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GERMAN UNIONISM IN TEXAS DURING THE
CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION

THESIS

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PREFACE

Texas, as a member of the Confederate States of America, faced several problems of internal security, among which was a potential threat stemming from the Unionist sentiment of the German Americans in the counties of the southwest portion of the state. These Texas Germans displayed opposition to slavery, secession and conscription, and consequently they presented a problem to Texas civil and military authorities since war measures demanded cooperation from all Confederate citizens. However, the premises upon which Confederate policy developed in combating this threat seem to have overemphasized their immediate danger to state security.

Immigrations to Texas during the early 1800's included a large number of Germans seeking political and economic freedom. Settlements resulting from these migrations were of both individual and cooperative nature. In general, early attempts to develop a concentration of Germans for purposes of a separate state failed because of the weakness and inexperience of the agencies involved, and after several such failures by immigration societies, independent settlement supplied the majority of immigrants.

Both the character of the immigrants and the location of settlements effected the role of this element in Texas during the Civil War and Reconstruction period. Natural

aversion to slavery caused the Texas Germans to appear as abolitionists and their preservation of old world culture and language supplied political ammunition to pro-slavery and secession interests. Actually, German opinion on the institution varied depending on their proximity to the practice of holding slaves and on their economic interest. The most general attitude was one represented by the state rights doctrine denying a legal right of interference by the national government; but this sentiment was modified as slavery became synonymous with disunion.

Loyalty to the Union was fostered in the majority of the German immigrants through experience in Europe, and upon arriving in America this attitude accounted, in large part, for their political affiliation. Though little political interest was displayed during the early history of the German settlements in Texas, by the 1850's the Democratic Party held by far the majority of the Teutonic element by its appeal to the Jacksonian principles so respected by the immigrants. This alignment, however, was broken when national schism threatened as a result of southern Democratic leadership.

As secession approached, the Texas Germans demonstrated, with few exceptions, a complete lack of cooperation with southern nationalism, and when the threat became a fact, the element remained loyal to the Union for the most part. Confederate methods used to subdue this unionism as potentially dangerous to Texas led to a legacy of bitterness. Defeat

of the South brought many of the German Americans in Texas into brief political prominence in the Republican Party.

Although never completely content with the Republican state administration, the Germans remained the only considerable group of Texas whites to continue their support of the Republican Party upon the return of the Democrats to power in state government. The circumstances of this transition in political alignment reveal a problem in minority rights which is ever common to a democratic republic.

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CHAPTER I

SETTLEMENT AND POLITICS

Pre-Civil War immigration to Texas resulted in two primary areas of settlement. The characteristics of these locales as well as of the immigrants themselves gave the Texas Germans a distinct place in the history of the state both in regard to the preservation of German culture and in state political development. These new citizens made every effort to remain German in language and attitude and those attitudes forced them to lend their weight to the preservation of the Union even at the cost of denouncing their early affiliation with the Democratic Party.

The outstanding reasons for the exodus from Germany to Texas were economic; lack of employment in the mother country and a desire to find economic betterment in America¹ although, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, motives of religious freedom and social elevation played significant roles. During the nineteenth century, following the revolutions of 1848-1849, many migrated seeking both economic and political freedom. Texas seemed an especially good locale for these

¹Carl Solms-Braunfels, Texas 1844-1845 (Houston, 1836), p. 135.

goals and perhaps for the establishment of a new Germany in America.²

Many early plans existed for the introduction of German immigrants into Texas. In 1814, a scheme was presented to the King of Spain providing for a German buffer state in the area of Texas as excellent insurance for the maintenance of Spanish authority. Mexican independence prevented fulfillment of the proposals.³ J. Val Hecke, a retired Prussian officer, also had detailed plans for establishing a German colony in Texas. Hecke proposed that the operations of the British East India Company be duplicated to provide Germany with profitable overseas trade.⁴ To protect the proposed colony it would be necessary to transport 10,000 Prussian veterans to Texas. Such an overseas possession might also furnish Germany with an excellent facility for exiling criminals, according to Hecke.⁵

Those responsible for early Anglo settlement in Texas also considered the advisability of utilizing German immigrants. Austin seriously planned to include German and Swiss immigrants in colonization plans, and three families to take up grants under his direction were German. Later Texas officials, Houston and Lamar, were approached with plans for

²Rudolph L. Biesele, The History of the German Settlements in Texas (Austin, 1930), p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 22.

⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵Ibid., p. 23.

encouraging wholesale immigration of Germans assisted by the state.⁶

Records indicate that the earliest settlement of any size in Texas by German immigrants was sponsored by Baron von Bastrop in 1823. In that year a colony of Oldenburgers was established on the Colorado River. By the late 1820's this initial settlement had spread into the area between the Colorado and Brazos rivers.⁷

The cradle of German settlement in Texas was the settlement of Industry, now in Austin County. Frederick Ernst, originally planning to establish himself in Missouri, read letters from the Oldenburgers describing the opportunities in Texas. The information so impressed him that, in 1831, he decided to change his destination to Texas. Finding the area of Austin County all he had expected, Ernst, in 1838, laid out town lots and offered them to Germans who might follow him to Texas. The town thus founded grew very slowly, as was typical of the German settlements. The name of Industry was suggested by neighboring Anglo-Americans who respected Ernst for his display of hard work in furthering the development of the area. Industry soon became a stop-over point for those interested in German migration to Texas. By 1860 Biegel Settlement claimed 103 landowners with German names. The citizens of

⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

⁷ Albert B. Faust, The German Element in the United States (Kingsport, 1929), p. 491.

this hamlet were to make themselves well known as the sectional controversy burst into armed hostility and conscription became necessary.⁸

With early colonization being of the independent type, organizations were soon formed to assist the German immigrant in his move to Texas. Of these the Germania Society was the earliest. Founded in 1835 with headquarters in New York, the society devoted itself to providing the necessities for migration to Germans both in the United States and in Europe. A debate over the feasibility of fostering a new German state in America led to a compromise among the planners of the society. Texas was selected as the most desirable location for immigration since many of the society fathers believed it unwise to antagonize the Americans in already established states of the Union.⁹ The Germania Society sent one group to Texas in November, 1839, but the expedition proved a failure. Of the 130 colonists dispatched, only those who were unable to secure return passage remained in Texas. As a result of poor preparations of the society, many were forced to remain in Houston; those able to do so returned to New York.¹⁰

Despite the failure of the Germania Society, many Germans made their homes in Texas in the 1830's and 1840's. There were 400 Germans in Houston by 1840, and they apparently were

⁸Biesele, op. cit., pp. 43-48.

⁹Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁰Faust, op. cit., p. 492.

well accepted by the natives of that city.¹¹ This coastal migration soon spread to the interior settlements in Austin, Fayette, and Colorado, and sometime later to Victoria, De Witt and Washington counties.¹² Henri Castro added to the German settlements in this period with his encouragement of Swiss, German and Alsatian immigrants on a land grant in what became Castroville in Medina County.¹³

Washington County received considerable numbers of Germans in the 1840's. Henry Eichholt from Brocken, Germany, sponsored colonization activity in this area after 1846. Many settlers arrived before the Civil War and even more thereafter with the availability of land following the break-up of the plantation system. Large numbers of Germans in the United States also took advantage of this opportunity.¹⁴

By the late 1840's, Victoria County had one German settlement, Washington and DeWitt counties two each, and Colorado County three. Austin and Fayette counties supported six each. Slow growth was characteristic of most of these colonies but only one, Coletoville in Victoria County, failed to survive.¹⁵ Recognition of these independent and successful attempts at colonizing was reflected by the Texas Congress

¹¹Bieseles, op. cit., p. 40.

¹²Ibid., p. 42.

¹³Faust, op. cit., p. 492.

¹⁴Charles F. Schmidt, History of Washington County (San Antonio, 1949), p. 23.

¹⁵Bieseles, op. cit., p. 65.

in 1841 in the authorization of "The German Union for Texas" a philanthropic organization.¹⁶ Also in 1841 the "Teutonia Order" was created in Austin to preserve the national traits and culture of the Germans and to maintain contact with Germany.¹⁷

Failure of the Germania Society served as no deterrent to further organized efforts at German colonization in Texas. In 1841, a group of German noblemen became interested in creating a society for the purpose of encouraging emigration to Texas. Count von Castell, a close friend of the Duke of Nassau, persuaded several German princes that such a venture under the leadership of the Duke would be profitable to all concerned. After arranging for allotted contributions to support the original expedition, Counts Boos-Waldeck and Victor von Leiningen were commissioned to visit Texas and inspect the area for likely locations for settlement. This first journey took place in 1842 and resulted in the founding of Jack Creek, Nassau of that period. Von Boos-Waldeck remained in Texas and Leiningen returned with favorable recommendations.¹⁸

The first negotiations for land on the part of the Society for the Protection of German immigrants to Texas were to be discouraging. Henry Fischer, a native of Cassel who had lived in Houston for several years, offered a tract of land

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁷ Faust, op. cit., p. 492.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 493.

to the society with the recommendation that it would well serve as a location for the first colony. The society, commonly termed Verein, purchased from Fischer a tract near the San Saba River for \$16,000. Fischer was also to receive a share of the profits realized from the operations of the Verein.¹⁹

The immigrants, according to the provisions of the Verein contracts, would deposit 300 gulden in the case of single men or 600 for a family head. In return, the Verein would furnish transportation, lodging in Texas and cattle at reasonable prices upon arrival. Complete settlements were promised to those who pledged to emigrate. Churches, schools, hospitals and individual parcels of land of 160 to 220 acres were to be provided soon after landing in America.²⁰

In May, 1844, Prince Carl, of Solms-Braunfels, left Bremen, Germany, followed by 150 families. In December, the colonists arrived at Indianola on Lavaca Bay. Prior inspection of the Fischer purchase had disclosed that the land was entirely too remote for the purposes of the Verein, and Solms-Braunfels purchased an additional tract on the Comal River. In March, 1845, after much hardship, the new Americans reached this area and began the difficult task of building homes. The journey to the site had taken them over the most difficult terrain in Texas but the trials of settlement were only

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., p. 494.

beginning. This purchase taken up by the first Verein settlers was the original site of New Braunfels, Texas.²¹

The preparations and activities of the Verein proved to be less than sufficient to sustain the new colony. With the collapse of funds, Solms-Braunfels returned to Europe and his successor, von Meusebach, found the situation at New Braunfels deplorable. Disappointment and lack of provisions had caused even the more dependable to fall into a state of apathy.²²

Von Meusebach's first achievement was to make peace arrangements with nearby Indians. Being highly successful in this endeavor, the new commissioner founded another community, Fredericksburg, some ninety miles from New Braunfels. Soon after the completion of his journey into the Indian country, von Meusebach learned that several thousand immigrants were to arrive at Galveston fully expecting those provisions promised them upon their departure from Germany. Evidently no mention had been made to these settlers that the Verein had not been able to provide for even the first contingent. With very little credit, von Meusebach experienced difficulty in securing funds, but was able to collect a small percentage of what was needed in New Orleans.²³

Von Meusebach's information had been accurate, for 2,300 Germans arrived in Galveston in early 1846. No arrangements

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 495.

²³Ibid., p. 497.

had been made to transport them to the interior, since the Mexican War had caused all such facilities to be in short supply. Most of the immigrants remained on Lavaca Bay protected from the elements by crude huts. A few were able to find employment in Galveston; German noblemen pushing wheelbarrows in the streets of that city became a common sight. Others made themselves available to the United States military in its operations against the Mexicans.²⁴

Lack of preparation caused those who were later able to reach New Braunfels to face a period of starvation and dejection. For the many sick only one doctor was available. The community cemetery was soon known as "Koester's Plantation," indicating perhaps that the doctor's treatment as well as the elements and poor nutrition had contributed to the large number of deaths.²⁵

The failure of the Verein resulted largely from a lack of information available to its founders and the lack of attention given to providing those things promised. Mismanagement of funds by the Verein officials, including Solms-Braunfels, also contributed to its failure. Meusebach, earnestly endeavoring to right the wrongs committed, found himself in circumstances beyond his immediate control and received undue criticism for the conditions existing in New Braunfels and Fredericksburg.²⁶ Concessions were forced from

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 498.

²⁶ Ibid.

him regarding the allotment of land by a mob of enraged Germans which forced its way into his home. Determined to perform his duty, Meusebach, nevertheless, remained the representative of the Verein in Texas until the liquidation of Verein property.²⁷

By mid 1846, the Verein settlements had begun to enjoy some degree of stability. In the winter of that year one thousand additional immigrants arrived and much of the idleness which had infected the colony was corrected. Encouragement lent itself to increased crop production and renewed hope for building comfortable homes.²⁸

Following the European revolutions of 1848-1849, many Germans of the educated classes poured into Texas. This wave of migration deposited settlers first in the older and now well established areas of Teutonic colonization and later in the larger cities of Texas. At this time the triangle formed by New Braunfels, San Antonio and Seguin began to take on its dominant German characteristics. San Antonio, Dallas, Galveston, Houston and Austin also received large numbers of Germans of this later migration.²⁹

²⁷ Ferdinand Roemer, Texas (San Antonio, 1935), pp. 215-218.

²⁸ Faust, op. cit., p. 498.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 499.

By 1856 there were 30,000 Germans in Texas in a total population of approximately 600,000.³⁰ By 1859 the immigrants spread from Calhoun County on the Texas coast to Gillespie and Bastrop counties farther north, settling in large numbers on the upper Colorado, Llano, Pedernales, Guadalupe and San Antonio rivers.³¹ With the exception of small settlements in North Texas, the bulk of the Germans inhabited an area between Austin and San Antonio extending to the northwest and southeast.³²

By 1860, many counties in Southwest Texas were heavily populated by Germans and their descendants. In the upper counties, the Germans comprised 85 per cent of the population in Comal County, 75 per cent in Gillespie County and 81 per cent, 55 per cent, and 46 per cent in Kendall, Kerr, and Mason counties, respectively. The lower counties of Fayette, De Witt, Victoria, Galveston, and Colorado were less heavily German, with respective percentages of 25, 32, 37, 30 and 24.³³

The most outstanding characteristic of these German settlements was the desire to preserve the language and culture of the Fatherland. Of the many Germans to migrate to the United States, those in Texas were best able to maintain

³⁰Anna J. Sandbo, "Secession," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVIII (July, 1914--April, 1915), p. 176.

³¹Ella Lonn, Foreigners in the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, 1940), p. 15.

³²Joseph W. McConnell, Social Cleavages in Texas (New York, 1925), p. 181.

³³Bieseke, op. cit., p. 163.

habits of the old country.³⁴ So strong was this desire that in Fredericksburg, New Braunfels and Boerne, towns of predominately German populations, children continued to speak the German language even in the face of outside influences. Even the few Negroes spoke the language.³⁵ Gillespie County especially retained its German characteristics. The county was virtually isolated until 1913 and thereby was able to preserve its old country environment to a greater degree than any other such area in Texas. Until 1941 the language of social contact was German, being used in the home, on the streets and even in official county business. The language was standard curriculum in the county schools.³⁶ The Republic of Texas recognized this concentration of German culture and language by providing that all laws be printed in German as well as in the English language after 1842.³⁷

Prince Solms-Braunfels wrote that in his new home, the Germans wished to establish no new Germany but only to live as they had lived in the Fatherland, enjoying their language and customs with their German culture, subject to the Constitution and laws of America.³⁸ This feeling was probably

³⁴McConnell, op. cit., p. 574.

³⁵Lonn, op. cit., p. 16.

³⁶Inventory of the County Archives of Texas (Gillespie County, 1941), No. 86, p. 14.

³⁷A. L. Mencken, The American Language (New York, 1936), p. 97.

³⁸Solms-Braunfels, op. cit., p. 136.

widespread among the German settlers, but many authorities contend that a well prepared plan to establish a new German state in America existed. Prince Carl betrayed some desire to see a German state by offering to negotiate with the Mexican government to recognize Texas independence.³⁹ Underlying the creation of the Verein was supposedly the motive to concentrate the Germans in such numbers that they would greatly predominate and form a basis for a separate state.⁴⁰ Indeed, the Stuttgart Universal Gazette, in 1823, announced that a plan was being formulated to send a package state to the United States for settlement in Texas. The Giessen Emigration Society as well as the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants to Texas showed interest in such plans.⁴¹

While plans for a new state were being discussed in Europe as well as America, conservative opinion in both locales found the move an impractical one. Johann H. S. Schultz, an influential spokesman on such affairs in Germany, pointed out that the cost of maintaining a navy sufficient to protect and service such operations was prohibitive for the German states. He expressed conservative thought in Germany and in Texas in recommending that German colonies in Texas remain an integral part of that Republic. A separate state was never seriously considered by the immigrants who were primarily

³⁹ Biesele, op. cit., p. 19.

⁴⁰ Faust, op. cit. p. 494.

⁴¹ Biesele, op. cit., pp. 18-20.

interested in economic and religious freedom. At least these goals were primary until the basic concern of making a living was satisfied. By that time Texas was a member of the Union and for all practical purposes would remain intact therein. Only a small minority of Germans, mostly of the 1848-1849 migration, actively campaigned for separate status and their actions made such plans appear out of proportion to their probability.⁴²

These immigrants to the Texas hill country brought with them attitudes which were later to be reflected in opposition to division of the Union. The Germans were opposed to the institution of slavery before their landing. They were hostile to the institution by both training and disposition.⁴³ Introduction to a society in which the holding of slaves was commonplace caused their hostility to grow, and many Germans who observed the system among their American neighbors became extreme abolitionists.⁴⁴ For the most part however, slavery was most dangerous to the Germans because of its capacity to split the Union.

Aside from the moral aspect, these settlers along the Texas frontier had more practical reasons for not joining

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Gilbert S. Benjamin, The Germans in Texas (New York, 1909), p. 90.

⁴⁴ Lonn, op. cit., p. 35.

the ranks of the slave holders. True, the Germans fostered no prejudice against color or race, but they also felt that slavery, aside from being immoral, detracted from their own labors.⁴⁵ Furthermore, slavery on the frontier was impractical for many other reasons. The proximity of the Mexican border made escape too easy. Indians were adept at relieving the frontiersmen of many belongings including slaves. The distance from markets and the suitability of the land for grazing rather than planting also discouraged slave labor.⁴⁶

Indeed, slavery served as something of a deterrent to immigration itself, since prior to their embarkment the Germans were warned of its evils. Prince Solms-Braunfels wrote that in America the Germans would find slave markets, breeding colonies and a social structure placing the non-slave holder in an inferior position in society. Severe treatment of the slaves and the tendency to retard their progress intellectually was described in full. A German traveler in America, Roemer, advised the Germans not to migrate because of the institution.⁴⁷ Thus, those immigrants who ignored the warnings of their countrymen were at least prepared to expect the worst from a social system alien to that of the Fatherland.

From the very beginning, Germans in Texas held only a negligible number of slaves. Comal County, often used as a

⁴⁵ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 90.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

measuring stick along with Gillespie County, counted only seventy-four Negroes in 1860. Gillespie County in the same year, had only thirty-two. Populations of the two counties were 4,000 and 2,700 respectively.⁴⁸ Olmsted, in his travels through Texas in the 1850's, reported that in New Braunfels with a population of 3,000 Germans and twenty Anglo-Americans, only 100 Negroes were held in bondage, and most of those were owned by one individual outside of town. In the town, only one German owned a Negro whose duties were those of a domestic servant; no white servant was available. One non-German family in the city also held one slave.⁴⁹

The German colonies differed according to locale as to the degree of sanction of slavery. Those settlements in the counties farther from the coast contained more abolitionist, or at least opposition, sentiment. The settlers in this area were to prove to be more concerned generally with the danger of secession. Many of these Germans left the old country during the period of nationalistic ferment and the oath taken by them upon entering the United States had made more than a nominal impression.⁵⁰

On the lower Brazos, Colorado and Guadalupe rivers, the Germans were somewhat more easily assimilated into the

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

⁴⁹ Frederick L. Olmsted, A Journey Through Texas (New York, 1860), p. 181.

⁵⁰ Lonn, op. cit., p. 424.

plantation system. Those Germans, having migrated at a time of greater provincialism at home, viewed the slavery question as state righters or, in some cases, from a standpoint of full accord.⁵¹ Especially tolerant of the slave system were those Germans in the Galveston and Houston areas who were engaged in the cotton business.⁵²

Although German attitudes toward slavery varied from locale to locale, little expression of their sentiments is found in early political activity. Inactivity in politics characterized the early Texas German population. Lack of participation resulted from either the linguistic barrier, failure to see their interests at stake, or lack of knowledge in democratic procedures. The returns on the Texas annexation referendum demonstrate this lack of German participation. No election was held in New Braunfels and the vote at Industry was very scant; only seventeen ballots were cast.⁵³ A short time later, however, a German mass meeting in Galveston in 1846 supported Timothy Pillsbury, who was opposed to the Wilmot Proviso.⁵⁴ Here then, can be found the beginning of a stand to be later taken by most Texas Germans; that is, slavery should not be controlled at the national level.

The majority of Germans who had alined themselves politically in the period before the critical years preceding the

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 423.

⁵² Ibid., p. 35.

⁵³ Biesele, op. cit., p. 193.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 195.

Civil War did so in accordance with their basic belief that the party of Jackson represented the best guarantee for the rights of the individual. As a consequence, during this period, the Democratic Party held the largest number of Germans in Texas. In Comal County in 1848, 106 votes of a total 120 cast went to Democratic candidates. This Democratic support was to shift later, but not because the Germans no longer found appealing the allusion to the sovereignty of the individual. On the contrary, this appeal lasted until disunion threatened, and the Democratic Party was broken on the secession issue.⁵⁵

German response to the provisions of the Compromise of 1850 still indicated apathy on the part of many Germans regarding political affairs. In Gillespie County, the provisions were favored by a vote of fifty-four to forty-four, while Comal County returned thirty-six in favor and thirty-two opposed.⁵⁶ The seemingly insignificant difference in this county vote indicates a sentiment in Comal County which would later become more pronounced. A desire, however, to put the slavery question to rest was indigenous to both counties.

The shift in allegiance on the part of the Germans from their early party affiliation, such as it was, began with the national political turmoil of the mid 1850's. The German-Americans in Texas were disturbed by the Kansas-Nebraska

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Bill of 1854. A revival of the slavery question seemed to them to be the beginning of sectional controversy which threatened the Union to which they were for the most part staunchly devoted. These new Americans were also worried about the increasing hold on the Democratic Party exercised by the South. They viewed such control as perhaps dangerous to the Union, not because of Southern slave sympathy, but because such sympathy would surely lead through sectionalism to disunion.⁵⁷

If Douglas had not reopened the slavery question the Germans would probably have remained within the ranks of the Democratic Party. German-American opinion was fairly well represented by the actions of Illinois Germans as they hanged Douglas in effigy.⁵⁸

Even with these fears, the Texas Germans were still found to lean to the Democratic Party in 1856. The presidential election of that year resulted in a Buchanan victory in Comal County. Fillmore received only twenty-six votes as compared to 256 cast for the Democratic candidate. The next year, German citizens of Fayette County pledged themselves to the Democratic ticket, and in New Braunfels a Democratic meeting requested Governor Houston to resign because of his abolitionist sentiments.⁵⁹ This latter event again demonstrates a pro-southern attitude in Comal County later to

⁵⁷ Lonn, op. cit., p. 144.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 105.

reappear. These events point also to the fact that the defeat of slavery was not of primary consequence in Comal County.

Many of the Texas Germans still adhered to the Democratic Party in the national election of 1860. Comal County Democrats denounced the "Black Republicans" and cast a majority vote in favor of the Democratic candidates.⁶⁰ In New Braunfels, Breckinridge received 137 votes; Bell received 15 while Lincoln received none. In Comaltown, Breckinridge was given 64 and Bell 7 with the Republican again being disappointed. Douglas received no votes in either locality. In Schumannsville, all 13 votes cast went to Breckinridge and in Fredericksburg Bell received a majority of 9 votes. Jacob Waelder, member of the Texas legislature from San Antonio, and Felix Bracht made rousing speeches in support of Breckinridge in New Braunfels.⁶¹ No conclusions can be rightfully drawn here in regard to German abolitionism; the Germans still believed slavery to be a state concern. These Teutonic settlers seemed to have followed John C. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis in the opinion that Congress had not the right to limit or prohibit the introduction of slavery into new territories.⁶²

Though many German-American votes went to the Democratic candidates in 1860, there is evidence in that year of a decided shift in support. Die Union, a German language newspaper in Galveston, had stated in 1856 that Congress had

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 108.

⁶¹ Bieseke, op. cit., p. 204.

⁶² Lonn, op. cit., p. 44.

absolutely no power to regulate state institutions including that of slavery. However, in 1860, with Southern schism threatening the continuation of the Union, this same journal embarked upon a campaign which was to bring down the wrath of the Southern pro-slavery press. The delegates to the Charleston Convention were described by Die Union in 1860 as "blockheads."⁶³ The causes for the changes in political allegiance as illustrated by Die Union were dual. The fear of disunion became a motivating force driving the Texas Germans to adopt political attitudes which would later during the war stigmatize them as abolitionists and unionists. The latter charge was true in most cases; the former, generally speaking, arose from misunderstanding of the real threat as the Germans saw it, disunion. Resentment also contributed to the change in allegiance. The Know-nothing movement was at its zenith in Texas. Attacks on the foreign element in general and especially the disloyalty of the German element in Texas drove these new Americans to seek haven where they might enjoy recognition of their rights in accordance with their numbers. In other times, the Democratic Party might have been able to offer refuge but growing Southern control in that party posed to the Texas Germans the threat of destroying a most important institution, union.

⁶³ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 108.

CHAPTER II

EARLY ORGANIZATIONS AND SECESSION

The nature of German political action in Texas was one of relative harmony with other Americans in Texas until the 1850's. Previously, the Germans had taken part in the Texas Revolution and Mexican War. They had opposed slavery principles but upheld the Democratic Party as state righters.¹ However, hostilities arose as a result of the lack of slave holders in the German communities. Competition between free and slave labor brought suspicion and perhaps jealousy, since German free labor cotton brought more on the market than the product grown by slave labor in Texas.² The German cotton was known as "free cotton" and brought from one to two cents more per pound than the product picked by slave labor. "Free cotton" was sought after by manufacturers for its cleanliness.³ The most outstanding examples of Anglo-German tension were to develop in those areas where the two races were equally proportioned, for example, San Antonio and counties of similar nature.⁴

German political opinion in Texas found its basis in organizations formed during the years preceding the Civil War.

¹Biesele, op. cit., p. 205.

²McConnell, op. cit., p. 159.

³Benjamin, op. cit., p. 96.

⁴Ibid.

Much of the German Anglo-American tension can be attributed to the early German societies formed shortly after the settlement of the German colonists. Most of these organizations were either societies concerned with the protection of the settlers or singing and physical education clubs. On the one hand these organizations were to be accused of attempting to found purely German political parties and on the other, were claimed by their founders and members to only be interested in furthering German culture.

One of the earliest of these organizations was the First Deutscher Verein, formed on November 29, 1840, to promote the material and intellectual life of the German settlers.⁵ In 1854, the Houston Turnverein was organized to stimulate the mental and physical health of Germans in that area. In the same year, a Saengerbund was formed in West Texas to promote the preservation of German song.⁶ Houston was the headquarters in 1856 of the Houston Deutsche Gesellschaft. This club concerned itself with the union of German customs and culture as well as developing the German population into an important political faction.⁷

Evolving from the singing and physical education clubs were organizations dedicated to the purpose of exercising the political power of the Texas Germans in relation to their

⁵McConnell, op. cit., p. 184.

⁶Ibid., p. 162.

⁷Ibid., p. 185.

numbers. The Demokratischer Verein, first mentioned in the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung in 1853, consisted of both a political unit and a social club. The president of the organization stated in 1853, that it was designed to permit the Germans in the area to act in unison in political affairs.⁸ Also in 1853, Der Freie Verein was created in Sisterdale, Texas. This club was later affiliated with the Bund Freier Manner, a national organization with headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky. The Freier Verein took a definite stand against the institution of slavery.⁹ With Sisterdale's large percentage of the late migration this affiliation and sentiment is easily understood.

In Gillespie County, two German organizations were founded in 1855. One, The Society of Good Fellowship and Promotion of General Information, was composed of settlers on the Pedernales and Live Oak creeks. The other, The Reform Club, was organized in Fredericksburg with the aim of interesting its members in political affairs through discussions and the promotion of newspaper articles and books.¹⁰ Another political party composed of Germans was the Social Democratic Party of La Grange, Texas, founded in June, 1855. This party assisted Germans in becoming citizens and promoted the principles of the Democratic Party.¹¹

⁸ Biesele, op. cit., p. 196.

⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 203.

The most significant of these German associations was the one resulting from the meeting of Germans at the Second Annual Saengerfest held at San Antonio on May 14, 1854. Singing societies had been well known prior to this date, but none had been so concerned with political affairs. Delegates to this meeting represented the areas of heavy German population. At the close of the singing activities, many delegates met to discuss politics and as a result a platform, supposedly reflecting the opinion of the mass of the Texas Germans, was drafted.¹²

The political platform set forth by the delegates to the Saengerfest was highly important both in its provisions and in its effect upon German Anglo-American relations. Most of the platform was devoted to social reforms but that portion concerned with the slavery issue was indeed explosive. Slavery was denounced as an evil which would have to be removed from the scene. The institution was considered to be, however, strictly a state matter not falling under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Perhaps the most misunderstood provision was the assertion of the right of the states to call upon the federal government for aid should a state have any difficulty in executing the removal of the slave system. Despite the efforts of many conservatives present at the time of the platform's birth, this plank

¹²McConnell, op. cit., p. 184.

remained unchanged. Further business of the political gathering was the adoption of a resolution calling for a German-American convention to be held at St. Louis, Missouri, in November, 1854.¹³

The reaction of the press to the San Antonio convention was dual. The Neu Braunfelser Zeitung took a vacillating position on the platform, first clarifying and later condemning it. The English Language Press generally criticized the gathering for its work and the radical German Press supported the convention's actions. On April 12, 1854, the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung set forth the purpose of the San Antonio meeting as an attempt to synthesize German political opinion. According to the article, the Germans were entitled to the recognition due their numbers and intelligence. The platform was also clarified in regard to the slavery plank. It was stated that only gradual emancipation was sanctioned and any brand of abolitionism placed upon the signers of the platform was false and resulted from a misunderstanding.¹⁴ It was further stated that no attempt had been made to create a totally German party, and that the meeting had been attended in the majority by Germans because of the linguistic factor.¹⁵

The most controversial plank of the platform was that concerned with the ability of the states to call for federal

¹³ Biesele, op. cit., p. 198.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁵ Ernest W. Winkler, ed., Platforms of Political Parties in Texas (Austin, 1916), p. 58.

aid in terminating the slavery institution. Later investigations proved that this plank merely provided for compensation of slave owners for the investments which would be lost due to the freeing of slaves. Indeed, compensation was the aid mentioned which was to be furnished the states by the federal government.¹⁶

Opposition to the sentiments expressed in the San Antonio platform soon emerged from secession and slave areas within the state. The actions of the San Antonio convention, representing the first outspoken criticism of slavery, received the impact of this opposition. The slavery plank was the center of dispute, and many enemies of the German element used this issue as ammunition. The stand on slavery, however, misunderstood, was highly untimely since the American Party was just beginning to gain in strength and the San Antonio resolutions stimulated this anti-alien group.¹⁷ The American platform of January, 1856, called for the extension of the residence qualification for citizenship and stated that only native Americans should be allowed to hold public office.¹⁸ The Know-nothings magnified the popular belief that those Germans living in West Texas were conspiring to secede and build a free state.¹⁹

¹⁶ Biesele, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁸ Dallas Herald, June 14, 1862.

¹⁹ McConnell, op. cit., p. 161.

In view of increasing criticism of the resolutions of the Saengerfest, the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung shifted its earlier position of defense and clarification to one of condemnation. On May 26, 1854, the Zeitung retreated by printing a protest to the convention's actions based on the fact that the New Braunfels delegation had not been duly elected. The Zeitung also rejected the abolition clause as highly impractical at that time. The paper called on all German communities to speak out against the San Antonio convention as not representative of the German population.²⁰

Also indicative of increasing conservatism was the stand taken by a mass meeting of Germans held in New Braunfels following the announcement of the San Antonio slavery plank. Attended by many of the German inhabitants, the meeting approved resolutions denouncing the emancipation plank as having been inspired by Germans from the North. Those in attendance at this New Braunfels meeting assured their neighbors that there was no plan to form a new state and that the German societies were not secret or restricted to German membership.²¹ Following this announcement, the bulk of the Texas Germans lapsed into silence and avoided expressing political opinions which they believed would antagonize their Anglo-American neighbors.²²

²⁰Biesele, op. cit., p. 200.

²¹Benjamin, op. cit., p. 99.

²²Lonn, op. cit., p. 35. Several later reports tend to uphold this professed leadership from radical quarters outside the state.

The Texas press, both German and American, expressed a variety of opinions over the San Antonio platform. The German language papers, the San Antonio Zeitung and Neu Braunschweiler Zeitung, took opposite stands while the English language sheets likewise took positions of varying support and criticism of the German element as a result of the slavery plank. The Indianola Bulletin on June 23, 1854, stated that radicals had been responsible for the convention and its political platform. The Bulletin expressed the opinion that the convention had not represented the mass of the German-Americans in Texas.²³ On June 16, 1854, the Texas State Times expressed disappointment toward those immigrants who, having been accepted with outstretched arms, would plot to undermine American institutions.²⁴ A warning came from the Texas State Gazette. The Gazette, having always protected the Texas Germans against charges of abolitionism, stated that if the German singing societies were dedicated to the spreading of anti-slavery propaganda, the people of Texas should know it. The Gazette warned that any crusade to eliminate slavery would be met with violence from the people of Texas. The responsibility of radical elements in the San Antonio convention was mentioned by the San Antonio Western Texas on June 8, 1841. On that date, the Western Texas stated that most of the Texas

²³ McConnell, op. cit., p. 163.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

Germans were enterprising and law abiding citizens fully aware of the value of slavery.²⁵

Despite the efforts of the Texas Germans to withdraw from the growing political struggle, they were, by 1855, being generally classed as free soilers by those anxious to ferret out dangerous elements in society. These charges were answered in the Texas House of Representatives in December, 1855, by Jacob Waelder. Waelder declared that his presence in that legislative body proved that his Texas German constituents were "sound on slavery." He stated that he had never embraced abolitionism and that the Texas Germans who had elected him were well aware of his feelings on the matter. Germans in Texas, said Waelder, as a whole were as loyal to the South as citizens anywhere in the state.²⁶

While the Germans were gaining a reputation for sentiments in favor of emancipation during the late 1850's, radical elements within the group were contributing a basis for such charges. One of the outstanding German language newspaper published in Texas in the 1850's was the San Antonio Zeitung. The Zeitung was an abolitionist journal edited by a German immigrant, Adolf Douai, who had arrived in Texas in 1848. Douai was among those Germans who settled in the "Latin

²⁵ Biesele, op. cit., p. 201.

²⁶ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 105.

Settlement" of Sisterdale, noted for the classical literary appetite of many of its later settlers.²⁷

Among the several arguments made by the Zeitung in opposition to secession was the contention that the Confederacy was incapable of coping with the frontier problem. Douai stated that the Union could best defend the settlers against the Indians and that the Confederacy would have little time for Texas and her frontier. On December 22, 1860, the Zeitung came out against Texas taking part in any convention of slave holding states.²⁸ After publishing and supporting the slavery plank of the San Antonio platform, Douai began receiving considerable criticism voiced in both English and German print.²⁹ The Goliad True American spoke of the San Antonio Zeitung as a free soil paper whose editor would be forced to leave the state. The Zeitung's editor was mentioned in the Galveston News in an article calling for his removal or censorship by tar and feathering.³⁰

Criticism and threats of violence aimed at Douai robbed the anti-slavery press of its chief leader. After the State Times called for his drowning, Douai was forced to flee the state in 1860.³¹ Hertzberg succeeded Douai and the Zeitung

²⁷ Biesele, op. cit., p. 171.

²⁸ Lonn, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁹ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁰ Sandbo, op. cit., p. 175.

³¹ Lonn, op. cit., p. 47.

was continued as an abolition journal until January, 1861, when Hertzberg too found it advisable to leave Texas. On January 19, 1861, the Zeitung announced that publication would be terminated because of difficulty in securing paper.³²

Another anti-secession paper in the late 1850's was published in Galveston, Texas. This paper, Die Union, supported the San Antonio Zeitung in many of its abolitionist views. Die Union advocated the formation of German military companies for protection from slave holders in Texas. Die Union suspended publication after the destruction of the press by infuriated citizens. This demonstration on January 6, 1861, resulted from a scathing article condemning South Carolina for her action of secession.³⁴

While the Zeitung and Union espoused the cause of Unionist thought, the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung led the conservative Germans of the state. One authority in the field considers Lindheimer, editor of the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung, to have been the barometer of German-American opinion in Texas.³⁵ He stood for the preservation of the Union but at the same time condemned the San Antonio Zeitung and Douai for extremist leanings. Lindheimer was not in favor of pressing a cause which would alienate the Texas Germans from their

³² Ibid., p. 46.

³³ McConnell, op. cit., p. 164.

³⁴ Lonn, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁵ Biesele, op. cit., p. 204.

non-German neighbors. It was Lindheimer's contention that no good could come from an attempt to swim against the tide of secession.³⁶ This conservatism of Lindheimer is possibly responsible for the long life of the Zeitung published still in the German language.

The division in opinion over the merits of the San Antonio platform and growing conservative thought resulting from criticism found expression in the election of delegates to the secession convention. The New Braunfels elections for delegates to the convention resulted in rejection of secession candidates, Felix Bracht and Gustav Dreiss, for the more conservative representatives, Theodore Koester and W. F. Preston.³⁷ These two gentlemen favored using every means available to procure promises from the North in respect of Southern institutions to avoid schism.³⁸ Charles Gonahl was elected in January to represent Kerr County. Gonahl, though a slave owner, represented pro-Southern sentiment in supporting secession and later serving the Confederacy.³⁹

Most outstanding of the German-American leaders in Texas at this time was Gustav Schleicher who was born in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1829. Migrating to Texas in 1847, he represented

³⁶ Lonn, op. cit., p. 47.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

³⁸ Biesele, op. cit., p. 206.

³⁹ Bob Bennett, Kerr County Texas, 1856-1956 (San Antonio, 1956), p. 136.

the later migration of educated Germans and was instrumental in the formulation of plans for the utopian community of "Icarie" which was to follow Cabet's plan. Schleicher was among forty young men, the "Vierziger," who were disappointed in the failure of such a community on the Rio Grande. Comanches and speculators were primarily responsible for the failure. Schleicher took up farming in San Antonio thereafter, and in 1853 was elected to the state legislature.⁴⁰ He later opposed the secession movement as a state senator. Schleicher joined the move however, and he later joined the Confederate Army and served as a captain in the engineer corps.⁴¹

Whether from personal weakness, conviction, pressure or realization of the futility of opposition, the German-American delegates in the secession convention voted for most of the ordinances by which Texas would leave the Union. Representatives of these delegates were Koester from Comal County, Montel from Medina County, Muller from Galveston, Nauendorf from Bexar and Medina counties and Preston from Comal County. All of those mentioned cast support for secession with the exception of Nauendorf. In deciding as to whether or not the decision of the convention should be put before the people of Texas these delegates were unanimously in favor of such a move. The final ordinance of secession was supported by all the German delegates without exception.⁴²

⁴⁰Faust, op. cit., p. 499.

⁴¹Benjamin, op. cit., p. 108.

⁴²William Winkler, ed., Journal of the Secession Convention of Texas (Austin, 1912), pp. 26-44.

The returns of the February referendum on secession indicate varying support of secession and Union sentiment. Even with the action of the delegates in the convention, the German-Americans in the counties were to reject secession for the most part. Many of the 13,841 negative votes cast in the referendum were those of Germans.⁴³ The only counties of heavy German population approving secession were Austin, Comal and Colorado.⁴⁴ Industry, in Austin County, returned a majority of 81 votes for secession. New Ulm supported disunion by 36 to 30 votes. The vote in Comal County was 239 in favor and 89 opposed to secession. This Comal County sentiment favoring secession contrasted, however, with an offer made to Governor Houston who was promised a force from Comal County of 2,000 men to be utilized in dispersing any secession convention.⁴⁵ In those counties furthest west the vote was more clearly anti-secession while those counties in the south, of more equally proportioned German Anglo-American residents, tended to lean more to secession. Fayette County is typical of the latter group with 626 votes being cast rejecting secession and 580 returned in favor.⁴⁶ Throughout the 1850's, Fayette County had demonstrated strong Union sentiment. After the Republican victory in 1860,

⁴³ Lonon, op. cit., p. 51.

⁴⁴ Winkler, Journal Secession Convention, p. 89.

⁴⁵ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 105.

⁴⁶ Lonon, op. cit., p. 52.

however, a black flag was run up in La Grange, principal city of the county. With some indignation at the intolerance of the North, the residents were still not prepared to allow disappointment at the North's approach to sacrifice the Union. La Grange had a large number of non-Germans thus the vote, 39 to 10 against secession, reflects some dilution of German influence as well as the factor of location. Round Top, on the other hand, being largely inhabited by Germans, returned 115 votes for the Union and 50 for secession.⁴⁷ Unionist sentiment in Fayette County might be illustrated by the slogan of the True Issue: "Our Country, Our State, The South, The Union." Even though many German votes were cast in the county rejecting secession, the total possible vote of that element, 250, needed considerable non-German support for victory.⁴⁸

In San Antonio where the population was exceedingly diverse as to origins, the referendum showed 662 persons voting to preserve the Union and 538 in favor of secession. Travis County rejected secession by a majority of only 75 with a total against schism of 150. Gillespie and Kendall, being located in the western portion of the state tallied a majority of votes rejecting the action of the convention. Gillespie County objected by a vote of 40 to 17,⁴⁹ even though the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Leonie R. Weyand and Houston Wade, An Early History of Fayette County (La Grange, 1936), p. 244.

⁴⁹ Lonn, op. cit., p. 52.

county had earlier approved, through a mass meeting, the move to call a special session of the legislature to convene a convention to consider secession.⁵⁰ Indeed, in the convention election, the city of Seguin elected delegates who were state righters by a majority of 164 to 33.⁵¹ Boerne and Comfort, in Kendall County, counted respectively 85 to 6 and 42 to 15 in favor of remaining within the Union.⁵²

Referendum results in Kerr County found 76 for and 57 against secession. Precinct 2, heavily populated by Germans, returned 53 votes against secession and 34 in favor.⁵³ The only opposition to secession in Guadalupe County came from the German populated city of Schumannsville, in which 68 votes were cast for preservation of the Union.⁵⁴ Evidence of voting sentiment remains too sketchy to warrant any general conclusions as to the extent of German loyalty to the Union, and the problem is further complicated by the fact that voting returns indicated that many citizens did not participate in the referendum at all. The scant voting of the Texas Germans was typical and apparently resulted from the attempt to remain quiet on political affairs, actions of vigilance committees in the German counties and the belief that the Union would remain intact regardless of the moves made by radical Southerners.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵² Ibid., p. 52.

⁵³ Bennett, op. cit., p. 136.

⁵⁴ Lonn, op. cit., p. 51.

In order to properly evaluate the German influence, it is necessary to investigate both the reason for many Germans voting for secession and the reason for others refusing to cast a vote at all. Those Germans who voted in favor of secession did so not because of a love for the South as a section or to preserve the institution of slavery, but apparently because they believed in the constitutional basis of state rights.⁵⁵ Possibly still others voting to sever Texas from the Union did so through a fear of secession mobs which were commonplace in many of the German counties.⁵⁶ This fear also kept many Germans away from the polls altogether. Another possible reason for the scanty German vote was the belief that the North would readily reduce the South to its rightful place within the Union.⁵⁷

Texas Germans in casting their votes either for or against secession were influenced not only by their inherent attitudes but by their location of settlement, economic interests and their association with the slave system. They followed no general pattern with the exception that all possible situations being equal, the Texas Germans feared that slavery would destroy a central state to which they owed allegiance. This fear frequently resulted in action which unfortunately

⁵⁵ Guido Ransleben, A Hundred Years of Comfort in Texas (San Antonio, 1954), p. 125.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 80.

⁵⁷ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 109.

stigmatized the German-Americans in Texas as abolitionists. A more active spirit of allegiance to the Union would later brand them as dangerous, in general, to Texas and to the Confederacy.

CHAPTER III

GERMAN UNIONISM AND CONFEDERATE SERVICE

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1861, the fears of the Texas Germans were realities; the Union had suffered the long expected schism. During the Civil War, especially after conscription was instituted in Texas, the German-Americans demonstrated a sentiment which was to brand them as traitors to the South and to Texas. Evidence of their reluctance to serve the Confederacy is abundant, and records clearly reveal a large number which left the South to serve the Union forces. Still, many outstanding Germans donated their talents and lives to the Southern cause and long rosters of Texas Germans under arms for the Confederacy indicate that allegiance. Generalizations on the Texas-Germans tend to overlook those who either quietly exercised their right to independent opinion or actively engaged in the war on the side of the Confederacy.

The German-Americans in Texas received the news of secession with mixed emotions, but for the most part the element would have preferred to remain neutral had it not been for circumstances which pressed them for a decision.¹ Banishment and conscription legislation in addition to already

¹ Lonn, op. cit., p. 424.

active Vigilance Committees caused fear, confusion and frequently determination to leave the state.

Responsible for much confusion among the Texas Germans was the Banishment Act of August 8, 1861, and its later interpretations. This act required all males over fourteen years of age who were hostile to the Confederacy to leave the state within forty days.² Any Union men remaining were to be arrested if they should refuse to pledge their loyalty to the Confederate States.³ Within three years after this act was passed the chief executives of Texas had gone on record as favoring the confiscation of the property of all who had left the state to avoid military service.⁴ On the other hand, those Germans who left the state believed they did so with full rights to return after paying allegiance to that side most in sympathy with their convictions.

One of the most important problems in regard to the German Unionist sentiment in Texas was the question of conscription and whether or not a draft legally applied to foreigners who lived in the state. Here another subject was raised which caused a great deal of confusion among the Germans. The degree of military service owed by an alien has

²Proclamation by the President, Confederate States, August 14, 1861, Messages and Papers of the Confederacy (Nashville, 1905), I, 131-132.

³Ibid.

⁴Message to Texas Congress, February 5, 1863, Manuscript of Executive Journal of Texas, November 1861-November, 1863, p. 150.

long been in dispute. Modern writers generally agree that a foreign national should not be required to serve in the military of an adopted land. During the Civil War however, the question was an open one, and it was held that any resident should serve in the defense of his home while not compelled to serve in regular units of the military. Further, it was generally believed that an alien should have sufficient time to vacate the state should any change occur in the law.⁵ Allegiance to Texas, however, was strongly upheld by Governor Lubbock who recommended that anyone refusing to serve should be forced to leave the state.⁶

Both Union sentiment and opposition to conscription caused a mass exodus from Texas in which the Germans took a large part. San Antonio especially saw much of this sentiment. A federal officer reported from that city that Texas could be turned over to the Union for a few thousand dollars. Placards in the German language appeared in San Antonio reflecting the tension existing between the German and Anglo-Americans.⁷ A German militia company of San Antonio fled to the North after refusing to take a required oath of allegiance to the Southern cause.⁸ So many were using the roads from San Antonio to Monterrey and Matamoras in hopes of reaching Mexico immediately

⁵ Lonn, op. cit., p. 383.

⁶ Message to Texas Congress, November, 1863, Manuscript of Executive Journal of Texas, p. 150.

⁷ Claude Elliot, "Union Sentiment in Texas," Southern Historical Quarterly, L (July, 1946-April, 1947), p. 456.

⁸ Lonn, op. cit., p. 124.

that the Confederacy was forced to take measures to prevent migration. Many left with the avowed purpose of joining with residents of other countries and offering their services to the Union. From Monterrey, a United States consul reported that a recruiting program there could easily enlist 3,000 combatants.⁹ Dispatches from a Confederate agent in Mexico told of Texas Germans in Mexico who were poisoning the minds of the natives against the Confederacy.¹⁰

A large number of those who were successful in leaving the state before the Confederacy restricted migration formed or joined Union military units. E. J. Davis, later governor of Texas, organized a Texas Union regiment in Mexico. Davis was captured in March, 1863, near Matamoras but was later released to continue his activities. He led 200 Texans against Laredo in 1864, but his forces suffered defeat and he was transferred to Louisiana.¹¹ Approximately 1,965 Texans fought on the side of the Union during the Civil War. Many hundreds of others were scattered and not accounted for.¹²

The First Texas Cavalry, a Union force, was organized by General B. F. Butler in New Orleans and consisted almost

⁹ Elliot, op. cit., p. 459.

¹⁰ Lonn, op. cit., p. 424.

¹¹ Elliot, op. cit., p. 451.

¹² James Farber, Texas, C. S. A. (New York, 1947), p. 98.

entirely of Texas Germans. Other Union units having large numbers of Germans from Texas were the Second Texas Cavalry, which later merged with the First, Vidal's Partisan Ranger Company and Hart's Cavalry Company.¹³

General opposition to conscription among the Germans of Texas can be vividly illustrated by activities taking place in two counties, Gillespie and Fayette. In the latter, a count of applications for physical disqualification for military service discloses three times as many such requests as in any other counties even though the Germans had long been considered the most robust of settlers.¹⁴ Early in the war Fayette County had few men in the ranks of the Confederate military. In fact, the county, with 1,300 registered voters, could muster only 150 for service. In comparison, Milam County, with 700 voters but with no German inhabitants to speak of, furnished 400 combatants to the South.¹⁵ At Round Top, in Fayette County, a petition was circulated to encourage resistance to conscription and the plea was answered by many of the residents who evaded service by hiding in nearby woods. One group of forty such evaders set out for Brownsville and was followed by a military committee of ten which attempted to force the Unionists to return to Fayette County. The committee was discouraged by the resistance of the fugitives

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Elliot, op. cit., p. 474.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 471.

and returned without accomplishing its mission. Reinhard Hildebrandt was jailed for insisting that the people of Fayette County evade conscription. Hildebrandt also carried on similar activity in neighboring Washington County.¹⁶ Gillespie County, a hotbed of Unionist activity, failed from the beginning to cooperate in filling the Confederate ranks. Jacob Kuechler, enrolling officer in Gillespie County, enlisted only those of Union sentiment. He also required an oath that those enrolled would support him as commanding officer of any military unit formed.¹⁷

First of the many reports to be filed in regard to the evasion of military service in the German counties was made by T. J. Thomas of New Braunfels. On April 20, 1861, Thomas reported that fellow citizens were evading enrollment and nothing short of a draft would stir them to serve.¹⁸ Early in 1862, A. J. Bell, enrolling officer in Austin County, reported to Confederate officials that this county was in open rebellion against conscription. Bell related that opposition meetings were well attended by representatives from nearby counties of Washington, Fayette, Lavaca and Colorado. Further details of the report revealed that in Industry the enrollment officer had been driven from his place of duty. Bell was

¹⁶ Weyand, op. cit., p. 256.

¹⁷ Elliot, op. cit., p. 463.

¹⁸ Lonn, op. cit., p. 312.

disturbed by rumors that military units were being formed in the area, and he requested that a full regiment be sent to maintain order.¹⁹

In Lavaca County a considerable number of Germans failed to answer summons to duty. Some left the state for Mexico and others disguised themselves as women. Even a larger number evaded service outside the state by enrolling in home guard units. Anglo-American desertion and evasion of service was likewise heavy in Lavaca County.²⁰

Until March, 1862, however, Union sentiment was relatively unorganized among the German counties in Texas. In that month, General P. O. Hebert, commanding officer of the Military District of Texas and Louisiana, declared martial law in Texas and required that all males over sixteen years of age take an oath of allegiance to Texas and to the Confederate States of America.²¹ This action resulted in a wave of activity throughout most of the counties of heavy German population.²² Recognition of the German element was evident in the fact that the declaration was printed in both the English and German languages.²³

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Paul C. Boethel, The History of Lavaca County (San Antonio, 1936), p. 75.

²¹ Dallas Herald, June 14, 1862.

²² Elliot, op. cit., p. 463.

²³ Lonn, op. cit., p. 312.

First of the actions taken by the Confederacy to thwart Texas German opposition to military service was the dispatch to Fredericksburg of two companies of Confederate troops. Governor Lubbock, realizing the danger in Gillespie County, sent to the town of Fredericksburg, hotbed of Union sentiment in the county, Captain James Duff after dismissing the company recruited by the Unionist enrolling officer, Kuechler. Duff, arriving in the area, camped some fifteen miles from Fredericksburg on the Pedernales River and immediately issued orders establishing martial law and declaring himself Provost Marshal.²⁴ Captain Duff issued further orders allowing a period of six days for all citizens to report to him in order to take the required oath of allegiance to the Confederate States. Additional instructions gave Duff authority to treat all persons not taking the oath as traitors and to send out patrols to break up all unauthorized meetings.²⁵ One member of Duff's detachment later reported that Duff instructed some of his associates to bring back no prisoners. This statement is substantiated by the fact that no trooper objecting to the hanging of the German settlers was assigned to the searching patrols.²⁶ Duff's severity in dealing with German-American captives is further illustrated by the action of several

²⁴ Elliot, op. cit., p. 466.

²⁵ Lonn, op. cit., p. 428.

²⁶ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 116.

Confederate patrols which hanged at least ten Germans after exploring the countryside for Unionists.²⁷

The first decisive step taken by the Germans to maintain their neutrality was the organization of the Union Loyal League. In June, 1862, eighteen representatives from Gillespie, Kerr, Kendall, Medina, Comal, and Bexar counties met for the purpose of organizing a league to protect the frontier settlements from Indians and to insure that no settler would be coerced into Confederate service. This modest beginning was amplified some days later when 500 such delegates met at Bear Creek in Gillespie County to discuss the organization of military companies and to pledge themselves not to render service to the South.²⁸ Of those meeting at Bear Creek, two thirds were German or of German parentage. Another third was Anglo-American.²⁹

The organization of military units was no innovation in the German counties since many of the Turnverein had been holding military drills after 1860.³⁰ At Bear Creek, three companies were organized and company officers elected to command them. The Gillespie County Company was headed by Jacob Kuechler and a Kendall unit was formed to serve under E. Kramer. Henry Hartman was elected to command the unit formed from men

²⁷ Lonn, op. cit., p. 428.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 426.

²⁹ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 113.

³⁰ Lonn, op. cit., p. 93.

residing in Kerr County.³¹ Major Fritz Tegener was chosen to command the battalion thus instituted. After electing an advisory board, the meeting adjourned to await further developments.³²

Tegener was well aware that Duff's military unit near Fredericksburg was concerned with the murder of an informer, Steward, who had relayed information to the authorities regarding the League. The murder probably had no official connection or sanction of the Union League but lots had been drawn among certain of its members for the task of disposing of Steward.³³ With this knowledge and additional reports of Duff's treatment of those rounded up by the Confederate patrols, Tegener called a meeting of the advisory board of the Loyal League. A decision was made to disband the military companies in accord with Duff's ultimatum to prove that the Germans had no intention of offering armed resistance to the Confederacy.³⁴ Those of the League who desired to leave Texas were invited to meet with Tegener at the head waters of Turtle Creek on August 1. Eighty persons met on that date and organized themselves for a journey to Mexico. Of the eighty

³¹ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 105.

³² Lonn, op. cit., p. 427.

³³ Report by Brigadier General Hamilton P. Bee, October 21, 1862, War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington, 1883), series 1, LIII, 454-55 (hereafter cited as O. R.).

³⁴ Ibid., p. 428.

men meeting, only sixty-one actually departed on the evening of August 1, 1862.³⁵ After several days travel, the Germans were joined by one Mexican and five other Americans including Captain John W. Sansom, a trapper and guide well acquainted with the country.³⁶

Tegener and his troops set an easy pace since they believed their exit to be perfectly legal under the provisions of martial law which allowed any person desiring to leave Texas to do so within the specified period. No attempt was made to evade any party which might have been following the Unionists. Tegener pitched camp on the Nueces River on August 9, about twenty miles from Fort Clark and one day's march from Mexico. Twenty-eight of the group returned on this date to Fredericksburg by another route. Earlier on the same day Tegener was warned that strangers had been sighted and that it would be wise to continue the journey until the Mexican border was reached, but Tegener refused to alter his plans to camp until morning. His choice of location had been poor as to defense and guards were not properly posted.³⁷

Meantime, Tegener's plans to leave Texas had been revealed to Captain Duff by a traitor, and Duff arranged to

³⁵Ransleben, op. cit., p. 106.

³⁶Albert Schutze, Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Book of Comfort Texas (San Antonio, Texas, 1929), p. 36.

³⁷Lonn, op. cit., p. 429.

pursue the Germans.³⁸ Chosen to command the detachment ordered to follow the Unionists was Lt. C. D. McRae, a member of the Second Texas Mounted Rifles. The command was heterogeneous, consisting of troops from McRae's own unit as well as from Captain Duff's Texas Partisan Rangers and a number of state troopers of Taylor's battalion. McRae's orders were to halt the Germans before they reached the border, and he was well equipped to do so, having approximately twice the number of men commanded by Tegener.³⁹

On the evening of August 9, Duff's troops discovered the camp set up by Tegener, but lacking specific information needed to advance on the Unionists, McRae ordered his unit to camp some three miles from the German site and wait for daylight before attacking.⁴⁰ Shortly before the ordered time for the advance, on the 10th, a German was captured by the Confederates and was offered his life for detailed information on the Unionist camp. The captive declined to help the Confederates in any way and was hanged.⁴¹

One hour before daylight, firing was commenced by the Confederates after an accidental encounter between the forward Confederate position and two German guards.⁴² Figures vary

³⁸ James Farber, Texas, C. S. A. (New York, 1947), p. 38.

³⁹ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁰ Lonn, op. cit., p. 427.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 430.

⁴² Ibid., p. 427.

as to the number killed and wounded on both sides after an hour of sustained gunfire, but at least thirty-two Germans lost their lives. The Confederates suffered two killed and eighteen wounded.⁴³ Of the German Unionists surviving the unprovoked attack, some were later killed attempting to cross the Rio Grande while others were taken prisons and hanged at White Oak Creek in Gillespie County.⁴⁴ Three survivors were able to complete their journey to Mexico and after walking 900 miles to Vera Cruz they managed passage to New Orleans. Here they joined the First Texas Cavalry Regiment and served until mustered out in 1865 at San Antonio.⁴⁵

The number of dead on the Unionist side in this encounter might have been considerably less had it not been for two facts. First, the Germans had been very poorly armed; only forty of the Unionists were armed properly, others having only pistols or no weapon of any type. Even those having shoulder weapons were placed at a disadvantage since they were of the muzzle loading type.⁴⁶ Secondly, many of the total German casualties were killed after the battle. McRae's later report stated that the Unionists had asked for and received no quarter. This report was contested by a member of McRae's

⁴³ Lt. C. O. McRae to Commanding Officer, April 18, 1862, O. R., series 1, IX, 614.

⁴⁴ Elliot, op. cit., p. 465.

⁴⁵ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

own command, an Englishman who testified that a number of wounded were brutally murdered. The trooper told of seeing the German wounded stripped of their clothing after being shot through the head and left without burial.⁴⁷

Three years after the "Nueces River Massacre," a group of citizens, including survivors of the encounter, proceeded to the scene of the battle to collect the remains of those who had given their lives on August 10, 1862. The bones were taken to Comfort, Texas, where today stands a monument inscribed "Treue der Union" dedicated to those who had remained true to their convictions.⁴⁸

The encounter in August on the Nueces River had little effect on opposition in the German counties to force enrollment in the Confederate military. Small parties continued to seek asylum in Mexico, and continued reports of Unionist activity were received by Confederate officials.⁴⁹ On November 28, 1862, Major J. P. Flewellen, Superintendent of Conscripts, received a message from A. J. Bell stating that meetings were being held among Germans in Austin County. Attendance at the meetings was reported to be in excess of 400, among whom were a number of native Americans.⁵⁰ One public

⁴⁷ Schutze, op. cit., p. 42.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁹ Message from A. J. Bell, November 28, 1862, O. R., series 1, XV, 887, 890, 925-926.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 887.

meeting drafted a message to the governor demanding that those he drafted first be clothed and armed before rendering service. Bell was not able to rely upon the local militia to quell disturbances because of its sympathy toward the settlers, and he therefore requested that one well-armed company be sent to maintain order and disperse the meetings.⁵¹

Bell's report was relayed to the headquarters of the military district, but proper action was not taken immediately to alleviate the situation in Austin County. Upon receiving Bell's report, Flewellen immediately informed Captain E. P. Turner, Assistant Adjutant General, of the Austin County trouble and asked for support for Bell.⁵² Major General Magruder, acting upon Flewellen's message, dated December 4, 1862, instructed the enrolling officer in Austin County to assign all foreign conscripts to regiments outside Texas.⁵³

Further complications arose in Austin County in late December, 1862. A report dated December 23 was sent by Bell to Major Flewellen dealing with an incident taking place in the town of Industry. Bell told of draftees who refused to be sworn into the military service and of the local enroller who was beaten with iron bars. One week later another message

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 926.

⁵² Message from Major J. P. Flewellen, December 4, 1862, O. R., series 1, XV, 886.

⁵³ Message from Captain E. P. Turner, December 6, 1862, O. R., series 1, XV, 890.

from Bell reported mass meetings in the upper part of Austin County attended by delegates from Austin, Washington, Fayette, Lavaca, and Colorado counties. Instructions were issued at these meetings for the organization of military units of both infantry and cavalry.⁵⁴

General W. G. Webb, of the state troops, provided information regarding the meetings among the Texas Germans in Austin and Fayette counties in late 1862 and early 1863. Webb reported to his superiors from La Grange that assemblies had been taking place for months in Austin and Fayette counties and that, in his opinion, the seeds of disaffection were being sown by native Americans. The general was convinced that most of the Germans would have remained loyal to the Confederacy had it not been for actions of Americans who capitalized on latent unionism. All Germans refusing to join in the denunciation of the Confederacy in these meetings were threatened, according to Webb.⁵⁵ The situation was made more explosive by the fact that those loyal to the South, in enough numbers to actually maintain order, had given their arms to those entering service. This left the Unionists with a distinct advantage. For this reason, Webb asked for a full regiment of armed cavalry.⁵⁶ In reply to the request, General Magruder

⁵⁴Message from A. J. Bell, January 3, 1863, O. R., series 1, XV, 925.

⁵⁵Message from General W. G. Webb, January 4, 1863, O. R., series 1, XV, 926-929.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 928.

dispatched to La Grange several Arizona companies and declared martial law to exist in the counties of Colorado, Fayette, and Austin.⁵⁷

Fayette County citizens had still more objections to voice in connection with the military draft. On January 4, 1863, 120 residents of Biegel Settlement met and signed a declaration to General Webb stating that they had no intention of taking an oath to the Confederate States since they had no interest whatever in the cause of the war. Complaints were made that soldiers were not receiving sufficient pay and no provisions were being made for the families of combatants.⁵⁸ Governor Lubbock responded to the Biegel Settlement protest by visiting the inhabitants, and his efforts temporarily calmed the opposition and led to increased enrollments. Many of the Fayette County Unionists, however, threatened to hoist a white flag and join Union forces at the first opportunity.⁵⁹

The situation in the upper counties during the Fayette County disturbances was equally hostile. Governor Lubbock was informed on January 3, 1863, by Colonel A. L. Webb, that German meetings were being held in Fredericksburg. The

⁵⁷Message from General J. B. Magruder, January 9, 1863, O. R., series 1, XV, 936-937.

⁵⁸Georgial Tatum, Disloyalty in the Confederacy (Chapel Hill, 1934), p. 48.

⁵⁹Lonn, op. cit., p. 436.

colonel reported that inflammatory speeches condemning the draft were delivered by radicals numbering up to one third native Americans.⁶⁰ Apparently many were awaiting the time when they could join a nearby Union military unit.

The quieting of unionism in the German counties followed action taken by both the governor of Texas and local military commanders. On January 4, 1863, Governor Lubbock issued a proclamation ordering all organizations hostile to the Confederacy to disband immediately. Any person found in a state of rebellion would be turned over to proper courts of law for trial.⁶¹ Reports of declining Union activity began reaching the headquarters of General Magruder shortly after the issuance of Lubbock's proclamation. Magruder was able to inform Governor Lubbock by February 11, 1863, that the German Unionist movement had subsided and many of the opposition had been delivered to civil authorities.⁶² By the end of 1864, the internal revolution had become passive in nature, but the Unionists welcomed the increasing number of Confederate defeats.⁶³

Even though many Texas Germans, during the years of the Confederacy, displayed an attitude of disaffection toward

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 433.

⁶¹ Proclamation by Governor, January 4, 1863, Manuscript, Executive Journal of Texas, January-November, 1863, p. 20.

⁶² Message from General J. B. Magruder, February 11, 1863, O. R., series 1, XV, 974-975.

⁶³ Elliot, op. cit., p. 476.

the South and its causes, it seems that this element was dealt with, in some cases, out of proportion to its danger. Even members of the Confederate military forces dispatched to deal with the Unionists complained of undue persecution of many of the German settlers. An English Confederate soldier, while a member of Captain Duff's detachment in Gillespie County, evidenced a distaste for the treatment of German families in the area. He wrote of Duff's unwarranted destruction of homes and livestock which resulted in a lasting animosity among the Germans both Unionist and loyal.⁶⁴ As late as April, 1865, prisoners held in Fredericksburg, Gillespie County, were hanged as traitors to the Southern cause.⁶⁵ Many of these Texas Germans killed during the reign of terror were aged and supporters of large families.⁶⁶ Ex-Governor Houston placed the responsibility for such "offensive acts" of the Confederate military on "Jeffy Davis."⁶⁷

Specific incidents of brutality during Duff's encampment in the vicinity of Fredericksburg were numerous. Even before the Nueces exodus affair, Duff hanged four men, three of whom were non-Germans and the other the remaining kinsman of Fritz Tegener, Gustav Tegener.⁶⁸ Many German males, after being

⁶⁴ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 12.

⁶⁵ Lonn, op. cit., p. 437.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 236.

⁶⁷ Tatum, op. cit., p. 49.

⁶⁸ Bennett, op. cit., p. 145.

placed under arrest, were reported as escapees, but were soon discovered hanging by their necks from nearby trees. One settler was given a pass to freedom by Duff; the German was found the following morning with a slit throat, his body suspended from a tree near the Confederate camp. Still another example of Duff's handiwork was the murder of an old farmer who was led from his home on pretense of attending a trial. After mounting his horse for the journey, the German was shot in the back in full view of his wife.⁶⁹ Captain Duff's actions at this time may well have contributed to his later court martial and removal from the service.⁷⁰

Captain Duff was not solely responsible for the undue harshness used to subdue Unionism in the German counties. Not content with his questionable victory at the Nueces, Lt. McRae returned to Gillespie County to hang some fifty men accused of sympathy with the Union. Gillespie County understandably held bitter feelings for a long period as a result of this murderous treatment.⁷¹ Not necessarily the fault of the Confederates were incidents occurring in Alleyton, Texas, where local enemies of the German element were employed as guides to ferret out Unionists. For personal reasons these guides purposely led Confederate troops to the homes of innocent

⁶⁹ Lonn, op. cit., p. 236.

⁷⁰ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 121.

⁷¹ Elliot, op. cit., p. 466.

Germans who later complained of rough treatment suffered at the hands of the guides.⁷²

Of the problems faced by the Confederacy in Texas, the German-American opposition was of relatively high importance, but was perhaps overemphasized by Confederate officials as a positive threat to Confederate authority. Unionism was strong among the Texas Germans and throughout the history of the German settlements there is evidence that these new Americans were dedicated to the institutions of their adopted nation. This dedication fostered in the German settlers, many of whom had seen the results of civil war, a distaste for the secession of the Southern States.⁷³ In the records of Bexar, Comal, Gillespie and other counties settled by Germans are found hundreds of applications for citizenship completed as soon as legally feasible.⁷⁴ Indeed, the German immigrants were, for the most part, prepared to take up their responsibilities as American citizens.

The positive danger of German-American sentiment in Texas was given an undue amount of attention by the Confederate civil and military officials. Indeed, a substantial degree of support given the Southern States by this element seems

⁷² Message from Lt. Col. H. L. Webb, February 18, 1863, O. R., series 1, XV, 982.

⁷³ Lonn, op. cit., p. 424.

⁷⁴ Ransleben, op. cit., p. 79.

to have been overlooked. Though many Germans left the state in order to join Union forces, many others enrolled and served well in Confederate companies. The first call for Texas volunteers was met by Germans of the Houston Turverein, the best drilled company in the state. The initial volunteer company of Texas was recruited from the ranks of the Turverein, and the unit was the first to serve under fire on Texas soil under E. B. H. Schneider.⁷⁵

Comal County counted three companies in Confederate service. Captain G. Hofmann led one of these units under Sibley's New Mexico command. Another served under Wood's Regiment with Captain Podawill as commanding officer. The remaining company was an infantry unit which saw action in Louisiana under J. Boses.⁷⁶

Three predominately German companies served the Southern cause from Gillespie County. Many of the Gillespie County Germans joined units enlisted in Comal and Bexar counties as well. Company E of the First Texas Cavalry was composed mostly of Gillespie County men as was the Thirty-first Texas Cavalry under brigade commander Captain Frank Vander Stuchen of Fredericksburg. Dr. William Keidel, first chief justice of Gillespie County, served as physician of the Thirty-first. Several home guards units were organized in Gillespie County

⁷⁵ Lonn, op. cit., p. 124.

⁷⁶ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 110.

and many of those enrolling were German-Americans. One of these units consisting of forty men, was commanded by Captain Theodore Brauback. Forty-six others served in the Gillespie Rifles under Captain Charles Nimitz. Similar units of from forty to sixty men were led by Captains Krauskopfe, W. J. Focke, William Wahrmund and Jacob Kuechler.⁷⁷

Hailing from Fayette County was the Long Prarie German Company. The roster of the La Grange Company disclosed all members of that unit to be German. Captain Z. M. P. Rabb commanded other Fayette County Germans in a company in Confederate service.⁷⁸

DeWitt County Germans enrolled in large numbers in home guard units which, although committed to duty in Texas only, nevertheless were available to the Confederate military. Robert Kleberg organized men of DeWitt County into the Coletho Guards and C. Eckhardt led the York Town Hulan Reserve Company. The Concrete Home Guards were commanded by M. G. Jacobs. These units were subject to call by the governor of Texas in cases of invasion or insurrection.⁷⁹

I. M. Strobel of Lavaca County enrolled men not only from his home county but from Fayette and Colorado counties

⁷⁷ Inventory of County Archives, No. 86, p. 8.

⁷⁸ Weyand, op. cit., p. 271.

⁷⁹ Inventory County Archives, No. 52, p. 12.

to form Company F, 8th Cavalry. Henry Holtzclaw of Hallettsville, in Lavaca County, served in a Confederate company in the grade of lieutenant. Louis Turner, a German immigrant from Lavaca County, became a Confederate hero, serving as a bugler in Company D of Whitfield's Legion. Ferdinand Arnim, a native of Germany, also from Lavaca County, served at Chickamauga where he suffered a wound and capture only to escape and return to active Confederate military duty. Also serving at Chickamauga was F. W. Neuhaus, First Lieutenant, who saw action at Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain.⁸⁰

Despite Texas German contributions to the Confederacy, for the most part, the element remained loyal to the Union throughout the war and was to display this allegiance following the conflict by changed political affiliation. Even in view of the emergency of the times, Confederate officials in Texas displayed undue severity in dealing with German-American unionism as a danger to the internal security of the state. Probably the most pointed example of the German desire to offer no armed resistance was the action of the Loyal Union League which, in view of mounting criticism, disbanded its formal military companies and offered only leadership to those desiring to leave the state. It is highly possible that Tegener and his band of German unionists, due to their knowledge of the terrain, could have defeated any Confederate

⁸⁰Boethel, op. cit., p. 72.

force pursuing them. No such move was made however, and the Unionists entered into a battle only after being attacked. Unionist sentiment among the Texas Germans indeed gave the Confederate civil and military officials some basis for alarm, but the methods utilized to combat the danger appears to have placed in jeopardy the rights and safety of many Germans who offered no active threat.

CHAPTER IV

PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION

With the collapse of the Texas Confederate government in May, 1865, an opportunity arose for conservatives to place themselves in control of the former Confederate state under the Johnson plan of reconstruction. This control was soon to be relinquished, however, to the radical elements as those of Unionist sentiment found favor in the new strength of the Radical Republicans in the national congress. Those of the Texas Germans who had thrown in their lot with the Union during the Civil War were to find themselves first in a position to criticize and demand the removal of the conservative, Johnson-inspired government, and later to take advantage of congressional reconstruction.

By the spring of 1865, Texas had incurred a debt of \$8,000,000. This debt and the confused state of governmental affairs after the flight of the major state officials brought Texas into the period of reconstruction with small hopes of quickly reestablishing an efficient state government,¹ but

¹Lewis W. Newton and Herbert P. Gambell, A Social and Political History of Texas (Dallas, 1932), p. 293.

conservative spirit was high since no major invasions or defeat had brought Texas to her knees.²

Reconstruction caused little bitterness among the German-Americans of the state.³ In particular, the counties of Fayette, Gillespie and DeWitt displayed little such feeling on the part of the German population. For the most part, the Germans in these counties found the trials of reconstruction much easier to bear than did their neighbors.⁴ DeWitt County, with 32 per cent of the population German in 1860, actually progressed during the period. Rudolf Kleberg was responsible for establishing the first county newspaper, the Cuero Star, by 1871. Two years later Guadalupe Academy was founded in DeWitt County.⁵

Bastrop County, with considerable numbers of Germans, had been divided about evenly on the question of secession, and many, therefore, were in accord with congressional reconstruction principles while an equal number felt that the term was abusive even by definition. Social cleavages in many of the communities of the county resulted from this difference in opinion. Freedom of the Negroes in Bastrop County caused the KKK to become quite active.⁶

²Testimony of Major General David S. Stanley, Washington, February 7, 1866, Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction (Washington, 1866), Part IV, 40.

³Inventory County Archives, No. 86, p. 10.

⁴Ibid., No. 75, p. 23.

⁵Ibid., No. 62, p. 62.

⁶Ibid., No. 11, p. 12.

Though earlier German affiliation with the Democratic Party had been waning in the late 1850's, the reconstruction era actually brought a complete break. Texas Germans joined the Republican Party en masse during the period and have remained there in large numbers since.⁷ An analysis of the German language press in the immediate post-war period demonstrates this change in political affiliation. By 1869 these papers had firmly affiliated themselves with the Republican cause. The San Antonio Press, Free Press and Flake's Bulletin are listed in 1869 as Republican organs. The Union, in the German language, was added in 1869, as was the Express, under the editorship of A. Siemering of Bexar County. Even the Neu Braunfelser Zeitung was printed in 1869 within the Republican sphere of influence.⁸

Not until June, 1865, did any reorganization of the state government take place. In that month, President Johnson appointed Andrew J. Hamilton provisional governor of Texas.⁹ Hamilton was a noted Unionist who had fled to the hills above Austin as the Confederacy began to take action against Unionist activity. In 1862, he made his way to the North and was commissioned a brigadier general in the Union military.¹⁰

⁷Benjamin, op. cit., p. 110.

⁸Texas Almanac 1869 (Galveston, 1869), p. 193.

⁹Proclamation by President, June 17, 1865, Messages and Papers of the Presidents (New York, 1914), V, 3519.

¹⁰Elliot, op. cit., p. 451.

The new governor's arrival was delayed, and in his absence General Gordon Granger, with 18,000 troops, assumed command of the state on June 19. Granger exercised his authority on that date by declaring that the Negroes of the state were free and that all laws passed since 1861 were null and void.¹¹

Hamilton's arrival in Galveston on June 21 was welcomed by Unionists of that city and a delegation of those in sympathy with his appointment met the new governor upon his landing. A similar welcome was later extended to Austin.¹² Immediate duties facing Hamilton were the registration of the "loyal" citizens by a qualifying oath of amnesty which would entitle them to participate in the election of delegates to a constitutional convention, and the calling of such a convention to revise the state constitution of Texas so as to insure re-entry into the Union.¹³

A proclamation calling for the election of delegates to attend a convention was issued by Hamilton on November 15; the delegates chosen were to meet one month later, February 7, 1866. Less than one half of those who qualified in the preliminary steps cast votes in the election of delegates. Inclement weather kept many from the polls.¹⁴

¹¹Newton, op. cit., p. 300.

¹²Charles W. Ramsdell, Reconstruction in Texas (New York, 1910), p. 57.

¹³Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 94.

¹⁴Newton, op. cit., p. 301.

As the delegates met in February, 1866, in Austin, their duties were well outlined. Among those things to be considered during the convention were providing the emancipation of the Negro, repudiation of the state debt incurred during the war and the determination of the status of the new freedmen. It was also necessary to provide a procedure for the election of state officers who would assume duties under the new constitution.¹⁵

Those in attendance readily alined themselves into several factions. Most conspicuous was a minority of radical Unionists which was intent on depriving the former Confederates of all power in the state. At the other extreme was a group of former secessionists who maintained a position of uncompromising hostility toward the Unionists. The third faction, the moderates or conservatives, reported in such a number as to control the convention.¹⁶

Of the German delegates elected, few were found in the ranks of the moderates. These delegates joined forces from the very beginning of the proceedings with the radical Unionists. I. A. Paschal and Edward Degener, the leading Radicals, represented Bexar County which had a large number of German-Americans. From Comal County came Daniel Murchison, also alining himself with the Radicals. Other of the German

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 94.

county representatives were John Ledbetter, an extreme Radical from Fayette County, George Smith, Colorado County, and J. E. Ranck from Kerr and Gillespie counties. John Ireland was elected from Guadalupe County and D. C. Giddings from Washington County. All of these delegates found shelter in the camp of the Radical Unionists.¹⁷

First of the many ensuing clashes between these factions came over the question of the legality of secession. On February 20, a radical leader, Saunders pressed for a declaration stating that secession had been illegal ab initio. Those delegates of heavily German populated counties backed this proposal almost to a man. Degener, Ledbetter, Murchison and Ranck all registered their approval, placing themselves without a doubt in the Radical camp. The outcome was disappointing to the Radicals; enough conservative opinion prevailed to defeat their motion. Secession was declared to have been illegal but not because of its inherent nature. The Civil War had made the move illegal in its failure, according to the majority of the 1866 convention.¹⁸

During the entire convention the Radicals continued to count among their numbers the representatives of the German counties. Especially active was Edward Degener of Bexar

¹⁷ Roll of Delegates, February 7, 1866, Journal of the Texas State Convention 1866 (Austin, 1866), pp. 1-5.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

County. Degener was born in Brunswick, Germany, in 1809 and served twice as a member of the legislature in Anhalt-Dessau and also as a member of the first German National Assembly in 1848. He migrated to the United States in 1850 and settled in Sisterdale, Texas, where he devoted himself to farming. During the Civil War he was imprisoned for Unionist attitudes and upon being released opened a grocery concern in San Antonio.¹⁹ Degener's interest and attitudes, though somewhat extreme, are typical of the 1848-1949 migration of educated Germans to Texas. His Union sentiment was shared by both sons who lost their lives serving the Union forces.²⁰

Degener's actions in the 1866 convention centered on the question of Negro rights. He led a move in the convention to provide that Negroes in Texas be extended the privilege of entering the state courts. Those of the German county delegates who backed Degener in this attitude were Murchison, Ledbetter, George W. Smith and Ranck.²¹

The Radicals found a consistent champion in Degener who was one of the few delegates of any shade of opinion not reluctant to demand full Negro suffrage. In this connection, Degener offered a minority report on February 24, stating that it was the duty of the convention to extend suffrage to every

¹⁹Walter Prescott Webb, ed., The Handbook of Texas (Austin, 1952), I, p. 482.

²⁰Faust, op. cit., p. 500.

²¹Journal of the Texas State Convention, 1866, p. 94.

male person who had resided in Texas for one year. The qualification for this right was the ability to "understandingly" read and write the English language or the citizen's native language.²² This qualification pertained to the Germans recently migrated as well as to the Negroes of Texas. The eleven-page report submitted by Degener referred to those rights guaranteed or not prohibited under the Articles of Confederation, original state suffrage qualifications and rights implied in general history.²³

While action taken by the delegates from the southwest German counties clearly shows their support of civil rights for the freedman, it is unusual that they were reluctant to release such a program to their constituents. A proposal to publish and distribute, in German, A. J. Hamilton's message on Negro rights was voted down with the help of Degener, Ledbetter, Murchison, George W. Smith and Ranck.²⁴ With the German delegates in the Radical camp it is probable that this move was a political one designed to prohibit Hamilton's receiving support from the southwest counties even though Hamilton was offered the Radical nomination for governor during the convention.²⁵ On the other hand, the delegates

²²Ibid., pp. 80-91.

²³E. Degener, The Minority Report on Suffrage (Austin, 1866), pp. 1-16.

²⁴Resolution, February 10, 1866, Journal Texas State Convention 1866, pp. 27-28.

²⁵Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 95.

representing the Texas Germans might have been aware that immediate extension of civil rights would not receive sanction from their constituents. It might well be that the sentiment of the mass of Texas Germans was not represented by Degener and the other Radical delegates. Testimony given during February, 1866, in Washington before the Joint Committee on Reconstruction points to the fact that most of the vocal Germans in Texas favored suffrage but only after a period of education of the Negro. Most Texas Germans believed it necessary to insure that the Negro was first able to understand political issues. Thus immediate suffrage would be unwise.²⁶

The question of civil rights was taken up along with the other prescribed duties of the convention during the first month. Meanwhile many of the delegates worked behind the scenes to organize for the renewal of an old proposal, the division of the state. In April, both the western and eastern delegates agreed on a plan of presentation. On the second of that month an ordinance for division passed by a margin of nearly two to one.²⁷ Among those voting in the affirmative were delegates Murchison and Ranck. Of the seventeen negative votes cast none were from Radical Unionists except that of

²⁶ Testimony of Governor David S. Stanley, February 7, 1866, Report of Joint Committee on Reconstruction, IV, 42.

²⁷ McConnell, op. cit., p. 46.

John Hancock of Travis County.²⁸ This victory on the part of the Radicals suffered from later legislative action putting the question to rest but with a record of considerable support.

Before adjourning, plans were agreed upon for the election for state officers in June. Nominations for these offices were made during caucuses held on April 2, 1866. Names appearing on the rolls of the Radical caucus included I. A. Paschal of Bexar County, H. Ledbetter of Fayette County, Edward Degener of Bexar County and Daniel Murchison from Comal County. A declaration of principles of the Radical faction called for devotion to a republican form of government and to the Union, an extension of civil rights to the new freedmen and the ab initio illegality of secession. E. M. Pease was chosen as the Radical gubernatorial candidate. This nomination had been declined earlier by A. J. Hamilton, the presidentially appointed provisional governor.²⁹

In contrast, the Conservative caucus called on its nominee, J. W. Throckmorton, to oppose Negro suffrage and Negro political equality. Throckmorton was praised for his opposition to Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner as conspirators against the Johnson governments and constitutional liberties

²⁸ Vote on Ordinance, April 2, 1866, Journal of Texas State Convention 1866, p. 357.

²⁹ Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 95.

in favor of military rule. Acceptance of the nomination by Throckmorton was received on April 13.³⁰

By the time nominations had been completed, the convention factions had become organized bodies. The general results of their work had been conservative, and the Radicals were to exercise every means available to criticize this conservatism. The main points of criticism were failure to declare secession ab initio, giving the freedmen only a portion of the Radical civil rights program and the failure to submit all the convention ordinances to the people of Texas. No popular approval of convention ordinances on secession and freedmen was provided, and no amendments dealing with these subjects were included in the list of constitutional changes submitted to the people of the state in June during the general election of officers. Criticism of the lack of popular participation in this phase of reconstruction was voiced through the San Antonio Herald, the Austin State Gazette and the Houston Telegraph. It was the general contention of these journals that the delegates had been more interested in public office than in the welfare of the state by using caucus nomination and by showing so little regard for the opinion of the people at large.³¹

During the June election for state officials the Radical-Conservative animosity was clearly in evidence. The Radicals

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

were accused of attempting to overthrow legally constituted government in favor of military rule. On the other hand, the Conservatives were attacked for their sympathy with the late rebellion and were accused of attempting a renewal of such action as well as hoping to nullify the act of emancipation. Radical forces also attacked the Conservatives for their actions in driving those of unionist leanings from the state. The fact that Texas Radicals were now becoming dependent upon support of their counterpart on the national level was reflected in a message from the Attorney General of Texas to Washington requesting that the restoration of government in Texas be postponed.³²

With the mechanics for the election complete, Texans were to register their votes in June, 1866, for either J. W. Throckmorton, the conservative candidate, or E. M. Pease, who was supported by the Radicals with the Germans found in the ranks of that faction. The results of the election placed Texas under the Johnson-inspired, conservative government which would later fall prey to Radical action on the national and state levels. Most of those Texas counties which returned a majority for E. M. Pease were those containing a large number of Germans. The early Democratic support furnished by this element was now vividly shifting to an allegiance which, to the Germans, meant adherence to the principles of the

³²
Ibid., pp. 109-111.

Union. Official records indicate eleven counties supported E. M. Pease, and of these at least six had considerable numbers of German-Americans.³³

Again the location and proportion of German Anglo-American residents give the key to German action. The western counties of Comal, Gillespie, Kendall, Medina and Mason backed the Radical candidate with substantial majorities. The vote in Comal County favored Pease by 363 to 190, in Gillespie by 261 to 52, in Kendall by 135 to 17, and in Medina and Mason counties by respective votes of 217 to 19 and 61 to 8. In those farther from the frontier, Throckmorton received a majority of the support. DeWitt County returned 408 for Throckmorton and 95 for Pease. In Colorado County, Throckmorton defeated Pease by 582 to 329. Bexar County, with the foreign and native element about equally proportioned, returned 1,030 for Pease and 966 for Throckmorton.³⁴ The 1866 election represents the beginning of a long history of Texas German support of the Republican Party.

Inauguration of the new state government took place on August 9, 1866, even before President Johnson approved of the action. This approval came, however, on August 13, and on that date Johnson instructed all troops to pay the same degree

³³Manuscript of Executive Department Journal 1866, pp. 224-227.

³⁴Ibid.

of allegiance to Throckmorton that had been shown to Hamilton.³⁵ The new conservative government was fully recognized on August 20 when Johnson announced that the late rebellion in the state of Texas had come to an end.³⁶

Though the Radicals were disappointed in the outcome of the election of 1866, their strength and influence was not injured. Throckmorton's fears of this faction's influence in Congress is indicated in letters written by the new governor to Washington assuring the chief executive that Texas was devoted to the Union and that the new state government was in full accord with the Johnson program of reconstruction.³⁷ This action was prompted by widespread Radical charges in Texas and in Washington that the Throckmorton government was disloyal.³⁸

The newly elected eleventh legislature, meeting in the fall of 1866, was composed, in the majority, of Conservatives, and it soon fell under the control of that political faction. Few of the convention delegates had been elected to the legislature, regardless of allegiance. Most of the convention Radicals had retired to private life, but those who were

³⁵ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 113.

³⁶ Proclamation by President, August 20, 1866, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, V, 3636.

³⁷ Resolution by Texas Senate, September 26, 1866, Journal of the Senate of Texas, Eleventh Legislature (Austin, 1866), pp. 25, 32, 264.

³⁸ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 112.

elected to the legislature came from the southwest German counties.³⁹ Daniel Murchison of Comal County was the most outstanding Radical of the convention period to take a seat in the new legislature. Representing the Germans of southwest Texas in the Senate were R. V. Cook of Colorado and Fayette counties, A. O. Cooley of Comal, Kerr, Gillespie and Medina counties and W. B. Knox of Bexar County. In the House of Representatives were R. W. Black of Medina, Joshiah Shaw of Colorado, Fritz Tegener, leader and survivor of the Nueces Massacre, from Kerr and Gillespie counties, N. Thomas of Washington and Fayette counties and W. F. Upton of Washington County.⁴⁰

Even without Degener and the convention radicals, state division received consideration in the new legislature. No action was to be taken on actual partition but presentation of the issue foreshadowed later attempts backed by legislators from the German sections. The House failed to adopt a division resolution by 29 to 44 but the Senate, on August 24, 1866, approved a measure: "That the Committee on State Affairs be instructed to inquire into the propriety of dividing the state, as seemed to be contemplated by the late convention, and report, as soon as practical, by bill or otherwise."⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

⁴⁰ Members of the Legislature of the State of Texas from 1846-1939 (Austin, 1939), pp. 51-56.

⁴¹ Resolution by Senate, August 24, 1866, Journal of the Senate of Texas, Eleventh Legislature, p. 59.

This move to divide the state is reflected in a similar congressional proposal on January 3, 1867, by Congressman Stevens of Pennsylvania. Lack of interest defeated this national attempt at division, but its introduction does indicate the success of Texas Radicals who spent the winter of 1866-1867 in Washington.⁴²

Before adjournment on November 13, 1866, the eleventh legislature displayed its conservative spirit in its selection of United States senators and its action on the Thirteenth Amendment. Neither Burnett nor Roberts were allowed to take their seats upon reaching Washington, and both returned to Texas to register their alarm at having seen the influence wielded by Texas Radicals in the national congress. The selection of Burnett and Roberts, plus the rejection of the Thirteenth Amendment by a vote of 70 to 5, indicated the prevailing opinion in the legislature that Texas had no debt to pay for her part in the late rebellion.⁴³ The rejection of the senators, however, foretold a long period of reorganization and political struggle in the state. Reconstruction had by no means ended; it had only begun.

⁴² McConnell, op. cit., p. 50.

⁴³ Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 117-125.

CHAPTER V

CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

While the Texas Germans belonging to the Radical faction had made themselves conspicuous during the 1866 convention and to a smaller degree in the eleventh legislature, their position during the Johnson government was restricted to one of criticism. However, with the victory of the Radicals on the national level and the reorganization of the government of Texas, this faction found itself in a position to exercise increased influence from their stronger position of favor with the Congress of the United States.

Little surprise was registered in Texas in March, 1867, when the Radical forces in Congress passed the First Reconstruction Act of that year. On March 2, 1867, this act declared that the Johnson recognized governments were to be provisional in nature and that no legal state governments existed in the former rebel states. It was provided that the ex-slave states be administered under five military districts, each with a general officer in charge. Texas was designed as a portion of the Fifth Military District.¹

General Philip Sheridan, already in New Orleans, was assigned duties of commanding the Fifth Military District and

¹Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 145.

in direct charge of Texas was General Charles Griffin. The military was given broad duties including the chief responsibility of insuring that a convention be called of both white and Negro delegates to frame a constitution suitable to Congress.² The appointment of these commanders soon revealed to Governor Throckmorton that the conservative state machine set up under recognition of President Johnson was to undergo modifications. Upon requesting an interview with General Sheridan, Governor Throckmorton was informed that no such talks were necessary and that the governor's only responsibility was to support the local military government and to recognize that the local commander had complete charge of state matters.³

With the passage of the Second Reconstruction Act of March 23, providing for the machinery of administering oaths for suffrage qualifications and the calling of a convention, General Griffin requested that Governor Throckmorton furnish a list of all voters and loyal citizens qualified to administer oaths, and such information was soon at the disposal of the commander.⁴

Opposition to the Throckmorton government had been in evidence since the triumph of the Conservatives in the election of 1866, but with the passage of the Reconstruction Acts

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. 149.

⁴ Ibid., p. 153.

the Radicals stepped up their campaign against the Conservatives. The Texas Radicals were furnishing information to the local military as to the condition of the state. Such reports emphasized the extent of lawlessness and rebel sentiment in Texas, with the result that the military soon began to rely on the services of the Radicals. General Griffin took advantage of such information to attempt the removal of Throckmorton. The first of such attempts was made on March 28 through a note to General Sheridan requesting that Sheridan remove Throckmorton on the grounds that outrages were being committed on "loyal" citizens under sanction of the governor. Endorsement of the message was forwarded to General Grant who advised the commander of the Fifth Military District to wait for additional authority before removing civil governors.⁵ Such authority was made available after July with the passage of supplementary reconstruction legislation. On July 30, Sheridan declared that since he was offering an impediment to reconstruction, Governor Throckmorton would be replaced by the Radical candidate for the position in 1866, E. M. Pease.⁶ The new governor was probably the best choice for the welfare of the state since his views were moderate and he enjoyed a close connection with the military.⁷

The most taxing of the duties of the new governor was the responsibility of filling the numerous vacancies in state

⁵Ibid., p. 150.

⁶Ibid., p. 169.

⁷Ibid., p. 172.

offices. Widespread dismissals had occurred while Throckmorton was in office due to the distrust felt by Griffin toward the governor. A large majority of these dismissals resulted from recommendations from Union Leagues and petitions from Radicals. Reports of difficulty in securing persons able to take the new loyalty oath were numerous in Milam, Red River, Bowie, San Augustine and Harrison counties, but no such difficulty was apparently encountered in the southwest counties which counted many Germans.⁸ On the contrary, records indicate that many removals were not filled in these counties at an early date either because of reporting procedures or reluctance of the German-Americans or their neighbors to assume responsibilities under the Radical program. Comal County reported all offices filled before the removals and none replaced by November 7, 1867. Four of the six officials reported prior to the removals were of German lineage. In Colorado County, all positions were filled before the mass removals and none had assumed office by the above date. Gillespie County likewise reported no appointments by November 7. At least three of the leading county officials in Gillespie County before removal were German.⁹

While the machinery of reconstruction was being established in the state, the Republicans were organizing as a

⁸
Ibid.

⁹Texas Almanac 1867 (Galveston, 1867), pp. 214-24.

state political party. Union League activity increased after the Throckmorton-Griffin split, and a convention of these leagues met in Houston in July, 1867. Twenty-seven counties were represented at the gathering, and E. M. Pease served at this first meeting of the future Republican Party in the state. The platform resulting from the political discussions called for free common schools and free homesteads without color distinction. The Conservatives were accused in the platform of being disloyal, and the military was praised for its administration of the state. Those delegates from the German counties assisting in the formation of this platform were H. Ledbetter of Fayette County and E. Cross of Comal County.¹⁰

With both political factions organized for the insuing struggle over reorganization of the state, orders from the local military commander set in motion the necessary machinery for the calling of a convention. Registration for determining whether or not a convention would be held was begun in early summer and was extended in September. Texas Conservatives changed tactics several times during the period of registration; first, it was decided to register all possible voters and then to insure that only a few cast approval of calling a convention. With the realization, however, that it was necessary to secure only one half of the total votes

¹⁰Winkler, Platforms and Parties, pp. 99-100.

cast for approval, the Conservatives strove to defeat the convention by ballot and finally to vote only for delegates pledged to oppose Negro suffrage.¹¹

General Winfield Hancock, who had replaced Sheridan, issued a call for an election to determine the calling of a state convention. The results of the balloting February 10-14, 1868, found the Radicals victorious with 44,689 votes cast in the affirmative and 11,440 declining the call of a convention.¹²

The decision having been made to call a state convention of delegates to satisfy the requirements of readmittance, and such delegates having been selected, the convention assembled in June, 1868. Only twelve Conservatives reported, and this position of a minority forced the faction to support the measures of Radicals representing moderate views of reconstruction. The Radicals taking seats in the convention rallied for leadership behind E. Degener and E. J. Davis, ex-commanding officer of the First Texas Union Cavalry. The total ninety delegates were composed of nine Negroes and ten Democrats, with the remainder being Republicans who quickly divided into two well defined factions. The Moderate Republicans, led by A. J. Hamilton, and the Ultra-Radicals, under E. J. Davis, soon found that their political goals were to be in direct contrast. These factions disclosed

¹¹ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 193.

¹² Ibid., p. 199.

exceedingly diverse allegiance as evidenced by the fact that the Ultra-Radicals counted within their ranks Morgan Hamilton, brother of the Moderate leader.¹³

The two major factions engaged in controversy from the very beginning. The first of these struggles came with the attempt to define and restrict the authority of the convention. With the Radicals in the majority, it was declared that the delegates represented not the people of Texas but the United States Congress and therefore should consider any question expressing the will of that body. Another point of controversy was the question of the legality of secession.¹⁴ Conservative thought had triumphed on this problem during the 1866 convention, and even with the Radicals now in the majority the same opinion prevailed. A compromise submitted by A. J. Hamilton brought the question to rest with the few Democrats present voting in favor of the move which declared that all laws not aiding disloyal elements in the state or in support of the late rebellion were to be observed.¹⁵ Other clashes of importance were over the franchise and the division of the state.

The previously debated proposal of the division of the state was renewed in the 1866 convention. Several alternative plans were presented; three of these differed widely in provisions, and a fourth was submitted by A. J. Hamilton

¹³Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 107.

¹⁴Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 206.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 210.

with the purpose of confusing the issue to defeat any concerted effort to divide. Support of the general plan to partition the state was reflected in the national Congress with the passage of the Beaman Bill advocating investigations to determine the most suitable procedure for division. Non-partisan political attitudes served as the basis for action on this question in the 1868 convention with eastern and western delegates combining forces regardless of politics. It was contended that the state had always suffered from the fact that its size prohibited efficient administration. The eastern delegates stated that their support of the move was based upon the fact that that section of the state always contributed most heavily to state maintenance and that it was unfair to continue the practice. This section also feared loss of control in state affairs to the Negro and foreign elements in West Texas which had generally alined themselves against East Texas.¹⁶ The Germans undoubtedly represented the foreign element thus designated. Germans had long been in contest with East Texas over slavery. The western counties rallied around a protest made by the German element during the war; that is, the Texas frontier had never enjoyed complete protection with the administration of the state in the hands of persons not concerned with the peculiar problems of the state.¹⁷

¹⁶McConnell, op. cit., pp. 51-64.

¹⁷Ibid.

On the recommendation of E. Degener, the convention passed a resolution on June 8, providing that a committee of fifteen be appointed to consider division and if advisable provide a plan for its execution.¹⁸ During the first session, however, this question of dividing Texas failed due to the diverse proposals submitted. More action was taken during the second session resulting in several moves toward division. On January 20, an ordinance was passed stating that in the opinion of the delegates, the state should be divided into several states of more convenient size due to conflicting interests and the general disorganization due to size. This ordinance was to be submitted to the national Congress, and in addition a commission was appointed to present to that body the facts making partition feasible and desirable. The commissioners were chosen from various sections of the state and two delegates at large, E. J. Davis and J. W. Flanagan, were also selected to outline to the national government conditions in the state of Texas.¹⁹

Victory for the divisionists, however, was made almost impossible by the action of E. J. Davis, who alienated many of the delegates through his constant disregard for rules of parliamentary procedure in an effort to place before the

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 53-54.

¹⁹ Ordinances Passed by the Constitutional Convention (Austin, 1870), p. 102.

convention only those measures acceptable to his faction.²⁰ Another factor assisting those opposed to division were mass meetings voicing disapproval of the scheme. On January 11, 1869, a mass meeting at San Antonio objected to division. Even though Newcomb, a staunch divisionist produced pro-division petitions from Bexar, Kendall, Karnes and Comal counties, many persons in these counties seem to have been of the opposite opinion. The Neu Braunfels Zeitung of January 23 announced that such petitions did not represent the intelligent, tax-paying citizens of Comal County; not one tenth of the citizens favored division according to this journal. The Zeitung went further to violently criticize Degener and Seimering, a German immigrant in the Radical camp, for leaving a false impression that the majority of the Texas Germans favored division.²¹

Probably the most outstanding move toward division was the appointment and subsequent work of a committee on state division. Members of the committee chosen to consider partition were Davis, Degener, Newcomb, Varnell, Morgan Hamilton and Jacob Kuechler. These delegates were instructed to draft a constitution for the state of West Texas. The basis for such instructions was the opinion that a section of the state

²⁰ Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 245.

²¹ McConnell, op. cit., pp. 84-86.

desiring to establish its independence could do so without consent from the remaining portions.²²

Even in view of the mass meetings held in the area of German settlement the actions of this committee represent to a large degree the sentiments of the Texas Germans. The document resulting from the work of this committee clearly indicated that several of the committee members were acquainted with Texas German opinion. The first twenty-three sections of Article I comprise a Bill of Rights, and include such provisions as civil and political rights for Negroes equal to those enjoyed by whites, and freedom of religious conviction.²³ These ideals are later reflected by German thought in 1873 with the drafting of a purely German-American political platform.

The new state which was to be established under this constitution was only vaguely outlined as to boundary, but the capital was definitely to be established at San Antonio, that is until 1871, when an election would be held to determine its permanent location.²⁴ Restrictions on suffrage clearly reflect the attitudes of Degener. No person who had "voluntarily aided or abetted the said rebellion in any manner" was permitted to register. This restriction included

²²Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 245-50.

²³Constitution of the State of West Texas, N. P., N. D., Microcopy, North Texas State College Library, pp. 1-4.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

editors or ministers who had written, preached or published words of rebellion. On the other hand, specific mention was made of the ability of those who had served with the Union to exercise the privilege of suffrage.²⁵ The inclusion in this document of a provision for popular election of United States Senators demonstrates the liberal political character of the Texas Germans.²⁶ Further influence of the German element in West Texas is seen in the provisions under this constitution by which the new state would aid immigration and institute liberal land policies to foreigners.²⁷

Final curtailment of the move to divide the state occurred in late January when A. J. Hamilton, leading the Moderates, brought about the defeat of additional proposals to insure that Texas would be partitioned. The growing strength of the Moderate faction by this time had placed the Ultra-Radicals in a much weaker position.²⁸

The interest of the German element was evidenced during the convention's proceedings in regard to patronage of the Texas press.²⁹ Contests for the supply of papers both to the convention and of its actions to the people of Texas resulted in victory for the Austin Republican and the San Antonio Express. It was also decided to endorse the publishing

²⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁸ Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 252-54.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

of 500 copies of the German language journal, Frei Presse. The Republican was awarded the job of publishing the journal of the convention after insistence of the Radicals among whom was A. Siemering, a German immigrant who had arrived in Sisterdale in the 1850's.³⁰

Remaining ordinances passed during the first session of the convention which were of importance to the Texas Germans included an authorization for granting of land to veterans of Union service. Specific reference was made of the First and Second Regiments of Texas Union Cavalry in which a large number of Germans had served. The basis for benefits under this provision for liberal land grants was devotion to the Union and suffering and slander which loyal citizens had endured.³¹ It is apparent that such action was designed to compensate not only veterans, but those of the Texas Germans who had undergone harsh treatment by the Confederate military.

The first session of the reconstruction convention of 1868-1869 adjourned on August 31, to meet again in December. By this time the state treasury was dangerously low with \$100,000 having been expended. Even the Moderates were prepared to forego continued sessions for some time and the Radicals, seeing the growing strength of the Moderates, desired time to regroup their forces for further attempts at enjoying some measure of success in the convention.³²

³⁰Ordinances Passed by the Constitutional Convention, pp. 6, 16, 43.

³¹Ibid., p. 33.

³²Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 229.

The period between sessions indicated the growing break in Radical ranks. Political organization for the national election of 1868 was undertaken even though Texas was denied participation due to unfulfilled requirements of official readmittance. The Republican convention, held August 12-14, suffered a continuance of the party schism begun during the convention. E. J. Davis ultimately led thirteen delegates from the convention for a separate meeting. The point of dispute was the now well-worn Ultra-Radical opinion that all state laws passed since 1861 should be declared null and void. Degener was among the bolters who drafted a platform recognizing the reconstruction legislation of the national Congress and endorsing the Republican nominees for federal offices. Also included among the bolters were Julius Schutze of Bastrop County and Francis Kettner, delegate from Mason County.³³

Even though no votes could be cast in Texas for national offices, the presidential election of 1868 overshadowed state affairs. It was hoped that a sham election might be held after President Johnson issued orders that the military was not to interfere with state elections, but it was soon discovered that the orders were not to apply to Texas. The Radicals busied themselves during the election with the task of enlisting support for their program of extended restriction of suffrage. Their argument during the convention adjournment

³³Winkler, Platforms and Parties, pp. 112-16.

was set forth in the Radical organs, the Austin Republican and the San Antonio Express.³⁴

With the opening of the second session of the convention in December, 1868, the Ultra-Radicals found themselves in a weak minority. The delegates reported in much smaller numbers than at the opening of the first session, and membership never reached its former strength. Though in minority, the Ultra-Radicals continued the fight for their original program. Ordinances providing for elections of state and district officers brought forth a protest condemning the action of the convention for failing to include the Radical ab initio doctrine. This minority report was signed by Degener and Jacob Kuechler and others of the staunch Radicals.³⁵ Only three days after this dispute the convention broke up in confusion. Troops were employed to maintain order as the convention adjourned by factions. The Davis group took leave of the proceedings on February 6, 1869, and the Hamilton faction called adjournment on Monday, February 8. Records of the last few days were never printed and were suppressed by the later Davis government.

The results of the 1868-1869 convention were not impressive when compared to the earlier meeting of state delegates in 1866. The latter delivered a complete constitution and

³⁴Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 239-242.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 256-257.

remained in session only forty-five days in doing so. The convention of 1868-1869 produced only a partial document and required 150 days of work. Expenditures of the earlier convention totaled \$70,000 and the later body spent \$200,000 during its sessions.³⁶

The outcome of the convention was disappointing to the Ultra-Radicals but their campaign was not abandoned. After final adjournment the two Republican factions appointed separate delegations to solicit support from Washington for the coming state elections. The delegations arrived in the national capital late in February and the Ultra-Radicals began at once to seek assistance for dividing the state, extending suffrage restrictions and postponing the state election of 1869. Degener was among the several Ultra-Radicals appearing to ask for these actions, and his selection was wise since he represented the German Unionist sentiment so often reported to Congress during the committee hearings held on conditions in the former slave states.³⁷ Even with such a convincing argument, the Ultra-Radicals received very little solace from their journey. The only immediate victory was postponement of state elections from July to November, but additional assistance was given the Davis forces as the state election drew near.³⁸

³⁶Winkler, Texas Handbook (Austin, 1952), p. 402.

³⁷Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction, pp. 39-40, 72-78.

³⁸Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 108.

On returning to Texas the Davis faction of the Republican Party was soon recognized by General Grant as the official state party, and in October, as a result of this recognition, Governor Pease resigned in protest. Grant's support was soon followed by official recognition by the Republican National Executive Committee, probably through the efforts of such members of the Congress as Butler, Boutwell, Sumner and Creswell.³⁹ Thus the party of the Texas Germans was recognized in the state for the first time and it would continue to serve their needs after their break with the Democratic Party.

In preparation for the November election the Moderate Republican forces chose A. J. Hamilton as a gubernatorial candidate, and the Davis faction chose their leader in a convention attended by A. Siemering who served as a member of the platform committee.⁴⁰ The list of Radical candidates included Jacob Kuechler who had gained recognition for his Unionist activity during the Civil War. Anxiety on the part of the Moderates caused them to change the platform of the party several times, but the supporters of Hamilton were confident that the Democrats of the state would support their conservative candidate. This support was cleverly reduced

³⁹ Ramsdell, op. cit., pp. 273-276.

⁴⁰ Winkler, Platforms and Parties, p. 117.

by the Radical Republicans who advised the Democrats to stand alone in the election.⁴¹

No public announcement of the election results was made until January 8, 1870, when it was declared that the new governor was E. J. Davis. Even then no figures were supplied as to the number of ballots cast for the two leading candidates.⁴² The German element was represented in the new state government by Jacob Kuechler, Land Commissioner, who had migrated to Texas in the early 1850's and had failed in the attempt to establish the Utopian community of Tusculum. He had opposed secession and been censored for early irregularities as an enrolling officer during the war. Kuechler had been successful in reaching Mexico after the ill-fated Tegener expedition, and he remained there until the fall of the Confederacy. His tenure as Land Commissioner after 1870 was renewed in the election of 1872.⁴³

On January 11, 1870, General Reynolds announced that the new Texas legislators included Edward Degener, and at this time the election figures were released. According to Reynolds' figures, Hamilton had received 39,092 votes to 39,901 cast for the victor, E. J. Davis.⁴⁴ With official recognition

⁴¹Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 279.

⁴²Ibid., p. 286.

⁴³Winkler, Texas Handbook, p. 975.

⁴⁴Ramsdell, op. cit., p. 286.

from Reynolds the Davis Republicans moved to establish a party journal. Siemering assisted in the purchase of the State Gazette which immediately began functioning as the official Republican organ under the title State Journal. Siemering's allegiance apparently underwent a complete reversal since the earlier period of Texas German persecution. At that time he had served as a lieutenant under Captain Duff in the Texas Partisan Rangers. Newcomb took over the position of editor so as to best represent the views of the administration which he also served as Secretary of State.⁴⁵

The assumption of office by Davis and the Radicals initiated a period of Republican rule by the new governor who found support for his policies among the new members of the Texas legislature which included the names of many German-Americans. The roll of the Twelfth Legislature included several German-American senators, Reinhard Hellbrand of Bastrop and Fayette counties, Theodore Hertzberg of Comal, Gillespie, Bexar, Mason and Kerr counties. Among the members of the House were William Scholtman of Washington County, Julius Schultze of Bastrop and Fayette counties, Fritz Tegener representing Comal, Gillespie, Kendall, Kerr, Mason and Bexar counties. Robert Zapp and Adolf Zoeller reported to represent several of the southwest counties as did F. E. Grothaus.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 287.

⁴⁶ Members of the Legislature of Texas, pp. 57-68.

Senator Hertzberg readily indicated his interest in the Texas Germans by successfully recommending that Davis' inaugural address be printed in the German language to be distributed to the German-Americans throughout the state.⁴⁷

While the Democrats registered complaints against Davis many Republicans began organizing to defeat the governor in the next election. Morgan Hamilton, driven into the Moderate camp by manipulations of his seat in the Senate, and Ex-Governor Pease were quite active in the Tax-Payers Convention of 1871. The meeting was held in September and called upon the citizens to refuse to pay taxes which were exorbitant in any way. A. J. Hamilton headed a committee appointed to investigate and report all phases of the Davis abuse. George Pfeuffer of Comal County served as vice president of the convention, and A. F. Trenckmann represented Austin, Bastrop, and Bexar counties in the deliberations.⁴⁸ The sentiment displayed in the convention was repeated in the special election which followed, resulting in the loss of legislative seats to Degener and many other Radicals.

On the state level the Radical Republicans had already begun to be replaced and the forces opposing Davis mustered in 1872 for the national and state elections of that year. The Republicans in convention in May, 1872, emphasized the

⁴⁷ Journal of the Senate of the Twelfth Legislature of Texas (Austin, 1870), p. 13.

⁴⁸ Winkler, Platforms and Parties, pp. 124-27.

necessity for harmony in view of the national schism affecting the strength of the group. The Texas Republicans endorsed Davis' administration as well as the Grant government. Degener was chosen a presidential elector and Julius Schutze served on the committee for platform and resolutions.⁴⁹ The following month found the Democrats organizing with the support of many former Radicals. No outstanding German-American delegates appeared on the Democratic convention roll, but the counties of Colorado, Bexar, Bastrop and Washington were represented.⁵⁰

The election following this political alinement resulted in favor of Greely on the national scene, and the legislators chosen greatly reduced the Texas German representation in the state legislature. This new body, predominantly Democratic, met in Austin in January, 1873, and immediately began repealing the Davis-inspired legislation. Especially amended were the state police and militia laws as well as some provisions for registration and election.⁵¹ No outstanding German names appear in the Senate of the Thirteenth Legislature and the House membership was reduced in its German-American strength. G. Hoffman of New Braunfels represented Comal, Gillespie, Kendall and Kerr counties; M. E. Kleberg was seated from the

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 141.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵¹ Newton, op. cit., pp. 311-313.

district composed of Victoria, Fayette and Bastrop counties, and J. F. Leyendecker reported from Colorado and Lavaca counties. Julius Neoggerath represented Bastrop and Fayette counties and E. T. Schmidt reported from Harris and Montgomery counties.⁵² Subsequent legislators include German-Americans from only the heaviest of German populated counties of southwest Texas. The decline apparently resulted from the allegiance paid the Republican government which was repudiated after 1872 by the Democrats of the state.

After four years of rule by the Davis administration, Texans, both Democrats and even a portion of the Republican Party, were anxious for a change in state administration. The Democrats met in September, 1873, to call upon the people of the state to support Richard Coke as governor. The increase of Democratic support was indicated by the convention attendance. Well over 700 delegates arrived to condemn the Republican Party. George Pfeuffer of Comal County served in the convention and his presence probably reflects the continuing conservative attitude as voiced earlier by Lindheimer.⁵³ Dallas served as host for the Republican Party in August as 550 delegates met to nominate E. J. Davis and a ticket including Jacob Kuechler for Land Commissioner. The platform

⁵²Members of the Legislature of Texas, pp. 69-77.

⁵³Winkler, Platforms and Parties, pp. 157-163.

indicated a much more liberal approach to state government than had earlier been put in practice. Mention was made of state aid to immigration, and this may have been an appeal to Texas Germans who, disappointed with the Davis government, had been taking part in Democratic meetings. The Republican convention of 1873 further recognized its German supporters by recommending to the voters of Texas a political platform drawn up by representatives of the German speaking element.⁵⁴

The platform mentioned by the Republican Party resulted from a called convention of the German element meeting in Austin in 1873 for the purpose of setting forth the principles advocated for efficient state government. The Texas Germans had made their break with the Democratic Party, long holding their support, and had by 1873 been introduced to the Republican Party as it appeared in Texas under the leadership of E. J. Davis. Neither of these political parties had completely satisfied the needs of the Germans and the convention of 1873 represents a desire on the part of the Texas Germans to set forth their own particular politics. There was no returning to the Democratic Party and yet there were objections to the Davis administration. The Staats Zeitung explained that the convention was open to all German speaking Texans who desired to discuss the political situation in the state. The delegates professed to have no intention of establishing a separate

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 154.

political party, but machinery was set up allowing for later meetings each year and for continual correspondence with local organizations through a state executive committee.

The Germans, during this first truly political state convention, demonstrated a liberal approach to state politics.⁵⁵ The delegates to the convention made a call for free public schools, repeal of all laws aimed at racial discrimination and revised state taxation. The collection of state revenue, according to the platform, should never exceed essential governmental activity and should never be levied to support in any manner the business interests of the state. Somewhat in contradiction to the revenue clause, the platform advocated a state supported plan for aiding immigration to Texas. These planks closely resemble the provisions of the Constitution of West Texas and outline the liberal policies which, at an earlier time, explained the adherence of the Germans to the Democratic Party.⁵⁶

Results of the state election for governor in 1873 point out the general dissatisfaction with the four-year administration of E. J. Davis. Coke received 85,549 and the governor only 42,663 votes. Davis, after a battle with the Democrats over the legality of the election, retired from office on January 17, 1874.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 151-154.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Newton, op. cit., pp. 312-313.

The final Democratic victory in Texas found the Texas Germans firmly in the Republican bloc where they were to remain even though there had been considerable disappointment with the results of the Republican government of 1869-1874. Had there been no final cleavage of the Union led by Southern Democrats, the Texas Germans would possibly have retained their early affiliation with the Democratic Party which had failed them seldom in principles until their devotion to the Union forced them to repudiate the party of their fathers.

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