THE "VIVA KENNEDY" CLUBS IN SOUTH TEXAS

THESIS

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By

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This thesis analyzes the impact of the Mexican-American voters in south Texas on the 1960 presidential election. During that election year, this ethnic minority was strong enough to merit direct appeals from the Democratic presidential candidate, and subsequently, allowed to conduct a unique campaign divorced from the direct control of the conservative state Democratic machinery. Formerly, the Democratic politicos in south Texas manipulated the Mexican-American vote. In 1960, however, the Chicanos voted for a man with whom they could empathize, rather than for a party label. This strong identification with the Democratic candidate was rooted in psychological rather than ideological, social rather than political, factors. John F. Kennedy seemed to personify machismo and simpatía. Perhaps even more impressive than the enthusiasm the Kennedy candidacy generated among the Mexican-Americans was the ability of the Texas Democratic regulars to prevent a liberal-conservative rupture within the state party. This was accomplished by permitting the Mexican-American "Viva Kennedy" clubs quasi-independence. Because of these two conditions, the Mexican-American ethnic minority became politically salient in the 1960 campaign.
The study of the Mexican-American political behavior in 1960 proceeds in three stages. The first chapter examines the political factionalism within the state Democratic Party, suggests the conservative solution to the problem of liberal splinter groups, and evaluates Lyndon Johnson's contribution to the Democratic ticket in south Texas. Chapter II probes into the importance of imagery and identity in politics, challenges the possibility of a religiously-based bloc vote in south Texas, but postulates the probability of a subconscious religious identification with the Democratic candidate. The last chapter describes the Valley "Viva Kennedy" clubs, their origin, organization, activities, and contributions. To substantiate the author's hypothesis, oral interviews, club reports, personal files, letters, and contemporary newspapers were extensively used.

The "Viva Kennedy" clubs proved to be the right stimuli at the right time. In 1960, the Mexican-American ethnic group was in a transitional phase of cultural assimilation, a phase usually characterized by a struggle for political recognition and an assertion of group autonomy. In this stage, the Chicanos in south Texas experienced the sociological phenomenon of relative deprivation--a sense of belonging to a group victimized by national antipathy in an era prattling exhortations of racial tolerance. The resulting frustration and animosity were catalytic to Chicano activism. John Kennedy, the candidate who appealed to them emotionally,
harvested the political fruits of this newly aroused political activism. The "Viva" idea tapped the energies of a group susceptible to an attitude of righteous indignation. Having attained political attention by the sheer weight of their numbers, the Chicanos resented the control exercised by the Texas political machinery. Their enthusiasm, anger, and imagination made the "Viva Kennedy" clubs successful. The clubs contributed not only to the election of John Kennedy, but also to the political awakening of an ethnic minority.
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INTRODUCTION

Apathy is the nemesis of democracy; activism the sustenance. Such is the propaganda popularly espoused by the Democratic Party, which, as the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt, has evolved into a coalition of minorities. Collectively, these minorities of hyphenated Americans compose the majority of the United States citizenry. Aware of the political puissance latent within these minorities, and encouraged by pollsters who estimate that seven out of every ten new voters cast their lot with the Democratic Party, Democratic strategists plan campaign tactics calculated to get out the vote. Nowhere is this effort made more obvious than in the presidential race. Every four years the voter registration efforts of the Democratic Party intensify as America's affirmation of political competition crescendoes to a comic absurdity in which the voters are wooed, cajoled, seduced, and pandered to.

Awakening minority groups, such as the Mexican-Americans\(^1\) of 1960, are particularly susceptible to emotional rhetoric filled with appeals to vote their interests, which, according to the Democrats, are synonymous with their party's objectives.

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\(^1\)For the purposes of this paper, the terms Mexican-American, Chicano, Spanish-speaking citizen, and Latin-American have been used interchangeably.
These minorities face a peculiarly disturbing dilemma; as political neophytes, they soon realize that their zeal and unharnessed energy are matched only by their relative political impotence. The resulting frustration renders them anxiously receptive to power-prestige promises of the national Democratic nominees. However, no sure formula exists which guarantees either the sincerity of the politician or the allegiance of the voter; a ballot vote does not always follow emotional support. Many a Democratic challenger owes his defeat to his failure to get out the vote which allegedly supports him.

Neither the victors nor the defeated are ever absolutely certain what factors decided the election. Consequently, most explanations of presidential elections are ambiguous. Attempts to isolate a single motivating factor produce exaggeration and distortion. On the other hand, efforts to analyze many or all of the factors involved in motivating the electorate in any given political contest too often result in a collage of generalities based on the abstract, the intangible, and the unsubstantiated. Because the variables motivating individual voters are infinitely complex and often paradoxical and illogical, a positivist or behavioristic approach to the study of voting would prove inaccurate.

Despite the futility of attempting a definitive catalog of voting determinants, voting trends and patterns as
affected by political strategy may be reasonably deduced, and political repetition and consistency recognized. For example, regardless of the myriad of variables, one thing appears constant in ethnic voting behavior. The typical minority-group voter is influenced more by imagery than by reality, more by finesse than facts, more by psychological appeals than political performance. Therefore, the object of the artful politician becomes the projection of an imperceivable, yet human, image—a rather superficial image designed solely for the procurement of votes. Once this image is established, rapport, even a certain commonality or identity with the electorate, can be accomplished. Generally, this kinship of the candidate to the people is not spontaneous but rather the result of shrewd politics. Concomitant to this artificial identity are intellectual allegiance, emotional loyalty, and, most importantly, the coveted votes. Through this illusionary identity factor, the 1960 Democratic campaign in south Texas will be considered.

The Mexican-American "Viva Kennedy" clubs, conceived in imagery and this tenuous identification with the candidate, epitomize viable Democratic get-out-the-vote strategy. This study attempts to introduce the Mexican-American as an emerging voting force, quantitatively strong enough to have merited direct solicitation and recognition from the Democratic candidate, qualitatively strong enough to have conducted a unique campaign effort divorced from the direct control of
the state Democratic establishment, and politically strong enough to have influenced the outcome of the 1960 presidential election.

Traditionally, the Mexican-Americans in south Texas voted as directed by the Democratic politicos, but, in 1960, the Chicanos voted for a man with whom they could personally identify rather than for a party label. Thus, they could no longer be considered pawns of the Democratic Party. Even more impressive, the Texas Democratic regulars, aware of the political dangers inherent in the grappling for autonomy by a minority group as large as the Mexican-Americans, successfully harnessed this liberal activism by allowing it quasi-independence. In so doing, the Texas Democratic Party was able to ward off a liberal-conservative split within the state machinery.

Fundamental to this thesis are two initial assumptions. First, the cohesiveness and harmony of the state Democratic Party must have been strong enough to enable party leaders to conduct such a flexible strategy. As head of the Texas machinery, Lyndon Johnson must have exercised tight control in order to prevent divisiveness which would have proved catastrophic to the conservative interests in subsequent Texas elections. From this perspective, then, the Texas political situation in 1960 will be assessed. Second, the appeal of John Kennedy's youth, heritage, and Catholicism must have been strong enough to capture the imagination of
the Mexican-Americans and to provide the impetus for the political novelty, the "Viva Kennedy" movement. These three attributes of Kennedy will be examined as possible sources of identity with the Chicanos. Through an analysis of the impact of these two preliminary concerns, the "Viva Kennedy" clubs, their organization, and contribution will be evaluated.

This study is not offered as a balanced insight into the electoral process, nor is it a comparative study of campaigns or competitors. Neither is it a definitive study of John Kennedy's campaign tactics in south Texas, nor a study of the Texas power elite. Further, it is in no way a prognostication of the potential power the Mexican-Americans might command in future elections. Rather, this study examines the 1960 campaign in Texas with regard to the development of a significant and crucial minority of American voters who responded in record numbers to an individual candidate.

In conducting this research, oral history has been extensively employed. An initial caveat regarding the use of interviews as reliable sources seems warranted. Apparently, the political past is too inextricably bound to the political present and, even more critically, to the advent of the 1972 and 1976 presidential contests to permit rational objectivity. Too often this author was dissuaded from further investigation into ethnic voting behavior with a curt, "let the past lie," "don't expose old wounds," "no comment," or "wait ten years." Even information volunteered
was often contradictory and seldom illuminating. Irritating, also, was the incredible unavailability of precinct-level voting records. Evidently, where knowledge is limited by memory, memories become conveniently inaccurate, narrowly selective, egocentered, or otherwise distorted. However, with the realization that motivations are no more ambiguous or complex than elections themselves, firsthand accounts deserve the historian's attention for the reasons men offer for their political actions are as historically important as the actions themselves.
CHAPTER I

TEXAS POLITICAL TEMPER IN 1960

On November 8, a record 68,838,979 voters went to the polls and elected John F. Kennedy the thirty-fifth President of the United States. The rigorous campaign had been nip and tuck, and quite unpredictable. Challenged election returns and the President-elect's meager popular plurality of 112,803 votes, made the 1960 election the most controversial since the James G. Blaine-Grover Cleveland race of 1884. In both instances, the focus of dissent was the popular vote, not the electoral vote. The Kennedy-Johnson ticket racked up a solid 303 electoral majority; yet, a switch of less than 1 percent of the popular vote in only eleven states would have tipped the electoral balance in the favor of the Republican candidate, Richard M. Nixon. Texas was one of the eleven critical states.

The Democratic ticket managed to carry Texas by less than 1 percent of a record 2,311,845 votes cast—approximately 46,000 votes. Considering that both the Constitutional Party and the Prohibition Party fielded support for their

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candidates, whose names also appeared on the ballot, the Texas election was all the more dramatic. Actually, Kennedy received only 24,019 votes more than the combined total of the three opposition candidates.\(^2\)

Some political analysts and commentators have maintained that Kennedy was not, in fact, the choice of the majority of Texans. Fraud and a confusing new type of ballot, inadequately explained by election judges, made it possible to discard thousands of improperly marked ballots and move the state from the Republican to the Democratic presidential column. Regardless of the validity or inaccuracy of these charges, one indisputable fact remains--Texas did not rush into the Democratic fold in the 1960 presidential election.

As in any close election, various political interest groups throughout Texas have claimed the honor of being that single factor which toppled the tottering state back into the Democratic fold.\(^3\) In assessing the factors responsible for Kennedy's victory, the Mexican-American vote must be considered. This awakening minority delivered the Democratic

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\(^3\)Democrats in 1960 were apprehensive that the Texas debacle of 1952 and 1956 might reoccur. In both presidential elections, Texas Democrats, led by Governor Allan Shivers and his disciples, the Shivercrats, had conducted a campaign that eventually awarded Texas' twenty-four electoral votes to Eisenhower.
vote with such vigor in south Texas that the Republican returns from the conservative strongholds of Harris, Tarrant, and Dallas counties were offset. In 1960, for the first time, Mexican-Americans took an active role in a presidential campaign and a presidential candidate made a serious appeal for the support of the Mexican-Americans.

Indeed, the sheer numbers of the minority warranted such an overt appeal. According to the 1960 census, 1,417,810, or roughly 14.8 percent, of the total Texas population was Spanish-speaking. Mexican-Americans were predominant in the Texas region that stretches from El Paso to Cameron County. Chicanos comprised over 55 percent of the population in the counties of Bexar, Hidalgo, El Paso, Cameron, Nueces, and Webb. Also, in the machine- or boss-controlled counties of Duval, Jim Wells, and Starr, the Mexican-Americans far outnumbered the Anglos. Thus their numbers established them as a critical factor in the election.

In past presidential elections of 1952 and 1956, considerable Republican sentiment flourished in the Latin counties of Texas. Of the twenty-seven counties with 50 percent or greater concentration of Latin-Americans, fourteen gave Dwight Eisenhower a majority of votes in both elections;

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four more followed suit in one of the two races. Only nine of these counties consistently supported the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson. Yet, of these same counties, all but two staunchly backed Kennedy in 1960; even in these two maverick counties, the Democratic ticket lost by less than 5 percent of the vote. Consequently, any analysis of the dynamics of the political maturity of the Mexican-Americans must focus on two separate patterns of voting behavior phenomena: first, the desertion of the Democratic Party by the rank and file Chicanos in both 1952 and 1956, and second, the return to the party in 1960, with the record turnout of voters.

The 1952 and 1956 desertion of the party can be explained by the chameleon-like politics of Governor Allan Shivers and by the economic weakness of a politically immature minority. The Shivercrats, Republican sympathizers disguised by the Democratic label, threw their influence throughout the state to the popular, but politically inexperienced, military hero, Dwight D. Eisenhower. So powerful were the Shivercrats that they influenced politicos and Latin-American leaders to get out the vote for the Republicans. The exodus of the Mexican-Americans from the Democratic fold, though not unique from

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the standpoint of Texas politics in 1952 and 1956, was indicative of the political immaturity of the ethnic group.

Economic dependence made political allegiance marketable. Mexican-Americans readily adhered to the dictates of the paternalistic bosses and politicos in the hope of greater job opportunities, favors, and raises. There was also the tacit understanding that economic sanctions could be applied if one refused to conform to the political requests of the leaders. Lest this political manipulation be exaggerated, suffice it to say that the Mexican-Americans were not voting contrary to their principles, for they had relatively little political identity in the 1950's. Rather, out of deference to their bosses, they cast their votes as advised.

The return of the Chicanos to the Democratic Party in 1960 marked the rebellious adolescent stage of their political maturation. The political atmosphere in Texas nurtured such growth. Consequently, an understanding of the peculiarities of Texas politics is prerequisite to an evaluation of the impact of the Mexican-American vote on the outcome of the 1960 election. On the political surface, Kennedy seemed to have the Texas electoral vote cinched.

The Democratic Party had chosen a native Texan as the vice-presidential candidate, and every statewide Democratic

7Clinton McCleskey, interview, July, 1971.
officeholder publicly supported the national ticket. The former governor of Texas, Allan Shiver, and ex-Democratic executive Wright Morrow endorsed Nixon, but their political influence had waned since the bolt of 1952 and 1956. Yet, despite the support of state Democratic leaders, Kennedy almost failed to win the state's twenty-four electoral votes.

The reason for his near-failure lay in the uniqueness of the Texas Democratic Party. The 1960 Texas party might best be described as *e pluribus unum*—one Democratic Party out of many splinter groups. Deprived of Republican opposition, the Texas Democratic Party welcomed all political philosophies and thus suffered from internal turmoil and personal factionalism. This, in turn, led to a dilution of principle and of liberal potency. What ensued was the emergence of a Dixiecrat conservative force in firm control of the state party machinery. Born of the 1950's primaries, this conservative element, composed of oil interests, monied magnates, wealthy manufacturers, and prosperous ranchers and farmers, could count on the support of the growing urban middle class.8 Lyndon Johnson was spokesman and legislative representative of the conservatives and moderates in 1960.

Well aware of the conservative power throughout the state,

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Johnson maintained his position in the Senate by championing conservative interests and virtually ignoring the liberal leaders' demands. The liberal element of the party, led by Senator Ralph Yarborough and County Commissioner Albert Peña, was a coalition of hyphenated Americans, organized labor, and frustrated malcontents. These two opposing factions of the Texas Democratic Party often worked at cross purposes. The resulting internal discord jeopardized the chances for a Democratic victory in 1960.

Johnson's politics before, during, and after the Los Angeles nominating convention had strained further the fragile bonds which held the party together. Though officially unannounced until July 5, Johnson had long been a shadow presidential candidate. Political speculators theorized that Johnson neglected intensive campaign activity because he believed the basis of national power rested in the national legislature, and especially in the Senate. Whatever his reason, whether through indecision or miscalculation, Johnson refused to release his strong control over Senate politics in order to conduct a vital campaign for grass-roots support before July.

Accordingly then, his campaign for the presidency assumed intralegislative dimensions. For example, through Johnson's persuasion, the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee allocated more than sufficient funds to states whose electoral
support would be essential to Johnson's presidential aspirations. Although the Johnson-for-President Headquarters had been erected at the Ambassador Hotel in Washington, D.C. and 191 Johnson-for-President clubs had come into existence in Texas by early January, 1959, on the whole Johnson ignored city precincts, minority groups, and convention delegates in his initial drive for his party's nomination.

In contrast, the four-year-old Kennedy juggernaut had been campaigning at all political levels. Much of this campaign effort had been directed to enlisting the support of rank and file Democrats throughout the states. As a young Catholic liberal, Kennedy contested Johnson’s bid for the party nomination. Pro-Kennedy sentiment became more and more pronounced in Texas despite the unannounced candidacy of favorite son Johnson. Liberals led by Ralph Yarborough and Chicanos led by Albert Peña openly endorsed Kennedy’s candidacy.

Heretofore, there had been no snags evident in the relationship of the majority leader to the Massachusetts senator. Indeed, Johnson had sponsored the junior senator for membership on the most influential Senate committees. Further,

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10 Ibid., p. 249; The Texas Observer, L (January 8, 1959), 2.

Johnson's confidants had suggested a Johnson-Kennedy ticket as being ideally balanced so as to heal the old North-South rupture. The realization of this ideal ticket, however, was predicated on Kennedy's failure to make a good showing in the primaries. This surface congeniality between the two presidential hopefuls was to dissolve as Kennedy racked up support in all the big industrial states with heavy electoral votes. Texas was no exception.

An incident which occurred at a ten-dollar-a-plate dinner held in Laredo in 1959 was illustrative of this growing animosity between Kennedy and Johnson. Johnson, who was present at the dinner honoring Kennedy, became irate when District Judge Ed Salinas introduced the Massachusetts senator as the "next President of the United States." From that moment, Texas became a political football bandied between Johnson and Kennedy.

The Kennedy organization, however, reached into Texas only after campaign manager Robert Kennedy had secured the promise from Johnson in late 1959 that the Texan would not run and in no way would frustrate Kennedy's claim to the party's nomination. Despite this promise, Johnson refused to lend any help by releasing his supporters before the convention.

12Leo J. Leo, interview, July, 1971.

13Evans and Novak, p. 246.
Johnson's support throughout the state was limited, timid, and divided. Political leadership representing the conservatives and the liberals had been reluctant to support Johnson. The liberal wing was opposed to Johnson because he appeared to be a "conservative, anti-civil rights, gas and oil Senator." Further, the conservatives withheld unreserved support of Johnson, realizing the impending danger of party division. Thus, the Texas obstacle in Kennedy's road to the White House was the political awareness that support of him might render the state machinery sluggish in subsequent elections. The great casualty of the Johnson-Kennedy rift could very possibly be the superficially united Texas Democratic Party.

Nevertheless, with the convention only one month away, Johnson announced his candidacy. For political propaganda purposes, he boasted that between 430 and 502 of the required 761 votes were pledged to him on the first ballot. His strength lay in the western states of Oklahoma and New Mexico, and in the eleven southern states. He counted also on some votes from Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. Though they knew the count was inflated, the Johnson camp endeavored to prevent

14 The Texas Observer, LII (July 8, 1960), 5.
15 Dave Cheavens, "Texas Dems are Officially United," Avalanche-Journal (Lubbock), September 21, 1960, p. 2B.
16 The Texas Observer, LII (June 3, 1960), 4-5.
Kennedy from adding to his 602½ votes. Johnson depended upon the mountain states to block a first ballot nomination of the Massachusetts senator. If this could be accomplished, Johnson believed he could secure the nomination on the fifth or sixth ballot. At the convention, a stop-Kennedy movement was instigated. If not in fact initiated by Johnson, this effort at least had his tacit approval. Most obvious were the smear tactics employed. Rumors were spread that Kennedy had an adrenalin deficiency which required tremendous dosages of cortisone, that his father was pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic, that his religious bias would determine his political decisions, that his inexperience disqualified him as a serious contender, and that his loose morals would dissuade many would-be Democratic voters. Johnson's efforts were thwarted, however, as Wyoming pushed the Massachusetts senator over the top with its additional seventeen votes. After roll call on the first ballot, the Kennedy vote totaled 806 to Johnson's 407.

Johnson's ability to gain a substantial vote in a relatively brief period of time did not go unnoticed by the Kennedy people. Based on Johnson's appeal to the West and the South, as evidenced throughout the convention proceedings, Kennedy (noticeably weak in those regions) offered Johnson the vice-presidency. Though advised by his friend

John Nance Garner that the vice-presidency was not worth "a pitcher of spit," Johnson accepted the political plum in hopes that it would free his reputation from the limitations of Texas parochial politics. In return for his ability to balance the ticket, Johnson demanded, and received, specific concessions from Kennedy.

The particular nuances of the bargain which ensued at the Biltmore Hotel have never been fully exposed. Kennedy told his press secretary, Pierre Salinger, "The whole story will never be known, and it's just as well it won't be." Admittedly, Kennedy and Johnson did make strange political bedfellows, whose personalities and political ideologies clashed. Yet, Kennedy was willing to buy Johnson's influence with compromises and concessions. One of the provisions of the deal involved Texas patronage. According to political protocol, if Johnson attained the vice-presidency, final approval on all patronage dispersions would become the prerogative of the senior senator of the state, in this instance, Johnson's long-time antagonist, Ralph Yarborough. Yet, Kennedy promised Johnson absolute control over Texas patronage, as well as over the organization and operation of the state campaign. 

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Kennedy announced to the convention that he chose Lyndon Johnson as his running mate.

News of Kennedy's choice threw the party into tumult. Kennedy's own nomination had disappointed the southern wing and now Kennedy's selection of Lyndon Johnson angered suspicious northern liberals. The results of a nation-wide Gallup poll taken just before the July convention reported that Kennedy had surged ahead of Nixon by 52 percent to 48 percent. The first post-convention poll showed a strong reaction, apparently against the choice of Johnson to balance the ticket. The polls measured a 53 to 47 percent lead by the Nixon-Lodge ticket.

Across Texas, an August Belden poll recorded only 40 percent for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. On the same poll Nixon and Lodge scored 36 percent. Coincidentally, a Texas Daily Newspaper Association poll predicted a Republican victory in the state. As were most southerners, Texans were uneasy with Kennedy's pro-civil rights position and his religious affiliation. Moreover, the South began to distrust Johnson, who, perhaps with the 1964 presidential nomination


in mind, attempted to remove the stigma of sectional politics from his candidacy.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, party bosses resented the fact that Johnson had agreed to second billing on a ticket headed by a northern liberal. When he took the vice-presidential nomination, Johnson had indirectly accepted the Democratic Party platform, which was particularly repugnant to Texans because of its labor, oil depletion allowance, and civil rights planks.\textsuperscript{23} Many southern politicians interpreted Johnson's statements and actions as a betrayal of their interests. They branded Johnson as a "political charlatan" and "a counterfeit Confederate."\textsuperscript{24} State newspapers, among them the well-circulated \textit{The Dallas Morning News}, felt Johnson could best serve the interests of Texans by remaining the majority leader in the Senate.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Weeks}, pp. 47-48; Roscoe Drummond, "Johnson Gaining Stature with Effective Campaign," \textit{Corpus Christi Caller}, November 7, 1960, p. 2B.


\textsuperscript{25} Pollsters across the state in random samplings concluded that 44 percent of those asked favored retaining Johnson as majority leader, 30 percent approved of his vice-presidential candidacy, and 26 percent voiced no opinion. Less than half the Texas voters seemed to think it was a good idea for Johnson to become Kennedy's running mate. David Albert Wiessler, "The Presidential Elections of 1952, 1956, and 1960, as Recorded in Selected Newspapers in Deep South Cities," unpublished master's thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1965, p. 120; Joe Belden, "Texas Poll: Big LBJ Muddle," \textit{San Antonio Light}, September 12, 1960, p. 20.
\end{footnotesize}
home state Johnson was confronted with the slogans "Let's Beat Judas," "A Texas tombstone for LBJ," and "I dreamed I went to Washington in my turncoat."26

Such displeasure with Johnson further split the party. A conservative breakaway led by Carr P. Collins, Dallas insurance executive, regarded Johnson's acceptance as a political tragedy. A newly organized Houston liberal group led by Wellington Abbey worked for Kennedy but renounced Johnson. Creekmore Fath, of the Democrats of Texas organization, stressed support for Kennedy alone. Joseph Rauh, Jr., former national chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action and civil rights and liberties attorney, believed Johnson's political character unscrupulous and amoral. In many circles Johnson was regarded as a "chameleon" capable of changing loyalties without compunction and, therefore, unworthy of support.27

It is questionable whether Johnson himself had confidence in the ticket, for he refused to remove his name from the ballot for reelection to the Senate. In fact, he pushed through the state legislature a provision allowing him dual candidacy. This provision may have been politically advantageous to Johnson, but it adversely affected the

26 Bell, pp. 4-45.

27 San Antonio Light, August 14, 1960, p. 7B; Valley Evening Monitor, August 26, 1960, p. 4; The Texas Observer, LII (June 3, 1960), 3.
Democratic effort in Texas. In October, both a Lou Harris and a Belden poll revealed that only 82 percent of the Kennedy supporters in Texas were willing to support Johnson, and 54 percent of those questioned were opposed to Johnson's dual candidacy. Eventually, a lot of this resentment would subside, and the conservative Texas political machine would support the nominees, but never would it sponsor the liberal platform, which, as they viewed it, subordinated their interests to pacify civil rights advocates and to cater to the economic proposals of the ultra-liberal northerners.

In order for the party to formulate effective campaign strategy, it was necessary to gauge Johnson's strengths and weaknesses in the South and to determine the cohesiveness of the Texas party. The August special congressional session afforded the opportunity for such an analysis. Originally, Johnson planned the special session to reinforce his bid for the nomination. Accordingly, Congress did not adjourn, only recessed for a period of five weeks, until late in August. By such a demonstration of his ability to manipulate the Senate, Johnson had hoped to persuade the party leaders that

28 Wiessler, p. 120; Weeks, p. 53; Bell, p. 37.
29 William McGaffin, "Kennedy-Johnson Lining up the South Despite Rumbling," Corpus Christi Caller, August 21, 1960, p. 2B; Jay Milner, "South Expected to Stick with Demo Ticket," Corpus Christi Caller, August 4, 1960, p. 2B; Bell, p. 29. Note: Johnson made it clear to southern politicians, especially to Texans, that he would not sell out the party's platform to buy their support (see Weeks, p. 45).
he alone would be able to push through the legislation which the party platform promised. Since his political plans had gone slightly awry, Johnson now considered the rump session of Congress with foreboding.

During the post-convention session, political resistance to the legislative programs introduced by Kennedy and Johnson revealed the queasiness with which the party regarded the ticket. The Democrats comprised the majority in both houses of Congress, yet the Kennedy-Johnson proposals encountered strong resistance. Under compulsion to deliver at least one of the platform promises and to test the weight of various political issues, Kennedy submitted bills concerning medical care for the aged, new public housing, new mutual security expansion, federal aid to education, and an increase in the federal minimum wage to the congressional session. To placate southern malcontents, no mention was made of civil rights. The August session of Congress was a failure, in Kennedy's opinion; one by one his bills met with defeat, and, moreover, he was confined in Washington, D.C. while Nixon was out unofficially campaigning. Yet the session did prove to Democrats that the ticket was compatible and viable. Leaders realized also the degree of factionalism within the party.

30 Evans and Novak, p. 264.
31 Ibid., p. 292; Kelley, "The Presidential Campaign," p. 73; Corpus Christi Caller, August 14, 1960, pp. 6, 12; Walter Lippman, "Campaign Taking Shape Amid Failures in Congress," Corpus Christi Caller, September 1, 1960, p. 2B.
especially in the South. Johnson had successfully used the session to obtain national attention, and, due to the factionalism in the South, his value on the ticket was becoming apparent. With this understanding, the Kennedy strategists were able to map out a more effective campaign.

The general Democratic strategy focused on the nine largest states--New York, Pennsylvania, California, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Texas--which together possessed 237 of the necessary 269 electoral votes. Johnson was given primary responsibility for keeping the South, particularly Texas, in the Democratic lineup. In Texas, Johnson was to get the stay-at-home voter to the polls, to emphasize the party--not the candidate--and to stress progress and movement instead of experience. According to Kennedy, the fundamental elements of a successful campaign in 1960 would involve the projection of an image with which the minorities could identify, a flexible theme based on advancement for all, close organization, increased registration, and an artful handling of the religious issue.32

Regardless of its aid in determining strategy, the special congressional session had disrupted the campaign efforts in Texas. It was September before campaign activities

resumed. By that time, leading Texas newspapers, among them the Dallas Times Herald, the Houston Chronicle, and the Houston Post, had already given tacit endorsement to the Republican ticket. To complicate matters, The Dallas Morning News swayed from one candidate to the other. Also during the confusing month of August, the party leaders had officially, albeit not wholeheartedly, rallied in support of the ticket. They waited for organizational and procedural instructions from Johnson.

Organization of the Texas campaign followed party direction, with Johnson wielding uncontested authority. J. Ed Connally was chairman of the state Democratic executive committee, and George Smathers of Florida was the assistant Democratic National Chairman and southern states coordinator. The steering committee was headed by Governor Price Daniel and Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn. Gerald Mann, former attorney-general, was appointed Texas Democratic campaign manager. State AFL-CIO president Jerry Holleman was selected as assistant campaign director.

As the central state campaign headquarters, Austin housed eleven divisions. Each division was manned by such prominent Texas Democrats as Will Wilson, Raymond Buck, French

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33 Wiessler, pp. 113, 120, and 164.

34 Corpus Christi Caller, August 12, 1960, p. 12; San Antonio Light, August 12, 1960, p. 22. See also Corpus Christi Caller, August 28, 1960, p. 6; The Texas Observer, LII (August 19, 1960), 3.
Robertson, John C. White, Mrs. Max Brooks, Ed Clark, Charles Herring, Tom Reavley, and Vann M. Kennedy. Other prominent leaders included Judge Woodrow Seals, John H. Crooker, Jr., and Robert W. Hervey of Houston; Blair Reeves, James W. Knight, and Burt Thompson of San Antonio's twentieth district; Ralph Logen, Jack Bill, and Dolph Briscoe of the twenty-first district; and Latane Temple of the seventh district; Zac Lentz of Victoria; State Senator Culp Krueger of El Campo; and Bill Patman of Goliad. The common denominator of this group was their loyalty to Lyndon Johnson.

The liberal faction of the party opposed such conservative dominance. Creekmore Fath called upon all honest Democrats to organize separate campaigns for Kennedy exclusive of Johnson. Several organizations, including the Kennedy-for-President clubs, co-chaired by Judge Sarah Hughes, regarded Johnson as incidental to their support of Kennedy. To the party regulars these divided campaign efforts threatened an irreparable fissure in post-election Democratic Texas politics. To prevent such a split and to appeal to the independent and dissident Democrats throughout the nation, the Kennedy machine established a system of separate campaign

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35 Corpus Christi Caller, August 27, 1960, p. 12; Weeks, p. 46; San Antonio Light, August 23, 1960, p. 3.

36 Sarah T. Hughes, NTSU Oral History Collection, interviewed by Fred Gantt, March 21, 1969; San Antonio Light, August 14, 1960, p. 7B.
groups which could function outside, but nevertheless under, the state party auspices.

Byron "Whizzer" White, former Rhodes scholar, directed and coordinated a national network of local volunteer groups. By Texans responded eagerly to this idea but the lack of cooperation between the state party regulars and the volunteer groups was symptomatic of party factionalism. As a panacea, Lawrence O'Brien wrote and distributed the Manual, which urged the cooperation of all campaign groups and emphasized the priority of the national campaign over local petty bickerings. With Johnson's approval, O'Brien sent out-of-state field coordinators to arbitrate the differences between the liberal volunteer groups and the conservative political machinery. Despite these efforts, seemingly irrepressible divisions and flareups occurred. On several occasions Robert Kennedy, as campaign manager, found it necessary to rebuke the Texas party officials for their obstinate preoccupation with old political feuds. The younger Kennedy's image and tactics--"arrogant, audacious, and ruthless"--infuriated the old pros, who were being summarily chastised. In retaliation, many gave only minimum support to the ticket

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38 The New Methodology, p. 49; San Antonio Light, August 16, 1960, p. 21.
and cooperated with the volunteer groups only when it benefited their immediate ends.

The problem of party dissonance and its effect on the election was acute. The national platform was ever a source of controversy. At the state Democratic convention in September, a group of delegates repudiated the national party and the party platform. Two delegates announced that they would not vote for Kennedy; Johnson eventually had them replaced.40 Similarly, businessmen and oil interests were anti-Kennedy. They feared the cancellation of the 27½ percent oil depletion allowance.41 The political hierarchy reflected the confused heterogeneity of the party when an attempt to present a unified front failed dismally. Sam Rayburn, Lyndon Johnson, Price Daniel, and Ralph Yarborough were to appear together and ride in the same motorcade; Daniel refused to make an appearance.42 Johnson himself often frustrated effective campaigning by last-minute cancellations, schedule rearrangements, and unanticipated appearances.43 Another source of friction was the revitalization of the old Johnson-Yarborough feud.

40 Weeks, p. 49; San Antonio Light, September 10, 1960, p. 3.
43 Evans and Novak, p. 295.
Throughout the campaign, Yarborough bore the burden of Johnson's autocratic control. Johnson deliberately waged a calculated drive to destroy such liberal dissent as was embodied and represented by Yarborough. Yarborough had provoked Johnson's ire by publicly supporting, even campaigning for, John F. Kennedy prior to the July national convention. Having agreed with Robert Kennedy on the preeminence of Kennedy's election and consequently to the necessity of sustaining the appearance of party unity, Yarborough yielded full authority to Johnson. With Yarborough in such a precarious position, Johnson was free to perform as he wished. Subsequently, the liberal Yarborough forces were denied recognition by local and state conservative politicians who feared the potential power of an uncontrolled inter-party revolt, be it political, economic, or ethnic.44

Another incident illustrating Johnson's complete control involved Kennedy advance man Paul Reddam. With the idea of encouraging all elements in the party to cooperate, Reddam called a strategy session the day before the Johnson-Kennedy visit to Texas. At the briefing, attended by political leaders and party workers representing the different factions, Nancy Voight, a leader of the American Civil Liberties Union, questioned Reddam. Sardonically, Voight

asked, "Why does Kennedy have to have Johnson hold his hand to cross the Texas border?" Reddam, a jaunty Bostonian and friend of the Kennedy clan since 1948, retorted that Kennedy needed no one to hold his hand to cross any state border. The next morning the newspaper headlines reported that a Kennedy aide claimed Kennedy did not need Johnson to carry Texas or the South. This minor incident angered Johnson. He reminded the presidential candidate of his promise in California, and Reddam's services as advance man, and indeed his association with Kennedy, were terminated. Reddam was sacrificed for the ephemerality of political expediency; the party would not tolerate any show of insolence.

With unity as the political ideal, the Johnson forces attempted to stay an inter-party revolt by creating a device whereby the liberal element which contained the seeds of dissension could be siphoned off and channeled into the formation of a constructive campaign tool--one which could support the liberal Kennedy, whereas it would never unite, even temporarily, with the party which sponsored the conservative Johnson. The results of such political acrobatics could only be rewarding. The party could exhibit a semblance of unity and harmony, thereby increasing the chances for winning the election in November. After the election, the Texas party's status quo conservatism could be maintained.

In conjunction with the directive of the national campaign headquarters, Johnson devoted 44 percent of his campaign time to the South. In a whistle-stop tour of eight states, he logged 3,811 miles. Half of his efforts in the last three weeks of the campaign was spent in the South. At least one-fourth of that time was devoted to Texas. Before Johnson could guarantee Texas' twenty-four electoral votes to the national Democratic ticket, he first had to offset the problems and opposition his nomination fomented.

Johnson, as the native son, should have been able to carry Texas by a substantial margin. The election, however, was so close and the state electoral votes were so critical that more than Johnson's heritage, time, and monied machinery were needed. Perceiving this, Yarborough warned Kennedy headquarters that the Democrats could not carry the state unless Kennedy consented to a Texas tour a few days before the election. Laudably, Johnson had lined up the conservative money and leadership in Texas, but these factors alone seemed insufficient to the national Democratic headquarters.  

46 Weeks, p. 52; Kelley, p. 72.

To supplement Johnson's efforts, Kennedy decided to spend two days barnstorming through Texas. His impressive convoy included five planes, a twenty-five-unit motorcade, and more than one hundred and fifty southern Democratic leaders. In the last three days of the campaigning, Kennedy visited Amarillo, Wichita Falls, Houston, Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, and Texarkana. Because of the importance of the state, other Kennedys spent considerable time in Texas. Ted Kennedy, the youngest brother, had campaigned in Houston, Fort Worth, Denton, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio. Robert Kennedy delivered speeches in Temple, El Paso, San Angelo, Houston, and Galveston. The Kennedy women also made an excursion through the state. Exclusive of the family, the Democrats sent nineteen out-of-state senators, one congressman, and one governor to help wrap up the Texas vote. 48

Despite these efforts by the national Democratic Party, state party factionalism took its toll of rank and file voters. 49 Since minorities played a substantial role in sustaining the party, their support was critical. Johnson was conscious of the need for minority votes, but his appeal among these groups, in particular the Chicanos, was limited. 48

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48 Weeks, p. 55; El Paso Times, October 23, 1960, p. 1; Corpus Christi Caller, October 16, 1960, p. 4B.
49 Bell, p. 104; Casso, interview; White, p. 35, in describing Johnson's problems in Texas, writes Johnson was "sweating it out" in Texas.
This political phenomenon seemed incredible in the light of Johnson's past record regarding Mexican-American affairs. Johnson's career was filled with special concessions and considerations to the Latins. He had taken a year off from college in 1928 to teach Mexican-American children at Cotulla, Texas. There he had spent three months' salary on athletic equipment for the underprivileged Mexican children and had opened his home to one youngster, Juan Gonzalez, whom he tutored. During the depression of the 1930's Johnson was the director of the National Youth Administration in Texas. In that capacity, he passed out jobs to Latins who could not find work with other relief agencies. In 1959, Johnson, along with Representative Joe Kilgore and Senator Yarborough, endorsed an irrigation project for the Valley costing over seven million dollars. The project would serve 95,541 acres, benefiting Latins throughout the various Valley counties. Still the Mexican-American could not identify with Johnson. Johnson's philanthropic efforts rang of insincerity and condescension. The Mexican-Americans felt no hostility towards Johnson, but neither did they feel any rapport.

50 Bill Davidson, "Lyndon Johnson: Can a Southerner be Elected President?" Look, XXIII (August 18, 1959), 66; Bill Davidson, "Texas Political Powerhouse Lyndon Johnson," Look, XXIII (August 4, 1959), 44.

51 San Antonio Light, August 7, 1960, p. 6.

Therefore, reasonable doubt remains that Johnson was an invaluable asset to Kennedy in south Texas where the area is predominantly Chicano in population.\textsuperscript{53} In south Texas, the counties can be very loosely categorized as boss-controlled, non-boss-controlled, and border counties. In the boss-controlled counties, party leaders have established symbiotic relationships with the Mexican-Americans based on economics and politics. The bosses are still linked to the state machinery and traditionally manage to get out the vote for the Democratic ticket.\textsuperscript{54} Regardless of Johnson's presence on the ticket, these counties would have voted Democratic. The key to the election rested in the non-boss-controlled counties. Here Johnson's influence was limited, for these counties were not composed of conservative Democrats.

Finally, in the border counties, Johnson was disliked.\textsuperscript{55} In all probability, the Chicanos in south Texas, either through the lack of choice or because they resented being saddled with conservatism, would have voted for Kennedy regardless, or in spite of, Johnson's presence on the ticket.

\textsuperscript{53}New York Times, November 6, 1960, p. 1D.


Realistically, Kennedy could not have carried Texas had it not been for three major reasons: (1) Johnson's aid in gathering financial and political support from the conservative party regulars, (2) the political ingenuity which allowed independent campaign groups such as the "Viva Kennedy" clubs to flourish, thus alleviating fears the conservatives had of an intra-party power struggle, and (3) the natural magnetism Kennedy seemed to have for the minority groups, especially the Mexican-Americans. Regarding Johnson's campaign for the vice-presidency, his name on the ticket was not as important as the political concession it implied.56 The mere presence of a southerner on the national ticket assured the politically paranoid South that the new Democratic administration would not overlook southerners in its dispersions of favors and patronage. An interesting but unanswerable conjecture arises out of this hypothesis: could another southern politician have fulfilled the responsibility Kennedy handed Johnson—that of diluting Kennedy's liberalism, making it palatable for southern party hacks—without conjuring such wrath and dissension within the Texas party?

Elections are eclectic by nature; there is no single factor which is responsible for success. It is therefore necessary to investigate beyond the superficial politics of the Valley, for the Valley was composed not only of a

substantial political minority, but also of Roman Catholics. The religious strategy developed by the Republicans and the Democrats and the reaction of the Chicanos to such tactics, will provide a vital key to the understanding of the socio-cultural complexion of the Valley.
In an election year void of any single critical domestic or international issue, religion became one cutting medium over which politicians of both parties agonized. "Because of its capacity to rouse emotions and to generate zeal," the religious issue was exploited by the Democratic Party and denounced by the upper stratum of Republican leadership. The Republicans attempted to instill fear of Catholicism in the minds of the voters, while faulting the Democrats for sanctimoniously portraying their candidate as the object of acrimonious vituperation as a means of attracting a sympathy vote. The Democrats, to resolve the controversy their candidate's religion incited, attempted to create an image with whom the electorate could identify by appealing to Kennedy's kinsmen in faith, by stimulating outrage at the scurrilous anti-Catholic prejudice, and by presenting Johnson as an example of one who had indulged, albeit indirectly, in printing and in distributing anti-Catholic literature before the Los Angeles convention, but who had since undergone a conversion to rational objectivity. Through such a strategy

the religious bias in the South could possibly be repressed, the bigots shamed, and their fears and warnings negated.

At a superficial glance, there seems to have been both a Catholic and an anti-Catholic bloc vote in 1960. Election returns seem to indicate a positive correlation between the percentage of eligible Catholic voters and the percentage gain in Democratic votes over the election returns of 1956. Nationwide, the percentage of Catholics voting Democratic increased from 51 percent in 1956 to 78 percent in 1960. This increase can be partially explained by the heavier than usual voter turnout: Democratic votes per precinct increased 25 percent in the South. Much more remarkable, however, was the rate of Catholic defection from the Republican Party. Approximately 62 percent of those Catholics voting in 1956 for Eisenhower voted for Kennedy in 1960. Texas, alone, experienced an estimated seven percentage point Republican loss.

The Texas Catholic population was 1,300,000 in 1960. According to the findings of the Texas Election Bureau, thirty-five of the thirty-nine predominantly Catholic counties voted overwhelmingly for Kennedy. Contrastingly, in 1956 twenty-eight of these counties supported Eisenhower. Of the twenty-seven heavily Latin-American Catholic counties in south Texas, the Kennedy-Johnson ticket captured all but two, which were both lost by less than 5 percent of the total vote. The major Democratic gains in south Texas were
therefore more clearly detectable in the areas of Catholic concentration. ²

In assessing such data, a religious-based bloc vote seems plausible. These statistics, however, exaggerate single-factor voting motivation, while veiling other important considerations. Though no definite correlation between religious preference and party allegiance has yet been satisfactorily established, a couple of generalizations seem valid. For example, approximately 63 percent of the nation's Catholics are traditionally affiliated with the Democratic Party and in all probability would have voted for the party ticket regardless of Kennedy's presence on it. On the other hand, Protestants generally seem to have a great proclivity for the Republican Party, which has traditionally been the party of the establishment. ³

Early immigration was heavily Protestant English and French. As the heirs of these Protestant ancestors gradually...


entrenched themselves in the political system, they gained control of the Republican Party. The more recent eastern and southeastern European immigrants were, coincidentally, predominantly Catholic. Politically, they gravitated toward the less congested Democratic Party which overtly sought their allegiance. Consequently, it appears that any relationship between party and religion has been accidental to United States immigration trends.

These immigration trends strengthen popular theory that party affiliation has become a family tradition and account for the Catholic-Democratic political phenomenon. Therefore, the election of 1960 does not represent any political mutation. The inconsistency in Catholic-Democratic alignment occurred in 1952 and 1956, when the Catholics, enchanted by the Eisenhower myth, crossed party lines to vote Republican. Because the Republican administration failed to match the expectations of these "Eisenhower Democrats," the defecting Democrats, who happened to number many Catholics, merely returned to the party of their ancestors.

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Another point to consider in analyzing voting motivation is that religious affiliation cannot, with any credibility, be separated from class position, economic standing, national origin, and regional location. All are inextricable political determinants. Together these determinants enable the ubiquitous, complex voting electorate to be classified into minority groups for convenient study of voting behavior. Ethnic groups generally represent a conglomerate of all these factors, are easily classified, and, more importantly, add another dimension to voting motivation. Group action springing from ethnic solidarity provides an impetus for political action; the way the group votes, so votes the individual member.

Identity and pride seem to be the cohesive elements of ethnic groups, and when the status of that identity or the strength of that ethnic pride is challenged, those groups tend to reflect political homogeneity.6 The Latin-Americans in south Texas serve as an ideal illustration. In 1960, Catholicism, the major religion of the Chicanos, became regarded as a political stigma, and all who bore such a baptismal identity were subject to suspicion and ridicule. What has been misinterpreted as religious-based bloc voting on the part of the Latins was actually ethnic chauvinism in

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reaction to the virulence of anti-Catholic propaganda and the centuries-old anti-Catholic prejudice. There was no Catholic bloc voting among the Chicanos. Change occurred not in voting behavior patterns but in the quantity of voters, stimulated by ethnic pride, which only coincidentally happened to be partially shaped by religious heritage. This pride was rooted not in Catholicism per se, but in religious commonality.

Therefore, Catholicism was not the main reason for the substantial increase in Chicano political activism. The real reason can best be explained by applying the sociological term, relative deprivation—the sense of belonging to a group victimized by national intolerance in an age of rising expectations and liberal exhortations to racial tolerance. Social lag in the acceptance of different cultures appeared inconsistent with democratic ideals. Inconsistency produced frustration, and this frustration, resulting from fraternal relative deprivation (rather than personal deprivation), swelled to political potency among the Chicanos in south Texas in 1960.

The first step in evaluating the validity of this hypothesis is to assess the depth of anti-Catholicism in Texas in 1960. The circulation of religious propaganda is a good indicator of the strength of prejudice. The Fair Campaign Practices Committee, a voluntary non-partisan association under the executive direction of Bruce Felknor and chairman
Charles P. Taft, claimed more anti-Catholic literature had circulated in 1960 than in 1928. Some 392 different pieces of defamatory literature, published by over 145 different printing houses, had reached between twenty and twenty-five million voters. Texas was reported to be among the worst offenders, second only to New York.\(^7\) From Austin alone more than five million items were being circulated throughout the state. According to Gerald Mann, the mailing of such literature was so heavy that it caused a real strain on the postal authorities in and around the Austin area. Also, newspaper offices were daily flooded with anti-Catholic materials submitted for publication.\(^8\)

Harry Golden, at the Kennedy compound in Hyannis Port, synthesized the reports filtering in from his campaign field workers and concluded that the strength of the religious issue was "unbelievable."\(^9\) So magnified was the religious question that the Fair Campaign Practices Committee attempted a noble, though futile, two-day effort to convince prominent religious leaders that "intelligent, honest and temperate discussion of the issue" was mandatory.\(^10\) Yet, as early as

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\(^7\) Barrett, p. 31; Sorenson, p. 219.


August, Felknor dishearteningly announced that the 1960 treatment of Catholicism was "dirtier" than that of 1928.\textsuperscript{11}

The difference between 1928 and 1960 was more a matter of sophistication than degree. During the election of 1928 Al Smith accepted religious bigotry as natural and suspicion of Catholics as understandable. He had no intricate strategy to combat such long-entrenched prejudice. By 1960, however, it was déclassé to be a religious bigot; prejudice had to be coated with political sophistication and some semblance of rationality before it could be flaunted. Though equally as vile, the 1960 literature became intellectualized prejudice with graduations of bigotry. Essentially three levels of religious prejudice were evident in the 1960 campaign: overt bigotry, the manipulation of votes through pulpit politics, and, finally, legitimate concern voiced in an atmosphere of prejudice.\textsuperscript{12}

In the first category, bigotry was rather spontaneous. Rumors and religious puns were particularly powerful. For example, all Catholics were reputed to swear to kill Protestant babies, and the Pope was accused of stockpiling nuclear weapons in order to compel Protestants to convert to


Catholicism. The jokes told in coffee houses and barber shops were more effective than the printed word. Kennedy people throughout Texas were said to greet one another with "Hail Mary, y'all," and money-starved Democratic campaign financiers were encouraged to fill their coffers by freezing holy water and sell it as "popesickles." The telephone was another direct means of communicating prejudice. An unidentified caller would recite the brief warning that a vote for Kennedy was a vote for religious oppression similar to that experienced by European countries under Romanism. Aside from this, chain letters were penned. Generally, the letters were handwritten, often illegible, and grammatically inaccurate. They were anonymous and mailed in unmarked envelopes. They contained essentially the same message as the telephone calls. Printed literature classified as overt bigotry included the revived 1850 "Knights of Columbus Oath" which supposedly bound Catholics to the expurgation of all heretics (i.e., Protestants) in the name of religious purification. The


15 Valley Evening Monitor, October 5, 1960, p. 9.

16 Farenthold, interview; Valley Evening Monitor, October 21, 1960, p. 1.
fact that this "oath" had been entered into the Congressional Record during the 1900's seemed to give it authenticity. This scathing propaganda was mailed, slipped under doors, and tucked beneath windshield wipers. The Texas Ku Klux Klan, under self-appointed leader Horace Sherman Miller, actively distributed the "oath" with an attached note that indicted Rome for crushing public schools.17

Along the same vein, but receiving less distribution was the fallacious "Abraham Lincoln's Warning," which denounced Catholics in general for their involvement in a papist plot to assassinate Lincoln. By far the most obscene and vulgar item was the pamphlet, "Maria Monk"--a fictitious tale outlining the immoral experiences of a nun. It was written in 1832 and resurrected for the campaign.18 Yet, this level of sporadic and unorganized bigotry could not compare with pulpit politics.

The greatest irony in the religious controversy was provided by the extremists in the Protestant clergy, who castigated the Catholic Church for its interference in secular matters, while they themselves engaged in politics. Most notorious for this hypocrisy were Baptist groups. In Texas approximately 2500 to 3000 of the 3700 Southern Baptist

18 Ibid.
preachers actively opposed the Democratic nominee. By early October it was estimated that 95 percent of all the Baptist preachers would, in one form or another, urge their parishioners to vote against the Catholic Kennedy. Baptist publications followed through with this campaign strategy. One editorial, which appeared in The Baptist Standard, the Texas Baptist weekly, with a circulation of 357,000, offered Kennedy their support in return for his denunciation of any Vatican allegiance.

Similarly, the Protestants and Other Americans United for Separation of Church and State (POAU), numbering more than one hundred thousand members, with five hundred thousand dollars in capital assets, engaged in this type of political proselytizing. Church and State, POAU's monthly paper, with a circulation of 110,000, printed a list of "Questions for a Catholic Candidate." Further developing their line of reasoning, this organization published the Manual of Christian Doctrine, which listed the reasons Catholic candidates were ineligible for high office. According to this document, Catholic Church doctrine affirms

1. the superiority of the Church to the State because the end to which the Church is directed is the more noble,
2. Papal authority to nullify any governmental legislation which, in his opinion, would

19 Texas AFL-CIO News, November 5, 1960, p. 7; Reporter, XXIII (October 13, 1960), 32.

20 The Texas Observer, LI (February 26, 1960), 2.
threaten the salvation of men, or impede their natural rights,
3. the priority of Catholic rules is the perpetuation of Catholicism,
4. State tolerance of dissenting religions only when time or covenant has legalized their existence,
5. the permanent subordinate position of the State to the rule of Christ,
6. the right to disobey all civil laws not in accord with natural or divine law. 21

Not only was church-sponsored literature politically influential, but also the ministers themselves were in an ideal position to manipulate the attitudes of hundreds of thousands. They took full advantage of the pulpit to exercise persuasion. Before his congregation on July 3, Reverend W. A. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, attacked the election of a Catholic on the grounds that such an occurrence would result in the demise of religious liberty guaranteed by the first amendment to the Constitution. He concluded that "Roman Catholicism is not only a religion, it is a political tyranny." His sermon was broadcast over radio station KIXL and was heard by an audience of twelve thousand. Before the Democratic convention, oil billionaire H. L. Hunt of Dallas, on behalf of Johnson, used his money to print and to distribute Criswell's sermon in mass quantity. 22

21The Texas Observer, L (January 8, 1958), 8; LI (March 6, 1960), 8.
22James Reston, "Economics of Bigotry," The Texas Observer, LII (September 30, 1960), 3; H. M. Baggarly, "Criswell Reproached," The Texas Observer, LII (July 22, 1960), 5; The Texas Observer, LII (October 28, 1960), 1; New York Times,
Harvey Springer, "cowboy evangelist of the Rockies," claimed he was proud to be called a bigot. He enjoined his followers to "Let the Romanists move out of America." He continued, "Did you see the coronation of Big John? Let's hope we never see the coronation of Little Johns. . . . How many Catholics came on the Mayflower? Not one. . . . The Constitution is a Protestant Constitution."23

Many incidents which occurred outside Texas were nevertheless so well publicized that their influence knew no state boundary. Because of his popularity, Norman Vincent Peale of New York managed to command the attention of Texas Protestants. Peale presided over a newly formed group, the Citizens for Religious Freedom. Attending the meeting were 150 leaders, among them Daniel Poling, editor of the Christian Herald; L. M. Bell, editor of Christian Today; Glen Archer, executive director of POAU; Donald Gill of the National Association of Evangelicals; J. Elwin Wright; and Harold J. Ockenga. The group issued a public statement which resolved that Kennedy's religious affiliation made him "unacceptable for the Presidency."24 The intolerance and


23 Sorenson, pp. 219-220.

prejudice of the organization was blatant. The political position of the Catholic Church had been misconstrued and inconsistency ascribed to Kennedy. Though he later repudiated the action of the group, Peale had been credited with initiating a new onslaught of anti-Catholic prejudice.\(^{25}\)

The president of the nine-million-member Southern Baptist Convention, Ramsey Pollard, insisted the Citizens for Religious Freedom were correct in disqualifying Kennedy on the basis of his religion, for "no matter what Kennedy might say, he cannot separate himself from his Church if he is a true Catholic." Speaking for his organization, Pollard asked Roman Catholicism to "lift its bloody hand from the throats of those that want to worship in the church of their choice." Though he claimed he was not a bigot, Pollard explained he could not remain silent when a man under the domination of the Roman Catholic Church became a contender for the presidency.\(^{26}\)

As if to verify his anti-Catholic protestations, Pollard recalled Kennedy's political faux pas involving Daniel Poling, well-known preacher, publicist, and one-time Republican candidate for mayor of Philadelphia. The incident dated back to 1947 when Poling had invited Kennedy to a fund-raising dinner in dedication of a chapel. The chapel

\(^{25}\)Ibid.

\(^{26}\)Sorenson, p. 219; Richter and Dulce, p. 131.
was erected in tribute to the heroic action of four chaplains who died aboard the SS Dorchester during World War II. One of the four was Lieutenant C. V. Poling, Poling’s son. To give the ceremony ecumenicalism, the Massachusetts congressman had been invited as an official representative of Catholicism. Apparently unaware of the responsibility implicit in the invitation, Kennedy had accepted. Two days before the dedication, Kennedy apologetically excused himself, explaining that he did not have the proper credentials to serve as a spokesman for his religion. Later it was revealed that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia supported neither the project nor the fund drive. Poling naturally drew an association between Kennedy’s refusal to attend, the disapproval of the bishop, and the understanding that Catholic attendance at Protestant services was subject to clerical discretion. Poling concluded that Catholics in secular and spiritual affairs were controlled by the hierarchy of their church. In 1960 Pollard related the incident to his parishioners. Realizing his potential influence, Pollard boasted that his church was numerically able to defeat Kennedy if they all voted as he directed. 27

Comparable to the caliber of Catholic opposition incited by Pollard was an announcement by world-renowned Billy Graham. In several speeches and in an article written for

27 Mezick, p. 42; Richter and Dulce, p. 124.
Life magazine, Graham attempted to elevate the religious question to a degree of legitimate concern. Implicit in this action was the belief that the Catholic Church would influence state matters, thus destroying the democratic ideal of separation of church and state. Ironically, the attempt to legitimatize the religious issue by clergymen only revealed the hypocrisy of church-state separation; pulpit politics was a biting indictment against the concept.

Expressing similar concern about the consequence of a Catholic in the White House were two other reputable clergymen. Presbyterian Eugene Carson Blake, executive director of the World Council of Churches and president of the National Council of the Church of Christ, and Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, chairman of the World Bishops of Methodists and president of the Federal Council of Churches were "uneasy" about the possibility of a Catholic president. This uneasiness arose from the inconsistencies they observed between the Catholic Church's stated theory and its actual practices. Their concern spread among Protestant leaders.

Though Texas was alert to the comments of world-famous ministers, they listened to their own preachers attentively. Homer G. Ritchie, pastor in Fort Worth, suggested that


Kennedy was either compromising the laws of his church or deceiving the electorate. Also, an independent Baptist preacher, Tom Landers, organized a group of Baptists called Christians United for a Free America and asked "Can We Afford to Elect a Catholic President?"

Highlighting the action taken by Texas ministers was the political distortion of Reformation Sunday. The National Association of Evangelicals, composed of 28,000 conservative and fundamental churches, with a total membership reaching tens of millions, declared that Catholicism suppresses evangelicalism, and, for this reason, "thinking Americans" must guard against the domination of Rome. The Association, led by George L. Ford, encouraged a massive all-out, anti-Catholic day. As Reformation Sunday would fall on October 30, just nine days before the election, it was selected as the ideal time to perpetrate the political assault against Kennedy's Catholicism. That Sunday was reserved for anti-Catholic and anti-Kennedy sermons and rallies. Protestants received "Stand Up and Be Counted" buttons with "1517" commemorating Martin Luther's attack on the Catholic Church.

30 The Texas Observer, LII (August 8, 1960), 1.
32 Richter and Dulce, p. 130; The Texas Observer, LII (November 4, 1960), 1.
However, the political aspects of Reformation Sunday met with little enthusiasm and minimal success because by that time people had grown weary of the religious issue and were embarrassed by outright prejudice.

Each of these levels of religious prejudice was rather spontaneous among the rank and file members of the Republican Party. Such action, however pervasive and intense, did not negate the need for a sound strategy by which the Republican leaders could handle the volatile issue. To receive the greatest political advantage, the Republicans were forced to perform a rather delicate balancing act; they must deny the existence of the religious issue and at the same time perpetuate it. In the midst of tons of scurrilous literature focused on the issue, only two groups in America were left to deny that Catholicism was an issue—the hypocrites, and the two major candidates, who by virtue of their positions were tacitly granted dispensation from the stigma of hypocrisy.\(^{34}\) Pragmatically, though the two parties denied the existence of a religious issue, Catholicism was the one constant issue which arose in every major strategy session.

The Republicans were especially perplexed by the issue. It was September before Nixon decided upon his two-pronged attack. Generally, Republican leaders would minimize the issue. Specifically, Nixon himself would avoid mention of religion. If directly challenged to take a stand, he would

\(^{34}\) The Texas Observer, LII (August 5, 1960), 4.
reiterate his confidence in Kennedy's loyalty and profess that religion was a phony issue. Therefore, it deserved neither the attention of Kennedy nor of himself. Further, Nixon instructed his staff to suppress all discussion of religion, for Kennedy might well be the greater beneficiary. He pleaded with the Kennedy camp to do the same. 35

The physical law which states for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction is a political fact as well. The bigotry that was encouraged by the Republican strategists offended rational citizens and solidified Democratic allegiance. When the growth of voter irritation over religious intolerance threatened a backlash, Nixon incessantly decried religious prejudice and warned the electorate that it was illogical to vote for Kennedy to prove religious tolerance. Nixon spent the last months of the campaign denouncing the Democratic Party's exploitation of the issue. He accused Kennedy's associates of religious histrionics while they labeled as bigots all who tried to put the issue in proper perspective. According to the Republican candidate, "It was, for Kennedy, a 'heads I win, tails you lose' proposition." 36 Republican Catholics were, Nixon claimed, being urged to vote

35 The New Methodology, pp. 53, 55.

for Kennedy because he was one of them, and Republican Protestants were being urged to vote for Kennedy to prove that they were not prejudiced. The Democrats had masterfully converted the Nixon-versus-Kennedy campaign into a bigotry-versus-liberty contest.

For the Democrats, the religious issue could prove the means through which their candidate could capture the election. Like the Republicans, the Democrats exaggerated the importance of a religious-based vote; to them a Catholic bloc vote was a reality. As early as 1956 they had alluded to the necessity to recapture the Catholic vote which deserted the party in 1952 and 1956. A few weeks before the 1956 convention, Theodore Sorenson attempted to rally support for the vice-presidential contender, John Kennedy. He made a detailed investigation into the voting trends and patterns in fourteen states, using voting records and observations of various political leaders. In an extremely persuasive report, the Bailey Memorandum, Sorenson theorized that there was indeed a Catholic vote. Its strategic location in critical industrial states with large electoral votes made it imperative that the Democrats select a Catholic to balance the ticket. The twenty-page document reported that the Democratic Party had been losing the Catholic vote gradually. Because of this, Eisenhower had been elected for two terms. The lost vote could be recaptured by putting a Catholic on the national ticket. The memorandum explained,
Has the Democratic era ended? Has the Party permanently lost its political base among the Catholics and immigrants of the large northern cities that made a Democratic victory possible in 1940, 1944, and 1948? A Catholic vice-presidential nominee could refashion this base as Al Smith did and begin a new era of Democrat victories, without costing even the few electoral votes Smith did.

Considering that one out of every five voters was Catholic, for every vote a Catholic candidate lost because of his religion, he would gain one or more from religious and racial minorities. Further, the report cited Samuel Lubell's observation that the Catholic voting strength, in view of the maturing offspring of immigrants from the southeastern European Catholic countries, was at its peak.

The Bailey Memorandum was "leaked" to the delegates and newsmen. The circulation of the document sparked a lively discussion of the Catholic voter potency. Skeptics, led by Hubert H. Humphrey, issued a rival report suggesting that Catholics do not necessarily vote their religion. Despite these denials of Catholic bloc voting, the issue had been

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39 Lubell, p. 211.
raised, and the flurry which the document provoked seemed credible in light of the 1956 election results. By 1960 Democratic leaders were willing to reconsider the validity of the memorandum.

In 1960, Kennedy had the responsibility of formulating the Democratic religious strategy. Initially, Kennedy had been criticized for raising the issue and at other times criticized for failure to mention it. If the church officials endorsed his candidacy, as Richard Cardinal Cushing did, Protestants envisioned a Catholic conspiracy. If the hierarchy criticized Kennedy, Protestants concluded that most Catholics actually believed in a united church and state and that Kennedy was "some kind of an oddball Romanist" to be feared all the more. In short, Kennedy was damned if the Catholic clergy openly supported him and damned if they did not.

To handle this predicament, Kennedy, sometime between the August strategy session at Hyannis Port and early September, decided to adopt the tactics he used in the West Virginia primary. He would reassert his independence of ecclesiastical control, projecting honesty and sincerity. He would not suppress discussion of the issue but would welcome it. Once committed to this political strategy,

40 Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 175.

41 The New Methodology, p. 46.
Kennedy met all religious questions, reasonable or insulting, head-on. He exposed the prejudice and exploited it. He seized every opportunity to discuss his religion in candid terms. It was even suspected that Kennedy planted religious questions among reporters at press conferences. Meanwhile, brother Robert was assigned charge of making sure that voters were "reminded of the necessity of forgetting the religious issue," a clever means of keeping the issue alive.

The logic behind Kennedy's approach was sagacious. He reasoned that this honest approach would strengthen the identity and cohesion between himself and his kinsmen in faith. And as an added feature, many Protestants would vote for Kennedy to convince themselves that they were not bigots. Attesting to Kennedy's theory, the Simulmatics Project—a computer program directed by Ithiel De Solo Pool and Robert Abelson—predicted that if Kennedy pressed the religious issue, statistically he could not lose. The study's

42 Ibid., p. 48; Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, p. 165.


44 Mezick, p. 47.

45 The New Methodology, p. 41; Ithiel De Solo Pool and Robert Abelson, "The Simulmatics Project," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXV (1961), 180. Note: Sorenson denies any validity to the "people machine." The reports received from the computers were, according to Kennedy's top aide, of no more worth than the raw polls which were fed into the computers. The novel technology was without practical application. Sorenson, p. 208.
results were submitted to Kennedy aides eleven weeks before election day and, if nothing more, reassured Kennedy in his decision.

To neutralize the obviously religious-based opposition, the National Democratic Headquarters organized the community relations division. Ted Sorenson, Myer Feldman, and Bill Moyers conceived the idea, and recruited James Wine, a staff member of the National Council of Churches, to quell the religious animosity. Wine and his workers answered from six hundred to one thousand letters per week clarifying Kennedy's position and the doctrines of his church. The division contacted local Democratic leaders and prescribed methods of dealing with the issue on the county and precinct levels. They often advised panel discussions, interfaith appeal films, and interdenominational statewide committees. They also encouraged Protestant clergymen to condemn religious bigotry through their conventions, in their sermons, and in their publications.46

The success of the community relations division was great. In Texas a group of one hundred religious leaders of all faiths decried religious prejudice. Baxton Bryant was quoted in The Texas Observer as admitting that religion was a valid issue, but one which must be held in perspective. "It sickens me," he said, "to see America afraid, suspicious,

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46 The New Methodology, p. 54; Sorenson, p. 198.
prejudiced, and not willing to give one-fifth of our nation an opportunity they have never had—an opportunity to serve as head of the government of a country to which they have richly contributed."47 Another Texas publication described the religious issue as a "virus, defying the antibiotics of reason and unbias."48 More sensational than articles was the creation of the Texas "truth squad," a group of state senators who attempted to correct Republican propaganda by publicly dispelling myths about the Catholic Church.49

Sorenson directed other efforts to reverse the direction of prejudice. At Sorenson's request, Francis B. Sayre, Jr., Dean of Washington's Episcopal Cathedral and the grandson of Woodrow Wilson, joined Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam50 in soliciting signatures of ministers on an open letter. The letter, addressed to the "fellow pastors in Christ," urged an end to vile bigotry and encouraged voting on the basis of the candidates' ability without regard to religious affiliation. The letter was signed by thirteen

47 The Texas Observer, LII (August 5, 1960), 8; Corpus Christi Caller, September 12, 1960, p. 1.
50 Oxnam had originally been dubious about accepting a Catholic as a candidate for the presidency, but later joined the anti-prejudice forces.
nationally-acclaimed Protestant leaders. Also, Charles P. Taft, chairman of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, issued a statement of principles in early March stating that a candidate's religion is relevant to a voter's decision only so far as it directly interferes with political decisions. Any further consideration of a candidate's religion was apolitical and un-Christian.

Kennedy endorsed each of these measures of combating religious prejudice. He implemented his own strategy through speeches. His earnestness was demonstrated in his address before the American Society of Newspaper Editors. In the speech, Kennedy restated his views on birth control, the appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican, and federal aid to parochial schools. Getting to the heart of the matter, Kennedy declared that he was not the Catholic candidate for president; but rather he was the Democratic candidate who happened to be Catholic. He explained, "Whatever one's religion in his private life may be, for the officeholder nothing takes precedence over his oath to uphold the Constitution and all its parts--including the First Amendment and the strict separation of Church and State." He swore that as president he would be guided by his conscience and remain independent of papal direction. Finally, he attacked

51 Fuchs, John F. Kennedy and American Catholicism, pp. 173, 177.
52 Corpus Christi Caller, September 1, 1960, p. 12.
prejudice:

If there is bigotry in this country, then so be it—there is bigotry. If that bigotry is too great to permit the fair consideration of a Catholic who has made clear his complete independence and his complete dedication to separation of church and state, then we ought to know it.\(^{53}\)

Kennedy's efforts to shame bigots were copied, indeed, often exaggerated. In another phase of the campaign, to which Kennedy was not directly a party, efforts were made to convince the public that a vote against Kennedy was a vote for bigotry. Adam Clayton Powell, a black Democratic congressman from Harlem, blatantly demonstrated this tactic. "The Klan is riding again," he said, "and all bigots will vote for Nixon and all right-thinking Christians and Jews will vote for Kennedy rather than be found in the ranks of the Klansminded."\(^{54}\) In Texas this type of emotional appeal was perpetrated by the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education. In a booklet, COPE announced the real issue in the campaign was "liberty versus bigotry." The cover of the pamphlet depicted the Statue of Liberty beside a Ku Klux Klansman.\(^{55}\) Epitomizing this reverse bigotry, an article in


\(^{54}\) The New Methodology, p. 55.

\(^{55}\) Nixon, p. 366; The Dallas Morning News, October 22, 1960, p. 3.
The Texas Observer asked, "How much better can we separatists demonstrate our faith in the doctrine than by electing a Catholic."\(^5^6\)

Visiting out-of-state politicians issued similar statements to shame bigots. Harry Truman's tour of Texas was devoted to the religious question. He angrily lashed out at Texas Baptists in Waco and in San Antonio. He flatly stated that Texans who voted Republican "ought to go to hell."\(^5^7\)

Less strident, but equally turgid, was Estes Kefauver's speech. In Corpus Christi, Kefauver pleaded with every citizen to ostracize the vicious hatemongers and demonic poison-pen pamphleteers. "Not only will a smear campaign damage the image of our country," Kefauver said, "it will also damage the soul and conscience of our nation." America had "flunked" her test of maturity in 1928; in 1960 she had a second chance to uphold the spirit of the Constitution.\(^5^8\)

Kennedy touched Texas pride when he observed, "side by side with Bowie and Crockett died McCafferty and Bailey and Carey, but no one knows whether they were Catholic or not. For there was no religious test at the Alamo."\(^5^9\)

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\(^{56}\) The Texas Observer, LII (October 16, 1960), 2B.

\(^{57}\) Corpus Christi Caller, October 13, 1960, p. 111; Corpus Christi Caller, September 6, 1960, p. 6.

\(^{58}\) "Kefauver Charges Anti-Catholic Drive is Flooding Nation," Corpus Christi Caller, August 31, 1960, p. 4.

\(^{59}\) Sorenson, p. 214.
Johnson appealed to the intelligence and patriotism of Texans. Ironically, while demanding an end to anti-Catholic prejudice, Johnson made several innuendoes and slurs about Nixon's religion.60 This counter-religious prejudice was best illustrated in attorney Ben F. McDonald's address before the First Christian Church of Corpus Christi:

Nixon is a Quaker--Quakers as a group are pacifists and many of them become conscientious objectors. They would not believe in building a strong and powerful America capable of dealing with any international incident or deterring the buildup of Communism over the world. . . .61

These speeches and countless similar statements were heard by the Texas voting electorate. But the most dramatic illustration of Kennedy's religious stratagem was his address before the Texas Ministerial Association at Houston. The intricacies involved in the scheduling of the speech were indicative of its importance. Houston's U.S. District Judge Woodrow Seals suggested to Senator Ralph Yarborough that the golden opportunity for Kennedy to resolve the religious issue once and for all was in Houston. Yarborough then telephoned Robert Kennedy and transmitted the idea. The younger brother felt final decision must be John Kennedy's when Robert relayed the idea of accepting the invitation of

60 Reddam, interview.

61 Ben F. McDonald, Jr., "Opening Remarks in Debate of Democratic Cause vs. Republican Cause," from the files of Hector P. Garcia.
the ministers to his brother, John Kennedy grabbed at the chance.  

So sure of the significance of the address, Paul Reddam, advance man for Kennedy in Texas, authorized television coverage and had the entire performance videotaped. In a fine display of political dexterity, Kennedy delivered his well-prepared address in the ballroom of the Rice Hotel. With obvious sincerity, Kennedy explained that the issue

... is not what kind of Church I believe in, for that would be important only to me, but what kind of America I believe in. ... 

I believe in an America where the separation of Church and State is absolute--where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote--where no church or church school is granted public funds or political preference ... an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant, nor Jewish--where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from ... any ... ecclesiastical source ... where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind ... and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

Thus Kennedy strongly affirmed his absolute innocence of prejudice and trusted that those obsessed with various forms of prejudice would come to their senses, especially before election day. It is not that Kennedy said anything

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63 Reddam, interview, July, 1971; The New Methodology, p. 55.
64 Sorenson, p. 215.
novel in this speech; but rather that he projected such total sincerity and such lack of vindictiveness, which, when mixed with such American idealism, made the address persuasive and memorable.

So convincing was this political move, that one of the delegates to the Houston Ministers Convention admitted in an article to the Reporter that he and other ministers were...

... a little chilled in our hearts at the contemplation of what we had wrought. The chairman of the meeting had felt obligated to remind us before the Senator arrived that we ought to conduct ourselves as gentlemen, and a layman had enjoined us by telegram to remember that our Lord Jesus Christ would also be present and involved in the evening's proceedings. Who could not be ashamed at the necessity for such counsel? It was as if we were not leaders of men and followers of Him who had commanded us to love one another, but unruly children whose father had to warn them to behave themselves because an important guest was coming for dinner.

Was it the young Senator from Massachusetts who was on trial, or was it we? Might not the world see with alarming clarity the contrast between his unfailing patience, dignity, honesty, intelligence, and courtesy, and our own bumbling, strident, and often hopelessly irrelevant interrogation? ... And then what would the world say of us who represent ourselves as men of God? Most shattering of all, perhaps, whose loyalty to the Constitution which separates church and state and forbids religious tests for public office was really open to question in these proceedings--his or ours?

It is an insight very close to the heart of the Christian understanding that whenever one man undertakes to judge another, he who judges puts himself, along with him who is judged, under a judgment which stands far above both. ... 65

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This reaction represents the fruition of the Democratic religious strategy. It was the ideal response the Kennedy tacticians had counted on. As if fulfilling Sorenson's prophecy that the election could either be won or lost in Houston, the Houston address acquired monumental importance and received generous publicity. The National Democratic Committee spent thousands of dollars rebroadcasting the address. The coverage Reddam had insisted upon produced films which were sent all over the state of Texas upon request from local party leaders. The speech impressed all who heard it. The Johnson people, who had originally opposed the idea, now applauded Kennedy's political genius. "As we say in my part of Texas," boasted Sam Rayburn, "he ate 'em blood raw." Finally, the goal for which the Democrats had long striven was at hand. As the film reached greater and greater audiences, Texans began to feel "guilt and revulsion" over their role in sustaining religious bigotry. Voters, eager to prove themselves tolerant, cast their lot with Kennedy. Echoing the sentiments of many Texans, one

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66 White, p. 296.

67 Sorenson, p. 217; David Lawrence, "Demos Keep Religious Issue Alive," San Antonio Express, October 14, 1960, p. 4A.

Protestant Republican said, "If they had left religion out of it, I'd have voted for Nixon..." 69

In truth, the religious issue did not die with the Houston oration. Kennedy was accused of lying. Others allowed that Kennedy was acceptable but they would not vote for him because his election might establish a precedent for other Catholics who did not share his views. Still others belligerently claimed they were not voting against Kennedy but against the Catholic Church. All of this exemplifies the subjectivity of voting behavior. Too often prejudice, emotionalism, and irrationality become voting determinants.

Initially, the religious issue had been the Republicans' biggest asset in Texas, and Nixon forces did not hesitate to use religious prejudice to their advantage. As GOP Chairman Thurston Morton retorted, "I am a practical politician. I want all the votes I can get." 70 Implied was the Machiavellian concept that the end justifies the means; in this instance the end was political and the means, religious. By October 30, the religious issue had practically burnt itself out from exhaustion and overexposure. Yet, at one time during the campaign, Southern Baptist reaction in Texas was so strong (approximately one and a half million adult

69 The Texas Observer, LII (December 2, 1960), 5.
70 Sorenson, p. 218; Reporter, XXIII (October 13, 1960), 32.
adherents out of nine and a half million Texans) that a New York Times journalist prophesied a Nixon victory in Texas had the election been held one month earlier. Complementing the initial optimism of the Republicans was Democratic pessimism. On September 4, Robert Kennedy asserted that the religious issue was the biggest factor in the South—big enough to determine strategy and to decide the vote. But to the advantage of the Democrats, the Republican strategists could not effectively control the rampant prejudice among Anglo-Protestants in Texas.

The dynamics of the Anglo-Protestant vote were matched in complexity by the Chicano reactionary vote. In Texas religion influenced the Mexican-American voter, but in quite a unique way. The Latin perceived the ferocity of anti-Catholicism to be an affront to his ethnic identity and personal integrity. Religious prejudice reminded him that he was a "second class" citizen and not a full-fledged member of the community. For years, the Latin immigrant had resented Protestant proselytizing. Anglo ministers had chided the Mexican-Americans for their blind loyalty to


religious tradition. Now those same ministers actually feared the strength of the church. In 1960, as religion became an issue, the Chicanos became politically active. The campaign released pent-up hostility the Mexican-American harbored for the Anglo, usually a Protestant, and his air of superiority.

The Mexican-American Catholics were concerned that the presidency could be denied a man because he was born Catholic. They wished to see that precedent broken. It is not that the Chicano was particularly religious (but then neither was Kennedy); a substantial number of Mexican-Americans revealed deeply embedded anti-clericalism. Kennedy's occasional irreverence was, therefore, appealing to many Latins.74 Thus, the Chicano vote was not in defense of Catholicism per se.

In evaluating the religious issue, Lyndon Johnson remarked that "it would be a mistake to assume that bigotry did not enter into the election in any form. . . . Actually the Catholic issue probably helped the Democrats."75 Kennedy's religion, asserted Johnson, helped bring back defecting Catholic Democrats.


Though Johnson's contention was accurate, his analysis was incomplete. The Chicanos, and their political organization, the "Viva Kennedy" clubs, did not play up the religious issue. There was simply no need to emphasize what everyone accepted. Identity between Kennedy and the Mexican-Americans had already been established. The ethnic minority voted for the candidate with whom they could more readily identify. That overwhelming political support of Kennedy was based on ethnocentrism; the Chicanos were motivated by fraternal relative deprivation. The political homogeneity and sense of political awareness to which this deprivation contributed was stronger than the anti-Catholic prejudice of Anglo-Protestant in Texas.

The voting behavior of everyone is shaped to a certain degree by his religious heritage. However, there is a danger of gross inaccuracy in extrapolating, isolating, and analyzing single-factor voting determinants. Rational reasoning and abstract emotionalism are too inextricably united to undergo dissection. Kennedy was sincere in his call for rational voting, but he realized that such an appeal would only endear him to voters of all religions. Though there was no Catholic precommitted vote in south

Texas, Catholics, especially Chicanos, took pride in Kennedy. And their votes were undeniably a major factor in Kennedy's victory. Religion was only one of the many reasons for the formation of the "Viva Kennedy" clubs.
CHAPTER III

THE VALLEY "VIVA KENNEDY" CLUBS

Ethnic groups are politically potent, for what they lack in political amenities is more than compensated for by their swelling numbers. Though they lacked political refinement, the Mexican-American voters at the grass roots level exhibited a tremendous numerical superiority. Realizing this potential, the Democratic Party had traditionally staged elaborate appeals aimed at capturing the ethnic vote. The Democrats had paid lip service to America's promise of prosperity and equality, for the promise of future economic advancement buys support from most ethnic groups handicapped by subjugation and poverty. Another means by which the Democratic Party had pandered to disadvantaged groups was through the promotion of the assimilation ideal.

Ethnic assimilation into middle-class America usually proceeds in three stages. First, the initial period of cultural inferiority lasts from two to three generations and is characterized by deprivation, socioeconomic and political homogeneity, intense anxiety, and political manipulation.1

Second, acculturation, which results from interaction between the ethnic group and the middle-class citizenry, is characterized by ethnic solidarity, rising expectations, resistance to leadership from without, and an assertion of political autonomy. Finally, assimilation is the third stage. A thorough Americanization is completed, followed by a tempering of zealous patriotism, socioeconomic diversity, and, quite ironically, xenophobia. In 1960, the Mexican-Americans of south Texas were apparently in the latter stages of the second phase of assimilation. In this transitional interregnum, ethnic groups are most defensively active. Such is a period of marked susceptibility to appeals encouraging retention of ethnic identity and efforts to shape one's own destiny.

The ultimate success of this traditional Democratic strategy to corral ethnic votes has been its demise, for the accoutrements of a middle-class status seem to be complacency and conservatism rather than Democratic liberal allegiance. Once attained, middle classism, with its acquisitive priority, seeks maintenance, stability, and the status quo. Acquisitivism, in turn, breeds a conservative propensity toward the Republican Party. The elections of 1952 and 1956 in Texas demonstrated this betrayal of the Democratic Party by the rising new middle-class groups. Though the Mexican-Americans who voted had overwhelmingly supported Stevenson, apathy took an enormous toll of the group's potential voting
strength. While the Democrats had taken the Latin support for granted, the Mexican-Americans had been maturing economically as well as politically. In order to prevent repetition of the Eisenhower-Stevenson upsets in Texas, the Democrats made every effort to attract the stay-at-home voter. Consequently, 1960 was the first election year in which the Chicanos paid the majority of the poll taxes in south Texas,\(^2\) even though they had long possessed numerical superiority in this area.

To attract the stay-at-home voter, a new strategy was demanded. Ethnic voting strength depends on both the intensity of ethnic identification with the candidate and the degree of ethnic relevance to campaign issues. The greater the challenge to ethnic pride or the greater the chances for ethnic advancement, the greater the ethnic participation in politics.\(^3\) With this in mind, the Kennedy machine recognized the necessity of recapturing lost voter strength in the South. Kennedy waged a campaign different from his Democratic predecessors, who bought votes with vociferous but shallow promises to the minorities. He was neither condescending nor patronizing. The essence of Kennedy's appeal was camaraderie; his image was that of a fellow American idealistically devoted to helping people help themselves.


\(^3\)The New Methodology, p. 48.
This strategy won him the overwhelming support of the Latin-Americans. He effectively presented himself as a member of a minority group—the Irish Catholics. As a member of a minority group, he echoed the frustration and dissension felt by the ethnic groups. He became the one candidate with whom the Mexican-Americans could identify.

Kennedy entered the presidential race with a lot of drawbacks. According to political analysts, these numbered religion, age, and an eastern-Irish background. All three of these proved to be assets among the Chicanos in the Valley. These qualities, along with his stand on civil rights, made him unique among the usual lineup of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant contenders; therefore, he was automatically attractive to the Mexican-Americans. Kennedy could be considered one of them, yet a political pied piper whose charisma seemed unequalled. He was admirable, impeccable, but always human. This type of image enthused the minorities. The Latins in south Texas allowed their enthusiasm for the candidate to overcome their usual political apathy. This enthusiasm was converted into political

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6 Idar, Oral History, pp. 5, 30.
activism through the "Viva Kennedy" Clubs which bloomed in the fertility of Valley politics.

The demographic complexion of the Valley was as interesting as it was complex. Approximately one-third of the population in the Valley during the 1960 election was Anglo. Traditionally, the Anglos, by and large, voted Republican or conservative Democrat. The other two-thirds of the populace were Mexican-Americans who were fairly evenly divided between a conservative faction which consisted of landholders, small businessmen, professionals--such as teachers, lawyers, and doctors--and a liberal faction. The liberal faction of Mexican-Americans was composed of younger, less ingrained professionals, and the grass-roots-level working class. Thus, in 1960, an estimated one-third of the Valley population was Anglo conservatives, one-third was Latin moderate-conservatives, and one-third was Latin liberals. The Kennedy Democratic strategy drew support from all three groups. The liberal element, the leadership, the average Mexican-American laborer, and many businessmen and entrepreneurs backed Kennedy. Kennedy's appeal extended to virtually all Mexican-Americans. One source of that appeal can be seen through his speeches to and actions toward the Latins.

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Throughout his speeches, Kennedy emphasized understanding, pride, heritage, and the solvable problems of minorities in America. Before the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People rally of July 10, in California, Kennedy denounced "second class citizenship for any American anywhere in this country." The goals of the party were to secure the right of all to work as they want to and to receive a just compensation for such work, to be educated, to live in a decent home of their own free choice, to be provided for in sickness and in retirement, and to think, to vote, to speak, to read, and to worship as they please. Of the speeches released for popular circulation in the Valley was his address before the African diplomatic corps. There Kennedy effectively quoted Thomas Paine: "A flame has arisen not to be extinguished. . . . the flame of freedom, equality and progress." Further emphasizing communion with the minorities, Kennedy often quoted Norman Cousins:

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8 Transcript of Senator Kennedy's speech before the NAACP rally, Los Angeles, California, dated July 10, 1960. From the files of Dr. Hector P. Garcia. Note: A letter to Dr. Garcia from John Kennedy, dated August 30, 1958, suggested that the Democratic leaders across the nation "be prepared on these subjects which will certainly figure in political debates."

9 Transcript of Senator John Kennedy's address before the NAACP rally in Los Angeles, July 10, 1960, from the press office for "immediate release" (files of Dr. H. P. Garcia).

10 Transcript of Senator John Kennedy's address before the African Diplomatic Corps, Washington, D.C., June 24, 1960 (files of Dr. Garcia).
When I enter my home, I enter with the awareness that my table is only half set, for half the men on this earth know the emptiness of want. The roof of my house is only half built, for half of my brothers are poorly sheltered. And when I think of peace, I can know no peace—until the peace is real.\footnote{Transcript of Senator John Kennedy's address before the State Democratic Central Committee luncheon in Roseburg, Oregon, Tuesday, February 12, 1960. "Better Housing for a Better America" (release from national headquarters for February 9, 1960, files of Dr. Garcia).}

By such compassionate language, Kennedy was able to establish a bond of kinship with minorities.

During his tour of Texas in September, Kennedy strengthened the bonds of identity with the Mexican-Americans specifically. He castigated the Eisenhower administration for ignoring the Latins, pronouncing that "We, with Latin America, are one."\footnote{Release from national headquarters, "The President's South American Tour," address of Senator J. F. Kennedy at Dartmouth College, March 6, 1960 (from the files of Dr. Garcia); The Texas Observer, LII (September 16, 1960), 3.}

Ever making his appeal more direct, on September 15, Kennedy sent a congratulatory telegram to the more than 4,000 Spanish-speaking citizens celebrating Mexican independence in Texas. The wire applauded the Latins on their "150 years of freedom" and was signed "sincerely, John Kennedy."\footnote{Corpus Christi Caller, September 16, 1960, p. 11B.} Sincerity was the gut impact of Kennedy's speeches to the minorities.
Climaxing the Democratic ethnic campaign was Senator Kennedy's National Conference on Constitutional Rights and American Freedom, held in New York, October 11 and 12, and attended by over four hundred civil rights experts from forty-two states. The delegates met at their own expense. The Senator had requested specific legislative proposals that would end their second-class citizenship in America. Sixty-three witnesses reported frustration in seeking redress through the Republican administration for their grievances regarding employment, housing, education, and voting prejudices. Concluding the convention, Senator Hubert Humphrey's report was read before the delegates. Humphrey's report praised the Democratic civil rights platform and called for an end to literacy tests, poll taxes, and segregation by 1963. Minority groups would have their justice through a new vigorous Democratic administration which promised implementation of the relatively generous civil rights platform.

As usual, the civil rights plank of the Democratic Party became the bone of contention between the northern liberals and the southern conservatives at the Los Angeles convention in July. In the midst of the bickering, Senator Lyndon Johnson advised Texas County Commissioner Albert

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14 Senator Hubert Humphrey's report to Senator Kennedy at the National Conference on Constitutional Rights and American Freedom (for release Wednesday, October 12, 1960, from the files of Dr. Garcia).
Peña, Jr., the first Chicano represented at any national party convention, that the delegate from Texas on the Platform Committee would not vote for the minority report on the civil rights plank. While investigating this problem, Peña discovered that most minority views seemed to be represented on the Minorities Committee. Yet, despite the existence of two national groups of Mexican-Americans (the GI Forum and LULAC), the Chicanos were not represented on the committee. Peña proceeded to register a complaint to the National Committee and was directed to the Governor of Michigan, G. Mennen Williams, chairman of the Minority Division of the National Democratic Committee. Williams had been unaware of any Mexican-American political difficulties, but, after his conversation with Peña, he was eager to have Peña address a meeting of the minority division. Accepting Williams' offer, Peña spoke before the group of his experience in Washington, D.C., in 1959. There he had discovered that nowhere in the different governmental agencies did a Mexican-American hold a position of any consequence. Yet, the Mexican-American had stalwartly voted for the Democratic

15 Albert Peña, County Commissioner, Precinct 1, interview, July, 1971.

16 Peña, interview; also interview with Leo J. Leo, mayor of LaJoya, July, 1971. Leo explained that brochures were circulated claiming that less than half a dozen Mexican-Americans had attained political positions on the national level. The party brochure implied that the number of prestigious positions held by Mexican-Americans in Washington would increase, given a Democratic administration.
Party. Faced with such injustice, Peña issued a warning that a time would come when the Latins would no longer vote a straight party ticket. Naïveté alone would prompt a candidate to consider the Mexican-American in the hip pocket of the Democratic Party. Disregard of the liberal demands of the Chicanos would be equivalent to the forfeiture of a substantial minority vote. In 1960 and in subsequent elections, the Mexican-Americans would vote for the candidate who could and would best represent their interests, warned Peña. As intended, the speech and the threat that the Latins might desert the party, provoked anxiety among the Democratic leaders, who could already foresee a tight race in the South and most especially in Texas.¹⁷

To alleviate the fears of these party technicians and to map out the southern strategy, Robert Kennedy called a special convention in St. Louis on August 7. Democratic Party leaders from Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Missouri attended. The younger Kennedy explained, "We must overcome handicaps of 220,000 votes in Texas; 85,700 in Louisiana; 57,000 in Tennessee; 88,000 in Oklahoma; and 95,000 in Kentucky."¹⁸ Eisenhower carried these five states in 1956, and the Kennedy camp depended on a reversal of this voting trend.


¹⁸San Antonio Light, August 8, 1960, p. 3.
The Texas delegation was well represented. J. Ed Connally, as chairman of the state party, was in attendance. Byron Skelton and Hilda G. Weinert, both members of Johnson's staff, accompanied Connally. Woodrow Seals, DOTC member; Frank Robertson, conservative Democrat; and George Parr, powerful political boss of Duval County, were also present.19 By special invitation from Robert Kennedy, state Senator Henry B. Gonzalez was a participant. Johnson himself was not present at this southern strategy session.

At this conference, Robert Kennedy told the Texas delegation that Johnson had final authority in all decisions involving the Texas campaign, but where no state or county Democratic machinery was supporting the Democratic nominee, independent campaign organizations were to be encouraged.20

After the general convention, Robert Kennedy held private briefing sessions with a select few. At one such conference, Lawrence O'Brien, Robert Kennedy, and Henry Gonzalez discussed Texas politics.21 As one of the most prominent Mexican-American leaders, Gonzalez was consulted about his minority's disposition in 1960. Together, the

21 Indicative of the importance of the private discussions is the fact that two politically active friends of Gonzalez, Lalo Solis and C. J. Sutton, were barred from the special session with Kennedy (letter from Gonzalez to Traffas, August 27, 1971).
three agreed upon a general campaign strategy. Gonzalez would help provide a vehicle whereby persons of Mexican descent could participate in the campaign. It would be important that this new liberal force be kept from disrupting the regular Texas party establishment, so that when the Latin-Americans had fulfilled their political purpose the Texas conservative power structure would remain intact. In return for this effort, Robert Kennedy promised to meet the demands previously made by Albert Peña. He guaranteed Mexican-American representation on the national Democratic Party's Minority Relations Committee as an initial step in recognizing the Latin population as a critical element in the party. Through this bargaining, the idea of a unique campaign effort divorced from the state machinery had its origins in St. Louis, but it was without a name and virtually without leadership.

In mid-August, the idea of a specific Chicano movement endorsing Kennedy took root at the National Convention of the American GI Forum held in Wichita, Kansas. Approximately

thirty-five or forty Mexican-American leaders were present. Among them was J. Carlos McCormick of Arizona. McCormick, of mixed parentage (his mother was Mexican-American and his father Irish), had been initially employed by Senator Yarborough. He had since been in Washington, D.C., working for Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona. By his own preference, he went to work as an aide on Senator Kennedy's staff.25 Since March of 1959, he had been assisting the senator in his effort to gain the Democratic nomination. Accompanying the senator through many states, he had been especially active in the West Virginia primary, which the senator had so handily won. McCormick's duties were mostly in the area of foreign language news media. He prepared political propaganda about the senator. These news releases were written and delivered in Spanish, and were well circulated in areas of heavy Latin concentration, especially in south Texas.26 He became a trusted confidant of Robert Kennedy, and consequently, became the Kennedy contact man with the Mexican-Americans.

McCormick had been active in the GI Forum for several years, and throughout the convention in Wichita he contacted leaders requesting they remain after the convention adjourned


Sunday afternoon. At the rump Sunday gathering, McCormick informed the leaders that he was authorized to start organizing what was to be known as the "Viva Kennedy" clubs. In return for their cooperation, McCormick reiterated the Kennedys' promise of recognition through patronage in ambassadorial and other important governmental posts. Shortly after his speech, McCormick, as executive coordinator of the movement, contacted Albert Peña and offered him the state chairmanship since the idea of the clubs was an outgrowth of his speech in Los Angeles. Peña accepted the position on condition that Robert Kennedy repeat the aforementioned promises directly to Peña. As an antagonist of Johnson's and of the state Democratic establishment, Peña also demanded that the clubs operate directly through the national campaign headquarters, thus averting control by the state machinery. Robert Kennedy satisfactorily alleviated Peña's worries through a telephone conversation. So it was that the idea which germinated from Peña's challenge to the Democratic convention in July now was to blossom under

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27Cuellar, p. 58. Note: The idea, ironically, was originally proposed to Nixon as "Viva Nixon" clubs before the Kennedy camp ever heard of it. Nixon, or one of his staff members, rejected the idea. Supposedly, such a measure would appeal to a specific ethnic minority, a technique quite outside the tradition of the Republican strategy. Somehow McCormick heard of it and proposed it to Robert Kennedy, who cleared it (Ed Idar, interview by Traffas).


his care. Subsequently, from their inception in Wichita, Kansas, the "Viva Kennedy" clubs sprang up all over the Southwest. The idea engendered a Kennedy crusade wherever a substantial Latin minority existed. In thirty-two states across the nation, the clubs developed with little of the usual embryonic organizational pains.

The ease with which the Texas clubs developed can be attributed to two factors. First, the existing GI Forum formed the rudimentary core of the new organization. The Forum had been founded by a south Texas physician, Hector P. Garcia, in 1948. Garcia, a political moderate, was part of the Texas party establishment. The immediate cause which precipitated the formation of the Forum was the refusal of a funeral home in Three Rivers, Texas, to bury a Mexican-American war veteran, Felix Longoria. Johnson, then Senate majority leader, became incensed about the flagrant ethnic prejudice and publicly castigated the wrongdoers. The outrage which Johnson had generated spawned the GI Forum across the entire southwestern and midwestern states. The Forum also branched into Washington, D.C. Regardless of the Forum's principle of political independence, it had bent toward ever more aggressive political participation. While

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30 Corpus Christi Caller, September 23, 1960, p. 14C.

31 Longoria's body was finally buried with full military honors in Arlington Cemetery. Johnson attended the funeral.
claiming nonpartisanship, the GI Forum members waged get-out-the-vote, registration, and poll drives during the 1950's. With these political credentials, the Forum was efficiently converted into the "Viva Kennedy" crusade. Among the sixteen national co-chairmen of this novel campaign effort were GI Forum leaders Garcia, Peña, and Gonzalez.

The second factor which made the birth of the clubs so painless was the 1958 gubernatorial campaign of Henry Gonzalez. Gonzalez, like Kennedy, entered the Texas governor's race with a triple handicap: he was Irish-Latin, Catholic, and an anti-segregationist. Gonzalez's campaign was a volunteer effort. He traveled by station wagon across Texas with a couple of friends and mariachis, who were given stipends for service and time. Novelty delighted the Latins, and this Gonzalez gave them; for example, one of his mariachis could play the guitar while standing on his head. However simple his tactics, Gonzalez achieved the ultimate in political strategy; he succeeded in stimulating a people to become aware of their political potential and significance.


33 Gonzalez, letter to Traffas, August 27, 1971, p. 2.

Though he lost to Price Daniel, he received one-fifth of the total votes.  

The vote indicated that the Latin vote could no longer be taken for granted by the county bosses.

Thus the groundwork for the Kennedy movement had been laid. According to one political activist, the Mexican-Americans in 1958

... had been asked for the first time to support more than a local candidate; they had for the first time seen the potential power of their ballots in statewide contests.

The 1960 campaign, insofar as the Viva-Kennedy Clubs was concerned, aimed to build on the foundations in that campaign and to re-capture and build on the momentum that had been generated.

Through the GI Forum and the Gonzalez campaign, years of contact could be exploited. Communication with the national campaign headquarters was informal and irregular. The actual impetus of the "Viva" movement originated within the leadership of the Mexican-Americans themselves. That Kennedy had endorsed the leadership of the clubs was sufficient to provide the necessary initial momentum.  

Contact with the national headquarters, what little there was, was conducted through the official liaison, McCormick. The two appointed national honorary chairmen were United States Senator Dennis

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36 Madla, p. 73; also Fowler, p. 32.

37 Gonzalez, letter to Traffas, July 2, 1971, p. 3.

38 Ibid., p. 2.
Chavez and United States Representative Joseph M. Montoya, both from New Mexico. General correspondence was funneled through Kennedy aide John E. Horne to the "Viva Kennedy" administrative assistant Arthur E. Valez of Washington, D.C., who was at the time employed by Representative Montoya.

As with every organization, principles and purposes were articulated. George Sanchez, professor of Latin education in the Department of Cultural Foundations of Education at the University of Texas, wrote and distributed the principles of the newly formed clubs. These principles stressed the importance of the common man. In no way was the theme of religion exploited, for to Sanchez, who was Protestant, such an issue was hypocritical and unprincipled. The obvious purpose of the movement was to guarantee the Mexican-American vote and hence the presidency to John F. Kennedy.

There were, however, more subtle reasons for the existence of the clubs. The natural enthusiasm the Chicanos had

39 Worthy of note is the reluctance of Senator Montoya to discuss the clubs, after eagerly scheduling a special appointment. It would seem as though he had been cautioned about possible political entrapments which such information might mean to Edward Kennedy regarding the 1972 and 1976 elections. At any rate, his press secretary claimed the senator had a lapse of memory concerning the clubs.

40 Idar, interview, July 15, 1971.

41 George Sanchez, Professor of Latin-American Education, Department of Cultural Foundations of Education, University of Texas, interview, July 15, 1971. Note: In return for his diligent work and services as guest speaker at various rallies, Sanchez was named to the Advisory Council of the Peace Corps.
for the Democratic candidate had to be constructively directed. The clubs, paradoxically organs of control and manipulation, were the vehicles through which the Mexican-Americans realized that in past elections they had been the political pawns of the conservative Texas Democratic machinery. For fear of losing political control as a consequence of the 1960 campaign, Johnson had secured the promise of complete control over the Texas campaign. To prevent an open party clash, the Johnson people seldom publicly recognized the efforts of the relatively liberal minority. As a separate ethnic organizational movement divorced from the state conservative regulars, the clubs stabilized the internal relations of the party, already too unstable (due to, in part, Johnson's nomination) to withstand much internal discord. The movement made the party more cohesive, and therefore, fortified its conservatism.

There had never been harmonious relationships between the establishment and this liberal element within the party; the two forces seemed incompatible. By lack of direct aid, the party machinery meant to relegate the "Viva" movement to oblivion once its initial political purpose was attained.

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43 Casso, interview, July, 1971; Paul Reddam, interview; also closed interview with a political observer on Capitol Hill.
The liberal force would burn itself out before it could disrupt the state party establishment.\textsuperscript{44} Ironically, the "Viva Kennedy" leaders were pleased with the \textit{laissez faire} policy arrangements of the state party,\textsuperscript{45} for they felt that by being part of the establishment they would have forfeited their identity and chances of recognition. Ultimate control, nevertheless, rested undeniably with Johnson. Never were the clubs without supervision, and sometimes direction, for they worked parallel to the party regulars.\textsuperscript{46}

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\textsuperscript{44}San Antonio Light, September 9, 1960, p. 11. It was reported that both James Knight and Paul Reddam had given the "cold shoulder" to the Democratic liberals. Note: To prevent clashes flaring between the two groups, McCormick had been designated as a troubleshooter. His primary duty was to keep the party factionalism to a minimum, at least for the duration of the campaign, stressing cooperation. One particular point of dissonance, however, concerned the Democratic National platform concerning civil rights. Though the party never officially endorsed the platform in Texas, Peña, as spokesman for the liberal element (according to the Valley newspapers), openly supported the plank in mid-October. (Lawrence Goodwyn, telephone interview, July 15, 1971.)

\textsuperscript{45}There is an argument that the Texas regulars never premeditatedly calculated their policy of non-involvement with the "Viva" clubs, for Johnson demanded in early September that his name be added to the club title. See San Antonio Light, September 9, 1960, p. 7; also Leo J. Leo, interview, July, 1971. However, Johnson's display of egotism can in no way be construed as refutation of the above thesis, for his peculiar position as Kennedy's running mate afforded him a certain artificial disassociation with the state party machinery in the eyes of the Chicanos. Furthermore, the original club title was never meant as a repudiation of Johnson. It was simply a more catchy slogan without Johnson's name cumbersomely attached. Though his name was officially added to the clubs, unofficially the clubs continued to be called "Viva Kennedy."

\textsuperscript{46}Bob Sanchez, interview, July 28, 1971.
The "Viva" clubs operated in a loose, "free-wheeling" way. To form a club, a minimum of eight Kennedy admirers was required. This group was to select a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary-treasurer. The names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the new club members were sent to the national office in Washington, D.C., and to the national co-chairmen. In return for the dollar membership dues (half of which was sent to the local organization and the other fifty cents to the state or national group), the members received a club charter signed by the co-chairmen, individual cards of membership, "Viva Kennedy" buttons to be worn only by club members, and propaganda messages and notices from the national organization.

An example of the emotionalism characteristic of the clubs was a bulletin soliciting membership and new clubs. The notice was addressed to "all those interested in helping to elect John F. Kennedy and in shaping their own destiny." Making an overt appeal to ethnic pride, the letter continued,

The purpose of these clubs is to unite all the Spanish-speaking population of the U.S. . . . to prove to the world that we believe in the

47 No formal reports, membership rolls, or financial records—though kept—were available to this author. See Report from the West Texas "Viva Kennedy" Clubs from Gregorio E. Coronado, Lubbock, Texas, to National Co-Chairman Dr. Hector P. Garcia (files of Garcia).

48 Open letter to the National "Viva Kennedy" clubs (from the files of Dr. Hector P. Garcia; examples are in the files).
true American Democracy and that even though we may be a minority . . . if we unite we may win the election. Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson are counting heavily on our vote. . . . If . . . we unite, we will have received the recognition that we deserve and that has never been given us. . . .

"La Raza" will receive the personal thanks from the Kennedy and the Johnson people. In a personal interview with Robert Kennedy he expressed his thanks to you and assures us that he is cognizant of the support that we could give his brother. Our main job is to be certain that each and every one of our people goes out and vote [sic].

Over 100,000 such letters were mailed throughout the state. The appeal, though unsophisticated and grammatically incorrect, harvested tremendous gains. Over thirty major clubs in south Texas alone were to answer this clarion summons. There was at least one club per county in the Rio Grande Valley. In addition, local clubs mushroomed in hundreds of little barrios.

McAllen attorney Ed Idar called the first "Viva Kennedy" club meeting for Hidalgo County. The letters announced a general meeting of Mexican-Americans interested in the idea of a "Viva" club. They were dated August 20, with the meeting scheduled for August 24, at eight o'clock in the Edinburg courthouse. There, the first Texas "Viva" club was

49 Letter addressed "To all Persons interested in helping the election of Senator John Kennedy and Senator Lyndon Johnson to the Presidency and Vice Presidency of the U.S.," Tuesday, November 8, 1960 (files of Dr. Garcia).

organized. The elected officers included Romiro Casso, chairman of the Hidalgo County "Viva Kennedy" Club; Trinidad Gonzalez, chairman of the Edinburg club; Adalphy de la Garza of Mission, vice chairman; Estella Lane Trevino of Edinburg, second vice chairman; Ralph Alexander, finance chairman; John Dominguez of Mercedes, secretary; and G. E. Valdez of Weslaco, treasurer.51 Almost immediately, the new leadership began acting as "political midwives"52 assisting at the births of other clubs throughout the Valley.

While serving as a club coordinator, Idar kept in close communication with the other Mexican-American leaders in other parts of Texas. Among the most important contacts were Hector P. Garcia, James DeAnda of Corpus Christi, Gilbert Garcia of Fort Worth, and especially Albert Peña of San Antonio. With the united help of these members of the GI Forum and others like them, the "Viva Kennedy" clubs sprang up everywhere there was a branch of the Forum. By early October, Mexican-Americans of all political persuasions—liberals, conservatives, or moderates—were all represented in the "Viva" clubs. The idea of the "Viva" clubs seemed to transcend political differences.53

51 San Antonio Light, September 27, 1960, p. 3; Idar, interview.

52 DeAnda, interview.

53 Valley Evening Monitor, September 18, 1960, p. 2; Corpus Christi Caller, October 5, 1960, p. 4; letter from Ed Idar, Jr., to Arthur Krock, December 19, 1960. Note: Listed among the more influential members were Judge E. D.
Of all the clubs, the McAllen club was especially active during the campaign. The club was headed by a triumvirate of Romiro R. Casso, a Baptist and recipient of the Humanitarian of the Year award; Leo J. Leo, mayor of La Joya; and R. P. "Bob" Sanchez, attorney at law and associate of Ed Idar. The McAllen club was organized September 7, and its headquarters opened September 10.\textsuperscript{54} Like other "Viva" branches, the McAllen club struggled to overcome their greatest obstacle—the traditional apathy of the Mexican-Americans which was rooted in economic instability, in lack of education, and in lack of statewide political leadership.

The clubs stimulated a political awareness heretofore unknown to the Mexican-American. Capitalizing on the need for identity the clubs circulated bills urging Chicanos to give "Nuestro Voto Unido" to the "amigos de nuestra raza," for they (Kennedy and Johnson) were credited with understanding

Salinas, Virgilio Roel, Vidal Trevino, Ricardo Garcia, Judge Robert Benovidez, and Mayor J. C. Martin of Laredo; Oscar Phillips, Carlos Soliz, and Manuel Valasco of Victoria; Nerio Garza and Martin Garcia of Kingsville; Freddie Rodriguez and Edna Cisneros of Raymondville; E. B. Cuarte and Reynaldo Garza of Brownsville; Dr. Cleo Garcia and William Bonnilla of Corpus Christi; Eddie Aguilar and Nicolas Norios of Mathis. Also important leaders were O. P. Carrillo of Benavides, Judge Santos Medina of Zapata, Calixtro Mera of Falfurrias, Dr. George Trevino of McAllen, Dr. Lauro Guerra of Edinburg, Dr. Armando Cuellar in Weslaco, John F. Domingues of Mercedes, David Dovalina of Mission, Dr. Armando Duron of Lubbock, Moises Vela of Harlingen, and Jimmy Trujello of Dallas.

\textsuperscript{54} Valley Evening Monitor, September 11, 1960, p. 8A.
the dilemma and frustrations peculiar to the Latins. They were heralded as "grandes liberes humanitarios, dignos, y partiolas" who would save the country from Communism, chaos, and ruin. Not only were Mexican-Americans encouraged to participate in the 1960 campaign, but to vote a straight Democratic ticket. For those who were illiterate, voting demonstrations were provided. Once the clubs were organized, general apathy seemed to disappear through the duration of the campaign.

In a letter to Arthur Valdez, dated September 27, Ralph Delgado of Brownsville described a state meeting of the "Viva" clubs held in Corpus Christi. Hector Garcia presided and Albert Peña was the guest speaker. According to Delgado, the meeting was

lively, interesting, and well attended. The Viva Kennedy gimmick has caught the imagination of our people down here and it is well exploited and publicized. The Viva Kennedy slogan was indeed the crux to the whole movement. It is a catchy phrase; it is the first time that "Viva" has been used in a political campaign on a national level.

Among the Mexican-Americans the slogan caught on like "wildfire" claimed one Chicano leader. The ensuing flood of volunteers was remarkable. Such participation had, in fact,

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55 Letter from Hector P. Garcia to Mexican-Americans (files of Dr. Garcia); notice authorized by Senator Henry Gonzalez, Albert Peña, Roberto Ornelas, and Dr. H. P. Garcia (files of Garcia).

56 Ralph Delgado, letter to Arthur Valdez, dated September 27, 1960 (files of Dr. Garcia).
created various organizational difficulties. More field workers were needed but there was no money to support additional forces. To spread the "Viva" program more comprehensively throughout the Southwest, Leo Montemayor, leader of the Corpus Christi AFL-CIO, suggested the national headquarters sponsor M. E. B. Duarte, former secretary-general of LULAC, as a field coordinator for the Latins specifically. In reply to Montemayor's request, Valdez acknowledged the urgent need for at least five more field coordinators, but admitted the financial impracticality of enlisting more aides. 57

Regardless of the tight money situation at national Democratic headquarters, the Spanish-speaking citizens enthusiastically hastened to volunteer their services. As in previous campaigns, the usual number of professional "coyotes," political prostitutes, who for five to five hundred dollars, sell their services to the campaigners, were present, but during this campaign, they willingly worked for minimum sustenance pay. 58 Local political factions united in support of Kennedy. Even the wealthy joined the "Viva" clubs. Though perhaps more for social reasons than political, countless young high school and college-aged students

57 Arthur E. Valdez, letter (copy) to Ralph Delgado of Brownsville Democrats for Kennedy and Johnson, dated October 1, 1960.
58 Bob Sanchez, interview.
enthusiastically volunteered. The Mexican-Americans seemed to be stimulated by their own involvement and activity. Participation was rewarded with pride, excitement, and fun. Ethnic pride was strengthened so much so that the original purpose of the clubs, the election of John Kennedy, became almost secondary to racial identity and to socializing. In a sense, Kennedy received their grateful votes, for it was in his name that they had such fun. Thus, as a social movement, the clubs fomented political unity and responsibility among the Chicanos.59

One of the most exciting highlights of the Valley campaign was the appearance of the Kennedys in south Texas. Robert Kennedy was honored at a coffee reception in El Paso on October 18. While addressing the group, the younger Kennedy indicted the State Department for the problems the United States was facing in Cuba and he stressed the perplexing problems of the Latin in South America.60 Throughout, he exuded sympathy for and understanding of ethnic problems. More so than Robert, the Kennedy women aroused the political zeal of many would-be stay-at-home voters among the Mexican-Americans. Both Jean Smith, the senator's sister, and Ethel Kennedy, the senator's sister-in-law, toured Texas twice during the campaign. On the tours they

59 Casso, interview; Leo, interview.

visited Waco, Denton, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, Laredo, and McAllen. Indicative of the response to the women was a McAllen tea reception attended by over four thousand. The Kennedy women's entourage included the wives of leading Texas politicians Ralph Yarborough, Price Daniel, Will Wilson, Frank Ikard, Joe Kilgore, John Young, and Paul Kilday. In city after city, the enthusiasm was overwhelming. The clubs could not accommodate all who were interested in seeing the Kennedy women. For example, although only 6,000 women had tickets to one coffee reception, over 20,000 Texas women flocked to meet the Kennedy girls. Of this priceless propaganda situation, the Democratic Party obtained maximum benefit. They promoted a "Coffee with the Kennedys" program which was televised and broadcast over twelve stations on November 2. If the people could not see the Kennedy women, then the Kennedy women would enter their homes by way of television and radio.

One concession the national campaign headquarters made to Valley Democrats was an appearance of Edward M. Kennedy, twenty-eight-year-old brother to John Kennedy. As part of his tour of college campuses, Ted visited Texas Western


College in El Paso, and Trinity University in San Antonio. The young and handsome brother had great appeal among the Chicanos. At El Paso, approximately 350 students met with him in open forum. The discussion was broadcast live over radio. While there, Ted appeared at a rally numbering over 600. With all the charm characteristic of a Kennedy, Ted sang "Guadalajara" in Spanish to the delight of those gathered. Thus, the bond between the Kennedy clan and the Chicanos was strengthened. The personal touch the Kennedy women and brothers contributed to the campaign was invaluable to the formation of ethnic identity.

Upon the Kennedy charisma, the clubs built the solid foundation of their "Viva Kennedy" campaign structure. To bolster membership and generate continuous participation, the clubs relied on well-known political personages. The principal effort of the clubs was persuading popular politicians to be guest speakers at "Viva" rallies. In this capacity, Gonzalez traveled over 50,000 miles in Texas alone, toured the state by air with Robert Kennedy and aide Charles Roche, and visited eleven other states on behalf of the Kennedy clubs.  

63 El Paso Times, October 2, 1960; El Paso Times, October 26, 1960, pp. 1, 12.  
At the behest of the state party in conjunction with the "Viva" clubs, Gonzalez's colleague, seventy-two-year-old Senator Dennis Chavez, visited the Valley, urging a return to the old Roosevelt spirit. He was ever mindful to drop occasional idiomatic Spanish phrases for the benefit of the liberal sprinkling of Latin-Americans present. Accompanying Chavez on his October tour of the Valley, Senator Ralph Yarborough, sponsored by the Hidalgo County "Viva" club, visited Brownsville, Los Francos, Harlingen, Weslaco, McAllen, Port Isabel, Lorzona, San Benito, and Raymondville. Yarborough was on call to the clubs. Wherever and whenever the clubs notified him, Yarborough was responsive and available.

Yet, Yarborough's popularity with the Chicanos was offset by his unpopularity with the Johnson people. So serious was the Johnson-Yarborough feud that on several occasions it threatened to interfere with the campaign and the election results. Consequently, the politically embarrassing feud merited the attention of Robert Kennedy. At the St. Louis conference, Kennedy questioned Gonzalez about the severity

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66 Edward A. Cazarez, letter to H. P. Garcia, dated October 21, 1960, outlining the schedule of Chavez; Valley Evening Monitor, October 23, 1960, p. 10A; El Paso Times, October 29, 1960, p. 1; San Antonio Express, October 27, 1960, p. 9C; Valley Evening Monitor, October 30, 1960, p. 3A.

and the source of the feud. Later Kennedy was to ask Yarborough himself about this clash with Johnson. In deference to the wishes of Robert Kennedy, Yarborough willingly postponed the quarrel he had with Johnson. Johnson, however, was not of like mind. According to Yarborough, Johnson's campaign strategy was twofold: first, fight a hard campaign for the vice-presidency in hopes that the national exposure would place him in an excellent position as party choice for the 1964 race, and second, destroy Yarborough in the wake of the election. Whereupon, under Johnson's personal direction, rallies, speeches, and barbecues were scheduled to conflict with Yarborough's appearances. In this way Johnson detracted from Yarborough's audiences and minimized Yarborough's worth as a politically attractive Democratic senator. Nevertheless, Yarborough did all he could for the liberal movement. In addition to personal speeches, he wrote an open letter to the people of the Valley stressing the importance of every individual vote. Also, he appeared on television and

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68 Letter from Gonzalez to Traffas, August 27, 1971, p. 2.


70 Yarborough received unfavorable publicity in local paper. For example, see Valley Evening Monitor, October 28, 1960, p. 4.

71 Letter from Ralph Yarborough to "Dear Fellow Texans," from the files of Hector P. Garcia, M.D.
radio spots; and he often suggested other out-of-state speakers more acceptable to the state machinery.

Efforts to persuade national headquarters that an appearance by either Eleanor Roosevelt or her son Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., was imperative failed.\textsuperscript{72} The clubs did manage to enlist the services of Howard W. Cannon of Nevada. In late October, Cannon was given warm receptions in Kingsville, Sinton, Corpus Christi, and Beeville. On October 25, he campaigned vigorously in the Rio Grande Valley and was the guest speaker at a fund-raising dinner in Brownsville.\textsuperscript{73} Another speaker the clubs co-sponsored was Senator Clinton P. Anderson. Anderson made campaign speeches on November 4, but confined his appearances to the San Antonio area. The list of dignitaries who visited Texas on behalf of the Democratic ticket included ex-President Harry Truman, Senator Alan Bible of Nevada, Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia, Governor Frank Clements of Tennessee, Senator Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut, Governor Buford Ellington of Tennessee, Senator Clair Engle of California, Senator William Fulbright of Arkansas, Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana, Senator

\textsuperscript{72}Idar, Interview. In their efforts to attract out-of-state speakers, the clubs had the support and cooperation of the National Committee Headquarters, as indicated in the correspondence between Valdez and the clubs. However, as the Democrats considered the Mexican-American vote secure, campaign headquarters did not give their requests top priority.

Henry M. Jackson of Washington, Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, Senator Russell B. Long of Louisiana, Senator Gale W. McGee of Wyoming, Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, Senator Ted Moss of Utah, Senator Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota, Senator John Stennis of Mississippi, and Congressman Francis E. Walter of Pennsylvania.74 These men did no campaigning in the Valley, for in official reports "local Latin American leaders all over the State appear to be actively supporting the Kennedy-Johnson ticket, and from all indications this vote will be overwhelmingly Democrat."75 Therefore, it would have been politically naive to duplicate work already accomplished by the mere existence of the clubs and their wide appeal. In this sense, the Latin vote was still considered in the hip pocket of the Democratic Party. Realization of this political fact, though, did not diminish the ambition and excitement of the Chicanos in this election.

The ability of the clubs to attract other out-of-state speakers was limited by the unavailability of funds. Generally, the clubs were self-perpetuating, receiving no financial aid from the national or state campaign headquarters.76 As a volunteer group, the clubs' expenses were

75 Ibid., October 29, 1960.
minimal; nevertheless, they often had to print their own campaign literature (the national headquarters never seemed to have sufficient material). Initially, the clubs' demand for material far exceeded the supply. Headquarters finally had to charge for campaign materials. According to James De Anda, this was a first in the history of campaigns in the Valley. 77 The typical Mexican-American considered it a privilege to advertise his allegiance to Kennedy and unfortunately his political pride and enthusiasm bore a financial cost. In order to satiate the need for feeding this political "kinship" between Kennedy and the Mexican-Americans at the lowest possible price, the clubs printed their own materials. For approximately eight dollars, the McAllen club commissioned a local printer to deliver several hundred blue and white "Viva Kennedy" bumper stickers. 78 To raise funds to cover such expenses, the members would sell raffle tickets, hold barbecues, wash cars, and stage dances. Dances were the most popular. At one Saturday night Democratic dance held in the McAllen Civic Center, Romiro Casso, a member of the dance committee, authorized a five-dollar-a-couple charge; table reservations were fifty cents more per person. At this particular fund raising soiree, W. R. Montgomery, V. T. Scribner, and Albert Peña were present.

77 De Anda, interview; Peña, interview.
78 Idar, interview.
Another popular means of fund raising was the selling of campaign tokens and Kennedy mementoes. The clubs bought boxes of the PT boat cufflinks from the national headquarters and sold them for two dollars a pair and three dollars per tie clip. Eventually, even Kennedy buttons had to be purchased. Though these activities were rather traditional campaign methods, they were unique to the Mexican-Americans.

Aside from their financial status, the clubs were limited in their activities only by their imagination. Baby-sitting and taxi services were made available to voters on election day; this was done not only out of civic responsibility and the fact that teenage members were ineligible to vote, but primarily to attract the potential, lethargic, stay-at-home voters. In Corpus Christi, as an additional incentive to active membership, a prize was offered for the most dog bites suffered in the line of duty while ringing doorbells asking for money and votes. In the Valley, sound-equipped cars were manned by "Viva" members. Armando Cuellar of Weslaco rigged his own automobile with a loudspeaker system. Usually, teenagers operated the rigs. Such efforts were successful in announcing rallies and delivering other political-social announcements.

79 De Anda, interview; Leo, interview; Valley Evening Monitor, October, 19, 1960, p. 2.
80 Ibid.
81 Leo, interview.
In cooperation with the Democratic Party of Texas, the clubs mailed radio tapes in Spanish from Mrs. John Kennedy, Hector Garcia, Senator Henry Gonzalez, state representative Oscar Laurel, and attorney Reynaldo Garza to thirty-seven Texas radio stations which had all or some Spanish programming. Similarly, requests were made of the central headquarters to send the television film spots of Jacqueline Kennedy to Corpus Christi, Laredo, San Antonio, El Paso, and the Valley areas. Ultimately, in cooperation with the state campaign center, Ed Cazares joined the Johnson staff as coordinator for the Special Developments Division. In that capacity, Cazares worked directly with the "Viva" leadership and the influence of the state party was unavoidably the consequence.

To avoid wasted energy and duplicated efforts, cooperation with the state Democratic conservatives was necessary. One cooperative effort was particularly impressive. A giant rally at Mission County Park was organized by the Bexar County Democrats and the Bexar County Young Democrats in collaboration with the "Viva Kennedy-Johnson" clubs in the area. An estimated five thousand people gathered and ten thousand others were reported to have passed through the park, stopping to listen to one or more of the political

83 Ibid., October 15, 1960, p. 4.
speeches. Two thousand Democratic precinct leaders and
grass-roots-level workers were present. Along with them
were Senators Yarborough and Anderson, state Senator
Gonzalez, Representative Victor Anfuso of New York, Albert
Peña, Maury Maverick, Jimmy Knight, and Paul Kilday. The
success of this cooperative effort was exceeded only by that
of the Harlingen rally.

Spearheaded by the conservative Democratic leadership
in Texas, who requested "Viva" clubs' assistance and coopera-
tion, the Harlingen rally idea came into fruition. A com-
mittee of forty-eight men from the counties of Cameron,
Willacy, Hidalgo, and Starr planned motorcades throughout
the Valley. A time schedule, denoting the arrival and
departure of the caravan through each town, was plotted and
then publicized. On the day of the rally, there were
hundreds of cars with "Viva Kennedy" bumper stickers and
club banners waving from car radio aerials. Three thousand,
five Hundred Persons were expected; approximately 5,000,
including about 200 hecklers, were present. Forty or fifty
reporters and newscasters were on hand to cover the impres-
sive rally.

84 San Antonio Light, March 5, 1960, p. 3; San Antonio
Light, November 2, 1960, p. 4.

85 Casso, interview; Leo, interview; Valley Evening
Monitor, November 4, 1960, pp. 1, 2.
Johnson was the speaker for whom the rally was staged. He was accompanied by his wife, Lady Bird, Congressman Joe M. Kilgore from McAllen, and Congressman John Young from Corpus Christi. Ramon Guerra presented the vice-presidential candidate with a citation praising Johnson's efforts in promoting better understanding between the Mexican and the United States citizens. Johnson also accepted a sombrero and in appreciation and gratitude delivered a thirty-minute speech. "You will never know ... when we have walked together through sunshine and sorrow ... how I feel. To sum it up, I love you." Johnson also introduced the religious issue, in an appeal to religious pride and even defensive voting:

It is extremely unfortunate that religion has entered this campaign. I believe it is wrong to vote for a man because he goes to the same church you do and wrong to vote against him because he worships God in a different manner. ...

Religion is an issue in every state in the union in one way or another. But I can tell you that if religion were not an issue, John Kennedy would carry every state in the nation.

The other scheduled speakers aroused the ire of the "Viva Kennedy" leaders. On the speakers' platform were conservative Democrats who had bolted the party and voted for Eisenhower both in 1952 and 1956. The "Viva" leaders were

86 Valley Evening Monitor, November 6, 1960, p. 1.
87 Ibid., November 7, 1960, p. 3.
88 Ibid.
neither asked to have a representative on the speakers' platform nor were they publicly recognized by the party regulars. Instead, they were lost among the crowds in the stands. Very possibly some of the hecklers at the rally numbered "Viva" members.

The hecklers waved several black shoeboxes labeled "Box 13." This display had reference to the 1948 election in which Johnson won Duval County by eighty-seven votes. The records of Precinct Box 13 were alleged to be fraudulent. The names on the rolls appeared in alphabetical order and were all in the same handwriting. Also, some of the 202 men whose names were recorded as "last minute" voters testified that they had not voted. So boisterous were the hecklers that eventually Johnson's temper flared. "I don't expect them [the hecklers] to exercise good manners. . . . I preach love instead of fear and all I can say is 'God forgive them for they know not what they do.'" The Mexican-Americans applauded this type of emotional outburst and dramatic histrionics. Some observers later accused Johnson of planting the hecklers in the gathering to stage an incident similar to the one which erupted in front of the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas. As he had done there, he could assume a martyr's role, which would be of great appeal to

89 Casso, interview; Idar, interview.
90 Valley Evening Monitor, November 7, 1960, p. 3.
the Latins. The Harlingen rally, in sum, was a great performance and a political feat which seemed necessary to affirm Johnson's appeal with the Mexican-American voter and to guarantee political support at the polls.

Johnson was most accurate in assessing the potential of the Chicano vote. As election day approached, a great Latin turnout appeared to be the critical deciding factor in Texas. Even the Democratic regulars became anxious. They concentrated all their efforts to stress the urgency and the individual worth of every vote. Get-out-the-vote tactics intensified. In the early morning of November 8, Robert Kennedy wired instructions to Gonzalez:

The national Viva Kennedy Clubs have been one of the outstanding successes of this campaign. We can attain victory only through a vigorous and thorough get-out-the-vote drive. Newspaper reports here say we won't be successful in the last effort. Please rally all our forces in accomplishing this mission. Senator Kennedy is counting on you and the Viva Kennedy Clubs. Let's get our voters to the polls. Que viva, Robert F. Kennedy. 91

This last summons was apparently successful, for voter increase was the highest ever in the South, and most especially in Texas. In the eleven largest Republican Texas counties, the Nixon-Lodge vote exceeded the 1956 turnout by 49,693. This Republican increase rendered the Democratic turnout all the more triumphant. Kennedy surpassed the

Stevenson record in 1956 by 169,529 votes. Since Kennedy and Johnson carried Texas by a slim margin of 50.71 percent, it is plausible that the deciding factor in the election was the Chicano participation, for the heaviest increase in Texas voters occurred among the Mexican-Americans, where formerly Eisenhower had had support in the Valley. Eisenhower had carried large majorities in Cameron, El Paso, Hidalgo, and Nueces counties. A comparative study of several county-wide election results showed this sentiment for Eisenhower in 1956; but in the same counties the 1960 election returns indicated an almost solid (90 percent of Spanish-speaking vote) preference for Kennedy. Table I reveals voter increase and Democratic conversion.

In 1960, Kennedy carried south Texas by approximately 57,000 votes. If his majority in El Paso County is added to the rest of south Texas, the total soars to 61,000 votes. When this figure is contrasted with the 46,000-vote majority

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92 Weeks, pp. 63, 67.
95 Valley Morning Star, June 28, 1961.
TABLE I

COMPARISON OF 1956 AND 1960 ELECTION RESULTS IN SEVEN TEXAS COUNTIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1956</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kennedy</td>
<td>Nixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bexar</td>
<td>75,373</td>
<td>63,934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Paso</td>
<td>26,027</td>
<td>21,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>18,663</td>
<td>13,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nueces</td>
<td>29,361</td>
<td>18,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webb</td>
<td>10,059</td>
<td>1,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Wells</td>
<td>5,330</td>
<td>2,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Hogg</td>
<td>1,255</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kennedy received across Texas, the Mexican-Americans' importance becomes uncontestable.

Kennedy regained the counties of Cameron, Starr, and Willacy, which had been lost to the Republicans for the previous elections. The following precinct returns of Hidalgo County (Table II) typify those of El Paso, Cameron, and parts of Nueces. All exhibit essentially the same economic, cultural, and religious background. The results indicate that the voter increase was indeed

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96Texas, Secretary of State, Election Register, 1956 and 1960, Austin, Texas.

97Corpus Christi Caller, November 10, 1960, p. 14C.

98Idar, interview; election returns from County Clerk, Bexar County; statistics provided by Hershal Bernard, attorney at law, San Antonio.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Precinct</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnic Content</th>
<th>Poll Taxes Paid</th>
<th>1960 Increase</th>
<th>Stevenson</th>
<th>Kennedy</th>
<th>Eisenhower</th>
<th>Nixon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1956 1960</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>NE Mission</td>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>1,123 1,380</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SE Mission</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>1,289 1,574</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>La Joya</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>1,261 1,407</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>1,008</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Hidalgo</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>279 352</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>SW McAllen</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>1,156 1,827</td>
<td>671</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>NW Mission</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>798 1,101</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>SW Mission</td>
<td>Latin</td>
<td>661 795</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>NNE McAllen</td>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>785 1,262</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>1,220</td>
<td>767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>NNW McAllen</td>
<td>Anglo</td>
<td>982 1,620</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1,034</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

attributable to the Chicanos. The method used to establish the percentage of Mexican-American votes was an actual name count of Spanish surnames listed on the registration and poll tax records.

These election statistics fail to credit the Mexican-Americans with their entire contribution. Get-out-the-vote registration and poll tax drives which can be traced to December of 1959 deserve note. Also the returns only tally the number of ballots counted; actually, the Latin-Americans voted in far greater numbers than indicated by the returns, but many ballots were invalidated. In 94 counties throughout Texas more than 59,886 ballots were thrown out in the final tally. These ballots had allegedly been improperly marked. To be valid the names of three candidates from parties other than the voter's choice had to be crossed out. It can be assumed that, in areas where Mexican-Americans comprised the majority of voters, a large number of the ballots discarded were those of Mexican-Americans. Approximately 12 percent of the total votes cast in Victoria

County (15,000) were thrown out, and in Cameron County 3,000 ballots were invalidated. 101

The statistics reveal a dramatic increase in voters too great to be explained away as part of the trend for greater participation in each successive presidential election. In the South, the voter turnout increased by more than 25 percent over that of 1956. 102 This record increase far outstrips the 7 percent estimated population and immigration growth considered a variable factor in analyzing election returns for the South. The "Viva" leaders claimed their organizational efforts resulted in the Democratic victory. Such a thesis is made feasible by the extremely high rate increase among Mexican-American voters. 103

The vote strength of the Chicanos can more readily be realized by an analysis of the special Texas senatorial election conducted to fill the vacancy left by Johnson. Kennedy had carried Hidalgo County by more than 5,000 votes. Yet less than six months later, the Democratic conservative candidate William Blakely lost the senatorial race to


103 Soukup, p. 129; "Viva Kennedy" leaders claimed 90 percent of the Latin poll tax holders in Nueces County and 89 percent in Bexar County voted in 1960.
Republican John Tower by more than 15,000 votes. The Mexican-American leaders, disappointed that the patronage position of federal district judge had been awarded to an "Eisenhower Democrat" rather than to the loyal party Chicano hopeful, simply told their constituents to "go fishing" on election day. 104 The results of the election leave little doubt that the Latin vote was a determinant factor in presidential elections of 1960.

In the 1960 presidential election, the Latin vote was the swing vote upon which the balance of the election in Texas rested. The Chicano vote was numerically strong enough to decide the election. The "Viva" clubs had unleashed the potential of the Mexican-American vote. As Albert Peña proclaimed, "We did it on our own. We financed it [the "Viva" movement] ourselves. And we won Texas for the President when the political bosses dragged their heels. We brought out the highest barrio vote in Texas history." 105 All the enthusiasm of the members seemed to be self-generative. Formerly, the patrones in the Valley dominated the counties politically as well as economically. They were relatively wealthy landowners, financiers, or entrepreneurs. They

104 Idar, interview; Idar, NTSU Oral History. The position was available due to the death of Judge James W. Allred.

105 An interview with George I. Sanchez, The Texas Observer, LII (November 25, 1960), 7; Medla, pp. 16, 74; The People's President, p. 282.
successfully used their economic power for political purposes. These politicos doled out patronage, thus keeping the Latins economically dependent. Also, the bosses often paid the poll tax of $2.50 for many Latin voters. In retribution for such generosity, the Latins voted as directed, thereby maintaining conservative Democrats in political power. 106 In 1960 however, the Chicanos voted for the one candidate who appealed directly to them for support. Kennedy's youth, vitality, and liberal propensity convinced the Chicanos that a Democratic administration would best benefit them. The Latins in non-boss-controlled counties outvoted those Latins in the boss-controlled counties by four to one. 107

The Mexican-American contribution to the election results did not go unrecognized. As president-elect, Kennedy wired from Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, to all the major "Viva" leaders. The telegram of November 10 expressed "Congratulations on the magnificent job turned in by the Viva Kennedy Clubs in Texas. The margin of victory in Bexar, Nuces [sic], El Paso Counties and the Rio Grande Valley was

106 Bob Sanchez, interview; Weeks, p. 69; Bill Davidson, "Texas Political Powerhouse Lyndon Johnson," Look, XXIII (August 4, 1959), 33.

107 Medla, p. 75.
of prominent significance in carrying Texas."\textsuperscript{108} His message to Bob Sanchez was more informal, "Your people really came through!"\textsuperscript{109} Kennedy gratitude was not limited to the president-elect. As Kennedy's campaign manager, brother Robert told a news reporter, "I think the Spanish-speaking American citizens were an extremely important factor [in the 1960 election]."\textsuperscript{110} After the election, John Kennedy called an impromptu meeting of his political staff. In the sunshine outside the Kennedy compound, Kennedy singled out Carlos McCormick and personally thanked him for his aid in securing the Chicano support.\textsuperscript{111}

Kennedy's appreciation later took the form of job appointments. As he had promised, Kennedy attempted to increase the number of Latin-Americans in governmental posts. Hector P. Garcia was named as a member to the United States delegation to Jamaica, which negotiated a mutual defense and aid treaty with the Federation of the West Indies. George Sanchez was appointed to the National Advisory Council of

\textsuperscript{108} Western Union telegram, November 10, 1960, files of Ed Idar. Similar telegrams wired to Mexican leaders of "Viva Kennedy" organization; also a confirmation copy of a wire sent to President John F. Kennedy, February 13, 1961, from Illinois "Viva Kennedy" Club, West Side Chapter, Jesse Obregon, Chairman (from files of H. Garcia).

\textsuperscript{109} Bob Sanchez, interview.


\textsuperscript{111} Bob Sanchez, interview.
the Peace Corps. Raymond L. Telles, former mayor of El Paso and an active "Viva" leader, accepted the ambassadorship to Costa Rica. Henry Gonzalez had been offered the ambassadorship to Cuba, but declined in favor of remaining in the Texas Senate in Austin, where he thought he might best serve the interests of his constituents. To the Mexican-Americans these job appointments substantiated their belief that the Kennedy charisma was rooted in sympatía.

Kennedy's sensitivity to Latin-American ethnic frustrations and his desire to heal their long-neglected political and economic wounds, cemented the bond of friendship between the two latent powers. The Mexican-Americans considered


113 Gonzalez, letter to Raffas, August 27, 1971, p. 3.

114 By 1962, the "Viva" leaders had become dissatisfied with these limited concessions. They claimed that Jack Kennedy had "violated clear assurances made by Robert Kennedy before the 1960 Democratic Convention and by Mr. Kennedy himself in campaign speeches that promised positions to major posts in formulating Latin-American policy." Congressional Quarterly News Service, "Viva Kennedy Leaders in Revolt," Valley Morning Star, June 28, 1961. Among other positions, the Chicanos had been pressing for the appointment of Vincente Ximenes, university professor from New Mexico, to assistant secretary of state for Latin-American affairs, and Joe Ontiveros to the national chairmanship of the GI Forum. A wire to president-elect Kennedy from Hector Garcia, July 11, 1960, "strongly urged" the appointment of the aforementioned. From the files of Hector P. Garcia. See also, letter from Gonzalez to Traffas, July 2, 1971.
Kennedy free of any prejudice. "He hated no one, which in itself was unusual 'cause most Americans hate someone." He had true compassion for the poor; it was neither affected nor condescending. Kennedy somehow "cut through the cynicism" which characterized his age. According to one Latin leader, the young walked vicariously with him, and the elderly regarded him as the ideal son. He had the ability to mingle and belong to any group. 115 Identity with Kennedy was practically spontaneous. Because of this identity, which Kennedy had successfully established, the Chicanos' increased rate of voter turnout surpassed any previous rate increase of political activism among the Mexican-Americans. The Chicanos voted for Kennedy the candidate, rather than voting as the pawns of the Democratic Party.

Religious heritage cannot adequately explain the election in south Texas. There was no Catholic bloc vote; there was no anti-Catholic bloc vote. Just as some Protestants in the region voted to break the WASP-only precedent, some Catholics voted Republican because they feared that a Catholic president would keep the religious issue "uncomfortably close." 116 The religious issue was important to

115 De Anda, interview.
116 Larry Goodwyn, interview.
the Mexican-American vote only insofar as it stimulated
pride and identity with the Democratic candidate.117

The "Viva Kennedy" clubs proved to be the right stimuli
at the right time. In 1960, the Mexican-American ethnic
group was in a transitional phase of assimilation—one
usually characterized by a clamor for political recognition
and an assertion of group autonomy. The "Viva" idea tapped
the energies of a group exposed and susceptible to an atti-
tude of righteous indignation. Having attained political
"respectability" by the sheer force of their numbers, the
Chicanos resented manipulation and exploitation by the party
establishment in Texas. Their enthusiasm, anger, and
imagination made the "Viva Kennedy" clubs successful.
Attempts to duplicate this "groundswell of spontaneous and
highminded efforts" on the part of the Mexican-Americans
have not been effective. The success of the clubs, however,
manifest the Mexican-Americans as a viable, political force
which, when given a candidate with whom they can emotionall
identify, was capable of influencing election results. The
clubs contributed not only to the election of John F.
Kennedy, but also to the political awakening of an ethnic
minority.

117 This does not dismiss the possibility, indeed proba-
bility, that many Mexican-Americans voted for Kennedy because
of his religion. Some Latin families still regard Kennedy
as a saint—a martyred one. In many homes, in a niche in
the bedroom, a vigil light burns before a picture of Kennedy
(Steiner, p. 343). But the fact remains, the leaders of the
clubs did not appeal to the Catholic vote. It seemed un-
necessary.
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