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CARL SCHURZ AND THE INDIANS

HANS L. TREFOUSSE

Carl Schurz's importance as an immigrant leader and ethnic politician is well documented; his efforts on behalf of civil service reform and anti-imperialism have often been commented upon.¹ His role as an administrator, however, is less familiar but by no means insignificant. Because it contributed to the more rational treatment of native Americans and the conservation of natural resources, it deserves to be explored more fully.

In March 1877, when President Rutherford B. Hayes sent to the Senate his nomination of Carl Schurz for secretary of the interior, party regulars were outraged. "In the selection of Mr. Schurz as one of your Cabinet, you will offend, of course, President Grant and his *warm friends*, as Mr. S. was a bitter enemy of Grant, and did his best to make him odious in the minds of the people," one Republican wrote to the president. "Change places with President Grant, and

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how would you feel should he take a bitter opponent of yours into his Cabinet?"² Schurz was accused of being an unrealistic dreamer, an impractical philosopher with no ability in business. Roscoe Conkling and his allies hated him; James G. Blaine distrusted him and John A. Logan was jealous of him. His desertion of the Republican party in 1872 had never been forgotten, and when even the moderate James A. Garfield thought the appointment unfortunate, there was some question whether the Senate would confirm it.³ In the end, however, Hayes prevailed, and the controversial appointee became Zachariah Chandler's successor in the Department of the Interior.

CARL SCHURZ'S CAREER

It is not surprising that Schurz's elevation caused such a row. One of the most colorful figures in nineteenth-century America, the young German revolutionary from the Rhineland had become famous at the age of twenty-one, when he liberated his professor, Gottfried Kinkel (then serving a life term for revolutionary activities), from a jail near Berlin. Schurz, who in 1849 had himself narrowly avoided Prussian capture by fleeing through a sewer

from the besieged fortress of Rastatt, succeeded in bribing one of the professor's guards. After Kinkel was lowered to the street from the roof, his liberator took him to the coast and from there he escaped by ship to Britain.

In 1852 Schurz came to America. Learning English quickly and well, he settled in Watertown, Wisconsin, where his oratorical gifts, his good education, and his journalistic enterprise were useful to the newly founded Republican party, then trying to wean the German-Americans away from their Democratic allegiance. Appealing to his numerous fellow countrymen, Schurz campaigned tirelessly for the Republican ticket in election after election, until in 1860 he was widely believed to have contributed materially to Abraham Lincoln's success. The president rewarded him with the legation in Madrid, where he served for half a year before returning to join the army. Eventually promoted to major general, he took part in the battles of the second Bull Run, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, and Chattanooga. Although his military record was mixed, he was useful to Lincoln by speaking to his compatriots in support of the administration.

After the Civil War, Schurz undertook a trip to the South for Andrew Johnson, but because of his radicalism, he soon fell out with the new president. Moving to St. Louis in 1867, he became an editor of the local *Westliche Post* and within a short time was elected United States senator from Missouri. As a strong advocate of civil service reform, he played a prominent role in the Liberal Republican movement, even presiding over its ill-fated convention in 1872. Hayes's election to the presidency gave Schurz a chance to try out some of his ideas of liberal reform, and the Interior Department became a laboratory for social change.⁴

SCHURZ'S ATTITUDE TOWARD INDIANS

The new secretary of the interior brought to his job a useful heritage of constructive ideas. His lifelong liberalism had originally led him into the antislavery crusade, and although he had temporarily abandoned the cause of the



FIG. 1. Carl Schurz

blacks—the administration's southern policy was a disaster for the race—he was anxious to deal fairly with Native Americans.⁵ He definitely did not share some westerners' beliefs that a "reservation 6 feet long, 4 feet deep and three feet wide was large enough for any Indian." In fact, if any of U. S. Grant's measures appealed to him, it was the inauguration of the "peace policy" in dealing with the Indians, although Schurz was determined to go much further and lessen the influence of the various denominations on the reservations.⁶

Until he became secretary of the interior, Schurz had had little contact with Indians or with the problems facing them. Sharing the prevalent ethnocentric view that Native Americans were "savages," he had rejoiced at the gradual disappearance of the frontier. In 1869, during a trip west, he reported his impressions of Nebraska and Wyoming to his newspaper, the St. Louis *Westliche Post*. The plains, the

antelopes, the prairie dogs had all caught his eye, as had the military posts, a reminder, he wrote, that "until recently Indians were threatening advancing civilization here with barbaric resistance." But because he was a humanitarian, the mistreatment of any minority, be it Jewish, black, or Indian, repelled him in the long run.⁷

Nevertheless, Schurz was a nineteenth-century liberal, not a twentieth-century pluralist. While he favored the retention of ethnic traits for German-Americans along with their Americanization, he could hardly be expected to see any parallels between European immigrants and Native Americans, habitually described as "barbaric" and "uncivilized." In keeping with the trends of the time and his own liberal ideas, Schurz was naturally inclined toward the policy of assimilation long advocated by many of his predecessors. Eventually, he believed, Indians ought to be full-fledged citizens. But he was equally certain that this process would take time and could not be accomplished immediately.⁸

REFORM OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Department of the Interior, which now became Schurz's laboratory, has been called the "great miscellany." An incongruous collection of various unrelated agencies, it consisted of the Land, Indian, and Patent offices, the Bureau of Education, the Census Office and that of the commissioner of railroads, as well as a host of minor jurisdictions. This disparate constellation of bureaus and agencies presented a challenge to anyone trying to head it; the department was difficult to manage not only because it involved an immense "span of control," but also because it entailed responsibility for the guardianship of vast natural resources. The Indian Territory and reservations as well as the public lands constituted a tremendous investment in the national patrimony.⁹ Under good management, this investment could be safeguarded; under indifferent or corrupt direction, it could be squandered.

Carl Schurz proceeded with care. First, he collected as much information on Indian affairs

as possible. General John Pope, who had long-standing experience with the Indians, was one source of information. At the secretary's request, the general sent him papers dealing with Indian affairs during the past fifteen years. Showing that the army had not dealt fairly with Native Americans, Pope pointed out that soldiers were expected to kill Indians when they left their reservations but, in fact, drove them to desperation by virtually starving them inside. General Robert H. Milroy likewise sent his impressions. Convinced that the trouble in the West was caused by the Indians' "barbarism," he believed the solution was speedy assimilation. He argued that children must be separated from their parents, preferably by placing them into industrial boarding schools where they might learn the arts of white "civilization." Other knowledgeable correspondents had similar ideas, many of which Schurz soon made his own.¹⁰

When the secretary took over his duties, he was determined to rid the Interior Department of the corruption for which it had long been known. First, as a passionate civil service reformer, he started to introduce civil service rules in the department.¹¹ Then he began a thorough cleanup, including an investigation of the Indian office and the work of Chief Clerk of the Bureau, Samuel A. Galpin. Schurz had not been in office for two months before he learned that Galpin, in response to a question whether he expected to retain his position, had replied: "If the dam dutch secretary don't give it to some dam imported dutchman [*sic*] I think I will be able to remain."¹² In addition, there were serious questions about the clerk's competence, if not his probity, as the department's Indian agents had habitually been defrauding both the government and the Indians they were supposed to serve.

Accordingly, on 25 May 1877, Schurz asked John Q. Smith, the commissioner of Indian affairs, to conduct an inspection of Indian posts. Smith's instructions were specific. He was to ascertain the condition of the Indian agencies, the quality of the agents, their manner of keeping accounts and conducting business, their

methods of inspecting goods issued to their charges, the type of physicians employed, and the relations of the agents with the Indians and whites in the vicinity. According to the secretary, it was of the highest importance to develop a well-defined policy toward peaceable and friendly tribes "so that the efforts made towards introducing among them habits and occupations of civilized life be systematized and thus be made productive of permanent results." To achieve this goal, he was interested in knowing which tribes were suited for agriculture and which for pasturage, what localities were best fitted for the Indians' pursuit of "civilized" activities, what kind of schools were available for them, and what prospects there were for the establishment of an Indian police force.¹³

When the investigation failed to yield the desired results, Schurz appointed two boards of inquiry. One, which included a treasury official, was to examine the methods used in the financial and accounting divisions of the Indian Bureau. The other, consisting of representatives of the Justice, War, and Interior departments, was to conduct a thorough inquiry into the charges against Galpin.¹⁴

The investigation into the business methods of the Indian Bureau was completed late in August 1877. The members of the board recommended certain changes in organization, suggestions that the secretary took very seriously. On the day of the completion of the board's report, he dismissed George W. Smith, the official in charge of the division of accounts and a relative of Commissioner John Q. Smith. No nepotism was allowed to shield incompetent officials in the department. Moreover, in order to tighten control, in 1880 he required inspectors to report directly to him rather than to the commissioner of Indian affairs.¹⁵

The other inquiry proceeded in great secrecy. Attacked as "star chamber proceedings," it nevertheless showed results. Even before the investigation was completed, a clerk was dismissed for accepting presents from contractors, and although no charges were preferred against Commissioner Smith, in September he retired to accept a consulship in Montreal. In his stead,

Schurz appointed Ezra A. Hayt, an official who seemed to be to his liking. Formerly a member of the unpaid Board of Indian Commissioners, a body charged with the supervision of expenditures in the Indian service, Hayt had energetically resisted the Indian rings. That he had had serious differences with Schurz's predecessor, Zachariah Chandler, did not bother the secretary; in fact, this was one of the reasons for the appointment.¹⁶

When it appeared at the end of the year, the full report of the investigation caused a sensation. "A Disgrace to the Nation," read the headline in the *New York Times*. "The Indian Bureau Investigated . . . Dishonesty and Fraud Everywhere."¹⁷ The board discovered that an inside ring, bypassing official channels, had maintained very irregular means of communication within the department; employees had received presents from interested parties, and the most outrageous forms of fraud had marred the furnishing of supplies to the Indians. Cattle had been driven into water to make them heavier; once sold, they had been stampeded, only to be caught and sold a second time, with the Indians the chief victims. The investigation also revealed that Chief Clerk Galpin had withheld charges of fraud concerning supplies at the Pawnee and Lemhi agencies.¹⁸ When Galpin sought to extricate himself by stating he had merely delayed information about certain crimes, Schurz replied that the excuse seemed to him to "aggravate" rather than to mitigate the offense. He effected a thorough housecleaning, and although former Commissioner Smith, who was not implicated, protested vigorously against the unfavorable publicity, the public tended to support the secretary.¹⁹

According to the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, unlike his predecessors, hardly any of whom were still remembered, Schurz was doing an excellent job of rooting out corruption in the Indian Bureau. The *St. Louis Republican* thought he deserved the gratitude of the country because Smith had been singularly unfit. Had he not failed to prevent Galpin and his dishonest confederates from running the department at will? In fact, wrote the Louisville

Commercial, far from having been treated harshly, as had been alleged, Galpin had been handled too leniently. As the *Youngstown Register and Tribune* readily conceded: "When he [Schurz] was appointed to the cabinet, we were of those who thought him a theorist, dreamer, visionary, one who would be constantly assaying the impossible and absurd. . . . We were mistaken in this estimate of his character. . . . He has shown himself to possess business talents of a high order."²⁰

It was inevitable that Schurz's radical departure from past laxity would occasion demands for his dismissal. "The Indian Ring is after Mr. Schurz in full cry," explained the *Philadelphia Telegraph*, "and its members have evidently made up their minds that something must be done, rightly, speedily, or the 'Flying Dutchman' will be making things so unpleasant that the good times of Chandler, Delano, and most of their predecessors will become nothing more than a blissful memory."²¹ The chief of the secretary's critics, President Julius H. Seelye of Amherst College, whom no one could accuse of any connection with the rings, charged that Galpin had been unduly victimized. Constant rumors of Schurz's resignation appeared in the press, but the secretary, much to the advantage of the Indian service, stood his ground.²² He wrote to President Hayes:

I fear I did not express myself strongly and clearly enough with regard to the moral and official obligation I should feel myself under to vindicate publicly the report of the Board of Inquiry as I find it correct and just, in case of any publication unfavorably reflecting upon it or liable to such a construction. The members of the Board have rendered so great a public service, and they have shown so great a courage in exposing themselves to the hostility of powerful and unscrupulous combinations, that if they are permitted in any way to suffer in public opinion or otherwise for the good work they have done, the moral effect cannot but be disastrous. Moreover, I have a big fight on my hands with a power which only those know who have had to contend against it, and you will readily understand that anything said by you that may be construed against the

Board . . . can be construed as reflecting upon me. Knowing the case as I do, I have no controversies to fear as to its merits.

Hayes supported his secretary of the interior, and Schurz's position was strengthened.²³

WARDING OFF THE WAR DEPARTMENT

The secretary's wide-ranging reforms in the Interior Department enabled him to ward off once and for all the long-standing effort of the War Department to regain control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Arguing that the Department of the Interior did not know how to handle Indians and that the army, charged with their pacification, should also control them, advocates of the transfer had the powerful support of William T. Sherman, the commanding general of the army. Ever since the Civil War, repeated measures for the change of jurisdiction had been passed by the House, only to fail in the Senate, until in 1878-79 a joint congressional committee was appointed to conduct hearings on the subject. In a report to the War Department, General Philip H. Sheridan criticized the Indian Bureau for allowing if not encouraging tribes to leave their reservations. Schurz, undaunted, replied in kind and in December testified in person before the committee.²⁴

The secretary made a strong argument against transfer. He had no great desire to keep the Indian Bureau, he said, for there was "no duty more perplexing, and more thankless, than the management of Indian affairs." But there were two methods of dealing with the tribes. One was to "herd or corral them under the eyes of a military force, so as to watch them"; the other was "to set them to work upon lands, which, in the course of time, they may call their own; to start them in pastoral or agricultural pursuits and educate and civilize them." The first was the method of the military; the second, that of civilians. The second was more humane, and in the long run, served the interest of peace.²⁵ Schurz's testimony was convincing. The transfer movement failed, never

to be revived in his generation. The important role the secretary's reforms and vigorous defense played in the defeat of the army's efforts has been pointed out by such eminent scholars as Francis Paul Prucha and Loring Benson Priest.²⁶ It was widely believed that the methods of the military were those of force, while those of the Interior Department were the opposite.²⁷ As if to underline this difference, Schurz, after helping to prevent the transfer, stated emphatically in his annual report for 1879: "Whatever troubles and perplexities the presence of Indians among us may cause, every man who loves justice and who values the honor of the American name will admit that it is our solemn duty to leave nothing untried to prepare a better fate for the original occupants of the soil upon which so many millions of our people have grown prosperous and happy."²⁸

CHANGING INDIAN POLICIES

While he was putting his house in order, Schurz also attempted to carry out his ideas about Indian relations. In his first annual report on 1 November 1877, he expressed the opinion that trouble between whites and Indians in the United States could not be entirely avoided because they were living too closely together. The solution, therefore, he thought, was to separate them by settling the southern tribes in the existing Indian Territory, while creating a similar reserve for the northern ones. Yet notwithstanding this unfortunate insistence on segregation, which at least for a time led to continuing the ill-conceived policy of removing entire tribes from their ancestral homes, he also strongly advocated assimilation. Recommending that agriculture and husbandry be encouraged, he advised the discouragement of hunting because it made the Indians warlike. Above all, he wanted to further concepts of private property, especially the holding of land in severalty. Once Native Americans were willing to live like whites, all the rights of citizenship ought to be conferred upon them. For this reason, he favored an educational system designed to teach English to young Indians, an Indian police force

to apprehend malefactors, and a better paid network of Indian agents, preferably no longer chosen by religious bodies.²⁹

Schurz did not merely recommend policies; whenever he had the power he also implemented them. The unfortunate practice of moving nations to far distant reservations had long been in force, and much to his later regret, at first he fully complied with it. Thus the Oglala and Brulé Sioux had already been removed from the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies in Nebraska, and he recommended that Chief Joseph and his band of Nez Percés, who had bravely resisted their antagonists in a retreat of more than one thousand miles, be moved to the Indian Territory instead of being repatriated to Idaho, where the local population was hostile. The Poncas, a small unoffending tribe along the Dakota-Nebraska line, had also been uprooted because their reservation had inadvertently been assigned to the Sioux. In later years, this oversight would cause Schurz no end of trouble, but in 1877 he strongly urged liberal compensation for them because of their sufferings.³⁰

To allot land to Indians in severalty was more difficult. Measures for that purpose had been introduced in Congress, but it was not until 1887 that the Dawes Act finally passed. Schurz's insistent and able advocacy of the policy greatly helped its backers, and in certain cases, Schurz put land allotment in severalty into effect years prior to the passage of the Dawes Act. It has since become apparent that the severalties policy did not work well, although in Schurz's time the measure seemed a step forward. At least the policy assumed that Indians were potentially the equals of whites.³¹

The education of Indian children had long interested the secretary, and in this area he was able to exert considerable influence. He fully supported General Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who were trying to put into practice the idea of schooling for young Native Americans. Armstrong, who was in charge of Hampton Institute in Virginia, was already educating seventeen former prisoners of war; with Schurz's ready assent, he soon

trained an additional fifty pupils. Pratt, who had earlier taught Indian prisoners at St. Augustine, Florida, wanted to establish an Indian school in the unused army barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Whether he could have obtained the facility without the help of the secretary of the interior is doubtful. Schurz was enthusiastic about the plan and intervened with the secretary of war to procure the buildings. The school was established, and for the rest of his term of office Schurz maintained a close interest in its program. Eventually, he saw to it that a third school was set up, this time in the West, at Forest Grove, Oregon. He established good relations with the parents of students and sought to popularize the experiment in every way he could.³² "None pushed more strenuously for Indian education than Carl Schurz," Prucha has justly commented.³³

It may be argued, of course, that the Indian schools represented the assimilation movement at its worst. Anglo-Saxon values were emphasized and native identity discouraged; students were forced to assume English names and forbidden to speak their native languages. Nevertheless, given the prejudices of the time, the schools, which operated for several decades, represented a step forward. Although their success was problematical, they did afford opportunities for Native American boys and girls that would otherwise not have been available.³⁴

The secretary continued to expound his theories in his annual reports. In 1878, he repeated his suggestions of the previous year. Taking great pride in the progress already made, particularly in Indian education, Schurz reported that fifty students had been sent to Hampton Institute. There they would "receive an elementary English education and through practical instruction in farming and other useful work, be sent back to their tribes after the completed course." The education program was an important part of his continued emphasis upon assimilation, his encouragement of agriculture rather than hunting, and his propaganda for individual allotments of land. Admitting that the Indian Territory was not suitable for the permanent settlement of northern tribes, he

was nevertheless still convinced that all Indian nations ought to be gathered into two large reservations, the southern tribes into the Indian Territory, and the others into another reservation in the North.³⁵

In the following year, Schurz was still advocating these policies. Having successfully settled a clash with the White River Utes without excess bloodshed, he blamed white traders for the outbreak and took great pride in the successful negotiations with Chief Ouray. "War ought to be, not the first, but the last resort," he concluded, while continuing to popularize his idea of assimilation.³⁶

But Schurz was not unwilling to admit mistakes. In 1879 and 1880 he undertook two extensive trips to the West to study the Indian problem firsthand. Meeting with various tribes, listening to their chiefs' complaints, using his own considerable powers of observation, and keeping in mind his troubles with the Poncas, he concluded that the removal policy was wrong. He had already said as much in his testimony concerning the Ute Treaty.³⁷ Although he had only a short time left in office, and many another official would have let the matter rest rather than admit error, Schurz never hesitated. In his annual report of 1880, his last, he forcefully stated that the practice of removing Indian nations was ill advised:

My extensive observations and study of the matter gradually convinced me that this was a mistaken policy; that it would be vastly better for the Indians and more in accordance with justice as well as wise expediency to respect their home attachments, to leave them upon the lands they occupied, provided such lands were capable of yielding them a sustenance by agricultural or pastoral pursuits, and begin to follow up the practice of introducing among them the habits and occupations of civilized life on the ground they inhabited.³⁸

The new policy would involve the recognition of the Indians' right to their land and their gradual transformation into ordinary citizens. For the Indian nations still on their original

reservations, this change must have been welcome news.

Schurz was especially encouraged by the success of his policies on the Sioux reservations. As he pointed out in his report, the Sioux had originally caused more trouble than any other nation; now they were largely peaceful, engaged in stock raising, living in regular houses, and obeying the law. In fact, they had just sent him a check for \$332.80 to hire a lawyer for the defense of some of their number accused of murder whom they themselves had turned over to the authorities. Only Sitting Bull was still holding out, but the secretary expressed optimism that this problem might soon be solved, which it was in the summer of 1881.³⁹

Schurz's recommendations were well received. It was idle to suppose large areas of land could be given over to "savage" pursuits, commented the *Brooklyn Daily Times*. "It has been the high prerogative of Secretary Schurz to discover a better way, better alike for the white man and better for the red man." Asserting that Schurz's policy was similar to Great Britain's successful pacification of the Scots Highland tribes, the paper was especially laudatory about the secretary's establishment of an Indian police force. The *New York Daily Herald* also called the report admirable. The paper emphasized Schurz's change in the settlement policy, which reoriented American efforts to pacify the frontier and had also received the approbation of other commentators.⁴⁰ So impressive was the secretary's presentation that the president announced shortly afterward: "It gives me great pleasure to say that our Indian affairs appear to be in a more hopeful condition now than ever before. The Indians have made gratifying progress in agriculture, herding, and mechanized pursuits." Hayes went on to stress their increased tendency to settle down. Within two months, he heartily endorsed his secretary of the interior's methods by informing Congress that U.S. Indian policy in the future should prepare Native Americans for citizenship by education, that lands should be allotted to them in severalty, and that in the end all the rights of citizenship should be

conferred upon them.⁴¹ Since Schurz's policies were at that very moment under strong attack, the president's endorsement was notable.

THE PONCA PROBLEM

The generally good record of Schurz's administration of the Indian Bureau was seriously marred by the sufferings of the Poncas, misfortunes for which the Interior Department could not entirely disclaim responsibility. Henry E. Fritz, in *The Movement for Indian Assimilation, 1860-1890*, has even charged that Schurz had never taken an interest in the Indian problem prior to the Ponca affair.⁴² The accusation cannot be sustained because it was the secretary himself who first called attention to the injustice done to the tribe, but the reproach is indicative of the great harm the incident did to Schurz's reputation.⁴³ There is no doubt, however, that his handling of the initial problem and the public protest showed little foresight.

When Schurz took over the Interior Department, he was faced with the task of carrying out the policy decided upon by his predecessors, the removal of the Poncas from their old home. By an oversight, the area had been included in lands given to the Sioux, the Poncas' bitter enemies. Consequently, the tribe was to be removed to the Indian Territory. When the Indian chiefs saw the new lands, they did not like them and asked to be taken back. But they found that the new administration was adamant. Despite the Poncas' pleas to be allowed to remain, Schurz, fearing trouble with the Sioux and anxious to fill up the Indian Territory, sent an order to his agent to proceed with the removal. The Poncas were taken to their new location under military guard.

The trip was a disaster. Weather conditions and disease decimated the group, and although eventually a better location was found for the Poncas, by January 1879, Chief Standing Bear, one of the principal opponents of removal, packed his bags, and carrying the remains of his deceased grandson, left for Nebraska. The Interior Department had him arrested near Omaha, only to find itself involved in a legal

suit arising in part from the local military commander's sympathy with the chief. General George C. Crook cooperated with the journalist Thomas H. Tibbles to apply for a writ of habeas corpus on behalf of Standing Bear. Interested parties in Omaha and elsewhere contributed funds; the chief was so eloquent at a hearing that he moved Judge Elmer S. Dundy to tears, and the judge granted the writ. Standing Bear was freed, but Schurz, who wanted to extend the full protection of the law to the Indians gradually rather than all at once, opposed an appeal to the Supreme Court that might have settled the matter. The result was that he became the *bête noir* of many Indian reformers. Relief organizations were founded in eastern cities. Helen Hunt Jackson became interested in the Poncas and was inspired to write her famous book, *A Century of Dishonor*, and Schurz's enemies in Congress made the most of his blundering.⁴⁴

The secretary handled the Ponca situation very ineptly. Although he himself had been among the first to realize that a wrong had been inflicted upon the Poncas—before the case became notorious he had called it to the nation's attention in his first annual report—and although he advocated governmental relief measures, he never declared himself willing to allow all the Poncas to return to their home. They were better off where they were, he said; he did not want to depopulate the Indian Territory then threatened with white incursions, and he was afraid of another Sioux war.⁴⁵ In the end, President Hayes appointed a commission that exonerated the secretary and recommended that those Poncas who had already returned might stay and those who were satisfied with their situation might remain in the Indian Territory, with compensation to be paid to them.⁴⁶ Thus the matter was settled, but the scar left on Schurz's reputation would not heal. Even the generally friendly New York *Daily Graphic* printed a cartoon with Schurz at the piano while a ghostly Indian looked on. "Nero Fiddled While Rome Burned," read the caption. "You Play Your Piano While We Starve and Perish." A quarter of a century later, when old

Chief Standing Bear heard of the former secretary's death, all he could say was, "Good."⁴⁷ Yet even this blemish on his name cannot eradicate Schurz's positive contributions to the improvement of Indian relations.

THE UTE SETTLEMENT

A prime example of Schurz's achievement was his success in settling the complications arising from the White River Ute outbreak in 1878-79. After a military force under Major Thomas C. Thornburg had been attacked and the major killed, some of the Indians murdered an Indian agent, Nathan C. Meeker. The fact that they also captured his wife and daughter and another woman with two children did nothing to quiet the settlers' outrage. The excitement in Colorado was very great. Governor T. W. Pitkin demanded war; the settlers were willing to take matters into their own hands, and the army was anxious to move. Schurz, however, remained calm. Appointing as his representative General Charles Adams, a postal inspector with experience as an Indian agent, Schurz entered into negotiations with the Utes, chiefly through Chief Ouray, who proved very willing to settle matters peacefully. A commission was set up and Ouray came to Washington. In the end, Schurz succeeded in effecting a settlement that provided for the cession of much of the Ute reservation. Those Indians willing to accept land allotments in severalty were to receive them, and the White River Utes were to remove to Utah. After much hard work on the part of the secretary, Congress accepted the agreement and voted the necessary funds. All this was done despite the presence of the captured women, whose release Schurz managed to obtain.⁴⁸ Although the settlement again resulted in the removal of a large part of the Ute nation, the alternative would have been infinitely worse. As Schurz wrote to Governor Pitkin, "We are endeavoring to prevent a general war with the whole Ute tribe, which is a better way to protect your border settlements than by a general attack upon the Indians by armed citizens, as your dispatch

seems to suggest." The removal settled matters without further bloodshed.⁴⁹

Carl Schurz's tenure as secretary of the interior was an important interlude in the history of the department in general and the Indian Bureau in particular. Forceful, well connected, and literate, the secretary was able to introduce civil service reform and succeeded in ridding the Indian service of many of its more corrupt officers. After at first mistakenly endorsing it, Schurz was able to reverse the outdated policy of concentrating the Indians on large reservations and pioneered in the attempt to integrate them into the mainstream of society. The experiment was not wholly successful and has had many critics, but at the time assimilation seemed the most humane path feasible. Schurz also laid the foundation for a national policy of conservation of natural resources, marking his administration as a period of great innovation.⁵⁰ All in all, despite occasional setbacks, Carl Schurz looked upon his tenure of office as secretary of the interior with justified pride.

NOTES

1. Hans L. Trefousse, *Carl Schurz: A Biography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Claude Fuess, *Carl Schurz, Reformer [1829-1906]* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1932); Joseph Schafer, *Carl Schurz: Militant Liberal* (Evansville, Wis.: Center Press, 1930).

2. P. Merritt to Hayes, 13 March 1877, Rutherford B. Hayes Papers, Rutherford B. Hayes Library, Fremont, Ohio.

3. O. Benson to William K. Rogers, 8 March 1877, Hayes Papers; *New York Tribune*, 7 March 1877; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 24 March 1877; *New York Daily Graphic*, 6 March 1877; Harry James Brown and Frederick D. Williams, eds., *The Diary of James A. Garfield*, 3 vols. (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1967-1973), 3:455; Charles Richard Williams, ed., *Diary and Letters of Rutherford Birchard Hayes, 19th President of the United States*, 7 vols. (Columbus: Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, 1922-1926), 3:426-27; Henry L. Nelson, "Schurz's Administration of the Interior Department," *International Review* 10 (1881): 380-82.

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