



Talks With T.R.

From the Diaries of John J. Leary, Jr.



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CLASHES WITH THE KAISER.

It is not generally known that on at least three occasions—twice before the great war and once since—Colonel Roosevelt and the Kaiser clashed. The Venezuela incident is more or less widely known, largely through Mr. Thayer's excellent book. But the clash of wills at the time of Colonel Roosevelt's visit to Berlin, and his refusal to take the Kaiser's part in 1914, are not at all well known.

The colonel told of the clash in Berlin en route for Boston one Sunday in 1916.

"It is," said he, "not generally known that I had a little friction with the Kaiser when I visited Germany."

"When I reached Berlin I found an invitation for 'Mr. Roosevelt' to be the Kaiser's guest at the embassy. Mrs. Roosevelt was traveling with me. I asked at the embassy what the invitation meant—it included her. When I found it did not, I declined, and said I was stopping at the embassy."

"The invitation was repeated. My answer was that Mrs. Roosevelt and I were to be the guests of the embassy. I was traveling as any American gentleman might travel with his wife and I did not propose to go any place where she would not be welcomed or could not go. The next day 'Colonel and Mrs. Roosevelt' were invited. By maintaining my point I had made it."

"While I was his guest, Wilhelm, a delightful host, was very frank in telling what he thought of other Americans who had visited him—Andrew Carnegie and others. Later he sent me photographs he had taken of some of them written on the backs. They were not opinions calculated to please the subjects of the pictures."

"I suppose he was advised that he should not have done this, for the return of the photographs was protested. I said, 'Oh, no, his majesty the Kaiser gave the photographs to me and I propose to retain them.' I suppose I was the one man in the empire at the time who would refuse to obey his wishes."

"Anyway, I kept the photographs. They have been mounted on glass so one can read the inscriptions."

"I clashed again with the Kaiser directly the war broke out," the colonel went on.

"Then I was called upon by a young member of the Kaiser's staff in Washington—a count—I cannot recall his name now."

"I am instructed by his majesty the Kaiser," said he, "to present his compliments to Colonel Roosevelt, to say to him that he has very pleasant recollections of his visit to Berlin and Potsdam, and to hope that Colonel Roosevelt will appreciate Germany's position and can be relied upon to see the justice of it."

"You will please present my compliments to his majesty the Kaiser," I answered; "and to him that I, too, have very pleasant recollections of my stay in Berlin and Potsdam, and his many courtesies to me, his guest, but that I also have a very lively recollection of courtesies extended to me by his majesty the Kaiser of Belgium, whose guest I also was."

"He clicked his heels together, saluted and left. I have not heard from him or the Kaiser since."

"I imagine the Kaiser also had recollections of the Venezuela matter. He was convinced that I was bluffing when he was told I would maintain the Monroe Doctrine. Von Holleben, then ambassador, told him so; he reported to the foreign office. I insisted on our rights, and finally told the ambassador that Admiral Dewey and his ships would be ordered to sail for Venezuela waters in 24 hours if in the meantime I did not receive definite assurances that Germany had abandoned its intentions. Dewey was then in West Indian waters."

"Von Holleben then concluded that I was not bluffing and his cable reversing himself caused the German foreign office. Soon after this he was recalled in disgrace. He was in so bad one German official was at the ship to see him off. On his return to Germany he dropped out of sight completely."

"The one man who sized me right and who put Berlin on the right track was Carl Bunsen, then consul-general in New York. He lived out Long Island way and had visited me at Sagamore Hill. He was shrewd enough to size up the situation accurately. He told the embassy it was in error and warned it to beware, that I was not bluffing."

"Later, you will recall, Bunsen has been indicted for plotting to put bombs on English ships—some of those German war plots."

"Dewey at that time had instructions to be ready to move on a moment's notice."

Subsequent to this conversation Henry A. Wise-Wood, noting that the accuracy of some of Colonel Roosevelt's published utterances on the Venezuela matter had been challenged, wrote to Admiral Dewey. Dewey's reply, published at the time, corroborated fully all that the colonel had said about holding his ships in readiness for action.



Thinking It Over.

I hope he gets what he asks, but I am afraid he won't.

The Colonel's fears proved true, and Bunsen, later convicted, died in the federal penitentiary at Atlanta.

THAT GARY DINNER.

IT IS not known to many that, in 1915, Colonel Roosevelt threatened, in the event that certain contingencies became facts, to support President Wilson for re-election against the republican nominee.

The threat was made at a luncheon given at the Harvard club in December of that year by the late Robert J. Collier. Later, in explaining the famous Gary dinner to me, Colonel Roosevelt repeated the threat.

The Gary dinner may well be described as the mystery of the 1916 campaign. Exactly what it meant few knew then, and publicly it has never been authoritatively explained.

The facts are that it was but an incident in the Colonel's campaign for preparedness—he attended it that he might explain so that "big business men, who have not been my friends, but who now know that I am right, might see the situation correctly as it is, and be in a position to help."

"There is," said he immediately after dinner, "no politics in this. We have come to a situation where all Americans must stand together—big business men and little business men, farmer and banker, artisan and longshoreman. I have not gone to the big business men—they have come to me."

That the Gary dinner threw the politicians into a flutter and sent such "old guardmen" as Boies Penrose and Murray Crane flying to New York to find out what it was all about, was entirely due to the fact that Mrs. Harold Vivian, wife of a political writer on the New York World, had an engagement to attend a concert on the night of the dinner.

The next morning Vivian, in the course of breakfast small talk, asked how she enjoyed the entertainment.

"I did not go," said she. "You see (naming the young woman with whom she was to have gone) had to sling at the big dinner Judge Gary gave Colonel Roosevelt last night."

Vivian lost interest in the grapefruit then and there. He knew of the Colonel's rule about attending private dinners except in his own home or in the homes of his immediate friends, as well as the Colonel's horror of large private dinners anywhere. It appealed to him as a story, and the next day the fact that there had been such a dinner, together with the names of the guests, was made public. What happened, what was said at the dinner, was not, in consequence, political editors and the public jumped at the conclusion that Colonel Roosevelt was preparing to run for the presidency again. For some days there was considerable speculation as to what it really meant, until Robert E. MacAlarney, then city editor of the New York Tribune, suggested I see Colonel Roosevelt and end the mystery.

My reception by the Colonel was characteristic.



Roosevelt in Chicago

with all of the strength at my command.

"And, by Godfrey, I mean it! If there's a mongrel platform adopted by the republican convention, such as I dislike Wilson, I'll stump the country for him from one end of it to the other and I won't ask his permission to do so either."

"No platform and no man who swears in the slightest degree from absolute loyalty to the greater Americanism can have my support. I will not be neutral if such a candidate is named or such a platform adopted. There is no such thing as being neutral between right and wrong. Neutral! I do not care who the man is or who his friends are or who comes to me in his behalf, if such a candidate is named, I will fight him with every weapon at my command."

"But at neither place did I say anything to advance either my own candidacy or that of any other man. I am not interested in candidates. I am interested in principles. My sole interest at these two affairs was to try and arouse the American people, to urge them and stir them, through them, to compel congress to take the proper attitude on the question of greater Americanism and national preparedness. If you say that I am working not for a nomination, but as every American should work to secure the peace and prosperity of the United States, you will have hit the nail on the head."

"And don't overlook the fact that any republican who seeks President Wilson's place by pandering to the hyphens will find that he is fighting Roosevelt as well as Wilson."

"I dislike Wilson. I dislike his policies almost to the point of hate, but I am too good an American to say so. Wilson is not a mongrel American or by one professing mongrel principles."

THE COLONEL AND JUDGE HUGHES.

THROUGH the 1916 campaign Colonel Roosevelt was careful, even with his intimates, to say nothing that would in any way reflect upon Judge Hughes. Hughes was the candidate of the party, he preferred to run over by and see him, not the type T. R. favored. More than that, in their personal relations the Colonel felt that Judge Hughes had not treated him quite fairly. This was in connection with the Barnes libel suit in which the Colonel had hoped Judge Hughes would be one of his most important witnesses.

Occasionally during the campaign a scornful reference to the "bearded lady" advised whoever of the inner circle was addressed that it was Mr. Hughes who was in the Colonel's mind. Such occasions were rare, and developed only when the Colonel, with all his heart and soul prayed for republican success, was piqued by the lack of "pep" in the Hughes canvass and the failure of the candidate to take a definite position on Germany.

He was, moreover, thoroughly familiar with the innermost details of the Hughes campaign, more so, some folks thought, than the candidate himself. These details came to him from many and widely scattered sources. For example, there was hardly a reporter on the Hughes train or at the national headquarters but that was cold toward the candidate. The more seasoned of them were of the T. R. "old guard," as members of the "Roosevelt newspaper cabinet," and as loyal to the Colonel as the bull pup he sometimes referred to as a standard of loyalty. These did not hesitate to tell the Colonel whenever they saw him—and they made it their business to meet him whenever possible—the inside news of the trips.

"Feeling as you do," he remarked to one of these, "you are going to find it difficult to vote for Mr. Hughes."

"Hughes, hell," replied William Hoster, the man addressed; "I desire to save a fragment of my self-respect. After Hoster had gone, I remarked that he seemed to feel rather keenly on the subject of Hughes."

"I am afraid," said the Colonel, "that there are a great many like him. Hughes is not an attractive personality at best. Close contact with him does not make him more attractive, for he is a very selfish, very self-centered man. Those boys would like to be his friends, but he won't let them and his namby-pamby policy or lack of real policy disgusts them."

"They have, as the boys would themselves say, taken his measure."



Enroute To The Tropics.

"You know as well as I do that some of the boys on that train and at Bridgehampton (Hughes' summer home) are among the shrewdest judges of politics in this country. They see—they must see—many things on a trip any candidate will overlook. However shrewd he is. They know the psychology of crowds and the newspapers and are valuable advisers in a campaign. Does Mr. Hughes take advantage of all this? No, he just withdraws into his whiskers, and their advice, when they manage to force it upon him, is ignored."

"What these men hate is his cowardice—his refusal to say anything, however right, that might jeopardize his chances. If he had consulted these men and taken their advice he would never have trafficked with Jerry O'Leary."

"With the verdict of the Chicago convention Colonel Roosevelt never quarreled. He accepted it joyfully and whole heartedly, though, it should be said, with misgivings as to the result, and prepared to efface himself as much as possible, lest by unduly remaining in the limelight he injure the candidate's chances. His fear was that Hughes would not make the right sort of a campaign."

"Hughes' danger," he then said, "is that he will not carry the fight to Wilson."

The declaration that Hughes would have to fight to win was made immediately after the convention and before the public at large knew what position he would take in the canvass. He was not at all confident of the result, not wholly satisfied with Hughes as a candidate, but never hesitated about supporting him.

When he made this declaration he had prepared his letter declining the progressive nomination, and was awaiting the meeting of the progressive national committee in Chicago before making public his position. Judge Hughes knew this; so did the leaders of the republican and what was left of the progressive party.

His own programme was definite. It was provided for such speeches for Hughes as might be called for, but otherwise none of the limelight for him.

"The truth is," said he, "and a fellow does not like to speak as I am going to, I have done my share. Let someone else carry the load for a while."

"After tomorrow's meeting in Chicago I hope to be let alone. The committee will agree with me—there will be nothing more for me to say. I have said it all in my letter. Mr. Hughes has seen it and is satisfied. There is nothing more for me to do or say."

"Don't you see that as things are working out I took the only course open? If Burton or Harding had been named I would have supported the nominee against Wilson. Imagine Hughes at his very possible worst, and he cannot do worse than Wilson has done or is doing. It is impossible. Any change is bound to be a good one. Hughes will develop all right if he is elected. I can do nothing but support him."

"Hughes won't come out here. I don't believe he will. What will probably happen is this: I will meet Mr. Hughes in town at dinner; speeches will come later—if they come at all. Whatever I do depends on Mr. Hughes."

"I cannot make his fight for him or tell him how to fight. He must do his own battling, make his own plans. His danger is that he will not carry the fight to Wilson. If he does that he is safe. But if he allows Wilson to get the jump on him he is beaten. Wilson will do it with him if he does not watch out. As matters stand and the election were held tomorrow, Hughes is beaten."

fight. As matters are, the people do not know where Hughes does stand, they look upon him as another Wilson when they do not look upon him as a man without a policy."

"It is his own fault. I tell you he would have won even German votes by preaching straight Americanism."

"The campaign has lacked definite direction. It has been like Mr. Hughes' speeches—it has lacked the punch. It is a fact that a lot of the aged reactionaries who have had so much to say at headquarters really think this fight could have been won on the tariff."

Coming back east after speaking in Toledo and Cleveland, he returned to the subject, declaring that Ohio was gone, that even "poor Herrick is beaten with the rest—a victim of the cowardice of others."

"Herrick" was Myron T. Herrick, our ambassador to France in the early days of the war, and a prime favorite of the colonel; he was the candidate for the United States senate.

"The 'Old Guard' here is not awake yet," said he; "they have simply thrown the state away."

"I have been asked tonight why I did not come out earlier in the campaign when they asked for me instead of going into the seclusion. I told them I went where I was sent; that they should ask that question of the national committee."

Sometime after the campaign was ended, a visitor at Sagamore Hill remarked: "Anyway, we haven't Hughes to worry about."

"Exactly," said the colonel; "we did not elect Hughes and we are not responsible for Mr. Wilson."

"Hughes would have been another Wilson in many respects, only he would have surrounded himself with men of a higher grade than Mr. Wilson has about him. He could not well get men inferior to those about Mr. Wilson. But he would have considered his election an act of God, and, in the Wilson way, been careless or contemptuous of the opinions of others."

Mr. Hughes came up for discussion again at luncheon at Sagamore Hill just before Christmas of that year. The colonel was, as usual, to play Santa Claus at the Cove school, and the "newspaper cabinet" was down for the occasion. In the luncheon party, in addition to Colonel and Mrs. Roosevelt, were N. A. Jennings, Mrs. Jennings, William Hoster, Rodney Bean, S. I. Bate, the then resident correspondent at Oyster Bay, and myself. As it was the first time since election that so many members of the "cabinet" had met with the colonel, there was a general discussion of that sort, but more of the statement of Secretary Lansing a few days previous to the effect that "we are on the edge of war," followed by the secretary's explanation that he did not exactly mean what he seemed to say, the whole matter complicated by rumors that had been in Wall Street and had breaks in the market.

"The antics of the last few days," said the colonel in this discussion, "have restored to me what self-respect I lost supporting Mr. Hughes."

Months later Colonel Roosevelt told me that he was in conference with Judge Hughes prior to 1916 that partly explained the small opinion he held of him.

"Hughes," said he, "went plumb back on his words and on me when Barnes sued me for libel. One of Barnes' grievances was my charge of Barnes' unbusinesslike conduct in the case of New York by him and Murphy. Hughes himself made that charge to me when the direct primary fight was on. Later, when I needed him, he denied all knowledge of it."

"It came about in this way: In his fight as governor for good government, Mr. Hughes complained that Murphy and Barnes were working together to defeat legislation; that there was evidence of a definite agreement and the two machines were working as one, not only in this, but in other matters affecting the public interest."

"When the Barnes suit came up, I wanted him as a witness. He declared that he did not recall the conversation and that he had no recollection that such a state of affairs had existed. Even when he was shown a printed statement coming from him, he had no recollection of the matter. That is the way Mr. Hughes stands up."

"It was his idea in this campaign to keep away as much as possible from all reference to the war by Europe or preparation for our inevitable part in it. He wanted to make his fight on war with Mexico, as though people could be interested in that. The real subject he dodged whenever he could. More than that, he tried to make me dodge."

"To do this Garfield was sent to meet me in Denver and ask that in my speeches, especially in Chicago, I omit preparedness and national defense. It was feared that I would alienate the women voters. I agreed to do so, but after sleeping on the matter, decided it was not the thing for me to do. So I wired national headquarters canceling all of my engagements. The answer to this was advice to proceed as I had been, talking what was in me, resorting to even the most enthusiastic of the lot. The idea of a manhood, willing and insistent on defending its women and children even to the point of going to war to avenge their murder, was not at all abhorrent to them. On the contrary, they took no offense at my treatment of the Lusitania affair."

"The war was Mr. Hughes' work—his idea of the way a candidate should go, the way the advocates of a candidate should go, always dodging any real issue that might cost votes."