# A Man for Both Parties: Francis J. Grund as Political Chameleon

FEW RECENT historical works have briefly hinted at Francis J. Grund's zigzag course in American politics during the middle third of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> For decades, Grund was lost to view, barring an article about him in German and occasional references to two of his books.<sup>2</sup> The editors of the *Dictionary of American Biography* overlooked him until 1942, when they belatedly picked him up for a supplementary volume. Even then Grund was given the wrong birthplace; his birth date was missed by seven years; his behind-the-scenes associations with American leaders were treated in inadequate fashion, and other aspects of his influence were ignored.<sup>3</sup>

A book from Grund's pen, Aristocracy in America, reappeared in 1959 with an introduction by a scholar who declared that Grund "deserves the title, 'The Jacksonian Tocqueville'."<sup>4</sup> An earlier Grund work, The Americans, was reissued in 1968 with an introduction by another historian who made many factual errors while also writing that Grund's "systematic attempt to delineate the totality of American culture in terms of its fundamental values ranks second only in importance to that done by de Tocqueville as a guide to the

<sup>1</sup> Henry Cohen, Business and Politics in America from the Age of Jackson to the Civil War: The Career Biography of W. W. Corcoran (Westport, Conn., 1971), 111, 210, 297, 313, 356, 359; Holman Hamilton, Prologue to Conflict: The Crisis and Compromise of 1850 (New York, 1966), 126, 132, 136, 137, 154-155.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. Rattermann, "Franz Joseph Grund," Gesammelte Ausgewahlte Werke (1906–1914), X, 69–80; Francis J. Grund, The Americans in Their Moral, Social, and Political Relations (London and Boston, 1837), and Aristocracy in America: From the Sketch-Book of a German Nobleman (London, 1839). Although Rattermann often erred, his article has value in providing leads.

<sup>3</sup> Allen Johnson and others, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928–1958), XXI, 362-364.

<sup>4</sup> George E. Probst wrote the introduction on pp. vii-xiii of the Harper Torchbook, published in New York.

foundation of Americans' actions in the 'Age of the Common Man',"<sup>5</sup> Despite the debatable Tocqueville accolade, the tendency has been to neglect this gifted and versatile immigrant who maneuvered significantly in every presidential campaign from 1836 through 1860.

Today's historians generally have remained unaware of "The Jacksonian Tocqueville" as a prototype of the chameleon or trimmer through most of his thirty years in politics. Grund's life is a case study in opportunism. Talleyrand and the Vicar of Bray would have recognized him as a blood brother. Indeed, it is doubtful that the veering of any other naturalized or native American has more closely resembled a political weathervane's.

Francis Joseph Grund was born in Reichenberg, Bohemia,<sup>6</sup> on September 19, 1805, the son of Wenzel and Anna Weber Grund. The family was Roman Catholic, the father a furrier, the mother a daughter of Wenzel Weber who lived in Neuhaus.<sup>7</sup> The youth is said to have studied at the Vienna Polyteknik and also at the University of Vienna, and to have taught in Rio de Janeiro before coming to the United States.<sup>8</sup> It is certain that he possessed unusual mathematical and linguistic ability. According to one account, "his knowledge of the French, English, and German languages was thorough; and in addition to these" he "was familiar" with Spanish, Italian, Latin, and Greek.<sup>9</sup>

In 1827 the Boston Directory listed Grund, then twenty-one, as a "lecturer on mathematicks" living at 13 Franklin Street. That same year he moved to Philadelphia, where, unsuccessful in seeking a University of Pennsylvania professorship, he taught mathematics at a military academy.<sup>10</sup> Returning to Boston, he headed the

<sup>5</sup> The introduction for the Johnson Reprint Corporation's one-volume version of *The Americans* (New York and London), v-xxii, is by Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr.

<sup>6</sup> Then part of Austria, now Liberec, Czechoslovakia.

7 Register of Births, 1799-1805, p. 400, Dean's Office, Liberec, now in State Archives, Jablonec nad Nisou, Czechoslovakia.

<sup>8</sup> National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York, 1898–1970), XXIII, 131; Dictionary of American Biography, XXI, 362; Public Ledger, Jan. 28, 1851; New York Herald, Oct. 3, 1863. The evidence is more substantial for Rio than for Vienna.

9 Philadelphia Press, Oct. 1, 1863.

10 The Boston Directory Containing Names of the Inhabitants ... (Boston, 1827), 122; John A. Dix to George C. Shattuck, May 20, 24, June 26, 1827, Grund to Shattuck, June 20, July 5, 1827, Feb. 7, Sept. 17, 1828, Shattuck Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; S. F. Hotchkin, Ancient and Modern Germantown, Mount Airy, and Chestnut Hill (Philadelphia, 1889), 369, 372. "departments" of mathematics and modern languages at a private school from 1828 to 1833 and was considered "very accomplished." Three Cabots, one Lowell, two Parkmans, and two Reveres were among the boys entrusted to him.<sup>11</sup> Such prominent Bostonians as Dr. George C. Shattuck and young Charles Sumner became Grund's friends.<sup>12</sup> And the teacher must have devoted much time to the preparation of textbooks, as six of them appeared in four years with his name on their title pages.<sup>13</sup>

In 1834, while still living in Boston, Grund made a dramatic entrance onto the political stage. The contest for the New York governorship was between the Democrat William L. Marcy and the Whig leader William H. Seward. That autumn, ardent Marcy supporters courted the German vote by sponsoring a "GREAT GER-MAN MEETING" at Tammany Hall.<sup>14</sup> Its resolutions, in Philip Hone's judgment, constituted "an impudent attempt" to "deceive the public." They "occasioned great dissatisfaction" among Germans, observed Hone who helped organize a rival assemblage of German Whigs several days before the election.<sup>15</sup>

"The meeting of Whig Germans at Masonic Hall . . . was a grand affair," according to Hone. "The lower Room and Entry were crowded by a Mass of honest and intelligent men, Germans all, with their German blood properly up for the insidious attempt to make them subservient to a set of desperate Jackson men. . . . The Resolutions were Introduced and read in german and English by Francis J. Grund who addressed the Meeting in an eloquent speech in German."<sup>16</sup>

"GREAT AND OVERWHELMING MEETING OF GER-MANS" was the heading in the Whig *Courier and Enquirer*. Reporting the resolutions, Grund prefaced them with "a speech which in logical strength, solid argument, great moderation and good sense rivals any oration we ever heard. He was frequently interrupted by

11 Thomas Cushing, Historical Sketch of Chauncy-Hall School . . . 1828 to 1894 (Boston, 1895), 23, 76-78, 199-202.

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<sup>12</sup> Grund to Shattuck, June 20, 1827, Sept. 17, 1828, Shattuck Papers; Edward L. Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner (Boston, 1877–1893), I, 192.

<sup>13</sup> A Catalog of Books Represented by Library of Congress Printed Cards . . . (Ann Arbor, 1942–1946), LXI, 171–172.

<sup>14</sup> New York Evening Post, Oct. 29, 1834.

<sup>15</sup> Philip Hone Diary, Oct. 29, 1834, New-York Historical Society.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Oct. 31, 1834.

thundering and enthusiastic applause, and was loudly and repeatedly cheered when he retired to his seat."<sup>17</sup>

Less than seven months after his Whig endeavors in New York, Grund—now back in Boston—wrote the foreword of his first campaign biography. Clearly Democratic in tone and substance, this thirty-seven page tribute to Vice-President Martin Van Buren was composed in the German language and designed to appeal to German voters:

Let me implore you not to go astray through the whispers and calumniations of those who wish to make you denounce Van Buren and the Democratic Party... Don't listen to those who want to misuse your private quarrels to promote their selfish, aristocratic ends, in order finally to deprive you of your right to vote as American citizens...

It is now up to you, mainly to you Germans, if you want to elect ... Van Buren ... President ... and crown the work to which the inaugurationstone has been gloriously laid during the Government of General Jackson.<sup>18</sup>

Grund, who had married a Philadelphia girl, was in that city during much of 1836. Identifying himself with Pennsylvania Germans, he often delivered German and English speeches on Van Buren's behalf.<sup>19</sup> Van Buren defeated William Henry Harrison by 4,233 votes in the state. If the Pennsylvania contest had gone the other way, the Democrat's nationwide electoral vote would have been only 140 to the other candidates' total of  $454.^{20}$  As the election then would have been thrown into the House of Representatives, it is no wonder than the fluent Grund's talents had a Keystone concentration.

Grund enjoyed visiting Europe. He was there in late 1836 and early 1837, making arrangements for publication of *The Americans* in London, Stuttgart, and Tübingen. One of his principal purposes was to present a view of the United States contrasting with those of such British travelers as Mrs. Frances Trollope, Thomas Hamilton, and Basil Hall. Optimistic, enthusiastic, and far less profound

<sup>17</sup> Morning Courier and New-York Enquirer, Nov. 1, 1834.

<sup>18</sup> Franz J. Grund, Martin Van Buren als Staatsman und Künftiger Präsident der Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika (Boston, 1835), viii, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Register of St. Michael's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Germantown, Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania; Rattermann, "Franz Joseph Grund," 71–72. Mrs. Grund was Larissa (originally Lerissa) Parke, who became Grund's wife on Aug. 22, 1829.

<sup>20</sup> W. Dean Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892 (Baltimore, 1955), 248, 887.

than Tocqueville, Grund brought the latter's first volume into his discussion. From a domestic political standpoint, several emphases of *The Americans* reflected the author's Jackson-Van Buren partisanship exemplified in the recent presidential campaign.<sup>21</sup>

Always a partisan of one sort or another, Grund came back to the United States where he wrote Aristocracy in America. But politically "The Jacksonian Tocqueville" had now become a Whiggish Tocqueville, if in fact he was a Tocqueville of any stripe. Before and during the 1840 log-cabin campaign, two Philadelphia newspapers were under his editorship. One was the English-language Standard, the second Der Pennsylvanisch Deutsche, and in each Grund was as fulsomely pro-Harrison as formerly he had been pro-Van Buren.<sup>22</sup> Grund's 1840 book was a Harrison biography. Like the earlier life of Van Buren, the Leben und Wirken of "Old Tippecanoe" appeared in German and had as its target the winning of the German-American vote:

Providence has elected you [Germans] to be saviors of this republic. Providence has called you here that the spirit and vigor of the Teutonic principle may breed fresh buds in the new world too.... General Harrison is the man! You can trust him as children trust their father.... The citizen statesman, patriot and soldier has pledged his word to you that he will assist you with counsel and action[,] and General Harrison has never broken his word.<sup>23</sup>

This was Grund's second switch in five years. He had no more difficulty in moving from Van Buren to Harrison than from Seward to Van Buren. In 1840, the Whigs eked out their Pennsylvania victory by 350 votes. If 176 Pennsylvania Germans who supported Harrison had backed Van Buren, the Whig electoral college margin would have been markedly less lopsided.<sup>24</sup>

President Harrison died before a reward came to Grund for his new allegiance. John Tyler, however, in 1841 assigned the editor-

21 Grund, *The Americans* (1837), I, vi, and I and II, *passim. Aristocracy in America*, too, was published in Stuttgart and Tübingen as well as in London; it was not published in the United States until 1959.

22 Rattermann, "Franz Joseph Grund," 72-73.

23 Franz J. Grund, Aufruf an die Deutschen Wahler: General Harrison's Leben und Wirken (Philadelphia, 1840), 3-4, 15, 30.

24 Burnham, *Presidential Ballots*, 248, 887. Instead of almost four to one, the electoral college ratio would have been reduced to slightly more than two to one.

author-orator-linguist to the Bremen consulship. Reaching that city in December, Grund returned to America the next year because the Senate had failed to confirm the appointment.<sup>25</sup> Quickly he identified himself with the "Tyler Guard" on the domestic front, as a weigher in the Philadelphia Customs House and as a writer for that community's pro-Tyler Mercury and Evening Journal.26 This concurrent employment continued well into 1844, when Tyler's hopes for a nomination to succeed himself evanesced. While the Polk-Clay campaign was beginning, the President pleased the weigher-editor by naming him consul at Antwerp. Commissioned in June and promptly confirmed,<sup>27</sup> Grund did not hasten to his post. Instead, now no longer even nominally a Whig, he lingered into the autumn as a Democratic adherent and no doubt contributed to James K. Polk's victory. Finally, in November, the consul arrived at the Belgian port where his wife and infant son joined him. Thanks to Secretary of State James Buchanan, and perhaps in part to Polk, Grund retained this position until October, 1846-his resignation taking effect when he was again in America in December.<sup>28</sup>

Almost immediately following his return, Grund became the Washington correspondent for the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* and the Baltimore *Sun*, popular dailies of considerable reputation. In the anonymous manner customary at the time, he signed the *Ledger's* letters as "Observer" and the *Sun's* as "X". This correspondence was Grund's major vocation for the next decade, during which he became an influential member of the capital's press corps.<sup>29</sup>

26 "List of Custom House Officers, November 1842," 63, Record Group 56, *ibid.*; Lambert A. Wilmer, *Our Press Gang...* (Philadelphia, 1859), 42, 44-45.

27 Consular Commissions, Permanent, 1840–1849, III, 114; John C. Calhoun to Grund, June 11, 1844, Consular Instructions, X, Record Group 59, National Archives.

28 Grund to Calhoun, July 23, Nov. 15, 1844, Grund to James Buchanan, Nov. 30, 1845, Feb. 15, Aug. 24, Sept. 4, Oct. 29, 1846, W. H. Vesey to Buchanan, Dec. 18, 1846, Consular Despatches, Antwerp, III; Buchanan to Grund, Dec. 22, 1845, Consular Instructions, X, Record Group 49, National Archives; Grund to Buchanan, July 14, Sept. 25, 1845, Buchanan to Grund (copy), Mar. 15, 1846, Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>29</sup> Grund also contributed at times to the Harrisburg Union; to the New York Herald as "T," "Pozzo di Borgo," and "Water Nymph"; to the Cincinnati Commercial as "Junius," and to the New Orleans *Picayune* as "Gil Blas." See Grund to Simon Cameron Jan. 1, 1853, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress; Grund to George N. Sanders, Mar. 20, 1851, R.M.T.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Consular Commissions, Temporary, 1829–1848, p. 53; Grund to Daniel Webster, Dec. 24, 1841, Consular Despatches, Bremen, III; Webster to Grund, Aug. 26, 1842, Consular Instructions, X, Record Group 59, National Archives.

Nearly every weekday while Congress was in session, Grund's writings appeared in the two newspapers. Although both the Sun and the Ledger were independent in politics,<sup>30</sup> Grund was a consistent middle-of-the-road Democrat throughout this period. His first absorbing concern was to defend the Polk administration's conduct of the Mexican War.<sup>31</sup> Whig opposition to the conflict he derided as inconsistent and insincere, a result of political calculation.<sup>32</sup> The Wilmot Proviso did not attract Grund's attention for several months after its proposal; then he attacked it as a needless abstraction, because geographic and climatic conditions would keep slavery out of new acquisitions.<sup>33</sup> As the war neared its end in 1847, he became rhapsodic about the American achievement:

The Mexican War ends all idea of European interference now and forever. It changes truly . . . the balance of world power, for it establishes a moral and political equilibrium between the freedom of one continent and the monarchical pentarchy on the other. The United States is not only the sixth great power of the world, but rapidly advancing to be the first.<sup>34</sup>

By New Year's Day 1848, "Observer" had at least one foot in the Lewis Cass camp. The Michigan senator was a leading presidential aspirant, whose "Nicholson Letter" opposed both the Wilmot Proviso and the extension of the Missouri Compromise Line. Cass's position, advocating congressional nonintervention in the West, was "unanswerable" in Grund's judgment.<sup>35</sup> In the winter and spring, Grund offered a sequence of prognostications which now favored Senator Cass and now Vice-President George M. Dallas.<sup>36</sup> Attending the Democratic national convention in Baltimore, Grund predicted in May before the balloting that Dallas or Levi Woodbury would

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Hunter Papers, University of Virginia; Buchanan to Grund (copy), Apr. 13, 1850, Buchanan Papers; Grund to Cameron, Aug. 17, 1853, Cameron Papers, Historical Society of Dauphin County, Harrisburg; Grund to Caleb Cushing, Jan. 1, 1853, Cushing Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>30</sup> Grund was paid \$10 weekly by the Public Ledger, and \$10 by the Sun.

<sup>31</sup> Public Ledger, Oct. 29, 30, Nov. 10, Dec. 12, 1846, Sept. 22, Oct. 8, 1847.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Nov. 21, Dec. 8, 1846, Feb. 17, 25, May 26, Sept. 9, 1847.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Dec. 15, 22, 1846, Jan. 8, 9, 19, Feb. 10, 20, 23, Apr. 20, 1847.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., Sept. 14, 1847.

<sup>35</sup> Sun, Dec. 20, 1847; Public Ledger, Jan. 1, 4, 13, 1848.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Public Ledger, Jan. 18, 20, Feb. 3, 21, Mar. 25, Apr. 14, 19, May 6, 11, 13, 20, 1848.

be selected. When the delegates nominated Cass, with William O. Butler for Vice-President, the newsman concluded the choices were "as strong as the Democratic party could make them."<sup>37</sup>

The 1848 Whig coverage by Grund proved characteristically devious. As if to keep the Whigs off balance, he alternated between predictions of Zachary Taylor's and Henry Clay's nomination—and between estimates of Whig success and failure. Present in June at Philadelphia for the Whig convention, he thought a compromise candidate probable, but at the last moment changed his mind with a correct forecast of Taylor and Millard Fillmore.<sup>38</sup>

Grund's greatest miss of the year concerned former President Martin Van Buren. Even in August, when Free Soil delegates were arriving in Buffalo, the journalist doubted that Van Buren would carry their standard.<sup>39</sup> Placing the best possible gloss on Cass's chances at the polls, Grund denied that Taylor would sweep the South. Could Cass win without New York, where Van Buren would split the Democratic vote? Grund did not answer this question. Filing his last campaign dispatch on September 3, he went off for an extended vacation until after election day.<sup>40</sup>

With General Taylor in the White House and Congress assembling in late 1849, Grund believed that some territorial compromise on slavery other than Senator Clay's would pass.<sup>41</sup> Clay altered his proposals, and now Grund was for him. When the Senate Committee of Thirteen adopted the Omnibus Bill strategy, Grund's enthusiasm increased. From mid-February through July, 1850, "X" and "Observer" submitted several hundred pro-compromise pieces to the *Sun* and *Public Ledger*. Grund's heroes were the compromisers. His villains included Jefferson Davis and William H. Seward. Seward's "Higher Law" speech with its "monstrous doctrines" was "sycophancy and demagogism in all respects."<sup>42</sup> Grund's estimates of the situation ranged up and down, back and forth, between optimism and despair. Even after Taylor's death and the first

<sup>37</sup> Sun, May 23, 25, 26, 1848; Public Ledger, May 23-27, 1848.

<sup>38</sup> Public Ledger, Jan. 4, 10, 13, 20, Feb. 2, Apr. 1, May 16, 29, 31, June 1, 3, 7-10, 15, 1848.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., May 30, 31, June 1, 2, 17, 22, 24, 27, 30, July 1, 7, 10, 11, 20, Aug. 1, 21, 1848.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., July 25-27, Aug. 11, 14, 17, 24, 29, Sept. 1, 5, 1848.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., Nov. 14, 21, 27, 28, Dec. 5-7, 18, 1849, Jan. 28, 30, Feb. 2, 4, 5, 12-16, 1850; Sun, Jan. 28, 31, Feb. 2, 4, 5, 12-15, 1850.

<sup>42</sup> Public Ledger, Mar. 14 and passim, 1850; Sun, Mar. 13 and passim, 1850.

successes of Stephen A. Douglas, Grund warned against a dangerous alliance of unprincipled northern and southern extremists.<sup>43</sup>

He had a special self-interest in one part of the projected compromise: the Texas boundary-debt assumption measure. The Washington correspondent owned Texas bonds, which would greatly appreciate if the compromisers won. He functioned as a speculator and newspaper propagandist lobbying on behalf of Texas bondholders and helping plan the lobby's strategy. In his dispatches to Baltimore and Philadelphia, Grund repeatedly pointed to the logic and fairness of the boundary-debt arrangement. A last resort of extremism, he charged, was intimidation of congressmen with the bogey that they were being "bribed by Texas funds."<sup>44</sup>

Even before the Compromise of 1850 became law in September, Grund boomed Cass for the presidency in the next election. Strong competition would come from Douglas, who in March, 1851, was "going it with a rush." Douglas was young enough to wait four years, but, Grund wrote privately, if Cass faltered the Democrats should and would take up the Little Giant.<sup>45</sup> With the finality of the Compromise as his central theme, Grund lauded President Fillmore for vigorously enforcing the Fugitive Slave Law. The newspaperman accompanied Fillmore and Whig Cabinet members on their widely publicized Erie Railroad trip in May, 1851, using the occasion to praise their love of Union and to boost Fillmore's election prospects.<sup>46</sup>

Grund's support of the Compromise, including the return of fugitives, may be linked with his belief in Negro inferiority. Blacks, he wrote, were not so constituted as to be governed by the same laws as whites. Grund defined slavery as "the condition under which Ethiopians participate in modern civilization." Africans would always suffer social degradation when they associated with white people. Admiring the American Colonization Society, Grund endorsed the colonization principle as the best solution of the slavery

<sup>43</sup> Public Ledger, July 16, Aug. 31, 1850; Sun, June 12, July 19, 29, Aug. 30, 31, 1850.

<sup>44</sup> Public Ledger, June 25, 27, 29, Aug. 2, 5, 6, 1850; Sun, June 29, Aug. 5, 27 (quotation), 1850; Hamilton, Prologue to Conflict, 126, 132; Cohen, Business and Politics, 111.

<sup>45</sup> Sun, Sept. 2, 13, Oct. 1, 1850; Public Ledger, Mar. 3, 16, Nov. 19, 1851, Jan. 2, 1852; Grund to Sanders, Mar. 20, 1851, Hunter Papers.

<sup>46</sup> Public Ledger, Jan. 8, Feb. 5, 19, 24, Mar. 16, May 17, 19, 20, Nov. 18, 1851; Sun, Feb. 18-20, Mar. 3, June 18, 1851.

problem. Repeatedly he employed such terms as "niggerdom" and "niggerology."<sup>47</sup>

Although much of the Compromise was consummated at once, the Texas bondholders long went unpaid. Texas seemed set on using the money for her own purposes instead of satisfying creditors. Protesting this "attempted wholesale swindle," creditor Grund suggested that Texas pay half the debt while issuing new bonds or land warrants for the remainder. Active at bondholders' meetings, he lobbied in their interest and did much to win the backing of James Buchanan's friends for a favorable settlement.<sup>48</sup>

Grund's on-again, off-again connections with Buchanan shed light on the mazelike nature of Democratic factionalism. Back in the spring of 1848, the New York *Herald's* Washington correspondent had published an accurate summary of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo while the Senate was still secretly discussing it. The Senate arrested the *Herald* man for violating the secrecy, demanding that he disclose his source—widely assumed to be Buchanan. Although nearly all journalists denounced the Senate action, Grund defended it. *Herald* retaliation took the form of revealing senatorial "leaks," with Grund's special "leakers" on Capitol Hill identified as Cass and Simon Cameron.<sup>49</sup>

Thus Grund at the time was nowhere near Buchanan's corner of the maze. On terms of intimacy with Cass and the wily Cameron, Grund enjoyed the confidence of a third Buchanan rival—Dallas. Even so, in 1848 Grund borrowed money from Buchanan to buy into a German-language paper. The next year he was a guest in Buchanan's house at Lancaster.<sup>50</sup> In 1850, Grund sent the *Herald* a

47 Public Ledger, Aug. 12, 1848, Mar. 6, June 6, 1850, Jan. 24, Nov. 20, 1851.

48 Public Ledger, Feb. 6, Mar. 27, 28, June 23, Sept. 17, 18, 1851, Mar. 18, Apr. 22, July 21, 22, Aug. 5, 6, Oct. 6, 1852; Sun, Jan. 8, 18, 27, Feb. 5, Mar. 8, 11, June 17, Sept. 16, 17, 1851, July 21, Aug. 2, 4, 21, 28, 30, 1852; Grund to William D. Lewis, July 3, 1851, Jan. 17 1852, Lewis-Nielson Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Cohen, Business and Politics, 313, suggests that a payoff for Grund's lobbying endeavors consisted of \$6,000 in Illinois bonds (bought by Grund from W. W. Corcoran at a profit of about 50%).

49 Frederick B. Marbut, News from the Capitol: The Story of Washington Reporting (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill., 1971), 85–93; Herald, Apr. 6, 9, May 3, 1848; Public Ledger, Apr. 4, 8, 1848.

<sup>50</sup> Roy F. Nichols, ed., "Diary and Letters of George M. Dallas...," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXIII (1949), 483-484, 499, 501; Grund to Buchanan, May 27, 1848, May 24, 1849, Buchanan to Grund (copies), May 27, 1848, May 28, 1849, Buchanan Papers.

refutation of an editorial criticizing Buchanan's record on Central America. That letter faithfully followed a draft dictated by the former Secretary of State. And, as "X," Grund made substantially the same presentation in the Baltimore *Sun.*<sup>51</sup> In less than a month, Buchanan was furious at his erstwhile benefactor. For in the *Ledger*, "Observer" announced without authorization that several leaders— Buchanan among them—would support the Omnibus Bill. "Grund's effort was one of deep design," Buchanan exclaimed to another insider: "It was intended to draw me from the platform on which I have stood . . . since . . . 1847."<sup>52</sup>

His relations with Buchanan ever ambivalent, Grund reiterated from January through May, 1852, that Cass would be nominated for President.<sup>53</sup> In June at Baltimore, after some convention balloting, Grund still seemed confident on this score. When Buchanan faded and Douglas scored gains, he did not dilate on the declining Cass strength. On June 3, he predicted the palm would probably be awarded to Douglas, Butler, or Franklin Pierce. But even then, on the surface at least, Grund did not totally desert Cass. Indeed, some *Sun* and *Ledger* comments resembled whistling in the dark, with Lewis Cass's presidential chances the monotonous tune of the graveyard whistler.<sup>54</sup>

When Pierce won the Democratic nomination on the forty-ninth Baltimore ballot, Grund tried to make the best of it.<sup>55</sup> With Winfield Scott running against Pierce, he pointed up the contrast between Democratic unity and Whig defections. Nevertheless, in mid-July, 1852, Grund's analysis sounded ominous:

There is a great deal of harmony on the surface of the democratic party just now; while a good deal of rancor festers below. There is imminent danger that the slavery question will yet ultimately divide the democratic party; not on principles, but on the lust of power and the distribution of the loaves and fishes.

<sup>51</sup> Buchanan to Grund (copy), Apr. 13, 1850, Buchanan Papers; *Herald*, Apr. 8, 23, 1850; Sun, Apr. 25, 1850.

52 Public Ledger, May 16-18, 1850; Sun, May 16, 1850; Buchanan to Edmund Burke May 30, 1850, American Historical Review, V (1899), 101-102.

53 Public Ledger, Jan. 22, 29, Feb. 21, 27, Mar. 16, 17, Apr. 15, 27, May 18, 1852; Sun, Feb. 10, 18, 21, Mar. 10, 12, 19, 26, Apr. 2, 6, 26, 30, May 12, 14, 25, 28-30, June 1, 1852; Grund to Howell Cobb, Feb. 16, 1852, Cobb Papers, University of Georgia.

54 Public Ledger, June 2-5, 1852; Sun, June 2-5, 1852.

55 Public Ledger, June 8, 10, 12, 1852; Sun, June 7-11, 1852.

While Grund interpreted state election returns from a pro-Pierce point of view, he warned that the next President would have difficulty with factionalism in both parties.<sup>56</sup> He visited New York and Boston in September, finding apathy in both places. Returning to Washington, he found more. Apathetic himself, he journeyed through Pennsylvania in the autumn, sending the *Ledger* travelogue letters which barely mentioned politics.<sup>57</sup>

From Pierce's election till shortly before the March, 1853, inauguration, Grund devoted many columns to Cabinet speculation. Right in some predictions, wrong in more, "X" and "Observer" touted Cass for the secretaryship of state but later concluded that if offered the post—the Michigan senator would decline.<sup>58</sup> Caleb Cushing, Grund believed, should and would receive an important portfolio. Dallas would be the Pennsylvanian selected,<sup>59</sup> with John A. Dix the New Yorker.<sup>60</sup>

Disgusted with what he read in the *Ledger*, Buchanan mailed anti-Grund estimates to the President-elect; honest Cass men, he declared to Pierce, "heartily despise" both Cameron and Grund who put selfish interests ahead of party welfare. Disorganizers and "guerillas," they sought to keep "Old Buck" out of the Cabinet by pushing Dallas into it. Yet "strangely enough," Pierce was informed, Senator Cass was "devoted to them."<sup>61</sup>

Grund also struggled to exclude southern extremists from the official family. Rumors that Jefferson Davis would be Secretary of War were "incredible." For Pierce "to single out an extreme faction,

<sup>56</sup> Public Ledger, July 13, 15, Sept. 2, 1852; Sun, June 29, July 9, 15, 16 (quotation), Aug. 10, 11, 12, 1852.

<sup>57</sup> Public Ledger, Sept. 6, 16, 18, Oct. 19, 25, 27, Nov. 1, 13, 1852; Sun, Sept. 6, Oct. 1, 5. 1852.

<sup>58</sup> Public Ledger, Nov. 20, 22, Dec. 4, 1852; Sun, Nov. 25, Dec. 4, 1852; A. Campbell to William L. Marcy, Nov. 27, 1852, Marcy Papers, Library of Congress; Grund to Cushing, Jan. 24, 1853, Cushing Papers.

<sup>59</sup> Public Ledger, Nov. 26, 30, Dec. 3, 4, 25, 1852, Jan. 12, Feb. 14, 16, Mar. 4, 1853; Sun, Nov. 25, 29, Dec. 4, 11, 24, 1852, Feb. 9, 16, 19, 21, 25, Mar. 4, 1853; Grund to Cushing, Jan. 1, 1853, Cushing Papers.

60 Public Ledger, Nov. 26, 30, Dec. 25, 27, 29, 1852, Jan. 1, 1853; Sun, Nov. 25, Dec. 11, 24, 30, 1852, Jan. 1, Feb. 16, 1853; Campbell to Marcy, Dec. 10, 1852, Marcy Papers.

<sup>61</sup> Public Ledger, Nov. 22, 26, Dec. 18, 20, 1852, Feb. 4, 14, 16, 1853; Sun, Nov. 25, 1852, Feb. 10, 1853; Grund to Cushing, Jan. 1, 1853, Cushing Papers; Grund to Cameron, Jan. 1, 1853, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress; John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan (Philadelphia, 1908–1911), VIII, 498.

and set aside those who have acted in the national spirit," would prove a fatal error.<sup>62</sup> When the Cabinet was announced, William L. Marcy (no friend of Grund) became Secretary of State and Davis headed the War Department. Grund himself was an applicant for office, hoping for another consular position and appealing to Attorney General Cushing to aid him. So "X" and "Observer" praised the Cabinet; termed Pierce's inaugural address "brilliant," and waited until April 9 (when Grund knew he would get nothing) to break with the administration.<sup>63</sup>

His disillusionment, Grund asserted, developed from two causes. First, Cass men had been rebuffed in patronage distribution. Secondly, "Secessionists" and "Free Soilers" were "richly rewarded for their opposition to the compromise."<sup>64</sup> It was now evident, said Grund, that Pierce's nomination at Baltimore smacked of conspiracy. Originally the extremists' Democratic ticket was supposed to consist of William O. Butler for President and Franklin Pierce for Vice-President. But Butler had been dropped, and Pierce promoted!<sup>65</sup>

What could Grund do? With his pen he could seek revenge on the administration for neglecting him. Thus he told Cameron he had two objectives—to kill Buchanan and Pierce politically.<sup>66</sup> Grund likewise reported to Edmund Burke, Pierce's former friend, that Pierce and "Jeff. Davis and all the rest" would be "unequivocally opposed." Cushing, "the most dangerous man in the country," would be assassinated with Grund's "pen knife." As for the President, he was "morally dead."<sup>67</sup>

Grund did not carry out his threats, at least in any obvious way. His course was more subtle and complex than at any other stage of his life. From 1853 into 1855, journalism continued to provide his

<sup>62</sup> Public Ledger, Nov. 30, Dec. 14, 21 (quotation), 27, 1852, Jan. 7, Feb. 23, 1853; Sun, Jan. 8, Feb. 14, 21, 23, 1853.

63 Public Ledger, Mar. 1, 7, 17, 23, 1853; Sun, Mar. 5, 1853; Grund to Cushing, Mar. 24, 1853, Cushing Papers.

64 Public Ledger, Apr. 12, 1853; Grund to Cushing, Apr. 9, 1853, Cushing Papers; Grund to Marcy, Apr. 9, 1853, Marcy Papers.

65 Public Ledger, Apr. 13, 19, 1853.

66 Grund to Cameron, Aug. 17, 1853, Cameron Papers, Historical Society of Dauphin County.

67 Grund to Burke, Aug. 17, 1853, Burke Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

main occupation and steadiest source of income. Both the *Public*  $\mathcal{L}edger$  and the *Sun* carried typical Grund letters favoring the Nebraska Bill, the Kansas-Nebraska Law, and even the Pierce administration. (In the case of the President, at various times the newsman blew hot and cold.) But allegiance to Cass and Cameron supplied the only real consistency in what was far from totally consistent scrivening. To understand what Grund was up to, it is essential to compare his contributions to the press with his private and confidential correspondence.

Publicly, Grund in early 1854 was sanguine respecting Douglas' efforts. The Nebraska legislation would pass without difficulty, and antislavery agitation in Washington would cease. So said "Observer," who told readers that Cass and the Senate were leading the administration. When the Kansas-Nebraska Bill became a White House measure, Grund seemed still more certain of success. With Congress and the President achieving perfect harmony, Pierce was in full accord with the Compromise spirit!<sup>68</sup>

The public optimism of Grund moderated when Cass's enthusiasm for the bill diminished. In a private letter to Cameron (now no longer a senator), Grund mirrored the Cass concern. And he did more than that, two parts of the following quotation reflecting a fundamental anti-Pierce animus:

Do not go too strongly for the Nebraska Bill, though it may pass the Senate by a thundering majority. It will not pass the House in a hurry; but is sure to break down the administration whichever way it goes. The Democracy is far from being united on it, and Cass goes for the doctrine that slavery does not go into the territories by the constitution, but must be legislated in by the people themselves. Do you believe that the South will accept the bill with such an understanding? The questions arising from the Nebraska Bill will not be settled for many years. Meanwhile, there is a good time coming, since the administration will soon be pressed by one or the other wing of the party. . . .<sup>69</sup>

When in March, 1854, the bill was referred to the Committee of the Whole House, Grund publicly doubted that it could be revived.

<sup>68</sup> Public Ledger, Jan. 23, 25, 26, 1854.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., Feb. 21, 27, Mar. 1, 1854; Grund to Cameron, Feb. 25, 1854, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.

He was more candid in private. "Nebraska is as dead as mutton," he told Cameron. "I think this was a defeat from which Gen'l. Pierce and his secession-Free Soil Cabinet will never recover. We have them tight and mean to squeeze them." In fact, "the administration is . . . falling to pieces."<sup>70</sup> Yet the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was not dead. Ultimately the journalist predicted its passage, and this occurred. Peace and prosperity would follow, *Ledger* readers were told, and in Grund's opinion the next session of Congress would enact both homestead and Pacific railway laws.<sup>71</sup>

The multifaceted Grund's numerous activities were never more varied than in 1853–1854. As Clerk of the House Committee on Public Lands, another indication of Grund's influence with congressmen and of his ability to obtain appointments when he needed supplementary income, he was not averse to using his position to enhance investment and speculative ventures in which he and Cameron were mutually interested. Grund also worked hard, albeit unsuccessfully, to bring Cameron back to the Senate—exploiting as many pipelines as were available in and out of the administration.<sup>72</sup> At the same time he lobbied for Texas-bond payments (which came through in 1856) and, long and energetically, for an increased subsidy to the Collins steamship line.<sup>73</sup>

When Grund retired as Washington correspondent in 1855, he was publicly reconciled to the Pierce administration and privately of a very different mind. The campaign year of 1856 found him active for Buchanan, speaking in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin and corresponding with the nominee.<sup>74</sup> He also cultivated good re-

<sup>70</sup> Public Ledger, Mar. 7, 15, 17, 23, 27, 28, 30, 31, Apr. 7, 27, 28, 1854; Grund to Cameron, Mar. 22, 1854, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress. See also Grund to Cameron, Apr. 23, 1854, Cameron Papers, Historical Society of Dauphin County.

71 Public Ledger, Apr. 29, May 8-10, 16, 17, 25, 26, 29, June 12, 13, 27, Aug. 25, 1854.

<sup>72</sup> Grund to Cameron, Dec. 25, 27, 1853, Feb. 25, June 11, 1854, Feb. 20, Apr. 12, 1855, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress; Grund to Cameron, Nov. 13, 1853, Nov. 20, Dec. 5, 1854, Jan. 9, 1855, Cameron Papers, Historical Society of Dauphin County; Public Ledger, Jan. 23, 1854, Jan. 30, 1855; Sun, Jan. 8, 1855; Lee F. Crippen, Simon Cameron: Ante-Bellum Years (Oxford, Ohio, 1942), 130–134; Erwin S. Bradley, Simon Cameron: Lincoln's Secretary of War... (Philadelphia, 1966), 94.

73 Cohen, Business and Politics, 111; Sun, May 11, 1852; Public Ledger, July 13, 1852, Mar. 21, July 3, 1854, Feb. 17, 1855. See also Grund to Lewis, Jan. 27, 28, 1850, Lewis-Nielson Papers.

74 Grund to Buchanan, Oct. 19, 1856, Buchanan Papers.

lations with Douglas, who in 1857 wrote a glowing letter to Cass, now Secretary of State, recommending Grund for a post abroad. No job came immediately, and Douglas (who meanwhile had split with President Buchanan) could scarcely have been pleased when Grund—now a resident of Chicago—served as a delegate to a Buchanan convention in Douglas' own state of Illinois.<sup>75</sup>

In the summer of 1858, the Buchanan administration sent Grund to Europe to report on Britain's "right of search" of American vessels, on the proposed Central American canal, on taxes levied for navigation of the Elbe and Scheldt rivers, and on miscellaneous matters. In addition to specific instructions, Cass gave Grund blanket ones:

I need hardly add . . . that, in the present interesting condition of Europe[,] the general state of public opinion . . . and the probabilities of political or commercial changes there must necessarily attract your attention, and lead you to communicate freely concerning them. . . . I rely upon your ability, intelligence, and industry. . . .<sup>76</sup>

Grund wrote Cass from London, Baden, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Mannheim, and Strasbourg. While carefully responding to the specifics detailed by the Secretary of State, he devoted most of his reports to mobilizations, alliances, and finances of France, Prussia, Great Britain and, especially, Austria.<sup>77</sup>

By prevailing standards, Grund was well paid for approximately a year of foreign service—his *per diem* stipend (including \$7 for expenses) being \$17 with a \$1,000 advance. Grund's title was Special Agent, his mission a confidential one. While some doubt may always remain as to the totality of his mission, the fact that he was entrusted with it indicates his standing with Cass and Buchanan. One scholar has written that Grund was "a sort of investigator at large"—a "supplementary and unofficial set of eyes and ears in

<sup>75</sup> Douglas to Cass, May 11, 1857, Department of State Appointment Papers, 1853-1861, Record Group 59, National Archives; Springfield *Illinois State Journal*, June 10, 1858.

<sup>76</sup> Cass to Grund, June 18, 1858, Department of State Instructions to Special Missions, III, 113-121, Record Group 59, National Archives.

<sup>77</sup> Grund to Cass, Aug. 6, Oct. 13, 20, 1858, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, [Mar. -], Mar. 29, Apr. 12, May 4, 8, June 5, 1859, Department of State Despatches from Special Missions, Grund Mission, XX, Record Group 59, National Archives.

Europe getting such information as a discreet private citizen could glean and to which a man in public station might not have access."<sup>78</sup> In domestic political terms, the appointment may minimally be interpreted as a payoff for 1856 campaigning and for what the administration construed as 1857–1858 loyalty.

Still finding favor in Buchanan-Cass eyes, Grund in February, 1860, became the United States consul at Le Havre. While the nomination was overwhelmingly confirmed, Senator Douglas twice voted against it. Such was Grund's factional ambivalence, however, that during an autumnal vacation in the United States he campaigned for Douglas against Abraham Lincoln. After Lincoln defeated Douglas in November, Grund retained the consulship until his removal by Lincoln and Seward in 1861.<sup>79</sup>

The *finale* of Francis Grund's career proved more dramatic than any previous phase. An editor of the Philadelphia Age from 1861 to 1863, he maintained the Democratic connections which—though shifting from faction to faction—he had not severed since 1844. Then, at the midway mark of the Civil War, the old tendency to change parties reasserted itself. It was in September, 1863, that Grund, the Philadelphia Democratic journalist, appeared at a meeting of the Union League and in a "beautiful and patriotic" address declared himself a Republican.

Shortly thereafter, General George B. McClellan-many Democrats' favorite for the presidency-happened to come to Philadelphia. Democrats of the Quaker City celebrated his arrival with a parade, the terminus being the house of McClellan's mother who was a neighbor of Grund.

The paraders halted outside Grund's house, shouting, yelling, and leading him to think they intended to punish him physically for his apostasy. Frightened, Grund rushed out the back door and ran to the police station to beg the authorities for protection. There he suffered a stroke and quickly died. Newspapers carried long ac-

<sup>78</sup> Cass to Grund, June 18, 1858, National Archives; Henry M. Wriston, *Executive Agents in American Foreign Relations* (Baltimore, 1929), 732-733.

<sup>79</sup> Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate . . . (Washington, 1887), XI, 105, 117, 134-136; Rattermann, "Franz Joseph Grund," 75-76; Grund to Cass, Apr. 1, 1860; James O. Putnam to William H. Seward, May 9, 1861, Consular Despatches, Havre, IX, X, Department of State Papers, Record Group 59, National Archives.

counts of the tragic occurrence. Grund's death took place the night of September 29, 1863, when he was fifty-eight years old.<sup>80</sup>

Contemporary characterizations of Grund range from the 1849 statement of a Philadelphia Whig—that he was a "sycophant," "libeller," "evesdropper," and "political villain"—to Douglas' 1857 recognition of his "ability, fidelity, & efficiency." In 1850 Henry Clay, seemingly with tongue in cheek, noted that "Mr. Grund . . . has just now taken a wonderful liking to me."<sup>81</sup> In 1858 the Philadelphia *Press* called him "notorious" and said he "has gone to Illinois to canvass the State against Douglas." Charles Sumner appeared to admire him in 1837. But, the following year in a review of *The Americans*, Sumner questioned the author's motives. For all their differences with each other, Senators Douglas and Sumner joined in opposing Grund's confirmation as consul to Le Havre after many years of acquaintance with him.<sup>82</sup>

Both Jay Cooke the banker and John W. Forney the journalist left comments on aspects of Grund's remarkable influence. According to Cooke, Grund "possessed a faculty of getting at and developing secrets of every kind relating to financial and political legislation... The secrets of the president & cabinet & of the Senate & the House seemed open to him." Cooke looked upon Grund as "famous" in journalistic and lobbying roles.<sup>83</sup> Forney emphasized the newspaper side, as well as Grund's personal traits:

A versatile genius, of enormous energy and inexhaustible resources—a linguist, an orator, a conversationalist, a writer with few rivals in his day and time—he [Grund] was a knight of the Free Lance... Mingling with all parties (to nearly all of which he... belonged and abandoned in turn), he was the terror of public men.

80 Public Ledger, Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, Press, Philadelphia Inquirer, all Oct. 1, 1863. The "beautiful and patriotic" adjectives are from the Press. According to the Inquirer, Grund left his house by the front door. Papers in New York and other cities had shorter accounts.

<sup>81</sup> J. M. Christopher to Thomas Ewing, Mar. 29, 1849, Ewing Papers, Library of Congress; Douglas to Cass, May 11, 1857, National Archives; Clay to Thomas B. Stevenson (copy), Apr. 25, 1850, Cincinnati Historical Society.

<sup>82</sup> Press, quoted in Springfield Illinois State Journal, May 29, 1858; Pierce, Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner, I, 192; North American Review, XLIV (1838), 106–126; Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate . . ., XI, 136.

83 Jay Cooke Memoir, Baker Library, Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.

Welcomed in every circle, especially among the diplomatists, where his large fund of information in regard to foreign politics gave him the *entree*, and where he gathered stores of intelligence for the newspapers whose correspondent he was, he seemed to sport with questions that troubled others.

Nothing gave him so much delight as to worry Father [Thomas] Ritchie, and nothing worried Father Ritchie more than Mr. Grund.... Nothing excited more merriment in official coteries than the skill with which the accomplished German tantalized and taunted the high strung Virginian.<sup>84</sup>

Ritchie, editor of the Washington Union, was not alone in being taunted and tantalized. Many Whig and Democratic leaders could never be sure at any moment where Grund would next be found. If the Tyler affiliation is included in the reckoning (as it certainly should be), Grund changed parties five times in a thirty-year span between the Age of Jackson and the year of Gettysburg. His factional switches are quite beyond counting because, among other reasons, he managed to move concurrently and ever so smoothly between and within so many Democratic groups.

The story of Grund stands as an object lesson for historians tempted to oversimplify the intricacies of partisan and factional relations in mid-nineteenth-century America. We may agree with Forney that Grund could have fun with issues which other people took seriously, yet few contemporaries could be as serious or determined in turning politics to private advantage. Only in the Taylor and Lincoln cases did Grund fail to choose the winning side in postconvention presidential contests. No other operator of his day exploited the immigrant vote more variously than the immigrant from Reichenberg. No other lobbyist was more skillful in discovering what transpired in inner circles of the White House and Capitol Hill. No other newsgatherer wrote more interestingly, or served more hidden purposes, as he developed patterns of Washington correspondence. And few if any immigrants to the new world sailed back to the old as frequently as Grund-to attractive places on official business for their adopted country.

Can Grund correctly be termed "The Jacksonian Tocqueville"? Once again, glibness should be eschewed. "We hesitate to give him our confidence," wrote Sumner in 1838. "We feel perpetually that

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<sup>84</sup> John W. Forney, Anecdotes of Public Men (New York, 1874), 108.

he has something more in view than directly meets the eye, and that secret undercurrents are at work beneath the unruffled surface of his page."<sup>85</sup> What Charles Sumner said in reviewing *The Americans* applies, in comparable measure, to Francis J. Grund's career as a whole. Deviousness, one of his principal assets, proved to be his main liability as a writer and as a man.

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85 North American Review, XLIV, 114.