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## War-Time Portraits of the Gringo: American Invaders and the Manufacture of Mexican Nationalism

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### Article abstract

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# War-Time Portraits of the Gringo: American Invaders and the Manufacture of Mexican Nationalism

MALCOLM BRUCE COLCLEUGH

## Résumé

*The 1846 American invasion of Mexico sparked an intensely nationalist response among members of Mexico's Liberal and Conservative intelligentsia. This paper documents and analyzes that nationalist reaction. To rally the nation to the cause, Mexican intellectuals constructed and presented to the Mexican masses frightful, negative caricatures and stereotypes of the invading Americans. An abject race of vile and perfidious usurpers, Anglo-Saxon invaders were, the intelligentsia warned, intent upon the spoliation of Mexico and the enslavement of her people. If not stopped by a vigorous prosecution of the war, they warned, the greedy and cruel heretics from the north would soon descend over the whole nation, raping Mexico's daughters along the way and desecrating her holy shrines. Disseminated through newspapers, political pamphlets and broadsides, it was against such caricatures that the allegedly positive features of the Mexican identity were defined and delineated. Against the dark and fiendish stereotypes of the Americans stood, in stark and powerful contrast, the moral and benevolent Mexicans. Where the American caricature evoked the dreadful image of a marauding, degenerate infidel, the Mexican portraiture called forth the equally evocative image of an upright, generous defender. While the Americans fought because of their greed, the Mexicans, it was maintained, resisted for the honour of their families, their Church and their motherland.*

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*Au Mexique, l'invasion américaine de 1846 a provoqué au sein de l'intelligentsia libérale et conservatrice un nationalisme d'une intensité particulière. C'est en vue de rallier les masses du pays à leur cause que les intellectuels mexicains ont construit et propagé des caricatures et des stéréotypes aussi négatifs que terrifiants, à travers journaux, tracts et placards politiques. Les envahisseurs anglo-saxons, avertissait-on, cette race d'usurpateurs viles et perfides, entendaient ravager le Mexique et subjuguier son peuple. Seul un engagement vigoureux à continuer la guerre pourrait empêcher ces hérétiques venus du nord de s'abattre sur la nation toute entière, de violer ses filles et de profaner ses sanctuaires. C'est en contraste avec ces caricatures que les traits présumés positifs de l'identité mexicaine furent définis. Aux stéréotypes d'Américains sombres et diaboliques on opposait la bienveillance et la moralité des habitants du pays. Là où l'image de l'Américain évoquait la terreur, le maraudage et la dégénéres-*

*cence de l'infidèle, le portrait du Mexicain renvoyait à la figure également suggestive du défenseur intègre et généreux. Alors que les envahisseurs étaient mus par leur cupidité, on maintenait que les Mexicains résistaient pour l'honneur de leurs familles, de leur Église et de leur patrie.*

El pueblo...de la república, cree generalmente que ustedes son heréjes y bárbaros y sanguinarios.<sup>1</sup>

The problem for the historian seeking to comprehend and to explain particular patriotisms and/or nationalisms, as opposed to simply documenting or describing them, rests upon the theoretically more difficult and elusive abstraction of patria and/or nation. For the purposes of the present study, the normal focus of traditional theorists of nationalism, on language, race, culture, and their territorial confines will be eschewed for the less tangible, but parallel and equally-important roles of cognition and perception in nation building. The theoretical focus here will be on the nation as an "imagined community" (in Benedict Anderson's celebrated vernacular), and, accordingly, this paper will examine the process by which Mexico, during its war with the United States, came to define and "imagine" itself.<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that language, race and culture were irrelevant to the development of the Mexican national consciousness; on the contrary, it will be argued that such phenomena were central to how Mexicans thought about themselves. The emphasis here, however, will focus on the mechanism of invention itself and the emotive symbols evoked in the process.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, the American invasion inspired in Mexico a wave of patriotic sentiment. Political broadsides, pamphlets, circulars and, especially, the nation's newspapers articulated this patriotism.<sup>4</sup> But to what symbols of nation did such articulations refer? What, in fact, was it that Mexicans were invited to defend? During the war with the United States, Mexican intellectuals came to identify the characteristics of *mexicanidad* by setting positive images of Mexicans alongside distinctly negative caricatures of the invaders. That is, the Mexican nation defined its patriotism and itself in contradiction to a tangible, menacing other.

David Brading has shown that this process of self-definition, with a particular reference to a hostile outsider, was not a new phenomenon. Indeed, he argues that much of Mexico's national mythology may be traced to the corporate solidarity of Creole patri-

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1. "Carta de un ciudadano mexicano á un oficial del ejército norte-americano," political pamphlet (Atlixco, 1847), Nettie Lee Benson Latin America Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Broadside Collection [hereafter cited as BLAC], p.25.
  2. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1982), *passim*.
  3. In this regard I am indebted to the seminal collection of essays assembled and edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). Especially see Hobsbawm's introductory essay, "Inventing Traditions," 1-15.
  4. Bruce Colcleugh, "The Yankee Invasion of 1846: Crucible of Elite Nationalism in Mexico," *The Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism/Revue Canadienne des Études sur le nationalisme*, forthcoming.

ots of the colonial era.<sup>5</sup> Brading argues that from conquest down to independence, New Spain's Creole sons looked on jealously as the influence and power of Spanish emigrants, many of common birth and low education, grew at their own expense and was exercised in the *consulados*, *audiencias* and *ayuntamientos*. Bewildered by their predicament and seeking some inner explanation for their disinheritance, Creoles turned, Brading explains, to histories and accounts of the conquest in which the cruelties of Spain were denounced (such as in the histories of Juan de Torquemada, Bartolomé de Las Casas, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora and Francisco Javier Clavijero) and in which the Creoles were depicted as paying the penance for conquest with their own current poverty and misery. According to these accounts, he argues, the natives and the Creoles suffered alike in the legacy of the conquest and therefore, it was believed, their destinies were intertwined.<sup>6</sup> This bonding took the form of an inchoate *indigenismo*, according to Brading, and was constructed in response to the negative stereotypes of the Creoles created by the theorists of the Spanish Enlightenment, and the prejudices which resulted from them. Hence, it was in response to hostile, prejudicial outsiders that Mexican Creole patriotism was later transformed into the potent, anti-*Gachupín* sentiment of Fray Servando Teresa de Mier and then into a revolutionary ideology and justification for independence.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, up until independence, it was the *Peninsulares* or *Gachupines* from Europe, not the Americans, who were resented in New Spain and were the touchstones against which an elite Creole identity was delineated. Indeed, the majority of ordinary Mexicans, prior to 1821, knew little and cared even less about the United States. Aside from vague notions that it was a nation of protestants and that it had, like Mexico, waged a war for national independence from Europe, the United States was, for most Mexicans, *terra incognita*.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the first two decades of Mexican independence, however, ignorance and indifference about the United States had changed first to admiration, then to ambivalence, and finally to complete distrust and suspicion.<sup>9</sup> Early U.S. recognition of Mexico's independence had been gratefully received in Iturbide's empire and had gone some distance in allaying the worry among the new rulers regarding America's intentions. It also aroused in many an acute curiosity about their northern neighbour and its institutions. Hailing from Mexico's far flung regions, many of the new nation's provincial elite came to openly admire the American federal system which, they believed, delegated significant powers to men just like themselves.<sup>10</sup>

5. David A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots and the Liberal State* (Cambridge, 1991) 39, 53-4, 97; also see his *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1985), 4-9.

6. For the influence of Torquemada in this regard see Brading, *The First America*, 292; for Las Casas see 58-62, Sigüenza y Góngora, 363-4, Clavijero, 450-62.

7. Brading, *Origins*, 24-66; *The First America*, 583-602.

8. Gene M. Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846: An Essay on the Origins of the Mexican War* (Albuquerque, 1975) 17-25.

9. Stanley C. Green, *The Mexican Republic: The First Decade. 1823-32* (Pittsburgh, 1987), 220-27; Brack, *Mexico Views*, 169-70.

10. Radical Liberal Lorenzo de Zavala typified the glowing admiration felt by some Mexicans for the United States. See his *Viaje á los Estados Unidos del Norte de America*, [1834] in *Obras* (México, S.A., 1976), 11-187 passim.

Gradually, however, as the aggressively-stated American policy objectives began to clash with Mexico's perceived national interests, admiration for the United States first waned and then evaporated. By the end of the 1820s, all but the most obsequious of America's admirers had traded in their gratitude and appreciation for a wary suspicion. When the United States assisted the Texan rebels in their independence efforts throughout 1836 and then rewarded them with prompt diplomatic recognition in March of 1837, Mexicans were outraged.<sup>11</sup> Accompanied as they were by numerous and increasingly cacophonous American claims against the Mexican government, these acts seemed to be proof positive of American bad faith.<sup>12</sup>

Thus by 1844, when the John Tyler Administration negotiated the annexation of Texas, Mexican opinion of the Americans had already evolved from general suspicion to fear, outrage and open animosity. In May, the American *Chargé d'Affaires* at Mexico informed Foreign Minister Bocanegra that such a treaty did exist and had been submitted to the Congress for approval.<sup>13</sup> The Mexican government's response was vitriolic. In addition to a long litany of other abuses, Bocanegra roared, and despite Mexico's forbearance and good faith, the United States had now proven itself to be a "usurper" and "aggressor" nation.<sup>14</sup>

Though Tyler's initial Bill failed to pass in the U.S. Congress, a later amended version passed in both houses and was signed by Tyler on 1 March 1845, just before the inauguration of the expansionist James K. Polk. Polk had recently been elected on a Democratic Party platform which included the American annexation of Texas, and it was now left to his administration to convince the Texan government also to ratify the annexation. Mexican intellectuals viewed these developments with a mixture of astonishment, exasperation and outrage. By January of 1845, Mexico City's daily and weekly newspapers, most of which were Liberal, were vehemently condemning the United States. "The usurpation of Texas" declared the editors of *La Voz del Pueblo*, was "the result of cold calculation, of the detained premeditation of a perfidious and ambitious nation." They continued:

Why do they [the Americans] today knock us down? Why do they violate, so scandalously, the faith of our pacts? Why don't they consider us a nation? Why do they treat us like the Creeks and the Cherokees, like the Blackfoot and the other errant tribes whom they throw off their lands in order to seize control, hunting them down like savage

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11. David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon and the Mexican War* (Columbia, 1973), p.71-72; José María Bocanegra, *Memorias Para la Historia de México Independiente, 1822-1846* (México, [1892] 1986), 733-34.

12. Manuel Urbina II, "The Impact of the Texas Revolution on the Government, Politics, and Society of Mexico, 1836-1845," Doctoral dissertation in history, University of Texas at Austin, 1976, 21-55, 300-3.

13. Benjamin E. Green to José María de Bocanegra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Mexico, 23 May 1844, in William R. Manning, ed., *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States, Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860* [hereafter IAA], Volume VIII, Document 3528.

14. Bocanegra to Green, Mexico, 30 May 1844, IAA, Document 3529.

beasts, and with whom they celebrate, today, decorous treaties with all of the formalities of state, but which tomorrow they will break?<sup>15</sup>

Such was the mood of the nation when, in March, Herrera's Foreign Minister, Luis Cuevas, delivered his report on the Texas issue to the Mexican Congress. In his report, Cuevas suggested that recognizing Texan independence might be the only way left for Mexico to avoid a war with the United States. Prefacing his report with the exhortation that war should always be avoided, Cuevas declared that Texan independence was, perhaps, preferable to an expensive, possibly devastating campaign, which the country could not afford. As long as Texas would agree never to annex itself to the United States, the Minister continued, Mexico would henceforth be prepared to hear the Texans' proposals for official Mexican recognition of their independence and for the forming of diplomatic relations with Mexico.<sup>16</sup>

Liberal as well as Conservative newspapers were aghast and condemned any sort of negotiation for the independence of Texas. This was a disastrous policy, claimed *La Voz del Pueblo*, born of an unconscionable naiveté.<sup>17</sup> Granting recognition to an independent Texas, not controlled by a European power, would be tantamount to ceding Texas the right to join the American union. Indeed, for many Liberals, only the re-admission of Texas to Mexico with full department status and rights would alleviate the current crisis.<sup>18</sup>

That Texas had rejected this option, however, left the nation only one honourable course. Many felt that Mexico must respond with force to the American annexation of Texas. Talk of independence for the anglo-Texans would only encourage the Americans, these militants believed. "Woe to Mexico," if in any way it rewarded the Americans for this "great scorn [vilipendio]" of the republic, this "cowardly and treacherous usurpation." In annexing Texas, many felt, the United States had "brazenly unmasked itself" unashamedly revealing "the wantonness of the ambition which has devoured it for years." In all of the civilized world, where people respected the "rights of nations," the American annexation had been seen for what it was, an "infamous business," and everyone recognised that the Americans had shown "scorn for all [of Mexico's] warnings."<sup>19</sup> Indeed, according to the editors of another federalist newspaper, *El Estandarte Nacional*, Mexico's problems with the usurping "Anglo-Saxons" could never be solved through negotiations. These people only understand brute force, it was asserted, and the Mexicans were ready and able to teach them a lesson. They continued:

We will not allow the glories of our fathers to be stained [by outsiders]. If they knew how to give to us our motherland and our freedom, spilling much of their blood in the

15. "Guerra á Tejas y á Los Estados Unidos," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Marzo de 1845, p.2.

16. "Declaración de Guerra," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 16 de Abril de 1845, p.4.

17. Ibid.

18. "La Admisión," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 3 de Mayo de 1845, p.7; for the liberal view of the evil effects in Mexico of Texas independence, see "El Ministro de Relaciones y Nosotros," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 9 de Abril de 1845, p.3.

19. "Declaración de Guerra," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 16 de Abril de 1845, p.4.

process, then we know how to spill ours in conserving and sustaining the one and the other.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, for many, it was inexplicable that Foreign Minister Cuevas had not issued a forceful response to this anglo-American effrontery. What had happened to Mexico's audacity and daring? Mexicans, it was asserted, should be alarmed by the fact that their leaders "have forgotten how to throw an arrogant intruder out of the house."<sup>21</sup>

Curiously, this shrill criticism was initially directed solely at the Foreign Minister himself, and not the government generally. This may have been as much a function of the fact that Cuevas was an erstwhile Conservative now in the cabinet of a *Moderado* Liberal government, as it was a deserved reproach. Indeed, it was even a bit ironic that the *puro* press chose Luis Gonzaga Cuevas as its main target. After all, he had been among the earliest and most vociferous of the Conservatives to denounce and reprove the Americans. Not only had Cuevas understood and feared the United States, but he had predicted its developing expansionism since his posting as Ambassador to France.

Born in Lerma in July 1799, he studied at the Colegio de San Ildefonso where he excelled in law and philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Becoming Secretary of the Prefecture of Mexico in 1825, he received his first posting in the foreign office the following year. Rising quickly through the ranks, Cuevas was appointed *Chargé d'Affaires* to Prussia and then to France. In Paris, he sought French support for Mexico's struggle to retain Texas.<sup>23</sup> The assistance and encouragement then being offered Texas by the United States was, he argued, a hostile act that jeopardized the good relations of the United States and Mexico.

During this period, Cuevas developed a rapport with General Anastacio Bustamante, then exiled in France. Years later, when Bustamante returned to Mexico and assumed the Presidency, he appointed Cuevas Minister of Foreign Relations.<sup>24</sup> In that post, Cuevas watched the Americans closely and kept Bustamante apprised of the growing number of their specious economic claims against the Mexican government. He warned of the dangerous course of U.S.-Mexican relations which, he believed, would lead ultimately to conflict.<sup>25</sup> This was a theme he reiterated in his second term as Foreign Minister in the Herrera Government of 1844-45. Harboring few illusions about United States intentions, Cuevas believed that Mexico could not afford to display any sign of weakness before the Americans. Indeed, he argued, it was internal instability in Mexico in the years following independence that had first stimulated America's acquisitive designs on Texas.

20. *El Estandarte Nacional*, 3 Abril [sic, should read Mayo] de Abril de 1845, p.4.

21. "Al Patriota General Presidente," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 2 de Abril de 1845, 1-2, 5.

22. Luis G. Cuevas, *Porvenir de México*, Mexico, D.F. Editorial Jus, 1954 [1857], x.

23. Cuevas, *Porvenir*, x-xi.

24. On the career of Anastacio Bustamante, Mexico's longest serving President before Porfirio Díaz, see "The Triangular Revolt in Mexico and the Fall of Anastacio Bustamante, August-October 1841," by Michael P. Costeloe in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 1 November 1988, Vol.20, 337-60.

25. Cuevas, *Porvenir*, x-xi.

Reflecting on the roots of Mexico's many divisions, and hence the origin of its vulnerability during the war of 1846, Cuevas reduced the source of these splits to an interplay of both domestic and external factors. Internally, the political machinations and intrigues of the Masonic lodges had, he believed, disentailed the nation of its religious and cultural heritage and invited the tumorous growth of alien ideologies. On the one hand, argued Cuevas, were the *yorkinos* (York rite Masons) who, as an instrument of the Americans, represented a wholly alien and heretical outside influence. On the other hand were the *escoseses* (Scottish rite Masons) who, he believed, had treacherously "conspired against Iturbide and against the [noble] purpose of the campaign of 1821."<sup>26</sup> In their support for the Plan de Casa Mata, argued Cuevas, the Escoseses took the first step along the path leading to the secularization of society. Like other Conservatives of his era, Cuevas believed firmly in maintaining protection for the Church as an essential requisite to the preservation of an orderly, civilized, Christian society.<sup>27</sup> In the aftermath of Iturbide's expulsion and the subsequent "heretical" deviation from the *Plan de Iguala*, Mexico was left susceptible, he believed, to infection from the outside. Into such a vulnerable environment, said Cuevas, the "vile" seed of anarchy was sown by the first American Ambassador to Mexico, Joel R. Poinsett.

Appointed to Mexico in 1825, Poinsett believed firmly that the most propitious path for Mexico was to model its institutions on the American federalist system. He believed, moreover, that anything the Americans might do to assist the Mexicans along this course was justified by the happy, federalist democracy which would ultimately result.<sup>28</sup> An urbane cosmopolitan, fluent in Spanish and with extensive experience in Latin America, Poinsett was also a "flaming evangel of republicanism" possessed of a "particular penchant for impetuous intrigue."<sup>29</sup> Hence, the Ambassador did not hesitate to use his office and resources, surreptitiously, to enter into the fray of Mexico's domestic political wrangles on the behalf of his federalist fellow-travellers. Perceiving a growing centralist sentiment in the country which, he feared, might jeopardise federalist objectives, Poinsett found York rite masonry an efficient organizing mechanism for Mexican federalists. In helping to establish *yorkino* lodges across the country, he hoped to see the federalists out-manoeuvre their pro-European, Conservative opponents. These activities were not lost on astute Conservatives such as Lucas Alamán, who wasted no time in publicly denouncing the ubiquitous American. Indeed, by decade's end, Poinsett's interference in Mexican politics was so notorious that Liberals and Conservatives alike reviled him and the United States government had no alternative but to recall him.<sup>30</sup>

26. i.e., against the three guarantees.

27. Cuevas, *Porvenir*, 395. Cuevas is referring to the participation of Gachupín *Escoseses* in the *Plan de Casa Mata*. He maintains the *Escoseses* rejected Iturbide because he represented stability for a virtuous, Catholic but nevertheless independent Mexico. Cf. Cuevas, *Porvenir*, 235, 203.

28. The most detailed account of Poinsett's controversial exploits in Mexico is still found in William R. Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations Between The United States and Mexico* (Baltimore, 1916) 31-88, 190-204.

29. Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 39; Brack, *Mexico Views*, 28.

30. Green, *The Mexican Republic*, 148-49, 158, 167; Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 40; George Lockhart Rives, *The United States and Mexico, 1821-1848* (New York, [1913] 1969) 165, 177, 243-44.



Besides his aggressive personal style, Poinsett had also brought with him to Mexico his government's foreign policy objectives. In his early diplomatic instructions to Poinsett, Secretary of State Henry Clay directed the new ambassador to foster pro-American organizations (i.e., to promote American influence in the country at the expense of British interests), to insist upon "most favoured nation" commercial status for the United States (by which it was meant that American merchants were to enjoy the same tariff status in Mexico as did Mexicans) and, most importantly, to demand a northern boundary resolution that left the Mexican Department of Texas officially situated west of the Sabine River.<sup>31</sup> That is, the U.S. government sought a virtual cession of the Texas territory to its own union. In short, Poinsett was instructed to pursue objectives which were sure, ultimately, to alienate all but the most fawning of America's admirers.

For many political intellectuals of Cuevas' generation, Poinsett typified the quintessentially arrogant and intrusive American. Possessing a calculating knowledge of all prominently poised and influential extremists, it was believed that Poinsett nimbly sought out and found the ready embrace of self-serving, parochial betrayers.<sup>32</sup> Cuevas later wrote of him:

Poinsett, with all the cunning indicative of those men who have consecrated their lives to the intrigues of government cabinets, and consequently have forgotten honesty and justice, proposed to challenge the Scottish rite through a sect which, in presenting itself under the most popular figures, appeared as the most deserving of favour and considered the firmest supporter of independence.<sup>33</sup>

Nor was this an uncommon assessment. Liberals in the 1840s, as much as Conservatives, generally believed that the United States had, through its support for and manipulation of Yorkino demagoguery, promoted the mutual antipathy of all factions and encouraged general dissension within Mexican society. For Liberal patriots such as Manuel Crescencio Rejón, "Yankee" designs on Texas predated even Mexican independence and were traceable to the confused negotiations surrounding the Louisiana Purchase.<sup>34</sup> Rejón believed that, at least since the signing of the 1819 *Onís Treaty* with Spain and the 1821 "settler" grants given Moses Austin, the United States had continually sought first to purchase and then to separate and annex Texas. Through scandalous intrigues, liaisons and beguilings, the United States had sought to promote trade and contact with the non-Hispanic colonists of Texas, while at the same time exacerbating the tensions between these settlers and their central government. During the late 1820s and early 1830s the Americans had, according to Rejón, helped to induce the colonists' first murmurings for secession. Following the Texas declaration of independence, moreover, they shrewdly provided Texans with the war materiel with which they resisted

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31. Rives, *The United States*, Vol.I, 166-71; Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 69; Manning, *Early Diplomatic Relations*, 205-51.

32. Cuevas, *Porvenir*, 234.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Rejón, "Observaciones Sobre los Tratados de Guadalupe," in *Pensamiento Político*, 93-97.

Santa Anna's punitive odyssey of 1836.<sup>35</sup> Rejón noted that:

The result of all their exclusive efforts, in which they had been lacking in the most clear principles of international law and in the basic consideration owed to a friendly, neighbouring people, was that they proposed to proclaim the sudden independence of a province which was incapable of sustaining itself on its own interior resources, all this in order that it [the U.S.] might carry off its project of aggregation.<sup>36</sup>

The successful culmination of America's perfidious endeavours, lamented Cuevas, was a pandemic of partisan intrigues which ultimately degenerated into the unadulterated, mean, personal intrigues of the regional *Jefes Políticos*. And yet, Cuevas maintained, "Horrific as this picture is, much more so is the system, if one can call it that, of attacking the Church and the pure doctrines of Catholicism."<sup>37</sup> For many Conservatives, this was the great moral issue facing the nation and the one upon which its future would turn. The weakening of the Church, argued Cuevas, was the weakening of Mexico. In his view, it mattered little which form of government Mexico chose, whether monarchical or constitutionally democratic. The important thing, he believed, was that a strong central government should emerge to return the nation to its former virtue, conscience and justice.<sup>38</sup> Thus, Cuevas looked upon the imperial rule of Iturbide with nostalgia. A return to such a government was, he believed, the only hope for the nation.

As for the reasons for Poinsett's manoeuvring, it was clear to Cuevas that, from the outset, it was the American minister's mission to destabilize Mexico in such a way as to leave it vulnerable to the United States.<sup>39</sup> Thus, according to Cuevas, the expulsion of the Spaniards, the independence of Texas, and the later accession of that territory to the American union, were all part of the grand design of the United States. Believing that Texan secession from Mexico was now a *fait accompli*, however, and fearing that a war would be economically disastrous for Mexico, Cuevas and others in the Herrera regime saw no other option but to seek to ensure that Texas remained independent and thereby served as a secure buffer between the aggressive Americans and Mexico's northern frontier. If this could be assured, then perhaps the territorial sacrifice necessary would be worth the future security of the nation. Accordingly, the Mexican government called upon the British to use their influence in Texas to advance this option and, together with the French, to militarily guarantee the territory's independence.<sup>40</sup>

Again, the press responded negatively to such compromising endeavours. The government was greatly mistaken, wrote *El Estandarte Nacional*, if it thought it could save the nation by promoting Texan independence while, at the same time, playing Britain against the United States. If Texan independence were to be guaranteed by England,

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35. Ibid. 99.

36. Rejón, "Observaciones," 96.

37. Ibid. 403.

38. Ibid, 401

39. Ibid.

40. Pletcher, *Diplomacy of Annexation*, 64-88.

then that country would surely come to exercise unacceptably significant influence inside the territory, and Mexico would be no safer than if the Americans resided there. Both the new "Albion" and the old were treacherous deceivers, who thought only of their own concrete interests. "Let us not be afraid to look soberly upon the naked poniard of our neighbours," adjured one writer, "and let us not fear to behold the hidden perfidy of our protectors and friends from far across the sea!"<sup>41</sup> *La Voz del Pueblo* agreed. Pandering to the British was a mistake, a grave miscalculation. Both the United States and Britain were of the Anglo-Saxon race and neither had any particular affection for Mexico. The British wanted the same as the Americans – to possess the Mexican territories for themselves.<sup>42</sup> The Americans, with their "unbounded ambition," their "insatiable greed and their gigantic projects," were simply an exaggerated version of their English forefathers.<sup>43</sup> One editorial in *La Voz* suggested that the various proposals for Texan independence were no more than thinly-veiled plots by foreign powers to exploit the territory for themselves:

Texan [independence] has been recognized only by those nations of Europe who hope for nothing more than a new market for their goods, and by the United States, whose dominant passion is greed for land, to satiate which it has hunted down like animals the unhappy Indians, the original inhabitants of that country.<sup>44</sup>

*La Voz* argued that the Mexican public would not long tolerate this talk of Texan independence. In a last-ditch effort to deter the Texans and the Americans, Foreign Minister Cuevas reiterated that if Texas joined the United States, if American troops entered Texas, then Mexico would consider that a state of war existed between Mexico and the United States. Mexico, he warned, would vigorously prosecute such a war in order to:

...save Mexican territorial integrity under its ancient limits, recognized by the United States in all of its treaties with Mexico between the years 1828 and 1836, and to save the now-threatened national independence.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the great furore caused in Mexico over the issue, it was the Texas legislature itself which ultimately decided the question of Texan independence. It voted in July to ratify the treaty of annexation. When President Polk dispatched American troops into the new state, the prospect of war seemed imminent and inevitable. The press accelerated its production of the frightful, threatening hyperboles of the "invading" Americans

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41. "Reconocimiento de la Independencia de Tejas," *El Estandarte Nacional*, 23 de Abril de 1845, 4.

42. "Tejas y el Ejército," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 19 de Marzo de 1845, 3.

43. "La Independencia Amenazada por los Realistas Mexicanas y Estrangeros," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 2 de Julio de 1845, 1-3. 2.

44. "Tejas y el Ejército," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 19 de Marzo de 1845, 2.

45. "Iniciativas del Gobierno sobre la Cuestión de Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 23 de Julio de 1845, 2; Luis G. Cuevas á Thomas Murphy, 30 de Julio, 1845, Mexico, *Archivo Historico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México*, 4-14-6447, fols. 35-36, in Carlos Bosh García, *Materia Para la Historia Diplomática de México* (Mexico, 1957), 521; Robinson, *The View From*, 75.

which it had been constructing for some time. Adjectives such as “treacherous” and “devious,” “malicious” and “perfidious” were now repeated daily in one editorial after another, and were conveyed to the Mexican public with an intense fervour. In contrast to the more flattering (Liberal) portrayals of Americans which had appeared in the 1820s and early 1830s, and in which the Americans were portrayed as industrious, liberty-loving, benevolent neighbours,<sup>46</sup> the anglo-northerners were *now* unanimously rendered as covetous, predatory and ungodly.

In January 1846, President Paredes spoke for the political elite of all of Mexico’s parties when he cursed the Americans for daring “to commit, before the entire world, the most scandalous usurpation...”<sup>47</sup> The United States was clearly engaging in “violent” and “criminal” acts. Moreover, these devious actions were “typical Yankee tactics” and demonstrated their “audacity” and readiness to take advantage of poor, “generous” Mexico.<sup>48</sup> Time and again the Americans were cast as “perfidious deceivers,” as “materialistic,” grasping and greedy usurpers. Indeed, in some renderings, writers compared Mexico’s current difficulties to those of the Aztecs in the final days of Tenochtitlán. The miscreant Americans were made to occupy the role of the Spanish conquistadors. The crimes of the Americans, however, were perceived to be much worse than those of Cortes and his company. A writer for *El Estandarte Nacional* stated, “Then the conquerors, although criminals, were also heroes because they were valiant. Today the usurpers are no better than infamous scoundrels [*infames*] because they have been cowards.”<sup>49</sup>

For Liberal-federalists, the apparent deception of their northern, federalist compeers seemed a particularly cruel betrayal. Placed together, by fate, on the same continent and governed by analogous institutions, linked by mutual ideological concerns to form a “continental American system” in contraposition to the powers of Europe, “any sacrifice,” it was felt, “would have been small in order to preserve peace between both nations”: a peace, according to one editorial, “so wanted by God and so precious to man.”<sup>50</sup>

But the Americans have betrayed us; they provoke us; they are the aggressors. Vengeance, say the Mexicans and their soldiers! Vengeance, and let us go forward with sword in hand to encounter them on our frontier. Vengeance, and let them know that if we are good and generous friends, we are also, when provoked, terrible enemies.<sup>51</sup>

Mexican Conservatives, of course, also castigated and caricatured their enemies. Carlos María de Bustamante looked upon the liberal neighbour to the north as “the strangest and most ridiculous anomaly in history.” While the Americans boasted to the world that their democracy was the truest, a city on the hill which extended to everyone the greatest

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46. Zavala, *Viaje á los Estados Unidos*, 11-187, *passim*.

47. “El Presidente Interno de la República á la nación,” *El Tiempo*, núm. 2, 25 de Enero de 1846, 3.

48. “Tejas y Californias,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 4.

49. *El Estandarte Nacional*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 4.

50. “Tejas y Federación,” *La Voz del Pueblo*, 23 de Abril de 1845, 1.

51. *Ibid*.

individual liberty and personal opportunity, at the same time they were capable of forcing millions into "the most cruel slavery," treating them worse than beasts.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Conservative Luis Cuevas feared for the future of any poor Mexicans left to the callous designs of the "disloyal" Texans and/or the "perfidious" Yankees. "The population of Texas is totally foreign to us," he wrote, and their "people have no sympathies or sentiments whatsoever for the Mexican nation."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Cuevas thundered:

There is not, nor certainly could there be, a single point of similarity between those Mexicans and the Americans...their high moral being is in complete contradiction to that of the [immoral] citizen of the American Union.<sup>54</sup>...Not only are their customs diverse, but they are in complete opposition [to ours], and their political habits manifest all of the many differences between the Mexican character and that of the American race.<sup>55</sup>

The editors of *El Tiempo* agreed. Trapped inside an American-occupied Texas, Mexicans would be reduced to the superstitious and miserable slaves of their "*anglosajona*" masters. Clearly, this was a first sample of what the Americans had in mind for all of the other northern departments of Mexico. Quite aware of American expansionist views, the editors wrote:

The Californias are the object of their ambition. Nuevo México, Nuevo Leon, Chihuahua, Coahuila and Sonora...Conforming to their usual perfidious tactics, they hope to induce in us a moment of hallucination so they may proclaim the independence [of those departments] and then negotiate their aggregation [to the United States]. Our people will then become, like other peoples of a distinct race trapped inside another nation, their slaves."<sup>56</sup>

The Texans, according to *El Tiempo*, were no better than the Americans. They were nothing but a band of deceitful adventurers. It was now clear that the territory's early settlers had never intended to stay within Mexico. From the beginning, they had planned to attach themselves to the United States. The Americans, according to the editors of *El Tiempo*, had always treacherously nurtured such sentiment in Texas while also encouraging dissension in the Californias. Following the Texan declaration of independence, they explained, the Americans had showed their readiness to support the rebels with force. When an American and a Texan ship, both loaded with weapons and ammunition and bound for the Texan rebels, were "justly" rammed by a Mexican brig and escorted to the naval station at Matamoros, the Americans responded by seizing a

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52. Andrés Cavo, *Los tres siglos de México durante el gobierno español hasta la entrada del ejército trigarante*, ed. with a supplement by Carlos María de Bustamante, 4 Vols. (Mexico, 1836-38), quoted in David A. Brading, *The First America*, 644.

53. "Memoria del ministro de relaciones y gobernación, leída en el senado el 11, y en la cámara de diputados el 12 de Marzo de 1845," *El Estandarte Nacional*, 9 de Abril de 1845, 2.

54. *Ibid.*

55. "Memoria del ministro," *El Estandarte Nacional*, 9 de Abril de 1845, 2.

56. "La Cuestión del Dia," *El Tiempo*, núm. 71, 5 de Abril de 1846, 1.

Mexican ship and removing it to Pensacola, Florida. Clearly, *El Tiempo* asserted, this was a *casus belli*. And yet, notwithstanding such provocative behaviour, Mexico had exercised forbearance.<sup>57</sup>

When American newspapers pointed to the interminable revolutions occurring within Mexico and questioned the country's ability to rule itself, the Mexican press again responded angrily. When a New York daily (the *Sun Weekly*) suggested that, with Mexico's deplorable economy, chronic problems with internal dissension and revolutionary intrigue, the nation might be better off either rejoining Spain or annexing itself to the United States, *El Tiempo* responded with self-righteous ire:

The proximity of the American confederation has been the true cause of all the misfortunes of our country. In our infancy as a nation, in our political inexperience, we opened our arms to it and followed its [perfidious] counsel. If we have since renounced our own traditions, if we have denied our own basic needs, adopting political forms fatal for our own prosperity [i.e., American-style liberalism and federalism], then it is to it [the American confederation] that we are indebted.<sup>58</sup>

This reference to American federalism belied the anti-federalist orientation of *El Tiempo*'s Conservative editor, Lucas Alamán. Indeed, Mexican political writers often combined their own domestic policy issues with propaganda against the Americans. This allowed political parties and factions to portray their own particular programmes as public-spirited and patriotic. For the Liberals, this meant combining federalism and liberal trade issues with emotive topics, such as national independence and/or freedom from external control. The *puro* newspaper *El Estandarte Nacional*, for example, claimed to be both fundamentally (*puro*) federalist and, at the same time, dedicated to the recovery of Texas: the slogan at the top of every issue was "*FEDERACIÓN Y TEJAS*." Its promise to Mexicans was to judge the government according to these standards. If the *moderado* Herrera government exercised good judgement, then *El Estandarte* would voice its approval, "hesitantly at times, to be sure, but sincerely nevertheless." Conversely, it would give "severe but loyal censure to its mistakes."<sup>59</sup> Other Liberal papers echoed these themes. "Like the Israelites who marched to the campaign," declared the editors of *La Voz del Pueblo*, "likewise will we march, all Mexicans, carrying under our standard the constitution of 1824, and we will repel the invaders, far beyond the margins of the Sabine."<sup>60</sup> According to *El Estandarte*, federalism was absolutely necessary to resolve the nation's internal as well as external difficulties. Only federalism would quell the legitimate grievances of the nation's diverse regions. If

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57. "La Cuestión del Día," *El Tiempo*, núm. 48, 13 de Marzo de 1846, 1; The American merchant vessel was the *Louisiana* and the Texan ship was the *Independence*. The captured Mexican ship was the schooner *General Urrea*. For a discussion of this incident see Niceto de Zamacois, *Historia de México. Desde Sus Tiempos Mas Remotos Hasta Nuestros Días*, Vol. XII, 114-17.

58. "Proyectos de los Estados Unidos," *El Tiempo*, núm. 20, 13 de Febrero de 1846, 1.

59. "El Estandarte Nacional," *El Estandarte Nacional*, 9 de Abril de 1845, 4.

60. "Federación y Tejas, pesele á quien le pesare," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 19 de Julio de 1845, 4.

Mexico had to face all of the perils of war, then the nation's attention must be focused on the external enemy, not on internal wrangles. Besides, the editors of *El Estandarte* continued, a united federalist nation might well awaken the Texans to the dangers posed to them by a robust, united Mexico. Instead of waging a destructive war, they might see the wisdom of re-entering the republic, especially if they were offered full state status, rights and jurisdiction. Hence, war might be avoided altogether.<sup>61</sup>

If war had to come, however, it was best to ensure that all regional domestic squabbles were resolved. For *La Voz del Pueblo*, this meant a return to federalism. The annexation of Mexican territory by the Americans was comparable to the past invasions of Mexico by the French and the Spanish, in 1829 and 1838 respectively. As in the past, the outcome of the current confrontation would depend, the editors maintained, on the form of government ruling the nation.<sup>62</sup> The aftermath of the French invasion, they argued, was a disgrace for Mexico (because Mexico eventually agreed to pay indemnities to France), and contrasted with the outcome of Spain's invasion of 1829, in which Spanish forces received a sound trouncing. The "shameful" outcome following 1838 was attributable to the fact that Mexico was then ruled by a centralist regime. Centralism, it was implied, debilitated the regional economies. The reduced economic activity which resulted from centralist policies meant that the government collected less revenue and funds for national defence became extremely scarce. Under federalism, on the other hand, the republic's regional economies did not suffer from the evils which were tormenting them today. With the establishment of the federal Constitution of 1824, Liberals argued, Mexico had begun a process of equitable integration of the nation's many diverse regions. The recognition of regional powers under the federal system was a necessary precursor to national reconciliation and economic reconstruction. *La Voz* explained that under federalism:

...every citizen was adjusted to the general and particular laws of his respective state, and from this it followed that public revenue was not jeopardised by anarchy or a loss of good order. The investment of private wealth, which formed the basis of public revenues, was conducted in an orderly, stable fashion. The bureaucracy, the army and the rest of the nation's expenses were all attended to. Consequently, in each state there was a competent circulation of hard currency which made the economy flourish.<sup>63</sup>

The truly national objective now, *La Voz* argued, was to face the external threat, which was palpable and immediate. The Americans, it was claimed, were a base and reprobate people that must be taught a lesson. But, to reconquer Texas and defeat the Americans, the editors explained, Mexico must return to the federalism of the 1824 Constitution.

In order to recover Texas, in order to lend ourselves to a war with a perfidious, greedy and demoralised nation, it is of the first necessity that the form of government given to

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61. "Tejas," *El Estandarte Nacional*, 9 de Abril de 1845, 4.

62. "Federación — Amnistia — Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 12 de Abril de 1845, 2.

63. Ibid.

the nation, put into the hands of the different parts of her, the most amplified faculties for her interior regimen, surrendering in this way to the general will.<sup>64</sup>

To reverse the order, it was suggested, would lead to defeat because the Anglo-Americans would surely seize upon every internal weakness.<sup>65</sup>

Conservatives, of course, also believed that a nation's form of government and its institutions were central to its effective defence. In a country such as Mexico, wrote Alamán in *El Tiempo*, with its unique history and traditions, only those institutions that would harmonise all of the important interests in the nation would allow the country to prosper. The ideal form of government for Mexico would also protect the "essential, long-standing features of Mexican culture." Although the federalist-republican form of government might seem successful in a peculiar, aberrant nation such as the United States, it was definitely not, the Conservatives maintained, suited to a country like Mexico. What Mexico needed, Alamán suggested, was a constitutional monarchy.<sup>66</sup> Only a benevolent monarchy could lend a composed, reflective symmetry to the often erratic, discordant vagaries of the legislature. Additionally, a monarch would also ensure that the nation maintained a vigorous army to defend the honour and territorial integrity of the motherland against aggressive outsiders.<sup>67</sup> Far from fostering the harmony and solidarity needed to face the invaders, the Liberal-federalists had, Conservatives believed, achieved the complete opposite.<sup>68</sup> Conservative Matias de la Peña y Barragan complained that the Liberals' proposed expropriations of Church wealth had rent the very fabric of Mexican society, leaving the nation in a weakened and vulnerable state in their hour of crisis. This was not patriotism, de la Peña and other Conservatives argued, it was treason.<sup>69</sup>

Many intellectuals attributed America's negative conduct to innate racial characteristics. That is, for some Mexican observers, the Americans were not only dangerous enemies, they were an enemy race of "treacherous Anglo-Saxons." They were wholly *other*. According to *El Estandarte Nacional*, Americans were a criminal and barbarous people.<sup>70</sup> The loss of Texas, claimed *El Orizaveño*, illustrated the fundamentally different innate characteristics of the two republics. Mexicans were clearly "credulous and more than a little naive." The Americans, on the other hand, demonstrated that they were an "astute and malicious people...."<sup>71</sup> *Don Simplicio* roared:

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64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

66. "Nuestra Profesión de Fé," *El Tiempo*, num.19, 12 de Febrero de 1846, 1.

67. Ibid.

68. "Circular á los Señores Gobernadores de los Estados: Ejército Salvador de la Independencia y de la Libertad," Broadside dated 9 de Marzo de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

69. "Manifiesto á la Nación del General Matias de la Peña y Barragan," Broadside dated 16 de Marzo de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

70. Ibid.

71. "Tejas," *El Orizaveño*, quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 3.



[That company] of abhorrent adventurers in the north, whose slanderous press refers to us as an abject race, buried in barbarity, has shown its own civilization to be capable of little more than ingratitude and perfidy....Our valiant soldiers, the constant custodians of our independence...will surely teach these vile enemies a solemn and bloody lesson.<sup>72</sup>

Joining this refrain, *El Tiempo* claimed that "The American democracy is composed of adventurers from all of the nations of the world...[and] is augmented continually by immigrants and political troublemakers from all over Europe."<sup>73</sup> This constant influx and mixing of the dregs of the world inevitably polluted the character of the population of the United States. Thus, the much-proclaimed American greed and avarice were perceived to be a function of cultural and/or racial miscegenation. It was inevitable, therefore, that the United States never would be satisfied "nor live under the ordinary conditions of existence that guide other peoples. It must continually enlarge itself, even when its territory can maintain fifty times the number of people who occupy it."<sup>74</sup>

*Don Simplicio* wrote, "We desire neither the domination nor the invasion of the American race," and continued:

Nor do we want a European government or influence. We want to be men of our own unique country, men who thrive under an eminently national system, a system which guarantees our freedoms without chaos or debauchery.<sup>75</sup>

Mexicans of different political views concurred that the only hope was to rise in arms to resist the arrogant American challenge. Otherwise, all of Mexico would be consumed and her customs and beliefs expunged before the tide of American expansion.<sup>76</sup> Summing up the situation, one writer for *El Tiempo* concluded:

Mexico's army, and only its army can preserve its independent and sovereign national existence, which immoral and ambitious neighbours want to wrench from her, reducing her to a pitiable colony of their [United] States, that agglomeration of a thousand scum.<sup>77</sup>

Observers of different political factions agreed that Mexico's government must declare war, not just to maintain national honour, but to preserve credibility. The Mexican government must seize the initiative. A declaration of war was well within its Constitutional rights and duties.<sup>78</sup> Mexicans of all classes, it was argued, were anxious to accept the challenge before them. From the wealthy land owner down to the poor *jornalero*, everyone now saw the urgency and the necessity of this campaign. From all sides,

72. "¡Honor á Nuestro Ejército!" *Don Simplicio*, 25 de Marzo de 1846, 4.

73. "La Cuestión del Día," *El Tiempo*, 12 de Marzo de 1846, núm. 47, 1.

74. Ibid.

75. "Situación de la República," *Don Simplicio*, 18 de Marzo de 1846, 4.

76. "Ministerio de Hacienda," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 1.

77. "Ejército y República," *El Tiempo*, número 41, 6 de Marzo de 1846, 1.

78. "Negocio de Tejas," *El Registro Oficial*, quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 3.

Mexicans pressed for war.<sup>79</sup> Critics argued that only the government was fearful and hesitant, doubtful, perhaps, of the justness of the cause. Ordinary Mexicans were ready and anxious to show that they were neither the cowards nor the savages described in the American press.<sup>80</sup> At least in the view of editorialists, they were ready to punish their lustful neighbour, "that degenerate and metallic race of Washington and Franklin which dares to insult us."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Mexicans were anxious, it was maintained, to liberate the oppressed slaves in America. In fact, according to *La Voz del Pueblo*, Mexico was "counting on the element of the coloured population." Moreover, the article continued,

We will proclaim the freedom of the Negroes. In so doing we will, at once, do a service to humanity and [also] destroy all of the fields of cotton, of sugar cane and coffee that form the prosperity of the southern states. We will precipitate this segment of the population against our greedy neighbours and, like a burst dike, it will release a raging torrent.<sup>82</sup>

Race, therefore, was perceived not only as a characteristic which distinguished Mexicans from the Americans, and the African slaves from the Americans: it was a potential asset which the Mexicans might exploit for their strategic advantage.

Following the commencement of hostilities, Mexican intellectuals remained confident in the righteousness of their campaign, convinced of the injustice of the American invasion and certain of the ultimate success of their cause. Undaunted by the early defeats suffered by Mexican forces at the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de Palma and Monterey, they intensified both their attacks on American "perfidy," and their praise of Mexican probity.<sup>83</sup> Following the Polko rebellion in February of 1847, however, and the contradictory accounts of the reported victory at the Battle of Angostura\Buena Vista, a few individuals began to question the ability of the Mexican army to check the American advance. With the subsequent landing of General Winfield Scott and his capture of Vera Cruz, fear and doubt about the eventual outcome of the war were, for the first time, entertained by large numbers of patriotic Mexicans. Ramon Alacarez (et al) later wrote:

The occupation of Vera Cruz by the Americans was the first signal of alarm for the capital of the Republic. Until then, the threat of the United States, to make their flag float over the palace of Moctezumas, was regarded as a piece of madness.<sup>84</sup>

In their repeated calls for public perseverance and resistance, intellectuals, politicians, military officials and clerics, all now appealed to the most basic fears of the average Mexican. The Americans were now ascribed malevolent supernatural attributes and

79. "Tejas," *La Voz de Tamaulipas*, quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 3.

80. "La Cuestión del Día," *El Tiempo*, 12 de Marzo de 1846, núm. 47, 1.

81. "Federación - Amnistia - Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 12 de Abril de 1845, 2.

82. "Tejas y Federación," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 23 de Abril de 1845, 1.

83. *Don Simplicio*, 4 de Noviembre de 1846, 2-3.

84. Alcaraz et al, *The Other Side*, 198.

were increasingly referred to as "satanic"<sup>85</sup>, "fiendish" and/or "diabolical."<sup>86</sup> Mexico's Archbishop warned of the dangers to the nation's "sainted cult" posed by the menacing, infidels from the north. If Mexico succumbed before the invaders, he predicted, all sacred shrines and sanctuaries would be desecrated and defiled, and her holy rites and liturgy would be replaced by the most depraved and deviant sects known to the world.<sup>87</sup> A writer for Lucas Alamán's Conservative newspaper, *El Tiempo*, echoed this warning:

We were born in the bosom of the Church, and we do not wish to see the Cathedrals of our religion converted into the temples of those sects which scandalize the world with their religious quarrels; nor do we wish to see, on our Church towers, that abhorred flag of stars [and stripes], flying in place of our own national standard.<sup>88</sup>

If the Americans triumphed over Mexico, warned the Archbishop, all Catholic holy days would be turned into "days of mourning and horror." Churches would be deserted or closed and would never again resonate with "those melodious canticles which elevate the soul upward to unite with God." He continued:

Our withered, pallid and disfigured virgins would turn their eyes from their oppressors...and our elderly and our children would find no support but misery and orphanhood, or mockery, insult and disdain. Priests would perhaps cease, altogether, their august functions so as not to be bloodied by sectarians and the unfaithful, and our Blessed Sacraments could not be administered except rarely and with care to avoid the abuse of the impious who do not respect them and the obstinate who do not believe in them.<sup>89</sup>

Mexico's humble and god-fearing Catholics would all live in penury and tribulation under American rule. In addition to losing their faith and holy rites, the Archbishop warned that the "unhappy *jornalero*" and the "miserable artisan" would also be deprived of their livelihood. Seeking employment and industry to sustain their children, they would find only languorous inactivity and poverty, because all of the manufactured goods would come from the north and "everyone would be seized by the elemental fear and horrible dread brought by the enemy."<sup>90</sup> These fears seemed justified, as frightening rumours circulated throughout the country about the atrocities committed by the American troops in occupied cities. Public broadsides reported on churches turned into stables, sacked homes and businesses, and the raping of wives and daughters, all contributing to the demonization of the *gringo*.<sup>91</sup>

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85. "El Ministro Mr. Juan Slidell," *Don Simplicio*, 8 de Abril de 1846, 4.

86. "Ejército y República," *El Tiempo*, núm. 41, 6 de Marzo de 1846, 1.

87. "Nos Juan Manuel Irisarri y Peralta, Por la Gracia de Dios y de la Santa Sede Apostólica, Arzobispo de Cesaréa, Dean de esta Santa Iglesia Metropolitana y Vicario capitular de este Arzobispado: A Nuestros Muy Amados Hijos en Jesucristo," Broadside dated 8 de Mayo de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

88. "Nuestra Profesión de Fé," in *El Tiempo*, Num.19, 12 de Febrero de 1846, 1.

89. "Nos Juan Manuel Irisarri y Peralta, Arzobispo de Cesaréa."

90. Ibid.

91. See "Contestaciones Habidas Anoche Entre el Señor General en Gefe del Ejército de los Estados Unidos y el Supremo Gobireno de la República Mexicana," Broadside dated 7 de Setiembre de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

Thus, it was the Christian duty of all Mexicans, reminded the Archbishop, to tenderly embrace one another "like the brothers that we are, through the sweet bonds of our religion and motherland." Only then could all of the nation's energies be directed towards making war against the enemy.<sup>92</sup> The solemn duty of every Mexican Christian, therefore, was to "love thy neighbour" so that all might help "destroy thy heretical gringo enemy."

Our duty as Christians is to direct our fervent prayers to His exalted throne for the salvation of our Religion, motherland, laws, lives and haciendas; our obligation as Mexicans is to direct our fervent prayers through our divine Lady who at Tepeyac promised [protection] to that most happy Indian, Juan Diego...This celebrated sanctuary of our Lady of Guadalupe will be our Tower of David from out of which will emanate the decrees of mercy and protection for the entire Republic...<sup>93</sup>

God, Mexico's religious leaders assured, would not desert the Mexicans in their hour of need. As one editorialist for *La Voz del Pueblo* wrote, Mexicans "are confident in the protection of God for our side, because he has also shown himself to be a God of liberty, as when he freed the Israelites from the yoke of Pharaoh."<sup>94</sup> Thus, through their own sainted Madonna of Guadalupe, they believed that God would deliver them out of Egypt and away from the clutches of Pharaoh (the Americans).

This likening of Mexicans to the Israelites, i.e., to the favoured of God, was a standard and often repeated allegorical motif. Along with other emotive cues and metaphorical markers, such religious symbolism was routinely employed by the nation's intellectual elite to distinguish the presumably "virtuous" Mexican character from that of the "unjust, usurping American invader." Against the dark and fiendish stereotypes of the Americans stood, in stark and powerful contrast, the moral and benevolent Mexicans. If the American caricature conjured up unsettling images of a grasping and immoral usurper, then the Mexican portraiture called forth equally evocative images of an upright, generous defender. While the Americans fought because of their greed, the Mexicans, it was believed, resisted for the honour of their wives, their children, for God and the motherland.

Into battle, let the educated man go with his pen, the rich man with his wealth and the soldier with his sword. Into battle, let the husband go for the defense of his beloved. Into battle, let the father of the family go to protect his tender and innocent children. Into battle, let all robust youths go for the sake of their venerable, elderly fathers. Into battle, finally, let all the Mexican people go to repel affront and insult, to guard the immunity of their homes, to sustain with enthusiasm and republican dignity, with energy and intelligence, the sacrosanct rights of the motherland.<sup>95</sup>

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92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. "Tejas y Federación," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 23 de Abril de 1845, 1.

95. *La Aurora de la Libertad*, quoted in *La Voz del Pueblo*, 26 de Abril de 1845, 3.

Before the haughty American "conquistador," therefore, stood the intrepid Mexican, the stoic defender of Tenochtitlán.<sup>96</sup> Against the Philistines of the United States were cast the Israelites of Anáhuac.<sup>97</sup> Challenging the infidel saracens of Washington were the stalwart, Christian crusaders of Mexico City. Indeed, one Liberal editorialist likened the war against the Americans to the European crusades which long ago had

...fanaticized the kings and great lords, the priests and their followers, the bishops and the people to march, *en masse*, to Palestine to conquer that sainted land. Thus, we desire [for Mexico] a similar revival of enthusiasm...and that the whole army and the nation march to destroy the unjust usurpers of our rights.<sup>98</sup>

News of the disastrous rout at Cerro Gordo caused an intense but temporary panic to seize the capital. "The unfortunate action of Cerro-Gordo [sic] not only caused the positive defeat [of our armed forces]...but destroyed, in a remarkable degree, the spirit of the troops who escaped the disaster."<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, Mexican intellectuals stoutheartedly and optimistically predicted victory for the Mexican side. If Mexican intellectuals of all parties saw themselves as the exalted soldiers of Christ, they also believed themselves to be adept warriors, in a more literal sense. Proud inheritors of the mantle of Hidalgo and Morelos, Mexicans would never, it was assured, shy away from a just cause. "[Our] valour and our patriotism," declared one broadside, "will make triumph the justice of our cause."<sup>100</sup> The same "rapacious" oppressors who today slandered the Mexicans as degenerates would soon, it was predicted, learn to respect them as the noble descendants of a "valiant and heroic race."<sup>101</sup> The struggle against the Americans was depicted in the great patriotic tradition of Hidalgo and Morelos. Those Mexicans, who today took up the fight against the American invaders, also carried forward the sacred banners of 1810.<sup>102</sup> Some argued that Mexico's numerous internal convulsions and revolutions would one day be seen to have been an important source of her salvation. "Our soldiers were born under the carriages of our cannons," explained one writer for *La Voz del Pueblo*, "Their cradles were rocked to the explosions of our artillery. Their education, their nourishment, their lives have been war." How, it was asked, could the inexperienced Americans succeed when they had never heard the "whistle of the bullet," and had passed their lives in the "idleness of peace"?<sup>103</sup> Mexicans would ensure that the sacrifice of their "noble forefathers," who had spilt their blood for liberty and independence,

96. "El Lancero Mexicano," *Don Simplicio*, 4 de Noviembre de 1846, 2-3.

97. "Errores de calculo en el ministerio de relaciones sobre el importante negocio de Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 4 de Junio de 1845, 1.

98. "Tejas y el Ejército," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 19 de Marzo de 1845, 3-4.

99. Alcaraz et al, *The Other Side*, 220.

100. Broadside beginning "En el conflicto se encuentra hoy la República...", (n.d.1847), García Collection, BLAC.

101. Ibid; also see "Cartas Oficiales de los Exmos. Sres. Ministro de Relaciones Interiores y Exteriores y Gobernador del Estado de México," Broadside dated 26 de Agosto de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

102. "Últimas noticias interesantes sobre Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 5 de Julio de 1845, 6.

103. "Tejas y Federación," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 23 de Abril de 1845, 1; also "Boletín de Gobierno," Broadside dated Miercoles 18 de Agosto de 1847, García Collection, BLAC.

would not be forgotten in vain. Mexicans would rise up in the name of Hidalgo, and defend the nation's liberty.<sup>104</sup> Many of these themes were brought together in *Don Simplicio*, in a *corrido* (popular lyric poem or ballad) dedicated to the "Lancer of Mexico":

Salute to the soldier of my homeland, the dragoon of the new world, the lancer of Mexico. Salute to you, noble and generous champion of Tenochtitlán, enthusiastic chieftain of the independence of Anáhuac!...You, who are inspired like the indomitable Guerrero, that stellar light of the south, you do not care how numerous are the enemy....So when the clarions of your regiment order the commencement of combat, when everyone's gaze is lowered and sombre, when all hearts are pounding, when the countenance of even the most valiant has turned as pale as death, remember your God and homeland....And do not lower your lance until the world can say: 'MEXICO IS AVENGED'. Lancer of my homeland, I salute you!<sup>105</sup>

Redoubling their efforts, editorialists cursed all talk of negotiation or armistice. Detestable was the thought of a negotiated Mexican surrender, and reprehensible were those who raised the prospect. "War without rest!" demanded the editors of *El Calavera*, "War until the invaders beg for peace and we can dictate its conditions!"<sup>106</sup> Following the defeat at Cerro Gordo, the author of one *corrido* summed up the sentiment of many intellectuals when he called for a determined, wrathful resistance:

Vengeance without equal, we say, [on the invaders and] on those wicked sons whose whispers would leave the motherland under the sharp brand of barbarous oppressors! Oh, adored homeland! Still there is time for the dutiful common people to raise the sword of vengeance and save themselves....Fly to the battle, Mexicans! For those who resolutely struggle for freedom are always invincible; Merciful God, lend to our arms the force of your terrible, omnipotent embrace; because ours is a sainted cause and heaven never abandons a virtuous people who anxiously clamour for their liberty.<sup>107</sup>

The appearance in Mexico of perverse divisions such as the Polko rebellion, and narrow, partisan demagoguery in moments of extreme national emergency must have depressed even the most optimistic of Mexican patriots. Despite these apparently fratricidal differences, however, Liberal and Conservative groups continued to share a common enmity for and caricature of the greedy and grasping "Yanquí." It was against these demonic caricatures of the American that the allegedly superior characteristics of the Mexican continued to stand out in relief. Only after the defeat of the regular army, the fall of the capital to the enemy and the capitulation of the provisional government to the invaders, did Mexican intellectuals begin to question the moral infallibility of the nation's cause; only then did they truly doubt the vigour of Mexico's patriotism and national conviction.

104. "Errores de calculo en el ministerio de relaciones sobre el importante negocio de Tejas," *La Voz del Pueblo*, 4 de Junio de 1845, 1.

105. "El Lancero Mexicano," *Don Simplicio*, 4 de Noviembre de 1846, 2-3.

106. "¡Guerra!" in *El Calavera*, Num. 26, 23 de Abril de 1847.

107. "Duelo y Venganza," in *El Calavera*, Num. 26, 23 de Abril de 1847, PIC, BLAC, 102.