John S. Lowry

Big Swords, Jesuits, and Bondelswarts: Wilhelmine Imperialism, Overseas Resistance, and German Political Catholicism, 1897–1906. Leiden: Brill, 2015. Hb, 139 euros.

John S. Lowry's *Big Swords, Jesuits, and Bondelswarts* explores the complicated and often acrimonious collision of the Catholic Center Party leadership and Kaiser Wilhelm II's government over the issues of Germany's colonial overseas holdings. Lowry seeks to offer a new explanation of how anti-imperialist resistance by colonized peoples impacted Germany's domestic political scene prior to the First World War. Through a vast array of archival material, Lowry argues convincingly that resistance movements abroad quite frequently played the pivotal role in the ever-changing relationship between the Zentrum (Catholic Center Party) and Wilhelm II's government.

Part One provides the background of the Center Party leadership from 1897–1906 with an examination of the Center's constituency. At any given time, the approximately one hundred Center Party delegates often were the pivotal players in the Reichstag. The Kaiser's government quite frequently found that, in order to pass critical budgetary and legislative acts, Centerist support was indispensable. However, in the climate of the 1890s, the legacy of Bismarck's persecution of political Catholicism, called the Kulturkampf, strained the relationship between Kaiser and Center. By providing an in-depth examination of just who was represented by the Center, Lowry definitively establishes that, for the vast majority of Center leaders and their constituents, there was no incentive to support the Kaiser's desire to acquire and expand on overseas colonial holdings. Most of the Center Party supporters derived no direct economic benefits from this type of expansion overseas. However, Center Party leaders often were willing to negotiate support for low cost expansion if Roman Catholic missionary work was fully protected by the German authorities.

Many Centrist leaders were particularly interested in obtaining guarantees from the Kaiser's government that Roman Catholic missionaries in Germany's colonies would be treated in the same equitable manner as Protestant counterparts. Many German Liberals and Protestants continued in the tradition of the Kulturkampf to spread fear of Catholicism on German soil, denouncing the religion as one of irrationality, superstition, backwardness, slothfulness, and stagnation. Added to these unflattering images were very popular attacks focusing on the Jesuits, who were characterized as masterful manipulators, seeking to re-Catholicize Germany and assist the pope with world conquest. Jesuits were frequently portrayed as traitors to the German Fatherland, loyal only to Rome. The Anti-Jesuit Law of 1872, emerging in the Kulturkampf years, at first

ordered the expulsion of foreign-born Jesuits from the Reich and placed movement restrictions on all members of the order. The Reichstag then proposed Article 1a which featured a complete ban of the Jesuit order from the German Reich, including any related orders and congregations. This resulted in the prohibition of Jesuit activity on German soil including bans from giving a sermon, hearing confession, celebrating Mass or administering the sacraments (44). These laws, along with the May Laws, attempted to deprive Roman Catholics of access to their priests and to the sacraments. However, German Catholics responded by pulling themselves closer into alliances with their church and political leaders. Eventually, the *Kulturkampf* was deemed to be a failure by Bismarck and circumstances changed enough that, beginning in 1880, there were Mitigation Laws and eventually, by 1886–87 the Peace Laws, all of which sought to retract or lessen the impact of *Kulturkampf* legislation. The Peace Laws readmitted almost all religious orders who had been banned from German soil, but this re-admission did not extend to the Jesuits and many of the related orders.

To many German Catholics, the Anti-Jesuit Law was merely a reminder that Catholics were still being treated as if they were second-class citizens in their own country. To many Protestants and Liberals, maintaining the Anti-Jesuit Law was the last defense safeguarding against the spread of ultramontanist across the Fatherland (52–53). Likewise, institutionalized anti-Catholicism throughout the government ranks seemed to imply that Catholic missionaries in Germany's colonies might become victims of bureaucratic anticlericalism. As Germany embarked on annexations in Africa, the South Pacific, and in Asia, the question of missionaries and their right to government protection became a very real concern to Center Party Leaders. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Lowry asserts that the cost of colonial acquisitions for Germany remained relatively low, so Center Party leaders could focus on confessional or on anti-slavery issues. As the *Kulturkampf* was winding down in this time period, Center party members were able to use the colonial question as a way of highlighting ongoing anticlericalism.

Part Two examines the resistance that was emerging in German colonial holdings in China, Cuba and Samoa and how those indigenous uprisings impacted government–Center Party relations. In particular, the image of Kaiser Wilhelm II, wishing quite openly to rid himself of the ultramontane influence, led to Center Party leadership digging their heels in to block the ambitious naval plans of the government. Lowry's significant contribution is the connection he is able to make between the Center Party and its vote to support the expansion of the fleet. Lowry argues that a significant factor in these negotiations which has long been ignored by scholars was an event that began

on November 1, 1897. That night an armed vigilante band of Chinese, called the Big Swords, stabbed to death two German Catholic missionaries in their residence. When news reached Germany of the violent incident five days later, the Kaiser ordered the East Asian squadron to seize the Jiaozhou Bay on the Shandong peninsula. The Kaiser said this was proof that he was interested in protecting even his Catholic subjects. German Catholic opinion swung in favor of the naval expansion once Catholic missionaries' lives were at stake, making it virtually impossible for Centrists to demand a repeal of the Anti-Jesuit Law in exchange for their support of the naval bill (119). Lowry argues effectively that Catholic desires to be seen as just as patriotic as Protestants combined with their desire to see Catholic missions protected by a strong naval presence coalesced into support and passage of the naval bill. The question of German influence in China would eventually lead to further problems between the party factions, however, in 1897–98, Berlin and the Center Party's interests aligned with one another.

Part Three of Lowry's work further explores the impact of African resistance from 1903–6 on government–Center relations. Lowry's account stresses the immediate effect such resistance movements (violent and nonviolent) had on the distant German home front, forcing political leaders to address uprisings and petitions in the parliament. Between 1903 and 1905 there were seven insurrections that rocked the German colonies, with three of the seven occurring in Southwest Africa. As a result, German policymakers at home could not ignore the financial burden of imperialism nor could they downplay the critical role that colonial policies were having on German homefront society. Indeed, Lowry finds that colonial crisis and overseas populations played some role in the political discussions between the Center Party and the government from 1903–5 (221).

Lowry's work is an outstanding example of exhaustive archival research. His work delves deeply into the minute details of Center Party leadership, Center constituent interests, and Berlin's desire to utilize the numerical strength of the Center in order to swing votes. The innovation of Lowry's work is to examine colonial uprisings, ranging from events in the Shandong Peninsula to Cuba to Samoa to Southwest Africa. He effectively utilizes his archival sources to demonstrate the interconnectedness of colonial policy with German domestic issues.

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