

From "The United States at the Court of Pius IX"

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Martin was succeeded by Lewis Cass, Jr., who served until 1858 and who, in 1854, was elevated to the rank of Minister Resident.¹³ Before the new chargé arrived at his post, April 2, 1849, a republican form of government had been set up in Rome, and the Holy Father had withdrawn to Gaeta within the territories of the King of Naples. Nicholas Brown, the American consul, who was in charge of the legation when the official proclamation of the republic was received, lost no time in tendering to the new nation his warmest congratulations, and gave assurances that his government would "take the earliest opportunity to recognize that of Rome in the most satisfactory manner." "So deeply rooted in every American heart (is) the love of liberty," he said, "that the Nation will at once hail with joy the Independence of the Roman Republic long before their diplomatic agents can have time in due official form to give expression to the generous sentiments of their constituency."¹⁴ But in spite of Brown's frequent urgings upon his home government to extend recognition, in spite of his statement that "the papacy is fallen, morally^o fallen, forever,"¹⁵ Buchanan's instructions to Cass, February 16, 1849, showed less eagerness. The Secretary stated that while it was the constant policy and practice of the country to recognize existing governments without inquiring into their legitimacy, yet such governments must first give evidence of their will and their power to maintain independence; and this, he thought, could not be asserted in regard to the existing government at Rome. "Its recent origin," he continued, "and the almost insuperable difficulties by which it is surrounded, render it extremely doubtful whether it will be able to maintain itself."¹⁶ Cass was told to proceed to Rome in order to gather all the information obtainable, but to withhold his letter of credence until he should receive further instructions.¹⁷ Cass himself doubted if a republic could exist for any length of time in Italy. The underlying reason, in his judgment, was the inability of that country to settle her disputes without foreign aid. And in the schemings of European powers regarding Italy, he thought the spiritual office of the Pope was used to a great extent as a pretext. "The real question," he was persuaded, "was to prevent in Italy the development of democratic principles, and to maintain the supremacy of Austria." "Revolution has almost everywhere compromised itself by acts of the greatest barbarity. It would really seem, in many instances p109 which have come under my own observation, as if the people were bent on making democracy appear ridiculous. . . ."¹⁸

Recognition of the new republic had not been accorded by any foreign government. On the contrary, the diplomatic body accredited to the Holy See accompanied the Pope in his flight to Gaeta, where it remained in attendance upon his court. In an effort to secure the strength which recognition on the part of the United States would give the republic, Cass was importuned by Mazzini and others to present his credentials and establish diplomatic relations with the provisional government. Dinners, seats at the opera, and other civilities were offered to him in abundance, but he declined them all.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Prussian minister and the secretary of the French legation came to Rome, ostensibly for the purpose of prosecuting some private business but manifestly to dissuade the American chargé from presenting his credentials to the party in power. Intervention, they declared, was unavoidable and necessary for the peace of Europe by arresting the factious spirit which under the name of democracy was doing so much evil; they therefore expected the speedy restoration of the Pope.²⁰

Later, Cass was requested by the Prince of Canino, then representing the ministry, to solicit an interview with the commanding officer of the French, who had arrived at Civita Vecchia for the

purpose of intervention, and to submit to him the ultimatum of the government. This demanded an armistice of fifteen days, within which period the question of the restoration of the Holy Father was to be submitted to the vote of the people. If the question were answered in the affirmative, the constitution would be changed accordingly, and the French should withdraw from Roman territory. The alternative was war. Cass, believing that the motive of this request was to create the impression that the United States favored the republican cause, refused to act as bearer of the message, giving as his reason that having no official character, the French commander might justly regard his mission as an act of impertinent interference.²¹ During the course of later negotiations between the contending parties, the American representative was again urged to appear as the representative of the Roman republic, but, although the French joined in the request, he felt it his duty to decline.²² The political situation appeared to be growing more complicated and uncertain, so that the Department of State finally left it to the discretion of the chargé to present his credentials to the provisional government, or to withhold them some time longer.²³

On July 3, 1849, the French army entered Rome. A few days after the collapse of the republic, some French soldiers entered the residence of Brown, the United States consul, frightened his wife by the drawing of swords, and carried off with them two Italians who had taken refuge on the roof. It appeared in the course of the investigation which followed the complaints of Cass, that two of Brown's servants had that day repeatedly insulted the soldiers while passing, and that an individual among the crowd that had gathered in front of the consul's house had drawn a poniard upon the guard. The patrol, not knowing the character of the house until they were retiring, entered and made prisoners the guilty individuals. Complete apology was made to the consul, and the prisoners were released.²⁴

On April 12, 1850, Pius IX, accompanied by the College of Cardinals, returned from Gaeta.

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