

Some Practical Effects of Clerical Opposition to the Mexican Reform, 1856-1860

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WHEN MEXICAN LIBERALS came to power after the Ayutla Revolution and initiated the Reform, they encountered firm opposition from the Catholic Church which viewed the liberal acts as attacks on their God-given rights, as assaults on Catholicism itself. Among the most objectionable measures were the Lerdo law of June 25, 1856, which prohibited ecclesiastical corporations from owning or administering real property except that destined immediately and directly for the purposes of the faith, and the federal Constitution of 1857 which incorporated the Lerdo law and other liberal principles.¹ But what did the opposition entail, what did it mean for the Church and faithful in practical terms?

For one thing, those who took advantage of the Lerdo law were threatened with excommunication, and the clergy denied them absolution, marriage, and burial.² The same penalties applied to those who supported the Constitution of 1857 and took the oath of loyalty to it. Many genuinely religious people were thus in a quandary. Some retracted their oath to the Constitution in order to receive absolution and then took the oath again. Others sought priests who would absolve them even though the oath had been taken. But those priests who granted absolution without first obtaining a renunciation of the oath were suspended by the Church, and newspapers announced that such absolution was null.³ Some people lost their jobs rather than oppose

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¹ Such as legal equality, earlier embodied in the Juárez law of November, 1855, and liberty of teaching, writing, and publishing.

² Archivo General de la Nación, México, D.F. (cited hereinafter as AGN), Justicia eclesiástica, Vol. 181, fols. 87, 88, and 127, Vol. 183, fols. 413-415, and Vols. 179, 180, and 181, *passim*. At the same time that circulars to this effect were issued, the Archbishop issued others instructing the clergy to refrain from mixing in politics and to do everything possible to maintain peace and respect for legitimate authorities. AGN, Bienes nacionales, leg. 456, exps. 5 and 6.

³ Anselmo de la Portilla, *México en 1856 y 1857, gobierno del General Comon-*

the Church. According to the United States Minister to Mexico, John Forsyth, large numbers of government employees refused to take the oath because of the Archbishop's position; in the Mexico City Customs House alone some forty officials were discharged for this reason.⁴

On May 11, 1857, it was reported that the father administrator of the Hospital of San Juan de Dios in Morelia was demanding that soldiers being treated there retract the oath taken to the Constitution.⁵ And a priest in Toluca refused burial to General Plutarco González because the general had not retracted or repented taking the oath. The Archbishop approved this action and reminded the clergy that either a public retraction of the oath was necessary or the retraction had to be brought to the attention of the authorities before whom the oath had been taken before confession could be heard.⁶

Another circular of the Archbishop, on November 13, 1857, besides denying ecclesiastical burial to those who had not retracted their oath, prohibited priests from receiving alms or saying prayers in Church for the souls of those who had died without retracting. These same prohibitions applied to those who had adjudicated Church property under the Lerdo law if they had not divested themselves of the property, requested cancellation of the deeds, or indicated their desire to return the property to its former condition.⁷

Despite the clerical position, however, the oath to the Constitution was taken peacefully in the majority of places, with opposition occurring principally in unimportant towns and those entirely subject to clerical influences. All state capitals except San Luis Potosí accepted the oath without incident, though there was a scandal in Mexico City when the Church refused to receive public officials, as was customary, during Holy Week ceremonies.⁸

The Church's opposition to the Lerdo law had some important practical consequences for the faithful and for ecclesiastical corporations. The very fact of ecclesiastical disapproval slowed the sale of properties, but the Church also tried to evade the Lerdo law in various

fort (New York, 1858), p. 196, and AGN, *Justicia eclesiástica*, Vol. 180, fols. 331-333.

⁴ Forsyth to the Secretary of State, Lewis Cass, April 10, 1857, in William R. Manning (ed.), *Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs, 1831-1860* (Washington, 1937), document #4304, IX, 911.

⁵ AGN, *Justicia eclesiástica*, Vol. 180, fol. 372.

⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. 174, fols. 403-416.

⁷ Clemente de Jesús Munguía, *Defensa eclesiástica en el Obispado de Michoacán desde fines de 1855 hasta principios de 1858* (México, 1858), November 28, 1857, II, 114-115.

⁸ José M. Vigil, *La Reforma*, Vol. V of *México a través de los siglos*, ed. by Vicente Riva Palacio (México, n.d.), p. 232.

ways.⁹ Since the law did not become operative until its official publication in each locality, the opportunity arose for the Church to alienate property before the publication. Thus, in Morelia the law was printed in newspapers on July 2, 1856, but was not officially published until July 5. During the interval, ecclesiastical corporations concluded contracts which the government felt evaded the law and prejudiced tenants' rights.¹⁰ On the other hand, the government often authorized conventional sales by the Church¹¹ on the theory that since the principal aim of the law was the disentanglement and circulation of property, the sale to individuals stipulated by the corporations would serve this purpose.¹²

Although the *reglamento* of the Lerdo law permitted ecclesiastical corporations to conclude conventional sales with tenants if the tenants renounced their rights of adjudication, the view of Clemente de Jesús Munguía, Bishop of Michoacán, was that this authorization did not constitute annulment of the Lerdo law nor did it restore to the Church full freedom to handle property as it wished; therefore, in accord with general episcopal directives, he forbade all sales or alienations of Church property in his diocese, conventional or not.¹³

Also, the Church tried to evade the law by simulated sales, retain-

⁹ The Lerdo law was applied throughout Mexico. According to the report of the Secretary of Hacienda, Miguel Lerdo, on operations from June 25 to December 31, 1856, the total value of adjudications was \$23,171,148.02 with ecclesiastical property accounting for \$20,678,878.71. As would be expected, the amount of ecclesiastical wealth correlated closely with centers of population and wealth in the republic. The greatest amount of adjudications occurred, in descending order, in the Federal District, Puebla, Veracruz, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Jalisco, Mexico (which at that time included Hidalgo and Morelos), and Oaxaca. Adjudications also took place in Aguascalientes, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Colima, Durango, Guerrero, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tlaxcala, Yucatán, Zacatecas, and the territories of Sierra Gorda and Tehuantepec. Although activity was minor in some states, during this period only Campeche, Nuevo León, and Tabasco reported no adjudications. *Memoria presentada al Excmo. Sr. Presidente Sustituto de la República por el C. Miguel Lerdo de Tejada dando cuenta de la marcha que han seguido los negocios de la Hacienda Pública en el tiempo que tuvo a su cargo la Secretaría de este ramo* (México, 1857).

Throughout this paper, the sign "\$" indicates pesos.

¹⁰ Resolution of August 28, 1856, in Luis G. Labastida, *Colección de leyes, decretos, reglamentos, circulares, órdenes y acuerdos relativos a la desamortización de los bienes de corporaciones civiles y religiosas y a la nacionalización de los que administraron las últimas* (México, 1893), pp. 101-102.

¹¹ This permission might be granted because the sale contract had been decided upon prior to the issuance of the Lerdo law or because tenants did not wish to adjudicate the property and denunciations would be harmful to real estate values. Permission might even be granted to enable a corporation to meet other expenses. AGN, Justicia eclesiástica, Vol. 174, fols. 199-202.

¹² *Ibid.*, Vol. 173, fols. 422-424, 432, and 433 and Vol. 174, *passim*.

¹³ Circular of September 10, 1856, Munguía, I, 66-67.

ing actual ownership.¹⁴ It is difficult to say just how widespread this practice was, but in Guadalajara it was common enough for the government, on July 26, 1856, to issue a temporary injunction on all alienations of ecclesiastical property.¹⁵ Some sales were made by corporations with the proviso that the pope's approval be secured to finalize the transaction; if he did not approve, as clearly he would not, then the property would revert to the corporation.¹⁶ At times priests adjudicated the houses in which they lived to prevent denunciations of the property by others, thus avoiding the loss of one-eighth of the value which was the denouncer's reward.¹⁷

Considering the foregoing, the Church's position on the law was clearly contradictory. In addition to the specific and oft-repeated episcopal prohibitions against taking advantage of the Lerdo law, the clergy and administrators of clerical property were ordered not to recognize or cooperate in the execution of the law in any way, and penalties were imposed for disobedience. By this criterion, simulated sales should have been, and at times were, prohibited since they involved recognition of the law. Thus, a clerical tenant adjudicated an ecclesiastically-owned property, believing that he would keep it in "apparent ownership" as long as current circumstances existed, later returning it in sound condition to the corporation. The Archbishop, however, censured him for his conduct and deprived him of his office and benefits. To return to favor, the cleric was required to rescind the contract and request rehabilitation from Rome.¹⁸

Similarly, when an adjudicator refused to pay the interest due the Church on his mortgage because he had not been given the deed to the property, the presbyter asked the Archbishop whether he could

¹⁴ Mariano Cuevas, *Historia de la nación mexicana* (2nd ed., México, 1952), III, 51 and Informe político, March 15, 1865, in *Intervención francesa. Documentos misceláneos, 1862-1867* (García Collection, University of Texas), #110.

¹⁵ Luis Pérez Verdía, *Historia particular del estado de Jalisco, desde los primeros tiempos de que hay noticia hasta nuestros días* (Guadalajara, 1910-1911), II, 412-413.

One possible way to determine the number of simulated sales would be to check the thousands of cancellation deeds issued under the conservative government to ascertain the reason given for returning the property to the Church. Obviously, however, this would be unreliable, and exhausting, and it would overlook much property not returned for various reasons, including its location in liberal-held areas.

¹⁶ *El Siglo Diez y Nueve*, March 8, 1857, p. 3. Such contracts were nullified by the government, see AGN, Justicia eclesiástica, Vol. 174, fols. 171-180.

¹⁷ *Siglo XIX*, March 10, 1857, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Resolución de la Sagrada Congregación acerca de la solicitud que le dirigió un eclesiástico que de buena fe denunció la casa en que vivía, con arreglo a la ley de 25 de junio de 1856* (Guadalajara, 1858). See also AGN, Bienes nacionales, negocios eclesiásticos, December 29, 1856, leg. 1873, exp. 1 and leg. 148, exp. 24.

take legal action to collect the interest due. The answer was that the Church's position was clear: nothing could be done by anyone to indicate approval of the Lerdo law; therefore, the presbyter could use only "prudent means that did not indicate recognition of the law."¹⁹

This attitude of non-cooperation and non-recognition presented a serious problem for the Church. Since one element of the Church's policy, as indicated above, was the refusal to turn over the title deeds to those who acquired the property, the new owners in turn refused to pay the interest on the mortgages which remained due on the properties.²⁰ As a result, many corporations found themselves in financial difficulty. By August, 1857, almost all of the property of Santa Teresa la Nueva Nunnery in Mexico City had been sold, but since the purchasers refused to make their interest payments, the Nunnery's income hardly covered one-half the food costs of the nuns.²¹ San Bernardo Nunnery reported that its income did not nearly cover its expenses, one reason being that the purchasers of the corporation's real estate claimed they had not been given title deeds to the property. The corporation manager readily admitted that this was the case, but he justified his action on the ground that if he had turned over the titles the last hope of recovering the property would be lost; purchasers of "bad faith" would destroy this evidence of Church ownership, thus making their "badly acquired" rights more secure since then only the government document concerning the purchase would remain.²²

Despite the foregoing evidence which was in keeping with the Church's announced opposition to the Lerdo law, in other situations the Church's attitude was curiously mild, almost indifferent. When the Puebla government discovered that a certain Dominican friar was conspiring to evade the Lerdo law by concluding false, pre-dated rent contracts for monastery real estate in order to have it adjudicated to his godchildren, he was jailed and the Archbishop informed of the matter. In reply, the ecclesiastical authorities asserted that the government was charging the friar with two things: disobedience to the Lerdo law and feigning anterior contracts. As for the former charge, his conduct conformed with that prescribed by the prelates, and as

¹⁹ El presbítero D. Manuel Carlos Armellero consulta si puede exigir de un adjudicatario el pago de los réditos de una capellanía, AGN, Bienes nacionales, August, 1857, leg. 1827, exp. 1.

²⁰ Adjunto a V. para conocimientos . . . en estas parroquias . . . Vicaría Foránea de Almoloya, *ibid.*, October, 1856, leg. 1873, exp. 1.

²¹ Relativo al presbítero D. Cleto Millán sobre la capellanía que disfruta, *ibid.*, May, 1859, leg. 1711, exp. 1.

²² La M.R.M. Abadesa del convento de S. Bernardo . . . en la calle de Mesones, *ibid.*, leg. 74, exp. 51.

for the latter, his actions did not impede the law, for if the properties did not pass to the current tenants, they would be the ones defrauded, not the government.²³ The Church's position in this case was hardly consonant with its attitude in others. Clearly the friar was attempting to evade the law in order to get the property into "reliable" hands, as well as to avoid the financial loss that would result from its being sold at auction; the action involved active opposition to the law as well as recognition of it; the former was constantly denied and the latter was forbidden by the prelates.

With the successful conservative Tacubaya Revolution of December, 1857, and the ensuing three-year war that engulfed Mexico, a civil war that the Church's attitude toward the liberal acts helped precipitate, the hierarchy felt that it had been delivered from its enemies. Early in 1858 the conservative government in Mexico City annulled the obnoxious measures, including the Lerdo law, and all property was ordered restored to the rightful owners, ecclesiastical corporations. Since the liberals quickly declared all acts of the Mexico City government null, those who had braved Church wrath initially by taking advantage of the Lerdo law were faced with an agonizing decision: if they refused to comply with the new decrees, expecting a liberal victory, they would be punished by the conservatives; but if they returned the property to the Church expecting that the liberals would be defeated, they would face retribution if the liberals were ultimately victorious. One possible solution to the dilemma was to restore the Church's property, but not willingly, then the victorious liberals might return the property to them. This was in fact Juárez' policy: the law of February 5, 1861, issued after the end of the civil war, established degrees of willingness in the return of clerical property; those who had not returned the property willingly, as noted in the cancellation deeds, reacquired it.²⁴

An example of a cancellation instrument, but one indicating willingness to restore the Church's property, follows:

Francisco Miguel Calapiz, escribano nacional y público.

Certifico: que al margen de la escritura de adjudicación otorgada ante mí con fecha treinta y uno de Julio de mil ochocientos cincuenta y seis a favor de Don José Félix Rodríguez, se haya la comparencia del tenor siguiente. "Méjico Febrero veinte y tres de mil ochocientos y ocho [sic] =

²³ El religioso dominico de Oajaca Fr. Ignacio María Feria acusado de haber querido adjudicarse unas fincas de su orden, AGN, Justicia eclesiástica, July, 1856, Vol. 173, fols. 338-357.

²⁴ Manuel Payno (ed.), *Colección de las leyes, decretos, circulares y providencias relativas a la desamortización eclesiástica, a la nacionalización de los bienes de corporaciones, y a la reforma de la legislación civil que tenía relación con el culto y con la iglesia* (México, 1861), II, 127-163.

hoy día de la fecha compareció la Señora Doña Gertrudis Eseudero, y dijo: que como albacea y heredera que es de Don Félix Rodríguez, lo cual me consta, manifiesta: que tanto el finado, cuanto la esponente, jamás tuvieron intención de tomarse los bienes pertenecientes a la Iglesia, y que si se adjudicó el finado la casa, fué con la intención de volverla a su legítimo dueño: que estando ya derogada la ley, y siendo llegado el caso de cancelar la presente escritura, lo verifica manifestando, que por su parte, queda la presente cancelada, rota, y de ningún valor ni efecto; poniendo la presente en este margen, en razón a que no se le dió testimonio. En tal concepto que da la presente cancelada, rota y de ningún valor ni efecto, doy fe. María Gertrudis Eseudero = Francisco Calapiz . . .”

Y a pedimiento de la interesada doy el presente.

Méjico a veinte y tres de Febrero de mil ochocientos cincuenta y ocho. [rubric]²⁵

From the evidence it appears that the Church, in conservative-held territory, was not vindictive toward those who had disobeyed its orders by adjudicating property; on the contrary, moderation and a willingness to be fair seemed to characterize its relations with former tenants. For example, Mariano Navarro returned a house to the Nunnery of Santa Teresa la Antigua declaring that he had only adjudicated it in the first place with the intention of conserving it for the Nunnery and of returning it when circumstances permitted. He added that he had made considerable improvements on the house, appraised at \$11,000. So on February 25, 1858, the Archbishop authorized Navarro to continue as the tenant of the house and asked the Nunnery to grant him some recompense for the improvements. The Nunnery did grant him over \$7,000 which, however, was not collectable as long as Navarro remained the tenant and the corporation did not alienate the property.²⁶

In another more intricate case, Josefa Rayón asked the Archbishop to authorize her return to the tenancy of a house she had vacated because she had been loath to adjudicate it under the Lerdo law. The Archbishop agreed; however, the person who had adjudicated the property resisted eviction. Señora Rayón believed recourse to the courts was the only way to obtain the eviction, but since she lacked necessary resources for such an action, she tried to reach an agreement in some other way. Although she did not try to validate her rights in court, neither did she renounce her rights to the property; since neither the conservative laws nor the Archbishop's statements on the

²⁵ Documentos pertenecientes al convento antiguo del Señor de Santa Teresa, AGN, Bienes nacionales, leg. 125, exp. 5.

²⁶ Expediente relativo a las mejoras y arrendamiento de la casa no. 3 de la calle de Santa Teresa la antigua, perteneciente al convento del mismo nombre, AGN, Bienes nacionales, leg. 125, exp. 5.

matter had stipulated a time limit for adjudicators to return the property to the Church, Señora Rayón believed her rights lasted as long as she wished. However, the manager of the corporation's property believed that this view was contrary to the spirit of the laws which were intended to favor the rights of ecclesiastical corporations. Señora Rayón's attitude would be prejudicial to the Nunnery because as long as no definite solution was reached on her claim, the Nunnery could not conclude a new agreement for increased rent with the adjudicator.

After reviewing the facts, the Archbishop finally decided to grant Señora Rayón \$25 a month for life with which to pay for other living quarters;²⁷ in return, she was to renounce all rights to tenancy of the house in question. This decision was made because Señora Rayón was poor and the rent on the whole house could be doubled, thus offsetting the amount granted to her. So, agreement was reached on this basis.

This part of the matter settled, the Nunnery concluded a new agreement with Cenobia Villanueva, wife of General Agustín Alcérreca, the adjudicator. Her position had been that, though the General had adjudicated the house, it was abandoned and in poor repair at the time; thus, she considered the Rayón claim invalid. However, if the Archbishop decided to return the house to Rayón, then the General should be reimbursed for improvements he had made, appraised at \$2,231. The new agreement concluded with General Alcérreca stipulated that he would pay \$65 a month rent for the whole house, or \$28 more than the rent at the time he had adjudicated the property. The Nunnery would use \$25 of the sum to pay Rayón and an additional \$3 to pay monthly interest on a mortgage of \$600 on the house; thus, the corporation's net would be the same as before. The amount for improvements would remain due to Alcérreca without interest and with no fixed time limit until a change in ownership or tenancy occurred, at which time the Nunnery would pay the General 5 per cent interest and redeem the amount within three years.²⁸

For a time after the Tacubaya Revolution it seemed to the Mexican Church that its firm opposition to the reformers' attempts to restrict its rights and power had been crowned with success. A favorable government occupied the capital and surrounding territory, and the Church's property and rights had been restored to it. Yet, as the

²⁷ Prior to the Lerdo law Señora Rayón had paid the Nunnery \$25 a month for the part of the house she rented; the whole house yielded the corporation \$37 a month.

²⁸ El Señor mayordomo del convento de Santa Teresa la antigua, consulta sobre la casa no. 7 de la calle de este nombre, de que eran inquilinos las Señoras Rayones, AGN, Bienes nacionales, leg. 125, exp. 5.

War of the Reform raged, the liberal government of Juárez in Veracruz and his lieutenants elsewhere in the Republic pressed forward with even more drastic anti-clerical measures: the separation of Church and State, nationalization of Church property, and suppression of monastic orders. And even though among friends, the Church was forced by circumstances to alienate its property, submit to government taxes, even to give up precious silver objects to sustain the conservative cause. Either way, the Church lost, despoiled by friends and enemies alike.

Thus, for example, the Provincial of Santo Domingo complained that the Monastery, and others as well, lacked the resources to fulfill a half-million peso loan to the government.²⁹ He said that Santo Domingo lacked \$5,763.73 on the payment of the first two-fifths of its quota which was due August 30, 1858, and he requested that the government collect it from the hacienda of Coahuistla, owned by the Monastery, but involved in litigation arising from Francisco Mendoza Cortina's claims to its ownership. The conservative government complied with this request.

Toward the end of the Three Years' War, another loan occasioned this curious situation. A lack of funds forced the Puebla diocese to alienate some mortgages it held. A contract was concluded with a Puebla inhabitant, Ciriaco Marrón, for funds in exchange for mortgages owed by Rafael Illercos on the hacienda of Sobreira; one of these, which sustained a *capellanía*, was held by the Juzgado de Capellanías of the Archbishopric. Since the Juzgado was not under the jurisdiction of the Puebla diocese, its permission was requested to complete the transaction. But there was no time to wait for a reply; so the deed of cession was authorized to Marrón, and approval of the completed act was then requested from the Juzgado.³⁰

In addition to loans, the conservatives on February 7, 1859, levied a tax of 1 per cent on all capital over \$1,000. The rector of the congregation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Querétaro complained that the tax meant a payment of \$2,668 for the congregation's real estate. But he pointed out that a government resolution of April 27, 1858, had exempted ecclesiastical real estate from any new tax until the Church's loan of \$1,500,000 was repaid. This had not been done; therefore, ecclesiastical real estate could not be subjected to this new tax. Furthermore, if the corporation was required to pay the tax, said the rector, it would mean a payment of \$444 within fifteen days, and a like amount in fifteen more days and during each

²⁹ AGN, Justicia eclesiástica, Vol. 165, fol. 341.

³⁰ AGN, Bienes nacionales, leg. 1001, exp. 1.

of the following four months, while the total monthly income of the corporation was only about \$500. No other funds were available, and, if forced to pay, it would be necessary for the congregation either to suspend all *obras pías* sustained by the rental income or to sell some property, which would be difficult because of the strained times.³¹

Toward the end of the civil war, the silver objects of the churches were also being used, but the government received little from this source. In August, 1860, it was reported that the silver had produced only \$53,000,³² and in September the Robles division arrived in Mexico City with \$10,000 worth of worked silver from the churches in Puebla and surrounding towns.³³ Despite the government's deteriorating position, a few transactions were still being concluded with it near the end of the war. One of the last was agreed to in September, 1860, just three months before the end of the war. By its terms, Pío Bermejillo received \$500,000 worth of ecclesiastical property deeds in exchange for \$100,000 cash, \$50,000 worth of Peza bonds,³⁴ and twenty-five carts valued at \$2,000 each. The carts were placed on auction, but the highest bidder offered only \$700 each, half in cash and half in clothing.³⁵ This transaction reveals the plight of the government which disposed of clerical property of considerable value

³¹ El rector de la congregación de N.S. de Guadalupe de Querétaro, sobre si no obstante lo estipulado por el Supremo Gobierno está obligada aquella corporación a escribir la que corresponde de la contribución nuevamente decretada, *ibid.*, Negocios eclesiásticos, March, 1859, leg. 1711, exp. 1.

Similar complaints against taxes had been made to the liberal government by corporations. The Provincial of the Franciscans of Michoacán said that it would be injurious to pay the tax decreed on May 26, 1857. He pointed out that the Monastery of San Francisco de Acámbaro, Michoacán, had capital of only \$680 which yielded annual interest of \$33.25, but since the Monastery itself was valued at \$20,000, the tax would be \$83.03 or more than twice its yearly income. Nevertheless the government refused this request for exemption from the tax. El provincial de Franciscanos de Michoacán pide se exceptue a los conventos de su orden de la contribución impuesta por la ley de 26 de mayo del corriente año, AGN, Justicia eclesiástica, Vol. 174, fols. 330-336. The 1844 report of the Ministry of Justice showed that the Monastery in question possessed active capital of \$10,312 at that time, so possibly the Provincial was stretching the truth. *Memoria del Secretario de Estado y del Despacho de Justicia e Instrucción Pública leída . . . en 12 enero de 1844* (México, 1844), Chart #6.

³² Augusto Rendón to Amado Julián (Jacdet), August 28, 1860, Jesús González Ortega Correspondencia, 1851-1881 (Typescripts in the Latin American Collection, University of Texas), Vol. II.

³³ Enrique A. Melleville to Ortega, September, 1860, *ibid.*

³⁴ Peza bonds were those issued by the conservative government in an attempt to raise funds.

³⁵ Luciana A. de Baz de Degollado, September 30, 1860, Ortega Correspondencia, Vol. II. Another report stated that Bermejillo offered \$25,000 cash, \$85,000 worth of carts with mules, \$150,000 in Peza bonds, and \$40,000 for freight and back debts. Rendón to Benito Quijano, September 23, 1860, *ibid.*

but received relatively little in return. It also shows the risk speculators were willing to take since the victorious liberals would quite probably annul any such acquisition of property deeds under the conservatives. The same risks, of course, were taken by speculators in Veracruz who dealt with the liberal government while the war's outcome was in doubt.

It has been suggested that a different archbishop and a different pope might have come to terms with the reformers in 1856-57 and avoided the holocaust of the civil war and the more radical anticlericalism. From the beginning the liberals had insisted that the Lerdo law was not an attack on the Church or religion but was purely an economic measure to force circulation of stagnating property and to create a numerous class of small property owners. In fact, the law did not deprive the Church of its wealth, though of course it restricted the form of that wealth. Clerical leaders must have felt, however, that the Lerdo law, following on the heels of the Juárez law, plus a general knowledge of liberal ideas, presaged more radical attacks on the Church. Certainly, whether the Lerdo law benefited the Church materially or not, the bishops did not view the law primarily from that standpoint, but as an attack on their God-given right to own property, an attack which they could not permit to go unchallenged. This challenge had lamentable results.