Infantry on 7 July 1838 and given his brevet on 1 March 1842 for his service in Florida. See Fayette Robinson, *An Account of the Organization of the Army of the United States; with Biographies of Distinguished Officers of All Grades* (2 vols.,Philadelphia: E.H. Butler and Company, 1848), II, 124; also see Bauer, *Mexican War*, 35; and Bernard A. DeVoto, *The Year of Decision, 1846* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1943), 105.

[8] Twiggs to Jesup, 16 December 1845 in David E. Twiggs Papers, Office of the Quartermaster General Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1915, Record Group 92, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Croffut (ed.), *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, 204, 19 December 1845; and Grady McWhiney, *Braxton Bragg and Confederate Defeat* (2 vols., New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), I, 55.

[9] Diary of Lieut. Daniel Harvey Hill, 15, 29, 65, Typescript, (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina); also see Lloyd Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), 189; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 35-6; Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Charles L. Webster and Company, 1894), 63.

[10] Bauer, *Mexican War*, 36; George Gordon Meade, *Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major-General, United States Army* (2 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), I, 88.

[11] Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 96; and Freeman Cleaves, *Meade of Gettysburg* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), 23.

[12] George F. Price, *Across the Continent with the Fifth Cavalry* (New York: n.p., 1883; reprint ed., New York: Antiquarian Press, 1959), 250; and Robinson, *Organization of the Army*, II, 124-25.

[13] Captain Seth Thornton took Companies C and F on the evening of the twenty-fourth to patrol the river, and the following day they were ambushed by Mexican regulars, who killed or captured most of them. See Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 96, 101; Price, *Across the Continent...*, 250. Twiggs' brigade consisted of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Infantry regiments, three companies of the Second Dragoons, and Ringgold's battery of light artillery. Taylor marched his men out of Fort Texas at 3:30 p.m., traveling eighteen miles before camping at midnight. The army proceeded the rest of the way to Point Isabel the following day. See Bauer, *Mexican War*, 49; Twiggs to Davis, 4 May 1846, in Haskell M. Monroe, Jr., and James T. McIntosh (eds.) *The Papers of Jefferson Davis* (4 vols., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971-1983), II, 577; Bauer, *Zachary Taylor*, 150-51.

[14] Oliver Otis Howard, *General Taylor* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 106; Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 101; and Samuel G. French, *Two Wars: An Autobiography of Gen. Samuel G. French, An Officer in the Armies of the United States and the Confederate States, A Graduate from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, 1843* (Nashville: Confederate Veteran, 1901), 49.

[15] Albert G. Brackett, *History of the United States Calvary, From the Formation of the Federal Government to the 1st of June, 1863* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1865; reprint edition, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 55; Report of Secretary of War, 5 December 1846 in United States Congress, 29th Congress, 2nd Session, House Executive Document 4, hereafter cited as H.D. 4; Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 102-3; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 54; Seymour V. Conner and Odie B. Faulk, *North American Divided, The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 38; French, *Two Wars*, 49; Report of Lieut. Col. James S. McIntosh to Maj. W.W. Bliss, 2 December 1846, James Simmons McIntosh Papers, (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina); William Seaton Henry, *Campaign Sketches of the War with Mexico* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847; reprint edition, New York: Arno Press, 1973), 91; Henry Montgomery, *The Life of Major-General Zachary Taylor, Twelfth President of the United States* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, n.d.), 127-28.

[16] Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 103, 105-06; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 59-62; Report of Lieut. John A. Whitall to Twiggs, 5 August 1846, McIntosh Papers.

[17] Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 106-07.

[18] Bauer, *Mexican War*, 81; Montgomery, *Zachary Taylor*, 182; and George W. Smith and Charles Judah (eds.), *Chronicles of Gringos: U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1968), 76.

[19] Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 114; Brainard Dyer, *Zachary Taylor* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1946), 180; Montgomery, *Zachary Taylor*, 185-86; James K. Polk, *The Diary of James K. Polk During His Presidency, 1845-1849* (4 vols., Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1910), I, 493; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 74; Robinson, *Organization of the Army*, I, 107; Scott to Marcy, 6 July 1846, *American State Papers, Military Affairs* (7 vols., Washington: Gales and Seton, 1832-1861), VI, 187.

[20] Taylor to Dr. R.C. Wood, 23 August 1846, in Zachary Taylor, William K. Bixby, (ed.), *Letters of Zachary Taylor from the Battlefields of the Mexican War* (Rochester, N.Y.: The Genesee Press, 1908), 47. Twiggs had no idea what he had done to warrant Winfield Scott's ill-will, but he was at least grateful for having been promoted over what he suspected were Scott's probable objections. See Twiggs to George Twiggs, 10 August 1846, Levi Twiggs Papers, Personal Papers Collection, (Marine Corps Historical Center, History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.)

[21] Twiggs to George Twiggs, 10 August 1846, Levi Twiggs Papers; Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon with the Second Dragoons*, 177; W. J. Hughes, *General William J. Hardee, Old Reliable* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), 30; Edmund Kirby Smith to mother, 18 August 1846, Edmund Kirby Smith Papers, (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, North Carolina); Jefferson Davis to Joseph E. Davis, in Monroe and McIntosh (eds.) *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, III, 115; Brackett, *History of the United States Cavalry*, 101; Dyer, *Zachary Taylor*, 195; Bauer, *Zachary Taylor*, 175.

[22] Brackett, *History of the United States Cavalry*, 62-3; Grant, *Memoirs*, 68; and Taylor to Adjutant General, October 9, 1846 in T.B. Thorpe, *Our Army at Monterrey; Being a Correct Account of the Proceedings and Events which Occurred to the "Army of Occupation" under the Command of Major General Taylor, from the Time of Leaving Matamoros to the Surrender of Monterrey; With a Description of the Three Days' Battle and the Storming of Monterrey: The Ceremonies of the Capitulation* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847), 156.

[23] John Reese Kenly, *Memoirs of a Maryland Volunteer: War with Mexico, in the Years 1846-7-8* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1873), 119.

[24] Joseph E. Chance, *Jefferson Davis's Mexican War Regiment* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 42; Connor and Faulk, *North American Divided*, 49; Alfred Hoyt Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict: The War with Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 149; Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant*, 174-75; John Edward Weems, *To Conquer a Peace: The War Between the United States and Mexico* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday and Company, 1977), 226.

[25] Daniel Russell to J. Davis, 18 October 1846 in Monroe and McIntosh (eds.), *Papers of Jefferson Davis*, III, 74; also see Memorandum on Battle of Monterrey to Jefferson Davis, 1846, III, 103.

[26] Butler to Bliss, n.d., and Taylor to Adjutant General, October 9, 1846, both in Thorpe, *Our Army at Monterrey*, 164-65 and 158-60, respectively. As the men approached the fort, two Mexican officers stood on top of the battlements, holding their swords by the points to indicate they were surrendering. Several of the Americans, not realizing the meaning of this gesture, called out to fire on the two men. Twiggs rode up, shouting, "For God's sake, don't shoot that man." But as he completed the order, a musket cracked, killing one of the Mexicans. The other ducked behind the wall, still holding up his sword. See Barna Upton to Elias Upton, 12 December 1846, in Barna Upton, "Our First Foreign War," William F. Goetzman (ed.), *American Heritage* 17 (June 1966): 96.

As part of Twiggs' command pushed beyond El Diablo into Monterrey, it discovered it was low on ammunition and sent Lieut. Ulysses S. Grant back to Twiggs to collect some. Before Grant could return, the men had been forced to retreat to Twiggs' position. See Hamlin Garland, "Grant in the Mexican War," *McClure's Magazine* 8 (1897), 4: 372; and Garland to Twiggs, 29 September 1846, in United States Congress, 30th Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document 17, hereafter cited as H.D. 17.

[27] At the end of the day's fighting, Major-General Butler had been wounded compelling Taylor to elevate Twiggs to second-in-command. See Taylor to Adjutant General, October 9, 1846, and Twiggs to Bliss, September 19, 1846, both in Thorpe, *Our Army at Monterrey*, 158-60 and 180, respectively; also see Samuel C. Reid, Jr., *The Scouting Expeditions of McCulloch's Texas Rangers; or, The Summer and Fall Campaign of the Army of the United States in Mexico--1846; Including Skirmishes with the Mexicans, and . . . the Storming of Monterrey; Also, the Daring Scouts at Buena Vista; Together with Anecdotes, Incidents, Descriptions of Country, and Sketches of the Lives of Hays, McCulloch, and Walker* (Philadelphia: G.B. Zieber and Company, 1848), 196.

[28] Bauer, *Mexican War*, 234-35; Taylor to James Buchanan, August 29, 1847 in Bixby, *Letters of Zachary Taylor*, 180; Col. F.S. Belton to wife, January 12, 1847, in Edmund Kirby Smith Papers; Bauer, *Zachary Taylor*, 191-92; Twiggs to George Twiggs, January 13, 1847, Levi Twiggs Papers.

[29] Charles Winslow Elliott, *Winfield Scott, the Soldier and the Man* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1937), 453. While he could motivate his men, Twiggs often had difficulties with his officers. Robert E. Lee later told a story about an incident on the march to Mexico City when Twiggs became exasperated with his junior officers taking liberties with his orders. After listening in silence while one of them explained why circumstance had caused him to disobey orders, Twiggs finally interrupted, saying, "Captain, I know that you can prove that you are right, and that my order was wrong; in fact, you gentlemen are always right, but for God's sake, do wrong sometimes." Douglas Southall Freeman, *R.E. Lee: A Biography*, (4 vols., New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), III, 235-36.

[30] Robert Anderson, *An Artillery Officer in the Mexican War, 1846-47: Letters of Robert Anderson, Captain 3rd Artillery, U.S.A.*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's sons, n.d.), 211.

[31] James Fowler Rusling, *Men and Things I Saw in Civil War Days* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1899), 174-75.

[32] Meade, *Life and Letters*, I, 174; Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict*, 190; William Starr Myers (ed.), *Mexican War Diary of George B. McClellan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917, reprint ed., New York: Da Capo Press, 1972) 48; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 238; Robert Anderson to wife, February 2, 1847, in Anderson, *Artillery Officer in the Mexican War*, 27; and Dabney Herndon Maury, *Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), 29-30.

[33] K. Jack Bauer, "Veracruz Expedition of 1847," *Military Affairs* 20 (1956): 166; John F.C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles of the U.S.A.* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1942), 149; K. Jack Bauer, *Surfboats and Horse Marines: U.S. Naval Operations in the Mexican War, 1846-48* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1969), 78, 82; and Diary of Lieut. Daniel Harvey Hill, 105, 109, 112, 115-17, 138; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 241, 249-52; Scott to Secretary of War William L. Marcy, March 12, 1847 and Twiggs to Capt. H.L. Scott, March 15, 1847, in United States Congress, 30th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Executive Document 1, 216, 245, hereafter cited as S.D.1; McCall to M., March 13, 1847 in George McCall, *Letters from the Frontiers* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Company, 1868; reprint ed., Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1974), 479; Edmund Kirby Smith to mother, April 3, April 8, 1847, Edmund Kirby Smith Papers; Jacob Oswandel, *Notes of the Mexican War, 1846-47-48*, revised ed. (Philadelphia: n.p., 1885), 74; Ephraim Kirby Smith to wife, March 13, 1847, in Emma Jerome Blackwood (ed.), *To Mexico with Scott: Letters of Captain E. Kirby Smith to his Wife* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1917), 116; Edward Hake Phillips, "The Texas Norther," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 54 (July 1955): 7; Smith and Judah (eds.), *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 188; Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict*, 213; George Ballentine, *Autobiography of an English Soldier in the United States Army* 2 vols. (2 vols., London: Hurst and Blackett, Publishers, 1853), II, 7; "Recollections of the Rifles," *Southern Literary Messenger* 33 (1861): 372; Croffut (ed.), *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, 241: and General Orders, no. 80, 30 March 1847 in S.D. 1, 239. American losses had been light: between fifty and sixty men were killed or wounded, Twiggs losing nine wounded and three killed. See *The American Eagle*, 6 April 1847. Twiggs' quotation can be found in Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant*, 199.

[34] Oswandel, *Notes on the Mexican War*, 108; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 261-63; Robert G. Hartje, *Van Dorn: The Life and Times of a Confederate General* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967), 36; D.E. Livingston-Little (ed.), *The Mexican War Diary of Thomas D. Tennery*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 78; Connor and Faulk, *North America Divided*, 113; and Logan U. Reavis, *The Life and Military Services of General William Selby Harney* (St. Louis: Bryan, Brand and Company, 1878), 195-96.

[35] Reavis, *Life and Military Services*, 196; Bauer, *Mexican War*, 263; T. Harry Williams, ed., *With Beauregard in Mexico: Mexican War Reminiscences of P.G.T. Beauregard* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956), 12; Rodenbough, *From Everglade to Cañon...*, 139; Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 464; Daniel H. Hill, "Battle of Cerro Gordo," *Southern Quarterly Review*, 21 (January 1852), no. 41: 131; "Recollections of the Rifles," 373; Twiggs to Captain H.L. Scott, April 19, 1847, in S.D.1, 274; and Eisenhower, *So Far from God*, 277.

[36] Freeman, *R.E. Lee*, I, 243.

[37] After the battle, the detail in charge of removing Twiggs' battery was astonished that the guns had been brought to the top of the hill, especially since these men had considerable difficulty pulling only themselves up the hill. See Oswandel, *Notes of the Mexican War*, 137; also see Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 464-66; Ewell to mother, April 22, 1847, in Percy Gatlin Hamlin (ed.), *The Making of a Soldier: Letters of General R.S. Ewell*, (Richmond: Whittet and Shepperson, 1935), 65; General Order no. 111, April 17, 1847, Edward Mansfield, *The Mexican War: A History of its Origin* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1848), 186; Robinson, *Organization of the Army*, I, 274; Myers (ed.), *The Mexican War Diary of General George B. McClellan*, 79; Scott to Marcy, April 23, 1847, in S.D. 1, 261; Max L. Heyman, Jr., *Prudent Soldier: A Biography of Major General E.R.S. Canby, 1817-1873* (Glendale, Cal.: Arthur H. Clarke Co., 1859), 64; Lee to wife, April 25, 1847, in Stanley F. Horn (ed.), *The Robert E. Lee Reader* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1949), 57.

Later there would be considerable controversy concerning which brigade had been the most responsible for the victory. The dispute centered around Twiggs' report of the battle that gave most of the credit for the victory to Harney, much to the chagrin of another officer. A court of inquiry later ruled that the other officer had taken a crest of the hill, but that Harney's men took the main summit. See Hill, "Cerro Gordo," 143; also Anderson to wife, July 28, 1847, in Anderson, *Artillery Officer in the Mexican War*, 267.

[38] Myers (ed.), *Mexican War Diary of General George B. McClellan*, 80.

[39] Scott to Marcy, April 23, 1847, in Sen. Doc. 1, 261.

[40] Anderson to wife, April 7, 1847, in Anderson, *Artillery Officer in the Mexican War*, 122.

[41] Parker E. Scammon, "A Chapter in the Mexican War," *Magazine of American History* 14 (December 1885): 573-74.

[42] Croffut (ed.), *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, 257, May 29 1847; Ephraim Kirby Smith to wife, May 29, 1847, in Blackwood, *To Mexico with Scott*, 174; and Elliott, *Winfield Scott*, 486-7.

[43] Heidler, "Military Career of Twiggs," 124-34; Robert Ryal Miller, *Shamrock and Sword: the Saint Patrick's Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 85; and Alan Peskin (ed.), *Volunteers: The Mexican War Journals of Private Richard Coulter and Sergeant Thomas Barclay, Company E, Second Pennsylvania Infantry* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 163.

[44] Charles L. Dufour, *Gentle Tiger: The Gallant Life of Roberdeau Wheat* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), 29; Lewis, *Captain Sam Grant*, 224.

BUENA VISTA: ALL WOOL AND A MILE WIDE

Bob Burke
Descendants of the Mexican War Veterans

My name is Bob Burke, and I am Vice-President of the Descendants of the Mexican War Veterans. My interest in the Mexican War stems from my great grandfather, Bob Burke, an Irish immigrant from County Cork, who fled to the United States during the first year of the great potato famine. He found no work in Boston or on the East Coast. He worked his way inland to the midwestern states, along with thousands of other Irishmen, who had no trade except farming.

Bob Burke was recruited into the U.S. Army in Alton, Illinois, by General John E. Wool. He followed General Wool down the Mississippi River and over to Port Lavaca, Texas. He received his basic training at San Antonio and was part of Wool's army as it marched through Mexico for nine hundred miles over a period of six months. Bob Burke fought with Company A, 2nd Illinois Volunteers, in the battle of Buena vista, was wounded, recovered from his injuries, reenlisted for the duration of the war, and served under General Wool in the Army of Occupation of Northern Mexico. When the war was over, Bob Burke returned to Alton, Illinois, to become a saddle and harness maker, a trade he learned in the army.

Who was General John E. Wool? He was a very strange man indeed--All Wool and a Mile Wide.

It was two months before the battle of Buena Vista. General Wool and his Army of the Center arrived at Agua Nueva, which is located twenty-one miles south of Saltillo, on December 21, 1846. Late the next day, General Wool and some of his staff set off for Saltillo to confer with Generals Butler and Worth. It grew dark early. The gloom of the valley was aggravated by a dense fog. It was so dark that the officers had to dismount and feel their way through part of the valley that was so narrow it was almost a canyon.

Two days later, General Wool and Captain Carleton returned to Agua Nueva during the daytime. In the sunlight the valley with all of its grounds and the mountains surrounding it was plainly visible. When they reached the pass of Angostura, Wool halted and after viewing the ground exclaimed:

> This is the spot of all others I have yet seen in which I should select for battle, were I obliged with a small army to fight a large one. The network of deeply worn channels on the right will completely protect that flank and the heights on the left will command the road, while the ravines in the front, which extend back to the mountain on that side, will cripple the movements of the enemy, should he attempt to turn that flank.

As they continued on their journey to Agua Nueva, General Wool expanded on his beliefs. Captain Carleton communicated his opinions to the other officers at the camp. Many of them visited the spot and agreed. It would be two months before Santa Anna would arrive with his Mexican Army, but General Wood had already selected the site for the battle of Buena Vista in the Angostura Pass, a narrow valley where the line of defense would be a mile wide.

General Wool planned the defense, executed his plan, and was in command of the troops when the battle started. He had been a combat infantry officer in the War of 1812, was a better tactician than General Zachary Taylor, was skilled in the logistics of battle, had never lost a battle, had trained volunteers for this war--especially the 1st and 2nd Illinois--so they were as skilled and disciplined as the regulars. On top of all this, General Wool outranked General Taylor.

Why then did Zachary Taylor get all of the glory? General Taylor had just won four outstanding battles. He was the darling of the Whigs, and they wanted him to be the next president of the United States. James K. Polk was a Democrat and not the most popular president. Taylor was the "Rough and Ready Warrior." He had the glamour. The soldiers loved him. As far as they were concerned, he couldn't be whipped. When he dressed for battle, Taylor looked like a slob. He made good newspaper copy and was in the headlines as the "Hero of the Day."

Wool, on the other hand, was called "Old Granny," "Old Fussy." He was decidedly old womanish. There was an intense hatred of Wool by many of the volunteers because of his strict discipline and rough training. Wool was also dull and uninteresting to the press.

John E. Wool was a capable and skilled general. At Agua Nueva, he terminated his march of nine hundred miles over a period of six months through enemy country without shedding a drop of blood. The army had leveled hills, filled ravines, constructed bridges, crossed rivers of difficult passage, covered sandy plains called the Mexican deserts, scaled mountains, and concluded the march without scarcely losing a man. The state of discipline was the envy of all military man. The annals of history furnished no other instance of such a march as General Wool's. It was not surpassed by the ten thousand Greeks under Xenophon. The Greeks were retreating, but Wool's army was advancing as they converted enemies into friends. They were considered protectors rather than conquerors.

In the beginning of the march, when the army arrived at the Rio Grande, opposite the Mexican town of Presidio Rio Grande, General Wool issued the following General Order:

> Tomorrow, we cross the Rio Grande and occupy the territory of our enemies. We have not come here to make war upon the people or peasantry of the country, but to compel the government of Mexico to render justice to the United States. The people therefore, who do not take up arms against the United States and remain quiet and peaceful at their homes will not be molested or interfered with either as regards their persons or property, and all who furnish supplies will be treated kindly and whatever is received from them will be liberally paid for.

Incidentally, the Rio Grande was three hundred years wide and three and one half feet deep. A Flying Bridge was built by Lt. William Franklin of the U.S. Army Engineers, using pontoon constructed in San Antonio, Texas. Observing the operation was Capt. Robert E. Lee.

The army of 2,800 troops, 200 heavily laden wagons drawn by mules, horse cavalry, and cannon crossed the river and entered into enemy territory. There was never the slightest sign of a spirit hostile to the American Army by the Mexicans. Wool did not treat them as enemies. He did not subject them to humiliation. He did not require a formal surrender of their towns or villages. He paid for all supplies and forage. This met with the approval of the Mexican people, because the only market they had for their products were the barbarian tribes to the north, who seldom had money to pay for their supplies.

General John Wool was somewhat of a martinet, a strict disciplinarian, who maintained good order. There were few or no signs of the looting, drunkenness, murder, and rape, which occurred among the volunteers of other armies in Mexico. No soldiers were better cared for, none suffered less from camp

disease, none were better fed, none were braver, and none fought better than Wool's volunteers. Everything Wool did was by the book. He was harsh and severe. He was just and impartial. He was fearless of the consequences of his decisions.

If John E. Wool was such a great general, why was he barely mentioned in stories of the battle of Buena Vista? The history books skimmed over his historic march through Mexico, and little has been written in the history books about his year as commander of the Army of Occupation in Northern Mexico. I have concluded that General Wool was a loner. I decided to investigate further. There must be a reason why!

General Wool had no friends, and General Wool had no enemies. General Wool wrote no books, letters, or memoirs. Two individuals wrote books about him. Wool did not hesitate to supply them with the facts, without coloring or exaggeration. Wool gave no opinions, neither praised or censured anyone. His recollection of the facts was perfect and was corroborated by the official reports.

After the Mexican War, the American generals were awarded swords. The English rewarded their heroes with titles such as the Duke of Wellington. The French granted country villas. We gave swords. Yet, Congress passed up General Wool. His hometown of Troy and his state of New York did bestow swords, banquets, parades, and a cannon salute when he returned for a visit.

We know that General Wool stayed in the U.S. Army. Various Civil War publications mentioned him ever so slightly as Brigadier General John E. Wool, the white-haired veteran of the War of 1812, who commanded at Fort Monroe at Hampton Roads.

General Wool was born in Orange County, New York. His was a humble beginning in a country town. His father was a revolutionary soldier. John Wool was unschooled. He was self-educated and had a passion for books and for reading. He was a fine individual according to his neighbors.

At the start of the War of 1812, Wool assisted in organizing a volunteer corps. For this he was appointed to a captaincy in the 13th Infantry. Capt. Wool fought with distinction in the battle of Queenstown and earned the rank of Major. He participated in the battle of Plattsburg and was one of the heroes. For this, President Madison conferred on him the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. After the war he stayed in the army and rose to the rank of Brigadier General in 1841.

For twenty-five years, Lt. Col. Wool served as the Inspector General for the Army. In this capacity, Col. Wool traveled north to south, east to west, and that included every state and territory in the Union. His work even took him to the capitals of Europe. On tours of inspection, he might have been in a bark canoe piloted by a single Indian gliding down the majestic rivers of the west, through vast and gloomy forests, where the sound of the ax had never been heard. He lived on biscuit and the chance game of the rifle. Later he might be at a banquet with the leaders of a foreign nation.

BINGO! This was it. General Wool was not only an army inspector, but The U.S. Army Inspector General. This molded his personality and his actions. Like other inspectors, he had no friends. He had no enemies. John Wool was a loner.

I speak from the experience of five years in the U.S. Army during World War II. As an officer, I became an Adjutant General of a Division. The all too frequent official visits of the Army Inspectors became a way of life. Inspectors were never friendly, but rather aloof, living by the book, which consisted of Army Regulations, General and Special Orders, instructional pamphlets, and everything else published by the Government Printing Office. An inspector had to find something wrong, or he wasn't doing his job. Inspectors are a strange lot, and that is the way General John E. Wool operated. He was very successful in the tasks he was assigned. However, in the U.S. Army, you must have lots of friends in the upper echelons if you are going to be promoted. Your enemies can also give you fame and publicity. Look at the famous generals: Grant, Custer, MacArthur, Patton.

Zachary Taylor became president of the United States. Jefferson Davis was president of the Confederacy. William Jenkins Worth was the namesake of Fort Worth, Texas, and the salt water inlet next to Palm Beach, Florida, is called Lake Worth. Robert E. Lee has hundreds of parks and boulevards

in the South named after him. Confederate Generals Braxton Bragg and John Bell Hood have big U.S. Army forts named after them.

Poor General John E. Wool was a general forgotten by the press, the government, the public, and now the history books. I couldn't even find when he died and where he was buried.

THE NEW MEXICAN "REVOLT" OF 1847 AND ITS EFFECT ON AMERICAN JURISPRUDENCE, 1850-1912

Robert J. Torrez
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If one were to compile a short list of events which had the most impact on the course of New Mexico history, it would surely include the founding of the European settlement by Diego de Vargas in 1598 and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Among more contemporary events, our imaginary list might include the arrival of the railroad in 1880, and most certainly, the event which changed the map and entire history of Mexico and North America, the Mexican - American War of 1846.

Within three months after war was declared in May 1846, General Stephen Watts Kearny and his Army of the West marched unopposed into New Mexico. The reasons why Kearny was able to take New Mexico without firing a shot are varied and complex, and beyond the scope of this discussion. Suffice it to note that on August 18, 1846, General Kearny and his troops entered the capital of Santa Fe, assembled the residents in the central plaza, and informed them he had taken possession of this northernmost portion of the Republic of Mexico. "We come as friends," he promised, "to better your condition and make you part of the Republic of the United States. We mean not to murder you or rob you of your property. . . . ."[1]

A few days later, August 22, perhaps anticipating that the lack of military opposition did not mean the entire population welcomed the new government with open arms, General Kearny issued another proclamation which contained a strong warning for the citizens of New Mexico. He carefully pointed out that his forces were equal to the task of suppressing any opposition, and warned it would be "folly or madness for any dissatisfied or discontented persons to think of resisting. . . ." [2]

There is little indication that the *Americanos* had anything to worry about. For the remainder of 1846, there was no overt opposition to the new government, and while war raged in Mexico, New Mexico seemed quiet.

But the silence was deceptive. In mid-December, Charles Bent, the civil governor, advised Colonel Sterling Price, who had been appointed New Mexico's military governor, that a group of men were trying to "excite" the citizens of New Mexico against the American government. Towards the end of the month, Governor Bent reported that seven "secondary conspirators," in what he described as a plot to overthrow the new government, had been arrested. He turned the suspects over to military authorities because he felt they could deal with them "more summarily and expeditiously" than the civil government. Two unnamed "leaders and prime movers" were still being sought.[3]

Despite the arrests, planning for a general uprising against the *Americanos* apparently continued. On January 19, 1847, a group of armed men attacked the home of Governor Bent at Don Fernando de Taos, seventy miles north of Santa Fe. By the end of the day, Governor Bent and six officials of the recently organized civil government lay dead. Within two days, the uprising had spread through much of northern New Mexico, and several *Americanos* and Mexicans supportive of the new government were killed.[4]

At Santa Fe, Colonel Price received word of Governor Bent's death on January 20th and learned the "rebels" were advancing towards the capital. On the 23rd, Colonel Price marched north from Santa Fe with nearly four hundred troops, including a company of volunteers recruited from among the *Americano* merchants, fur trappers and Santa Fe Trail freighters who were at the capital when Price received news of the "insurrection." Price also took several pieces of artillery which proved instrumental in the ensuing battles.[5] The following day, Colonel Price's expedition engaged and dispersed the New Mexican forces at the settlement of Canada, about thirty miles north of Santa Fe. Four days later, Price's force assaulted the Mexican position near Embudo, where a strategic gorge guarded the principal route to Taos. When the smoke settled, the American forces controlled the pass, and the New Mexicans were in retreat to Taos, where they regrouped and fortified themselves at the Indian Pueblo of Taos.

In the meantime, another force of American troops attacked the Mexican settlement of Mora, located east of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, forty miles southeast from Taos. The New Mexicans repulsed the initial assault on January 24th, but a week later the United States forces returned to Mora. On February 1, they mounted an artillery barrage which forced the New Mexicans to abandon their position in the town. Then, in a portent of actions to come, the Americans proceeded to raze Mora to the ground.

On the west side of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, Colonel Price continued his advance on Taos. On February 3, he marched through Don Fernando and commenced an artillery barrage on the Pueblo of Taos, where the New Mexicans and their Indian allies had fortified themselves. Late the following morning, Price's troops began an assault on two flanks of the pueblo. By mid-afternoon, the attackers had made their way past the outer defenses, but were unable to dislodge the New Mexicans from the church, whose massive adobe walls provided a large measure of protection from the artillery.

Finally, At 3:00 that afternoon, the Americans wheeled the largest gun they had--a six pounder--to within sixty yards of the church, and began to batter the wall at a spot where an earlier attempt to chop through with axes had been beaten back. When the wall was breached, the cannon was brought up to point-blank range, and several rounds of grape shot were poured into the hole.

The onslaught was too much for the brave defenders to resist, and a general retreat was ordered as the Americans stormed through the breach. Hundreds of Mexicans and Pueblo allies fled to the mountains, although fifty-one were reportedly cut down while attempting to escape. Various sources estimate that between 150 and 200 defenders died at the pueblo, although the actual number will probably never be known. Several dozen others were captured, including two men identified as leaders in the insurrection, Pablo Montoya and Tomas Romero. Romero was killed the following day, shot when he allegedly tried to escape.

On the 6th, Colonel Price convened a military court martial to try Pablo Montoya and several unnamed individuals, for "rebellious conduct," and for "exciting" people to rebel, and conspiring to rob wagons which carried United States funds.[6]

Pablo Montoya was tried that same day, convicted, and sentenced to hang. He was executed on the plaza of Don Fernando, the following day, February 7, 1847, between the hours of 11:00 in the morning and 2:00 in the afternoon.[7] It is not known what happened to the unnamed individuals who were to be court martialed with Montoya.

Following Montoya's execution at Taos, the scene shifted to Santa Fe, where a grand jury was convened on March 8. This jury, which was described by an observer as a "motley mixture - German,

French, natives of the United States and Spaniards,"[8] returned indictments for treason against four men believed to be the principal leaders and organizers of what has come to be known as the "Revolt of 1847."

The first of these indictments was brought against Antonio María Trujillo. On March 12, he was tried and convicted of the charge, and four days later, a sentence of death by hanging was imposed. April 16 was set as the date of execution.[9]

Trujillo's conviction and sentence apparently sent a shockwave through the community. In the days following Trujillo's trial, three other men, Pantaleón Archuleta, Trinidad Barcelo, and Pedro Vigil, were also indicted and tried on the same charge of treason. However, all three ended in hung juries, and by the time court adjourned, charges against these three had been dropped.

The reasons for this turn of events is unclear. It may be that the jury, after hearing the death sentence imposed upon Trujillo, simply no longer wanted to be part of any such further actions. It may also be because immediately following his conviction, Trujillo's attorney filed an appeal which questioned the authority of an American court to try a Mexican citizen for treason.

Regardless, within days of Trujillo's conviction and sentence, many individuals, including several territorial judges, the United States District Attorney, and even members of the jury which convicted him, were convinced Trujillo was "a proper subject for the mercy of the government" and joined to petition the President of the United States to suspend the sentence and pardon Trujillo.

President Polk, however, did not pardon Trujillo. Instead, Secretary of War W. L. Marcy, acknowledging it was probably not "proper use of the legal term" to convict Mexican citizens as traitors to the United States, authorized Colonel Price, as military governor, to use his own discretion and pardon Trujillo. The documentation is not clear, but every indication is Price subsequently exercised the pardon and released Trujillo, along with twenty-five other persons being held prisoner in Santa Fe. These were discharged, in the words of an official, "for want of testimony to indict them for Treason."

In the meantime, more than forty men, possibly the ones who were to have been court martialed with Pablo Montoya that past February, were still being held prisoner at Taos, and court was reconvened there on April 5. By then, there were only two individuals in custody, Polio Salazar and Francisco "Rovali" [Ulibarri], who the court felt had exercised a leadership role in the abortive rebellion and were worthy of being tried for treason. In addition, sixteen of the other prisoners were somehow singled out and indicted for murder, for the January 19 killing of Governor Bent and other American officials.[10]

On April 7, Polio Salazar was convicted of treason, and five of the other men were convicted of murder. Two days later, Salazar and these five men were hanged together at Taos. Polio Salazar, by virtue of the subsequent acquittal of Ulibarri, therefore attained the dubious distinction of being the only person actually convicted of the charge of treason and executed at what the history books have come to call the "Treason Trials" of 1847.

Official records provide no details of the April 9 executions which took the lives of Salazar and his five companions. Church burial records simply tell us that Father Antonio José Martínez, the famous Padre Martínez of Taos, buried five of the six the same day they were hanged. Into each burial entry is incorporated the following comment: "murió por sentencia judicial y le administré los santos sacramentos de penitencia y comunión."[11]

The only details we have about the events of that fateful day come from Lewis H. Garrard's book, *Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail*. First published in 1850, Garrard's eye witness account describes the last hours of the condemned men and their final walk from the jail to a gallows which had been erected on an empty field, 150 yards north of town.

As the prisoners and their guards, which included Garrard, neared the gallows, a wagon was driven under the crossbeam between two upright poles. The six condemned men were positioned carefully on a stout board which was placed across the rear end of the wagon. The men were so close together, Garrard noted, "they touched." After the ropes were adjusted around their necks, each was allowed to

say a few words to the sparse crowd which had gathered. Garrard continues:

> The one sentenced for treason [Polio Salazar] showed a spirit of martyrdom worthy of the cause for which he died--the liberty of his country. . . . His speech was firm asseverations of his own innocence, the unjustness of his trial, and the arbitrary conduct of his murderers. With a scowl, as the cap was pulled over his face, the last words he uttered between his gritting teeth were, "*Carajo, los Americanos*". . . .

After bidding each other farewell, the wagon was driven out from under them. Their bodies swayed back and forth, bumping against each other as they struggled against their bonds. As they slowly strangled to death, two of them managed to grasp each others hands, and for a few moments held each other in a firm grip, until unconsciousness, and then death, overtook them.[12] One wonders if these two were the ones identified in the burial records as Manuel and Isidro Romero, both from the nearby mountain settlement of Los Dolores, and quite probably cousins, if not brothers.[13]

Three days after Padre Martínez buried Salazar and his companions, the appalling spectacle of the executions and the continued condemnation of others prompted him to appeal for mercy to Colonel Price. He sent a runner to Santa Fe with two letters, the first addressed to Manuel Alvarez, a prominent merchant and United States Consul in residence at the capital. Padre Martínez informed Alvarez that District Court Judge Charles Beaubien was apparently planning to kill everyone in Taos. Already, he noted, a large number of households had been deprived of their men, and if the executions continued, soon there would be no one left to work and plant fields at this critical time of the year. He pleaded with Alvarez to accompany the runner when he delivered the other letter to Colonel Price and do what he could to put a stop to the suffering at Taos.[14]

Martínez' letter to Colonel Price is a poignant indictment of the proceedings in Taos. Besides the trials being held in English because the prosecuting and defense attorneys did not speak Spanish, he also noted that the juries, which condemned those being tried, were "a class of ignorant men . . . tainted with passion." The trials and executions at Taos, he concluded, had deteriorated beyond the need or desire for public vengeance and justice, into a "frightful" spectacle which was resented by everyone and was causing general discontent.[15]

We have no record of Price's response, if any, and the trials and executions at Taos continued. The extant documentation shows there were ten additional convictions for murder before the court adjourned on April 12. All ten were sentenced to death by hanging, and although church records note only two additional burials of those scheduled to hang, there is no reason to believe that any of the ten were spared. If that is so, these deaths would have brought the total number of executions from the Taos trials to sixteen.

With the closing of court at Taos, it appeared New Mexico's harsh introduction to American jurisprudence was over. But the summer of 1847 brought more tragedy into the lives of the United States' newest citizens.

In early July 1847, the capital was stunned when the bodies of three soldiers, a Lieutenant Brown and two enlisted men who had been missing since late June, were discovered near the settlement of El Valle, about forty miles east of Santa Fe. Suspicion immediately fell upon the residents of this isolated community, and warranted or not, reprisals were quick. On or about July 6, 1847, a military force descended upon El Valle and literally erased the community from the face of the earth. Within hours, at least six of El Valle's townsmen lay dead, and nearly every building in the village was destroyed. At least forty men were taken prisoner and marched to Santa Fe for trial.

On July 26, Colonel Price issued orders for a "drumhead" court martial to try those suspected of killing Lt. Brown and his men. The court transcript does not specify how it determined which of the forty or so persons being held prisoner would stand trial on the charges, but on July 27, seven were singled out. Six of them were convicted of murder and sentenced to hang. Their executions were carried out on August 3. A witness tells us that as soon as the men were hanged, the bells of all the churches in

Santa Fe, "went into motion with the solemn knell. . . ."[16]

The tolling of Santa Fe's church bells may have also sounded severe consequences for the manner in which Mexican juries subsequently approached their duties after New Mexico was officially annexed to the United States of America after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848. Territorial status ended nearly two years of government by a dual system of military and civil authority which proved to be complex and ineffective.

The New Mexican experience with this dual system of military and civil government had seen the conviction and execution of twenty-one of their countrymen for the crime of murder, one for treason, and another for the dubious crime of "rebellious conduct." The death of so many in so short a time amply demonstrated General Kearny's early warning that armed resistance to the *Americanos* was futile.

We know nothing of the motives of the men who decided to take up arms against the *Americanos*. The record shows only that many suffered terribly for having done so. And although history has demonstrated that New Mexicans have remained steadfast in their loyalty to the new government, it apparently it took them a long time to forget that this same government killed many of their forefathers.

This generational memory may be best demonstrated in an analysis of capital punishment during New Mexico's period of territorial government. In 1857, New Mexico Governor Abraham Rencher was apparently surprised by what he described as a "general unwillingness of local juries to find a verdict in favor of the death penalty."

And nowhere is this reluctance more apparent than in Santa Fe and Taos, the two counties which suffered the full impact of the Revolt of 1847 and subsequent trials. Santa Fe, for example, had only two legal executions during the first forty years of American territorial government. It may be significant that these two, which took place in 1849 and 1860, involved individuals named Andrew Jackson Simms and Thaddeus Rogers. Santa Fe did not witness the execution of a Spanish surnamed person until 1895.[17]

It is Taos, however, the site of the revolt's bloodiest battle and most ruthless administration of justice, which provides us the most apparent example. Between 1848 and 1906, a period of nearly sixty years, Taos witnessed only one execution--and that one was for an 1864 conviction orchestrated by Kirby Benedict, who was arguably New Mexico's most colorful frontier judge.[18]

The difficulty with which territorial courts obtained convictions in capital crimes prompted Judge Perry Brocchus to note in 1868 that New Mexican juries had a "natural and educational repugnance to convict for a crime punishable by death."[19] Because capital punishment was uncommon in New Mexico during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Spanish colonial experience did not prepare New Mexicans for their harsh introduction to the punitive nature of American jurisprudence. And their new found experience was passed on by elders, who undoubtedly reminded subsequent generations of what the *Americanos* not so long ago did to many of their grandfathers, fathers, brothers, or cousins.

ENDNOTES

1. Ralph Emerson Twitchell, *The History of the Military Occupation of the Territory of New Mexico from 1846-1850* (Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1963), 73.

2. Twitchell, *The History of Military Occupation*, 79

3. Charles Bent to James Buchanan, Secretary of State, 16 December 1846, "Insurrection Against the Military Government in New Mexico and California in 1847 and 1848," Senate Document 442, 53rd Congress, 1st Session (Serial No. 3878), 6.

[4] Donaciano Vigil to Secretary Buchanan, 16 February 1847, "Insurrection," 6-7.

[5] Sterling Price to Adjutant General of the Army, 15 February 1847, "Insurrection," 8-13. Details of the ensuing campaign and battles are derived principally from this and its supporting documents.

[6] St. Louis (Mo.) *Republican*, April 26, 1847.

[7] Price to Adjutant General, 15 February 1847; A.B. Dyer to Colonel George Talcott, February 17, 1847, Miscellaneous Records: Letters and Diaries, (New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico). Hereafter refered to as SRCA.

[8] J.N. Dunlap Journal, 1847, Misc. Records: Letters and Diaries. SRCA.

[9] "Treason Trials," Santa Fe County Warrant Book, 1847, County Records, Santa Fe County, SRCA. Also Donaciano Vigil to James Buchanan, 23 March 1847, and Frank Blair to John Y. Mason, April 1, 1847, House of Representatives Executive Document 70, 30th Congress, Session 1 (Serial No. 521), 24-27; Details of request for pardon and subsequent action are from W.L. Marcy to Sterling Price, 11 June 1847 and 26 June 1847, House of Representatives Executive Document 17, 31st Congress, Session 1 (Serial No. 573), 248-253.

[10] Taos County District Court Journal (Record), 1847-1851, District Court Records, Taos County, SRCA.

[11] Taos burials, 1843-1850, Microfilm roll 42, (Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico). Hereafter refered to as AASF.

[12] Lewis H. Garrard, *Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 196-198.

[13] AASF, Roll 42.

[14] Antonio José Martínez to Manuel Alvarez, 12 April 1847, Benjamin Read Collection, Read I: 182, SRCA. It should be noted that Charles Beaubien's son was among those killed with Governor Bent on January 19.

[15] Antonio José Martínez to Col. Sterling Price, 12 April 1847, Governor's Papers: L. Bradford Prince, SRCA.

[16] Sterling Price, Order No. 221, 26 July 1847, and Order No. 223, 31 July 1847, Records of the Adjutant General's Office (RG94), Orders and Special Orders, Vol. 43 1/2, Army of New Mexico, 1847-1847, 9th Military Department, 11 June 1847-15 August 1847, National Archives Microfilm. Also in J.N. Dunlap Journal, 1847, SRCA; A.B. Dyer to Colonel George Talcott, 11 August 1847, SRCA; and St. Louis *Republican*, August 13, 1847.

[17] Robert J. Torrez, "Executions in Territorial New Mexico," History File #17, SRCA.

[18] Torrez, "Executions in Territorial New Mexico," History File #17, SRCA.

[19] *The Daily New Mexican*, Santa Fe, New Mexico, May 5, 1868.

"HO! FOR YUCATAN!": LOS VOLUNTARIOS NORTEAMERICANOS DESPUES DE LA GUERRA CON MEXICO

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Introducción

La Guerra de Castas (1847-1901) es un acontecimiento que, aún teniendo un carácter eminentemente regional, rebasa totalmente las fronteras de Yucatán en muchos sentidos, además del territorial. En ello radica una de sus características más importantes. No sólo se trata de la única rebelión indígena del continente que tuvo éxito durante más de medio siglo, logrando la independencia *de facto* de los mayas rebeldes y la transformación adaptativa de su cultura a tales condiciones; no sólo significa un parteaguas en las relaciones político-territoriales y económicas al interior de la península; no sólo manifiesta la tensión existente entre México y un gobierno como el yucateco, que amenaza con la separación y con ligarse a otras naciones; no sólo involucra los intereses y preocupaciones de las grandes potencias europeas de la época--Gran Bretaña, España y Francia--asi como también a entidades cercanas a la península, como Belice y Cuba. No sólo implica todo esto.

También revela el entramado de la política estadounidense en la gran época del expansionismo y del Destino Manifiesto, y nos permite analizar quién es el soldado voluntario norteamericano, ese personaje mezcla de patriota, filibustero y mercenario, de espíritu temerario, aventurero y guerrero; a la vez despreocupado del peligro, prepotente y, las más de las veces, racista, tremendamente valeroso y popular, héroe y villano a la vez.

Hasta ahora, lo que se sabía con respecto a los soldados norteamericanos que participaron en la Guerra de Castas, provenía de los testimonios directos de dos de estos voluntaries, de un oficial del ejército yucateco y de dos combatientes mayas, todos ellos octogenarios, entrevistados hacia 1904 por Edward H. Thompson, cuando fungía como cónsul norteamericano en Yucatán.[1]

Durante muchos años, todos los recuentos posteriores del episodio se basaron en esta fuente y, de manera mucho más limitada, en los artículos aparecidos tanto en periódicos locales, *El Fénix* de Campeche, por ejemplo, como en periódicos estadounidenses, como el *Daily Delta* y el *Picayune* y en

los datos proporcionados por la fuente secundaria más completa y confiable del siglo pasado: la obra del historiador yucateco Serapio Baqueiro.[2]

Exceptuando a Howard F. Cline, Nelson Reed y Edward Wallace,[3] que abundan un poco más en el tema, pero siempre basándose en los testimonios ofrecidos por Thompson, la mayoría de los historiadores contemporáneos que hacen referencia a este episodio sigue el esquema de Robert E. May, quien resume en cuatro frases la participación de los norteamericanos en la Guerra de Castas: "The volunteers sailed from New Orleans in December 1848, spent a couple of months in inconclusive counter-guerrilla warfare against the Maya, suffered casualties, and never received the expected remuneration. Most of the survivors returned to the Crescent City in March 1849".[4] Ese es todo.

Una revisión más a fondo de los periódicos mencionados, así: como la búsqueda de documentos privados y oficiales en los archivos de Yucatán, Campeche y Luisiana, han arrojado nueva luz sobre este poco estudiado episodio, que forma parte tanto de la Guerra de Castas como de la historia de Estados Unidos; y ayudarán a corregir omisiones y errores que han prevalecido tanto entre los historiadores de Yucatán, como tambíen entre los autores que mencionan este episodio al analizar la guerra con México, el expansionismo, el Destino Manifiesto, los filibusteros o la compra de Cuba.[5]

En esta ponencia pretendo dar una breve visión de la experiencia del grupo de soldados norteamericanos que participaron como voluntarios en la guerra México-Estados Unidos, y que poco después se enrolaron al servicio del gobierno yucateco para pelear contra los mayas. Creo importante dejar asentados algunos datos concretos, así como los derroteros que deberá seguir la investigación a la luz de lo que ahora sabemos.

Los voluntarios norteamericanos en Yucatán

Al mismo tiempo que estaba teniendo lugar la guerra entre México y Estados Unidos, en la península de Yucatán estallaba otra contienda con un carácter muy distinto. El 30 de julio de 1847 se inició una rebelión maya en contra de la población yucateca blanca, rebelión que inicialmente pretendía disminuir y luego abolir las contribuciones civiles y religiosas, pero que pronto se convirtió en una contienda por el dominio de Yucatán y la supremacia de una etnia oprimida.[6] Un año después de iniciada la llamada Guerra de Castas, a mediados de 1848, los mayas se habían apoderado prácticamente de toda la península y, con las armas y el parque proporcionado por sus aliados, los colonos ingleses de Belice, se encontraban a punto de tomar las ciudades de Mérida y Campeche. La prensa norteamericana reprodujo los horrores de esta contienda, así como los esfuerzos del enviado yucateco a Washington, Justo Sierra O'Reilly, para conseguir primeramente el reconocimiento de la neutralidad de Yucatán en la guerra México-Estados Unidos, y posteriormente el apoyo militar del gobierno norteamericano para derrotar a los mayas.

Tras un prolongado debate en el Senado, la iniciativa sobre Yucatán (the Yucatan Bill), que promovía la ocupación militar temporal de la península, fue denegada y abandonada.[7] El gobierno yucateco, separado de México desde 1846 y totalmente desesperado, ofreció la soberanía de la entidad a las potencias mundiales. Sin conseguir una respuesta positiva, optó por regresar al seno mexicano y por contratar, además, a una fuerza militar norteamericana que apoyara los esfuerzos del desmoralizado ejército yucateco.

Los artículos sobre este asunto empezaron a aparecer en la prensa norteamericana desde abril de 1848, pero las convocatorias formales lo hicieron a fines del mes siguiente en el *American Star*.[8] De hecho, se mencionaba al dueño de este periódico, John Peoples, como uno de principales contactos entre el gobierno yucateco y los reclutas. Las convocatorias se publicaron también en otros diarios, principalmente en el *Picayune* y en el *Daily Delta* de Nueva Orleans, así como en el *Baltimore Sun*.[9] Los

editoriales, escritos en un tono festivo, pintaban un cuadro atrayente para todos aquellos jóvenes reclutas deseosos de aventuras y ganancias. La propaganda era casi la de un viaje de placer, y contrasta enormemente con los artículos previos que pintaban una situación dramatica y peligrosa en Yucatán.[10]

A pesar de la entusiasta respuesta que recibieron estas convocatorias, el gobierno norteamericano se negó a permitir el reclutamiento de voluntarios en suelo mexicano, y este ocurrió una vez que las tropas fueron licenciadas en varios puntos de los Estados Unidos, principalmente Nueva Orleans y Mobile.[11] De esta forma, "the Crescent City" se convirtió en el punto clave de reclutamiento de mercenarios/voluntarios para pelear contra los mayas rebeldes en Yucatán, y fue también el puerto de embarque de otras expediciones filibusteras posteriores a la guerra del 47, especialmente aquellas dirigidas contra Cuba y Nicaragua.

Las características de Nueva Orleans en esos años se prestaban a la maravilla para el auge de las expediciones filibusteras: era una ciudad en pleno auge agrícola y comercial, en la que se mezclaban aventureros y marineros de todas partes del mundo, con barqueros de los vapores del Mississippi, los estibadores, los plantadores del algodón, el arroz y la caña, y ocasionalmente con algun montañés de las Rocallosas, así como con los mercaderos de la ruta de Santa Fe. La población misma de Nueva Orleans, compuesta por una aristocracia de "creoles" hispanos y franceses, anglosajones provenientes del norte, negros libres y negros esclavos, indios, e inmigrantes irlandeses, alemanes y "cajuns" (de Acadia, Nueva Escocia), añadía aún más variedad a esta mezcla.[12] La mayoría de estos habitantes constituía una población flotante e inquieta, en constante movimiento y al ritmo de la vida que giraba en torno al gran río. Eran la materia prima ideal para las expediciones filibusteras: el espíritu del Destino Manifiesto.[13]

Por otra parte, sabemos que, desde 1846, Nueva Orleans jugó un papel importante en la guerra México-Estados Unidos. Por su posición estratégica, fue escogida como la base de todas las actividades militares. De allí partieron los soldados rumbo a Veracruz, y allí regresaron al término de su servicio, para ser licenciados. Se estableció un centro financiero con el propósito de equiparlos y pagarles, así como una serie de instancias para lidiar con aquellos que habían cometido algún delito en campaña,[14] con el numerosísimo correo enviado a y proveniente de México, y con los heridos y enfermos, muchos de los cuales provocaron una epidemia de fiebre amarilla en la ciudad.[15]

Nueva Orleans se convirtió en el lugar de concentración y reclutamiento de todas las fuerzas voluntarias de los estados sureños. Luisiana misma fue, de hecho, la entidad que más voluntarios reclutó: 7,728 hombres, seguida de Texas, con 7,330.[16] Además, el reclutamiento, apoyado enfáticamente por la prensa local, se realizó con una gran rapidez, y en el lapso de una semana, el regimiento Washington era transportado por el Mississippi rumbo a México.

De igual forma, los mercenarios norteamericanos contratados por el gobierno yucateco, que sumaron casi mil hombres, fueron organizadas y transportados a la península en menos de dos meses. Provenían de los siguientes cuerpos de voluntarios que combatieron en México: el 2º batallón de artillería de Luisiana; el 1º y 2º de regimientos de la brigada del general Persifor Frazer Smith (compuestos, entre otros, por el regimiento Washington y por una compañía de voluntarios de Mobile); la compañía independiente, o compañía Phoenix, del capitán Albert Gallantin Blanchard, del 12º de infantería de los Estados Unidos; el regimiento de voluntarios de Luisiana; el batallón de voluntarios de Luisiana; y el batallón de voluntarios montados de Luisiana. En menor numero, los voluntarios de Yucatán procedían de otras instancias, como el 1er. regimiento de voluntarios de Ohio.[17]

Tanto los hombres de Smith como los de Blanchard (cuya compañía de voluntarios fue la única que fue aceptada para servir durante doce meses) cosecharon triunfos en Monterrey, Cerro Gordo, Contreras, Churubusco, Molino del Rey y Chapultepec. Otros participaron en Buena Vista, y la mayoría se integró al 13º de infantería. Es posible, también, que algunos estuvieran presentes en Resaca de la Palma, donde fue hecho prisionero el general mexicano Rómulo Díaz de la Vega en mayo de 1846, y que unos años después, en Yucatán, pelearan a su lado en contra de los mayas.[18]

El reclutamiento se llevó a cabo de la siguiente forma: una vez que voluntarios fueron licenciados

en Nueva Orleans y Mobile, el capitán George W. White,[19] se autoascendió a coronel, y con la ayuda de varios oficiales más, todos ellos veteranos de la guerra con México, inició, en Nueva Orleans, la organización del regimiento, apoyado por el gobierno yucateco a través del ex-gobernador Tiburcio López Constante. Este trató de conseguir el apoyo del cónsul mexicano en la ciudad, pero por instrucciones del ministro mexicano de asuntos interiores y exteriores, y del enviado mexicano a Washington, Luis de la Rosa, el cónsul se mantuvo al margen de las contrataciones.[20]

Las convocatorias aparecieron en el *Daily Delta* desde fines de septiembre de 1848, y en ellas, los capitanes J.J. Connolly, John G. Malloy, y George H. Tobin, entre otros, anunciaban que el gobierno yucatéco pagaría a quien se alistase ocho dólares al mes, además de comidas al día, ropa y un terreno de 320 acres.[21] Muchos voluntarios se integraron al regimiento con sus propios monturas, ya que el teniente coronel Lorenzo A. Besançon y el capitán R.P. Mace se encargaron de reclutar tres compañias montadas.[22]

Los voluntarios procedían de diversos estados y de diferentes orígenes, aunque probablemente la mayoría eran sureños. Asimismo, de acuerdo con su espíritu filibustero y aventurero, la mayoría eran muy jóvenes. Había entre ellos inmigrantes irlandeses, polacos, húngaros y, por lo menos, un cubano.[23]

Se embarcaron rumbo al puerto yucateco de Sisal en varios grupos y en distintas fechas, entre octubre y diciembre de 1848.[24] Inmediatamente a su llegada, viajaron a Mérida, donde recibieron sus instrucciones y luego partieron rumbo a Tekax, en el centro de la península, donde se encontraba el general Sebastian López Llergo, comandante en jefe de las fuerzas yucatecas. Fueron asignados a las divisiones 1ª y 7ª operaciones, para pelear en las importantes batallas de Tihosuco y sus alrededores, así como en la toma de la hacienda del cacique Jacinto Pat, el líder más destacado de los mayas rebeldes. Participaron también en numerosas escaramuzas en Valladolid, Chemax y otros puntos menores.[25]

Como parte del ejército yucateco, tuvieron numerosas experiencias con los mayas que eran hechos prisioneros en los encuentros armados. Ayudaron a colgar o a aplicarle la "ley fuga" a más de uno, y pronto aprendieron que si apresaban a las mujeres y a los niños, los hombres caerían tarde o temprano en sus manos.[26]

En estos encuentros, tuvieron asimismo oportunidad de experimentar lo que eran las tácticas de guerra de guerrillas puestas en práctica por los mayas. Muchos voluntarios y sus caballos quedaron ensartados en puntiagudas estacas de madera dentreo de posos disimulados en la maleza; muchos de ellos murieron tras beber agua de pozos envenenados con animales descompuestos; varios más nunca se recuperaron de las heridas producidas por balas de fabricación casera a base de barro y miel.

Las barricadas de piedra construidas por los mayas, que constantemente aparecían en su camino, constituyeron un reto para los norteamericanos, acostumbrados a avanzar frontalmente y a la carga con balloneta calada. Las emboscadas eran continuas, así como tiroteos nocturnos y los ataques sorpresivos a plena luz del día. A todo ello se sumaban diversas enfermedades tropicales, el difícil avance en la selva y la escasez de agua para beber, a pesar de las fuertes lluvias invernales.[27]

Después de casi cuatro meses de constantes encuentros con mayas, casi una tercera parte o la mitad (segun la fuente) de los voluntarios habían muerto o se encontraban heridos;[28] y aduciendo que el gobierno yucateco no estaba cumpliendo con su parte del trato, pues sólo les había pagado diez dólares hasta el momento, un buen número decidió regresar a Nueva Orleans.[29] Otros muchos, sin embargo, decidieron quedarse y conformar una nueva compañia para recuperar la importante ciudad de Bacalar, punto de encuentro entre los mayas y sus aliados ingleses.

Las aventuras posteriores de estos voluntarios en tierras yucatecas no están aún muy claras. En el mes de abril, la toma de Bacalar por la 7ª división de operaciones, a la que se incorporaron los norteamericanos, fue una misión ardua y peligrosa. Un testimonio destaca la presencia de voluntarios en las tres batallas de Chan Santa Cruz, cosa que pudo haber sucedido hacia fines de 1850 o después, en la distintas entradas de los yucatecos al incipiente santuario, en 1851, bien o cuando el general Rómulo Díaz de la Vega ocupó Chan Santa Cruz en 1852. De ser ciertos estos datos, los voluntarios, aunque en menor

número, continuaron participando en las campañas militares contra los mayas rebeldes mucho después de lo que se ha creído.

Al menos dos de estos soldados se casaron con yucatecas y se quedaron en Mérida, donde sus hijos y nietos aún vivían a principios de este siglo.[30] Asimismo, tres cartas dirigidas al gobernador Barbachano en 1849 muestran que varios voluntarios norteamericanos no sólo no estaban descontentos con el trato recibido, sino que querían seguir enrolados en las filas yucatecas y continuar peleando contra los sublevados.[31]

Por otra parte, al menos dos voluntarios norteamericanos desertaron de la compañía del capitán Robert Kelly, y se dedicaron a asaltar a los viajeros en el camino entre Mérida y el puerto de Sisal. Fueron apresados y, tras de varios días de pasar hambre encerrados en la carcel del puerto, fueron enviados a Mérida para ser juzgados por sus delitos como cualquier soldado yucatéco.[32] En meses posteriores, dos de los supervivientes hubieron de pedir la ayuda financiera del gobierno yucateco para poder comprar el pasaje de regreso a su país.[33]

Por su parte, el coronel George W. White regresó a Estados Unidos tras la primera desbandada del regimiento de voluntarios. No obstante, pronto organizó una nueva fuerza de cerca de 500 hombres, concentrándolos en agosto de 1849 en la isla Round, localizada en la desembocadura del río Pascagoula en Mississippi. Las primeras noticias de estos hechos afirmaban que su propósito era desembarcar en Yucatán y obligar al gobierno yucateco a cumplir con sus ofrecimientos. No obstante, luego se supo que se trataba de una fuerza de apoyo a lo que fue la primera expedición a Cuba del filibustero Narciso López.[34] Aun cuando White desaparece del mapa tras el episodio de la isla Round, sabemos que algunos voluntarios norteamericanos se unieron a la segunda expedición de López, en 1851. Pero sobre esto hay que hacer aun muchas averiguaciones.[35]

Conclusiones

Sabemos ahora quiénes son varios de los voluntarios norteamericanos: sus nombres, sus antecedentes, lo que fue de ellos despues de Yucatán. Sus orígenes son tan variados como sus destinos. Muchos más de los once mencionados en los testimonios recopilados por Thompson regresaron a su patria; seguramente más de dos se casaron y se quedaron a vivir en la península. Varios de ellos continuaron con su vida aventurera y errante, en otras expediciones filibusteras o en busca de oro en California.

De su estancia en Yucatán tenemos ahora una idea más precisa, como del papel que jugaron en la Guerra de Castas. Su incidencia en los triunfos yucatecos no puede negarse, aunque, dentro de un análisis global del desarrollo de la contienda, sus contribuciones fueron mínimas. Ganaron algunas batallas, más no la guerra. La rebelión maya sufrió, sí, un revés importante, pero continuó poco después con más fuerza, si cabe, y se mantuvo durante los siguientes 50 años.

La presencia de los norteamericanos tal vez hubiera podido ser más decisiva si hubiesen sido más, si hubiesen permanecido más tiempo en campaña, y si sus logros hubiesen estado respaldados oficialmente por el gobierno de Estados Unidos. A sus esfuerzos se unió el de México, que procuró armas y parque a los yucatecos. El triunfo momentáneo dependió también de la retirada espontánea de los mayas del frente de la guerra en el verano de 1848, de disensiones entre sus líderes, de la escasez de parque.

Llegan a Yucatán con la idea de convertirse en la elite del ejército yucateco, y de entrenar y dar el ejemplo a esa milicia que malamente se defiende de los mayas. Muchos de ellos son soldados experimentados en campañas contra los indios de Florida y "greasers" de Texas; se han probado, además, en batallas decisivas como Buena Vista.

No obstante, la Guerra de Castas les demuestra cuán equivocados estan y hasta qué punto ignoran las condiciones de hostilidad y peligro que predominan en Yucatán: deben enfrentarse a la experiencia amarga de los soldados yucatecos que han logrado sobrevivir; a la fiereza y habilidad de los mayas para atacar y defenderse; a la naturaleza agreste, al clima extremeso.

Por otra parte, además de modificar, corregir y ampliar la información que se tenía con respecto al Regimiento de Voluntarios Norteamericanos y su actuación en Yucatán, podemos entender mucho mejor quienes eran estos personajes y cuáles sus motivaciones. Se les puede analizar desde el punto de vista del filibusterismo y de las actitudes y acciones que caracterizan a este grupo específico del combatientes: se trata de soldados voluntarios/mercenarios que están adelantándose a los deseos de su gobierno, que practican en la realidad y de manera personal, lo que su gobierno no puede ni debe manifestar abiertamente: la invasión y consecuente anexión de otro país. Son la punta de lanza de los preámbulos diplomáticos y las negociaciones políticas, de las presiones económicas y las invasiones armadas. Cabría preguntarse: ¿hasta que punto son agentes inconscientes del Destino Manifiesto? ¿que nexos guardan a través del tiempo con los "freedom fighters" de la actualidad?

Estos voluntarios en particular, se convierten en los primeros filibusteros que se organizan y actúan inmediatamente después de acabar la guerra con México; son los precursores de Narciso López en Cuba y de William Walker en Nicaragua. Su estancia en México los dejó, evidentemente, insatisfechos, sus expectativas de gloria y riquezas tal vez no saciadas. Así, las ofertas del gobierno yucateco resultaron sumamente tentadoras: buena paga, uniformes, armas y un terreno de 320 acres al terminar la guerra. Las posibilidades reales, no obstante, iban mucho más allá fama, gloria, y quizá la anexión de la península a su país.

Cabe aquí destacar el papel jugado por la prensa, o más bien por ciertos periódicos, como el *American Star* y el *Daily Delta*, ya que no se limitaron meramente a informar sobre las andanzas de los voluntarios, sino que constituyen verdaderos centros de apoyo y reclutamiento de los mismos. La participación de John Peoples es muestra de ello y sería interesante averiguar hasta qué punto contribuyen también con dinero a estas expediciones.

Cabe, asimismo, resaltar la personalidad y popularidad de corresponsales de guerra como el capitán George H. Tobin, cuya "Mochila de Noticias" era una muy leída y aprecíada columna publicada en el *Daily Delta*. Una investigación más a fondo de su vida nos ha revelado que ocupó el puesto de asistente de alguacil en la corte de la parroquia de Nueva Orleans en 1842; que peleó contra los mexicanos en Texas, que formó parte, junto con el entonces capitán George W. White, del regimiento Washington de voluntarios de Luisiana que fueron a México, y que inmediatamente después de su regreso de Yucatán se lanzó a la búsqueda de oro en California. El análisis de sus cartas al *Daily Delta* puede resultar muy ilustrativo de lo que era la ideología tanto de este periódico, como de estos aventureros, y de lo que se consideraba, en esos tiempos, como literatura jocosa y picante, salpicada de alusiones despectivas y humillantes contra los negros, los indios, los mexicanos y, por supuesto, las mujeres.

Finalmente, esta "página de la historia americana" nos revela cómo las relaciones entre México y Estados Unidos entran nuevamente en tensión al poco tiempo de haberse firmado el tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo, debido a la presencia de soldados norteamericanos en suelo yucateco. El gobierno mexicano teme evidentemente una nueva separación de la península, esta vez apoyada por los voluntarios, o bien que, como filibusteros, decidiesen emprender una rebelión a favor de la anexión de Yucatán a su país. Este temor aumenta ante las evidencias del filibusterismo que se organiza en Round Island y que se dirige finalmente a Cuba. En este sentido, los voluntarios continuan afectando, con su lucha y su presencia en tierras yucatecas, las frágiles relaciones entre México y Estados Unidos posteriores a la guerra.

NOTAS

[1] Edward H. Thompson, "A Page of American History," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 17 (October 1905), 239-251.

[2] Serapio Baqueiro, *Ensayo histórico sobre las revoluciones de Yucatán desde el año de 1840 hasta 1864* (5 tomos, Mérida: Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán, 1990).

[3] Howard F. Cline, "Regionalism and Society in Yucatan, 1825-1847", *Related Studies in Early Nineteenth Century Yucatecan Social History* (Chicago Microfilm Collection of Manuscripts on Middle American Cultural Anthropology No. 32, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL, 1950); Nelson Reed, *La Guerra de Castas de Yucatán* (México: Era, 1977); Edward S. Wallace, *Destiny and Glory* (New York, Coward-McCann, 1957).

[4] Robert E. May, "Young American Males and Filibustering in the Age of Manifest Destiny: The United States Army as a Cultural Mirror", *The Journal of American History* 78:3 (December 1991), 880.

[5] Entre otros, Frederick Merk, *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansion, 1843-1849* (New York, 1966) y David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon and the Mexican War* (Columbia, University of Missouri, 1973). El caso de Merk es bastante ilustrativo, pues le dedica un párrafo a este asunto, párrafo que está, además, cuajado de errores informativos e interpretativos: parece sugerir que la ofensiva maya fue detenida y revertida por los mercenarios norteamericanos, y establece el fin de la Guerra de Castas en 1853, cincuenta años antes de su terminación oficial. Termina el párrafo diciendo: "Thus Americans did make contributions to the saving of Yucatan, even if not in the manner intended by the Yucatan bill". Como veremos, eso está muy lejos de ser cierto. Ver: Merk, 230-231.

[6] La llamada Guerra de Castas es una más, la mayor y más importante, de una serie contínua de rebeliones y levantamientos armados que se dieron en Yucatán desde la conquista española y a todo lo largo de la época colonial.

[7] La inciativa sobre Yucatán o "Yucatan Bill", que reflejaba los deseos expansionistas de Polk, fue introducida por el senador Hannegan, de Indiana, a principios del 1848, y apoyada por otros demócratas como Jefferson Davis, Sam Houston y Lewis Cass. No obstante, la iniciativa se entfrentó con la total oposición del partido Whig y especialmente de Calhoun, quien rechazó todos los argumentos de Polk, entre ellos su apelación a la Doctrina Monroe ante la intervención en asuntos y territorios de América por parte de Gran Bretaña. Ver: U.S. Congressional Record, *The Congressional Globe: New Series Containing Sketches of the Debates and Proceedings of the First Session of the 30th Congress* (Washington, Blair and Rives, 1848); *Senate Executive Documents, 30th Congress, 1st session* (Washington, D.C., Wendell & Van Benthuysen, 1847); y *Messages of the President of the United States 30th Congress, 1st session* (Washington, D.C., Wendell & Van Benthuysen, 1848).

[8] *Baltimore (Maryland) Sun*, June 17, 1848, citado en: Justo Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo Libro del Diario de Mi Viaje a los Estados Unidos (La Prentendida Cesión de la Península de Yucatán a un Gobierno Extranjero)* (México: Manuel Porrúa, 1953), 146.

[9] Sierra O'Reilly, *Segundo Libro del Diario*, 146.

[10] Citados en Wallace, *Destiny and Glory*, 27-28.

[11] El anuncio de esta prohibición apareció también en el *American Star*, y se seguía animando a los posibles reclutas diciéndoles que era tan fácil llegar a Yucatán desde Nueva Orleans como desde Veracruz. Lo que sí es posible es que John Peoples haya entrado en contacto en Veracruz con oficiales de varios regimientos de voluntarios, como

los "Southern Rangers", y que posteriormente se involucrara directamente en su enlistamiento en Nueva Orleans. Ver: Wallace, *Destiny and Glory*, 28. En apoyo de esta idea está el hecho de que John Peoples aparece en la lista de pasaportes ortorgados por el gobierno yucateco a varios ciudadanos, entre ellos los voluntarios que habían dejado de serlo al no recibir la paga prometida por el gobierno de Barbachano. Es de suponerse que viajó junto con ellos de regreso a Estados Unidos y que se encontraba presente cuando estos voluntarios presentaron su renuncia a White y al gobierno yucateco. Ver: Archivo General de Estado de Yucatán (en adelande AGEY), Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación Expediente Cuaderno Anotador de Pasaportes de 1848 a 1851, Caja 71 (1849).

[12] Varias obras muestran el ambiente, las costumbres y la población que predominaban en esas épocas. Ver: John B. Garvey y Mary Lou Widmer, *Beautiful Cresent: A History of New Orleans* (New Orleans, Garmer Press, 1982); Leonard V. Huber, *New Orleans: A Pictoral History* (New York, American Legacy Press, 1971); Mel Leavitt, *A Short History of New Orleans* (San Francisco, Lexikos, 1982); W. Adolphe Roberts, *Lake Pontchartrain* (New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1946); Martin Siegel, ed. y comp., *New Orleans: A Chronological and Documentary History* (New York, Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975); Wendell Holmes Stephens, "Antebellum New Orleans as an Agricultural Focus", en: *Readings in Louisiana History* (New Orleans, the Louisiana Historical Society, 1978); y Joseph Tregle, "Early New Orleans Society: A Reappraisal", en: *Readings in Louisiana History*.

[13] Wallace, *Destiny and Glory*, 33-34.

[14] Tal vez sea el caso de uno de los voluntarios entrevistado en 1904 por Thompson, Michael Foster, quien afirmó que las autoridades norteamericanas le plantearon una sola alternativa: ir a la cárcel o enrolarse como voluntario para Yucatán. Ver: Thompson, "A Page of American History".

[15] Bernardette Rogan, "Louisiana's Part in the Mexican War," Master's Thesis, Tulane University, 1939, 70-81.

[16] Edward D. Mansfield, "Statistics of the U.S. Army Engaged in the Mexican War", en: *The Mexican War: A History of Its Origins, and a Detailed Account of the Victories which Terminated in the Surrender of the Capital...* (New York, Barnes & Co., 1849); Rogan, "Louisiana's Part in the Mexican War", 36.

[17] Ver: "Military Forces Employed in the Mexican War, Letter from the Secretary of War, Statement of the Volunteer Forces Mustered into the Service of the United States", en: *House of Representatives Executive Documents*, 31st Congress, lst Session, Ex. Doc. No. 24, (Washington, D.C., 1850); "Louisiana in the Mexican War", en: *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana* (Chicago, The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1892), I; *Official List of Officers and Volunteers who Marched with the Army under the Command of Major General Winfield Scott, from Puebla upon the City of Mexico, 1847* (Mexico, American Star Print, 1848); y Cadmus M. Wilcox, "Roster of Volunteer Officers Serving in the War between Mexico and the United States" y "Roster of Volunteer Officers Serving in Mexico from 1846 to 1848", en: *History of the Mexican War* (Washington, D.C., The Church News Publishing Co., 1892).

[18] "Louisiana in the Mexican War", 73.

[19] No Joseph A. White, como afirman todas las fuentes.

[20] Carta de Luis de la Rosa, Enviado Extraordinario y Ministro Plenipotenciario de México en Estados Unidos, al Ministro de Relaciones Interiores y Exteriores, Montgomery, 19 de noviembre de 1848, en: Archivo de la Embajada de México en los Estados Unidos, 1822-1978 (en adelante AEMEU/ASRE), correspondencia encuadernada en el Archivo Histórico "Genaro Estrada" de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, tomo 10.

[21] *The (New Orleans) Daily Delta* November 15, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 1848.

[22] *The (New Orleans) Daily Delta* November 19, 23, 1848.

[23] AGEY, Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación, Expediente Milicia Local, Caja 70 (1849).

[24] De especial interés resultan las cartas de los corresponsales del *Daily Delta*, específicamente las escritas por el capitán George H. Tobin y por "Caballo". Ver: *The (New Orleans) Daily Delta*, January 25 y March 14, 16, 25, 1849.

[25] Baqueiro, *Ensayo histórico sobre las revoluciones de Yucatán*, y *Manifesto que hace a sus compatriotas el C. Sebastián López de Llergo, respecto a la epoca en que ejerció el mando principal de las armas* (Mérida: Imprenta de Rafael Pedrera, 1850). Ver también: Thompson, "A Page of American History," y cartas de Tobin y otros corresponsales del *Daily Delta*, publicadas en enero y febrero de 1849.

[26] Carta del Capitán George H. Tobin al *(New Orleans) Daily Delta*, fechada en Valladolid el 12 de febrero de 1849 y publicada el 16 de marzo de 1849.

[27] Thompson, "A page of American History," y cartas de Tobin y otros corresponsales del *Daily Delta*, publicadas en enero y febrero de 1849.

[28] Dos ciento viente muertos y heridos en total, según el *(New Orleans) Daily Delta* March 14, 1849. No obstante, otras fuentes mencionan que solamente en la batalla de Culumpich y en el sitio de Tihosuco, a fines de diciembre de 1848, los norteamericanos sufrieron entre 220 y 300 bajas. Ver: Thompson, "A Page of American History."

[29] Doscientos cincuenta voluntarios desembarcaron en Nueva Orlens el 13 de marzo de 1849, de regreso de Yucatán, según el *(New Orleans) Daily Delta*, March 14, 1849. Entre ellos en encontraba el Capitán George H. Tobin, que pronto se alistó para partir a California.

[30] Edward Pinkus, nacido en Polonia, y Michael Foster. Ver: Thompson, "A Page of American History."

[31] Cartas del Teniente William Gardiner y del Capitán Beresford al Gobernador de Yucatán, fechadas en Mérida en abril de 1849, en: AGEY, Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación, Expediente Comandancia Militar y Milicia Local, Cajas 70 y 71 (1849).

[32] Carta del Capitán del Puerto e Sisal al Comandante General del Estado, 27 de abril de 1849, en: AGEY, Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación, Expediente Guerra y Marina/Capitanía del Puerto de Sisal, Caja 75 (1849).

[33] Carta de los Capitanes John B. Jacobs y Francis Church al Gobernador de Yucatán, fechada en Mérida el 10 de agosto de 1850, en: AGEY, Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación, Expediente Campañía de Americanos Voluntarios, Caja 77 (1850).

[34] Diversos documentos fechados en agosto de 1849, en AGEY, Ramo Poder Ejecutivo, Serie Gobernación, Expediente Secretaría General del Gobierno, Cajas 71, 72, and 74 (1849) y en AEMEU/ASRE, *Correspondencia de Luis de la Rosa*, tomo 10 y *Correspondencia Consular*, tomo 39; Wallace, *Destiny and Glory*, 46. Ante la preocupación de los gobiernos mexicano y español en Cuba, el presidente Taylor ordenó a la armada norteamericana dispersara a los filibusteros antes de que pudiesen actuar, cosa que se realizó prontamente. Sin embargo, Narciso López no desistió de sus propósitos ante este primer fracaso, sino que organizó dos expediciones más a Cuba.

[35] *Apuntes históricos acerca de la expedición pirática que invadió la isla de Cuba en mayo de 1850. detalles de la causa seguida contra el Gral. Narciso Lopez y sus cómplices* (Nueva Orleans, s.e., 1850); Grace E. Gebelin, "Lopez's Filibustering Expedition to Cuba", Master's Thesis, Tulane University, 1929; y Anderson C. Quisenberry, *Lopez's Expeditions to Cuba, 1850-1851* (Louisville, John P. Morton Co., 1906).

JOSIAH TURNER, JUAN CORTINA, AND CARLOS ESPARZA: VETERANS OF THE MEXICAN WAR ALONG THE LOWER RIO GRANDE

Carlos Larralde
The Carlos Esparza Library

On August 15, 1910, a Brownsville, Texas journalist interviewed an elderly man named Josiah Turner. The old gentleman was celebrating his eighty-fourth birthday. By this time he was something of a curiosity since he was one of the last survivors of the Mexican War living in South Texas. The reporter wrote, "Mr. Turner's active mind is stored with a perfect mine of information upon these stirring days in Texas history, and his friends always enjoy a talk with him, when he is in a reminiscent mood."[1]

Turner was the owner of the Galveston Ranch, located about twenty-five miles from Brownsville. On his birthday a lavish dance was held in his honor and "lasted until the wee hours of the morning." This man, who had spent most of his life in the Lower Rio grande Valley, was a native of Maryland, where he was born in St. Mary's County on August 10, 1826.

Turner first came to Texas as a soldier in the United States Army. At the time he was nineteen years old. He was among the troops under the command of General Zachary Taylor, who arrived at Corpus Christi in 1845, following acceptance of terms of annexation to the United States by the Republic of Texas. Many years later, Turner recalled the march south to the Rio Grande, which the United States claimed as the boundary between Texas and Mexico. Said Turner,

> . . . after toiling ten days through an arid waste, [we] reached the Arroya [sic] Colorado. Here [we] was met by a party of mounted Mexican marauders called rancheros. They warned [us] that [we] had reached the limits of Texas, and that to advance further would be regarded by the Mexicans as an invasion.[2]

General Taylor ignored the rancheros' warning and went on to Port Isabel, a small Mexican seaport. "The Mexican authorities in leaving this place had set it on fire," recalled Turner, "but Taylor with exertion saved most of the buildings. The place was important to him, as from the nature of the coast, this must be the depot for his stores." On March 23rd, the U.S. Army took control of the road running from Matamoros to Point Isabel.[3]

On March 28th, Turner and his comrades reached the north bank of the Rio Grande, where they began the construction of Fort Texas (later renamed Fort Brown). On April 6th, Taylor wrote a dispatch to the Adjutant General of the Army. It read, in part:

> On our side, a battery of four 18-pounders will be completed and the guns, placed in battery today. These guns bear directly upon the public square of Matamoras [sic], and

within good range for demolishing the town.
The city, however, was never razed.[4]

As part of Taylor's "Army of Occupation," Turner fought on May 8, 1846, at Palo Alto and the following day at Resaca de la Palma, "a shallow ravine," he said, "that had once been part of the bed of the ever-changing Rio Grande."[5]

Both battles were intense. Writing about Palo Alto, one American reporter declared: "It was truly a shocking sight. There were heaps of dead lying hither and yon, with the most ghastly wounds I ever saw, which made one shudder." The total number of killed and wounded was at least eight hundred. At Resaca de la Palma, another observed noted, "The Mexicans gave way and broke into a disorderly mass with our artillery pouring grape and canister shots at the retreating mob." Trying to escape the enemy, bewildered Mexican soldiers and civilians were trapped by the Rio Grande. Correspondent Thomas Bangs Thorpe recorded the scene:

> The water was covered with the miserable beings, who confused and desperate plunged about in the waves, calling on God to help them, or venting their impotent malediction upon those who had forced them into a watery grave.

Another witness to the mayhem stated: "Nothing could exceed the consternation that reigned in Matamoros . . . . Between 4,000 and 5,000 lawless soldiers were wandering, panic-struck, about the streets." [6]

Following the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, General Arista, having vainly sought a truce, evacuated Matamoros. On May 18, 1846, United States troops entered the town, its unfinished cathedral dominating the central plaza. An Illinois volunteer, Pvt. Thomas Tennery, observed that Matamoros was "a well laid out town" with elaborate gardens and orchards, brick buildings, and sidewalks, although, said the soldier, many of the streets were "muddy with puddle holes."[7]

Another American soldier at Matamoros was First Lt. Jenks Beaman of the 4th Infantry. Beaman, who died in Tampico near the end of the war, wrote: "Matamoros is a very large place, much larger than I had ever expected. It contained 15 or 20 thousand inhabitants-but it is deserted at present, not having more than 6 or 8 thousands [inhabitants]. . . ." Beaman's writing also reveals "the mixed contempt and jealousy with which the professional soldier regarded the volunteer as well as yearning that the regular's heroism be duly recognized."[8] Josiah Turner, caught up in this rivalry between volunteers and regular soldiers, came to view the former, "of whom about two thousand had reached Matamoros by the end of May," with a mixture of "impatience and contempt."[9]

Turner was perhaps more sensitive to the plight of the citizens of Matamoros than the average American soldier. While stationed there, he became genuinely troubled by the suffering of the conquered Mexican people and was appalled by the looting of the city. This was ascribed to the volunteer troops, who, some said, ". . . robbed Mexicans of their cattle and corn, stole their fences for firewood, got drunk and killed several inoffensive inhabitants of the town in the streets."[10]

Lt. Ulysses S. Grant was also with Taylor's army at Matamoros. On July 25, 1846, he wrote a letter to his future wife, Julia Dent, in which he too deplored the situation at Matamoros.

> Since we have been in Matamoros a great many murders have been committed, and what is strange there seems to be every week means made use of to prevent frequent repetitions. Some of the volunteers and about all the Texans seem to think it perfectly right to impose on the people of a conquered city to any extent, and even to murder them where the act can be covered by dark. And how much they seem to enjoy acts of violence too! I would not pretend to guess the number of murders that have been committed upon the persons of poor Mexicans and our soldiers since we have been here, but the number would startle you.[11]

First Lt. George Meade was equally critical declaring, "[The volunteers] . . . act more like a body of hostile Indians than civilized Whites. Their officers have no command or control over them."[12]

The problem, as Turner and others saw it, was that General Taylor was simply unable to keep his volunteer troops in line. This situation appears to have caused Taylor a great deal of tribulation. In one report, he confessed, "I deeply regret to report that many of the twelve-months' volunteers . . . have committed extensive depredations and outrages upon the peaceful inhabitants [of the lower Rio Grande Valley]. There is scarcely a form of crime that has not been reported to me as committed by them." Yet he also pointed out to a critic, "I cannot suppose you are so badly informed as to believe that such atrocities were committed with my connivance or consent, or that they furnish a fair example of the mode in which the war has been conducted in this part of Mexico. They were in truth unfortunate exceptions caused by circumstances beyond my control."[13]

Of all the volunteers, Taylor was convinced that the Texans were by far the worst: "Of the infantry I have had little or no complaint; but the mounted men from Texas have scarcely made one expedition without [the] unwarrantable killing [of] a Mexican."[14]

After the war Josiah Turner told the scholar José T. Canales that he had witnessed incidents involving the Texas Rangers and other Texans which smacked of genocide. F. S. Edwards concurred, citing this story as an example: "I have been credibly informed that when those Rangers are sent out on scouting parties, a Mexican guide is generally provided, but never returns; the Texans always shooting him on some pretext or other before he gets back."[15]

Not all American soldiers saw Mexicans as "savage, barbaric, immoral and corrupt." Some, such as Josiah Turner, admired and respected both men and women. Brevet Major Isaac I. Stevens, of the Corps of Engineers, was another. Remarking upon the mobility of the Mexican army, he praised the stamina of the ordinary "soldados," saying, "the Mexican troops are indeed remarkable for their rapid marches, and their patient endurance of hunger and fatigue."[16]

After the war, Josiah Tuner remained in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where he took up farming and learned to speak Spanish. Like another veteran of the Mexican War, Lt. Thomas Jackson, who later became better-known as "Stonewall" Jackson, Turner felt it was a romantic tongue, a language for lovers. Turner also studied the Roman Catholic faith. In time, he converted.[17]

Turner's interest in Roman Catholicism and his eventual conversion was yet another way in which he differed from the average American soldier of that time. Most U. S. soldiers were not only Protestant but also fiercely anti-Catholic. No doubt many agreed with the Reverend Fitch Taylor, who, writing about Mexicans in 1848, declared:

> And under the apology of a hateful system of religion, misnamed the Christian, with the cross of the merciful and tender-hearted Jesus as the emblem borne on their standard, they sacrificed thousands . . . beneath their still severer cruelties as the inquisitors of the church.[18]

These bitter anti-Catholic feelings surfaced during the war. Mexicans charged that American soldiers had desecrated their churches by "sleeping in the niches devoted to the sacred dead . . . [and] drinking out of holy vessels." Some American troops were Irish immigrants who shared the same religion as the Mexicans. Not a few deserted and joined the Mexican army, forming the famed San Patricio batallion.[19]

After taking up residence in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Josiah Turner met two Mexican army veterans, Juan N. Cortina and Gregory Esparza. At Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma they had faced Turner and his fellow American soldiers. They never forgot the conduct of the American volunteers during the war, particularly the Texans, "which vastly increased the bitterness between Americans and Mexicans."[20] Yet for the remainder of their lives these three men--one Anglo-American, two hispanic--were both neighbors and friends.

Charles Goldfinch, the son-in-law of José Canales recalled that for Cortina the result of the Mexican war was "to change his citizenship and make the Rio Grande a political boundary between him and the culture and people that had formed his being." Until that time, wrote Goldfinch, "Texas had been

far from Cortina's birthplace; but with the victory of the United States, Texas advanced to the Rio Grande . . . [and with it] came political authority which supported a cultural pattern alien to that in which Cortina had become a man."[21]

After acquiring the Galveston Ranch in 1850, both Josiah Turner and his brother William ("Willie") married Mexican women. Josiah's bride was María Petra Treviño. Willie married her sister, Antonia. "As in California," writes author Carey McWilliams, "many marriages took place at an early date between Anglo-American men and Mexican women in the border counties."[22]

In time the Turner brothers were completely assimilated into the region's Hispanic culture. Josiah, in particular, came to identify with his Mexican-American friends and family and to champion their civil rights. By 1870 he was speaking English with a Spanish accent. Instead of eating bread with his meal, he ate tortillas. He also came to detest most of his fellow Anglos, who believed that every Mexican was violent and dishonest. "The descendants of the Americans who married Mexican wives in the 1800s," Jovita Gonzales points out, "are more Mexicanized than the Mexicans."[23]

In 1848, following the Mexican War, Juan Cortina organized a political campaign to resist Anglo-American abuses. It was known as the "Cortinista" movement.[24] Josiah Turner joined the struggle. Despite his tranquil appearance, he was a gallant guerilla fighter, who obtained arms for his fellow "Cortinistas." Most of his activities, however, are shrouded in mystery. Years later, after surviving the turbulent political currents of the Lower Rio Grande Valley, he appeared as the stoic grandfather. He would say, "My fellow Gringos have seen the Mexicans here with abhorrence and have seen them again with more malice and again seen them with more hatred that breeds more violence."[25]

Many of Cortina's grievances dated back to the time of the Mexican War. As a leader, he expressed his ideology through his rich voice, meticulous timing, and forceful gestures.[26] As a master orator, his speeches were impressive. In September 1859 he declared:

> Our hopes having been defrauded in the most cruel manner in which disappointment can make one effort [right], and at one blow destroy the obstacles to our prosperity. . . . Innocent persons shall not suffer. . . . Our lands, if they are to be sacrificed to the avaricious covetousness of our enemies, will be rather not so on account of our own vicissitudes. . . . Our personal enemies shall not possess our lands until they have fattened it with their own gore.[27]

With his shrewd rhetorical skills, Cortina "dedicated himself to constant labor for the happiness of those who, suffering under the weight of misfortunes, eat their bread mingled with tears, and ready for combat." The emotion in Cortina's speeches came from passionate dedication to his fellows and their cause, and his dramatic flair was no handicap. José Canales contended that "Cortina's speeches aimed to inspire the Mexican people to fight. He spoke to incite political involvement and action at the immediate moment. He would improvise in order to react to his audiences' questions. He often used parables with a political point and sometimes jested to keep their attention."[28]

The charismatic Cortina referred to most Anglo Mexican War veterans and businessmen in the region as "flocks of vampires in the guise of men [who] came and scattered themselves in the settlements, without any capital, except the corrupt heart and perverse intentions." In doing so, Cortina was expressing himself in the colorful, literary style of an educated gentlemen of that era.[29]

About 1848, Cortina organized a mysterious political structure that would stand for unity, devotion to the community, mutual aid and brotherly love. It operated mostly as a clandestine organization, based on discipline and, to some extent, fear--as a necessity for the survival of the movement. One government document stated,

> he professes to be at the head of a secret society, organized for the object . . . so that these [Cortinistas] have defied justice on either side of the river, and now, banded together in any imposing army . . . with experienced reactionary officers to direct his military operations.[30]

On November 23, 1859, Cortina said: "An organized society in the state of Texas will untiringly devote itself, until its philanthropical purpose of bettering the condition of the unfortunate Mexican to [get rid] . . . of their tyrants and . . . ready to shed their blood or die the death of martyrs."[31]

José Canales said the group was called by the popular name "La Raza Unida" to redefine their loyalties on racial terms, much like Hispanics in Southern California. He declared the organization developed from the militant "Defensores de la Patria." The historian Juan Manuel Torrea wrote that the "Defensores" existed from 1844-1851 and consisted of part of the army during the Mexican War.[32] These soldiers gained valuable guerrilla experience during the war. Eventually, most of them would become "Cortinistas."

One of the "Cortinistas" was Carlos Esparza. Like Cortina, he lived all his life in the vicinity of Brownsville. His home was known as La Encantada Ranch. Esparza was living there when he heard that American troops had arrived to take possession of the north bank of the Rio Grande. Frightened, the family buried their sterling silver and other valuable possessions, hoping that their ranch would not be looted.

After the arrival of the Americans, Esparza joined the Mexican army. He fought in the battles of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, only a few miles from his home. The war became a painful memory that he never forgot. Some years later, his wartime experiences as a spy and his knowledge of guerrilla tactics were put to use helping Juan Cortina set up an intricate espionage network that furthered Cortina's political objectives.[33]

To the Mexicans along the Lower Rio Grande, these spies were know as the "Aguilas Negras." Some of them were probably veterans who had served under General Antonio Canales, a guerrilla leader known as the Chaparral Fox during the Mexican War. Canales's force consisted of an irregular cavalry that conducted a ferocious warfare along the Texas frontier. These local guerrillas were known for their ruthless behavior. One of their earliest victims was Father Antonio Rey, who collaborated with Zachary Taylor in capturing Matamoros. In January 1847 Father Rey "was brutally killed by a party of Mexican guerrillas."[34]

Texas Ranger Captain Neal Coldwell was probably referring to the"Aguilas" when he remarked: "These bandit groups are too smart and too well organized. They've got spies everywhere. They know where every soldier and every Ranger outfit is, and they know your moves before you make them. They've [gotten] bigger and smarter than the law."[35]

Ranger N. A. Jennings also probably had the "Aguilas" in mind when he spoke of "bands of Mexicans" under the leadership of "some . . . outlaw." The "outlaw" may have been Carlos Esparza, who was sometimes mistaken for an Anglo.[36]

These spies, said Jennings, "worked so systematically and were so perfectly organized that they successfully defied or eluded all attempts to bring them to justice. They laughed at the abortive attempts of the United States cavalry to catch them . . . and could always escape across the Rio Grande."

The Mexican War veteran Esparza appeared to many as an ordinary rancher, possessing neither Cortina's striking appearance or obvious leadership qualities. Esparza, eccentric and with a razor-sharp tongue, was Cortina's man-in-the-shadows, shaping the "Aguilas" into an efficient instrument for the "Cortinistas" interests. Cortina gave him an honorary superintendent's position in Matamoros so that he could have access to city resources to benefit the "Aguilas."[37]

The self-proclaimed Texas lawman, Leander H. McNelly, was probably referring to Esparza when he said: "They have an organization called the rural police. The chief man is owner of a ranch, or the superintendent. . . . He is a civil officer. . . . He sends an alarm to one ranch, it is sent from ranch to ranch in every direction."[38]

The result of this ongoing conflict was an intense, gruesome war. The "Aguilas," most of them veterans of the Mexican War, were determined to eliminate the Texas Rangers and other lawmen, who were just as committed to destroying every militant Hispanic. The tough bands of lawmen who followed

McNelly were dedicated to his principles "with a devotion bordering on fanaticism." "The Mexican War was resuscitated again with all its abominations."[39]
They were proud to call themselves "Little McNellys," especially those under Captain J. L. Hall and Lt. John Armstrong.

Atrocities prevailed while McNelly faithfully read the Bible for moral guidance, never knowing what mercy and understanding meant. "To the Rangers and their admiring historians," charges author Thomas Draper, "McNelly is an appealing composite of warlord and Christ figure; courageous and gentlemanly, utterly devoted to his men and his mission, a remorseless killer, and dead himself by the age of 33." It is particularly ironic, Draper muses, that "From McNelly flows the rich blood of Ranger lore . . . [when] in fact Leander McNelly was never a Texas Ranger."[40]

The "Cortinista" war ended in 1876, but the tumultuous conflicts between Hispanics and Anglo-Americans continued long after. Historian T. R. Fehrenbach remarked that "between Cortinas' banditry and Texan suspicion of all Mexicans, the delta was laid waste" and numerous Mexicans had to leave their land.[41]

Several years later some of the Hispanic hostility toward Americans, that could be traced to the Mexican War, resurfaced in a new ideology. It emerged in the writings of Aniceto Pizana to recapture the lands that were lost during the Mexican War. These concepts were known as the Plan of San Diego. During 1915 most of South Texas would again be plunged into a destructive guerrilla war between Hispanics who called themselves "Magonistas" and certain Anglo-Americans.[42]

ENDNOTES

1. *Brownsville (Texas) Herald* August 15, 1910.

2. Emma Willard, *Last Leaves of American History: comprising histories of the Mexican War and California* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849), 36.

3. Willard, *Last Leaves of American History*, 36; George Winston Smith and Charles Judah (eds.), *Chronicles of the Gringos: The U.S. Army in the Mexican War, 1846-1848, Accounts of Eyewitnesses & Combatants* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1968), 59. This is a valuable resource for anyone wishing to understand the U.S.-Mexican conflict in 1846 along the Lower Rio Grande.

4. Taylor is quoted in Abiel Abbott Livermore's *War with Mexico Reviewed* (Boston: American Peace Society, 1850), 77. For more details, see Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 58-64; Contrary to myth, Matamoros was never leveled. This glaring error originated in Rodofo Acuña's *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Harper Collins, Publishers, 1988), 15. Acuña wrote: "In truth, the United States conducted a violent and brutal war. Zachary Taylor's artillery leveled the Mexican city of Matamoros, killing hundreds of innocent civilians with 'la bomba' (the bomb)." Unfortunately, this popular college textbook contains numerous other errors.

5. Quoted in David Nevin's *The Old West: The Mexican War* (Alexandria, Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1978), 42; *Brownsville (Texas) Herald* June 12, 1964.

[6] Quotes, in order, from, *Facts for The People showing the relations of the United States Government to Slavery embracing a History of the Mexican War, its origins and objects* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1847), 117; John C. Rayburn and Virginia Kemp Rayburn, ed., *Century of Conflict, 1821-1913: Incidents in the Lives of William Neale and William A. Neale, Early Settlers in South Texas* (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1966), 43; Livermore, *War With Mexico Reviewed*, 126, 127.

[7] D. E. Livingston-Little, ed. *The Mexican War Diary of Thomas D. Tennery* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 26-27.

[8] Smith and Judah, *Chronicles of the Gringos*, 71, 74.

[9] Alfred Hoyt Bill, *Rehearsal for Conflict* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 122. See also a letter to Judge T. Butler, Matamoros, June 19, 1846, published as *Old Rough and Ready Speaks His Mind: Zachary Taylor on the Conduct of the War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).

[10] Interview with the scholar and attorney José Canales, June 12, 1964. The distinguished historian Walter Prescott Webb admired Canales. See Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1935), 574. For more on Canales, see Evan Anders, *Boss Rule in South Texas: The Progressive Era* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 307. See also David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 126, 305; Bill, *Rehearsal For Conflict*, 122.

[11] John Y. Simon (ed.), *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (2 Vols., London: Feffer and Simons, 1967) I, 102.

[12] William Starr Meyers (ed.), *The Mexican War Diary of General George B. McClellan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917), 109-110.

[13] Quoted in Livermore, *War With Mexico Reviewed*, 148-149. Many scholars have ignored or denied these atrocities along the Lower Rio Grande. An example is Henry W. Barton's *Texas Volunteers in the Mexican War* (Waco, Texas: Texian Press, 1970); Letter of Z. Taylor, camp near Monterrey, May 19, 1847, in U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, "Correspondence Between the Secretary of War and Generals Scott and Taylor, and Between General Scott and Mr. Trist," 30th Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document No. 56, Serial 518 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1848), 331.

[14] Quoted in Livermore, *War With Mexico Reviewed*, 149.

[15] Quoted in Livermore, *War With Mexico Reviewed*, 149-150; Interview with José Canales, June 12, 1964.

[16] Nevin, *The Mexican War*, 59; Isaac I. Stevens, *Campaigns of the Rio Grande and of Mexico. With Notices of the Recent Work of Major Ripley* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1847), 18.

[17] On Stonewall Jackson: See Byron Farwell, *Stonewall: A Biography of General Thomas J. Jackson* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), 60-61. On page 62, Farwell wrote: "Three months in Mexico after the fighting stopped were always numbered as among the happiest in his life, truly halcyon days . . . nothing was able to diminish his delight in Mexico City." On Turner: Interview with Ismael Montalvo, April 28, 1964. Montalvo knew Turner well.

[18] Reverend Fitch R. Taylor, *The Broad Pennant: A Cruise in the United States Flag Ship of the Gulf Squadron during the Mexican Difficulties, together with sketches of the Mexican War* (New York: Leavitt, Trow & Co., 1848), 157-158.

[19] Carey McWilliams, *North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 103.

[20] Interview with José Canales, June 12, 1964. The author is related to Cortina and Esparza and had numerous documents of these individuals; Charles Goldfinch, *Juan Cortina, 1824-1892: A Re-Appraisal* (Brownsville, Texas: The Bishop's Print Shop, 1950), 24. Goldfinch documents Cortina's involvement in the Mexican War. For Esparza: Interviews with Francisco Reyes Esparza and José Tomás Canales, June 10, 1971.

[21] Goldfinch, *Juan Cortina, 1824-1892*, 24. Goldfinch was the son-in-law of José Canales. Most of the information came from Canales.

[22] McWilliams, *North From Mexico*, 86.

[23] Interview with José Canales, June 12, 1964; interview with Ismael Montalvo. The marriage helped the sisters protect their property since the brothers were familiar with the law and business practices. Canales gathered this information from María Petra Turner, the daughter of Josiah Turner, and María Petra Treviño. Born on the Galveston Ranch, Cameron County, on December 4, 1854, María Petra Turner took an interest in Canales' historical projects. She died about 1920. For her birth record, see the Immaculate Conception Church, Brownsville, Texas, Book 1, p. 168, entry number 243. On June 19, 1991, the author met the descendants of Josiah Turner. In 1993, Juan Longoria still lived in Santa María. He had the same facial features of his ancestor Josiah Turner. Other members of the family had moved to Harlingen, Texas. Quoted in McWilliams, *North From Mexico*, 86-87.

[24] A clerk of the district court of Cameron County, W. Nelson testified: "I believe that a certain movement [was] made here in 1848, commonly known as the territorial movement, at which time a great many speeches and addresses were made in the English and Spanish languages, tended to impress the Mexicans on this side of the river with the idea that Texas had no claims to the territory of this side of the Nueces River. . . ." See Affidavit of W. W. Nelson, Brownsville, Texas, January 17, 1860, U.S. Congress, "Difficulties on the Southwestern Frontier," 36th Congress, 1st Session, House Executive Document No. 52, Vol. 7, 1859-1860, Serial No. 1050 (Washington, D.C.: Thomas H. Ford, printer, 1860), 123.

[25] Interview with Ismael Montalvo. The last years of Josiah Turner were blustery. His Galveston Ranch was the site for militant "Magonistas" who skirmished with the United States Army during the blistering summer of 1915. Turner, however, was "in Brownsville on the day of the fight," reported *Brownsville (Texas) Herald*, September 24, 1915.

[26] Interview with José Canales. As a young man, he knew his relative Cortina well.

[27] Proclamation of Juan N. Cortina, September 30, 1859, "Difficulties on the Southwestern Frontier," 72.

[28] Interview with José Canales, May 10, 1963.

[29] Cortina, "Difficulties on the Southwestern Frontier," 80; We can almost see the expression in the popular writer of the era, William Howitt, *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets* (London: Richard Bentley, 1849). On page 468, Howitt wrote of the character of Lord Byron: "The vampire who means to suck the blood of the selected victim, makes his approach with flatteries and vows of the deepest attachment, of the most eternal tenderness, and protection from the ills of life."

[30] Cortina, "Difficulties on the Southwestern Frontier," 78-79.

[31] *Reports of the Committee of Investigation sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas* (New York: Baker and Godwin Printers, 1875), 133.

[32] For the Southern California La Raza Unida concept, see Richard Griswold del Castillo's *The Los Angeles Barrio, 1850-1890: A Social History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 133-134; Juan Manuel Torrea, *Estado de Tamaulipas* (México, D.F.: Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística, 1940), 112-113.

[33] Interview with Francisca Reyes Esparza, May 30, 1964. Her grandfather was Carlos Esparza. Like her cousin, José Canales, Francisca Esparza distinguished herself in legal matters concerning the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in relation to land grants in South Texas. See: *Corpus Christi (Texas) Caller*, June 7, 1943; *South Texas Citizen*, Laredo, Texas, April 6, 1945; and *Corpus Christi (Texas) Caller*, April 3, 1953. See also Irene I. Blea, *Toward A Chicano Social Science* (New York: Praeger Press, 1988), 80.

[34] Nevin, *Mexican War*, 64, 67; Antonio Canales was eventually tried "for a deal setting himself up as local ruler under U.S. protection," wrote Nevin; Robert Ryal Miller, *The Shamrock and the Sword: The Saint Patrick's Battalion in the U.S.-Mexican War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 159.

[35] George Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip: The Story of McNelly's Rangers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 41-42.

[36] N.A. Jennings, *A Texas Ranger* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), 108.

[37] Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 108; Interview with José Canales, August 12, 1964; Interview with Francisca Esparza, May 30, 1964.

[38] Testimony of Leander H. McNelly, January 24, 1876, "Texas Frontier Troubles," 11. Also U.S. Congress, House Index to Reports of Committee, 1875-1876, 44th Congress, 1st Session, Serial No. 210 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1876), 11, 14. As for McNelly, recent scholarship has revealed some unusual perceptions. Although McNelly was a remarkable leader when he was well, it was determined by the Texas adjutant general that he was thought of as "an incompetent man" with ailments. Robert Draper, in "The Twilight of the Texas Rangers," *Texas Monthly* (February 1994), 83, wrote that historians like "Walter Prescott Webb have woven Leander McNelly into a Ranger history with little regard for the facts. Numerous biographies have written that McNelly's troops were known as the Special Force of Rangers, [even] though the historical record plainly indicates that his battalion was never given that official designation."

[39] Howard R. Lamar (ed.), *The Readers Encyclopedia of the American West* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1977), 701; Interview with José Canales, November 16, 1964.

[40] Draper, "Twilight of the Texas Rangers," 80-82. He wrote that "McNelly lionized exploits including the killing of unarmed men and the raiding of innocent homesteads-enough wanton bloodlust to have reportedly scared off [the actor] Robert Redford from a Leander McNelly project."

[41] T. R. Fehrenbach, *Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans* (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1968), 521.

[42] The author has the personal papers of Aniceto Pizana. For more on these Magonistas, see James A. Sandos, *Rebellion In the Borderlands: Anarchism and the Plan of San Diego, 1904-1923* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

THE TEXAS DEVILS:
McNELLY'S RANGERS AND THE PALO ALTO FIGHT OF 1875

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Following the American Civil War the Rio Grande Valley became a breeding ground for violent conflict. Confederate deserters, refugees from Reconstruction, desperadoes of the worst description who had learned little in life but fighting and dying and killing, mixed with Mexican bandits and insurrectos fleeing the justice of President Benito Juárez. From their enclaves along both banks of the Río Bravo, they raided with impunity, robbing and rustling before disappearing into their sanctuaries of chaparral and mesquite thickets.[1]

During the early 1870s the lawlessness along the border had reached epidemic proportions. By the spring of 1875, as a squall of violence swept the lower Rio Grande Valley, Governor Richard Coke dispatched Texas Adjutant General William Steele and State Senator Joseph E. Dwyer into the region to gather evidence of ongoing crimes and atrocities. Their report blamed much of the recent lawlessness on local volunteer militia units and vigilantes who were engaged in "private killing." In their frustrations and fierce determination to punish those who plundered, these regulators administered swift frontier justice at the end of a rope--and they did so in the name of the law. Dwyer summarized the tragic acts of such self-appointed avengers, pointing out that "instead of exterminating the banditti who invaded Texas, the vengeance [too often] fell upon the poor and unfortunate" living in the border counties north of the river. And, almost inevitably, these victims of vigilante violence were Tejanos, or Mexican-Americans farming and ranching on the Texas side of the Rio Grande.[2]

Thus, in desperation Governor Coke ordered Captain Leander H. McNelly's Special Force of Rangers south of the Nueces River. Resembling a mob more than a company of law enforcement officers, they wore no uniforms, no insignias, no evidence of rank. "Most of them gave you the idea [that] they had fought in the war [between the States]," Ranger George Durham recalled. "On which side was their business." Unshaven and unwashed, with weather-beaten faces, soiled clothes, scuffed boots, and sweat-stained hats, they were a surly looking lot. In fact, their horses were the best groomed members of the company. Some of them were young plowboys straight off the farm, as Napoleon Augustus Jennings remembered, "beardless . . . [youths] full of deviltry and high spirits . . . ready at a moment's notice to rush into any adventure." Each was armed to the teeth, a veritable arsenal on horseback in possession of every conceivable instrument of death, from Bowie knives to repeating rifles, to sixshooters and shotguns. And to a man, they reflected their Captain's grim determination to rid the region of rustlers

and thieves--no matter by what means.[3]

On April 18, 1875, Adjutant General Steele received a telegram from Sheriff John McClure of Nueces County: "Is McNelly coming? We are in trouble. Five ranches burned by disguised men near La Parra last week. Answer." Four days later McClure got his answer. In the early gray of the morning McNelly and his men crossed the Nueces, each ready to administer gunpowder justice.[4]

Already word had spread of McNelly's method of bringing back bodies, not prisoners. As Ranger Bill Callicott wrote to historian Walter Prescott Webb years later, McNelly "had orders to deal with . . . [the bandits] the same way that Major [John] Jones dealt with the Indians; if caught on this side of the river with stolen cattle, kill them." Durham likewise recalled the Rangers' brutally effective means of shooting first and investigating later. Other Ranger captains before McNelly had "tried to fight according to the books as written in Austin. The military had to fight by the books as written in Washington. But those Nueces outlaws didn't fight by any books," Durham charged. "Neither did Captain McNelly. They made their own rules, and the Captain made his. They didn't mind killing. Neither did Captain McNelly. They didn't take prisoners. Neither did Captain McNelly."[5]

McNelly's first order of business was to disband the gangs of armed vigilantes roaming the *monte* of South Texas. Everywhere he traveled the word preceded him: regulators who took the law into their own hands and committed crimes would be considered no better than bandits. In short, they would be hunted down and shot.

McNelly was quick to recognize that the armed mobs which prowled the brush country were not providing protection but were, in fact, part of the problem. "The acts committed by Americans are horrible to relate," he admitted. "Many ranches have been plundered and burned, and people murdered or driven away; one of these parties confessed to me as having killed eleven on their last raid." The annual report of Adjutant General Steele issued that summer likewise observed that "there is a disposition on the part of some Americans . . . not to respect the property of Mexicans" living above the Rio Grande. On the one hand, while stating that "the thieves and cut-throats, who have collected on the border, think the killing of a Texan something to be proud of," Steele went on to confess that "there is a considerable element in the country . . . that think the killing of a Mexican no crime."[6]

Delaying no more than a day in Corpus Christi, McNelly and his men moved down the coast along the Taylor Trail toward Captain Richard King's Santa Gertrudis Ranch. From there they continued southward, skirting the Big Sands which stretch from present-day Falfurrias to Edinburg. Along their route they observed much evidence of the recent range war: a burned out and abandoned cabin; a Mexican vaquero dangling from a railroad trestle, a noose around his neck; families of Tejanos with their belongings piled in carts.

Heavy spring rains had turned the coastal plain into a quagmire, slowing McNelly's advance to no more than ten miles a day. On May 14 Company A, Washington County Volunteers, McNelly's Special Force of Rangers, numbering fewer than forty, arrived at the village of Edinburg. Tired, rain-soaked, his boots covered with mud, McNelly dashed off a letter to Adjutant General Steele that afternoon, informing him that the company was now camped within ten miles of the Rio Grande. "I met [Ranger] Captain [Neal] Coldwell yesterday," McNelly began, "but think he is disinclined to take chances in crossing the river (which is not a ten foot rise). [General Juan] Cortina was on the opposite side yesterday and hung an alcalde and another Mexican for killing one of his cattle thieves. Can't say anything yet about the conditions of affairs here," he continued. "Everyone says that stealing is going on constantly, but Captain Coldwell thinks most of the reports are false."[7]

As it turned out, Coldwell was the one who was wrong. McNelly's scouting parties returned to camp almost daily with reports of rustlers crossing the river into Mexico with dust clouds of cattle bearing Texas brands. Allegedly these cattle thieves were in the employ of Juan Cortina, called by Texans the "Red Robber of the Rio Grande." By June 5 McNelly had bivouacked at Las Rucias in Cameron County, upriver from Brownsville. One week later, acting on information gathered by his spies operating

above and below the river, the Captain ordered seventeen of his Rangers--almost half of the company--to ride off to La Parra, below Brownsville. The next day they picked up the tracks of a small party of raiders herding cattle southward to the banks of the Bravo. Within forty-eight hours the Rangers captured two of the alleged bandits.[8]

Both of the prisoners suffered the misfortune of being turned over to Jesús Sandoval, one of McNelly's scouts, who apparently enjoyed torturing captives into confessions. The cattle thieves could not have had a more terrifying enemy. "Old Casuse," as the Rangers called him, was a tall, brooding figure, with dark, penetrating eyes, shoulder-length auburn hair, and a beard speckled with gray. According to Durham, Casuse was "what you would call spooky" in appearance. "He looked like a crazy man," Durham remembered--a man who lived only to kill, and to have his revenge against Cortinas' rustlers who had raided his rancho fifteen miles upriver from Brownsville the previous year. During Sandoval's absence, raiders had purportedly raped his wife and daughter, burned his adobe ranch house, and stolen his livestock, threatening that they would soon return to kill him and his family if they cooperated with American officials. His "fierce, glittering eyes," as Ranger Napolean Augustus Jennings recalled, revealed the hate that he harbored and the terrible vengeance which he sought. It was rumored that, just days before joining up with McNelly, Sandoval had hanged four alleged thieves from the same tree near the river, leaving their corpses swinging in the wind as a grisly reminder to other bandits who crossed the border.[9]

Now Old Casuse used the same gruesome method to extract information from the two captives taken near La Parra. He would take each to an isolated tree, tie a rope around the prisoner's neck, toss it over a limb, then hoist the man two to three feet into the air, strangling him for several moments before lowering him back to ground. The ritual was repeated several times until the suspected spy had apparently told all that he knew. "As far as we knew," Callicott speculated, "this treatment always brought out the truth."[10]

"Captain McNelly didn't like this kind of killing," Callicott insisted, "but Casuse did." As Callicott remembered, "we caught several spies on that scout . . . and Casuse dealt with all of them alike, showing no partiality--he always made them a present of six feet of rope."[11]

Later General E.O.C. Ord, commander of the Department of Texas, admitted knowledge of such executions, when he wrote that McNelly "had a big advantage" over the United States Army "mainly because he employed means of getting information . . . that was denied the military. His prisoners would talk. Ours wouldn't."[12]

Learning from the captives that a band of rustlers had crossed the river and were returning south, McNelly sent out scouts, then moved his camp to a wooded site near the Palo Alto prairie located ten miles north of Brownsville, not far from the Laguna Madre. Perhaps it was altogether fitting, since here, almost two decades earlier, the Mexican War had begun.

What happened on the morning of June 12, 1875, was a running gun battle on a smaller scale, yet a struggle equal in ferocity to that earlier campaign. After trailing the bandits through the pre-dawn hours, McNelly moved in and located them at a salt marsh soon after sunrise. By then an early morning fog had lifted. "On arriving I found them drawn up in a line on the south side of a marsh about six hundred yards wide, filled with mud and water, eighteen to twenty inches deep," McNelly later recorded. The raiders had driven their herd onto a small island surrounded by a boggy plain. The Captain surveyed the scene through his field glasses, then formed a skirmish line, not yet allowing his Rangers to unsling their Sharps or draw their pistols. As soon as McNelly's company closed to within five hundred meters the bandits dismounted and opened fire with repeating rifles, the rounds falling harmlessly in front of the Rangers as they advanced at a slow yet steady gait to within one hundred meters. As Durham recalled, the thieves were "well forted for a standoff," as if they were expecting help. Then, just as the Rangers moved to within pistol range, the rustlers leaped upon their horses, wheeled around, and galloped away in an attempt to escape, abandoning their cattle as they rode off toward the Rio Grande. In anticipation

of such a retreat, the Captain had already ordered three of his best riders into a timber line in an attempt to flank them and "force a stand."[13]

What followed was a series of skirmishes extending over five or six miles. When the alleged bandits broke out in groups of two or three and scattered over the prairie, the Rangers spurred their mounts in pursuit, Captain McNelly leading the way, urging his men to move in and "powder burn" them at close range. One by one the rustlers were gunned down, several riders having their horses shot from under them. "I have never seen men fight with such desperation," McNelly later reported. "Many of them, after being shot . . . and severely wounded three or four times, would rise on their elbows [in the mud] and fire at my men as they passed."[14]

McNelly overhauled one of the fleeing raiders, shooting his fleet mount several times, sending the horse tumbling into the mud and the injured rider scrambling through the ankle deep water toward the tall marsh grass known as Spanish dagger. As the Captain dismounted and approached the vaquero, the man suddenly emerged from the brush, wielding a dagger. Apparently, the man had emptied his pistol and thought McNelly had done the same. He was wrong. With the knife-wielding vaquero racing toward him, McNelly calmly raised his revolver and, according to Callicott, "placed the last shot he had between the bandit's teeth as if he had put it there with his fingers."[15]

Seventeen year-old Benjamin Smith, the youngest Ranger in the company, was neither as experienced nor as lucky as his Captain. After one rider fell from his horse and lay motionless in the mud for a few moments, "Sonny" Smith slid from his saddle, holstered his pistol, and approached the lifeless body. But the wounded man turned over suddenly and shot Smith dead, then crawled into a pond a few feet away and disappeared into the thick marsh weeds.

Meantime, Captain McNelly had shot and mortally wounded another rustler, then disarmed the dying man, and recited the scriptures to him as he drew his last breaths. But when McNelly arrived at the pond and saw Smith's corpse, then learned that the boy's killer was hiding in the brush, he became visibly upset. Seeing a slight movement in the murky water, he ordered every Ranger present to surround the pond and open fire on a suspicious looking clump of rush grass. When the shooting finally stopped, the man's thrashing body floated to the top, bloodied and riddled with bullets.[16]

By noon the Palo Alto fight was finished. Carefully, the Rangers tied young Smith across his horse and led him back to Brownsville, where they prepared to give him a funeral with full military honors. As for the twelve dead vaqueros, they were treated with less respect. The Rangers roped their bodies, dragged them through the mud for more than a mile, then piled them into a small wagon. Later that day McNelly and his men rode into the Brownsville town plaza and, in the words of George Durham, "stacked . . . [the] bodies like cordwood."[17]

As word spread of the ghoulish display, so did anger and grief. McNelly's sentries guarded the bodies through the night, not allowing mourning relatives to claim them and carry them away. It was a *noche triste*, or night of sorrows, that the people of Brownsville would not soon forget.[18]

On June 14 McNelly telegraphed Adjutant General Steele in Austin: "Had a fight with raiders, killed twelve and captured two hundred and sixty-five beeves. Wish you were here." Characteristically, the Captain was a man of few words. Instead, he preferred to intimidate the border rustlers with actions. In the hot summer weeks that followed, McNelly's men made themselves visible patrolling the lower Rio Grande, at the same time secretly sending spies across the river to learn about the movements and activities of Juan Cortina's vaqueros. On at least one Saturday night, a number of rowdy Rangers rode across the river into Matamoros and apparently imbibed more than their share of tequila, then went looking for an evening of fun and for trouble. Predictably, they ended up turning a festive fandango into a fistfight. As Jennings later summarized, they were purposefully carrying out "a set policy of terrorizing the Mexicans at every opportunity." He even admitted that "it was tacitly understood that we were to gain a reputation as fire-eating, quarrelsome dare-devils." As a result, he concluded, "we accomplished our purpose. In a few weeks we were feared as men were never before feared on that border." In other

words, McNelly wanted the people along the river to know that "Los Diablos Tejanos," or the "Texas Devils," had arrived.[19]

Following the Palo Alto fight the border remained quiet for many weeks. So quiet, in fact, that McNelly's dispatches to Austin usually mentioned little more than the monotony of daily patrols which reconnoitered the region along the river for rustlers who were no longer there.

The Palo Alto fight was over, though not forgotten. In the coming months cattle rustling continued unabated along the border, even after McNelly's storied river crossing at Las Cuevas the following November. But that is another story.

Historian Walter Prescott Webb immortalized McNelly and his men as almost mythic heroes. Webb even lamented that McNelly should have been "at the Alamo, or Goliad, or, at another place where his courage, ingenuity, and audacity could have been exercised in a patriotic cause." More recently, Texas novelist Larry McMurtry excoriated McNelly as a brutal and ruthless tyrant with little respect for human life. Whereas Webb had apologized for the Rangers' behavior, even for Old Casuse's "paint horse gallows," explaining that "affairs on the border cannot be judged by standards that hold elsewhere," McMurtry rightly asked, Why not? "Torture is torture, whether inflicted in Germany . . . or along the Nueces Strip. The Rangers, of course, claimed that their end justified their means, but people who practice torture always claim that."[20]

Mexican historians agree. And so the debate continues, as it should. Were these Texas state volunteers keeping the peace or provoking a war in 1875? Were McNelly and his men heroic Rangers or riders from hell? Unfortunately, in years past it all depended upon which side of the border you were on.

ENDNOTES

1. William Steele, "Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Texas for the Year 1876, Including Mexican Border Troubles," 3-5, in U. S. Department of War, United States Adjutant General's Papers, Letters Received, National Archives, Washington, D.C., Microfilm, Main Series, Roll 197. Hereafter cited as *Texas Adjutant General Report, USAGP.*

2. "Message of Governor Richard Coke: The Rio Grande Border Troubles," *Texas House Journal* 15th Legislature, April 19, 1876, 47-48; *Texas Adjutant General Report*, 6-9, 11-14, USAGP.

3. George Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip: The Story of McNelly's Rangers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962), 9-10, 12-13, 24-25, 45-47; Napoleon Augustus Jennings, *A Texas Ranger* (Dallas: Southwest Press, 1930), 80-81, 115.

4. John McClure to William Steele, April 18, 1875, (Adjutant General's Papers, Texas State Library and Archives, Austin, Texas). Herafter cited as TAGP; See also Walter Prescott Webb, *The Texas Rangers: A Century of Frontier Defense* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 238.

5. "Reminiscences of William Callicott of Houston: The Palo Alto Fight," (MSS, Eugene C. Barker American History Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas) 1-2. Hereafter cited as Callicott, "Reminiscences". Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 40.

6. *Texas Adjutant General Report*, 8-10, USAGP; Leander H. McNelly to William Steele, May 14, 1875, TAGP.

[7] *Texas Adjutant General Report*, 8-10, USAGP; Leander H. McNelly to William Steele, May 14, 1875, TAGP; Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 41-42.

[8] Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 120-122.

[9] Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 44, 85-86; Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 134-137, 139-141.

[10] Callicott, "Reminiscences," 3-5.

[11] Callicott, "Reminiscences," 3-5.

[12] Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 55.

[13] Chuck Parsons, *"Pidge," A Texas Ranger from Virginia: The LIfe and Letters of Lieutenant T. C. Robinson, Washington County Volunteer, Militia Company "A"* (Wolfe City, Texas: Henington Publishing Company, 1985), 75-77; Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 122-124.

[14] Parsons, *"Pidge," A Texas Ranger from Virginia*, 75-77; Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 122-124; Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 55-59; Callicott, "Reminiscences," 8-10.

[15] Callicott, "Reminiscences," 11-12.

[16] Callicott, "Reminiscences," 11-12; Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, 62; Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 123-125.

[17] Durham, *McNelly's Rangers*, 63-66.

[18] For the statement, or deposition sworn under oath, of Joseph P. O'Shaughnessy, City Marshal of Brownsville, see O'Shaughnessy to Steele, June 16, 1875, and Albert Wood to Steele, June 16, 1875, TAGP.

[19] McNelly to Steele, June 14, 1875, TAGP; Jennings, *A Texas Ranger*, 128-130.

[20] Webb, *The Texas Rangers*, 242-146; Larry McMurtry, *In a Narrow Grave*, (Encino, Calif.: Encino Press, 1968), 40-41; Durham, *Taming the Nueces Strip*, x.

BIOLOGY OF THE PALO ALTO BATTLEFIELD SITE
SUMMARY

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The Palo Alto Battlefield Site comprises some 3,400 acres with six types of natural vegetation (Tamaulipan Brush, Coastal Prairie, Sacatal, Borrichia Prairie, Wetlands/Tanks, Huisachal, and Mesquital) and two types of vegetation resulting from disturbance. The vegetation types are influenced by elevation and salt content.

The Tamaulipan Brush occupies the highest elevations and has the most fertile soil; hence, it is more desirable land for farming and has been the most affected by clearing. It is by far the richest in number of plant species. Typical plants are *Prosopis glandulosa* (mesquite), *Yucca treculeana* (Spanish dagger), *Parkinsonia aculeata* (retama), *Phaulothamnus spinescens* (snake eyes), *Bumelia celestrina* (la coma), *Acleisanthes obtusifolia* (vine four-o'clock), *Jatropha cathartica* (Jicamilla), *Opuntia engelmannii* (prickly pear) and other cacti.

The Coastal Prairie appears generally to occupy the lowest elevations with the highest saline content. Characteristic plants are *suaeda sp., Monanthochloe littoralis* (shoregrass), *Salicornia bigelovii, Batis maritima* (vidrillos), and *Machaeranthera phyllocephala* (camphor daisy). It is probably the least disturbed because of the infertile soils.

The Sacatal consists principally of *Spartina spartinae* (gulf cordgrass) with scattered *Borrichia frutescens* (sea ox eye).

The Borrichia Prairie occupies old resaca beds which are almost completely filled in by erosion. *Borrichia frutescens* (sea ox eye) is the dominant plant species. The plants grow so densely crowded together that there appears to be only the single species present. Closer inspection reveals some inconspicuous herbaceous plants interspersed among the sea ox eye.

The Wetlands/Tanks have a number of hydrophilic plants such as *Typha domingensis* (cat tail), *Marsilea macropoda* (water clover), *Nymphae elegans* (blue water lily), *Heteranthera liebmannii* (water stargrass), and various sedges.

The Huisachal consists of *Acacia farnesiana* (huisache) with some low-growing herbaceous plants. It usually occupies elevations slightly lower than the Tamaulipan Brush, in indentations which tend to stay moist for longer periods of time.

The Mesquital contains *Prosopis glandulosa* (mesquite) as the only woody plant. Grasses and other small herbaceous plants grow among the mesquites. The Mesquital is clearly regrown from cleared

Tamaulipan Brush.

Various types of cleared land are present, from row crops to fallow ground with small mesquite and other woody plants beginning to grow.

The fauna of Palo Alto is truly "crossroads" in nature. Representatives of the Chihuahuan Desert Biome enter from the west, and both temperate and tropical species are present. Fiddler crabs associated with the marine influences are dispersed throughout.

Some of the other animal species are associates of Tamaulipan Brush and others are of Salt Prairie associations which interdigitate at this site. The Eastern Cottontail Rabbit is common within the brush, and the Black-tailed Jack Rabbit inhabits the Salt Prairies.

The diversity of species, some of which are either threatened species or species which are candidates for classification, mandates that Palo Alto be managed as a wildlife sanctuary. The endangered Aplomado Falcon in Texas had its population center concentrated at Palo Alto but was extirpated during the 1950s. This species is particularly adapted to Tamaulipan Brush for perch sites and roosting, and grassy or salt flats for hunting birds or insects. The combination at Palo Alto seems ideal and consideration must be given to cooperation with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, which is currently reintroducing the species at Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge.

Two weeks of live trapping did not reveal either the endangered ocelot or jaguarundi, but suitable habitat for both species seems to exist. Studies done on wetland sites did not inventory any threatened or endangered fish or amphibians.

Species on either Texas Parks and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Threatened Lists which exist at Palo Alto are Texas Tortoise, Texas Indigo Snake, Horned Lizard, White-faced Ibis, White-tailed Hawk, and Texas Botteri's Sparrow.

Wild Boar (feral hog) and Nilgai (antelope) are exotic species which have been seen at Palo Alto. Efforts to eliminate the Wild Boar should be considered in the management plan.

Continued surveillance for additions to the floral and faunal lists should be conducted.

PALO ALTO:
A SYMBOL AND A SACRED GROUND

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As one human being very conscious of the war which began at Palo Alto nearly a century and a half ago and equally conscious of the multivariate problems which, nearly a century and a half later, profoundly afflict both nations that went to war with each other, I envision Palo Alto as sacred ground precious to both the United States and Mexico. This sacred ground is a suitable place for the two neighboring countries to achieve lasting reconciliation ennobling to both.

Every since the events at Palo Alto, the United States and Mexico have both continued on their own way, and both have numerous worthwhile achievements they can vigorously celebrate. Also, both nations have discovered more and more ways and means to help each other. In fact, as the twentieth century comes closer to its close, cooperation between the United States and Mexico is apparently increasing and intensifying.

For example, both the United States and Mexico worked vigorously to make the North American Free Trade Agreement a reality. For quite some time, multivariate wholesome enterprises of Mexican origin have taken root in the United States. And, very recently, the United States was most warmly received as WalMart opened in Mexico City, one of the largest retail business operations in the entire world. Also, it was recently announced that the United States and Mexico will together, in just a few more years, inaugurate in Mexico City a Mexican franchise that will be part of the United States' National Basketball Association. The list of what the United States and Mexico are actually doing to help each other is becoming ever more substantial all the time. Yet, when people speak very honestly, it is very often acknowledged on both sides of the Rio Grande River that still, nearly a century and a half after Palo Alto, too many Americans and too many Mexicans go on living with negative attitudes, many of which have remained entrenched.

Having met only a very small number of Mexican citizens in my early years, I fully realized on my very first trip into the interior of Mexico that somewhere, somehow, I had been infected with some negative attitudes toward the Mexican people. Down in Mexico I also learned very quickly that many Mexican people were not very much at ease with citizens of the United States. But, as a Christian, I wholeheartedly made an all-out effort to do my very best to learn to know and respect the Mexican People. Just one result--for me a most happy result--of this effort is that I met, fell in love with, and married María López, who once had been a Mexican citizen. Often, I look at our son as a superb human

symbol of both the United States and Mexico, neighbors united in a most noble sense. For me, Palo Alto, the very place where our two nations first went to war with each other, can be--once the Palo Alto National Park is eventually fully developed--a perfect place for citizens of the two neighboring nations to learn much about each other, to experience the most genuinely wholesome traits of each other, and to find themselves wanting to help each other all they can. I envision all of this, and I firmly believe that it will come to pass.

Very recently, I noticed in the media that archaeologists in a remote area of Mexico that is being referred to as El Pital have located an extremely ancient port-community that flourished possibly two to three thousand years ago. I was delighted to learn, for example, that numerous pyramids in this El Pital area are linked to the pyramids at Teotihuacán, which is located southwest of El Pital. These newly discovered pyramids will reveal much of Mexico's own ancient history. Also, I very happily noted that the archaeologists involved in the discovery of the truly ancient area of El Pital were people of both the United States and Mexico working together. Again, Palo Alto can be a most appropriate location for celebrating all the good our two neighboring nations achieve together.

In our current news, we are learning more and more about the problems Mexico is having with its own Indian people in the State of Chiapas. Here in the United States we, ourselves, have numerous unresolved problems in regard to our own Indian people. Palo Alto would be a perfect place for both our countries together to study solutions that would truly help the Indian people of both our nations. We could learn a lot from each other.

As Americans, we can rather easily list the names of our own American wise men who would bring great wisdom to a Mexican/American dialogue at Palo Alto. For my part, I've come to realize that in Mexico a formidable list of wise men can also be made, a list that would include the names of Carlos Fuentes and Octavio Paz. These two giants of human genius already are respected internationally. Often, right here in the United States, I find writings by Carlos Fuentes on the editorial pages in a number of newspapers of various major metropolitan areas. Octavio Paz, also, in one way or another, appears in many American newspapers, and people here buy his book too. At Palo Alto, these two respected men, along with numerous other respected Mexicans and Americans could do much to further the noble cause of total and lasting reconciliation between all the people of the United States and Mexico.

Several years ago, I secured a superb section of a Sunday newspaper from San Antonio, Texas. I still joyfully cherish this newspaper magazine. Its theme is: "Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries." For me, it has the academic worth of a great book. It is my dream that, pursuant to lasting reconciliation between our two countries, Palo Alto can become a powerful instrument for welcoming Mexican people to the United States and to all its most magnificent features. Palo Alto can also become a powerful instrument for welcoming American people to Mexico and to Mexico's splendors of thirty centuries.

With all my being, I say: ¡Viva los mejores de los dos países! ¡Viva! ¡Viva! ¡Viva!

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