

379  
N81d  
No. 988

SANTOS DEGOLLADO AND THE MEXICAN REFORMA,

1854-1861

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the

North Texas State University in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

John T. Hardi, M. A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1975

Hardi, John T., Santos Degollado and the Mexican Reforma, 1854-1861. Doctor of Philosophy (History), December, 1975, 474 pp., bibliography, 161 titles.

This study examines in detail the public career of Santos Degollado during the era of the Mexican Reforma, and, because of his central role in national events of that period, the story is presented in the context of a general history of the Reforma. Sources of information were largely primary, including manuscripts and newspapers from Mexican archives. The richest of these were the collection of Degollado's letters at the Instituto de Antropología e Historia; manuscripts from the Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores archive, the Archivo Juárez of the Biblioteca Nacional, and the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México; as well as documents from various collections at the University of Texas Latin American Collection. Important published sources included the 36-volume collection edited by Genaro García and the 15 volumes of Benito Juárez papers edited by Jorge L. Tamayo.

As much as possible the study followed a chronological narrative. The thirteen major divisions treat, respectively, Degollado's early life and career, the two-year Revolution of Ayutla, his term as governor of Jalisco, his involvement

in the diplomatic dispute with the British known as the Barron-Forbes affair (2 chapters), the drafting of the Constitution of 1857, don Santos' contributions as commander-in-chief of the liberal army during the first year of the Three Years' War, the military developments of the first half of 1859, the issuance of the Reform Laws and the Estancia de las Vacas campaign, Degollado's activities as minister of foreign relations and the course of the war in the summer of 1860, his role in the conducta and peace plan affairs, the political events of early 1861 and his death, and an epilogue.

Santos Degollado was a pivotal figure in the national history of the Mexican Reforma. As a liberal serving in several positions of power, Degollado made political contributions including his participation in the drafting of a new liberal constitution and a key role in the issuance of the Reform Laws. In diplomatic affairs he achieved national prominence through a steadfast defense of Mexico's national sovereignty. While his best-known role, that of a military leader, was blemished by numerous defeats in battle, he nevertheless provided a unity and central direction without which his party could never have won the Three Years' War. All of his contributions to the cause of liberal reform in

Mexico were magnified by a remarkable record of personal sacrifice and capped by the ultimate self-denial of political martyrdom.

In seeking to explain and justify aspects of Degollado's conduct and behavior which have heretofore often been characterized as aberrations, this study has suggested some revised interpretation of the role of Benito Juárez in the Reforma. This great Mexican hero of the nineteenth century has long overshadowed the other important figures of the period, including Degollado. This study contends that not only should other Mexicans receive a larger share of credit for the progressive advances made during the Reforma, but also that Juárez should receive less.

© 1975

JOHN THORNLEY HARDI

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PROLOGUE . . . . .	1
Chapter	
I.    REVOLUTION OF AYUTLA . . . . .	22
II.   GOVERNOR OF JALISCO. . . . .	51
III.  BARRON-FORBES AFFAIR: PART I. . . . .	75
IV.  BARRON-FORBES AFFAIR: PART 2. . . . .	116
V.    CONSTITUTION OF 1857 . . . . .	171
VI.   THREE YEARS' WAR: 1858. . . . .	218
VII.  TACUBAYA CAMPAIGN. . . . .	260
VIII. REFORM LAWS AND THE ESTANCIA DE LAS VACAS CAMPAIGN. . . . .	295
IX.   MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. . . . .	334
X.    CONDUCTA AND PEACE PLAN AFFAIRS. . . . .	375
XI.   THE LAST FULL MEASURE. . . . .	414
EPILOGUE . . . . .	446
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	460

## PROLOGUE

### 1

Mexico won her independence from Spain in 1821 after a protracted civil war. But independence was not, in this case, synonymous with revolution, for patterns of Spanish colonialism continued to dominate Mexican life for years to come. It was not, in fact, until the Reforma began in 1854 that a definitive break with Spanish traditions of absolutism, feudalism, and a dominant Catholic Church took place.

In general Mexico's political evolution in the first decades after independence followed a familiar pattern, one which was outlined by Simón Bolívar, the great South American liberator, in his famous "Jamaica letter." Bolívar said it was

. . . characteristic of civil wars to form two parties, conservatives and reformers. The former are commonly the more numerous, because the weight of habit induces obedience to established powers; the latter are always fewer in number although more vocal and learned. Thus, the physical mass of the one is counterbalanced by the moral force of the other; the contest is prolonged, and the results are uncertain.<sup>1</sup>

In Mexico these two parties were called "centralists" and "federalists," and their contest was indeed prolonged.

---

<sup>1</sup>David Bushnell, ed., The Liberator, Simón Bolívar: Man and Image (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 21.

Their initial differences in philosophies centered around the form the national government was to take, hence the labels "centralist" and "federalist."

As the conflict progressed, however, it became clear by the 1840's that more elemental differences separated the two groups. The conflict over centralized or federal government had often been little more than a facade obscuring from view these more basic issues, for even when the federalists had been in power, they had never tried to implement a truly federal system. The regimes of both parties in the first three decades of independence differed more in degree of centralization than in kind.<sup>2</sup>

The real ideological clash developed over the issue of corporate privilege, and as this became clearer in the 1840's, more accurate party labels of "conservative" and "liberal" came to replace, respectively, those of "centralist" and "federalist." The conservatives, whose ranks included the clergy, most army officers, large landowners, monarchists, and others, sought to preserve the special privileges, powers, and wealth of the Catholic Church, the army, and the landed aristocracy. The liberal party, depending largely on the

---

<sup>2</sup>J. Lloyd Mecham, "The Origins of Federalism in Mexico," Hispanic American Historical Review 18(1938):166-181; Jesús Reyes Heróles, El liberalismo mexicano, 3 vols. (México: UNAM Facultad de Derecho, 1957-1961), 2:35.



creole middle class for leadership, attacked the privileged position of the conservatives in order to create political and economic equality and to free the State from autocratic rule. As the conflict crystallized after 1846 the questions of Church-State relations and the wealth, privileges, and temporal powers of the Church became by far the most serious issues.<sup>3</sup>

Yet even in respect to these details, the Mexican experience was far from unique. As Crane Brinton has shown, a characteristic of most revolutions is their "progressively increasing hostility to organized Christianity, and particularly to the more oecumenical forms of organized Christianity." Men who lead such revolutions are not necessarily evil men, for their heaven and their ethics are very close to the more orthodox Christian's heaven and ethics. The revolutionary simply wants his heaven here and now whereas the traditional Christian has accepted the notion of a long haul.<sup>4</sup>

Mexican liberalism in this period has generally been characterized as a movement to break away from the Spanish

---

<sup>3</sup>Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 2:35; Charles Hale, Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 296-297.

<sup>4</sup>Crane Brinton, The Anatomy of Revolution, rev. ed. (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), pp. 216-217.

heritage of colonialism. Many writers have described attempts by federalists to create a political system modeled after the United States.<sup>5</sup> More recently Charles Hale has suggested some revision of this picture. He points out that both the Church and the military emerged from the wars of independence more powerful than ever. Under the Spanish colonial system these institutions had been restrained by a strong absolutist State. But independence removed that restraint and liberals spent the ensuing years in vain attempts to restore control through constitutional liberalism. After 1830, Hale shows, Mexican liberals, led by José María Luis Mora, turned for inspiration, not to the United States, but to the reform tradition of the Spanish Bourbons. Liberals in fact harkened back to the Spanish colonial system in an effort to restore State sovereignty over corporate privilege. Though the concept was pragmatic, it still represented no departure from the Spanish heritage. Furthermore these liberals retained traditional creole social conservatism as well, since their call for political reforms in no way implied support for social revolution.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>See Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, vol. 2; also see Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, Vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:19.

<sup>6</sup>Hale, Mexican Liberalism, pp. 298-304; Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 2:92-94, 98-99.

It remained for the Reforma to provide the final break with Spanish colonialism and to establish a national identity for Mexico. The thinking of Reforma liberals and the programs they introduced advanced far beyond the liberalism of Mora's time. Though the Church-State clash was the obvious issue in the Reforma, in a larger sense the struggle was a "Mexican middle class revolution" to bring democratic capitalism to Mexico.<sup>7</sup> It may have fallen short of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, but it greatly surpassed liberal efforts in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As Mexican society became increasingly polarized in the early 1850's over questions such as clerical and military privileges, religious and civil liberties, Church wealth and temporal power, and others, the stage was set for disaccord to lead once again to armed conflict. But this revolution was to be vastly different from all those which had preceded it, including the war for independence. With the outbreak in 1854 of the Revolution of Ayutla, a great struggle ensued which lasted, with only occasional respite, for fourteen years. It is this momentous clash which is known in Mexican history as the War of the Reforma.

---

<sup>7</sup>Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), pp. 1-2.

Santos Degollado played a paramount role in the early critical phase of this great conflict. Holding military offices of the highest order as well as major state and national posts in the liberal governments, he was in the midst of historic events of the period. During the years 1854 to 1861 he took active part in molding the course of that history.

Very little is known for certain about Santos Degollado's early life. The only sources which offer any details are secondary in nature and none of them document their statements. These accounts include an anonymous biographical sketch found in the García papers at the University of Texas Latin American Collection and published in García's Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, volume 11; El libro rojo, 1520-1867 edited by Angel Pola; and Vicente Fuentes Díaz' biography of Degollado.<sup>8</sup> What

---

<sup>8</sup> Santos Degollado Papers, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection (hereafter cited as García 26); Biographical notes in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, 11:242-261 (hereafter cited as García, Documentos); Angel Pola, Vicente Riva Palacio, Manuel Payno, Juan A. Mateos, Rafael Martínez de la Torre, El libro rojo, 1520-1867, 2 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1906); Vicente Fuentes Díaz, Santos Degollado, el santo de la Reforma (México: Talleres Imprenta Arana, 1959).

follows is, for the most part, an effort to provide the most plausible account of Degollado's early life by reconciling these and other secondary sources.

In the past there has been confusion as to the exact date of Degollado's birth. Some of his contemporaries thought he was born on November 1, 1807. The anonymous account published in García's Documentos inéditos said November 1, 1813 was the correct date. But García, as he revealed in a footnote to the anonymous sketch, had secured baptismal certification from Guanajuato which indicated that Degollado, an infant of "un días [sic]" was baptised on November 1, 1811. Vicente Fuentes Díaz may have based his opinion on this footnote when he stated the date of birth was October 30, 1811.<sup>9</sup>

There is a discrepancy, however, between the actual document of baptismal certification in the García papers and the version published in Documentos inéditos, a discrepancy which seems to indicate that everyone heretofore has been mistaken. According to the document, Jesús Ramírez y Aguilar, priest, vicar, and judge of the ecclesiastical court in Guanajuato in 1907, certified that at the time Degollado was

---

<sup>9</sup>Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 14 November 1859, p. 3; García, Documentos, 11:242-243; Fuentes Díaz, Degollado, p. 12.

baptised on November 1, 1811, records show he was an infant of "1 días [sic]." <sup>10</sup> The written expression "un días," mistakenly used in the published version, could be interpreted as "some days," but the use of the cardinal number "1" in the actual document is strong evidence that Santos Degollado was in fact born on October 31, 1811.

This baptismal certificate identifies Santos' parents as Francisco Degollado and Mariana Sánchez. The child was christened José Nemesio Francisco Degollado. <sup>11</sup> Throughout his life, however, he was called Santos, probably after his day of baptism, Todos los Santos or All Saints' Day. The only other member of the immediate family was a second son named Rafael.

According to undocumented secondary accounts, Santos' father had come to Mexico from Spain late in the eighteenth century. Through silver mining he had acquired a respectable estate before marrying Mariana Sánchez, a native of the region, in 1808. <sup>12</sup> Apparently Francisco's involvement in

---

<sup>10</sup>García 26.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.; Pola, Libro rojo, 2:361 names Ana María Garrido as Santos' mother. Since it is certain that Degollado had an uncle named Marian Garrido, it is likely, though not essential, that one of Degollado's mother's surnames was Garrido.

<sup>12</sup>Fuentes Díaz, Degollado, p. 12. Whether Degollado's mother was Indian is uncertain. A contemporary of Degollado

or sympathy for the independence movement which broke out in Mexico in 1810 led the viceregal government to confiscate his property. He died soon thereafter and his family, now poverty-stricken, joined Mariana's brother, a priest in Mexico City named Mariano Garrido.<sup>13</sup>

When he was reassigned to a parish in Cocupao, Michoacán (modern-day Quiroga), Garrido took the Degollado family with him. This priest, a strict Augustinian, was largely responsible for the upbringing and early education of the Degollado boys. While Santos was compelled to perfect his handwriting through constant practice in the vicarage copying marriage and baptismal records, Rafael was eventually permitted to pursue a career in the military.<sup>14</sup> The year after his brother left to attend the Colegio Militar in Mexico City, Santos married. The decision was not entirely his own; indeed he may have had very little to say in the affair, which was seemingly arranged by his uncle and his mother.

---

said Santos "has not a drop of Indian blood in his veins," and "He has fair skin, light hair, and blue eyes." See Edward E. Dunbar, The Mexican papers: the Mexican question, the Great American question, with personal reminiscences (New York: J.A.H. Hasbrouck and Co., 1860), p. 81.

<sup>13</sup>García, Documentos, 11:242-244.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.; Pola, Libro rojo, 2:361; Fuentes Díaz, Degollado, p. 13.

On October 14, 1828 Degollado wed Ignacia Castañeda Espinosa in Cocupao in a service performed by Garrido.<sup>15</sup>

Compelled by poverty to continue living with his family, Degollado began to chafe under the domineering authority of his uncle. A few months after the wedding he went to Morelia to find work, leaving his wife in Cocupao until he could secure the wherewithal to have her join him. His carefully developed handwriting style stood him in good stead as he immediately found a position as scribe for a local notary. He then made contacts which led to a job teaching writing to the son of the assessor and collector of tithes for the cathedral of Morelia, Dr. José María Medina. Later this opened up another opportunity and Santos joined the accounting section of the church treasury as a scribe.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these strokes of good fortune, Degollado's salaries remained small until he worked his way to the post of accountant in the cathedral's treasury. How soon his wife joined him is unclear, but it may not have been for several years. After they were reunited, Santos and Ignacia

---

<sup>15</sup>Pola, Libro rojo, 2:361-362; García, Documentos, 11:244-245.

<sup>16</sup>Pola, Libro rojo, 2:363-364.



eventually had four sons. Joaquín, the eldest, became an attorney and later had the unenviable experience of having to defend his father in court. Mariano, the second, was exiled in the 1850's, served in the Mexican legation in the United States under Benito Juárez, and later was a diplomat for Maximilian. There was a third son named Felipe of whom nothing is known. The youngest, Agustín, died in early 1859.<sup>17</sup>

Degollado continued studies, largely self-directed, during the early years in Morelia. Just as others who record the lives of national heroes in various times and places are prone to do, Degollado's biographers assume out of hand his intense love for learning and unquenchable thirst for reading matter. Fuentes Díaz and the anonymous biographer reveal that Santos studied not only such traditional subjects as law, philosophy, languages, and history, but also pursued such diverse interests as carpentry, fencing, and music. With regard to the latter, he was reputed to have become an accomplished guitarist, an art he took up

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 2:365; Egon Caesar Count Corti, Maximilian and Charlotte of Mexico, 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 2:479, 504; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 December 1860, document no. 67, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH); Diario de Avisos, 22 March 1859, p. 3.

out of fear that his poor vision might deteriorate into blindness, making it necessary to earn a living without benefit of eyesight.<sup>18</sup>

It is not possible to determine exactly how well-educated Degollado may have been. His writings certainly indicate that he was a learned, intelligent man. As was often the practice among educated persons at the time, he used numerous Latin expressions in personal correspondence.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore his writings, decrees, manifestos, etc. indicate he had a good deal of knowledge and experience in affairs of law and economics. There is evidence that he taught French and physics and perhaps other subjects at the College of San Nicolás de Hidalgo in Morelia between 1847 and 1853.<sup>20</sup> For a man whose education was primarily self-directed, Degollado seems to have been surprisingly well-rounded. And although his modest protestations often appear to border on feelings of inferiority, particularly when writing to friends with formal educations, he apparently held his own intellectually,

---

<sup>18</sup>García, Documentos, 11:247-248; Fuentes Díaz, Degollado, pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 31 August 1859, document no. 30, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

<sup>20</sup>Julián Bonavit, Historia del colegio primitivo y nacional de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 4th ed. (Morelia, México: Universidad Michoacana, 1958), p. 212.

enjoyed the company of academics, and was great friends with one of the intellectual giants of his time, Melchor Ocampo.

Degollado soon became active in the social affairs of Morelia. As was the case with most of the liberal leaders of the Reforma, he too was a Mason. In the late 1840's he served as president of the Society of Mutual Aid of Morelia, which provided health and life insurance, savings and loan benefits for members, as well as certain services to the public.<sup>21</sup> He also was typically busy promoting public education in his adopted state.

But most importantly Degollado became involved in local politics. From the earliest he favored groups allied with the cause of national federalism or liberalism. Though it may be subject to argument, considerable evidence can be gathered to indicate that progressive thought has prevailed in Michoacán throughout much of that state's history. Certainly during the decades of the mid-nineteenth century Michoacán was one of the strongholds of liberalism in Mexico. The impact of this tide of political thought was not lost

---

<sup>21</sup>Wilfred H. Callcott, Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1926), p. 222; El Federalista (Morelia, Mexico), 17 January 1847, pp. 2-3; 18 March 1847, p. 4.

on Degollado, despite the influence of clergy and other conservatives in his formative years. For Degollado, as for such seminary-educated liberals as Benito Juárez and José María Luis Mora, adherence to liberalism involved a conscious conversion.

It is not easy to explain this conversion. As suggested above, political environment may have had some impact. In Degollado's case a reaction against the regimentation and strict upbringing of his priestly uncle may have been involved as well. But perhaps personal acquaintances, particularly Melchor Ocampo had more influence on his conversion to liberalism than any other factor. Whatever the causes, they worked their metamorphosis slowly, for though Degollado was allied with the liberal party in Michoacán very early, it was some time before he was able to accept the more radical goals of fellow liberals.

According to one source, the head accountant of the treasury for the cathedral of Morelia was, ironically, also head of the liberal party in that area. It was therefore perhaps through this fellow worker that Degollado first came to attend one of the liberals' secret meetings. At one such meeting Degollado met Ocampo and began what was to be a deep and lifelong friendship.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Pola, Libro rojo, 2:365-366.

Degollado's involvement with the liberals was an active one. Undocumented accounts describe Santos' participation in an unsuccessful federalist pronunciamiento in 1836 against the conservative national administration of Anastasio Bustamante. Serving as a second lieutenant Degollado took part in some fighting and was captured. He was spared execution and released. Three years later he and his brother Rafael, who was a lt. colonel in the federal army serving under pro-liberal general Gordiano Guzmán, were arrested in a raid on a liberal gathering. On this occasion Degollado spent several months in prison for his activities.<sup>23</sup>

Such indignities Degollado suffered only while his party was out of office in Michoacán. When liberals held power, his political ventures followed routes more traditional than the escapades of the 1830's. In October 1845 he was named to the departmental assembly of Michoacán. One year later he was elected one of five state electors from Morelia.

---

<sup>23</sup>García, Documentos, 11:252-253; Valentín Gómez Farías papers, F47A(713A)843 and F62(4548)681, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as VGF/UT); García, Documentos, 11:254-257; Juan López de Escalera, Diccionario biográfico y de historia de México (México: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964), p. 266.

Then in November 1846 he won one of four positions on the council advising the state's assembly.<sup>24</sup>

Feeling himself ill-equipped as a counselor to the assembly and believing he could better serve Mexico in her war with the United States as a supply officer in the national guard, Degollado asked governor Melchor Ocampo to accept his resignation.<sup>25</sup> Santos' bookkeeping skills and other abilities developed in his position with the cathedral gave him a talent for solving military organizational and logistical problems. These skills and their applicability to warfare were to prove a great asset to Degollado and the liberal cause in later years.

For the moment, however, Ocampo persuaded his friend to stay on as adviser to the legislature. In this post Degollado took an active part in debate and drafting of state laws. He was particularly involved in pressing for increased state activity in educational affairs, leading debate for the public education bill and securing reappointment of members of the state studies board.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Amador Coromina, ed., Recopilación de leyes, decretos, reglamentos y circulares expedidas en el estado de Michoacán, 43 vols. (Morelia, Mexico: Imprenta de los hijos de I. Arango, 1886-1923), 8:199, 239; El Federalista, 29 October 1846, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> El Federalista, 24 December 1846, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 4 April 1847, p. 1; 15 April 1847, p. 1; 25 April 1847, p. 1.

On March 29, 1848 Ocampo resigned as governor of Michoacán, customary behavior for the temperamental liberal leader when he became disgruntled. Santos Degollado became substitute governor to serve until the post could be permanently filled. On May 18 Degollado was elected once again as proprietary adviser to the assembly and three weeks later stepped down as acting governor, for by this time Juan B. Ceballos had been chosen as the new governor.<sup>27</sup> Having served as interim governor for less than three months, don Santos was not responsible for any major measures.

Returning to his post as first counselor of Michoacán, Degollado exerted considerable influence in state politics. Liberals in other parts of Mexico soon began to hear of him, due in large part to the fact that former president Valentín Gómez Farías was promoting Degollado as one of three possible liberal candidates for president of Mexico.<sup>28</sup> There is no evidence that Santos ever actively pursued the nomination and it is unlikely that he would have done so. In early 1851 Congress chose as president Mariano Arista, the leading moderate candidate.

---

<sup>27</sup>Coromina, Recopilación de leyes de Michoacán, 11:89, 104; 10:3; 9:109. Degollado's brother Rafael was elected substitute deputy to the state assembly in the same May 18 election.

<sup>28</sup>F55(2949)2864, F57(3324)3222, F56(3189)3296, VGF/UT.

Instead of seeking national office Degollado continued to concern himself with affairs in Michoacán. Late in 1850 Ocampo tried to persuade Degollado to use his influence to secure Juan B. Ceballos' election to the national supreme court. Santos reluctantly agreed providing Ceballos would be willing, but feared that critics would denounce his efforts as an attempt by Degollado to get competitors out of Michoacán so he alone could dominate the state. Santos' primary concern, however, seemed to be persuading Ocampo to return to activity in state politics.<sup>29</sup>

Ocampo, Ceballos, and Degollado were friends and all three profited politically from the situation. In 1852 Ceballos accepted the supreme court post, and early the next year, when President Arista resigned, Ceballos was appointed interim president of Mexico.<sup>30</sup> Ocampo soon thereafter returned as governor of Michoacán. Degollado assumed responsibility for directing the Ocampo faction in the state assembly from 1851 on. In that capacity he helped launch what was virtually the only liberal reform program

---

<sup>29</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 16 December 1850, document no. 10, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>30</sup>Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía, y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1970), 1:416. He held office for only one month.



to get off the ground in Mexico during the period of liberal predominance after the war with the United States. Unfortunately for the liberals this program helped trigger a conservative revolt that ultimately led to a new national conservative regime under Antonio López de Santa Anna in 1853.<sup>31</sup>

Late in 1851 Degollado was chosen as one of three candidates for state governor and simultaneously was named president of the College of San Nicolás de Hidalgo in Morelia.<sup>32</sup> Whether he lost the gubernatorial election or rejected the candidacy to take the post at the Colegio is not known. But one or the other occurred for he soon thereafter became regent of the school with which he had been affiliated for the past several years.

The College of San Nicolás de Hidalgo, often referred to as the oldest "colegio" in America, was founded in the sixteenth century by Vasco de Quiroga. In operation until the wars of independence, it was then closed down and used

---

<sup>31</sup>Jesús Romero Flores, Historia de la ciudad de Morelia (México: Ediciones Morelos, 1952), p. 110; José C. Valadés, Don Melchor Ocampo: reformador de México (México: Editorial Patria, 1954), p. 235; Justo Sierra, The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 255.

<sup>32</sup>Coromina, Recopilación de leyes de Michoacán, 11:194.

alternately as a prison and troop quarters. Efforts to reopen the school in 1832 proved fruitless when liberals and clergy were unable to agree on who was to exercise control. In 1846 governor Melchor Ocampo took action because of widespread interest in reopening the Colegio. Much of the work and organization necessary was handled by the agency directing state studies, of which Degollado was secretary.<sup>33</sup>

Ocampo was the driving force in the restoration of the school and in its academic life once the project reached fruition. But Degollado did much of the work and drudgery involved. On January 17, 1847 when formal restoration ceremonies took place, Santos read the list and ranks of faculty and took care, as the school's new secretary, to preserve copies of all speeches and formal acts for the Colegio's archives.<sup>34</sup>

For the next seven years, while he also was engaged in state politics, Degollado played an active role in the

---

<sup>33</sup>Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás, pp. 153, 182-185; Pablo G. Macías, Aula Nobilis, monografía del colegio primitivo y nacional de San Nicolás de Hidalgo (México: Ediciones Vanguardia Nicolaita, 1940), pp. 84, 88-92, 94-95; García, Documentos, 11:257-258.

<sup>34</sup>Macías, Aula Nobilis, pp. 12, 22, 94-95, 164; El Federalista, 10 December 1846, p. 4; Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás, pp. 207-211.

life of the College of San Nicolás. He taught several subjects and acquired for the school its first physics laboratory. And he continued to serve as secretary of the institution, a position which occupied much of his time. Finally in late 1852 or early 1853 Degollado became regent of the Colegio.<sup>35</sup>

This was a position don Santos likely enjoyed and it seemed his interest in state politics was being supplanted by his love for the academic life. In all probability Santos Degollado would have happily made a lifelong career of his work at the Colegio. And had circumstances in Mexico been different he might have been able to do so. But by this time Santa Anna was once again in power in Mexico City and for progressive-minded Mexicans such as Degollado it could only mean another bout of civil war was imminent.

---

<sup>35</sup>Macías, Aula Nobilis, pp. 142-143; Bonavit, Historia del colegio de San Nicolás, p. 212; El Federalista, 7 February 1847, p. 2; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 28 January 1853, document no. 11, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Melchor Ocampo, Obras completas de Melchor Ocampo, ed. F. Vázquez, 3 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1901), vol. 2, Escritos políticos, 2:liii.

## CHAPTER I

### REVOLUTION OF AYUTLA

#### 1

In the unsettled aftermath of the 1846-1847 war with the United States, Mexico City fell to the liberals. But for five years Presidents José Joaquín de Herrera and Mariano Arista tried and failed to solve those national problems that kept the country divided. In 1853 conservatives rose up, partly in anger over Ocampo's reforms in Michoacán, and forced Arista out of office. They then called Antonio López de Santa Anna to the presidency, and the perennial dictator accepted and was sworn in on April 20.<sup>1</sup>

Early in his administration Santa Anna was guided by Lucas Alamán, but when Alamán died don Antonio's rule quickly degenerated into unrestrained dictatorship. Yet through these deteriorating conditions Santa Anna paradoxically made what was perhaps his most positive contribution to Mexico. His unprincipled rule crystallized opposition to

---

<sup>1</sup>Justo Sierra, The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 249, 255; El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 20 April 1853, p. 4.

the regime and so gave the liberals a unifying factor they had been unable to provide for themselves.

In February 1854 this growing disaffection finally broke out into open rebellion. In the hills of the southern state of Guerrero, Juan Alvarez, the "panther of the south," called together loyal followers who had fought with him periodically since the wars of independence. The old liberal had challenged centralist, conservative dictators before, Santa Anna included, and he quickly filled out the ranks of his veteran army with ardent new supporters who knew his reputation and opposed the regime in Mexico City.

On March 1, 1854 the rebels formally revealed their purposes by issuing the Plan of Ayutla. Ignacio Comonfort, an ex-colonel whom Santa Anna had removed as customs collector in Acapulco, met with Juan Alvarez and liberal army officers Tomás Moreno and Florencio Villareal at La Providencia, where they drafted the plan. Then, following "the traditional pattern of Mexican revolutionary protocol," Colonel Villareal was selected to announce the plan at the village of Ayutla, since he was not closely associated with the leadership of the movement. The nine articles of the original Plan of Ayutla called for the following:

1. overthrow of Santa Anna

2. representatives of each department and territory to select an interim president
3. this interim president to have ample powers to govern the nation and assure national security
4. provisions for administration of states
5. president ad interim to call a convention to approve his acts and to draft a new constitution
6. provisions for support of the army and regulation of trade
7. abolition of restrictive passport laws and special taxes imposed by Santa Anna
8. opponents of this plan to be considered traitors to Mexico
9. Nicolás Bravo, Juan Alvarez, and Tomás Moreno to be invited to lead the revolutionary forces.<sup>2</sup>

Ten days later, in Acapulco, Comonfort slightly modified the plan in a number of ways. He was to be included in the leadership of the revolution and, being a moderate, he proposed changes which served to obscure somewhat the type

---

<sup>2</sup>Ray F. Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort: His Contributions to the Mexican Reform, 1855-1857" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1959), pp. 38-40; Plan of Ayutla, 1 March 1854, in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:13-15.

off. Others suggested that there had been a break in the dictator's line of communications with the capital, and some speculated that Santa Anna lacked the heavy artillery necessary to reduce the fortress at Acapulco. The most probable explanation, however, is that the dictator feared that a siege would decimate his army through desertions, casualties, disease, and lack of provisions.<sup>5</sup> Whatever may have been the reasons, this failure cost him an ideal opportunity to deal the revolution a crippling blow, and it gave new impetus to the rebellion.

Santa Anna lost one minor engagement while returning to the capital, but upon his arrival in Mexico City, he lauded the entire campaign as a great triumph. Those who heard these claims remained unconvinced. The North American press predicted that Santa Anna would soon fall from power. One Mexican paper published a satirical article titled "I came, I saw, I ran," which reported that the dictator had lost 1,000 men as well as munitions, pack animals, weapons, and baggage. When don Antonio claimed victory, the article retorted, "there aren't many turkeys who believe

---

<sup>5</sup>Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 150-157.

of government called for and which in effect dissociated the plan from the federalist-liberal position.<sup>3</sup>

Initially the revolt was confined to the states of Guerrero and Michoacán, and even when it began to spread, these states remained the movement's strongholds. Santa Anna seems to have realized that this was no ordinary revolt, for he chose to direct personally the first major campaign rather than delegate command. Two weeks after the Plan of Ayutla was issued he set out with 5,000 men to track down Juan Alvarez' army.<sup>4</sup>

On April 4, 1854, after nearly three weeks of fruitless efforts to bring the elusive Alvarez to bay, Santa Anna turned toward Acapulco, a key port held by rebels under the command of Comonfort. The dictator laid siege to the city, but suddenly withdrew on April 26. He claimed that his siege had merely been a ploy to lure Alvarez out of the hills, and when it met with no success, he chose to call it

---

<sup>3</sup>Jesús Reyes Heróles, El liberalismo mexicano, 3 vols. (México: UNAM Facultad de Derecho, 1957-1961), 3:395; Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort," pp. 43-44; Acapulco modifications to Plan of Ayutla, 11 March 1854, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:15-24.

<sup>4</sup>Sierra, Political Evolution, p. 262; Tomás Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares como consecuencia de la proclamación del Plan de Ayutla hasta el triunfo de la revolución liberal," in Plan de Ayutla: conmemoración de su primer centenario, ed. Mario de la Cueva (México: Ediciones de la Facultad de Derecho (UNAM), 1954), pp. 149-150.



it." The revolution was quickly spreading to other parts of Mexico, and Santa Anna's hollow boasting deluded no one.<sup>6</sup>

Comonfort went to the United States in mid-summer 1854 and enjoyed considerable success in acquiring arms and munitions for the Ayutla movement. But before these could reach rebel troops in the field, santanista forces began to turn the tide in their favor. Félix Zuloaga and Severo Castillo ranged through Guerrero, and though they were unable to pin down Alvarez, they won several engagements and managed to keep the rebels off balance. Ramón Tavera had even more success in Michoacán, regaining control of much of the state by the end of November 1854.<sup>7</sup> Thus by early winter Santa Anna had recouped some of his losses, and the rebels were on the defensive.

## 2

At this time, the winter of 1854-1855, Santos Degollado joined the Ayutla revolutionaries. This was by no means unexpected, for he had participated in earlier revolts against conservative administrations, and would eventually

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 157-158; Harper's New Monthly Magazine (New York), July 1854, p. 251 (hereafter cited as Harper's); Article, May 1854, document no. 10, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 1, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as RII/CEHM).

<sup>7</sup> Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort," pp. 54-56; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 159-161; El Omnibus (Mexico City), 12 October 1854, p. 3; 29 November 1854, p. 3; 2 December 1854, p. 3.

have been attracted to any movement designed to remove Santa Anna. The dictator must have been aware of this potential threat, for secondary accounts report that Santa Anna had taken steps in 1853 to have Degollado confined in Jalapa.<sup>8</sup> After the revolution erupted, the president issued a decree on May 26, 1854 ordering that don Santos be expelled from Michoacán, and three weeks later ordered that Degollado be arrested. Apparently Degollado officially announced his support of the Ayutla movement the following month.<sup>9</sup> There is no evidence, however, of his having participated in any military engagements before December 1854.

Upon enlisting, Degollado proclaimed his desire to serve as a common soldier, for he was an admitted novice in the science of warfare. The rebel army suffered for

---

<sup>8</sup> José M. Vigil, La Reforma, vol. 5 of México a través de los siglos, ed. Vincente Riva Palacio, 5 vols. (México: Editorial Cumbre, 1958), 5:856; Anselmo de la Portilla, Historia de la revolución de México contra la dictadura del general Santa Anna, 1853-1855 (México: Imprenta de Vincente García Torres, 1856), pp. 196-197; Juan López de Escalera, Diccionario biográfico y de historia de México (México: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964), p. 266. Since Ocampo was imprisoned on his hacienda in June 1853, it is very likely that Degollado was also arrested; El Siglo XIX, 14 June 1853, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Güfa de los documentos más importantes sobre el plan y la revolución de Ayutla que existen en el Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (México: Taller Autográfico, 1954), pp. 21, 23; Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y el segundo Imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 8.

want of leadership, however, because most regular army officers remained loyal to Santa Anna. Consequently Degollado was compelled to accept a command.<sup>10</sup>

In Michoacán don Santos' participation in the revolution seems to have testified to the movement's "high purposes," and soon the rebels in that area met with great success in recruiting.<sup>11</sup> Degollado displayed a rare talent, even this early in his military career, for recruiting, training, and organizing military forces.

By January 1855 he became the commander-in-chief of the Ayutla army in Michoacán. In seeking to persuade one local caudillo to join him, Degollado pointed out that he had encountered such success in recruiting that he had soldiers "in excess," but was in need of "intelligent and reputable commanders." Don Santos' recruiting pitch was an appeal to patriotism and personal integrity, and a plea for the rule of law. He combined flattery with a reminder that his cause enjoyed the support of the people, and added a subtle warning that once the inevitable victory had been won, those who had resisted it might not fare so well.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>El Universal (Mexico City), 28 January 1855, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Portilla, Revolución contra Santa Anna, p. 197.

<sup>12</sup>El Universal, 28 January 1855, p. 2.

In affairs of tactics, Degollado realized the importance of raiding towns and cities, not as geographical objectives, but in order to resupply his army. He placed greater importance on maintaining a mobile, potent fighting force than on retaining control of strategic cities. Therefore he was always willing to abandon a town in the face of superior forces, in order to fall back and close with his enemy on ground of his own choosing.

Don Santos conducted numerous raids of this type in the winter of 1854-1855. In early December he raided Tajimaroa, Turundeo, and Tuxpam, all in Michoacán, in search of horses and money. On December 22 he led an attack near Maravatío which netted \$40,000 in supplies and funds. In January, with a force of 2,000 men, he led forays against Medina, Acámbaro, Barca, San Felipe, and several haciendas. Meanwhile, Juan Alvarez and Tomás Moreno won a critical battle in Guerrero, when Félix Zuloaga's army, pinned down at Nuxco for thirty-seven days, surrendered and joined the Ayutla forces.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 29 January 1855, p. 3; 2 February 1855, p. 3; Richard A. Johnson, The Mexican Revolution of Ayutla, 1854-1855 (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana College Library, 1939), p. 55; Ignacio Aguilar y Marocho, La familia enferma (México: Editorial JUS, 1969), pp. 26-27; Niceto de Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, desde sus tiempos más remotos hasta nuestros días, 18 vols. (México: J.F. Parres y Cía., 1877-1882), 14:6-7, 9; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 159-162; Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort," pp. 57-58.

Degollado then spread the revolution to Jalisco. Joining forces with Eпитacio Huerta, Manuel Garcíа Pueblita (always referred to as General Pueblita), and others, he marched on Guadalajara, one of the most important santanista strongholds in Mexico. Don Santos was surprised to learn that a personal friend, José de la Parra, was commanding forces in defense of the city. In a move which was to become standard procedure with him, Degollado sent a letter on January 28, 1855 to de la Parra to try to persuade his friend to abandon Santa Anna's cause. Don Santos warned that the dictator must ultimately lose, since he lacked any principle and since his rule was detrimental to Mexico. But above all, Degollado's appeal was personal--"I do not speak to you as the defender of a government, which holds me and mine to be bandits . . . , I speak to you as a friend who dearly loves you."<sup>14</sup> In the end, however, one of the great tragedies of civil war prevailed--the "cause," which often transcends friendship and even family ties, took precedence, and don Santos' plea went unheeded.

Degollado had a mounted force of 3,500 men at San Pedro, about ten miles away from Guadalajara. The day after his

---

<sup>14</sup> El Universal, 4 February 1855, p. 2; 20 February 1855, p. 2.

appeal to de la Parra was ignored, don Santos learned that a 1,000-man force under Ramón Tavera and Pepe Santa Anna, the president's son, had been sent out from the city to engage him. Degollado decided to wait for their attack, which he believed he could easily repulse. He would then have the benefit of captured munitions and increased forces, for the defeated santanista soldiers could be counted upon to switch sides. He would thus dispense with part of the forces defending Guadalajara, increase his own strength, and improve his chances of capturing the Jaliscan capital. In addition this plan of action would more effectively disperse the enemy, making it unnecessary for don Santos to prepare for an immediate counter-siege.<sup>15</sup>

It was an excellent plan, on paper, but something went awry. The opposing force was larger than expected, Degollado's troops were green, and his battlefield leadership was less than brilliant. A foreign observer reported that Degollado could have easily taken Guadalajara, but was afraid to unleash his undisciplined troops on the city for fear that they would loot and pillage. Whatever may have been the circumstances, when battle was joined on January 29, Degollado's army was driven from the field, leaving behind 45 dead, many wounded,

---

<sup>15</sup>New-York Daily Times, 20 February 1855, p. 1.

and much equipment. Don Santos prevented any pursuit by the enemy when he succeeded in fomenting a revolt among the rabble within Guadalajara, a diversionary tactic which became a common feature of his warcraft.<sup>16</sup>

The loss at Guadalajara was not a critical one. Degollado had not captured the city, but he had temporarily expanded the theater of conflict, harassed his enemies, and kept them off guard. Nine days after his retreat from Guadalajara, however, don Santos attacked Zapotlán, also in Jalisco, with 4,000 men and was repulsed. Eight days later he lost again, at Cocula, this time to Ramón Tavera.<sup>17</sup> These additional setbacks were disheartening, but still not critical, for they were little more than skirmishes and Degollado's losses were minimal.

By March don Santos was back in Michoacán. There was little military activity, for most of the state was already in the hands of rebel forces. There were rumors that rivalries in Degollado's command hampered his efforts at this time to launch an assault on Morelia.<sup>18</sup> If such was the case,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7 May 1855, p. 1; Johnson, Revolution of Ayutla, p. 56; Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, 14:19-20; El Universal, 4 February 1855, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, Revolution of Ayutla, pp. 57-58.

<sup>18</sup> El Universal, 21 March 1855, p. 1; 31 March 1855, p. 3.

Degollado was merely experiencing the same problem which constantly plagued the Ayutla movement before and after its victory over Santa Anna. Indeed, this most perplexing issue, that of internal factionalism, was never resolved by the liberals and was perhaps the root cause of the subsequent undoing of the Constitution of 1857 and the beginning of the Three Years' War in December 1857.

## 3

There were three principal factors in armed conflict of the type seen during the revolution of Ayutla: terrain, arms, and men. Terrain was the one constant, unchanging factor, and both sides had to cope with it on an equal basis. Arms had evolved, by this time, to a sophisticated level. Most of the weapons used were of French and Spanish origin, while only a relatively small number came from the United States. Artillery was invaluable, but because of the mobile style of fighting, field pieces were the most highly prized. Of these, commanders preferred lighter eight and twelve pounders, smooth bore and muzzle-loading mortars and howitzers. Since the santanistas held the major cities, they were of course more concerned with fixed gun emplacements. As the challengers, Ayutla rebels made greater use of siege guns. The standard small arms were percussion and flintlock muskets, with bayonets. Weapons were not so



advanced, of course, that hand-to-hand combat was eliminated, and many times men went into battle armed only with swords, machetes, lances, billhooks, or sickles.<sup>19</sup> It is because of this that the third and most important factor, that of fighting men, came into play.

The major consideration in manpower is numbers. Aside from this, however, a soldier's fighting ability can be enhanced by physical and mental preparation, and by moral purpose. The santanistas excelled in the former category, the rebels perhaps fought for a higher moral goal. Even so, the ranks of the Ayutla armies included many undesirables. One foreign observer reported that Degollado often feared capturing a plaza because he doubted his ability to restrain the undisciplined mob under his command. It was common practice for conservative newspapers to refer to the Ayutla rebels as little more than gangs of bandits, and this was not entirely propaganda. Don Santos admitted privately that his was indeed an army of ruffians. He confided that he always faced the dangers of assassination or of mutineers surrendering him to Santa Anna for the price on his head.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 129-140.

<sup>20</sup> New-York Daily Times, 7 May 1855, p. 1; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AN/INAH).

It is under circumstances such as these that leadership can make the critical difference in battle.

As individuals, soldiers have different mentalities and motivations, but all are subject to the same emotions of excitement and panic. The fact that some leaders can control these emotions and instill discipline is what makes leadership a most significant factor in armed conflict. Degollado rarely had the opportunity to train and discipline his men at an orderly pace. An irregular army of guerrillas always on the move, with soldiers constantly joining and leaving the ranks, made effective training and leadership most difficult. In such a situation emotional appeals and a firm will were about all Degollado had to rely upon. After the revolution was won, Degollado confided in his friend Melchor Ocampo that his principal contribution to the military effort had been to place himself "among perverse people in order to moralize and regularize them" enough to win battles.<sup>21</sup> Don Santos had not won all his battles, of course, but his overall record was not bad. And because of the unique difficulties of command that the Revolution of

---

<sup>21</sup>Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," p. 139; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Ayutla had posed for rebel chiefs, Degollado's battlefield leadership was not strongly criticized at the time.

## 4

Santos Degollado devoted wholeheartedly his military talents, such as they were, to the Ayutla movement. But philosophically, he had reservations, for at this time he had not accepted entirely the program of the radical faction of the liberal party known as the puros. He believed that the Plan of Ayutla did not appeal to the majority of Mexicans, because it proposed, in his opinion, the establishment of a dictatorship as odious as the one it sought to destroy. He therefore decreed on March 11, 1855, under power granted to him in the fourth article of the plan, that the Organic Bases of 1843 would serve as the provisional constitution for the states under his command--Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guanajuato. He still seconded the Plan of Ayutla, but called upon Alvarez to adopt the Organic Bases as "the most effective and sure means" to satisfy the will of the majority of Mexicans.<sup>22</sup>

The Organic Bases were, in effect, a moderate national constitution adopted in 1843, which returned the country to a federal system, but which allowed the privileged

---

<sup>22</sup>Johnson, Revolution of Ayutla, p. 84; Decree, Degollado, 11 March 1855, document no. 3aS/R138/D211, AH/INAH.

classes to retain their fueros. Degollado believed that it had been the most widely accepted constitution in Mexico's past, and that it would conciliate those groups which were otherwise disenchanted with the Plan of Ayutla.<sup>23</sup>

Though Degollado's opponents ridiculed this decree as an explicit recognition of principles proclaimed by Santa Anna, it does not represent a defection by don Santos from the revolution.<sup>24</sup> Instead it was a realistic recognition of the true nature of the revolution. Degollado saw that the Ayutla movement would become the most popularly supported revolution in Mexico's history, because its singular original purpose had been the elimination of Antonio López de Santa Anna. This goal most Mexicans would support, Degollado realized, if they could be permitted to do so under a banner which was not politically repulsive to them. Don Santos also believed the removal of the dictator to be the overriding concern of the Ayutla movement. Consequently he was willing to compromise the reformist nature of the revolution, which he personally may not have entirely accepted anyway, for

---

<sup>23</sup> Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970), 1:234; Decree, Degollado, 11 March 1855, document no. 3aS/R138/D211, AH/INAH.

<sup>24</sup> El Universal, 26 March 1855, p. 1.

the expedient of popular support and the more rapid achievement of victory which this support would make possible.

The son-in-law of Melchor Ocampo, and a leading liberal, José María Mata, agreed that this measure would certainly bring quicker victory, but he had doubts as to whether it would facilitate or hamper the solution of major ideological questions separating Mexicans. He soon resolved these doubts, however, and became convinced that adoption of the Organic Bases would not only hasten victory but would also leave the door open for necessary reforms to follow.<sup>25</sup>

Degollado's suggestion was, to the puro leadership of the revolution, an ideological step backward which its members were not prepared to take. There were even rumors that Degollado had reached some agreement with Santa Anna. In the end, though don Santos' decree was applicable to those states he controlled, the Organic Bases of 1843 were not accepted as part of the Plan of Ayutla.<sup>26</sup>

Degollado's military activities continued unabated, for he did not permit essentially minor political differences

---

<sup>25</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 14 April 1855, and letter, Mata to Ocampo, 16 April 1855, in José María Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), pp. 47, 48.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 2 May 1855, *ibid.*, p. 53; Johnson, Revolution of Ayutla, p. 84.

to shake his commitment to the overriding goal of driving Santa Anna from power. On April 20, 1855, after a 36-hour siege, he captured the well-defended town of Puruándiro, and the entire garrison fell into his hands. The following week La Piedad was taken. As he piled up victories, santanista garrisons began surrendering without a fight, as in the case of Zamora, where many federal troops joined Degollado's revolutionary forces. General Pueblita likewise had success against Santa Anna's armies, and soon Comonfort came to Michoacán to participate in the near rout. By the end of April the Ayutla rebels controlled nearly all of the state.<sup>27</sup>

Santa Anna realized the portent of these events, and on April 30 he set out from the capital to recapture Michoacán. He led his army into Morelia nine days later, obviously to the relief of his troops there, for they were one of only two santanista garrisons remaining in the entire state. Three days later, on May 12, Santa Anna marched on Zamora, expecting to encounter Degollado's army. Instead he fell upon Pueblita's forces and dispatched them handily. Don Santos was convinced that the dictator's army was too

---

<sup>27</sup>Portilla, Revolución contra Santa Anna, p. 202; Guía de documentos de la Defensa Nacional, p. 50; Decree, Degollado, 25 April 1855, document no. 3aS/R138/D212, AH/INAH; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," p. 163.

strong to risk a pitched battle.<sup>28</sup> Instead he had flanked the enemy forces and, in a daring attempt to divert Santa Anna from the Michoacán campaign, Degollado made a menacing thrust in the direction of Mexico City itself.

## 5

Degollado's three-week campaign in the hills northwest of Mexico City is a classic textbook lesson in guerrilla warfare. He led a force of 1,100 to 1,400 men out of Michoacán and into the state of México on May 9, 1855. His maneuver immediately achieved one desired effect when Santa Anna cancelled a planned march northward from Zamora and sent some of his best troops under General Ramón Tavera in pursuit of don Santos' rebel band.<sup>29</sup>

The santanistas were unsure of Degollado's objectives, but most believed that he intended some sort of thrust at the capital or at Toluca. The garrisons in both cities were confident that they could repulse any threats to their respective plazas.<sup>30</sup> In fact, Degollado probably never

---

<sup>28</sup> El Universal, 29 April 1855, p. 3; 18 May 1855, p. 3; 22 May 1855, p. 2; Jesús Romero Flores, Historia de la ciudad de Morelia (Morelia: Imprenta de la Escuela de Artes, 1928), p. 139.

<sup>29</sup> Portilla, Revolución contra Santa Anna, pp. 216-218; Johnson, Revolution of Ayutla, pp. 58-59; El Universal, 25 May 1855, p. 2; 26 May 1855, p. 3; 27 May 1855, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> El Universal, 25 May 1855, p. 2; Letter, Quintero to minister of relations, 28 May 1855, document no. 1, H/518 "879," 5-15-8579, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AG/SRE).

considered such a grandiose objective. His raid seemed merely diversionary, and at the outset, at least, he had no intentions of being drawn into battle.

Degollado's army did considerable maneuvering, and Tavera's men had a difficult time keeping up the chase. Finally on May 23 conservatives reported the rebel force of nearly 2,000 to be quartered for the night at San Felipe del Obraje, their objective supposedly being Toluca to the south. The following day near Jiquipilco Tavera came to within one league of his quarry, close enough for advance elements to observe some of Degollado's men loading wagons with tobacco. The rebels escaped over the rough terrain, however, and fled northward toward Villa del Carbón, while Tavera's admittedly weary men were unable to pursue.<sup>31</sup>

Degollado's army then feinted to its right, toward the federal district, but forces there drove them away from Tlalnepantla and pushed them back toward Villa del Carbón. Tavera, meanwhile, had force marched to Carbón to deny his opponents a chance to rest and resupply there. Degollado

---

<sup>31</sup>Letter, Cabrera to minister of relations, 23 May 1855, document no. 1, H/518 "855," 5-15-8521, AG/SRE; Letter, Tavera to governor of Dept. of Mexico, 25 May 1855, document no. 1, H/518 "855," 5-15-8525, AG/SRE; El Universal, 30 May 1855, p. 2.



was thus pressed even farther to the north, across the state line of Hidalgo toward Tepejí del Río.<sup>32</sup>

The tenacious pursuit of Tavera may have begun to take its toll on Degollado's army. If conservative accounts are accurate, don Santos' forces were being dissipated by desertion, and he was striving to reach sanctuary in the Sierra Madre mountains. He had hoped to link up with Plutarco González, who had come from Michoacán to reinforce him, but González was cut off by federal troops from Toluca and defeated on May 26.<sup>33</sup>

After Degollado left Villa del Carbón on May 26, Tavera temporarily lost the trail. When he finally found it again at Tepejí del Río, he learned that Degollado had already fled eastward toward Huehuetoca, after destroying the telegraph and taking money and supplies. In addition don Santos had mounted his infantry on the finest horses from Tepejí del Río, and Tavera almost despaired of pursuit.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> El Universal, 27 May 1855, p. 3; 29 May 1855, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 29 May 1855, p. 3; Letter, Noriega to minister of relations, 28 May 1855, document no. 1, H/518 "855," 5-15-8519, AG/SRE; El Universal, 30 May 1855, p. 2; 31 May 1855, p. 3; Portilla, Revolución contra Santa Anna, pp. 216-218.

<sup>34</sup> Letter, Tavera to commander of district of Mexico, 28 May 1855, document no. 2, H/518 "855," 5-15-8525, AG/SRE.

The santanista general explained that Degollado's tactics made it extremely difficult to catch and engage him in battle. Because the rebels entered villages first, they had their choice of the best horses and supplies. In addition, local authorities offered no resistance, either out of fear of or sympathy for the rebels. Tavera observed that,

Since the tactics of these bandits is to flee, to take what they can in the towns and never to offer battle, unless another force comes forward to block them in order to engage them, they will return to their old by<sup>35</sup>grows evading the forces of the Supreme Government.

Degollado's band proceeded on through Huehuetoca to the town of Tizayuca. Here, for some reason, don Santos violated one of the basic tenets of guerrilla warfare. He wheeled his troops around to face a superior force in pitched battle. Perhaps Tavera's army pounced upon him too quickly to allow escape; perhaps his men had been so closely harried the past three week that they were too exhausted to retreat; or perhaps Degollado is guilty of bad judgment. Whatever the circumstances, don Santos by choice or by compulsion abandoned the tactics which had to that point crowned his campaign with success, and

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

in so doing suffered the worst single defeat of the Ayutla revolution.<sup>36</sup>

After a hard fought battle of not more than three hours, Degollado's infantry was routed and his cavalry dispersed. Of a 1,200 man force he suffered at least 24 killed and as many as 50 captured, all of whom were executed. In addition the rebels lost nearly 150 firearms as well as ammunition and other weapons. Degollado and some of his officers were able to escape only because of their excellent mounts.<sup>37</sup>

The following day Tavera set out in pursuit of don Santos and the small number of men still accompanying him, as the beleaguered rebels struggled to make their way back to Michoacán. They headed due west spending one night in Chapa de Mota before pushing on.<sup>38</sup> This badly mauled remnant

<sup>36</sup>Portilla, Revolución contra Santa Anna, pp. 216-217.

<sup>37</sup>Letter, Tavera to minister of relations, 28 May 1855, document no. 4; Letter, García de Rebollo to minister of relations, 31 May 1855, document no. 7; both from H/518 "855," 5-15-8525, AG/SRE; El Universal, 6 June 1855, p. 2; 7 June 1855, p. 2; 31 May 1855, p. 2; Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 1:184.

<sup>38</sup>Letter, Tavera to minister of relations, 31 May 1855, document no. 3; Letter, Tavera to minister of relations, 2 June 1855, document no. 8; Letter, Aria to Tavera, 3 June 1855, document no. 9; all from H/518 "855," 5-15-8525, AG/SRE.

of Degollado's army finally reached home ground, only to discover that Santa Anna had been busy in its absence.

The dictator had restored all the federal garrisons in the embattled northern sector of Michoacán. He had then marched south to attack Comonfort's army at Ario. Fortunately for the revolutionary forces a "terrible storm" compelled Santa Anna to cancel the campaign and return to Mexico City.<sup>39</sup>

With the rout of Degollado's army at Tizayuca and the success of Santa Anna's campaign, newspapers in Mexico City declared that the revolution in Michoacán was dead.<sup>40</sup> Leaders in the capital began to discuss clemency for the rebels, and when it was revealed that Degollado and three others had been offered amnesty, rumors circulated that these four men "will be tomorrow or the next day in this capital" to accept the pardons.<sup>41</sup>

Such predictions were of course premature. The revolution was indeed about to draw to a rapid close, but as Santa

<sup>39</sup>Letter, Noriega to minister of relations, 28 May 1855, document no. 1, H/518 "855," 5-15-8519, AG/SRE.

<sup>40</sup>El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 30 May 1855, p. 4; El Universal, 10 June 1855, p. 2.

<sup>41</sup>El Universal, 13 June 1855, p. 1; 14 June 1855, p. 3; Letter, Pereda to minister of relations, 18 August 1855, document no. 7, H/510 "855," 1-1-72, AG/SRE.

Anna soon learned, the outcome would not be what these newspapers anticipated.

## 6

The Ayutla armies, including the Michoacán forces, were far from finished. Almost as soon as he returned to the state after the disaster at Tizayuca, Degollado set about rebuilding his army. His marvelous recuperative powers, which in later years enabled him to sustain a military effort against nearly hopeless odds, served him well, and in a few weeks he had recruited another fighting force. In addition, Ignacio Comonfort's army was still intact and active in Michoacán. Elsewhere the revolution was spreading, and by the end of June every state in Mexico had Ayutla supporters in arms.<sup>42</sup>

On July 21 revolutionary units under the commands of Degollado, Comonfort, Luis Ghilardi, and General Pueblita joined forces and the following day attacked Zapotlán (modern-day Ciudad Guzmán) in southeastern Jalisco. Though the town was well-defended by santanista forces under Plutarco Cabrera, Degollado's troops smashed through and captured the enemy garrison.<sup>43</sup> The rebel army then marched

---

<sup>42</sup> El Universal, 26 June 1855, p. 2; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," p. 163.

<sup>43</sup> Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, 14:47; Vigil, Reforma, 5:859; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

on Colima, and on the 29th the city surrendered without a shot being fired. The rest of the territory followed suit and declared for the revolution.<sup>44</sup>

With the fall of Colima, the little remaining support for Santa Anna quickly evaporated. United States Minister James Gadsden had already complained of Santa Anna's tyranny and had favored breaking diplomatic relations. Federal garrisons throughout the country were declaring their support of the Plan of Ayutla. The revolutionaries were easily overpowering those troops which remained loyal to the dictator. Santa Anna realized his position was becoming untenable, and after sending his family ahead, he left Mexico City on August 9, 1855 enroute to Havana and exile.<sup>45</sup>

When the dictator fled, the Mexico City garrison accepted the Plan of Ayutla and on August 14 chose Martín Carrera as interim president. Carrera immediately issued a call for a constituent congress, as outlined in the plan. Comonfort,

---

<sup>44</sup> Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, 14:47; Vigil, Reforma, 5:859.

<sup>45</sup> William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:771-772, 780; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," p. 165.

Degollado, and other liberal leaders in the field disavowed Carrera's authority and insisted that only Juan Alvarez could serve as interim president and convoke a congress.<sup>46</sup>

Degollado sent Carrera an eloquent if melodramatic personal protest that he would not stand for don Martín's machinations.

When I resolved to leave my beloved family in the hands of the hateful dictator, who persecuted them and subjected them to cruel tortures; when I abandoned the peace and enviable tranquility of private life to play a role as contrary to my habits, likes, and inclinations as to the interests of my poor children, it was not in order to attend a bloody spectacle that would leave implanted evils I wished to see cured, but instead to contribute my share to <sup>47</sup>the true restoration of liberty and legal order . . . .

Degollado warned that Carrera's actions were contrary to the Plan of Ayutla, thus implying that Carrera was as much an enemy as Santa Anna. Don Santos promised, however, that if the Ayutla leadership disagreed with his opinions, he would gladly retire from military command, which he found "repugnant."<sup>48</sup>

On September 12 Carrera abandoned his claim and turned over command of the capital to Rómulo Díaz de la Vega. Three weeks later a junta of representatives from each state met

<sup>46</sup> Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 165-166.

<sup>47</sup> El Siglo XIX, 9 September 1855, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 165-166; El Siglo XIX, 9 September 1855, p. 3.

at Cuernavaca, as specified in the Plan of Ayutla, to select an interim president. They chose Juan Alvarez over Comonfort and Melchor Ocampo. Alvarez named a cabinet, including Comonfort as minister of war, Ocampo as minister of foreign relations, Benito Juárez as minister of justice, and three others. All except Comonfort were confirmed puros.<sup>49</sup>

On November 15, 1855 Alvarez entered Mexico City and, amid much factional squabbling, established his provisional government and issued a call for the election of delegates to draft a new constitution.<sup>50</sup> The war was over, and the first provisions of the Plan of Ayutla had been put into motion. Whether the liberals could achieve their long term goals for reform remained to be seen.

---

<sup>49</sup> Diccionario Porrúa, 1:376; Sánchez Hernández, "Las operaciones militares," pp. 165-166; Letter, Comonfort to Doblado, 9 October 1855, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:73-74.

<sup>50</sup> Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:790-797 passim; Convocatoria, Alvarez, 16 October 1855, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:75-83.



## CHAPTER II

### GOVERNOR OF JALISCO

#### 1

The Ayutla leaders, Juan Alvarez and Ignacio Comonfort, began organizing the machinery for a new liberal administration even before Martín Carrera surrendered control of Mexico City. As always, Mexican newspapers were quick to make recommendations for political appointments. In Degollado's case, Siglo XIX suggested that he be named governor of Michoacán, La Situación supported him for minister of fomento, and El Jalapeño believed he should become minister of justice.<sup>1</sup> Don Santos' prestige had grown considerably in the latter months of the revolution, and by August 1855 he was in the forefront of liberal party leadership in Mexico.

On August 31 Comonfort appointed Degollado governor and commander-in-chief of the state of Jalisco. Don Santos was sworn in at noon the following day, but he noticeably lacked enthusiasm for the assignment. In his inaugural decree he expressed a preference to return to private life,

---

<sup>1</sup>El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 19 August 1855, p. 4; 21 August 1855, p. 4; 3 September 1855, p. 4.

but accepted the post out of feelings of obligation to military discipline and gratitude to his supporters in Guadalajara. Even at that, he referred to his upcoming term as a "transitory administration," and clearly had no intention of staying for long.<sup>2</sup>

In September and October 1855 Degollado was offered at least two posts in Juan Alvarez' cabinet, and his close friends Melchor Ocampo and Guillermo Prieto both urged him to accept. He explained to Prieto, however, that his hope of resigning the governorship of Jalisco as soon as possible was not motivated by a desire to move up to a more prominent office. He repeatedly expressed feelings of inferiority and the belief that he had nothing to contribute. Also, though he had taken the post in Jalisco with a great deal of reluctance, he was nevertheless determined to place the state's finances on a sound base and secure her defenses before resigning. He emphasized that once this was accomplished, he would retire from politics and rejoin his family. "Leave me then," he pleaded, "to go in peace to my home."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Decree, 31 August 1855, and decree, 1 September 1855, for both see untitled, bound, printed decrees from Jalisco during 1850's, University of Texas Latin American Collection, call no. Gz/qG972.32/J2171d/v. 1 & 2, 2:4, 6 (hereafter cited as Decrees from Jalisco).

<sup>3</sup>Letter, Degollado to Prieto, 26 October 1855, document no. 4, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, Archivo Histórico,

Perhaps Degollado hoped to avoid involvement in the intense factional squabbling which had hindered the Ayutla movement from the very beginning and which made Juan Alvarez' efforts to organize a cabinet extremely frustrating. Melchor Ocampo and other puros in the cabinet, which Alvarez had formed in Cuernavaca, objected to the appointment of Comonfort, a moderate, to the war ministry. Ocampo argued that a coalition cabinet would stifle the movement, but he also personally distrusted Comonfort. The two clashed at a special cabinet meeting in October when Ocampo challenged Comonfort's independent, free-wheeling policymaking on army reorganization, amnesty, and other matters. It was not Comonfort who left the cabinet, however, but Ocampo, who resigned in a huff when his demands were not met.<sup>4</sup>

The first attempt by interim President Juan Alvarez to launch the liberals' reform program not only exacerbated this factionalism, but also further alienated the conservatives.

---

Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AN/INAH); Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 25 October 1855, document no. 15, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; José C. Valadés, Don Melchor Ocampo: reformador de México (México: Editorial Patria, 1954), p. 302.

<sup>4</sup>Jesús Reyes Heróles, El liberalismo mexicano, 3 vols. (México: UNAM Facultad de Derecho, 1957-1961), 2:429, 431; Ray F. Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort: His Contributions to the Mexican Reform, 1855-1857" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1959), pp. 91-96.

This came on November 28, 1855 when Minister of Justice Benito Juárez issued a presidential decree establishing an interim system of justice by delineating court structure and by modifying the traditional Mexican judicial system. In this new law, which came to be called the Ley Juárez, Articles 42 and 44 of the general provisions were the most controversial. Article 42 abolished all special courts except military and ecclesiastical exemption or privilege in civil crimes.<sup>5</sup>

One week later the most outspoken of the defenders of ecclesiastical privilege, Bishop Clemente de Jesús Munguía of Michoacán, issued a statement protesting these articles. The bishop argued that such changes would undermine canon law and jeopardize the morality of the clergy. And he further suggested that only the Pope had the power to suspend ecclesiastical privileges. Juárez challenged these arguments and cautioned the bishop against disobeying the law.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>For full text of Ley Juárez, see Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:98-115.

<sup>6</sup>Clemente de Jesús Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica en el obispado de Michoacán desde fines de 1855 hasta principios de 1858, ó sea colección de representaciones y protestas, comunicaciones oficiales, circulares y decretos diocesanos, con motivo de las leyes, decretos y circulares del gobierno

But the promulgation of the Ley Juárez signalled not only the end of the Alvarez administration, but also the beginning of the end of the Ayutla regime. Revolts broke out in several quarters. José López Uruga, who over the years fought for Santa Anna, Benito Juárez, and Maximilian, plotted a coup against Alvarez, but was found out. In early December Manuel Doblado, the leading caudillo in Guanajuato, pronounced against the interim president because of what he believed to be reform excesses.<sup>7</sup>

Though the Ley Juárez was a relatively moderate anti-clerical measure, conservatives saw it as a dangerous precedent and therefore responded with a sudden and vociferous uproar of opposition. On December 11, 1855 Alvarez temporarily stepped down as president, surrendering the office to the

---

general, constitución federal de 1857, decretos y providencias de los gobiernos de los estados de Michoacán y Guanajuato, contra la soberanía, independencia, inmunidades, y derechas de la Santa Iglesia, desde 23 de noviembre de 1855, en que se dio la lei que suprimo [sic] el fuero eclesiástico, hasta principios del año de 1858, en que el nuevo gobierno deroga todas las leyes que el anterior había dado contra la iglesia por el Lic. Clemente de Jesús Munguía, obispo de Michoacán, 2 vols. (México: Imprenta de Vicente Segura, 1858), 1:1, 5, 17-18.

<sup>7</sup> Harper's New Monthly Magazine (New York), February 1856, p. 405 (hereafter cited as Harper's); William J. Ross, "The Role of Manuel Doblado in the Mexican Reform Movement, 1855-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1967), p. 104.

more moderate Ignacio Comonfort. Complaining of poor health, Alvarez retained the right to reassume the presidency at any time.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, however, Benito Juárez also resigned, strongly indicating that Alvarez had been forced out by opposition to the Ley Juárez. In the cabinet shakeup which followed, Comonfort offered Santos Degollado the post of fomento, and once again don Santos refused. He was still determined to complete the task in Jalisco and retire. Also he, like Ocampo, distrusted Comonfort and was angry when don Ignacio did not punish Manuel Doblado for revolting against the Alvarez administration.<sup>9</sup>

This turnover in leadership may have temporarily satisfied conservative opponents of the Ayutla government, but it only worsened factionalism within the ruling liberal party. Puros were in the majority, and they made little

---

<sup>8</sup> Wilfred H. Callcott, Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1926), p. 241; William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:811.

<sup>9</sup> El Siglo XIX, 13 December 1855, p. 4; Letter, Juárez to minister of foreign relations, 6 December 1855, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:124; El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 29 December 1855, p. 3.

effort to conceal their opposition to Comonfort, whom they suspected of being a conservative at heart.<sup>10</sup>

Degollado had his own ideas about the makeup of the interim government of the Ayutla regime. He proposed a strong central government with a single governor and commandant in each department. It would be the governors' task to implement laws issued by the national administration, until the new constitution could establish a more liberal, democratic system. Degollado believed that the only workable alternative to such a setup would be a system in which the state governors exercised supreme legislative and military authority. Any program which fell between these two extremes of centralist rule and state autonomy would be, in don Santos' opinion, unworkable. Widespread disorder still existed in late 1855, and there had as yet been no progress in reconciling the very basic ideological questions dividing important members of the Ayutla movement. Therefore, Degollado argued, any interim government which proposed that the central and state administrations share power would discredit the liberal party and doom the country to more warfare.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:813.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Degollado to Prieto, 26 October 1855, document no. 4, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

Ironically, the two men who were to become political antagonists, Degollado and Comonfort, both agreed on the necessity of firm rule in this critical time. They ultimately came to a parting of the ways, however, for Degollado saw strong state or national executive rule as a necessary provisional system to operate until constitutional rule could be established. Comonfort, on the other hand, subverted the new constitution to perpetuate executive rule, and though he did this to stem growing disorder, his action was to Degollado unforgivable.

## 2

Santos Degollado was not a political theoretician. His ideas, which evolved under the tutelage of Ocampo, were molded by traditional nineteenth-century liberal thought and modified by his own experiences in office. Since his ideas later played a part in the drafting of a new Mexican constitution, an examination of his tenure as governor of Jalisco is appropriate.

As soon as don Santos assumed office in Guadalajara, he set about revamping the existing state government. During his first month of office he gave ample evidence that he intended to operate an activist administration which ruled through executive decree. He seemed particularly concerned with the judicial system and state criminal code.



He issued at least five decrees creating state courts, appointing numerous justices, regulating the activities of the state supreme court, and delineating many other aspects of the state judicial structure.<sup>12</sup>

Don Santos published an organic statute for the state in early October, and he declared certain older laws dealing with criminal matters to be in effect until the legislature could convene to draft a new code. Realizing that his efforts to create new courts and revamp old laws could not bring immediate relief to the overtaxed system, Degollado issued a decree to aid those who had been in jail for several months awaiting trials that had been delayed by unsettled conditions. He also eliminated one weapon of political harassment by requiring a court order for vagrancy arrest.<sup>13</sup>

In light of the fact that Degollado was himself to be sued for libel in connection with some newspaper articles he wrote exactly one year later, his September 20 decree

---

<sup>12</sup>Decrees, 11 September 1855, 14 September 1855, 22 September 1855, 18 December 1855, 17 March 1856, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:13, 18, 23, 77, 106; El Monitor Republicano, 28 December 1855, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 1:210; Decrees, 23 September 1855, 2 October 1855, 12 November 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:24, 28, 49.

regulating free press is noteworthy. He required authors or editors to sign articles dealing with morality, government policy, or private citizens, and he defined as libel, attacks on the Christian religion, morality, private life of an individual, or political principles of the national government. Degollado provided detailed procedures for trials of offenders and three grades of fines, the proceeds of which were to go to the support of public education.<sup>14</sup> Had he been tried under his own law for the allegedly libelous articles he wrote the following year, don Santos would likely have been acquitted.

In the economic sphere, one of Degollado's first acts was designed to relieve the hardships on lower classes. He abolished the much abused alcabala, or sales tax, on such essential consumer goods as wood, chiles, beans, potatoes, straw, fruit, cheese, butter, etc. To promote foreign commerce and to halt widespread smuggling of gold and silver from Mexican Pacific ports, he imposed stricter export regulations on the coastal towns of San Blas and Manzanillo. He established a toll booth on the Tepic-San Blas road to raise revenue, and to provide him with statistics

---

<sup>14</sup> Decree, 20 September 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:20.

on the amount of gold and silver being transported overland. If comparison with port records of amounts legally exported revealed discrepancies, the information aided in tracking down smugglers.<sup>15</sup>

Don Santos completely reorganized the state treasury, established strict regulation for the conduct of treasury employees, and created a state auditor's office.<sup>16</sup> There had been widespread corruption in the treasury, and Degollado was determined to reform the state's financial operations before he would even consider resigning as governor.

Laissez faire economics was at the heart of nineteenth-century Mexican liberalism. But Governor Degollado enacted some mild measures to promote the growth of business and commerce, such as the requirement that businesses contribute sums to pay for their own protection and to finance a business fair at San Juan de los Lagos. He also issued regulations to encourage the expansion of housing construction, and, in a move which seems to have been highly controversial, removed all restrictions on the sale of tobacco. He also was not

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 9 September 1855, 11 October 1855, 2:11, 33.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Pérez Verdía, Historia particular del estado de Jalisco, desde los primeros tiempos de que hay noticia, hasta nuestros días, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Guadalajara, México: Gráfica, 1952), 2:502.

above using his power to cut off all trade and communication to the port of Mazatlán, when that town refused to submit to his authority.<sup>17</sup>

As state governor Degollado was involved in other miscellaneous projects and activities. He suppressed the university in Guadalajara, which was dominated by conservatives, and reestablished in its stead the Literary Institute. He promoted public education. He also contributed to the hagiolatry of the liberal movement by naming two towns in his state after Gordiano Guzmán, the old liberal chieftain under whom Degollado had fought in his youth, and whom the santanistas had captured and executed during the Revolution of Ayutla.<sup>18</sup>

In early October 1855 the Jaliscan jurist, politician, and playwright Antonio Pérez Verdía proposed to Governor Degollado that a theater be built in Guadalajara and named for the seventeenth-century Mexican dramatist Juan Ruíz de Alarcón. On December 12 don Santos issued a decree ordering the sale of certain government lands to finance the construction of such a theater in the San Agustín plaza. The prize and

---

<sup>17</sup>Decrees, 6 October 1855, 23 April 1856, 8 September 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:31, 118, 10; El Monitor Republicano, 6 February 1856, p. 3; 10 February 1856, pp. 2-3.

<sup>18</sup>Augustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la reforma y el segundo imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 13; Decree, 14 September 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:19; El Monitor Republicano, 2 May 1856, p. 3.

contract offered for the best design were awarded to Jalisco painter and architect Jacobo Gálvez. On March 5, 1856, shortly before he resigned as governor, Degollado laid the cornerstone to the Alarcón Theater. Five years later, however, following Degollado's death, the name was changed to the Degollado Theater. It was completed in September 1866 and is still in use today.<sup>19</sup>

## 3

Degollado's administration was actively reformist, yet Jalisco, particularly the capital city of Guadalajara, was one of the more conservative regions of Mexico. Don Santos was not blind to the potentially explosive atmosphere this combination created. Very early in his administration the governor took steps to insure his ability to maintain order, not only in case of open rebellion, but also to stem the rise of criminal activity. In late September 1855 he created a police force of 200 infantry and 300 cavalry to deal exclusively with banditry. One month later he issued detailed regulations for the organization, equipping, and functioning of state national guard forces.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Carlos Pizano y Saucedo, "Centenario del teatro 'Degollado' de Guadalajara," Historia Mexicana 16(1967):419-422; El Monitor Republicano, 3 January 1856, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Decrees, 29 September 1855, 27 October 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:26, 44.

In December 1855 Degollado was called upon to put down a local rebellion in Tepic. It seemed at the time to be a relatively minor incident, but because of the involvement of a British consul, an international dispute arose which plagued don Santos and Mexico for the next two years. The story of this matter, known as the Barron-Forbes affair, is the highlight of Degollado's term as governor in Jalisco. It is of such critical importance that it must be detailed in separate chapters.

There were other problems involving disorder. Jalisco was an expansive state, and it was simply impossible to patrol the outlying areas with regularity. Landowners in these regions had been beset for years by Indian raids, though in many cases they had illegally seized the Indians' property. In November Degollado authorized the hacendados to arm themselves and form vigilante groups for self-defense on those occasions when the state was unable to provide protection. These groups would, however, be subject to state regulation and inspection, and would have to report any attacks and turn over to state authorities any bandits or Indians they captured.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 24 November 1855, 2:57.

When Indians rebelled in December 1855 and attempted to seize lands, Degollado was able to squelch the movement. But when violence broke out again in March, the governor realized that in some cases the Indians had justifiable claims. He therefore ordered that those who had occupied land for the past year and a day would retain control until the cases could be decided in court on an individual basis. If either group broke the truce, the other would be allowed to arm and defend itself, and, Degollado pledged, he would intervene with state forces.<sup>22</sup> He left office soon thereafter, though, and was unable to see the question through to its solution.

Some of Degollado's problems originated with members of his own party. He clashed with Ayutla compatriot Manuel Doblado in December 1855 when the Guanajuato strongman revolted against the regime of Juan Alvarez and contributed to Comonfort's succession to the presidency. Don Santos publicly denounced Doblado's revolt as a conservative plot and privately referred to Doblado as the "champion of religión y fueros."<sup>23</sup> Over the next four years Degollado was often compelled to work with Doblado and even to support

---

<sup>22</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:241; El Monitor Republicano, 15 March 1856, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup>Decree, 10 December 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:72; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

him against his detractors, but he never trusted him and never believed Doblado to be a sincere liberal. Don Santos likewise had conflicts with Comonfort, with whom he disagreed politically. This dislike was fueled also by what Degollado believed to be impractical and contradictory decrees from don Ignacio, and by the substitute president's less than ardent support of don Santos in the Barron-Forbes affair.<sup>24</sup>

Internal factionalism had plagued the Ayutla movement from the very beginning, and it continued to hamper efforts to establish a smooth-running government. Though he himself had personal differences with fellow liberals, Degollado was nonetheless concerned about his party's unity. When moderados and puros in his own state reconciled their differences and formed a united liberal party in November 1855, Degollado took the cue and a few months later proposed an alliance of states based on principles of popular democratic government and the exchange of aid and resources. His intention was to create unified support for the liberal government and to provide cooperative effort to maintain order. The Doblado revolt had shaken him badly, and he believed that such an insurrection could best be stopped by

---

<sup>24</sup>Letter, Degollado to Prieto, 26 October 1855, document no. 4, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.



forces from several states acting in conjunction. The state governments of Colima and Querétaro joined the alliance, and perhaps a few others, but when Degollado resigned his office, interest in the project collapsed.<sup>25</sup>

## 4

As governor of Jalisco, Degollado most often clashed with members of the conservative party, particularly the clergy. In a scathing critique of don Santos' administration, published several years later by the conservative newspaper Diario de Avisos, the Church-State conflict was the center of attention. The paper claimed that Degollado was the leader of the liberal effort to lead Mexico down the path to Protestantism. Conservatives often maintained that don Santos' anticlericalism was especially disgusting, for he had been reared by a priest and had been cared for and educated by the Church. Despite this background, by the Diario's account, he was guilty of vicious verbal and physical attacks on the Church. He not only seized ecclesiastical funds illegally, but ordered his followers to organize anti-church propaganda and promote espionage against clergymen.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>El Monitor Republicano, 27 December 1855, p. 3; 5 March 1856, p. 3; 13 March 1856, p. 3; 17 March 1856, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup>Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 2 July 1859, pp. 1-2; 6 July 1859, p. 1.

When a liberal protégé of Governor Degollado, addressing a gathering at an independence day celebration, denounced the Pope, indulgences, the sacrament of penitence, and then called for universal tolerance, the conservatives were scandalized. The paper reported that don Santos praised the speaker, named Miguel Cruz Aedo, and acknowledged that he shared the young man's opinions. This is an example of the kinds of charges most often leveled at Degollado. Though the editorials appeared for ten days and were each day titled "Don Santos Degollado, considered as governor of Jalisco and as general in chief of the forces which besieged Guadalajara," virtually all of the accusations were directed at Degollado's "followers," while he was accused only of verbal attacks and of inciting his supporters to commit vicious acts.<sup>27</sup>

The July 8 editorial ran to 2400 words, bearing the above title, yet Degollado was not mentioned a single time. The preceding day, the article exceeded 2000 words and his name appeared only to identify others as his followers.<sup>28</sup> When he was indeed accused of a specific act, it was the incredible claim that he plotted to separate Jalisco from

---

<sup>27</sup> Diario de Avisos, 2 July 1859, pp. 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 7 July 1859, p. 1; 8 July 1859, pp. 1-2.

Mexico, make himself president, and then ally with the United States and several western Mexican states.<sup>29</sup> The editorials cited specific acts of violence committed against the Church and clergy, but declared that these occurred after Degollado had retired from the governorship.<sup>30</sup> In the July 4 editorial the Diario apologized for not being able to elaborate upon and cite specific "injustices, calumnies, and threats which the degolladistas committed against the clergy in general, and against various respectable ecclesiastical persons . . . but the brevity of this writing does not permit it."<sup>31</sup> It is unfortunate that in ten "brief" front page editorials totalling 23,000 words, there was not sufficient space to present details of these atrocities, for it deprives us of the information necessary to indict Governor Degollado for dereliction of duty and abuse of power.

The conservatives ultimately resorted to one of their standard arguments by charging that when Degollado and other liberals denounced the Church, they denounced God.<sup>32</sup> Though there certainly must have been atheists within the

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1859, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 6 July 1859, p. 1; 7 July 1859, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 4 July 1859, pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 5 July 1859, p. 1.

ranks of the liberals, Degollado was not one of them. His criticism of the Catholic Church and clergy in Mexico was consistent with the liberal philosophy of ecclesiastical reform common to Church-State conflicts in other parts of the nineteenth-century world. Why he or any other Mexican who had been reared within the bosom of the Church joined the liberal clamor to reform her is impossible to explain fully. But he did not behave like a Godless man. During years as a military commander, he never denied any of his men the spiritual sustenance of the holy sacraments. As governor of Jalisco he drafted a free press law which declared that any attack on the Christian religion would constitute criminal defamation, and he punished a group of young atheists who abused the cathedral in Guadalajara.<sup>33</sup>

But because don Santos felt that the Catholic Church held inordinate political and economic power, and that members of the clergy enjoyed special privileges and abused their sacred trust, he insisted that reforms and restraints be imposed. As a state governor, he could only wait for such reforms to be handed down by the national government. But

---

<sup>33</sup>Ernesto de la Torre Villar, El triunfo de la república liberal, 1857-1860 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960), p. xxxii; Decree, 20 September 1855, Decrees from Jalisco, 2:20; Angel Pola, et al, El libro rojo, 1520-1867, 2 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1906), 2:370-371.

his opinions were well-known, and they were far from popular in Jalisco. French Minister Alexis de Gabriac reported that a minor revolt against Degollado in October 1855 forced the governor to take refuge from a mob, which had been incited by the clergy. The revolt had no chance of success, but neither, said Gabriac, did the puros, for "their impatience will kill them."<sup>34</sup>

In early 1856 the bishop of Guadalajara, Pedro Espinosa y Dávalos, wrote to Governor Degollado requesting the suppression of liberal publications which denounced the clergy. He also reproached don Santos for presiding at the independence day celebration at which Miguel Cruz Aedo criticized the Church. Degollado's reply to the bishop's letter denounced the clergy as silent witnesses to the innumerable crimes of Santa Anna and his supporters. He proclaimed that he was both a liberal and a believer in God, and as such would sustain the separation of Church and State. And with characteristic foresight, don Santos predicted that another civil war would come, which would permanently alter Mexico's religious life.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:218.

<sup>35</sup>Instituto Jalisciense de Bellas Artes, Homenaje del gobierno del estado de Jalisco a los ciudadanos gral. Santos Degollado, arq. Jacobo Gálvez, pintor Gerardo Suárez,

Degollado had accepted the governorship of Jalisco reluctantly, and it was no secret that he intended to resign at the earliest opportunity. He had nearly done so in December 1855 when Comonfort refused to punish Manuel Doblado for revolting against the Alvarez administration. It was yet another graphic demonstration of the Ayutla regime's difficulties in holding together a coalition of diverse elements. Opposition to Santa Anna had been the major unifying factor in the Revolution of Ayutla, and when the dictator was ousted, the movement's cohesiveness left with him. One newspaper asked how a party could be made up of defenders of progress, such as Degollado, and at the same time contain "paladins of privilege," such as Manuel Doblado.<sup>36</sup>

In January 1856 Degollado was elected deputy from Michocán to the constituent congress, which was to draft the new Mexican constitution. Don Santos obviously believed the task of creating a new national government to be more important than that of administering the affairs of one state.<sup>37</sup> He also had differences with President Comonfort

---

constructores del Teatro Degollado (Guadalajara, México: Gráfica Editorial, 1966), pp. 7-8; Ernest Gruening, Mexico and its Heritage (New York: Century Co., 1928), p. 202.

<sup>36</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 29 December 1855, p. 3.

<sup>37</sup> Election results, 6 January 1856, in Reclamaciones de la compañía Barron y Forbes en contra del gral. Santos

which made it difficult for him to remain as governor. In January 1856 Degollado privately expressed the conviction that with Comonfort's succession to the presidency the previous month, the Revolution of Ayutla had accomplished nothing more than a "change of Master." That same month don Santos became involved in a heated dispute with the supporters of a British consul whom don Santos had expelled from Jalisco in December 1855. Serious international repercussions developed, and Degollado came to resent bitterly the fact that President Comonfort did not strongly support him in the subsequent Barron-Forbes affair. By mid-1857 Degollado had vowed not to serve in any public office so long as Comonfort was, in his words, "dictator" of Mexico.<sup>38</sup>

---

Degollado, 1843-1870, 13 vols. of bound manuscripts, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, 11:4 (decimal classification H/242(42:72)/397; topografía L-E 2188 to L-E 2200; hereafter cited as Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE). In addition, although it occurred too late to have had any bearing on Degollado's decision to resign as governor, there was an attempt on his life in April 1856. A conservative rebel, Valentín Barron, had been captured and executed in Jalisco, and some of his followers planned to break into the Governor's Palace in Guadalajara to assassinate don Santos. The plot was exposed prematurely and its leaders captured. I have found no evidence of any kinship between this rebel leader and the Eustace Barron family, with which Degollado clashed (see two following chapters); El Monitor Republicano, 26 March 1856, p. 4; 6 April 1856, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:260; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, and letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Rumors that don Santos intended to resign circulated freely in early March 1856. Some citizens of Jalisco wrote to Comonfort asking that he not accept the resignation. Several newspapers petitioned the president to keep Degollado in Guadalajara, while others proposed that he be appointed to some other office. Even former President Valentín Gómez Farías tried to persuade don Santos to remain as governor.<sup>39</sup>

But Degollado was firm in his decision to step down, and by April 20 the government had accepted his resignation. He enjoyed a month and a half of rest, and on June 5, 1856 he arrived in Mexico City to take his seat in congress.<sup>40</sup> Upon departing Jalisco, Degollado had hoped to leave behind that matter which had caused him so much worry since December 1855. He was unable to do so, for the Barron-Forbes affair was rapidly becoming one of the greatest personal challenges of his life.

---

<sup>39</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 12 March 1856, p. 4; 28 March 1856, p. 2; 13 May 1856, p. 3; 17 May 1856, p. 3; 19 May 1856, p. 3; El Siglo XIX, 12 May 1856, p. 3; Letter, Gómez Farías to Degollado, undated, document no. f55, 4137(3812), Valentín Gómez Farías papers, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

<sup>40</sup> La Nacionalidad (Guanajuato, México), 20 April 1856, p. 4; El Monitor Republicano, 6 June 1856, p. 3.



## CHAPTER III

### BARRON-FORBES AFFAIR: PART I

#### 1

Violence and disorder spawned by the Revolution of Ayutla continued to break out periodically even after liberals consolidated their control in Mexico City. As the previous chapter relates, Santos Degollado dealt with a number of incidents of turmoil and insurrection in his efforts to maintain order in Jalisco. The Barron-Forbes affair began as just such an incident, but it soon swelled to proportions far transcending that state's boundaries. It became an international conflict of serious dimensions and a symbolic drive by Mexico to win economic independence from domination by foreign merchants. Moreover it served in part to undermine the Comonfort regime's work in reestablishing order, and thus it contributed to the resumption of war in 1858. And finally, the affair brought the name of Santos Degollado to national prominence.

What became a complicated and involved matter began with an apparently simple revolt by a 120-man federal garrison at Tepic, Jalisco on December 13, 1855. The rebels seized control of the city and also captured San Blas, a major

Pacific port forty-two miles to the west. While the purpose of the uprising was not immediately known, Governor Degollado believed the insurgents to be partisans of Guanajuato strongman Manuel Doblado in his short-lived revolution against the reforms of Juan Alvarez' government.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of his pronunciamiento Deblado had asked Santos Degollado to support the revolt. The latter had refused and had denounced Doblado's revolutionary inclinations as an attempt to restore the conservative party to power in Mexico.<sup>2</sup> Don Santos simultaneously issued a proclamation to the citizens of his own state warning them of the Doblado movement. Calling upon his often melodramatic eloquence, Degollado cautioned,

The venomous hydra which today once again lifts its head in Guanajuato is thirsty for blood, for that which it was given to drink by Santa Anna served only to whet its murderous appetite; let us, therefore, unite, Jaliscans, and fight hand-to-hand the monster which seeks to devour us.<sup>3</sup>

Believing the disturbance at Tepic to be part of the larger Doblado revolution, Degollado solicited assistance from the commander at Querétaro, Félix Zuloaga. Don Santos

<sup>1</sup>El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 21 December 1855, p. 4; 24 December 1855, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 22 December 1855, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>El Monitor Republicano, 25 December 1855, p. 1.

was then alarmed to learn that Zuloaga's men had joined the Tepic rebels. At the same time a commission of fifty citizens from the besieged village arrived in Guadalajara with more disquieting stories and requests for help. Governor Degollado promised action.<sup>4</sup>

While mustering forces to march on Tepic, don Santos learned that the leader of the revolt, José María Espino, had issued a proclamation on December 22 which clarified reasons for the uprising. Espino denounced local officials for rigging elections, usurping the leadership of the national guard unit, leading the city to criminal excesses, and otherwise engaging in scandalous behavior and inept political administration. The rebel leader appealed to Substitute President Ignacio Comonfort to remedy the situation. Since the majority of these local officials were state-appointed (in fact most were recent Degollado appointees), and because Espino had directed his appeal to Comonfort, Degollado considered the revolt to be aimed at his own state administration.

---

<sup>4</sup>El Omnibus (Mexico City), 4 January 1856, p. 2; La Nacionalidad (Guanajuato), 30 December 1855, p. 4; Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria levantada por el I. Ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Tepic, comprobando los hechos de que acusó el mismo I. cuerpo, á los extranjeros D. Eustaquio Barrón y D. Guillermo Forbes, por considerarlos perniciosos, y remitida al Excmo. Sr. Presidente de la República (Guadalajara, México: Tip. del Gobierno, 1856), p. 10.

Don Santos was resentful that Comonfort had left him in Jalisco without forces. Therefore Degollado personally had to march against Tepic with less than 200 men.<sup>5</sup>

When don Santos marched into Tepic on December 30, 1855, he discovered that the rebels had dispersed at his approach and that the townspeople had captured Espino. The populace turned out to welcome the governor and order was quickly restored. The only fighting occurred when a pursuit force sent out by Degollado defeated a small band of the rebels in a skirmish at La Presa.<sup>6</sup>

At this point don Santos learned from local citizens of the involvement of two foreign consuls in the rebellion. According to members of the local ayuntamiento, Eustace W. Barron, Jr. of Great Britain and William Forbes of the United States, both consuls in the Tepic-San Blas area for many years, had smuggled silver, interfered in local political processes for commercial gain, and incited and financed the

---

<sup>5</sup>El Omnibus, 8 January 1856, p. 3; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH).

<sup>6</sup>Letter, Montenegro to V. Gómez Farías, 31 December 1855, document no. F58, 4289(3975), Valentín Gómez Farías papers, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as VGF/UT); El Omnibus, 16 January 1856, p. 3.

December 13 revolt. When Degollado's forces appeared, the Tepic council related, Barron and Forbes had gone to San Blas and illegally taken the Mexican boat Antoñita to flee to the British frigate President, where they were given refuge.<sup>7</sup>

The ayuntamiento of Tepic petitioned Governor Degollado to banish the two consuls for these crimes and for many other abuses committed over the years. Don Santos acceded and on January 8, 1856 issued a decree forbidding "that Messrs. Barron and Forbes may return to the territory of Jalisco, while His Excellency the President resolves the exile . . . asked for by the authorities and inhabitants of this city." He gave as reasons for this banishment, the instigation and financing of the December 13 revolt, guilt confirmed by flight, and the illegal seizure of the Mexican pilot's boat Antoñita to escape.<sup>8</sup> As he explained nearly

---

<sup>7</sup> Santos Degollado, Reseña documentada que el C. Santos Degollado, gobernador y comandante general que fué del estado de Jalisco, hace a la representación nacional para que en calidad de gran jurado decida sobre su responsabilidad oficial, por haber prohibido a los extranjeros Barron y Forbes que volviesen a Tepic, entre tanto el supremo gobierno resolvía lo conveniente (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), pp. 3-4, 11-12; Benito Gómez Farías, Juicio de imprenta: documentos relativos al promovido por el Sr. D. Eustaquio Barrón contra Benito Gómez Farías (México: Imprenta de José Mariano Fernández de Lara, 1856), pp. 48-50.

<sup>8</sup> Degollado, Reseña documentada, p. 13.

two years later, Degollado also had reason to believe that the consuls were indeed engaged in smuggling. He had seen large discrepancies in accounts of goods coming through maritime customs in San Blas and those being transported overland in the area. Moreover he had evidence that Barron had falsified records of goods received by ship.<sup>9</sup>

Degollado immediately informed the minister of war, Manuel María Sandoval, of his actions, and received approval on January 16.<sup>10</sup> Shortly thereafter President Comonfort also approved of the steps taken. Don Santos returned to Guadalajara, doubtless feeling that he had performed his duty and that the entire matter was now in the hands of the president. Very soon, however, as more details of the affair emerged, repercussions developed which were to plague both Degollado and the Mexican nation continually for the next two years.

## 2

The town of Tepic had in 1855 a population of 4-5,000, and it had become an important commercial center because of the nearby port of San Blas. Founded in the seventeenth

---

<sup>9</sup> Felipe Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso constitucional de la república mexicana que funcionó en el año de 1857; extracto de todas las sesiones y documentos relativos de la época, 9 vols. (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1874-1882), 1:1:232-233.

<sup>10</sup> Degollado, Reseña documentada, pp. 4, 37.

century as a base for expeditions to California, San Blas became by 1800 the most important port on the Pacific coast of New Spain. Tepic's prominence grew proportionately. High temperatures and humidity in San Blas combined with a lack of sea breezes and rotting vegetation to produce an exceedingly unhealthy climate, much like that of Veracruz, and Tepic was the nearest refuge.<sup>11</sup>

In 1824 the British moved their consulate from Acapulco to San Blas because of the latter's increasing importance in trade. At that time Eustace Barron, a longtime British merchant in Mexico, became vice-consul. Barron was promoted to consul for San Blas and Tepic in 1849, and in the early 1850's was succeeded in the post by his son, Eustace, Jr., who had been born in Mexico.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria, p. 11; Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970), 2:1853; R.A. Humphreys, ed., British Consular Reports on the Trade and Politics of Latin America, 1824-1826 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1940), p. 337, note 2. San Blas was a poor choice as Spain's primary Pacific coast naval station. Although it was excellent for controlling commerce, had a strategic location, sheltered harbor, and natural resources, it was nonetheless isolated from Mexico City, had a shallow harbor and an exceedingly unhealthy climate; Michael E. Thurman, The Naval Department of San Blas: New Spain's Bastion for Alta California and Nootka, 1767 to 1798 (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1967), pp. 31-33.

<sup>12</sup> Humphreys, Consular Reports, p. 335, note 1; Diccionario Porrúa, 1:231; Reclamaciones de la compañía Barron y Forbes

In 1827 the elder Barron joined with William Forbes to form Barron, Forbes and Company, a commercial house which dealt primarily in mining and textile manufacture. Over the years Forbes held consular posts for Chile, Great Britain, and the United States, the latter of which he occupied from 1852 on. The company was a financial success and relatives of both men joined the business, alternately holding consular posts as well. Expanding its holdings and interests northward and across the gulf to Baja California, the company was involved over the years in numerous suits in Mexico and the United States over contested mine ownership.<sup>13</sup>

The Barrons and the Forbeses acquired great wealth and power, and as rich foreign investors in Mexico were wont to do, they allied themselves with Mexican conservatives. Their chief competition for commercial and political control of

---

en contra del Gral. Santos Degollado, 1843-1870, 13 vols. bound manuscripts, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, 11:23 (decimal classification H/242(42:72)/397; topografía L-E 2188 to L-E 2200; (hereafter cited as Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE); Gloria Grajales, Guía de documentos para la historia de México en archivos ingleses (siglo XIX) (México: UNAM, 1969), p. 66.

<sup>13</sup>El Omnibus, 4 February 1856, p. 3; Despatches from United States consuls in San Blas, 1837-1892 (Washington: National Archives Microfilm Publications, 1963), microcopy no. 301, roll 1; Grajales, Guía de documentos ingleses, p. 361; El Universal (Mexico City), 17 March 1855, p. 3; Degollado, Reseña documentada, p. 16; Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 13:16.



the region came from members of the Castaños family, who operated a rival company and were liberal partisans. Local persons who supported the Castaños clan were known as changos, while those who backed the Barron-Forbes house were called macuaces.<sup>14</sup>

José María Castaños was acknowledged as his family's leader. He was a powerful man as well, for in addition to his commercial leadership, he had served as United States consul from 1837 to 1844 and had held political offices in Tepic and Mazatlán. His sons and brothers had likewise filled important posts. Castaños' standing in the liberal party was considerable, and several years after this affair he served a short period as secretary of the treasury under President Benito Juárez.<sup>15</sup>

Over the years a local power struggle had arisen between the houses of Barron-Forbes and Castaños, a rivalry for commercial and political domination of the area. After

---

<sup>14</sup> José María Castaños, Los sucesos de Tepic (Guadalajara, México: 1857), p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Despatches from U.S. consuls in San Blas, roll 1; El Omnibus, 1 November 1854, p. 3; 4 February 1856, p. 3; José María Castaños, Discurso leído por José María Castaños, en la ciudad de Tepic el día del aniversario de nuestra independencia, consumada por Iturbide y Guerrero (Guadalajara, México: Tipografía del Gobierno, 1855), passim; Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), p. 71.

the December 13 revolt and Degollado's subsequent banishment of the consuls, Barron-Forbes supporters contended that Degollado was under the influence of the pro-liberal Castaños group and that, far from being guilty of any misconduct, Barron and Forbes were innocent victims of this local rivalry and of don Santos' bias.<sup>16</sup> Defenders of Governor Degollado and Castaños responded that Barron and Forbes had interfered in domestic political affairs, sought to monopolize commerce in the region, engaged in smuggling, and incited rebellion. Don Santos had simply acted, they insisted, to correct these abuses.

## 3

When details of the Tepic incident became public, Eustace Barron lost no time in moving to protect his interests and his son's position. On January 4, 1856 he wrote to the British chargé in Mexico City, W.G. Lettsom, informing him of the recent disturbances in Tepic and requesting the chargé's support.<sup>17</sup> Barron related that new customs officials had caused great disorder in that region threatening foreign-owned property and causing disturbances which compelled Espino to revolt. Barron explained that his son, as British consul in

---

<sup>16</sup> El Omnibus, 4 February 1856, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> Occasionally the chargé's name appears in Mexican sources as "Lettsom," but the correct spelling is that used in the text.

Tepic, should properly report these developments, but "a serious and urgent family circumstance has obliged him to leave that city [Tepic] for Mazatlán," and he had written his father asking him to relate the details to Lettsom.

Forbes also had had to leave Tepic, the elder Barron reported, because of illness. Avoiding any suggestion that the consuls had been involved in the revolt and had fled to avoid capture, Barron explained that his son's "urgent family circumstance" had been a desire to visit his mother, and since Forbes was departing because of poor health, the younger Barron decided to accompany him.<sup>18</sup>

Eustace Barron had for years exerted considerable influence on the British diplomatic corps in Mexico. An earlier British representative had been described by the French minister as "always disposed to offer his support to all the schemes in which his friend Barron participates."<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup>Letter, Barron to Lettsom, 4 January 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:30-33; Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria, p. 11. Formal diplomatic correspondence between Britain and Mexico was often in French. Many of the copies of letters and documents in the 13 volumes of material on the Barron-Forbes affair in the Foreign Relations archives in Mexico City have been translated from the original English or French into Spanish. Thus my translations of these Spanish copies back into English may not result in verbatim original language.

<sup>19</sup>Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 1:38, 40.

Chargé Lettsom was no less inclined to follow the dictates of this wealthy British citizen. The same day he heard from Barron, Lettsom wrote to the Mexican foreign minister, Luis de la Rosa, requesting an investigation. He suggested that if de la Rosa would issue orders to that effect, they could be sent by the Mexican government to Barron's house in Mexico City to be "instantly" forwarded to Tepic.<sup>20</sup> The matter was instead referred to President Comonfort.

William Forbes appealed to the United States government for support as well, but none was forthcoming. He resigned in May 1856 complaining of "ill treatment by the [Mexican] authorities." The following month eighteen United States citizens and foreigners living in the Tepic area petitioned President Franklin Pierce in behalf of Forbes, whom they described as totally innocent and possessing a character "without a blemish."<sup>21</sup> Secretary of State William L. Marcy was unmoved. Therefore, after June 1856 Forbes' involvement in the affair ceased, as he disappeared from the scene.

While the British were moving to have their consul reinstated, circumstances on the Mexican side of the question

---

<sup>20</sup> Letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 4 January 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:27-28.

<sup>21</sup> Despatches from U.S. consuls in San Blas, roll 1.

were enhancing that prospect. It had been on January 5 that the Tepic ayuntamiento had asked Degollado to banish Barron, Jr. and Forbes, a request he had fulfilled three days later. Also on January 5 more than 115 "sons and citizens" of Tepic sent a petition to President Comonfort accusing Barron and Forbes of numerous crimes, including interfering in local elections, bribing officials, employing bandits to encourage disorder, smuggling silver, using their consular posts to advance their commercial interests, inciting and directing the December 13 revolt, and others. These citizens described Forbes as the principal author of such abuses and asked for his immediate banishment. They considered Barron to be less guilty, however, and requested that his exequatur be withdrawn and that he be severely admonished.<sup>22</sup>

Though he had already banished both consuls from Jalisco, Degollado had also come to the conclusion by January 11 that Barron's culpability was less than that of Forbes. Don Santos had likely interviewed many of the citizens who had signed the petition referred to above, though he may not have seen the document itself, since it was sent to Comonfort. In addition Degollado had received a note of protest from

---

<sup>22</sup> Petition, 5 January 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:62-70.

Captain Charles Frederick, commander of the British warship President, where Barron, Jr. had taken refuge.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, either because he foresaw strong British objections or, more likely, because he was convinced by Tepic residents that Barron deserved less punishment, on January 11 Degollado revised his earlier decree of exile. He now stated that because he believed Barron to be less guilty than Forbes, the British consul would be permitted to resume his duties at San Blas, though he still could not return to Tepic.<sup>24</sup>

This did not satisfy Barron, however, and that same day he wrote to Degollado from on board the President at San Blas protesting his banishment as illegal. He laid squarely at the feet of Degollado and the Mexican government responsibility for any harm that might come to British citizens or property as a result of their being deprived of the services of their consul.<sup>25</sup>

On January 14 Barron, Jr. wrote to Chargé Lettsom denouncing Degollado and refuting the charges included in the governor's decree of banishment. First Barron defied

---

<sup>23</sup>El Omnibus, 4 February 1856, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup>Degollado, Reseña documentada, p. 38.

<sup>25</sup>Letter, Barron, Jr. to Degollado, 11 January 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:95.

don Santos to prove that he had provoked the Tepic revolt, because, he argued, the town had already been in turmoil over Degollado's appointments, especially that of Benito Gómez Farías as political agent with extraordinary powers. He labeled the charge that the consuls' guilt had been confirmed by their flight as "absurd" and replied that Forbes had been in poor health and had left to avoid the excitement of the anticipated attack by Degollado's forces. Barron called the charge of having illegally seized the Mexican pilot's boat Antoñita, "frivolous in the extreme." He claimed that the boat's owners had placed it at Forbes' disposal for his trip to Mazatlán and he insisted that departure papers had been in order. And finally the charge that Barron, Forbes and Co. had supplied funds to the revolting garrison was considered "malicious" since, Barron explained, the company had been accustomed to furnishing money "with some frequency" to government troops in Tepic and lower California.<sup>26</sup>

That same day, January 14, 1856, Lettsom lodged another protest with the Mexican government demanding that Degollado's decree of exile be annulled. Three days later he cautioned

---

<sup>26</sup> Letter, Barron, Jr. to Lettsom, 14 January 1856, *ibid.*, 8:78-84.

de la Rosa that if Governor Degollado would not assure the protection of British subjects in Tepic, the commander of the British warship President would take steps to do so. In addition, Barron's father had announced that unless Degollado's order was revoked, he would file a claim for damages against the Mexican government.<sup>27</sup>

In the face of this barrage of protests de la Rosa agreed to meet with Lettsom. Two conferences were held in late January, but nothing was settled. Instead, the Comonfort government had decided to stand behind Degollado's actions. The minister of foreign relations sent to Lettsom copies of petitions from towns in the Tepic-San Blas area, adding that the attitudes "of the entire canton are of the same feeling; and when opinion is manifested in such a uniform and general manner, it is evident that the causes which motivate it must be just and considerable."<sup>28</sup> The opinions expressed in these petitions were unanimous in their approval of the conduct of Governor Degollado and in their criticism of abuses committed by Barron and Forbes.

---

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 14 January 1856; letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 17 January 1856; letter, Barron to Lettsom, 24 January 1856; all three *ibid.*, 8:42-43, 49-50, 115-116.

<sup>28</sup> Letter, Montes to Lettsom, 18 February 1856, *ibid.*, 8:73, 134.



In an account published several months later, the Tepic ayuntamiento elaborated on charges that had been made against the consuls by that body and by groups of Tepic citizens. Providing thirty-four pages of documentation and sworn testimony from over two score residents of Tepic, this account traced much of the background to the conflict. It described Tepic in the 1830's and 1840's as a thriving town with growing industry, several large haciendas, the excellent San Blas harbor, and a strategic location between the major markets of Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Jalisco. Commerce in the area flourished in the hands of four to six major trading companies, until Barron, Forbes and Co. moved in and squeezed out its competitors by gaining control of customs collection and local government. Under the consuls' direction, different tariff rates were imposed depending on whether the owner of the consignment supported Barron and Forbes. By use of intrigue, money, and influence in Mexico City the company dominated the area from 1846 to 1853.<sup>29</sup>

According to this account, during the 1853-1855 administration of Santa Anna, however, the dictator's concern for increased revenue led to restoration of equal tariff rates

---

<sup>29</sup> Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria, pp. 15-50, 3-4. None of the members of the ayuntamiento at this time was named Castaños.

for all, at least in theory. Still Barron imposed his will and gained control of the local militia, personally serving as commander for a time.<sup>30</sup>

These accounts and petitions to the Mexican government constituted strong testimony, and the house of Barron moved quickly to counteract their influence. In a manner reminiscent of residencia judicial procedure of the colonial period, British Chargé Lettsom sought to discredit each of the 115 persons who had signed the January 5 petition to Comonfort. In a February 18 dispatch to de la Rosa, Lettsom listed the names of all the petitioners and added beside each of the names short derogatory remarks designed to undermine each person's credibility. Some of the descriptive sketches were rather lengthy, such as that for Bonifacio de la Peña--

a bankrupt shopkeeper, arrived from San Francisco under suspicious circumstances, his brother having committed a murder . . . has the worst reputation . . . overwhelmed with debt--and was recently appointed by Sr. Degollado Prefect of Tepic.

José María Castaños, who had signed the petition, was described as "the most unscrupulous member of the House of Castaños--has been fined by the Judge for his disorderly conduct--and is the most active abettor of Señor Degollado in the Governor [sic] proceedings against the House of Barron, Forbes & Co."

---

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 5, 8.

Other petitioners were variously described as "a worthless character," "has not a sixpence in the world," "a ruined gambler," "a thorough vagabond," "confirmed drunkard," "a practised swindler who has been imprisoned several times," "an insignificant butcher," "a muleteer's boy," "a bad character who has been imprisoned for inflicting wounds," "a seller of tripes," "an idiot," "an insignificant dealer in eatables in the Plaza," etc. Several were described as being indebted to either Barron or Forbes or their company, or as being dependent on the House of Castaños, or as being from Compostela and not Tepic. With the exception of eight persons who were referred to as "unknown," the British managed to find something disparaging to say about each and every petitioner.<sup>31</sup> It conjures up an absurd picture of the promoters of the petition searching the alleys, brothels, jails, and gutters of Tepic in order to find and secure the signature of every disreputable character in town.

This maneuver obviously had little success, so in late March the supporters of Barron and Forbes presented their own petition, complete with over 150 names of Tepic citizens. The document denied that Barron and Forbes had exercised a

---

<sup>31</sup>Letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 18 February 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:123-126.

"pernicious" influence in the area and it refuted the charges of the January 5 petition. Taking a different tack from the earlier attempt to discredit the pro-Degollado petitioners, this account contended that the names on the January 5 petition had been gained "under the influence of fear and principally taking advantage of the ignorance of the greater number of the signers."<sup>32</sup> No longer were those who signed petitions denouncing Barron and Forbes described as scoundrels and reprobates; now they were intimidated and misguided citizens. This counter-petition brings to mind the Mexican practice of having each side in a litigation parade its long line of "peritos" or eyewitnesses, who are recruited from the streets as needed.

Some discrepancies appeared in testimony against the consuls. In April Wenceslao Merino and Marcial González, both artisans, protested the inclusion of their names in a letter from the Club del Progreso to the newspaper El País of Guadalajara, a letter which supported the Tepic ayuntamiento's call for banishment of Barron and Forbes. The two men protested that the consuls had done them no wrong and wished their names removed from the letter. Then when two of the signers of the January 5 petition, Diego Serrano and Antonio Esteves,

---

<sup>32</sup>Petition, 28 March 1856, *ibid.*, 8:171-176.

withdrew their names, the British chargé quickly pointed to it as significant. Degollado, on the other hand, declared that the men had been threatened by Barron, whose influence in Tepic he described as "omnipotent."<sup>33</sup>

## 4

The influence of Eustace Barron, Sr. had no immediate effect on the Mexican national government. When British Chargé Lettsom had on January 5 first expressed concern to de la Rosa over the Tepic revolt and the possible threat to British lives and property, Comonfort had instructed Degollado to provide protection. A few days later, when the president first learned of don Santos' expulsion of the two consuls, he approved of the action. In five letters, dated January 12, 16, and 19, Comonfort continued to support his governor. In addition, on January 15 the executive council stated that Degollado had acted within his authority and recommended that Barron be fined 500 pesos. Shortly thereafter the cabinet also commended don Santos' conduct.<sup>34</sup>

But on February 2, 1856 Comonfort yielded to continually increasing British pressure, though he was perhaps also

---

<sup>33</sup>El Monitor Republicano, 11 April 1856, p. 2; Los Padres del Agua Fría (Mexico City), 12 September 1856, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Letter, Lafragua to Degollado, 5 January 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:35; Degollado, Reseña documentada, pp. 31-33; El Omnibus, 6 February 1856, p. 2.

troubled by new information which revealed that the incident was more complicated than originally thought. On that date he informed Degollado that he would send Supreme Court Justice José María Muñoz de Cote to Tepic to investigate the affair.<sup>35</sup> This was the first of a series of steps in which the president was to submit to British demands, for whatever motive. Each time Degollado became the sacrificial victim, and he grew to resent bitterly such treatment at the hands of his own government. There were also political differences between don Santos and Comonfort, as has been mentioned, for Degollado was a puro while the president was a moderado. And ultimately, of course, to Degollado, Comonfort was responsible for overturning the work of Mexican liberals through his subversion of the Constitution of 1857 in the December 1857 "Golpe de Estado."

The investigatory commission appointed by Comonfort, including Muñoz de Cote and another magistrate named Macedo, arrived in Guadalajara on April 5 and proceeded on to Tepic. The commission questioned dozens of witnesses, collected much documentation, and one month later submitted a report to Comonfort which served largely to substantiate the guilt of Barron and Forbes. A local investigation concerned with

---

<sup>35</sup>Degollado, Reseña documentada, p. 36.

smuggling by the consuls was dragged out in litigational procedure and never concluded.<sup>36</sup>

Just as each side in the dispute presented its own witnesses, each also presented its own evidence on certain aspects of the charges made against Barron and Forbes. One crime the commission of which it should have been possible to document was the alleged illegal seizure by the consuls of the Mexican pilot's boat Antoñita to facilitate their escape. On March 24 Lettsom sent de la Rosa documents showing that the boat had been properly dispatched by port authorities at San Blas. The Tepic ayuntamiento contended, however, that the vessel had been impounded the previous summer due to an unrelated suit and that the consuls could not have had proper papers when they left in the boat.<sup>37</sup>

Santos Degollado further confused the issue the following September. In a series of newspaper articles, he claimed that the boat had been attached by the Tepic judge on December 11, 1855. Though the consuls had had the approval of half-owners Antonio Rodríguez and Manuel Escudero when

---

<sup>36</sup> El Omnibus, 30 May 1856, p. 3; Report, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 9:104-227; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 12 September 1856, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 24 March 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:L64; Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria, pp. 36-50 passim.

they took the Antoñita, their action had been against the wishes of the other half-owner, María Vial de Garciglia. In addition, said Degollado, Barron and Forbes had no clearance papers from the port authority. Don Santos conjectured that if as Lettsom said, Barron and Forbes did have papers, then the documents must have been forged at Mazatlán, for he, Degollado, claimed to have the authentic papers which were supported by the testimony of the boat's crew.<sup>38</sup> Needless to say, this aspect of the question remained unresolved.

One of Barron's lawyers, Manuel Piña y Cuevas, raised another question in April which eventually proved to be the crux of the British case. Piña y Cuevas suggested that as state governor, Degollado did not have the authority to banish a consul, such as Barron, Jr., except in very serious situations of proven guilt. The governor did have the power to withdraw exequatur, the lawyer pointed out, but since this had not been done, Degollado had acted illegally.<sup>39</sup>

The French minister in Mexico, Alexis de Gabriac, who fully believed Barron's company to be guilty of smuggling,

---

<sup>38</sup> Los Padres del Agua Fría, 12 September 1856, p. 2; 13 September 1856, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> El Siglo XIX, 19 April 1856, p. 2.



nonetheless contended that "Degollado sinned in forgetting the forms of public law. It is, perhaps, the single point on which the legation of England will be able to support itself." He argued that Degollado should have brought the matter to the attention of the central government rather than having taken direct action himself.<sup>40</sup>

Don Santos and his supporters argued, of course, that, to the contrary, he as governor did have the authority to expel pernicious foreigners from his state. Several months later Degollado drew a distinction between the rights of consuls and those of other diplomatic representatives, contending that deportation of a consul need only be accompanied by an explanation.<sup>41</sup>

The 1856 Prontuario diplomático y consular was published after Degollado banished the consuls, but assuming that practices were relatively standardized, it offers the best information on the rights and responsibilities of consuls serving in Mexico at the time. The Prontuario explains that consuls cannot be arrested even for "atrocious crime" until exequatur has been withdrawn by the chief executive of the nation in which the consul serves. And although it further

---

<sup>40</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:285.

<sup>41</sup>Los Padres del Agua Fría, 25 September 1856, pp. 1-3.

states that consuls who are merchants and citizens of the country in which they serve, as was Barron, Jr., are subject to all the laws of that country, before they can be tried and punished, exequatur must first be withdrawn. This can be done in cases of serious crime or "when the consul is involved in political affairs of the country where he resides."<sup>42</sup> Therefore Degollado's decree expelling Barron and Forbes from his state was not legally sound, just as Gabriac suggested. Yet as with any law it was to be interpreted in court, and that was to be a Mexican court.

It was to be almost a year, however, before Degollado was permitted to plead his side of the issue in a court of any kind. For his associate Benito Gómez Farías, the opportunity came much sooner. Gómez Farías, son of the former president of Mexico, had been a Degollado-appointed customs official at San Blas, and just two weeks after the two consuls were expelled he had published an article on the affair in La Pata de Cabra. Including in his article the January 5 petition from the citizens of Tepic, Gómez Farías added comments seconding the charges therein levied against

---

<sup>42</sup> José Justo G. de la Conde de la Cortina, Prontuario diplomático y consular, y resumen de los derechos y deberes de los extranjeros en los países donde residen (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1856), pp. 74-79, 96-97.

Barron and Forbes. In addition, he referred to Barron as a "suborner of public officials," "thief of public funds," "conspirator with bandits," "insurrectionist," and "smuggler."<sup>43</sup>

Almost immediately Barron's father filed a defamation suit and on February 8 Gómez Farías was convicted and sentenced to 300 pesos fine and court costs plus six months in prison. But judge Mariano Sansalvador's decision may have been biased or at least tempered by a weariness of Mexican revolts that led him to view them as so commonplace as to be unimportant. He had ruled that even if it could be proven that Barron was involved in the Tepic uprising, since it had not been a revolt against Mexican independence or her form of government, it could not excuse Gómez Farías' libelous remarks.<sup>44</sup>

In an immediate appeal the following week, Judge José A. Bucheli upheld the conviction. By this time Gómez Farías was serving as a delegate to the constituent congress, and he claimed immunity, though he had not held the position at the time he published the defamatory article. On February 22 he published a collection of documents in an appeal to the public. His brother Fermín, a customs collector at San Blas,

---

<sup>43</sup> La Pata de Cabra, supplement to 23 January 1856.

<sup>44</sup> Gómez Farías, Juicio de imprenta, pp. 5-9.

wrote articles in don Benito's defense, and Santos Degollado did likewise. Degollado even went so far as to suggest that the conservative party was secretly pushing the prosecution of the case.<sup>45</sup>

Barron, Sr. responded by accusing Degollado of defamation for this suggestion. He complained bitterly that Gómez Farías, though convicted and sentenced, was sitting in the constituent congress instead of in jail. He was even more furious when he learned in May that Gómez Farías had been appointed secretary to the Mexican legation in Brussels. Though it was not entirely unusual, since don Benito had served in several similar positions in Europe during the last ten years, Barron not unreasonably saw it as an attempt by the Mexican government to abort the case. The Briton therefore refused to cooperate with the appeal in the congressional grand jury the following month, contending that the courts had ruled already and that the matter would now be left up to the British legation.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 1, 44; Diario de Avisos, 30 November 1857, p. 2; El Omnibus, 8 March 1856, p. 2; Letter, Lettsom to de la Rosa, 8 March 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:154-156.

<sup>46</sup> El Omnibus, 10 March 1856, p. 2; 16 May 1856, p. 2; 19 May 1856, p. 2; El Monitor Republicano, 5 June 1856, p. 3.

But Barron did continue to press the case in the ensuing months and in November 1857 as a newly elected deputy to the newly formed congress, he was still fighting to have the case prosecuted as he wished. Despite his opposition, congress chose to examine the matter, and shortly before the Golpe de Estado plunged Mexico into civil war once again, the deputies voted to absolve Benito Gómez Farías of all guilt.<sup>47</sup>

## 5

In the early months of the Barron-Forbes affair the primary vehicle through which the dispute was sustained was the newspaper. Barron, Degollado, and their partisans wrote to papers throughout the country, arguing their points and including letters and documents to support their respective views. Such newspapers as El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), El Universal (Mexico City), La Nacionalidad (Guanajuato), Opinión (Querétaro), Los Padres del Agua Fría (Mexico City), La Voz de Iturbide (Guanajuato), El Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), El País (Guadalajara), Mentor (Aguascalientes), and many others published letters, remitidos, and often commented editorially on the issue.

---

<sup>47</sup>Diario de Avisos, 30 November 1857, p. 2; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 December 1857, document no. 21, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5 AH/INAH.

Barron, Sr. was by far the more active and vigilant in this war of words. Rarely did a pro-Degollado remitido or editorial appear in any Mexican newspaper without attracting Barron's attention and drawing a rebuttal. In addition he continually sent out to many papers remitidos of his own. The fact that some newspapers regularly printed pro-Barron material with only an occasional response from the Degollado faction led to charges that Barron was using his vast wealth to buy newspaper support. El Monitor Republicano of Mexico City was most often accused of having been bought off by Barron. The Monitor had long considered itself the organ of the liberal party in Mexico and on domestic issues, it may well have been. But Omnibus, another Mexico City paper and long-time rival of Monitor, accused its competitor of spreading lies and of being pseudo-liberal.<sup>48</sup>

Initially the Monitor seemed to support Degollado's actions, for on January 22, 1856 it reprinted an article from Querétaro's Opinión praising don Santos' personal bravery and his conduct in the Tepic revolt. Omnibus, on the other hand, believed that Degollado had allowed himself to be

---

<sup>48</sup>French Minister Alexis de Gabriac referred to "the newspapers of the Barron family." See Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381. El Monitor Republicano, 14 June 1856, p. 1; El Omnibus, 13 September 1856, p. 2; 27 September 1856, p. 2.

influenced by Barron's enemies, had compromised Mexico's interests, and had injured a respected company.<sup>49</sup>

By mid-February, however, Monitor's stance began to crystallize. José J. González pointed out in an editorial that his paper had reserved comment on the Tepic affair until all evidence was available. He now believed that Degollado had been misled by "pernicious men" who had sought personal gain by ruining Barron's company. This editorial led José M. Castaños, among others, to imply that the paper had sold out to the Barron interests, but on March 1 Monitor energetically denied such charges.<sup>50</sup>

Beginning in March 1856, however, the paper began to publish Barron's remitidos on an almost regular basis. Often they appeared several days in a row, and on one occasion the front page of Monitor bore an unprecedented announcement that a Barron remitido was printed within. The paper did not, on the other hand, print remitidos from Degollado defenders. It did at one time promise, in order to inform its readers on both sides of the issue, to reprint an extensive letter from Degollado published in Mentor, but the promise

---

<sup>49</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 22 January 1856, p. 2; 14 February 1856, p. 3; El Omnibus, 4 February 1856, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 17 February 1856, p. 1; 1 March 1856, p. 4.

was never fulfilled. Still, the Monitor, in areas other than the Barron-Forbes affair, strongly supported Degollado and when it became evident in March that don Santos would resign as governor of Jalisco, it printed several notices praising his administration.<sup>51</sup>

Other newspapers also voiced their support of Barron's plight. When another plot against the national guard garrison in Tepic was exposed at the end of March 1856, Barron, Forbes and Co. was again implicated. The pro-Barron Heraldo appealed to the sympathy of the public by claiming that unfair arrests of some employees and the director of Barron, Forbes and Co.'s cloth factory in Juaua had forced the factory to close. This, the paper lamented, caused damage not only to Barron but also put 250 persons out of work, all because of what it considered unfair partisan persecution of Señor Barron.<sup>52</sup>

The war waged in the press by Eustace Barron in behalf of his son was both massive and effective, and don Santos soon determined, partly because of this, to resign his post in Jalisco. Disillusioned by the entire affair, he expressed his dismay as follows:

---

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 14 March 1856, p. 1; 24 May 1856, p. 3; 12 March 1856, p. 4; 22 March 1856, p. 3; 28 March 1856, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup>El Omnibus, 21 April 1856, p. 3.



The effort that Eustace Barron has made to present me to the nation as a deep enemy of his house is inexplicable to me. I know neither him nor his children, against whom I take action out of necessity and with much pain; I have never been a merchant, nor even a resident of Jalisco . . . I have never even been able to consider Barron and Forbes enemies of my political principles, since they profess none: there is no reason or rational motive to believe me a partisan of the enemies of this house.<sup>53</sup>

Barron's campaign had been effective, but Degollado's childlike protestations of dismay and hurt were obviously an exaggeration. There were other, perhaps more compelling, reasons for don Santos' decision in March to resign, as has been explained.

On June 5, 1856 he arrived in Mexico City to take his seat as delegate to the constituent congress and to participate in drafting what was to become the Constitution of 1857.<sup>54</sup> But while he was able to depart Jalisco and thus leave behind the scene of his troubles, he could not escape the irksome, nagging Barron-Forbes question, which was by now on the verge of becoming a full-blown national crisis.

## 6

By late summer 1856 relations between Great Britain and Mexico had badly deteriorated. There were several minor issues involved, but by far the most serious causes of discord

---

<sup>53</sup> El Siglo XIX, 4 April 1856, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 28 March 1856, p. 2; El Siglo XIX, 12 May 1856, p. 3; El Monitor Republicano, 19 May 1856, p. 3; 22 March 1856, p. 3; 6 June 1856, p. 3.

were the Barron-Forbes affair and Mexico's continued delays in payments to British bondholders. The latter problem was aggravated by worsening financial conditions in England which by the following year reached panic proportions.<sup>55</sup>

Many British bondholders had awaited payment for thirty years, only to see it slip from their grasp half a dozen times. At least one expert has suggested that bondholders blamed adverse circumstances in Mexico for the delay and did not doubt the good faith and willingness of the Mexicans to pay. There is considerable evidence to the contrary. Many Britons felt that the Mexican people were inferior to Europeans, and thus incapable of democratic self-government and financial responsibility. Eustace Barron attributed to the Mexicans a natural propensity for mischief and dishonesty. British journalists commonly explained that Mexico's problems were due to her being governed by a barbarous "mongrel race," and they suggested that the more Spanish

---

<sup>55</sup>D.C.M. Platt, Latin America and British Trade, 1806-1914 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), p. 52; British Foreign Office Registers (modern series) and Indexes of General Correspondence, 1820-1890, Mexico, vol. 5, 1856-1860 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), pp. 14-18 (hereafter cited as Mexican Register). In 1850 President José Joaquín de Herrera had acknowledged a debt to British holders of Mexican bonds of just over 10 million pounds sterling. See British and Foreign State Papers, 167 vols. through 1967, comp. Sir Edward Hertslet (London: William Ridgway, -1967), 50:1123-1124.

blood was diluted by that of the Indian, the more civilization in Mexico would decline.<sup>56</sup> Consequently the British increasingly came to support intervention in Mexico to collect by force payments on bonds. Such intervention did not occur until six years later when British, French, and Spanish forces landed at Veracruz, but it very nearly took place in 1856. British opinions such as the one which follows were voiced in justification of the 1862 intervention, and it is reasonable to assume that similar attitudes were also prevalent in 1856:

We do not believe in the possibility of forming any stable government out of the degenerate race which has reduced the finest territory on the globe to a state of utter barbarism. The experiment has been proceeding for nearly half a century, and has resulted only in a spectacle which is a scandal to civilization . . . . To be governed, Mexico must be occupied, probably for a lengthened period, by a foreign force . . . .<sup>57</sup>

The Mexican government was well aware of the tide of British opinion. But Comonfort was plagued with innumerable

---

<sup>56</sup>Jan Bazant, Historia de la deuda exterior de México, 1823-1946 (México: Colegio de México, 1968), p. 73; Humphreys, Consular Reports, pp. 338-339; The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art (London), 26 May 1860, pp. 666-667; 24 December 1859, p. 766.

<sup>57</sup>The Quarterly Review (London), January-April 1862, p. 171.

domestic and foreign problems by mid-1856 and he was ill-prepared to antagonize the British and face the disrupting effects of a foreign intervention. Revolts continued to break out with alarming frequency in many parts of Mexico as conservatives demonstrated their dissatisfaction with liberal programs. Comonfort had to deal with opposition from fellow liberals as well, for the puros fought him at every turn. At the same time Spain was clamoring for payments on bonds, and this, later coupled with the unsolved murders of some Spaniards near Cuernavaca, led the Spanish to break diplomatic relations with Mexico.<sup>58</sup>

In light of all this, Mexico's bargaining position with England could hardly have been worse. The British were of a mind to press their demands to the fullest and Comonfort was convinced that antagonizing England would doom his administration. Santos Degollado had the unenviable misfortune to be caught in the middle.

In early July 1856 Lettsom presented the Mexican government with London's formal protest of the "persecution" of Barron, Jr., who was by then stationed in Mazatlán. In addition, the pro-Barron faction in Tepic regained control

---

<sup>58</sup> Ray F. Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort: His Contributions to the Mexican Reform, 1855-1857" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1959), pp. 176, 203-204.

of the local ayuntamiento and added its voice to the chorus of protest. Within two weeks Lettsom added a demand that Degollado be tried in court for his actions in the Tepic affair.<sup>59</sup>

Mexico City newspapers disclosed in early August that the British government was exerting pressure over the Barron-Forbes affair, and some papers rumored that the situation was serious.<sup>60</sup> Siglo XIX was the first to report the details of British demands. These included restoration of Barron, Jr. to the consular post in Tepic, severe punishment for Degollado, and payment of two million pesos in damages. The newspaper believed that Lettsom had been instructed to break diplomatic relations if these demands were rejected. Though it was not publicly disclosed, Lettsom also raised with Comonfort the issue of payments to holders of Mexican bonds.<sup>61</sup>

---

<sup>59</sup> El Omnibus, 19 June 1856, p. 2; 16 July 1856, p. 3; Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 4-7; Joaquín Degollado, Defensa ante el público, que hace el que suscribe, de la justicia con que ha sostenido su inmunidad al Señor Don Santos Degollado, para impedir que un juez incompetente lo juzgue en el delito de imprenta, que le imputa D. Eustaquio Barron (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), p. 41.

<sup>60</sup> El Monitor Republicano, 10 August 1856, p. 3; El Omnibus, 12 August 1856, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> See article in El Omnibus, 19 August 1856, p. 3; Mexican Register, unnumbered page, document no. 94, 22 August 1856.

On August 19 the French minister in Mexico, Alexis de Gabriac, reported to his government the strained condition of relations between England and Mexico. He pointed out that the day before, the first ship of a British squadron had arrived at Veracruz to back up demands with a show of force. Lettsom had complained to Gabriac of Comonfort's weakness and of the audacity of the puros, and Gabriac acknowledged that Comonfort was very nervous over the situation. But the only action that the Mexican president took was to send a polite note to London explaining his government's actions and assuring the British that there was sufficient evidence of the consuls' guilt.<sup>62</sup>

While the two opposing governments regarded each other and plotted their next moves, the two men around whom the dispute raged continued to do battle in the columns of Mexican newspapers. Eustace Barron directed his attacks in July and August 1856 against one major Mexico City newspaper which publicly defended Degollado, Siglo XIX. Barron accused the paper of trying to give partisan documents an official appearance by publishing them in columns reserved for official government decrees and correspondence. And he complained

---

<sup>62</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:315; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 30 August 1856, p. 4.

that editor Francisco Zarco had referred to Barron, Jr. in an article as a smuggler and a rabble rouser.<sup>63</sup>

Another capital city newspaper, the Heraldo, stated that it did not support Barron but wanted to call attention to Degollado's improper actions. The paper pointed out that Degollado had without sufficient authority to do so, banished "two rich foreigners . . . employees of friendly nations, who were suspected as enemies for the very reason of having a great fortune in a small town."<sup>64</sup>

On Degollado's side the Omnibus believed the British claims to be exaggerated and saw the affair as a typical case of a major power dealing highhandedly with a weaker nation. Omnibus continued to accuse its competitor Monitor Republicano of being in the employ of Barron and of denying Barron's opponents access to its remitido columns, a charge which Monitor denied.<sup>65</sup>

Degollado in July 1856 had published some documents in sympathetic newspapers and had sent to the Mexican minister of foreign relations others which gave specific facts on

<sup>63</sup> El Omnibus, 24 July 1856, p. 3; El Monitor Republicano, 26 July 1856, p. 2; 19 August 1856, p. 3.

<sup>64</sup> El Omnibus, 23 August 1856, p. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.; El Monitor Republicano, 23 August 1856, p. 4.

crimes supposedly committed by the two consuls. For example, he revealed that Barron and Forbes had illegally exported 17,780 marcos of silver, valued at 147,427.50 pesos, on July 29, 1854 in the British vessel Frowning Beauty. The editor of Los Padres del Agua Fría, Joaquín Villalobos, wrote that such documents as these were incontrovertible proof that Barron and Forbes had been guilty of smuggling, inciting rebellion, protecting rebels, and bribing public officials.<sup>66</sup>

As he had done in the spring, Barron continued in the summer to win the press war. More and larger papers published far more material in his behalf than was the case for Degollado. But of greater importance for Barron was the fact that the British government chose to support him fully. Rumors of July and August that the affair had seriously undermined British-Mexican relations soon proved to be true.

On September 1, 1856 British Chargé Lettsom suspended diplomatic relations with Mexico due to unsatisfactory responses to his demands in the Barron case. The Mexican congress learned of this development the following day and

---

<sup>66</sup> Letter, Degollado to minister of foreign relations, 29 July 1856, Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:247-248; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 26 August 1856, pp. 1-2.



by September 3 word appeared in Mexican newspapers. It was several weeks before news of Lettsom's actions reached London, and it was in fact an entire month before the British chargé put his decision into action by closing the legation in Mexico City and retiring to Tacubaya.<sup>67</sup>

The text of British demands was now made public, and in addition to those already rumored (restoration of Barron, Jr. to his Tepic post; indemnification of Barron, Forbes and Co.; court trial of Degollado), there were additional requirements that Degollado's decree of banishment be formally revoked and that Barron, Forbes and Co. be allowed to press their suits in Mexican courts. Neither claims of British bondholders nor any other grievances were mentioned in the suspension of relations; officially the rupture came because of the Barron-Forbes affair alone.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the lines of conflict between the two countries seemed more clearly drawn than ever before, and the next turn of events would depend on Mexico's response to these demands.

---

<sup>67</sup> Mexican Register, p. 49; Francisco Zarco, ed., Crónica del congreso extraordinario constituyente, 1856-1857 (México: Colegio de México, 1957), p. 990; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 4 September 1856, p. 3; The Examiner (London), 1 November 1856, p. 696; The Illustrated London News, 1 November 1856, p. 456.

<sup>68</sup> El Omnibus, 6 September 1856, p. 3.

## CHAPTER IV

### BARRON-FORBES AFFAIR: PART 2

#### 1

While Mexico faced the critical situation brought about by suspended diplomatic relations with Great Britain, Santos Degollado was confronted with repercussions that created for him a major personal crisis. He had been unable to defend himself adequately from newspaper attacks in July and August 1856 arising from his dispute with Eustace Barron because his duties as a member of the constituent congress consumed much of his time. He had been particularly busy in August for he had served as president of the congress that month. Though he ~~was~~ still very much occupied in September, Degollado had finally come to the belief that he must publish extensive materials in his own defense.

On September 12, 13, 14, and 25 Los Padres del Agua Fría published remitidos, documents, and letters submitted by Degollado in an attempt to counteract Barron's press attacks. Degollado claimed he could bear the personal attacks but refused to remain silent when a Barron cohort, in a September 13 remitido in Monitor Republicano, impugned the Mexican government. Don Santos charged that Barron had

bought off journalists whose accounts the London government accepted as fact. British ignorance of the true details of the affair, he suggested, was turning a simple incident into an international crisis which was further complicated by the existence of a new ayuntamiento in Tepic made up of conservatives who had participated in the December 13, 1855 Tepic revolt.<sup>1</sup>

Degollado also defended his decree banishing Barron and Forbes. He argued that his action had been within his authority, it had been made after an investigation and after the consuls had fled, and the president had supported the decree. Furthermore, Degollado pointed out, in modern practice consuls were "not diplomatic employees, thus do not enjoy the privileges that ministers do," and were instead "subject on this same point to the same principles as simple foreigners, with the difference that the government which deports a consul has to explain to the other government the reason on which the action was based."<sup>2</sup>

Don Santos closed by accusing Barron, Jr. of the incredible act of beating José de Landero y Cos in Mexico City, a

---

<sup>1</sup> Los Padres del Agua Fría, (Mexico City), 25 September 1856, pp. 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

maritime administrator from San Blas who had signed the list of charges against Barron and Forbes which Tepic citizens had earlier compiled and submitted to Comonfort. Relating this incident to Barron's public attacks on his reputation, Degollado pointed out that a Mexican in London would never be allowed to use the tactics Barron, Sr. had employed in his crusade against Degollado.<sup>3</sup>

These remarks by Degollado probably gained little attention. Most people had made up their minds one way or another about the affair, and Los Padres did not enjoy huge circulation. Months later, however, when Barron had exhausted his recourse to diplomatic channels, these articles were dredged up again in order to perpetuate the issue, and in this respect they are significant.

The British legation realized that its severance of relations did not place any immediate pressure on Mexico to submit to demands. Consequently, at Chargé Lettsom's request, the British Gulf fleet was alerted and the Pacific squadron was ordered to the west coast of Mexico, or so said rumors to that effect. Lettsom had indeed written to the Admiralty asking that a squadron be sent to Veracruz, and each day residents of the port awaited a British blockade

---

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

to force the Mexican government to act on the Barron claims and bond payments. Yet weeks passed and no ships arrived, though there were vessels at Greytown and elsewhere in the Gulf expected to assume this role. While rumors continued to circulate in the capital and even though Lettsom himself believed that warships had arrived by late November, in fact they never showed up.<sup>4</sup>

This may well have been intentional, for British opinion did not entirely support this kind of pressure on Mexico. The Illustrated London News first commented on the Barron-Forbes affair at this time and expressed the opinion that Degollado's banishment of the consuls may not have been strictly legal, "but some allowance must be made for a people and their rulers embroiled in civil contests." While conceding that the British government must protect its subjects, "it is also its duty to take care that its power is not abused by its agents and that British subjects under its protection do not mingle in civil broils in other states." Recalling similar embarrassing incidents in Britain's experience, the News suggested, "Before such cases be made

---

<sup>4</sup> New-York Daily Times, 14 October 1856, p. 1; El Omnibus (Mexico City), 15 October 1856, p. 3; 4 November 1856, p. 3; British Foreign Office Registers (modern series) and Indexes of General Correspondence, 1820-1890, Mexico, vol. 5, 1856-1860 (London: H.M. Stationery Office), p. 58 (hereafter cited as Mexican Register).

the justification for putting fleets in motion, impeding trade, and running the risk of involving us in further quarrels, they ought to be submitted to some mixed commission or impartial tribunal."<sup>5</sup>

The newspaper in fact found it difficult to believe reports of broken relations and the order to blockade. "There must, we presume, be some exaggeration in this, as it is tantamount to a declaration of war against a State which has of late been on very friendly terms with us." Believing that Mexico had at last taken steps toward establishing order, the News maintained that the British should show forbearance and patience. In addition to this opposition, large groups of British citizens in Mexico City and Veracruz protested their government's breaking relations with Mexico. It is also worth pointing out that some months later the British Mercantile Law Committee hoped to prevent future incidents such as the one in Mexico by considering clear, definite rules of conduct for British consuls in foreign countries. It was suggested "that under no circumstances a foreigner should be permitted to act as British consul, nor any be allowed to engage in trade." Had such

---

<sup>5</sup>The Illustrated London News, 11 October 1856, p. 364.

regulations been enforced earlier, the Barron-Forbes affair might never have occurred.<sup>6</sup>

## 2

By far the most hazardous undertaking of the historian is the attempt to attribute motive. Rarely did historical figures lay all their cards on the table, and as human beings, many were of course unaware themselves of why they did what they did. Yet in light of what many Mexicans and Englishmen considered to be insufficient grounds for Great Britain to sever relations with Mexico and order the blockade of Veracruz, it is necessary to consider what may have been possible underlying British motives for these actions.

The vital interests of the British government were not jeopardized in the Barron-Forbes affair. To be sure, insofar as it involved the prerogatives of and respect for a British official, the honor of England may have been ever so slightly threatened; but certainly not enough to justify of itself the vigorous nature of the British response. Even direct economic losses suffered by Barron's company were, according to the French minister, not very serious.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 2 September 1856, p. 4; The Times (London), 16 February 1857, p. 3; The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 7 October 1856, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 1:266.

What else, therefore, may have contributed to the diplomatic rupture? One factor which certainly had a bearing on the official stance taken by the British Chargé was the immense wealth and influence of Eustace Barron. French Minister Gabriac had expressed on several occasions the opinion that W.G. Lettsom was little more than a pawn in Barron's hands. Mexican diplomat Matías Romero indicated that Barron's influence extended beyond his control of Lettsom, when he reported that Barron had agents in London as well as Mexico City spending freely to sway British foreign policymaking.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, while motive is almost always difficult to prove, it seems most likely that British holders of Mexican bonds were also exerting pressure on the British government to intervene in Mexico. Though bonds were not mentioned publicly in the course of the Barron-Forbes dispute, they were unquestionably on the minds of leaders for both nations. The register of British diplomatic correspondence to and from representatives in Mexico at the time lists as many dispatches dealing with bond payment as with the Barron-Forbes affair. That the British people

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 1:266, 2:18-19; Letter, Romero to Juárez, 1 November 1856, in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:215:216.



were no less concerned about bonds than were British leaders seems evidenced by the fact that British newspapers of the time only rarely carried items referring to the Barron question, while references to Mexican bonds were commonplace.<sup>9</sup>

Some individuals publicly voiced their doubts regarding Britain's professed motives and intentions. Mexican Chargé in London González de la Vega believed that Lord Palmerston harbored a personal dislike for Mexicans and was using the Barron-Forbes affair as a pretext to pressure for payment of bonds.<sup>10</sup> A United States observer in Mexico City reported on September 20, 1856 that the Barron-Forbes incident was the supposed cause of severed British-Mexican relations,

This, however, is but a hobby; for it is well known that the British Government has been endeavoring for a long time to settle the financial claims of its subjects against Mexico quietly, if possible. But all such attempts have been abortions, and it only required some act on the part of the Mexican Government to demonstrate that all her plans were groundless, and that sympathy had been wasted on the country, for the British Government to adopt coercive measures. The Barron, Forbes & Co's. case has furnished abundant pretext, and I cannot for my part see in what manner Mexico is going to escape from the difficulty without getting a drubbing.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Mexican Register, pp. 18-21; see such British newspapers as The Times (London).

<sup>10</sup>Letter, Romero to Juárez, 1 November 1856, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:215-216.

<sup>11</sup>New-York Daily Times, 14 October 1856, p. 1.

The above writer was apparently no anglophobe, for he defended British actions, pointing out that the Mexicans had "taken the wrong pig by the ear," and as a result would be taught a valuable lesson in taking their international responsibilities more seriously.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, while it is not possible to document the contention that Britain's financial claims against Mexico in part motivated her actions in the Barron-Forbes affair, it would be most unrealistic to ignore the possibility.

## 3

In the face of suspended relations and a threatened blockade the Mexicans endeavored to negotiate a settlement, but met British indifference on all fronts. Chargé González de la Vega had an interview with Lord Clarendon in late October and once again came away feeling rebuffed. In Mexico attempts to bargain with Lettsom proved equally frustrating. As a last resort the Comonfort government named General Juan N. Almonte as special agent to the Court of St. James. Almonte sailed for London bearing documents supposedly proving Barron, Jr.'s guilt, but he wasted a month in Veracruz and by the time he arrived in England, the

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

Mexican government had already felt obliged to capitulate to the British demands.<sup>13</sup>

Mexican hopes that the issue might be submitted to international arbitration also proved fruitless. The French minister was specifically instructed not to offer his services as mediator. The under-secretary of state for the United States said that his government must await the outcome of the presidential election, which he said John C. Fremont was expected to win, before it could proffer its good offices to the disputants.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the British refusal to discuss the matter and the reluctance of other powers to interfere, minor incidents further complicated the situation. The chief clerk for Barron, Forbes and Co. was arrested and detained for a week for unknown reasons. This drew protests from

---

<sup>13</sup>Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 13 November 1856, p. 3; The Illustrated London News, 1 November 1856, p. 444; The Daily Picayune, 17 October 1856, afternoon edition, p. 1; Letter, Romero to Juárez, 1 November 1856, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:216-217. Almonte was a distinguished Mexican general and diplomat, illegitimate son of the great liberator, José María Morelos; Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970), 1:74-75.

<sup>14</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:359, 361; Letter, Romero to Juárez, 1 November 1856, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:216-217.

Lettsom. Also, the ayuntamiento of Tepic, once again in the hands of conservatives, petitioned Comonfort to allow Barron, Jr. and Forbes to return to their city.<sup>15</sup>

By this time the diplomatic impasse between the two countries was indeed serious. Matías Romero wrote to Benito Juárez on November 1 that the British would no longer receive the Mexican chargé and that they would be even less likely to hear Almonte upon his arrival. Romero expected the British blockade to come at any time, whereupon, he said, "I can assure you that we will very soon find ourselves involved in a war with Great Britain, in which we will surely get the worst part." French Minister Gabriac believed that the affair would bring down the Comonfort government, for he expected Veracruz to revolt as soon as the British warships appeared, with other areas following suit.<sup>16</sup>

British Minister Lettsom confirmed fears that the situation was worsening when on November 5, 1856 he sent the Mexican government an ultimatum--Mexico had nine days

---

<sup>15</sup> Mexican Register, p. 16; El Omnibus, 18 September 1856, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Letter, Romero to Juárez, 1 November 1856, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:215; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:365.

to grant British demands or Lettsom would retire to Veracruz and rely on the British squadron to gain satisfaction.<sup>17</sup>

Eight days after this ultimatum was issued rumors circulated in Mexico City that the affair had been settled. Although it did not become public knowledge for several days, Comonfort had indeed acted on November 13, the eve of the deadline imposed by Lettsom. First, because the Mexican minister of foreign relations, Juan Antonio de la Fuente, refused to yield to the British claims, Comonfort replaced him with Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, who was more cooperative. The British legation was then informed of Comonfort's decision on its ultimatum. Degollado's decree was nullified and the consuls would be accorded the right to reassume their posts in Tepic. Degollado was to face judgment by the constituent congress acting as a grand jury. The consuls received the right to bring suits in Mexican courts and they were to be compensated for damage to their company, the amount later being set by two arbiters at 140,000 pesos. Every British demand was granted.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:361.

<sup>18</sup> Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 14 November 1856, p. 3; 9 December 1856, p. 3; 22 December 1856, p. 3; Joaquín Degollado, Defensa ante el público, que hace el que suscribe, de la justicia con que ha sostenido su inmunidad al Señor Don Santos Degollado, para impedir que un juez incompetente

On November 17 Lettsom expressed satisfaction with the agreement. Orders to the British squadron were suspended and all other instructions for hostile action were cancelled. The squadron had never arrived at Veracruz, of course, and Mexicans soon began to believe that there had never been one. The suspicion that Comonfort had been bluffed into conceding every point became widespread. Though Los Padres del Agua Fría felt that the president had to yield lest a clash occur and enable the conservatives to seize power, the paper nonetheless lamented the one-sided settlement. Others were less forgiving. As Gabriac described Mexican feelings, many believed that Comonfort had "toyed with the honor and dignity of the country." Gabriac argued that "he should either have yielded at the beginning, frankly recognizing his errors or since he had declared for ten months that he was right, he should have continued sustaining his opinion."<sup>19</sup>

---

lo juzgue en el delito de imprenta, que le imputa D. Eustaquio Barron (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), p. 48; El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 19 December 1856, p. 4; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:365; William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:859.

<sup>19</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, p. 42; Mexican Register, p. 21; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 23 November 1856, p. 3; 30 November 1856, p. 3; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:365, 381.

Though Lettsom and the Barrons were obviously pleased with the reconciliation, some British citizens, particularly the bondholders, were not. The London Times reported the settlement and granting of all demands, but pointed out that British creditors were still without satisfaction. "Surprise was consequently expressed that the British squadron, which had lately been announced, had not made its appearance." The people in England, if not the government, believed that hostilities had been threatened to compel payments on the debt, a fact which lends more support to the argument that the British used the Barron-Forbes affair as a pretext to press financial claims.<sup>20</sup>

Comonfort's action had undercut the pretext and compelled the British either to admit openly their true motives or to come to terms. Once England accepted the Mexican concessions, Comonfort was careful not to give them another opportunity to use the Barron claims as an excuse to press other issues. Though payments on other debts were habitually put off, installments on Barron's compensation were promptly paid throughout the next year.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup>The Times (London), 9 January 1857, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 5 January 1858, p. 7.

Therefore, due to what may have been a shrewd, if palpably unpopular, move by Comonfort, the Barron claims and complaints were eliminated as a source of difficulty between the two governments. If the British felt that world opinion would not suffer them to press their financial claims directly and that they needed some pretext to justify interference, at least now they would have to find another pretext.

## 4

Mexican dissatisfaction with the settlement was of serious concern for it created a potentially explosive situation. In Tepic conditions were understandably most tense and Barron, Jr.'s return to that city was the perfect catalyst to set off a reaction. The two factions there had clashed in September over the celebration of the national independence fiesta of "diez y seis de septiembre." Then on All Saints Day, November 1, the Castaños faction, the changos, ignored prohibitions by the political boss, Francisco Castillo, and the military commander, Mariano Pico, and fired rockets in celebration of the fiesta and its namesake, Santos Degollado.<sup>22</sup>

The pro-Barron faction, the macuaces, however, also had occasion to celebrate. Though Castaños reported that

---

<sup>22</sup> José María Castaños, Los sucesos de Tepic (Guadalajara, México: 1857), pp. 8-9.



the news of Comonfort's concessions to the British "fell like a bombshell" on liberals in Tepic, the macuaces responded with joyous outbursts, rockets, and shooting.<sup>23</sup> The scene was set for the appearance of the man whose presence promised to bring this seething undercurrent of antagonisms to a boil once again.

Eustace Barron, Jr. was officially informed, during the last week of November, of the agreement between Mexico and Great Britain and he immediately began preparations to reassume his post in Tepic. Arriving in his hometown the second week in December, escorted according to Castaños by armed macuaces, Barron received a great welcome and for several days attended dances and parties held in his honor.<sup>24</sup>

José María Castaños admitted that he had conducted several secret meetings during the fall of 1856 to plot strategy for regaining political power in Tepic. But he claimed that his efforts had been geared toward persuading his more aggressive followers to seek peaceful settlement by sending petitions and representatives to the state and

---

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>24</sup>Mexican Register, p. 59; Diario de Avisos, 24 December 1856, p. 2; Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, p. 11.

national governments. Yet he agreed to lead an uprising if these measures failed.<sup>25</sup>

According to Castaños, leading changos met at his house on December 28 to approve the terms of a petition. The resulting document called for a new "jefe político," either Andrés Avelino Terán or someone of his choosing; a new military commander to be named by José Calderón; a new judge; a new ayuntamiento chosen by these new officials; a new national guard and police force chosen in the same manner; and the pardon of the outlaw band of Losada.<sup>26</sup> What the changos wanted, in short, was for the state or national government to intervene in Tepic and restore their faction to political control.

In the evening, December 28, Castaños' efforts to the contrary notwithstanding, an uprising occurred in Tepic. The festivities of the macuaces and Barron partisans and their undisguised glee at the recent course of events were apparently more than their local rivals could stand. One Mexico City newspaper described the movement as a spontaneous outburst of anger at the insults heaped upon Degollado and others who had opposed Barron. French Minister Gabriac,

---

<sup>25</sup> Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 9, 12-13.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13, 29.

however, reported that the revolt was led by Castaños' son-in-law, a man named Landero. Some accused Castaños, Degollado, and others of plotting the uprising.<sup>27</sup>

A small band of the insurgents first attacked the consistorial building, which housed the town jail, and despite armed resistance, succeeded in capturing it. Another group seized the church tower and rang an alarm, whereupon people immediately filled the plaza as if by design. Other bands disarmed guards at other public buildings and in half an hour the town was theirs.<sup>28</sup>

The mob then began to roam the streets of Tepic sacking the houses of known and suspected Barron partisans and shouting slogans such as "Viva Degollado! Viva el Pueblo!" and, according to the pro-Barron military commander in his subsequent report to the president, "Death to Comonfort!" A pharmaceutical house, whose owner had supposedly given Barron a gold-headed cane upon the consul's return, was looted, as was the house of one man who had given a dance in Barron's honor.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> El Siglo XIX, 9 January 1857, p. 4; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381.

<sup>28</sup> Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 14-15.

<sup>29</sup> Colección de documentos inéditos o muy raros relativos a la Reforma en México, 2 vols. (México: Instituto Nacional

At the time the mob began its activities, Barron was entertaining several dinner guests at his home. Alerted by the noise, he armed the guests and together they barricaded the doors and windows. Several of his partisans made their way to Barron's house from various sections of town, for the house was centrally located and offered better security because of the number of defenders there. The mob did not attack the house, however, nor did it bother the houses of any other foreign residents of Tepic. According to Castaños, the insurgents did at one point pause momentarily at Barron's house to return fire, but they quickly moved on to more vulnerable targets.<sup>30</sup>

Another macuace stronghold was the house of Mariano Pico, the military commander, for the political boss and several others had barricaded themselves therein. The rebels added to their numbers by emptying the jails of 100-200 political and criminal prisoners, and the following

---

de Antropología e Historia, 1957), 1:9-12; Report, Calderón, 8 January 1857, Documentos relativos a la Reforma en México, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, roll no. 3, document no. 9, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Mic DF/BINAH); Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381.

<sup>30</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381; El Siglo XIX, 4 February 1857, p. 3; Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, p. 17.

morning took the house by storm. They would have killed Pico on the spot but for the intercession of Bonifacio Peña, a local priest.<sup>31</sup>

At this point Castaños returned from Fortuna, having left with the petitions the night before. He met with Pico and some of the changos, and together with the ayuntamiento, Castaños' brothers, and some other prominent citizens, a truce was arranged. It was agreed that a commission would be sent to Guadalajara, to be accompanied by Pico. Barron's pledge assured the apprehensive citizens that Pico would not take retribution once released.<sup>32</sup>

This settlement, through which the changos gained nothing for their efforts, lends support to the contention that the revolt was an unplanned, spontaneous uprising. Castaños, as one would expect, disavowed any involvement and argued that there had been no recognized leader among the insurgents. Yet it is he who reported that when the church bell was rung, people flocked to the plaza as if it were a prearranged signal. As has been mentioned, one Mexico City newspaper described the revolt as a spontaneous

---

<sup>31</sup> Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 14-16, 18-19; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381; Diario de Avisos, 15 January 1857, p. 3, quoting article from El Herald (Mexico City).

<sup>32</sup> Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 18-19, 30.

burst of anger; another such paper laid the blame for it on Castaños and Degollado appointees. The French minister reported hearing rumors that Degollado "was one of the participants in the plot."<sup>33</sup>

Castaños, on the other hand, laid much of the blame on the governor of Jalisco, Anastasio Parrodi, for having undone Degollado's work and for favoring the pro-Barron faction. Castaños claimed that fearing retribution from Parrodi, he and his brothers Fernando and Joaquín had fled Tepic. They were captured in Santiago by Parrodi forces. The changos in Tepic then disbanded and Pico reassumed control of the city, launching, according to Castaños, a series of arrests which included members of the Castaños family. When all were released on their own recognizance on February 14, Castaños and Pico agreed to go to Guadalajara together in an effort to work out a solution with the state government. In Castaños' opinion, his opponents gained the upper hand through these actions due to governor Parrodi's bias.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 14-15; El Siglo XIX, 9 January 1857, p. 4; Diario de Avisos, 15 January 1857, p. 3, quoting article from El Herald; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:381.

<sup>34</sup>Castaños, Sucesos de Tepic, pp. 22-26, 31.

Pico's account, earlier related to the minister of war, understandably disputed aspects of the Castaños version. The two opponents disagreed on whether the mob chanted "Death to Comonfort." They did not agree on the terms under which order was restored. The military commander did, however, acknowledge making a number of arrests after January 1, including some of the Castaños clan.<sup>35</sup>

At this point Barron, Jr. decided that he could better conduct his affairs in some other town. Resigning from the consulate in Tepic, he named Juan Francisco Allsopp, first clerk of Barron and Forbes' commercial house and a Mexican citizen, to succeed him as consul. The Comonfort administration surprisingly, considering concessions made earlier, refused to grant recognition or exequatur to the new appointee and insisted that the British submit another choice for consul. As the Trait d'Union pointed out, the Mexican government acted entirely within its authority in refusing to accept Allsopp, and Comonfort probably reasoned that his refusal, intended to avert further clashes in Tepic, would not threaten British-Mexican relations.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 16; Report, Calderón, 8 January 1857, document no. 9, roll no. 3, Mic DF/BINAH.

<sup>36</sup> The Examiner (London), 7 March 1857, p. 150; Diario de Avisos, 21 January 1857, p. 3; Ayuntamiento de Tepic,

The hopes of the Trait d'Union, President Comonfort, and others that the new Tepic revolt and Mexico's refusal to accept Allsopp would not cause further diplomatic strain were soon shattered. Late in the winter of 1856-1857, these factors combined with another more significant circumstance to bring about a resumption of British displeasure.

## 5

When Comonfort accepted British demands in November 1856, he agreed that Degollado should stand trial. There was some uncertainty regarding the judicial procedure to be followed. Barron, Sr. argued that don Santos must be tried in criminal court, but the Mexicans pointed out that in February 1856 a presidential decree had established a different procedure. Comonfort had ordered that proprietary delegates to the constituent congress, such as Degollado, could not be prosecuted for criminal offense until congress, sitting as a grand jury, delivered an indictment. Don Santos was aware of this procedure and just two weeks after Comonfort had settled the British claims, Degollado wrote to him asking

---

Información sumaria levantada por el I. Ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Tepic, comprobando los Hechos de que acusó el mismo I. cuerpo, a los extranjeros D. Eustaquio Barrón y D. Guillermo Forbes, por considerarlos perniciosos, y remitida al Excmo. Sr. Presidente de la República (Guadalajara, México: Tipografía del Gobierno, 1856), p. 9; El Siglo XIX, 31 January 1857, p. 1.



that he send to congress copies of the agreement reached with the British chargé, as well as copies of Degollado's banishment decree, the Tepic ayuntamiento's January 1856 petition, and other documents.<sup>37</sup>

Don Santos had in fact begun preparing his case even earlier. Then he addressed a formal letter to the congress on November 21 outlining his position. He declared that his good reputation had been smeared by Barron's newspaper attacks and that in order to clear his name, he had in late September petitioned Comonfort to have the case tried quickly. Despite Degollado's voluntary surrender of immunity, Comonfort had taken no action. Don Santos believed that the president's acceptance of all British demands was an admission that he considered Degollado guilty. For this reason don Santos now formally addressed congress to request action on his case.<sup>38</sup>

But weeks passed and congress took no steps to look into the matter. In mid-January 1857, to prod that body into

---

<sup>37</sup> Decree, Comonfort, 23 February 1856, Reclamaciones de la compañía Barron y Forbes en contra del Gral. Santos Degollado, 1843-1870, 13 vols. bound manuscripts, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, 11:22 (decimal classification H/242(42:72)/397, topografía L-E 2188 to L-E 2200; (hereafter cited as Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE); Los Padres del Agua Fría, 7 December 1856, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> Los Padres del Agua Fría, 26 November 1856, p. 2.

action, don Santos and his son Joaquín published and distributed to the delegates a thirty-nine page documented account of the Barron-Forbes affair titled Reseña documentada que el C. Santos Degollado, gobernador y comandante general que fue del estado de Jalisco, hace a la representación nacional . . . . In his concluding remarks in the Resena, Degollado appealed to fellow deputies to grant a remarkable request. In what may well have been a grandstand play, he asked congress to indict him on the charges brought by Barron and Lettsom. Don Santos admitted that an acquittal would restore his public reputation and honor. But, he explained, an indictment would give him the opportunity to confound his antagonists in court and win the case, thus saving Mexico from "onerous consequences." He proclaimed, "I prefer, therefore, to continue playing the role of criminal, in order to lend greater service to my country."<sup>39</sup>

Degollado then published notices in newspapers that he intended to leave the country, informing anyone who had suits

---

<sup>39</sup> Santos Degollado, Reseña documentada que el C. Santos Degollado, gobernador y comandante general que fué del estado de Jalisco, hace a la representación nacional para que en calidad de gran jurado decida sobre su responsabilidad oficial, por haber prohibido á los extranjeros Barron y Forbes que volviesen a Tepic, entre tanto el supremo gobierno resolvía lo conveniente (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857), p. 10.

pending against him to take steps to clear them up. Since Eustace Barron was the only person with such suits, it is apparent that don Santos hoped this announcement would cause Barron to exert his considerable influence on congress to take action. Barron, however, mistakenly believed that once congress adjourned, he would be able to take the case to criminal court, so he did nothing but publish a response to Degollado's November 21 letter to congress. Barron complained in this article that Degollado was attempting to pressure unfairly the members of congress through this letter and his Reseña documentada, and he argued that a congressional ruling would not fulfill justice, nor would it help Mexico's international standing. He further protested that Degollado's offers to submit to trial had been hypocritical and his accounts inaccurate, and he again pointed out that the Tepic petition supporting don Santos had been signed by a gang of thieves and scoundrels.<sup>40</sup>

The Mexican constituent congress completed its work and promulgated the new constitution in mid-February 1857. Then on the 16th, the last day before adjournment, it erected itself as a grand jury to review the Degollado case. Joaquín Degollado, who had passed the bar exam the year before,

---

<sup>40</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, pp. 6-7; El Herald, 11 February 1857, p. 2.

conducted his father's defense. Degollado's strategy for defense had already been revealed, of course, in the Reseña and elsewhere. Don Joaquín argued that technically his father could not be held responsible for the banishment decree because it had been issued after the expiration of Ayutla revolutionary regulations on the powers of state governors and before adoption of the provisional organic statute. But he argued further that don Santos' actions had been entirely legal under the provisions of certain Mexican laws, and under Article 11 of an 1826 Treaty of Amity, Navigation, and Commerce with England. He also cited as legal precedents United States-British treaties of 1794, 1806, and 1815, which contained similar provisions.<sup>41</sup>

As we have seen already, Degollado's arguments, from a strictly legal point of view, were insufficient. Though deportation of a consul was not usually a serious or a difficult step, in all cases a consul's exequatur first had to be withdrawn, and this had not been done in Barron and Forbes' cases. But the congressional delegates were persuaded either by Joaquín Degollado's arguments, by their own national pride, by perhaps the intent rather than the letter of the

---

<sup>41</sup>El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 10 February 1856, p. 3; Los Padres del Agua Fría, 26 November 1856, p. 2; Degollado, Reseña documentada, pp. 22-24.

law, by the reasonableness of Degollado's banishment decree, by don Santos' eloquence, or by other factors, and on February 16 they voted that Degollado could not be brought to trial for his actions.<sup>42</sup>

If don Santos believed that he was finally free from the imbroglío which had caused him such consternation for the past year, he was sadly mistaken. The day after congress acquitted him and adjourned, Eustace Barron filed a libel suit against him for things he had written in September 1856 issues of Los Padres del Agua Fría. Among other things, Degollado had said of Barron, Jr. that "it is proven that he is a smuggler and an agitator for revolutions." Barron had responded in print to Degollado's remarks and had charged that don Santos "spends money to bribe the press and invoke their testimony like that of public opinion against us." Barron had complained of efforts to present Degollado as a poor man unable to finance a propaganda campaign while he,

---

<sup>42</sup> Benito Gómez Farías, Juicio de imprenta: documentos relativos al promovido por el Sr. D. Eustaquio Barrón contra Benito Gómez Farías (México: Imprenta de José Mariano Fernández de Lara, 1856), pp. 74-75, 78-79; Francisco Zarco, ed., Crónica del congreso extraordinario constituyente, 1856-1857 (México: Colegio de México, 1957), p. 980. There was no debate and the vote was not recorded; Actas oficiales y minutarío de decretos del congreso extraordinario constituyente de 1856-1857, ed., Luis Felipe Muro and Xavier Tavera Alfaro (México: El Colegio de México, 1957), pp. 635-636.

Barron, was billed as the wealthy villain who bribed newspapers. Though Barron thus protested Degollado's allegations, he took no further action at the time. But when congress cleared Degollado five months later, Barron dredged up the old newspaper articles as the basis of his defamation suit.<sup>43</sup>

Since congress had adjourned, Degollado's immunity as a delegate was subject to challenge. Barron took the case to the criminal court of first instance in Mexico City and Degollado was convicted of libel and sentenced to six months in prison and 300 pesos fine. Don Santos appealed the decision to the supreme court on the grounds that he had had immunity at the time the newspaper articles in question had been published. On March 4 the supreme court agreed that don Santos' argument had sufficient merit for them to take the case under consideration. But weeks passed and there was no word of the court having taken any action.<sup>44</sup>

Needless to say, Eustace Barron was displeased at the turn of events, and as usual the British legation reflected his feelings. In fact, as early as mid-December 1856 Lettsom

---

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH); El Omnibus, 28 October 1856, p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

had begun to express misgivings about the November 13 agreement he had reached with Comonfort. The chargé's primary objection was that congress was not a competent tribunal to judge the case. Comonfort's decree of the previous year had specifically required congressional indictment of a deputy prior to his prosecution, but Lettsom had doubtless come to realize that congress was made up largely of men who would side with Degollado.<sup>45</sup>

After congress ruled in don Santos' favor, Lettsom wrote to the Mexican minister of foreign relations complaining that congress was indeed not a competent judge and thus Mexico had not fulfilled its part of the November 13 agreement. In addition, rumors circulated that the congressional decision had been invalid because several deputies had left during the proceedings reducing the number of those present below a quorum.<sup>46</sup> It was evident that the issue was still far from settled.

## 6

President Comonfort in a March 4 address to the nation sought to minimize difficulties between Mexico and England.

---

<sup>45</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, p. 49.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.; Diario de Avisos, 27 February 1857, p. 3.

Referring to his November 13 capitulation to British demands as an "arreglo," he contended that the Barron affair was all but settled and revealed that Juan N. Almonte was enroute to London to clear up final details. The incident involving seizure by rebels of a 240,000 peso British silver shipment at San Luis Potosí was being resolved as well, he reported. Finally the president pointed out that payments on the British debt would be resumed upon completion of a pending financial arrangement with the United States, but even if the deal fell through, Mexico would still fulfill her obligations.<sup>47</sup>

Comonfort must either have been out of touch with the situation or he was trying to spread false optimism, for on March 30 Lettsom delivered another ultimatum to the Mexican government. The British chargé insisted that Comonfort must submit the Degollado case to the supreme court, congress having been an incompetent tribunal, or, Lettsom warned, he would close the British legation. Once again the president was given nine days to decide.<sup>48</sup>

During the next week Lettsom and Mexican Foreign Minister Ezequiel Montes engaged in intense negotiations. Montes was

---

<sup>47</sup>Diario de Avisos, 18 March 1857, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, pp. 41, 50; Diario de Avisos, 15 April 1857, p. 2.



adamant regarding the new demand. He cited several articles of Mexican law which stipulated that the supreme court could not judge cases such as Degollado's until a congressional grand jury had delivered an indictment. In the November 13 settlement, Montes insisted, Comonfort had only agreed to submit the issue to congress, and since that body had not billed Degollado, the issue was closed. He asserted

The [Mexican] government is not obligated to satisfy the new demand of Señor Lettsom; . . . the only cause that your lordship has to withdraw the British legation from Mexico is in that the government of the republic does not adjust its<sup>49</sup> procedures to the private opinions of Señor Lettsom.

The United States minister in Mexico, John Forsyth, described the new British demand as "arrogant bullying," and regretted that "Mexico although having right on her side will be obliged to yield." He complained that Barron held "great influence over the British Legation," and that he had acquired his ten million dollar fortune "by notorious smuggling." Forsyth was not entirely motivated by sympathy for Mexico, for what seemed to gail him most was the fact that Barron had "for years held a monopoly of the trade of Mexico on the Pacific greatly to the detriment of American interests."<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, pp. 43-48.

<sup>50</sup>Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:912.

Ezequiel Montes would likely have gone the way of his predecessors and resigned before submitting to Lettsom's ultimatum. But Degollado had learned of the new demand and of Montes' resistance, and he wrote to the minister on April 6. Don Santos realized that Mexico had fulfilled its obligations, and he told Montes he did not want to see a precedent established which would make future rulings of congressional grand juries invalid. Nevertheless, because he wished to avert another international crisis, don Santos agreed to have the case submitted to the supreme court. Degollado believed it was imperative that the issue be settled, for by this time Mexico's national honor and the issue of his innocence were almost inseparable in the minds of many Mexicans.<sup>51</sup> In addition, it will be recalled that the supreme court had already taken under consideration Degollado's appeal of the libel conviction Barron had won against him in February.

There is no means of determining how much Degollado's letter may have influenced Montes, but the same day the minister received the letter he signed a protocol with Lettsom which represented substantial compromise on his part. The two diplomats agreed to let the supreme court decide if it

---

<sup>51</sup>El Pueblo (Morelia), 30 April 1857, pp. 3-4.

should look into the case. In other words, the court would rule on whether the congressional verdict had been valid and had fulfilled the provision of the November 13 agreement between Lettsom and Comonfort.<sup>52</sup>

The French minister, Gabriac, did not consider the Mexican concession here to be a dangerous one. He pointed out that the Mexican supreme court was composed of radical friends of Degollado who would rule, probably unanimously, in his favor. Gabriac sympathized with Lettsom, believing Degollado had abused his authority and insulted British honor. He concluded that Lettsom had raised a great commotion which would, in the end, gain him nothing. Not only would Degollado be acquitted a second time, but arbiters had also reduced the original indemnity award to Barron by one half.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>Diario de Avisos, 15 April 1857, p. 2. Montes and Comonfort may still have split over the issue, as had Comonfort and de la Fuente in November 1856, for one month after this compromise Montes was enroute to Rome to assume a diplomatic post and Comonfort was naming his fourth foreign minister in six months; The Times (London), 3 June 1857, p. 7.

<sup>53</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:413, 430. Reports of the indemnity amount vary from 140,000 to 148,000 pesos, and to 150,000 dollars. Felipe Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso constitucional de la república mexicana que funcionó en el año de 1857: extracto de todas las sesiones y documentos relativos de la época, 9 vols. (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1874-1882), 1:1:233.

The fact of Gabriac's sympathy for Lettsom's frustrations is significant, for the continued exertion of diplomatic pressure in Barron's behalf was uniquely Lettsom's personal crusade. And evidence increasingly points to the fact that this was done because Barron held great influence over the British chargé. Degollado and other Mexicans had made this charge, and both the French and United States ministers had agreed. During the early prosecution of the affair, in the first months of 1856, Lettsom and Barron corresponded frequently and regularly as the latter appeared to orchestrate the diplomatic maneuvers of the former.<sup>54</sup>

In addition, there is considerable evidence that the London government never considered the Barron question important enough on its own merits to object strongly. This indicates that the incident did not represent a significant "affair of honor" between the two countries. It was Lettsom who delivered the ultimatums of September 1856 and March 1857, and it was Lettsom who requested that a British squadron blockade Mexican ports to compel acceptance of Barron's claims. As has been suggested, it is not unlikely

---

<sup>54</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:38, 40; Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:912; Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE, 8:30-33, 27-28, 115-116, and others; Ayuntamiento de Tepic, Información sumaria, p. 11.

that the British government agreed to the September 1856 ultimatum in hopes of gaining some concessions toward British financial grievances. When the Barron issue was settled in November and every British demand conceded, many in England remained dissatisfied, because nothing was done about payments to Mexican bondholders. But on January 23, 1857 President Comonfort issued a decree resuming such payments on the basis established by an 1850 presidential decree. Comonfort pledged 25 percent of the import duties from maritime and frontier custom houses, 75 percent of the export duties from Pacific ports, and 5 percent of the export duties from Gulf ports to pay the interest on British-held bonds.<sup>55</sup>

Having gained this concession, the London government was willing to accept the February congressional acquittal of Degollado and drop the entire Barron matter. Lord Clarendon therefore instructed Lettsom that it was "not advisable to sanction Consul Barron's [continued] prosecution of Señor Degollado," and, a few weeks later, that "as to the refusal of the Mexican government to bring Señor Degollado to trial"

---

<sup>55</sup>The Times (London), 9 January 1857, p. 5; British and Foreign State Papers, 167 vols. through 1967, comp. Sir Edward Hertslet (London: William Ridgway, -1967), 50:1123-1126.

before the supreme court, it was "not advisable to suspend diplomatic relations for that reason alone."<sup>56</sup>

This is not to suggest that Mexican-British relations were now friendly, for they were not. But diplomatic strain was being caused by other issues which the London government felt were more important than the Barron affair, an incident that had been resolved as per British demands. Such other issues included forced loans on British citizens, misappropriation by Mexico of funds of British bondholders, and especially the January 1 robbery of a British-owned silver shipment at San Luis Potosí. Indeed, the latter incident resulted in rumors of another threatened blockade of Mexican ports.<sup>57</sup> This additional evidence indicates that the British government was more concerned about hard economic issues than "affairs of honor," and since Comonfort had resumed bond payments, Lord Clarendon instructed Lettsom to drop the Barron claims.

---

<sup>56</sup>Mexican Register, p. 140; Robert K. Lacerte, "Great Britain and Mexico in the Age of Juárez, 1854-1876" (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1971), pp. 48-49. These dispatches were received in Mexico in April and May 1857.

<sup>57</sup>Diario de Avisos, 15 May 1857, p. 3; El Pueblo, 18 May 1857, p. 3; see also the descriptive list of dispatches for the first six months of 1857 in the Mexican Register.

But Eustace Barron had no intention of giving up the fight, and it is due to his influence that Lettsom continued to press the matter. The chargé rejected the February congressional ruling on the case and through the March 30 ultimatum demanded a supreme court trial. By the time he received instructions from London in April to drop the issue, the protocol with Montes had already been concluded, and the British cabinet decided to accept it.<sup>58</sup>

## 7

Santos Degollado had understandably begun to tire of the whole affair and now wished to see it to its speedy conclusion. He did not share Gabriac's confidence of an acquittal by the supreme court, and he had reason to suspect that should the court rule in his favor, Barron intended to take the libel suit before congress when it convened in the fall. But it was apparent that the court had no intention of acting precipitantly on the case, so Degollado decided to goad both the court and Barron into motion.<sup>59</sup>

As early as February 5, 1857 don Santos had begun planning for a trip abroad. Whether for reasons of health,

---

<sup>58</sup>Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso, 1:1:233.

<sup>59</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

personal business, or simply, as he later suggested, to prod Barron into action, he had resigned his rank as brigadier general and applied to the minister of foreign relations on March 23 for permission to leave the country. Degollado explained some months after that he had hoped to go to London to explain in person the true nature of the Barron-Forbes affair, for he believed that the British government had received a distorted version from Lettson. Whatever his purpose, Degollado had for four months been giving notice of the trip when he finally departed Mexico City on June 2. He stopped at Orizaba to await the arrival of the steamship Texas at Veracruz.<sup>60</sup>

Two or three days after Degollado's departure, Barron's lawyer, Emilio Pardo, filed a protest with the Mexican government complaining that don Santos was attempting to flee prosecution. Comonfort, therefore, issued through his minister of gobernación an order to the governor of

---

<sup>60</sup> El Pueblo, 5 February 1857, p. 2; 30 April 1857, p. 4; J. Degollado, Defensa, p. 6; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Emilio Pardo, Informe en estrados que el licenciado D. Emilio Pardo, como apoderado del Sr. D. Eustaquio Barron pronunció en la primera sala del tribunal supremo de justicia, en el incidente promovido sobre competencia de jurisdicción de la causa criminal promovida al Sr. D. Santos Degollado por abuso de imprenta (México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1857), p. 21.



Veracruz to arrest Degollado and return him to the capital. Governor Manuel Zamora took don Santos into custody on June 10, but not without hearing bitter complaints from his prisoner. Degollado bore Zamora no personal grudge and finally decided that his proposed trip to London must have caused Barron to take action out of fear that it might result in British repudiation of the Barron cause. In the face of apologies and praise from Zamora, and an expression of public support in Veracruz, Degollado agreed to return to Mexico City.<sup>61</sup>

The British chargé contended that Degollado had fled to avoid prosecution for the libel suit. Joaquín Degollado replied that only Barron could believe that don Santos would abandon his family, his country, his interests, his social and political position, and his reputation in order to escape a judgment which at most would have cost him six months in jail and 300 pesos fine. Don Joaquín argued that the odds favored an acquittal anyway, and that a conviction could only enhance don Santos' prestige in Mexico.<sup>62</sup>

The only significant by-product of the aborted journey was that Degollado's growing dislike for Comonfort was

---

<sup>61</sup>Pardo, Informe, p. 21; J. Degollado, Defensa, pp. 11, 54-56.

<sup>62</sup>Diario de Avisos, 12 June 1857, p. 3; J. Degollado, Defensa, pp. 10-11.

intensified. Friends told don Santos that Comonfort had agreed to block the proposed trip to England out of fear that in a foreign country with free press, Degollado might "write some historical rectifications." For example, in the capture of Zapotlán during the Revolution of Ayutla, a key liberal victory, Comonfort had received the credit, when in fact, said Degollado, don Ignacio had come in on the heels of Degollado's victorious troops. Don Santos insisted that exposing such facts had not been his intention, and he bitterly resented Comonfort's submission, once again, to British demands.<sup>63</sup>

On April 6, 1857 Lettsom and Montes had signed the protocol agreeing to have the supreme court rule on the validity of the February congressional acquittal of Degollado. The court agreed to hear arguments in the case on May 6. The British legation retained former supreme court magistrate and later conservative minister of gobernación José Hilario Elguero to handle their suit. On the sixth, with several capital city newspapers carrying editorials and poems of encouragement for each side, Elguero delivered his arguments to a packed courtroom. The following day Santos Degollado

---

<sup>63</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

spoke in his own defense. The court promised to render a decision within six days, and in fact some Mexico City papers announced on May 14 that a ruling favorable to Degollado had been handed down.<sup>64</sup>

These reports, however, were unconfirmed, for by the end of the month the court had still not announced a judgment. Degollado later disclosed that he feared this delay was due to British attempts to influence the decision, and he therefore decided to go to London to press the issue. In fact it was on June 2, 1857, the very day on which don Santos departed Mexico City to take passage to Europe, that the supreme court revealed the decision it had reached on May 12. It unanimously ruled that, in conformity with Mexican law and the November 13 agreement with the British, Degollado could not be tried for having issued the January 8 and 11 orders banishing Barron, Jr. and Forbes, because congress had declared there to be no grounds for prosecution.<sup>65</sup>

Thus did Eustace Barron and his son lose another round. And though he was not yet prepared to strike his colors, the British government was. Barron continued to complain

---

<sup>64</sup>El Siglo XIX, 4 May 1857, p. 3; 6 May 1857, p. 2; Diario de Avisos, 9 May 1857, p. 2; 14 May 1857, p. 3; Diccionario Porrúa, 1:696; El Pueblo, 18 May 1857, p. 3.

<sup>65</sup>El Siglo XIX, 22 June 1857, p. 3.

to the legation of his libel suit against Degollado, of delayed payments to bondholders, and of any other issue he felt might strike a sympathetic chord. But by June 23 the British had received from Mexico satisfaction regarding "all claims against Mexico" and the Queen's advocate had declared that Great Britain could not contest the supreme court ruling upholding the no-bill of Santos Degollado. After late summer 1857 no further mention of the Barron-Forbes affair appears in the Mexican register of British diplomatic correspondence.<sup>66</sup> All viable avenues of prosecution had simply been exhausted, and since Mexico had long ago fulfilled the provisions of the November 13 agreement, the British government had no legitimate choice but to drop the matter entirely.

In June, as the Mexican people awaited the supreme court's ruling in the Degollado case, national elections were held. Don Santos had been too preoccupied to seek actively any office, but his partisans had promoted his candidacy for a number of posts. He was elected governor of his adopted state, Michoacán, as well as first magistrate of the national supreme court. He also received votes for

---

<sup>66</sup> Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:29; Diario de Avisos, 23 June 1857, p. 3; Mexican Register, p. 246.

president of Mexico and president of the supreme court. Several newspapers editorially argued among themselves about Degollado's eligibility for office, considering the libel suit pending against him. Don Santos cleared up any questions when he refused to accept the governorship until the Barron question was resolved.<sup>67</sup>

## 8

True to Degollado's expectations, Barron was determined to continue to press the libel suit. Don Santos grew understandably weary of the pressure and harassment, and confessed to his friend Ocampo that he still hoped for the opportunity to go abroad, for he feared that by remaining in Mexico he would become misanthropic. In addition, his dislike for Comonfort had grown after the president's order blocking his trip to London. Not only did Degollado hold these personal grievances toward Comonfort, he thought the president's politics were "despicable." He added that part of the reason for his rejection of the governorship of Michoacán was his determination not to serve in any position, even that of bishop, he said facetiously, so long as Comonfort

---

<sup>67</sup> La Voz de Iturbide (Guanajuato), 28 June 1857, p. 4; El Pueblo, 1 July 1857, p. 3; Diario de Avisos, 24 June 1857, p. 3; 16 July 1857, p. 2; 17 July 1857, p. 3.

was "dictator" of Mexico. His generally pessimistic outlook at this time extended to Barron's suit, for despite his acquittal by the supreme court, Degollado was convinced that due to the "gold of Barron and the love of my comrades in arms [referring to Comonfort]," he would eventually end up in prison.<sup>68</sup>

Eustace Barron did his best to justify that fear. He retained another Mexican attorney, Emilio Pardo, to promote the libel suit, which it will be recalled was before the supreme court after Degollado had appealed a lower court conviction. The primary issue in the case was Degollado's immunity, for at the time the allegedly libelous articles were published, he had been a congressional deputy. Pardo accused don Santos of attempting to delay the proceedings by seeking this immunity and by endeavoring to flee Mexico, while publicly proclaiming a desire to speed up the process. Pardo further declared that the outdated laws and the Constitution of 1824 on which Degollado based his claim to immunity were not applicable. He referred to a May 1856 circular of the minister of gobernación which specified that common

---

<sup>68</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1857, document no. 17, and letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 July 1857, document no. 18, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

crimes of officials which were unrelated to their duties would be tried in ordinary courts, and he cited the case of another congressional deputy accused of libel which had been tried in an ordinary court.<sup>69</sup>

Pardo concluded his legal arguments with an emotional appeal to justice. He explained that Degollado's case had come to be identified with Mexican national honor. This was unfortunate, he believed, because a simple personal suit of private concern was being billed as a foreign threat to Mexico, and this placed greater responsibility on the judges. Pardo concluded that only a guilty verdict against Degollado would uphold Mexico's national dignity, for it alone would uphold justice.<sup>70</sup>

Joaquín Degollado defended his father in the libel suit, and when Pardo later published his arguments in the case, don Joaquín had printed his responses to Pardo's charges. These points most likely formed the basis of his defense arguments before the supreme court. Don Joaquín first pointed out that Santos Degollado had voluntarily relinquished congressional immunity in order to hasten the

---

<sup>69</sup>Pardo, Informe, pp. 6-8, 10, 15, 19.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-4.

proceedings, but the court had ruled that he could not surrender a right which was granted to a body of officials. Furthermore, a much more appropriate precedent for the case than the one cited by Pardo was the Francisco Zarco trial of a year earlier. Zarco had been a congressional delegate accused of defamation by the French minister, and congress had sat as a grand jury to hear the case and consider indictment. This trial had in fact served as the precedent for Degollado's February 1857 trial and was as well, don Joaquín argued, the proper precedent for the Barron libel suit.<sup>71</sup>

The court apparently saw more merit to Degollado's arguments, for it ruled on July 3 or 4 that Barron would have to present his suit to a congressional grand jury. Since congress was not scheduled to convene before September, it meant for Degollado another delay in an affair he desperately wished to see finished.<sup>72</sup>

By September 13 not enough deputies had arrived in Mexico City for a quorum in congress, and this left Degollado more depressed and pessimistic than ever. The supreme court

---

<sup>71</sup>J. Degollado, Defensa, p. 4; Xavier Tavera Alfaro, "Zarco ante el gran jurado," Historia Mexicana 6(1957): 589, 593.

<sup>72</sup>Diario de Avisos, 4 July 1857, p. 2.



had refused to allow him to renounce his immunity and it seemed to him that congress might never convene. He expressed the fear that his fate would be to remain in "limbo" until Barron could cook up another pretext to prolong his attacks.<sup>73</sup>

Finally on October 7, 1857 congress was installed, and the following week it met as a grand jury to look into the Barron suit. After seeking material on the case from the supreme court, congress debated the issue off and on for several weeks. As if the question had not posed problems enough for don Santos in the past months, he now faced an added hardship--Eustace Barron had won election as a voting member of the new congress, and he used his position to press the case to the fullest.<sup>74</sup>

On November 28, 1857 congress met as a grand jury and heard Degollado plead his own defense. Lamenting the mistreatment of such loyal public servants as himself, yet thankful for the opportunity to defend himself before judges of integrity, don Santos laid out an elaborate six-part

---

<sup>73</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 13 September 1857, document no. 22, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>74</sup>El Pueblo, 29 October 1857, p. 4; Diario de Avisos, 28 October 1857, p. 2; 30 November 1857, p. 2; 4 December 1857, p. 2.

argument. Among other things, he contended that he had not attacked Barron's private life in the Los Padres del Agua Fría articles, he protested that Barron had been adequately compensated, he pointed out that congress and the supreme court had already cleared him for making earlier comments identical to those Barron claimed were libelous, and he recalled that the British government had been satisfied with these earlier trials. Degollado also cited judicial precedents supporting his position. He left the chamber, and congress immediately delivered a unanimous vote to declare him once again innocent--111 to 0, with Barron abstaining.<sup>75</sup>

It appeared that Barron had lost the final round, and Degollado, relieved of a great burden, now felt optimistic and decided to accept political office. Less than three weeks after his acquittal the new Constitution of 1857, which he had helped to draft, would go into effect, and he looked forward to serving in the new regime. Degollado never had the opportunity, however, to enjoy peacefully the pleasure of having the Barron affair behind him. For on

---

<sup>75</sup>Diario de Avisos, 8 October 1857, p. 3; 28 October 1857, p. 2; 30 November 1857, p. 2; 1 December 1857, p. 3; 4 December 1857, p. 2; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 December 1857, document no. 21, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso, 1:1:233-234. Congress also absolved Benito Gómez Farías.

December 17 Ignacio Comonfort abrogated the new constitution and plunged Mexico into a three year long civil war of greater intensity than she had previously known. Denied the right to savor his hard-won victory, don Santos quickly assumed the leadership of the constitutional army of Benito Juárez and embarked upon a long campaign to defend the same principles he had upheld in the Barron-Forbes affair. In a sense his fight with Barron continued as well, for the wealthy Briton helped finance Degollado's opponents in the ensuing Three Years' War.<sup>76</sup>

## 9

The initial revolt in Tepic two years earlier had been little more than the eruption of a long-standing, local commercial and political rivalry. Degollado's intervention, unwittingly or not, served to benefit one side in this struggle, because he accepted at face value the accounts of local officials who were clothed in the credibility of elected authority, but who were likewise members of the Castaños faction. When they requested don Santos' support, he gave it, the result being the temporary elimination of

---

<sup>76</sup> Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 113; Diario de Avisos, 10 March 1858, p. 3.

their opponents. Had he simply helped his friends overcome their rivals?

There can be little doubt but that acts committed by Barron and Forbes in their efforts to dominate the region exceeded their authority as consuls and their rights under Mexican law. The Castaños group may also have been guilty of such conduct, but they were Mexicans. Foreign-owned commercial houses throughout Latin America had gained, like Barron's company, a notorious reputation for making "a fortune from the fluctuations in trade occasioned by political instability." The fact that "the best profits went to the man who smuggled most or paid up generously to those in authority" also seems to have been applicable to Barron and his son.<sup>77</sup>

Long before the Tepic revolt ever occurred, Barron had been described as an intriguer "enriched . . . by smuggling and usury," and as "accused of being one of the principal contrabandists in the republic [of Mexico]."<sup>78</sup> Barron's interference in Mexican domestic affairs was only slightly less infamous. In addition to dominating the Tepic-San Blas area, he sought influence in the Mexican national

---

<sup>77</sup>D.C.M. Platt, Latin America and British Trade, 1806-1914 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973), pp. 59-60.

<sup>78</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:37, 197.

government as well. He had earlier attempted to arrange a financial deal with Santa Anna, but when the dictator was ousted by the Revolution of Ayutla, Barron invested in a scheme to bring Comonfort to Mexico City to overthrow Santa Anna's successor, Martín Carrera. In exchange for aid in this affair, he expected the removal of Benito Gómez Farías as customs chief at San Blas, because Gómez Farías had seriously disrupted his smuggling activities.<sup>79</sup>

Barron successfully resisted all threats to his position of power, especially challenges from Mexicans, for whom he felt contempt and once described as "bred to practice every sort of chicanery."<sup>80</sup> He was able to acquire and retain such influence not only because of his wealth, but also because the British government, in the person of the chargé in Mexico, was willing to bring to bear in his behalf the full weight of its power.

In this vein one must at least consider the possibility of underlying British motives, for the Barron matter hardly seems to have been serious enough to justify the animated nature of Britain's response. Continually delayed payment

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 1:196-197.

<sup>80</sup> R.A. Humphreys, ed., British Consular Reports on the Trade and Politics of Latin America, 1824-1826 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1940), pp. 338-339.

on Mexican bonds, however, was a serious question in England and was the most prominent topic in British newspapers regarding relations with Mexico.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the register of British diplomatic correspondence to and from Mexico lists as many dispatches during the period dealing with bond payments as with the Barron-Forbes affair. No mention whatsoever of the Barron issue appears in the British and Foreign State Papers or in the Parliamentary Debates. Finally, when the Mexicans conceded British claims on bonds and resumed payment in January 1857, the London government ordered the Barron matter dropped. And when Great Britain joined in an invasion of Mexico four years later, it was to collect on this very same debt.

Technically, Degollado had not followed established procedure when he ordered the consuls out of his state. Though he protested that consuls had not the privileges of ministers and that a government deporting a consul was bound only to give reasons for its action, it was in fact clear that before a consul could be expelled for any reason, his exequatur first had to be withdrawn by the Mexican national government.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Mexican Register, pp. 18-21; see such British newspapers as The Times (London).

<sup>82</sup> Los Padres del Agua Fría, 25 September 1856, p. 2; José Justo G. de la Conde de la Cortina, Prontuario diplomático y consular, y resumen de los derechos y deberes de los extranjeros en los países donde residen (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1856), pp. 74-79.

Degollado acted too precipitously, to be sure, but hindsight does not necessarily prove that he took the wrong steps. He was obliged to take some course of action in this "damned if he did, damned if he didn't" situation. The evidence indicates that had he first placed the issue before Comonfort, as the law required, Great Britain would have browbeaten the president into submission. The British government and Eustace Barron won on virtually every point, but in the end, of course, lost the "war." It was through Degollado's hard-fought, singular struggle, through his stubborn determination to hold out against continually mounting odds, that Barron's campaign was finally and completely quashed, that Mexico was able to retain some degree of national self-respect, and that don Santos was properly cleared of all charges.

The Barron-Forbes affair had an indirect impact on subsequent Mexican history, for Degollado had gained through it an awareness of the international implications of Mexico's position, a realization of just how desperately Mexico was at the mercy of major world powers, and a genuine fear of the danger that foreign intervention posed for his country. This awareness and this fear ultimately led Santos Degollado to commit acts which were severely detrimental to his

reputation in order to do what he thought was necessary  
to save Mexico from ruin.



## CHAPTER V

### CONSTITUTION OF 1857

#### 1

During much of the time Santos Degollado was involved in the Barron-Forbes controversy, he was simultaneously serving in the constituent congress. One reason the Plan of Ayutla had appealed to so many Mexicans of varying political persuasions had been its simplicity; the convening of a congress to draft a new constitution had been one of its few concrete provisions. Soon after taking office in the fall of 1855, provisional President Juan Alvarez ordered elections for delegates to such a congress, but there was widespread disagreement as to the nature this proposed new charter should take.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since some conservatives stood opposed to any new constitution drafted by liberals, Mexico was plagued with continual outbreaks of violence throughout the year congress met.

---

<sup>1</sup>Convocatoria, Alvarez, 16 October 1855, in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:75-83.

The delegates were to have convened in Dolores, the birthplace of the Mexican nation, but this presented what Ignacio Comonfort called "insuperable difficulties." Accordingly, he ordered the congress moved to Mexico City, where it began work on February 17, 1856. It appeared, however, that the proceedings would be interrupted, for a conservative revolt at Puebla was growing in strength, placing the capital in jeopardy.<sup>2</sup>

In December 1855 several clergymen in the village of Zacapoaxtla, near Puebla, had stirred up opposition to the Ley Juárez. When army troops joined the dissidents, a full-fledged revolt broke out. In Mexico City Comonfort arrested Antonio de Haro y Tamariz, one of the most outspoken members of the conservative party, to prevent him from joining the uprising. But on January 8 Haro y Tamariz escaped and assumed command of the rebels, who captured the city of Puebla on January 22.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Published decree, 26 December 1855, document no. 16, Fondo XXXVIII, carpeta 1, Impresos constituciones de México, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Fondo XXXVIII, carp. 1, Impresos constituciones, CEHM); Justo Sierra, The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 267. When it seemed that the capital might be threatened, Governor Degollado offered the congress asylum in Jalisco. Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>Emilio Portes Gil, "The Conflict in Mexico Between the Civil Power and the Clergy, 1854-1876: Defense of the

The following day Haro y Tamariz issued a circular accusing the Comonfort government of an attack on the Church in particular and on religion in general. Santos Degollado, though ill at the time, wrote to don Antonio refuting those charges and denouncing the revolt. On March 1 Comonfort left the capital to take personal command of an army which had been gathered to lay siege to Puebla.<sup>4</sup>

For three weeks the president's army shelled the city, and finally on March 22 the rebels surrendered. Aware that alienating the army could cause him serious danger, Comonfort was most lenient with officers who had joined the revolt. He allowed such future luminaries as Miguel Miramón and Sóstenes Rocha to remain in the army by accepting temporary demotions. Others such as Luis Osollo were later pardoned. But the president felt less inclined to be tactful with the

---

Civil Power," in The Conflict Between Church and State in Latin America, ed. Frederick B. Pike (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 119; El Omnibus (Mexico City), 3 January 1856, p. 3; 9 January 1856, p. 3; José J. Alvarez, Parte general que sobre la campaña de Puebla dirige al ministro de la guerra el Sr. General Ayudante General D. José J. Alvarez, segundo jefe de estado mayor, cuartel maestre general del ejército de operaciones, por orden del Exmo. Sr. D. Ignacio Comonfort, presidente sustituto de la República, y general en jefe de dicho ejército (México: Imprenta de Vicente G. Torres, 1856), p. iii.

<sup>4</sup>El Omnibus, 3 March 1856, pp. 2-3; Alvarez, Parte general, p. iv.

Church, and he ordered the confiscation of certain ecclesiastical property to indemnify the government for its expenses in suppressing the rebellion.<sup>5</sup>

The conservatives had revolted, of course, in anticipation of what the constituent congress might do to alter Mexican society and political structure, as well as in opposition to the Ley Juárez. For thirty years they had fought the liberals' efforts to create a federal system, since they favored an elitist, centralist government which would support and protect the Catholic Church and the military. They believed that the involvement of the Church in political affairs was a positive, moralizing force. Moreover, they defended the Church's accumulation of wealth and property on the grounds that it was used for the public welfare.<sup>6</sup>

The conservatives had little doubt that these principles would be jeopardized by a new liberal constitution, and even

---

<sup>5</sup> Alvarez, Parte general, pp. 61-62, 70-73, 110; Letter, Osollo to President of the Republic, July 1856, document no. 14, Fondo VIII-1, carpeta 1, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Fondo VIII-1, carp. 1, RII/CEHM); Harper's New Monthly Magazine (New York), June 1856, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), pp. 17-20.

after the defeat at Puebla, many of them were determined to continue their resistance.

Despite such conservative opposition, the constituent congress proceeded with its task. But it was hampered at the same time by dissension within the liberal party. In May Juan Alvarez, who had temporarily stepped down in December, formally resigned as president, supposedly due to poor health. His substitute, Ignacio Comonfort, suspected, however, that this was an intrigue arranged with Degollado to provoke rebellion. The personal friendship between Alvarez and Comonfort had been seriously strained by recent political differences, and don Ignacio knew that Degollado was displeased with the substitute president's behavior in the Barron-Forbes affair. Comonfort began to regret not having demanded a more centralized military government, and as early as January 1856 some liberals suspected that he was plotting a coup to set up just such a system. Santos Degollado, for example, believed that more war was inevitable, for the Ayutla government (particularly the Comonfort regime) had done nothing to settle issues between the privileged classes and the people.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup>Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 1:283-285; Clyde G. Bushnell, "The Military

Nineteenth-century Mexican liberalism was more of a movement than a formally constituted political party. As such it was fragmented in many ways. There was ideological disagreement, of course, and there were personalist factions, but the greatest divergence of opinion arose over methods and timing in the struggle for reform. Thus in the late 1830's two distinct groups had coalesced over this issue and had formed the most clear-cut factions within the liberal movement. These were the moderados and puros, or moderates and radicals.<sup>8</sup>

Although the moderados and purors basically agreed on the kinds of reforms that were needed in Mexico, they continually clashed on how and when these changes should be enacted. The moderados preferred to see such reforms as abolition of special privilege and disamortization of Church wealth instituted gradually, while the purors called

---

and Political Career of Juan Alvarez, 1790-1867" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1958), pp. 305-306, 323; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH).

<sup>8</sup> Jesús Reyes Heróles, El liberalismo mexicano, 3 vols. (México: UNAM Facultad de Derecho, 1957-1961), 2:426.

for their immediate implementation. Theirs was primarily a difference of rhythm, a contest between celerity and gradualism.<sup>9</sup>

The purōs seem to have been the more inflexible and uncompromising of the two factions. Melchor Ocampo, as perhaps the leading ideological spokesman of the puro group, simply denied the existence of political moderates. He saw only liberals, who favored progress, conservatives, who wanted neither progress nor retrogression, and reactionaries, who sought retrogression. The moderados, he contended, belonged in the second group. And he argued that any compromise between purōs and moderados, any coalition regime, was an obstruction to the reform program.<sup>10</sup>

The moderados placed great emphasis on timing and opportunity in implementing reforms. They believed that reforms enacted hastily had less chance for survival than those implanted at opportune moments. Their application of the "it is not yet time" philosophy, however, necessarily drew them close to the fine line separating gradualism from quiescence.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Walter V. Scholes, "Church and State at the Mexican Constitutional Convention, 1856-1857," The Americas 4(1947): 152; Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 2:424-425.

<sup>10</sup>Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 2:429, 431-432.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

During the Revolution of Ayutla neither moderados nor puros were explicit in outlining their objectives. When the puro administration of Juan Alvarez came to power, internecine quarreling began on a serious scale. Moderados feared that the precipitant behavior of the Alvarez government would ruin efforts to maintain order, which they believed to be an essential prerequisite to progress. In the ensuing power struggle, the moderados prevailed as Comonfort succeeded to the presidency. But their efforts at compromise were resisted by puros and conservatives alike.<sup>12</sup>

Comonfort's most serious failing may have been the fact that he never perceived the depth of the liberal movement. He believed his alternatives were to leave things as he found them, to accede to puro demands and enact proposed reforms quickly, or to implement prudently reforms called for by "liberal opinion." He chose the third course, but he never truly walked the middle line. Instead he let himself be pushed back and forth by puros and conservatives and vacillated from one extreme to the other.<sup>13</sup>

Traditionally the constituent congress of 1856-1857 has been depicted as a showcase for this puro-moderado

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 428, 442.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 442, 446.



conflict. It has been statistically demonstrated, however, that the standard picture of a clear-cut puro-moderado split in the ranks of congressional delegates must be revised. Few of the representatives can be politically classified as either puro or moderado on the basis of their voting patterns during congressional proceedings. Voting was very much issue-oriented in the constituent congress, and conflicts over these issues produced constantly shifting coalitions.<sup>14</sup>

The greatest cause of controversy among members of the congress was the question of how to establish and preserve law and order. Other major points of disagreement included the relative power of the states, congress, and the executive. Surprisingly, perhaps, some issues, which were most controversial throughout the rest of the country, had little significance within the constituent congress. The old liberal banner of federalism, for example, was scarcely visible, for most delegates favored a stronger central government, with the greater degree of power residing in the legislative branch. And since most delegates agreed on the need to limit the political and economic power of the Catholic

---

<sup>14</sup>Richard N. Sinkin, "The Mexican Constitutional Congress, 1856-1857: A Statistical Analysis," Hispanic American Historical Review 53(1973):11-13.

Church, the Church-State conflict was also not a major issue within the congress.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, although controversy did arise during the drafting of the Constitution of 1857, the most serious differences of opinion among delegates were not necessarily over those issues traditionally cited by historians.

## 3

In January 1856 the voters of Michoacán chose Santos Degollado as a proprietary delegate to the constituent congress. At that time he was governor of Jalisco, but in April he resigned and left Guadalajara, intending to rest a few weeks before assuming his congressional seat in Mexico City. Don Santos unofficially took part in some of the proceedings through June, but when a movement promoting him for the governorship of Michoacán got under way, he formally presented his credentials to the congress. These were approved on July 1, and amid resounding applause he took his seat. This welcome is not only indicative of the immense prestige Degollado enjoyed at the time, but also was an expression of hope shared by some in Mexico that don Santos would be the knot which would unite contesting factions in congress.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-10.

<sup>16</sup> La Nacionalidad (Guanajuato, México), 20 January 1856, p. 4; El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 25 June 1856,

Any such prospect seemed shattered by the first measure Degollado sponsored, though he intended it as a compromise. On July 23, with the backing of fifteen other deputies, he introduced a proposition that the Constitution of 1824 be retained with any reforms congress might wish to add. Such a resolution had already been defeated once by the delegates, and considerable dismay was expressed that Degollado would seek to revive it. The newspaper Los Padres del Agua Fría could not understand why a delegate as progressively minded as Santos Degollado would make such a proposal, but it suspected that the upcoming consideration of religious toleration had something to do with it. This seems doubtful, since don Santos supported toleration, but the paper saw fit to chide him in verse form for seeking to advance by going backward.<sup>17</sup>

Melchor Ocampo's son-in-law, José María Mata, was a delegate to the congress, and he likewise was puzzled.

---

p. 3; 30 June 1856, p. 4; Francisco Zarco, Crónica del congreso extraordinario constituyente, 1856-1857 (México: Colegio de México, 1957), p. 203; El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 2 July 1856, p. 1; Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 31, Los gobiernos de Alvarez y Comonfort, según el archivo del General Doblado, 31:7, 223 (hereafter cited as García, Documentos).

<sup>17</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:324; Los Padres del Agua Fría (Mexico City), 25 July 1856, p. 4.

Knowing Ocampo was don Santos' close friend, Mata asked his father-in-law, "Do you understand it? I could not."<sup>18</sup> When after two days of heated debate, the measure was defeated by a vote of 48 to 42, Mata exclaimed, "Thank goodness and may we not again have such scenes repeated!" His wish was not granted, for although don Santos no longer promoted the scheme, other delegates introduced the proposal twice more before September.<sup>19</sup>

It is not clear why Degollado sought to revive the Constitution of 1824. Some have pointed to this incident as evidence that at this time he was still a moderate.<sup>20</sup> Though this may well be true, it is likely that don Santos was simply attempting to fulfill the role in congress that many expected him to assume, that of a great compromiser. Degollado personally disliked the 1824 charter. As he explained to Guillermo Prieto just nine months earlier,

---

<sup>18</sup> José Ma. Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), p. 90.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 1:324; Zarco, Crónica del congreso, p. 528.

<sup>20</sup> For example, see García, Documentos, vol. 26, La revolución de Ayutla, según el archivo del General Doblado, 26:111; Richard A. Johnson, The Mexican Revolution of Ayutla, 1854-1855 (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana College Library, 1939), p. 84; Roeder, Juárez, p. 139.

"The constitution of 1824 is monstrous because it amalgamates heterogeneous elements and contrary principles."<sup>21</sup> There was, nevertheless, strong support in congress for the Constitution of 1824, as indicated by the close vote on Degollado's resolution, and perhaps don Santos saw in a revised version of this charter the best chance for compromise between opposing factions.

While congress debated this and other issues before it in the early summer of 1856, the Comonfort administration enacted the most far-reaching reform of the two and one-half year Ayutla regime. The liberals had hoped to bring democratic capitalism to Mexico, and this depended largely on a broad system of private land ownership.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, on June 25, 1856 Treasury Minister Miguel Lerdo de Tejada issued a law abolishing the right of civil and ecclesiastical corporations to own land. The Ley Lerdo, as this new measure came to be called, required such corporations to sell within three months all holdings not directly related to their activities. The Church was by far the largest corporate owner of land in Mexico, administering at least 25 percent

---

<sup>21</sup>Letter, Degollado to Prieto, 26 October 1855, document no. 4, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

<sup>22</sup>Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 1-2, 15.

of the national wealth.<sup>23</sup> The disamortization law meant that all Church-owned lands not used for ecclesiastical services were to be sold. Also included as corporate property were communal lands, or ejidos, owned by Indian villages. The law did not confiscate property; proceeds from sales went to the corporation. But the measure was intended to provide land for the lower classes and to raise revenue for the government, since a 5 percent sales tax was levied on all transactions.<sup>24</sup>

The law provided that if corporations did not voluntarily disamortize, the government could step in and sell the holdings. This eventually occurred, and while the government did raise some revenue from the sales, very little of the land found its way into the hands of the lower classes.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>This most conservative estimate is from Jan Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875, ed. and trans. Michael P. Costeloe (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 13. Others estimate that the Church held one third or more of the land in Mexico; eg. J. Lloyd Mecham, Church and State in Latin America, a History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934), p. 362.

<sup>24</sup>Published Ley Lerdo, 25 June 1856, document no. 17, Fondo XXXIII, carp. 1, Impresos constituciones, CEHM (see in particular Articles 1, 3, 8, 9, and 32); Mecham, Church and State, p. 362; Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 177.

<sup>25</sup>Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 16.

Three days after the Ley Lerdo was promulgated, the constituent congress ratified it and ultimately incorporated it into Article 27 of the constitution.<sup>26</sup> The Church understandably opposed the new law. The most outspoken clerical critic of the liberal program had been the bishop of Michoacán, Clemente de Jesús Munguía, and in mid-July he issued a response to the disamortization order. He defended the right of the Church to own land and said that the new law would destroy the concept of private ownership of property in Mexico. He further warned that the measure would force the clergy to choose between obedience to the laws of God and those of the State. He left no doubt as to which he would choose, for he unequivocally declared the law null and void in his diocese and refused to obey it.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Actas oficiales y minutarario de decretos del congreso extraordinario constituyente de 1856-1857, ed. Luis Felipe Muro and Xavier Tavera Alfaro (México: Colegio de México, 1957), p. 640. In April congress had approved of the Ley Juárez; Ibid., p. 637.

<sup>27</sup> Clemente de Jesús Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica en el obispado de Michoacán desde fines de 1855 hasta principios de 1858, ó sea colección de representaciones y protestas, comunicaciones oficiales, circulares y decretos diocesanos, con motivo de las leyes, decretos y circulares del gobierno general, constitución federal de 1857, decretos y providencias de los gobiernos de los estados de Michoacán y Guanajuato, contra la soberanía, independencia, inmunidades, y derechos de la Santa Iglesia, desde 23 de noviembre de 1855, en que se dio la lei que suprimo [sic] el fuero eclesiástico, hasta principios del año de 1858, en que el nuevo gobierno

The rest of Mexico's upper clergy likewise refused to conform to the law, and in September, when the three-month period ended, the government began to sell Church-held estates. Fearing that Munguía might stir up revolts, Comonfort had him confined to Coyoacán for a short time.<sup>28</sup> Violence did break out in several areas, however, and Puebla was once again the scene of a major clash.

## 4

Amid the uproar produced by the announcement of the Ley Lerdo, the constituent congress took up consideration of one of the few religious issues, but certainly the most controversial issue, to come before it--the question of religious toleration. Such a measure threatened to destroy a three hundred year-old tradition which held, at that time, as firm a grip on Mexican society as any before or since. It was Santos Degollado's distinction to be chosen presiding officer for the August proceedings of the congress, during which time this crucial question would be decided.<sup>29</sup>

---

deroga todas las leyes que el anterior había dado contra la iglesia por el Lic. Clemente de Jesús Munguía, obispo de Michoacán, 2 vols. (México: Imprenta de Vicente Segura, 1858), 1:21.

<sup>28</sup> Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y el segundo Imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> Presiding officers of the congress were elected on a monthly basis. See Zarco, Crónica del congreso, p. 377.



In the months preceeding August, delegates had received petitions, letters, and citizens' groups seeking to influence the vote on proposed Article 15, which would establish religious toleration.<sup>30</sup> Those opposing the measure were led by Archbishop of Mexico Lázaro de la Garza, who reminded the congressional delegates that they were Catholics, members of the "only" religion. He pointed out that the Mexican people, whom this congress represented, were sincere Catholics as well, and knew that their religion disapproved of any other faith. And he warned that granting freedom of religion would tear Mexico apart, for it would add one more divisive force to a society ill-prepared to cope with existing problems. Thus it was not only a religious issue, but more importantly for the delegates, it was a law and order question, for in this area the congress had consistently witnessed its greatest disagreement.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Exposición que varios vecinos de Morelia elevan al soberano congreso constituyente, pidiéndole se digne reprobar el artículo 15 del proyecto de constitución, sobre tolerancia de cultos (Morelia: Imprenta de Ignacio Arango, 1856), pp. 5, 18-28; Frederick C. Turner, The Dynamic of Mexican Nationalism (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 185-186.

<sup>31</sup> Published exposition, 3 July 1856, document no. 63, Fondo XXVIII-1, carp. 1, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as RII/CEHM); Handwritten statement, 29 June 1856, document no. 13, Fondo VIII-1, carp. 1, RII/CEHM; Sinkin, "Constitutional Congress," pp. 10, 7; Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 3:293-294.

The proposed article prohibited any law which would deny the practice of any religion, but it acknowledged Roman Catholicism as the traditional religion of the Mexican people, and it called upon congress to protect this public interest by passing laws defending Catholicism.<sup>32</sup>

Supporters of religious toleration felt it was a basic human right, but also they disagreed with conservatives by claiming that it would bring Protestant immigrants to Mexico, stimulate the economy, and stabilize the country. Some purors opposed the article, however, because it established toleration only in a negative form. Also, they complained, it violated the principle of equality inherent in religious freedom by incorporating safeguards for Catholicism.<sup>33</sup> In short, they believed it was an effort at compromise on an issue where there could be no compromise.

Because even supporters of religious toleration could not agree on the proposed article, debate was lengthy and heated. When congress at last convened on August 5 to vote on whether to call the measure up for a final vote, the galleries were filled for what promised to be a hectic session. Just before the roll call began, several delegates

---

<sup>32</sup>Reyes Heroles, Liberalismo mexicano, 3:292.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 3:294, 298-299.

were seen leaving the chamber. Then as each remaining delegate announced his vote, murmurs of approval or disapproval drifted down from the spectators. When the votes had been tallied, the measure was defeated by 67 to 44. The galleries erupted into applause, whistling, and shouts of "viva religion, death to the heretics, viva the elergy, etc." Degollado had just restored order when a proposal to discuss further the matter brought forth more clamor from the spectators. Finally don Santos had to adjourn the proceedings, and congress reconvened in secret session. At that point the members decided that the vote had not killed Article 15, but had merely sent it back to the congressional commission.<sup>34</sup>

Several congressmen obviously ducked the controversial issue. Among the twenty-three who were absent for this important vote were such notables as Valentín Gómez Farías, Vicente and Mariano Riva Palacio, and Melchor Ocampo. Degollado voted for Article 15 in this instance, but when the measure was definitely retired on January 26, by a 57 to 22 vote, he stood against it. The reason for don Santos'

---

<sup>34</sup>Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 436-437. Actas oficiales del congreso, p. 308 gives the above cited roll call vote, while Zarco, Crónica del congreso reports the vote as 65 to 44.

shift of opinion is unknown, but the January proceedings bore little resemblance to the intense contest of August. Debate was more muted, and for two days lack of a quorum prevented a final disposition of the article.<sup>35</sup>

The Constitution of 1857 thus said nothing on the question of religious freedom, but unlike the 1824 charter, neither did it designate Catholicism as the state religion. Some Mexicans suggested that because of this, religious freedom was implicit in the new constitution. Francisco Zarco, perhaps the most ardent congressional supporter of religious toleration, responded that if a principle could be established by omission, a constitution would be unnecessary.<sup>36</sup> It was clear to Zarco, as it was to most of his countrymen, that religious freedom would not exist in Mexico until it could be legally founded with constitutional safeguard.

## 5

The question of whether to establish trial by jury in Mexico was second only to that of religious toleration

---

<sup>35</sup> Actas oficiales del congreso, pp. 308, 610.

<sup>36</sup> Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 3:310. Reyes Heróles believes that religious toleration was indeed implicit in the Constitution of 1857; see 3:320.

in the amount and intensity of debate it generated in congress. This controversy stemmed in part from the fact that, as in the case of religious toleration, adoption of jury trial would destroy a centuries-old tradition. Once again, however, recent evidence indicates that this question also must be viewed in the context of the law and order issue, for members of congress were vitally concerned with how this reform would affect growing instability in Mexico.<sup>37</sup>

Critics of trial by jury argued that it would be disruptive and confusing and would hinder efforts to restore domestic peace. Defenders of the measure countered that trial by jury was a fundamental right in a democratic society, and it was a reform whose time had come in Mexico.<sup>38</sup>

Santos Degollado did not participate in debate over this issue, but he voted for it, while his son Joaquín, a lawyer and a substitute delegate from Jalisco, voted against it. Trial by jury was defeated by a vote of 42 to 40.<sup>39</sup>

Since some delegates opposed the reform because they feared its disruptive effects, one may consider Degollado's

---

<sup>37</sup>Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 11; Sinkin, "Constitutional Congress," p. 8.

<sup>38</sup>See Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 495-512 passim.

<sup>39</sup>Actas oficiales del congreso, p. 334.

support to be an indication that he was not a hard-liner on the law and order issue. This interpretation seems valid in light of don Santos' consistent stand on restriction of punishment of criminals. He supported two unsuccessful measures designed to prohibit mutilation and torture of criminals, use of shackles, chains, excessive fines, confiscation of property, and other extreme punishment. And he voted for an article which limited the death penalty to certain crimes and abolished it altogether once a penitentiary system had been established. Don Santos was not, however, willing to dispense with the death penalty until a penitentiary system was in existence, and thus his position once again seems to fall more into a moderate line.<sup>40</sup>

One of the primary liberal objectives in a new constitution was to limit the power of the chief executive. The Revolution of Ayutla had removed the man who had most blatantly abused executive authority in Mexico, and liberals hoped to avert similar dictatorships in the future. But this goal necessarily put congress into conflict with the Comonfort administration, for don Ignacio had come to believe that the only way to curb burgeoning disorder was through increased power in the executive branch.

---

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 339-340, 500, 346-347, 599-600.

Many in the constituent congress believed, therefore, that in addition to incorporating into the constitution guarantees of congressional supremacy over the executive, a precedent also had to be established. The radicals in congress clashed with the Comonfort administration over the president's disapproval of Santiago Vidaurri's attempt to join the states of Coahuila and Neuvo León. They also quarreled over Comonfort's reorganization of the provisional government. In July the congressional puros called the cabinet to account for its actions, but at the same time appointed a commission to try to improve relations with the administration. The commission was made up of some of the president's strongest critics, including Santos Degollado. As one who saw underlying motives in the creation of this group, José María Mata wryly observed, "What a way to seek harmony, naming [to the commission] the most vicious enemies of the government!"<sup>41</sup>

Though don Santos was indeed becoming an increasingly bitter critic of Comonfort, his attitude toward the general character which executive authority was to take in the new constitution is not so clear. He favored the creation of a

---

<sup>41</sup>Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 8-9; Mata, Correspondencia privada, p. 83.

one-house "Congress of the Union," which was passed by only a six-vote margin, and he preferred giving some powers, such as the granting of amnesty, to this body rather than to the president. He also supported a measure, which failed of adoption, that would have subjected the president, the cabinet, and federal judges to "political judgment" for abuses committed in the exercise of their duties.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, Degollado supported the secret and indirect election of the president, and he favored giving to the chief executive instead of to congress the powers to appoint and remove the national treasurer, to establish tariffs, ports and custom houses, to commute sentences of federal prisoners, and to suspend constitutional liberties in times of grave national emergency.<sup>43</sup> In the end, of course, the Constitution of 1857 greatly restricted the power of the Mexican presidency. And while Degollado concurred in this general intent, he was not dogmatic in his approach.

As with the question of executive power, Degollado's opposition to Church power was not the unreasoning hostility

---

<sup>42</sup>Actas oficiales del congreso, pp. 373, 469, 472-473.

<sup>43</sup>All of these, except control over the treasurer, were passed. See *ibid.*, pp. 431-433, 620-621, 408, 441, 447, 506-507.



demonstrated by some radical anticlericals. When congress considered measures concerning the rights and economic power of the clergy, Degollado again voiced moderate opinions. Because of his years of experience in the treasury of the cathedral in Morelia, don Santos felt particularly well-qualified to discuss Church taxes.<sup>44</sup>

Degollado opposed suggestions made by some radicals that all Church taxes be abolished. He pointed to the text of St. Paul for scriptural justification for tithes, but also defended the right of clerical income from a practical point of view. If the Church lost its income, he warned, the clergy would become wards of the state. He contended that the Mexican people, as Catholics, should pay Church taxes if they wished to benefit from Church services and sacraments. Those who did not feel the need of the Church were not compelled to pay tithes, but to deny Mexicans the choice to pay if they wished would, in Degollado's opinion, deny the right to worship.<sup>45</sup>

Don Santos did favor abolition of parochial perquisites and special fees for clerical vestments, and he believed the

---

<sup>44</sup>I. y N. Colegio de Abogados de México, El constituyente de 1856 y el pensamiento liberal mexicano (México: Librería de Manuel Porrúa, 1960), p. 35.

<sup>45</sup>Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 946, 949-950.

aranceles should be reduced and standardized. But he insisted that complete suppression of Church taxes would be morally and economically disastrous, and he therefore favored government regulation of such taxes rather than their total exclusion.<sup>46</sup>

## 6

Degollado rarely participated in floor debate in the constituent congress, most likely because of his often-expressed feelings of inferiority in legal matters. But in the fall of 1856 his strong beliefs on the issue of residence requirements for congressional deputies caused him to put aside his normally self-effacing attitude. At the September 26 session he began a lengthy address in which he proposed stiff residence requirements. During a subsequent four-day recess don Santos became ill, and his son Joaquín completed the presentation and explanation of Degollado's proposals.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.; Actas oficiales del congreso, p. 626. A proposal for such regulation was narrowly defeated, and Degollado's support of it should not be taken as an indication of his breakaway from the nineteenth-century liberal economic doctrine of laissez faire. In fact he opposed private or government monopolies as well as protective tariffs for industry. See *ibid.* and Actas oficiales del congreso, pp. 626, 325-326.

<sup>47</sup> Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 630-633.

Don Santos suggested for congressional deputies a residence requirement of two years, for those candidates who established their business interests and families in the area they would represent; a three-year requirement for men who relocated only one of these; and a five-year minimum for persons who came simply to live in the area. Degollado firmly believed that congressmen should be residents, in the truest sense, of the areas they represented. He therefore argued for vecindad, which was permanent, over residencia, which was variable and occasional.<sup>48</sup>

Degollado contended that this kind of direct representation was essential to a federal republican system. During his campaigns in the Revolution of Ayutla, he explained, he had discussed the point with people in many parts of the country, and he was convinced that the Mexican people preferred that their representatives be true residents of their areas. Such representation was more democratic, he believed, and more responsive to the public.<sup>49</sup>

Proposed Article 60 of the constitution contained the requirements to serve in congress (it became Article 56 in

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 637; Francisco Zarco, Historia del congreso constituyente de 1857 (México: Imprenta I. Escalante, 1916), pp. 535-536.

<sup>49</sup> Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 632-633.

the final version), and it was voted on in early October. There was little objection as the delegates approved the requirements that a congressional deputy must be a Mexican citizen, not less than 25 years of age, vecino of the state electing him, and not a clergyman. The only serious challenge to the rigid provisions don Santos favored came when Francisco Zarco introduced an amendment which would have allowed residents of a state or persons born there to represent it as a congressman. Don Santos spoke out against the measure, and, in the end, his opinion prevailed by the narrow margin of 41 to 38.<sup>50</sup>

Zarco, among others, saw this as a victory for provincialism. He complained that strict residence requirements would fill the rolls of congress with backwoods yokels who would arrive in the capital late, attend few sessions, leave early, or not come at all.<sup>51</sup>

But Santos Degollado apparently was one liberal for whom the cause of federalism was not yet dead. He was in favor of more direct representation, and while most delegates supported a stronger central government, he preferred

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 391, 395-397, 647-648; Actas oficiales del congreso, pp. 398-399.

<sup>51</sup> Zarco, Crónica del congreso, p. 648.

retaining certain powers for the states. Though he nearly always voted with the majority during his tenure in this congress, three measures restricting state authority were overwhelmingly approved over his opposition in November. One prevented states from making alliances, coalitions, or treaties with other states or foreign powers; the second required state governors to publish and enforce federal laws; the third made it the duty of the national government to maintain order in the interior of the country.<sup>52</sup>

Degollado's stands on these issues and on residency requirements for deputies help classify him as a federalist and demonstrate his greater faith in the common man and in representative democracy. If some of his colleagues regarded him as provincial, he doubtless considered them elitist.

Degollado served on several commissions in this congress, but perhaps his greatest concrete contribution to the new constitution came in the closing months of the proceedings. In late October he and two other delegates, Gregorio Payró and Albino Aranda, were appointed to draft the lengthy and complicated organic electoral law, which was to be appended to the constitution. Throughout December and January don

---

<sup>52</sup>Actas oficiales del congreso, pp. 476, 484, 488.

Santos steered portions of the law through congress, participated in debate and revision of the measure, and continually demonstrated a willingness to compromise on points the delegates found objectionable.<sup>53</sup> When the project was finished, he took considerable pride in the resulting law.

## 7

On January 28, 1857 congress considered a transitory article which specified that the new constitution "will be sworn to . . . throughout the Republic" and that it would go into effect on September 16, 1857, whereupon the new legislative congress would be installed. The interim Comonfort government would continue to function until that time. Degollado objected to the article. He had helped draft some transitory provisions of the organic electoral law, and he was opposed to continuing the Comonfort dictatorship in unaltered form for another eight months. He expressed to fellow delegates the conviction that the Plan of Ayutla and the leadership of the revolution intended that the provisional government rule only until the constituent congress convened to create and set up a new government. Pointing to the 1824 Constitution as an example, don Santos

---

<sup>53</sup>Zarco, Crónica del congreso, pp. 731, 858, 866, 880.

suggested that the congress either pass a constitutive act or set up a new interim government along the lines of the new constitution. He nevertheless believed Comonfort should be retained as president with extraordinary powers as a demonstration of the delegates' confidence.<sup>54</sup>

As debate on the measure proceeded, Ignacio Ramírez observed that three groups seemed to emerge. One faction favored immediate implementation of the new constitution; another, following Degollado's arguments, preferred revamping the provisional government; the third chose the most natural and simple course--prolonging the Comonfort administration without change. Those favoring the latter prevailed as the transitory article was adopted by a 66 to 21 vote, with Degollado and elder statesman Valentín Gómez Farías dissenting.<sup>55</sup> Subsequent events indicated that Degollado's suggested course might well have been more effective in safeguarding the constitution and in securing liberal goals.

On February 5, 1857, with Gómez Farías presiding, the delegates signed and swore their allegiance to the new constitution in a solemn ceremony.<sup>56</sup> There were some final

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 953-954.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 955; Actas oficiales del congreso, p. 629.

<sup>56</sup>Roeder, Juárez, p. 138.

matters to clear up, such as ruling on the Barron case against Degollado, before congress finally adjourned on February 17.

Thus while the rest of the Mexican people had continued to dispute the numerous issues dividing them, the delegates to the constituent congress had managed to reconcile their differences and produce a constitution which was essentially moderate in character. The new charter established a federal system with a three-branch national government. The unicameral legislative body, the Congress of the Union or, as it was sometimes called, the House of Deputies, was unquestionably the dominant branch. Executive authority was limited in many ways, not the least of which was the creation of a permanent deputation of members of congress whose purpose it was to serve as watchdog over the president while congress was not in session. There was no vice-president, this office having been a frequent source of revolutions in the past. Any vacancy in the presidency was to be filled by the president of the supreme court.

The Constitution of 1857, for the first time in Mexican history, included a bill of human rights, though the president could suspend them in times of emergency. But many controversial reforms, particularly restrictions on the civil and



economic power of the Church, were not included, for in essence the new constitution was a child of compromise. It abolished special judicial privilege, but it did not grant religious toleration; it restricted Church landholding, but it did not nationalize ecclesiastical wealth; it denied clergymen the right to serve in congress, but it did not destroy the civil power of the Church. If it did not immediately achieve all these goals of liberals, however, it did provide the "bases for the future secularizing action of the Reform Laws of 1859-1860."<sup>57</sup>

On March 11 the new constitution was formally published. Six days later President Comonfort ordered all government officials to take oaths of allegiance to the charter on March 19 and 20. All state and national public officials and all military officers were to swear personal allegiance, and they were then to administer oaths to their subordinates. The ayuntamientos of state capitals would swear for themselves and for the settlements under their jurisdiction. Another oath was provided for those who exercised no authority.<sup>58</sup> It was this decree which crystallized opposition to the new

---

<sup>57</sup>Reyes Heróles, Liberalismo mexicano, 2:xxii.

<sup>58</sup>Decree, 17 March 1857, document no. 19, Fondo XXXIII, carp. 1, Impresos constituciones, CEHM.

constitution and set in motion forces which ultimately plunged the country into war once again.

## 8

Santos Degollado's contributions to the new constitution were more substantial than some accounts indicate.<sup>59</sup> Of 310 proprietary and alternate delegates to the congress, don Santos has been ranked as one of the 24 leading figures.<sup>60</sup> Though he took no major part in floor debate and though he was not the leader of any important faction, he commanded great respect, served as president of the body for one month, and doubtless exerted considerable moderating influence behind the scenes.

Any attempt to fit Degollado into a political category by examining his actions during the congressional proceedings is fraught with pitfalls. For some observers, his proposal to harken back to the Constitution of 1824 labeled him little better than a conservative. Yet he joined with purors in seeking religious toleration, restraint of the executive, and an end to the death penalty. He then antagonized many of these same radicals by promoting strict residence

---

<sup>59</sup>For example see Roeder, Juárez, p. 139.

<sup>60</sup>Daniel Cosío Villegas, La constitución de 1857 y sus críticos, 2nd ed. (México: Secretaría de Educación Pública, SepSetentas, 1973), pp. 79-81.

requirements for congressional deputies. Though it has been reported that more often than not don Santos voted with the 40 leading puros,<sup>61</sup> this fact has been shown to be statistically insignificant. The most recent analysis of congressional voting records has demonstrated that voting was issue-oriented, and it is thus impossible to classify delegates as puros or moderados based solely on how they cast their votes. In Santos Degollado's particular case, the statistical correlations show too little significance to categorize him, for he like other delegates constantly shifted from one coalition to another on each issue.<sup>62</sup>

One point which these statistics ignore, however, is motive, since it is a most incalculable matter. For example, some radicals voted against the article for religious toleration because it did not go far enough, yet they are statistically grouped with their conservative opponents. In such a case, motive has greater meaning in determining political persuasion than does the casting of a vote.

Motive is, of course, often impossible to discern. But when one surmises, based on the best evidence available,

---

<sup>61</sup>Angel Pola, Vicente Riva Palacio, Manuel Payno, Juan A. Mateos, Rafael Martínez de la Torre, El libro rojo, 1520-1867, 2 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1906), 2:373.

<sup>62</sup>Sinkin, "Constitutional Congress," p. 12.

Santos Degollado's various motives for advocating strict residence requirements, for proposing that the Constitution of 1824 be reformed and retained, for backing several unsuccessful states rights measures, for switching his vote on religious toleration, and for walking the middle ground on the death penalty, one comes away with the gut feeling that at heart, Degollado was in 1857 a political moderate. By 1860 he may have risked career, reputation, family, and life to promote the most radical and far-reaching reforms in Mexico's history, but that fact should not distort the picture of his basically moderate political character three years earlier.

## 9

Throughout much of 1856 and well into 1857 members of the upper clergy of the Catholic Church had actively opposed the work of the constituent congress and the liberal administrations of Alvarez and Comonfort. In retaliation Comonfort had arrested some clerics and exiled others, including Archbishop Lázaro de la Garza. If this temporarily cooled the ardor of clerical opponents of the liberal program, it was fired anew when Pope Pius IX denounced the Leyes Juárez and Lerdo in December 1856.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup>Rivera, Anales mexicanos, p. 19.

Once the constitution was promulgated the clergy resorted to a most effective means of continued resistance. The day after President Comonfort ordered all officeholders to take oaths of loyalty to the new charter, Bishop Clemente de Jesús Munguía of Michoacán countered with a decree of his own. Munguía declared that since parts of the constitution were contrary to the institution, doctrine, and rights of the Church, no cleric or faithful Catholic could pledge loyalty to it. Any who did swear allegiance would be denied the holy sacraments until they followed a set formula for retraction of the oath.<sup>64</sup>

In some of the outlying states such as Tabasco and Nuevo León clerics obeyed the new constitution without protest. But in the more populous states of the Mexican interior, particularly in Jalisco, Michoacán, San Luis Potosí, and Zacatecas, Munguía's program was vigorously followed. Priests refused to marry, hear confession, or bury those who swore loyalty to the constitution or who acquired Church land through the Ley Lerdo. In Mexico City during Holy Week public officials were denied admittance

---

<sup>64</sup> Decree, Munguía, 18 March 1857, in Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica, 1:194-195. For specific formula of retraction see undated, handwritten document, García folder 28, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas.

to the cathedral. During March and April newspapers in the capital regularly printed lists of government employees and army officers who refused to take the oath, and some papers, such as Diario de Avisos, published editorials in support of the Church's campaign.<sup>65</sup>

Encouraged by his success, Bishop Munguía continued to promote opposition to the liberal program. When the Comonfort government issued a law in April 1857 regulating parochial fees and perquisites, the bishop ordered all clerics in his diocese not to obey it. But liberal leaders, such as Manuel Doblado in Guanajuato, continued to retaliate by banishing rebellious clergymen.<sup>66</sup>

In the midst of this disorder liberals were striving to establish a government. Elections were held in June 1857, and two leading puros, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and Melchor Ocampo, challenged Comonfort for the presidency. But campaign blunders and the hopelessness of it all led both challengers to withdraw, and don Ignacio was elected

---

<sup>65</sup>Robert J. Knowlton, "La iglesia mexicana y la Reforma: respuesta y resultados," Historia Mexicana 18(1969):522-526. See Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 3 April 1857, p. 3 for an example of such lists.

<sup>66</sup>Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica, 1:323-326, 97-98, 101; The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 3 May 1857, morning edition, p. 1.

to a four-year term beginning December 1, 1857. At the same time only 21 of the 155 delegates to the puro-dominated constituent congress were elected to the legislative congress or House of Deputies, due to convene in September. These results are frequently cited as evidence that the Mexican people largely rejected the Constitution of 1857 and its accompanying reforms. This is not necessarily a valid interpretation, for 47 percent of the delegates to the constituent congress were from six central states and the Federal District, but deputies to the new legislative congress were elected under much stricter residence requirements.<sup>67</sup> Quite simply many of the constituent delegates were ineligible for election to the new congress.

Santos Degollado had spent time during the spring of 1857 campaigning in Michoacán for liberal candidates and preparing his defense in the Barron-Forbes case, which was to go before the Mexican supreme court in May. He was well aware of the fact that some of his followers were promoting him for office in the elections. His name appeared

---

<sup>67</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:712; Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), pp. 194-195; Sinkin, "Constitutional Congress," p. 3.

most frequently in connection with the governorship of Michoacán and the position of first magistrate of the national supreme court. In hopes of negating these efforts in his behalf, Degollado issued an announcement on June 20 asking his fellow citizens not to burden him with public office at that time. He promised that once he had arranged his affairs (referring to the Barron question) and provided for his family, he would gladly serve again. He seemed particularly reluctant to be placed in candidacy for the supreme court position, since, as he said, he lacked any legal training or experience.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, in July Degollado was elected to both offices. With the national reputation he had already gained in the widely publicized Barron-Forbes affair, he was also an obvious candidate for a cabinet post in Comonfort's new administration, though he would have rejected any offer in this regard. Congress convened in early October 1857, and in late November awarded the supreme court position to Degollado. He refused the office, again on the grounds that he lacked a law degree, but also because he had first

---

<sup>68</sup> Felipe Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso constitucional de la república mexicana que funcionó en el año de 1857: extracto de todas las sesiones y documentos relativos de la época, 9 vols. (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1874-1882), 1:35-36.



been elected to the governorship of Michoacán. There is some indication, though, that as late as December 8 he had no intention of accepting that post either.<sup>69</sup>

But events moved quickly in Mexico, and before Degollado could make any plans for the future, the political outlook had worsened. Revolts against Comonfort and the new constitution, to be promulgated in mid-December, continued. Since June 1857 rumors had circulated that Comonfort would overthrow the constitution before it could go into effect and declare himself dictator. In fact British newspapers falsely reported in late November that Comonfort had already executed a coup.<sup>70</sup>

Degollado was particularly disturbed by the tenacity of such rumors, for he simply did not trust Comonfort. His mind was put at ease, however, when the president personally

---

<sup>69</sup> Diario de Avisos, 8 October 1857, p. 3; 23 November 1857, p. 2; 28 November 1857, p. 2; 2 December 1857, p. 2; Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso, 1:235; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 December 1857, document no. 21, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>70</sup> Two letters, Juárez to Romero, 8 September 1857, and Romero to Juárez, 17 September 1857, both in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:255, 257-258; Diario de Avisos, 14 June 1857, p. 2; The Examiner (London), 28 November 1857, p. 758; The Illustrated London News, 28 November 1857, p. 522; El Pueblo (Morelia), 10 December 1857, p. 3.

assured him that the constitution would be preserved. Thus by early December Degollado was most pleased at the outlook for himself and the country. He had finally won the two-year battle with Eustace Barron and the British legation. He was not burdened with a public office and was eagerly looking forward to being neighbors with his good friend Ocampo. Referring to the date when the new constitution would go into effect, December 17, Degollado exclaimed, "Eight days from here to our promised land!"<sup>71</sup>

Because Comonfort had personally assured him of his good intentions, Degollado was perhaps more shocked than most observers when on December 17, instead of promulgating the Constitution of 1857, the president abrogated it. The rumors had come true; Comonfort had become convinced that under the new charter the executive would be too weak to stem the rising tide of disorder in Mexico. He had accepted the constitution in hopes of gaining the necessary amendments to remedy its deficiencies. When this had proved impossible and when he had been persuaded that most Mexicans opposed the new charter, he scrapped it and took full governmental authority upon himself.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 December 1857, document no. 21, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>72</sup>Ray F. Broussard, "Ignacio Comonfort: His Contributions to the Mexican Reform, 1855-1857" (Ph.D. dissertation,

On the same day, December 17, conservative General Félix Zuloaga pronounced against the constitution and issued the Plan of Tacubaya. This program called for the abrogation of the Constitution of 1857 and the vesting of all national power in the hands of Comonfort and a council of representatives from each state. The president would be required to convene a new congress in three months to draft another constitution, which would be referred to the electorate for final approval. Zuloaga and fellow conservatives declared publicly that since the Constitution of 1857 was premature and was opposed by most Mexicans, it was responsible for the rising disorder throughout the country.<sup>73</sup>

Two days later Comonfort accepted the Plan of Tacubaya, explaining that Zuloaga's army had merely yielded to the demands of the nation. He implemented two provisions of the plan by calling for the election of a new constituent congress and by appointing the council which would rule with him as an interim administration. At the same time he imprisoned Benito Juárez, president of the supreme court. The

---

University of Texas, Austin, 1959), p. 193; Diario de Avisos, 21 December 1857, pp. 2-3.

<sup>73</sup>Published decree, Plan of Tacubaya, 17 December 1857, document no. 115, and decree, Zuloaga, 17 December 1857, document no. 116, both in fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 2, RII/CEHM.

Constitution of 1857 specified that the head of the court would succeed to the presidency if a vacancy occurred, thus making Juárez Comonfort's most legitimate rival.<sup>74</sup>

## 10

As this crisis was unfolding Santos Degollado was sworn in as governor of Michoacán. Addressing the state legislature on December 24, he lamented the fact that due to agitated conditions he could offer no administrative program other than a promise to respect rights of citizens and sustain democratic institutions. His inaugural proclamation reveals that crucial events had a way of bringing out Degollado's melodramatic rhetoric, for he declared, "Honor and my pure patriotism have made me fly to place myself at your side in the moments when the most repugnant treason sinks the dagger in the proud breast of the fatherland."<sup>75</sup>

His first step as governor was to enlist Michoacán in a coalition of states which had been organized on December 23

---

<sup>74</sup>Decree, Comonfort, 19 December 1857, Documentos relativos a la Reforma en Mexico, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, roll no. 6, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Mic DF/BINAH).

<sup>75</sup>El Pueblo, 28 December 1857, pp. 2-4.

by Jalisco, for the purpose of defending the constitution and supporting Juárez as legitimate president. By the 27th the governors of Colima, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Querétaro, Michoacán, Guerrero, and Veracruz had joined Jalisco. Representatives of these states were to choose a substitute president to rule until Juárez could be liberated. In addition, Degollado pledged nearly a thousand men to a federal army to be commanded by Jaliscoan governor Anastasio Parrodi.<sup>76</sup>

Meanwhile a power struggle between Zuloaga and Comonfort developed in Mexico City. Zuloaga's forces had entered the capital, and on January 11, 1858 they rejected Comonfort as president. Don Ignacio concentrated his loyal troops in the national palace, but failed in an attempt to arrest Zuloaga. He released Juárez and on the 21st, after his forces at Acordada were defeated, fled the capital eventually making his way to Veracruz and to exile in the United States.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:284; Decree, Degollado, 27 December 1857, García folder 17, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas.

<sup>77</sup> Diario de Avisos, 12 January 1858, p. 3; 23 January 1858, p. 2; José M. Vigil, La Reforma, vol. 5 of México a través de los siglos, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, 5 vols. (México:

Now in complete control of the capital, Zuloaga had himself chosen interim president, and, as tradition demanded, he received the de facto recognition of the diplomatic corps. He quickly set about dismantling the liberal machinery by revoking the Ley Lerdo and other reforms. He restored to their posts officials who had been fired for refusing to swear to the constitution, and he reestablished military and ecclesiastical privileges.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile Benito Juárez made his way on foot and by train to Guanajuato, where he rallied about him the leading liberals in Mexico, many of whom had had to flee the capital. He proclaimed himself to be the constitutional president of Mexico, since the constitution established him as successor to the office vacated by Comonfort. Juárez wrote to Degollado, who was busily organizing forces in Michoacán, and asked him to come to Guanajuato and serve in the cabinet as minister of gobernación. Don Santos accepted, but it was several weeks before he was able to join the president. Ocampo,

---

Editorial Cumbre, 1958), 5:275; circular, Zuloaga, 27 January 1858, document no. 130, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 2, RII/CEHM; The Times (London), 23 February 1858, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 113; Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica, 2:180-185.

Guillermo Prieto, Manuel Ruiz, and León Guzmán were named to the other cabinet posts.<sup>79</sup>

The sides were thus drawn for what was to prove the bloodiest and most passionate civil war the country had yet seen. Though he could not have known, Degollado was once again to play a military role. This position made him a firsthand witness to all of the very worst in human suffering, and the lesson was not lost upon him.

---

<sup>79</sup>Decree, Juárez, 19 January 1858; Four letters, Juárez to Degollado, 22 January 1858; Ocampo to Degollado, 29 January 1858; Ocampo to Degollado, 5 February 1858; Degollado to Ocampo, 6 February 1858, all in Juárez, Documentos, 2:293-294, 298, 300, 306, 307.

## CHAPTER VI

### THREE YEARS' WAR: 1858

#### 1

The man to whom the liberals now turned for leadership was Benito Juárez. The constitutional president was a Zapotec Indian from Oaxaca who had gained his early education in a seminary and had earned a law degree by 1834. He served in several local offices in Oaxaca, in the national house of deputies, and by 1848 became governor of his home state. Don Benito's commitment to liberalism at this time was uncertain, but when Santa Anna, fleeing Mexico City after losing the capital to United States forces, sought sanctuary in Oaxaca, Juárez turned him away. The dictator never forgot this affront, and upon returning to power in 1853 he banished Juárez along with a sizable number of liberals. Eventually landing in New Orleans, Juárez became acquainted with Melchor Ocampo, who encouraged the development of don Benito's liberal philosophy.

In mid-1855 Ignacio Comonfort called upon Juárez to return to Mexico to help promote the Ayutla movement in Oaxaca. By the time he arrived the revolution had all but



ousted Santa Anna, and Juárez became minister of justice in Juan Alvarez' cabinet. He resigned in the face of opposition to his law abolishing judicial privileges and returned to Oaxaca again to become governor. In the fall of 1857 he served briefly as minister of gobernación before being elected president of the supreme court. As head of the court he became Comonfort's successor, in accord with the Constitution of 1857. The conservatives, who contended that the constitution had been abrogated, had other ideas.

When Comonfort had first pulled off the coup in mid-December 1857, leading liberal military figures had hurriedly set about recruiting forces for the impending conflict. Santos Degollado, as governor of Michoacán, gathered 3,000 men and melted down some of the bells from the Morelia cathedral to make cannon. He joined a coalition of states which supported Juárez' claim to the presidency, and he contributed forces to a constitutional army to be commanded by Jaliscan governor Anastasio Parrodi.<sup>1</sup>

Juárez had rallied liberals around him in Guanajuato, but because the position there became untenable, he moved

---

<sup>1</sup>Letter, Acosta to Juárez, 19 January 1858, Ms. J/1-15, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AJ/BN).

his cabinet on February 13 to Guadalajara. Parrodi's plans, which were intercepted by conservatives, called for the liberal state militia units to stay well away from the capital. He hoped to consolidate control of the important Bajío region and draw the conservatives out of Mexico City. If successful in this, he planned to fall back to Salamanca to force his opponents to overextend their supply lines and to engage him on his own ground.<sup>2</sup>

But Juárez may have lacked confidence in either Parrodi's ability or loyalty. He commissioned Degollado, who was still in the field though now technically minister of gobernación, to join the army as a special minister. Don Santos was invested with faculties from each of the cabinet positions and was to function in the name of the president. He could remove or replace anyone in the army he felt to be incompetent. In fact the only limitations on Degollado's new authority were that he could not enter into any agreements with the enemy without the prior approval of President Juárez and that he must notify the government of his actions to avoid duplication of effort and to insure unified action.

---

<sup>2</sup>Miguel Rivera, Historia antigua y moderna de Jalapa y de las revoluciones del estado de Veracruz, 20 vols. (Tacubaya, México: Editorial Citlaltepetl, 1960), 14:168; Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 25 February 1858, p. 3.

And Juárez reassured Degollado that these restrictions did not indicate a lack of confidence in don Santos' judgment. The president simply wanted to reserve for himself the responsibility of deciding if any route to peace other than complete military victory should be pursued.<sup>3</sup>

General Parrodi was aware that he could not delay in implementing his strategy, yet delay he did. Ocampo fumed to his friend Degollado, "I wish that you would get Señor Parrodi to move, as we expect; this inaction is killing us. What is he waiting for?"<sup>4</sup>

The procrastination was indeed disastrous for the liberal army. It accorded the conservatives the luxury of extending their area of control and amassing a huge army under young Luis Osollo. When attacked at Celaya, the liberals fell back to Salamanca as planned, only to discover that they were still closely pursued by a much superior, well-equipped army. Battle was joined on March 9 and continued the following day. There was no uniformity in the performance of the liberal army. Some units fled at the first shots while

---

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Ocampo to Degollado, 4 March 1858, in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:317-318.

<sup>4</sup> Diario de Avisos, 23 March 1858, p. 2.

others valiantly held their ground in the face of a devastating conservative artillery barrage. In the end, nevertheless, Parrodi's men were routed and the remaining army, less than half its original size, retreated toward Guadalajara.<sup>5</sup>

Juárez minimized the loss at Salamanca when he commented, "They have plucked a feather from our rooster."<sup>6</sup> But that defeat was quickly followed by other events which seemed to forebode the quick demise of the infant constitutionalist cause. Manuel Doblado, commanding the largest liberal army other than Parrodi's, surrendered his entire force at Silao. Then on March 13 a national guard force in Guadalajara, charged with protecting the state governor's palace, revolted against the constitutional government and sealed off the palace with Juárez and his cabinet inside.<sup>7</sup>

Guadalajara quickly became an embattled city as the 200 rebels, commanded by Col. Antonio Landa, skirmished

---

<sup>5</sup>José M. Vigil, La Reforma, vol. 5 of México a través de los siglos, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, 5 vols. (México: Editorial Cumbre, 1958), 5:286; Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:734.

<sup>6</sup>Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la reforma y el segundo imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 32.

<sup>7</sup>Bancroft, History of Mexico, 5:736; Letter, Cendijas to Degollado, 13 March 1858, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:321-322.

for two days with the 800 troops which remained loyal to Juárez. Soldiers sniped at each other from rooftops. Degollado and Parrodi, meanwhile, were rushing to the Jalisco capital, hotly pursued by Osollo. Ocampo, though a virtual prisoner with Juárez and the rest of the cabinet, managed to smuggle out a dispatch to Degollado. Addressing don Santos as the "universal minister," Ocampo related, "We are prisoners and the President, while he is incapacitated, delegates to you all his authority so that you may do whatever is legally necessary to restore legal order."<sup>8</sup> Santos Degollado therefore became acting president, and but for a poet's passion, he would have been president of Mexico.

The day after the revolt Ocampo entered into negotiations with the rebels in Guadalajara to arrange a truce. But a group of loyal troops, unaware of the proceedings, attacked the palace to liberate Juárez. They were repulsed, and some of Landa's men, convinced that Ocampo was negotiating in bad faith, burst in upon the president. They shouldered their weapons as one of their number shouted out the commands, "Ready--Aim . . . ."<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>Letter, Cendijas to Degollado, 13 March 1858; Letter, Bablot to Degollado, 15 March 1858, both in Juárez, Documentos, 2:321-322, 325-326. As first magistrate of the supreme court, Degollado was legal successor to the presidency.

<sup>9</sup>Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), pp. 164-165.

Guillermo Prieto, poet, playwright, and journalist, was then Juárez' treasury minister. He lunged between the president and the soldiers and drowned out the word "fire!" with his own command, "Down with those guns!" He shouted and talked and harangued, and though he afterward had no recollection of what he had said, his words took effect. The soldiers lowered their rifles, some weeping, and Juárez' life was spared.<sup>10</sup>

Negotiations were resumed and on March 15 a truce was signed. The rebels were allowed to leave the city after turning Juárez and his cabinet over to the French consul.<sup>11</sup> Three days later Degollado and Parrodi arrived with the liberal army. Since the conservatives were only a few days away, Juárez decided to flee toward Colima with the cabinet and a small escort, leaving Parrodi's army behind to face its pursuers. During its flight southwestward, the president's small band was attacked, but made good its escape. Their reaching Colima safely gave the liberal war effort its first cause for optimism. Any encouragement was quickly dispelled,

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Convention, 15 March 1858, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:326-327.

however, when word arrived that Parrodi had surrendered at Guadalajara on March 23.<sup>12</sup>

## 2

With Parrodi's capitulation the military hopes of the constitutionalists were dealt a severe blow. Only in Michoacán and in the far north were there liberal armies of any size still afield, and these were hard pressed. Juárez decided at this point to go to Veracruz to establish there the civil seat of the constitutional government, while leaving behind a virtually independent military commander to attempt to revitalize the liberal effort in the interior.

On March 27, 1858 President Juárez chose his new commander. He named Santos Degollado minister of war and marine and commander-in-chief of the liberal army.<sup>13</sup> On April 7 Juárez clarified don Santos' new authority, and later events make

---

<sup>12</sup>Roeder, Juárez, p. 166; Matías Romero, Diario personal de Matías Romero, 1855-1865, ed. Emma Cosío Villegas (México: Colegio de México, 1960), p. 158; Bancroft, History of Mexico, 5:736.

<sup>13</sup>Letter, Ocampo to Degollado, 27 March 1858, in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, 11:9-10 (hereafter cited as García, Documentos). At this point Degollado vacated the cabinet post of gobernación.

it important to note here the exact wording of the president's decree.

Considering:

That it is more suitable for the support which the Government in my charge ought to give to the constitutional regime, interrupted by rebellion, to move its residence to the State of Veracruz;

That the western part of the Republic remains, as in state of siege, under the command of his Excellency Señor Don Santos Degollado, as General in Chief of the Federal Army, and for such state and transfer, without the immediate intervention of the Government,

I have come to decree, in accord with my Ministers, the following:

1. The appointed General in Chief, his Excellency Señor Don Santos Degollado, very amply empowered in his department of War, is left to do whatever he judges necessary for the restoration of peace and the maintenance of institutions.
2. He is left likewise very amply empowered in the department of Treasury.
3. He is left equally empowered in the rest of the departments, for only that strictly relative to the good discharge of the <sup>14</sup>two principle departments with which he is entrusted.

Degollado was therefore to remain in the interior to organize a military effort. Juárez and his cabinet left the following day, April 8, to make their way to Veracruz. They departed from Manzanillo on the 11th, crossed the isthmus

---

<sup>14</sup> Decree, Juárez, 7 April 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:15-16.



of Panama, stopped off at Havana and New Orleans, and finally arrived at the Mexican port on May 4.<sup>15</sup>

Don Santos accepted his new assignment and pledged to sacrifice his heart and his life to defend the liberal cause, which he contended was the cause of "independence, liberty, and humanity."<sup>16</sup> On March 30 he issued his first proclamation to the constitutional army.

The difficult circumstances which surround us, and, above all, my inadequacy and my lack of military skill, ought to make me refuse the command of the Federal Army, if it were not unbecoming for a man of honor to turn his back on danger and think of prolonging life, when to live in slavery is to die, and to become unworthy of public esteem is the worst of all deaths.<sup>17</sup>

Don Santos went on to explain why most Mexicans would favor the constitutional cause, and in so doing, he "personified the set of liberal bourgeois ideas of the age" and summarized the "socio-economic motives" of the liberals.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>Romero, Diario, pp. 164-165; Circular from minister of gobernación, Ocampo, 5 May 1858, document no. 177, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 2, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as RII/CEHM).

<sup>16</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 27 March 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:11.

<sup>17</sup>Proclamation, Degollado, 30 March 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:12.

<sup>18</sup>Ernesto de la Torre Villar, El triunfo de la república liberal, 1857-1860 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960), p. xxxiv.

In the most part the people favor the cause of constitutional order, because they do not want to return to the tobacco monopoly, to forced enlistments, to machinations, to forced contributions, to the extortion for passports, licenses for arms and others, to the suppression of free press, to the exorbitance of parochial fees, to the tyranny of sales taxes and fiscal laws, nor to the system of oppression and universal violence, which the reactionary party never omits nor even modifies.

Comrades, let us be, then, faithful guardians of the laws, intransigent defenders of the rights of humanity and the strong arm of civilization of the century. Let us work for concord and union; let us do justice to all citizens, whatever party they belong to; let us everywhere sustain the property owners and the fathers of families against those who, invoking religion or liberty, violate the most sacred guarantees; let us protect the lowest class of the people, the unfortunate Indians who have so many just claims, and then we will have deserved the gratitude of the country.<sup>19</sup>

And so Degollado more than any other liberal, including President Juárez, shouldered the responsibility for the success of constitutional liberalism in Mexico. In the beginning his duties were chiefly military, and thus the appointment raised some questions. Don Santos had no professional military training, and though he had gained battlefield experience in the Revolution of Ayutla and earlier insurrections, his record was far from impressive. One conservative newspaper expressed an opinion that certainly must have been shared by some of Degollado's colleagues,

---

<sup>19</sup> Proclamation, Degollado, 30 March 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:14-15.

"If under the able direction of Parrodi this army gave the [liberal] coalition so few days of glory, imagine what it will do under the command of don Santos Degollado."<sup>20</sup>

Why, then, did Juárez choose Santos Degollado as his chief general? It seems clear that the appointment was motivated largely by political considerations, and from this point of view it proved to be a shrewd step. Benito Juárez was not well known in the interior of Mexico, particularly in the Bajío region, which proved to be the area of greatest strategic importance throughout the war. Juárez' activities had been confined primarily to Oaxaca, he had sat out most of the Revolution of Ayutla in New Orleans, and his service in Juan Alvarez' cabinet had lasted less than four months. Unique circumstances had thrust him into the presidency, and he knew he had to depend on the reputation of subordinates for much of his initial popular support. Santos Degollado was a native son of the Mexican interior, had fought in the Revolution of Ayutla, had served as governor of Jalisco and of Michoacán, and had gained nationwide notoriety in the Barron-Forbes affair. His prestige in the interior was immense, and Juárez saw its value.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Diario de Avisos, 17 April 1858, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies,

Some accounts, especially the one by Francisco Bulnes, have criticized Juárez for placing the burden of responsibility on Degollado and retiring to the relative security of Veracruz.<sup>22</sup> One writer implies that Juárez hoped to see don Santos fail, while another points out that by leaving Mexican soil during his journey to Veracruz, the president abandoned his country and "reduced to nothing [his] political personality."<sup>23</sup> Juárez did seem to have a disjointed view of the relative dangers of remaining in the embattled interior as compared to embarking on the voyage, for he suggested that the unhealthy climate in Havana posed more risk than the conservative armies.<sup>24</sup> And his move did have the effect of passing the buck to Degollado, for once Juárez was entrenched in Veracruz, little was heard from him for a year. He existed as the symbolic head of government, but certainly not the active one.

---

1957), p. 28; Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), pp. 222-223.

<sup>22</sup> Bulnes, Juárez, p. 230.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Allen Smart, Viva Juárez! (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1963), p. 177; Alejandro Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Antón Lizardo; el tratado de MacLane-Ocampo; el Brindis del desierto (México: Editorial JUS, 1962), p. 61.

<sup>24</sup> Romero, Diario, pp. 164-165.

It would be impossible to determine, however, if cowardice played any part in the president's decision. From both practical and political viewpoints, the move to Veracruz was a good one. It accomplished the liberal principle of effectively separating civil and military commands by subordinating the army and establishing the conduct of the war as an individual facet of the overall task of government. It put the seat and symbol of the constitutional government in the place where it could best be protected and where it could watch over its primary source of revenue, thereby enhancing prospects of foreign recognition. It maintained the cause politically and symbolically, while Degollado struggled to keep it alive in fact.

The problems don Santos faced in his efforts to do this were enormous. From a purely military point of view, the conservatives had nearly all the advantages in the spring of 1858. Since most army garrisons had declared for the Plan of Tacubaya, the majority of major cities fell into conservative hands by default.<sup>25</sup> Others, such as Guadalajara,

---

<sup>25</sup> See statements from army garrisons proclaiming their support for the Plan of Tacubaya, in Microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as MicDF/BINAH).

Orizaba, San Luis Potosí, and Tampico, were quickly captured by Zuloaga's armies. Thus the conservatives retained the recognition of foreign powers and controlled most domestic sources of revenue.

In addition, since the conservative government defended special privilege for the military as well as the Church, the cream of the Mexican officer corps joined its ranks. Thus Zuloaga gained the battlefield genius of Luis Osollo and Miguel Miramón, the killer instinct of Leonardo Márquez and José María Cobos, and the steady dependability of Tomás Mejía, Miguel Negrete and Adrián Woll.

The liberals, as might be expected, suffered badly from a lack of good officers. They simply had no outstanding generals when the war began.<sup>26</sup> Only Santiago Vidaurri had any initial success against the conservatives, and he proved to be unmanageable and too self-serving.<sup>27</sup> The liberals instead had to rely heavily on civilian commanders such as Degollado.

Armies for both sides were small. Rarely did a general gather more than 5,000 troops for a single engagement, and

---

<sup>26</sup>Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 2:21.

<sup>27</sup>Diario de Avisos, 10 August 1858, p. 3.

not until the last months of the war was an army of more than 10,000 amassed. Forces were more formally organized, especially on the liberal side, than they had been during the Revolution of Ayutla, but the nature of fighting was still often little more than guerrilla skirmishes. The rank and file of the conservative army were better trained and equipped than their liberal counterparts.<sup>28</sup> Degollado's men, as had been the case in the Revolution of Ayutla, once again proved to be often lacking in discipline.<sup>29</sup>

Shortage of equipment was another problem facing the liberals, as there was a constant need for firearms, ammunition, and artillery. But also, because these highly mobile armies took everything with them in the field, wagons and mules were equally essential to success.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> A couple of years earlier, the United States minister to Mexico, John Forsyth, had praised the Mexican soldiers as brave, hardy, highly mobile, and easily led. William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:856.

<sup>29</sup> Melchor Alvarez, Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez, or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905), p. 122.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

To combat these many difficulties Degollado had been given extensive authority. In fact his powers were "almost equal to those of the president." Except in the areas of foreign affairs and "general laws," his options for action were "unlimited." He of course had full control of the military, including state militias. In the political sphere, he could appoint and remove officials ranking as high as state governor. And he issued decrees and manifestos which bore the weight of national law.<sup>31</sup>

In practice, General Degollado's authority was even greater than that specifically outlined by Juárez. The unique difficulties of conducting a military campaign under existing circumstances combined with incredibly poor communication with the government in Veracruz compelled Degollado to act almost independently. Conduct of military campaigns was left completely up to him, and instructions from Juárez on other matters were rare, particularly during the first year of the war. Also since the conservatives

---

<sup>31</sup>Justo Sierra, Juárez, su obra y su tiempo, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971), p. 118; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 July 1859, document no. 28, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH); Decree, Degollado, 4 November 1858, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.



intercepted many of the dispatches from Veracruz, Degollado often received no word at all from his government for as long as two months at a time.<sup>32</sup>

During this first year don Santos' actions had a considerably greater impact on the course of events in Mexico than did those of President Juárez. While in the chain of command and in constitutional prerogative Juárez was Degollado's superior, in the active exercise of authority during 1858 don Santos was far more powerful than the president. He could possibly have made himself the leading figure of the liberal movement, had he possessed the ambition.

Throughout the war the success of the liberal military effort depended directly on the raising of revenue. The conservatives were also concerned in this regard, but with the Church and the landed aristocracy serving as willing resources, their needs were not as immediately crucial. Conservatives also had more initial support from foreign creditors, as well as foreigners in Mexico, such as Eustace Barron.<sup>33</sup> Liberals, on the other hand, had little more

---

<sup>32</sup>Bancroft, History of Mexico, 5:743; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 February 1859, document no. 25, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>33</sup>In early 1858 Barron, Forbes and Co. advanced the Zuloaga government 320,000 pesos upon the security of Church property. The company also provided a 50,000 pesos bribe

than customs receipts from the port of Veracruz in the early months of the war.<sup>34</sup>

Because military campaigns were so directly dependent on finances, Degollado was more involved in fiscal matters than in any other area of the political sphere. Of the various measures employed by the liberals to raise revenue, the most controversial was the imposition of forced loans. Don Santos utilized this device extensively, even before joining the Juárez administration. On December 30, 1857, while he was still governor of Michoacán and after Comonfort had overthrown the Constitution of 1857, Degollado imposed a forced loan of 100,000 pesos on the clergy of his state. Fighting in the Three Years War had not yet broken out at

---

to persuade one prominent general to join the conservatives. During the course of the war the company understandably suffered at the hands of liberals, but conservative troops also occasionally confiscated and destroyed property belonging to Barron. One such incident occurred in mid-1858 when conservative forces made off with 50 bales of cotton goods belonging to the company. Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 113; Diario de Avisos, 10 March 1858, p. 3; Letter, Duval to Castillo y Lanzas, 25 September 1858, in Reclamaciones de la compañía Barron y Forbes en contra del gral. Santos Degollado, 1843-1870, 13 vols. of bound manuscripts, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City, 11:194-204 (decimal classification H/242(42:72)/397; topografía L-E 2188 to L-E 2200; (hereafter cited as Reclamaciones de Barron, AG/SRE).

<sup>34</sup>Turlington, Mexico and Creditors, p. 113.

this time, though in the opinion of most observers armed conflict was imminent. Degollado was thus calling upon the clergy, who, in his words, had "shown themselves at all times disposed to aid the Government in circumstances as urgent as these," to contribute to the campaign to halt impending anarchy.<sup>35</sup>

The expected protest from the clergy, led by Bishop Munguía of Michoacán, must have been more immediate and vociferous than don Santos expected. A few weeks later, on January 23, 1858, Governor Degollado revoked the order for the forced loan. He substituted a decree for the collection of back debts owed by the Church to the state government, contending that circumstances had improved and demands were lessened. It is more likely that he was motivated by a combination of factors including, as he

---

<sup>35</sup> Clemente de Jesús Munguía, Defensa eclesiástica en el obispado de Michoacán desde fines de 1855 hasta principios de 1858, ó sea colección de representaciones y protestas, comunicaciones oficiales, circulares y decretos diocesanos, con motivo de las leyes, decretos y circulares del gobierno general, constitución federal de 1857, decretos y providencias de los gobiernos de los estados de Michoacán y Guanajuato, contra la soberanía, independencia, inmunidades, y derechos de la Santa Iglesia, desde 23 de noviembre de 1855, en que se dió la lei que suprimo [sic] el fuero eclesiástico, hasta principios del año de 1858, en que el nuevo gobierno deroga todas las leyes que el anterior había dado contra la iglesia por el Lic. Clemente de Jesús Munguía, obispo de Michoacán, 2 vols. (México: Imprenta de Vicente Segura, 1858), 2:161-163.

admitted, the fact that the loan would not produce nearly what was called for.<sup>36</sup>

Circumstances did not improve, of course, and after Degollado assumed command of the constitutional army, his successor as governor of Michoacán revived the forced loan. In September 1858 Epitacio Huerta imposed a 90,000 peso levy on the state's clergy. When the Church was unable to produce this amount, Huerta had General Miguel Blanco confiscate chalices, chandeliers, and other items containing precious gems and metals from the cathedral of Morelia. These articles, valued at 500,000 pesos, were melted down, but their worth was thus diminished by one-half.<sup>37</sup>

In early December 1858 Degollado again had recourse to a forced loan, in order, as he privately put it, "to disarm the enemy, taking from him that with which he most harms us."<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 2:170b-170c, 171g.

<sup>37</sup>José Fuentes Mares, Juárez y los Estados Unidos, 5th ed. (México: Editorial JUS, 1972), p. 87; Jan Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875, ed. and trans. Michael P. Costeloe (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 174. Part of this loot was later recovered by the conservatives in the battle of Tacubaya, while more of it was found hidden in the cellar of the house in Mexico City occupied by U.S. Minister James Forsyth; Diario de Avisos, 18 December 1858, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 February 1859, document no. 25, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

He imposed upon the Mexican clergy a loan of two and one-half million pesos and publicly justified the action by blaming the Church for financing the conservative effort to overthrow the constitution and the legitimate government. He charged the clergy with seeking "to sustain the old abuses and prejudices in which it has invested its patrimony, taking as pretext the defense of the holy religion of Jesus Christ, which no one is attacking."<sup>39</sup>

Any future loans to the conservatives, the decree warned, would have to be matched with forced loans to the liberals for equal sums. The loans were to be collected by the sale of Church-held estates that had not been disentailed under the Ley Lerdo. Therefore it appears that in addition to his desire to weaken the conservatives' financial base and to raise funds, Degollado also hoped to continue the land reform program. With priority for purchase of these Church estates given to the tenants, the objective was still to create a class of small landowners with a vested interest in the success of the liberal movement.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup>Decree, Degollado, 7 December 1858, in Manuel Dublan and José María Lozano, eds., Legislación mexicana ó colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república ordenada por los licenciados Manuel Dublan y José María Lozano, 34 vols. (México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, á cargo de M. Lara, hijo, 1876-1904), vol. 8, 1856-1860, 8:658.

<sup>40</sup>Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth, pp. 158-159; Decree, Degollado, 7 December 1858, document no. 2967,

Degollado and the liberals resorted to diverse methods for raising funds. When the war first broke out, they seized a large number of weapons recently arrived in Veracruz belonging to French arms importer José Yves Limantour. About the same time, Degollado imposed a forced loan of horses on the haciendas of Michoacán, requiring the contribution of one horse for each 10,000 pesos value of the estate. He also levied export duties on such goods as sugar, rice, wheat, and chiles. And from the very beginning Degollado corresponded directly with agents in the United States seeking arms and private loans.<sup>41</sup>

One particularly interesting financial maneuver by the liberals involved citizens in Mexico City who had acquired Church properties through the Ley Lerdo. When the war began and the conservatives occupied the capital, many such

---

fondo I-2, carpeta 36, Luis Gutiérrez Cañedo manuscritos, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as LGC/CEHM).

<sup>41</sup>Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth, pp. 164-165; Diario de Avisos, 22 June 1860, p. 3; Jesús Romero Flores, Historia de Michoacán, 2 vols. (México: Imprenta "Claridad," 1946), 2:160; Instructions from Degollado to San Francisco commissioner, 29 July 1858, in vol. 1 of Correspondence of Jesús González Ortega, 1851-1881, 5 vols. typescripts, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin (hereafter cited as JGO/UT). Limantour was the father of the man who later achieved notoriety as Porfirio Díaz' treasury minister.

persons began returning these properties to the Church. Some may have been motivated by personal convictions, but the conservatives, who had revoked the law, undoubtedly discouraged any recalcitrants. The Mexico City newspapers published accounts of these actions, and the Veracruz government used such notices to compile a list of these "voluntarily" surrendered properties. Then in August 1859 the Juárez government simply resold them.<sup>42</sup>

As if military, political, and financial troubles were not enough of a worry for General Degollado, he also had to be concerned about diplomatic affairs. The recurrence of civil war in Mexico, with its accompanying threat to the property and lives of foreigners, spurred talk in the United States, Great Britain, France, and Spain of intervention.<sup>43</sup> The conservatives, in retaining control of Mexico City, had gained the recognition of the diplomatic corps. Degollado and the liberals believed a foreign intervention, particularly a European incursion, would favor their opponents. Therefore don Santos felt it was essential to avoid incidents against foreigners which might provoke such intervention. In addition

---

<sup>42</sup>Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth, p. 165.

<sup>43</sup>eg. see New-York Daily Times, 4 May 1858, p. 1.

the liberals began very early to court recognition by the United States, not only to counterbalance conservative influence in Europe, but also for material aid and as a psychological demonstration of the legitimacy of the Juárez government.

Before the outbreak of the war, the United States had sought from the Comonfort administration concessions in the isthmus of Tehuantepec and in northern Mexico. When the war began, American Minister John Forsyth seemed willing to deal with either side to gain his objectives.<sup>44</sup> By mid-1858, however, United States sympathies were clearly leaning toward the liberals. Ostensibly this was because of atrocities committed by conservatives against foreigners and because Americans more closely identified with the politics of the liberals.<sup>45</sup> But the fact that the Juárez government seemed more receptive to the idea of territorial concessions to the United States had to carry considerable weight as well.

## 4

The liberal military campaign in the interior was slow to develop in 1858. During the first month after Juárez

---

<sup>44</sup> Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:963.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 9:991.



departed to establish his government in Veracruz, Degollado fought a desperate struggle merely to survive. Absolutely without revenue and hard-pressed by the conservative army, he maneuvered throughout Michoacán and Colima and eluded his pursuers, recruiting on the run. By early May 1858, in his first report to Juárez, Degollado was able to render a rather optimistic account. He had gathered a 3,000-man army, though a third of them were still unarmed, and he was planning to launch within a few weeks an offensive into the strategically critical Bajío region.<sup>46</sup>

Thus Degollado's efforts to turn the tide of the war began in earnest during the last week of May. After three days of maneuvers and thrusts against Zamora and Callejones, in northwestern Michoacán, he captured them and moved due west into Jalisco. In the area around Zapotlán and Sayula he gathered more forces, artillery, and revenue and was joined by 900 well-armed men under Miguel Blanco from Juan Zuazua's army of the north.<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 9 May 1858, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:369-370.

<sup>47</sup> Diario de Avisos, 6 July 1858, p. 3; Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN; Letter, Degollado to minister of foreign relations, 4 July 1858, document no. 4, Informes y proclamas militares del general don Santos Degollado, general en jefe del ejército federal, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City (decimal classification H [513 "1858-59"]; hereafter cited as Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE).

With this force Degollado marched north to lay siege to Guadalajara. Arriving at Santa Ana Acatlán, the liberals prepared for a dawn attack against Santa Anita, where the major conservative army under Francisco Casanova blocked the approach to Guadalajara. Casanova fell back to the Jaliscan capital, however, and Degollado moved his troops in closer to their objective.<sup>48</sup>

Then on June 3 Degollado employed a stratagem which he often used in confrontations with his enemies, though never with success. He wrote to Casanova a fervent, articulate appeal to try to persuade the conservative general to join the popularly-supported constitutional movement, or at least to come out and fight in the open and spare Guadalajara the destruction of siege warfare. Casanova respectfully replied that he could never join such bandits, though he believed Degollado, as an honorable man, was an exception. And he insisted that the populace of Guadalajara wanted him to defend their city, so don Santos could best help by leaving.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 25 July 1858, document no. 3, Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Degollado to Casanova, 3 June 1858, and letter, Casanova to Degollado, 3 June 1858, both in García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

Instead Degollado moved in, taking other points closer to the city. An assault plan was formulated, and the interception of some conservative dispatches detailing aspects of the defenses seemed to assure a liberal victory. In addition Degollado's partisans inside Guadalajara planned some kind of coordinated uprising.<sup>50</sup>

But then the liberals' plans collapsed. The conspiracy within the city was exposed and its leaders were imprisoned.<sup>51</sup> At the same time, don Santos learned that Miguel Miramón was rushing from San Luis Potosí with 3,000 men to save Casanova's garrison. Though his subordinates pleaded with Degollado to press the assault, he felt that the enemy forces within the city, heartened by the news of coming reinforcements, could hold out for another three days. The liberals would then be trapped in a pincer, outnumbered and outclassed. Degollado chose, therefore, to retire southward and hopefully to lure Miramón into pursuit, where the liberals might engage him on ground of their own choosing.

---

<sup>50</sup>Letter, Degollado to minister of foreign relations, 4 July 1858, document no. 4, Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 14:213.

<sup>51</sup>Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 14:213. One of Degollado's sons may have been involved in the planning of this plot, for he had earlier been arrested in Guadalajara; see Diario de Avisos, 21 May 1858, p. 3.

Therefore on June 21 the constitutional army began to fall back.<sup>52</sup>

The retreat proceeded southward through Ciudad Guzmán (formerly called Zapotlán) in orderly fashion. The road from there to Colima was extremely difficult, however, for there were numerous deep barrancas, or gorges, to cross. With its progress slowed by these obstacles, the liberal column began to stretch out, and Miramón's army quickly closed on the heels of the liberal rear elements. On July 2 Degollado chose to make a stand and selected a huge barranca near the town of Atenquique as the battleground. He deployed his troops, numbering 3,000-3,500, on the southwest side and in the bottom of the more than 200 feet deep gorge. Miramón arrived at the scene late that morning with an army of equal size, but with more artillery.<sup>53</sup>

There are discrepancies in Miramón's and Degollado's accounts of this first major encounter between the two

---

<sup>52</sup>Letter, Degollado to minister of foreign relations, 4 July 1858, document no. 4, Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE; Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN.

<sup>53</sup>Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN; Niceto de Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, desde sus tiempos más remotos hasta nuestros días, 18 vols. (México: J.F. Parres y Cía., 1877-1882), 15:18-20; Diario de Avisos, 15 July 1858, p. 3.

leading figures of the war. Don Santos reported that the conservatives maintained an almost constant and furious assault on liberal positions during the eight-hour battle. Despite strong artillery support, Degollado related, the conservatives were repeatedly beaten back, and by nightfall had made no significant gains. "The result of the battle was that the enemy was put to flight for Ciudad Guzmán," he reported. He therefore pulled his men back to the barranca at Beltrán, where he expected another assault and where he believed he would completely destroy Miramón's force.<sup>54</sup>

According to Miramón, his troops did meet with stubborn liberal resistance throughout the day's fighting, but by concentrating his superior artillery on liberal strongholds, he contended, his men were able to make steady progress. It was only darkness which halted the conservative advance 600 feet short of the southwest rim. The liberals withdrew under cover of darkness, he reported, leaving behind arms, wagons, and dead and wounded men. Having thus prevailed in the encounter, he marched back to Guadalajara.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN; Letter, Degollado to minister of foreign relations, 5 July 1858, document no. 6, Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE.

<sup>55</sup> Diario de Avisos, 15 July 1858, p. 3; Letter, Miramón to minister of war and marine, 7 July 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:18-23.

Each side claimed victory, and down through the years their partisans have continued to plead their cases.<sup>56</sup> But each army lost 200-300 in dead and wounded, and if Miramón did not cross the barranca, Degollado did not put his opponent to flight.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, don Santos expected the decisive confrontation to come at Beltrán and chose to lay in wait there for his pursuers. Miramón believed the liberals had been dispersed, and he returned to Guadalajara. Though intense, it was clearly an inconclusive battle, and the respective armies withdrew to lick their wounds and prepare for more of the same.

## 5

One consequence of the Guadalajara-Atenquique campaign was that it completely exhausted the meager resources of Degollado's army. Writing to Juárez, don Santos pleaded for 50,000 pesos to keep his 4,000 man force together. He was still expecting a followup battle with Miramón, but

---

<sup>56</sup> eg. see Carlos Sánchez Navarro y Peón, Miramón, el caudillo conservador (México: Editorial Patria, 1949), p. 59 and Vicente Fuentes Díaz, Santos Degollado, el santo de la Reforma (México: Talleres Imprenta Arana, 1959), p. 88.

<sup>57</sup> Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, 15:21; Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN; Diario de Avisos, 15 July 1858, p. 3.

warned the president that without funds he would have to disband his army out of sheer hunger.

Although full of hopes, I am full of anguish and I hope that you do not abandon me. I do not fear death, only to die with the name of bandit which the reactionaries give me. With funds this name will disappear, for I will not have to seize them by force.<sup>58</sup>

There is no evidence that Juárez sent any money to Degollado. Instead it seems Degollado continued to raise his own revenue and to keep his army together by personal leadership and moral force. It was the beginning of a pattern in which he repeatedly rebuilt armies in the face of adversities much more disheartening than those of July 1858. Within six weeks he was once again afield in the environs of Guadalajara, raiding, recruiting, and preparing for another siege of the Jaliscan capital.<sup>59</sup>

On September 21 Degollado fell upon Casanova at Cuevas de Techaluta, southwest of Guadalajara. He had lured the conservative army of 2,000 into an ambush, and after a short pitched battle, completely routed them. The liberals captured seven pieces of artillery along with much equipment and many prisoners. Degollado ordered one conservative

---

<sup>58</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 4 July 1858, Ms. J/1-22, AJ/BN.

<sup>59</sup> Diario de Avisos, 19 August 1858, p. 3; 7 September 1858, p. 3.

officer, Encarnación Peraza, to be shot for his part in the March palace revolt in Guadalajara that nearly killed Juárez.<sup>60</sup>

The battle at Cuevas was a tremendous victory for Degollado. Casanova limped back into Guadalajara with a handful of men, and his subordinates urged the immediate evacuation of the city. Degollado was convinced that the town would be his within a week. But Casanova rallied his remaining troops, with the help of General José María Blancarte, and the conservative army prepared to make a stand.<sup>61</sup>

On September 26 Degollado's forces invested the city and began preparations for an assault. His army numbered 4,000, and he had 23 pieces of artillery, about double the size of Casanova's forces and armament. In a dawn attack on October 3 the liberals destroyed some of the enemy's breastworks, but were repulsed after suffering heavy losses,

---

<sup>60</sup> Letter, Degollado to governor of Jalisco, 23 September 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:24-25; Miguel Galindo y Galindo, La gran década nacional, ó relación histórica de la guerra de Reforma, intervención extranjera y gobierno del archiduque Maximiliano, 1857-1867, 3 vols. (México: Oficina Tipográfica de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1904-1906), 1:189-191.

<sup>61</sup> Diario de Avisos, 10 November 1858, p. 2; Letter, Degollado to governor of Jalisco, 23 September 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:24-25.



including the death of General José Silverio Núñez.<sup>62</sup>

For the next three weeks Degollado kept steady pressure on the conservative garrison, but failed in two more assaults on the city's main plaza. The death of Núñez and news of a major liberal defeat in Nuevo León further demoralized the besiegers. But don Santos rallied his men and planned a fourth assault. He was encouraged by reports that conservative reinforcements under Miramón, which had been rushing to Guadalajara, were diverted to Mexico City when Miguel Blanco attacked the capital and captured Chapultepec.<sup>63</sup>

Precisely at sunset on October 27 liberal artillery laid down a barrage, and Degollado's men stormed the enemy parapets. Mines devised by a Colonel Bravo were used to blast an opening in the breastworks, and with continual artillery fire illuminating the spectacle, the liberals poured through the breach. As one participant related,

---

<sup>62</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 4 November 1858, document no. 23, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Letter, Cuéllar to minister of war (conservative government), 3 November 1858, and letter, Blancarte to minister of war, 5 October 1858, both in García, Documentos, 11:37, 26-27.

<sup>63</sup>Diario de Avisos, 15-30 October 1858; Excerpt from article in El Boletín del Ejército Federal, in García, Documentos, 11:31-32; Manuel Cambre, La guerra de tres años (México: Biblioteca de Autores Jaliscienses, 1949), p. 150.

"It was a horrible night, and I will always remember the atrocities I witnessed in this night of fire, blood, and pillaging." Within two hours the central plaza and the government palace had fallen, and the conservatives had laid down their arms.<sup>64</sup>

At mid-morning the next day an armistice was signed between Degollado and Blancarte. As was common practice on both sides, those captured officers and men who pledged not to rejoin the fight against the Juárez government were set free. Flushed with victory, don Santos praised his men and their achievements as evidence of the superiority of a just cause over a mercenary army. And he predicted, somewhat prematurely, that with one more such effort by the constitutional army, all Mexico would be theirs.<sup>65</sup>

Among those released on their promise not to rejoin the struggle was the conservative general José María Blancarte. The next day, however, Antonio Rojas, a liberal

---

<sup>64</sup> Excerpt from article in El Boletín del Ejército Federal, in García, Documentos, 11:32-33; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 4 November 1858, document no. 23, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Manuel Valdés, Memorias de la guerra de Reforma (México: Imprenta y Fototipia de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1913), p. 83.

<sup>65</sup> Convention, 28 October 1858, and proclamation, Degollado, 29 October 1858, both in García, Documentos, 11:34-36.

officer, burst into Blancarte's home and murdered him. Degollado was incensed by what he privately described as a "cowardly assassination."<sup>66</sup> He issued a decree ordering all civil and military authorities to seek to arrest Rojas and to kill him if he offered resistance. He further decreed a pension of 600 pesos a year for Blancarte's widow and children.<sup>67</sup>

On November 4, 1858 Degollado issued another decree, one which was to have profound effects on the nature of the war being fought. It was a measure designed to adapt certain provisions of treason laws, issued by the Spanish Cortes in April 1821, to the 1858 conflict. It provided the death penalty for any who conspired to overthrow, destroy, or alter the Constitution of 1857, and it included detailed

---

<sup>66</sup>This Degollado said in a private letter to Ocampo, 4 November 1858, document no. 23, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH. Mariano Cuevas, Historia de la nación mexicana (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1967), p. 806 infers that Degollado was pleased at Blancarte's death. But Valdés, Memorias, which is often very critical of don Santos (eg. pp. 103, 104, 107), reports on p. 85 that the general was very upset by the murder.

<sup>67</sup>Untitled, bound, printed decrees from Jalisco during 1850's, University of Texas Latin American Collection, call no. Gz/q G972.32/J2171d/v.1&2, 2:226 (hereafter cited as Decrees form Jalisco). It seems that Degollado later pardoned Rojas because of contributions to the liberal cause; Cuevas, Historia de la nación, p. 806; Diario de Avisos, 2 August 1859, p. 3.

regulations for punishing every other conceivable form of disloyalty. In addition, clerics who withheld sacraments or insisted on retraction of oaths of loyalty to the constitution as a prerequisite to receipt of sacraments were subject to fine, prison, and exile.<sup>68</sup>

Later in the war this decree and countermeasures issued by the conservatives became pretexts for numerous executions and atrocities committed by both sides. For the present, though, it did little more than spark debate between Degollado and clerics within Guadalajara, who objected to the provisions dealing with their efforts to combat loyalty oaths to the constitution. Don Santos blamed the clergy for the continuation of the war and charged them with abusing their spiritual authority, while conservatives claimed that the Constitution of 1857 was contrary to Church dogma.<sup>69</sup>

Other incidents occurred during the liberal occupation of Guadalajara which further swelled conservative resentment. To raise 150,000 pesos, Degollado levied forced loans of

---

<sup>68</sup> Decree, Degollado, 4 November 1858, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Degollado to Guerra, 9 November 1858, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

1,000 to 15,000 pesos against 52 individuals within the city, all of whom doubtless were conservatives. Don Santos was accused by his enemies of all sorts of other crimes and misdeeds ranging from blasphemy and ridiculing clerics to executing notable persons and destroying churches.<sup>70</sup>

## 6

Degollado's chief worry in Guadalajara was preparing for the inevitable conservative counter-siege. He had hardly occupied the city for a week before General Leonardo Márquez set out from Zacatecas to challenge him. By November 10 Márquez was on the scene with 3,000 men, making quick harassing stabs at liberal positions. Degollado worked to fortify the bridge of Tololotlán (sometimes called Calderón), the major weak point in his defenses, and he hoped to deal Márquez a crippling blow before Miguel Miramón arrived with yet another army.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup>Decrees from Jalisco, 2:230; Diario de Avisos, 9 July 1859, p. 1; Cuevas, Historia de la nación, pp. 808-809.

<sup>71</sup>Letter, minister of war (conservative government) to postal administrator of San Juan de los Lagos, 6 November 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:40; Diario de Avisos, 29 November 1858, p. 3; Valdés, Memorias, pp. 94, 96; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Don Santos did repulse one attack by Márquez on the Tololotlán bridge, but lack of field provisions prevented him from pursuing the conservatives and inflicting any serious damage. Then Miramón arrived the first week in December, bringing the total number of conservative forces to 7,000. Degollado had 8,000 men and 19 pieces of artillery, but these were spread out along a 37 league front on the Santiago river.<sup>72</sup>

On December 12 Miramón launched a three-day campaign against the liberal defenses. He sent Márquez against the bridge once again. Then when he detected that a foulup in liberal communications had created a weak spot farther up the river, he hurried forces across on a makeshift bridge. These troops broke through the gap and rolled up Degollado's flank in a major engagement near the hacienda of San Miguel. The liberals fell back and by the 15th had abandoned the city completely.<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup>Excerpt of article from El Progreso (Veracruz), 30 November 1858, document no. 2966, fondo I-2, carpeta 36, LGC/CEHM; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>73</sup>Diario de Avisos, 20 December 1858, p. 3; 21 December 1858, p. 3; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:49-50; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Letter, Miramón to minister of war, 16 December 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:43-44.

Don Santos beat a retreat southward toward Colima, following the same route he had taken the previous June. His losses in Guadalajara had been serious, and he was forced to leave behind all his heavier artillery. He was hotly pursued by conservative cavalry, and two days later Miramón set out after him with the bulk of the infantry.<sup>74</sup>

As the conservative general bore down upon him, Degollado abandoned all but his lightest field pieces in hopes of getting to the barranca of Atenquique to make another stand. He chose instead to set up defenses at the barranca of Beltrán, near the village of San Joaquín, but Miramón outmaneuvered him and marched into the city of Colima.<sup>75</sup>

When Degollado abandoned his defensive position to march against the conservative army, Miramón stormed out of the city and fell upon the liberals in a wooded area near San Joaquín. Degollado's army was broken and driven from the field after an hour and a half battle. Though don Santos sought to minimize his losses, it was clear that this

---

<sup>74</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:49-50; Diario de Avisos, 21 December 1858, p. 3; 28 December 1858, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup>Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:51; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

was a major defeat. He lost virtually all his remaining artillery and munitions, and those troops not killed or captured were dispersed so badly that Miramón pronounced the revolution in that area "completely finished."<sup>76</sup>

Degollado regrouped his remaining units in Zamora, then marched to Morelia to begin rebuilding the army of the center.<sup>77</sup> There was clearly cause for discouragement in the liberal ranks. They now effectively controlled only one state, Michoacán. Their opponents had gained new incentive from the recent victories, greatly strengthening conservative unity. Due to the defeats, Degollado's leadership was being seriously questioned. Even his successes had had ill effects, however, for they had threatened to eclipse the prestige of the civil government in Veracruz and increased the administration's jealousy of the military.<sup>78</sup>

Nevertheless, General Degollado could reflect upon the past year with some satisfaction. He had organized and

<sup>76</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, 15:114-115; Letter, Miramón to governor of Querétaro, 31 December 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:47.

<sup>77</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>78</sup> Roeder, Juárez, pp. 183, 188; Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:50; Valdés, Memorias, pp. 103, 104, 107.



sustained a military campaign against nearly hopeless odds, enabling Juárez to establish the constitutional government in Veracruz. In major engagements at Atenquique, Cuevas de Techaluta, and Guadalajara he had demonstrated masterful strategic and tactical planning and competent battlefield leadership. As supreme liberal commander he had done as much or more than anyone else could have, under the circumstances, to promote the liberal cause. Yet despite this record of achievement, the outlook for success in the coming year was indeed bleak, and it was to this immediate problem that Degollado now had to direct his attention.

## CHAPTER VII

### TACUBAYA CAMPAIGN

#### 1

After Miramón's December 1858 victory at San Joaquín, many conservatives were encouraged by his report that the constitutional movement in that part of the country had been stamped out for good. Others were not so sure. One conservative newspaper, which described Santos Degollado as the most tireless of the liberal chieftains, reported his arrival in Morelia with only a handful of men, yet cautioned,

Leave Degollado unmolested in Michoacán for two months, one month more, and at the end of this time we will see him with a force of two thousand or more men again threatening one of the capitals controlled by the [conservative] government.<sup>1</sup>

It was therefore fitting that Degollado himself exhibited little discouragement over the loss of Guadalajara and the defeat at San Joaquín. In proclamations and letters he reaffirmed his faith in the constitutional cause and pointed out that while he had been losing at San Joaquín, other liberal armies were winning at Irapuato and Salvatierra.

---

<sup>1</sup>Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 19 January 1859, p. 2.

And no less than two weeks after his defeat don Santos was already planning the next campaign and predicting, quite incorrectly, that the war would wear itself out without another major bloodletting.<sup>2</sup>

Finances still constituted Degollado's central problem as he set about rebuilding the army of the center. The previous month, while occupying Guadalajara, he had imposed a forced loan of 2 1/2 million pesos on the clergy of Mexico. Now on January 11 in Morelia, he added six additional articles which would authorize liberal governors and chieftains to begin collecting these funds. But this attempted shortcut proved too extreme, as it allowed considerable opportunity for abuse, and so on January 29 don Santos announced further modifications of the law.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Two proclamations, Degollado, 6 January 1859, documents no. 1 and 2, decimal classification H[513 "1858-59"], Informes y proclamas militares del General Don Santos Degollado, General en Jefe del Ejército Federal, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Informes de Degollado, AG/SRE); Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 January 1859, document no. 24, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter abbreviated as AH/INAH).

<sup>3</sup>Decree, Degollado, 11 January 1859, document no. 5042, in Manuel Dublan and José María Lozano, eds., Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república ordenada por los licenciados Manuel Dublan y José María Lozano, 34 vols. (México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, á cargo

This final revision of the December 7 decree has been described as something of a precursor to the famous Reform Laws, which the Juárez administration began to issue six months later largely at Degollado's insistence. For with the January 29 modifications the decree recognized that at least some ecclesiastical capital would not be redeemed, but would be left for the maintenance of educational and charitable institutions.<sup>4</sup>

From this forced loan Degollado eventually collected over one million pesos in capital, yet this yielded less than 150,000 pesos in cash, and it took quite some time to collect. He consequently turned to other sources for more immediate help. He appealed directly to Ocampo to negotiate in the United States for several thousand rifles. He imposed more forced loans and ordered anyone providing funds

---

de M. Lara, hijo, 1876-1904), vol. 8, 1856-1860, 8:663; Jan Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875, ed. and trans. Michael P. Costeloe (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 159-160.

<sup>4</sup>Decree, Degollado, 29 January 1859, document no. 5043, in Dublan, Legislación mexicana, 8:663-664. The College of San Nicolás de Hidalgo was to be endowed with ecclesiastical capital, and thus Melchor Ocampo was able to pay to the school 4,000 pesos which his estate at Pomoca was assessed for the local chaplaincies. Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth, pp. 159-160, 162.

for the conservatives to donate an equal sum to the liberals. Even at that, his search for revenue was not so desperate as to turn to any source. For example, he objected to one suggestion that the liberals impose a 10 percent duty on farm produce, for it could only be collected by force, he argued, in which case it would ruin agriculture.<sup>5</sup>

While General Degollado was rebuilding the liberal army of the center, his opponents were planning a major campaign to deal the constitutional movement a finishing blow. But conservatives had encountered problems very similar to those plaguing liberals, including internal factionalism and, on a lesser scale, financial shortage. Many conservatives were dissatisfied with the performance of the Zuloaga administration during 1858, and late that year there were several intrigues against don Félix in the capital. The strongest opposition factions to arise were those promoting Miramón and General Manuel Robles Pezuela. In late December Robles seconded a pronunciamiento against the Zuloaga regime issued by Miguel María de Echegaray in

---

<sup>5</sup>Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth, p. 162; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 February 1859, document no. 25, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Manuel Valdés, Memorias de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Imprenta y Fototipia de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1913), p. 131; Diario de Avisos, 19 April 1859, p. 3.

the Plan of Navidad. This defection led to a shakeup of the conservative government's leadership, and on January 1 a junta passed over Robles and chose Miramón to become substitute president. Zuloaga apparently bore no ill feelings toward Miramón because of this turnover, though later there was some disagreement over technicalities regarding who was legally president. There was never any doubt, though, once 27-year-old Miramón assumed office on February 1, 1859, that he was de facto conservative president.<sup>6</sup>

Don Miguel immediately set in motion plans aimed at winning the war quickly and in grand fashion. In early March he launched a campaign to strike at the political heart of the constitutional movement, the city of Veracruz. It was an excellent strategic notion, but as nearly everyone recognized, a tactical impossibility. Because such a maneuver was the logical next step for the conservatives,

---

<sup>6</sup>Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970), 2:1780; Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 2:64; Decree, Azcarate for Zuloaga, 31 January 1859, document no. 2976, fondo I-2, carpeta 37, Luis Gutiérrez Cañedo manuscritos, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as fondo I-2, carp. 37, LGC/CEHM); Justo Sierra, The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), p. 284; Luis Islas García, Miramón, caballero del infortunio (México: Editorial JUS, 1957), p. 67.

by the time the campaign unfolded, the liberals had anticipated and prepared for it. The city's defenses were strong, and even if they were surmounted, the liberals could fall back to the virtually impregnable fortress of San Juan de Ulúa. In addition the conservative army would have to conduct its campaign around Veracruz during the notorious sickly season. José María Mata, sent to the United States by Juárez to court American recognition, was elated at the news that Miramón was attacking Veracruz, for he like many other liberals believed the conservative army would be destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

The siege was a standoff. The conservatives did a considerable amount of maneuvering throughout the month of March, but there was no real fighting. When Miramón abandoned the operation and started his retreat to Mexico City on March 30, many of the liberal defenders still retained the first charges in their muskets.<sup>8</sup> But in the

---

<sup>7</sup>William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-39), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:1026; Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 8 March 1859, and letter, Mata to Ocampo, 31 March 1859, in José Ma. Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), pp. 170, 172.

<sup>8</sup>Ten-page journal of the siege of Veracruz, 1 April 1859, García folder 28, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas.

meantime a liberal army under the command of Degollado had launched an attack on Mexico City and had set in motion a sequence of events that constitute one of the great historical controversies of the war.

## 2

When Miramón's plans to lay siege to Veracruz became widely known in early February, Degollado showed the same enthusiasm as most liberals. Like Mata, he believed it would give the constitutional forces an ideal opportunity to destroy a large conservative army and probably win the war. He told Ocampo that if Miramón should unexpectedly cause Veracruz any real threat, however, he would gather what force he could and create a diversion by attacking Mexico City. He believed that he might even have a chance to capture the capital, if the liberal armies of the north and south would obey him, a matter on which there seemed to be considerable doubt. Don Santos may also have been encouraged about the prospects of taking Mexico City by promises of support from liberal sympathizers within the capital. But he had not yet, as some seem to suggest, decided that a move against Mexico City was necessary.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 10 February 1859, document no. 25, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; James



It is unclear whether Degollado made the decision to attack the capital on his own initiative.<sup>10</sup> When on February 17 don Santos ordered a concerted liberal assault on Mexico City, he mentioned neither presidential orders nor diversionary tactics. He at that time still believed Veracruz to be impregnable, and he cited the vulnerability of Mexico City as the only reason for the attack. Some have suggested, however, that by mid-March Degollado had received specific instructions from Juárez to begin the campaign in order to draw Miramón away from Veracruz. This cannot be confirmed, but it is not a critical question, since both Juárez and Degollado approved of the stratagem.<sup>11</sup>

---

Creelman, Díaz, Master of Mexico. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1912), p. 108; Justo Sierra, Juárez, su obra y su tiempo, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971), p. 117.

<sup>10</sup> See Melchor Alvarez, Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez, or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905), pp. 116-118 and Sierra, Juárez, p. 117 for opposing views.

<sup>11</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, pp. 329-330. The conservatives had anticipated the liberal stratagem well before it developed and had left sufficient forces in the environs of the capital to deal with it. Boletín Oficial (Mexico City), 20 March 1859, p. 2; Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 123; Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), p. 251.

In late February don Santos launched a multi-faceted operation designed to restore liberal control of the Bajío, capture the northern and western approaches to Mexico City, and finally amass a 15,000 man force (many armed only with lances) to reduce and capture the capital. The first part of this plan was quickly accomplished, and on March 14 Degollado set out from Querétaro for the Federal District. He encountered a large enemy force at Calamanda, and after the two armies fought it out through the night, he had succeeded in clearing the way to the capital. He might have preferred pursuing the conservative force, commanded by Tomás Mejía and others, to apply the coup de grâce, but he rejected the temptation, either because of orders from Juárez or due to his own desire not to be sidetracked.<sup>12</sup>

Once his contingent of the liberal army reached the environs of the capital, Degollado issued a proclamation to the people of Mexico City promising that if they would rise up, "the chains which oppress us will fall without

---

<sup>12</sup>Diario de Avisos, 17 March 1859, p. 3; Letter, Berduzco to governor of Nuevo León, 18 March 1859, in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, (hereafter cited as García, Documentos, vol.:page), 11:48-50; Bulnes, Juárez, p. 455.

bloodshed."<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile he gathered more forces and supplies and seized Tacubaya and Chapultepec, tightening his grip on the capital. But then he began to hesitate, and in his incertitude don Santos committed a series of errors that gravely jeopardized any liberal hopes of victory. He allowed forces under Mejía and Callejo, which he had earlier defeated at Calamanda, to enter the capital unopposed. Though he cut off water and food supplies to Mexico City, he wasted too much time maneuvering and building fortifications--time which allowed Leonardo Márquez the opportunity to rush another conservative army in relief from Guadalajara.<sup>14</sup>

A major reason for Degollado's delay was his desire to avert bloodshed, and to this end he wrote a personal appeal to his conservative counterpart in hopes of inducing surrender. He pleaded with General Antonio Corona to submit to constitutional legitimacy and accept the system preferred by the Mexican people. He declared that the Constitution of 1857 was not a perpetual and unchanging institution, but was merely a starting foundation from which to build toward

---

<sup>13</sup> Proclamation, Degollado, 21 March 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:62.

<sup>14</sup> Diario de Avisos, 28 March 1859, p. 2; Miguel Rivera, Historia antigua y moderna de Jalapa y de las revoluciones del estado de Veracruz, 20 vols. (Tacubaya, México: Editorial Citlaltepétl, 1960), 15:46.

reform. The conservatives, he charged, used religion as a pretext to defend their interests in a decrepit and decaying system. It was not a question of personalities, he assured, for both sides had honorable as well as selfish men within their ranks. It was rather a matter of the conservatives agreeing to submit to the will of the people and accept the constitution, and consequently, in a more practical vein, abandon a struggle which they had no hope of winning.<sup>15</sup>

Once again, as had been the case at Guadalajara twice before, don Santos' plea had no effect. He therefore took further steps to tighten the stranglehold on the capital, dealing harshly with deserters and continuing to cut off the city's supplies of water and goods. But all his efforts seemed fruitless, for more conservative troops slipped into the capital, rain provided the city with water, and word came that Márquez was enroute from Guadalajara with a sizable relief force. Degollado thought about intercepting Márquez, but decided against abandoning his fortified positions. And as his situation deteriorated, he began seriously to consider raising the siege altogether.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>Letter, Degollado to Corona, 29 March 1859, document no. F59, 4402(4088), Valentín Gómez Farías papers, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas (hereafter abbreviated as VGF/UT).

<sup>16</sup>Diario de Avisos, 2 April 1859, p. 3; 9 April 1859, p. 2; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:47.

For the moment, however, Degollado decided to continue the campaign. One account reported that most of the liberal officers favored retreat, while José Justo Alvarez, Ignacio Zaragoza, Leandro Valle, and Julián Quiroga used their influence in behalf of launching a major assault. Don Santos agreed to try the attack, and at 5:30 A.M. on April 2 three columns simultaneously stormed turret fortifications at La Verónica, San Antonio de las Huertas, and San Cosme causeways, all on the southwest side of the capital. In the same area other thrusts were made at the Belén and Nonoalco causeways. At San Antonio liberals under Zaragoza smashed into the conservative line four times, and four times they were hurled back. The fighting at San Cosme raged with equal fury. Many curious civilians had come out from the city to view the spectacle, and after nearly three hours they watched the liberals finally fall back exhausted.<sup>17</sup>

Following this failure Degollado again considered abandoning the siege, since he knew that Márquez would arrive at the capital within a few days. In addition, don Santos was convinced that Miramón had given up the assault on

---

<sup>17</sup>Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:47-48.

Veracruz, so in that respect Degollado must have believed his mission had been accomplished. Moreover the conservative president would soon return to swell further the number of forces defending Mexico City, unless, as the liberals hoped, he could be waylaid at Orizaba.<sup>18</sup> The decision was made, however, that the liberal army would continue the siege-- the question is, who made the decision and why?

One version is related by Melchor Alvarez, who certainly had a vested interest in the matter, for his father, liberal General José Justo Alvarez, was discredited by the disastrous campaign. Alvarez lays blame for the continuation of the siege on Benito Juárez, basing his assertion on a letter he received from Degollado's secretary, Benito Gómez Farías, thirty-seven years after the battle. In this letter Gómez Farías reported that after the unsuccessful assaults of April 2, and believing Miramón had failed at Veracruz, Degollado decided to retreat, but he "received new orders from the general government insisting that the operations be continued."<sup>19</sup> This version is accepted by several authors, including of course Francisco Bulnes, the most renowned

---

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Degollado to Corona, 29 March 1859, document no. F59, 4402(4088), VGF/UT; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:48-49.

<sup>19</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 131.

critic of Juárez, who further charged that even if the order was sent before March 29, when Miramón pulled out, it was nonetheless a foolish order motivated by Juárez' unreasoning fear.<sup>20</sup>

Justo Sierra and José M. Vigil both doubt Benito Gómez Farías' account. Sierra suggests that Degollado decided his chances were better in a pitched battle than in a retreat under fire, and he charges don Santos with military incompetence for failing to capitalize on an ideal opportunity to win a major battle. Vigil refers to a letter from Ignacio Zaragoza which says that Degollado had indeed decided to retreat when José Justo Alvarez persuaded don Santos to continue the siege. But Zaragoza and Alvarez each blamed the other for almost everything that went wrong in this campaign, and they were throughout much of the war bitter rivals, so this version may not be credible.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Angel Pola, Vicente Riva Palacio, Manuel Payno, Juan A. Mateos, Rafael Martínez de la Torre, El libro rojo, 1520-1867, 2 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1906), 2:72; Bulnes, Juárez, pp. 248-253.

<sup>21</sup> Sierra, Juárez, p. 122; José M. Vigil, La Reforma, vol. 5 of México a través de los siglos, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, 5 vols. (México: Editorial Cumbre, 1958), 5:359. For Zaragoza's letter see Ignacio Zaragoza, Epistolario Zaragoza-Vidaurre, 1855-1859, ed. Israel Cavazos Garza (México: Primer Congreso Nacional de Historia para el Estudio de la Guerra de Intervención, 1962), pp. 90-91. It is interesting to note that while Vicente Riva Palacio had

As for Juárez' writings on the subject, no orders of the sort referred to by Gómez Farías are known to be extant. But he did address a letter to an acquaintance in New Orleans on April 1. Here the liberal president reported that Miramón had abandoned the siege of Veracruz without firing a shot, yet Juárez compared the incident to the siege of Sevastopol in the Crimean War. Of Degollado's operation against Mexico City, he expressed near certainty that it would succeed in capturing the capital. In such an optimistic state of mind Juárez would certainly have expected don Santos not to abandon the siege, and might very well have issued orders to that effect, even after Miramón retreated from Veracruz.<sup>22</sup> The evidence from this letter regarding Juárez' misconception of the state of affairs at Mexico City and his exaggerated view of the siege of Veracruz bears out the contentions of Bulnes and Alvarez. It is further strengthened by the testimony of Gómez Farías, which Juárez' supporters challenge, but have been unable to disprove.

---

a hand in both El libro rojo and México a través de los siglos, they offer conflicting accounts.

<sup>22</sup>Letter, Juárez to Santacilia, 1 April 1859, Ms. J/S-6, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter abbreviated as AJ/BN).



Furthermore, as Degollado had twice demonstrated at Guadalajara, he did not hesitate to retreat in the face of superior enemy forces. Ignacio Zaragoza reported that after the April 2 assault failed, just before the Juárez order described by Gómez Farías supposedly arrived, Degollado had already begun to retreat. When the order to withdraw was then countermanded, Zaragoza expressed surprise, and since he may not have been privy to orders from the president, if there were any, he blamed his rival José Justo Alvarez for persuading don Santos to continue the siege.<sup>23</sup>

## 4

On April 3 Degollado addressed his soldiers in hopes of lifting morale after the repulse of the day before. For whatever the reason, he was now committed to continue the campaign. He assured his men that while the assault of April 2 had failed to carry enemy positions, it had at least gained information which would insure victory when the "true attack" came.<sup>24</sup>

The conservatives were utilizing many of the same fortifications employed by the Mexican army in 1847 in its

---

<sup>23</sup>Letter, Zaragoza to Vidaurri, 14 April 1859, in Zaragoza, Epistolario, pp. 90-91.

<sup>24</sup>Proclamation, Degollado, 3 April 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:63-64.

aborted effort to defend the capital from capture by the United States. In light of this Degollado asked rhetorically why Mexicans had then defended their independence so poorly, but now fought against liberty so stubbornly. The blame, he suggested, lay with the clergy, who owed their allegiance to Rome and thus cared little about national independence, and who now used all their influence to resist threats to their worldly interests.<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, though Degollado had hoped for an uprising of liberal sympathizers within the capital, the conservative government's control of the city was too strong. In addition, though there certainly were liberals within Mexico City, they were most likely few in number and lacking in any underground organization capable of arranging such a revolt.<sup>26</sup>

On April 7 Leonardo Márquez arrived at the capital with the conservative army from Guadalajara. Much to his surprise he encountered no liberal resistance and was able to enter the city unopposed. Don Santos had ordered Epitacio Huerta to come from Morelia to help intercept Márquez, but Huerta had refused to leave Michoacán. Degollado

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 102 of course agrees with Degollado that the clergy exerted strong influence in the capital.

decided within the next two days that his position was such that he now could do nothing but hold his ground and wait for Márquez to attack him. He had not the strength to assault the capital, yet if he retreated, he feared, his forces would become so scattered and disorganized that they could easily be caught and destroyed. Unfortunately for don Santos the site in Tacubaya which he chose to anchor the right flank of his defenses consisted of adobe buildings which could be easily penetrated by artillery.<sup>27</sup>

On April 10 Márquez marched out of the capital with 5,000 men to confront Degollado's 6,000-man army.<sup>28</sup> The conservative general situated his artillery on slopes facing Tacubaya and spent the rest of the day shelling liberal positions.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:49; Diario de Avisos, 8 April 1859, p. 2. In letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH, don Santos said he had ordered Epitacio Huerta to come from Morelia to help intercept Márquez, but Huerta had refused to leave Michoacán. Letter, Degollado to Zaragoza, 9 April 1859, in Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 331; Diario de Avisos, 11 April 1859, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Estimates of the sizes of the armies vary, but these figures appear most often. Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 133; Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:760-761; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:50.

<sup>29</sup> Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:50.

Degollado had established a horseshoe-shaped line of defenses that will be immediately familiar to students of the 1847 United States assault on Mexico City. In this instance, though, the liberal forces occupying the positions faced the capital instead of away from it. There were several critical points connecting Degollado's line. The left flank was anchored by the Valdés millhouse and a large stone building called the Casa Mata. To the east of this there was a series of small buildings known as Molino del Rey. The outward curve of the horseshoe was protected by the castle of Chapultepec. The line then extended southward toward Tacubaya before turning back to the west, where the right flank was anchored by the large Arzobispado or Bishop's palace. The Tacubaya portion of the line was commanded by José Justo Alvarez, while Ignacio Zaragoza was in charge of everything from the Valdés mill to the castle of Chapultepec. The only fighting that first day, April 10, occurred at the two flanks, Molino de Valdés and the Arzobispado, where the conservatives found the defenses to be strong.<sup>30</sup>

At dawn the next day people in Mexico City flocked to the bell towers and other high places to watch the battle.

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; Letter, Zaragoza to Vidaurri, 14 April 1859, in Zaragoza, Epistolario, pp. 91-92.

Shortly before 7:00 A.M. Márquez laid down an artillery barrage and followed with an infantry assault on the same two flanks he had probed the previous day. Zaragoza claimed that the thrusts at both points were repulsed, and that at the Arzobispado the enemy even abandoned some artillery. He complained, however, that no liberal officer (meaning in particular Alvarez) took the initiative to press this opportunity, and the conservatives had time to regroup.<sup>31</sup>

A furious second assault on the right flank succeeded in capturing a house in the northern part of Tacubaya, between Chapultepec and the Bishop's palace. Márquez set up two batteries here and laid out a devastating fire. At the other flank, a cavalry charge on the Casa Mata was beaten back. Then a third assault on the Arzobispado caused one liberal unit to fall back, making other positions untenable. At the same time the powder magazine at the Bishop's palace exploded. Rather than see that wing of the liberal defenses overrun, Alvarez ordered the entire Tacubaya stretch of the line abandoned. Some of these forces were sent toward Toluca in retreat while the rest fell back to the castle of Chapultepec.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Bancroft, History of Mexico, 5:761; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:52-53.

Having thus rolled up the liberal right flank, Márquez leveled a tremendous fusillade at the castle, by far the strongest point in Degollado's defenses. Finally a conservative infantry assault stormed Casa Mata collapsing the left flank and compelling the units at Chapultepec to withdraw to avoid being surrounded. Degollado ordered a general retreat westward toward Michoacán, and though it was a comparatively orderly flight, many wounded, much equipment, and 31 pieces of artillery had to be left behind.<sup>33</sup>

## 5

Degollado was the last to leave the field of battle, not so much as a symbolic gesture as to discover if Miramón had arrived at the scene. It was known that don Miguel had given up the siege at Veracruz and was returning, almost unimpeded, to Mexico City. For don Santos the conservative president's arrival would at least signal a symbolic victory at Tacubaya, since the campaign had been initiated primarily to draw Miramón away from the liberal capital.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Letter, Zaragoza to Vidaurri, 14 April 1859, in Zaragoza, Epistolario, pp. 91-94; Bancroft, History of Mexico, 5:762; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:53.

<sup>34</sup> Circular, Ocampo, document no. 6 in Melchor Ocampo, Obras completas de Melchor Ocampo, ed. F. Vasquez, 3 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1901), vol. 2, Escritos políticos, 2:212-213; Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 135.

Don Miguel did arrive some time after the battle, but if this indeed represented a liberal military achievement, it was the only one to come out of the disastrous Tacubaya campaign. In addition to the tremendous losses in men and equipment, Degollado suffered the humiliation of having his uniform, eyeglasses, and personal papers captured and put on display at the National Palace.<sup>35</sup>

Even the most cursory analysis reveals that the whole premise for the liberal operation had been ill-conceived. Miramón had anticipated that Degollado might threaten Mexico City in order to pull him away from Veracruz, and he therefore had left ample forces in the area around the capital to deal with such a move.<sup>36</sup> The outcome of the battle seems to have demonstrated this fact. In addition to being a bad idea in the first place, the campaign had been poorly fought by the constitutional army. It was "a terrible demonstration of the folly of attempting large-scale operations with the inadequate resources and inflated tactics of guerrilla warfare."<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> García, Documentos, 11:65-66 footnote refers to Diario de Avisos, 12 April 1859.

<sup>36</sup> Boletín Oficial, 20 March 1859, p. 2; Bulnes, Juárez, p. 251.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 197.

Assessing blame for the loss was not a complicated matter for liberals at the time. Since conduct of the operation was the primary responsibility of Santos Degollado, his ineptitude was judged to have been the cause of failure.<sup>38</sup> While such blame is not entirely misplaced, one should remember that there is a good possibility that don Santos was compelled to continue the siege after he personally judged it more appropriate to pull out. Indeed, critics of Benito Juárez blame the liberal president for the disaster by charging that he sacrificed Degollado's army, still emaciated after the San Joaquín disaster, in order to allay his own unfounded fears that Miramón would take Veracruz.<sup>39</sup>

Despite all this, the battle of Tacubaya was not the crippling defeat it might have been for the liberals. It was certainly a spectacular confrontation, the biggest battle of the war up to that time, witnessed by much of the populace of Mexico City. But it did not alter the course of the war, and it would likely have been dismissed as just another battle had it not been for the remarkable aftermath of executions. When Miramón learned of the conservative

---

<sup>38</sup>Valdés, Memorias, p. 142.

<sup>39</sup>Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, pp. 140-141, 103, 106; Bulnes, Juárez, p. 248.



victory, he immediately sent orders to Márquez that "all the prisoners of the rank of officers and jefes" be shot.<sup>40</sup>

Such action, while harsh, was not unusual. But Márquez interpreted the order as broadly as possible, and in the hours following the battle he had dozens of persons sent before the firing squad. This involved not only most captured liberal officers, including the wounded, but all other prisoners and several doctors and medical students, some of whom had been attached to the liberal army and others who had come out from the capital after the battle to treat the wounded of both sides. One of the medics, Juan Duval, was either a British or American subject, while another, Ildefonso Portugal, was a member of a very prominent Mexican family of conservative sympathies. Two other American doctors and several other non-combatants who may simply have been in the wrong place at the wrong time were also reportedly among those shot. Of several contemporary liberal estimates of the number executed, the most moderate came from Francisco Zarco, who placed the total at fifty-three.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Letter, Miramón to Márquez, 11 April 1859, Ms. J/1-58bis, AJ/BN.

<sup>41</sup> Others estimate as many as 100. Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:55-56; Francisco Zarco, Las matanzas de Tacubaya (México: Impresora Juan Pablos, 1958), pp. 16-24; Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y

To these charges the conservative government responded that Juan Duval "was a Mexican from the moment he took part in . . . the service of the rebels." The official conservative version contended that only seventeen men were executed. None of these were under age, the Miramón government reported, all were "apprehended with arms in their hands . . . not while stanching wounds but while opening them," and all were properly tried under laws of treason.<sup>42</sup> In spite of this categorical denial, there is little doubt that there were foreigners and young medical students among those executed, though defenders of Márquez contended that since these technically were officers, don Leonardo had simply carried out Miramón's order.<sup>43</sup>

In their own defense, conservatives pointed to atrocities committed by the liberals. Five months earlier Degollado had ordered the death penalty for any who sought to overthrow

---

el segundo Imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 43; Pablo G. Macías, Aula Nobilis, monografía del Colegio primitivo y nacional de San Nicolás de Hidalgo (México: Ediciones Vanguardia Nicolaita, 1940), p. 105; Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1083.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, Bonilla to McLane, 25 June 1859, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1097-1099.

<sup>43</sup> Mariano Cuevas, Historia de la nación mexicana (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1967), pp. 815-816.

the Constitution of 1857, though there are few recorded instances of his having carried out such executions. During the liberal occupation of Guadalajara he had reportedly stood by helpless while a mob hanged two persons. And when liberals raised a furor over the Márquez executions at Tacubaya, conservatives claimed that liberals retreating after the battle had murdered three persons in Jocolitlán.<sup>44</sup>

In effect both sides were guilty of committing inhumane acts, the conservatives in the name of religion and the liberals in the name of reform. If anything distinguished the Tacubaya incident and the conservative atrocities, it was the particularly vicious talents of Leonardo Márquez. After the April 11 battle Degollado always referred to Márquez as the "assassin of Tacubaya," though through history don Leonardo has been more widely known as the "tiger of Tacubaya." He was responsible for other acts of cruelty later in the war, all of which have led historians to describe him variously as a "talented butcher" and as possessing the "ferocity of a born criminal." Since the clergy usually celebrated a Márquez battlefield victory, including the one at Tacubaya, with Te Deums, the liberals charged

---

<sup>44</sup>Roeder, Juárez, p. 199; Letter, Ayestarán to minister of war, 12 May 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:84.

that don Leonardo was the clergy's favorite general, a fact for which José María Mata claimed to have seen documentary evidence.<sup>45</sup>

## 6

Because three of the physicians executed at Tacubaya were reported to have been Americans, the incident caused a stir in the United States. Formal protests were filed over the atrocity, which one North American periodical described as "an indiscriminate slaughter." In his annual address to congress later that year, President James Buchanan cited the Tacubaya executions as one of many such outrages, and he called for an American intervention in Mexico. Indeed the affair was a significant propaganda coup for the liberals, and except for one important detail it might well have been the final push needed to win United States recognition.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Sierra, Juárez, p. 65; Letter, Degollado to Doblado, September 1859, in Carlos E. Castañeda, ed., Nuevos documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 3 vols. (San Antonio: Editorial Lozano, 1930), vol. 3, La guerra de Reforma según el archivo del general D. Manuel Doblado (hereafter cited as Castañeda, Nuevos documentos), 3:114; Lesley Byrd Simpson, Many Mexicos, 4th ed. rev. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 281; Roeder, Juárez, p. 199; Henry B. Parkes, A History of Mexico, 3rd ed. rev. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), p. 251; Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 23 July 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, p. 207.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, McLane to Bonilla, 11 June 1859, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1083; Harper's New Monthly

That detail was the fact that the United States had recognized the Juárez government five days earlier.

In truth such recognition had been in the offing for several months. The United States had for years tried to secure from various Mexican governments rights-of-way across northern and southern Mexico, as well as trade and railroad construction concessions. Of these, the prime objective was a right-of-way across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the narrow southern neck of Mexico. But the conservative government of Félix Zuloaga, which the United States recognized after the Golpe de Estado, had very early shown a disinclination to make such grants. In June 1858 United States Minister John Forsyth broke relations with Zuloaga, supposedly over the conservative government's treatment of foreigners. Later that year, after being insulted by Miramón and involved covertly with liberal finances, Forsyth returned home, but it is more likely that he severed relations with the conservatives because the desired concessions were not forthcoming.<sup>47</sup>

---

Magazine (New York), June 1859, p. 119 (hereafter cited as Harper's); James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 10 vols. (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1904), 5:565, 645; Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), p. 30.

<sup>47</sup>Paul V. Murray, Tres norteamericanos y su participación en el desarrollo del tratado McLane-Ocampo, 1856-1860

Forsyth was replaced by special agent William Churchwell, who immediately advised Secretary of State Lewis Cass in early February 1859,

The present condition of affairs in Mexico affords the best, and it may be, the last opportunity which will ever be presented to the United States to form a Treaty with this Republic that will secure to them not only the sovereignty over [Mexico] . . . but also the perpetual right of way from El Paso to Guaymas on the Gulf of California and from a point on the Rio Grande to some point on said Gulf, together with vast cessions of territory to such companies in the United States as may obtain the sanction of the Government to build a rail-road through the States of Sonora and Chihuahua, etc; and also the same perpetual right of way through the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

Churchwell added that "Mexico cannot fail to admit that [Baja California] ought of right to belong to [the United States]." He further advised Cass that the liberals had the backing of 16 of 22 states and the support of the majority of public opinion, and were prevented from reestablishing themselves in Mexico City only by lack of "material resources."<sup>48</sup>

---

(Guadalajara: Imprenta "Gráfica," 1946), pp. 18-20; Robert McLane, Reminiscences, 1827-1897 (privately printed, 1903; Harvard College Library, 1922), pp. 141-142; Howard L. Wilson, "President Buchanan's Proposed Intervention in Mexico," American Historical Review 5(1900):698; Diario de Avisos, 18 December 1858, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Churchwell to Cass, 8 February 1859, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1025, 1028.

Churchwell unquestionably favored extending recognition to the Juárez regime, though he described Juárez as a "distrustful and timid politician" who "has no influence over his ministers and is unconsciously perhaps under their most absolute and unlimited control." The American agent had deep respect for Ocampo, though, and saw Miguel Lerdo de Tejada as "the most popular man among his party . . . the master spirit of the cabinet." Churchwell believed Lerdo to be very pro-American and even claimed to have had a hand in securing the cabinet post for don Miguel.<sup>49</sup> Since Churchwell's sympathies for the liberal cause were apparently well known, by early March rumors were circulating that the United States would soon recognize Juárez.<sup>50</sup>

But Churchwell was not empowered to extend recognition, so in March President Buchanan dispatched Robert McLane to Veracruz. McLane was authorized to decide if recognition of Juárez would be appropriate, and if so, to grant it on the spot. He arrived at the Mexican port on April 1 and soon decided that he should recognize the constitutional government due to its broader base of popular support. His opinion may well have been influenced by Santos Degollado's continuing

---

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Churchwell to Buchanan, 22 February 1859, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1033.

<sup>50</sup> Letter, Churchwell to Cass, 8 March 1859, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1036.

ability to gather resources and rally followers in the face of repeatedly adverse military encounters. On April 6, 1859 McLane extended formal United States recognition to the Juárez regime, just five days before the Tacubaya executions would have given him additional pretext.<sup>51</sup>

## 7

As Santos Degollado led his army westward in retreat from Mexico City, he publicly blamed the defeat of Tacubaya on shortage of revenue. Though there was certainly some truth to this statement, it did little to regain for don Santos the considerable prestige he had lost. The constitutionalists had committed elementary tactical errors for which Degollado was ultimately responsible and for which he received much of the blame from fellow liberals. As his shattered army marched first to Morelia, then on through Jalisco to Colima, Degollado sought in vain to gather men and equipment to rebuild it. Though it has been said that in don Santos "defeat renewed the strength for battle," and that his army was "a phoenix," his loss of face at

---

<sup>51</sup>McLane, Reminiscences, pp. 141-142; Letter, Juárez to Santacilia, 1 April 1859, Ms. J/S-6, AJ/BN; Sierra, Juárez, pp. 133; José Fuentes Mares, Juárez y los Estados Unidos, 5th ed. (México: Editorial JUS, 1972), p. 213 provides a fotostat of McLane's telegram to Cass, dated 7 April 1859.



Tucubaya made it impossible to reconstruct the army immediately.<sup>52</sup>

As some liberal military men began to question Degollado's ability as a battlefield commander, the conservatives of course chimed in and publicized rumors of liberal differences to encourage rifts in their opponents' ranks. For example, Epitacio Huerta, liberal commander of Michoacán, accepted conservative reports that Degollado had left the country, and issued a call for another commander-in-chief to replace don Santos. Degollado took this as an act of rebellion on Huerta's part, a misconception which conservatives also encouraged, and it served to complicate further Degollado's problems in restoring the army of the center.<sup>53</sup> And as if

---

<sup>52</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 143; Valdés, Memorias, p. 142; Manuel Cambre, La guerra de tres años (México: Biblioteca de Autores Jaliscienses, 1949), p. 210; Sierra, Political Evolution, p. 286.

<sup>53</sup> Diario de Avisos, 2 June 1859, p. 3; 16 August 1859, pp. 2-3; Epitacio Huerta, Memoria en que el C. General Epitacio Huerta dió cuenta al congreso del estado del uso que hizo de las facultades con que estuvo investido durante su administración dictatorial, que comenzó en 15 de Febrero de 1858 y terminó el 1 de Mayo de 1861 (Morelia: Imprenta de Ignacio Arango, 1861), pp. 30-31. Degollado seemed aware that Huerta's subordinates had kept from him don Santos' circular announcing the trip to Veracruz, and he did not want Huerta punished. But he was upset over Huerta's failure to follow some orders during the Tacubaya campaign which might have kept Márquez away from Mexico City, and he was shocked that Huerta, whose rise to prominence Degollado was partly responsible for, could believe that he would desert the cause; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

this were not enough, conservative newspapers published false rumors that don Santos' son Mariano, enroute to the United States, had been shipwrecked, and his wife, in Cocupao, had died. Since one of Degollado's sons had died shortly before the Tacubaya campaign, such rumors as these must have been particularly distressing.<sup>54</sup>

Don Santos' failure to rebuild the army of the center meant that the conservatives won control of the Bajío region by default. Those smaller liberal armies that were still afield remained scattered and on the run. But while Degollado was having some difficulty recruiting, his opponents were convinced that it was merely a temporary setback and that unless they swept across Michoacán and captured him, he would be back in action within a few months. In fact, don Santos' incredible industry in building and training armies had inspired his soldiers to call him el colmenero--"the beekeeper." Therefore Leonardo Márquez was sent into the state in early May to track him down.<sup>55</sup>

By that time don Santos was not in Michoacán, however, and though Márquez restored conservative control of the

---

<sup>54</sup>Diario de Avisos, 28 May 1859, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup>Sierra, Juárez, p. 134; Diario de Avisos, 16 April 1859, p. 3; 10 May 1859, p. 3.

state for a short time, he did not find his quarry. The liberal commander-in-chief had issued a circular on May 20 announcing his decision to go to Veracruz in a last-ditch effort to salvage the constitutional army. He asserted that conservatives were recruiting a foreign prince to rule Mexico, and without money and munitions, liberals would be powerless to resist. "When each day one must be occupied with soliciting the soldiers' bread for the morrow, it is not possible to be calm or to plot cold-bloodedly the means of conquering the enemy."<sup>56</sup> In addition to this financial shortage, the army's morale was at an all-time low, and thus Degollado believed that a psychological boost would also be necessary to restore the liberals' fighting spirit. On May 25 he left Manzanillo by ship, crossed the Isthmus of Tehuantepec on horseback, and took another boat up the Gulf coast to Veracruz.<sup>57</sup> He planned to present Juárez

---

<sup>56</sup> Circular, Degollado, 20 May 1859, in Ernesto de la Torre Villar, El triunfo de la república liberal, 1857-1860 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960), pp. 95-96.

<sup>57</sup> Liberal morale was so poor that José María Mata advocated recruitment of foreign troops; letter, Mata to Ocampo, 3 July 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, pp. 197-198. Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:409; Diario de Avisos, 13 June 1859, p. 3; 25 June 1859, p. 3; Sierra, Juárez, p. 134.

with specific proposals designed to rejuvenate the cause,  
and though others had been promoting similar measures for  
some time, he succeeded where all before him had failed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### REFORM LAWS AND THE ESTANCIA

#### DE LAS VACAS CAMPAIGN

##### 1

In early June 1859 Santos Degollado arrived in Veracruz and immediately set to work pursuing his two chief objectives there--financial support for his army and new moral incentive for the liberal cause. The latter goal could be achieved, he hoped, by persuading President Benito Juárez to promulgate a new series of reform decrees. Several such measures had been drafted months earlier but held back by the hesitant Juárez who preferred to wait for a groundswell of support. Members of the cabinet, particularly Melchor Ocampo, Manuel Ruiz, and Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, chief authors of the new laws, had urged don Benito for weeks to take action. They had argued that the law nationalizing ecclesiastical property would provide funds needed to bankroll a winning military effort, while the other reforms would bring public support and demonstrate to the world the high purpose of the liberal cause.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies,

But Juárez continued to stall, and thus measures which most prominent liberals believed would rescue the constitutional movement were held in abeyance, victims of the president's "chronic caution."<sup>2</sup> In fact, there is evidence that Juárez was so reluctant to fix his name to the laws that he seriously considered resigning the presidency in favor of Degollado, who as first magistrate of the supreme court was legal successor.<sup>3</sup>

By late June Juárez was at last persuaded to put aside his fears and take steps to launch the next stage of the liberal reform program. On July 7 he proclaimed to the nation the nature of this new policy and outlined the laws which he subsequently issued at various times during the next seventeen months. Degollado had already left Veracruz by this time to take charge once again of the constitutional armies. But his efforts in the liberal capital had been the decisive ingredient in overcoming the president's reluctance and in bringing to Mexico the new wave of progressive legislation known as the Reform Laws.<sup>4</sup>

---

1957), p. 43; Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), pp. 202-203, 210.

<sup>2</sup>Roeder, Juárez, p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>José C. Valadés, Don Melchor Ocampo: reformador de México (México: Editorial Patria, 1954), p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>Published proclamation, Juárez, Lerdo, Ocampo, Ruiz, 7 July 1859, document no. 20, fondo XXXIII, carpeta 1,

On this last point most sources agree; while "liberals in general shared similar views [on reform], it took the impetus given by Degollado to embody these opinions into law."<sup>5</sup> Some historians refer to Degollado's impact on the president as a "powerful appeal" and an "apostolic conviction."<sup>6</sup> Melchor Alvarez reported that don Santos approached the president by offering to publish the laws himself, and if they produced nothing, he would willingly stand judgment. Among Degollado's contemporaries, Minister of Justice Manuel Ruiz and Francisco Zarco accorded him credit for prompting the issuance of the laws.<sup>7</sup>

Impresos constituciones de México, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as CEHM).

<sup>5</sup>Scholes, Mexican Politics, pp. 52-53.

<sup>6</sup>Roeder, Juárez, pp. 202, 207; Justo Sierra, Juárez, su obra y su tiempo, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971), pp. 132-133. Roeder also refers to an unnamed "elder statesman" who strongly influenced Juárez, though he was not in Veracruz.

<sup>7</sup>Melchor Alvarez, Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la guerra de Reforma (México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905), p. 145; Excerpts from exposition by Ruiz in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos, y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:480-481; El centenario de Santos Degollado, documentos y cartas (México: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1961), p. 28.

Degollado likewise believed he had personally exerted considerable influence in persuading Juárez. In a letter to Manuel Doblado he related that his trip to Veracruz had been a success and had resulted in the promulgation of the Reform Laws.<sup>8</sup> The day before Juárez' public announcement of the laws, Degollado wrote to Ocampo,

I am happy at having undertaken such an arduous trip to come help you [plural] in persuading our most worthy President to issue the reform Program and decrees. I earnestly await them because they will be our last resource, or as sailors say, our lifeboat.<sup>9</sup>

Over the years Benito Juárez has been depicted as the "author of the Reform." In attacking this image, Melchor Alvarez pointed out that Lerdo, Manuel Ruiz, and Ocampo in fact drafted the laws, and he suggested that Degollado was their true moral and material creator. Alvarez also contended that Juárez incurred no physical risk by promulgating the laws, for within Veracruz he was safe from any

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 4 July 1859, in Carlos E. Castañeda, ed., Nuevos documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 3 vols. (San Antonio: Editorial Lozano, 1930), vol. 3, La guerra de Reforma según el archivo del general D. Manuel Doblado, 3:71-72 (hereafter cited as Castañeda, Nuevos documentos).

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH).



conservative backlash.<sup>10</sup> But Justo Sierra argued that Ocampo, Lerdo, Degollado, and others who promoted the new decrees were merely secretaries to the president; they could have done nothing without him. The laws did not represent the original thought of any of Juárez' subordinates, but embodied principles common to earlier revolutions in other parts of the world. According to Sierra, Juárez professed the idea, chose the opportunity, discussed the form, and converted into law the reform principles that had for years been discussed in conjunction with the liberal movement.<sup>11</sup>

It is nevertheless clear that Juárez resisted the opinion of most liberals in the summer of 1859, and only issued the laws at last with considerable reluctance. Therefore any credit given him as creator of the Reform must be tempered by an awareness that he assumed such a role not entirely of his own volition. He did, of course, make the final decision, and as chief executive he stood charged by history to bear the ultimate consequences of that decision. But while his part in the drama was more critical to the outcome than that of anyone else, the fact

---

<sup>10</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>11</sup> Sierra, Juárez, p. 145.

remains that others played important roles as well, and among these others, Santos Degollado was paramount.

In this respect, don Santos' contribution was important if for no other reason than that of timing. Assuming that the laws would have been issued eventually, a delay of six months or a year could conceivably have altered the outcome of the conflict and the subsequent course of events during the French intervention of 1862-1867.

## 2

On July 12 the first and perhaps most fundamental of the Reform Laws was issued. This decree nationalized all Church property, capital as well as real estate, without compensation, thus making uniform many of Degollado's earlier wartime decrees as well as other liberal confiscatory measures. In fact many of the provisions of the law and certain aspects of its implementation bore striking similarity to Degollado's decrees.<sup>12</sup>

Other major Reform Laws issued that summer in 1859 established civil registry of births, deaths, and marriages; made marriage a civil ceremony; secularized cemeteries;

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 142; Jan Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875, ed. and trans. Michael P. Costeloe (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 167-168.

reduced the number of religious holidays and established civil holidays. In the following months more Church-related reforms were promulgated, including the abolition of all religious orders and the secularization of all regular clergy, the closing of novitiates, and finally in December 1860, the establishment of religious toleration. Administrative reforms included the creation of a jury system, the elimination of court fees, codification of civil and criminal codes, freedom of press, and reorganization of the army. Education was given due consideration in the establishment of free primary public education and reforms in secondary schools. Fiscal reforms included the abolition of alcabalas, bridge tolls, internal tariffs, etc.; reorganization of the national treasury; programs to encourage foreign trade; and several others.<sup>13</sup>

During his short stay in Veracruz Degollado had advised Juárez that the Reform Laws constituted the best hope liberals had of salvaging their military effort. Immediately

---

<sup>13</sup>For detailed analysis of the Reform Laws see Agustín Cue Cánovas, La Reforma liberal en México (México: Ediciones Centenario, 1960). A briefer review is given in Scholes, Mexican Politics, chapter 2. For the full text of the laws see Manuel Dublan and José María Lozano, eds., Legislación mexicana o colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república, 34 vols. (México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, a cargo de M. Lara, hijo, 1876-1904), vol. 8, 1856-1860, 8:680-705, 762-766.

after Juárez agreed to issue the laws, don Santos had confided in Ocampo that the new program would be their "lifeboat." And he remained optimistic after he departed the liberal capital and went to Tampico in July to begin preparations for setting up a new general headquarters at San Luis Potosí. He published a circular announcing that his arrival in Veracruz had coincided with the unanimous accord of the cabinet and the resolution of Juárez, and pointed out that the government had accepted most of his suggestions on the reform program. There was strong implication in his words that he was responsible for the final decision to launch the new measures.<sup>14</sup>

In personal correspondence with Melchor Ocampo that same day, Degollado's enthusiasm for the Reform Laws was less restrained as he expressed his personal reasons for wanting the decrees.

A thousand congratulations! Mutual greetings! Now I feel like a man! Because we have had the courage to say what we want and the goal toward which we are heading. If the pelona [Mexican slang for "death"] makes me a prisoner in the middle of this fandango, I will die contented embraced<sup>15</sup> by a flag that has no ambiguities or dark folds.

---

<sup>14</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 26, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Circular, Degollado, 18 July 1859, document no. 252, fondo XXXIII, carp. 1, Impresos constituciones, CEHM.

<sup>15</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 July 1859, document no. 28, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

He was nevertheless aware that the war was far from won and that his position was militarily precarious. He assured his good friend Ocampo that he would take care to avoid the "big snakes" who were pursuing him, but revealed for the first time a personal conviction that the most capable "snake," meaning Miramón, was convinced that the liberals would win and was seeking some way to rehabilitate himself.<sup>16</sup>

The following month as more of the laws were issued, don Santos expressed satisfaction, though he was impatient to see them appear more quickly. With his own quaint metaphor, he explained how the new program would carry the liberals through the remaining perils of the war, "The snakes would try to bite our heels if we continued riding on an ass; but now we are on a fat elephant and the reptiles cannot reach us."<sup>17</sup>

By mid-September, now in San Luis Potosí organizing a new offensive, Degollado believed the laws were having a good effect in restoring morale and incentive to the liberals. Although they did not immediately produce much revenue, their

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 August 1859, document no. 30, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

psychological impact was important. And for the moment at least the new reforms set in motion the process of usurping the conservative financial base and breaking the civil and economic power of the Church.<sup>18</sup>

For this reason the reaction of clerics and conservatives to the Reform Laws was understandably violent.<sup>19</sup> With the lines of conflict now more clearly drawn than ever before, the Three Years' War entered its decisive phase. Avenues for compromise were virtually erased and polarization became even more extreme. The publication of the Reform Laws was tantamount to a demand by the liberals for unconditional surrender by their opponents.

## 3

During Degollado's short stay in Veracruz, the liberal army of the center had broken up into several brigades and scattered. When don Santos left the port city, he went first to Tampico, then through Ciudad Victoria to San Luis Potosí. There he established the new liberal general headquarters in early August 1859. San Luis was chosen because

---

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 19 September 1859, document no. 36, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 55.

<sup>19</sup> Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y el segundo Imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), pp. 46-47.

its strategic location would let the constitutionalists keep the Bajío region under constant menace while also allowing Degollado the opportunity to draw men and resources from several northern states. Michoacán continued to provide the liberals with a stronghold from which they could threaten Mexico City.<sup>20</sup>

But before he could seriously endanger either the capital or the Bajío, don Santos, the "beekeeper," first had to reorganize, reunify, and reanimate the liberal military effort. He set about this task in August, but was immediately hampered in his efforts to draw upon the resources of northern states by intense rivalries among their respective local strongmen. José María Mata believed Degollado had every hope of settling these disputes, but the Mexican diplomat could not have foreseen the remarkable circumstances that emerged during the attempt.<sup>21</sup> Santiago Vidaurri, then the most powerful of the northern caudillos, was to prove the

---

<sup>20</sup>Miguel Rivera, Historia antigua y moderna de Jalapa y de las revoluciones del estado de Veracruz, 20 vols. (Tacubaya, México: Editorial Citlaltepetl, 1960), 15:85-86, 115; Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, pp. 147, 149.

<sup>21</sup>Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:98; Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 15 August 1859, in José María Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), p. 215.

greatest vexation in this regard, and his subsequent defection from the constitutional movement threatened for a time to tear it apart.

Vidaurri had served the liberals well during the Revolution of Ayutla, though his tendency to operate his northern domain independently of control from Mexico City had caused Ignacio Comonfort some distress. When the Three Years' War began, he again rallied to the liberal side. He was an accomplished field commander, and several sources report that early in the war Degollado had considered turning over to him command of the liberal army.<sup>22</sup> Juárez apparently vetoed this idea, for he felt that the vidaurreistas were not ardent constitutionalists. Ocampo relayed to don Santos the president's advice,

Without injuring Vidaurri's self-esteem, try to get him to obey you as general in chief of the federal army; if unfortunately he resists, Señor Juárez believes it more convenient to the public cause that you rotate in your orbit allowing satellites, but never planets that may eclipse your shine.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup>Justo Sierra, The Political Evolution of the Mexican People, trans. Charles Ramsdell (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), pp. 263, 284; Rivera, Historia de Jalapa y Veracruz, 15:107; Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 8 July 1858, p. 2; Manuel Valdés, Memorias de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Imprenta y Fototipia de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1913), p. 178.

<sup>23</sup>Diario de Avisos, 10 August 1858, p. 3.



Don Santos nevertheless seems to have retained a respect for Vidaurri's abilities, and until June 1859 there were no serious rifts. Early that month, however, don Santiago called for the appointment of his chief lieutenant, Juan Zuazua, as commander of the army of the north. Though this would not have been objectionable to Degollado, Vidaurri backed up his demand by threatening to recall his state's troops if the appointment were not made. Two months later Vidaurri probably further irritated don Santos by writing directly to Juárez in order to make suggestions as to how the upcoming liberal campaign should be conducted.<sup>24</sup>

Then on August 12, 1859 there occurred a minor incident arising out of the petty jealousies of some of the northern chieftains, and this led to an open clash between Vidaurri and Degollado. Juan Zuazua, who must have been upset at not having been given command of the northern army, complained to Degollado that the governors of Zacatecas and Aguascalientes had given asylum to a disobedient subordinate named Julián Quiroga. Degollado talked with Zuazua and believed he had reached an understanding with him, when the northerner unexpectedly pulled his troops out of San Luis Potosí

---

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 3 June 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, pp. 186-187; Letter, Vidaurri to Juárez, 10 August 1859, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:537-538.

leaving the liberal headquarters in an exposed and extremely vulnerable position.<sup>25</sup>

After further negotiations, Degollado granted Zuazua a short leave of absence so that he might go to Saltillo to confer with Vidaurri on the matter, which he did on August 21. But in a letter to Ocampo don Santos declared that Quiroga and the two governors had served the liberal cause well, while Zuazua and Vidaurri had not. He suggested that Juárez postpone any proceedings against Quiroga as well as the Zacatecas and Aguascalientes chieftains until after the war. And while he briefly considered cashiering Zuazua and Vidaurri, he realized how seriously this might split the liberals and resolved instead to be patient.<sup>26</sup>

But the week after Zuazua left for Saltillo two squadrons of Neuvo León militia troops deserted, and Degollado was convinced that it was don Juan's doing. He wrote to Vidaurri asking that Zuazua be punished, but he suspected don Santiago of complicity in the affair for the purpose of prolonging and profiting from the war.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup>Ronnie C. Tyler, Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p. 35; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 August 1859, document no. 30, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 September 1859, document no. 33, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Rather than punish his subordinate, Vidaurri announced on September 5 that Nuevo León and Coahuila, the two northern states under his control, had done more than their share in the war and he was forthwith ordering their militias to return home. Though he declared that this action was taken to avert further bloodshed and should not be construed as a rejection of constitutional principles, Degollado, Juárez, and historians since then have interpreted the move as an attempt by Vidaurri to establish an independent northern republic under his own rule.<sup>28</sup> Conservative newspapers, always ready to exploit rifts within their opponents' ranks, billed Degollado as an ambitious villain in the dispute, but don Santos was surprisingly successful in retaining the support of much public opinion in the northern states.<sup>29</sup>

In retaliation to Vidaurri's announcement, Degollado issued a decree on September 11 removing don Santiago from military and political command of the two northern states

---

<sup>28</sup> Decree, Vidaurri, 5 September 1859, in Documentos relativos a la Reforma en México, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, roll no. 5, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Mic DF/BINAH); Sierra, Political Evolution, p. 291; Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), p. 320.

<sup>29</sup> Diario de Avisos, 15 October 1859, pp. 1-2; Valdés, Memorias, p. 179.

and ordering him to stand trial for treason. Don Santos named José Silvestre Aramberri to the vacant post and made it the new commander's first assignment to capture Vidaurri. At the same time Degollado appealed to liberal troops, especially those of the northern frontier, to remain loyal and denounced Vidaurri's treason as the irrational act of a selfish, ambitious man.<sup>30</sup>

The day after he deposed Vidaurri, don Santos sent word of his action to the Veracruz government. It is clear that Degollado took these steps entirely on his own, and apparently Juárez first learned of the incident from newspapers. Two weeks after Vidaurri was replaced, the president approved of the action and hoped that the people and troops of Nuevo León would also accept it.<sup>31</sup>

Ignacio Zaragoza and the most important elements of the northern army did indeed accept the removal of Vidaurri, but others remained loyal to don Santiago. Nonetheless, on September 25 the recalcitrant chieftain was captured and two weeks later sent across the border to Texas. Though he

---

<sup>30</sup>Two decrees, Degollado, 11 September 1859 and 12 September 1859, roll 5, Mic DF/BINAH.

<sup>31</sup>Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 12 September 1859, and letter, Ocampo to governor of Tamaulipas, 20 September 1859, and letter, Ocampo to Degollado, 27 September 1859, all on roll 5, Mic DF/BINAH.

later returned and regained control of Nuevo León, he did not personally affect the subsequent course of the war.<sup>32</sup>

Repercussions of this clash, however, did continue to influence the events of the war. French Minister Gabriac predicted that it would in fact destroy the liberal cause. By April 1860 don Santos was still trying to persuade the legislature of Nuevo León and Coahuila to remain loyal to the Juárez government. In August the dispute between Vidaurri partisans and the Veracruz regime was still raging and apparently continued to do so right up to the end of the war in December.<sup>33</sup>

Among other things, the Vidaurri affair served to focus attention on factionalism within the liberal party, and

<sup>32</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 6 October 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, p. 238; Tyler, Vidaurri, pp. 36-37. Juan Zuazua was later killed. Vidaurri remained in power and came to dominate much of northeastern Mexico. He developed close ties with the Confederate States of America and sided with Maximilian when the French captured his state. He was finally captured and killed by juaristas in July 1867.

<sup>33</sup> Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 2:112; Santos Degollado, Refutación del mensaje del ejecutivo de estado, en vindicación de los principios constitutivos de la unión federal, conculcados por D. Santiago Vidaurri y sostenidas por el ciudadano Santos Degollado como general en jefe de las tropas constitucionales de la república mexicana (Tampico: Impreso Carlos Segura, 1860); La Sociedad (Mexico City), 9 August 1860, p. 1.

especially on disputes among liberal military commanders. Immediately after he deposed Vidaurri, Degollado had to deal with a similar quarrel in Durango. Here Esteban Coronado, who commanded 4,000 men, constantly clashed with other liberal leaders in the area, including Jesús González Ortega and Pedro Ogazón. Originally don Santos intended to let the caudillos fight it out among themselves. But in November González Ortega had a dispute with Coronado's right-hand man Juan José Subízar, and don Santos feared that Coronado might abandon the strategic port of Tepic in order to rush to Subízar's aid. It was a particularly touchy situation, for don Santos believed Coronado was not very loyal, a "little Vidaurri" he explained, but he commanded a large force which controlled an important area. If properly handled, Degollado hoped, Coronado would cooperate with Ogazón and together they could capture Guadalajara.<sup>34</sup>

González Ortega, on the other hand, was not as "dangerous" as Coronado, in Degollado's opinion. But he did not have as many forces as don Esteban, and he did not occupy as strategic a position. Moreover don Santos felt confident that he could

---

<sup>34</sup>Three letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 5 November 1859, document no. 48, 6 October 1859, document no. 40, 27 October 1859, document no. 46, all in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

handle González Ortega's ambition--"I will conduct myself with great prudence toward him and will let him feel as little as possible the rein I hold in my hand."<sup>35</sup> All of Degollado's efforts in this incident came to nought, but at least the conflict did not erupt into an open clash.

About that same time Degollado restored Manuel Doblado to command in Guanajuato. Many liberals looked upon Doblado as a deserter after he surrendered his army in March 1858, following the first important liberal defeat at Salamanca, but don Santos had need of his services. This required a considerable personal sacrifice on Degollado's part, for he greatly disliked Doblado and explained to Ocampo, "no man has personally insulted me as has he." Almost immediately after being restored to command, don Manuel quarreled with another liberal commander, Juan Traconis, and in late September Degollado had to go to San Felipe to settle that dispute.<sup>36</sup>

All this squabbling made it well nigh impossible to conduct a coordinated offensive, and Degollado soon began

---

<sup>35</sup>Two letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 5 November 1859, document no. 48, 29 August 1859, document no. 31, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>36</sup>Roeder, Juárez, p. 205; Valdés, Memorias, p. 182; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 July 1859, document no. 29, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

to complain bitterly about his "zoological collection of beasts." He pleaded "May God enlighten me in order to govern men so full of vices and vile passions."<sup>37</sup> He suggested to Ocampo that the liberals' real difficulties would begin after they marched into Mexico City and began to try to decide who would rule. But that would be the problem of "you poor ones who are the government," don Santos declared. "As for me, I promise to play the little duck, whom the curious will see disappear and not resume quacking until reaching the other side of the pond [meaning the Atlantic]."<sup>38</sup>

Don Santos' bitterness was evident in another step he took in October 1859. José López Uruga approached Juárez late that summer asking for a position, and Ocampo sent him to Degollado. López Uruga was a talented military commander, but an ambitious opportunist and former santanista who changed sides regularly during his long career. Ocampo cautioned don Santos against giving López Uruga a post, but the commander-in-chief was intrigued with his old adversary. Don José arrived at San Luis Potosí flat broke, and Degollado shared

---

<sup>37</sup>Two letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 October 1859, document no. 40, 13 October 1859, document no. 42, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>38</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 5 November 1859, document no. 48, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.



his bread with him. Finally, apologizing to Ocampo for ignoring his friend's advice, Degollado made López Uraga quartermaster of the army of the center. He explained,

I am so slashed, so bruised by the blows that unblemished liberals have given and give me, [liberals] who know only how to hinder, to grumble, to ask for pay and to conspire against the quick end to the struggle, that now those men seem good to me who without political ideas serve whoever pays them.<sup>39</sup>

López Uraga gave immediate evidence of his military sagacity by quickly sizing up the liberal army. He confided to his diary that it would be difficult for the liberals to win unless they could eliminate the provincialism of officers and men and establish strict discipline. And this, he believed would not be easy, "since the cancer extends down from one step below don Santos."<sup>40</sup> This should probably not be taken as a high evaluation of Degollado's military talents, but as a recognition of his singleminded determination to place the cause of liberal reform and military victory above personal concerns and jealousies.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 October 1859, document no. 41, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>40</sup> José López Uraga, Diary, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas, rare books call no. G470A, leaf 9.

In the midst of all these irritating hindrances Degollado was working to establish his headquarters and organize a campaign. He was bitter and frustrated, but Guillermo Prieto observed that his faith had not been shaken "one iota."<sup>41</sup> He ranged through the regions around San Luis Potosí raising funds and recruiting forces.<sup>42</sup> He planned to disperse several light brigades around the Bajío to raid conservative units and major towns, but hoped to avoid pitched battle. If the conservatives responded to any of these thrusts by concentrating their forces in one area, Degollado believed it would weaken the defenses at Guanajuato or Guadalajara. This would enable the liberals to move in and capture either city or seize money and equipment and flee. Don Santos intended to continue maneuvering in this way until he had raised and equipped an 8-10,000 man army. He would then sweep through the Bajío from south to north before descending upon Mexico City.<sup>43</sup>

But as usual raising revenue did not come as easily as Degollado wished. He had begun arranging loans in the field

---

<sup>41</sup> Castañeda, Nuevos documentos, 3:96.

<sup>42</sup> Valdés, Memorias, p. 174.

<sup>43</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 August 1859, document no. 30, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

with local and foreign merchants, and while they were often negotiated in haste, they were nevertheless serious matters with Degollado. When on the eve of the battle of Tacubaya he had borrowed 1,500 pesos from a merchant to buy powder and had neglected to give a receipt, don Santos wrote directly to Veracruz urging that the debt be repaid post haste. The greatest benefit of recognition by the United States, in Degollado's opinion, would be financial, "It will be worth more to us than winning ten battles." Thus when Mata showed little talent for securing loans in the United States, don Santos urged that Miguel Lerdo de Tejada be sent north with Fermín Gómez Farías to assume the task.<sup>44</sup>

But Lerdo went to the United States and failed, so by September 1859 the financial condition of the army was desperate. Degollado pleaded with Ocampo, "I earnestly beg you to help me with some money, for it is impossible for me to do miracles." Don Santos feared that perhaps some liberals who suspected him of ambition were hindering the efforts to raise money for him.<sup>45</sup> He complained to Doblado, "This lack

---

<sup>44</sup>Two letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 June 1859, document no. 26, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>45</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 September 1859, document no. 33, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH. At the time Lerdo visited the United States, American leaders were

of money paralyzes all my projects and has me in perpetual bitterness."<sup>46</sup>

In early October he appealed directly to Juárez, promising that with sufficient funds he could raise 15,000 men, sweep through the Bajío, and fall upon Mexico City with 20,000 men, capturing it without resistance. To Ocampo he made a less grandiose and perhaps more realistic pledge the following week--with funds for 19 days he could gather 6,000 men and subdue the entire Bajío. For all this entreaty Degollado was still left to his own designs, and even when he did manage to arrange some small loans, customs red tape at Veracruz frustrated his immediate needs.<sup>47</sup>

Don Santos may have found some consolation in the knowledge that the conservatives were having similar problems. Mata had received reports that in some areas clergymen were

---

offering Mexico several million dollars for a treaty of concessions, and they may well have discouraged American creditors from loaning money to Lerdo in order to compel Mexico to accept their offer.

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 11 September 1859, in Castañeda, Nuevos documentos, 3:106.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 10 October 1859, document no. 1, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5; two letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 17 October 1859, document no. 43, 3 November 1859, document no. 47, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5; all three letters in AH/INAH.

selling Church adornments to raise money for Miramón.

On October 27 Leonardo Márquez seized a foreign-owned silver conducta, or shipment, in Guadalajara valued at 600,000 pesos. He needed the funds to keep his army intact, though Degollado, perhaps unfairly, suggested he was feathering a nest abroad in case the conservatives lost. Since don Leonardo's seizure could jeopardize the conservatives' foreign recognition, Miramón ordered the funds returned, then suspended Márquez from command and made plans for his court martial.<sup>48</sup> Partly because of Miramón's factional headaches, Degollado was developing the notion that don Miguel was beginning to lean toward the liberal side.

But just two days after Márquez seized the silver conducta, Miramón himself demonstrated exactly how serious was the financial situation of the conservative government, for on October 29 he agreed to the incredible Jecker loan.

---

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 15 August 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, p. 215; Rivera, Anales mexicanos, p. 48; Edward E. Dunbar, The Mexican Papers: the Mexican question, the Great American question, with personal reminiscences (New York: J.A.H. Hasbrouck and Co., 1860), 15 August 1869, p. 31; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 3 November 1859, document no. 47, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH. Partly because of Miramón's factional problems, Degollado was acquiring the notion that don Miguel was beginning to lean toward the liberal side; see letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

For approximately 723,000 pesos in cash and 468,000 pesos in equipment, Miramón gave Swiss banker John B. Jecker Mexican bonds worth 15 million pesos.<sup>49</sup> It was just two years later that the French, using the pretext of collecting the Jecker loan, joined Britain and Spain in an intervention in Mexico that led to five more years of war.

In addition to the international provocation his conducta seizure might cause, Márquez was responsible in other ways for adding to his government's diplomatic worries. The United States chargé complained in October that don Leonardo had murdered an American citizen in Tepic, and he urged the Buchanan administration to ask Congress for authorization to intervene in Mexico. In December, 1859, during the course of his annual message to congress, Buchanan did just that, but congress refused. Also that fall the Miramón government yielded to Spanish pressure and signed the Mon-Almonte Treaty, recognizing not only recent claims by Spanish citizens for damages, but reassuming obligation incurred in an 1853 treaty for claims many Mexicans believed cancelled.<sup>50</sup> The Juárez party feared, moreover, that the

---

<sup>49</sup>Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970), 1:280.

<sup>50</sup>Two letters, Reintrie to Cass, 5 October 1859, 6 November 1859, in William R. Manning, ed. Diplomatic Correspondence

treaty was a first step toward restoration of Spanish colonialism in Mexico. Therefore it seems that both financially and diplomatically, the conservatives were at least as troubled as the liberals in the fall of 1859.

## 5

Seeing all this adversity falling upon his enemies may have lifted Degollado's spirits. The first week in November, as he set out from San Luis Potosí to direct liberal operations in the Bajío campaign, he was optimistic that he could soon bring the war to an end.<sup>51</sup> His mood was so improved that he could even joke about his quarreling subordinates and his own role in the war, for as he departed, he left Guillermo Prieto behind to

. . . serve as mediator in this subsidiary [branch] of my cage of beasts. Besides since I will not be able to communicate frequently with my Dulcinea of Veracruz [Ocampo], Prieto will be the Sancho who relates news of the pirouettes which his master [Degollado] makes in the Sierra Morena.<sup>52</sup>

---

of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:1129-1130, 1134; James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 10 vols. (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1904), 5:567-568; Scholes, Mexican Politics, p. 32; Rivera, Anales mexicanos, p. 48.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 5 November 1859, document no. 48, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

On November 7 don Santos arrived in Guanajuato, captured by Doblado a few days earlier. The liberal commander-in-chief was greeted with fireworks and bells by the crowds of civilians. But don Santos objected to this old tradition, lamenting that his "democratic friends" would use any excuse to celebrate and complaining that they made "more noise than a stuck pig."<sup>53</sup>

In Guanajuato don Santos altered his plans. He had intended either to attack San Miguel or Querétaro or to march against Adrián Woll in Zacatecas. But he learned that Miramón was coming northward from the Federal District, so he decided to head for Querétaro where he expected to encounter don Miguel on the eleventh. He confided in Ocampo that he intended to confer with Miramón, and he hoped that by exploiting the rift with Márquez he might persuade the conservative president to give up the war. Therefore he headed south with 6,000 men and 29 pieces of artillery, describing his situation as comparable to that of the biblical Daniel.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 November 1859, document no. 5, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.

<sup>54</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 5 November 1859, document no. 48, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 November 1859, document no. 5, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH.



Miramón brought his forces westward from Querétaro, and in the late afternoon on November 12 the two commanding generals met near Celaya, accompanied only by their aides. This was probably the first time don Santos met in person the man known as "young Macabeo." Degollado asked don Miguel to accept the Constitution of 1857 and end the warfare, but the conservative president refused to do so. Despite this rebuff, don Santos came away convinced that Miramón "desires a finish to the war which he confesses cannot end but with the triumph of the liberal ideas."<sup>55</sup>

Degollado acquired a great admiration for Miramón's gallantry at this meeting, but unfortunately he also became inured to this apparent misconception that don Miguel would give in as soon as his self-esteem would permit it.<sup>56</sup> It

---

<sup>55</sup> Liberals and conservatives alike called Miramón "Macabeo," after Judas Maccabee, a great Jewish patriot and religious warrior of the second century B.C. Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 18 November 1859, in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, compañías, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, 11:92 (hereafter cited as García, Documentos); Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 19 November 1859, document no. 50, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 November 1859, document no. 49, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

was an idea that stayed with don Santos throughout the war and on occasion led to other misjudgments.

As the two men parted company, Miramón told Degollado that he would defeat him within the next 24 hours. Tradition has it that don Santos responded, "My duty is not to conquer but to fight for principles which, in the end, must triumph for they are of a magnificent revolution which, in the moral order, is taking place throughout the country."<sup>57</sup>

Quite simply, meeting with Miramón in the first place had probably been a tactical mistake. It let the conservative general stall long enough to concentrate his forces, which were inferior in number to the liberals. It was one more example of Degollado's hope of ending the war as soon as possible to prevent further bloodshed. It was not the action of a shrewd battlefield commander in search of a victory.<sup>58</sup>

Early the next morning don Santos deployed his forces on the heights overlooking Estancia de las Vacas, a small ranch settlement two leagues from Querétaro. An hour later the conservatives moved up on line, and at 9 A.M. Degollado

---

<sup>57</sup> For this quote see Vicente Fuentes Díaz, Santos Degollado, el santo de la Reforma (México: Talleres Imprenta Arana, 1959), p. 174.

<sup>58</sup> Sierra, Juárez, p. 152; Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 199.

threw José María Arteaga's units at Miramón's left flank. This assault met with some success, and don Santos quickly supported it by hurling more forces at the conservative right. Again the enemy wavered. He then sent Miguel Blanco's infantry smashing into Miramón's center. It was standard on-line military tactics in those days to attack an opponent's flanks compelling him to take men from the center to hold the threatened points, then to thrust at his weakened center. With these standard maneuvers executed perfectly, the middle of the conservative line started to collapse.<sup>59</sup>

At this point, however, the tide of battle quickly turned. Two liberal officers spearheading the assault were killed, spreading disorder through liberal ranks. At the same time Miramón, who just learned that he would not receive expected reinforcements from Woll, personally led a desperate counterattack to regain the lost center. The liberals began to fall back, and Degollado, afoot after his horse collapsed, could not rally them. A few of his men attempted to make a stand at some nearby houses, but

---

<sup>59</sup>Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 18 November 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:92-93, which is Degollado's account, and Diario de Avisos, 19 November 1859, p. 3, which is Miramón's account, agree remarkably well up to this point in the battle.

by 11 A.M. they too had to retire. Degollado and several of his officers were the last to retreat, but finally the conservatives were left command of the field.<sup>60</sup>

The liberal army lost all 30 pieces of artillery because panic-stricken soldiers had fled on the mules used to pull the cannon. The conservatives had exhausted their ammunition and were thus unable to pursue, but don Santos was ambushed as he rode through Celaya and was nearly shot.<sup>61</sup> Estimates of the number of liberals killed and captured at Estancia de las Vacas range from 120 to 420, but since Miramón admitted to losing 200 of his own men killed and wounded, the liberal losses must have been higher than that. Among those captured was liberal general José Justo Alvarez, who had accidentally wounded himself the day before the battle and had his leg amputated in Celaya. In addition the liberals lost at least 40 munitions wagons, 500 arms, and nearly all their supplies.<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.; telegram, Miramón to minister of war, 13 November 1859, in García folder 28, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 18 November 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:94; Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 212.

<sup>62</sup> Manuel Cambre, La guerra de tres años (México: Biblioteca de Autores Jaliscienses, 1949), p. 286; Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of

It was an incredible battle, considered by some to be Miramón's greatest victory. Degollado had watched while an army he spent six months building was tactically destroyed in four hours. Partly because of the success at Estancia de las Vacas, the foundering cause of the conservatives was boosted and sustained for several more months.<sup>63</sup>

## 6

By November 17 don Santos was back in San Luis Potosí. Unable to hold the city, he abandoned it the following week and headed north for Matehuala. He dispatched Prieto to Veracruz to explain the situation and then made plans to join Jesús González Ortega in Zacatecas, in hopes of pulling together another army.<sup>64</sup> This was a challenging task, for many liberals had now completely lost confidence in Degollado as commander-in-chief of the constitutionalists.

---

The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:771; Diario de Avisos, 19 November 1859, p. 3; letter, Degollado to minister of war, 18 November 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:95. The conservatives suggested that Alvarez shot himself to stay out of the battle; Diario de Avisos, 18 November 1859, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 212.

<sup>64</sup> Valdés, Memorias, p. 195; Diario de Avisos, 27 December 1859, p. 2.

Critics suggested that don Santos had violated some of the standard precepts of military science during the Estancia campaign. For example, Juan Suárez Navarro told Juárez that Degollado's 30 pieces of artillery were well above the accepted limit of three per 1,000 men, and thus the liberal army had been overburdened, with too many troops tied up handling cannon.<sup>65</sup> Those who defended Degollado complained that subordinates, especially Doblado, had disobeyed orders and botched their assignments.<sup>66</sup> But whatever the case, distrust of Degollado's abilities continued to spread, particularly through the liberal officer corps, and there were the beginnings of rumblings for his replacement.<sup>67</sup>

The defeat had left Degollado's self-confidence shaken also. It is not insignificant that after Estancia de las Vacas he never again attempted actively to direct troops in battle. His immediate reaction, expressed in candid

---

<sup>65</sup> Letter, Navarro to Juárez, 12 November 1860, Ms. J/2-134, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AJ/BN).

<sup>66</sup> Luis Pérez Verdía, Historia particular del estado de Jalisco, desde los primeros tiempos de que hay noticia, hasta nuestros días, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Guadalajara, México: Gráfica, 1952), 3:93.

<sup>67</sup> For example, see Valdés, Memorias, pp. 195, 198-199.

letters to Ocampo, however, was bitter defensiveness. He blamed the loss on his "terrible officers," whom he accused of being cowards and "traffickers in blood." "Traffickers" was another reference by Degollado to what he believed to be a group which sought to prolong the war for personal gain. He grumbled that the liberal military leadership had become corrupted, and he told Ocampo that only by recruiting a foreign legion could the liberals soon win the war.<sup>68</sup>

Publicly Degollado was somewhat less defensive. In his report to Veracruz he offered to appear anywhere to answer charges regarding his conduct.<sup>69</sup> In a public proclamation to his soldiers he repeated the offer, though he suggested that his removal would destroy the unity of the constitutional army, a contention that was probably true. He also urged liberal troops not to lose faith and asserted that their inevitable victory would not be deferred by temporary setbacks. If their reputations were marred at Estancia they must erase the stain with their own blood and

---

<sup>68</sup> Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 235; Two letters, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 November 1859, document no. 49, 19 November 1859, document no. 50, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 18 November 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:96.

that of their enemies. "We have only one path to rectification: battle. Women weep; men take vengeance."<sup>70</sup>

On November 29, some of his bitterness having subsided, Degollado confessed to Ocampo that he simply could not understand the loss at Estancia. He pointed out that the conservatives had not turned his flank, they had not surprised him, they had not broken through with artillery. As well as he could determine, two companies of one battalion had become disorderly, and that had been enough to scatter the entire line, including rear guard, like a "flock of doves." For this reason he could only continue to suspect the "speculation" of a group which had a vested interest in seeing the war continue.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time don Santos told Ocampo that he had decided to come to Veracruz once again "to try to get you to take from me a burden that I can no longer carry with honor . . . ."<sup>72</sup> It is doubtful that this was a sincere motive, for don Santos went on to explain that if forced to stay on as commander-in-chief, he must be given absolutely

---

<sup>70</sup>Proclamation, Degollado, 18 November 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:97-98.

<sup>71</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 29 November 1859, document no. 51, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.



revolutionary authority. Instead of honestly asking to be relieved, he was most likely making a pitch for sympathy from his close friend. In a published circular issued two days later he declared that he was going to Veracruz to explain the continued failure of the liberal armies and to suggest how the cause might yet be saved. And he informed his troops that if Juárez rejected his advice,

. . . another more fortunate than I will come to command the constitutional army; I will lay aside before the nation my sword as General in Chief, and I will return to the side of my brothers in arms to serve as a simple soldier until attaining the triumph of our cause.<sup>73</sup>

Before departing from the theater of conflict, don Santos took note of the fact that the always chivalrous Miramón had treated liberal prisoners well after the battle of Estancia. He thus cautioned his men to reciprocate by being merciful toward conservatives. "War is sufficiently cruel in itself," he advised, "so that its dismal consequences should not be aggravated with a spirit of cruelty . . . among sons of the same country."<sup>74</sup>

On December 9 Degollado set out for Tampico, there to take passage down the coast to the liberal capital.<sup>75</sup> Just

---

<sup>73</sup>Published circular, Degollado, 1 December 1859, document no. 261, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 3, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, CEHM.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>José López Uruga, Diary, leaf 11.

six days later, unaware that don Santos was already enroute, Juárez sent instructions that he come to Veracruz to map out a new campaign plan. Part of the reason for this desire to formulate new strategy certainly must have been disappointment at past failures. But there was another purpose, the only one mentioned in the dispatch to Degollado. It was that the Juárez government had just signed a treaty granting certain concessions to the United States, and don Santos was needed to help plan how to use the "services" Mexico would receive in compensation from the North Americans.<sup>76</sup>

Therefore, just as had been the case in 1858, the year came to an end with the liberal army of the center in ruins, but with a flicker of hope on the horizon. The shattering losses at Tacubaya and Estancia de las Vacas, the constant bickering and factionalism among liberal officers, and the growing lack of confidence in Degollado's leadership all served to make 1859 a year which must have filled don Santos with despair. Yet the constitutionalists had gained the recognition of the United States, they had promulgated the Reform Laws, thus giving the struggle new meaning, and now

---

<sup>76</sup> Letter, minister of war to Degollado, 15 December 1859, in García, Documentos, 11:99.

as the year came to a close, a treaty with the United States held out hope of new resources which would enable the liberals to mount a winning campaign. For Degollado the situation was clearly not irretrievable.

## CHAPTER IX

### MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS

#### 1

Santos Degollado arrived in Veracruz in late December 1859, just as disagreement over the recently-signed treaty with the United States caused a shakeup in the Juárez cabinet. Melchor Ocampo stepped down as minister of foreign relations, and President Juárez asked Degollado to take over the position. Don Santos reluctantly agreed to serve for a short time and officially assumed office on January 23, 1860.<sup>1</sup>

Degollado immediately regretted his decision. He found himself in an unenviable middle position in a cabinet torn by dissension, for the two dynamic personalities of the cabinet, Miguel Lerdo de Tejada and Ocampo, often clashed. Degollado's friendship with Ocampo was well-known, and Lerdo, who remained as the dominant figure in the administration, must certainly have mistrusted don Santos. In addition

---

<sup>1</sup>Published circular, 23 January 1860, document no. 2, Expediente personal de Gral. Santos Degollado, decimal classification I/131/817; topografía L-E-371, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Expediente de Degollado, AG/SRE).

there may have been some liberals in Veracruz for whom Degollado's Church-related background and his peace feelers to Miramón made his suspect.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently three weeks after he took office as minister of foreign relations, Degollado submitted his resignation and began planning to return to the army in San Luis Potosí. But Juárez refused to allow it on the grounds that Veracruz was once again beseiged by Miramón, and under those circumstances the resignation might be misconstrued and prove damaging to the government.<sup>3</sup> So Degollado stayed on, political heir to that continuing dispute over the treaty with the United States which had placed him in office in the first place.

Robert McLane, the American agent who had extended formal recognition to Juárez in April 1859, had remained in Veracruz to negotiate the treaty. He had constantly reassured the liberal president and Ocampo, who handled the intense

---

<sup>2</sup> Diario de Avisos, (Mexico City), 30 January 1860, p. 3; Paul Murray, Tres norteamericanos y su participación en el desarrollo del tratado McLane-Ocampo, 1856-1860 (Guadalajara, México: Imprenta "Gráfica," 1946), p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Letter, Degollado to Reina, 7 February 1860, in Diario de Avisos, 3 April 1860, p. 3; Letter, Degollado to Llave, 13 February 1860, document no. 4; letter, Llave to Degollado, 18 February 1860, document no. 5, both in Expediente de Degollado, AG/SRE.

bargaining for the Juárez administration, that closer commercial ties would more likely insure better relations between the two countries than would United States acquisition of Mexican territory. But many Mexicans were suspicious, and well they should have been, for McLane admitted that President James Buchanan believed commercial intimacy would "prepare the way for the admission of all the Mexican States into our Union."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, during the negotiations of 1859, McLane pressed Mexico very hard to cede Baja California to the United States, in what was intended to be perhaps the first step toward Buchanan's objective. But Juárez would not cede or sell any territory, so the bargaining was narrowed to other concessions.<sup>5</sup>

The treaty was formally signed on December 14, 1859. The United States received the right of transit across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the right to introduce troops there to protect American citizens and goods in times of emergency; other rights of transit from the Gulf of California to a point near Nogales in Arizona; and certain concessions in trade and in railroad construction in northern Mexico.

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert M. McLane, Reminiscences, 1827-1897 (privately printed, 1903; Harvard College Library, 1922), pp. 143-145.

<sup>5</sup> Jorge L. Tamayo, "El tratado McLane-Ocampo," Historia Mexicana 21(1972):593-595, 602-603.

The Juárez government was to receive upon ratification of the treaty four million dollars, half of which would be applied toward United States claims against Mexico.<sup>6</sup>

Juárez immediately approved the use of funds, of which the liberals had little to spare, to hire propagandists in the United States to promote ratification by the American senate.<sup>7</sup> In addition, Melchor Ocampo, who was to be sent on a special mission to Great Britain, was instructed first to visit the United States and to do whatever he could to secure passage of the treaty.<sup>8</sup>

It is doubtful that Mexican lobbying could have had much influence, since there were powerful American objections to the treaty. The traditional explanation has been that

---

<sup>6</sup>For the full text of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty, see José Fuentes Mares, Juárez y los Estados Unidos, 5th ed. (México: Editorial JUS, 1972), pp. 227-232, or Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 3:751-766.

<sup>7</sup>Letter, Degollado to Mata, 28 January 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:29. Murray, Tres norteamericanos, p. 42 suggests that for \$100,000 Mata could have bought enough votes in the senate to assure ratification.

<sup>8</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 February 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:599. Ocampo was also to probe other matters, such as a U.S.-Mexican alliance, possible aid in the form of U.S. military forces, an American guarantee to keep filibusters out of Mexico, etc.

northerners in the United States blocked ratification out of fear that the treaty was a southern scheme to expand slave-holding territory. Though there is some truth to this, in fact many southerners also opposed the treaty, because it gained for the United States neither territory nor absolute control of any of the rights-of-way. There was also some fear that the agreement would pave the way for a free trade relationship with Mexico, which would work to the detriment of American industry. Moreover, some senators believed that the conservatives might still win, and they doubted Juárez' legal capacity to speak in Mexico's behalf. Consequently it was not by a strictly sectional vote that the treaty was rejected in the senate in May 1860.<sup>9</sup>

## 2

The McLane-Ocampo Treaty has been the source of intense debate in Mexico from 1859 to the present day. Those who over the years have criticized the Juárez administration for agreeing to the treaty have generally pointed out Buchanan's

---

<sup>9</sup>Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 123; Agustín Cue Cánovas, El tratado McLane-Ocampo: Juárez, los Estados Unidos, y Europa (México: Editorial América Nueva, 1956), pp. 239-241; Edward E. Dunbar, The Mexican papers: the Mexican question, the Great American question, with personal reminiscences (New York: J.A.H. Hasbrouck and Co., 1860), 15 September 1860, pp. 122-123; Tamayo, "McLane-Ocampo," p. 608.



strong desire for territorial expansion and his firm belief that the Manifest Destiny of the United States would lead to the assimilation of Mexico.<sup>10</sup> Juárez, these critics suggest, grew so desperate for funds to defeat his enemies that he either knowingly or unwittingly played into Buchanan's hands by trading Mexico's national sovereignty for this revenue. He surrendered control of national territory by according a foreign power the right to introduce armed forces in Mexico at its own discretion. Conservatives at the time branded Juárez a traitor, and many accounts since then have labeled his behavior in the affair unforgivable.<sup>11</sup>

Those who have defended Juárez and the liberals contend that the treaty did not sell out Mexico's national sovereignty, but instead sought to preserve it. They have argued that a quick liberal victory was the only means of averting a

---

<sup>10</sup> Murray, Tres norteamericanos, pp. 6, 8-10; James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902, 10 vols. (Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1904), 5:469. Also see again McLane's remark above that Buchanan saw the treaty as a first step toward annexation.

<sup>11</sup> Justo Sierra, Juárez, su obra y su tiempo, 2nd ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971), pp. 143, 148-151; Fuentes Mares, Juárez y los Estados Unidos, p. 143; Murray, Tres norteamericanos, p. 26.

European intervention, a scheme being promoted by their conservative opponents at that time which would subvert democracy and independence in Mexico by installing a foreign monarch. With American funds the liberals could win the war, reestablish stability, and set about paying off the foreign debt, thus eliminating the threat of European intervention by removing the debt question as a pretext.<sup>12</sup>

Supporters of Juárez have argued that he never intended to accept the treaty, but that he prolonged and controlled the negotiations and led McLane to believe he wanted the treaty in order to retain United States support for his regime. This steady American support caused European powers to shy away from interfering in Mexico. The most recent justification of the treaty from the Mexican viewpoint suggests that because of pressure from Europe, the United States, and the conservatives, it was a practical necessity that Juárez accept the accord. And, this study argues, Juárez gave up no territory nor sovereign control of any territory, and he secured the best possible guarantees

---

<sup>12</sup>Cue Cánovas, El tratado McLane-Ocampo, is the most detailed defense of Juárez' motives and actions in the affair; eg. see pp. 246-247.

that the United States would not abuse its right to send in troops.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, defenders of the Juárez regime point out that in November 1860, when the time limit on ratification of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty expired, Juárez vetoed the suggestion to extend the time limit, thus killing any remaining hopes for the treaty. A recent study describes this move as a great decision which revealed Juárez' growth as a mature statesman and also demonstrated that he truly did not want the treaty.<sup>14</sup> Yet in November 1860 the liberals had all but won the war and no longer needed American revenue. Also, one should remember that during the spring of 1860, while the United States senate was considering ratification, the liberal government went to great lengths, including appropriation of funds for propagandizing and sending Ocampo as a special agent, to secure American ratification of a treaty that defenders suggest Juárez did not really want.

While purely conjectural, another possibility not heretofore explored is that the liberal negotiation and signing of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty may in fact have retarded

---

<sup>13</sup>Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), pp. 260-261; Tamayo, "McLane-Ocampo," pp. 602-603; McLane, Reminiscences, pp. 140-145.

<sup>14</sup>Tamayo, "McLane-Ocampo," pp. 607-609.

the constitutional effort and thus contributed to foreign intervention in 1862. After the United States recognized the Juárez regime in April 1859, liberals expected that they would be extended credit by American banking houses, but Mata, Lerdo, and other juaristas who sought private loans in the United States consistently failed.<sup>15</sup> At least one author has conjectured that this was because of the McLane-Ocampo negotiations.<sup>16</sup> Washington knew that if Juárez could secure funds privately, he would not need to make concessions to the United States, and thus the American government may well have used its influence to block the extension of private credit to the liberals.

After the treaty was signed in December 1859, Degollado instructed Mata to seek a half-million peso loan from an American banking house on the basis of the yet-to-be ratified accord.<sup>17</sup> But again Mata had no luck. It seems likely that by that time United States bankers preferred to wait and see if ratification was forthcoming, for this factor could markedly affect the nature of any financial arrangement with

---

<sup>15</sup>Two letters, Mata to Ocampo, 6 May 1859 and 19 June 1859, both in José María Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), pp. 178, 193; Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 13 January 1860, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Murray, The Catholic Church in Mexico: Historical Essays for the General Reader (México: Editorial E.P.M., 1965), p. 171.

<sup>17</sup>Letter, Degollado to Mata, 3 February 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:604-605.

Mexico. Therefore perhaps directly because of the treaty, in both the negotiation stage and while ratification was pending, potential American sources of revenue for the liberals were dried up. To carry this hypothesis one step further is to steal the thunder of Juárez' defenders, for if the liberal government had never even considered the treaty, private loans might have been available, thus allowing the liberals to achieve victory sooner, restore order, and avert foreign intervention by resuming payments on the debt.

Santos Degollado, while close friends with Ocampo, openly objected to the treaty from the very beginning, and he candidly told its co-signer that he hoped it would not be ratified. He believed the liberals could win the war "without the help of our neighbor speculators."<sup>18</sup> Apparently don Santos' opposition to the treaty was prompted by his deep distrust of American motives. The year before, when negotiations on the accord had first begun and McLane was pressing hard for territorial cession, Degollado had warned

---

<sup>18</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 26 May 1860, document no. 53, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH).

Ocampo, "I consider lost all portions of the Republic that our ambitious neighbors may occupy."<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, as Juárez' foreign minister, don Santos faithfully relayed instructions to José María Mata, the Mexican minister in Washington, regarding schemes to promote ratification. Mata believed Mexico must trust in the good faith of the United States, for there was greater danger, he suggested, in a European intervention, if the concessions were not made.<sup>20</sup> Many liberals believed that the McLane-Ocampo treaty was quite simply the lesser of two evils-- acceptance of a possible future United States intervention to avert a nearly certain and immediate European intervention. Degollado remained suspicious, however, and several months later, when a threatening Spanish squadron at Veracruz did indeed seem to forebode a European incursion, he wryly predicted that "our dear old friends" the Americans would bide their time until "we are well mangled so they can afterward swallow us more easily and stuff themselves with Cuba."<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 June 1859, document no. 26, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>20</sup> Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 19 September 1859, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, pp. 229-231.

<sup>21</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 August 1860, document no. 63, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

As minister of foreign relations, Degollado was not simply marking time in Veracruz. He handled routine diplomatic matters, such as demanding the recall of the United States consul in Veracruz for involvement in contraband trade and excessive drinking; seeking to block efforts by a conservative agent in the United States to procure arms; and raising enough money to maintain the Mexican legation in Washington. But there were other, less mundane responsibilities as well. For example, in late January he began arranging a confidential mission to Great Britain for Ocampo. Don Melchor was to offer a reduction of tariffs on British goods and the resumption of payments on the debt in exchange for recognition of the Juárez regime.<sup>22</sup>

Degollado's overriding concern, however, was still the war and how to end it. In March 1860 he became involved in a complicated series of negotiations with the conservatives and two British representatives, negotiations which for a time held out hope for a peace settlement. The affair began when British Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell wrote to

---

<sup>22</sup>Letter, Degollado to McLane, 6 March 1860; letter, Degollado to Mata, 9 February 1860; letter, Degollado to Mata, 27 February 1860; letter, Degollado to Mathew, 28 January 1860; letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 February 1860; all five in Juárez, Documentos, 2:634-636, 609-610, 624, 581-582, 597-598.

British Chargé George B. Mathew in January in hopes of securing a general armistice. He revealed that there was much concern in Great Britain over the Mexican civil war, and he offered a plan which he hoped might end the fighting. He proposed an armistice of six months to a year and the impartial election of a national assembly to determine the nature of the future government. While Russell gave assurances that Britain did not wish to prescribe the form of government, he urged that in order to guarantee stability it should include an executive with "a character of permanence." Furthermore he argued that there must be a general amnesty as well as civil and religious toleration. He instructed Mathew that if these proposals were rejected by the contesting factions, the British government would have no choice but to press both parties for payment of British claims against Mexico.<sup>23</sup>

Since the British still formally recognized the Miramón government, Mathew's post was in Mexico City. He therefore sent all communications to the Juárez government through Captain Cornwallis Aldham, commander of the British warship

---

<sup>23</sup>Letter, Russell to Mathew, 26 January 1860, item no. 286, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as RII/CEHM).



Valorous stationed at Veracruz. In late February Aldham approached Degollado, provided him with a copy of the Russell proposals, and offered his services as a mediator. Degollado persuaded Juárez to explore this potential avenue to peace, and Aldham was allowed to make overtures to Miramón.<sup>24</sup>

On March 2 Miramón replied to Aldham's proposal, "I have believed for a long time that the civil war in Mexico cannot be concluded by the force of arms; that it is indispensable to open a path for the conciliation of all Mexicans." But he offered his own plan which included the following points:

1. an armistice throughout Mexico.
2. diplomatic representatives of Britain, France, Spain, Prussia, and the United States to be invited to mediate between the two parties.
3. No new treaties to be negotiated or ratified (directed at the McLane-Ocampo Treaty) by one side without the approval of the other.
4. division of customs duties.
5. an assembly of notables (high office-holders between 1822 and 1853) to choose a provisional

---

<sup>24</sup> Circular, Degollado, 20 March 1860, *ibid.*

president, set up a provisional government, and draft a new constitution to be approved by the majority of Mexicans.<sup>25</sup>

Benito Juárez declined answering this proposal, pointing out that at the moment, Miramón was besieging Veracruz, and the liberals were too preoccupied with defending themselves to be able to devote much attention to any peace plan. But in a cabinet meeting on March 13 Degollado pressed hard for an armistice of six months to a year, and he proposed that a congress be called to revise the Constitution of 1857. While he won the support of Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, Juárez and the rest of the cabinet voted down the suggestions.<sup>26</sup>

That evening, however, Miramón directly approached the liberals with an offer to negotiate, and Juárez agreed. Further communications were exchanged, and a meeting was arranged for the following morning. Juárez chose Degollado and José de Emparan to represent the liberals.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Letter, Miramón to Aldham, 2 March 1860, *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Letter, Degollado to Aldham, 8 March 1860, *ibid.*; Juárez, Documentos, 1:291-292; Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), p. 38.

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Miramón to Iglesias, 13 March 1860; letter, Iglesias to Miramón, 13 March 1860; both in item no. 286, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, RII/CEHM.

Shortly after 8:00 A.M. on March 14 Degollado and Emparan left Veracruz and met Isidro Díaz and Manuel Robles Pezuela, Miramón's commissioners, in a railroad guard house. After several hours of negotiation the following plan was drafted:

1. a cease fire in and around Veracruz.
2. a commission of representatives of both sides to meet in Tlalpan in 15 days to arrange a general armistice and to decide on means for reestablishing peace.
3. diplomatic representatives of Britain, France, Spain, Prussia, and the United States to be invited to mediate in the armistice negotiations.
4. the armistice commission and mediators to resolve what to do about international treaties concluded by both parties.
5. both sides agree that only "the Nation" can decide the issues dividing them.
6. Provisions for importation and taxation of foreign goods in Mexican ports.<sup>28</sup>

The representatives withdrew for several hours to discuss these provisions, presumably with their respective presidents,

---

<sup>28</sup> Accord, Degollado, Emparan, Díaz, Robles, 15 March 1860, *ibid.*

then reconvened at 7:30 P.M. Degollado informed his conservative counterparts that Juárez would accept the first two provisions, but rejected the third. He would accept point 5 if this decision would be made by a congress elected under the provisions of the 1857 constitution, and he likewise believed point 4 should be resolved by such a congress. He suggested that the sixth provision be the concern of the armistice commission.<sup>29</sup>

The conservatives responded that Miramón was prepared to accept all six points as drafted that morning, and he would even be willing to concede some of Juárez' reservations. But he wanted the McLane-Ocampo Treaty eliminated, he wanted a share of the customs receipts, and on the critical fifth point he could not abide Juárez' insistence that a congress chosen under the Constitution of 1857 make these decisions. He personally preferred leaving those matters up to an assembly of notables or the armistice commission.<sup>30</sup>

The two parties continued to debate these points of disagreement until 10:30 P.M. They then adjourned, agreeing that the cease-fire would remain in effect until 6:00 the

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; Circular, Degollado, 20 March 1860, *ibid.*

next morning; if by that time neither side had called for a new meeting, fighting would resume. It was evident that both parties intended to stand firm on the pivotal fifth provision, however, that is, who would resolve their differences, and no further meetings were ever held. The conservatives began shelling Veracruz again promptly the next morning.<sup>31</sup>

The following day, March 16, Degollado informed Captain Aldham of the conference with Miramón's commissioners, and in a very long dispatch systematically attempted to discredit the sincerity of the conservatives in pressing for peace. Interlacing a review of the history of the present clash with references to crimes the Miramón party had committed against foreigners, don Santos sought to demonstrate that the liberals would uphold the rights of foreigners and were therefore more deserving of British recognition. He pointed out that he had personally asked to negotiate peace on three different occasions--when he addressed Casanova at Guadalajara in 1858, Corona before Tacubaya in April 1859, and Miramón prior to Estancia de las Vacas in November 1859. Furthermore, he reminded the British officer, Miramón's peace proposals completely differed from the Russell plan and totally omitted

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

any pledge of civil and religious toleration, a matter upon which Russell had insisted.<sup>32</sup>

Degollado then made the following statement, which led to a great deal of confusion and controversy in subsequent negotiations with the British chargé.

Despite all these objections, with His Excellency Señor Juárez desirous of overcoming for his part the difficulties in order to try the friendly advice of the Honorable Lord John Russell, he resolved by the unanimous vote of his cabinet to accept an armistice under the bases that the British government desires, so that during the suspension of hostilities the election of President of the Republic might proceed, the naming of the members of a National Assembly that will be preferably occupied with resolving the question over constitutional points, and the establishment of civil and religious toleration as an accepted and invariable point.<sup>33</sup>

Don Santos followed this statement with details of his unsuccessful meeting with Miramón's commissioners. An important question later arose as to whether the above statement by Degollado constituted a formal acceptance by the liberals of the Russell proposals. The British said it did, but the liberals claimed it was merely a relation of the fact that they had agreed among themselves to pursue that path to peace, but that Miramón rejected it. Degollado,

---

<sup>32</sup>Letter, Degollado to Aldham, 16 March 1860, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

who left office as minister of foreign relations the following week and was not present when the controversy developed, never clarified the statement. His last few days in Veracruz were spent trying to persuade representatives of the four major European powers and those of three Latin American republics to shift their diplomatic recognition from Miramón to Juárez.<sup>34</sup>

## 4

In the meantime Aldham continued to press Juárez to accept the Russell proposals. In a stirring appeal he warned that history would record for all time the fratricide of nineteenth-century Mexico.

Is this magnificent country, so perfectly endowed with the most sought after natural gifts, to be assigned for all time to this sad and melancholy state? Surely this cannot be. There ought to be patriots sufficiently anxious for the happiness of their country that they would in good will aid Your Excellency in gaining the blessings of peace.

Aldham proposed that at the very least the Mexicans should be able to arrange a simple armistice, and again he offered his services as mediator.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Circular, Degollado to ministers of France, Prussia, Spain, Great Britain, Guatemala, Venezuela, Ecuador, 22 March 1860; letter, Degollado to Aldham, 23 March 1860; both in item no. 295, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, RII/CEHM.

<sup>35</sup> Letter, Aldham to Juárez, 24 March 1860, *ibid.*

On March 27 José de Emparan, Degollado's successor as minister of foreign relations, sent Aldham a noncommittal reply. He pointed out that simple desire for peace was not enough; a means was required. And Juárez, he explained, believed that constitutional order and legality was the best means to peace. Whereas the Degollado dispatch of March 16 had seemed to include a firm acceptance of the Russell proposals, this communication from Emparan appeared to back away from any such commitment.<sup>36</sup>

When Aldham relayed this new dispatch to Mathew in Mexico City, the chargé was surprised and somewhat piqued. He wrote back to Aldham that the March 27 letter seemed to be a retraction of Degollado's pledge. Complaining that he could not deal with a government that demonstrated such a lack of aptitude toward its official position, he instructed Aldham to get from Juárez a clear-cut acceptance or rejection of the Russell proposals.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, Mathew asked the American representative, Robert McLane, to use his influence to persuade Juárez to adopt the British plan. Because the liberals were anxious not to do anything to jeopardize ratification of the pending

---

<sup>36</sup> Letter, Emparan to Aldham, 27 March 1860, *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Letter, Mathew to Aldham, 12 April 1860, *ibid.*



treaty with the United States, McLane's influence might have been considerable. But while he liked the Russell proposals and agreed to speak to Juárez, the American minister was convinced that the liberals would accept the plan only if the national assembly was to be elected under the provisions of the Constitution of 1857. Yet on this point, he told Secretary of State Cass, there was not the slightest chance the conservatives would agree.<sup>38</sup>

Before McLane could speak to the liberal president, Emparan responded to Mathew's complaint that Juárez had reversed his stand on the Russell proposals. He claimed there was no contradiction between his dispatch of March 27 and Degollado's of the 16th, and he reminded the chargé that Miramón's agents had strayed from the Russell plan at the March 14 meeting, not the liberals. His government had not given a final rejection to any plan, Emparan declared, and was still willing to negotiate with Miramón.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Letter, Mathew to McLane, 4 April 1860; letter, McLane to Mathew, 19 April 1860; letter, McLane to Cass, 20 April 1860, in William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:1174; 1175-1176, 1177.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Emparan to Aldham, 20 April 1860, item no. 295, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, RII/CEHM.

The same day that Emparan made this pledge to hear the conservatives out, Miramón's foreign minister, Octaviano Muñoz Ledo, wrote to Mathew that he also was willing to pursue the matter further and would send agents to negotiate. In direct contrast to Emparan, he claimed that the conservatives had promoted the Russell proposals at the March 14 meeting, but the liberals had rejected them. Assuring the British chargé that Miramón would accept any "reasonable" plan, Muñoz Ledo outlined his version of the Russell proposals. While this was indeed very close to the British plan, it once again hedged on questions of amnesty and civil and religious toleration.<sup>40</sup>

Aldham relayed this conservative offer to the Juárez government and again requested a clear response to the Russell plan as well. Emparan replied that his government could not take any action that might contravene the constitution. While the liberals substantially agreed with Lord Russell's proposals, the liberal minister explained, their major objectives were the primacy of the Constitution of 1857 and the establishment of religious toleration. Beyond these two unalterable goals, however, the Juárez government would welcome British counsel.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Letter, Muñoz Ledo to Mathew, 20 April 1860, *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Letter, Aldham to Emparan, 23 April 1860; letter, Emparan to Aldham, 29 April 1860; both *ibid.*

Both Aldham and Mathew interpreted this response as a rejection of the Russell plan. The British chargé informed the constitutional government that he would therefore employ the "necessary means" to exact compensation from the liberals for British claims against them. Mathew had already notified the conservative foreign minister that his April 20 response to the Russell proposals had likewise been unsatisfactory, largely because of Muñoz Ledo's failure to accept civil and religious toleration.<sup>42</sup>

Thus it seemed that the British had failed. Mathew made one more appeal to the liberals, pointing out that Lord Russell's plan did not exclude the Constitution of 1857. But Empanan was unmoved and the chargé could only renew his pledge to collect British claims by "force of arms."<sup>43</sup>

Degollado had failed as well, it seemed, for he more than any other liberal in Veracruz at the time had ardently promoted a peace settlement. His discouragement was evident, for he attempted to resign not only as foreign minister but

---

<sup>42</sup>Letter, Aldham to Empanan, 1 May 1860; letter Mathew to constitutional government, 2 May 1860; letter, Mathew to Muñoz Ledo, 27 April 1860; all in *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>Letter, Mathew to Aldham, 8 May 1860; letter Empanan to Aldham, 18 May 1860; letter, Mathew to Aldham, 19 May 1860; all in *ibid.*

also as commander-in-chief. Juárez took no action regarding the resignation from the army, but it was considered by Degollado to be pending for the next several months.<sup>44</sup> It became an issue the following September when don Santos revived the question of a peace settlement and staked his career and reputation on a plan to end the war.

## 5

Throughout Degollado's stay in Veracruz, the city was under siege by Miramón's army. The conservatives had begun operations in February and had spent much more time in preparation than they had the year before. And while they had a sizable numerical advantage, the city had extremely strong fortifications supported by more than 150 pieces of artillery. In addition Miramón's troops had to contend with difficulties of supply as well as climate and disease.<sup>45</sup>

"Macabeo" hoped to solve some of his supply problems by purchasing two steamers in Cuba, which were to sail to Veracruz with a load of munitions. The ships were renamed

---

<sup>44</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 23 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:773.

<sup>45</sup> Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), p. 407.

the General Miramón and the Marqués de la Habana and placed under the command of Tomás Marín. Liberals considered several courses of action, including a bold attempt at setting fire to the ships, but finally Juárez issued a circular declaring the two vessels to be pirates. Degollado delivered copies of this decree to commanders of United States warships in Veracruz harbor. At the end of February he met with Captain Joseph R. Jarvis, senior naval officer commanding the American fleet, and asked that Marín be stopped lest United States citizens in the city be endangered. Jarvis responded that he could act only if Marín attempted to blockade the port.<sup>46</sup>

On the morning of March 6 the two conservative ships appeared off Veracruz harbor, then continued down the coast to a roadstead called Antón Lizardo. Jarvis ordered Commander Thomas Turner to have his corvette, the Saratoga, towed to the anchoring in order to investigate the nationality and intent of the two vessels. Turner left Veracruz at sunset, his ship being towed by the American steamers

---

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Degollado to Zatarain, 11 February 1860, in Diario de Avisos, 3 April 1860, p. 3; Letter, Degollado to Le Doux Elgeé, 24 February 1860, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1165; Edward J. Berbusse, "The Origins of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty of 1859," The Americas 14(1958):240; Charles Allen Smart, Viva Juárez (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1963), pp. 207-208.

Indianola and Wave, and he approached the conservative vessels sometime around midnight. One of Marín's ships raised anchor and attempted to flee, whereupon Turner fired a shot across her bow. A fight ensued involving all five vessels and lasting 30-45 minutes. One of the conservative ships ran up a Spanish flag, while a ship's boat from the General Miramón escaped to shore with what Turner believed to be a number of officers from the conservative army. Marín finally surrendered, and the ships and crews were dispatched to New Orleans as prizes.<sup>47</sup>

The conservatives bitterly complained that the Americans had provoked an attack by surprising their steamers at

---

<sup>47</sup> Alejandro Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Antón Lizardo: el tratado de MacLane-Ocampo; el brindis del desierto (México: Editorial JUS, 1962), pp. 22-23; Report, Turner to Jarvis, 8 March 1860, copy made by D.W. Knox, officer-in-charge of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Navy Dept., Washington, 13 January 1943, for Paul V. Murray (hereafter cited as Turner report); Letter Muñoz Ledo to Cass, 29 March 1860, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1167-1169. In New Orleans the ships' crews were cleared of charges of piracy and released, but the ships were sold at auction by court order; Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Antón Lizardo, pp. 36, 51-52. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, ed. C.C. Marsh, 3 vols. in series 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921-1922), 1:259 states that the Marqués de la Habana, which was purchased by the Confederate States of America in 1861 and renamed the McRae, was sunk in the Mississippi River in April 1862. Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Antón Lizardo, pp. 51-52 claims that the Miramón became the United States merchant ship Virginus, which was later involved in a famous international incident involving the sale of guns to Cuban rebels.

midnight. They argued that it was illegal for an American warship to investigate a vessel's nationality at that hour and in Mexican waters.<sup>48</sup> One subsequent account sympathetic to the conservative plight even went so far as to declare that Miramón lost the war because of Turner's interference. But recent evidence suggests that Juárez felt compelled to use whatever means necessary to halt Marín's vessels, because they were supported by Spanish warships lying offshore awaiting a pretext to intervene in Mexico.<sup>49</sup>

After the loss of the two steamers and the ammunition they carried, Miramón's hopes for a successful siege were greatly diminished. It was at this point that he approached Juárez with the offer to discuss Lord Russell's proposals. When the March 14 meeting then failed to prove fruitful, he resumed the assault on Veracruz. Juárez took refuge in the fortress at San Juan de Ulúa, while Degollado remained in the city to help direct the defending forces.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup>Letter, Muñoz Ledo to Cass, 29 March 1860, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1167-1169.

<sup>49</sup>Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Antón Lizardo, pp. 56-57; Renato Gutiérrez Zamora, "El incidente de Antón Lizardo," Historia Mexicana, 13(1963):277-278.

<sup>50</sup>Letter, Degollado to Siglo XIX, 28 April 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:370-372; see also 1:290-291.

Miramón shelled Veracruz for the next several days, but difficulty in anchoring his artillery and the ammunition shortage made it impossible to sustain a continuous fire. Three conservative assaults on the southern part of the city were easily repulsed. Don Miguel had hoped that he might at least compel the liberals to negotiate peace seriously or to spare the city by coming out to fight in the open. But the loss of the ships and ammunition at Antón Lizardo prevented him from employing this kind of siege, so on March 20 he suspended operations and began to withdraw to Mexico City.<sup>51</sup>

The liberals were jubilant. Special decorations were given to those soldiers who had fought in defense of their capital. The Juárez government was further heartened by the news that liberal armies had been winning victories in Jalisco, Durango, Zacatecas, and Guanajuato. Conservatives, on the other hand, were bitter over their defeat, which they blamed on the American interference at Antón Lizardo. Upon returning to Mexico City, Miramón deported United States citizens and confiscated their property.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup>Diario de Avisos, 3 April 1860, pp. 2-3; Letter, McLane to Cass, 30 March 1860, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1171.

<sup>52</sup>Decree, Juárez, 19 June 1860, no. 5100, in Manuel Dublan and José María Lozano, eds., Legislación mexicana o



Degollado had bided his time while the siege raged, restlessly performing his duties in the foreign relations office. When the conservatives withdrew he immediately petitioned Juárez once again to accept his resignation and permit him to return to the theater of war. On March 26 the liberal president consented, and the next day Degollado left for Tampico.<sup>53</sup>

Don Santos' return to the army seems to have evoked little enthusiasm from fellow liberals. The conservatives published a letter, reportedly written by Juárez and intercepted, in which the constitutional president told Epitacio Huerta,

Put aside the fears you harbor regarding the return of Señor Degollado to the command of our forces in the interior, since I have believed that we should utilize his knowledge and good will in another way, and not entrusting to him our arms, which has been so unfortunate.<sup>54</sup>

---

colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república, 34 vols. (México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, a cargo de M. Lara (hijo), 1876-1904), vol. 8, 1856-1860, 8:743; Bulnes, Juárez, pp. 421-423; Diario de Avisos, 29 March 1860, pp. 1, 3; Harper's New Monthly Magazine (New York), May 1860, p. 834 (hereafter cited as Harper's).

<sup>53</sup>Letter, Degollado to Llave, 24 March 1860, document no. 6; circular, Juárez, 26 March 1860, document no. 9; both in Expediente de Degollado, AG/SRE; Letter, McLane to Cass, 30 March 1860, in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1170.

<sup>54</sup>Diario de Avisos, 11 April 1860, p. 3.

Nevertheless don Santos was returning to the interior to continue to direct the overall liberal campaign. José María Mata voiced the sentiments of many liberals when he observed, "I fear that Degollado's evil military star continues pursuing him."<sup>55</sup>

## 6

In mid-April 1860 Santos Degollado arrived in San Luis Potosí to reassume command of the constitutional armies. For months there had been growing pressure upon him and other civilian generals to relinquish command to professionals. While don Santos refused to step down as commander-in-chief, he was not blind to the fact that his nearly habitual losses in battle must have been due in part to his own deficiencies as a battlefield general. A nickname he had acquired much earlier was gaining new popularity with liberals and conservatives alike--the "hero of defeats." Therefore by the time he finished setting up the new general headquarters, he had resolved to leave field tactics to individual commanders and to restrict himself to those tasks for which he had a proven talent--logistics and strategy.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup>Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 18 April 1860, in Mata, Correspondencia privada, p. 274.

<sup>56</sup>Manuel Cambre, La guerra de tres años (México: Biblioteca de Autores Jaliscienses, 1949), p. 364; Diario

In San Luis Potosí don Santos once more focused his attention on a campaign in the Bajío region. He became increasingly reliant upon José López Uruga, despite Ocampo's misgivings and Juárez' warning, "do not let him become preponderant in the ranks of liberty."<sup>57</sup> Don José was given a more independent command, and on April 24 repaid the trust by defeating Rómulo Díaz de la Vega and capturing 1,000 men at Loma Alta, near San Luis Potosí. Degollado then made López Uruga field commander of the army of the center and urged his men to fight on to win peace, while also cautioning them to "economize" in the shedding of their brothers' blood.<sup>58</sup>

---

de Avisos, 5 May 1860, p. 3; Correspondence of Jesús González Ortega, 1851-1881, 5 vols. typescripts, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas, vol. 2 (pages are not numbered, so citations will refer to volume number; hereafter cited as JGO/UT).

<sup>57</sup> Letter, Degollado to Partearroyo, 3 April 1860, document no. 135; decree, Degollado, 30 March 1860; both in Documentos relativos a la Reforma en México, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, roll. no. 5, Operaciones Militares, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Mic DF/BINAH); Diario de Avisos, 14 May 1860, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Diario de Avisos, 7 June 1860, p. 2; Decree, Degollado, 7 May 1860, item no. 294, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, RII/CEHM.

Certainly the rapid rise of López Uruga aroused jealousy on the part of other liberal commanders, adding another complication to the ever-present liberal factional strife. Degollado continued to have difficulties with the rebellious state legislature of Nuevo León and Coahuila, and he also had to deal with the misbehavior of Juan B. Traconis, the growing jealousy of Ignacio Zaragoza, and the constant recalcitrance of Epitacio Huerta. Benito Gómez Farías, Degollado's secretary, was so disgusted with the continuous bickering that but for loyalty to don Santos, he would have left the scene entirely.<sup>59</sup>

Manuel Doblado had also again aroused suspicion, this time by going to New Orleans without permission. There were implications of his involvement in a vidaurrista plot to bring Comonfort back. Degollado ordered his arrest, but through the intercession of Guillermo Prieto agreed to overlook the matter and restore don Manuel to command in Guanajuato. Doblado was agreeable to reconciling his differences with Degollado, perhaps because friends encouraged him that don

---

<sup>59</sup>Letter, Degollado to Partearroyo, 10 April 1860, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as García 26); Letter, Degollado to Partearroyo, 16 January 1860, document no. 72, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; La Sociedad (Mexico City), 8 July 1860, p. 1; 2 September 1860, p. 2; 23 July 1860, p. 2.

Santos would soon be discredited and Doblado might then succeed him.<sup>60</sup> While he was willing to forgive don Manuel, though, Degollado still did not trust him, and subsequent events seemed to justify this sentiment.

When Treasury Minister Miguel Lerdo de Tejada added to don Santos' problems by misrepresenting some of his economizing efforts, Degollado turned to Ocampo in frustration, and with remarkable foresight declared,

I am confirmed in the fear that my career of sacrifices in the present struggle has to end in a criminal trial, as happened to me in the Ayutla Administration . . . . But patience! My fatherland demands it thus, and forward.<sup>61</sup>

Degollado was further disheartened when on May 28 López Uruga decided on his own to attack the conservative stronghold at Guadalajara, but was defeated and captured. Degollado believed don José had risked an assault on the well-fortified city in hopes of winning favor with many in the liberal party who distrusted him. Don Santos publicly

---

<sup>60</sup> Elward Maurice Caldwell, "The War of 'La Reforma' in Mexico, 1858-1861" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1935), pp. 207-208; Carlos E. Castañeda, ed., Nuevos documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 3 vols. (San Antonio: Editorial Lozano, 1930), vol. 3, La guerra de Reforma según el archivo del general D. Manuel Doblado, 3:200; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 23 July 1860, document no. 60, 1st serie caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>61</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 26 May 1860, document no. 53, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

minimized the loss, but it was clearly a major setback in the campaign to establish control over the Bajío.<sup>62</sup>

In July Antonio Carbajal arrested Bishop Pedro Espinosa of Guadalajara for violating the Constitution of 1857, and he proposed exchanging the bishop for López Uraga. Conservatives seemed uninterested, and Degollado realized that it would be impossible to give Espinosa a trial at that time. For the aged and ill cleric to remain in the hands of a constantly moving army would certainly kill him; keeping him prisoner would also tie up needed liberal troops, and it would encourage attacks from conservatives seeking to liberate him. Therefore over the objections of Carbajal, Pedro Ogazón, Leandro Valle, and others, don Santos ordered Espinosa released.<sup>63</sup>

Consequently José López Uraga remained a prisoner of the conservatives. But while recovering from wounds received in the unsuccessful assault on Guadalajara, he wrote to Juárez outlining problems within the constitutional

---

<sup>62</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 11 June 1860, document no. 55, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Diario de Avisos, 29 May 1860, p. 2; Circular, Degollado, 31 May 1860, in Diario de Avisos, 19 June 1860, pp. 2-3.

<sup>63</sup> La Sociedad, 5 August 1860, p. 3; 10 August 1860, p. 3; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 2 August 1860, document no. 61; letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 August 1860, document no. 62, both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

army which were responsible for its continuous losses. He complained of poor organization, lack of discipline, and bad officers.

Accustomed to defeat, our troops shy from fighting and at the first shot are ready to retreat. Their chiefs and officers, ill chosen, capriciously appointed, and easily promoted, seek to avoid exposing themselves in battle and are the first to flee . . . .

The general of our army, without supporting hands, must be all things himself: gunner, muleteer, quartermaster, and division commander; he must fight in the open, direct his columns, and attend to his artillery and even to his munitions . . . .<sup>64</sup>

Since he believed that a negotiated peace was not possible, López Uraga concluded that unless there were radical changes within the liberal army, "the total destruction of the country is assured and while the liberal party may not be finished, it will never triumph."<sup>65</sup>

## 7

To offset these gloomy predictions, liberals received some encouraging news. In mid-June Jesús González Ortega, the young constitutionalist general from Zacatecas, won an important battle at Peñuelas, not far from Aguascalientes. With Degollado's consent he then released conservative

---

<sup>64</sup> Letter, López Uraga to Juárez, 29 July 1860, Ms. J/2-100, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AJ/BN).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

prisoners in hopes that Miramón would respond by freeing López Uruga.<sup>66</sup> Juárez congratulated González Ortega on his victory and expressed the belief that once he joined forces with Degollado, "you will make el Macabeo [Miramón] bite the dust."<sup>67</sup>

This was exactly what don Santos had in mind as he began directing don Jesús in a campaign into the Bajío. Miramón was operating in the same area, and Degollado warned González Ortega to avoid battle unless he could enter it with superior numbers on his own terrain, for a defeat at this point could unnecessarily prolong the war. Therefore to avoid being surprised by the conservative general, Degollado warned, González Ortega should keep at least two days' march in distance between himself and Miramón.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>66</sup> Ivie E. Cadenhead, Jesús González Ortega and Mexican National Politics (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1972), p. 34; Dunbar, The Mexican papers, 1 September 1860, pp. 78-79. Degollado may not have been so magnanimous after the battle of Silao. A conservative newspaper reported that he ordered González Ortega to execute any paroled conservative officers who were subsequently recaptured in battle; La Sociedad, 11 September 1860, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Letter, Juárez to González Ortega, 6 July 1860, vol. 1, JGO/UT.

<sup>68</sup> Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 20 July 1860; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 23 July 1860; both in vol. 1, JGO/UT.



González Ortega chafed at the bit. He wanted battle, he wanted to direct the campaign himself, and he was encouraged by friends who assured him that don Santos was hindering his effectiveness. But the "beekeeper" remained firm and patient, he flattered the young Zacatecan, and he continued to direct the operation himself.<sup>69</sup>

In some of the best-conceived strategy of the war, don Santos converged forces under Pueblita, Felipe Berriozábal, Carbajal, Doblado, Zaragoza, and González Ortega. Moving armies about like chess pieces he forced Miramón out of Lagos and pressed the conservative army in the direction he wanted. Each step fit a strict timetable in Degollado's mind, and by August 1 he knew that a decisive battle would be fought on the tenth or eleventh.<sup>70</sup>

As the campaign unfolded exactly according to plan, Degollado longed to be at the scene when battle was met. Finally he could stand it no more. Leaving the general

<sup>69</sup> Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 24 July 1860; letter, Auza to González Ortega, 25 July 1860; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 23 July 1860; all in vol. 1, JGO/UT.

<sup>70</sup> Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 30 July 1860; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 1 August 1860; both in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, 11:107, 108-109.

headquarters at San Luis Potosí, he went to San Felipe to continue to direct the movements of his armies. But he assured Ocampo, "I will not appear on the field of battle so that my bad luck will not influence the success of our arms."<sup>71</sup>

On August 10 near Silao the combined liberal armies, under the tactical command of Jesús González Ortega, dealt Miramón his first major defeat in battle. The conservative president fell back to Mexico City with the remnants of his army, and the liberals then ranged through the Bajío occupying every major city. The campaign was a smashing success, and Degollado was genuinely happy in congratulating González Ortega and the other liberal generals.<sup>72</sup>

To take advantage of this momentum, don Santos immediately reorganized and combined the army of the north and the army of the center into a single army of operations, and he named González Ortega as general in chief. Then he

<sup>71</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 2 August 1860, document no. 61; letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 8 August 1860, document no. 62; both in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>72</sup>La Sociedad, 16 August 1860, p. 3; Cadenhead, Jesús González Ortega, p. 37; Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 11 August 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 August 1860, document no. 63, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

directed don Jesús to lay siege to Guadalajara, though he would have liked to march directly on Mexico City.<sup>73</sup> Before the successful Silao campaign Degollado had been in very bad spirits. He was apprehensive about foreign intervention, and after more than two years of physical and mental anguish, he was plagued by the fear that the liberals would not be able to muster the resources needed to win the war. In one irrational moment he had asked Ocampo to persuade Juárez to move the government out of Veracruz to protect it from a foreign intervention. And while advising González Ortega to avoid battle in July, he had indulged in bitter self-pity, complaining that his great sacrifices for the cause had been rewarded only with jeers and mockery.<sup>74</sup>

The liberal successes in the Bajío did little more than temporarily buoy Degollado's spirits. While the military outlook was encouraging for the moment, he confided in Ocampo,

I have fear, much fear! of the war of intrigues in which the struggle of arms must end. I who do not

---

<sup>73</sup>General order, Degollado, 13 August 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT; Cadenhead, Jesús González Ortega, p. 38; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 August 1860, document no. 63, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>74</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 2 August 1860, document no. 61, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 23 July 1860, vol. 1, JGO/UT.

value my life . . . have such greed for the treasure of my reputation that I would not want to lose it for anything in this world; but it seems to me that I am going to come out badly in this new terrain we are entering, because what happened to the maker of fire-works is going to happen to me.<sup>75</sup>

While this too smacks somewhat of self-pity, as an exercise in foresight, it was tragically flawless.

---

<sup>75</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 August 1860, document no. 63, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

## CHAPTER X

### CONDUCTA AND PEACE PLAN AFFAIRS

#### 1

Despite the recent military success of Jesús González Ortega, a stalemate had developed in the Three Years' War by August 1860. Since neither side seemed to have the strength needed to prevail and restore peace and order, the chances of a foreign intervention greatly increased. Perhaps because of his experiences in the Barron-Forbes affair, Santos Degollado was intensely fearful of a foreign incursion, and he suspected that Spain in particular was plotting such a move. He told Juárez, "I always desire war with the gachupines [Spaniards], but not now."<sup>1</sup> He knew that intervention by a European power would clearly work to the advantage of the conservatives, who had agents abroad soliciting foreign assistance.

---

<sup>1</sup>Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 243; Letter, Degollado to Ruiz, 23 July 1860, document no. 7, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH); Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 24 September 1860, in Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 2:776.

Yet while the threat of intervention impelled the liberals to act quickly to bring the war to a finish, lack of revenue continued to hold them back. It caused such hardship and desertion that in June Degollado had again spoken of disbanding the army to avert starvation. Liberal commanders pleaded with Juárez to send them money, but there was nothing the constitutional president could do. By September he could only suggest that Degollado take whatever steps seemed convenient with the nationalized properties.<sup>2</sup>

Some liberals again proposed that the Juárez government recruit foreign troops. One year earlier José María Mata had supported this idea, and Degollado, in the desperate aftermath of the battle at Estancia de las Vacas, had concurred.<sup>3</sup> There were a number of foreigners, primarily officers from the United States, who served on an individual

---

<sup>2</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 14 June 1860, document no. 56, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH. Juárez received such requests for funds from the beginning of the war until the very last days of fighting; see for example Ms. J/1-30, 5001, 1-84, 1-39, 1-62, 1-12, 2-119, 2-89, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AJ/BN). Letter, Juárez to Degollado, 2 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:744.

<sup>3</sup>Letter, Mata to Ocampo, 3 July 1859, in José María Mata, Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo, ed. Jesús Romero Flores (Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959), pp. 197-198.

basis in the constitutional army, and some Spaniards fought with the conservatives, but there were no foreign units.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, there were in the United States several groups ready to organize filibustering expeditions to Mexico.<sup>5</sup> Juárez rejected the aid of such groups, and in January 1860 he also disapproved of the notion of recruiting foreign troops. When Ocampo was briefed for a secret mission to the United States in early 1860, Juárez instructed him to find out how many troops the Americans could send if he were to request them. Nevertheless, by early September 1860 don Benito had again resolved not to solicit such aid.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore the financial squeeze still loomed as the liberals' major problem. Finally in desperation, having exhausted all other sources, Degollado asked Jesús González

---

<sup>4</sup>For the names of some of the foreigners who fought in the war see Fernando Zertuche Muñoz, La primera presidencia de Benito Juárez, 2nd ed. (México: Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, 1972), p. 46; Alfonso Teja Zabre, Leandro Valle: un liberal romántico (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1956), p. 105.

<sup>5</sup>One such group, the Knights of the Golden Circle, prepared an invasion of Mexico, but Juárez refused their aid; New-York Daily Times, 23 March 1860, p. 2; 2 August 1860, p. 2; 7 August 1860, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Letter, Carbajal to Juárez, 30 January 1860, Ms. J/2-71; letter, Juárez to Mathew, 14 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-93; both in AJ/BN; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 1 February 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:599.

Ortega's opinion on seizing a foreign-owned conducta.<sup>7</sup>

These conductas were regular shipments of silver from the mining regions of Zacatecas and Aguascalientes to the port of Tampico. The obvious risk in confiscating one of these convoys was that it might provoke a foreign intervention, a possibility which greatly distressed Degollado. Leonardo Márquez had captured a conducta earlier in the war, and Miramón had felt obliged to punish his subordinate in order to placate the foreigners and avoid losing European recognition.

There was a serious gamble involved in confiscating foreign property, and don Santos weighed the matter carefully. By September 4 he had still not decided what if any action to take. On that date, however, Manuel Doblado decided for him by ordering Ignacio Echagaray to march to San Luis Potosí and intercept two conductas enroute to Tampico. After taking a strict accounting of the funds seized and giving the owners a receipt, Echagaray was to meet don Manuel in Lagos. Five days later at Laguna Seca, Echagaray halted one

---

<sup>7</sup>Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 29 August 1860, in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales y honores póstumos, 11:115.



of the two shipments described by Doblado and seized 1,100,000 pesos in silver.<sup>8</sup>

Doblado then informed the commander-in-chief of what had been done. He assured don Santos that he was aware of the possibly adverse international repercussions his act might produce, but he believed that the step was justified. Without these resources, he argued, the liberals would have to abandon their struggle just as they had finally reached the threshold of victory. It was a simple choice in Doblado's mind of taking the foreign-owned silver and risking intervention or losing the war outright.<sup>9</sup>

Doblado closed his dispatch to don Santos by volunteering to stand trial if Degollado disapproved of his actions. This was apparently an intentional ploy by don Manuel, for Degollado believed the offer questioned his own devotion to the cause. He incautiously rose to the challenge and replied to Doblado,

I approve your conduct, I take upon myself the full weight of responsibility, and I declare you free

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Doblado to Echagaray, 4 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:122-123; Charles Allen Smart, Viva Juárez (New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1963), p. 223; Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Letter, Doblado to Degollado, 10 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:124-125.

from that [responsibility] which you could have had for having taken so grave and serious an action.

. . . you are free from this moment from any charge, and . . . the Supreme Government has to blame only me and submit me to the crucible of a trial.<sup>10</sup>

Don Santos completely agreed with Doblado's reasons for seizing the conducta, and he explained that he would do everything possible to avert an international conflict. He pledged himself to serve as a "victim," if that was what would appease the foreigners. "Posterity will do me justice and will approve the fruit of my great sacrifice."<sup>11</sup>

When he informed Juárez of the conducta affair, Degollado began by asking the liberal president to "be patient and please listen to me calmly." Then explaining the hopeless position of the constitutional army without revenue, he told Juárez of the action taken at Laguna Seca. He repeated the pledge made to Doblado, "I have taken upon myself full responsibility and I am at the disposal of the Government in order that with my head, if necessary, it may avoid any international conflict."<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 12 September 1860; letter, Doblado to Degollado, 10 September 1860; both in García, Documentos, 11:128, 126; William J. Ross, "The Role of Manuel Doblado in the Mexican Reform Movement, 1855-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1967), p. 324; Roeder, Juárez, pp. 246-247.

<sup>11</sup> Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 12 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:128-129.

<sup>12</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 13 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:753-754.

Writing to Ocampo, don Santos asked that his friend not lose confidence in him, and while he knew that Juárez "must punish me," he likewise hoped that he would not lose the president's respect. "If I have taken the wrong road, the sin is from my head and not from my heart."<sup>13</sup>

## 2

On September 20 Degollado published an emotional and articulate address to the nation, explaining his behavior in the conducta affair.

With my eyes fixed on my cause, with my heart filled with hope and faith, after each defeat I have risen like a promise of triumph, and my cry has been an invocation to battle and a call to patriotism . . . . The dispersion of twenty thousand men over these exhausted villages, the transformation of the war into a bloody and anarchical insurrection, the extinction of discipline, unity, and law into this chaos of blood, of desperation, and of extermination, was not a fictitious fear, but a reality which we all felt in the face of a huge temptation for the presence of the wealth of the conducta.

. . . I had given everything to my country: I had preserved, with miserly severity, for me and mine, a pure name to leave to my children, some of whom I have left without education and deprived others of my presence in their last moments; yet necessity came knocking at my door and demanding, in the name of my cause, my reputation to deliver over to contempt and malediction, and after a horrible agony I slew my name and closed my future and plead guilty. In the profound conflict that tortured me in the solitude of my soul, I asked myself: and what of the national name and

---

<sup>13</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 16 September 1860, document no. 64, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

honor? Cold reason replied then, and repeats now, that the national name suffers far more from the prolongation of the struggle, that the foreigner like the native must suffer its consequences, and that with the loss of independence all will be lost.

. . . For this reason I presented my name and assumed the responsibility which I could have avoided through the generous resolution of Señor Doblado to report it, because thus, though my person suffered even the ingratitude of the same Government which has covered me with honors, the interests of those same ones who accuse me of an offense against their property, remained clearly secure.

I have not sought to vindicate myself or to elude my destiny by subterfuges of any kind, or even to gain the sympathy of those who are fighting. I am accustomed to having my own devotion to the cause described as a fatal obstinacy, and my misfortune as a crime to the point of not being allowed to die for my cause on the battlefield.

But if, condemned by opinion, if repelled by my own, if forgotten by all, my cause for this reason triumphs, rises up with respect, and my country is happy, its independence assured, then my aspirations will be generously satisfied.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the fatalistic tone of this address, Degollado had not given up hope that the foreigners could be appeased long enough to employ some of the funds in reviving the liberal army. British, French, and Spanish creditors loudly protested the seizure, but don Santos was most concerned with the British. They had owned the largest share of the conducta, they seemed on the verge of extending recognition to Juárez, and, in Degollado's opinion, they would be most

---

<sup>14</sup> Manifiesto, Degollado, 20 September 1860, document no. T-2/32/C.A., AH/INAH. Some of this translation is taken from Roeder, Juárez, pp. 247-248.

likely to resort to intervention to secure repayment. Therefore he returned 400,000 pesos of the silver to British diplomatic representatives within a few weeks of its seizure.<sup>15</sup>

Manuel Doblado, who had escaped unblemished despite his pivotal role in the affair, objected to returning the British funds. But Chargé George Mathew made it clear that if Juárez or anyone else interfered with Degollado's decision to repay the British, he would use naval forces to exact payment. By October 10 Mathew was satisfied, and don Santos had succeeded in defusing the threat of intervention.<sup>16</sup>

Some liberals denounced Degollado for seizing the conducta and jeopardizing the cause. On the other hand, Doblado was not the only one to criticize don Santos for

<sup>15</sup>For French, British, and Spanish claims, see Niceto de Zamacois, Historia de Méjico, desde sus tiempos más remotos hasta nuestros días, 18 vols. (México: J.F. Parres y Cía., 1877-1882), 15:1011-1023. La Sociedad (Mexico City), 4 October 1860, p. 1; Roeder, Juárez, pp. 248-249; Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 16 October 1860, Ms. J/2-86 bis, AJ/BN. In letter, Mathew to Juárez, 26 October 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:785, the British chargé implied that Juárez had ordered don Santos to return the British funds, but the wording of Degollado's October 16 dispatch and Mathew's of February 1 to Zarco make it clear that Degollado acted on his own in refunding the 400,000 pesos.

<sup>16</sup>Ross, "Manuel Doblado," p. 331; Letter, Mathew to Zarco, 1 February 1861, in Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 2:210; Letter, Mathew to Juárez, 10 October 1860, Ms. J/supl-99, AJ/BN.

returning the British portion, though there was well over half a million pesos left to pump into the liberal military effort. Yet constitutional officers clamored for a share, and when Degollado seemed slow and overly cautious in disbursing the funds, more criticism was heaped upon him.<sup>17</sup>

Despite all the objections and complaints, Degollado remained in Lagos and continued to dispense the conducta revenue as he saw fit. Some 200,000 pesos of it went to finance González Ortega's campaign against Guadalajara. The "beekeeper" prayed that the operation would be successful, for as he told don Jesús, "only triumph can salvage my reputation."<sup>18</sup>

General Degollado kept Juárez informed of his actions, but the president remained strangely silent during the entire

---

<sup>17</sup>Letter, González Ortega to Degollado, 24 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:774; La Sociedad, 16 September 1860, p. 1; 23 September 1860, p. 1; Letter, Arce to González Ortega, 17 September 1860; letter, Patoni to Auza, 19 September 1860; letter, Auza to González Ortega, 12 October 1860; letters, among González Ortega, Ramírez, Degollado, 10-11 October 1860; all in Correspondence of Jesús González Ortega, 1851-1881, 5 vols. typescripts, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, vol. 2 (pages are not numbered, so citations will refer to volume number only; hereafter cited as JGO/UT).

<sup>18</sup>Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 19 September 1860; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 20 September 1860; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 28 September 1860; all in vol. 2, Documentos, 2:776-777; Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 18 September 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT.

affair. Degollado made the decision to return the British portion, and he alone decided how to disburse the remainder. Juárez was apparently biding his time to see how the matter would develop, since it was Degollado's responsibility, and he alone would bear the consequences.<sup>19</sup>

Foreigners, merchants, conservatives, and some fellow liberals criticized Degollado for the *conducta* seizure, ignoring the fact that Manuel Doblado had taken the step entirely on his own and then shifted responsibility for it. Don Santos' friend and fellow general Felipe Berriozábal was one of only a few who praised Degollado for incurring such a great personal sacrifice in order to save the liberal cause. Nevertheless, it is clear now that the *conducta* affair was "the most spectacular financial step of the war." It did more to bring victory to the liberals than perhaps any other single act, and some have called it Degollado's greatest contribution to the cause.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 26 September 1860; letter, Degollado to Juárez, 24 September 1860; both in Juárez, Documentos, 2:786, 776-777.

<sup>20</sup>Letter, Berriozábal to Degollado, 16 September 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT; Wilfred H. Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 27; Melchor Alvarez, Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez, or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905), p. xix.

The turmoil stirred up by the conducta seizure lasted only two weeks before it was eclipsed by an even more controversial affair involving Santos Degollado and the continuing interest in a negotiated peace. British Chargé George B. Mathew had failed the previous spring to bring the two Mexican parties together under a plan initiated by Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell. But the avenues to negotiation had remained open, and in early July 1860 Juárez met with representatives of the Miramón government to talk of peace. He continued to insist, nonetheless, that any settlement must recognize the Constitution of 1857 and Reform Laws.<sup>21</sup>

When Mathew learned that Juárez was still willing to talk, he wrote to the liberal president suggesting that the constitutional government formulate and publish a proposal for peace and accept his services as mediator. Juárez replied that any negotiation with the conservatives would be useless, for he was convinced that they would concede

---

<sup>21</sup> Document nos. 7334 and 7335, Mariano Riva Palacio Archives, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin (hereafter cited as MRP/UT); Letter, Mathew to McLane, 13 July 1860, in William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:1197.



nothing. Nevertheless, he admitted that events might compel him to discuss peace with Miramón, but he repeated that even then, he would accept only a settlement which included the constitution and Reform Laws.<sup>22</sup>

By this time Mathew was growing impatient with the liberals. He warned Juárez that public opinion abroad would decide Mexico's fate, and he contended that such opinion already condemned the liberal president's senseless determination to maintain the Constitution of 1857. The chargé declared that the conducta seizure had complicated matters, and if the liberals did not now accept mediation, British intervention could follow.<sup>23</sup> Though these dispatches were confidential, it was common knowledge among liberal leaders that prolonging the conflict increased the odds in favor of European intervention. Still, while many in the liberal party feared such incursion, only Santos Degollado and Jesús González Ortega were moved to take independent action.

On September 21, 1860 don Santos wrote to George Mathew to propose a new plan for ending the war. Explaining that

---

<sup>22</sup>Letter, Mathew to Juárez, 9 September 1860, Ms. J/95 bis; letter, Juárez to Mathew, 14 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-93; both in AJ/BN.

<sup>23</sup>Letter, Mathew to Juárez, 26 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-98, AJ/BN.

he had come to the conclusion that "pacification" could not be brought about solely by force of arms, Degollado declared, "I am ready to dispense with the form and persons provided that the principles which sustain the liberal party remain secure and perfectly without alteration."<sup>24</sup> He pointed out that he was approaching the British chargé at this time because his repeated overtures to the conservatives had been ignored and he consequently doubted their good faith. Therefore, he suggested the following terms, which he intended to relay to Juárez and the leading liberal officers:

1. a junta composed of the diplomatic corps in Mexico City, the United States minister, and one representative from each Mexican party to establish only these five bases for a constitution,
  - a. free election of representatives to a national congress
  - b. supremacy of civil power
  - c. religious liberty
  - d. nationalization of clerical property
  - e. the principles contained in the Reform Laws

---

<sup>24</sup>Letter, Degollado to Mathew, 21 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN.

2. the junta to name a provisional president to rule until congress convenes.
3. congress to convene three months from the date on which it is called.
4. congress' first duties are to appoint an interim president and to establish the five provisions from article 1 as the basis of the new constitution.
5. congress to present a new constitution three months after convening.<sup>25</sup>

Degollado told Mathew that if both sides rejected the plan he would retire from the Mexican political scene, whereas if the conservatives alone turned it down, he would promote the war to the fullest.<sup>26</sup>

Two days later he sent Juárez a copy of his letter to the British chargé and explained that he had taken the step because he felt it was his duty to seek peace. Don Santos told the liberal president that both González Ortega and Doblado approved of the plan. Nevertheless, if Juárez did not concur, Degollado asked that the president accept "the resignation that I made when I was in Veracruz and

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

that remained pending."<sup>27</sup> The next day don Santos addressed another letter to Juárez, again requesting that he accept the plan, but this time offering more insight regarding his motives. He told don Benito that the conservatives would surely reject the plan, whereupon, he believed, the diplomatic corps would shift recognition to the liberals enabling them to fight on with more support at home and abroad.<sup>28</sup>

By September 27 there had not been sufficient time for Mathew to receive Degollado's dispatch and respond to it, but due to other communications don Santos had reason to believe that the British chargé was in perfect accord with the plan. Therefore on this date, Degollado added a new provision which would exclude as candidates for the provisional presidency "the generals in chief of the belligerent armies," meaning himself and Miramón. There was no mention of Benito Juárez.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 23 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:773.

<sup>28</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 24 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:777.

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Degollado to Mathew, 27 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN.

At this point, while Degollado was still flushed with enthusiasm for his peace plan, he learned that Jesús González Ortega was also endeavoring to arrange a settlement with the conservatives. Don Jesús, who was commanding siege operations against Guadalajara, had discovered that Severo Castillo was directing the conservatives' defense of the city. Castillo had temporarily left the conservative army in 1859 due to the Tacubaya executions, and González Ortega felt that he might therefore have less resolve to continue the war than his more confirmed comrades. Consequently, the young liberal general broached the question of a peace settlement, and on September 23 Castillo agreed to discuss the matter.<sup>30</sup>

In the conference which took place that same day, Castillo informed González Ortega that conservatives would not accept any peace settlement which did not include the alteration of the Constitution of 1857 and the removal of Juárez. González Ortega responded that while liberals would insist that the former could be accomplished only by congress,

---

<sup>30</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 July 1859, document no. 27, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH. Folio Ms. J/2-84, AJ/BN, includes copies of communications between Castillo and González Ortega.

this did not necessarily conflict with the conservative demand. As to the elimination of Juárez, the liberal general replied, it would be an act of extreme ingratitude, but not an insurmountable obstacle. Therefore, because González Ortega believed that Juárez would voluntarily step down if it would achieve peace, he agreed to Castillo's second demand as well. The conservative general was taken aback and began to hedge, charging that the liberals would simply replace Juárez with someone exactly like him.<sup>31</sup>

At this point González Ortega decided that Castillo was simply buying time and had no intention of agreeing to any peace terms. The meeting adjourned after don Jesús refused to grant a 48-hour cease fire. The liberal campaign resumed, and two days later González Ortega gave the conservatives one last chance to come to terms. When they again declined, he pressed the siege full scale and informed Degollado of his dealings with Castillo and of his conviction that there was no further hope of getting the Guadalajara commander to agree to a peace settlement.<sup>32</sup>

Degollado told González Ortega that neither of their plans could be made public until Juárez ruled on the proposals

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

don Santos had sent to Mathew. To do otherwise would make their actions appear to be disloyal to the liberal cause. The commander-in-chief again stated his intention to resign if Juárez turned down the plan. For the first time, though, he declared that if after his resignation, his "companions in arms and subordinates" approved of the plan, he would propose it to the nation and the conservatives, despite Juárez' objections. Had this circumstance come to pass, it clearly would have been treasonous, but it was a hypothetical situation which never occurred. At the same time, however, Degollado believed González Ortega's concessions to Castillo had been a blunder, for he doubted that don Jesús could deliver on the promises. Therefore he cautioned the young general that if during the siege of Guadalajara another opportunity to negotiate peace arose, the matter should be communicated to Degollado without interrupting military operations.<sup>33</sup>

In a letter to Manuel Doblado, don Santos spoke scornfully of González Ortega's dealings with Castillo and suggested that the young Zacatecan should not become involved in political questions, "which not even I dare to

---

<sup>33</sup>Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 29 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:790-791.

decide."<sup>34</sup> Since Degollado was in fact daring to involve himself in political issues by proposing his own plan, one must question his reasons for criticizing González Ortega's efforts. There is immediate suspicion that don Santos was jealously protecting from competition his own work toward securing peace. While such an unjustifiable motive may indeed have prompted the commander-in-chief to disparage don Jesús' actions, it is clear that the concessions offered to Castillo were, as Degollado claimed, potentially fatal to the liberal cause. The agreement to alter the method of amending the constitution included no safeguards for any of the reforms achieved during the past five years, and González Ortega was willing to push Juárez aside as well. Castillo most likely turned down the concessions because he could not believe the liberals would surrender so much so easily. He knew that either the offer must be a ploy, or González Ortega would be overruled somewhere up the chain of command.

The young liberal general felt don Santos had treated him unfairly, however, and on October 2 he lashed back at Degollado in defense of his conduct. He declared that his concessions would not have jeopardized liberal reforms, and

---

<sup>34</sup> Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 30 September 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT.



he contended that in pursuing peace he was merely following Degollado's example. As to his agreement that Juárez would resign, he naively asked,

Could I have equivocated in declaring in the name of Don Benito Juárez his voluntary separation from the power he exercises, when with this, without infringing upon the Constitution . . . the struggle which has destroyed the Nation for three years and which in its course has discouraged men of the greatest faith could have ended?<sup>35</sup>

González Ortega believed that if he had not offered Juárez' resignation, "I would have offended him in an unpardonable manner . . . ." Also he explained how the liberal reforms would be protected.

What matter the voluntary separation of Señor Juárez and the compromise of reforming the Constitution, if all remains guaranteed by the continuation of the liberal Governors and Legislatures in the States, and in the general Government a President and Cabinet with the same ideas, and all linked by the precepts contained in the Constitution of 1857?<sup>36</sup>

González Ortega wanted his dealings with Castillo made public so the people could judge his actions and motives. He told Degollado that the leading liberal generals and at least four state governors had already approved of his offer to Castillo, and he "shuddered" at the realization that only

---

<sup>35</sup> Letter, González Ortega to Degollado, 2 October 1860, *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

don Santos had objected. He suggested that his plan was in fact superior to Degollado's, and he felt he would be shirking his duty and abusing their friendship by not disclosing the error of don Santos' judgment.<sup>37</sup>

By the time he received this lengthy dispatch from González Ortega, Degollado had already written to Juárez again. He laid the entire issue before the liberal president, including documents from don Jesús' dealings with Castillo, and asked him to decide. As a friend and supporter he advised don Benito to adopt his plan, for if by chance the conservatives accepted it, Juárez' sacrifice would save Mexico. He believed, however, that Miramón would reject the program, in which case the liberals would win the recognition of the diplomatic corps and thus be able to pursue the war with improved chances of success. If Juárez disapproved of the plan, Degollado asked that the president either accept his resignation or dismiss him for the *conducta seizure*.<sup>38</sup>

## 5

On October 4 Juárez informed don Santos that under no circumstances would he approve his peace plan, but rather he

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 29 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:789-790.

would employ every legal means at his disposal to counteract it. The liberal president explained in detail his objections, but he especially took exception to the provision allowing foreign representatives a hand in selecting a provisional president. He also declared that he could not resign without violating his pledge to uphold the constitution. Regarding Degollado's resignation, which was still pending from the spring, Juárez rejected it because it had been tendered for other reasons. But the president implied that if don Santos would submit a new resignation citing the current incidents as cause, he would accept it.<sup>39</sup>

Other liberals quickly rallied to support Juárez' decision. Manuel Doblado wrote to don Santos denouncing his plan and asking, "What ill disposition has managed to inspire in you such a mistaken determination?"<sup>40</sup> He also criticized Degollado for returning the conducta money, for ruining González Ortega's peace negotiations at Guadalajara, and for attempting to turn Mexico over to foreign control. Among others who ventured opinions, Jesús González Ortega said he deplored the scheme; Ignacio Zaragoza vowed never

---

<sup>39</sup> Letter, Juárez to Degollado, 4 October 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:793-795.

<sup>40</sup> Letter, Doblado to Degollado, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:143.

again to obey don Santos; Leandro Valle praised Degollado's motives, but had only reproach for the plan.<sup>41</sup>

On September 30 don Santos was informed that a junta of "the principal commanders of the Army of Operations" at Guadalajara had unanimously voted not to approve the peace plan. Degollado immediately replied that he would respect their opinion. Therefore on October 14 he notified George Mathew that he had decided to press the war rather than negotiate peace, for he was convinced that Miramón would accept nothing short of a return to pre-Reforma conditions. And this, he declared, the people would not abide, for "eyes once opened to the light will not be willfully closed again to darkness." Two days later Degollado wrote to Juárez to confirm his request to resign. He complained that Doblado and González Ortega had originally approved of his plan, but had now reneged, and he saw this as a clear sign that he had become a stumbling block to the liberal revolution.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup>Letter, Mathew to Juárez, 26 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:785; Letter, Doblado to Degollado, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:142-146; Teja Zabre, Leandro Valle, pp. 92-93.

<sup>42</sup>Letter, González Ortega to Degollado, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:141-142; Letter, Degollado to Doblado, 2 October 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 3:18; Letter, Degollado to Mathew, 14 October 1860, Ms. J/sup1-441; letter, Degollado to Juárez, 16 October 1860, Ms. J/2-86 bis; both in AJ/BN.

Juárez obviously agreed with this, but on October 17, the day after Degollado again tendered his resignation, the president chose to dismiss him from command and to order that he stand trial for treason. Jesús González Ortega, whom Juárez chose as the new commander-in-chief, issued a circular informing don Santos of the action.

Not only with displeasure but with true surprise has the . . . president learned that Your Excellency, exceeding your authority, has proposed to the enemies of the constitutional government an agreement, and has sought to arrange a pact with which you have intended to put an end to the present struggle. The conduct of Your Excellency is in truth incomprehensible . . .

The President deplores, as he should, this misconduct . . . he can only save the Nation again [by] dismissing Your Excellency from the command which until today you have held, in order that you may come to this city for the purpose of being subjected to the trial which will be formed against you.<sup>43</sup>

In public decrees and letters Juárez later made numerous references to the "services" Degollado had given to the cause, but he insisted that don Santos must be tried, for he "has departed from the path traced by the spirit of the present revolution and has sought to nullify a law."<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Circular, González Ortega, 7 October 1860, no. 5114, in Manuel Dublan and José María Lozano, eds., Legislación mexicana ó colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república, 34 vols. (México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, a cargo de M. Lara (hijo), 1876-1904), vol. 8, 1856-1860, 8:754-755.

<sup>44</sup> Angel Pola, ed., Miscelánea comunicados, respuestas, iniciativas, dictámenes, informes, brindis, etc. de Benito

What in fact seems to have made Degollado's offense so serious in Juárez' mind was his belief that behind don Santos' plan was Mathew, and behind Mathew was a plot by the diplomatic corps to bring Ignacio Comonfort back to rule Mexico. The ex-president, who was in New York at the time, also believed that Mathew had forced the plan upon Degollado, but declared that if don Santos thought the scheme involved him, Comonfort, "he has certainly been tricked."<sup>45</sup>

The news that Degollado had been relieved of command led other liberals to join in the rush to heap scorn upon him and his efforts. Pedro Ampudia, Juan Traconis, Antonio Landa, Ignacio de la Llave, and others charged him with treason and provoking anarchy. Liberal newspapers denounced his "evil idea." Ignacio Zaragoza, Manuel Doblado, Epitacio Huerta, and José Aramberri told don Santos that they believed, and the entire army concurred, that he must leave the theater

---

Juárez (México: A. Pola, 1906), pp. 334-336; Letter, Juárez to Corzo, 20 October 1860; letter, Juárez to Corzo, 28 November 1860; both in Jorge L. Tamayo, ed., Epistolario de Benito Juárez, 2nd ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), pp. 226-227; Letter, Juárez to Romero, 20 October 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 3:26.

<sup>45</sup>Roeder, Juárez, pp. 256-257; Letter, Comonfort to Arriaga, 7 November 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 3:37.

of war, for his presence jeopardized liberal operations.

Don Santos humbly agreed to do as they asked.<sup>46</sup>

Of those who challenged the peace plan, however, Guillermo Prieto sent what was perhaps the most painful letter to Degollado.

I cannot explain this, and I am overwhelmed because you have disinherited us of our glory with the atheism of a believer, with the despair of a man of constancy, well nigh with the apostasy of the living incarnation of political society. I cannot, I will not, believe it; I want a denial to dispel this nightmare of shame that makes me weep blood . . . .

I who believed that our greatest misfortune, our most irreparable defeat, would be your absence from the command; I who joined your circle because I felt myself more honored there than anywhere else; I say that you must leave the command . . . .

I offer sympathy to my country for the emasculation of one of its most eminent men, and to myself for the death of my purest illusions.<sup>47</sup>

Only a few very close friends within the liberal party did not spurn Degollado. Ocampo stood by don Santos and offered to serve as his defense counsel in the upcoming trial. Benito Gómez Farías pleaded in his behalf that the

<sup>46</sup> Letter, Llave to Huerta, 20 October 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:158; El País (Guadalajara, México), 13 December 1860, pp. 3-4; La Opinión de Sinaloa (Mazatlán), 15 December 1860, p. 3; Letter, Zaragoza, et al. to Degollado, 21 October 1860; letter, Degollado to Zaragoza, 23 October 1860; both in García, Documentos, 11:160-163, 163-164.

<sup>47</sup> Letter, Prieto to Degollado, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:147-149. This translation taken from Roeder, Juárez, p. 253.

plan was not a treacherous secret plot, but an honest, open attempt to achieve liberal objectives without further bloodshed. "What more," he asked, "could the most splendid victory by arms give us?"<sup>48</sup>

One former conservative general, Juan Suárez Y Navarro, wrote to Juárez that Manuel Doblado was responsible for the crisis, and while Degollado had been deceived and admittedly weak, he was still innocent of treasonous behavior. He also reminded the president that rivalry and factionalism had been the liberals' chief problem in the war, and only Degollado had been able to forge the diverse elements into an army. He suggested that Juárez have don Santos tried quickly, so that if acquitted, he could resume command immediately, for no other liberal commander could "get the bull out of the barranca."<sup>49</sup>

Most conservatives of course, denounced don Santos' plan. Miramón again objected to the provision which called for a congress to resolve the great questions dividing Mexicans, since he still preferred an assembly of notables.

---

<sup>48</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 December 1860, document no. 67, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Letter, Gómez Farías to Lefevre, 15 October 1860, Ms. J/2-86, AJ/BN.

<sup>49</sup>Letter, Suárez Navarro to Juárez, 12 November 1860, Ms. J/2-134, AJ/BN.



He also disapproved of the participation of the diplomatic corps in the selection of a provisional president. Surprisingly, perhaps, the diplomatic corps did not approve of this provision either.<sup>50</sup> It was, in fact, the one proposal which everyone rejected.

On November 14 Degollado issued a farewell address to the army which he had led for two and a half years. He announced that he had left the theater of war at the end of October for reasons he could not disclose. He later learned from newspapers and letters that the constitutional government had dismissed him from command, though he had received no official notice. Reminding the liberal soldiers of the hardships and sacrifices he had shared with them, don Santos affirmed that they would soon learn he was not unworthy of their confidence and esteem. He finished by urging them to continue to serve faithfully, and, when the war was won, to return home and live in peace.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup>Letter, Miramón to Robles, 3 October 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN. For conservative editorial see La Sociedad, 11 October 1860, p. 1. For disapproval of the diplomatic corps see letter, Mathew to Degollado, 21 October 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN; Letter, McLane to Pacheco, 22 October 1860; letter, Pacheco to McLane, 11 October 1860; both in Manning, Diplomatic Correspondence, 9:1213, 1209-1210.

<sup>51</sup>Proclamation, Degollado, 14 November 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 3:50-51.

Because he had not been officially instructed to step down, don Santos attempted to place José López Uruga, whom the conservatives had earlier released, in command of the army of operations. When this step was blocked by Ignacio Zaragoza, Degollado appealed to the minister of war, who cleared up any doubts in a circular issued on November 26. It stated that General Degollado was dismissed from command and awaiting trial, and any orders he issued were not to be obeyed.<sup>52</sup>

## 6

Historians have long grappled with the problem of explaining how Santos Degollado, a man whose devotion to the liberal cause was beyond question, could so stray from the path of the Reform that his comrades in arms would question his loyalty. For the most part their answers have proven insufficient. One popular version suggests that don Santos sought to cool British wrath over the conducta seizure by agreeing to promote Chargé Mathew's peace plan, which was in effect a scheme to bring Ignacio Comonfort back as president of Mexico. But Degollado, whose dislike for Comonfort was

---

<sup>52</sup>Letter, Degollado to Llave, 21 November 1860, document no. 3, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH; Circular, minister of war, 26 November 1860, no. 5123, in Dublan, Legislación mexicana, 8:762.

no secret, would never have knowingly participated in such a plot, and Comonfort himself denied there was any such scheme.<sup>53</sup> As for Mathew tricking Degollado, it seems unlikely, for the Barron-Forbes affair had left don Santos with a bitter distrust of the British. Moreover, since he had restored to Mathew most of the British funds seized from the conducta, he had little to regret or fear in the way of British retaliation. And finally this explanation ignores the fact that for two years Degollado had sought a means to negotiate peace with the conservatives; his September peace plan was merely another step in a continuing campaign to end the war by negotiation.

Another account contends that Degollado was seduced into a cunning conservative plot. Under his plan the diplomatic corps of ministers from monarchical Europe would help set up Mexico's provisional government, and in so doing they would certainly favor the conservatives.<sup>54</sup> Yet one will

---

<sup>53</sup>Roeder, Juárez, pp. 250-251, 256-257; Letter, Comonfort to Arriaga, 7 November 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 3:37. Just a few months earlier, Degollado had denounced Comonfort as the man who had thrown the liberals into the "claws" of the conservatives; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 26 May 1860, document no. 53, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>54</sup>James Creelman, Díaz, Master of Mexico (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1912), p. 112.

recall, it was this provision of don Santos' plan which Miramón and the diplomatic corps as well refused to accept.

A different explanation, which contends that Degollado had decided that the liberals simply could not win the war, is completely in error, for by late September 1860 he was in fact convinced that the constitutional army was on the verge of victory.<sup>55</sup> Finally, a number of accounts suggest that Degollado had suffered some sort of mental or emotional breakdown.<sup>56</sup> While this cannot be disproven, it seems highly unlikely, for his attempt to gain peace at this time was not an aberration, but part of a continuing two-year effort.

All but a few accounts seem to have ignored Degollado's explanations of why he proposed the peace plan.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps more than any other prominent liberal of the time, don Santos

<sup>55</sup>Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), p. 41; Letter, Degollado to Mathew, 27 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN; Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:140-141.

<sup>56</sup>Alvarez, José Justo Alvarez, p. 232; Smart, Viva Juárez, pp. 125, 225; Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, p. 28.

<sup>57</sup>Two which cite these reasons are Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), p. 446 and Ivie E. Cadenhead, Jesús González Oretga and Mexican National Politics (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1972), p. 40.

gave consideration to the international implications of Mexico's situation. The Barron-Forbes affair had instilled in him a respect for British power and an awareness that Mexico was potentially at the mercy of the major countries of Europe. Thus his plan was designed to placate these foreign powers and to avert intervention, whether the conservatives accepted it or not. If adopted, it would give foreigners a vested interest in the settlement through their participation in the choice of a provisional president. But if, as don Santos expected, Miramón rejected the plan, this would cause the diplomatic corps to recognize Juárez and thus strengthen the liberal position and enhance its prospects for military victory.<sup>58</sup>

While Degollado believed the conservatives would disapprove of his plan, he hoped they would not, for his proposals were much more than a mere ploy to win foreign recognition. He sincerely believed the plan would bring peace, and he graphically explained why he had felt compelled to suggest it.

. . . even when we triumph in Guadalajara and later in Mexico, we will not pacify the country, if it is not by the means of the negotiations begun; since once these are started and accepted by our opponents,

---

<sup>58</sup>Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 24 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:777.

the support of the Diplomatic Corps will be the guarantee of their completion. By any other mode the civil war will continue, and at the end of a year intervention will inevitably come, or more likely, foreign domination.<sup>59</sup>

His foresight was once again impeccable. The liberals technically won the Three Years' War, but fighting continued and they were unable to restore order, a virtual prerequisite to resuming payments on the foreign debt. Consequently, thirteen months after don Santos made the above statement, Spain, France, and Great Britain signed the Tripartite Convention of London, which launched a full-scale military intervention in Mexico and very nearly established French domination there.

Degollado's plan had sought to avert this, but liberals rejected it because they felt don Santos was willing to surrender too much. Yet the only points to which these liberals specifically objected were the participation of the diplomatic corps in selection of a provisional president and the elimination of Benito Juárez from candidacy for this office. The former was disapproved by liberals, conservatives, and the diplomatic corps, and thus Degollado would most certainly have been persuaded to delete it from the plan had

---

<sup>59</sup>Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 30 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:140-141. Underlining is mine.

he been given the opportunity. As regards the removal of Juárez, don Santos never specifically included this in his plan; he proposed only the exclusion of himself and Miramón. Nevertheless, from remarks he made in letters to González Ortega, Mathew, and Juárez, he seems to have shared González Ortega's naive assumption that don Benito would offer to step aside in order to facilitate a settlement.<sup>60</sup> But unlike González Ortega, he never undercut Juárez by agreeing to this himself.

Another question arises from an analysis of this affair--was Degollado's behavior treasonous, as was implicit in Juárez' order that he stand trial? Such a judgment is incomprehensible, since the plan was never negotiated with the enemy, but sent to a British minister and at the same time forwarded to Juárez with an offer to resign if the president disapproved. It is even possible that Degollado was entirely within his authority in proposing the peace plan, for his original appointment as commander-in-chief of the liberal army stated that he was empowered "to do whatever he judges necessary for the restoration of peace

---

<sup>60</sup> Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 29 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:789-790; Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 27 September 1860, in García, Documentos, 11:134; Letter, Degollado to Mathew, 21 September 1860, Ms. J/supl-441, AJ/BN.

and the maintenance of institutions."<sup>61</sup> Juárez must have been aware of this, for when he appointed Jesús González Ortega to succeed Degollado, he gave the new commander all the powers with which don Santos had been invested, "with the precise limitation that whatever political arrangement might be proposed to Your Excellency, you will not take into consideration . . . ."<sup>62</sup> A subsequent circular repeated that González Ortega had "the same authority with which his predecessor was invested, and only the prohibition from entering in agreement with the reactionaries."<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, the Juárez government could not have been surprised that don Santos was working for a peace settlement. On three separate occasions during the war he had tried to get opposing generals to discuss a negotiated peace, and not once did Juárez object to his efforts. In the spring of 1860, in fact, Juárez sent Degollado to meet with Miramón's commissioners to try to work out an agreement. Juárez himself was still involved in exploring possible routes to a settlement at the very time don Santos proposed his plan.

---

<sup>61</sup>Decree, Juárez, 7 April 1858, in García, Documentos, 11:15-16.

<sup>62</sup>Letter, Llave to González Ortega, 17 October 1860, *ibid.*, 11:153.

<sup>63</sup>Circular, Llave, 26 November 1860, *ibid.*, 11:165-166.



And finally, when Juárez rejected the plan on October 4 and when liberal leaders supported his decision, Degollado informed Mathew that he had scrapped the proposals. He then resubmitted his resignation, in proper form, but Juárez chose instead to relieve him and order a trial.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the entire affair was that González Ortega, who succeeded don Santos as commander-in-chief, was, in the words of his biographer, "as guilty of disloyalty to the government as Degollado."<sup>64</sup> Yet don Jesús escaped without even so much as a reprimand. Since don Santos reported that González Ortega and Manuel Doblado had originally encouraged his peace efforts, there is some possibility that don Jesús hoped to see Degollado discredited, so he might succeed him.<sup>65</sup> The tragic truth seems to be simply that Degollado was no longer needed by the liberals, while González Ortega was. As one accounts explains, "The justice of Juárez was tempered by a sense of expediency . . . . The discretion of the President gave his detractors an opportunity . . . to accuse him of catering to the strong and scourging the weak."<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Cadenhead, Jesús González Ortega, p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 47, note 38; Letter, Degollado to Juárez, 23 September 1860, in Juárez, Documentos, 2:773.

<sup>66</sup> Roeder, Juárez, pp. 258-259.

This reveals why Degollado could be drummed out of the army, but it does not explain just why the peace plan he proposed was rejected out of hand by the liberals. In answering this, some accounts contend that essentially irreconcilable differences separated the two Mexican parties, differences which could only be resolved by inevitable war.<sup>67</sup> It speaks ill of human wisdom to concede that man has not the capacity to avert war, yet the above explanation still begs the point. Degollado's plan did not ask the liberals to compromise their revolution, for the principles contained in the Reform Laws were to be retained. The only answer seems to be quite simply that Benito Juárez and the majority of the liberal party wanted victory more than they wanted peace, for as Degollado had seen, peace did not automatically come with victory. It is tragically possible that other courses of action could have been pursued, which, in the inexplicable unraveling of history, might have brought real peace to Mexico, rather than so many more years of war. But with the temptation of military triumph so

---

<sup>67</sup> Hubert H. Bancroft, History of Mexico, vol. 5, 1824-1861, vol. 13 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, 39 vols. (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890), 5:746; Miguel Rivera, Historia antigua y moderna de Jalapa y de las revoluciones del estado de Veracruz, 20 vols. (Tacubaya, México: Editorial Citlaltepétl, 1960), 14:256.

close at hand, the leaders of the liberal party had not the stature to look beyond the expedient of victory in order to explore other possibilities.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LAST FULL MEASURE

#### 1

In October 1860, when Santos Degollado was officially removed as commander-in-chief of the constitutional armies, only the three conservative strongholds at Guadalajara, Puebla, and Mexico City remained to be captured. Don Santos had already begun siege against Guadalajara the previous month, and he ordered González Ortega to press the assault even though President Juárez had as yet made no decision on his peace plan. From Lagos Degollado formulated the campaign strategy and directed as much of the day to day operations as possible.<sup>1</sup> The liberal army at Guadalajara numbered almost

---

<sup>1</sup>Letter, Ogazón to González Ortega, 20 September 1860, Correspondence of Jesús González Ortega, 1851-1881, 5 vols. typescripts, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas, vol. 2 (pages are unnumbered, so citations will be to volumes only; hereafter cited as JGO/UT); Letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 29 September 1860, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin; Angel Pola, ed., Miscelánea comunicados, respuestas, iniciativas, dictámenes, informes, brindis, etc. de Benito Juárez (México: A. Pola, 1906), p. 335. Don Santos scolded González Ortega when the young general was lax in informing him of developments; letter, Degollado to González Ortega, 28 September 1860, vol. 2, JGO/UT.

20,000 men, recruited and equipped primarily by Degollado with funds from the captured conducta, and on November 3 this force at last compelled Leonardo Márquez and 7,000 defenders to abandon the city.<sup>2</sup>

This defeat was one more in a series of setbacks which had plagued the conservatives since mid-summer. Liberal victories at Peñuelas and Silao had forced Miramón out of the Bajío. Also, he had steadily lost the respect, and in some cases the recognition, of foreign powers. And while financial shortages were a continual headache, the loss of Guadalajara made the conservative president even more desperate. On November 15 he imposed a 100,000 peso forced loan in Mexico City, then a few days later siezed 660,000 pesos from the British legation. The latter sum had been collected and placed under seal for payment to British bondholders, and its loss provoked the British into taking steps to shift their recognition to Juárez.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Melchor Alvarez, Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez, or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la Guerra de Reforma (México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905), pp. 236-238; Agustín Rivera, Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y el segundo Imperio, 4th ed. (México: Ortega y Cía., Editores, 1904), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860, 12 vols. (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,

When Guadalajara fell to the liberals, Degollado resigned himself to the fact that he had been removed from command, though he had not yet received any official notice. He now planned to go to Veracruz, as Juárez had ordered, to stand trial, and while he hoped to clear his name, he had no intention of thereafter accepting another military or political office.<sup>4</sup> He went to Quiroga, in Michoacán, and on November 14 issued a farewell address to the army, though the Juárez government did not confirm his dismissal until twelve days later.

Traveling through Michoacán, through villages he had visited many times before, don Santos' mood seems to have improved due to the warm welcome he received everywhere. By

---

1932-1939), vol. 9, Mexico, 1848-1860, 9:1195, note 2; Jan Bazant, Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875, ed. and trans. Michael P. Costeloe (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 174; La Sociedad (Mexico City), 17 November 1860, p. 3; Robert K. Lacerte, "Great Britain and Mexico in the Age of Juárez, 1854-1876" (Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1971), pp. 104-105; Edgar Turlington, Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), pp. 117-119.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 11 November 1860, document no. 65, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH); Letter, Degollado to Sánchez, 21 November 1860, 4 a.s./ documentos varios, legajo 13/ ff. 40, AH/INAH.

early December he appeared determined not to accept the disgrace of being discharged. Upon arrival in Toluca he decided not to risk the journey to Veracruz, but to remain there and prepare his defense. He was also pleased to share the company of his close friend Felipe Berriozábal, who commanded the liberal garrison at Toluca.<sup>5</sup>

In sorting out the events which had led to his fall from grace, Degollado came to believe that Manuel Doblado had been responsible in large part for his misfortunes. Doblado had captured the conducta, for which don Santos had felt compelled to take responsibility, and Doblado had initially approved of Degollado's peace plan, only to denounce it and its author later. As he pondered these matters, don Santos became so furious that he challenged Doblado to a duel and promised that if don Manuel did not accept, he would publicize his cowardice. Though he had information that other generals, and possibly even Juárez,

---

<sup>5</sup>Diary, Santos Degollado, in Genaro García, ed., Documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México, 36 vols. (México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910), vol. 11, Don Santos Degollado, sus manifiestos, campañas, destitución militar, enjuiciamiento, rehabilitación, muerte, funerales, y honores póstumos, 11:231-232 (hereafter cited as García, Documentos); Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 December 1860, document no. 67, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

had conspired to disavow him as commander-in-chief, Degollado harbored no grudges at that time for anyone except Manuel Doblado. The "beekeeper's" loyalty to the liberal president had not been shaken at that point.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, in Mexico City, Miramón knew that as soon as González Ortega secured Guadalajara, he would descend upon the Federal District with a huge army. In a desperate move to buy time, the young "Macabeo" dressed a division of his troops in uniforms of the constitutional army and personally led a sortie out of the capital. On December 9 he fell upon Toluca by surprise and captured Degollado, Berriozábal, Benito Gómez Farías, and 1,300 men. Three days later he returned with his prisoners to Mexico City. The captured liberal officers were brought to the National Palace in a closed coach, while the constitutionalist troops were paraded through the city.<sup>7</sup>

The conservatives talked at length about executing Degollado and the others. Don Santos managed to get a letter

---

<sup>6</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 6 December 1860, document no. 67, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>7</sup>Carlos Sánchez Navarro y Peón, Miramón, el caudillo conservador (México: Editorial Patria, 1949), pp. 103-104; José M. Vigil, La Reforma, vol. 5 of México á través de los siglos, ed. Vicente Riva Palacio, 5 vols. (México: Editorial Cumbre, 1958), 5:442; El País (Guadalajara, México), 1 January 1861, p. 4.



to Ocampo in which he described their precarious position. Rather than fearing death, however, he seemed pleased that he might gain "the humble tomb of Hidalgo." His only apprehension was that his critics might misinterpret the courtesies Miramón had shown him and raise new accusations.<sup>8</sup> The lives of don Santos, Berriozábal, and Gómez Farías were spared, though, and afterward several conservatives, including Leonardo Márquez, claimed credit for this magnanimous act.<sup>9</sup>

On December 22 Miramón led 8,000 men northward out of the capital to make a last-ditch stand against González Ortega's army of 11-12,000. They met at San Miguel Calpulalpán, and after a heated but short engagement, the conservatives were soundly defeated. There is some question as to whether González Ortega deserves much credit for the victory, for Leandro Valle, José Justo Alvarez, and Ignacio Zaragoza all

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 22 December 1860, document no. 68, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>9</sup> El País, 1 January 1861, p. 4 reprints an article from Idea Progresista (Querétaro) which said Márquez wanted to shoot the prisoners, but Miramón's wife persuaded don Miguel to spare them. As Vigil, Reforma, 5:442 explains, Márquez later claimed that he stopped Miramón from carrying out the executions. Isidro Díaz also supported the cause of mercy; see Benito Juárez, Documentos, discursos y correspondencia, ed. Jorge L. Tamayo, 15 vols. (México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969), 4:128.

played crucial roles.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless Miramón's losses were heavy, and when he pulled back to the capital, it was without any hope of being able to make a stand there.

On the 23rd Miramón met with Berriozábal and Degollado and decided to send the former, together with the French and Spanish ministers and one conservative general, to discuss surrender terms with González Ortega. Don Jesús would consider nothing short of unconditional surrender, and when the commission returned on December 24 with this negative response, there was more talk of executing the liberal officers. Instead Miramón disbanded his forces and surrendered control of the capital to Berriozábal and Degollado. "Macabeo" then escaped to Veracruz and eventually made his way to Europe, later to return to the employ of Maximilian. Don Santos, because of his uncertain status, refused to accept any official position, but late that night he rode through the city with Berriozábal to help calm the populace.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Alfonso Teja Zabre, Leandro Valle: un liberal romántico (México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1956), pp. 97-103.

<sup>11</sup> Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:232-233; El País, 8 January 1861, pp. 3-4; Letter, Guadalupe to Riva Palacio, 25 December 1860, document no. 7359, Mariano Riva Palacio Archives, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin, Texas (hereafter cited as MRP/UT).

The next day, Christmas morning, Aureliano Rivera's liberal troops entered the capital to take charge. Degollado gladly departed from the scene by moving to the home of Benito Gómez Farías for a few days, then into the Hotel del Bazar.<sup>12</sup> On January 1, 1861 González Ortega led the grand procession as the liberal army marched into Mexico City to restore the sovereignty of the constitution to the true national capital.

When this parade passed the Hotel Iturbide, don Jesús spied Degollado watching from the balcony. He halted the march and sent for don Santos to be brought down to receive the tribute of the crowd, and he placed in his hand a Mexican flag. Laurels were proffered to González Oretga, but he bestowed them upon Degollado. The two men exchanged praise and wept considerably before proceeding on together at the head of the parade. The crowds applauded both generals as they rode through the streets to the National Palace, where they mounted the balcony to review the troops with Mata, Ocampo, and Llave. The unrestrained joy and enthusiasm of this New Years day in no way resembled the solemn scene which took place ten days later when Juárez entered the capital. The hearty reception given to the "hero of defeats"

---

<sup>12</sup>Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:233.

must have encouraged his hope that, for the moment at least, his reputation had been redeemed.<sup>13</sup>

## 2

One week after González Ortega's triumphal march into the city, Degollado fell ill with scarlatina. He was confined to bed until January 17, during which time Juárez, Ocampo, and others visited him. When fully recovered, he immediately set to work pressing the government to bring his case to trial.<sup>14</sup>

Even at this early date, at least one newspaper was suggesting Degollado as a candidate in the upcoming presidential elections, called by Juárez for late spring. But this promotion led other newspapers to object to his candidacy, since he was awaiting trial for treason. Don Santos was compelled to announce that he was not a candidate for any office, and he declared that his only immediate concern was to vindicate his good name. Accordingly he intended to appear before the supreme court in March to seek a quick judgment in his case.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:234; El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 28 January 1861, p. 3; 31 January 1861, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup>El Siglo XIX, 1 February 1861, p. 4.

At the same time, other critics leveled charges at him regarding the conducta affair, suggesting that he had pilfered funds and now sought to delay the trial to conceal his misconduct. In response, Degollado published an itemized statement of the disbursal of the conducta monies and a letter from Juárez confirming that don Santos was doing everything possible to hasten his trial.<sup>16</sup> In mid-February Juárez appointed Leandro Valle, the young quartermaster of the army, to investigate Degollado's role in the conducta and peace plan affairs. Valle named General Ramón Iglesias to serve as fiscal, or investigator and prosecuting attorney.<sup>17</sup> All this made it apparent that Juárez intended to have Degollado tried before a court martial, thus labeling his crimes military in nature rather than political.

Degollado was uneasy about this, and Ignacio de Jáuregui, whom Ocampo had asked to serve as Degollado's defense counsel until he could take over, appealed to Minister of War González

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 16 February 1861, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Letter, Valle to Degollado, 14 February 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:166-167; Letter, Valle to minister of war, 18 February 1861, Documentos relativos a la Reforma en México, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, roll. no. 6, no. 153, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as Mic DF/BINAH).

Ortega. Jáuregui cited several articles of the constitution in support of his arguments that Juárez had no authority to appoint a fiscal, that Degollado's alleged crimes were not of a strictly military nature, and that as a state governor accused of violating the constitution and federal laws, don Santos could only be tried by the supreme court after indictment by a congressional grand jury.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, the investigation proceeded as Juárez had ordered, and on February 27, Iglesias presented Degollado with the charges against him. But don Santos challenged the procedure by demanding the names of his accusers, a constitutional privilege, and by claiming his immunity as a high officeholder, in order to be tried first before a congressional grand jury. Iglesias was taken aback by this challenge to the jurisdiction of the military investigation and tribunal, and could only suggest to Leandro Valle, his superior, that the military indeed did not have legal authority in the case. Valle relayed the question to González Ortega, who took the matter before Juárez and the cabinet.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Letter, Jáuregui to González Ortega, 20 February 1861, roll no. 6, no. 153, Mic DF/BINAH.

<sup>19</sup> Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:234; Letter, Valle to González Ortega, 28 February 1861, roll no. 6, no. 153, Mic DF/BINAH.

Degollado explained to Ocampo that he would accept a conviction by the military court, for that he could appeal. An acquittal, however, would ruin him, he believed, for he had learned that there was strong pressure from within the army that he be cleared. It appeared, therefore, that the court martial would be a staged formality which would not serve the purpose of restoring his reputation. Consequently he had decided to reserve his immunity so that if the military acquitted him, he could request a congressional trial.<sup>20</sup>

When this challenge was passed up the chain of command to Juárez, the president turned the question over to a legal consultant.<sup>21</sup> This meant more delay, which was exactly what don Santos had hoped to avoid. Therefore he wrote to Valle to explain that he had not intended to question the jurisdiction of the indictment against him. He had planned to request a congressional inquiry only if it would hasten the proceedings.

I pledge to abide for my part with the sentence of the military tribunal if it is a conviction, but if it is an acquittal which is the only [ruling] that is important for me to confirm, I will have recourse to

---

<sup>20</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 14 March 1861, document no. 69, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.; Letter, Juárez to Iglesias, 16 March 1861, roll no. 6, no. 153, Mic DF/BINAH.

the grand jury, as competent judge so that it may try me and absolve or condemn me according to existing constitutional law.<sup>22</sup>

## 3

While Degollado and the Juárez administration debated the matter of his trial, the preliminary elections took place. These both affected and were affected by the Degollado case, for his uncertain status did not prevent some of his supporters from promoting his candidacy for congress and for the presidency. The public knew little about the charges being pressed against don Santos, and many voters felt he had been wronged. Even Degollado suspected that his trial might have been delayed to prevent his making any serious bid for public office.<sup>23</sup>

Juárez' two challengers for the presidency were Jesús González Ortega and Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, with the latter representing the greatest threat to the incumbent. Lerdo had strongly favored negotiating a peace settlement with Miramón in the fall of 1860, but he had disapproved of the

---

<sup>22</sup>Letter, Degollado to Valle, 30 March 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:169-171.

<sup>23</sup>Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), pp. 297-298; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 14 March 1861, document no. 69, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.



particular plan Degollado proposed. Nevertheless, he objected to the manner in which don Santos was being punished, for he believed no one could seriously doubt Degollado's loyalty to the constitutional cause.<sup>24</sup> Therefore when Lerdo died on March 22, 1861, Degollado appeared to some of don Miguel's supporters to be a logical successor to his candidacy.

Even before Lerdo died, two newspapers in Querétaro had taken it upon themselves to defend Degollado from the charges being leveled at him. The Idea Progresista had questioned the motives of the Juárez government in seeking to label don Santos a criminal, and the Mocho de Querétaro had described his position with a quote from Themistocles, "the people treat in this manner those who serve them well." El Mocho also feared that Degollado's name might become a sad reality--in Spanish "degollado" means "throat cut." Then after Lerdo died, the Idea and El Mocho threw their support to Degollado for president of Mexico.<sup>25</sup>

At the end of March don Santos learned that in both Querétaro and San Juan del Río, he had won the presidential

<sup>24</sup> Letter, Lerdo to Juárez, 13 November 1860, Ms. J/2-99, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AJ/BN); Juárez, Documentos, 4:213.

<sup>25</sup> El Herald (Mexico City), 5 March 1861, p. 4; El País, 9 April 1861, p. 4. La Orquesta (Mexico City), 16 March 1861, p. 18 compared Juárez to Pontius Pilate.

election. Fearing that the voters might begin to take his candidacy seriously, Degollado wrote a confidential letter to the editor of El Mocho expressing a determination to return to private life. He was depressed over how the government had treated him, and he was apprehensive about the course the country was taking. He also feared his candidacy might intensify liberal factionalism, and he consequently wanted the newspaper discreetly to let it be known that he would not accept nomination for the presidency.<sup>26</sup>

When Degollado wrote to Ocampo to tell him that Querétaro had voted for him for president, he joked, "fortunately 'a little poison does not kill.'"<sup>27</sup> He continued to discourage supporters from promoting him for office, but as election returns came in from Jalisco, Michoacán, and other areas, he received yet more votes for congress and for the presidency.<sup>28</sup>

Other newspapers, especially the Partido Puro and El Artesano Libre, both of Morelia, were bitterly critical of

<sup>26</sup> Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:235; Letter, Degollado to Montoya, 28 March 1861, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:304-305.

<sup>27</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 31 March 1861, document no. 70, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>28</sup> El País, 2 April 1861, p. 1; Wilfred H. Callcott, Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), p. 32.

Degollado. Partido called don Santos a "shameless shyster" and a "crazy man," and accused him of unfair newspaper attacks on Eпитacio Huerta during the elections. Degollado denied that he had written any articles criticizing Huerta, but he had confided to Ocampo that he would go to extreme lengths to keep don Eпитacio from becoming governor of Michoacán. El Artesano Libre suggested that Degollado was a traitor and ought to be in jail, but don Santos rebutted that only congress could put him in prison. He complained, however, that Juárez had contributed to the effort to discredit him by discharging him initially and by allowing the Morelia press to slander him now.<sup>29</sup>

Since early February don Santos had regularly appealed to the president to do something about these press attacks. He had also grown more apprehensive about Juárez' appointment of so many "conservatives" to government posts and bitter toward the president's demotion of some of don Santos' loyal adjutants in the army.<sup>30</sup> Finally on April 28, 1861 his

---

<sup>29</sup> Letter, Degollado to publisher of Partido Puro, 27 April 1861; letter, Degollado to publisher of El Artesano Libre, 28 April 1861; both in Juárez, Documentos, 4:362-366, 367-369; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 31 March 1861, document no. 70, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>30</sup> Letter, Degollado to editor of El Siglo XIX, 14 February 1861, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:266-267; Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 14 March 1861, document no. 71, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

self-restraint gave way, and he lashed out at Juárez in a letter sent to the newspaper Siglo XIX.

How is it that His Excellency the President remains a cold spectator to such insults against he who was his most faithful defender; he who prevented the interior from forgetting and disavowing him; he who did not try to follow him to safety in Ulúa, despite not having military command nor being more than Minister of [Foreign] Relations; he who during the six days of bombardment of Veracruz not a single moment put himself under the blindages? How! Does not misfortune deserve some respect, ill<sup>31</sup> luck some consideration, helplessness some protection?

Don Santos further complained that despite his service to the cause, he could expect no one to speak out in his defense, for "the men of fortune, of power, and of force, are against me." He did not ask for gratitude,

but I do believe I have the right to ask that the verdict of my judges be awaited, that I be left to live in peace, that I be forgotten, and that I be granted the grace Diogenes requested: that they not take the sun away from me.<sup>32</sup>

Degollado's propensity for self-pity was again in evidence, but it had indeed been prompted by vicious attacks. In frustration he had reproached none less than the president, accusing Juárez of all shades of ingratitude and cowardice. Two days later he told Ocampo that he had lost his temper

---

<sup>31</sup>Letter, Degollado to editor of El Siglo XIX, 28 April 1861, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:370-372.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

and "some complaints against Señor Juárez escaped from me which will end up prejudicing him against me." Yet he did not regret his action, for "I have believed myself to be right." His son Joaquín concurred when a few weeks later he declared that he and don Santos' other children would not permit their father to return to public service under those liberals who had rejected him, slandered and defamed him, rejoiced at his capture at Toluca, and hoped for his execution.<sup>33</sup>

## 4

As the time for the final presidential elections approached, Degollado's trial still was delayed. Some continued to suspect that this was intentional on Juárez' part. When González Ortega had resigned as minister of war in early April, the president had tendered the position to Degollado, a strange offer indeed for Juárez to make to the man whom he had charged with treason. But don Santos turned down this apparent proposal of reconciliation, preferring instead a trial which would publicly clear his name.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 30 April 1861, document no. 71, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; La Orquesta, 1 June 1861, p. 105.

<sup>34</sup>Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:236; Juárez, Documentos, 4:314.

Yet the government continued to stall. In early February Juárez had explained that the necessary documents were still enroute from Veracruz, but three months had passed since then and the case was no closer to trial. One Juárez biographer has seconded the government's explanation that the matter was bogged down in legal routine, but this was difficult for Degollado to accept. His supporters still believed Juárez was holding off until June, when the election returns would be in, for if don Santos remained in legal limbo, he could not make a serious challenge for the presidency.<sup>35</sup>

By the end of April Degollado had decided to take his case directly to congress as soon as that body convened. But Ocampo, who was planning to serve as Degollado's defense counsel, had been elected deputy to the congress. Don Santos told his old friend that it might be better if he retained his seat on the congressional grand jury rather than serve as attorney, for as a member of the body he could debate in Degollado's behalf during the deliberations. If the congress delivered an indictment and sent the case to the

---

<sup>35</sup>Letter, Degollado to editor of El Siglo XIX, 14 February 1861, in Juárez, Documentos, 4:266-267; Roeder, Juárez, p. 298.

supreme court, Degollado hoped that Ocampo would defend him there.<sup>36</sup>

On May 9 the congress convened, and four days later Ignacio Jáuregui appealed to the deputies to decide under whose jurisdiction the Degollado case should fall. Immediately the congress met in secret session and voted to ask the executive branch for the documents relative to the matter so it could resolve the question. On May 16 the Juárez administration complied with congress' request, and at last it seemed that Degollado would have the chance to plead his case.<sup>37</sup>

## 5

The Juárez party had recaptured Mexico City in December 1860, but the ensuing months had seen all its efforts at restoring order fail. Conservative bands continued to roam the hills of the Central Valley as well as other parts of Mexico. Their brand of mountain guerrilla warfare was difficult to combat, especially with the constitutional army crippled by lack of funds and shortages of recruits. Leonardo

---

<sup>36</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 30 April 1861, document no. 71, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>37</sup>Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:238-239; Several letters, May 1861, roll no. 6, no. 153, Mic DF/BINAH.

Márquez had repledged his support of Félix Zuloaga and now ranged virtually unopposed through the territory north and west of the capital.<sup>38</sup>

On May 31, 1861 a band under Márquez' general command, but led by Guillermo Lindoro Cajiga, stormed onto Melchor Ocampo's hacienda at Pomoca in Michoacán and took don Melchor prisoner. Ocampo had left Juárez' cabinet in January and returned to his hacienda, where he intended to remain until Degollado's case came before congress. News of his capture caused an uproar in the capital, and Juárez hurriedly sought to raise ransom money and take conservative hostages.<sup>39</sup>

Ocampo was taken to Tepejí del Río and turned over to Márquez and Zuloaga, who submitted him to the mockery of a trial. On June 3, after drafting a simple will and refusing last rites, Ocampo fell before a firing squad, and his body was left hanging in a tree. In the years to follow the two principals in the execution, Márquez and Zuloaga, each blamed

---

<sup>38</sup> Report, Zaragoza, 11 May 1861, in Ignacio Zaragoza, Memoria de guerra, leída en la Cámara de Diputados por el Ministro del ramo general Ignacio Zaragoza el día 9 de Mayo de 1861, é informe sobre facciosos en el Valle de México dado por el mismo el 11 del propio mes (México: 1861), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Jesús Romero Flores, Historia de Michoacán, 2 vols. (México: Imprenta "Claridad," 1946), 2:173, 175; Letter, Ocampo to Juárez, 14 May 1861, in Jorge L. Tamayo, ed., Epistolario de Benito Juárez, 2nd ed. (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), p. 253; Roeder, Juárez, p. 304.



the other for this act of barbarity, and some liberals suspected the complicity of leading clerics as well. But to most people it seemed that the responsibility had to lie with Márquez, "the little man whose instincts ran on four legs and who still reared himself on two."<sup>40</sup>

News of Ocampo's murder caused near riots in Mexico City, and in congress a mob spirit prevailed as well. On June 4, as the delegates debated possible courses of action, the secretary interrupted the proceedings to announce that Santos Degollado wished to address the body. Permission was immediately granted and the galleries burst into applause. When don Santos walked to the podium a few moments later, the deputies stood and joined the galleries in cheering.<sup>41</sup>

This was high drama of the first order, for deputies and spectators alike knew of the close relationship that had existed between Degollado and Ocampo. The applause

<sup>40</sup> Telegram, Montero to Zaragoza, 4 June 1861, Ms. J/2-168, AJ/BN; Roeder, Juárez, pp. 309-311; Leonardo Márquez, Reminiscencias sobre el fusilamiento de D. Melchor Ocampo (Havana: P. Fernández y Cía., 1891), p. 3; Romero Flores, Historia de Michoacán, 2:174.

<sup>41</sup> Roeder, Juárez, pp. 305-306; Felipe Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso constitucional de la república mexicana que funcionó en el año de 1857: extracto de todas las sesiones y documentos relativos de la época, 9 vols. (México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1874-1882), 1:2:101.

continued for some time, and when order was at last restored, the "hero of defeats" spoke.

I come in the name of justice; I want to be judged; I swear before the spirit of Ocampo that vengeance is not my desire. I want neither command nor ovations; I want to make war on the assassins. It will not be I who calls for the persecution of women, old men, or children, but must we passively weep like women? No, we will fight; I will go as the least soldier; we will make an example of these evil-doers. Permit me to shed my blood in battle . . . allow me to fight against our enemies, and I will return so that judgment can be rendered in my case.<sup>42</sup>

As Degollado left, the chamber erupted. Immediately a motion was introduced that the congress should clear don Santos of all charges and restore him to public service. As debate on the measure began, a deputy named Lama questioned the procedural propriety of such a motion, and he was promptly drowned out by boos and catcalls from the gallery.<sup>43</sup>

The debate continued for several minutes before Degollado returned to the chamber to clarify his appeal. He explained that he did not want absolution, only permission to take up arms against the conservative bands which had killed Ocampo. He promised to return from the campaign to stand trial for the charges pending against him. More debate followed, and

---

<sup>42</sup>El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 5 June 1861.

<sup>43</sup>Buenrostro, Historia del primer congreso, 1:2:101-102.

finally Manuel M. de Zamacona gave a stirring oration in Degollado's behalf. Then by a 77 to 32 vote congress approved the resolution "that the citizen Santos Degollado may continue lending his services to the constitutional cause, with reservation for what may result from the trial he has pending."<sup>44</sup>

## 6

On June 6 Degollado notified the minister of war of his congressional authorization, and offered to serve under any general Juárez might select to direct the operation. Nevertheless, he made it clear that he believed only congress could restrict his activities or recall him from the campaign. Therefore he considered himself free to recruit his own guerrilla forces, if necessary, and to conduct his mission as he saw fit.<sup>45</sup>

The military agreed to organize an expedition, but Degollado was too impatient to wait in the capital. On June 7 he led a small brigade westward out of Mexico City, stopping off in Tacubaya to say goodbye to his wife. The next day he was joined by another small force under Tomás

---

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1:2:102-103.

<sup>45</sup> Letter, Degollado to minister of war, 6 June 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:189-190.

O'Horán. Later, on the plains of Salazar, they skirmished with one of the conservative bands near Monte de las Cruces, the site of an important battle in the war for independence. The brief scrape was inconclusive, and don Santos' brigade continued on its way to Lerma.<sup>46</sup>

The following day, June 9, O'Horán proposed an elaborate plan for searching the mountains between Toluca and Mexico City, and Degollado accepted it. The force continued westward to Toluca, where it spent several days gathering equipment and a few more troops. Don Santos then returned with his brigade to Lerma and spent several more days impatiently awaiting reinforcements which O'Horán was to bring from Mexico City.<sup>47</sup>

By June 15 Degollado had tired of the inactivity, and when on that day he learned that O'Horán's convoy had at last set out from the capital, he decided to march out to meet it and provide escort. At mid-morning his force arrived at the foot of Monte de las Cruces, less than 20

---

<sup>46</sup>Diary, Degollado, in García, Documentos, 11:240; José Monroy, La muerte del benemérito gral. D. Santos Degollado (México: n.d.), pp. 3-5.

<sup>47</sup>Plan of operations, O'Horán, 9 June 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:191-196; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, p. 5; Lilia Díaz López, ed. and tr., Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos, 3 vols. (México: Colegio de México, 1963), 2:249.

miles from Mexico City. It was here that don Santos had skirmished with a conservative band one week earlier, and he feared that, if still in the vicinity, it might attack O'Horán. Consequently he divided his forces, sending Felipe Berriozábal down the road to meet the convoy, while he led another group up the mountain to parallel Berriozábal's march and cover the road from an elevated position. Before separating, the generals agreed on specific bugle signals to be used in case either party ran into trouble.<sup>48</sup>

The guide leading Degollado's men up the mountain chose a nearly impassible trail, and while the troops were struggling with the difficult ascent, they were ambushed. Since there was no place to go but up, don Santos and his men fought their way to a protected and elevated position, incurring only slight losses. After a brief skirmish the enemy band withdrew.<sup>49</sup>

Berriozábal had heard the firing from the road, and he turned his forces to rush to Degollado's aid. But don Santos' men, excited over their success, raised shouts of

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Vega to minister of war, 19 June 1861; letter, Vega to Zaragoza, 17 June 1861; both in García, Documentos, 11:207-208, 214-215; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> Letter, Vega to minister of war, 19 June 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:208-209.

victory while the bugler exulted by sounding the "diana." Berriozábal thereupon resumed his march, for the "diana" was the prearranged signal that there was no trouble. Observing don Felipe's departure, the conservatives attacked Degollado once again, and because of superior numbers, easily surrounded and pinned down the liberal troops.<sup>50</sup>

The fighting raged, and by 3:00 Degollado's men had nearly exhausted their ammunition. Don Santos sent a man to bring Berriozábal back, but he was not seen again that day. The liberal troops began to lose heart, and officers worked frantically to keep up their hope that the convoy would soon arrive. At 4:00 it began to rain, and twice the enemy called upon don Santos to surrender, but each time he refused. By 5:30, having expended the last of their powder, the liberals fixed bayonets. Degollado's aide overheard him mumbling, "The convoy or nightfall." He had no way of knowing that O'Horán had not left Tacubaya until 2:00 that afternoon.<sup>51</sup>

The conservatives perceived their opponents' condition, and when the rain let up briefly, they attacked and easily

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 209-210; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, pp. 7-8.

<sup>51</sup> Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, pp. 8-9; Letter, Vega to minister of war, 19 June 1861; letter, Vega to Zaragoza, 17 June 1861; both in García, Documentos, 11:210-211, 218.

overran the liberal position. Degollado ordered a retreat, but under the circumstances it became a desperate, every-man-for-himself dash down the mountainside. Astonishingly 97 men escaped. When don Santos was last seen by any of his men, he was firing his pistol while leading his horse down the mountain. He broke through the ring of conservatives at the foot of Monte de las Cruces, and, hotly pursued by those among the enemy who recognized him, he rode off.<sup>52</sup>

From accounts which have been pieced together, it seems that don Santos sought to escape into the hills above the plains of Salazar. He was caught, however, and wounded by an Indian named Neri, lanced in the neck by "Chato" Alejandro Gutiérrez, then shot point-blank in the chest by a third man. His body was recovered and buried in the nearby village of Huixquilucán.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup>Letter, Vega to minister of war, 19 June 1861; letter, Vega to Zaragoza, 17 June 1861; both in García, Documentos, 11:211, 217; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, p. 10.

<sup>53</sup>Letter, Vega to minister of war, 19 June 1861, in García, Documentos, 11:212; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, p. 11; Teja Zabre, Leandro Valle, p. 126; Angel Pola, Vicente Riva Palacio, Manuel Payno, Juan A. Mateos, Rafael Martínez de la Torre, El libro rojo, 1520-1867, 2 vols. (México: A. Pola, 1906), 2:393. The French minister did not believe the band which attacked Degollado's force was part of Leonardo Márquez' army; see Díaz López, Versión francesa, 2:252-253.

Melchor Ocampo's murder was still a matter of concern in Mexico City when word came that Degollado too had been killed. In addition to the numbing shock this news caused, it should have demonstrated to the congress and to the Juárez government that the conservative army was not simply a few minor bands of outlaws, but a fighting force still to be reckoned with. Apparently the lesson was lost upon them, for on June 23 a force sent out under Leandro Valle to pursue Degollado's killers was itself defeated near Monte de las Cruces. Leonardo Márquez captured Valle and executed him on the same mountain where don Santos had fallen.<sup>54</sup>

Public mourning for "the hero of defeats" began as soon as his death was confirmed. Newspapers dressed their columns in black, and cities throughout Mexico shared in the grief.<sup>55</sup> Congress ordered nine days of official mourning in August, during which time all officials wore black, flags were flown at half mast, and cannon were fired each quarter hour from sunup to sunset. On August 9 Juárez led a procession from

---

<sup>54</sup>Teja Zabre, Leandro Valle, pp. 128-134.

<sup>55</sup>For example see La Orquesta, 19 June 1861, p. 126; Decree, governor of San Luis Potosí, 4 July 1861, document no. 332, fondo XXVIII-1, carpeta 5, Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as RII/CEHM).



the National Palace to the Alameda, where services were held and eulogies given.<sup>56</sup>

Don Santos received many posthumous honors. Congress declared him "benemérito de la patria"; the state of Jalisco renamed the Guadalajara theater for him, changed the name of the town of San Ignacio de Morelos to Degollado, and declared him "benemérito del estado." On September 9, 1861 congress met as a grand jury and unanimously cleared him of all charges pending in the conducta and peace plan affairs.<sup>57</sup>

The conservatives claimed that Juárez rejoiced at Degollado's death. While this is an incredible contention, fifteen years later don Santos' son Mariano apparently came to believe it. He engaged in a heated newspaper battle with Juárez' son, and charged that don Benito had harbored

<sup>56</sup> Circular, Ruiz for Juárez, 3 August 1861, legajo 1041, seccion de gobernación, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City; El centenario de Santos Degollado, documentos y cartas (México: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1961), p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> Decree, minister of gobernación, 7 September 1861, document no. 3057, fondo I-2, carpeta 37, Luis Gutiérrez Cañedo manuscritos, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City (hereafter cited as LGC/CEHM); Instituto Jalisciense de Bellas Artes, Homenaje del Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco a los ciudadanos gral. Santos Degollado, arq. Jacobo Gálvez, pintor Gerardo Suárez, constructores del Teatro Degollado (Guadalajara, México: Gráfica Editorial, 1966), pp. 11, 13-14; El Herald, 10 September 1861, p. 3.

"perfidy and ill will" toward Degollado. The issue became so intense that don Mariano was challenged to a duel, but the matter died down without further incident.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the charges, though completely unfounded, have left suspicions that persist to the present day.

A year after Degollado's death, his remains were brought to Mexico City and, at his family's request, interred in the British cemetery. In 1906 congress ordered don Santos' name inscribed in gold in the House of Deputies, where it can be seen today, and also instructed that his remains be transferred to the Rotunda of Illustrious Men. The latter was not done, and when the Mexican senate in 1936 again ordered the transfer, it was again overlooked. Finally on the centennial of his death, don Santos' body was exhumed by presidential order and placed in the Rotunda.<sup>59</sup>

Degollado achieved the martyrdom that some say he fervently sought out. It erased all doubts regarding not only his devotion but his conduct as well. Among the few possessions found on his body was a small gold ring set

---

<sup>58</sup> Mariano Cuevas, Historia de la nación mexicana (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1967), p. 861; Monroy, Muerte de Degollado, p. 2; Several items dated September 1876, García folder 26, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

<sup>59</sup> Pola, Libro rojo, 2:393; Centenario de Degollado, pp. 11, 13, 5.

with a green jasper and the Mexican coat-of-arms, and  
inscribed with the most apropos of words--"Todo por ti."  
"All for you."<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup>García, Documentos, 11:241.

## EPILOGUE

### 1

The foregoing chapters have traced the career of Santos Degollado in the context of the history of the Mexican Reforma. Due to the nature of the narrative vehicle and for purposes of reemphasizing certain points, a few additional comments should help to illustrate the subject more fully. For example, one overriding aspect of Degollado's life which can hardly be exaggerated is the import of his close relationship with Melchor Ocampo, for more than any other person, don Melchor influenced the course of Degollado's career. Don Santos rarely felt more dejected than when he feared that something he had done, such as the conducta seizure, might offend Ocampo. He had such trust in his friend's judgment that when on one occasion he heard rumors that don Melchor had resigned from the cabinet, he too proposed to resign despite the fact that he had no idea why Ocampo had stepped down.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 18 November 1859, document no. 49, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City (hereafter cited as AH/INAH).

This close and long-lasting association seems almost to have transcended the cause to which both men dedicated their lives. During the Three Years' War, when Degollado needed to inform the president on an important matter, yet had only enough time to write one letter, he wrote not to Juárez but to Ocampo, whom he asked to relay the information.<sup>2</sup> Personal correspondence with his closest companion strengthened and sustained don Santos, whose salutations reveal his considerable affection for Ocampo (eg. "your devoted brother and constant friend who loves you," "your devoted brother and faithful friend who sends you his heart beating with patriotic hope," etc.).<sup>3</sup> Yet this correspondence was at best a poor substitute for the company of his friend. When at last shed of the Barron affair, for example, Degollado perceived as one of the most joyous consequences the fact that he would be able to settle down in Mexico City in the same neighborhood with Ocampo. One would be hard-pressed, in short, to decide whether don Santos chose to lay down his life in June 1861 for his cause or for his friend.

---

<sup>2</sup>Degollado did this on several occasions; eg. letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 4 November 1858, document no. 26, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

<sup>3</sup>For these and many others see letters, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Degollado's association with his family is less clear, but it seems nonetheless that he greatly cherished it. This feeling was doubtless enhanced by the hardships that war imposed upon their relationship, as when during the Revolution of Ayutla his brother Rafael was nearly killed, two of his sons were badly beaten, and his wife was forced to peddle chocolate in the streets in order to feed her children. During the Three Years' War don Santos' youngest son died, and he constantly fretted about the second eldest son, Mariano, who while serving in the Mexican legation in Washington became destitute.<sup>4</sup> Many times during his career Degollado lamented the privations he imposed upon his loved ones, and he often declared that his greatest hope was that once the Three Years' War was finished, he could retire from public service and be with his family.

There was a lighter side to don Santos' personality, however, as evidenced by the comical metaphors, sarcastic observations, and humorous stories which abound in his letters. The Reform Laws, which he esteemed beyond any other liberal achievement, he described as a "fat elephant"

---

<sup>4</sup> Three letters, all Degollado to Ocampo, 10 January 1856, document no. 16; 6 July 1857, document no. 27; 3 November 1859, document no. 47; all in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH; Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 28 May 1859, p. 2.

upon which his party could ride to avoid the bites of the conservative "snakes"; his constantly bickering subordinates were his "caged beasts"; indiscreet celebrants made "more noise than a stuck pig"; a rebellious officer was a "little Vidaurri." Explaining his own forgetfulness, don Santos declared, "I have a memory as if I had been bathed in the Styx." He once criticized an article, which praised as a patriot someone he disliked, by asserting, "If ignorance and indolence are claim for patriotism, no one is more of a patriot than I, and Santa Anna, Zuloga, and many others." He characterized himself as a Quixote, and Ocampo was his "Dulcinea of Veracruz." Because the conservatives repeatedly protested that God was on their side, don Santos often jokingly invoked the name of the devil in behalf of the liberals. When his favorite battle horse, El Petardo, died, he told Ocampo, "I expect that you will join me in mourning, although my horse did not know how to give testament."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 21 August 1859, document no. 30, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-D5, AH/INAH; Seven letters, all Degollado to Ocampo, 8 November 1859, document no. 5; 18 August 1860, document no. 63; 14 March 1861, document no. 69; 26 May 1860, document no. 53; 5 November 1859, document no. 48; 21 July 1857, document no. 18; 27 October 1859, document no. 46; all in 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

Thus in some respects don Santos seems to have had an appealing personality, yet it should not be necessary to point out that all men, regardless of their stature in history have had faults. In Degollado's case, the most blatant character defects were his inability to accept humbly personal injustices and criticism, and his penchant for self-pity. Particularly after reverses on the battlefield, he was prone to rationalize his failings, though he always went on record as officially accepting full responsibility. To be sure, he suffered many hardships and made great sacrifices for his cause, and in the end was treated most unfairly by the Juárez government. But he complained so bitterly and bemoaned his sufferings to such an extent that he seemed almost to cheapen this self-denial. One generally expects great men to suffer in courageous silence the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Nonetheless, Degollado became a martyr for the cause of liberal reform in Mexico. This may not have been entirely accidental, for he often expressed a desire to die for his country and complained more than once that he had been denied the glory of death in battle. One account has asserted that Degollado was "destined for martyrdom." It does not seem unlikely, therefore, that don Santos sought



out, consciously or not, the kind of death he ultimately found.<sup>6</sup>

## 2

Without the soldiers of the constitutional army, the liberal party would never have been able to work its reforms in Mexico. Yet it seems at first glance paradoxical that this army achieved victory while under the central direction of the "hero of defeats." Aside from the strategic and tactical importance of defeat in battle, however, there is a psychological significance in how the defeated party accepts his loss. And for Santos Degollado, defeat simply steeled the resolve to fight on. His unique recuperative ability enabled him to make of defeat a psychological asset, an encouragement, and a personal challenge, and it was for this reason that his comrades-in-arms called him the "hero of defeats."

In addition, there were certain aspects of warcraft for which Degollado exhibited true talent. He was, for example, a remarkably persuasive recruiter. Serious battlefield defeats of the magnitude he suffered could

---

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 248. A new discipline known as "victimology" may someday make possible a determination of whether don Santos might have been a "victim in search of an assassin"; Time, the Weekly News Magazine (Chicago, Illinois), 5 July 1971, p. 42.

completely destroy an army, for even those troops which escaped injury or capture were generally so greatly dispersed and demoralized that many simply deserted and went home. Don Santos' ability to recruit a new army after each of his shattering defeats was phenomenal. Moreover, he was adept at organizing these raw recruits, training and equipping them, and directing their movements in major campaign operations. He was, in short, an excellent logistical commander. He was, additionally, a competent strategist, as he ably demonstrated in the Bajío campaign in the summer of 1860.

Degollado also gave the liberal military movement something which perhaps no other constitutionalist general could have provided--unity and central direction. During the first year of the war, when Benito Juárez was isolated in Veracruz, Santos Degollado functioned as the active head of the liberal party. In the final two years, when the country came to know Juárez as the constitutional president, don Santos still served to keep together a movement which constantly threatened to disintegrate into a dozen personalist factions.

While Degollado could inspire and win followers to the cause, and even forge them into armies, he simply could not

steel them to battle. In one sympathizer's opinion, don Santos was a standout general in "his constancy, his activity, his faith, his valor, his epic heroism, his impartiality, and his exquisite virtue."<sup>7</sup> Noticeably absent from this list of attributes is any skill in directing troops in combat. The only major victories in which he actively commanded liberal forces occurred in the fall of 1858 at Cuevas de Techaluta and Guadalajara, and the gains realized in these battles were at best transitory. The defeats which he suffered at San Joaquín, Tacubaya, and Estancia de las Vacas were, on the other hand, crippling setbacks from which the liberal cause was hard-pressed to recover.

Don Santos' failure as a battlefield commander cannot entirely be attributed to his lack of military training and experience, for while this was certainly a contributing factor, there have been many civilians and amateurs who have distinguished themselves as combat leaders. Degollado's major flaw in this respect seems to have been psychological. He simply lacked the killer instinct; he was first and foremost a man of peace. On at least three occasions he lost battles when he sacrificed an advantage of crucial timing in

---

<sup>7</sup>Francisco Bulnes, Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y de Reforma (México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967), pp. 300-301.

order to try to avert bloodshed by persuading his opponents to negotiate. In each case the delay gave the enemy an opportunity to concentrate forces and deal him a major defeat. A confirmed and capable combat general would have pressed his advantage without hesitation and most probably would have won all of these engagements.

Don Santos was aware of his shortcomings as a general, and he constantly sought the advice of professionals within the liberal army.<sup>8</sup> When even this failed to help and when the loss at Estancia de las Vacas destroyed all remaining confidence in him as a battlefield commander, he chose to absent himself from the scenes of conflict and to restrict his activities to strategy and logistics. If he had earlier felt confident that there were capable subordinates to whom he could delegate the tasks of battle, he might never have acquired the epithet "hero of defeats."

The reasons for liberal victory in 1860 were many. They included the constitutionalists' "astonishing recuperative power and vitality rather than . . . their ability to win battles"; the basic fact that the liberal cause received popular support and was promoted by an enlightened

---

<sup>8</sup> Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 17 October 1859, document no. 43, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

middle class; the determination of the "faithful men-in-the-field," including Degollado; the perseverance and incontestable title of Benito Juárez; the great cause and comprehensive program of social reform; advantages of geography, foreign recognition, and credit.<sup>9</sup> The liberals, in short, did not win this war on the battlefield, and that fact is due in part to the inadequacy of Santos Degollado as a combat general.

## 3

Benito Juárez has always been incontestably portrayed as the central figure of the Mexican Reforma, and an important aspect of the history of that era is his relationship with Santos Degollado. Don Santos was the second most powerful liberal of the period, and as first magistrate of the supreme court, he was legal successor to the presidency. Yet throughout the Three Years' War he was completely loyal to Juárez, and in fact felt some affection for don Benito.<sup>10</sup> Not until the spring of 1861, when overwhelmed by bitterness at his dismissal, did he actually criticize the president.

---

<sup>9</sup>Elward Maurice Caldwell, "The War of 'La Reforma' in Mexico, 1858-1861" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1935), pp. 23, 29, 30, 32-36, 45-47, 49, 107-108.

<sup>10</sup>Letter, Degollado to Ocampo, 25 July 1858, document no. 58, 1st serie, caja 26, legajo 50-II-5, AH/INAH.

But Degollado's resentment on this occasion is understandable, for the punishment he received from Juárez was completely unjustifiable.

Nevertheless, Juárez' role in the Reforma was impressive. For more than 14 years he was president of Mexico, and nearly half of that time he courageously resisted a foreign invasion, at times almost single-handedly preserving the symbol of Mexico's nationality. His administrations brought the country liberal reforms which revolutionized society and government. Yet some historians have examined his political career in the 1840's and in the period following the end of the Three Years' War, and have suggested that he often resorted to the methods of an opportunistic and power-hungry politician to achieve his ends. A recent study of the Porfirio Díaz rule has concluded that in fact Juárez used essentially the same tactics as Díaz in governing and in dealing with political opponents.<sup>11</sup> During Juárez' political tutelage in Oaxaca in the 1840's, in his coup d'état of November 1865, in the 1867 convocatoria, in the rigged 1869 and 1871 elections, and in numerous other affairs, don

---

<sup>11</sup> José C. Valadés, Breve historia del porfirismo, 1876-1911 (México: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1971), p. 224.

Benito's behavior was such that one must question whether his motives gave priority to Mexico or to Benito Juárez.<sup>12</sup>

This study has suggested that during the time the careers of Santos Degollado and Benito Juárez followed collateral paths, Juárez' conduct was consistent with the above critical judgments of his earlier and later terms in power. He was thrust into the presidency in 1858 entirely by circumstance, and while not exactly a political parasite, he gained much prominence through the abilities and achievements of others such as Ocampo, Lerdo, and Degollado. Juárez' contributions during this 1858-1861 period to the cause he represented were minimal and certainly not of the caliber that required any particular talent. Furthermore, his roles in the McLane-Ocampo treaty, the battle of Tacubaya, and the peace plan affair leave him vulnerable to those same charges of political opportunism and power-hunger which have been leveled at other periods in his career.

## 4

Santos Degollado's contributions to the cause of liberal reform in Mexico can be seen in all facets of his public

---

<sup>12</sup>For examples of these and other matters see Walter V. Scholes, Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872 (Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957), pp. 67-68, 83, 93, 113-115, 118-122, 125-126, 132-133, 157-158, 162-163,

service during the last eight years of his life. His military role in the Revolution of Ayutla and the Three Years' War, while not impressive on the battlefield, nevertheless helped give the liberal party a preponderance over domestic opponents, making possible the implementation of reform programs. His political achievements in contributing to these programs are especially evident in his participation in the drafting of the Constitution of 1857 and in his promoting the issuance of the Reform Laws. In diplomacy, his symbolic defense of national sovereignty in the Barron-Forbes affair and his efforts to restore peace and avert foreign incursion presaged Mexico's subsequent valiant stand against French intervention.

While he did not have the intellect of a Melchor Ocampo, the military genius of a Miguel Miramón, the political skills of a Miguel Lerdo de Tejada, the good fortune of a Manuel Doblado, or the phenomenal success of a Jesús González Ortega, no man of the Reforma could match his courage, his devotion, and his self-sacrifice. This he proved by his decision to join in a conflict he might have avoided; this he confirmed time and again by his refusal

---

167-168; Ivie E. Cadenhead, Jesús González Ortega and Mexican National Politics (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1972), pp. 50, 99-106; Bulnes, Juarez, pp. 116-117.



to give in to overwhelming pressures. Though he was in some respects a naive and hopeless victim of his own unbridled idealism and self-mortification, he was nonetheless a major force in the events of the Reforma.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### I. Manuscripts

British Foreign Office Registers (modern series) and Indexes of General Correspondence, 1820-1890, Mexico, vol. 5, 1856-1860 (London: H.M. Stationery Office).

Correspondence of Jesús González Ortega, 1851-1881, 5 vols. typescripts, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

Despatches from United States consuls in San Blas, 1837-1892, roll 1, National Archives Microfilm Publications, micro-copy no. 301, Washington, National Archives, 1963.

Documentos relativos a la Reforma en México, from Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional, on microfilm cámara 1734, serie Distrito Federal, rolls 1-6, Biblioteca del Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

Expediente personal de gral. Santos Degollado, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.

García folders 17, 26 (Santos Degollado papers), and 28, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

Letters from Santos Degollado, 1st serie, caja 26, legajos 50-II-5 and 50-D5, Archivo Histórico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico City.

Impresos constituciones de México, fondo XXXIII, carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City.

Informes y proclamas militares del general don Santos Degollado, general en jefe del ejército federal, Archivo

General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.

Luis Gutiérrez Cañedo papers, fondo L.G.C. I-2, carpetas 35-38, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City.

Manuscritos de Reforma, Intervención e Imperio, fondo R.I.I. XXVIII-1, carpetas 1-7, and fondo R.I.I. VIII-1, carpeta 1, Centro de Estudios de Historia de México, Mexico City.

Miscellaneous manuscripts, decimal classification H/518 "1855"/1; 5-15-8525, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.

Miscellaneous manuscripts, Archivo Juárez, Biblioteca Nacional, Mexico City.

Miscellaneous manuscripts, Mariano Riva Palacio Archives, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

Reclamaciones de la compañía Barron y Forbes en contra del gral. Santos Degollado, 1843-1870, Archivo General, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico City.

Untitled, bound, printed decrees from Jalisco during 1850's, call no. Gz/qG972.32/J2171d/ vols. 1-2, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

Valentín Gómez Farías papers, University of Texas Latin American Collection, Austin.

## II. Published Documents and Contemporary Accounts

Actas oficiales y minutario de decretos del congreso extraordinario constituyente de 1856-1857. Edited by Luis Felipe Muro and Xavier Tavera Alfaro. México: El Colegio de México, 1957.

Alvarez, José Justo. Parte general que sobre la campaña de Puebla dirige al ministro de la guerra el Sr. general ayudante general don José J. Alvarez, segundo jefe de estado mayor, cuartel maestro general del ejército de operaciones, por orden del Exmo. Sr. don Ignacio Comonfort,

presidente sustituto de la república, y general en jefe de dicho ejército. México: Imprenta de Vicente G. Torres, 1856.

Ayuntamiento de Tepic. Información sumaria levantada por el I. Ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Tepic, comprobando los hechos de que acusó el mismo I. cuerpo, a los extranjeros D. Eustaquio Barron y D. Guillermo Forbes, por considerarlos perniciosos, y remitida al Excmo. Sr. presidente de la república. Guadalajara: Tip. del Gobierno, 1856.

British and Foreign State Papers. Compiled by Edward Hertslet. 167 vols. London: William Ridgway, 1841-1967.

Cañedo, Estanislao. La verité sur la révolution actuelle au Mexique. Paris: Impr. de A. Auyot e Scribe, 1860.

Castañeda, Carlos E., ed. Nuevos documentos inéditos o muy raros para la historia de México. 3 vols. San Antonio: Editorial Lozano, 1930.

Castaños, José María. Los sucesos de Tepic. Guadalajara: 1857.

Colección de documentos inéditos o muy raros relativos a la Reforma en México. 2 vols. México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1957.

Conde de la Cortina, José Justo G. de la. Prontuario diplomático y consular, y resumen de los derechos y deberes de los extranjeros en los países donde residen. México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1856.

Constitución federal de los Estados-Unidos Mexicanos, sancionada y jurada por el Congreso General Constituyente el día 5 de Febrero de 1857. México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857.

Coromina, Amador, ed. Recopilación de leyes, decretos, reglamentos y circulares expedidas en el estado de Michoacán. 43 vols. Morelia: Imprenta de los hijos de I. Arango, 1886-1923.

Degollado, Joaquín M. Defensa ante el público, que hace el que suscribe, de la justicia con que ha sostenido su inmunidad al Señor don Santos Degollado, para impedir

que un juez incompetente lo juzgue en el delito de imprenta, que le imputa D. Eustaquio Barron. México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857.

Degollado, Santos. Refutación del mensaje del ejecutivo de Neuvo León y Coahuila, dirigida a la H. legislatura del mismo estado, en vindicación de los principios constitutivas de la unión federal, conculcados por D. Santiago Vidaurri y sostenidas por el ciudadano Santos Degollado como general en jefe de las tropas constitucionales de la república mexicana. Tampico: Impreso Carlos Segura, 1860.

\_\_\_\_\_. Reseña documentada que el C. Santos Degollado, gobernador y comandante general que fué del estado de Jalisco, hace a la representación nacional para que en calidad de gran jurado decida sobre su responsabilidad oficial, por haber prohibido a los extranjeros Barron y Forbes que volviesen a Tepic, entre tanto el supremo gobierno resolvía lo conveniente. México: Imprenta de Ignacio Cumplido, 1857.

Díaz López, Lilia, ed. and tr. Versión francesa de México: informes diplomáticos. 3 vols. México: El Colegio de México, 1963.

Dublan, Manuel, and Lozano, José María, eds. Legislación mexicana ó colección completa de las disposiciones legislativas expedidas desde la independencia de la república. 34 vols. México: Imprenta del Comercio de Dublan y Chávez, a cargo de M. Lara (hijo), 1876-1904.

Dunbar, Edward E. The Mexican papers: the Mexican question, the Great American question, with personal reminiscences. New York: J.A.H. Hasbrouck & Co., 1860.

Exposición que varios vecinos de Morelia elevan al soberano congreso constituyente, pidiendole se digne reprobar el artículo 15 del proyecto de constitución, sobre tolerancia de cultos. Morelia: Imprenta de Ignacio Arango, 1856.

García, Genaro, ed. Documentos inéditos ó muy raros para la historia de México. 36 vols. México: Librería de la Vda. de Ch. Bouret, 1905-1910.

- Gómez Farías, Benito. Juicio de imprenta: documentos relativos al promovido por el Sr. D. Eustaquio Barron contra Benito Gómez Farías. México: Imprenta de José Mariano Fernández de Lara, 1856.
- Guía de los documentos más importantes sobre el Plan y la Revolución de Ayutla que existen en el Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional. México: Taller Autográfico, 1954.
- Huerta, Epitacio. Memoria en que el C. general Epitacio Huerta dió cuenta al congreso del estado del uso que hizo de las facultades con que estuvo investido durante su administración dictatorial, que comenzó en 15 de febrero de 1858 y terminó el 1 de mayo de 1861. Morelia: Imprenta de Ignacio Arango, 1861.
- Humphreys, R.A., ed. British Consular Reports on the Trade and Politics of Latin America, 1824-1826. London: Royal Historical Society, 1940.
- Juárez, Benito. Documentos, discursos y correspondencia. Edited by Jorge L. Tamayo. 15 vols. México: Secretaría del Patrimonio Nacional, 1964-1969.
- López Uruga, José. Diary. University of Texas Latin American Collection.
- Manning, William R., ed. Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States. Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860. 12 vols. Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1937.
- Márquez, Leonardo. Reminiscencias sobre el fusilamiento de D. Melchor Ocampo. Havana: P. Fernández y Cía., 1891.
- Mata, José María. Correspondencia privada del Dr. José Ma. Mata con Dn. Melchor Ocampo. Edited by Jesús Romero Flores. Morelia: Tipografía Mercantil, 1959.
- McLane, Robert M. Reminiscences, 1827-1897. Privately printed, 1903. Harvard College Library, 1922.
- Munguía, Clemente de Jesús. Defensa eclesiástica en el obispado de Michoacán desde fines de 1855 hasta principios

- de 1858, ó sea colección de representaciones y protestas, comunicaciones oficiales, circulares y decretos diocesanos, con motivo de las leyes, decretos y circulares del gobierno general, constitución federal de 1857, decretos y providencias de los gobiernos de los estados de Michoacán y Guanajuato, contra la soberanía, independencia, inmunidades, y derechos de la Santa Iglesia, desde 23 de noviembre de 1855, en que se dió la lei que suprimó [sic] el fuero eclesiástico, hasta principios del año de 1858 en que el nuevo gobierno deroga todas las leyes que el anterior había dado contra la iglesia. 2 vols. México: Imprenta de Vicente Segura, 1858.
- Ocampo, Melchor. Obras completas de Melchor Ocampo. 3 vols. Edited by F. Vásquez. México: A. Pola, 1901.
- Pardo, Emilio. Informe en estrados que el licenciado D. Emilio Pardo, como apoderado del Sr. D. Eustaquio Barron pronunció en la primera sala del tribunal supremo de justicia, en el incidente promovido sobre competencia de jurisdicción de la causa criminal promovida al Sr. D. Santos Degollado por abuso de imprenta. México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1857.
- Pola, Angel, ed. Discursos y manifiestos de Benito Juárez. México: A. Pola, 1905.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. Miscelánea comunicados, respuestas, iniciativas, dictámenes, informes, brindis, etc. de Benito Juárez. México: A. Pola, 1906.
- Portilla, Anselmo de la. Historia de la revolución de México contra la dictadura del general Santa Anna, 1853-1855. México: Imprenta de Vicente García Torres, 1856.
- Richardson, James D., ed. A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1902. 10 vols. Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1904.
- Romero, Matías. Diario personal de Matías Romero, 1855-1865. Edited by Emma Cosío Villegas. México: Colegio de México, 1960.
- Tamayo, Jorge L., ed. Epistolario de Benito Juárez. 2nd ed. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972.

Torre Villar, Ernesto de la. El triunfo de la república liberal, 1857-1860. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1960.

Valdés, Manuel. Memorias de la Guerra de Reforma. México: Imprenta y Fototipia de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1913.

Zaragoza, Ignacio. Epistolario Zaragoza-Vidaurre, 1855-1859. Edited by Israel Cavazos Garza. México: Primer Congreso Nacional de Historia para el Estudio de la Guerra de Intervención, 1962.

Zaragoza, Ignacio. Memoria de Guerra: leída en la Cámara de Diputados por el Ministro del ramo general Ignacio Zaragoza el día 9 de Mayo de 1861, é informe sobre facciosos en el Valle de México dado por el mismo el 11 del propio mes. México: 1861.

Zarco, Francisco, ed. Crónica del congreso extraordinario constituyente, 1856-1857. México: El Colegio de México, 1957.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. Historia del congreso constituyente de 1857. México: Imprenta I. Escalante, 1916.

\_\_\_\_\_. Las matanzas de Tacubaya. México: Impresora Juan Pablos, 1958.

### III. Newspapers

The Daily Picayune (New Orleans), 1855-1860.

Diario de Avisos (Mexico City), 1855-1860.

The Examiner (London), 1856-1857.

El Federalista (Morelia), 1856-1857.

Harper's New Monthly Magazine (New York), 1854-1861.

El Herald (Mexico City), 1856-1857, 1861.

The Illustrated London News, 1856-1857.

El Monitor Republicano (Mexico City), 1855-1857, 1861.



- La Nacionalidad (Guanajuato), 1855-1856.
- New-York Daily Times, 1854-1860.
- El Omnibus (Mexico City), 1854-1857.
- La Orquesta (Mexico City), 1861.
- Los Padres del Agua Fría (Mexico City), 1856-1857.
- El País (Guadalajara), 1860-1861.
- El Pueblo (Morelia), 1856-1857.
- The Quarterly Review (London), 1856-1857.
- The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art (London), 1856-1857.
- El Siglo XIX (Mexico City), 1854-1861.
- La Sociedad (Mexico City), 1859-1861.
- The Times (London), 1856-1858.
- El Universal (Mexico City), 1855-1857.
- La Voz de Iturbide (Guanajuato), 1856-1857.

## SECONDARY SOURCES

### I. Books

- Alvarez, Melchor. Historia documentada de la vida pública del gral. José Justo Alvarez, or La verdad sobre algunos acontecimientos de importancia de la guerra de Reforma. México: Talleres Tipográficos de "El Tiempo," 1905.
- Bancroft, Hubert H. History of Mexico. Volumes 9-14 of The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft. San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft and Co., 1875-1890.
- Bazant, Jan. Alienation of Church Wealth in Mexico: Social and Economic Aspects of the Liberal Revolution, 1856-1875.

Edited and Translated by Michael P. Costeloe. London:  
Cambridge University Press, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. Historia de la deuda exterior de México, 1823-1946.  
México: El Colegio de México, 1968.

Bonavit, Julián. Historia del colegio primitivo y nacional  
de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. 4th ed. Morelia: Universidad  
Michoacana, 1958.

Buenrostro, Felipe. Historia del primer congreso constitucional  
de la república mexicana que funcionó en el año de 1857:  
extracto de todas las sesiones y documentos relativos  
de la época. 9 vols. México: Imprenta de Ignacio  
Cumplido, 1874-1882.

Bulnes, Francisco. Juárez y las revoluciones de Ayutla y  
de Reforma. México: Editorial H.T. Milenario, 1967.

Cadenhead, Ivie E. Jesús González Ortega and Mexican  
National Politics. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University  
Press, 1972.

Callcott, Wilfred H. Church and State in Mexico, 1822-1857.  
Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1926.

\_\_\_\_\_. Liberalism in Mexico, 1857-1929. Stanford: Stanford  
University Press, 1931.

Cambre, Manuel. La guerra de tres años. México: Biblioteca  
de Autores Jaliscienses, 1949.

El centenario de Santos Degollado, documentos y cartas.  
México: Departamento del Distrito Federal, 1961.

Cosío Villegas, Daniel. La constitución de 1857 y sus  
críticos. 2nd ed. México: Secretaría de Educación  
Pública, SepSetentas, 1973.

Creelman, James. Díaz, Master of Mexico. New York: D.  
Appleton and Co., 1912.

Cue Cánovas, Agustín. La Reforma liberal en México. México:  
Ediciones Centenario, 1960.

Cue Cánovas, Agustín. El tratado McLane-Ocampo: Juárez, los Estados Unidos, y Europa. México: Editorial América Nueva, 1956.

Cuevas, Mariano. Historia de la nación mexicana. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1967.

Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México. 3rd ed. 2 vols. México: Editorial Porrúa, S.A., 1970.

Fuentes Díaz, Vicente. Santos Degollado, el santo de la Reforma. México: Talleres Imprenta Arana, 1959.

Fuentes Mares, José. Juárez y los Estados Unidos. 5th ed. México: Editorial JUS, 1972.

Galindo y Galindo, Miguel. La gran década nacional, ó relación histórica de la guerra de Reforma, intervención extranjera y gobierno del archiduque Maximiliano, 1857-1867. 3 vols. México: Oficina Tipográfica de la Secretaría de Fomento, 1904-1906.

Grajales, Gloria. Guía de documentos para la historia de México en archivos ingleses (siglo XIX). México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1969.

Gruening, Ernest. Mexico and Its Heritage. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1928.

Hale, Charles. Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1968.

Hernández Rodríguez, Rosaura. Ignacio Comonfort, trayectoria política, documentos. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1967.

Instituto Jaliscense de Bellas Artes. Homenaje del gobierno del estado de Jalisco a los ciudadanos gral. Santos Degollado, arq. Jacobo Gálvez, pintor Gerardo Suárez, constructores del Teatro Degollado. Guadalajara: Gráfica Editorial, 1966.

Islas García, Luis. Miramón, caballero del infortunio. México: Editorial JUS, 1957.

- I. y N. Colegio de Abogados de México. El constituyente de 1856 y el pensamiento liberal mexicano. México: Librería de Manuel Porrúa, 1960.
- Johnson, Richard A. The Mexican Revolution of Ayutla, 1854-1855. Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana College Library, 1939.
- López de Escalera, Juan. Diccionario biográfico y de historia de México. México: Editorial del Magisterio, 1964.
- Macías, Pablo G. Aula Nobilis, monografía del colegio primitivo y nacional de San Nicolás de Hidalgo. México: Ediciones Vanguardia Nicolaita, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 1940.
- Mecham, J. Lloyd. Church and State in Latin America, a History of Politico-Ecclesiastical Relations. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934.
- Monroy, José. La muerte del benemérito gral. C. Santos Degollado. México: n.d.
- Muñoz y Pérez, Daniel. El general don Juan Alvarez, ensayo biográfico seguido de una selección de documentos. 2 vols. México: Editorial Academia Literaria, 1959.
- Murray, Paul. Tres norteamericanos y su participación en el desarrollo del tratado McLane-Ocampo, 1856-1860. Guadalajara: Imprenta "Gráfica," 1946.
- Pérez Verdía, Luis. Historia particular del estado de Jalisco, desde los primeros tiempos de que hay noticia, hasta nuestros días. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Guadalajara: Gráfica, 1952.
- Platt, D.C.M. Latin America and British Trade, 1806-1914. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973.
- Pola, Angel; Payno, Manuel; Mateos, Juan A.; Torre, Rafael Martínez de la; and Riva Palacio, Vicente, eds. El libro rojo, 1520-1867. 2 vols. México: A. Pola, 1906.
- Reyes Heróles, Jesús. El liberalismo mexicano. 3 vols. México: UNAM Facultad de Derecho, 1957-1961.

- Rivera, Agustín. Anales mexicanos: la Reforma y el segundo Imperio. 4th ed. México: Ortega y Compañía, Editores, 1904.
- Rivera, Miguel. Historia antigua y moderna de Jalapa y de las revoluciones del estado de Veracruz. 20 vols. Tacubaya: Editorial Citlaltepetl, 1960.
- Roeder, Ralph. Juárez and his Mexico. New York: Viking Press, 1947.
- Romero Flores, Jesús. Don Melchor Ocampo: el filósofo de la Reforma. Morelia: Ediciones de la Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Historia de la ciudad de Morelia. Morelia: Imprenta de la Escuela de Artes, 1928.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Historia de Michoacán. 2 vols. México: Imprenta "Claridad," 1946.
- Sánchez Navarro y Peón, Carlos. Miramón, el caudillo conservador. México: Editorial Patria, 1949.
- Scholes, Walter V. Mexican Politics During the Juárez Regime, 1855-1872. Columbia: University of Missouri Studies, 1957.
- Sierra, Justo. Juárez, su obra y su tiempo. 2nd ed. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Political Evolution of the Mexican People. Translated by Charles Ramsdell. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969.
- Smart, Charles Allen. Viva Juárez. New York: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1963.
- Teja Zabre, Alfonso. Leandro Valle: un liberal romántico. México: Imprenta Universitaria, 1956.
- Turlington, Edgar. Mexico and Her Foreign Creditors. New York: Columbia University Press, 1930.
- Tyler, Ronnie C. Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy. Austin: Texas State Historical Society, 1973.

Valadés, José C. Don Melchor Ocampo: reformador de México.  
México: Editorial Patria, 1954.

Vigil, José M. La Reforma. Vol. 5 in México á través de los siglos. 5 vols. Edited by Vicente Riva Palacio.  
México: Editorial Cumbre, 1958.

Villaseñor y Villaseñor, Alejandro. Antón Lizardo; el tratado MacLane-Ocampo; el brindis del desierto. México: Editorial JUS, 1962.

Wheat, Raymond C. Francisco Zarco: el portavoz liberal de la Reforma. Translated by Antonio Castro Leal. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1957.

Zamacois, Niceto de. Historia de Méjico, desde sus tiempos más remotos hasta nuestros días. 18 vols. México: J.F. Parres y Compañía, 1877-1882.

Zertuche Muñoz, Fernando. La primera presidencia de Benito Juárez. 2nd ed. México: Secretaría del Trabajo y Previsión Social, 1972.

## II. Articles

Berbusse, Edward J. "The Origins of the McLane-Ocampo Treaty of 1859." The Americas 14(1958):223-245.

Gutiérrez Zamora, Renato. "El incidente de Antón Lizardo." Historia Mexicana 13(1963):277-283.

Knowlton, Robert J. "La iglesia mexicana y la Reforma: respuesta y resultados." Historia Mexicana 18(1969):516-534.

Mecham, J. Lloyd. "The Origins of Federalism in Mexico." Hispanic American Historical Review 18(1938):164-182.

Pizano y Saucedo, Carlos. "Centenario del teatro 'Degollado' de Guadalajara." Historia Mexicana 16(1967):419-426.

Portes Gil, Emilio. "The Conflict in Mexico Between the Civil Power and the Clergy, 1854-1876: Defense of the Civil Power." In The Conflict Between Church and State in Latin America. Edited by Frederick Pike. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964.

- Sánchez Hernández, Tomás. "Las operaciones militares como consecuencia de la proclamación del Plan de Ayutla hasta el triunfo de la revolución liberal." In Plan de Ayutla: conmemoración de su primer centenario. Edited by Mario de la Cueva. México: Ediciones de la Facultad de Derecho, UNAM, 1954.
- Scholes, Walter V. "Church and State at the Mexican Constitutional Convention, 1856-1857." The Americas 4(1947):151-174.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Revolution Falters: Mexico, 1856-1857." Hispanic American Historical Review 32(1952):1-21.
- Sinkin, Richard N. "The Mexican Constitutional Congress, 1856-1857: A Statistical Analysis." Hispanic American Historical Review 53(1973):1-26.
- Tamayo, Jorge L. "El tratado McLane-Ocampo." Historia Mexicana 21(1972):573-613.
- Tavera Alfaro, Xavier. "Zarco ante el gran jurado." Historia Mexicana 6(1957):588-596.
- Wilson, Howard L. "President Buchanan's Proposed Intervention in Mexico." American Historical Review 5(1900):687-701.
- III. Unpublished Materials
- Broussard, Ray F. "Ignacio Comonfort: His Contributions to the Mexican Reform, 1855-1857." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1959.
- Bushnell, Clyde G. "The Military and Political Career of Juan Alvarez, 1790-1867." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1958.
- Caldwell, Elward M. "The War of 'La Reforma' in Mexico, 1858-1861." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1935.
- Lacerte, Robert K. "Great Britain and Mexico in the Age of Juárez, 1854-1876." Ph.D. dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1971.

Ross, William J. "The Role of Manuel Doblado in the Mexican Reform Movement, 1855-1860." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, 1967.