

Book Reviews

The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt. Edited by Elting E. Morison, John M. Blum, Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., and Sylvia Rice. Volumes VII and VIII, *The Days of Armageddon, 1909-1919.* (Cambridge: The Harvard University Press, 1954, pp. xii, vi, 1621. Illustrations and index. \$20.00.)

These concluding volumes of the Theodore Roosevelt letters cover Roosevelt's hunting trip to Africa, his triumphant visits to the countries and royal courts of western Europe, his break with Taft, his campaign for the Republican nomination in 1912 and his defeat, the organization of the Progressive party, the election of 1912, his South American expedition in 1914, the liquidation of the Progressive party, Roosevelt's opposition to American neutrality after 1914 and his attempts to arouse the country to the German threat, his campaign for American military preparedness, his part in the presidential campaign of 1916, his earnest endeavors to get into the war himself as an organizer of four divisions and how he was rebuffed, his furious hatred of Wilson, his ideas of a proper peace settlement after the war, his part in the congressional elections of 1918, and the increasing convergence of all the anti-Wilson forces around the name and activities of Roosevelt—a convergence which probably would have made him the victorious Republican nominee for President in 1920 had he lived and had his health permitted. These final volumes are edited with the wit and insight which characterized the editing of the previous six volumes.

Roosevelt was both an ambitious opportunist and a sincere believer in causes (what politician of the first rank is not?), but in Roosevelt both the opportunism and the belief in causes are much more pronounced than is usual. This is what makes him so paradoxical and so controversial a figure. The revisionist view of Roosevelt, popular after his death and reflecting the inevitable reaction from his personal popularity while he lived, had emphasized his opportunism. The current rehabilitation of Roosevelt rightly emphasizes his strong and remarkably coherent and consistent philosophy.

Roosevelt's campaign for the nomination against Taft, his organizing of the Progressive party, his remaining in the race against Wilson, and his liquidating of the Progressive party can be put down as evidence of Roosevelt's vaulting

ambition, of his determination to "rule or ruin." But these letters and other evidence can be used to make a convincing case for the other side. There can be no doubt that Roosevelt was a sincere social-minded and national-minded democrat. He was sincerely shocked by Taft's ineptitude and truckling to the conservatives in the Republican party. He honestly believed that he represented the rank-and-file progressive views of the average American of around 1910 and 1912, that the Republican party had a better chance of winning in 1912 and of advancing acceptable progressive principles with him as the nominee than it had with Taft or LaFollette as the nominee. Also, his contention that the Democratic party was the party of the "rural toryism" of the South and the victim of its antiquated states-rights doctrines was no pose. The split in the Republican party had already occurred before the nomination of the progressive Wilson took place. Indeed, it is not improbable that Roosevelt's impending candidacy on the Bull Moose ticket prodded the Democrats into rejecting the more conservative Champ Clark and nominating Wilson. (In a sense, Roosevelt played in the rise of Wilson the role Douglas played in the rise of Lincoln, although Roosevelt would be exasperated at this comparison, since he loathed Douglas, came to loathe Wilson, and on almost every other page of his letters compares himself to Lincoln.) After Wilson's nomination it would have been difficult for Roosevelt to retire, even had he desired to do so, for he had made too many commitments to his associates and followers; besides, he still earnestly believed that Wilson's program was too states-rights oriented, that it lacked a Hamiltonian centralization which alone could make it effective. Moreover, there was real wisdom in Roosevelt's scuttling of the Progressive party after 1914. He saw earlier than the other Progressive leaders the impact of the World War on domestic politics, how the war and postwar atmosphere would not be conducive to the growth of the Progressive party. He discerned, too, what Beveridge and other Progressive leaders chose to ignore, that the Progressive party, in spite of its remarkable showing in 1912, had not elected enough congressional, state, and local officials, that it had not taken sufficient root in the precincts and localities to allow it to become a major party.

Theodore Roosevelt was one of the few Americans of his time who understood the international balance of power. He

warned, particularly in his long and vivid letter to George Otto Trevelyan describing his travels in Europe in 1910, that the new and astonishing industrial efficiency of Germany and Japan, belatedly built on feudal class structures and combined with anachronistic authoritarian traditions, might lead to wars of aggression for which Britain and America were unprepared. His insights into Germany's industrial and social structure anticipated by many years the brilliant interpretations of Thorstein Veblen's *Imperial Germany*. Roosevelt believed that the world situation required and would continue to require a close paralleling of British and American foreign policies, with universal military service in both countries; and he even suggested, as early as 1914, that after the defeat of Germany the Western powers might have to rebuild Germany, with safeguards, to stand against Russia and the Slavs.

However, along with this clear-headedness about the balance of power, Roosevelt was singularly blind to some other aspects of international relations. He did not understand at all the anti-imperialist revolutions, already taking place in his own day in Mexico and in Sun Yat-sen's China. He did not understand the strength (and the underlying reasons for it) of the collectivist movements in the Europe of his own day, and he did not at all understand or anticipate the strength (and the underlying reasons for it) of the collectivist movements inside the anti-imperialist revolutions of his day and a later day. Finally, Roosevelt was almost completely unprepared for the growing tendency of all nations, both old and new, to cooperate, even federate, in international organizations.

There is no denying that Roosevelt, because of a mixture of personal ambition, hatred for Wilson, and sincere belief in nationalism, encouraged some dangerous tendencies in American life. He led the pack in the domestic anti-German hysteria of 1914-1918. He was for loyalty oaths, the dismissing of teachers, the banning of books. He would investigate historians like Robinson, Beard, and Shotwell; he would expel LaFollette from the Senate; he would hang Viereck. After the October Revolution in Russia, he also led the anti-Communist hysteria. He would send an American army to Russia to back the Cossacks and the counter-revolution. His domestic enemies became Bolshevists, no better than Dantans, Robes-

pierres, Marats, Lenins, Trotskys. He was not content merely to cast out the I.W.W. or even Debs, Berger, and Hillquit as Communists. To this category, from time to time, he consigned the Nonpartisan League, Hearst, LaFollette, Fremont Older, Amos Pinchot, Rudolph Spreckels, Felix Frankfurter, Newton Baker, Woodrow Wilson. His hatred of Wilson knew no bounds. To Roosevelt, Wilson was callous, perfidious, sinister; he was an empty rhetorician and a hypocrite; he was without intellect, morals, or patriotism; he was a pacifist and even a traitor; he was by all odds the worst President in American history, much worse than James Buchanan. In numerous private letters to British and French officials and leaders, Roosevelt, in the midst of the war, spewed out his savage characterizations of the President. Often he would preface such letters with: "I hope the censor won't see this." When Roosevelt's correspondents would suggest that perhaps Wilson's timing of America's entry into the war was sound, that at least he carried with him a fairly united nation, Roosevelt would reply that the nation was more unified for war at the time of the sinking of the "Lusitania" than it was in 1917. When Roosevelt's correspondents would hint at Wilson's brilliant use of the pre-armistice negotiations with Germany to talk directly to the German people and undermine the Hohenzollern regime, Roosevelt would reply that Wilson was merely attempting to doublecross the Allies, make a soft peace with Germany, and win personal glory for himself. This "outrageous plan" of Wilson, Roosevelt maintained, miscarried only because of the Republican congressional victory of 1918.

By 1918 Roosevelt had become the symbol and the converging point of the anti-Wilson reaction. For this role he was a "natural": his flaming hatred of Wilson, his shrill anti-Bolshevism, his intense nationalism. It is safe to say that the "pro-German isolationists" whom Roosevelt so severely castigated during the war—the LaFollettes, the Hearsts, and the Vierecks— would have been Roosevelt's allies by 1920, united by their common anti-Wilsonism and their nationalism. Indeed, even during the war itself Roosevelt was flirting with some extreme opponents of the war, among them Tom Watson of Georgia and Ernest Lundeen of Minnesota. This was a foretaste of what would have come on a large scale had Roosevelt lived until 1920. As early as 1918, Roosevelt was

preparing to wage the campaign of 1920 on the issue of nationalism versus internationalism. In a letter to Beveridge, Roosevelt gave assurances that anything he (Roosevelt) said which indicated sympathy for internationalism was merely "a platonic expression" designed to mollify Taft and other internationalists in the Republican party. And yielding to expediency on a measure which would have been consistent with nationalism but not with isolationist nationalism, Roosevelt, usually so clear-headed on the balance of power, indicated that he would oppose any American-British-French alliance designed to protect France from renewed German aggression.

Had Roosevelt lived on to 1920 and been elected President, it is possible that the conservative reaction in the United States would have been given a more articulate, decisive, and ideological orientation. On the other hand, Roosevelt in power probably would have relaxed, become more objective. His bite was never as formidable as his bark. There was something Gallic about Roosevelt. Like the politicians of the Third French Republic, he liked to engage in polemics, personal controversies, fierce journalistic onslaughts. In deeds French politicians are apt to be much more moderate than in words. Roosevelt resembles Clemenceau; there was a strong similarity of outlook, manner, and methods.

These letters testify that after 1910 Roosevelt was more frustrated than even the general public supposed. They also testify to what the public did not suspect: that after 1910 Roosevelt was a tired and in some ways a prematurely old man, that after 1914 he was a sick man.

The eight volumes of letters reveal that Roosevelt was a man of considerable intellectual stature. His first love was not biology but history, and while his earlier works, like the *Thomas Hart Benton*, were often superficial, had he gone into history writing as a profession, as he once contemplated when he was Vice-President and saw little prospect of political advancement, he might have developed into a historian in the grand manner. His description of the various stages of historical development of the peoples along the Nile in his day and his account of the royal courts, dynasties, aristocracies, and plain peoples of Western Europe in 1910 show much historical insight and narrative power. Roosevelt the reader of literature and history was never as cock-sure as Roosevelt the public man. (The years he occupied the Presidency, the

years in which he read less, were the years of his most irritating intellectual cock-sureness.) Intellectually, Roosevelt showed considerable capacity for objectivity and for changing his mind. In a letter to William E. Dodd, Roosevelt, always antagonistic to Jefferson, reveals a genuine interest in Dodd's favorable interpretation of Jefferson; and in Roosevelt's later life he largely rejected the racist theories of Lothrop Stoddard and Madison Grant, theories with which in earlier life he had flirted.

Students of Indiana history will be interested in the interchange of letters between Roosevelt and famous Hoosiers like William D. Foulke, Lucius B. Swift, Charles W. Fairbanks, Will Hays, John W. Foster, and Albert J. Beveridge. There is a series of curious and impudent letters between Foster and Roosevelt. Roosevelt and Beveridge were never really close, not nearly so close as their political collaboration would seem to justify, but in the final years both men were brought closer together by their mutual distaste for Wilson, their hostility to internationalism, and Roosevelt's genuine appreciation of Beveridge's first two volumes of *The Life of John Marshall*.

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Confederate Agent. By James D. Horan. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1954, pp. xxii, 326. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$5.00.)

One finishes James D. Horan's long account of his search for new material with the feeling that industry rewarded him. He had the use of the Baker-Turner Papers in the War Records Office of the National Archives, which he says were still under lock and key when he first sought access to them in 1951. While some documents dealing with the conspiracies in the North during the Civil War were published in the *Official Records* of the war, the bulk of them were not. Horan also used the papers of Thomas H. Hines, the hero of his book, that are in the Margaret I. King Library of the University of Kentucky, as well as some letters that passed between Hines and Nancy Sproule—whom Hines married during the war—that are privately owned.

Thus Horan had very important sources not used by Mayo Fesler for his basic study, "Secret Political Societies