

Listening to the New Apartment House

Richard Moore

A voice above the derricks and the diggers
had words for me about their rules and rigors:
"To use our new machines, gentlemen, we
ideally shall become machinery.
Earth shall be redefined, benumbed reposer,
to that which can be moved: by a bulldozer.
Everything else earth might have been or meant
is hereby now proclaimed irrelevant
and all those stupid ways we'd meditate it
gathered in one magnificent *I hate it!*"

Tornado

Richard Moore

There is an emptiness that drives
us through our lives
like the black funnel that came down,
tore through the town,

and put a value on our gambles,
left them a shambles.
O Lord, must we not let them sound us,
whirling around us?

The day my Tanta Minna died
she put aside
her coffee cup, in her heart holding
springtime unfolding,

forgot what everything was for,
and was no more.

Sins of Omission

by Roger D. McGrath

Mexican in Name Only

For several years, Charles Truxillo, a professor at the University of New Mexico, has been proclaiming that the American Southwest will—and should—be reconquered by Mexico through massive immigration. Most politicians and media have either ignored Truxillo or tried to characterize him as an isolated extremist, claiming that most Mexican immigrants have no political agenda and cross the border only to find work.

A Zogby International poll, however, conducted in Mexico at the end of May, suggests that Truxillo's views reflect those of the majority of Mexicans. A startling 58 percent of Mexicans claimed "that the territory of the U.S. Southwest rightfully belongs to Mexico" and an equally startling 57 percent thought that they "should have the right to enter the United States without U.S. permission." Welcome to the mainstream, Professor Truxillo.

The Southwest has been formally a part of the United States since 1848, when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, and informally since 1846, when the region was occupied by American troops. That's more than 150 years. How long was it Mexican? All of 26 years. Before that, it was Spanish, and before that, it was turf contested by dozens of tribes of American Indians. Moreover, Spain (and, later, Mexico) occupied less than one percent of the vast region.

California, the part of the Southwest that Mexicans have entered illegally in greater numbers than any other, was never more than nominally Mexican. Spain did not colonize California until 1769 and only did so then because she feared Russian encroachment if the area were left unoccupied. By the mid-1770's, colonization had meant nothing more than a couple of presidios and five missions. By the end of the Spanish period, the number of presidios had increased to four and the number of missions, to 21.

These outposts and the few pueblos that Spain founded clung to the California coast from San Diego to San Francisco Bay. No settlements penetrated California's interior or reached north of Sonoma. Most of California was uninhabited and generally untouched by Spaniards. So superficial and infrequent

was their contact with the Sierra foothills that they even failed to discover the greatest placer deposits of gold on earth. Nor did they take any action against a Russian settlement, Fort Ross, on the coast just north of Bodega Bay. Built in 1812 and occupied for 40 years by the Russian-American Fur Company, the fort's population occasionally exceeded 400, making it California's third-largest settlement in 1820, behind Los Angeles (at 650) and Monterey, the capitol of the province, at 700. There was no San Francisco but only a tiny village, Yerba Buena, on the site. The population of California, other than Indians, was just over 3,000.

In 1822, word reached California that Mexico had won her independence from Spain. Nonetheless, Mexico did not bother to send a governor to California for more than three years, and the province enjoyed a quasi-independence that would characterize it throughout the Mexican period. Again and again, Mexican governors were run out of the province, and local Californians were elevated to the governorship. Americans residing in California, frequently former mountain men, were recruited to aid in these *coups d'etat*.

Typical was Tennessean Isaac Graham, a veteran frontiersman. In support of Juan Bautista Alvarado, he organized a band of American mountain men and sailors in 1836 and, together with a force of local Californians, marched to the Monterey presidio and demanded the garrison's surrender. The troops complied with alacrity. The governor barricaded himself in his house, but when a cannonball struck one of the structure's walls, he, too, surrendered posthaste. Alvarado assumed power, and California was declared a "free and sovereign state."

For a couple of years, a local Californian would control the government—what little there was. For a year or two, an appointed Mexican governor would rule. There were times when both a Mexican and a Californian would govern simultaneously from different parts of the state. There were times when nobody governed. On one occasion, California was split into northern and southern halves. During another period, the capi-



tol was moved to San Diego, then Los Angeles, then back to Monterey. In 1842, Comdr. Tom Jones, commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet (all of seven small ships), misinterpreted his orders and determined that Monterey was to be captured. It didn't take much. A landing party seized the surprised troops at the Monterey presidio and raised the Stars and Stripes. Commodore Jones came ashore and declared California annexed to the United States. Two days later, after learning of his error and lowering the American flag, Jones was wined and dined by California's governor.

By the early 1840's, many of California's leading citizens were advocating annexation to the United States or independence with American protection. They had no love for Mexico and called themselves "*Californios*" rather than "Mexicans." At the same time, hundreds of American sailors, artisans, and businessmen had settled along the coast, and hundreds of American frontiersmen, in California's interior valleys. By 1846, Americans made up a quarter of the non-Indian population, and more were arriving every day. Meanwhile, Mexico had failed repeatedly in efforts to send settlers to California. By the time the Mexican War erupted in Texas, California was on the verge of becoming American.

When Comdr. John Sloat sailed into Monterey Bay in July 1846, California surrendered peacefully. A few minor skirmishes and one battle occurred in southern California after the surrender, but those engagements were the result of the brusque and authoritarian manner of Marine Lt. Archibald Gillespie and his declaration of martial law in Los Angeles. Two years later, California was formally part of the United States after having been Mexican, and tenuously at that, for only 26 years.