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A HISTORY OF NEW MEXICAN-PLAINS
INDIAN RELATIONS

by

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PREFACE

Most regions of the United States have undergone the ordeal of being the frontier, the point of conflict between civilization and the wilderness. The impact left by the frontier experience, however, was usually ameliorated by the brevity of the episode. Within a decade, or a few score years at the most, law replaced brute force and order, chaos. In sharp contrast, New Mexico was exposed to the rigors of frontier existence for nearly three hundred years. From the time of its founding in 1598 by Juan de Oñate until the Red River War of 1874 the inhabitants were in almost constant contact with unconquered Indians of the plains. This is a study of the profound economic, social, and cultural effects that this long period of interchange produced upon both the New Mexicans and the Indians.

For the sake of convenience, the terms Mexicans and New Mexicans are used to refer to the Latin population of New Mexico; and the terms Anglo-Americans, Anglos, and simply Americans are reserved for the fairer-skinned intruders from the east. The author is quite aware that Spanish Americans residing in New Mexico after 1848 were also "Americans" and that Anglo-Americans living there then were also "New Mexicans."

Consistency in spelling is always a problem in a work

that covers several centuries. All words in quoted material are spelled and accented exactly as in the original. Otherwise, the modern spelling of place names and terms has been preferred: thus Picuris is used instead of Picuriés and Pecos instead of Cicuye. The accent mark has been omitted from such obviously Anglicized words as Santa Fe' and Río'.

In the preparation of this study, the author has benefited from the labors of many people. Dr. Ernest Wallace, who directed the dissertation, gave generously of his time and talents and to him is due much of the credit for any of its merit. In addition Professors Lowell L. Blaisdel, J. William Davis, Lawrence L. Graves and David M. Vigness, members of the committee, have been both gracious and helpful in reading and criticizing this study.

A host of others have rendered valuable assistance. The staffs of the Southwest Collection and the Library at Texas Technological College and Library at Angelo State College have been very cooperative in obtaining research materials. Cordial aid has also been received from the staffs at the Western History Collection of the Denver Public Library, the Special Collections Division of the University of New Mexico Library, the New Mexico Historical Museum Library, the Eugene Barker History Center at the University of Texas, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum

Library, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives. Robert Feynn of the Angelo State Foreign Language Department lent his considerable talents for the translation of numerous documents from the New Mexico Archives. To all of these and many others go my heartfelt thanks.

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CHAPTER 1

THE VALLEY AND THE PLAINS

There have been few examples in American history of neighboring peoples who differed so completely as the Pueblo Indians of the upper Rio Grande Valley and the nomadic tribesmen of the South Plains. Originally the natives of both regions had been simple hunters and gatherers, but about a thousand years before Christ the Rio Grandeans learned to grow corn. Released by this revolutionary step from the constant struggle against imminent starvation, they used their leisure to master the arts of building pueblos and making pottery and to develop the other accoutrements of a maturing civilization. The Plains Indians, on the other hand, remained so confined by the never-ending search for food that they were never able to make the breakthrough to a richer and more complex culture.

Contrary to what might be expected, the impact that the two peoples had on each other steadily increased as the gulf between their respective ways of life widened. Since each produced desirable goods that the other lacked, some type of intercourse between them became inevitable. To obtain the coveted agricultural products of the Pueblos, the have-nots from the plains at first resorted to raids, but--seeing that these were both costly and uncertain--

they gradually turned to peaceful trade to meet their needs. During the long period of commercial contacts thus initiated, both the Plains Indians and the Pueblos acquired cultural traits that significantly affected their entire history.

For the period before 1700, the limited information to be found in the reports of early Spanish explorers and modern archeologists makes it possible to sketch only an outline of Plains-Pueblo relations. Long before the Pueblos developed their distinctive way of life, the so-called Folsom men--a primitive but brave race who hunted the prehistoric bisons of northeastern New Mexico--apparently traded with the Indians of the plains. Among the arrowheads they left intertwined in the skeletons of their kills were many made of a uniquely banded flint found only in outcroppings near the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle.¹ To get this Alibates flint, the Folsom hunters either made the long, arduous trip deep into the plains to quarry their own or, more likely, bartered for it with the natives who lived there.

Notwithstanding the intriguing mystery of the Folsom men, the true Pueblos of New Mexico are not known to have been in contact with the plains until after 1000 A. D.

¹James B. Shaeffer, "The Alibates Flint Quarry, Texas," American Antiquity, XXIV (October, 1958), 189.

About that time the comparatively backward Pueblos of the Rio Grande were greatly augmented in population and culture by a mass migration of more advanced peoples from the Mesa Verde region to the northwest. Stimulated by this infusion of fresh blood and ideas, the Pueblo world underwent a rapid expansion that did not spend itself until its outer limits had been pushed beyond the southern fringes of the Sangre de Cristos into the Canadian and Pecos valleys. There at the edge of the plains, Pueblos built the same style of multiroom adobe- and stone-walled dwellings and manufactured the same types of pottery and culinary ware as their kinsmen in the Rio Grande valley.²

About the same time, 1200 A. D., a plains people who settled in the shadows of the Raton Mountains fell under the influence of Taos, the northernmost of the Rio Grande pueblos, and acquired from it the knowledge of farming, pueblo building, and pottery making.³ These otherwise unidentified people, whose incipient culture was soon destroyed by fresh invaders from the plains, would be unworthy of mention except that they were the first of many groups of Plains Indians who succumbed to the attractions

²Fred Wendorf, "The Archaeology of Northeastern New Mexico," El Palacio, LXVII (April, 1960), 59.

³Ibid., p. 60.

and comforts of a sedentary way of life.

After 1300 the Pueblos who had moved into the Pecos and Canadian valleys abandoned their homes and retreated up the Pecos River as far as the Pecos pueblo, which would stand as the eastern bastion of Rio Grande culture for five hundred years. Although their withdrawal may have been due to a drought, they more likely were forced back by eastern intruders, who soon afterwards launched a vigorous assault against the Rio Grande pueblos.⁴ At first hard pressed, the Rio Grandeans eventually weathered the onslaught by abandoning their smaller villages and concentrating in the larger and more defensible communities.

No longer able to steal corn and other coveted food-stuffs easily, the Plains invaders, evidently having learned the techniques of crop growing during their extensive forays, retired to the comparatively well-watered Canadian valley and took up agriculture for themselves. They not only succeeded as primitive farmers but also adopted the Pueblos' style of architecture. Starting with single room dwellings, they were soon building structures of up to three hundred chambers along various Canadian tributaries in the Texas Panhandle.⁵

⁴William C. Holden, "Excavation of Saddle-Back Ruin," Texas Archaeological and Paleontological Society Bulletin, V (1933), 50.

⁵Ibid., p. 51.

Despite the cultural debt that the Antelope Creek people (as archeologists have designated the Canadian farmers) owed to the Pueblos, commerce between the two groups was insignificant. Of almost five thousand potsherds found in the Saddle-Back excavation in present Oldham County, for example, less than two dozen were of Pueblo origin; and only a few artifacts made of the Alibates flint quarried by the Canadian River residents have been found at Pecos in time levels corresponding to the Antelope Creek focus.⁶ The lack of trade was undoubtedly due to the similarity of the two peoples' ways of life. The Canadian River dwellers produced enough corn to supplement their basic diet of buffalo meat and manufactured their own pottery, crude but serviceable. No longer nomads, they probably had very little surplus buffalo meat or hides to trade to their western neighbors. The Pueblos, on the other hand, took advantage of the temporary absence of hostile nomads on the plains to roam them freely. Incredible as it seems, so many of their potsherds and artifacts have been found in the sandy region near present Muleshoe, Texas, that archeologists suspect they even farmed the thin soil there.⁷ Pueblos this

⁶Ibid., p. 49; Dolores Gunnerson, "The Southern Athabascans: Their Arrival in the Southwest," El Palacio, LXIII (November, 1956), 350.

⁷Alex Krieger, "Eastward Extension of Puebloan Datings," American Antiquity, XII (January, 1947), 143.

familiar with the plains undoubtedly hunted their own buffalo and had little need to trade for venison.

Around 1450 the Antelope Creek people vanished without a trace, victims of either war or drought. Although tree ring studies indicating a severe drought in western Nebraska during the mid-fifteenth century do not necessarily denote similar conditions for the Texas Panhandle, the drought supposition is furthered by the discovery that many of the Canadian ruins filled with wind-blown sand before their walls crumbled away.⁸ Quite likely, however, the drought only weakened the ability of the Antelope Creek inhabitants to resist the new wave of nomads who, it is known, moved into the area about the time the pueblo builders vanished.

After obliterating the Antelope Creek culture, this latest group of Plains Indians moved against the Pueblos of the Rio Grande. Once again, however, the Pueblos successfully resisted the attacks by erecting larger and more heavily fortified communities. In causing such an unprecedented growth of large towns, the nomads served as the unwitting catalysts for a sudden flowering of Pueblo culture that has caused the entire era to be described as the "Golden Age of the Rio Grande."⁹

⁸Waldo Wedel, Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 145.

⁹Alfred Vincent Kidder, The Pottery of Pecos (2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), I, 154.

Of all the pueblos, Pecos, lying squarely athwart the easiest invasion route to the Rio Grande basin, was hardest hit by the nomadic intruders. Its people, to survive, built houses that towered four stories above the ground and merged them so that sentinels could traverse the rooftops of all without descending. At the second-story level, eaves formed a balcony-like lane that encircled the entire pueblo. Below the eaves no opening pierced the adobe walls, for all entrances and exits were made by means of portable ladders. Surrounding the settlement was a low stone wall that secured a large courtyard and a spring that provided the town with an emergency water supply.¹⁰ These protective measures were evidently quite effective, as there is no archeological evidence that Pecos was ever taken by enemies. In addition, the Spanish chronicler, Pedro Castañeda, observed upon arriving there with Coronado in 1541 that "The people of this town pride themselves because no one has been able to subjugate them."¹¹

According to Castañeda and Coronado, the Indians who caused the Pueblos to strengthen their defenses had made an amazing adaptation to the plains environment. They

¹⁰ "Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and trans.), Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), p. 257.

¹¹ Ibid.; Alfred Vincent Kidder, The Artifacts of Pecos (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), p. 3.

ate the buffalo's flesh raw, drank its blood, and used its skin to make their clothes and to cover their conical tents. Upon making a kill they "cut open the belly of the cow . . . squeeze out the chewed grass and drink the juice . . . saying that it contains the sustenance of the stomach."¹² After satiating their hunger, they deftly skinned the buffalo with their flint tools, sliced its meat into thin strips, dried it in the sun, and then pounded it into a powder that would keep indefinitely. Apparently little handicapped by their horseless state, they went "about like nomads with their tents [loaded on] . . . packs of dogs harnessed with little pads, pack-saddles, and girths." Their hardy way of life agreed well with them: Castañeda thought they were better proportioned, greater warriors, and "more feared" than the Pueblos, and Coronado unequivocally stated that they had "the best physique of any natives of the Indies."¹³

The identity of the nomads is still questionable. Coronado encountered two groups that he termed Querechos and Teyas, who, although hostile towards each other, displayed virtually identical characteristics. While most

¹²"Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in Hammond and Rey, Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p. 262.

¹³Ibid.; "Letter of Coronado to the King, October 20, 1541," in ibid., p. 186.

authorities believe that the Querechos, who dwelt closer to Pecos, were Plains Apaches, opinions vary widely on the Teyas. George Hammond stated that they must have been the same as the Tejas of later times;¹⁴ Herbert Eugene Bolton conjectured that they were "members of the groups" later known as Jumanos;¹⁵ and Jack D. Forbes in a recent study concluded that they were only another branch of the Apaches, perhaps the Lipans.¹⁶ For the purposes of this study, both groups will be referred to as Apaches.

The occupation of the plains by the Apaches forced the Pueblos to discontinue their hunting excursions. With the Pueblos now lacking in meat and hides, and the Apaches in corn, there developed a trade that was already well established when the Coronado expedition arrived. According to the Spaniards, the nomads, unable to cope with the scarcity of game and frequency of blizzards during the winter, packed their belongings and trekked to the pueblos where they found "shelter under the eaves,

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 239, n. 2.

¹⁵ Herbert E. Bolton, Coronado on the Turquoise Trail, Knight of Pueblos and Plains (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949), p. 260.

¹⁶ Jack D. Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 15.

as the inhabitants do not let them inside."¹⁷ There, under the ever-alert guard of the Pueblos who kept "watch at night with bugles and calls, as in the fortresses of Spain," they passed the winter trading the cattle and deerskins "that they do not need, and the meat dried in the sun" for maize and blankets.¹⁸

Although the Teyas and Querechos were usually on friendly terms with the people of the towns, occasional hostilities broke out in which the strong walls of the pueblos were not always invulnerable. Hernando de Alvarado, Coronado's chief assistant, found in the province of Tiguex seven other pueblos, "uninhabited and in ruins," that he learned had been destroyed by the "Indians who daub their eyes [Teyas]." ¹⁹ Castañeda observed several destroyed pueblos near Pecos and was informed that the Teyas had come out of the north some sixteen years earlier and after an unsuccessful siege of Pecos had destroyed them. Then, before leaving they had made

¹⁷"Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in Hammond and Rey, Narratives of the Coronado Expedition," p. 258.

¹⁸"Relación del Suceso," in ibid., p. 293.

¹⁹"Discovery of Tiguex by Alvarado and Padilla," in ibid., p. 183.

"friends with all."²⁰ Such was the completely unpredictable state of Pueblo-Plains Indian relations.

A plausible explanation for the alternating periods of peace and war has been advanced by archeologist J. Charles Kelley. Kelley conjectures that peace prevailed as long as rainfall was adequate enough for the farmers to produce an abundance of corn, beans, and squash and for the hunters to obtain plenty of buffalo robes and dried meat. During the periodical droughts, however, the Pueblos produced no surplus corn, and game on the plains became so scarce that the hunters faced starvation. Driven by hunger, the Plains Indians finally raided the pueblos for their seed corn. A few smaller towns might succumb, but the larger survived. When the drought ended and corn and game were again plentiful, peaceful trade relations were resumed in a surprisingly short time.²¹

²⁰"Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in ibid., pp. 257-258. Dolores Gunnerson has sought to use this sudden attack upon Pecos by the Teyas as evidence to indicate the first arrival of the Apaches in the Southwest. Her reasoning is interesting and worthy of close study, but she does not explain how the close relations existing between the Pueblos and Apaches could have developed within a space of sixteen years. Gunnerson, "The Southern Athabascans: Their Arrival in the Southwest," El Palacio, LXIII, 346-365.

²¹J. Charles Kelley, "Factors Involved in the Abandonment of Certain Peripheral Southwestern Settlements," American Anthropologist, New Series, LIV (July, 1952), 384-385.

Challenged constantly by the Plains Indians, the Pecos natives responded by reaching heights of military efficiency unparalleled among the Pueblos. Enabled to "dominate the [other_] pueblos they wish,"²² they used their power to become the chief center for the western diffusion of trade goods from the buffalo country. So widely did their traders range that Coronado met some as far west as Zuñi and exchanged glassware and beads for their "dressed skins, shields, and headpieces."²³ The predominant position of Pecos in the plains trade is evidenced further by the abundance in its ruins of plains artifacts, which are rare or absent from sites farther west, "even in the nearby Galisteo Basin."²⁴

It was almost forty years after the Coronado expedition before Spaniards again set foot in New Mexico. During the interim, trade between the Pueblos and Plains

²²"Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in Hammond and Rey, Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, p. 257. This indication of occasional inter-pueblo warfare was also noticed by Suceso, one of Castañeda's comrades, who stated that one of the reasons the pueblos were so compactly built "is due in part . . . to the wars they wage against each other." "Relación del Suceso," in ibid., p. 294.

²³"Castañeda's History of the Expedition," in ibid., p. 217.

²⁴Alfred Vincent Kidder, "Pecos, New Mexico: Archaeological Notes," Vol. V, Papers of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology (Andover, Mass.: Phillips Academy, 1958), p. 313.

Indians seems to have increased. Alfred V. Kidder, after spending years excavating the ruins of Pecos, concluded that the Plains influence shown by eastern specimens "began to be exercised about 1550" and became increasingly stronger during the next hundred years. The greater number of snub-nosed scrapers and two-edged knives made of Alibates flint indicated to Kidder "an intensification of contacts" with the tribes to the east.²⁵

In 1581 Fray Agustín Rodríguez and Francisco Sanchez Chamuscado, setting out from the Spanish settlements at the head of the Rio Conchos, reopened Spanish contact with the upper Rio Grande. Bearing permission from the Viceroy to "preach the gospel" in a land to the north where they hoped to obtain "very fruitful results,"²⁶ they thoroughly explored the Pueblo country. While visiting among the Tompiro pueblos near the salines east of the Manzano Mountains, they were amazed to find their hosts bartering corn and blankets to visiting "people of the buffalo" for deerskins, buffalo hides, and

²⁵Kidder, The Artifacts of Pecos, pp. 43-44.

²⁶"Declaration of Pedro de Bustamante, 1582," in Herbert E. Bolton (ed.), Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706 (New York : Barnes and Noble, 1959), p. 142.

meat.²⁷ Although long years of intimate contacts had enabled each group to understand the language of the other, the Tompiros were afraid to visit the plains. When the Spaniards asked to be taken to the camps of the wild Indians, the Pueblos refused, warning them that the "Indians who followed the buffalo" were very brave people who used many arrows, and that they would kill any trespassers on their domain.²⁸ In their missionary zeal, Fray Rodríguez and his fellow priests remained behind when Chamuscado returned to Mexico.

The failure of Rodríguez to return enabled a fortune hunter named Antonio de Espejo to obtain permission to lead a rescue expedition to the upper Rio Grande. Although he learned early that the priests had been put to death by the Pueblos, Espejo roamed far and wide across New Mexico checking on its reputed riches. Concerning relations between the Plains Indians and the Pueblos, Espejo mentioned that the inhabitants of Cochiti had numerous fine buffalo skins which they traded to him for "sleighbells and small iron articles."²⁹ Since

²⁷George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and trans.), The Gallegos Relation of the Rodríguez Expedition to New Mexico (Santa Fe: The Rydal Press, 1927), p. 267.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 267-268.

²⁹George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and trans.), Expedition into New Mexico made by Antonio de Espejo, 1582-1583 (Los Angeles: The Quivira Society, 1929), p. 112.

Cochiti lay west of the Rio Grande, its surplus of robes seems to indicate that the Pueblo trade in these items was very extensive.

Don Juan de Oñate, who in 1598 made the first permanent settlement in New Mexico, found the trade in buffalo robes quite brisk. In September his nephew and second-in-command, Vicente de Zaldivar, while exploring the region near the Canadian River, met several Indian "herdsmen" returning from Picuris and Taos, "populous pueblos of this New Mexico, where they sell meat, hides, tallow, suet, and salt in exchange for cotton blankets, pottery, maize, and some small green stones which they use."³⁰ According to another of Oñate's captains, Juan de Ortega, the Vaqueros (as the Spaniards now styled the Plains Apaches) brought meat, fat, hides, and tallow loaded on dogs "a little larger than water-dogs" and set up camp "300 or 400 paces" from Pecos where they traded for maize and blankets. Ortega personally observed the arrival of a party of some four hundred of these plains traders.³¹ Oñate,

³⁰"Account of the Discovery of the Buffalo, 1599," in Bolton, Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, p. 226.

³¹Testimony of Juan de Ortega, July 31, 1601, in Mexico, Vol. 26, Archivo General de las Indias (hereafter cited as AGI), quoted in Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p. 99.

greatly impressed by the trade, noted that most of the Pueblos dressed in buffalo skins, "of which there is a great abundance," and that "This land is plentiful in the meat of the buffalo."³² Even the Zuñis and Hopis of the western deserts had plenty of buffalo hides for winter wear.³³

Vicente de Zaldívar later reported that the Vaqueros and the Pueblos formerly had been enemies who killed "each other daily," but claimed that "by good treatment and many presents" he had persuaded the Apaches to "remain at peace" and trade with his charges.³⁴ Although Zaldívar seemed to think he had initiated the trade between the two peoples, his statement merely confirms that the long-time commerce between the Pueblos and Vaqueros was still occasionally interrupted by hostilities.

The Spaniards soon jeopardized the intertribal trade by impoverishing the Pueblos, to whom they left, according to a Franciscan friar, "nothing in their houses, no

³²Oñate to the Viceroy, March 2, 1599, in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and trans.), Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628 (2 vols.; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), I. 483.

³³"Diary of Fray Francisco de Escobar," in ibid., II, 1014.

³⁴"Zaldívar Inquiry, 1602," in ibid., II, 828.

wheat, nothing to eat, nothing that is alive."³⁵ Thousands of natives, the Franciscans charged, were dying of starvation, and others were staying alive only by eating tree branches or dirt and ashes mixed with a little corn.³⁶ If these charges were true--or partially so--the Pueblos obviously were left with little to exchange with the Vaqueros.

Two of the pueblos, Acoma in the west and Jumanas in the southeast, sought to shake off the Spanish tyranny, but Oñate crushed their rebellions with barbarous cruelty. Despite their inability to match strength with the Spaniards, however, other pueblos from time to time plotted to free themselves. In 1609 Picuris, Taos, and Pecos formed an alliance with the Apaches and Vaqueros and threatened to exterminate any Indians who allowed themselves to be converted. Convinced that the Spaniards were "scoundrels" concerned only with their own interests, they sought to persuade the more complacent pueblos that "no benefit" could be gained by cooperation with them.³⁷ Since all three pueblos in the alliance were located on

³⁵"Declaration of Fray Francisco de San Miguel, September 7, 1601," Mexico, Vol. 26, AGI, quoted in Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p.97.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 97-98.

³⁷"Memorial of Fray Francisco de Velasco," in Hammond and Rey, Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico, II, 1024.

the eastern fringes of New Mexico and had had long and intimate trade relations with the Vaqueros, it seems likely that the latter were encouraging them to oppose the Spaniards. How long the league lasted or how effective it was is unknown, but there is no evidence of actual hostilities between it and the Spaniards.

In the 1620's, according to Fray Alonso de Benavides, leader of the Franciscans in New Mexico, the Vaqueros were killing large numbers of buffaloes by hiding near water holes and shooting them "as they come by" and then were skillfully dressing the hides, some with the hair on for use as beds and cloaks, and others without, for tents and "other things they are accustomed to use." With their surplus robes packed on the backs of dogs "harnessed in their little pack saddles," entire Vaquero villages--men, women, and children--regularly trekked to New Mexico. In return for cotton fabric and "other things they need," they exchanged robes in such quantities that they provided the dress "commonly worn by both [Pueblo] Indians and Spaniards."³⁸

Although Pecos remained the most important trading point for the Vaqueros, the Tompiro towns east of the

³⁸Peter P. Forrestal, C. S. C. (ed. and trans.), Benavides' Memorial of 1630 (Washington: Academy of Franciscan History, 1954), p. 54.

Manzano Mountains developed such a lively commerce with the Jumano Indians of southwestern Texas that the southernmost settlement became known as Jumanas, "because this nation often comes here to trade and barter."³⁹ During one of their many trading visits to Jumanas, some of the Plains Indians were quite intrigued by the glittering Catholic medals and crosses. The Spaniards were so encouraged by this incipient expression of interest in Christianity that two friars braved the journey of more than one hundred leagues to the Jumano villages near present San Angelo. Unfortunately, they found the natives more interested in hunting buffalo and fighting Apaches than in learning the catechism.

The Vaquero Apaches also showed curiosity about the new religion of their Pueblo friends, but were speedily rebuffed by the ill-advised actions of the Spaniards. In 1628, according to Father Benavides, a group pilgrimaging toward Santa Fe to view a statue of the Virgin was attacked by Governor Philip de Ossorio "to obtain slaves" to sell in New Spain.⁴⁰ To this treachery the Vaqueros retaliated with only a brief flurry of raids; and then they

³⁹Frederick Webb Hodge, George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey (eds. and trans.), Fray Alonso de Benavides' Revised Memorial of 1634 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1945), pp. 66-67.

⁴⁰Forrestal, Benavides' Memorial of 1630, pp. 55-56.

made peace in order to resume trade. Despite the seeming insignificance of this episode, it introduced the most destructive obstacle to good relations between the valley farmers and the plains hunters--the slave raid.

Under Luis de Rosas, who became governor of New Mexico in 1637, the taking of Indian slaves increased greatly. Insatiable in his thirst for money, Rosas sought to monopolize the Indian trade at Pecos and then sent slave raiders deep into the plains where they killed "a great number of the friendly Apaches" and captured others to sell in Nueva Vizcaya. The Pecos natives protested his barbarity with a "great demonstration" because, they said, the captured Apaches had been living among them and "with them they had their commerce," by which means they clothed themselves and paid their tributes.⁴¹

Some of the inhabitants of Taos became disheartened at Rosa's misrule in 1639 and fled to the plains, where they took refuge with a friendly group of Apaches living near the present Colorado and Kansas border. In their new homeland they built a pueblo, subsequently known to the Spaniards as El Cuartelejo, and planted crops; but about 1642 Juan de Archeleta, Rosa's assistant, took twenty

⁴¹"Testimony of Francisco de Salazar, July 5, 1641," Patronato, Vol. 244, AGI, quoted in Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p. 132.

soldiers to their haven and recaptured most of them.⁴²

In the early 1660's another New Mexican governor, Don Diego de Peñalosa, ferreted out the rest of the Taos refugees who, he reported, were living "as heathens" among the people of El Cuartelejo, on the "frontier of Quivira."⁴³

Although Peñalosa methodically "laid waste" to El Cuartelejo, he could not blot out the fact that the Pueblos and Plains Indians had been living side by side in peace.

Other Pueblo-Apache intrigues called for more drastic resistance to the Spaniards than mere flight. In 1650 the "sorcerers and chief men" of the Pueblos plotted to deliver the "droves" of mares and horses belonging to the Spaniards to the Apaches, who would then join in an attack "in all districts" on the night of Holy Thursday. Unfortunately for them, their scheme was uncovered when a Pueblo party was detected in the act of driving some mares to the Apaches. Terrified by the narrowness of their escape, the Spaniards ruthlessly arrested "most" of the

⁴²Silvestre de Escalante to Juan Agustín de Morfi, April 2, 1778, in Ralph E. Twitchell, The Spanish Archives of New Mexico (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1914), II, 279-280; Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p. 137; Charles W. Hackett (ed.), Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya and Approaches Thereto, to 1773, collected by Adolpf F. Bandelier (3 vols.; Washington: Carnegie Institution, 1923-1937), III, 263-264.

⁴³"Trial of Diego de Peñalosa, 1665," in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 263-264.

Pueblo leaders, of whom they hanged nine and sold many others into slavery.⁴⁴ Spanish brutality, however, failed to stifle the spirit of revolt. A San Felipe Pueblo in 1681 declared that his people had been planning ever since the 1650 uprising to rebel.⁴⁵

Even in the midst of the intrigues, Pueblo-Plains trade was little interrupted. Fray Agustín Vetancourt, writing some forty years later, stated that more than five hundred Apaches were coming annually to Pecos with their "laden dog trains" to trade for corn, "vari-colored stones," and tobacco.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Fray Alonso de Posada, who was in charge of the Pecos mission in the 1650's, recalled that the Apaches were bringing robes and "captive Indians from Quivira" to trade for horses, the earliest record of the Spaniards' bartering horses to the Plains Indians.⁴⁷ Quite significantly, Posada added that the

⁴⁴"Declaration of Diego López Sambrano, December 22, 1681," in Charles W. Hackett (ed.), Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermín's Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682 (2 vols.; Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), II, 299.

⁴⁵"Declaration of Pedro Naranjo, December 19, 1681," in ibid., II, 247.

⁴⁶Charles W. Hackett (ed. and trans.), Pichardo's Treatise on the Limits of Louisiana and Texas (4 vols.; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1934-1946), II, 373.

⁴⁷S. Lyman Tyler and H. Daniel Taylor (trans.), "The Report of Fray Alonso de Posada in Relation to Quivira and Teguayo," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXIII (October, 1958), 301-303.

Plains Apaches had always taken particular care to maintain peace with the Spaniards in order to preserve an outlet for their dressed skins and hides. Unfortunately, the Spanish governors failed to perceive this advantage and to give the trade proper encouragement.

A basic change in the trade with the Plains Indians was gradually developing in that an increasing amount was taking place in the Indian camps. Although the origins of this practice cannot be documented, a Spanish captain in 1663 testified that several years earlier he had gone among the "heathen Indians to trade, as it was customary for the Spaniards to go as an escort for Christian Indians when the latter go to trade."⁴⁸ In 1659 Governor Bernardo López de Mendizábal, who controlled a large portion of the trade at the time, sent Captain Diego Romero among the Plains Indians to barter for buffalo and antelope skins. Upon arriving at the Apache camp, Romero announced that his father "when he came to that land had left a son" and that he desired to do the same.⁴⁹ The Apaches, apparently flattered by his request, promptly obliged. After erecting a new tent and furnishing it with a bed of antelope robes, they held a "wedding dance"

⁴⁸"Hearing for Nicolás de Aguilar, May 8, 1663," in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 140.

⁴⁹"Letter of Fray Garcia de San Francisco, October 13, 1667," in ibid., p. 156.

and brought him a young maiden. The following morning they put a feather in Romero's hair, proclaimed him their "captain," and gave him two bundles of skins and the tent. Thus, the Spanish trader, like his later French and Anglo-American counterparts, made use of a temporary marriage alliance to facilitate trade with the Indians.

Trade on the plains was given a tremendous boost in 1664 when Governor Peñalosa decreed that wild Indians, no matter how peaceful, could not come to the pueblos.⁵⁰ Although he claimed that his purpose was to keep the Apaches from spying on the strength of the province, it is more likely that he wished to gain a larger share of the trade for himself by eliminating competition from the Pueblos. Whatever his motive, the ban weakened the most important device for maintaining peaceful relations between New Mexico and the Plains Indians.

The growing importance of the trade in Indian slaves also menaced the stability of the frontier. Spanish traders, tempted by the growing demand for laborers in the mines of Nueva Vizcaya and for household servants and sheep-herders in New Mexico, bought scores of captives from the

⁵⁰"Order of Diego de Peñalosa, January, 1664," in Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 2.

Apaches, who obtained them by raiding the Caddoan villages to their east. Although entire villages were decimated, not enough Caddoans were taken to supply the demand. Consequently, the New Mexicans, taking advantage of a long-standing law that permitted unconverted Indians who made unprovoked attacks on Spaniards to be enslaved, also began capturing the Plains Apaches. As the price of good young Indians rose to as much as forty pesos each in Santa Fe, the slavers used every opportunity to capture Indians, even taking some who were trading peacefully at the pueblos.⁵¹ Governor Mendizábal, the most notorious of the slavers, in 1661 sent an expedition of more than eight hundred Pueblo Indians and Spaniards to capture slaves for the camps and mines of El Parral.⁵² As this occurred during the middle of the harvest season, his greed not only jeopardized the chances for peace but also deprived his people of badly needed crops.

The Tompiro Pueblos on the southeastern border of New Mexico paid the greatest price because of the avaricious policies of the Spaniards. They had long carried on a lively but dangerous trade with the Siete Rios Apaches

⁵¹France V. Scholes, "Troublous Times in New Mexico, 1659-1670," New Mexico Historical Review, XII (July, 1937), 396-397.

⁵²"Declaration of Captain Andres Hurtado, September, 1661," in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 186-187.

of the near-by Sierra Blanca Mountains who, hard put to obtain plenty of buffalo robes and meat to trade, were constantly tempted to steal from their neighbors' fields. Nevertheless, the Tompiros generally maintained until the late 1660's a tenuous peace with the Apaches. Unfortunately, a drought--the Southwest's most persistent opponent of tranquility--which seared southeastern New Mexico from 1666 to 1671 reduced both the Pueblos and Apaches to the verge of starvation. In a series of savage attacks, the Apaches ran off the Tompiros' livestock and forced them to abandon their parched fields to huddle helplessly inside walled pueblos that promised little safety. When Spanish retaliatory campaigns failed to check the Apache attacks, the Pueblos lost hope. Reduced to mere shadows of their former prosperous selves, they gradually drifted away during the 1670's, leaving only emptiness and solitude behind.⁵³ Their tragic fate was a grim reminder to the other Pueblos of the precariousness of their own position.

The long-smoldering discontent of the Pueblos flamed up in 1680 in a carefully planned rebellion that quickly drove the Spaniards from the province. It is quite likely

⁵³ Escalante to Morfi, April 2, 1778, in Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 269.

that the Apaches del Acho, who lived on the eastern edge of the Sangre de Cristos, helped to plan the revolt, since they joined the northern Pueblos in annihilating the Spaniards at Taos and Picuris.⁵⁴ Other Apaches participated in the successful siege of Santa Fe. Before allowing Governor Antonio de Otermín to withdraw from Santa Fe, the rebels demanded that he surrender all his Apache captives "inasmuch as some Apaches who were among them were asking for them."⁵⁵

Late in 1681 Otermín led an expedition back into New Mexico, expecting to find, according to one of his aides, that "the greater part of the kingdom" had been destroyed, and that the Pueblos still alive would submit "most humbly" because of Apache oppression.⁵⁶ Since he recalled that in earlier years the Plains Indians, upon entering a pueblo to trade, had maltreated the townsmen "and often their wives and daughters as well," he expected the Pueblos to greet him as a deliverer. Instead, he was shocked to find that the Apaches had neither destroyed a pueblo nor "even damaged one seriously,"⁵⁷ and that the Pueblos

⁵⁴Hackett, Revolt of the Pueblo Indians, I, xxiv.

⁵⁵"Letter of Antonio de Otermín, September 8, 1680," in ibid., I, 13.

⁵⁶"Opinion of Fray Francisco de Ayeta, December 23, 1681," in ibid., II, 307-308.

⁵⁷Ibid., II, 308.

were still determined to resist him. Unprepared to cope with their opposition, he again withdrew to El Paso. He had failed to realize that once the Spaniards were gone the Pueblos and Plains Apaches would renew their trade alliance.

The near-anarchy that prevailed in New Mexico until Diego de Vargas reconquered the territory in 1693 did not mar the close relations between the eastern towns and the Plains Indians. Pecos became practically a second home for the Faraon Apaches (probably the same tribe as the Vaqueros of Oñate and Benavides), and Taos retained the friendship of the Apaches del Acha. Although Picuris, the third pueblo fronting directly on the plains, was hostile towards the other two, it was able to maintain peace and an active trade with their Apache allies.⁵⁸

During the course of his reconquest, Diego de Vargas encountered some Apache support for the Pueblos. His attempt to surprise Pecos in 1692 failed because "several Apache scouts" warned the Pueblos, who fled into the mountains overlooking their town.⁵⁹ Although the Pecos natives at first threatened to take refuge at Taos or among the Apaches rather than to surrender, Vargas managed

⁵⁸Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p. 238.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 239.

to win their confidence by his kind treatment of some captive stragglers. When he returned the following year to resume his conquest, Pecos was the first pueblo to submit, and thereafter it actively assisted in the capture of the more recalcitrant towns and encouraged the Faraon Apaches to remain friendly. When Luís Tupatu, the influential chief of Picuris, finally appeared before Vargas to proffer friendship, he explained that he had been away trading with the Apaches for deerskins and that his brother and fellow leader Lorenzo had been on a trip to the buffalo plains.⁶⁰ The absence of the two prominent leaders during a crisis indicates that Picuris had become quite dependent on the Plains Indian trade.

Although Vargas relentlessly pressed his reconquest to a conclusion during 1694, his marches, skirmishes, and sieges did not stop the trade between the Pueblos and Apaches. In March the Faraones came to Pecos to barter as usual. Juan de Ye, the Indian governor there, promptly went to Santa Fe where he obtained permission to trade from Vargas, who also sent some Spanish soldiers to participate. The fair was, no doubt, a great success inasmuch as the Apaches upon leaving promised to return at the end

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 251.

of the wet season and the Spaniards lauded them as having "better behavior [and] a greater perseverance of friendship" than the Pueblos.⁶¹

In May Juan de Ye returned to Santa Fe with a Faraon chief and eight warriors. The Apaches gave Vargas three intricately decorated buffalo robes and a tipi, and they asked permission to hold a trading fair at Pecos during the tiempo de elote ("when the corn begins to ripen").⁶² They informed Vargas that it was a fourteen-day trip to their villages on the Canadian--which would place them in the central part of the Texas Panhandle. Upon leaving, they explained that they had "to attend to their fields." This, the first evidence that any of the Plains Apaches had taken up agriculture, demonstrates the significant extent of the Pecos influence upon the Faraones.⁶³

When the Apaches again arrived at Pecos in late August, Juan de Ye asked Vargas to allow the barter and urged the Spaniards to attend in order to emphasize their

⁶¹Ibid., p. 254.

⁶²Jessie Bromilow, Diego de Vargas and the Reconquest of New Mexico (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), p. 169; J. Manuel Espinosa, Crusaders of the Rio Grande; the Story of Don Diego de Vargas and the Reconquest and Refounding of New Mexico (Chicago: Institute of Jesuit History, 1942), p. 204.

⁶³The Hurtado Expedition of 1715 substantiates the indication here that the Faraones engaged in small-scale agriculture on the Canadian during this period. Infra., p. 40.

peaceful intentions towards the Apaches. Although about to start on a campaign against some rebellious Tewas, Vargas delayed his departure for a week to enable his followers to visit the fair, enjoining them, however, against the use of horses as a "medium of exchange."⁶⁴ War could wait; trade was paramount.

By the end of 1694 Vargas seemingly had completed the reconquest of the Rio Grande pueblos, but within two years some of the northern towns had again taken up arms against him. This time, as he methodically crushed the insurgents, Vargas meted out punishment with a cruelty rarely matched--even by Spanish governors. Exaggerated accounts of his barbaric retaliations caused the panic-stricken natives of Picuris to seek refuge among the Apaches on the plains. When he arrived at the deserted pueblo at the foot of the Sangre de Cristos on October 22, his Pecos scouts turned up a straggler who revealed that his townsmen three days earlier had "headed toward the place where the bulls run."⁶⁵ Determined to prevent their escape, Vargas hurriedly followed along a footpath "like a canyon in some places and wholly mountainous, and filled with stones." Slowed

⁶⁴Bromilow, Diego de Vargas and the Reconquest of New Mexico, pp. 149-151; Forbes, Apache, Navaho, and Spaniard, p. 256.

⁶⁵"Journal of Events in the Second Uprising of the Pueblos in 1696," in Alfred Barnaby Thomas (ed. and trans.), After Coronado, Spanish Exploration Northeast of New Mexico, 1696-1727 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), p. 55.

by their families, supplies, and livestock, the fleeing Indians were overtaken just as they reached the plains. Although they scattered like so many frightened quail, the Spaniards rounded up seventy-one before nightfall. More were captured the following day, but they informed Vargas that Don Lorenzo, their governor, had gone with "the rest, following the Apaches who had moved ahead."⁶⁶

An early autumn blizzard forced Vargas to give up the pursuit. After returning to Santa Fe by way of Pecos at the southern flank of the snow-clogged mountains, he apportioned the forlorn captives among his soldiers for use as bondsmen, "because of their desertion of our holy religion and their royal vassalage."⁶⁷ Of the eighty-four prisoners, "counting the suckling babes of the women, and the boys and girls of all ages," however, only five were married braves. Once again the Spaniards had asserted their control over the upper Rio Grande region; but their mastery was soon to be challenged by the approach of French traders from the east and horse-seeking Comanches from the north.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

CHAPTER II

WAR, TRADE, AND DIPLOMACY, 1700-1786

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the New Mexicans had achieved a remarkable stability in their relations with the Plains Indians. By means of a flourishing trade with the Plains Apaches they were rapidly inducing the latter to adopt Spanish and Pueblo cultural traits. Unfortunately, these tranquil conditions were eventually destroyed by the intruding Comanches, soon to master the southern plains and become the most serious challenge New Mexico faced before the arrival of the Anglo-Americans. Only after long, painful years of turmoil in which the province was driven to the brink of destruction was a modus vivendi reached. Eventually, the sporadic trading between the two peoples transformed the Comanches from hostile marauders into friendly barterers willing to keep a peace treaty.

At the time of the arrival of the Comanches, the only Plains Indians hostile to New Mexico were the Faraon Apaches, semi-nomadic raiders who ranged all the way from the central Texas Panhandle to the Sandia Mountains. Always treacherous, this band of Indians intermittently spread death and destruction deep into New Mexico. Even Diego de Vargas, probably the greatest fighter ever to occupy the

Palace of the Governors, was unable to master them. After Vargas died suddenly in 1703 while pursuing a Faraon band, matters grew so desperate that the Santa Fe cabildo appealed for aid against the "constant murders and thefts."¹ Before the end of the year the ferocity of the raids forced the Spaniards temporarily to abandon Galisteo, which left the southern approaches of both Pecos and Santa Fe wide open to the invaders.²

In his brief administration from 1705 to 1707 Governor Francisco de Cuervo made an amazing improvement in the Indian situation. With the aid of the Pueblos "most skilled in war," he won a series of "most happy victories" that forced the Faraon Apaches to make peace.³ Then, to hold their friendship, he distributed to all who came to Santa Fe presents such as "food, bundles of tobacco, ribbons, hats, needles, beads, and many other trifles."⁴ The restoration of peace greatly benefited the Pueblos because it allowed them to renew their trade with "the savages."⁵

¹Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 125.

²Ibid.

³"Certification of Captain Real de Aguilar, January 10, 1706," in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 367.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Mandamiento of the Viceroy Duke of Albuquerque relative to New Mexico, July 30, 1706, in Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 139.

Cuervo took advantage of the improved conditions in 1706 to dispatch an expedition under his sargent mayor, Juan de Ulibarri', to bring back the Picuris natives who had fled to El Cuartelejo ten years earlier. The fugitives, disappointed at being subjected by the Cuartelejo Apaches to "labor twice as great" as in New Mexico, had several times petitioned Cuervo for soldiers to "restore" them to their old pueblo.⁶ When some of the refugees who returned to Picuris at the beginning of 1706 also urged the sending of a rescue mission, Cuervo finally yielded.

With forty soldiers and two Pueblo guides, Ulibarri' left Santa Fe on July 13 on an expedition that introduced to recorded history the inhabitants of a vast area northeast of New Mexico. Marching east from Taos over a trail "very broken, mountainous, narrow and full of many precipices" into the Canadian watershed, he found small groups of Apache farmers whom he presented with "much" tobacco, knives, pinole, corn, biscuits, and "suitable presents."⁷ As he moved north towards the Raton Pass, he encountered the Jicarillas, Flechas de Palo, and Carlana Apaches, who--belying the appellation of "bad thieves" given them by the

⁶Cuervo to His Majesty, October 18, 1706, in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 384.

⁷"Diary made by Ulibarri' of his trip to ransom the Picuries Indians, 1706," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 61.

Indians farther south--were "busy with the sowing of corn, frijoles, and pumpkins." After giving the Indians some worn-out horses and other "good presents" to insure their friendship, Ulibarri' continued on his way.⁸

Reaching the Arkansas River on July 30, Ulibarri' turned eastward toward El Cuartelejo, following a trail over savannas so featureless that, according to him, even the Apaches sometimes got lost. Although his Pueblo guides took their "direction from hummocks of grass" placed a short distance apart on the trail by the Apaches, they lost their way three times before stumbling upon the nearest of the Cuartelejo villages. To Ulibarri's relief, the Cuartelejos received him with "peace and friendship" and then conducted him to their principal town, the storied El Cuartelejo itself. Here he was greeted with cries of joy by the Picuris natives who came running out of their "huts of little houses." To cap his success, the Apaches readily agreed to surrender the captives.

Ulibarri' soon realized that the Cuartelejos' amiability stemmed from their need for support against the Pawnees, who, armed with French muskets, had been worsting them in their long-standing warfare. Liberally embellishing the facts, his hosts informed Ulibarri' that French soldiers

⁸Ibid., p. 64.

were fighting side by side with the Pawnees, and as proof produced a rusty gun supposedly taken from a slain Frenchman. In bringing up the spectre of a French intrusion they had accidentally struck upon the one thing most likely to command Spanish attention.

During the few days necessary for all the Picuris to be brought in from the various Apache villages, Ulibarri⁹ was intrigued to see that the majority of the Apaches wore around their necks crosses, medals, and rosaries. Inquiring the reason, he learned that during "many years" of trading with New Mexico the Cuartelejos had come to attribute the Spaniards' valor to their religious symbols. Reasoning therefore that the medals would "help them in their own wars,"⁹ the Apaches sallied forth to battle with the images of Spanish saints hanging from their necks. True to their word, the Apaches delivered to Ulibarri⁹ all the Pueblos except a few absent on a buffalo hunt who, it was promised, would be returned to New Mexico the following year when the Apaches "came in for ransom." Before leaving the Apache camp, however, Ulibarri⁹ gravely performed a time-honored ritual intended to instill in the Indians loyalty for Spain. He selected a "young Indian of fine body and countenance" to serve as chief of all the Cuartelejos and gave him a baton to symbolize his authority.¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 74.

Ulibarri's report disclosed that, under New Mexican influence, the Apaches throughout a vast area northeast of the Pueblo settlements had developed a surprising skill in agriculture to supplement their dependence on the buffalo. His observations have been confirmed by archeological reports that an Indian village excavated in Scott County, Kansas, contained a multiroomed stone structure, irrigation works, and other features "clearly inspired by, if not the actual work of, Pueblo Indians." Waldo Wedel, the leading authority on the archeology of the Great Plains, concluded that if this village were not the Cuartelejo ranchería from which Ulibarri rescued the Picuris refugees, it was a simultaneously occupied community in which Pueblo Indians from the upper Rio Grande and Plains Apaches were residing.¹¹

The Cuartelejos were only one of several Apache groups influenced by the Spaniards and Pueblos to adopt a semi-sedentary way of life. Archeologists have discovered between the eastern slope of the Colorado Rockies and the Nebraska Sand Hills many sites similar to El Cuartelejo that were the homes of Plains Apaches. These sites, designated as the Dismal River complex and dated by means of tree rings or by cross finds of datable Southwestern potsherds "at

¹¹Waldo R. Wedel, "An Introduction to Kansas Archeology," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 174 (1959), p. 468.

approximately A. D. 1700 plus or minus 25 to 50 years,"¹² were occupied by a hunting people who, like the Cuartelejos, had adopted a rudimentary form of agriculture from the Pueblos. Evidence of Pueblo influence includes their baking pits, identical to those found in post-Spanish levels at Pecos, and their pottery, which "strongly resembles the utility pottery made at Taos, Picuris, and other frontier pueblos on the upper Rio Grande."¹³ Wedel asserts that the Pueblos must have speeded up, if they did not initiate, the adoption of crop-growing among the Plains Apaches hundreds of miles northeast of New Mexico.¹⁴

Of all the Plains Apaches, only the Faraones resisted the New Mexicans' blandishments. Like their kinsmen, the Faraones traded regularly at Pecos and Taos but, unlike the others, they took advantage of their visits to "commit thefts of animals."¹⁵ They had become so troublesome by 1715 that Captain Juan Paez Hurtado, a veteran of Vargas's reconquest, was dispatched to punish them. While planning the expedition, Hurtado was warned by the Taos Indians not to let the natives of Pecos know of his plans because they

¹²Wedel, Prehistoric Man on the Great Plains, p. 113.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁵"Diary of the Campaign of Captain Juan Hurtado against the Faraon Apaches, 1715," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 80.

would inform the Faraones. The Taos spokesmen claimed that the Pecos natives and the Faraones were "almost the same" and that the Faraones had even lived at Pecos until Vargas reduced it in 1693. Then they had gone to live on the plains.¹⁶ The best time to attack the Faraones, the Taoseños continued, would be in the middle of August "when the moon is almost full" because then they would be threshing the grain from their corn. If the expedition did not strike them then it would be too late, for after the harvest they cached their grain in the ground and followed the buffalo herds until it was time to plant their crops during the following spring.

Hurtado's campaign was a dismal failure. His Pueblo guide fruitlessly sought the Apache camps for eighteen days until Hurtado, deciding the guide did not know where he was "nor where he ought to go," had him lashed for "such negligence."¹⁷ After a group of Taos Indians whom he sent in search of the Faraones returned empty-handed, Hurtado, concluding that his quarry probably had been warned of his expedition by the Pecos Indians, reluctantly turned back.¹⁸

Although the Faraones continued for a time to be a nuisance, the Comanches replaced them as the major menace

¹⁶Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 98.

on the eastern frontier of New Mexico. This tribe, native to the mountainous region far to the north, apparently had learned of the attractive southlands from their Ute kinsmen and allies, who regularly attended the Taos trade fairs. The Comanches made their first recorded visit to Taos in 1705, ostensibly to trade; but the very next year they were reported to Ulibarri' to be threatening to attack that pueblo.¹⁹ On his campaign through southern Colorado, moreover, Ulibarri' observed the possible commencement of Comanche pressure on the Apaches of the plains when he met some Penxaye Apaches who were hurrying to join "the rest who live along those rivers and streams in order to defend themselves together from the Utes and Comanches."²⁰ The Comanches evidently had been impelled to leave their homeland by pressure from northeastern tribes armed with muskets. Once on the move, they were lured towards New Mexico by their desire for Spanish horses and trade goods.²¹ In the first agreement they made with New Mexico, about 1709, they

¹⁹Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 301; Thomas, After Coronado, p. 60.

²⁰"Diary made by Ulibarri' of his trip to ransom the Picurie's Indians," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 65.

²¹Ernest Wallace and E. Adamson Hoebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), p. 10; Rupert N. Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1933), p. 19.

asked for and received permission to trade at Taos.²² Apparently having had little intention of honoring this original treaty, the Comanches, according to a report of Captain Xtopal de Serna of the Santa Fe presidio in 1719, took advantage of the "shade and cloak of peace" to steal "on whatever occasion that offered itself."²³

Serna's statement not only indicates the extent of the Comanches' stealing but also casts doubt on the authenticity of an alleged campaign against the Comanches in 1717. As originally described in 1906 by Amado Chaves, an amateur New Mexican historian, the citizens of Santa Fe, incensed by the Comanche raids, selected Don Juan de Padilla, Don Carlos Fernandez, and Don Pedro Pino to lead them against the marauding Indians. After a long pursuit, the Spaniards surprised the Comanches in a beautiful valley southeast of present Anton Chico, killing "hundreds" and capturing seven hundred others whom they sent to die in the sugar cane fields of Cuba. In concluding his narrative, Chaves solemnly stated that the Comanches were so subdued by their defeat "that they never again went on the war path against the Spaniards."²⁴ Although accepted by many

²²Opinion of Xptoval de la Serna, August 19, 1719, in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 105.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Amado Chaves, "The Defeat of the Comanches in 1717," Historical Society of New Mexico, Publication No. 8 (1906), pp. 6-10.

southwestern historians,²⁵ Chaves's account was only the garbled rendition of the folk traditions of a victory won over the notorious Comanche chief Guerno Verde in 1774.²⁶

By 1719 the mounting Comanche depredations, including a destructive raid on Taos, and their interference with the important barter between New Mexico and the Plains Apaches²⁷ led Governor Antonio de Valverde to take the field against them with more than six hundred men. Although Valverde

²⁵See, for example, Warren A. Beck, New Mexico; a History of Four Centuries (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), p. 94; Cleve Hallenbeck, Land of the Conquistadores (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printers, 1950), p. 207; Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, 1751-1778 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1940), p. 8.

²⁶Infra, p. 70. Although Chaves did not document his article, he based it on a folk drama "written in verse by one of the members of the expedition." (Chaves, as cited, p. 10). He possessed one of the few extant copies of this drama and loaned it to Gilberto Espinosa who edited and published it in 1907 ("Los Comanches," University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series, No. 1 [1907], p. 18). Like Chaves's article, the folk drama lists Fernandez and Pino as being among the New Mexican leaders--but both were residents of the last half of the eighteenth century and could not have led an expedition in 1717. Since Padilla, otherwise little mentioned in New Mexican history, was a direct ancestor of Chaves (Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 198-199), the latter may also have relied upon family tradition in writing his account. For an interesting analysis and translation of the folk drama see Arthur L. Campa, "Los Comanches; a New Mexican Folk Drama," University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series, No. 7 (1932). Although both Espinosa and Campa have shown the impossibility of the 1717 campaign referred to by Chaves, no notice of their findings has ever been taken by Southwestern historians.

²⁷Opinion of Captain Miguel de Coca, August 19, 1719, in Thomas, After Coronado, pp. 104-105.

was unable to locate his elusive enemy, he discovered the gravity of the Comanche onslaught against the Apaches and perceived the serious consequences this could have for New Mexico. East of Taos in the valley of La Jicarilla he found the Jicarilla Apaches living in small villages composed of adobe houses with flat roofs that sometimes bore "a most holy cross"--a pathetic protection against the Comanches. The Jicarillas, like the Pueblos, raised maize on small, fertile fields irrigated by "many ditches and canals;"²⁸ but, unfortunately, their crops had attracted Comanche raiders. Valverde visited many "depopulated rancherías" where ruins only were to be seen. He noted also that the discouraged Apaches at night abandoned their houses and hid in the hills "to insure their lives."²⁹

Between the Raton range and the Arkansas River Valverde encountered some Carlara Apaches, shattered remnants of a once powerful tribe, in full retreat before the Utes and Comanches.³⁰ He was heartened, however, to meet near the Arkansas a large Cuartelejo war party that was also in search of the Comanches. Although he hopefully joined the Cuartelejos, Valverde was unable to track down the Comanches

²⁸"Diary of the Campaign of Governor Antonio de Valverde against the Ute and Comanche Indians, 1719," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 113.

²⁹Valverde to Valero, November 30, 1719, in ibid., p. 142.

³⁰"Diary of the Campaign of Valverde," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 117.

who had vanished with hardly a trace into the vast expanses north of the Arkansas River.

During the joint expedition Valverde learned that the Cuartelejos were under attack from all sides. One band, the Palomas, had recently been driven from the South Platte region by the Utes, and the entire tribe was subject to devastating raids from the east by the Pawnees. Repeating the charges made earlier to Ulibarri³¹ that Frenchmen were fighting side by side with the Pawnees, the Cuartelejos pleaded for aid; but the approach of winter forced Valverde to call off his campaign and return to New Mexico.³¹

The following year Valverde sent his lieutenant-governor, Don Pedro de Villasur, to investigate the reports of French encroachments. With forty-two Spanish soldiers and sixty Pueblo auxiliaries, Villasur followed the well-known trail from Taos to the Cuartelejo villages, then marched northeastward to the South Platte River, and descended it until he reached a Pawnee Camp on August 7. After trying unsuccessfully for three days to learn the location of the elusive Frenchmen, he became alarmed over the growing belligerency of the Pawnees and withdrew some distance to consider his next move. On the following morning his camp was surprised by the Pawnees, and he and all but thirteen of his men were killed. The survivors, all wounded,

³¹Ibid., p. 119.

fled pell-mell across the plains to El Cuartelejo where the Apaches received them "with much kindness" and shared with them their "poor provisions."³² Clinging pathetically to the only possible source of aid, the Cuartelejos begged the Spaniards to "return to these frontiers" and join them in an offensive against the French and Pawnees. It was a forlorn hope.

Thoroughly alarmed by the Villasur massacre, the Spaniards debated possible means of aiding the Apaches and countering the French movements. The Viceroy, perhaps overly encouraged by reports that the Cuartelejos were trustworthy and ready to accept Christianity, proposed the establishment at El Cuartelejo of a presidio manned with twenty-five soldiers. Valverde, however vigorously objected, arguing that a twenty-five man garrison was too small, that El Cuartelejo was lacking in wood and other essentials, that the winters there were too rigorous, and that the site was surrounded by "a great number of savages."³³ He maintained that the Valley of La Jicarilla, which could be more easily reinforced and provisioned, would be a better location. Unfortunately, neither site was occupied, and the Apaches, bereft of Spanish aid, were unable to check the Comanche advance.

³²Valverde to Valero, October 8, 1720, in ibid., p. 142.

³³Council of War, Santa Fe, June 2, 1720, in ibid., p. 157.

Significantly, the Apaches' inability to withstand the Comanche advance was not due to a marked inferiority in either guns or horses. It is true that the Apaches were denied guns by the Spaniards, but the Comanches likewise were unable to secure firearms from the French until after they had defeated the Apaches. Valverde reported in 1719 that a war party of sixty-nine Apaches that joined him had 103 mounts, a respectable number by almost any standard. That same year Bénard de la Harpe, a French trader blazing a trail through what is now Oklahoma, stated that the main advantage of the Faraon Apaches in war was that "they have good horses, whereas the other nations have very few."³⁴

The Apaches were unsuccessful in defending themselves largely because they lived in small, isolated farming communities that were easy to overwhelm by surprise attacks. On the other hand, Apache retaliatory expeditions were usually unsuccessful because the Comanches were difficult to locate and had better organization and discipline. According to Inspector Don Pedro de Rivera, who visited New Mexico in 1727, the Comanches conserved "such solidarity that both on the marches which they continually make, . . . as well as in the camps which they establish where they settle, they are

³⁴"Diary of the Campaign of Valverde," in ibid., p. 128; Anna Lewis (trans.), "LeHarpe's First Expedition in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II (December, 1924), 46.

formidable in their defense."³⁵ Two courses of action might have enabled the eastern Apaches to withstand the Comanche onslaught: by abandoning agriculture and reverting to their former status of nomadic bison hunters they could have met the Comanches on equal terms; or, by concentrating, like the Pueblos, the Pawnees of eastern Nebraska, and the Taovayas on the Red River, into larger, fortified villages they could have repulsed the attacks.³⁶ They failed, however, to make either of these adjustments.

Of the Plains Apaches who were driven back on New Mexico, the defeat of the Jicarillas is the best documented. Governor Juan de Bustamante, who in 1723 visited their village, learned that the Comanches had recently killed many young Jicarilla men and carried off many of their women and children.³⁷ Although Bustamante recommended the establishment of a presidio among the Jicarillas and personally selected a logical site for it, he was unable to obtain authorization for the project. Soon afterwards, the Jicarillas despaired of aid and abandoned their homes, some going to the Navahos, others to Taos, and a few--strange though it may

³⁵Rivera to Casa Fuerte, September 26, 1726, in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 212.

³⁶Frank E. Secoy, "Changing Military Patterns on the Great Plains," Monographs of the American Ethnological Society, No. 21 (1953), p. 32.

³⁷Bustamante to Casa Fuerte, January 10, 1724, in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 201.

may seem--"to the extensive plains of Los Cibolos."³⁸ In 1733 a group settled around a mission established for them on the Rio Trampas near Taos and gave up hope of reclaiming their old homeland. According to a report of 1748, "the few that remained" were living peacefully near Taos and Pecos.³⁹ Too late, the Spanish officials realized that in abandoning the Jicarillas, they had lost control of "the pass" through which the Comanches had easiest access to the province.⁴⁰

Because the Comanches were basically a mountain people, the Cuartelejo Apaches, located farther out on the plains than the Jicarillas, were able to hold out a while longer. An Apache report in 1727 placed the Comanches in "El Almagre [the front range of the Rockies] or a little farther away"--no immediate threat to the Cuartelejos.⁴¹ Indeed, the Cuartelejos apparently entered into a loose alliance with some French traders. In 1726 they sold to the New Mexicans some Comanche captives who claimed that their captors had been accompanied by white men who, "according to their narrative," were French. About a year later, the Cuartelejos

³⁸Rivera to Casa Fuerte, September 26, 1727, in ibid., p. 216; Bustamante to Casa Fuerte, August 26, 1727, in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 246.

³⁹Governor Joaquín Codallos y Rabal to the Viceroy, March 4, 1748, in Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, I, 20.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Bustamante to Casa Fuerte, April 30, 1727, in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 256.

were reportedly joined by five Frenchmen in an expedition against the Comanches.⁴² The efforts of these few Frenchmen, however, were short-lived and unavailing, for the Cuartelejos were forced to abandon their homeland. Unfortunately, there are no extant records pertaining to their defeat. When next officially mentioned, in 1752, they were living near Pecos, allied with the inhabitants there against the Comanches.⁴³ They did not immediately give up all contact with the plains, however, for a report in 1754 stated that they roamed the country east of Pecos "as far as the boundaries of Texas."⁴⁴

The Faraon Apaches, found along the Canadian in 1715 by a Spanish expedition and mentioned by La Harpe in 1719 as living west of the Taovayas, were soon afterwards set upon by the Comanches. Although there are no contemporary accounts of their defeat, Teodoro de Croix stated in 1781 that a portion of the Mescalero Apaches some time earlier had been forced to flee "from their old pueblos of El Norte,"⁴⁵ almost

⁴²Ibid., p. 257.

⁴³Governor Thomas Vélez to the Count of Revilla Gigedo, September 29, 1752, in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 124.

⁴⁴"Instruction of Vélez to his successor, Don Francisco Marín del Valle, August 12, 1754," in ibid., p. 135.

⁴⁵"General Report of 1781 by Teodoro de Croix," in Alfred B. Thomas, Teodoro de Croix and the Northern Frontier of New Spain, 1776-1783 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1941), p. 126.

certainly a reference to the Faraones; and three years later Governor Domingo Cabello of Texas reported that a group of Apaches who lived three hundred leagues northwest "from the province of Texas" had been defeated in a nine days' battle with the Comanches in 1723 and forced to seek safety in flight.⁴⁶ Once driven from the plains, the Faraones cut their ties with the area; in the early 1750's they were living near the Rio Grande about midway between El Paso and Albuquerque and were purchasing their buffalo meat and robes from the Cuartelejo Apaches rather than doing their own hunting.⁴⁷

Despite the turbulence on the plains, the Spaniards managed to preserve much of their Indian trade. The importance of the barter as well as the fact that a surprisingly large portion of it was conducted on the plains is revealed by the records of early French explorers. Clause Du Tisne, a young French adventurer who visited the "Black Pawnees" (Wichitas) along the Arkansas River in southern Kansas in 1719, was told that New Mexican traders had formerly reached their villages, but that the Padoucas had recently "barred

⁴⁶William E. Dunn, "Apache Relations in Texas, 1718-1750," Texas State Historical Association Quarterly, XII (January, 1911), 218.

⁴⁷"Instruction of Vélez to his Successor," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 135.

the road."⁴⁸

With the Padoucas,⁴⁹ the master of the Kansas plains, the Spaniards had a significant commerce. La Harpe observed in 1719 that whoever controlled the trade with them would be the "master of the region."⁵⁰ In 1724 the Frenchman Étienne Veniard de Bourgmond, veteran of long years of trading among the Plains Indians, visited the Padoucas in an attempt to open communications with Santa Fe. During his very amiable stay among them, he learned that the Spaniards came to their villages "every spring" with horses, knives, awls, and axes to trade for buffalo robes. "A great number of warriors" who were preparing to go to New Mexico "to buy horses" had

⁴⁸Du Tisne to Bienville, November 22, 1719, in Pierre Margry, Decouvertes et Etablissements des Français dans l'Ouest et dans le Sud de l'Amérique Septentrionale (6 vols.: Paris: Maisonneuve, 1879-1888), VI, 313, quoted in Henri Folmer, "French Expansion towards New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century" (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Denver, 1939), p. 71.

⁴⁹There is a considerable amount of controversy concerning the identity of the Padouca Indians. Many historians of the Plains Indians--including Rupert N. Richardson, Ernest Wallace, Alfred B. Thomas, and Henry Folmer--have concluded they were probably the Comanches. Two other historians, Frank R. Secoy ("The Identity of the 'Paduca'; an Ethnohistorical Analysis," American Anthropologist, N. S., LIII [January, 1951], 525-547) and George E. Hyde (Indians of the High Plains [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961]), vigorously contend that they were in reality the Plains Apaches. It is not essential to this study to attempt to identify them.

⁵⁰Lewis, "LeHarpe's First Expedition in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, II, 347.

gathered a large number of buffalo hides because, they explained, the Spaniards "give us one horse for three hides."⁵¹ Although the Padoucas offered to take Bourgmond to New Mexico, which they said was only twelve marching days away, he declined the offer because of his poor health and the nearness of winter.

The available references at this time indicate that New Mexico conducted a comparatively peaceful trade with all of the Plains Indians. In 1730 Bishop Benito Crespo, reporting on a visitation he had made of New Mexico, was quite impressed with the amount of "bartering and trading" being conducted with the "pagans on the borders."⁵² Significantly, he made no mention of Indian hostilities. Don Pedro de Rivera, in a report published in 1736, blandly observed that a "barbarous, warlike nation called the Comanches, . . . always on the move," appeared annually in New Mexico to barter and then disappeared, not be seen again until the next trading season.⁵³ The first Frenchmen

⁵¹Folmer, "French Expansion toward New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century," p. 184.

⁵²Bishop Crespo to the Viceroy, September 25, 1730, in New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII (July, 1953), 230.

⁵³Don Pedro de Rivera, "Diario y Derrotero de l Cominado, Visto y Obcervado en el Discurso de la visita general de Precidios, situatdos en las Provincias Ynternas de Nueva Espana, que de orden de su Magestad" (Guathemela, 1736), leg. 950, quoted in Ernest Wallace, "The Habitat and Range of the Kiowa, Comanche and Apache Indians before 1867" (Unpublished MS, report for the United States Department of Justice, in possession of the author), p. 65.

to cross the plains to New Mexico, the Mallet brothers in 1739, also reported that the Comanches (Laitanes) were trading peaceably with the Spaniards.⁵⁴ The most probable reason for the Comanches' peaceful behavior was that the Spaniards were their only practical source of European goods until the 1740's when French traders reached the plains in appreciable numbers.

Most of the trade with the Comanches took place in the New Mexican villages because it was more convenient and because Spanish laws forbade traders to visit the villages of the "wild" Indians.⁵⁵ Occasionally, foolhardy individuals ignored the ban,⁵⁶ but with increasing risk. In 1768, for example, five settlers and a Pueblo who went to a Comanche camp near Taos to gain an advantage over their fellow traders were killed by their hosts.⁵⁷ As a consequence of this and similar incidents, traders generally remained within the safety of their villages.

⁵⁴Folmer, "French Expansion toward New Mexico in the Eighteenth Century," p. 236.

⁵⁵One such edict was issued December 12, 1712 (Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 169); another on April 3, 1723 (Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of New Mexico and Arizona, San Francisco: The History Company, 1889, p. 239.)

⁵⁶In 1735 Diego de Torres was accused of trading with the Comanches before the time set and as a result had to forfeit the buffalo hides he had purchased. Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 205.

⁵⁷Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 160.

Throughout the century Taos dominated the Indian trade by means of great summer fairs to which New Mexicans from far and near and of all classes, hues, and reputations flocked. In its dusty plaza a governor often rubbed shoulders with lowly peons, all keenly anxious to reap profits from their Indian visitors. The spirit of the fairs was brilliantly but scathingly captured by a reform-minded priest, Fray Serrano:

When the Indian trading embassy comes to these governors and their alcaldes, here all prudence forsakes them . . . because the fleet is in. The fleet being, in this case, some two hundred, or at the very least, fifty tents of barbarous Indians.⁵⁸

The New Mexican traders were able to offer an increasing list of European goods. In return for their buffalo hides, meat, tallow, and captives, the Comanches could now obtain not only cornmeal, bread, and other foodstuffs, but could also choose from among an array of beads, trinkets, and a wide variety of ironware ranging from knives and axes to bridle bits and cooking utensils.

Horses also changed hands at the fairs, although at times Spanish officials attempted to prevent their sale to the Indians. Governor Thomas Vélez once forbade the settlers to take a single horse to the fair for fear that he would be

⁵⁸Report of Father Serrano to the Viceroy, the Marquis of Cruillas, 1761, in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 486.

forced to allow the Comanches "to buy mares and studs."⁵⁹ Other governors, however, saw nothing wrong with the practice. Fray Serrano in 1761 stated that New Mexican officials in preparing for the fair "gather together as many horses as they can," and fifteen years later another priest observed without reproach that his countrymen were trading horses for slaves and "she-mules"⁶⁰ (horse trading in a classical sense.) As their horses increased in numbers, the Comanches became sellers instead of purchasers. As early as 1760 Bishop Tamaron noted that they brought horses to trade "out of the plunder they obtained elsewhere" and in the 1770's they were reportedly bringing "a thousand or more animals" with them to Taos. On a more modest scale, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza in 1786 purchased fifteen "riding beasts" from the Comanches.⁶¹

⁵⁹"Instruction of Velez to his Successor, 1754," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 133.

⁶⁰Report of Fray Serrano, 1761, in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 486; Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, 1776, ed. and trans. by Eleanor Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1956), p. 251.

⁶¹Eleanor B. Adams (ed. and trans.), "Bishop Tamaron's Visitation of New Mexico, 1760," New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII (July, 1953), 217; Alfred B. Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers: A Study of the Spanish Indian Policy of Don Juan Bautista de Anza, 1777-1787 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932), p. 317.

The rigidly enforced Spanish ban on trading guns to the Indians did not entirely eliminate the traffic for there was no barrier against the Comanches' selling firearms to Spaniards. Mentioned as early as 1760, this peculiar reverse gun-flow was still going on in 1776 when Fray Dominguez stated matter-of-factly that the Comanches sold "good guns," pistols, powder, and balls which they obtained from the Jumano Indians. Although the friar implied that the trade in guns was considerable, the only specific numerical reference is Anza's report in 1786 that he had purchased three from the Comanches.⁶²

The propriety of ransoming slaves from the Comanches at the fairs created a furious controversy. Most New Mexican governors maintained that the practice was "laudable" because the redeemed captives were educated and "brought into the fold of the church," and because its discontinuance would cause the Comanches to kill their captives.⁶³ Some clerics defended the trade as a potential means to save souls. For this reason, Father Claramonte "astutely cultivated" a Comanche chieftain with the intent of getting some Apaches "out of captivity."⁶⁴

⁶²Adams, "Bishop Tamaron's Visitation," New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII, 210; Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 251; Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 317.

⁶³Velez to the Marquis of Altamira, January 14, 1751, in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 332.

⁶⁴Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 251.

Other priests argued that the captives were only being delivered from one bondage into another. Their protests ranged from a mild rebuke that the "ransomed Indians were not well treated by their new masters"⁶⁵ to a fiery charge that the governors were enriching themselves by the trade in human bodies; or, as Fray Serrano phrased it, "gorging themselves first with the largest mouthfuls from this table, while the rest eat the crumbs." To Serrano, the trade was brutal, vicious, and degrading, and he denounced it in ringing terms:

It is the truth that when these barbarians bring a certain number of Indian women to sell, among them many young maidens and girls, before delivering them to the Christians who buy them, if they are ten years old or over, they deflower and corrupt them in the innumerable assemblies of barbarians and Catholics . . . without considering anything but their unbridled lust and brutal shamelessness, and saying to those who buy them, with heathen impudence: "Now you can take her--now she is good."⁶⁶

The outrageous behavior of the Comanches at the fairs was matched by the larcenous conduct of the Spaniards and Pueblos. On several occasions, even the governors were shocked by their excesses; Governor Thomas Vélez complained that the New Mexicans and Pueblos caused trouble by robbing

⁶⁵Report of Fray Miguel de Menchero, May 10, 1744, in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 487.

⁶⁶Report of Fray Serrano, 1761, in ibid., p. 487.

the Comanches of their robes, horses, or "some other priceless possession."⁶⁷ Fray Serrano, even more critical, predicted darkly that the traders "with their wrongs and injustices [which] stir up these barbarous nations" would inevitably bring on a war.⁶⁸ Regardless of the risk, however, the New Mexicans could not resist the temptation to defraud their gullible visitors who "as soon as they buy anything, they usually sell exactly what they bought; and usually they keep losing, the occasion when they gain being very rare, because our people ordinarily play infamous tricks on them."⁶⁹

A few governors seriously endeavored to forestall trouble by regulating the trade. Vélez, who always tried to attend the fairs to keep the settlers from doing their visitors "the slightest injury,"⁷⁰ issued in the early 1750's a "superior decree" listing the prices assigned to the trade effects of both Comanches and Spaniards. Although the decree has long since been lost, a few of its rates

⁶⁷"Instruction of Vélez to his Successor, 1754," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 134.

⁶⁸Report of Fray Serrano, 1761, in Hackett, Historical Documents Relating to New Mexico, III, 487.

⁶⁹Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 251

⁷⁰"Instruction of Vélez to his Successor, 1754," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 134.

were casually mentioned by Fray Dominguez: for a tanned buffalo robe or "white elkskin," a Comanche received a "beldique, or broad knife made entirely of iron, which they call a trading knife here;" for two robes he obtained "a very poor bridle, but garnished with red rags;" and for a pistol he got a bridle.⁷¹ The decree was still in effect, at least nominally, in 1786 when Governor Anza received permission to modify it because the value of New Mexican goods "had fallen since then and that of hides had increased."⁷² The only changes he made, however, were that two beldiques were to be valued as one robe and that one Spanish horse was to equal thirteen buffalo robes. In conducting the fair at Pecos in 1786, Anza set a high standard. He abolished the practice of requiring contributions from the "pagans" as a fee for permission to trade and marked off two lines "so that the contracting parties, placed on the outside of both, could exhibit and deliver to each other in the intermediate space" the goods to be exchanged.⁷³ By enforcing these regulations, Anza succeeded in having a peaceful and orderly fair.

The fairs were of inestimable importance to the New Mexican economy. Provincial traders took robes and Indian slaves acquired at them directly to the great Chihuahua fairs to exchange for the manufactured items not produced in their

⁷¹Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 251

⁷²Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 318.

⁷³Ibid.

agrarian homeland. Indeed, Taos and Pecos were not the only settlements dependent on the trade. The settlers at La Cañada (present Espanola), a thriving town on the Rio Grande about twenty miles north of Santa Fe and the main trade center for the Utes, reportedly "could not provide for themselves" without the Indian trade, "for they have no other commerce than that of these skins."⁷⁴ Conditions probably differed little at several other frontier villages.

It would have been extraordinary had not peoples as heterogeneous as the New Mexicans and Comanches had occasional misunderstandings and hostilities. Comanches on leaving the fairs did not always overcome the urge to help themselves to their hosts' livestock. A contemporary priest wryly observed, "the Comanches always carry off all they want, by purchase in peace and by theft in war."⁷⁵ Furthermore, the Comanches' lack of unity led to situations in which one group might be trading peaceably at Taos while another was raiding elsewhere. Upon being upbraided for this apparent perfidy, one friendly Comanche chief replied: "Don't be too trusty. Remember, there are rogues among us, just as there are among you. Hang any of them you catch!"⁷⁶ On the other hand, Comanches desiring

⁷⁴"Instruction of Vélez to his Successor, 1754," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 130.

⁷⁵Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 112.

⁷⁶Adams, "Bishop Tamaron's Visitation of New Mexico," New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII, 216.

access to the Taos fairs too often blamed the raids on "certain warlike captains they cannot control."⁷⁷

In combating the Comanches, the New Mexicans, when well led and adequately armed, were more than able to hold their own. Had they been as timid and cowardly as many Anglos have claimed, their province could never have endured two centuries of constant exposure to Indian attacks. According to a veteran Spanish military observer, New Mexican youths grew up "well prepared for war, for they learn to use weapons and ride horses when they are very young." Their weapons, however, were both poor in quality and inadequate in quantity. The Pueblos generally relied upon the bow and arrow, pikes, and lances and, as a crude sort of armor, wore leather jackets.⁷⁸ The Spanish settlers, handicapped by a lack of gunpowder for their few firearms, used similar weapons, the most effective being the lance. Not until the late 1770's was the serious shortage of guns partially alleviated.

The Comanches made few raids on the Spaniards and Pueblos until the 1740's. Then they began assailing Pecos and Galisteo

⁷⁷Veíez to Don Juan Francisco de Guemes, March 8, 1750, in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 328.

⁷⁸Lawrence Kinnaird (trans. and ed.), The Frontiers of New Spain; Nicolás de Lafora's Description, 1766-1768 (Berkeley: The Quivira Society, 1958), p. 93.

with unprecedented fury, killing 150 at Pecos between 1744 and 1749. To stop their attacks Governor Vélez finally garrisoned Pecos with thirty presidials, surrounded it and Galisteo with "intrenchments, with towers at the gates," and stationed "spies" on their eastern approaches.⁷⁹ These measures notwithstanding, the people at Pecos were in constant danger. In 1751 Jean Chapius, a French trader, after having seen no Comanches while crossing the plains, encountered them near Pecos, "spying" on a party of Pueblo hunters.⁸⁰

The relentless attacks on Pecos and Galisteo were probably in retaliation for the support that these two pueblos had given the Plains Apaches. So "neighborly" were they with the Apaches in 1752 that the latter often left their women and children at the pueblo when they went to the plains to hunt buffalo.⁸¹ The Spanish officials, however, failed to associate the Comanche hostility against Pecos with the presence of the Apaches, whom they welcomed enthusiastically. Governor Vélez actually schemed, "with whatever guile" necessary, to keep the Apaches near Pecos to augment its defenses and for use as spies. Apaches would venture as far as one hundred

⁷⁹Vélez to Don Juan Francisco de Guemes, March 8, 1750, in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 328.

⁸⁰Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 354.

⁸¹Vélez to the Count of Revilla Gigedo, September 29, 1752, in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 124.

leagues onto the plains, a feat "very rare and risky" for the Pueblos.⁸²

The Plains Apaches and the Jicarillas both served the Spaniards faithfully as soldiers and scouts. In 1760 Bishop Tamaron was introduced by the Santo Domingans to the leader of the "peaceful Apache Indians," who was "esteemed in the kingdom" because he loyally warned of the approach of Comanche marauders and was a safe ally in war.⁸³ As late as 1779 the inhabitants of Taos were notified by Apache "friends" of an imminent Comanche attack and were thus enabled to repulse it with little loss.⁸⁴ But for all their loyalty, the Plains Apaches lacked the strength and numbers to be of great assistance against the Comanches.

The New Mexicans did not associate the Comanche raids on Pecos with the presence of the Apaches because they were convinced that the French were the instigators. In 1748 a number of forays occurred soon after rumors reached New Mexico that thirty-three Frenchmen were on the east side of the Sangre de Cristos, not far from Taos, trading the Comanches "plenty of

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Adams, "Bishop Tamaron's Visitation of New Mexico," New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII, 203.

⁸⁴"Governor Anza's Diary of his Campaign against the Comanches," in Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 138. These statements do not pertain to the Apaches of southern and western New Mexico who continued to attack the province, although their main targets were in Chihuahua and Sonora.

muskets for mules."⁸⁵ Governor Vélez was certain, therefore, that the French had alienated the Comanches "from our friendship and trade."⁸⁶ Since the factors promoting war were largely counterbalanced by the mutual need for trade, the New Mexican frontier had alternating periods of peace and war throughout the period from 1750 to 1786. Battles, treaties, trade fairs, and raids occurred in perplexing array.

Vélez, on the whole, was the most successful governor before Anza in dealing with the Comanches. Upon taking office in 1751 he used conciliation and diplomacy to stop an Indian war which he had inherited from his predecessor, but when the Comanches raided Galisteo in violation of their pledges, he surprised and annihilated one of their rancherías east of Pecos.⁸⁷ Winning the respect of the Comanches with his show of strength, he gained their confidence by his lenient treatment of those whom he had captured and held it by his fairness in subsequent trade relations.

Don Francisco Marín del Valle, the successor to Vélez, maintained an uneasy peace with the Comanches from 1754 to

⁸⁵Twitchell, The Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 149.

⁸⁶"Instruction of Vélez to his Successor, 1754," in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 134.

⁸⁷Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 78. Since the reports of this campaign are somewhat vague and are undoubtedly exaggerated, it does not seem necessary to describe it in detail.

1760. In August, 1760, however, a large force of Comanches swept down into the Taos valley and attacked a Spanish ranch house in which many settlers had gathered for protection. After a desperate struggle, the Indians broke into the house, killed all the men, and carried off fifty-six women and children.⁸⁸ Although Governor Marín at the head of a punitive expedition trailed them as far north as the Arkansas River, the raiders escaped unscathed.

Early in 1761 Marín was succeeded by Don Manuel del Portillo, who was infatuated with the idea that the Comanche problem could be solved by a quick, decisive victory. Soon after his arrival, Portillo proclaimed that no Comanches would be allowed to trade until every Spanish captive had been released. For some inexplicable reason, the Taos alcalde nevertheless admitted a large number of Comanches to a fair upon their promise to ransom seven captives. Learning of this, Portillo rushed to Taos and imprisoned the Comanche chiefs when they refused to comply with his demand that they immediately return all their prisoners. The following day, he coolly ordered the leaderless Comanche braves to hand over their horses and "remain on foot" for the duration of the fair. Angered by such arrogance and bent on revenging the seizure of their chiefs, the Indians charged--straight into a trap.

⁸⁸Adams, "Bishop Tamarón's Visitation of New Mexico," New Mexico Historical Review, XXVIII, 216.

Portillo, shrewdly anticipating their action, shattered their ranks with a salvo from a grapeshot-loaded cannon and a "close volley" of shotguns. The Spaniards, piously "invoking the Queen of Angels and men," were joined in the slaughter of the terrified Comanches by some Utes and Apaches who were present for the fair. After the melee ended, Portillo proudly boasted that more than four hundred Comanches had been killed and about three hundred women, "large and small," had been captured.⁸⁹

Although the elated governor predicted that his "glorious" victory would bring peace to New Mexico because of the fear it had inspired in the "heathen" tribes, he had little time to enjoy the triumph. In February, 1762, he was replaced by former governor Thomas Vélez, who thought Portillo's attack both unjust and unwise. Vélez promptly reinitiated his old peace policy and claimed that thereby he prevented a general attack by the Comanches. Again, he sought to win the good will of the Comanches by releasing some of their prisoners and promising to regulate the Taos fairs. Thus reassured, the Comanches pledged to return their Spanish captives and to restrain their young braves.⁹⁰ Although information on the mid-1760's is sparse, the peace,

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 220.

⁹⁰ Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 155.

except for a few minor misunderstandings, apparently remained in effect until Don Pedro Fermín de Mendinueta became governor in 1768. Don Nicolás Lafora, who in 1766 inspected the province in company with the Marques de Rubi, found that New Mexico suffered "some small annoyances" from the Comanches but that the benefits gained from trade with them were far more impressive.⁹¹

Soon after Governor Mendinueta arrived in New Mexico, a Comanche chief named Cuerno Verde, the most implacable Indian foe the province ever had, again led his people to war. First noticed by Mendinueta in October, 1768, because he wore "a green horn on his forehead," Cuerno Verde reportedly had the "appearance and accoutrements of a little king" with a body guard and pages to attend him while he mounted and dismounted and to hold "a canopy or shade of buffalo skins for him in which he takes his seat."⁹² A decade later, Governor Juan Bautista de Anza, who labeled Cuerno Verde "the cruel scourge" of New Mexico, theorized that the chief held an intense hatred for New Mexico because his father had been killed there.⁹³ In his war against the Spaniards, Cuerno Verde had the support of the Taovayas, enterprising middlemen of the border, who sold him guns obtained from illicit

⁹¹Kinnaird, The Frontiers of New Spain, p. 94.

⁹²Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, pp. 166-167.

⁹³Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 135.

English traders from east of the Mississippi. A Taos Indian who escaped from the Comanches in 1768 reported to the New Mexican officials that "not many months ago the Jumanos [as the New Mexicans called the Taovayas] brought seventeen loads of guns and munitions to the Comanches" and traded them for horses that had doubtlessly been stolen from the Spaniards.⁹⁴ The Taovayas were more dangerous than the French traders of earlier years because they purchased captive people as well as horses. In 1778 they held captive ten Spaniards from New Mexico whom they had bought from the Comanches.⁹⁵

The chief target of the Comanches during 1768 was Ojo Caliente, a strategically located settlement on the west side of the Rio Grande about forty miles north of Santa Fe. Governor Mendinueta, convinced that "none of the districts of Santa Cruz de la Cañada would be secure" without Ojo Caliente, sent fifty presidials to garrison it. Fortunately, they arrived in time to foil an ingenious Comanche plot. The Indians announced that they would arrive at Taos on June 2 to trade and make peace, knowing that the Ojo Calienteans would hasten to attend the proposed fair. Then, they dispatched one hundred men to destroy the defenseless town. Only the

⁹⁴Mendinueta to Croix, June 18, 1768, in Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, pp. 161-162.

⁹⁵Athanase de Mézières to the Commandant General, April 19, 1778, in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, II, 247.

arrival of Mendinueta's presidials thwarted their scheme.⁹⁶

The Comanches, nevertheless, continued their raids against the frontier village so fiercely that the panic-stricken settlers began abandoning their homes "to live in different places of this kingdom." Mendinueta ordered the refugees to return or suffer a fine of two hundred pesos and the forfeiture of their land. Many refused to obey; and one, Diego Gomes, expressed their despair when he explained that because in "his presence five of his relatives have been killed and he was not able to prevent it, he yields the right to the house and lands which he has at said Ojo Caliente."⁹⁷ By the next year, however, the attacks having subsided, the settlers ventured back to their village and Mendinueta suspended his harsh decree. A tragic reminder of the Ojo Calienteans' plight was contained in the Miera map of 1780 which labeled the entire Caliente valley below their village tersely and simply: "Settlements destroyed by hostile Comanches."⁹⁸

The troubles at Ojo Caliente were repeated many times in other villages. In 1770 the Spanish settlers at Taos were forced to abandon their separate plaza and to take refuge in

⁹⁶E. Boyd, "Troubles at Ojo Caliente, a Frontier Post," El Palacio, LXIV (November, 1957), 353-356.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 356.

⁹⁸A copy of the Miera map is printed in Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 87.

the Taos Pueblo "with the consent" of the Indians.⁹⁹ Since the Taos natives had always zealously guarded their privacy, obviously the situation was one of grave danger.

In 1771 Mendinueta concluded with the Comanches another of an apparently unending series of peace treaties; yet, by the middle of 1772 he complained that five hundred marauders had attacked Pecos and others had raided Picuris and Galisteo. After noting this, he naively reported an incredible sequel to the raids:

. . . the Comanches did not find it inconvenient to present themselves peacefully at Taos to trade their buffalo skins, horses, mules, some guns and captives in exchange for bridles, awls, knives, colored cloth and maize, from which the settlers of the province benefited.¹⁰⁰

After trading peacefully for more than a year, the Comanches renewed the war in 1774 with a massive and unceasing assault. At first, the New Mexicans resisted quite successfully. In August, 1774, nine Santa Clara Pueblos, without suffering the slightest injury, put to flight fifty Comanches.¹⁰¹ Then in September a New Mexican force led by Don Carlos Fernandez, a shrewd old Indian fighter, won a decisive victory in which over four hundred Comanches were killed or captured and about a thousand "beasts of burden" seized.¹⁰²

⁹⁹Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 219.

¹⁰⁰Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 43.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 174.

Mendinueta, who fervently hoped that Fernandez's victory would halt the attacks, since the Indians had never before "been given an example of how our arms in attack could succeed in destroying a ranchería," was sadly disappointed.¹⁰³ The Comanches retaliated with such fury that Viceroy Antonio María de Bucareli wistfully suggested that in place of teaching them lessons, the punishment may have exasperated them and "thus be the motivating reason for their uniting" to seek vengeance.¹⁰⁴

Bucareli's harried fears became reality as the Comanches, swarming into the province "by all routes," stamped out effective resistance. Although New Mexico still had an abundance of men "very fit for war," the lack of arms and horses made them almost useless for fighting.¹⁰⁵ To remedy the shortage of guns, the Spanish officials encouraged the presidial soldiers to barter their old firearms to the settlers for foodstuffs. A survey that afterwards showed only 600 guns and 150 pairs of pistols "in all the realm" seemed to satisfy every one.¹⁰⁶

The acquisition of sufficient horses was more difficult.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 177.

¹⁰⁵"Bonilla's Notes Concerning New Mexico, 1776," in Charles W. Hackett, George P. Hammond, and J. Lloyd Mecham (eds.), New Spain and the Anglo-American West (2 vols.; Lancaster, Pa.: n. p., 1932), I, 195.

¹⁰⁶Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 184.

Raising a supply was impossible because of the unending Comanche raids. The problem had grown so acute by the summer of 1775 that Mendinueta warned Viceroy Bucareli that if New Mexico did not receive fresh horses, "perhaps to the number of fifteen hundred," it would be desolated.¹⁰⁷ Faced with this danger, the penurious bureaucrats in Mexico City reacted with uncharacteristic haste. A royal council quickly agreed to forward the horses "at the account of the royal treasure,"¹⁰⁸ but Bucareli, for reasons unknown, failed to send them. The delay was tragic. On June 23, 1775, a Comanche party ran off most of the stock of the Sandia pueblo. The Sandians on foot bravely pursued the marauders, but when they became "most worn out," the Comanches turned upon them and killed thirty-three.¹⁰⁹ Nor was this an isolated incident. According to Meninueta's reports, the ratio of New Mexican losses to those of the Comanches during the summer of 1775 was almost six to one.¹¹⁰

Pecos and Galisteo were the hardest hit. Handicapped by

¹⁰⁷Mendinueta to Bucareli, August 19, 1775, in ibid., p. 184.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁰⁹Mendinueta to Bucareli, August 18, 1775, in ibid., p. 181. The Sandia church records confirm this disaster. See Fray Angelico Chavez, Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, 1678-1900 (Washington, D. C.: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1957), p. 234.

¹¹⁰Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, pp. 181-183.

a searing drought that left them without sufficient food, their inhabitants were unable to withstand the raids. At Pecos, the irrigated lands could not be farmed because the pueblo was so constantly besieged, and crops planted in the small dry land fields immediately under the pueblo's walls failed because of the lack of rain. Therefore, in the doleful words of Fray Dominguez, "what few crops there usually are do not last even to the beginning of a new year . . . and hence these wretches are tossed about like a ball in the hands of fortune."¹¹¹ The seriousness of the food shortage during the summer of 1776 is poignantly revealed in a priest's terse notation that the parents of a child he had baptized were absent because they were "looking for something to eat."¹¹²

At Galisteo, smaller and even more demoralized than Pecos, many residents were killed by Comanche raiders and the survivors were so terrorized that they would not venture to the fields. By 1776 the forays and lack of rain had combined to produce a famine so acute, according to a priestly chronicler, that the natives were forced to beg for food elsewhere: "now the men alone, now the women alone, sometimes the husband in one place, his wife in another, the children in still

¹¹¹Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 213.

¹¹²Chavez, Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, p. 205.

another, and so it all goes."¹¹³ Those who remained at the pueblo sustained life only by eating "the hides of cows, oxen, horses, etc., in a sort of fried cracklings," or, when these failed, by stripping the "vellum from the saddle trees" or by toasting "old shoes." They longed to abandon the pueblo and divide themselves "as best they might among the pueblos with good supplies," Dominguez reported, "but they have not done so for fear of the government." The populations of the two pueblos declined drastically during the war. Galisteo had scarcely half the people in 1776 that it had boasted in 1760, and at Pecos the population dropped from 446 in 1750 to 269 in 1776.¹¹⁴

In 1777 the situation grew worse. The Comanches unleashed a rash of raids that left twenty-three New Mexicans dead at Valencia, eight at Taos, fourteen at Isleta, and numerous others elsewhere.¹¹⁵ The following year, Cuerno Verde's raiders, bolder and more ruthless than ever, killed or captured 127 settlers and Pueblos.¹¹⁶ No let-up seemed to be in sight.

At this darkest hour of New Mexico's history, the Spanish officials in far-away Madrid finally became aware that

¹¹³Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, p. 219

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 213; Kidder, Pecos, New Mexico, Archaeological Notes, p. 327.

¹¹⁵Thomas, The Plains Indians and New Mexico, p. 51.

¹¹⁶"General Report of 1781 by Teodoro de Croix," in Thomas, Teodoro de Croix, p. 111.

continued procrastination might cause the loss of not only New Mexico but its neighboring provinces. Accordingly, they placed the entire northern region of New Spain under a new military government called the Commandancy-General of the Interior Provinces and appointed Don Teodoro de Croix to head it as commander general. Because of a lack of funds and jurisdictional differences with Viceroy Bucareli, Croix did not reach the northern frontier until late 1777. At Chihuahua in June, 1778, he formulated plans for the defense of New Mexico, Nueva Vizcaya, and Sonora in a council of war attended by Mendinueta, worn out by eleven years of combating the Comanches in New Mexico, and by Don Juan Bautista de Anza, fresh from the colonization of California and already named to succeed Mendinueta. The provincial governors at the council, bothered by Apache attacks almost as much as by Comanche, decided that, instead of fighting both tribes simultaneously, they would adopt the Marques de Rubi's proposal of 1768 to seek an alliance with the Comanches against the Apaches. Croix, who had already dispatched the fifteen hundred horses requested by Mendinueta, assured the governors he would do everything possible to back them up.¹¹⁷

Arriving in New Mexico in late 1778, Governor Anza immediately turned to the Indian situation. Concluding that a

¹¹⁷Ibid., pp. 17-18.

lasting peace could never be gained until the Comanches had learned that nowhere, not even in their southeastern Colorado homeland, would they be safe from Spanish punishment, in August, 1779, he mustered a motley force of six hundred soldiers, settlers, and Pueblos for a surprise attack. Since he realized the impossibility of marching up the eastern side of the Sangre de Cristos undetected by the Comanches, he led his force northward through the Ute controlled San Luis Valley. Enroute he augmented his ranks with two hundred Utes and Jicarillas, anxious to settle old scores with the Comanches and familiar with their favorite camping places. Near present Colorado Springs Anza crossed to the eastern slopes of the mountains, having reached unobserved the rear of the enemy camps. He marched southward to the vicinity of present Pueblo where he came abruptly upon Cuerno Verde's village. Since that fiery chief and most of his warriors were absent on a raid against Taos, Anza easily captured the camp together with about fifty women and children; then he continued down the lee of the Rockies in quest of the returning raiders. At the foot of Greenhorn Mountain, which perpetuates his memory, Cuerno Verde, disheartened by the failure of his raid and by reports of the destruction of his village, stumbled into a trap set by Anza. Finding himself surrounded and outnumbered more than ten to one, he led his warriors in a last, defiant assault on the Spaniards. The battle did not end

until Cuerno Verde and all his braves lay dead.¹¹⁸

Anza's successful campaign all but ended the Comanche threat to New Mexico. Seeking easier prey, the Comanches during the following year turned upon Texas with a series of attacks "so horrible and bloody" that Croix feared their continuance would lead to the complete destruction of the province.¹¹⁹ In New Mexico, on the other hand, Comanche attacks in 1781 were repulsed with such losses that the Indians "swallowed their pride" and solicited peace in the pueblo of Taos. Although Croix was urgently pressing Anza to reach an agreement, the governor concluded that the Comanches had not come in "good faith" and rejected their overture. He informed them that there would be no peace until all the tribe would agree to it. Otherwise, he concluded, "whatever infractions occurred the subterfuge would remain of attributing them to the opposing party."¹²⁰

Over the issue of war or peace the Comanches were strongly divided. A faction led by Chief Toroblanco insisted on resuming war, but another under the leadership of Chief Ecueraacapa demanded peace. Toroblanco's inability to win a striking success against the Spaniards seems to have caused

¹¹⁸Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, pp. 119-142.

¹¹⁹Thomas, Teodoro de Croix, pp. 74, 112.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 114; Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 299.

many of his supporters to defect to the peace party. Since Anza still insisted on unanimity as a prerequisite for negotiation, the peace faction brutally murdered Toroblanco in 1785 and terrorized his adherents into compliance.¹²¹

News of the change of sentiment was carried to New Mexico by a Taos buffalo hunter, who had been captured by "Comanche spies" and afterwards released. Soon afterwards, Josef Manuel Roxo (possibly a trader) on his own initiative journeyed to the Comanches and urged them to ask Anza once more for peace.¹²² The Indians agreed and chose as their representative Ecuera-aca, a remarkable leader later described by Anza in ecstatic terms as "distinguished . . . by his adroitness and intelligence in political matters" and "without equal in military achievements."¹²³ In a brilliant maneuver, Ecuera-aca invited the Pecos natives to visit his camps on the plains and "magnanimously entertained" the many who accepted. At one stroke he won their good will and, of more importance, impressed them with his power and strength. Upon returning home, the Pueblos reported that the Comanches "were so many that they doubted if all the people of this province would equal their number."¹²⁴ Obviously, peace would be as advantageous to the New Mexicans as to the Comanches.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid., p. 385, note 109.

¹²³Ibid., p. 295.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 313.

In a conference held at Pecos on February 28, 1786, Anza and Ecueraacapa quickly agreed on a deceptively simple set of peace terms. By the perpetual and unbreakable agreement, the Comanches could move closer to New Mexico--with the governor's approval--in return for a promise to be peaceful towards all Indians friendly to Spain. Ecueraacapa asked for and received the "establishment of free trade and fairs" at Pecos and the right to travel through Pecos to Santa Fe at any time to present grievances of his tribe. He agreed also to join the Spaniards in an offensive war against the Apaches.¹²⁵ With the presentation of a "token of credential" to Ecueraacapa to symbolize his authority over the Comanches the treaty was concluded. A major landmark in the history of both New Mexico and the Comanches had been reached.

¹²⁵Ibid., pp. 313-316.

CHAPTER III

THE COMANCHE PEACE, 1786-1846

Indian affairs during the last years of the Spanish regime in New Mexico were characterized by a remarkable stability. The New Mexican officials, conducting Indian policy in a realistic and dispassionate manner, maintained with the Comanches an equilibrium that was strikingly similar to the understanding reached with the Plains Apaches a century earlier. Confronted by Plains tribes so powerful that they could have destroyed the province, the Spanish leaders secured the greatest degree of peace and prosperity that New Mexico had ever known. Although the intrusion of Anglo traders eventually upset the delicate balance of New Mexico's Indian relations, matters never degenerated into chaos, as they did in Texas, Chihuahua, and the other North Mexican provinces.

Guidelines for preserving the peace negotiated between Anza and Ecueraacapa were lucidly formulated in 1786 by Bernardo de Gálvez, Viceroy of New Spain, conqueror of West Florida during the American Revolution, and nephew of the great visitor-general, José de Gálvez. Viceroy Gálvez, stating that the earlier peace treaties had broken down because they contained no "advantages" for the Indians, boldly proposed to prevent hostilities by satisfying the Indians' legitimate grievances. Giving them gifts, he asserted, would cost less

than what "is now spent in considerable and useless reinforcements of troops."¹ To preserve the peace, he emphasized the need for a revised and realistic trade policy that would allow the bartering to Indians of such controversial items as horses, guns, and ammunition.² He contended vigorously that the trading of horses and other livestock in return for buffalo robes would lessen the Indians' incentive for stealing; that firearms, instead of increasing the Indians' strength, would make them reliant upon the Spaniards for repair and replacement; and that, in time of war, it would be a simple matter to cut off their supply of gunpowder. Further revealing his Machiavellian thinking, Gálvez suggested that the guns traded to the Indians should be extra long so they would be awkward to carry on horseback, resulting in continual damages and need for repairs or replacement. In addition, they should have "superficial adornments which delight the sight of ignorant persons," and barrels, stock, and bolts made of steel without the "best temper" so they would be unreliable.³

Although the bloodshed and suffering produced during subsequent decades by the trading of guns to the Indians seem to indicate that Gálvez was wrong, it should be remembered

¹Bernardo de Gálvez, Instructions for Governing the Interior Provinces of New Spain, 1786, ed. and trans. by Donald E. Worcester (Berkeley: The Quivira Society, 1951), pp. 40-43.

²Ibid., p. 46.

³Ibid., pp. 48-49.

that he envisioned Spaniards trading them under strict supervision in return for buffalo robes and meat. The gun trade brought unrest only after firearms were introduced illicitly by American traders who encouraged the Indians to steal Spanish horses. Until these outsiders intruded, the policies of Gálvez were remarkably successful.

Turning to the specific problem of the Comanches, Gálvez based his recommendations upon a keen appreciation of Indian mentality. In deference to their pride, for example, he ordered the New Mexicans to refrain from punishing Comanche lawbreakers. Instead, they were to let the "tribunal of Ecuera-capá or council of captains" judge the offenders.⁴ The Comanches would accept chastisement by their own chiefs, Gálvez declared, but they would resent punishment by the Spaniards, "even though it were more moderate and pious."

To help retain the Comanches' friendship, Gálvez instructed the New Mexicans to entertain Indian visitors liberally. He decreed that all Indians who presented themselves in peace should receive presents ranging in value from one or two pesos for a common warrior to fifteen or twenty pesos for a chief.⁵ These meager sums, when multiplied by the

⁴Ibid., pp. 51-52.

⁵Ibid. For evidence that the New Mexican governors relied upon Gálvez's instructions see Fernando de la Concha to Pedro de Nava, November 1, 1791, MS, Document 1164, New Mexico Archives, Santa Fe. This document, together with other documents from the New Mexico Archives, was examined in photostatic form in the Coronado Room, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

numerous visits, added up to 5,906 pesos in 1789. Of this total, 4,248 pesos went to the Comanches, 842 to the Navahoes, 416 to the Utes, and 320 to the Jicarillas.⁶ In 1795, 3,323 pesos were spent on Indian gifts and it was estimated that 3,900 would be needed for the following year.⁷

This generous treatment of Comanche visitors, even though it suggests an element of bribery, apparently led to the development of a warm relationship between the Indians and the New Mexicans. In 1812 Don Pedro Bautista Pino, the only delegate from New Mexico who ever attended the Spanish cortes, claimed that the "continued" state of peace and friendship with the Comanches was the result of the presents given them and asserted that the Comanches had originally tried to return gift for gift. When told that this was not necessary, their "esteem" for the Spaniards had "increased mightily."⁸

In conducting relations with the Comanches, the New Mexican governors leaned heavily upon specially-trained interpreters, two based at Taos and one each at Santa Fe and Pecos. At least one was to be among the Comanches at all times "to

⁶Frank D. Reeve, "Navaho-Spanish Diplomacy, 1770-1790," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXV (July, 1960), 233.

⁷Facundo de Chacón to Pedro de Nava, July 8, 1796, MS, Document 1367, New Mexico Archives.

⁸H. Bailey Carroll and J. Villasana Haggard (eds, and trans.), Three New Mexican Chronicles: the Exposition of Don Pedro Bautista Pino, the Ojeda of Lic. Antonio Barreiro, and the Notices of Don Agustin Escuerdo (Albuquerque: The Quivira Society, 1942), p. 135.

give an account of their movements."⁹ For eight pesos a month the interpreters handled a wide range of duties somewhat akin to those of modern diplomatic representatives. They had to be hardy enough to accompany Comanche campaigns against the Apaches and shrewd enough to handle commercial matters. Governor Concha, for example, would never allow New Mexican traders to visit the Comanche camps unless an interpreter was available to "take charge of governing them" while they were among the Indians.¹⁰ Interpreters also accompanied all official and many unofficial expeditions to the plains, particularly the larger buffalo-hunting parties.¹¹ Their most important task, however, was to serve as an avenue of communication between the Governor's Palace and the Comanche camps.

The crowning achievement of the New Mexicans in their relations with the Comanches was to persuade them that their chiefs should be "confirmed" by Spanish officials in the name

⁹Don Fernando de la Concha, "Advice on Governing New Mexico, 1794," trans. by Donald E. Worcester, New Mexico Historical Review, XXIV (July, 1949), 240.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 246.

¹¹Manrique to Salcedo, March 31, 1810, MS, Document 2311, New Mexico Archives. This was not the first use of such officials by the Spaniards. In 1778 Athanase de Mézières wrote of the Taovayas Indians that "In each of these villages there resides a Spanish merchant of Natchitoches skilled in the language of the Indians with whom he deals. . . . It is his duty to watch over their conduct, maintain the general union, and report without delay anything of interest to the service of his Majesty and to the peace of his subjects." Herbert E. Bolton, Athanase de Mézières and the Louisiana-Texas Frontier, 1768-1780 (2 vols.; Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1914, I, 109.

of the king. This practice, a standard Spanish device for influencing friendly Indians, apparently was not extended to the Comanches until 1786 when Anza confirmed Ecueraacapa. Thereafter, confirmation became common. In 1797, for example, a band of Comanches came to Pecos upon the death of their chief and requested Governor Chacón to preside over the election of a new leader. After a Kotsoteka warrior named Canagiap was elected "by a plurality of votes," Chacón recognized him in the king's name and gravely invested him with the proper symbols of his authority--a silver-handled baton, a silver medal, and an ornate scarlet cloak.¹² As late as 1818 some Kotsotekas who came to Pecos with news that their chief had recently died were told by Governor Facundo Melgares that after they had decided "in council" on a successor he would "confirm him accordingly."¹³ According to Don Pedro Pino in 1812, confirmation had become so essential to the Comanches that a chief would feel "deeply reproached" if he were denied such recognition.¹⁴

The silver-handled baton and scarlet cloak issued to Chief Canagiap were not unusual accessories for a Comanche

¹²Chacón to Nava, November 18, 1797, MS, Document 1404, New Mexico Archives.

¹³Facundo Melgares to Don Alexo Garcia Conde, October 8, 1818, in Alfred B. Thomas (trans.), "Documents Bearing upon the Northern Frontier of New Mexico, 1818-1819," New Mexico Historical Review, IV (April, 1929), 156.

¹⁴Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 136.

chief. In 1808 Don Francisco Amangual, while enroute from San Antonio to Santa Fe, visited a Comanche village in western Texas in which he was greeted by chiefs in "long, red coats, with blue collars and cuffs, white buttons, and yellow imitation gold galloons."¹⁵ One Indian, more outlandish than the rest, sported a short red coat, blue trousers, white stockings, English spurs, and an "ordinarily cornered hat" that clashed violently with his chalk and ochre facial paint. As late as 1822 Thomas James, an observant pioneer in the Santa Fe trade, described Cordero, a famous Comanche chief, as coming to Santa Fe "dressed in his full regimentals."¹⁶ Ludicrous though Comanches in war paint and dress blues might seem, their attire strikingly exemplifies the strength of the Spanish influence on them.

The New Mexicans were also able to influence the Comanches through the education of their children in Santa Fe. Ecueraacapa sent his son to Governor Anza in 1786, asking that he be instructed in the Spaniards' language and customs as if he were the governor's own child. Anza accepted the boy but cautioned that he might not make such progress as his father

¹⁵Don Francisco Amangual, *Diary of the Incidents and Operations which took place in the Expedition made from the Province of Texas to the Province of New Mexico [1808]*, MS, Bexar Archives, University of Texas. Typescript translation by J. Villasana Haggard. Hereafter cited as Amangual, *Diary*.

¹⁶Thomas James, *Three Years among the Indians and Mexicans*, ed. by Milo Milton Quaife (Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Sons, 1953), p. 134.

desired.¹⁷ In 1812 Pino reported that the son of a chief named Maya had also learned to read at a school in Santa Fe. Eventually succeeding his father as chief, the youth afterwards had "held the Spaniards in the highest regard."¹⁸

As a result of the Comanche peace, Spanish explorers were able to travel the plains freely and safely. When Pedro de Vial, most noted of the trail blazers, prepared to leave Santa Fe for St. Louis in 1792, Governor Concha confidently stated that "he will meet no other tribes than those of our allies the Comanches on whose aid and knowledge he can count with all safety."¹⁹ Soon after leaving Pecos, Vial met some Comanches who (exclaiming "it was a long time since they had seen" him) made him return to Pecos and visit with them. "Consequently," he moaned half-seriously, "we lost the march of the day."²⁰ In 1799 Don José Cortéz reported that travelers were "hospitably entertained, respectfully served, and treated with greatest friendship" by the Comanches. They were escorted courteously from one village to the next and their

¹⁷Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 314.

¹⁸Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 130.

¹⁹Concha's Instructions to Vial, May 21, 1792, in Archer Butler Hulbert (ed.), Southwest on the Turquoise Trail: the First Diaries on the Road to Santa Fe (Denver: Denver Public Library, 1933), p. 47.

horses were carefully guarded.²¹

A small minority of Comanches, however, remained hostile towards the Spaniards. In an Indian village in 1787 Vial observed the return of some Comanche youths from an unsuccessful horse-stealing foray into New Mexico. The raiders' elders berated them sharply, however, for attacking "their friends," the Spaniards.²² While Vial was visiting another Comanche camp, there arrived two Indians who claimed that the Spaniards were conspiring against the Comanches and that Vial "was leading them to New Mexico in order that they all might be killed."²³ Fortunately for Vial, his hosts refused to believe the story.

For a brief time the Comanches seemed ready to succumb to the comforts of a sedentary life. In July, 1787, a Jupe Comanche chief named Parunarimuco asked Anza to help his people build a pueblo on the Arkansas River in eastern Colorado. Anza immediately dispatched thirty New Mexican workers, and

²⁰Vial's Diary, May 25, 1792, in ibid., p. 49.

²¹Report of Don José Cortéz, 1799, translated in "Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon the Indian Tribes," Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean (12 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1855-1860), III, 119.

²²Vial's Diary, November 11, 1787, Archivo Nacional de la Nación, Historia, Vol. XLIII, Part 14 (Typescript copy in the Coronado Room, University of New Mexico.)

²³Vial's Diary, April 7, 1787, quoted in Carlos E. Castañeda, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936 (7 vols.; Austin: Van Boeckmann-Jones Company, 1942-1957), V, 154.

by September nineteen houses had been completed and occupied.²⁴ Elated by this development, Don Urdinola de Ugarte, Commander General of the Interior Provinces, reported to the Viceroy that the Comanches were building houses on their own to such an extent that their pueblo would "constitute a considerable settlement." Careful to stress the traditional Spanish concern about the Indians, he piously intoned that "putting the gentiles in pueblos would open the door easily to the preaching of the gospel."²⁵

Ugarte's optimism was without foundation. In January, 1788, a full two months before he had written his hopeful letter to the Viceroy, the Comanches had abruptly deserted their pueblo because a favorite wife of Chief Parunarimuco had died. In accordance with Comanche custom, the chief abandoned the site of his grief. The Spaniards, chagrined by the collapse of their hopes, concluded that "unless Divine Providence performs a miracle" the Comanches would never "come out of their barbarity."²⁶

The Spaniards' disappointment over the failure of the colonization project was undoubtedly tempered by their success in obtaining the aid of the Comanches against the

²⁴Anza to Don Jacobo Ugarte, October 20, 1787, in Alfred B. Thomas (trans.), "San Carlos on the Arkansas River, 1787," Colorado Magazine, VI (May, 1929), 86.

²⁵Ugarte to Don Manuel Antonio Florez, March 13, 1788, in ibid., p. 88.

²⁶Concha to Ugarte, June 26, 1788, in ibid., p. 90.

Apaches. To whet the Comanches' natural appetite for fighting, the New Mexicans supplied them with horses, guns, and ammunition; paid salaries to their chiefs;²⁷ and in 1788 offered them "a horse with bridle and two large knives" for each Apache brought to Santa Fe.²⁸

Most of the fighting, if the few extant documents are reliable indicators, was on a relatively small scale. Near Tucumcari Peak in 1787 José Mares, returning from San Antonio to Santa Fe, encountered some Comanches who had recently killed five Apaches and captured thirty.²⁹ In June, 1792, Ecueraacapa, provisioned by the Spaniards and accompanied by a New Mexican interpreter, led five hundred Comanches against the "Apaches Lipanes, Lipiyanes, y Llaneros." Near the Bosque Redondo on the Pecos the Comanche party divided into two groups, with one under Ecueraacapa moving towards the Sierra Blanca Mountains and the other under a chief named Geranucano going towards the plains. Ecueraacapa's force killed five Apache warriors and captured four women and a few horses. Geranucano, after a fourteen-day march to the east, located a considerable Apache camp. As he failed to surprise it,

²⁷Ecueraacapa, for example, reportedly received two hundred pesos a year. Bancroft, Arizona and New Mexico, p. 267, note 30.

²⁸Reeve, "Navaho-Spanish Diplomacy, 1770-1790," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXV, 232.

²⁹José Mares, Diary, 1787, quoted in Castañeda, Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, V. 155.

however, his men killed only six Apache braves and captured but thirteen women and children.³⁰

Indecisive as these campaigns were, they eventually led to a conclusive Comanche victory over the Plain Apaches. About 1790 Don Manuel Merino, secretary to the commander general of the Interior Provinces, reported that the Llanero Apaches (perhaps the same group as the Cuartelejo Apaches of earlier decades), who occupied "the plains and sandy country" lying between the Pecos and Canadian rivers, fought the Comanches in "frequent skirmishes and actions," especially during "the time of buffalo killing."³¹ According to a report by Don José Cortés at the end of the decade, however, the Llaneros had been driven west of the Pecos.³² There, the survivors eventually were absorbed by the Mescaleros.

New Mexican forces often fought side by side with the

³⁰Concha to the Count of Revilla Gigedo, July 20, 1792, MS, Document 1200, New Mexico Archives; Concha to Nava, November 10, 1792, MS, Document 1218, New Mexico Archives. Although the Comanches usually confined their activities to the plains, eight accompanied a New Mexican expedition against the Gila Apaches of Arizona in 1788. Don Fernando de la Concha, "Diary, 1788," trans. by Adlai Feather, New Mexico Historical Review, XXXIV (October, 1959), 289.

³¹Don Manuel Merino, "Report made to the king concerning the lands of the Apache nation, its division, the sites which they occupy, and their manner of waging war and perpetrating their robberies [c. 1790]," in Hackett, Pichardo's Treatise, III, 213.

³²Report of Don José Cortés, 1799, in "Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon the Indian Tribes," Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route, III, 119.

Comanches against the Apaches. In 1797 an expedition of four hundred Comanches, presidials, settlers, and Pueblos campaigned against the Mescaleros in the Sand Hills country of southeastern New Mexico. According to the plan of operations, all booty such as livestock and weapons was to be divided equally among the allies, but all Apache prisoners were to be taken to Santa Fe. The commander of the New Mexican contingent was advised to be careful not to antagonize the Comanches and to avoid giving them arbitrary orders except during the actual battles.³³ In 1810 the Kotsoteka chief Cordero traveled to New Mexico to join his kinsmen "and their Spanish allies" against the Apaches.³⁴ On this campaign the Comanches were told that they could keep all unbranded or unclaimed horses taken from the Apaches, while identifiable animals would be returned to their former owners in New Mexico or Chihuahua.³⁵ Joint campaigns took place as late as 1822 when Thomas James encountered a force of fifty Spaniards and three hundred Comanches returning from one.³⁶ Although it is difficult to appraise the value of the Comanche aid, Don Pedro Pino in 1812 declared that the "Apache, roaming around in every direction,

³³Nava to Real Alencaster, October 19, 1797, MS, Document 1399, New Mexico Archives.

³⁴Richardson, The Comanche Barrier to South Plains Settlement, p. 67.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶James, Three Years among the Indians and Mexicans, p. 134.

has no other check to his depredations than that of his fear of the brave and honest Comanche."³⁷

On at least one occasion, the New Mexicans repaid the Comanches for their assistance by helping them against their own enemies. In 1790 Governor Concha sent a small Spanish force with a Comanche band on an ineffectual expedition against the Pawnees. When the Spanish officials in St. Louis complained that this action complicated their own Indian problems, Pedro de Nava, Concha's superior, reprimanded the Governor and warned him that he might give "distant and little known nations" reason to attack his province.³⁸ Concha replied that the Comanches had long presented "themselves to work either alone or united with our people against the Apaches" and thus would have been deeply offended if he had refused their request for aid. He reassured Nava that as long as the Comanches were friendly New Mexico had little to fear from any other Plains Indians.³⁹

At the same time that they encouraged the Comanches to fight the Apaches, the New Mexicans sought to keep them at peace with their other allied tribes--the Navahoes, Utes, and

³⁷Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 135.

³⁸Concha to Nava, November 1, 1791, MS, Document 1164, New Mexico Archives, trans. in A. P. Nasatir (ed.), Before Lewis and Clark; Documents Illustrating the History of Missouri, 1785-1804 (2 vols.; St. Louis: Historical Documents Foundation, 1952), I, 147-148.

³⁹Ibid.

Jicarillas. This policy almost collapsed in late 1792 when the Utes and Navahoes, smarting to avenge earlier humiliations, organized a raiding party that surprised a Comanche village while the braves were absent on a buffalo hunt. The raiders captured a large number of women, children, and horses, but the Comanches soon retaliated by destroying a Ute Camp. Although these forays had taken place a "long distance" from New Mexico, the officials were alarmed that the province would be caught in the middle of the budding Indian war and "the peaceful state of affairs now existing" would end. To forestall this, Governor Concha ordered the Navaho chiefs to deliver their prisoners to the Comanche leaders at a council in Santa Fe.⁴⁰ His best efforts to foster friendly relations between the two nations, however, resulted only in a temporary truce.

In contrast to this unsatisfactory settlement, the New Mexicans, according to Indian tradition, helped to forge a lasting peace between the Comanches and Kiowas about 1790. Groups from each of these traditionally hostile tribes by chance visited a New Mexican village on the same day. In some undisclosed manner their worried hosts persuaded them to negotiate. A few days later the Kiowa leader, accompanied by one or two Mexicans, visited the Comanche camps on the plains

⁴⁰Concha to Nava, June 12, 1793, Provincias Internas, Archivo General de la Nación, Vol. 102, Part 2, pp. 40-43. Photostatic copy in the Coronado Room, University of New Mexico.

where an alliance never to be broken was "patched up."⁴¹

The colorful Comanche trade fairs that had meant so much to the province underwent a significant change after the advent of peace. The Comanches in 1786 announced they were transferring "if not all, the greater part of their fairs to Pecos,"⁴² and there is no further mention of their trading at Taos. The Pecos trade fairs, although gradually overshadowed by the small-scale barter that small groups of Comanches and New Mexicans were constantly conducting in each other's villages, continued well into the nineteenth century. Eight Comanches who arrived at the settlement in 1808 announced that their chief was on his way to the annual "ransom" held there.⁴³ Ten years later, Governor Melgares reported the arrival at Pecos of more than a thousand Indians under Chief Soguara, "to trade in this province, according to custom."⁴⁴ There is no indication that fairs were still being held after Mexico achieved its independence.

One of the most significant results of the years of peace with the Comanches was the slow expansion of the New Mexican

⁴¹James Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), p. 163; Also see Wilbur S. Nye, Bad Medicine and Good: Tales of the Kiowas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. 84-88.

⁴²Thomas, Forgotten Frontiers, p. 306.

⁴³Diario de novedades desde 1 de Julio de 1808 hasta 13 de Septiembre, MS, Document 2134, New Mexico Archives.

⁴⁴Melgares to Alexo Garcia, November 9, 1818, MS, Document 2771, New Mexico Archives.

frontier towards the plains. In 1794 Pecos ceased to be the eastern outpost for the first time in five hundred years when settlers located at San Miguel del Vado farther down the Pecos valley.⁴⁵ Early in the nineteenth century other villages were founded lower down on the Pecos--San José del Vado, La Cuesta, and (about 1822) Anton Chico, which remained the eastern gateway to the province until the Civil War.

These towns were inhabited largely by "genizaros"--Indians who had been ransomed from the Comanches and other wild tribes as children.⁴⁶ The practice of buying children from the Indians had been so prevalent that by 1790 the province contained a large number of genizaro Apaches, Comanches, Navahoes, Utes, and Kiowas--all lacking land and status because the New Mexicans considered them "children of the enemy" and would not "admit them to their pueblos." According to a Franciscan friar, the genizaros were reduced to living without "land, cattle, or other property with which to make a living except their bows and arrows."⁴⁷ Abandoned, they lived "like animals" and were fast becoming a problem. To alleviate their deplorable plight, Governor Chacón began settling them along

⁴⁵Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, I, 266; Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 8.

⁴⁶Dominguez, The Missions of New Mexico, 1776, p. 42, note 42.

⁴⁷Fray Damian Martínez to Fray Juan Agustín de Morfi, 1792, Historia, Archivo General de la Nación, Vol. 25, folio 138. Typescript translation, Coronado Room, University of New Mexico.

the Pecos River in the 1790's. Once there, these Comanche and Kiowa neophytes, of whom so little is known, established contact with their old tribes and even induced some of their wild kinsmen to take up residence among them along the Pecos. Fray Angelico Chavez, a modern investigator, has discovered that the baptismal books at the eastern missions indicate that a "large number of Comanches" were baptised at San Juan and "a large number of Plains Indians" at Taos during the last few years of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ In 1812 Jose' Cristobal Guerra, a San Miguel genizaro of Comanche extraction, claiming to represent 230 families, petitioned the Bishop of Durango for a resident priest. His account of the settlement led the Bishop to believe that the "Comanches are joining San Miguel and San Jose' and getting baptized, so that these towns are expected to become the most populous in New Mexico."⁴⁹

Two of the Comanche settlers in New Mexico are mentioned in the reports of American travelers. In 1825 Major George C. Sibley, who surveyed and marked the Santa Fe Trail to Taos, engaged an old Comanche Indian named Francisco Largo (who spoke "Spanish very well, but no English") to find a wagon route across the Sangre de Cristos where previously only pack

⁴⁸Chavez, Archives of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, p. 232.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 75.

trains had passed. Within four days' time Francisco had found a wagon route through a pass south of the "usual mule route." Sibley, obviously pleased, noted in his diary that the Indian had discharged his duty faithfully and "very much to my satisfaction, & so I told him."⁵⁰ A few years later Josiah Gregg encountered another New Mexican Comanche, known simply as "Manuel el Comanche," who had lived a nomadic life on the plains until he visited San Miguel where he married a Mexican girl and had resided there for the last ten or twelve years as "a sober, 'civilized' citizen."⁵¹ Manuel achieved considerable reputation as a guide. In 1833 he was hired by Albert Pike, the Arkansas poet-journalist, to guide him across the plains.⁵² Seven years later he led Gregg from Santa Fe to Van Buren, Arkansas, and in 1849 conducted Captain Randolph B. Marcy for six hundred miles over the plains "quite reliably."⁵³

⁵⁰Kate L. Gregg (ed.), The Road to Santa Fe; The Journal and Diaries of George Champlin Sibley and Others Pertaining to the Surveying and Marking of a Road from the Missouri Frontier to the Settlements of New Mexico, 1825-1827 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1952), p. 107.

⁵¹Josiah Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, ed. by Max Moorhead (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 316.

⁵²Albert Pike, "Narrative of a Journey on the Prairie," Arkansas Historical Association Publications, VI (1906), 96-97.

⁵³Randolph B. Marcy, Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1963), p. 99. Concerning the influx of Comanche blood into eastern New Mexico, John P. Harrington, an early anthropologist who made

The eastward expansion of the New Mexican frontier was not limited to the Pecos valley. Settlers from Trampas, Embudo, and Picuris took advantage of the Comanche peace to move up the Tres Ritos canyons to the crest of the Sangre de Cristos and beyond into the untilled valley of the Mora River. By 1818 a sufficient number had silently moved across the mountains to begin petitioning for a church.⁵⁴ In contrast to the genizaros on the Pecos, the Morans proudly called themselves "todos castellanos"--all Castillians.

There is some dubious evidence that settlement even leapfrogged far into the plains. One Antonio Ortiz received a land grant on the Gallinas River east of present Anton Chico in 1819 and reportedly "occupied it for many years with his cattle, flocks, and herds" until Indians forced him to abandon it.⁵⁵ More intriguing is the story of Pablo Montoya, who in 1824 obtained a grant far to the east on the Canadian River near the future site of Fort Bascom. According to the later testimony of one of his friends, Montoya "occupied the place

a detailed study of the Pueblo Indians, stated that the natives of Pecos, many of whom "spoke Comanche as well as their own tongue," contained "much Comanche blood." John P. Harrington, "The Ethnogeography of the Tewa Indians," Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 478.

⁵⁴Fray Angelico Chavez, "Early Settlements in the Mora Valley," El Palacio, LXII (November, 1955), 319.

⁵⁵Abstract of Title to the Antonio Ortiz Grant Situated in San Miguel County, New Mexico, Typescript copy in Coronado Room, University of New Mexico, p. 12.

with his stock" about fourteen or fifteen years. After his death his family abandoned the grant because of Indian hostilities.⁵⁶ Unlikely as the story seems, it is barely possible that Montoya, alleged also to have been an Indian trader, maintained a ranch in the very heart of the Comanche country during the 1820's and 1830's.

The New Mexican sheep industry, which had always fluctuated according to the state of Indian affairs, likewise benefited from the peaceful conditions. During the incessant Comanche wars of the 1770's Governor Mendinueta had had to forbid the export of sheep to conserve the remnants of the decimated flocks, but after the Comanche peace treaty of 1786 the sheep industry climbed to unprecedented prosperity. By the last decade of Spanish rule, according to Josiah Gregg, 200,000 to 500,000 sheep were being driven to Chihuahua each year.⁵⁷ His estimate, seemingly too high, was dwarfed by the claim of J. Francisco Chavez, scion of a great sheep-raising family and New Mexico's territorial delegate to Congress in the early 1870's, that 1,000,000 sheep were driven annually to Mexico during this period.⁵⁸ Even if these estimates were

⁵⁶Deposition of Rafael Romero, "Private Land Claims in New Mexico," 36 Cong., 2 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1861), pp. 24-26.

⁵⁷Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 134.

⁵⁸Statement of J. Francisco Chavez, "The Pastoral Lands of America," 43 Cong., 2 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 13 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), p. 309.

somewhat exaggerated, the happy condition of the sheep industry was perhaps the most remarkable attestation to the success of Spanish Indian policy in New Mexico.

The first cracks in the facade of New Mexico's successful Indian policy originated in the acquisition of Louisiana by the United States in 1803. This act initiated a keen rivalry for the loyalty of the Plains Indians as both the Spaniards and the Americans recognized the strategic importance of the Plains tribes to the control of the expanses between Louisiana and New Mexico. In 1805 James Wilkinson, the schemer who commanded the American forces in Louisiana, stated that the Comanches "have it in their power to facilitate or impede our march into New Mexico should ever such movement become necessary."⁵⁹ When Zebulon Pike left on his fateful expedition up the Arkansas River the following year, Wilkinson instructed him to attempt to win the friendship of the Comanches.⁶⁰ Pike, however, was unable to carry out the order because the Pawnees, his intended intermediaries, were at war with the Comanches.

In response to the American challenge, the New Mexicans

⁵⁹Wilkinson to Henry Dearborn, July 27, 1805, in Clarence E. Carter (ed.), The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XIII, The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri, 1803-1806 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 169.

⁶⁰W. Eugene Hollon, The Lost Pathfinder; Zebulon Montgomery Pike (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 101.

stepped up their own activities among the Plains Indians. Confident of Comanche loyalty, they concentrated on extending their influence to the Pawnees. Spurred on by rumors about the impending Pike expedition, Lieutenant Facundo Melgares, after marching from Chihuahua with one hundred regular troops and recruiting five hundred settlers in New Mexico, moved eastward in August, 1806, with the most imposing force to penetrate the plains since Anza's march against Cuerno Verde in 1779. After following the Canadian River deep into Oklahoma, he turned north to the Arkansas where he met the Pawnees one month before Pike. In a solemn conference with the tribe he stressed the power of Spain, liberally distributed flags, medals, and other gifts, and then left,⁶¹ having (in the words of some American traders) "influenced the Indians much" in New Mexico's favor.⁶²

In order to exploit the groundwork laid by Melgares, the New Mexican officials appointed two veteran French traders, Jean Chavet and Pedro Vial, to serve as interpreters for the eastern Indians. Although very little is known of their work, it was quite likely to them that Governor Meriwether Lewis of Louisiana alluded in 1808 when he nervously reported that the

⁶¹Elliott Coues (ed.), The Expeditions of Zebulon Pike (3 vols.; New York: Francis P. Harper, 1895), II, 413-415.

⁶²William Clark to Henry Dearborn, June 1, 1807, in Carter, The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XIV, The Territory of Louisiana-Missouri-1806-1814, p. 127.

Osages, Kansas, and Pawnees were assembled at "the Great Saline" in northern Oklahoma "to hold a council with the Spaniards and as it is understood by the invitation of the latter."⁶³ Lewis feared that the results of the conference would not "be favorable to the quiet of our frontier." It was also probably Chavet and Vial who in 1808 persuaded the Pawnees to make peace with "part" of the Comanches.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, New Mexican influence over the Pawnees soon waned, perhaps because Spain, then occupied by Napoleon's troops, was unable to support Indian affairs on its distant frontiers. In 1811 Major John Sibley, an American Indian agent, visited the Pawnees to ascertain whether they had dissolved their former allegiance to the Spanish authorities. Although they had a letter from the Governor of New Mexico as well as Spanish medals and flags, the Pawnees informed Sibley that New Mexican agents no longer came to their camps and that they seldom went to Santa Fe because of the distance.⁶⁵

New Mexico's influence over the eastern Plains Indians remained weak after the close of the Napoleonic Wars due to the serious shortage of Indian trade goods. In 1818 Governor

⁶³Meriwether Lewis to Henry Dearborn, July 1, 1808, in ibid., p. 199.

⁶⁴Diario de novedades desde Julio de 1808 hasta Septiembre, MS, Document 2134, New Mexico Archives.

⁶⁵"Extracts from the Diary of Major Sibley," Chronicles of Oklahoma, V (June, 1927), 205.

Melgares complained that a visit of some Comanches to Santa Fe had left him with too few "Indian presents" to satisfy any other visitors.⁶⁶ That same year an astute foreigner observed that the New Mexicans had neither the trade goods nor the market to meet the needs of the Plains Indians who, consequently, were doing "everything possible" to attract American traders. He also warned that the Indians might turn against the Spaniards.⁶⁷ The prediction was somewhat belated for the Anglo influence had already led to a renewal of Comanche raids against Texas and Chihuahua.

Counteracting the efforts of the Americans called for all the diplomatic skills that the New Mexicans could muster. In 1816 Juan Lucero, the most experienced of the New Mexican interpreters, visited the Comanche camps in an effort to bolster the waning friendship. Lucero warned the Comanches that the American gifts were only intended to entice them into stealing from the Spaniards and that the Americans would eventually seek to take their lands. He suggested that any who doubted this should go to the United States where they could see that the Americans had wiped out the other Indians tribes, "as they will do to the Comanches."⁶⁸

⁶⁶Melgares to Conde, October 8, 1818, in Thomas, "Documents Bearing upon the Northern Frontier of New Mexico, 1818-1819," New Mexico Historical Review, IV, 136.

⁶⁷Alfred B. Thomas (ed.), "Anonymous Description of New Mexico, 1818," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXIII (July, 1929), 58.

⁶⁸Bonavia to Allande, August 13, 1816, MS, Document

It was only natural that the eastern Comanches would break away from New Mexico's influence much earlier than their western kinsmen. By 1819 the "Cumanches Orientales" were raiding so openly in Chihuahua and Durango that Governor Melgares of New Mexico was ordered to send an expedition of 255 men down the Pecos in an effort to intercept them on their return.⁶⁹ Significantly, his instructions emphasized that he was not to attack the "Cumanches Occidentales," who lived peacefully near the borders of New Mexico, but rather to call their principal chief to Santa Fe, assure him of the Spaniards' good will, and warn him not to go close to the "territories in which the campaign will be, lest our troops attack him by mistake."

Although the eastern tribes were steadily receding from the Spanish orbit, New Mexican agents, to the consternation of American officials, made sporadic efforts to regain their allegiance. In March of 1819 the Indian agent at Fort Smith became highly alarmed over the intrusion of "Spaniards from Santa Fe" into the lower Canadian valley, although he did not know whether they were an official expedition or only a large trading party.⁷⁰ A month later Agent John Fowler in southeastern Oklahoma complained that the New Mexicans had given

2672, New Mexico Archives.

⁶⁹Conde to Melgares, May 11, 1819, MS, Document 2819, New Mexico Archives.

⁷⁰William Bradford to John C. Calhoun, March 28, 1819,

the head chief of the Caddoes "new presents" and "old advice" that had encouraged him to be very insolent and "full" of threats."⁷¹ It is difficult to see, however, how either of these affairs could have posed a challenge to the Americans for control over the eastern Indians.

The New Mexicans continued to wield a very strong influence over the western Comanches until the end of the Spanish regime, as vividly illustrated by the harrowing experience of the American trader, Thomas James. While enroute to New Mexico in early 1822, James and his companions were seized by Comanches who decided to kill them the following day. Before the execution could be carried out, six Spaniards rode madly into the camp crying: "Save them! save them!" When the leader of the party, who had ridden twenty miles to save the Americans, demanded to know why the Comanches desired to kill the Anglos, he was told that the Spanish governor at Santa Fe had commanded them not to allow any Americans to pass. The New Mexican then explained that Mexico had become independent and that the New Mexicans now considered themselves to be "brothers to the Americans."⁷² James, so intensely anti-

in Carter, The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. XIX, The Arkansas Territory, p. 59.

⁷¹John Fowler to John Jamison, April 16, 1819, in ibid., p. 70.

⁷²James, Three Years among the Indians and Mexicans, p. 134.

Mexican that he had no sooner related this miraculous rescue than he stated that the Comanches "entertained a strong aversion and dislike" for the New Mexicans,⁷³ would hardly have made up this striking testimonial to the close co-operation between the New Mexican officials and the Comanches.

Under the administration of Mexico, Indian relations in New Mexico steadily deteriorated. The rapid turnover of officials (there were no less than ten different governors during the first twelve years of Mexican rule) made it impossible to have any continuity in policy. The inexperienced officials, moreover, were handicapped by inadequate financial resources. The meager appropriations for Indian affairs, which in 1826 totaled only 698 pesos, were made less adequate by the high price of Indian goods--46½ varas (one vara equals 33 inches) of a heavy blue cloth valued by the Indians for cloaks and decorative purposes, for example, cost 310 pesos.⁷⁴ Thus, far fewer gifts than previously were available.

As the influence of the New Mexicans waned, the western Comanches in 1825 began to raid in Chihuahua. Upon hearing this, the New Mexican officials dispatched Interpreter Manuel Nastes to reprimand them. Although they readily admitted to

⁷³Ibid., p. 151.

⁷⁴Cuenta de la fonda de Aliados a los Capitanes Comanches, Cordero, Isaconoso, Estrellas, y los Gandulos que los acompanan, August 19, 1826, MS, Document 1826/720, New Mexico Archives.

Mestes that they had participated in the raids, the Comanches blamed the Kiowas for instigating them. To show their good will, they warned Mestes that the Kiowas were talking of an attack upon New Mexico itself and pledged assistance if this occurred.⁷⁵ As the raid did not develop, their aid was not required.

For the balance of the decade the New Mexicans strove in vain to stop the western Comanches from raiding Chihuahua and Durango. At a council held on the Gallinas River in 1828 the Kotsoteka chiefs, Cordero and Paranquita, glibly promised in return for presents to keep peace with Chihuahua.⁷⁶ The following year Don Juan José Arrocha, the military commander in New Mexico, with a force of 125 men conferred with Comanche Chief Parvaquivista at the Bosque Redondo on the Pecos River below present Fort Sumner. After the Father Chaplain of the expedition had celebrated the mass in the midst of the Comanches to impress upon them the solemnity of the occasion, Arrocha began the conference by protesting the damages the Indians had inflicted on Chihuahua. He "energetically" told them to restrain their young braves and chided them for breaking their previous pledges of peace. Parvaquivista and his lieutenants, intent on obtaining the gifts brought by the New Mexicans,

⁷⁵Severino Martínez to Bartolome Baca, June 14, 1825, trans. in Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, I, 347.

⁷⁶Don Juan José Arrocha to Don José Antonio Chavez, August 31, 1828, MS, Document 1828/943, New Mexico Archives.

promised anew to raid no more. The following morning Arrocha, having put the agreement into writing, solemnly sealed and delivered a copy of the treaty to the Comanche chief to remind him of his pledge.⁷⁷ The Spaniard then returned home; Parvaquivista and his warriors avidly began to lay their plans for their autumnal excursions to the rich southlands. There is no record of further negotiations with the Comanches. The New Mexicans may have realized the futility of such efforts, or the chaotic condition of national affairs may have prevented any co-ordination of Indian policy. When it finally became a matter of every province for itself, New Mexico managed to maintain peace with the Comanches; Chihuahua and Durango did not.

Despite the general tranquillity with the Comanches, the New Mexicans endured a few minor depredations. In 1827, for example, the alcalde at Taos sent frantic word to Santa Fe that a party of Comanches, in whom he recognized "much malice," had killed twenty cows near the pueblo.⁷⁸ Before troops who were ordered to the settlement could arrive, however, the Comanches had vanished without further misconduct.

The only report of a major Comanche raid in New Mexico

⁷⁷Arrocha, Diary of Expedition led to Bosque Redondo to negotiate with the Comanches, July 19 to August 31, 1829, MS, Document 1829/460, New Mexico Archives.

⁷⁸Manuel Martínez to Manuel Armijo, September 22, 1827, MS, Document 1827/1145, New Mexico Archives.

was made by James Ohio Pattie, fur trapper and inventive fabricator of tall tales. Shortly after Pattie and his fellow mountain men arrived in Santa Fe in 1826, the Comanches reportedly captured several women and children, including the governor's daughter. The New Mexicans cowered helplessly as the savages raced away with their victims, but Pattie and his comrades pursued the Comanches, rescued the captives, and returned the governor's daughter to a grateful father.⁷⁹ Had not Pattie's editor and rewrite man, a veteran Cincinnati newspaper man named Timothy Flint, five years earlier published a novel containing an almost identical adventure,⁸⁰ this episode, uncharacteristic as it is, might merit some credence. Other American visitors to New Mexico not only did not report any Comanche raids, but commented on the peacefulness of the Comanches. Jacob Fowler, a semi-illiterate but shrewd mountain man, noted in 1821 that the Comanches were "at Peace with

⁷⁹James Ohio Pattie, The Personal Narrative of James O. Pattie of Kentucky, Vol. XVIII of Early Western Travels, 1784-1846, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (32 vols., Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1904-1907), pp. 78-81.

⁸⁰Flint's novel, Francis Berniam, had opened with the American hero, "fine looking and dignified," at Santa Fe in the act of rescuing from a Comanche band a Mexican governor's daughter, "a damsel of exquisite beauty" whom he later married. Lennie Merle Walker, "Picturesque New Mexico Revealed in Novel as Early as 1826," New Mexico Historical Review, XIII (October, 1938), 326. It would seem, therefore, that Flint, who admitted in the foreword to Pattie's Narrative that he had contributed an "occasional interposition of a topographical illustration," was overly modest about his role in the writing of the book. Pattie, Personal Narrative, p. 25; John Ervin Kirkpatrick, Timothy Flint; Pioneer, Missionary, Author, Editor, 1780-1840 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1911), p. 189.

new maxeco and the Spanish in Habetance there,"⁸¹ and Josiah Gregg, a frequent and observant visitor to both Santa Fe and Chihuahua during the 1830's, reported that the Comanches "cultivated peace" with the New Mexicans although they were continually at war with Chihuahua and Durango.⁸²

Precisely why the Comanches remained friendly with New Mexico while they were hostile towards the other North Mexican provinces is difficult to determine. New Mexican diplomacy, astute though it may have been, could hardly have been the only reason. Josiah Gregg, the only contemporary writer to speculate on the matter, conjectured that it was because the poverty of New Mexico offered few temptations to raid and because the Comanches desired to retain some friendly point with which to keep an "amicable intercourse and traffic."⁸³ Since New Mexico had been even poorer during the period of the Comanche onslaughts, Gregg's first deduction obviously was wrong; but his belief that trade was the key to the Comanche peace unquestionably was correct. In addition, the bonds that had developed between the New Mexicans and Comanches were far warmer and deeper than Gregg realized.

⁸¹Elliott Coues (ed.), The Journal of Jacob Fowler (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1898), p. 56.

⁸²Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 437.

⁸³Ibid.

Native New Mexicans explained the Comanches' friendliness in a more romantic way. According to tradition, the Comanches remained tranquil because of a great victory that the New Mexicans had once won. The date, the locale, and even the name of their commander had been forgotten, but not the victory's magnitude and importance. Father Antonio José Martínez, the famed curate of Taos immortalized in Willa Cather's Death Comes for the Archbishop, stated in 1865 that the Comanches "in olden times" had always been at war, but that after they "met with a severe disaster" in which a great many of their warriors were killed "they abandoned the idea of fighting against New Mexico" and were "always faithful in keeping peace with us."⁸⁴ Captain George H. Pettis, who as an officer in New Mexico in the 1860's learned of the great victory, reported that some eighty years earlier the New Mexicans had found the Comanches in "full force at 'Rabbit Ear Creek,' and after a two days' fight they 'cleaned them out, cleaner than a shot gun,' killing several thousand of them." The Comanches had never "forgotten the lesson."⁸⁵ Amado Chaves's version of the legend, already described,⁸⁶ asserted that the battle had ended the Comanche wars for all time: "Whenever the young bucks

⁸⁴Statement of Antonio José Martínez, July 26, 1865, in "Condition of the Indian Tribes," 39 Cong., 2 Sess., Senate Report No. 156 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), p. 488.

⁸⁵George H. Pettis to the editor, March 7, 1870, in Daily New Mexican (Santa Fe), March 24, 1870.

⁸⁶Supra., p. 40.

wanted to start a war against the Spaniards the gray haired old men would take them to las 'Orejas del Conejo' . . . and show to them the pile of bones and skulls [of their ancestors] . . . and that would cool their desire to fight."⁸⁷

A new foe, called simply the "Nations of the North,"⁸⁸ replaced the Comanches as New Mexico's chief menace from the plains during the 1820's. Although the specific tribes were not named in the records, the new enemies quite likely were the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, newcomers to the southern plains. Their depredations were usually limited to small-scale raids on the livestock of northeastern New Mexico and posed no serious threat, except at the ancient pueblo of Pecos, which had become too depopulated to defend itself. On June 17, 1828, fifty militiamen had to be sent to drive the "Barbarians of the North" away from it.⁸⁹ It was these new raiders, apparently, who forced the survivors at Pecos to join their kinsmen at Jemez, bringing to a dismal end the history of the

⁸⁷Chavez, "The Defeat of the Comanches in 1717," Historical Society of New Mexico Publication No. 8, p. 9.

⁸⁸The New Mexicans' use of this term is not to be confused with its use in Texas in the eighteenth century to refer to the tribes living along the Red River. One of the first references to these Indians in the New Mexico archives was in 1801 when the Comanches reported that they had been surprised and attacked by the Naciones del Norte on the Arkansas River. Extracto de las novedades ocurridas en Nuevo Mexico desde 20 de Noviembre de 1801 hasta 31 de Mayo de 1802, MS, Document 1594, New Mexico Archives.

⁸⁹Juan Esteban Pino to Juan José Arrocha, June 17, 1828, MS, Document 1828/624, New Mexico Archives.

proudest pueblo in all New Mexico.

The depredations by the "Nations of the North" led indirectly to the founding of Las Vegas. The petitioners for the Las Vegas grant claimed that the settlement would close to the northern tribes the "entrance" to the Pecos River villages. If this were done, they stated, the people of San Miguel and its environs would have no one to fear but the Comanches, who were "supposed to be peaceful."⁹⁰ Thus, they could recoup their depleted fortunes. The Las Vegas grant was issued and a settlement was established there in 1835, but even so the nuisance raids did not cease until after the Civil War.

The troubles with the northern Indians were made worse by the increasingly inept conduct of Indian affairs by the venal politicians who governed New Mexico during the 1830's and early 1840's. Manuel Armijo, the notoriously corrupt governor who later abandoned Santa Fe to the Americans, allowed an unnecessary war to break out with the Arapahoes. In 1840 the Utes sold some captive Arapaho slaves to the New Mexicans. The Arapaho chiefs appealed to Armijo through Charles Bent, the trusted co-owner of Bent's Fort on the Arkansas River, for the release of their fellow tribesmen, offering to pay one horse

⁹⁰ José Miguel Sanchez to the Ayuntamiento of Santa Fe, February 8, 1832, MS, Document 1831/1123, New Mexico Archives. Typescript translation by Clarabel Walker, "Selected Spanish Archives Translations," Coronado Room, University of New Mexico.

for each captive.⁹¹ When Armijo ignored the request, Bent warned him that both the Arapahoes and the Cheyennes, "the most formidable warriors of the North," would go to war unless the Indians were freed. Armijo's contemptuous dismissal of this notice brought tragedy. On April 30, 1841, Bent wrote Manuel Alvarez, his friend and the American consul in Santa Fe, that a party of Arapahoes had come to Bent's Fort with "8 Spanish scalps" and ten horses that they had taken "somewhere east" of the Sangre de Cristos.⁹² Unfortunately, there is no further information on the Arapaho War because Bent soon afterwards went to St. Louis on a business trip. Although the outbreak apparently was not serious, in 1846 Bent reported that the Cheyennes and Arapahoes had "for many years been on friendly terms with the New Mexicans,"⁹³ the incident reflects the sad state to which New Mexican diplomacy had sunk.

Relations with the Apaches also worsened during the last turbulent years of Mexican rule. Like the northern tribes, however, the Apaches mounted comparatively few large-scale attacks; Gregg stated that in all his travels in New Mexico, he had heard of only one serious incursion by them--near

⁹¹Charles Bent to Manuel Alvarez, January 30, 1841, MS, Benjamin Read Collection, Santa Fe. Microfilm copy in the Special Collections Division, University of New Mexico.

⁹²Bent to Alvarez, April 30, 1841, ibid.

⁹³Charles Bent to Medill, November 10, 1846, in Annie Heloise Abel (ed.), The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun While Indian Agent at Santa Fe and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in New Mexico (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 7.

Socorro in the early 1830's.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the Apaches insolently stole thousands of sheep. According to Gregg they boasted that they could have destroyed every sheep in the country, "but that they prefer leaving a few behind for breeding purposes, in order that their Mexican shepherds may raise them new supplies."⁹⁵

Although most of New Mexico's Indian neighbors became warlike during the last hectic years of Mexican rule, the Comanches remained peaceful. Charles Bent, when asked to inform the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on conditions in New Mexico after the American occupation, indicated that relations had changed little with the Comanches since the 1820's. They had "been at peace for many years with the New Mexicans," although they had carried on an "incessant and destructive" war with Chihuahua, Durango, and Coahuila.⁹⁶ In view of the destruction wrought on the more densely populated and inaccessible interior provinces, it might be but little exaggeration to conclude that had there been no Comanche peace in New Mexico, there might have been no New Mexico.

⁹⁴Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 322.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 135.

⁹⁶Bent to Medill, November 10, 1846, in Abel, The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

THE COMANCHERO TRADE, 1786-1860

Among the most striking and picturesque of the New Mexicans were the daring individuals who traveled to the plains to trade with the Comanches. The Comancheros,¹ as they came to be known, consisted mainly of two groups: the "indigent and rude classes of the frontier villages"² and the Pueblo Indians, avid traders from time immemorial. The reputation of the Comancheros is quite paradoxical. At first considered harmless rovers of the plains, later they were regarded as notorious villains; yet during the interval they changed very little. They were the victims of a rapidly changing society in which they, like their redskinned customers, became a dangerous anachronism that had to be eliminated by the new masters of the plains.

The era of the Comancheros opened with the peace treaty negotiated between Anza and Ecueraacapa in 1786. Although

¹The term Comanchero, unknown in Spanish documents, made its first appearance in print in Josiah Gregg's Commerce of the Prairies in 1843. It seems likely, therefore, that Gregg either coined the term or, at least, popularized it. Most army officers who served in the Southwest during the 1840's and 1850's read Gregg's book to obtain information on the area; hence, when they encountered New Mexican traders on the plains, they promptly labeled them "Comancheros."

²Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 257.

traders had visited the Indian country previously, the number had been severely limited by official restrictions and by the danger from hostile Indians. After the peace treaty, however, numerous frontiersmen asked permission to trade in the Comanche country, and Governor Fernando de la Concha, Anza's successor, acceded to their requests in order to acquire "knowledge of the waterholes and lands" of the Comanches in the event of a renewal of hostilities.³

The opening of the plains to the traders was not an unqualified success. The Comancheros, oblivious to the possible consequences, purchased horses avidly of the Plains Indians in order to resell them in their war-torn homeland. But since this practice encouraged the Indians to steal from one another and therefore threatened the uneasy peace among New Mexico's Indian allies, Concha forbade trading on the plains except when it was specifically requested by the Comanches.⁴ It seems likely that this policy continued for the remainder of the century, as goods acquired on an unauthorized trade visit in 1796 were confiscated.⁵

Governmental hostility towards the Comancheros ended abruptly in 1810 after a small party of armed Americans was

³Concha, "Advice on Governing New Mexico, 1794," New Mexico Historical Review, XXIV, 246.

⁴Ibid., p. 247.

⁵Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 277.

captured east of Pecos. Governor Joseph Manrique immediately presumed that they were hirelings of Joseph Bonaparte, the usurper of the Spanish throne who was rumored to be planning an invasion of New Mexico from bases in American territory. Critically short of trained troops, Manrique began to grant "continual licenses to the settlers" to trade with the Plains Indians, hoping thus to detect the approach of hostile forces. The attack never materialized, but Manrique's plan apparently brought about a dramatic increase in the trade. On July 20, 1810, he reported that a party of fifty men had just left to visit the Kiowas, another was on its way to the Utes, and one had just returned from trading with the Comanches.⁶

After the Mexican revolution of 1821, the policy towards the Comancheros fluctuated erratically. In 1827 a trader was arrested for going to the Indian country without permission;⁷ the following year the military commander at Santa Fe informed the alcalde at San Miguel del Vado that he desired to send an emissary with the next party of Comancheros in order "to treat with the Comanches on important affairs to the national service;"⁸ but in 1831 the same San Miguel alcalde was ordered

⁶Joseph Manrique to Namesio Salcedo, July 20, 1810, MS, Document 2342, New Mexico Archives.

⁷Mariano Martín to Don Antonio Narbora, February 26, 1827, MS, Document 1827/224, ibid.

⁸Jefe Politico to Estevan Baca, May 21, 1828, MS, Document 1828/495, ibid.

to refrain from licensing settlers to trade with the Comanches because such expeditions were "detrimental to order."⁹

Nevertheless, the trade flourished. Stephen Long, an American officer who explored the Southwest in 1820, reported that a well-beaten trail containing more than twenty parallel bridle paths followed the Canadian River eastward from New Mexico towards the plains.¹⁰ Long also noticed along the river some sandstone cliffs inscribed with figures of men and horses, which he interpreted as recording meetings of the Indians and the Spaniards "for the purpose of trade, when the horses were either given as presents or bartered for other articles." Although he did not meet any Comancheros, Long did encounter a group of Kiowa-Apaches on its way to meet some Spanish traders on the upper Canadian.¹¹

By the 1840's the incessant Comanchero traffic had broadened the pack trails observed by Long into full-fledged cart thoroughfares. Lieutenant J. W. Abert, who in 1845 led an official exploring party down the Canadian, stated laconically

⁹Jefe Politico to Comandante Principal, September 23, 1831, MS, Document 1831/695, ibid.

¹⁰Edwin James, James's Account of S. H. Long's Expedition, 1819-1820, Vols. XIV-XVII of Early Western Travels, XVI, 87, 95. Another early Comanchero trail extended from the Bosque Redondo on the Pecos eastward to Cañon del Rescate near present Lubbock, Texas. Pike, "Narrative of a Journey on the Prairie," Arkansas Historical Association Publications, VI, 100-101.

¹¹James, S. H. Long's Expedition, as cited, XVI, 105.

that the trail had "the appearance" of a wagon road.¹² Four years later Captain Randolph B. Marcy, after shepherding a group of forty-niners from Van Buren, Arkansas, to Santa Fe, described the Comanchero trail as "the old Mexican cart-road."¹³ A gold seeker with Marcy's caravan was more explicit: Along the upper Canadian, he wrote, "you find large, broad wagon trails made by the Giboleros, or buffalo hunters, and the Comanche traders, which lead you to the settlements."¹⁴

The first American officials arriving in New Mexico after the conquest found the Comanchero trade in a flourishing condition. James S. Calhoun, upon assuming his duties as superintendent of Indian affairs in 1849, reported with astonishment that the Pueblos and Mexicans had a "constant habit of trading with the Comanches." Although he thought the trade "ought to be gently and quietly stopped," he allowed it to continue under an improvised set of regulations. To Pueblos (for whom he was more responsible) who asked permission to trade, he gave "a simple permit, without charging a fee of

¹²"Lt. Abert's Report on the Upper Arkansas and Country of the Comanche Indians," 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 438 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1846), p. 49.

¹³"Report of Captain R. B. Marcy," 31 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 45 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1850), p. 42.

¹⁴Ralph P. Bieber (ed.), Southern Trails to California in 1849, Vol. V of Southwest Historical Series (12 vols.; Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1931-1942), p. 307.

any amount." Mexican traders, on the other hand, were required to produce testimonials of good character, to post a bond of up to five thousand dollars, to pledge not to trade in munitions of war, and to state the specific tribes with which they wished to deal. They were also charged a fee of ten dollars for a license.¹⁵

Calhoun had hoped that the licensing requirements would restrict the trade, but this was not the case. When one trader received a license, he discovered, a dozen or more would "Club together" and trade on it. Thus, although he issued only three licenses to Mexicans during his first year in office, "the number of traders going to the plains was never greater."¹⁶ There is some indication, however, that Calhoun's licensing procedures had some effect on the traffic. Two men whom he sent to ransom a captive from the Mescalero Apaches reported upon their return that the Indians had a "large number of captives, horses, and mules which they had not found a market for, as traders did not come to see them as formerly."¹⁷

Many of the requests for trade licenses were recorded at the Indian agency in Santa Fe by John Greiner and John Ward,

¹⁵Calhoun to Orlando Brown, January 25, 1850, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, pp. 105-106.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Calhoun to Brown, March 15, 1860, in ibid., p. 161.

secretaries to Calhoun and his successor, William Carr Lane. An analysis of the journal entries from April 1, 1852, to January 1, 1853 (when the records are most complete), reveals that sixteen trading parties were licensed--twelve Pueblo and four Mexican.¹⁸ More significant, perhaps, were the five requests which were denied: one to a Pueblo because he refused to accept responsibility for some Mexicans whom he wished to take with him, two to Mexicans who lacked the necessary documents, one to a Mexican because the agent "didn't like his appearance," and one without a recorded reason.¹⁹ The licensed expeditions, however, were probably only a minority of those that actually went to the plains. Many Mexican traders could not hope to fulfill the requirements for a permit and thus were forced to trade illicitly. Moreover, only the Pueblos who lived near Santa Fe bothered to obtain licenses. Such inveterate traders as the natives of Taos, Picuris, and Isleta went directly to the plains without asking leave of anyone.

The entries of Greiner and Ward also indicate that August and September were the chief trading months. More than half of the recorded requests for trade permits in 1852 were made

¹⁸Annie Heloise Abel (ed.), "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III (July, 1916), 189-242; Abel (ed.), "Indian Affairs in New Mexico under the Administration of William Carr Lane; From the Journal of John Ward," New Mexico Historical Review, XVI (April, 1941), 206-232.

¹⁹Ibid.

between August 11 and September 8. This data is substantiated by the report of Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, who traveled the Canadian route to New Mexico in September, 1853. While crossing the Panhandle, he met five Mexicans on September 8, six or eight Pueblos from Santo Domingo on the twelfth, "traders in search of Comanches" on the fifteenth, a party of fifteen on the eighteenth, and twenty-two persons on the twenty-second. In addition, he reported there were "other parties in the vicinity." Whipple concluded in amazement that he had "no previous idea of the extent of this Indian trade, or of the impunity with which defenseless traders could mingle with the savage and treacherous tribes on their own soil."²⁰

As they made their way across the plains, the Comancheros often presented a bedraggled sight to the few Americans whom they encountered. Lieutenant Abert in 1845 met a "poor and shabby" group of traders dressed in "conical-crowned sombreros, jackets with the stripes running transversely; large bag breeches extending to the knee; long stockings and moccasins." Abert was considerably more charitable, however, than Captain Lemuel Ford of the First Dragoons who upon meeting Comancheros in eastern Colorado confided to his diary that "These Spaniards are the meanest looking race of People I ever saw, don't

²⁰"Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon a Route near the Thirty-Fifth Parallel," in Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route, III, 31-39.

appear more civilized than our Indians generally. Dirty filthy looking creatures."²¹

Even veteran Anglo traders were sometimes taken aback at the alien appearance and habits of the Comancheros. Jacob Fowler, upon encountering a party of sixty at a Comanche camp in southeastern Colorado, immediately judged them to have "far less sence" (like many early travelers, his spelling did not match his perception) than the Comanches. He also claimed that the Comanches issued orders to the New Mexicans "much as we command our negroes." To gratify Fowler's whim, the Comanches bade the Mexicans to pray so that he could "see their fashion." The traders obligingly "went through the Catholic prayers, and afterwards prayed fervently" for the American. During the course of the prayers, Fowler gaped when he saw the leader of the Comancheros casually catch "a louse and eat it." When the actual trading began the next day, Fowler again professed to be shocked to see that the Mexicans "were painted like the Indians,"²² but it is difficult to believe that any occurrence--unless it were observing traders who "prayed fervently"--would have shocked an experienced American plainsman.

Strangely enough, the early travelers on the plains sel-

²¹"Lt. Abert's Report on the Upper Arkansas," 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 438, p. 53; Nollie Mumey (ed.), March of the First Dragoons to the Rocky Mountains in 1835; the Diaries and Maps of Lemuel Ford (Denver: Eames Brothers Press, 1957), p. 72.

²²Coues, The Journal of Jacob Fowler, pp. 72-73.

dom mentioned Pueblo traders. Lieutenant Abert saw some whose "jet black hair was tied up in stumpy queues with some light-colored ribbon," and Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, leader of one of the Pacific railway surveys in the 1850's, recorded that he met a group from Santo Domingo who were wrapped in blankets and had headbands around their hair.²³

Unkempt and tattered though they might be, the Comanche-ros had an abundance of trade goods eagerly coveted by the Plains Indians--bread, flour, and corn meal. These products became such an integral part of the commerce that they were inseparably linked with it. Long afterwards, some Pueblos who were questioned about the barter recalled that

When the men were going to the plains to trade with the Comanches, the women used to grind whole loads of meal for them to carry. Several women would grind together at night; they ground the corn successively on three or four metates ranging from rough to smooth. On the first they broke up the corn, and reduced it to fine flour on the fourth, toasting it after each grinding. Meanwhile, the men sang the grinding song, or beat a drum, and the women kept time to the music with slow, regular strokes.²⁴

²³"Report of Lt. J. W. Abert of His Examination of New Mexico," 30 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 41 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1848), p. 446; "Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon a Route near the Thirty-Fifth Parallel," in Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route, III, 34.

²⁴Wilfred W. Robbins, John P. Harrington, and Barbara Freire-Marreco, "Ethnobotany of the Tewa Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 55 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), p. 86.

The New Mexicans carefully baked the trade bread in their rounded ovens until it was dark, dry, crisp, and almost imperishable. They knew that the Indians regarded it as a great delicacy and would pay as much as a good pony for a "sack" of the hard but nutritious loaves.²⁵ Long afterwards, the Cheyennes, cooped up on a reservation, wistfully recalled that the traders had brought them "foods" that were very good.²⁶

Early American observers differed greatly about the quality and taste of the bread. Josiah Gregg stated that the loaves, although "exceedingly hard and insipid while dry," became soft and palatable when soaked in water.²⁷ Young Lewis Garrard, who had his first taste after he had spent a winter eating the cooking of mountain men, ecstatically proclaimed the bread to be "light, porous, and sweet--a perfect luxury with a cup of coffee by a mountain-pine fire."²⁸ On the other hand, a tenderfoot forty-niner, not two weeks out of the East, recoiled in disgust from the "hard, black-looking crackers" that a swarthy Comanchero offered to sell him for six-

²⁵Edgar L. Hewett and Bertha P. Dutton (eds.), The Pueblo Indian World (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1945), p. 98.

²⁶George B. Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians (2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), I, 124.

²⁷Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 67.

²⁸Lewis Garrard, Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail, Vol. IX of the Southwest Historical Series, p. 242.

pence each.²⁹

In addition to their staple stocks of bread, flour, and corn meal, the traders, according to contemporary accounts, carried to the Indians sugar, "saddlary," dried pumpkins, onions, tobacco, barley meal, and dry goods. Manufactured items such as hardware or cloth apparently were rarely traded, perhaps because they were too difficult for the Comancheros to procure.

Although commonly regarded as "gun-runners," the Comancheros had very few firearms to barter until after the arrival of American merchants in New Mexico. Indeed, the Mexican traders were buying more guns from the Indians than they were selling. In 1848 the Indian agent for the Osages reported that his charges were purchasing "guns, blankets, cloth, powder, lead, etc. of the traders in this nation" and trading them to the Comanches for horses. The Comanches, he asserted, "can sell their guns for thrice their value."³⁰ This indicates that the Comanches were again selling firearms to the New Mexicans as they had done at the Taos trade fairs during the preceding century. The Comancheros, however, did sell

²⁹Lansing B. Bloom (ed.), "From Lewisburg to California in 1849, Notes from the Diary of William H. Chamberlain," New Mexico Historical Review, XX (January, 1945), 46.

³⁰John M. Richardson to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 25, 1848, quoted in Grant Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, 1830-1860 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933), p. 242.

weapons to the Plains Indians--lances and tomahawks, "more slender and graceful in design than those supplied by English or American traders." They also brought the Indians "iron or steel arrow spikes ready made," which were rapidly superseding the traditional flint points.³¹

In addition to trade goods, the Comanchero visits also provided the Indians with an important social diversion in their bleak lives. A Cheyenne story recorded by George Bird Grinnell poignantly illustrates the keen anticipation with which the Indians looked forward to the arrival of the Comancheros:

. . . one night the people heard a loud shout saying, "The Mexicans have come to trade; they are camped here just outside the circle." All the women jumped out of bed, got together the things that they had to trade, and rushed off in the direction of the voice. When they got outside the circle they could see no camp, and looked around, not knowing what to do. Then from behind them on the other side of the camp came the shout, "The Mexicans are camped here, and they have plenty of things to trade." At once the women, thinking they had made a mistake, turned about and ran in that direction; but when they reached the border of the camp on that side, no Mexicans were to be found. Then the cry sounded from still another direction, saying: "This is where the Mexicans are; come this way;" and some of the women started, but presently someone shouted out, "Oh it must be Little Hawk who is calling us about from one place to another." It proved to be Little Hawk, and there were no Mexicans.³²

³¹Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, p. 141; J. Marvin Hunter, The Boy Captives: Clinton L. and Jeff. D. Smith (Bandera, Texas: The Frontier Times, 1927), p. 159.

³²Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians, I, 125. For another

In return for their goods the Comancheros received horses, mules, buffalo robes, and meat. With the exception of the traffic in horses and mules, their commerce of the early nineteenth century was remarkably similar to the barter carried on between the Plains Indians and the Pueblos during the time of Coronado--a simple exchange of the produce of the valley for the game of the plains.

Although most of the trade goods were carried to the Indian country on pack animals, a significant amount was taken in ungainly ox carts called carretas. Lieutenant Abert in 1845 reported that the Comanchero trail along the Canadian "was strewn" with the broken axletrees of the Mexican carts. Near the Texas line, however, the road suddenly changed "from a wagon trail to a bridle path," which led Abert to conclude that the Mexicans cached their carretas at that point and from there traveled with pack animals to the Comanche villages. Abert was both amazed and amused at the construction of an abandoned cart found at the end of the wagon road:

Two eccentric wheels, not exactly circular, formed by sawing off the ends of large logs, and rimming them with pieces of timber to increase their diameter . . . They were perforated in the neighborhood of the centre, to receive an axletree of cottonwood.

graphic account of the impact of the traders upon the Plains Indians see Alice Marriott, The Ten Grandmothers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), pp. 16-26.

A suitable pole, and a little square box of wicker wood completed the laughable machine.³³

Abert's amusement over the carreta was shared by many of his fellow Americans, who regarded its odd appearance and inefficiency as evidence of the cultural backwardness of the New Mexicans. Josiah Gregg claimed that it required four yoke of oxen "to draw the load of a single pair with an ordinary cart." W. H. H. Davis, a federal judge in New Mexico during the 1850's, detected other faults with the vehicle: "The wheels are never greased," he complained, "and as they are driven along they make an unearthly sound . . . being a respectable tenor for a double-bass horse fiddle."³⁴

Despite their archaic equipment, the Comancheros ranged over an extensive area. To the east they wandered as far as the Wichita Mountains (Sierra Jumanos) of Oklahoma,³⁵ to the southeast as far as the Davis Mountains where in 1849 a party charged some foot-sore emigrants fifty to seventy-five dollars each for horses that, according to the Anglos, had probably cost them no more than six dollars apiece.³⁶ Other

³³"Lt. Abert's Report on the Upper Arkansas," 29 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 438, p. 53.

³⁴Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 147; W. H. H. Davis, El Gringo: or, New Mexico and her People (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1857), p. 212.

³⁵Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 322.

³⁶Mabelle E. Martin (ed.), "From Texas to California in 1849; Diary of C. C. Cox," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX (July, 1925), 47.

traders were going far to the north by the beginning of the century. In 1811 a brigade of trappers sent out by Manuel Lisa, father of the Missouri fur trade, discovered that "the Spaniards of Mexico were going every year to trade with the Arapahoes" near the South Platte River.³⁷ As late as 1858 a Comanchero party was encountered on the Platte "packing flour" to the Indians.³⁸ Years later, Lieutenant John Bourke, one of the Southwest's first amateur anthropologists, questioned an ancient native of the San Juan Pueblo about his youthful travels. Eyes misty with nostalgia, the old Pueblo recalled that in addition to the routine excursions to the Comanches and Kiowas, he had gone far to the north and bartered with the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Crows, Utes, and Shoshones.³⁹

Naturally the time required for making the trading trips varied greatly. Gregg stated that Comancheros usually wandered "around for months,"⁴⁰ but the journals kept by Greiner and Ward in the early 1850's show that the traders were often

³⁷Herbert Eugene Bolton, "New Light on Manuel Lisa and the Spanish Fur Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XVII (July, 1913), 63. ✓

³⁸Anselm H. Barker, Diary of 1858 from Plattsmouth, Nebraska Territory to Cherry Creek Diggings, the Present Site of Denver, Colorado, edited by Nollie Mumey (Denver: Golden Bell Press, 1959), p. 56.

³⁹Lansing Bloom (ed.), "Bourke on the Southwest," New Mexico Historical Review, XI (July, 1936), 267.

⁴⁰Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 257.

gone only a few weeks. On August 15, 1852, for example, Santo Suazo of Tesuque Pueblo received a license to trade with the Comanches; by September 15 he had returned to Santa Fe to report that the Comanches "are all behaving well . . . and are all moving towards the Arkansas in order to hunt buffalo." Similarly, two Indians from Santa Ana Pueblo who received licenses on June 22 returned on July 30 with a report on "conditions among the Comanches."⁴¹ This brevity was not unusual, for licenses granted by Greiner and Ward were often valid for only two months.

The Comancheros learned to move skillfully and at will over the featureless landscapes of the plains. Among the earliest Anglos to witness their extraordinary ability were the ill-fated members of the Texas-Santa Fe expedition. After the force in August, 1841, had virtually collapsed from exhaustion in the vicinity of Quitaque Creek, a vanguard that included George Wilkins Kendall, the youthful publisher of the New Orleans Picayune, moved ahead and luckily encountered a handful of Comancheros. The traders pointed out to Kendall and his companions the route to New Mexico, and then went back for the main party. Kendall was amazed to learn later that the Mexicans had covered in "less than four days" a distance

⁴¹Abel, "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 218-241.

that had taken his party thirteen days.⁴² Thomas Falconer, a young Englishman with the main group, noted with awe that the Mexicans could bring "us exactly to the places that they told us about yet they led by no trail nor by any visible marks."⁴³

In making their lonely trade visits, the Comancheros were in constant danger of being robbed by their savage customers. Gregg once met some traders who were fleeing from the Comanches, who, he stated, often recaptured horses they had sold to the Comancheros;⁴⁴ in a similar incident, Lieutenant Whipple encountered five traders who sought his protection from some Indians who had robbed them of nearly all their goods.⁴⁵ In early 1852 Greiner recorded that a trader visiting his office complained that the Kiowas "had stolen all his animals."⁴⁶ The following year a trader named Matias Baca asked John Ward for a pass to "try and recover some of his animals the Comanches had stolen" during his trip among them.⁴⁷

⁴²George Wilkins Kendall, Narrative of the Texan Santa Fe Expedition (Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1929), p. 354.

⁴³As quoted in H. Bailey Carroll, The Texan Santa Fe Trail (Canyon, Texas: Panhandle-Plains Historical Society, 1949), p. 145.

⁴⁴Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 322.

⁴⁵"Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon a Route near the Thirty-Fifth Parallel," in Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route, III, 31.

⁴⁶Abel, "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 199.

⁴⁷Abel, "Indian Affairs in New Mexico under the Admin-

It is significant that each of these incidents involved Mexicans rather than Pueblos, who seem to have had a better rapport with the Plains Indians. These outrages, at least as far as the Comanches were concerned, were more likely the result of personal grudges than of any general feeling of antipathy towards the traders.

Although there is no record of the Comanches' having killed any of the traders, the Kiowas, notorious for their treachery and viciousness, were another matter. In 1858 they callously murdered two Comancheros who were enroute to a small Comanche village.⁴⁸ When Adolph Bandelier, the pioneer anthropologist and historian, spent a few weeks at Santo Domingo in 1880, he learned that the Kiowas had long been a menace to traders. About sixteen or eighteen years earlier they had

attacked a party of forty from San Juan Pueblo but were repulsed after a fight which lasted from midnight till after 3 P. M. The Pueblos had one man killed and one wounded, and their entire stock was run off, so that they had to return on foot. The captain of the Kaihua was killed, and they fled, leaving many dead behind them. The Comanche witnessed the engagement from the neighboring hills, but remained neutral.⁴⁹

istration of William Carr Lane," New Mexico Historical Review, XVI, 345.

⁴⁸"Report of Lt. John V. Dubois, February 23, 1858," in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1858, p. 258.

⁴⁹Adolph F. Bandelier, Journal for 1880, MS, New Mexico Museum Library, Santa Fe. Entry for October 21, 1880. Typescript copies of the pertinent entries in the Journal were furnished by Dr. Charles Lange and Dr. Carroll L. Riley of Southern Illinois University, who presently are preparing the manuscript for publication.

The Comanches did not always tolerate Kiowa interference with their traders. Once, according to Bandelier, a Pueblo party on its way to the Comanches was stopped by Kiowas who asked to trade. After the bartering was completed, the Kiowas demanded the return of their goods. This the traders refused to do. Before the Kiowas could attack, however, some Comanches "dashed into the camp," ascertained the cause of the trouble, and "had the Kaihuas whipped out."⁵⁰

The Navahoes, who often slipped onto the plains in quest of buffalo or Comanche horses, were almost as serious a menace to the Comancheros as were the Kiowas. On August 26, 1860, a party of Pueblos from Isleta set out for the Comanche country. According to the crude vernacular of the Santa Fe Gazette, they were winding their way through the Cañon del Inferino ("Valley of Hell") in the Manzano Mountains when they suddenly found themselves in a "'Hell of a fix' (to use a common expression) surrounded by Navahos." In the brisk battle that followed, the Pueblos beat off their attackers at a cost of one Isletan killed, five wounded, and sixteen burros stolen. Two of the Navahoes were killed.⁵¹

In trading with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, the Comancheros faced considerable opposition from American traders who

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Santa Fe Gazette, September 2, 1860. Newspaper Collection, Library of Congress.

resided among these Indians. "Uncle John" Smith, an American squawman who exercised a great deal of influence over the Cheyennes, was one of the most notorious of the Mexicans' tormentors. Smith forced all traders coming to "his Indian village" to pay tribute to him before they were allowed to barter. On one occasion, a party of "strange Mexicans" refused. Smith thereupon incited the Cheyenne braves to dump the goods of the "cowering Mexicans" onto the ground and then to help themselves. Ordered out of the camp, the Comancheros left, according to Lewis Garrard, who looked upon Smith almost as a demigod, "crossing themselves and uttering thanks to Heaven for having retained their scalps." This was the last time that New Mexicans refused to bribe Smith. Garrard related that the "poor Greasers" were so intimidated that when on one occasion they encountered Smith all alone, instead of dispatching him on the spot, they promised to give him "every third robe" for his permission to trade.⁵²

The New Mexican traders were not always so timid and craven in their encounters with Americans. A disreputable Anglo known simply as "Old Bob" once crept into a Comanchero camp

⁵²Garrard, Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail, p. 116; Henry Inman, The Old Santa Fe Trail (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897), p. 280. It is impossible to tell how much Garrard's anti-Mexican bias, which had been whetted by his witnessing the New Mexican and Pueblo revolt of early 1847, colored this story. John Smith was a powerful figure among the Cheyennes from 1838 to 1865 and often served as an interpreter for them.

and stole two horses, keeping one for himself and trading the other for a rifle and ammunition at Bent's Fort. When he returned to the plains "intent on renewing his depredations," he unfortunately fell in with the traders from whom he had stolen the horses. They took back the remaining horse and then turned their wrath on "Old Bob." Despite his "protestations of innocence and stout resistance," they stripped him of his weapons, gave him a severe flogging, and then turned him loose, "destitute of everything except the baseness of his own heart!"⁵³

The Americans who established trading posts on the plains during the 1830's and 1840's not only competed with the New Mexicans but also furnished them with an important market for their products. Their forts, which lined the foot of the Rockies from the Arkansas to the North Platte, depended almost exclusively upon caravans from New Mexico for foodstuffs. At Fort Lupton in northern Colorado Rufus Sage observed a party of fifteen Mexicans who had come from Taos to trade flour, corn, bread, beans, onions, dried peppers and salt for robes, meat, moccasins, ammunition, guns, coffee, tobacco, and "old clothes." But in this commerce too the Mexicans were sub-

⁵³LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen (eds.), Rufus Sage, His Letters and Papers 1836-1847 with an annotated reprint of his "Scenes in the Rocky Mountains and in Oregon, California, New Mexico, Texas, and the Grand Prairies, Vols. V and VI of The Far West and Rockies Series (15 vols.; Glendale, Calif.: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1954-1961), V, 272. Hereafter cited as Sage, Scenes in the Rocky Mountains.

jected to intimidation. Sage observed "an affray" in which a small party of Americans forced the Taoseños to reduce their price on flour from twenty dollars per fanega (120 pounds) to five dollars.⁵⁴ (The same year, 1843, flour at nearby Fort Laramie reportedly was selling for twenty-five dollars per hundred-weight.)⁵⁵

Many New Mexican traders remained at the trading posts to guard horses, care for cattle, and perform other tasks in return for wages that ranged from four to ten dollars a month. Although the real value was somewhat less because they were paid in trade goods valued at exorbitant rates, the wages were much higher than the Mexicans could make in their poverty-stricken homeland. It is not known what kind of workers the New Mexicans were as a whole, but at "St. Vrain's Fort on the South Platte" in 1842, Captain John C. Frémont hired a Mexican to act as his personal servant and described him as "an active, laborious man" who was "of very considerable service."⁵⁶

In the 1830's some of the New Mexican traders established

⁵⁴Ibid., V, 62.

⁵⁵Matt Field, Prairie and Mountain Sketches, ed. by Kate L. Gregg and John F. McDermott (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 81.

⁵⁶John C. Frémont, Narrative of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-1844 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1846), p. 26.

a settlement of their own, named Fort El Pueblo, on the Arkansas River about five miles above Bent's Fort. According to Thomas Farnham, who passed by it in 1839, the inhabitants lived in one-story adobe houses built around a quadrangle, raised grain and vegetables on irrigated plots near the river, and had a few head of livestock.⁵⁷ Later in the same year Matt Field, an impressionable young poet-journalist, ventured to stay overnight at the post even though he had "some awkward sensations relative to the black-looking fellows" who lived there. After convincing himself that the residents were "of peaceable character," Field became quite inquisitive and learned that they made their living "entirely by hunting and trading now and then with friendly Indians." Once or twice a year they traveled to Santa Fe to sell skins and to buy necessities. Romanticizing the Mexicans as much as other travelers had deprecated them, Field dubbed their settlement "Milk Fort" because of the number of milk goats kept there. To him the men were as brave and daring as the Comanches, had the "fleetest horses," and were "as expert with the bow as the Indians."⁵⁸ Field was that rarity among men who could appreciate and idealize alien cultures.

⁵⁷Thomas Farnham, Travels in the Great Western Prairies, the Anahuac and Rocky Mountains, and in the Oregon Territory, Vols. XXVIII and XXIX of Early Western Travels, edited by R. G. Thwaites, XXVIII, 174.

⁵⁸John E. Sunder (ed.), Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), p. 152.

Other parties of Comancheros established tiny settlements on the Arkansas where they eked out a precarious existence under the constant threat of Indian attack. On Christmas Day in 1854, for example, a large war party of Utes and Jicarilla Apaches slipped out of their mountain retreats to strike a settlement at the present site of Pueblo, Colorado. The Indians killed fifteen men, captured a woman and her two children, and ran off two hundred head of stock.⁵⁹ Such raids kept all but the most restless and daring out of the region.

One of the most controversial aspects of the Comanchero traffic was the ransoming of captives, a practice rooted centuries in the past. Originally the New Mexicans had purchased only Indian captives--to obtain servants and mine workers; but after the increase of Comanche raids in Chihuahua and Durango in the nineteenth century, they began purchasing Mexican prisoners also. As had been the case with ransomed Indians, a purchased Mexican remained the property of his redeemer until and unless the latter received compensation--either from relatives in Old Mexico or from the American officials. Some traders, it was charged, profited greatly from buying high-born captives from the Comanches and holding them for an

⁵⁹ Lt. L. H. Nichols to Col. T. T. Fauntleroy, January 11, 1855, Dept. of New Mexico, Letters Sent, Vol. 9, p. 265, U. S. Army Commands, Record Group 98, National Archives. Hereafter, the abbreviations RG, LS, and LR will be used for Record Group, Letters Sent, and Letters Received respectively; U. S. Army Commands will be shortened to Army Commands.

"adequate" reward. A group of traders from Mora returned from the Indian country in March, 1850, with four newly-ransomed captives for whom they had paid exorbitant amounts: to free a twelve-year-old boy had cost four knives, one plug of tobacco, two fanegas of corn, four blankets, and six yards of red Indian cloth; another boy of the same age had cost one mare, one rifle, one shirt, one pair of drawers, thirty small packages of powder, some bullets, and one buffalo robe; and a young woman had required two striped blankets, ten yards of blue cotton drilling, ten yards of calico, ten yards of cotton shirting, two handkerchiefs, four plugs of tobacco, one bag of corn, and one knife.⁶⁰ Although these prices may have been exaggerated in order to get a larger reward, the items vividly illustrate the fondness of the Comanches for a variety of small goods.⁶¹

Although Governor Calhoun was horrified to learn that the traders purchased their own "kith and kin," he overcame his disapproval of the trade in captives whenever his own countrymen were involved. In late 1849 some Apaches ambushed

⁶⁰Calhoun to Brown, March 31, 1850, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 183.

⁶¹Among the travelers who noticed this quirk of the Comanches in regard to trade was W. B. Parker who noted: "They . . . prefer a variety rather than a quantity, even though the goods may not be so valuable." Parker, Notes Taken during the Expedition Commanded by Capt. R. B. Marcy, U. S. A., through Unexplored Texas in the Summer and Fall of 1854 (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1856), p. 234.

a wagon train on the Santa Fe Trail, killing five of the men and fleeing with a Mrs. White and her small daughter. As soon as news of this tragedy reached Santa Fe, Governor Calhoun hastened to a "daring, fearless, and . . . discreet" Mexican trader and offered him a reward of one thousand dollars for ransoming the Whites.⁶² Although the trader left on his mission less than an hour after Calhoun talked to him, Mrs. White had already been murdered before he located the Apaches. Efforts to save the daughter were likewise futile.

The New Mexicans, however, did succeed in rescuing an impressive number of prisoners. In 1837 a native of San Miguel bartered Mrs. Sarah Ann Horn from the Comanches for "a horse, four bridles, two looking-glasses, two knives, some tobacco, and some powder and balls." In contrast to the Mexican's generous payment, an Anglo trader to whom the distraught woman had first been offered had been willing to give only "a poor old horse" that looked like an "aged rack of bones." Compared to the American, Mrs. Horn reported, the Spaniards "of whom I was so much afraid were kind . . . they brought me enough of food and drink."⁶³ Other Comancheros

⁶²Calhoun to Medill, October 25, 1849, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 65.

⁶³Carl Coke Rister, Comanche Bondage (Glendale, Calif: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1955), pp. 168-171.

during 1837 also liberated a Mrs. Harris, who had been captured at the same time as Mrs. Horn.⁶⁴

Few border captives owed more to the New Mexican traders than Mrs. Jane Wilson, a young Texas farm wife whose husband had been killed by Indians in the summer of 1858 while they were enroute to California. While Mrs. Wilson was returning to East Texas with a small wagon train, she and her two young brothers-in-law were captured by Comanches. After twenty-five days of brutal maltreatment, she escaped--to face quick and certain starvation on the barren plains. After being reduced to "a mere skeleton," she met a small party of Comancheros who tended her "in every possible manner," clothed her in men's apparel, and secreted her with some provisions in a hollow tree. Then they went on to the Comanche camp, hoping to ransom her young brothers-in-law. By the time they returned eight days later, unsuccessful in their quest for the boys, Mrs. Wilson was so weak that they had to pack her on an Indian travois. They turned her over to an American family at Fort Union and were rewarded with forty dollars by David Meriwether, the new superintendent of Indian affairs in New Mexico.⁶⁵ Meriwether was

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 165.

⁶⁵Meriwether to George W. Manypenny, December 13, 1853, N/306, New Mexico Superintendency, Office of Indian Affairs, LR, RG 75, National Archives. Hereafter, Office of Indian Affairs will be abbreviated OIA.

satisfied; and Judge W. H. H. Davis stated that the conduct of the leader of the Comancheros was "such as to entitle him to all praise;"⁶⁶ but Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, commander at Fort Union, dourly condemned the traders because they did not also "rescue or redeem" the two boys. Cooke expressed a deep suspicion of such "friendly intercourse with these aggressive savages,"⁶⁷ but he did not explain what might have been Mrs. Wilson's fate had the Comancheros not found her. Meriwether dispatched the Comancheros on a mission to rescue the two boys, but the attempt was unnecessary. Both had already been ransomed by other traders of the plains, one by a group of Chickasaws and the other by some Kickapoos. Congress later appropriated one thousand dollars to reward the rescuers of the boys⁶⁸--a generous sum compared to the forty dollars doled out to the Comancheros for Mrs. Wilson.

Nelson Lee, another of the survivors of Comanche captivity, also owed his rescue to Mexican traders, who found him in the New Mexican mountains, more dead than alive, and concealed him from the Indians until they could return to the settlements.⁶⁹ These are only four of several Americans

⁶⁶Davis, El Gringo, p. 110.

⁶⁷Cooke to Meriwether, December 4, 1853, C/117, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶⁸Foreman, Advancing the Frontier, p. 283.

⁶⁹Nelson Lee, Three Years among the Comanches (Albany:

who owed their survival to the kind and compassionate efforts of a people whom too many of their countrymen considered to be the "weakest, . . . most contemptibly servile objects to be seen."⁷⁰

Although most of the early Comancheros were of the simple and comparatively harmless type already described, others--backed by wealthy ricos and unscrupulous Anglos--introduced guns and whiskey to the Indians in exchange for horses and mules stolen in Mexico. Gregg in 1831 witnessed the departure from Santa Fe of a large trading party "freighted with engines of war and a great quantity of whiskey" to be given to the Apaches for "mules and other articles of plunder which they had stolen from the people of the south."⁷¹ Gregg evidently did not classify these nefarious traders as Comancheros. In a similar vein, Governor Calhoun complained that sinister groups were trading arms and ammunition to the Indians in such quantities that he believed that five-sixths of the mules in New Mexico had been brought in by them.⁷² George Ruxton, a young Englishman (somewhat prone to exaggerate) who traveled northward through Chihuahua

B. Taylor, 1859), p. 65.

⁷⁰Garrard, Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail, p. 272.

⁷¹Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 203.

⁷²Col. John Munroe to Adj. Gen. R. Jones, June 11, 1850, in Abel, The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 109.

and New Mexico in 1846, even stated that some New Mexicans disguised as Indians accompanied the Apaches on their raids in Mexico. He observed the capture of two such raiders during his visit in Chihuahua.⁷³

Other New Mexicans covertly introduced whiskey on a large scale among the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. In 1844 Thomas H. Harvey, the superintendent of Indian affairs at St. Louis, charged that New Mexico had become "a new source of supply." The liquor peddlers that Harvey castigated were not the rude and simple Comancheros encountered by Gregg and Abert, but rather desperate characters, most of whom had deserted from the trading companies, and "now form a reckless band of desperadoes," engaged in illicit and destructive trade with the Indians.⁷⁴ Equally active in purveying alcohol to the Plains Indians were Anglo traders from Missouri who used the border tribes such as the Osage and Kickapoo as middlemen.

As the years passed the distinction between the hitherto law-abiding Comancheros and the lawless gun-and liquor-runners steadily grew more tenuous. Almost imperceptibly the Comancheros of the frontier villages exchanged their role of peaceful purveyors of foodstuffs among the Plains

⁷³LeRoy Hafen (ed.), Ruxton of the Rockies (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 161.

⁷⁴"Report of Thomas H. Harvey, October 8, 1844," in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1844, p. 437.

Indians for a new one as inciters of tribal resistance to the Anglo intruders. As early as 1857 the Indian agent for the Cheyennes complained bitterly about the immense number of Mexican traders who were roving over the country, ostensibly to trade provisions to the Indians, but in reality to "introduce among them their miserable Mexican whiskey, using their influence, which in many instances is great, to keep up the hostile feeling against the whites."⁷⁵ This report was the forerunner of many allegations of evil deeds perpetrated by the Comancheros during the post Civil War period.

⁷⁵"Report of R. C. Miller, October 14, 1857," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1857, p. 436.

CHAPTER V

THE CIBOLEROS

Pushing boldly onto the plains side by side with the Comancheros were the New Mexican buffalo hunters, the ciboleros. Indeed, the two groups were closely related as it was not uncommon for hunters to carry trade goods to the plains, for traders to return with their carretas laden with buffalo meat, or for a person to hunt and trade alternately. But the primary objective of the Comanchero party was to trade; that of the cibolero, to hunt.

The ciboleros, although relatively unimportant until the nineteenth century, had pursued their vocation sporadically for untold ages. Pre-Spanish hunters had ventured forth whenever their relations with the people of the plains permitted. When the peaceful Antelope Creek people occupied the Canadian valley during the fourteenth century, for example, the Pueblos had hunted extensively, but with the arrival of the warlike Querechos and Teyas they were content to barter for enormous quantities of buffalo robes and meat, which seemed to be "more abundant" among them then than in later periods.¹

¹Adolph Bandelier and Edgar L. Hewett, Indians of the Rio Grande Valley (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1937), p. 150.

The first known buffalo hunt of the Spaniards was also their most famous. In 1598 Juan de Oñate, the founder of New Mexico, sent Vicente de Zaldívar, his nephew and most trusted aide, with a detachment of sixty soldiers to the plains to see if the buffaloes could be domesticated. Finding several large herds, Zaldívar followed the advice of the Teyas and built a cottonwood log corral so large and with "such long wings" that it could enclose ten thousand head. His expectations that the ungainly buffaloes, lumbering around "as if they were hobbled," would be easy to capture were soon exploded, however, as he observed his soldiers vainly try "in a thousand ways" to drive the beasts inside the corral. After the "wild and fierce" animals, belying their awkward appearance, had killed three horses and wounded forty others, Zaldívar abandoned the attempts to capture the adult buffaloes and instead ordered a large number of the calves to be roped. His men started for the camp with these, but all of them died "within an hour." Zaldívar regretfully concluded that unless the buffaloes "are caught soon after they are born and mothered by our cows and goats, they cannot be taken until [they] are tamer . . . than at present." The hunt was not a total loss, however, for Zaldívar enthusiastically proclaimed the meat of the buffaloes that had been killed to be better than beef and the fat to be superior to lard.²

²Hammond and Rey, Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico. pp 401-402

The Spanish documents of the seventeenth century contain very few references to buffalo hunting. Although both Pueblos and Spaniards probably obtained most of their buffalo meat and robes by barter, it also seems likely that they were familiar with buffalo hunting techniques. One of the greatest buffalo slaughters on record was made in 1683 by the expedition which Juan Dominguez de Mendoza led into the Concho River region of western Texas. While camped among the Jumano Indians near present Ballinger, Texas, Mendoza stated that the Spaniards and Indians killed over four thousand head for meat and left to rot on the prairie almost as many others, which were only skinned for the hides.³ At no fewer than seven other campsites, Mendoza recorded buffalo killings that ranged from "only one" to "two hundred and fifty-five beeves."⁴ Other expeditions onto the plains during this period must have made similar use of the great herds.

Eighteenth century references, although infrequent, imply that buffalo hunting had become fairly common. In 1706 Ulibarri⁵ noted that the natives of Picuris who were living at El Cuartelejo had gone on a buffalo hunt. In 1719 Governor Antonio de Valverde, while leading his punitive

³"Itinerary of Juan Dominguez de Mendoza, 1684," in Bolton, Spanish Exploration in the Southwest, 1542-1706, p. 339.

⁴Ibid., pp. 329-343.

expedition in search of the Comanches, encountered in eastern Colorado a great herd of buffalo. Mounting his horse, he "isolated a cow and ran it a good distance until he killed it with a spear;"⁵ his men then joined him in killing "many buffalo." This incident would seem to indicate that the Spaniards had had previous experience at buffalo hunting. In 1726 Governor Facundo Bustamante reported that a Pueblo chief and "others of his nation" had gone to hunt meat in the east,⁶ but said nothing of the results. The matter-of-fact nature of this report suggests that hunting on the plains had become too common to be newsworthy.

The migration onto the plains of the warlike Comanches after 1725 probably reduced the number of cibolero hunts. In 1750, it is true, there was a cryptic report by a French trader that the Comanches "were spying upon the Indians of Pecos, who were hunting;" but it is more likely that this statement pertained to the hunting of deer than of buffalo. Moreover, Governor Thomas Velez stated in 1752 that it was "very rare and risky for the Indians of these pueblos" to go far into the plains.⁷ There are no more specific references to buffalo hunting until 1785, after Governor Juan

⁵"Diary of the Campaign of Governor Antonio de Valverde against the Ute and Comanche Indians, 1719," in Thomas, After Coronado, p. 129.

⁶Bustamante to Casa Fuerte, April 30, 1727, in ibid., p. 257.

⁷Supra., p. 64.

Bautista de Anza's decisive victory over the Comanches, when "a party of Spaniards went buffalo hunting."⁸ No details of the hunt are given; reference was made to it only because it led indirectly to the great peace conference between Anza and Ecueraacapa.

The new patterns of New Mexican-Plains Indian relationships that grew out of the Comanche peace greatly stimulated buffalo hunting. The shifting of much of the Comanche trade to the plains diminished the quantity of meat and robes brought to the pueblos for barter; traders who returned from the Indian camps told of massive concentrations of buffaloes to the east of the province; and robes were needed in ever greater numbers to exchange for manufactured goods in Chihuahua. In addition, the expanding population of New Mexico was putting greater pressure on the available food supply. These factors, plus the comparative safety with which expeditions could travel to the plains, combined to increase greatly the importance of buffalo hunting.

Although Spanish officials tried with some success to curtail the Comanchero trade, their few efforts to restrict the ciboleros had little effect. In 1811 the alcalde at Jemez threatened to arrest the natives of the Santa Ana Pueblo who had gone to hunt without permission, and the alcalde at Taos reported in 1818 that a campaign against

⁸Supra., p. 79.

hostile Indians could not be undertaken because the Pueblos had taken all of the good horses on "an unauthorized buffalo hunt."⁹ Despite these minor complaints, the size and importance of the buffalo hunts increased steadily. A rapid growth during the second and third decades of the century can be inferred by contrasting the report of Don Pedro Bautista Pino in 1812 with that of Antonio Barreiro in 1832. Pino, an astute and thorough chronicler, did not mention buffalo hunting; but Barreiro included in his brief account detailed descriptions of the hunts. He estimated that the ciboleros were killing a minimum of ten to twelve thousand buffaloes annually.¹⁰

Thus the day of the cibolero seems to have dawned in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Rugged, daring, and picturesque, the ciboleros drew the attention of several Americans who visited New Mexico. An encounter with some hunters inspired Josiah Gregg to pen one of his most vivid descriptions of western life. The hunters, he wrote,

usually wear leathern trousers and jackets, and flat straw hats; while, swung upon the shoulders of each hangs his carcage or quiver of bow and arrows. The long handle of their lance being set in a case, and suspended by the side with a strap from the pommel of the saddle, leaves the

⁹Sanchez Vergara to Governor Manrique, January 6, 1811, MS, Document 2391, New Mexico Archives; Twitchell, Spanish Archives of New Mexico, II, 610.

¹⁰Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 102.

point waving high over the head, with a tassel of gay parti-colored stuffs dangling at the tip of the scabbard. Their fusil, if they happened to have one, is suspended in like manner at the other side, with a stopper in the muzzle fantastically tasselled.¹¹

Governor W. H. H. Davis, a less enthralled observer, likened some hunters he met in 1853 to "a band of Gypsies" and recoiled from the homemade Aguardiente, "as barbarous an alcoholic compound as was ever made,"¹² which the ciboleros hospitably offered him. Frederick Wislizenus, a German scientist-explorer, upon meeting a fierce-looking group of leather-jacketed ciboleros asserted that they "were never hostile towards white men" and seemed to be afraid of Indians.¹³

Cibolero expeditions were commonly made in October. Then the crops had been harvested, the weather was not yet too severe for travel, the hides were in good condition, and meat was needed to sustain the sizable families during the winter. Furthermore, in October the buffaloes were comparatively near at hand, for by then their annual migration southward from their summer haunts along the Arkansas River would have carried them into the Canadian valley. As the

¹¹Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 66.

¹²Davis, El Gringo, p. 44.

¹³Frederick A. Wislizenus, "Memoir of a Tour of Northern Mexico," 30 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Misc. Doc. No. 26 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1846), p. 12.

frost began to settle in the upland villages, caravans were formed under the leadership of veteran hunters known as mayordomos. Old and young, weak and strong participated. A few athletic young men called cazodores might suffice for the actual lancing, but many hands were needed to skin and prepare the meat. Occasionally, even women and children accompanied the expeditions. Wislizenus met a cibolero party in 1846 that included some women; and Frank Collinson, an Anglo buffalo hunter, in 1875 encountered a cibolero caravan that was made up of two hundred men and "half as many women and children and dogs."¹⁴

Many settlers also went on a short hunt after the crops had been safely planted in June. Preserving the summer kill was no problem, surprisingly enough, for "jerked" meat cured out rapidly under the hot sun. Since the buffaloes had already shed their thick coats of hair, hides taken then were worthless for trade, but they could be used for rugs or bed covers or could be sliced into thin shreds for making ropes.¹⁵

On the hunt the cazodores exercised skill and courage seldom equalled on the American frontier. Stealing as close as possible to a herd of buffaloes, they dashed into

¹⁴Ibid.; Frank Collinson, "The Old Mexican Buffalo Hunters," MS, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum Library, Canyon, Texas.

¹⁵Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 102.

the midst of the fleeing animals. Each hunter singled out a victim, shouldered his horse next to the brute, and drove his lance downward past the animal's left ribs into its heart. Wrenching the lance loose, the hunter swiftly turned on another lumbering beast. During the course of a single chase, which often covered two or three miles, an experienced lancer could kill from eight to twenty-five buffaloes.¹⁶

A few hunters preferred the bow and arrow to the lance. Gregg, who went on a hunt with a Mexican archer, stated that as soon as they spied a herd of buffaloes, the cibolero "put spurs to his horse" and started in hot pursuit. Before Gregg's mule could catch up, the hunter had killed and partially skinned a buffalo.¹⁷

The most extravagant testament to a cibolero's skill was recorded by young Matt Field during a trip with a Santa Fe caravan. When the wagon train came into view of a herd of buffaloes, a Mexican hunter named José Alexico set out to get fresh meat for the teamsters. Because there was a considerable distance to the next campsite, the wagon train could not wait for him, but if he killed the cow on the

¹⁶Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 371; Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1954), p. 42; John Cook, The Border and the Buffalo (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1938), p. 84.

¹⁷Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 371.

prairie, butchered her, and carried the meat after the caravan, he would not get to camp until after night. To solve his problem, Alexico, "with the coolest precision," separated a cow from the main herd and wounded her slightly. Then he worried her with torturing jabs of his lance to make her chase him. When the cow stumbled to her knees, he "beat her over the head . . . just as one might take a stick to drive away a sick dog" until she lunged suddenly at him and "passed her short curling horn within an inch of his horse's flank." In this manner Alexico maneuvered the beast some three miles in advance of the wagons before completing the kill. As the animal fell, Alexico's companions closed in "with their knives, tearing away the reeking skin of the buffalo while she yet lay panting with life."¹⁸

Even before the lancers completed their work, the other members of the hunting expedition joined in. Men followed close behind the cazodores to slit the throats of the fallen animals to bleed them properly. Others brought up carts for carrying the carcasses to the camp, where the meat was prepared quickly to prevent spoilage.¹⁹ The night of the kill every member of the party from the mayor-domo to the lowliest novice worked at slicing the meat and

¹⁸Sunder, Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail, pp. 301-302.

¹⁹Wesley Hurt, "Indian Influence at Manzano," El Palacio, XLVI (November, 1939), 353.

hanging the thin strips up to dry. Among the Fueblos, "Each man was given the same amount and the one who worked fastest went to bed first."²⁰

It usually took only a few days for the prairie sun to cure the razor-thin slices; if by chance the weather was damp or cloudy, the meat was smoked over a fire of buffalo chips, which gave it a pungent, peppery taste. After the meat was "jerked," the ciboleros packed it into their carretas by vigorously "beating or kneading the slices with their feet," which they also believed helped to preserve it.²¹ At the village, the meat was pounded in large stone mortars up to three feet in diameter in order to break down its tough fibers. When some ciboleros in later years sold buffalo meat to Anglos, who had no taste for "jerky," they soaked it in brine and then smoked it much as pork was cured in the Mississippi valley.²²

The New Mexicans, like the Indians, used almost every part of the buffalo. After converting the flesh into "jerky," they cut the fat into large chunks and rendered it into tallow for use in cooking and candle-making. The

²⁰Ruth Benedict, "Tales of the Cochiti Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 98 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 199.

²¹Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 67.

²²Rex W. Strickland (ed.), "The Recollections of W. S. Glenn, Buffalo Hunter," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, XXXI (1949), 39.

crunchy cracklings (chicharones) that remained after the tallow was drained off were carefully hoarded to delight many a child's palate on the long winter nights. The buffalo hides were tanned into highly valued robes and rugs by tediously scraping them and repeatedly kneading them with liberal applications of buffalo brains. Not even the long wool from the neck and shoulders was wasted; it was carted back to the settlements to be packed into mattresses or spun into coarse cloth.²³

The successful hunters returned to their village in a triumphal procession, riding proudly through the intervening settlements as people gazed at them with envy and admiration. Occasionally the less fortunate stood at the doors of their hovels and pleaded, "Buffalo hunter, give me some grease, give me some meat."²⁴ To show his great success, a cibolero might toss the beggar a small amount. The instant the hunters drew near their own village they were sure to be spied by children, who would be craning anxiously from the roof-tops. The returnees were honored the first night with a fandango (even as they had been bid adios).²⁵ It was wonderful to be a successful cibolero.

²³Wesley Hurt, "Buffalo Hunters," New Mexico Magazine, XIX (November, 1941), 36; Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, pp. 42-43.

²⁴Benedict, "Tales of the Cochiti Indians," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 98, p. 201.

²⁵Samuel Montoya, "A Buffalo Hunt," MS, New Mexico Historical Museum Library, Santa Fe.

The glamor of the hunt was somewhat offset by the dangers involved. The safety of the buffalo lancer rested directly upon the speed, agility, courage, and skill of his horse. The buffalo did not submit tamely; once wounded, it became enraged and often lunged desperately at its pursuer. An untrained horse could easily be "disembowelled," Gregg stated, but if "the steed understands his business, he will dodge the animal with the expertness of a fencer."²⁶

Even the best of mounts was no guarantee of safety, however, for there was always the chance that a horse might trip in a prairie dog hole or fall over some unexpected obstacle. A haunting ballad of the New Mexican frontier, telling of a young hunter tragically impaled on his own lance when his horse tripped, is a grim reminder of the dangers faced by the ciboleros.

Caballo alazan tostado
Que tu la muerte me dices

Oh my sorrel colored horse
That you should be my death

En este llano estacado
Vienes a hacer calavera

On this Staked Plains
I will leave my skeleton²⁷

Another dreaded danger encountered by the ciboleros were the late autumn blizzards that sometimes swept across the plains without warning. The perils of a blizzard are illustrated by a familiar story involving a cibolero who had become separated from his fellow hunters. When

²⁶Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 372.

²⁷Lorin W. Brown (trans.), "Manuel Maes," MS, CL-1057, New Mexico Historical Museum Library, Santa Fe.

engulfed in a sudden storm, the hunter desperately scraped out the insides of a newly-killed buffalo and took refuge in the warm carcass. To his dismay the buffalo was soon frozen stiff, leaving him entrapped in an icy tomb. Luckily, the storm soon abated and his comrades, hearing his weakening cries, found him and thawed out the carcass. The hunter, who also "had to be thawed out," was afterwards known as El Manco because he had lost an arm from the affair.²⁷ The bizarre imprisonment of a hunter inside of a frozen buffalo either occurred more than once or else it was one of the favorite "tall tales" of old-time buffalo hunters. Colonel Henry Inman related a similar story about an Anglo hunter who in 1867 was thus trapped.²⁹

Because the ciboleros competed with the Indians in the hunting of the buffaloes, the redmen harbored a resentment that sometimes flared into open hostilities. Indian groups frequently visited the cibolero camps and demanded flour, coffee, sugar, and any other provisions "that they took a fancy to." The hunters, thinking it "cheaper to buy peace than pay the consequences of a fight," generally complied.³⁰ They also kept on hand a supply of trade goods, including

²⁸Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 45.

²⁹Inman, The Old Santa Fe Trail, p. 206.

³⁰Hurt, "Buffalo Hunters," New Mexico Magazine, XIX, 35.

plenty of their oven-toasted hard bread, to use in soothing the Indians' passions.³¹

For added protection the buffalo hunters traveled in large parties. In June, 1808, Don Francisco Amangual met 120 ciboleros near the Canadian River.³² Josiah Gregg and Antonio Barriero, writing during the Mexican period, agreed that the ciboleros went in "large parties or bands."³³ In 1846 Frederick Wislizenus recorded an encounter with a party of about 100 ciboleros in southwestern Kansas, and in 1853 W. H. H. Davis met a hunting party of 150 men who were employing 500 oxen and burrows and fifty carts on a hunt in eastern New Mexico.³⁴

Even the best of precautions did not always give the hunters security from the Indians. In December, 1801, some hunters from Santa Fe, well armed and bearing specific instructions to fight if they met the Apaches, turned back because some Comanches warned them that "the Nations of the North" in great numbers were among the buffalo herds.³⁵ In

³¹Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 67.

³²Amangual Diary, 1808, MS, Bexar Archives, University of Texas, Austin.

³³Gregg, Commerce of the Prairies, p. 67; Carroll and Haggard, Three New Mexican Chronicles, p. 101.

³⁴Wislizenus, "Memoir of a Tour of Northern Mexico," 30 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Misc. Doc. No. 26, p. 12; Davis, El Gringo, p. 44.

³⁵Extracto de las Novedades ocurridas en la Prov. del Nuevo Mexico desde 20 de Noviembre 1801 hasta 31 de Mayo de 1802, MS, Document 1594, New Mexico Archives.

the winter of 1817 the Pawnees attacked a group of ciboleros, killing seven and capturing a ten-year-old boy whom they would have sacrificed had not Manuel Lisa, the noted French trader, ransomed him.³⁶ In 1826 a party of Pawnees captured a group of buffalo hunters on the eastern side of the Sangre de Cristos, stripped them of their "mules, horses, meat, cloth, arms etc. & were seriously inclined to kill them all" until they recognized one of the ciboleros whom they had previously met in Kansas. They then released his party and returned his gun, but kept "everything else."³⁷

With the decline in size of the buffalo herds the Plains Indians became increasingly dangerous. In 1852 a large party of Mexicans and Pueblos hunting near Fort Atkinson, Kansas, evoked such loud protests from the Indians that the commander of the fort, ignoring the hunting permit that the lancers had been given by the Indian superintendent in New Mexico, ordered them to abandon the hunting grounds.³⁸ In the autumn of the same year some Santo Domingo hunters who were traveling towards the plains with

³⁶George E. Hyde, The Pawnee Indians (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), pp. 108-109; Richard Edward Oglesby, Manuel Lisa and the Opening of the Missouri Fur Trade (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1933), p. 166.

³⁷"General Sibley's Santa Fe Diary," in Hulbert, Southwest on the Turquoise Trail, p. 168.

³⁸Abel, "Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 219.

their carretas were advised by a group of returning ciboleros that the Comanches had threatened to "take away all the animals and wagons" from hunting parties. The Santo Domingans prudently gave up the trip.³⁹ According to Colonel Philip St. George Cooke, the Indians in 1853 again warned the ciboleros not to bring to the plains more than a few pack animals.⁴⁰

Failure to heed these warnings contributed to a short but violent war between the ciboleros and the Cheyennes. In the fall of 1853 a large party of New Mexicans who failed to find the buffalo herds along the Canadian River continued northeastward until they located them between the Cimarron and Arkansas rivers. During the hunt two Cheyennes and a Mexican were killed in a skirmish. The New Mexicans claimed that the fight began when three Cheyennes attempted to steal some of their horses; the Cheyennes, that "the Mexicans caught two of our young men by themselves and killed them."⁴¹ Lieutenant J. E. Maxwell, who conducted an investigation of the matter, concluded from the testimony of a "Mr. Senecal, a gentleman of San Miguel," that the

³⁹Abel, "Indian Affairs in New Mexico under William Carr Lane;" New Mexico Historical Review, XVI, 229.

⁴⁰Cooke to Major W. A. Nichols, January 29, 1854, C/10, Dept. of New Mexico, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴¹David Meriwether to William Bent, March 11, 1854, N/246, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Indian version was the more accurate. After the buffalo hunters reached the hunting grounds, Maxwell reported, a small party led by a youth named Salazar--son of the Damasio Salazar who had brutally maltreated the members of the Santa Fe Expedition in 1841--split off from the main group and afterwards attacked three visiting Cheyennes, "to obtain their horses." Their treachery backfired, however, for young Salazar was killed and one of the Indians escaped. Salazar's comrades then fled for New Mexico. They escaped; but the infuriated Cheyennes retaliated against the main body of ciboleros, who had known nothing of the altercation, by capturing between eighty and one hundred head of oxen and wrecking about twenty carts.⁴²

The Indians were warmly supported by William Bent, powerful proprietor of Bent's Fort, and Thomas Fitzpatrick, the veteran mountain man who was now the agent for the Cheyennes. According to David Meriwether, governor and superintendent of Indian affairs in New Mexico, Fitzpatrick gave the Cheyennes permission "to take the property of the Mexican hunters," which the Indians sold to the traders about Bent's Fort.⁴³ After disposing of the ciboleros' stock,

⁴²Lt. J. E. Maxwell to Cooke, January 28, 1854, enclosed with Cooke to Nichols, January 29, 1854, C/10, Dept. of New Mexico, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴³Meriwether to George W. Manypenny, March 15, 1854, N/246, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

the Cheyennes had Bent pen a letter to Governor Meriwether, presenting their case against the New Mexicans. Claiming that hundreds of ciboleros had been roaming through their country in violation of their treaty rights, they demanded immediate compensation for their two slain tribesmen: "If the Mexicans will send us the pipe of peace and something to reward the parents of the two young men we will bury the tomahawk, but if not we will kill them when we see them." Signed--"Your children the Cheyennes." In a personal postscript, Bent assured Meriwether that "from what I can learn . . . the Mexicans were to blame in this case."⁴⁴

Although the Cheyennes had promised not "to hurt one hair on the heads of our friends the Americans," Governor Meriwether was deeply alarmed. He asked Bent to tell the Indians that "any attack upon the Mexicans of New Mexico will be . . . punished by me as though the same had been made upon the Americans." He also rejected the Cheyenne claim that the Mexicans were trespassing, pointing out that by the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851 the Cheyennes had been assigned the land between the Arkansas and North Platte rivers; the dispute with the ciboleros had occurred south of the Arkansas. The "whole American people," he

⁴⁴Bent to Meriwether, February 15, 1854, enclosed with ibid.

threatened, would punish the Cheyennes if they went to war.⁴⁵

Meriwether, however, did not have the support of the Army. Colonel John Garland, commander of the troops in New Mexico, felt that the Cheyennes were justified in their complaints. Since the ciboleros killed off the game upon which the Indians depended for subsistence, the latter, he argued, were forced to choose among breaking up the hunting parties, depredating upon the settlements, or starving to death.⁴⁶ The obvious solution was for the New Mexican hunters to stay away from the plains.

In the spring of 1854 the Cheyennes unleashed their threatened attacks on the New Mexican frontier. Although they harmed no Americans (as they had promised), according to Colonel Garland, they killed fourteen Mexicans in San Miguel County alone.⁴⁷ The American officers made little effort to punish the raiders for, as Lieutenant Colonel Cooke stated, it was "reasonably to be expected" that the

Prairie Indians should commit depredations on this frontier, . . . in retaliation of serious depredations committed by the inhabitants of

⁴⁵Meriwether to Bent, March 11, 1854, enclosed with ibid.

⁴⁶Garland to Meriwether, January 18, 1854, Dept. of New Mexico, LS, Vol. 9, p. 115, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴⁷Garland to Lorenzo Thomas, June 30, 1854, ibid., p. 200.

the Territory on them: Viz. the annual destruction of buffalo within their country (attended by occasional murder) in defiance of law and express treaty obligations; and I have information of repeated complaints and warnings by them to Americans passing through their country.⁴⁸

In addition to the killings, the Cheyennes kidnapped eleven boys from the vicinity of Tecolote and Las Vegas. Meriwether, while enroute to St. Louis during the summer of 1854, met a party of Cheyennes who openly boasted that they had committed the depredations and carried off the prisoners. Unable to carry out his threat to punish the Indians, Meriwether asked the new Cheyenne agent, J. W. Whitfield, to try to procure the release of the captives. Upon returning to Santa Fe, Meriwether perceived something of the pathetic impact of the raids when an old Mexican peon, "very poorly clad" and in "very bad health," walked sixty miles to inquire about his two sons who had been among the kidnapped youths.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Cooke to Major W. R. Nichols, June 6, 1854, C/45, Dept. of New Mexico, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives. The American officials seem to have exaggerated the number of buffalo killed by the ciboleros when they justified the Cheyenne attacks on this score; they also ignored the fact that the territory south of the Arkansas River did not belong to the Cheyennes. Their lack of concern over the Indian raids may have been due in part to their anti-Mexican bias, but they were also engaged in a campaign against the Utes and Jicarilla Apaches which may have left them with too few troops to oppose the Cheyennes.

⁴⁹Meriwether to Manypenny, October 25, 1854, N/339, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Meanwhile, Agent Whitfield, with a "liberal present," had bribed the Cheyennes into releasing two of the Mexican captives, "very interesting children" who had aroused his sympathies. Despite this show of compassion, Whitfield realistically pointed out that "We cannot establish the precedent of buying Mexican prisoners, if we were . . . only to pay for what the Indians now have in my Agency it would Bankrupt your Treasury--I am certain the Comanches and Kiowas have one thousand."⁵⁰

The last incident of the cibolero war occurred in November, 1854. when some Cheyennes ambushed twenty-five Taos Indians hunting near the Raton Mountains and killed twelve.⁵¹ The enmity aroused between the Taoseños and the northern tribes by this attack did not end until 1858, when at a peace conference called through the efforts of Kit Carson, Guatamo, an Arapaho chief who represented the Cheyennes and Arapahoes, met with José María Cordova and Antonio José Suaso, the "Warchiefs" of Taos, and entered into a "permanent treaty of peace and friendship" in which it was agreed that "parties may pass and repass through the

⁵⁰Whitfield to Meriwether, September 29, 1854, enclosed with ibid.

⁵¹Christopher Carson to Meriwether, November 28, 1854, N/350, ibid.

country of each without molestation if on a peaceable mission."⁵²

In an ironic postscript to the trouble with the Cheyennes, Damasio Salazar, father of the good-for-nothing who had been largely responsible for the tragic war, unabashedly asked Judge W. W. H. Davis for five thousand dollars in damages for the death of his son--"it had cost a great deal of money to rear and educate him." To the old rogue's dismay, however, the Judge flatly refused to consider his request.⁵³

After the hostilities with the Cheyennes the ciboleros restricted their hunts mainly to the Comanche country east of New Mexico and thus avoided further Indian opposition until after the close of the Civil War. Protests resumed then, however, when the ciboleros, replacing the rickety carretas with larger wagons that could each hold the dried meat of thirty to forty-five buffaloes,⁵⁴ began to make serious inroads on the buffalo herds. In 1866 Jesse Leavenworth, the agent for the Kiowas and Comanches, took note of this development:

⁵²Carson to J. L. Collins, January 28, 1858, Y/26, New Mexican Superintendency, Field Office Records, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

⁵³Davis, El Gringo, p. 293.

⁵⁴Hurt, "Buffalo Hunters," New Mexico Magazine, XIX, 35.

The Mexicans hitherto have been in the habit of . . . killing large numbers of buffalo, drying the meat and taking it back to New Mexico as an article of traffic, selling it for thirty or forty cents a pound--This I am trying to put a stop to--have already stopped two or three parties, one party having escaped me, and had gone back with their large wagons, drawn by four or five yoke of cattle each, loaded with dried meat--I have adopted these measures to satisfy the Indians, who have complained, very justly I think, of these acts.⁵⁵

When Leavenworth was unable to stop the encroachments by the ciboleros, some of the Indians again resorted to force. On January 13, 1868, a New Mexican from San José, Anirecha Lopez, stumbled into Fort Bascom in eastern New Mexico with a tale of a tragic massacre. He had been with a party of forty-eight Mexican hunters on the "Agua Azul" about two hundred miles east of Fort Bascom. One morning he and four other hunters from "a mesa about two miles from the camp" had seen an estimated two to three hundred Indians sweep down upon their unsuspecting comrades. The entire train of wagons and carts, thirty-three in number, was set afire and Lopez presumed that all the ciboleros were killed.⁵⁶ A group of Pueblo hunters, attacked by about three hundred Kiowas in eastern New Mexico on May 26, 1872, were more fortunate. By chance they were able to reach a nearby

⁵⁵Leavenworth to D. N. Cooley, June 5, 1866, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

⁵⁶J. V. Dubois to the Asst. Adj. Gen., District of New Mexico, January 15, 1868, Dist. of New Mexico, Fort Bascom, LS, Book No. 82, p. 54, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

cave in the side of a cliff and from its mouth beat off their attackers.⁵⁷

By the late 1860's the ciboleros also faced a serious threat from the military officials, who had become so highly upset by the illicit activities of the Comancheros that they were considering closing the plains to all New Mexicans. In early 1867 General James H. Carleton, commander of the District of New Mexico, described the problem:

The citizens here claim the right from custom running back for at least two centuries to make an annual trip to the buffalo country for a supply of meat for their families, and as an article of trade. They claim this right as our eastern people claim the right to go off upon the New Foundland Banks to fish. Have the military any legal right to stop them? Now this going off after buffalo meat is without a doubt made a pretext when in reality the principal object of the voyage is to traffic for stock.⁵⁸

Although the plains were never closed permanently to the ciboleros, there were sporadic interruptions of their vocation. During one of these in 1871 Vicente Garron, Indian governor of Isleta Pueblo, summed up the importance of the hunts to the New Mexicans when he pleaded simply but eloquently for his people's right to hunt the buffaloes:

⁵⁷Weekly New Mexican (Santa Fe), June 18, 1872.

⁵⁸Endorsement of Carleton on Major A. J. Alexander to Major Cyrus DeForrest, January 26, 1867, B/10, Dist. of New Mexico, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Since this is the only food that we have here in order to be able to live through the winter, there would be many poor families that would have neither beef nor venison to eat in this season and they would die of hunger. For that reason, Senor, I with all the pueblo ask for the license to be able to hunt the buffaloes in order to eat in the time of winter.⁵⁹

Garron's people were soon allowed to return to the plains, only to encounter a menace far more ominous than either Indians or cavalry. Anglo buffalo hunters, armed with deadly repeating rifles and motivated by an unquenchable thirst for gore and money, would commit unceasing carnage on the teeming herds until within the space of a few years only rows of bleached bones would be left as grim reminders of the great beasts that had so admirably served the ciboleros.

⁵⁹Vicente Garron to Nathaniel Pope, September 27, 1871, F/462, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

CHAPTER VI

THE ASCENDANCY OF THE ANGLOS, 1848-1861

Neither the New Mexican frontiersmen nor the Comanches were greatly affected when the Americans first assumed control of the territory: the Comancheros continued to traverse the plains, the ciboleros to hunt the buffalo, and and the Comanches to visit the little plazas along the Pecos. Although minor aggressions and chicaneries occasionally occurred, neither the New Mexicans nor the Indians, unlike the Americans, condemned the other race for the acts of individuals. As Kiowa chief Dohasen strikingly summed up the unique situation: "The Spaniards and myself are men; we do bad things towards one another sometimes, stealing horses and taking scalps, but we do not get mad and act the fool."¹

Not until June, 1851, did an American officer take notice of this strange alliance between the savage and the peon. A squadron of troops that had been dispatched to check an American merchant's complaint that the Comanches had entered the Pecos valley in large numbers found "the inhabitants in their fields and everything quiet, no one having any fear of the Comanches." Colonel John Munroe,

¹"Report of R. C. Miller, August 14, 1858," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1858 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1858), p. 451.

the troop commander, shrewdly recognized that since the residents at Anton Chico and the other settlements on the mesas carried on a continual trade with the Comanches it was to their interest to preserve peace with them.² But this harmonious co-existence with its unique and colorful patterns of life was soon to pass, for few of the incoming Anglo officials could understand or appreciate the fleeting glimpses they obtained of the compatible interplay of cultures.

From the time of Anza's treaty with Ecueraacapa, the New Mexican frontier had imperceptibly crept eastward, led by stolid pastores at the head of burgeoning flocks of sheep. By 1849 Captain Randolph Marcy found it difficult to find sufficient forage in the upper Canadian River valley because the pastores had recently made it a "pasture ground" for large flocks of sheep.³ Four years later Lieutenant A. W. Whipple, encamped on Plaza Larga Creek near present Tucumcari, reported that rancheros sometimes sent out large flocks of sheep to the valley.⁴ Although the leading historians of the western sheep industry, Charles W. Towne and Edward H. Wentworth, state that the pastores

²Munroe to Adj. Gen. Jones, July 13, 1851, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 348.

³"Report of Captain R. B. Marcy," 31 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 64, p. 189.

⁴"Lt. A. W. Whipple's Report upon a Route near the Thirty-Fifth Parallel," in Explorations and Surveys for a Railroad Route, III, 39.

by mid-century were driving their flocks as far down the Canadian as the central part of the Texas Panhandle,⁵ this seems unlikely. Only one of the emigrants who crossed the Panhandle so much as hinted at an encounter with pastores. W. H. Chamberlain, a young forty-niner, was startled to see striding into his camp northeast of present Amarillo three Mexicans, "rough looking fellows and the first we had seen," who said they lived at a "ranch" ten miles to the south;⁶ they were quite likely Comancheros or ciboleros rather than sheepherders.

The expansion of the sheep frontier was especially remarkable because of the defenselessness of the pastores. An American officer described a typical pastor whom he met on the Gallinas River:

A swarthy, copper-colored young Mexican, of eighteen or twenty years of age, most miserably clad, was driving them [sheep] slowly before him . . . Beside him was a gruff sheep dog, a couple of impudent puppies, and a most beautiful pet lamb. Moving correspondingly with and among the living mass was a whitish gray mule, which seemed to have imbibed the spirit of his master in meekness.⁷

⁵Charles W. Towne and Edward H. Wentworth, Shepherd's Empire (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1945), p. 124.

⁶Bloom, "From Lewisburg to California in 1849," New Mexico Historical Review, XX, 45.

⁷"Report of Lt. J. H. Simpson on the Route from Fort Smith to Santa Fe," 31 Cong., 1 Sess., Sen. Exec. Doc. No. 12 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1850), p. 18.

Lieutenant J. W. Abert in 1846 similarly described some sheepherders as mere lads, "miserably clad in tattered blankets," and armed only with bows and arrows.⁸ Such helpless intruders maintained themselves on the fringes of the frontier only at the Comanches' sufferance.

The eastward advance of the pastores was temporarily checked by the bloodthirsty Apaches rather than by the Comanches. Sweeping down out of their mountain fastnesses, the Apaches raided on an unbelievable scale, between 1846 and 1850 stealing an estimated 450,000 sheep.⁹ In a typically insolent foray, a party of Jicarilla Apaches in 1851 filed boldly into the Pecos valley, seized a flock of one thousand sheep, and after slaughtering seven hundred, demanded pay for sparing the others.¹⁰ The eastward expansion, thus halted, did not resume until the late 1850's; then it was spearheaded by Anglos who, unlike the pastores, would encounter determined Comanche resistance.

Until aroused by encroaching Anglo ranchers, the Comanches were so peaceful that the military officials in New Mexico seemed scarcely aware of their existence. In 1853

⁸"Report of Lt. J. W. Abert of His Examination of New Mexico," 30 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 41, p. 443.

⁹Towne and Wentworth, Shepherd's Empire, p. 153.

¹⁰Calhoun to Lea, March 22, 1851, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 299.

Captain John Pope, later to win fame in the Civil War, stated that the Comanches, except for some small groups who occasionally visited in the Pecos valley, had "been little heard of in this Territory during the past two years, and have committed no depredations whatever within that period."¹¹

In contrast to the military's apparent lack of concern, the New Mexican Indian agents, who had acquired a considerable knowledge of the Comanches from Pueblo traders, were keenly aware of the importance of maintaining cordial relations between the tribe and the New Mexicans. Superintendent James Calhoun often plied his Pueblo visitors with sugar, coffee, and whiskey to obtain information about the Comanches.¹² Don Carlos Vigil, the Indian governor of Tesuque Pueblo, was apparently the most responsive of the Pueblos--if such frequent entries in the agency records as "Carlos, his wife, brother, and child, three meals each sugar and coffee--\$3.43 3/4"¹³ can be believed. In return for the agents' hospitality, Carlos, who reportedly understood the Comanche language and was "generally" admitted

¹¹Robert M. Utley (ed.), "Captain John Pope's Plan of 1853 for the Frontier Defense of New Mexico," Arizona and the West, V (Summer, 1963), 156.

¹²Calhoun to Lea, April 29, 1851, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 339.

¹³Abel, "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 192.

to their councils, served as an unofficial emissary to the Plains Indians. In June, 1850, Calhoun, upon hearing that the Comanches planned to hold a council on the Canadian at Sutton's Fort, "twelve days travel" from Santa Fe, sent Carlos to attend it,¹⁴ but there is no recorded report by the Pueblo.

Calhoun, anxious to try his skill at personal diplomacy, in 1851 held a brief conference with the Comanches. Hearing in May that some of these people were gathering at the Bosque Redondo for a "grand council" with the Apaches, he dispatched a trader to ask their leaders to come to Santa Fe. In response to the invitation, Chief Pluma de Aguilar (Eagle Feather) and several warriors visited Calhoun on May 29, sold him a Mexican captive, and promised that "nothing but death" could prevent their return the following day. That night, however, the Indians, falsely warned by some "infamous individuals" that the Americans planned to kill them, slipped quietly out of the city, leaving behind their animals, robes, arms, and provisions.¹⁵ Calhoun, mystified and dejected at the sudden departure, blamed it upon a plot by native New Mexicans to stir up enmity between the

¹⁴Calhoun to Brown, June 15, 1850, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 212. Sutton's Fort may have referred to William Bent's old Adobe Fort or Adobe Walls northeast of present Borger, Texas.

¹⁵Calhoun to Lea, June 30, 1851, in ibid., p. 368.

Americans and the Comanches. Although his conjecture may have been partially true, the Indians also may have feared a repetition of the massacre of their tribesmen in San Antonio in 1840 under similar circumstances. In an effort to alleviate the Comanches' distrust as much as possible, Calhoun inventoried and sent their abandoned property to them by Don Carlos.¹⁶

Before he had any chance of holding another conference with the Comanches, Calhoun had to surrender his duties to his secretary, John Greiner, and leave New Mexico in a vain attempt to reach his home in Georgia before death overtook him. Greiner, a political appointee whose most noteworthy accomplishment was writing the "famous log cabin campaign song in 1840,"¹⁷ was haunted by the way in which a New Mexican mob in 1847 had butchered Indian Superintendent Charles Bent. Ever on the alert for indications of a similar uprising,¹⁸ he became greatly agitated in the spring of

¹⁶Calhoun to Lt. O. L. Chapman, June 9, 1851, in ibid., p. 356.

¹⁷Obituary notice on Greiner, Santa Fe Weekly Post, May 27, 1871.

¹⁸On October 1, 1851, Greiner wrote to a friend: "Here I am in the Palace of Santa Fe If I succeed in getting safely back again among my friends under Providence I shall consider myself a highly favored man! Between the savage Indians, the treacherous Mexicans and the outlawed Americans a man has to run the gauntlet in this country. Three governors within twelve years have lost their heads (Perez, Gonzales and Bent) and there are men here at present who talk so flippantly of taking Governor Calhoun's head as though it were of no consequence at

1852 when Don Carlos of Tesuque reported that the celebrated Comanche chief Baja Sol and "the President of Mexico" had entered into an alliance against the United States. According to the rumor, Baja Sol also intended to invite the other roving tribes of the Southwest and the Pueblos to join the league.¹⁹ Greiner immediately reported the plot to Colonel E. V. "Bull Head" Sumner, the military commander in New Mexico, but the Colonel discounted the possibility and asserted that he had enough troops to handle any emergency that might arise.²⁰

all. . . . There is a great and deep gulf between the Americans and Mexicans There is hardly an American here that stirs abroad without being armed to the teeth." Tod Galloway (ed.), "Private Letters of a Government Official in the Southwest," Journal of American History, III (July, 1909), 546.

¹⁹Abel, "The Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 192; Greiner to Sumner, April 4, 1852, in Abel, The Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 521. The apparent basis for Don Carlos's story was an agreement between Baja Sol and the governor of Chihuahua in which the latter was to pay the Comanches for killing Mescalero Apaches. Ralph A. Smith, "The Scalp Hunter in the Borderlands, 1835-1850," Arizona and the West, VI (Spring, 1964), 19. William H. Emory, engaged in surveying the boundary between the United States and Mexico, also commented upon the negotiations between Chihuahua and Baja Sol. At Presidio, Texas, on July 8, 1852, he learned that "Chihuahua, not receiving the protection it was entitled to from the central government of Mexico made an independent treaty with the Comanches, the practical effect of which was to aid and abet the Indians in their war upon Durango." Emory, "Report on the United States and Mexican Boundary Survey," 34 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 135 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1855), p. 86.

²⁰Sumner to Asst. Adjt. Gen. Jones, April 9, 1852, in Abel, Official Correspondence of James S. Calhoun, p. 521.

Greiner, however, was not reassured. He spent an anxious summer admonishing his subordinates to remain alert: "Talk around among the wild Indians and judge for yourself if there is any diplomacy carried on between them and other tribes. But say nothing--do nothing--to excite suspicion in the breast of anyone!"²¹ Greiner felt somewhat relieved when some Pueblos returned from the plains with word that the Comanches were "behaving well" and Pablo Romero, leader of the Taos Pueblo, assured him that the traditional enmity of the Apaches and Utes towards the Comanches would preclude any alliance.²² His optimism was dispelled in August, however, by a Pueblo report that the Comanches were moving towards the Bosque Redondo to hold a conference with the Mescalero Apaches and that they wished to make peace with the Navahoes.²³ Upset more than ever over the possibility of an Indian alliance, he sent a Pueblo trader to persuade the Comanches to see him before talking with the Navahoes. Although nothing came of this endeavor, Greiner finally realized that his fears had been unjustified when he learned in September that the Comanches and Utes were at war.

The end of military indifference to the Comanches was

²¹Greiner to Baird, April 7, 1852, in ibid., p. 520.

²²Abel, "Journal of John Greiner," Old Santa Fe, III, 194-195.

²³Ibid., pp. 234-241.

foreshadowed by two mid-decade developments. Anglo ranchers began moving onto the eastern border of New Mexico-- Lucien Maxwell and Samuel Watrous into the upper Canadian valley and Alexander Hatch, James M. Giddings, and Preston Beck into the Pecos valley below Anton Chico; and simultaneously, large numbers of Comanches were being forced to retire towards the New Mexican frontier. In 1855 Colonel John Garland, commander of the Department of New Mexico, complained that Comanches "driven from Texas" were hovering about the eastern border.²⁴ Later in the year Governor David Meriwether was visited by some Comanches who claimed that they "had been driven from their homeland by the Osages" and stated that they wished to remain permanently in New Mexico.²⁵ Meriwether ordered them to return to Texas, but to no avail.

A rash of minor incidents accompanied the Comanche intrusion. In May the Comanche bands of Chiefs Sanaco and Pahanca visited the Pecos settlements and voluntarily surrendered a prisoner, but on their departure "broke up" the ranch of Beck and Giddings.²⁶ The following month some

²⁴Garland to Asst. Adj. Gen. L. Thomas, July 31, 1855, in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1855, p. 72.

²⁵Meriwether to Manypenny, September 18, 1855, N/527, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

²⁶Meriwether to Manypenny, May 28, 1855, N/439, ibid.

three hundred Comanches stopped at the same ranch and proceeded to hold a barbecue for which they "borrowed" two oxen, one calf, one "fine American boar hog," twenty-nine pigs, and sixteen chickens. One of the women at the ranch tried to stop them from killing the chickens, but they nonchalantly drove her away with two arrow shots and went ahead with their feast. Upon being asked about the incident later, the Comanche chiefs blamed it upon "bad Indians" whom they could not control.²⁷ In July a band of Buffalo Eaters (Kotsoteka Comanches) visited Lucien Maxwell's ranch on Rayado Creek and, according to Maxwell, killed two hundred sheep, stole a mule and all the loose ranch property, took several articles from his employees, and arrogantly promised to return when the "corn was ripe." Despite the apparent hostility of the Comanches, several things about the raid puzzled Governor Meriwether: Maxwell had voluntarily given the Comanches food and clothing, he had admitted trading horses with them after the occurrence of the alleged depredations, and the Indians when intercepted by soldiers had displayed a certificate of "good conduct" signed by Maxwell.²⁸ The Comanches did not consider these

²⁷Giddings to Meriwether, November 7, 1855, Indian Depredation Case No. 2653, Records of the United States Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

²⁸C. Carson to Meriwether, July 25, 1855, N/481, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

incidents as raids. For generations they had helped themselves to foodstuffs while visiting in New Mexico, and the native New Mexicans had learned to accept their dinner stops with grace. The Anglo ranchers, however, stridently demanded military protection.

In response to the complaints, Colonel Garland in September dispatched Major J. H. Brooks with 150 soldiers to the eastern frontier with instructions to warn the Comanches against hovering around the borders of New Mexico and to attack them if they committed any act "worthy of chastisement." Although this order was temporarily suspended a week later because the troops were not "properly instructed and disciplined,"²⁹ the roles had been cast for the drama to be played during the balance of the decade. The Comanches would continue to visit the New Mexican frontier settlements; the American inhabitants to protest; and the military to oppose the Indian incursions. Silent onlookers at first, the native New Mexicans would gradually align with the Comanches.

Resuming their unwelcomed dinner visits in September, 1856, some Comanches under Chief Esaquipa camped on the Gallinas River and helped themselves to the corn on Alexander Hatch's newly-established ranch. Hatch persuaded them

²⁹Nichols to Brooks, September 29, 1855, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 9, p. 403, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Nichols to Brooks, October 4, 1855, ibid., Vol. 9, p. 413.

to leave by giving them an ox and "some other staples,"³⁰ but then other parties, including some Kiowas on their way to fight the Navahoes, stopped at the ranch and demanded food. As a result, Hatch "suffered much from the loss of corn, whole fields of which the Indians . . . destroyed."³¹

Besieged by both Hatch and James Giddings for protection, Garland sent Captain W. L. Elliott to survey the area for a suitable fort site. Elliott found that Giddings' ranch, located on the Pecos River twenty-five miles below Anton Chico, had little stock, few residents, and fewer signs of Indians. On the other hand, Hatch's ranch, located on the Gallinas River thirty-three miles southeast of Las Vegas and thirteen miles northeast of Anton Chico, offered an excellent site. Its buildings, Elliott reported, would afford "comfortable shelter" for a company of troops and their horses, there were ample water and firewood, and Hatch had enough corn (despite the inroads of the Indians!) to supply the troops through the winter.³² His recommendation accepted, Elliott in November established the new post, naming it Fort Biddle. The name, however, was disallowed

³⁰Hatch to Garland, September 24, 1856, H/20, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

³¹Stephen Baca to Garland, September 29, 1856, B/37, ibid.

³²Elliott to Nichols, October 31, 1856, E/32, ibid.

by his superiors; consequently, the post, although occupied by as many as four companies of troops, was referred to simply as Hatch's Ranch until its abandonment during the Civil War.

The establishment of the new post was a boon both to Alexander Hatch personally and to the entire eastern frontier. The troops not only protected Hatch's corn fields and stock but, according to Lieutenant J. H. Beale, a young army engineer who visited the post in 1858, they furnished him with a lucrative market:

Hatch settled a year or two since on the Gallinas, then an unsettled country, and by the fruitful product of the country has made himself independent. When we arrived he had already collected some ten thousand bushels of corn which he was selling at over one dollar a bushel to the government and others. . . . and being a shrewd man makes large profits by taking contracts for the delivery of grain or selling it at his house.³³

Hatch profited further from his unique arrangement with the military by serving as sutler for the garrison.³⁴ Other Anglo ranchers, emboldened by the existence of the fort, moved to the Gallinas valley, and soon an influx of Mexican settlers moved in to minister to the thirsts and appetites of off-duty soldiers. Pleasantly situated on the Gallinas

³³Lt. J. H. Beale, "Report on Construction of a Wagon Road," 36 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 42 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1859), p. 30.

³⁴Hatch to Colonel E. R. S. Canby, December 3, 1861, H/39, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

three miles above Hatch's Ranch, the Mexican settlement, Chaparito, became one of the strongholds of the Comancheros.

Perhaps due to the presence of the garrison, the New Mexican frontier during 1857 was relatively peaceful. A few "friendly" Kiowas stopped at Giddings and Beck's ranch in early February, but they left after being given some beef.³⁵ J. L. Collins, the new superintendent of Indian affairs in New Mexico, was not entirely pleased when a few Comanches and Kiowas who visited the Mexican plazas treated the residents in a "menacing manner," but, he hastened to add, they complied peacefully when warned by the military to leave.³⁶ Later in the year some Kiowas, questioned by Indian agent Robert Miller about a few depredations near Las Vegas, readily admitted committing the crimes and promised to "return in kind" what had been stolen.³⁷

Underneath the apparent tranquility, the Comanches and their Kiowa allies were becoming increasingly resentful of the intruding Anglo ranchers. An old frontiersman years afterwards recalled meeting in 1857 a grim-faced Comanche chief who declared that while he lived he would allow no

³⁵Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, February 21, 1857.

³⁶"Report of J. L. Collins, August 30, 1857," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1857, p. 545.

³⁷"Report of R. C. Miller, October 14, 1857," in ibid., p. 431.

settlements east of the Gallinas.³⁸ With the exception of one or two inconclusive encounters,³⁹ however, the eastern frontier remained calm until March, 1858, when the Comanches suddenly unleashed their pent-up fury on the encroachers. Samuel Watrous, lured by the deceptive quiet of the previous year, had sent his foreman, a Mr. Bunsham, to establish a ranch on the Canadian River about 130 miles below Fort Union. When Bunsham rejected their ultimatum to abandon the ranch, the Comanches decided to make an example of him. Three "Mexican captives" who had long lived among the Comanches secured jobs at the ranch; a few days later, four Indians arrived and pretended they wished to trade. After the renegade Mexicans lured Bunsham from his house unarmed, the Comanches speedily cut him down, burned the ranch buildings, and ran off the stock. They allowed the legitimate Mexican ranch-hands to return unharmed to the settlements

³⁸Affidavit of John Odam, August 30, 1894, Indian Depredation Case No. 3252, Records of the United States Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

³⁹In early 1858 troops from Fort Craig surprised some Kiowas who while returning from a raid on the Navahoes had stopped near Valverde to dine on borrowed cattle. The Americans killed several of the Kiowas and captured their wounded chief. After the Kiowas began to grow restless, the recovered chief was released with instructions to explain to his people that the army "neither knew nor cared to know" the identity of the Kiowas before the late attack and did not wish to have war with them. Any Kiowas found west of the Pecos, however, would be considered hostile. Nichols to Colonel W. W. Loring, March 8, 1858, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 194, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

with instructions to tell the Americans that "they should not settle there, for the Comanches would kill any who attempted it."⁴⁰ To emphasize that the raid was not the act of a few impetuous young braves, the Comanche leaders sent word to the American officers that the destruction of the ranch "had been resolved on in council beforehand," and that they were determined to prevent settlements east of Hatch's Ranch.⁴¹ Although he responded to the raid by reinforcing the garrison at Hatch's Ranch, Colonel Garland's reaction was remarkably mild: The attack "was expected by many, and Mr. Watrous was advised not to undertake a settlement so distant from protection."⁴²

The following year when the Anglos undertook to survey the Canadian valley, the Comanches dramatically re-emphasized their opposition to the eastward expansion of the settlements. R. E. Clements, the contractor for the survey, began the task in early July despite warnings not to proceed without military protection. The Comanches, understanding quite well that the surveyors' chains would be followed by settlers, immediately dispatched a war party that without firing a shot captured the government group.

⁴⁰Loring to Nichols, March 31, 1858, L/26, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Lt. L. L. Baker to Nichols, April 28, 1858, B/28, ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Garland to L. Thomas, May 1, 1858, in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1858, p. 288.

For four hours the Comanches debated the Americans' fate, while Clements fervently promised to abandon the survey if spared and his Mexican employees (whose own safety was never in jeopardy) also pleaded for his life. After taking all the surveyors' property except their compass, chains, and animals, and sternly warning them that he could call together five hundred warriors "by one smoke," the Comanche leader ordered their release.⁴³ With the army still unable to furnish an escort, Clements, to the apparent disappointment of no one, called off the survey. Collins, who had been a veteran Santa Fe trader before his appointment as Indian superintendent, observed pointedly that no settlement could have been established in the Canadian valley without the protection of a fort. When a fort was located there, he asserted, "it will be time enough to complete the surveys."⁴⁴

Collins quite likely was irked at the surveyors because they had jeopardized his plan to hold a conference with the Comanches. The previous year he had journeyed to

⁴³Capt. Thomas Claiburn to Thomas Wilkens, July 4, 1859, C/16, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Collins to Greenwood, July 10, 1859, C/41, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives; "Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, November 30, 1859," in Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1859, 36 Cong., 1 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1859), p. 188.

⁴⁴Collins to Greenwood, July 9, 1859, C/41, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Washington and in conjunction with Major J. S. Phelps, an influential congressman from Missouri, had persuaded Postmaster General Aaron Brown to approve a mail and stage coach line from Neosho, Missouri, through Santa Fe to California.⁴⁵ Jacob Hall, who obtained the contract to carry the mail over the new route, had left Neosho on November 5, 1858, for the initial trip--only to be captured by Comanches who burned his wagon and the mail. Fortunately, Hall escaped and arrived in St. Louis in March, 1859, to tell of his misfortune;⁴⁶ but Collins and Phelps obviously had to placate the Comanches before the stage line could succeed. Congressman Phelps thereupon persuaded A. B. Greenwood, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to send Collins to treat with the Comanches and then hurried to New Mexico to participate in the negotiations.⁴⁷

In preparing for the conference, Collins shrewdly used the capture of the surveyors to obtain the cooperation of Colonel B. L. Bonneville, the new military commander in New Mexico. Claiming that the incident indicated that the Comanches were "ready at any time to commence hostilities,"

⁴⁵J. S. Phelps to Greenwood, March 1, 1858, P/754, ibid.

⁴⁶LeRoy Hafen, The Overland Mail, 1849-1869 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1926), p. 118.

⁴⁷Greenwood to Collins, May 18, 1859, New Mexico Superintendency, LR, Field Office Records, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

he pointed out to the Colonel that the province was ill-prepared for a "rupture" with the Plains Indians.⁴⁸ Bonneville, readily convinced by the argument, agreed to accompany the negotiators.

On July 18, 1859, Collins, Bonneville, and Phelps left Santa Fe with an escort of 130 soldiers. At Hatch's Ranch they were informed by Collins' Mexican scout that the Comanches upon learning of the expedition had become alarmed. Pressing on to the Comanche camp and finding that the Indians had fled towards the east "in great confusion," the Americans followed their trail down the Canadian to the mouth of Utah Creek before turning back.⁴⁹ The Comanches, afraid that the troops intended to punish them for the capture of the surveyors and painfully aware that no less than three of their tribesmen's villages had been destroyed by expeditions from Texas within the past year, had no intention of awaiting the approach of an armed column.

Their plans thwarted, Collins and Phelps parted company on July 27; Phelps with an escort of thirty cavalrymen returned to Missouri by way of the Antelope Hills, and Collins and Bonneville veered off to the south and returned to

⁴⁸Collins to Bonneville, July 11, 1859, C/51, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴⁹Collins to Greenwood, August 4, 1859, C/82, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Santa Fe over the Fort Smith road. They met along the way thirty or forty Comanches who were permitted to pass because there was "no chief" with them. At Hatch's Ranch, the officials learned to their chagrin that these Indians had killed one of the drovers with a herd of five hundred cattle that had recently been driven up the Canadian from the Creek Nation.⁵⁰

In the autumn the Comanches launched their most serious attacks yet on the New Mexican frontier, hitting for the first time the New Mexican rancheros as well as the Americans. Striking the ranch of Don Feliciano Guterous in the Cañon de Quele on November 20, they drove off the herders and butchered a large number of sheep. Four days later they attacked the ranch of Don Feliz Chavez on the Rio Conchas, "seized and stripped the herders," killed two head of cattle, and destroyed the ranch property. These were not isolated cases; all along the frontier the Comanches swarmed, killing cattle, stealing horses, and pillaging.⁵¹ But out of respect for their traditional friendship with the New Mexicans, they did not kill a single herder. That would come if their warnings went unheeded.

Stepping up its efforts in response to the pleas of the frontiersmen, the military was seriously handicapped by

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Collins to Greenwood, December 5, 1859, C/255, ibid.

false reports from New Mexican traders as to the whereabouts of the Indians. Many of the officers soon felt that the Mexicans, in the words of Lieutenant Colonel J. V. Reeve, were "a set of villainous vagabonds,"⁵² aiding the Indians. All efforts to intercept incoming Comanches were futile until June, 1860, when a force of fifty infantrymen surprised about one hundred Indians enroute to trade at the Mexican towns on the Pecos. At a range of only 150 yards the troopers fired a volley that killed three or four and wounded others, but the rest of the Indians escaped.⁵³ Levi Kiethly, an Indian agent who was at Hatch's Ranch, later claimed that the Indians had not merited the punishment. The Comanches, he insisted, had come in with their families and pack animals to trade, and when fired upon had run off "without making any hostile demonstration."⁵⁴

Meanwhile, the New Mexican military forces had been assigned a key role in an ambitious three-pronged offensive against the Comanches and Kiowas. Three columns of six

⁵²Reeve to Lt. J. D. Wilkins, November 24, 1858, R/35, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁵³"Report of the Adjutant General, November 20, 1860," in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1860, 36 Cong., 2 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1860), p. 204.

⁵⁴Michael Steck to General James H. Carleton, November 5, 1864, MS, Papers of Michael Steck, 1818-1883 (9 file boxes, University of New Mexico Special Collections, Albuquerque), Box 4.

companies each (roughly 250 to 300 men) were to strike into Comancheria from different directions, hoping to catch the Indians between their converging forces. Major John Sedgwick was to lead an expedition southwestward from Fort Riley, Kansas; Captain S. D. Sturgis was to lead a force northwestward from Fort Arbuckle, Indian Territory; and Major C. F. Ruff was to push down the Canadian River from Hatch's Ranch. The commanders were ordered to hold no "intercourse" with the Indians: "make a fierce pursuit, overtake them, and attack them."⁵⁵ Such a campaign might have seriously crippled the Comanches and Kiowas, but the columns were poorly coordinated and severely hampered by the extremely dry weather. The two eastern columns, although marching hundreds of miles, fought only one battle: Captain Sturgis's force on August 6 engaged a party of Kiowas and Comanches on the Republican River in southern Nebraska, killing twenty-nine Indians and losing two troopers.⁵⁶

From the inception of the campaign, the native New Mexicans, aware of the threat to their friendly relations

⁵⁵General Order No. 6, March 15, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., Orders, Vol. 39, p. 345, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Col. E. V. Sumner to Major John Sedgwick, May 9, 1860, in LeRoy Hafen and Ann W. Hafen (eds.), Relations with the Indians of the Plains, 1857-1861, Vol. IX of The Far West and the Rockies Historical Series, p. 197.

⁵⁶Captain S. D. Sturgis to Capt. Jno. Withers, August 12, 1860, in ibid., pp. 251-254.

and commerce with the Comanches, tried to sabotage the Canadian River expedition. A Comanchero on June 7 told Major J. S. Simonson at Fort Union that the Comanches and Kiowas were camped in great numbers on the Cimarron Ciba, ten or fifteen miles from Maxwell's Ranch. Simonson, however, refused to believe the report and instead charged that there was "not a doubt" that the Indians were "well posted" by the New Mexicans on the movements of the troops and the strength of the garrisons in eastern New Mexico.⁵⁷

Major Ruff, however, was less suspicious of the Comancheros. Having left Hatch's Ranch on June 1, he established a sub-depot (named Camp Jackson) sixty miles to the east on the Canadian. Assured by "various sources" that six to twelve thousand Comanches were camped on the Pecos River below the Bosque Redondo, Ruff on June 8 altered his plans and led his force southwestward to the junction of the Pecos with the Rio Hondo below present Roswell. He found neither Indians nor "Indian signs." To add to his frustration, so many of his horses broke down because of a mysterious disease called "black-tongue" and the lack of forage that half his command had to walk back. Finally arriving at Camp Jackson on July 4, the duped commander vented his fury on the Mexicans who had led him astray:

⁵⁷Major J. S. Simonson to Lt. D. H. Maury, June 7, 1860, S/60, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

The representations were made by men who live by trading with the Comanche Indians, and who deprecate the loss of that trade . . . more than they seek our friendship; lying Mexicans who never tell the truth, if a falsehood can possibly be made to answer the purpose.⁵⁸

Lieutenant J. V. Dubois, one of Ruff's subordinates, was more lyrical and only slightly less impassioned in confiding his outraged feelings to his diary: "alas for those who put their trust in Mexicans. . . . There is no truth in them. Their evident intention was to take us away from the Indians and they have succeeded."⁵⁹

Major Ruff's troubles had only begun. Leaving the depot again on July 10, he proceeded down the Canadian with 225 cavalrymen and two highly unsatisfactory ex-Comanchero guides. The fourth day out he encountered six Indians who raised a white flag and rode around in a small circle--the Comanche sign that they desired a peaceful talk. Ruff, however, having nothing of a "friendly character" to say to them, ignored their overtures and pressed on in search of their village. His Mexican guides led him almost directly to a large Comanche camp which he destroyed; but the Comanches scattered in three directions. After exhausting his

⁵⁸"Report of Major Ruff, July 3, 1860," in Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1860, p. 58.

⁵⁹George P. Hammond (ed.), Campaigns in the West, 1856-1861; The Journal and Letters of Colonel John Van Deusen Dubois (Tucson: Arizona Pioneers Historical Society, 1949), p. 106.

horses, which were still in poor shape and no match for the lean Indian ponies, in vain pursuit, Ruff, ever ready with an excuse, blamed his failure to surprise the village on the two Comanchero guides:

It is a matter of keenest regret, to feel assured as I do, that our failure to capture, or destroy this entire body of Indians . . . is solely to be attributed to a want of Guides, had I had with me, six good Guides who knew the country, not afraid to proceed a mile or two in advance of my column, there could be no doubt whatever that the surprise and destruction of this large body of Indians would have been completed.⁶⁰

Unwilling to concede defeat, Ruff followed doggedly after the elusive Indians, hoping to surprise them by a night attack. But his Mexican guides, he discovered to his disgust, could not trail at night and thus he lost another opportunity for "inflicting full and summary chastisement." After camping for a time at William Bent's old adobe fort,⁶¹ about twenty miles east of present Stinnett, Texas, Ruff reluctantly turned back. With only 139 of 293 horses still serviceable, he dared not venture farther because of his lack of guides, grass, and water.

⁶⁰Ruff to Maury, July 30, 1860, R/21, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶¹Ibid. Ruff was one of the few to describe this obscure post. He reported that it was "a building of nine rooms, the walls of which are in good preservation, the west wall is 100 feet, and the north wall 180 feet long; nothing of the woodwork of this building remains." Ruff also noted that nine miles up the Canadian from the adobe fort there were the "remains of another fort or trading post, called the 'wood fort' by the Mexicans."

Upon returning to Hatch's Ranch, Ruff, his health temporarily broken by the arduous campaign,⁶² relinquished his command to Lieutenant Colonel A. L. Porter, who energetically refitted the expedition and resumed the search for the Comanches. Taking a lesson from Ruff's unfortunate experience with Comanchero guides, Porter replaced them with "Old Leroux,"⁶³ a veteran mountain man who was confident that he could find the Indians. In an effort to surprise the Comanches, Porter moved in a sweeping circle northeastward to the Rabbit Ear Mountains, then southeastward into the Canadian valley, and back to the New Mexican settlements--without seeing a single Comanche. Baffled by their repeated failures, the military leaders reluctantly called off the campaign.

Soon afterwards, a band of Comanches, including many women and children, unwisely travelled to Chaparito to trade. The officer at Hatch's Ranch,⁶⁴ seeing his chance to avenge the humiliations of the preceding summer, dispatched a select body of troops who found the Indians

⁶²Hammond, Campaigns in the West, p. 108.

⁶³Antoine Leroux probably ranked next to Kit Carson as an army guide in the early Southwest. As he died in 1861, this was probably his last assignment. See Grant Foreman, "Antoine Leroux, New Mexican Guide," New Mexico Historical Review, XVI (October, 1941), 367-378.

⁶⁴The identity was not disclosed in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, November 3, 1860, which is the source for this account. The army records do not mention it.

asleep in the courtyard of Don Feliz Ulibarri', a local rico. Opening fire, the soldiers killed two and wounded one of the Indians before the survivors could take refuge in Ulibarri's house. The troops then appropriated the horses and mules of the Comanches and reportedly sold them the next day in Las Vegas. The Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, in reporting this bizarre episode, vehemently denounced the action: "There is a culpability on those who ordered the attack that will not readily be cleared up. The Indians were among the whites on a peaceful trading expedition . . . the attack as made was unjustifiable and wanton . . . a miserable military exploit."⁶⁵

In retaliation for this wanton attack, the Comanches struck anew at the frontier ranches. Within a few days they had captured more than a thousand head of cattle in the Canadian valley, including the entire governmental herd of 460 head.⁶⁶ When stealing the government's cattle, the Comanches, cognizant that their vendetta was with the Anglos, carefully refrained from harming the Mexican herdsman, telling them that if they remained quiet they would not be injured but that if they interfered they would all be killed.⁶⁷ Despite a belated cavalry pursuit, the Indians

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Lt. D. H. Maury to Col. T. T. Fauntleroy, October 31, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, pp. 491-492, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶⁷Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, November 3, 1860.

escaped unscathed with the cattle.

At the beginning of 1861 the New Mexico military finally won a significant victory over the Comanches. Upon learning of a Comanche encampment on the Cimarron River, Lieutenant Colonel George B. Crittenden, Commander at Fort Union, prepared to move against them "so quietly that none of the garrison knew his purpose," except the officers concerned.⁶⁸ Successfully eluding the watchful eyes of the Comancheros, Crittenden relentlessly pushed his picked force of sixty men through bitter cold and over a country "previously unknown to any but to the Indians" and the Mexican traders⁶⁹ until, eight days after leaving, he located a Comanche camp of 150 lodges. In a surprise dawn attack on January 4, Crittenden destroyed the village, killed ten Indians, and wounded many more. His own loss totalled three men "slightly wounded." Unsatisfied with the capture of forty Indian ponies, he lamented that if his force had been large enough to divide he could have taken the entire herd.⁷⁰ Indian Superintendent Collins, upon receiving the report of the engagement, conjectured that the

⁶⁸Fauntleroy to L. Thomas, January 12, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 535, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶⁹Dabney H. Maury, Recollections of a Virginian in the Mexican, Indian, and Civil Wars (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1894), p. 118.

⁷⁰Crittenden to Fauntleroy, January 9, 1861, C/7, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Indians had probably suffered more than the military realized. The loss of 150 lodges and a large number of robes just before the outbreak of cold weather, he stated, might cause many of them to perish.⁷¹

Temporarily subdued by Crittenden's attack, the Comanches sent peace offers by several Comanchero parties. Although the officers at Fort Union ignored the offers and pleaded for more troops, Colonel T. T. Fauntleroy, commander of the Department, was forced to concentrate his available strength at Fort Stanton to suppress a Mescalero Apache uprising. Consequently, he had to curb his warlike subordinates by informing them that peace was to be the new policy towards the Comanches.⁷²

While Fauntleroy was considering the possibility of a peace conference, his junior officers became incensed at the Indian department. In February the troops at Hatch's Ranch apprehended a trading party enroute to the plains that had passed "entirely beyond" any settlement. The traders, Santa Clara and Tesuque Pueblos led by Juan Vigil, brother of the highly respected Don Carlos, carried a pass from their agent authorizing them to visit the Comanches

⁷¹Collins to Mix, January 27, 1861, C/4, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

⁷²Maury to Crittenden, February 23, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 551, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

"unmolested."⁷³ The military officers, however, were infuriated that the agents would issue passes to "Mexicans" (they apparently had not learned to distinguish Pueblos from New Mexicans) to go to the plains and traffic with the Comanches, with whom the "government is at open war." By means of the trade, they charged, the Comanches received ammunition and information of troops movements in return for mules and horses stolen from Texas.⁷⁴ In their entire tirade, however, they failed to indicate that any contraband goods had been found on the accosted traders.

Despite their distrust of the Comancheros, the military officials had to use one to carry peace overtures to the Comanches. On April 5 Fauntleroy asked William B. Moore, a veteran army contractor living at Tecolote, to send a reliable Mexican trader to invite the Comanche chiefs to a conference. Fauntleroy issued a pass to the emissary "so he will not be molested . . . by Troops" and instructions to emphasize to the Indians that the proposal was in response to their many requests for peace.⁷⁵ Before

⁷³Pass issued to Juan D. Vigil, February 18, 1861, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, Pueblo Agency, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

⁷⁴Lt. Col. B. S. Roberts to Maury, February 27, 1861, R/22, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Fauntleroy to Thomas, March 3, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 562, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁷⁵Maury to Moore, April 5, 1861, ibid., p. 563.

the details for the conference could be worked out, Fauntleroy was replaced by Colonel W. W. Loring, a Confederate sympathizer seemingly as concerned with protecting Texas as New Mexico from the Comanches.⁷⁶ While making his plans, Loring had to squelch an attempt by the settlers on the Pecos to make their own peace with the Comanches. Alexander Hatch, alarmed that Crittenden's attack might provoke retaliatory raids in the spring and doubtful that the secession-riven military could protect the frontier, sent word to the Comanches that neither he nor his neighboring settlers had had anything to do with the attack and invited them to his ranch for peace talks. Upon learning of Hatch's plan, Colonel Loring had a scouting party turn back the Comanches and went ahead with his own preparations.⁷⁷

On May 10 and 11 the conference was held at Alamo Gordo Creek, a small tributary of the Pecos, with the government represented by Captain R. A. Wainwright and Superintendent Collins, and the Indians by Chiefs Esaquipa, Pluma

⁷⁶Loring to Col. E. D. Townsend, April 22, 1861, ibid., Vol. 11, p. 1. Loring reported that the Comanches "are very desirous of living in peace with the people of this Territory, and have sent in many messages to that effect. And as the Texans are not said to be treating with them, I have thought it best for the interests of this Department, to listen to their propositions and to suspend for the present, operations against them. In any agreement I shall make with these savages, I shall stipulate for the exemption of the People of Texas from their incursions."

⁷⁷Loring to Lt. A. R. McKrae, April 25, 1861, ibid., p. 3.

de Aguilar, and Paracasqua.⁷⁸ The Comanches, willing to pay almost any price for peace, in return for an armistice promised to stop their depredations, to stay away from wagon trains on the Santa Fe trail, to keep away from the settlements of eastern New Mexico, and to trade only at Fort Union or at "such places as shall be designated by proper authorities." Seeking to sever the intimate relations between them and the New Mexicans, Wainwright and Collins warned the Comanches that "if they listened to any other people" besides the military or acted upon their advice they would "get in trouble."⁷⁹

The truce thus established collapsed almost immediately. Failing to grasp the full implications of the treaty, Chief Esaquipa, only a few days after signing it, led a trading party to Chaparito. Captain Thomas Duncan, the commander at Hatch's Ranch, ordered the Comanches to return at once to the plains. Evidently they did not promptly oblige for Duncan attacked as soon as he "got his men ready." Although the Indians fled wildly in all directions, the troops succeeded in killing one, wounding three,

⁷⁸Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, May 25, 1861.

⁷⁹Ibid.; Maury to Wainwright, May 5, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 11, p. 15, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives. The reports of the conference are missing from the files in the National Archives but the account of it in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette should be accurate since Superintendent Collins, present at the conference, was also publisher and editor of the paper.

and capturing two.⁸⁰ This unwarranted attack once more alarmed the frontier settlers, who feared that the Indians would make reprisals against them. Levi Keithly, who was ranching on the Pecos, anxiously wrote that "one of my persons today saw Comanches not more than a mile from my house evidently acting as spies, one of them having come to him and inquired in regard to the soldiers, and as to how many persons were living in certain houses."⁸¹ Fortunately, the Comanches chose to move to their summer hunting grounds on the Arkansas.

The American officials and the settlers differed sharply on the causes for the sudden collapse of the treaty. The Comanches would have remained away from the settlements, Superintendent Collins maintained, but for the intervention of some traders, "a lot of scoundrels who contribute more to the encouragement of Indian depredations than all other causes combined."⁸² Rancher Keithly, realizing that the Comanches could not be expected to stay away from the New Mexican settlements, asserted that the unwise attacks by the troops were responsible for most of the Indian hostilities. Three times, he later wrote, he had seen peaceful

⁸⁰Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, June 8, 1861.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Collins to Samuel B. Watrous, October 26, 1861, L/69, 1863, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

Comanche trading parties fired upon: "They came with friendly intentions and it was my opinion at the time that they were badly treated."⁸³ The argument that the soldiers had provoked much of the trouble on the frontier was seemingly verified when the troops were withdrawn from the area at the outbreak of the Civil War. With the soldiers out of the way, the Mexicans and Comanches resumed their old-time trade relationships.

⁸³Levi Keithly to Michael Steck, October 8, 1864, MS, Steck Papers, Box 4.

CHAPTER VII

THE CIVIL WAR AND THE ADOBE WALLS AFFRAY

As a result of the military debacle in New Mexico soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, Plains Indian-New Mexican relations underwent considerable modification. During 1861 the New Mexican troops, poorly trained and unimaginatively led, suffered a series of humiliating defeats at the hands of a force of determined Texans under the command of General H. H. Sibley. In short order, the Texans captured one Federal column near Las Cruces, defeated another at Valverde and penned it up in Fort Craig, and occupied Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Sibley's troops then marched for Fort Union, hoping to capture its vast military stores, but in March, 1862, disaster struck at Glorieta Pass, about twenty miles southeast of Santa Fe. Encountered by a Federal force, the Texans carried the main field of combat but had their supply train destroyed by a detachment of Colorado troops led by Colonel John Chivington which had reached their flank through an unguarded mountain defile. Without supplies and in danger of being trapped by an advancing column from California, the Texans began a tragic and disorderly retreat. By summer they had been cleared from the

territory, but throughout the remainder of the war the Federal commanders in New Mexico were in constant fear that the Texans might make another invasion attempt, perhaps by way of the plains. The Union officers, consequently, abandoned their efforts to screen the Plains Indians away from the settlements and concentrated on cultivating their friendship and cooperation.

Already some steps had been taken to promote friendly relations with the Plains Indians. Colonel E. R. S. Canby, commander of the Department of New Mexico, on December 19, 1861, reprimanded Colonel J. G. Gallegos, commanding at Hatch's Ranch, for capturing a Kiowa party visiting near Chaparito. Ordered to release the Indians and to accept as genuine their "professions of friendship," Gallegos was also to treat them "with kindness" and to encourage them to report any movement of Texans toward New Mexico.¹ The Kiowas reportedly left Hatch's Ranch "quite pleased," but there is no record that they ever performed any significant amount of espionage for the Federal commanders.

At the very outbreak of the war, the army officers began recruiting the heretofore despised Comancheros to serve as scouts. In June, 1861, forty New Mexican and Pueblo traders, stationed at Forts Union and Stanton, were

¹Lt. Hugh Nicodemus to Col. J. G. Gallegos, December 19, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 11, p. 474, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

assigned to patrol the Pecos and Canadian invasion routes.² Drawing food and ammunition from the army stores and allowed to trade freely with the Indians (to avoid suspicion from any Texans they should encounter), they were also paid at a rate that must have dwarfed their previous earnings. Don Carlos of Tesuque, who with a group of his braves in 1862 hired out to work at Fort Sumner "as spies and guides," was paid three dollars a day and "a ration;" his subordinates each received a daily wage of one dollar and seventy-five cents.³

Although the Texans never attempted an attack directly across the plains, the New Mexican scouts, ranging past Horsehead Crossing on the Pecos and the Antelope Hills on the Canadian, occasionally reported that enemy forces were approaching. An inaccurate report in December, 1862, that six thousand Texans were preparing to march up the Pecos led General James H. Carleton, who had replaced Canby as commander in New Mexico, to prepare to fight a delaying action by burning the grass in front of the Texans, by stampeding their stock, by firing into their camps at night,

²Lt. A. L. Anderson to Lt. Col. William Chapman, June 19, 1861, War of the Rebellion, Official Records (130 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881-1898), Series 1, IV, 36.

³Carleton to Capt. J. C. McFerran, November 13, 1862, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 13, p. 156, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

and by any other possible means.⁴ Many of the inaccurate warnings were nothing more than wildly imaginative rumors picked up from the Indians, but since Texan scouting parties at times followed Kiowa and Comanche raiders a considerable distance in the direction of New Mexico, such expeditions could easily have been mistaken for invasion forces.

Growing distrustful of the Comancheros, the army officers first reduced their use as spies and guides and then attempted to restrict their commerce. Superintendent Collins in October, 1862, refused to license a Comanchero party from Picuris and, when the traders defiantly left for the plains, informed Carleton. The General, suspecting the contrabandists would attempt to go down the Mora Valley and past Wagon Mound, a prominent landmark on the Santa Fe Trail, dispatched a patrol from Fort Union to capture the runaways and confine them to "public labor."⁵ The Comancheros, however, eluded the troops. As an old trader from Cordova, a village near Picuris, later explained, "When we came close to Fort Union we would wait until night to slip by. The Americans did not want us to go into the Comanche

⁴Carleton to Capt. Joseph Updegraff, December 8, 1862, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 13, p. 224, ibid.

⁵Carleton to Capt. P. L. Plympton, October 30, 1862, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 13, p. 129, ibid.

country because it might cause trouble."⁶ In February of the following year, Collins refused passes to several other trading parties because he feared that Texans might be approaching by way of the plains.⁷ All efforts to restrict the Comanchero trade, however, were ineffective because the officers and enlisted men on the eastern frontier, either native New Mexicans or long-time territorial residents, appreciated the significance of the commerce and thus did not carry out the directives from headquarters. Even the official dispatches of the outpost commanders reflected little disapprobation of the traffic; in 1864, for example, Captain E. H. Bergmann, commanding Fort Bascom in eastern New Mexico, casually stated that "an old Mexican trader, and as far as I know him, a reliable man," had reported upon his return from the plains that white men were approaching from Texas.⁸

Unwilling to depend upon the Comancheros for protection against a surprise attack from the east, Carleton in late 1862 resurrected an earlier plan to establish a military post in the Canadian valley. Long desired by expansion-minded New Mexicans, a fort (tentatively named Fort

⁶Vicente Romero, interview with L. B. Brown, April 6, 1937, MS, New Mexico Historical Museum Library, Santa Fe.

⁷Collins to Carleton, February 14, 1863, C/62, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁸Bergmann to Carleton, March 1, 1864, B/60, ibid.

Butler) had been authorized in 1860 to prevent Kiowa and Comanche incursions and to replace Fort Union as the main departmental supply depot.⁹ The Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, elated by the news, assured its readers that the fort would open up "the rich soils of the Canadian to occupancy and settlement" and printed glowing reports from citizens who had visited the valley that there was an abundance of wood, water, building stone "of the finest quality," and grass "all the year around."¹⁰

The Gazette's enthusiasm was premature, for the officers, opposed to the relocation of their supply depot, claimed that they could not find a site with ample water, wood, and grass. Captain D. H. Maury, after half-heartedly inspecting Hatch's Ranch in June, 1860, concluded that there was neither adequate space nor water and that the land title was questionable. He also found that the place where the Fort Smith road crossed the Gallinas River was lacking in sufficient water and wood.¹¹ That autumn a Santa Fe Gazette correspondent caustically complained that

⁹Fauntleroy to Lt. Col. B. S. Roberts, November 11, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 496, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁰Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, October 20, 1860.

¹¹Maury to Thomas, June 10, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 429, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

nine months had passed without the military's being able to locate a proper site. "It seems that Providence in creating that part of New Mexico forgot to make a spot on earth suitable for a U. S. Fort. There are it is true many handsome localities good enough for the people to locate upon and settle and improve but wholly unfit for the location of Fort Butler." The observer concluded his virulent outburst by charging that the military officers did not wish to find a proper site and would not as long as they could "humbug the Secretary of War with plausible excuses for not doing so."¹²

Perhaps in response to this criticism and to public pressure, Colonel Fauntleroy, after explaining to the Secretary of War that he had not established the post because his campaign against the Plains Indians had depleted the available funds,¹³ on November 11 ordered Lieutenant Colonel B. S. Roberts, commander at Hatch's Ranch, to reexamine the country along the Canadian River.¹⁴ Roberts staked out a ten-mile-square reservation for the fort on the Canadian, ten miles below the crossing of the road from Fort Smith to

¹²Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, October 20, 1860.

¹³Fauntleroy to S. Cooper, November 12, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 496, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁴Fauntleroy to Roberts, November 11, 1860, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, pp. 498-499, ibid.

Hatch's Ranch; but on January 20, 1861, Fauntleroy, his command disrupted by secessionist sentiments, suspended work on the project.¹⁵ Although Captain R. A. Wainwright told the Comanches at the Alamo Gordo peace conference a few months later that "the great Father in Washington" intended to establish the post on the Canadian,¹⁶ the matter was lost sight of in the turmoil of the Texas invasion.

After Sibley's troops were repulsed, General Carleton, worried about the possibility of a new attack, on October 31, 1862, ordered Captain William H. Backus with one company of the Second Colorado Volunteers to establish a temporary post 120 miles east of the settlements.¹⁷ After locating the outpost (subsequently known as Camp Easton) on the Canadian fifteen miles above the mouth of Utah Creek, Captain Backus took up his lonely assignment of watching the approaches from Fort Smith and Texas for Confederates.

General Carleton, recognizing that the success of the small post depended upon the friendship of the Comanches, instructed Backus to treat them kindly and to establish a

¹⁵Lt. C. M. Wilcox to Roberts, January 20, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 10, p. 537, ibid.

¹⁶Maury to Wainwright, May 5, 1861, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 11, p. 15, ibid.

¹⁷General Order No. 94, October 31, 1862, Dept. of N. Mex., Orders, Vol. 37, pp. 288-289, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

"good understanding with them in order to obtain information." To further this policy, Carleton also requested his friend, Indian Superintendent Collins, to establish a Comanche agency in eastern New Mexico. Long an ardent advocate of such a step,¹⁸ Collins rather presumptuously sent William B. Stapp, a former agent for the Mescalero Apaches, to care for the Comanches at Fort Bascom and then asked approval of Indian Commissioner William Dole.¹⁹ Although Collins lauded Stapp as being "useful and efficient" and stressed the need for the agency, Dole vetoed the project. He, like the rest of the Washington hierarchy, could not understand that a significant portion of the Comanches could be dealt with effectively only through New Mexico.

Despite the refusal of the Indian Department to cooperate, the army officers at Camp Easton soon won the friendship of the Comanches. On November 3, 1862, a party of Chief Mow-way's warriors aided in the capture of some southern sympathizers fleeing down the Canadian. A few days afterwards Chiefs Mow-way and Little Buffalo visited Captain Backus and offered to help if he would "come down and

¹⁸In June, 1860, Collins had recommended the establishment of an agency at Hatch's Ranch for the Comanches, who "occupy the country" on the Canadian and cause "some trouble and loss" for the frontier settlers. His request had been ignored. Collins to Charles Mix, June 3, 1860, C/87, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

¹⁹Collins to Dole, November 13, 1862, C/1921, ibid.

fight the Texans." Backus was in no position to join them against the Texans, but he promised to pay them for all information about Confederate troop movements brought to Camp Easton.²⁰ Lured by the hope of reward, some Comanches led by Esaquipa, a frequent visitor to New Mexico in the 1850's and now "an old chief," visited the Camp on May 6, 1863, to report that a body of Texas troops were "moving across" the plains between the Red River and the Butterfield Trail. Obviously exaggerating, Esaquipa stated that the Confederates had a large number of tents and five pieces of artillery and gravely assured the Federals that his warriors would "dispute every inch of soil" with the invaders. After staying overnight at the post and professing the "most friendly feelings," the Comanches departed.²¹

Although the alleged Confederate movement never materialized, the visits of the three chiefs initiated a honeymoon between the Comanches and the garrison on the Canadian that lasted for more than a year. On June 19, 1863, Captain Bergmann, commanding Camp Easton at the time, reported that the Comanches had promised to notify him if "anything should occur" on the plains. In accordance with the

²⁰Backus to the Asst. Adj. Gen., December 1, 1862, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XV, 153-158.

²¹Lt. David Perry to Capt. B. C. Cutler, May 9, 1863, P/84, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

military's ardent courtship of the Comanches, he stated that he had always greeted them cordially and had given "to one party some articles of old clothing and food" and others as far as rations would allow some "Bread, Sheep, etc." Complaining that his stores had become depleted, he requested additional supplies of flour and sheep for distribution among subsequent visitors. "They do not expect to get anything when they come here," he wrote, "but they will beg anyhow."²² Upon receiving this report, General Carleton immediately ordered that some goods "intended for the Comanche Indians" be sent to Camp Easton by the next wagon train.²³

Camp Easton in August, 1863, was converted into a permanent post and renamed Fort Bascom.²⁴ In addition to guarding against Texans, the new fort was apparently intended to promote settlement. Carleton went out of his way to announce to the New Mexican press that the troops at Fort Bascom would prevent Comanche and Kiowa raids upon the flocks and herds of the citizens who desired to pasture the region between Utah Creek and the border settlements and

²²Bergmann to Cutler, June 19, 1863, B/81, ibid.

²³Cutler to Craig, June 28, 1863, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 13, p. 579, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²⁴General Order No. 20, August 11, 1863, Dept. of N. Mex., Orders, Vol. 34, p. 368, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

would protect those who settled in the "fertile" valleys of the Canadian and Conchas.²⁵ In October he sent Major H. D. Wallen to survey the economic possibilities of the region around Fort Bascom. After a brief reconnaissance, Wallen reported that the soil in the Canadian valley was arable and that fields there could be easily irrigated. Describing the climate as mild and pleasant with little if any snow during the winter, the Major assured potential settlers that there was plenty of cottonwood timber, game, fish, and "pleasant" drinking water. The climate and soil, he asserted, were well adapted to "the culture of the grape."²⁶ Furthermore, the settlers would be able to sell their grain, hay, and beef cattle at Fort Bascom--a statement that suggests that the need for supplies may have inspired the army's eagerness to get the region settled.

Once more, the New Mexican newspapers, always agitating for territorial development, were jubilant over the prospects offered by the new fort. The Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, proclaiming that it was no wonder a great number of families planned to move to the Canadian in the spring, declared that "Every time there is a Fort Bascom established there is a blessing conferred upon New Mexico."²⁷ As

²⁵Rio Abajo Weekly Press (Albuquerque), August 25, 1863.

²⁶Wallen to Cutler, October 15, 1863, printed in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, November 21, 1863.

²⁷Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, November 7, 1863.

the newspapers had predicted, settlers soon began moving into the area. By 1866 the region between Fort Bascom and the Pecos settlements was so thickly populated, according to the Gazette, that a person could safely travel alone from Fort Union, Las Vegas, or Tecolote to Forts Sumner or Bascom.²⁸

Soon after Fort Bascom was established, the cordial relations between the military and the Comanches were jeopardized by a petty feud. On October 10 Captain P. W. Plympton, commander at Fort Bascom, complained that the Comanches were making "repeated visits" to beg for food and requested that an Indian agent be sent to care for them.²⁹ At the same time, Captain Bergmann, who with Superintendent Collins' approval had spent \$206.28 on the Comanches, presented his bill. Carleton forwarded these matters to Collins' successor, Michael Steck, a Pennsylvania-born physician and former agent for the Mescalero Apaches, who referred them for approval to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Commissioner Dole refused either to reimburse Bergmann or to provide an agent at Fort Bascom; instead, he informed General Carleton that regulations specifically authorized frontier commanders to issue rations in order to

²⁸Ibid., November 21, 1863.

²⁹Plympton to Cutler, October 10, 1863, P/144, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

conciliate potential hostiles. Carleton, upon receiving Dole's refusal, sent it to Superintendent Steck with a curt endorsement that it was doubtful whether the commanding officer at Fort Bascom would be able to issue any provisions to the Comanches or to any other Indians.³⁰ It became evident that Carleton was not bluffing in February, 1864, when Esaquipa, reporting at Fort Bascom that he had seen "large bodies" of marching troops coming up the Canadian, was turned away without presents.³¹ Esaquipa may have been lying; but it was the wrong time to begin offending the Comanches.

The Comanches, like the other Plains tribes, had become agitated over the extension of settlement into their domain and were attracted toward the warpath by the shortage of troops on the frontier. Furthermore, Comancheros possibly were inciting them; in late 1863 Robert North, a squawman dispatched to ransom some white captives from the Plains Indians, reported that among the Comanches were many Mexicans who were urging them to fight, "promising to help the Indians themselves, and that a great many Mexicans would come up from New Mexico for the purpose in the

³⁰All the correspondence in this episode is filed with Steck to Dole, October 22, 1863, S/219, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

³¹Bergmann to Carleton, March 1, 1864, B/14, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

spring."³²

The following year the simmering discontent erupted into a major war, starting among the Cheyennes and Sioux and spreading rapidly southward. By May, although General Carleton unsuspectingly still trusted the Comanches to report approaching Texans at Fort Bascom,³³ small bands of Comanches and Kiowas had joined in the Cheyenne war. As the two tribes for a time stole only a few mules and horses from unescorted wagon trains, they caused the New Mexican officials little concern until August, when they struck a small train at the lower Cimarron Springs on the Santa Fe Trail. The Comanches, seventy strong but "apparently friendly," entered the camp of the teamsters as if to trade, caught their hosts off guard, and killed and scalped the five Americans, "horribly" mutilating their bodies. Three Mexican teamsters, who watched the massacre in helpless terror, were spared. Telling them they did not wish to kill Mexicans but "would kill every white man that came on the road," the Comanches gave them a wagon and oxen and sent them on their way.³⁴ Although only a natural

³²Statement of Robert North," November 10, 1863, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XXXIV, Part 4, 100.

³³Carleton to Lt. Col. William McMullen, June 4, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 14, p. 489, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

³⁴Capt. Nicholas Davis to Carleton, October 30, 1864, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLI, Part

consequence of the long friendship between the Comanches and the New Mexicans, the sparing of the Mexican teamsters was regarded by General Carleton as proof that the two races were united in an unholy league against the whites. He charged grimly that the discrimination which the Comanches frequently made in favor of the native New Mexicans and against Anglo-Americans was an insult to the "Government and to our people."³⁵

In reaction to the massacre, Carleton proclaimed the Kiowas and Comanches to be hostile and ordered the frontier posts to take precautions against a surprise attack. From Fort Bascom a seven-man detachment was sent to the Tucumcari Mountain to "keep a vigilant lookout." The sentinels were to arrest any traders on their way to the plains, but returning Comancheros, unless of a "suspicious character," were not to be molested.³⁶ In addition to such defensive measures, the General began mobilizing his slender resources for an all-out attack on the Plains Indians.

1, 212-213; another account, which differs somewhat, was printed in the Weekly New Mexican, August 19, 1864, quoted in Oliver LeFarge, Santa Fe, The Autobiography of a Western Town (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), pp. 26-27.

³⁵Carleton to Steck, October 31, 1864, in Michael Steck Papers, Box 4.

³⁶Special Order No. 47, August 30, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, Orders, Book 84, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Thoroughly alarmed when the Comancheros dutifully brought them news of Carleton's war preparations, ten Kiowa and Comanche chiefs headed by "F. M. Bears" on September 22 went to Fort Bascom under a flag of truce. They admitted that they had committed depredations, but promised that if peace were made they would notify the other chiefs of both tribes to cease hostilities immediately.³⁷ Summarily rejecting the peace overture, Carleton ordered Captain Charles Deus, the commander at Fort Bascom, to remind the chiefs of their many atrocities and to tell them that "their hearts are bad and that they talk with a forked tongue." Deus was also to tell them that there would be no further negotiations until the Indians had returned all the stock stolen during the year and surrendered the perpetrators of the massacre at the lower Cimarron Springs.³⁸

The Comancheros, working desperately to prevent Carleton's punitive campaign, found a passionate supporter in Michael Steck, the Indian superintendent. On October 26 Steck asked Carleton to reconsider because "several respectable citizens" of San Miguel County who had recently

³⁷Capt. Charles Deus to Capt. Cyrus H. DeForrest, September 24, 1864, C/119, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives. "F. M. Bears" quite likely was the noted Comanche chief and orator, Ten Bears, who achieved fame at the Medicine Lodge conference in 1867.

³⁸DeForrest to Deus, September 27, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 59, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

returned from a trading trip had assured him that the Comanches had never been more peaceably disposed. These Indians, he reminded Carleton, had for about eighty years acted in good faith towards the people of New Mexico, and a war with them would be disastrous to the settlers on the eastern frontier as well as to transportation routes across the plains.³⁹ Steck maintained, somewhat lamely in view of the Cimarron Springs massacre, that the hostilities of the past summer had been entirely the work of the Kiowas, who thus should be the only tribe punished.

Carleton refused to accept Steck's argument. The Comancheros' statements were untrustworthy, he declared, because they favored the Indians out of gratitude for past favors and in order to continue their trade. In defense of his own position, he recalled a long list of Comanche forays, of which most had occurred in the 1850's and were quite petty. He admitted he knew of none upon the settlements since 1861.⁴⁰

On November 5 Steck, desiring to rid himself of "all responsibility" for the disasters that would be incurred by a Comanche war, appealed once more for Carleton to

³⁹ Steck to Carleton, October 16, 1864, Steck Papers, Box 4. Copies of the extensive correspondence between Steck and Carleton concerning the Comanche campaign of 1864 can also be found in the National Archives.

⁴⁰ Carleton to Steck, October 31, 1864, ibid.

revise his campaign plans. Saying that he spoke for the frontier residents, he argued that the Comanches should not be attacked; the Kiowas, on the other hand, should be severely chastised: "I hope the Government will be able to inflict the punishment they so richly deserve."⁴¹ Seeing that Carleton was determined to go on with the campaign, Steck dejectedly complained to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the Comanches for many years had been at peace with the people of New Mexico and that war with them was "entirely uncalled for."⁴²

Carleton, meanwhile, was finding it difficult to gather enough troops for the expedition. To lead the command he chose Colonel Christopher Carson, who had recently won new acclaim for his conquest of the Navahoes. In October Carleton instructed Carson to recruit some Utes and Jicarillas, hereditary foes of the Plains Indians, and for a time considered the use of Navahoes, despite the recent war with them. He asked General James G. Blunt, the commander at Fort Larned, Kansas, to send a supporting expedition against the Kiowas and Comanches, but Blunt, distracted by General Sterling Price's unexpected invasion of Missouri, could not oblige.⁴³ Carleton also requested the use of the

⁴¹Steck to Carleton, November 5, 1864, ibid.

⁴²Steck to William Dole, November 16, 1864, ibid.

⁴³Carleton to Blunt, October 22, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 98, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

territorial militia, but Governor Henry Connelly refused to call it out, reportedly stating that the Comanches were "at peace with the people of New Mexico and that it was impolitic to stir up this powerful tribe without a cause."⁴⁴ Consequently, Carleton was able to provide Carson with only 335 cavalrymen, most of whom were native New Mexicans of the First New Mexico Volunteers, and seventy-five Indians--a force far too small for the job at hand.

To prevent the Comancheros from warning the Indians, Carleton on October 22 asked Steck and Governor Connelly to discontinue issuing trade permits and ordered the commanders at Fort Bascom to turn back all Mexicans going east.⁴⁵ To the General's chagrin, however, Steck ignored the request and issued passes to two groups of traders, and the troops at Fort Bascom allowed one party to bluff its way past and were unsuccessful in apprehending others. Thus, Carson's force was preceded into the Texas Panhandle by traders who not only warned the Indians of the impending attack but also delivered to them a quantity of arms and munitions.

After being informed of the location of the Comanches

⁴⁴Steck to Dole, November 16, 1864, Steck Papers, Box 4; Weekly New Mexican, April 7, 1865.

⁴⁵Carleton to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., January 29, 1865, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 197, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

and Kiowas by (of all people) a party of Comancheros, Carleton ordered Carson to march as quickly as possible. Leaving Bascom on November 12 along a road well-worn by generations of traders and Comanches, Carson made excellent time despite two severe but short snow storms. Locating the Indian camps near Adobe Walls on November 25, he quickly captured a Kiowa village of 150 lodges but then was assailed by an estimated 1,000 warriors from camps farther downstream. In the long day of bitter, confused fighting that followed, Carson's force escaped annihilation only by the adroit management of two mountain howitzers. When dusk closed over the battlefield, the Colonel withdrew, flattering himself that he had "taught these Indians a severe lesson." The casualties had been surprisingly light: Carson reported that he had three killed and estimated that the enemy had sixty killed or wounded.⁴⁶

Upon returning to Fort Bascom, Carson learned that Jesus Amalla and José Castillo, two Comancheros apprehended returning with cattle obtained from the Indians, had carried a pass signed by Superintendent Steck on October 27,

⁴⁶Carson to Carleton, November 29, 1864, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLI, Part 1, 939-943. For an excellent account of the Adobe Walls battle see Captain George H. Pettis. "Kit Carson's Fight with the Comanche and Kiowa Indians," Historical Society of New Mexico, Personal Narratives of the Battles of the Rebellion (Santa Fe: New Mexican Publishing Co., 1908), pp. 7-35. Pettis, who had been in charge of the two howitzers during the battle, supplemented the documentary sources by drawing on his personal recollections.

five days after Carleton had asked that no more passes be issued. Carson thereupon penned a supplementary campaign report and blamed his failure to win a decisive victory upon Steck and the Comancheros. Asserting that his losses had been inflicted by ammunition supplied the Indians by the Mexican traders, he bitterly declaimed:

I blame the Mexicans not half as much as I do Mr. Steck . . . who gave them the pass to go and trade, he knowing perfectly well at the time that we were at war with the Indians, and that the Mexicans would take what they could sell best, which was powder, lead, and caps.⁴⁷

General Carleton took advantage of the incident to obtain Steck's removal. On January 29, 1865, he forwarded to Washington a packet of letters and documents intended to incriminate Steck and complained that the military could never defeat the Indians as long as a "high civil functionary gives passports to men to carry on a nefarious traffic, when he knows in reason that those men will give information of the movements of troops."⁴⁸ On May 1, 1865, Steck was asked to resign "for the good of the service;"⁴⁹ but, quite ironically, Felipe Delgado, the veteran New Mexican

⁴⁷Carson to Carleton, December 16, 1864, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLI, Part 1, 943.

⁴⁸Carleton to the Adj. Gen., January 29, 1865, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 197, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴⁹William Keleher, Turmoil in New Mexico (Santa Fe: The Rydal Press, 1952), p. 506, note 134.

politician named to replace him, was far more sympathetic to the Comancheros than Steck had ever been.

Impelled by Carson's report to strengthen the restrictions previously imposed on the traders, Carleton on November 30, 1864, ordered the arrest of all parties attempting to visit the Comanches to barter, no matter "from what source" they had derived their authority.⁵⁰ Although Captain Bergmann at Fort Bascom was able to intercept a few traders, not one was ever brought to trial.

The Captain was more ingenious in guarding against a rumored Comanche raid on his horse herd, which could not be kept near the fort because the grass there had been consumed. Bergmann knew that the Comanches were on good terms with the Mexican population of the Conchas valley and were unlikely to steal from them. Therefore, he sent his animals there, "where they are now and doing well."⁵¹

Fears of a raid on the fort subsided on January 21, 1865, however, with the visit of a Comanche named Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh, inaccurately called by Bergmann "the principal chief of the whole Comanche nation," who stated that he wished to "live in good faith" with the Americans. In

⁵⁰Cutler to Bergmann, November 30, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 127, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁵¹Bergmann to Cutler, January 10, 1865, B/33, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, ibid.

return for peace, the Chief promised to do everything within his power to prevent Comanche raids along the Santa Fe Trail and to inform the Americans if any were planned by the Kiowas or Apaches. Although Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh refused to remain at the fort until Bergmann could receive instructions from Santa Fe, he promised to return the following month to hear General Carleton's answer.⁵²

Since the fear of a Comanche counterattack had become a major issue in the election campaign for territorial delegate to Congress, Carleton and Collins, who were backing Colonel Francisco Perea, used Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh's visit to prove that the Adobe Walls campaign had been effective. Collins's Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, under the heading "Comanches and Peace," editorialized that Carson's victory had made the Indians feel "the white man's power," predicted that the Comanches would now "become our permanent friends and allies," and assured its readers that Carleton was quite willing to negotiate a peace treaty.⁵³

Retorting through the Weekly New Mexican, the anti-Carleton forces claimed that the visit proved that the southern Comanches should not have been attacked, that the

⁵²Bergmann to Cutler, January 21, 1865, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLVIII, Part 1, 611.

⁵³Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, February 4, 1865.

war with them was a blunder, and that Carleton, realizing his mistake, was trying to "patch the matter up as best he can."⁵⁴ The New Mexican also challenged the contention that the Indians had been defeated at Adobe Walls. The troops had been so "badly whipped," it asserted, that they had been unable to prevent the Indians from retaking their captured horses.⁵⁵ Carleton's sudden willingness to negotiate was due to his recognition that the unpopular Comanche war, unless ended, would cause the loss to Colonel Perea of the Counties of San Miguel and Mora.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Carleton, encouraged by Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh's peaceful visit, had relaxed his restrictions on the Comanchero trade. As soon as peace with the Comanches was restored, he promised, the trade would be reopened; until then, traders whose passes were countersigned at his headquarters could go to the plains.⁵⁷ When Carleton soon afterwards endorsed passes for some of his political allies, ostensibly to ransom captives from the Indians, the native New Mexicans hotly charged him with favoritism. On March 20, 1865, a resident of Las Vegas wrote to the editor of the New Mexican that he marveled to see so many traders

⁵⁶Ibid. Perea, a candidate for Congressional delegate, was defeated by Colonel Francisco Chaves, who as an army officer had deliberately evaded having anything to do with the Kiowa-Comanche campaign.

⁵⁷General Order No. 2, January 31, 1865, Dept. of N. Mex., Orders, Vol. 30, pp. 185-186, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

on their way to the Comanche country, "especially so soon after some of our worthy citizens" had been detained at Fort Bascom. He complained that it was unfair to allow a few privileged parties to trade in return for their promise to liberate captives when it was known they were interested only in making a profit.⁵⁸ A week later, the New Mexican noted that another party licensed by Carleton had started for the plains and demanded sarcastically that the General "inform us . . . whether the Comanches are at peace or war."⁵⁹

The prospects of peace with the Comanches waned as rapidly as they had appeared. After Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh failed to return to Fort Bascom, there were renewed rumors of Indian hostility. In early April Lorenzo Valdez, one of the traders licensed by Carleton, reported that the Kiowas and most of the Comanches had made an alliance with the Texans. Claiming that he had been held prisoner for two days by Comanches and spared only because he was personally acquainted with their leader, Valdez warned that "almost all" of the Plains Indians had combined to commit depredations upon trains crossing the plains during the forthcoming summer.⁶⁰

⁵⁸Weekly New Mexican, March 24, 1865.

⁵⁹Ibid., March 31, 1865.

⁶⁰Valdez to Carleton, April 11, 1865, enclosed with Bergmann to Carleton, April 18, 1865, B/135, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Making no mention in the press of this or other disturbing reports, Carleton and his aides professed to hope that the ominous allegations might be "devoid of truth" because they had been made by Mexicans, who had purposely shaped them to "serve their purpose." The failure of the Comanches to return to Fort Bascom for a peace conference, they thought, might be due to the Comancheros' having "abundantly replenished" the Indians' wants.⁶¹

The editor of the New Mexican, upon hearing the rumors, stated that the renewal of hostilities was "the fruit" of the Comanche War, for which there had existed "not the least necessity." He also declared that Carleton, fearing the indignation of the people whom he had exposed to the "ravages of their former friends," was suppressing the gravity of the situation. Sardonicly he taunted: "Where is Sheer-kee-na-kwaugh and his peace makers?"⁶²

Any hope that the rumors were unfounded vanished on May 10 when Arthur Morrison, Carleton's former military aide, returned from the plains with indisputable news of Comanche hostility. Morrison, hoping to reap large trade profits when he left Fort Bascom on March 18, had followed the Canadian to a point one hundred miles below Adobe Walls without contacting the Comanches. Then two of his Mexican

⁶¹Bergmann to Carleton, April 18, 1865, ibid.

⁶²Weekly New Mexican, April 28, 1865.

scouts were captured by thirty-eight Comanche warriors and robbed of their pistols, saddles, and "other things." Before being released, the captives were told that the Comanches, Kiowas, "and twelve more nations"⁶³ had concluded a treaty with Texas by which they would receive ammunition, clothing, and foodstuffs in return for their aid in an expedition against New Mexico. Morrison also met a party of Mexican traders licensed by Carleton who had had their goods taken by the Comanches and had been told to warn other traders that they would be killed if they came to the plains. Considering himself lucky to escape unharmed and without losing all his trade goods, Morrison hastily returned home. The Indians were "very much aggrieved" by Carson's attack, he reported, and in their passion for revenge were boasting that they and the Texans would destroy Fort Bascom.⁶⁴

Morrison had sized up the situation quite well. The Comanches, moved by the Adobe Walls campaign to jettison even their long-standing peace with the native New

⁶³This coincides with the number of tribes that were represented at the Camp Napoleon, Indian Territory, conference on May 26, 1865. The "twelve more nations" were the Cherokees, Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, Seminoles, Caddos, Osages, Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Lipans, Northern Caddos, and Anadarkoes. W. F. Adair to Brig. Gen. J. C. Veatch, July 20, 1865, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLVIII, Part 2, 1102-1103.

⁶⁴Morrison to Carleton, May 10, 1865, M/58, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Mexicans,⁶⁵ turned for support to their traditional enemies, the Texans. Impressed by the Comanche overtures, the Confederate leaders in the Trans-Mississippi Department appointed as emissaries to treat with the Indians Brigadier General James W. Throckmorton, later governor of Texas, and Albert Pike, the Arkansas poet and journalist who in 1861 had negotiated a compact with the Comanches. Although the possibility of a joint offensive was briefly considered, the Plains Indians had waited too long before seeking new allies, for suddenly the collapse of the Confederacy doomed the project. Throckmorton attended a conference between the "Civilized Tribes" and the Plains Indians at Camp Napoleon on the Washita River on May 26, 1865--not to formulate an alliance, however, but to persuade the Indians to stay away from the Texas settlements.⁶⁶

⁶⁵Much of the anger of the Plains Indians towards the New Mexicans was because many native New Mexicans had served with Carson at Adobe Walls. The Kiowas, for example, told Agent Jesse Leavenworth that they had robbed "some Mexicans that came to trade" and told them that "they must not come again, as the Mexicans with Kit Carson were fighting them." Leavenworth to Brig. Gen. J. H. Ford, May 30, 1865, War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XLVIII, Part 2, 688.

⁶⁶Of the considerable correspondence in the War of the Rebellion, Official Records concerning the proposed council, see especially General E. Kirby Smith to Albert Pike, April 8, 1865, LXVIII, Part 2, 1266-1269 and Brig. Gen Douglas Cooper to Brig. Gen. J. W. Throckmorton, May 16, 1865, XLVIII, Part 2, 1307. Throckmorton gave a brief description of the council in a speech to Congress, March 9, 1886 (49 Cong., 1 Sess., Congressional Record, 1886, XVII, Part

Left without allies, the Comanches were ready to resume their traditional peace with New Mexico. Jose' Ulibarri', a trader from Chapparito, stated on his return from the plains in June that the Comanches were "desirous of remaining at peace."⁶⁷ General Carleton, immediately sent Ulibarri' back to the plains to bring the Indians to Fort Union for a conference. The Comanches, however, were unwilling to trust the pledge of safe passage and refused to accept the invitation. Farther north, Jesse Leavenworth, the agent for the southern Plains tribes, had better success. In October, 1865, he signed with these Indians the Treaty of the Little Arkansas which temporarily restored peace to the plains and confirmed the Comanches' claim to much of northwestern Texas, a right no Federal agent legally could grant. The final disposition of the Comanche problem, however, had to await a new treaty and the end of another war on the plains.

5, 2265). He recovered nine prisoners from the Comanches and was convinced that "with proper management" the Indians could be kept at peace with Texas. Dallas Herald, July 1, 1865. As soon as the Comanches resumed friendly relations with the New Mexicans, however, they reverted to their traditional pattern of hostility towards Texas.

⁶⁷ Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, June 17, 1865; Ulibarri' to Carleton, July 1, 1865, U/4, Dept. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GREAT COMANCHERO CATTLE TRADE

The Comanchero trade was revolutionized during the early 1860's. In place of biscuits, flour, and corn meal, the traders trekked to the plains with powder, lead, guns, and whiskey; instead of buffalo robes, they returned with cattle that had been stolen in Texas and trailed hundreds of miles across the barren Llano Estacado.¹ Their support, moreover, encouraged the Comanches and Kiowas to wreak a gruesome toll on the advancing Texans before surrendering control of the South Plains. The traders were rarely seen by the hard hit pioneers, but this very elusiveness quite likely added to their notoriety. Once, their commerce had been described as harmless by such men as Josiah Gregg and Lieutenants Abert and Whipple; now, the very term Comanchero was synonymous with evil.

The origins of the illicit cattle trade are obscure. Although it may have started shortly before the Civil War,²

¹For an excellent contemporary description of the Comanchero trade see the Daily New Mexican, July 18, 1870.

²J. Evetts Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII (January, 1935), 163. The only contemporary evidence for this, however, are two rather casual statements: In 1871 some New Mexicans, indignant at efforts to suppress the trade, asserted that it had been going on for fifty years (Santa Fe Weekly Post, June 17, 1871); in 1873 John Hittson estimated that the trade had

the commerce most likely was sired by the chaos and confusion created by that conflict. William J. Wilson, a Texas cowman who learned much about the Comancheros during a sojourn in New Mexico in the 1870's, stated that the Comanches towards the end of the Civil War began gathering and selling cattle to the New Mexicans because so many untended animals were "running at large" on the frontier.³ At first the Comanches merely drove off unbranded mavericks; but after the war, when Texas stockmen with stout-hearted crews and fast branding irons moved into the mesquite thickets and carved out cattle empires for themselves, the Comanches began to seize beeves by force.

There are also some inconclusive indications that Federal encouragement during the war abetted the early raids. Early in the conflict Oliver Loving, a Texas cattleman who had made a drive to Denver, excitedly wrote Governor Francis R. Lubbock of Texas that the Comanches were being paid by the Union troops in Colorado for all the "scalps taken in Texas."⁴ Although this report may have been exaggerated,

been in progress for twenty years (Daily New Mexican, March 21, 1873).

³Deposition of William J. Wilson, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Charles Goodnight and John Sheeks vs. The United States and Comanche Indians, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

⁴Oliver Loving to F. R. Lubbock, 1862, in James M. Day and Dorman Winfrey (eds.), Texas Indian Papers, 1825-1916 (4 vols.; Austin: Texas State Library, 1959-1961), IV, 67.

the Comanches in 1867 told Lorenzo Labadi, a veteran New Mexico Indian agent, that Union officers in New Mexico, perhaps hard-pressed to obtain beef for their troops, had encouraged them to raid in Texas.⁵

The meager documentary evidence indicates that the cattle trade was expanding during the latter part of the Civil War. In April, 1864, H. T. Ketcham, a pioneer physician detailed by the Indian Department to vaccinate the southern Plains Indians for smallpox, reported that the Kiowas and Comanches had large herds of cattle and were preparing for another excursion to the Texas ranges.⁶ A few months later Robert North, a white squawman, accused the Mexicans of helping the Plains Indians by driving their stolen stock to New Mexico.⁷ In October a corporal at Fort Bascom encountered on the Fort Smith road a party of west-bound Mexican traders with a "lot of cattle;"⁸ and the following month Captain Bergmann, commander at Fort Bascom,

⁵"Report of Lorenzo Labadi, August 23, 1867," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), p. 214.

⁶"Report of H. T. Ketcham, April 10, 1864," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1864), p. 253.

⁷"Statement of Robert North, June 15, 1864," in War of the Rebellion, Official Records, Series 1, XXXIV, Part 4, 422.

⁸Lt. Col. Francisco Abreau to Capt. B. C. Cutler, October 10, 1864, in ibid., XLI, Part 3, 771.

apprehended some Mexicans who had purchased 250 head of cattle from the Indians.⁹

Bergmann and his fellow officers, however, have been charged with being more interested in profiting from the Comanchero trade than in stopping it. Jose' Tafoya, an old Comanchero, testified in a depredation case that in 1864 he had worked for Bergmann, who had furnished him with supplies and goods to barter to the Plains Indians for livestock.¹⁰ Mrs. Marian Russell, the bride of a young lieutenant at the fort in 1865, recalled some sixty-seven years later that "most all the folks" at Fort Bascom supplied themselves with cattle; she vividly remembered sending a "copper kettle and a small Navajo blanket" to the plains by a Comanchero and receiving in exchange twelve head of cattle.¹¹

Although time may have clouded the memories of Tafoya and Mrs. Russell, Captain Bergmann can be linked to the Indian trade by his own words. After resigning from the Army, he established a "farm" on the Canadian below Fort

⁹Cutler to Bergmann, November 30, 1864, Dept. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 16, p. 108, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁰Deposition of Jose' Pineda Tafoya, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

¹¹Marian Russell to J. Evetts Haley, August 25, 1932, cited in Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 166.

Bascom in 1868 and applied to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for a license to trade with the Comanches, "to keep up the friendly relationship" with them and to prevent depredations upon the settlements in "this part of the country." In his application he stated that while commanding Fort Bascom he had had "frequent intercourse" with the Comanches. "Having served my country for many years," he reminded the Commissioner, "I think it justice that my request be granted."¹² As to whether Bergmann received a license the records are silent, but as to his involvement in the Indian trade there appears to be little doubt.

Captain Bergmann was not the only military figure to engage in the Indian trade. Mrs. Russell, in her memoirs (which made as charming a book as ever concerned a woman of the Old West), unconsciously revealed the respectability of the cattle trade and indicated the ease with which an enterprising entrepreneur could build up a stake. Her husband Richard, upon being discharged from the army in 1866, established a trading post at Tecolote. Since he had always longed to be a cattle rancher, he invested "every extra penny" in "Texas longhorns." By buying corn cheaply of the Mexicans and trading it to the Indians for cattle, he

¹²Bergmann to N. G. Taylor, September 9, 1868, enclosed with Charles Mix to L. E. Webb, October 14, 1868, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, LR, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

was able at the end of five years to sell the trading post and move to a Colorado ranch to which he had been sending "herds of cattle."¹³

Lieutenant Russell's involvement in the trade was minuscule, however, compared to that of four of his fellow officers--Patrick Henry Healy, Charles J. Jennings, E. W. Wood, and R. C. Vose. This audacious quartet, with chicanery in their hearts and larceny in their eyes, calmly set out in 1866 to monopolize the Comanchero commerce. In their quest for riches, they hoodwinked successively the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the agent for the Comanches, and the superintendent of Indian affairs in New Mexico--only to lose in the end to the lowly Comancheros. The cupidity of these officers was undoubtedly aroused by the vigorous manner in which the Comanchero trade had rebounded from the setback given it in 1865 by General Carleton. The General had issued several permits, upon each of which, according to Indian Superintendent A. B. Norton, as many as fifty Mexicans would trade, "claiming they are doing business" for the recipient.¹⁴ Soon Comancheros were arriving

¹³Mrs. Hal Russell (ed.), Land of Enchantment, Memoirs of Marian Russell along the Santa Fe Trail (Evanston, Ill.: The Branding Iron Press, 1954), pp. 117-125.

¹⁴"Report of A. B. Norton, July 31, 1866," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1866), p. 151.

in the settlements "almost daily" with "large numbers of cattle."¹⁵

An opportunity for Healy and his fellow officers to enter the lucrative commerce arose unexpectedly in mid-1866 with the arrival of Norton to replace Superintendent Felipe Delgado. Norton, while enroute to the territory, had been informed by Comanche Agent Jesse Leavenworth in Kansas that the Plains Indians were supplied with guns and ammunition by Mexican traders and were thereby induced to steal stock and children in Texas. Deeply incensed by this disclosure, Norton promised Leavenworth that he would "use the extent of his power" to end the illicit traffic.¹⁶ After arriving in Santa Fe and conferring with General Carleton, he announced that all passes then in effect were revoked and that subsequent ones must have the personal approval of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.¹⁷ Messrs. Healy, Jennings, Wood, and Vose, assuming that the Mexican traders would be forced out of the business, immediately applied for permits.

Healy, the spokesman for the group, resigned from the Army on August 4, 1866, and rushed to Washington. Using his six years of military service in New Mexico as a source

¹⁵Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, July 28, 1866.

¹⁶Leavenworth to D. N. Cooley, June 5, 1866, L/54, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

¹⁷Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, July 28, 1866.

of authority, he regaled D. N. Cooley, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with a misleading description of the situation on the southwestern frontier. The Comanches were very peaceable, he stated, and in their Canadian Valley homeland, well wooded and watered and covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, raised "large numbers" of cattle and horses. Since they were well adapted and deeply "attached" to their country, it would be cruel to remove them; but they were in dire need of trade goods! Why, therefore, Healy pleaded, should "honest, loyal American citizens" be deprived of the benefits of this trade?¹⁸ Since Healy and his colleagues had obtained the endorsement of Agent Leavenworth (by holding out the prospect that they could break up the malevolent influence of the Comancheros),¹⁹ Cooley allowed himself to be duped into granting the licenses.

Upon arriving in New Mexico in January, 1867, Healy, Jennings, Wood, and Vose gaudily flashed their permits and indignantly demanded that Carleton and Norton stop "the illicit trade by citizens of this country." Although Norton's order of the previous summer had supposedly ended the traffic, both he and Carleton had been hesitant to enforce it.

¹⁸Healy to Cooley, October 15, 1866, H/394, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

¹⁹Leavenworth to G. W. Todd, December 24, 1866, L/88, ibid.

Carleton now professed to doubt that the military had any legal rights to stop New Mexicans "from going east . . . to buy things of the Comanches," but after General Winfield Scott Hancock, commander of the Department of the Missouri, advised him to the contrary, he and Norton jointly proclaimed a new ban.²⁰ Thus supported by both the Army and the Indian office, Healy and his partners plunged into the Comanchero trade.

To their misfortune, however, they had overlooked the persistency and ingenuity of the Comancheros. John D. Henderson, the veteran agent for the Pueblos, obstinately continued to give his charges trade permits, which, Healy complained, were soon being used by at least seven hundred men from various parts of the Territory. The Anglos, unable to cope with this unexpected competition, quickly incurred heavy losses. As Healy lamented,

I sent a party to the Indian country to trade for furs and ponies, my men returned in fifty days losing nearly all their goods (\$1,000 worth) . . . they informed me that there was more than four hundred men in the Indian camp having goods of every description to the amount of \$20,000 and that it was impossible to make any kind of an average trade . . . if a man bought a good horse the Indians would take the same away from him.²¹

²⁰Healy to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., January 22, 1867, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, LR, OIA, RG 75, National Archives. The comments of Carleton and Hancock are in the form of endorsements on the letter.

²¹Healy to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 31, 1867, N/142, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Withdrawing from personal participation in the commerce, the Americans sought to profit by sub-letting their licenses to Comancheros, anxious to evade a military crackdown on unauthorized trade.²² Jennings established a trading post at Hatch's Ranch and began selling impressively worded permits, "under authority of the license granted him by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs."²³ José Tafoya later recalled that he had traded supplies furnished by Jennings to the Indians for cattle and "sometimes some horses." Upon returning from the plains, Tafoya paid Jennings "with stock" and kept the balance for himself.²⁴ Healy also sub-let licenses to the natives, while Vose sold his license outright to Manuel Chavez, an ambitious Comanchero who in turn franchised many of his countrymen. Of the four Americans, Norton reported, only Wood (Carleton's former adjutant) had not as yet "been complained of."

Upon realizing that the activities of the quartet had re-opened the Comanchero trade upon "a more extensive scale" than ever, Norton asked Nathaniel Taylor, the new

²² *Ibid.*, p. 275.

²³ Norton to Taylor, September 10, N/151, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives; Letterman to DeForrest, August 31, 1867, L/128, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²⁴ Deposition of José Tafoya, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to revoke their licenses.²⁵ Although the Commissioner agreed that the four had forfeited all right to their permits, he observed that it was not necessary to revoke them because they would expire within a few days.²⁶ With his refusal to renew the licenses, the bizarre attempt of four Anglo officers to obtain control of the Comanchero trade collapsed.

Although the Anglos had been forced out of the Plains Indian trade, the Comancheros, in the face of persistent regulatory efforts, sustained their thriving commerce for another decade. In making their lonely excursions, the traders normally followed a similar routine. At the outset, they had to evade the troops, who sometimes seized their goods without reporting the action. W. F. M. Army, Pueblo agent and a former acting governor of New Mexico, charged in 1871 that some soldiers had stopped a Pueblo party and appropriated for their own use "a good private horse, several silver-mounted bridles, saddles, and other articles."²⁷

²⁵ Norton to Taylor, September 10, 1867, N/151, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

²⁶ Mix to Norton, October 4, 1867, New Mexico Superintendency, Field Office Records, LR, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

²⁷ "Report of W. F. M. Army, August 14, 1871," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1871 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), p. 804.

Jim Duncan, a trooper with the Eighth Cavalry, recalled capturing a burro train loaded with ammunition, whiskey, and about fifty bolts of red and blue cloth. Although the soldiers had orders to destroy the cloth, they sold it to a merchant and used the proceeds to get "a couple of extra shirts apiece."²⁸ At one time complaints about seizures were so widespread that Captain George F. Letterman, commanding at Fort Bascom, instructed his officers to inventory accurately all stock and trade goods taken so that the "whole matter" can be fully investigated and articles wrongfully withheld returned "to their proper owners."²⁹

In addition to the military, trading parties occasionally had to contend with hostile Indians, especially the Navahoes and Kiowas. While the Navahoes were confined at the Bosque Redondo reservation on the Pecos from 1864 to 1868, they were in position to strike swiftly at the Comanchero routes to the plains. In February, 1866, Manuel Olona of Valencia County was returning from the Comanche country with a herd of cattle when his party was attacked by about thirty Navahoes at a place called the "Pintadea." With the loss of only one man wounded, however, the

²⁸Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 171.

²⁹Letterman to Sergeant James Rieves, September 15, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, p. 21, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Mexicans repulsed the Navahoes and saved the entire herd of stock.³⁰ With the Kiowas, often friendly but never dependable, trouble also sometimes occurred. In 1868 some Kiowas opened fire on a party of ten Mexicans taking provisions to trade at a Cheyenne village in the present Oklahoma Panhandle. With their opening volley, the Kiowas killed three of the Mexicans and forced the others to abandon their wagons and flee for their lives. The Indians then looted the wagons and appropriated the draft animals.³¹

After evading these dangers, the traders faced the task of making contact with friendly Indians. Often a rendezvous in one of the canyons that indented the rugged eastern escarpment of the Staked Plains was agreed upon in advance. Clandestine trysts were held in a dozen secluded valleys beneath the Caprock, ranging from Blanca Cita, a branch of Palo Duro Canyon, and Quitaque on the north to Mucha Que, near the present town of Gail, on the south.³² While waiting for the Indians to arrive with cattle, traders sometimes built surprisingly elaborate living

³⁰Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, March 3, 1866.

³¹John S. Smith to Col. Thomas Murphy, February 16, 1868, enclosed with Murphy to Taylor, March 10, 1868, M/13, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

³²Other trading sites were in the Cañon del Rescate (Yellowhouse Canyon above present Lubbock), Las Lenguas Creek (the Pease River), Las Tecovas (a spring northwest of Amarillo), and McClellan Creek. Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 164.

quarters. During the 1871 campaign of Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie, the troops came across on Duck Creek the

trading stations of the Mexicans with the Indians, consisting of curiously built caves in the high banks or bluffs, the earth propped up or kept in place by a framework of poles, giving these subterranean abodes the appearance of grated prison doors or windows, reminding us of the cave dwellers of Arizona and New Mexico.³³

Although most trade took place on the plains, some daring Comancheros slipped onto the reservations in western Oklahoma and "corrupted" the agency dwellers. In 1870 Lawrie Tatum, the Quaker agent on the Comanche-Kiowa Reservation, charged that his wards were well supplied with guns and ammunition by New Mexican traders who encouraged them to "steal from Texas."³⁴ The following year a Comanchero party visited a Kiowa camp northwest of the Wichita Mountains, bartered arms, ammunition, whiskey, and sugar for "stock and robes," and then urged the Kiowas "to go to Texas and steal cattle." Although the Mexicans offered to pay liberally, the Kiowas, in an unprecedented display of virtue, rejected the proposal.³⁵

³³Robert G. Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie; or Winning West Texas from the Comanches (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1961), p. 161.

³⁴"Report of Lawrie Tatum, July 20, 1870," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1870 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), p. 264.

³⁵George H. Smith to Enoch Hoag, February 3, 1871, enclosed with Hoag to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, February 20, 1871, H/249, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

Other traders, in the absence of a pre-arranged rendezvous, depended entirely upon chance and their skill as plainsmen to locate their nomadic customers. Vicente Romero, reflecting on his days as a young trader from Cordova, stated that as the Indians were always traveling, hunting, or following the buffalo, "we never knew where we could find them." On one trip, his party had to go "here or there" over the plains looking for Indian signs until they found a fresh trail. After tracing it to the vicinity of the Indian village, the traders set up camp at a convenient water supply, unpacked their trade goods, and sent up "a smoke signal" to announce their presence. When they awoke the next morning, they were "surrounded by a large group" of Comanches busily making camp.³⁶ Not all traders found the Indians: in June, 1871, the New Mexican reported that some parties who had gone to the plains to trade had returned without "effecting their object."³⁷

Once among the Indians, the traders might remain for several days or even weeks before completing their transactions. According to Romero, a Comanchero at the age of eighteen, the trading was preceded by a "sort of feast" and athletic contests such as archery matches, wrestling bouts,

³⁶Vicente Romero to L. B. Brown, interview, April 6, 1937, MS, New Mexico Historical Museum Library, Santa Fe.

³⁷Daily New Mexican, June 6, 1871.

and horse races, all accompanied by vigorous wagering. With a favorite hunting horse, Romero added "considerably" to his "store of goods" by winning "six out of about nine races."³⁸ Herman Lehmann, a white captive who for many years was a full-fledged Comanche warrior, recounted the Indian side of the meeting: "we traded, horse-raced, gambled and had a good time while they got all we had, and then we left them, to rob the palefaces."³⁹

After the festivities, the bartering began in earnest, with the Comancheros usually getting the better of the transactions. Clinton Smith, another white captive of the Comanches, recalled that "Those fool Indians would let the Mexicans pick their mules for a keg of whiskey; ten pounds of coffee was accepted for a pack horse, five pounds of tobacco would get a mule, and a buffalo robe would be exchanged for little or nothing."⁴⁰ Cattle were equally as cheap. The New Mexican in 1871 reported that a "burro load" of powder, caps, lead, and biscuits would secure quite a herd of cattle; and Superintendent Norton stated that a man from Santa Fe had taken goods worth about \$150

³⁸Romero to Brown, interview, April 6, 1937, as cited.

³⁹Jonathan H. Jones, A Condensed History of the Apache and Comanche Indians Prepared from the General Conversation of Hermann Lehmann, Willie Lehmann, Mrs. Mina Keyser, Mrs. A. J. Buchmeyer and Others (San Antonio: Johnson Brothers, 1899), p. 165. Hereafter cited as Jones, Condensed History.

⁴⁰Hunter, The Boy Captives, p. 58.

to the plains and returned with one hundred head of Texas cattle.⁴¹ Pueblo traders, whose "Biscuits made for that purpose" were still in great demand as trade goods, competed vigorously for Texas cattle. According to Herman Lehmann, the Pueblos were especially esteemed by the Comanches, as they paid "a good price" for cattle and were completely trustworthy: "we could send by these fellows" for whatever was needed, he stated, and they were always "faithful to their promises."⁴²

Although whiskey, for which Indians would reportedly "give the robes off their backs . . . on the coldest winter day,"⁴³ enabled traders to get cattle even cheaper, taking it to an Indian camp created an explosive situation. Herman Lehmann matter-of-factly recalled that while his party was trading three thousand head of cattle to some

⁴¹Daily New Mexican, April 20, 1871; "Report of A. B. Norton, July 31, 1866, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866, p. 191. In another oft-quoted observation of the trade, Norton stated that "when no cattle or horses are found in the Comanche camp by the Mexican traders, they lend the Indians their horses and pistols and remain at camp until the Comanches have time to go to Texas and return, and get the stock they desire." (Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867 p. 191.) This statement, however, is unreliable because it was lifted almost verbatim from a letter by P. H. Healy, who was deliberately seeking to discredit his Mexican competitors. Healy to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, July 31, 1867, N/142, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

⁴²Jones, Condensed History, pp. 198-199.

⁴³"Report of H. T. Ketcham, April 4, 1864." in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1864 p. 401.

Mexicans, a fight broke out in which the Comanches killed two Mexicans and "raised their scalps on a pole." After that, the Indians "drank all the whiskey, ran off the Mexicans," and kept all their trinkets, guns, and ammunition.⁴⁴ To avoid similar incidents and to guard against an unpleasant Comanche penchant for retaking cattle already sold, one group of Comancheros promised the Indians kegs of whiskey hidden several miles away as a bonus for good behavior. After the purchased cattle were well on the road to New Mexico, a trader who had remained behind pointed out the liquor and raced swiftly away before the Indians had drunk enough to become vicious.⁴⁵

While carrying on their illicit barter, the Comancheros on rare occasions ran afoul of vengeful Texans. In the summer of 1870 a party of traders arriving from the plains reported that a body of "Texan rangers" had trailed a stolen cattle herd to a Comanche camp in which there were some Comancheros. Surprising the village, the Texans killed all the Indians and traders except a Pueblo Indian from San Juan, "who mounted a swift horse and dashed through the Texan line" to safety. In announcing this massacre, the New Mexican admonished the Comancheros that if

⁴⁴Jones, Condensed History, p. 41.

⁴⁵James East, "Recollections," MS, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum Library, Canyon, Texas.

they continued to encourage the Comanches "to kill the Texans and steal their stock" they should expect no mercy when caught by the embattled ranchers.⁴⁶ The traders needed no reminder, however, to be on the alert; one aged veteran afterwards recalled that "we rounded up the cattle at night by the light of the moon and we drove them on a fast run," leaving behind the animals too weak to keep up. Sometimes, he added, a party of Comanches would stay behind to repulse any Tejano pursuers.⁴⁷ Two other traders, José Medina and Vicente Romero, independently stated that the Comanches provided two- or three-day escorts for cattle enroute to New Mexico.⁴⁸

Much of the trouble with the Texans undoubtedly stemmed from Comanchero participation in the cattle raids. Texas rancher John Hittson in 1873 stated that the Comanche marauders "not infrequently" were accompanied by Mexican traders who were "much more savage and expert than the Indians themselves."⁴⁹ About one hundred "Comanches" who

⁴⁶Daily New Mexican, July 30, 1870. The "Texan rangers" in question were probably a party of Texas cowmen, as the Texas Rangers had not yet been re-organized after the Civil War.

⁴⁷Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 49.

⁴⁸Deposition of José Gertrudis Medina, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives; Romero to Brown, interview, April 6, 1937, as cited.

⁴⁹Rocky Mountain News (Denver), April 29, 1873.

charged through a trail camp northwest of Fort Bascom in 1866 were shouting to one another in such good Spanish that the herders were positive that many of them were Mexicans.⁵⁰ Herman Lehmann remembered a raid in which a party of 60 New Mexicans and 140 Comanches captured a cattle herd west of Fort Griffin and beat off a counterattack by forty whites.⁵¹ About ten or twelve "Mexicans in Indian disguise" captured a few miles north of Fort Stockton in 1868 were held for some time before being released.⁵² In the best known case involving New Mexican cattle thieves, troops from Fort Concho on a routine patrol in 1872 discovered that some apparent Indian thieves were Mexicans. Polonis Ortiz, who was captured in this encounter, revealed that he was one of fifteen New Mexicans regularly employed to steal cattle in Texas.⁵³ Quite likely, numerous other parties made similar trips to the Texas cattle ranges.

Most of the raids, however, were the work of the arrogant Comanches, who denuded the Texas frontier with incredible ease. One of the depredators boasted to Captain

⁵⁰Major H. B. Bristol to Lt. Charles Porter, July 14, 1866, printed in the Santa Fe Weekly Gazette, July 28, 1866.

⁵¹Jones, Condensed History, p. 41.

⁵²Testimony of Louis Johnson, December 4, 1877, in "Texas Border Troubles," 45 Cong., 2 Sess., House Misc. Doc. No. 64 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1878), p. 136.

⁵³Post Medical Records, Fort Concho, Vol. 401, p. 259, Adjutant General's Office (AGO), RG 94, National Archives.

Bergmann in 1866 that "it will not pay to go any longer to Texas for those people have already been robbed poor."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the Indians soon stepped up their pillaging. After a visit to the Comanche camps in 1867 Lorenzo Labadi reported that the Indians had Texas cattle "without number" and that at the time no less than eighteen parties were out on forays along the frontier.⁵⁵

A favorite target of the cattle thieves was the Pecos trail. A. M. Adams, a beef contractor for the military garrison at Fort Sumner, in 1867 lost three separate herds along the trail. His herds, he complained, were attacked "before they had crossed the state line" by armed bands of Kiowa and Comanche Indians, the herdsmen killed or driven away, and 2,449 head of cattle captured. Governmental officials presented Adams' claim for damages "in council" to the Comanches, who, quite surprisingly (for any recompense he received would be deducted from their annuity allotments), admitted their guilt.⁵⁶ A single band of seventy-five Comanches on June 30, 1868, captured 900 cattle at

⁵⁴Bergmann to DeForrest, August 11, 1866, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, p. 103, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁵⁵"Report of Lorenzo Labadi, August 28, 1867," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, p. 215.

⁵⁶A. N. Adams, "Memorial to Senate Committee on Appropriations Concerning His Claim against Comanches and Kiowas," [n. d.], A/966, Kiowa Agency, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

Independence Springs, just below the New Mexico line; on the following day, at the same place, they took 1100 head from "Thomas & Slater" and 1000 more from "another party;" and they were assumed to be the same group that a few days previously had escaped with John Chisum's herd of 1100 head lower down the Pecos Trail.⁵⁷ Thus, within a week this band alone had netted approximately 4,100 cattle, an average of more than fifty per person.

The Comanches were equally adept at seizing stock on the open range. The San Antonio Express in 1871, under the heading, "More Raids--Indians in Force--What Texas is Coming to," reported an encounter twelve miles from Fort Concho between some Texas cowboys and a party of Comanches who had been discovered with a herd of eight hundred cattle. The cattlemen "let in upon the savages and a fierce fight ensued on the spot known as the Devils-court-house," but, outnumbered thirty to nine, they were driven off. Shocked by the boldness of the Indians, the Express complained that

Instead of coming in, in twos or threes, and skulking through the country, stealing under cover of night, the reds come boldly in, in force. . . . The stockraisers and cow hunters are not safe from them unless they band together and hunt their stock in large parties.⁵⁸

Although the military officers at Fort Concho strove

⁵⁷Daily New Mexican, July 20, 1868.

⁵⁸San Antonio Express, April 8, 1871.

desperately to protect the cattle herds in their vicinity and along the Pecos Trail, they were handicapped by a lack of manpower. After a small detachment of cavalry had safely escorted a herd of 1500 to Horsehead Crossing in July, 1872, the Indians captured it twenty-three miles upstream, killing three of the drovers. Four days later, on July 13, another band, after stampeding a herd of 2,600 head twelve miles west of Fort Concho eluded a pursuit by forty-five cavalrymen. Major John Hatch, commanding the fort, reported on July 15 that due to the troop shortage several thousand cattle were there awaiting escort and that within a few days there would be 10,000 more.⁵⁹ Ironically, Colonel Mackenzie at the time had most of the post's garrison in Blanco Canyon 200 miles to the north--looking for cattle thieves.

While these raids were occurring on the Pecos Trail, a band of forty Comanches attacked Jesse Hittson, the seventeen-year-old son of John Hittson, and his ten-man round-up crew near present Ballinger. Although the cowboys stood off the Indians in a four-hour battle, the marauders escaped with seven hundred cattle, all of the herd except one lone heifer. Young Hittson, with a slightly embittered

⁵⁹Major John Hatch to Asst. Adjt. Gen., Dept. of Texas, July 15, 1872, Filed under M/350, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

sense of humor, promptly branded the survivor: "7-11-72
Indians Thick as Hell J. H."⁶⁰

For every herd taken by force on the sparsely settled Texas frontier, the Indians probably escaped undetected with a dozen. John Hittson later stated that it was "comparatively easy" for the Comanches to steal cattle unobserved and that it was not uncommon to strike a trail made by herds being driven towards the Staked Plains.⁶¹ The Texans learned by costly experience that the Comanches were adept vaqueros.

Unfortunately, the Comanches did not limit their crimes against the Texans to cattle stealing. At times their uninhibited tastes led them to steal things verging on the ridiculous: a party raiding a ranch above Fredericksburg in 1869 took besides a mare, the clothes from the clothesline and "one of the bee hives."⁶² Usually, however, the raiders left a trail of murders, rapes, and kidnappings. A brief notice in the San Antonio Express hints at the heart-rending tragedies that occurred in scores of

⁶⁰Deposition of J. J. Hittson, July 11, 1890, Depredation Case 2996, John Hittson vs. the United States and Comanche Indians, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

⁶¹Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1873.

⁶²San Antonio Express, January 18, 1869.

Texas communities:

Taken from my house by the Indians, in Legion valley, Llano County, Texas, on Wednesday, Feb. 5, 1868, my son Lee Temple Friend, aged eight years, black eyes, light hair and fair complexion: also my neighbor's daughter, Malinda Caudle, aged seven, blue eyes, fair complexion and light hair. All Indian agents or traders or any person having an opportunity, are requested to rescue the above named children; and delivering them to me or notifying me of their whereabouts will be liberally remunerated.

Jno. S. Friend.⁶³

Friend had been absent during the attack in which the Indians, in addition to kidnapping the two children, had cold-bloodedly killed a three-month-old infant, a sixteen-year-old girl, and two neighbor women. The sole survivor of the massacre was Mrs. Friend, who in a desperate hand-to-hand struggle was slashed across one hand, wounded in the arm, pierced with an arrow through the breast, and scalped. Before leaving her for dead, an Indian pushed the arrow in her breast "up and down" several times. She did not flinch. Despite having to wait two days for a doctor, the victim recovered and five years later greeted her son Lee Temple when, "completely Indianized," he was finally rescued.⁶⁴ Most families were not so fortunate.

⁶³Ibid., March 24, 1868.

⁶⁴Joseph C. McConnell, The West Texas Frontier (2 vols.; Palo Pinto, Texas: n. p., 1935-1939), II, 217-218; Carl Coke Rister, Border Captives; the Traffic in Prisoners by the Southern Plains Indians, 1835-1875 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1940), pp. 143-147.

Deeply moved by these atrocities, the New Mexican papers vied with one another in denouncing the Comancheros for instigating the raids. In 1870 the New Mexican charged that the traders were the "strongest incentives" for the marauding and murdering expeditions and that they must share the responsibility for the bloodshed and misery inflicted on the Texans.⁶⁵ In similar fashion, the Republican Review described the trade as "pandering to red murderers and thieves."⁶⁶ Even more violent, the Santa Fe Weekly Post proclaimed that the Comancheros should "be shot down like so many dangerous dogs;" they are worse, it declared, "than the savages whom they aid."⁶⁷

The native New Mexicans, however, were little bothered by the outrages that horrified the Anglo press. Living in a society where life was cheap and the very term Tejano was so odious that mothers hushed their little ones with the threat, "I'll give you to the Tejanos,"⁶⁸ few even thought about the distant depredations. The New Mexican, despite its hostility to the Comancheros, shrewdly recognized that

⁶⁵Daily New Mexican, July 18, 1870.

⁶⁶Republican Review (Albuquerque), July 30, 1870.

⁶⁷Santa Fe Weekly Post, June 17, 1871.

⁶⁸Miguel Otero, My Life on the Frontier, 1864-1882 (New York: Press of the Pioneers, 1935), p. 63.

the typical trader, "thoughtless and ignorant," did not

consider or realize the terrible character of his trade, or the misery, suffering or death produced by his course. In other cases, long familiarity with such scenes and such thoughts has blunted his sensibilities and . . . he is thoughtless or reckless of the fact that he is in a great measure responsible for the deaths of the slain owners of the scalps, and the captivity of those to whom death were preferable.⁶⁹

Most Comancheros, however, reflected not at all on such abstract matters as the degree of their guilt. They simply saw nothing wrong in the trade, as Julian Baca, an old Comanchero testifying in one of Charles Goodnight's claims cases, exemplified in a disconcerting courtroom

⁶⁹Daily New Mexican, July 18, 1870. The contemporary press was inaccurate in blaming the Comancheros exclusively for gun-and liquor-running and for instigating the Comanche raids. Anglo traders, based in Kansas and the Chickasaw nation, introduced large quantities of whiskey to the Indians and sold them guns and ammunition. In 1867, for example, General Sherman complained that Charles Rath, operating out of Fort Zarah, Kansas, had armed the Kiowas with revolvers and had "completely overstocked" them with powder. Sherman to Grant, January 26, 1867, quoted in Carl C. Rister, The Southwestern Frontier, 1865-1881 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1928), p. 81. At the outset of the Red River War in 1874, Thomas Battey, a gentle Quaker schoolmaster, observed that the licensed traders for the Cheyennes were selling pistols and ammunition to all of the Southern Plains Indians. Battey, The Life and Adventures of a Quaker among the Indians (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1875), pp. 260-261. In making their raids on Texas, the Comanches, although stimulated by their desire to obtain cattle for the New Mexican market, were also motivated by their passion for horses, glory, status, scalps, and revenge. They also stole cattle for food. Some Comanches who took A. M. Adams's cattle in 1867 admitted the following year that from the time of the raid they had been living on the captured cattle and still had a "few in their possession." Adams, "Memorial to Senate Committee on Appropriations Concerning His Claim against the Comanches and Kiowas," A/966, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

confrontation with a government attorney:

Attorney: Do you mean to say you bought stolen cattle?

Baca: Didn't matter to us whether they were stolen or not, we were buying cattle.

Attorney: Did you belong to church at that time?

Baca: Yes Sir, I was a Catholic and am now.

Attorney: Did you think it right to deal in stolen cattle?

Baca: For me it was right because I gave my money for it.⁷⁰

The attorney changed the subject. The few Comancheros who rationalized their vocation claimed that the Comanches stole cattle primarily "as a means of revenge against the Texan cattle owners who were moving into their lands."⁷¹ This statement, not entirely devoid of truth, suggests that the common dislike of Texans may have cemented further the traditionally friendly ties between the Comanches and New Mexicans.

The successful Comanchero returned to his village to receive unabashedly the acclaims of his townsmen. According to the New Mexican, he was regarded as "a good citizen," respected, and trusted by his neighbors.⁷² Vicente Romero stated that traders returning to Cordova proudly discharged

⁷⁰Testimony of Julian Baca, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

⁷¹Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 47.

⁷²Daily New Mexican, July 18, 1870.

their firearms at the crest of the ridge overlooking the hamlet to salute its patron saint and to announce their arrival. Longingly, the old Comanchero's mind drifted back through the years:

The closer we got to our homes the more we pushed our poor horses . . . Soon we were firing our firearms in the Salvo to San Antonio. We could see the people on the roof-tops counting us as we rode down into the village to see who were missing. My poor mother cried with joy to see me back safe. The next few days were filled with feasting and the nights with dancing. Blessed be God; those were the times.⁷³

Less colorful than the Comancheros but equally indispensable to the success of the cattle trade were the merchants who backed them. Although these profiteers were at times castigated by the authorities, they were never subjected to effective punitive action. In 1870 Captain Horace Jewett, the last and the most ingenious commander at Fort Bascom, charged that the chief instigators of the cattle trade were "wealthy and prominent" Mexicans who furnished the supplies, "taking no risks themselves of apprehension, but the lion's share of the profit."⁷⁴ Like Jewett, Texas rancher John Hittson firmly believed that those most responsible for the depredations were some merchants who "occupy prominent and responsible" positions in the

⁷³Romero to Brown, interview, April 6, 1937, as cited.

⁷⁴Jewett to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., August 25, 1870, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 144, p. 139, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

government.⁷⁵ Few of the financiers can be identified, but it is likely that a large proportion of the merchants of northeastern New Mexico, Anglo as well as Mexican, dabbled in the lucrative trade. Although perhaps not a typical case, John Watts in 1867, one year before he was appointed to the Territorial Supreme Court, received a conditional license to trade with the Comanches.⁷⁶

The merchants evidently paid the Comancheros comparatively little for the stolen cattle. Although Manuel Gonzales, who bought cattle for many years, testified in a claims case that he paid the Comancheros from eight to twenty dollars a head, depending on their age and condition,⁷⁷ he may have deliberately named a high figure to help the claimant obtain a better settlement. One old trader vehemently complained that "we gained little from the trade, as the Americans to whom we sold the cattle paid us low prices for them."⁷⁸ John Hittson, who on his many cattle drives through New Mexico had ample occasion to observe the trade, estimated in 1873 that the traders turned

⁷⁵Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1873.

⁷⁶A. B. Norton to N. G. Taylor, February 20, 1867, N/20, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

⁷⁷Deposition of Manuel Gonzales, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

⁷⁸Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 48.

their cattle over to the merchants "at a total cost of say two dollars a head."⁷⁹ As a result of these low prices, the merchants in 1866 were able to sell dressed beef at ten cents a pound,⁸⁰ an all-time low.

The size of the trade is also hard to judge. Charles Goodnight was positive that more than 300,000 head of Texas cattle had been run off between 1860 and 1867; yet Hittson, equally familiar with the commerce, in 1873 estimated that only 100,000 head had been stolen during the preceding twenty years.⁸¹ The larger estimate was more accurate, if any credence can be attached to a statement in the New Mexican in 1871 that its "informant" had reported that more than thirty thousand cattle had been brought into New Mexico by the Comanche traders during the last three months. Charging that over one thousand persons were currently engaged in the illicit trade, the paper predicted that, as the "people on the Pecos have almost entirely neglected their ranches for this more profitable traffic, . . . the consequence will be a scarcity of bread stuffs this year."⁸²

⁷⁹Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1873.

⁸⁰Daily New Mexican, July 14, 1866.

⁸¹J. Evetts Haley, Charles Goodnight, Cowman & Plainsman (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), p. 194; Hittson to Veale, February 23, 1873, printed in the Daily New Mexican, March 21, 1873.

⁸²Daily New Mexican, May 24, 1871.

Despite the condemnation heaped upon the great Coman-
chero cattle trade, it received a few indirect plaudits. The United States census of 1880, for example, contained a terse and unusual description of the commerce:

The Indians east and northeast of the Llano Estacado were killing the western pioneer stockmen of Texas and stealing their herds. Stockmen from New Mexico fitted out expeditions into the dangerous country and purchased the herds. Many thousand cattle were thus secured for New Mexico, especially for the northeastern section. This constituted an important advance in the New Mexican stock occupation.⁸³

Apparently this was the way the Comancheros and their customers wished to see their trade remembered.

While encouraging the Comanches to steal Texas cattle, the Comancheros were also bolstering their resistance to the Americans. J. R. Mead, an official interpreter, reported in 1866 that the Kwahadi Comanches, living on the eastern borders of the Staked Plains, were under the influence of New Mexican traders. The Kwahadis "don't care anything about goods or presents," he complained, "because they can get all they want from the Mexicans." He also pointed out that the refusal of the Kwahadis to make peace had "a bad effect on the young men of the other tribes who see with what impunity these fellows escape."⁸⁴ Comanche

⁸³Clarence Gordon, "Report on Cattle, Sheep, and Swine," in Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 (22 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), III, 989.

⁸⁴J. M. Mead to Thomas Murphy, September 7, 1866, M/724, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

agent Leavenworth also observed that the Kwahadis, who were the only "ones who are giving . . . the whites any trouble," would be obliged to "come in and make peace" if the Mexicans could be stopped from trading with them.⁸⁵ But the Comancheros would not be stopped, and the Kwahadis would not submit until their power was finally crushed in the Red River War of 1874.

⁸⁵Leavenworth to Cooley, June 5, 1866, L/54, ibid.

CHAPTER IX

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE COMANCHERO TRADE, 1867-1872

For two years following the Civil War little was done to combat the Comanchero commerce. General Carleton soon lifted his restrictions of early 1865, and both he and Indian Superintendent Felipe Delgado issued permits on a generous scale. Moreover, some frontier military officers, as has already been noted, may have been engaged in the traffic. Even Superintendent Norton's well-publicized revocation of all extant trading licenses in mid-1866 had little effect because Pueblo Agent John D. Henderson obstinately continued to issue permits.

Henderson's actions went unchallenged until January, 1867, when Major A. J. Alexander, upon replacing Captain Bergmann as commander at Fort Bascom, complained that Pueblo Indians bearing permits signed by the agent were "constantly passing" and asked for instructions on dealing with them.¹ His simple request was shoved methodically up the army's chain of command until it reached the desk of General of the Army U. S. Grant. Grant promptly returned it to Lieutenant General William T. Sherman, head of the

¹Alexander to DeForrest, January 26, 1867, B/10, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Division of the Missouri, with instructions to issue such orders concerning the matter as he thought "necessary and proper." On March 18 Sherman belatedly advised the New Mexican officers to confiscate all livestock obtained illicitly by traders. "Have all parties traveling to and from the plains report at Fort Bascom," he suggested, and if "new horses" are found with returning traders "presumption can be made they were . . . bought of thieves."² Upon receiving Sherman's "solution," Carleton dourly commented that he lacked sufficient troops to force traders to report at Fort Bascom and that, in the absence of a specific statute authorizing his action, an officer who confiscated cattle from the traders "could be sued in every court in New Mexico."³ This unduly cautious attitude perhaps explains why little was done to stop the trade while Carleton commanded the District of New Mexico.

The controversy stirred up by Alexander's request, however, eventually led to the abolition of the system of licensing Comancheros. Upon learning of Henderson's actions, the military officials in Washington lodged a formal protest with the Office of Indian Affairs. Soon afterwards, Indian Commissioner Nathaniel Taylor ordered

²Ibid. The endorsements of General Carleton and the other officers completely cover the letter.

³Ibid.

Superintendent Norton to recall all outstanding permits and to forbid Henderson to issue others "under any circumstances."⁴ Deprived of their legal passes many Comancheros, hopeful of avoiding capture and the confiscation of their goods, purchased bogus permits from Charles Jennings and the other licensed Anglo traders. Armed with these, they continued to trade at a brisk pace throughout the summer of 1867.

At Fort Bascom the troops, almost as if intimidated by the forbidding wastes that surrounded them, paid little attention to the trade. Early in the year a patrol led by a guide "who knew nothing of the country" lost its way on the Llano Estacado and wandered frantically for fifty-two waterless hours before reaching safety.⁵ Subsequent detachments, as a result, were hesitant to traverse the hostile expanses over which the Comancheros were moving their illicit cattle.

Even vigorous patrolling, however, would have been hampered by the lack of judicial cooperation, a handicap that was never completely overcome. The troops at Fort Bascom apprehended a party of liquor-runners near the post, but United States District Attorney Stephen B. Elkins,

⁴Taylor to Norton, April 13, 1867, OIA, LS, Vol. 82, p. 566, RG 75, National Archives.

⁵Alexander to DeForrest, January 12, 1867, B/5, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

later to serve his native West Virginia as a United States Senator for nineteen years, was unable to secure an indictment. The traders were released and their confiscated whiskey returned, doubtlessly with an apology for the inconvenience caused them.⁶

The listless pace of patrol activities ended in July when Carleton was replaced by Colonel George Washington Getty. Soon after assuming command, Getty established "picket posts" at Hubbell's Ranch and at the intersection of the Fort Smith road and the trail connecting Forts Bascom and Sumner.⁷ Instructed to send out frequent patrols, Lieutenant Sam Hilderbun, commander of the detachment at the crossroads, soon intercepted several Mexican traders "on their way to the Comanche Indians," confiscated their

⁶Maj. Gen. George Sykes to Elkins, April 28, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 43, p. 156, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Elkins to DeForrest, May 18, 1867, E/8, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, ibid.

⁷DeForrest to DuBois, August 16, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 43, p. 253, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives. The crossroads was about twenty-five miles southwest of Fort Bascom and about twelve miles southwest of Tucumcari Mountain; Hubbell's Ranch was about twenty-five miles farther south on the edge of the Llano. It had been established in 1865 by Charles Hubbell, another of the motley collection of officers that served in eastern New Mexico near the close of the war. Hubbell, perhaps buying beef of the Comancheros, was a leading contractor for the military until April, 1867, when a stolen cattle herd was tracked from Fort Bascom to his ranch. As he thereupon fled from the country, his ranch headquarters were available for use as an army sub-depot. Letterman to DeForrest, April 24, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, p. 21, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

improperly endorsed permits, and ordered them to return to the settlements.⁸ Then, on August 26 a patrol from Bascom overtook a caravan of Comancheros about sixty miles below the post. Although the traders, none of whom had a permit of any type, tried to avoid detention by asserting that "others of their band on before had the legal papers," they were escorted to the fort where Captain George L. Letterman, the commander, inventoried their confiscated goods:

About 200 pounds of corn meal--500 of Mex. Hard Bread, 35 or 40 butcher knives--9 files--Vermillion--a lot of shirts, Some red and white flannel--one vest--Some iron hoops, Ducking and Calico--shelled corn--tea--sugar--flour--letter paper--candy--one regalia--one box of army caps (100), about 400 percussion caps (small)--several pounds of lead--about 5 pounds of powder--16 elongated balls calab. 58.⁹

This was not a sinister lot of merchandise--no whiskey, no arms, and a surprisingly small quantity of munitions. To avoid having "to supply them rations," Captain Letterman released the traders but kept their trade goods pending further instructions.

A few days later two soldiers from the picket on the Fort Smith road arrived at the fort with eighty-two head of cattle taken from another party of Comancheros, who had

⁸Hilderbun to DuBois, August 22, 1867, B/121, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, ibid.

⁹Letterman to DeForrest, August 31, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, pp. 12-13, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

been released because they carried "papers" issued by Charles Jennings. After carefully recording their brands, Letterman impounded the cattle. By September 11 he was holding eight hundred head of cattle brought in by the patrols.¹⁰

The disposition of the captured cattle posed a ticklish problem. Superintendent Norton, informed by Colonel Getty that the animals upon the presentation of "satisfactory proof" would be returned to their legal owners, notified the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and suggested that the brands be published in the Texas newspapers. Approving this idea, Commissioner Charles Mix asked Judge L. D. Evans of Texas to publicize the brands in the best "advertising medium" in the state.¹¹ Furnishing "satisfactory" proof of ownership, however, was not easy. Charles Goodnight, enroute to Colorado with a cattle herd, visited Fort Bascom and estimated that 250 head there had been stolen from him; but the officers, Goodnight stated years afterwards, refused to surrender his animals because he lacked "legal authority to receive them."¹²

¹⁰Letterman to DeForrest, September 7, 1867, ibid., p. 21.

¹¹Charles Mix to Evans, October 3, 1867, OIA, LS, Vol. 84, p. 379, RG 75, National Archives; Mix to Norton, October 4, 1867, New Mexico Superintendency, LR, OIA, RG 75, National Archives.

¹²Haley, Charles Goodnight, p. 194. Haley states, apparently relying upon Goodnight's memory, that the troops

The failure to return the cattle, however, was quite likely due to a sweeping judicial decision that practically nullified the military operations. At the fall session of the United States District Court in Las Vegas, charges were brought against several of the New Mexicans "for trading with the Comanche Indians without a license." The lawyers for the defendants stoutly contended that New Mexico was not subject to the Federal trade regulations because it had not been a part of the United States when they were passed in 1834 and that no subsequent legislation had specifically extended coverage to the territory. Readily accepting this specious line of reasoning, Judge J. P. Slough ruled that there was "no Indian Country in New Mexico within the meaning of the act of 1834," quashed the charges against the Comancheros, and ordered the return to them of the captured cattle.¹³ United States Attorney General Henry Stanberry, angered by this bland negation of the Indian trade laws, hastily instructed Elkins to appeal the case to the Territorial Supreme Court, and, if the decision were not

had captured "seventy-three hundred" head of cattle, as compared to the eight hundred that the military records report. Goodnight also recalled that he went into court at Las Vegas to recover six hundred of his cattle that he had located on the Gallinas. Although he was confident that he had proved his case, he was defeated, had to pay the court costs, and "felt lucky to get out of the place alive."

¹³S. B. Elkins to Henry Stanberry, October 1, 1867, Records of the Attorney General's Office, LR, New Mexico, RG 60, National Archives.

reversed there, to the United States Supreme Court.¹⁴ Although no further records of the case appear in the New Mexico or United States compendiums of court decisions or in the files of the attorney general's office, the ruling was obviously reversed, for afterwards the trade laws were applied to New Mexico without question.

Despite the disappointing court decisions, the energetic action of the military apparently led to a temporary decline in the Comanchero trade. In withdrawing his pickets on October 24, Captain Letterman stated that the "Comanche trade has entirely ceased;"¹⁵ Jose' Tafoya later testified that he and several others stopped trading in 1867 because the troops "got after" them;¹⁶ and Phillip McCusker, a Comanche squawman and a highly respected government interpreter, reported to Agent Leavenworth in the spring of 1868 that the measures of the New Mexico military had "entirely broken up" the cattle trade. As the New Mexicans had ceased trading with the Comanches, McCusker added, the Indians were without a market for their cattle and

¹⁴Stanberry to Elkins, November 23, 1867, in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1867, p. 222.

¹⁵Letterman to Lt. Edwin Hunter, October 24, 1867, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, pp. 33-34, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁶Deposition of Jose' Tafoya, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

stole only "such as they need for subsistence."¹⁷ Seemingly corroborating these statements, the military failed to apprehend any more traders during the following two years.¹⁸

Not even General Philip Sheridan's massive, three-pronged winter campaign of 1868-1869 unearthed any signs of the Comancheros. Major A. W. Evans, in command of one of the columns, marched from Fort Bascom down the Canadian to Monument Creek, near present Canadian, Texas, and then continued southeastward to the Wichita Mountains without encountering any traders. He did meet several parties of ciboleros, but found no indication that they had been trading with the Indians.¹⁹

Although Sheridan's campaign forced many of the Comanches to move onto the reservation in southwestern Oklahoma,

¹⁷ McCusker to Leavenworth, April 6, 1868, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

¹⁸ Some trade, however, undoubtedly continued. A few Comancheros may have started using more southerly trade routes that were still unknown to the military. Others conceivably were able to slip past the pickets. In 1868 Captain Louis Morris, upset that a picket south of Fort Bascom had failed to detect a party of Comanche raiders, stated that the Indians "soon know where the picket is stationed and always go around it, and the picket knows nothing about them." This also probably held true for Comancheros. Morris to Hunter, September 26, 1868, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, p. 104, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁹ Carl C. Rister (ed.), "Evans' Christmas Day Indian Fight," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XVI (September, 1938), 284.

the Kwahadis and part of the Kotsotekas clung tenaciously to their old haunts and to their ties with New Mexico. Apparently hoping to receive a reservation on the New Mexican frontier, they sent word to Fort Bascom in early 1869 that they would surrender to Colonel Getty.²⁰ Getty, however, replied that if they desired peace they would have to follow Sheridan's orders and report to Fort Cobb in Indian Territory. Despite this rebuff, Mow-way, the leading Kotsoteka chief, and a number of other Comanche leaders traveled to Fort Bascom to press their case. The commander there sent them to Santa Fe, where on March 6 they conferred with Colonel Getty and Superintendent Norton. Becoming apprehensive during the night, the chiefs stole out of Santa Fe but were captured at Chaparito where Getty had learned they had left horses. After being held as prisoners of war for a few days at Fort Union, they were transported to Fort Cobb.²¹ In this ignominious way, another Comanche attempt to remain legally on the New Mexican frontier went for naught.

Fearful that the detention of the chiefs would provoke an Indian war, the frontier residents became panic-stricken

²⁰Major William Kobbe to Lt. Col. A. W. Evans, January 10, 1869, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 46, p. 160, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²¹Getty to Brig. Gen. C. McKeever, March 13, 1869, ibid., p. 213.

upon learning that an Anglo and three Mexicans had been killed at a saline east of Fort Bascom.²² Fortunately, the assumption that the murders had been committed by a Comanche retaliatory party proved inaccurate. On March 16 the New Mexican announced that the killings had been the work of Navahoes seen "headed in that direction, intending, no doubt, to make their semi-occasional raid on the Comanche stock."²³ This assurance, however, did not dispel the anxiety of the frontiersmen. Vincent Colyer, who in May made an inspection tour of the region for the Indian Department, reported that the officers at Fort Bascom were still "considerably" upset about Getty's treatment of the chiefs and that the settlers on the frontier had "quite numerously signed" a petition for their release.²⁴

Meanwhile, General Sheridan, apparently blaming the New Mexicans for the Kwahadi's refusal to move to the reservation, had authorized Colonel Getty to

make every effort to break up and punish the bands of New Mexico traders who have been and are still trading for captured stock with hostile Indians:

²²Capt. L. T. Morris to Lt. Edward Hunter, March 11, 1869, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 82, p. 194, Army Commands, RG 93, National Archives.

²³Daily New Mexican, March 16, 1869.

²⁴Vincent Colyer, "Report on Indians in Indian Territory, New Mexico, and Arizona, October 20, 1869," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1869 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869), p. 88.

and if hereafter such traders are found at any point east of the eastern line of New Mexico their goods will be burned and their stock killed.²⁵

By publishing copies of this order in the territorial newspapers and distributing Spanish translations at the settlements of eastern New Mexico, Getty seems to have intimidated many of the Comancheros into staying away from the plains. At any rate, none were apprehended during the year.

By the spring of 1870, however, traders were again frequenting the plains. In March Captain Horace Jewett, the energetic and outspoken commander of Fort Bascom, noted that a party of about twenty Mexicans and six Pueblos, posing as buffalo hunters, had been sighted about fifty miles east of the fort. Although convinced that the New Mexicans were actually illicit traders, Jewett did not send a patrol in pursuit because they had too much of a start.²⁶ Never slow to volunteer advice, he suggested that the Comanchero traffic could be stopped by commissioning private citizens to seize traders in return for their trade goods. With the aid of these vigilantes, he asserted, the trade could be made "too risky" to attempt.²⁷ Colonel Getty, however, was

²⁵Printed in Republican Review, July 30, 1870.

²⁶Jewett to Kobbe, March 15, 1870, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 144, p. 89, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²⁷Ibid.

unwilling to entrust the enforcement of the trade laws to bounty hunters.

Sending him instead an additional company of cavalry, Getty in July ordered Jewett to reoccupy the intersection of the Fort Smith and Fort Sumner roads and advised him he should be able to "diminish if not break up" the illegal traffic.²⁸ Lieutenant H. S. Weeks, dispatched to the crossroads by Jewett, captured two traders on August 19 and slaughtered their small herd of cattle. The following day his eighteen-man force encountered a lone fugitive, a "colored man" who claimed he was a cavalry man captured by the Indians in Texas and rescued by the two traders.²⁹ Weeks, however, suspected that he was a deserter in league with the two Comancheros and sent all three to Fort Bascom. From there Jewett sent them to Santa Fe, where they were immediately freed.

In response to growing complaints from the military about the lack of civil cooperation, Governor William Pile on August 29 issued a proclamation ordering "all persons" to desist from the illicit commerce and the officials of the eastern counties to "exercise their full authority" against the traffic. Citizens were to cooperate by giving

²⁸ Kobbe to Jewett, July 2, 1870, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 2, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²⁹ Jewett to Getty, August 25, 1870, Dist. of N. Mex., Fort Bascom, LS, Book 144, p. 39, ibid.

information to the officers at Fort Bascom and on the picket lines.³⁰ Giving this proclamation its full endorsement, the New Mexican charged that the traders "knowingly and intentionally" promoted murder and robbery; such men, it continued, "ought to be safely enclosed within the walls of a penitentiary."

In an economy move that greatly encouraged the traders, Fort Bascom was abandoned as a permanent fort in October, 1870. But just as the fort had been in existence under the name Camp Easton before its formal creation in 1863, it remained occupied for four years after its announced dismantling. Seven months a year a non-commissioned officer and a handful of enlisted men took care of the buildings; each summer, however, under the designation, "Summer Camp on the Canadian," its quarters reverberated with milling troops assigned to suppress the Comancheros.

In many respects 1871 was the Indian summer of the Comanchero commerce, as traders, heartened by the evacuation of Fort Bascom, once again flocked to the plains. Soon after assuming his post as commander of the District of New Mexico, Colonel J. I. Gregg, taking note of the renewed interest in the trade, had Sheridan's 1869 order relative to the burring of traders' supplies and the killing of

³⁰Daily New Mexican, September 1, 1870.

their cattle read at each of the pueblos. He also pleaded with the Pueblo leaders to use their "influence and authority" to keep their young warriors from trading.³¹

Gregg's efforts were futile. By February, 1871, he was receiving reports that traders were moving towards the plains with large quantities of goods, including "sheath knives, powder, lead, caps, . . . and perhaps spirituous liquors." To check on these rumors, he sent Frank DeLisle, his most experienced guide, to gather information "in reference to the illicit trade."³² Although the nature of the oral report made by DeLisle is not known, Gregg on March 15 learned from Major D. R. Clendenin, commander at Fort Union, that the caretaking detachment at Fort Bascom had sent word that burros and carretas were passing "towards the Comanche Territory in considerable numbers every day." The eleven-man garrison, apprehensive of its own safety, did not dare to interfere. Numerous moccasin tracks, they reported, indicated that Indians were constantly prowling

³¹"Report of Nathaniel Pope, August 31, 1871," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1871 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1871), p. 802.

³²Gregg to Pope, February 25, 1871, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 92, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Gregg to Commanding Officer, Fort Union, February 25, 1871, ibid.

around their post and even entering the buildings at night.³²

Determined to extirpate the trade, Gregg on March 29 ordered Major Clendenin to dispatch two companies of the Eighth Cavalry to patrol a long arc from Fort Union past Fort Bascom to Fort Sumner. Frequent detachments moving along the route were to "pursue all Indian trails leading towards or from" the frontier settlements and to arrest and seize the property of any traders they discovered.³⁴ In mid-April Gregg posted Captain James F. Randlett at Fort Bascom with a sizable detachment and stridently demanded results. When one of Randlett's directives failed to stress the importance of apprehending illicit traders, Gregg caustically upbraided him and again exhorted him to keep frequent patrols moving in different directions throughout the region.³⁵

Having established the first comprehensive and effective patrol line, Gregg did not have to wait long for results. In early May while Lieutenant Andrew Caraher was

³³Major D. R. Clendenin to Gregg, March 15, 1871, U/23, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

³⁴Gregg to Clendenin, March 29, 1871, Dist of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 108, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

³⁵Gregg to Randlett, April 18, 1871, ibid., pp. 139-140.

leading a large scout across the Llano south of Fort Bascom, an eleven-man patrol sent to "scour the country on his flank" spotted some traders with a large herd of cattle. With a surprising show of resistance, the Comancheros put to flight the small patrol and held off the main command for a few minutes before being overpowered. They proved to be twenty-one Isleta Pueblos, armed with bows, muskets, and a demeanor so fierce that it shocked their captors: "They do not look like any Pueblos I ever saw."³⁶ Caraher had netted ten ponies, fifty-seven burros, and over seven hundred head of cattle. In accordance with instructions, he began to shoot the cattle but because of an ammunition shortage stopped after only 250 head had been killed. He then took the prisoners and the remaining livestock to Fort Bascom.

Before the Comancheros had time to recover from this blow, Captain Randlett, leading a patrol some fifty miles southwest of Hubbell's Ranch, overhauled a trading party enroute to the plains and without a fight took twelve prisoners (eleven Mexicans and a Comanche squaw who was serving as their guide) and twenty burros loaded with powder, lead, cloth, trinkets, and "fancy articles." After

³⁶Clendenin to Lt. J. W. Pullman, May 13, 1871, U/48, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Daily New Mexican, May 17, 1871.

killing the burros, destroying the trade goods,³⁷ and sending the prisoners to Fort Bascom, Randlett continued his scout. Discovering another party coming from the plains the next day, he captured only one of the Comanchero herdsmen but recovered 510 head of cattle, which in accordance with the most recent instructions he drove to the fort.³⁸

In the wake of these captures, which foreshadowed the collapse of a way of life, wild stories of organized Comanchero resistance spread rapidly along the frontier. A rumor reached Fort Bascom that a large party of traders was driving three thousand cattle "up from the Comanche country" and was prepared to fight the troops. Another report claimed that some Comancheros had fortified themselves at the Portales Springs and were making "every preparation to fight."³⁹ Alarmed by this rumor, Gregg ordered Clendenin to take "not less than one hundred mounted men" and to find, subdue, and arrest the traders "at all hazards." In support of the operation, he instructed the commander at Fort Stanton to patrol the Pecos south of the Bosque Redondo to keep traders from slipping into New Mexico by

³⁷Clendenin to Gregg, May 31, 1871, U/60, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.; Daily New Mexican, May 24, 1871.

that route.⁴⁰ Clendenin's scout to the Portales Springs, however, failed to discover any Comancheros, and the whole episode may simply have been a plot to lead the Anglo soldiers astray. Although the troops continued their patrols for the remainder of the summer, no more traders were found.

Meanwhile, the officers at Fort Bascom were discovering that capturing cattle was much easier than holding them. On May 13 Lieutenant Caraher delivered to Lieutenant A. G. Hennissee the 435 cattle he had seized. While driving the animals to Fort Union, Hennissee lost all but 212 head. In accounting for the large loss, he stated that some had been butchered to feed the troops, a few had strayed in a storm, others had sickened and died, and the stragglers had been killed "to prevent their falling into the hands of the Mexicans." Over a hundred head, he admitted, "must have been disposed of" by his soldiers to the New Mexicans.⁴¹ The remaining cattle and the twenty-one Isletans captured with them were delivered to Nathaniel Pope, the superintendent of Indian affairs. Pope released the Isletans on bond and, having no way of caring for the

⁴⁰Gregg to Clendenin, June 3, 1871, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 174, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Gregg to Commanding Officer, Fort Stanton, June 7, 1871, ibid., p. 177.

⁴¹Hennissee to Pullman, June 14, 1871, U/68, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

herd, put them in charge of it.⁴² Although the Isletans were to care for the cattle only until their legal status was determined, there is no record that the animals were ever reclaimed. The ludicrous circle was complete.

Captain Randlett fared even worse with the cattle he had taken. While he held it at Fort Bascom during the summer, the herd dwindled from 510 to 384. Court-martialled for negligence, Randlett maintained in his defense that it was impossible to prevent some cows from straying, especially during the summer thunderstorms.⁴³ Once animals became separated from the herd, they could not be reclaimed because the nearby settlers gathered up all "stray cattle" and put them in their own herds. Randlett admitted that none of his command could recognize cattle thus appropriated and recommended therefore that cattle afterwards

⁴²Gregg to Pope, June 1, 1871, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 171; Daily New Mexican, June 12, 1871; June 27, 1871; July 1, 1871.

⁴³Randlett was charged specifically with appropriating two cows for his personal use and allowing his men to retain the Mexicans' personal ponies. In defending himself, Randlett charged that the court martial charges were fabrications trumped up by Colonel Gregg and Lieutenant Caraher to discredit him. Randlett and Major Clendenin in turn brought charges against Caraher for accusing them in the presence of their troops of failing to protect the cattle. Both Randlett and Caraher were acquitted. For the proceedings, correspondence, and charges in Randlett's case see File 1605, Adjutant General's Office, 1872, RG 94, National Archives; for the record of Caraher's court martial see 243 Appointment, Commission, and Personal File 1872 (filed with 5154 AGO 1874), RG 94, National Archives.

captured be branded "U. S." ⁴⁴

The proper venue for the trial of the captured traders presented another troublesome question for the military commanders. General John Pope, Commander of the Department of the Missouri, recommended that they be tried in Texas. New Mexicans who knew they would go before a Tejano jury if captured, he asserted, would hesitate to engage in the unlawful traffic. Furthermore, he thought it only "proper" that the stock stolen in Texas and the individuals who traded for it should be "disposed of" by the Texas courts.⁴⁵ General Sherman, however, disagreed. After first stating that the prisoners should be tried at the District Court in Fort Smith, Arkansas, which had jurisdiction over the Indian country, he ordered them to be delivered to the civil authorities in New Mexico.⁴⁶ Ten Mexicans and three Pueblos were accordingly bound over for the October session of the District Court at Las Vegas.

From the beginning, there was little hope of securing a conviction. On August 18, six weeks before the court convened, W. F. M. Arny, a veteran New Mexico politician

⁴⁴Randlett to Gregg, June 30, 1871, R/6, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴⁵Pope to Col. G. L. Hartstuff, June 22, 1871, Dent. of the Missouri, LS, No. 57, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴⁶Sherman to Sheridan, June 27, 1872, 2196 AGO 1872, RG 94, National Archives.

and the Pueblo Indian agent, predicted that the prisoners would go "scot free" because of the inefficiency of S. M. Ashenfelter, the United States District Attorney.⁴⁷ Ashenfelter, a twenty-eight-year old political appointee from Reading, Pennsylvania, had more than upheld the reputation of the Grant administration for incompetency. Earlier in 1871, B. J. Waters, Chief Justice of the New Mexico Supreme Court, had complained about Ashenfelter to President Grant himself:

There were fifty-one cases on the criminal docket. . . . Case after case was called and tried by jury, and not a conviction had during the term.

He knows nothing about the practice of law and appears perfectly ignorant of every principle of law in the examination of witnesses and the trial of a case. . . . His incompetency and ignorance of the law and practice has become a matter of universal remark, not only by the members of the bar, but by the people generally.⁴⁸

Army predicted correctly. The cases of the accused Comancheros were thrown out of court because Ashenfelter had drawn up defective indictments. The accused Isletans, unintimidated by their experience, promptly asked Army for permission to return to the plains.⁴⁹

⁴⁷"Report of W. F. M. Army, August 18, 1871," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1871, p. 804.

⁴⁸Waters to Grant, February 20, 1871, Chronological Files, New Mexico, No. 53, Department of Justice, RG 60, National Archives.

⁴⁹Army to Pope, October 10, 1871, P/517, New Mexico Superintendency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives; Weekly New Mexican, October 3, 1871.

Defending himself against vigorous complaints made to Attorney General A. G. Akerman, Ashenfelter denied that he had been negligent and argued that Congress should enact simpler, more direct laws "providing fine and imprisonment" for both the Comancheros and their customers. He also maintained unabashedly that his legal efforts had caused several traders to leave the country in "hot haste" and had curtailed the activities of those still "in the business."⁵⁰ The New Mexican also noticed a reduction in the trade, but it credited it to the vigilant patrolling of the Eighth Cavalry rather than to the inept district attorney.⁵¹

After the military had ceased its patrolling for the year, a disgruntled observer at Fort Bascom, perhaps reflecting Anglo opinion of the traders, prescribed his own remedy for the traffic. Noting that buffalo would provide beef "cheaper (if anything could be cheaper)" than buying cattle from the Comancheros, he proposed with tongue in cheek to break up the trade by having

the buffalo herded up this way--for . . . such is the fondness of the Mexican appetite for dried buffalo meat and chile that I know they wouldn't pass

⁵⁰ Ashenfelter to Akerman, October 9, 1871, Chronological Files, New Mexico, No. 276, Department of Justice, RG 60, National Archives.

⁵¹ Daily New Mexican, April 18, 1872.

a buffalo herd to buy the longest horned Texas steer that ever roamed over Maverick's land, even if they could get him for a jack knife and two beads.⁵²

During the winter's brief respite the Kwahadi Comanches, desiring vainly to return to the time when New Mexico could be relied upon as a haven of trade, informed former Indian agent Lorenzo Labadi that they desired to make peace with the territory. Although Labadi faithfully relayed the proposal to the authorities, the army officials refused to consider it and the New Mexican sternly warned that the Comanches must be taught that "peace with us in New Mexico means peace with the people of Texas."⁵³

The end of the period of calm was presaged in February, 1872, when a band of fifteen New Mexicans gathered at Puerto de Luna and slipped onto the Llano Estacado on a venture that would set off the most vigorous campaigning yet against their trade. Following a trail known only to themselves and the Comanches, they crossed the Alamo Gordo and Las Truchas, pigmy streams that flowed off the Llano into the Pecos, climbed the western escarpment of the Staked Plains, and then moved southeastward past a series of watering places--Tule Lake, Tierra Blanca Lake, and the Portales Springs-- to the Salada, a large salt lake just west of the Texas line where New Mexican cattle buyers had

⁵²Santa Fe Weekly Post, November 25, 1871.

⁵³Daily New Mexican, April 1, 1872.

formerly bargained with "the men who deal directly with the Indians." At the Salada the trail branched, with one fork running eastward towards the Cañon del Rescate, but the Comancheros followed the other fork southeastward to the Mucha Que valley. Here, the traders had often bartered for thousands of cattle; on this occasion, however, the Indians had no stolen stock. While waiting for a Comanche party to make a quick visit to the Texas ranges, the New Mexicans unfortunately grew impatient and went on a scavenging expedition of their own.⁵⁴

Unknown to them, Sergeant William Wilson and a small detachment of the Fourth Cavalry from Fort Concho were trailing some stolen horses in the vicinity. The soldiers had often followed similar trails without success, but this time they accidentally encountered the Comancheros, who were unsurely feeling their way through the alien breaks of the Colorado. Although the Mexicans fled, the pursuing cavalrymen in a "brisk little fight" killed two and captured a youth from La Cuesta named Polonis Ortiz.⁵⁵

When Ortiz sought to shield himself and his friends by

⁵⁴Major John Hatch to Col. Gordon Granger, April 15, 1872, Transmitting Distances from Alamo Gordo to Fort Concho via Mucha Que, as given by Mexican captive Polonis Ortiz, C/36, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁵⁵"Medical History of the Posts, Vol. 401, Concho, Texas," p. 259; Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1872, 42 Cong., 3 Sess., House Exec. Doc. No. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), p. 56.

giving incorrect names and information, Major John Hatch, commanding Fort Concho, threatened that only by the "most faithful service" could he ever expect to receive a pardon. Ortiz, finally breaking, named his home town, his fellow traders, and the merchants who backed them; described the method of tracing and the trails across the Llano Estacado; and agreed to serve the military as a guide. To verify his story, Hatch on April 29 dispatched Captain N. B. McLaughlin to reconnoitre the Mucha Que valley. Led by Ortiz, McLaughlin after a five-day march arrived at Mucha Que, only to find that the Indians had deserted it the preceding day. The numerous cattle tracks, however, confirmed Ortiz's account.⁵⁶

Prompted by these disclosures to move vigorously against the Comanches and their partners, General C. C. Augur, head of the Department of Texas, on May 31 ordered Colonel R. S. Mackenzie, the energetic commander of the Fourth Cavalry, to establish a base on the headwaters of the Brazos or Colorado River and to operate as he thought best to protect the frontier, punish hostile Indians, and suppress "thieving marauders." Wasting no time, Mackenzie by July 2 had established a supply camp near the mouth of

⁵⁶Hatch to Granger, March 31, 1872, C/31, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Ernest Wallace, "Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie's Expedition of 1872 across the South Plains," West Texas Historical Association Year Book, XXXVIII (1962), 7.

Blanco Canyon on the Freshwater Fork of the Brazos, about eleven miles southeast of present Crosbyton. Failing to find Indians in the canyon, Mackenzie sent Captain McLaughlin with a strong detachment to survey the Mucha Que region while he led another patrol northward along the base of the Caprock as far as present Donley County. Neither force located any Indians.⁵⁷

After Mackenzie returned to his supply camp, a scout discovered a large cattle trail leading westward. Anxious to catch the thieves, Mackenzie on July 28 began following the rain-beaten trace by way of the upper Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos. After arriving at the Salada, he tracked the Comancheros northwestward, hoping to arrest them and two Puerta de Luna merchants, Hughes and Church, who had supplied Ortiz's party. To his consternation, however, he discovered that the trail broke up on Alamo Gordo Creek and that the merchants had left the country, "to escape capture by a party of citizens who are arresting cattle thieves and taking possession of stolen cattle."⁵⁸ Foiled in his efforts to surprise the cattle traders, Mackenzie informed Colonel Gordon Granger, the new

⁵⁷Ibid. pp. 9-11.

⁵⁸Henry Strong, My Frontier Days and Indian Fights on the Plains of Texas (Waco: no publisher, 1926), p. 34; Mackenzie to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., Dept. of Texas, August 15, 1872, Dept. of Texas, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

commander of the District of New Mexico, that there had been an immense number of stolen cattle driven by the trail he had followed.⁵⁹ After replenishing his supplies at Forts Sumner and Bascom, Mackenzie recrossed the Staked Plains by way of the Tierra Blanca Creek, the head of Tile Canyon and Quitaque,⁶⁰ still searching vainly for traders and Indians. Although he had not caught the thieves, his expedition, according to General Augur, had been of great significance. It was

the first instance . . . where troops have been successfully taken across the Staked Plains. This fact, that troops can be so moved, and the general knowledge of the country, and the specific knowledge of the routes and modus operandi of the cattle thieves, obtained by Colonel Mackenzie, I regard as very important and well worth the summer's labor.⁶¹

Meanwhile, the "citizens" who had thwarted Mackenzie's hopes of capturing the traders at Puerta de Luna were giving the cattle trade some of its worst moments. John Hittson, deciding to retrieve at least part of his stolen cattle and obtaining from many of his fellow ranchers "powers of attorney" to recover their animals also, raised a force of ninety gunmen and in July moved into New Mexico. During

⁵⁹Mackenzie to Granger, August 15, 1872, M/361, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶⁰Ernest Wallace, Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier (Lubbock: West Texas Museum Association, 1964), pp. 72-73.

⁶¹Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 1872, p. 56.

the next three months Hittson's forces roamed over the country, rounding up some four to six thousand cattle and driving them northward into Colorado.⁶²

In operating against the traders, Hittson had the full consent of the New Mexican military officials. Colonel Granger introduced him to Colonel Gregg at Fort Union and recommended that Gregg loan the cattleman some "surplus arms." Although on July 18 Granger ordered his subordinates to cooperate with Hittson in recovering the stolen cattle and in arresting cattle thieves, two weeks later he instructed them to confine their activities to preventing bloodshed, "if possible," and to enforcing the laws when "application is made by the proper civil authorities."⁶³

To avoid violence, Hittson deliberately operated in such force that no one would dare oppose him. As Governor Marsh Giddings explained to United States Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, "he goes with such numbers that he generally acquires the property quite peaceably, as it is well understood that this large force for peace carry the

⁶²For a detailed study of Hittson's Raid into New Mexico see Charles Kenner, "The Great New Mexico Cattle Raid, 1872," New Mexico Historical Review, XXXVII (October, 1962), 243-259.

⁶³Granger to Gregg, July 18, 1872, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 522, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives; Granger to C. O., Fort Bascom, August 1, 1872, ibid., p. 542.

means of securing it by force."⁶⁴

Despite the precautions, clashes between Hittson's men and the New Mexicans were inevitable. At Las Vegas a delegation of townsmen petitioned Don Miguel Otero, their former delegate to the United States Congress, to use his influence to halt the activities of the Texans. Reluctantly agreeing, Otero, with his two teen-age sons, went to the Texans' camp and urged their leader "to have greater regard" for the New Mexicans' property. The Texan, remembered by young Miguel Otero Jr., future territorial governor of New Mexico, only as a "large, red-headed man with chin whiskers, weighing fully two hundred and twenty-five pounds," answered the urbane New Mexican with a burst of profanity:

These God damn greasers have been stealing our horses and cattle for the past fifty years, and we got together and thought we would come up this way and have a grand round-up, and that is why we are here. What is more we intend to take all the horses and cattle we come across and drive them back to Texas where they belong. My advice to your fellows is: Don't attempt to interfere with what we are doing unless you are looking for trouble.⁶⁵

There the conversation ended.

⁶⁴Giddings to Fish, October 28, 1872, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, Records of the State Department, RG 59, National Archives.

⁶⁵Miguel Otero, My Life on the Frontier, pp. 62-63. The Texan in question may or may not have been Hittson. He was frequently absent from his men while attending business in Santa Fe or Las Vegas.

As weeks passed and Hittson's men continued their methodical search for stolen cattle, rumors of gun fights spread across the territory. An old Comanchero later remembered, not too unhappily, that the Tejanos had whipped a band of Americanos in a gun battle and then had lynched one of them "from a pine tree close to the house." Jim Duncan, just out of the army and into the ranching business, recalled that an American named Simpson who sought to stop the Texans by blocking the entry to his corral was coldly shot down and the herd driven out over his lifeless form.⁶⁶ Although such stories, recalled fifty to sixty years after the raid, may or may not have been accurate, a sensational clash at Loma Parada, a small hamlet just outside the Fort Union military reservation, shocked the entire territory.

It was not surprising that the Loma Pardans, accused by the officers at Fort Union of being a gang of "thieves and cut-throats" who preyed on off-duty soldiers,⁶⁷ were the first (and the last) to oppose the Texans with force. Led by Edward Seaman, their police chief and postmaster,

⁶⁶ Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 60; Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 173.

⁶⁷ Chris Emmett, Fort Union and the Winning of the Southwest (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965), p. 316.

they twice prevented parties of Texans from inspecting their herds for stolen cattle. On September 10, however, Hittson's men, sixty strong and ready for a showdown, swept into the little village. In the wild, terrifying melee that broke out within a few minutes of their arrival, the Texans killed two Loma Pardans, including Police Chief Seaman, pistol-whipped another into insensibility, shot the town alcalde through both legs, and left the stunned townspeople huddling helplessly in their adobe huts while they gathered up their cattle.⁶⁸ Although this episode marked the end of armed opposition, it solidified the New Mexican ranks against the invaders.

The Texans' protestations that they had acted only in self defense did little to calm the storm of outrage and criticism that mounted around them. The New Mexico Union bitterly condemned Hittson's men for entering the territory with "braggadocio, swaggering, and offers of violence" and taking cattle where they pleased under the "pretense" that

⁶⁸Weekly New Mexican, September 24, 1872. In Hittson's absence during this affray, the Texans were led by one of his lieutenants, H. M. Childress, a notable frontier character in his own right. According to Joseph McCoy, Childress had "a nerve of iron," was "cool and collected" under fire, and was a "deadly pistol shot." According to his enemies, moreover, he had the "peculiar characteristic of smiling demonically whilst he is plainly and openly maneuvering to shoot them through the heart." Joseph G. McCoy, Historic Sketches of the Cattle Trade of the West and Southwest, Vol. VIII of the Southwest Historical Series, edited by Ralph Bieber, p. 132.

they had been unlawfully taken from Texas. Complaining that the authorities had allowed "these blowing bullies" to succeed with their pretensions, it warned the New Mexicans that there was no safety but in their "own hands."⁶⁹

The New Mexicans, however, preferred to resort to legal means rather than to risk combat with Hittson. In the Texan's own words, some of the parties from whom he had reclaimed cattle secured indictments against him "to the number of about a dozen;"⁷⁰ Probst and Kirchner, one of the leading New Mexican ranching firms, obtained writs of replevin forbidding Hittson to drive their cattle out of the territory until the courts had determined their ownership.⁷¹ According to Governor Giddings, "a few of these cattle takers" were placed under heavy bond.⁷² In San Miguel County alone, Hittson and his associates were charged (according to a court docket which is the sole surviving county court record of the era) with no less than twenty-one offenses such as stealing cows, "assault in a

⁶⁹New Mexico Union (Santa Fe) October 1, 1872.

⁷⁰Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1873.

⁷¹Daily New Mexican, October 4, 1872.

⁷²Giddings to Fish, October 28, 1872, Territorial Papers, New Mexico, Records of the State Department, RG 59, National Archives.

menacing manner," carrying arms, and "rioting;"⁷³ these charges, moreover, did not include the Loma Parda affray, which had occurred in Mora County.

With his activities thus circumscribed, Hittson decided to return to Texas, leaving Santa Fe by stage on October 25. Although he placed James Patterson and Thomas Stockton in charge of gathering his cattle, the great raid, for all practical purposes, was over. In December the last of Hittson's men in New Mexico were arrested for the murders at Loma Parda, but they broke out of jail and fled for "parts unknown."⁷⁴

During the winter Hittson reported to William Veale, the chairman of the Committee on Indian Affairs of the Texas House of Representatives, that he had only partially accomplished his goals of putting "a stop to the Indian depredations" and recovering his stolen property. Although he had regained five to six thousand cattle, their recapture had incurred "enormous expense, nearly equal" to their value.⁷⁵ Despite his pessimism, his flamboyant raid, which

⁷³Court Docket for San Miguel County, 1871-1876, Archives of San Miguel County, Stored in Special Collections Division, University of New Mexico Library, Albuquerque.

⁷⁴Daily New Mexican, December 28, 1872; January 5, 1873.

⁷⁵The Daily Statesman (Austin), February 2, 1873.

brought him fleeting fame as far east as New York,⁷⁶ had hit the Comanchero trade at one of its most vulnerable links, the purchasers of the traders' cattle.

In addition to Hittson and Mackenzie, the cattle buyers and Comancheros had to contend with the New Mexican military officials, anxious to repeat their successes of the previous year. Armed with instructions from General Pope to send all prisoners and captured stock to Fort Sill for delivery to the Texas authorities,⁷⁷ Granger kept his troops on patrol all summer, continually spurring them to "break up" the camps of illicit traders and to take their cattle. On July 11 he dispatched a company from Fort Bascom to Las Truchas to capture a gang of cattle thieves allegedly led by "Celco Baca and Labadie;"⁷⁸ but the

⁷⁶The Colorado Chieftain (Pueblo), January 16, 1873, quoted a glowing account published in the New York Evening Post under the eye-catching headline "Cattle Jack--A Modern Hercules to the Rescue!"; the Rocky Mountain News, January 5, 1873, stated: "John Hittson's operations against the border thieves seem to have attracted general attention; and our bold, honest and wealthy stockman has gained a national reputation by the effectiveness of his operations and its entire lack of 'red tape!'"

⁷⁷Pope to Granger, August 5, 1872, Dept. of the Missouri, LS, No. 130, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁷⁸Lt. W. J. Lorile to C. O., Camp on the Canadian, July 11, 1872, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 45, p. 532, ibid. Unfortunately, Granger did not give the first name of the Labadie mentioned here. Lorenzo Labadi, the former Indian agent and now a prominent person in New Mexico, lived on the Pecos near present Santa Rosa. The following year he was elected sheriff of San Miguel County. Labadi is not a common New Mexican family name since it is of French origin.

Mexicans escaped. Although Granger had troops patrolling the eastern frontier from the Canadian to the junction of the Pecos with the Rio Hondo, neither stolen cattle nor Comancheros were discovered. If the traders had not suspended operations for the time being, they were having phenomenal success in avoiding the patrols.

In the most ambitious project of the summer, Granger ordered Colonel Gregg to lead a large expedition to the Quitaque trading grounds. Gregg, after a number of delays which brought sharp rebukes from Granger, left Fort Bascom on August 7 with 214 enlisted men and eleven officers. After following the Fort Smith road for a few miles, he turned off to the southeast on a trail described by Ortiz as the Quitaque road. Ascending the bluffs of the Llano Estacado at their intersection with the western boundary of Texas, Gregg passed by Garcia Lake in southwestern Deaf Smith County and then followed Tierra Blanca Creek northeastward to its junction with Palo Duro Creek. While encamped near the present site of Canyon on the night of August 15, his command was attacked by about forty Kiowas, who stampeded the cattle being driven along for food. Other than the beef herd, Gregg lost only one enlisted man wounded and three horses killed; the Kiowas, he learned later, lost four killed and eight wounded.⁷⁹

⁷⁹Gregg, "Report of a Scout to the Vicinity of Quitta Que, September 17, 1872," 4548 AGO 1872, RG 94, National Archives.

Gregg then moved southeastward along the northern rim of Palo Duro Canyon, which he admiringly reported was "unsurpassed in rarity of color and beauty of outlines." On the eighteenth his Comanchero guide lost the Quitaque trail⁸⁰ amidst the tracks of a large buffalo herd. Two days later, however, when a stream of clear water flowing over a "white sand bed . . . fully one hundred yards wide" was discovered, the guide proclaimed it to be "Cibola" Creek (Mulberry Creek) and asserted that Quitaque was a short distance to the northeast.

Leaving the bulk of his troops in camp, Gregg wandered for several hours through broken country until he came upon a circular valley enclosed by a "high ridge" that afforded "an outlook from which the surrounding country can be seen for many miles in every direction."⁸¹ Mistakenly he concluded that this was Quitaque, which in reality lay about forty miles to his south on the other side of the Red River. Gregg's guide, who had taken him into Donley County southwest of present Clarendon, was either incredibly ignorant of the trading grounds or had deliberately led the Anglo military expedition astray.

Finding neither Indians nor cattle, Gregg moved southward to the junction of Mulberry Creek and the Red River.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

Exploring the base of the Caprock southwest of the Red River on the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh, he unknowingly passed within a few miles of Quitaque and barely missed Mackenzie's returning expedition, which was then in the vicinity of Silverton.⁸² After resurveying the region around Clarendon, Gregg on August 30 began the journey home on a "well-defined wagon road leading northwest." Without any major incidents he arrived at Fort Bascom on September 14, having made the first thorough exploration of the Red River from its sources to the foot of the Caprock. Significantly, he reported that there were no indications that the trail he had followed had been used by the cattle traders during the preceding two years. Prior to that time, he concluded, a very large trade had annually passed over it.⁸³

In many respects 1872 marked the climax of the struggle against the Comancheros. Hittson's raid had undoubtedly made the New Mexican ranchers hesitant about buying stolen cattle, and both Mackenzie and Granger had made threatening moves against the suppliers of the traders. As these groups were less willing to take chances than were

⁸²Wallace, Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier, p. 73.

⁸³Gregg, "Report of a Scout to Quitta Que," 4548 AGO 1872, RG 94, National Archives.

the dare-devil Comancheros, much less pressure was required to persuade them to abandon the business. In addition, the pioneer marches of Mackenzie and Gregg had revealed the location of the trading grounds, portending similar scouts in subsequent years. Although some traders would doggedly range the plains until the last of the Indians had been subdued, most realized that the time had come to find other occupations--such as herding sheep on the new grazing grounds being wrested from their Indian allies or serving as guides and scouts for the increasing numbers of troops that were moving onto the plains. Even Jose' Piedad Tafoya, one-time prince of the Comancheros, allegedly entered the service of Mackenzie and, according to the folklore of the range, was instrumental in the final defeat of his Indian trading partners.

The year closed much as it had begun--with the Kwahadi Comanches making another attempt to maintain their ties with New Mexico. Cohepa, one of their leading chiefs, sent word to Colonel Granger that his people and some Kiowa groups would come in and remain at peace if they could have a reservation on the Canadian or Pecos River. Although Granger recommended that the Indians, if they "are acting in good faith as we have every reason to believe," should be granted a reservation in New Mexico,⁸⁴ the Indian

⁸⁴Granger to Pope, November 8, 1872, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 46, p. 31, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

Department took no action, even as it had done nothing to implement the earlier recommendations of Superintendents Collins, Steck, and Norton. The Washington officials were determined to place the Kwahadis on the reservation in Oklahoma; within a few years they would have enough troops to accomplish the task.

CHAPTER X

THE END OF A LONG ROAD

At the beginning of 1873 a major change had taken place in the Comanchero commerce. The great cattle traffic, harrassed by the military during the previous two years, had virtually expired; consequently traders returned with only small lots of horses and buffalo robes and just enough cattle to recall the halcyon days of the past. Venturesome New Mexicans, nevertheless, continued to go forth to barter as long as the Indians roamed the plains or possessed trade goods valuable enough to make the long trek to their reservations worthwhile.

Aware that warm weather would produce a renewal of trading activities, Colonel Gregg, once again in command of the District of New Mexico, sent Captain S. B. M. Young with two companies of the Eighth Cavalry to reoccupy Fort Bascom in May, 1873. Young stationed one company at the fort to guard the stores and protect the ranchers in the area and dispatched the other to patrol the road linking Bascom with old Fort Sumner. Ever alert to exploit weaknesses in the picket lines, the Comancheros immediately shifted their trade routes to the area north of the Canadian. By July, according to rumors circulating in Las

Vegas, they had driven five hundred head of stolen cattle across the Canadian in the vicinity of Fort Union. Emboldened by these successes, other traders rushed to the plains. One, Juan Piedad, insolently challenged "all the troops in the country" to try to catch him.¹ Although Captain Young pleaded for reinforcements in order to extend his patrol lines, General Pope, to whom the request was forwarded, replied illogically that "two companies are deemed sufficient . . . if properly rotated."

In early July one party of traders, returning with eight horses, ten cows, and a few ponies and calves, even dared to pass within sight of Fort Bascom itself and easily eluded a pursuit by Lieutenant A. A. Rogers and ten enlisted men.² A few weeks later, however, another Comanchero, Juan Lucero, coming from the plains with eleven ponies and two colts, was apprehended near the mouth of Utah Creek. Accused of illicit trading and detained with his animals at Fort Bascom, Lucero immediately appealed to New Mexico Supreme Court Justice J. G. Palen. Palen issued a writ of habeas corpus ordering the delivery of Lucero to the San Miguel County authorities. Young reluctantly complied with

¹Young to Gregg, July 17, 1873, N/233, Dept. of the Missouri, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

²Rogers to Young, July 15, 1873, enclosed with ibid.

the request but was incensed to see Lucero released upon bail.³ When Judge Palen thereupon issued a writ of replevin commanding the return of the horses, Young refused to obey, stating that as a commissioned officer acting in obedience to military instructions he was not amenable to the laws of New Mexico.⁴ Although his superiors commended him on his stand, they decided that there was not enough evidence to convict Lucero and ordered the restoration of his animals.

The lackadasical attitude of Captain Young's superiors towards the Comancheros ended abruptly in late August when Lieutenant Colonel J. B. Brooks, commander at Camp Supply, Indian Territory, complained vociferously to General Pope that Mexican traders were introducing large quantities of whiskey to the Cheyennes in the Antelope Hills region and implied that the troops in New Mexico were doing little to stop them. Questioned about the matter by Pope, Colonel Gregg hotly defended his command. Declaring that Captain Young was doing everything feasible with the small force at his disposal, he pointedly observed that Fort Bascom was at least five times as far from the Antelope Hills as was Camp Supply and asked why Brooks could not apprehend

³Young to Palen, August 14, 1873, enclosed with Young to Gregg, August 14, 1873, N/269, Dept. of the Missouri, LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁴Young to Palen. August 20. 1873, copy enclosed with

the traders. It would be far easier, he maintained, to guard the immediate approaches to the Indian camps than to prevent the traders, who were "the boldest and most unscrupulous portion of this frontier population" and had "all the inhabitants of the country in full sympathy with them," from leaving New Mexico.⁵

Gregg, nevertheless, ordered Captain Young to reconnoitre the entire length of the eastern frontier, from Las Portales in the south to the Santa Fe Trail on the north.⁶ With fifty men and rations for twenty-six days Young on August 28 left Fort Bascom and marched southwestward to Las Cañaditas, a favorite Comanchero watering spot northeast of Fort Sumner. From there he turned southeastward and reversed Mackenzie's trail of the previous year past Tule Lake and Las Portales all the way to Blanco Canyon, where he arrived on September 8. Discovering the tracks of wagons and cattle leading northward, he followed them across the Red River to the Washita. There on September 16 he overtook his quarry, a company of fifty Texas surveyors selecting lands for a grant to the Houston and

Young to Gregg, August 20, 1873, Y/20, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁵Gregg to Pope, August 29, 1873, Dist. of N. Mex., LS, Vol. 46, p. 268, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁶Lt. J. P. Willard to Young, August 21, 1873, ibid., p. 260.

Great Northern Railroad. W. S. Mabry, leader of the surveyors, noted in his diary that the troops "had followed our trail from Canyon Blanco, thinking we were Mexicans out trading guns and ammunition to the Indians for horses and cattle."⁷ Young then led his command to Camp Supply to replenish his rations and give the troops a rest before beginning the homeward journey. He returned by following Wolf and Palo Duro creeks, tributaries of the North Canadian, across the eastern half of the Texas Panhandle, and then striking the South Canadian near Adobe Walls. From there he retraced Kit Carson's trail of 1864 to Fort Bascom, which already had been abandoned for the winter, and from there marched to Fort Union where he arrived on October 24. In fifty-eight days he had marched more than a thousand miles without finding a single Comanchero.⁸ Young concluded from his reconnaissance that "not one dollar's worth" of contraband goods had passed between old Forts Bascom and Sumner during the year but that north of the Canadian considerable trading had apparently been carried on "without fear of hindrance."⁹

In early 1874 some Anglos made a belated effort to

⁷W. S. Mabry, "Early West Texas and Panhandle Surveys," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, II (1929), 35.

⁸Young to Willard, November 1, 1873, Y/27, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

⁹Ibid.

infiltrate the Comanchero ranks. Hobart Ford, lauded by Congressman J. D. Cox of Ohio as a gentleman of "the most stubborn and downright integrity,"¹⁰ applied to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for a license to trade with the Comanches. Describing himself as a partner of the well-known New Mexico rancher, John S. Chisum, Ford stated that he desired to "go peaceably" among the Indians of the Staked Plains to recover "by persuasion if possible and purchase if necessary" cattle and horses stolen from Texas. He claimed that he and Chisum had secured the consent of the principal Texas stock-raisers for their proposal and predicted that, if licensed, they could stop depredations and preserve peace.¹¹ Since the Staked Plains were not part of any Indian reservation and thus were not subject to his jurisdiction, Commissioner Smith could not issue the license. He assured Ford, however, that there was nothing illegal in his going to the plains to recover stolen cattle.¹² Ford and Chisum, knowing quite well that the military was arresting unauthorized traffickers with the Plains Indians, dropped their plan. Even if they had received a license, it would have been too late, for the military for

¹⁰Cox to E. S. Corwin, March 18, 1874, C/300, Kiowa agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

¹¹Ford to E. B. Smith, April 2, 1874, F/118, ibid.

¹²Smith to Ford, April 3, 1874, OIA, LS, Vol. 116, p. 540, RG 75, National Archives.

the first time had enough men, bases, and knowledge of the plains to force the Indians to accept life on the reservations.

The final confrontation between the military and the Southern Plains Indians was produced by a number of resentments, real and fancied, that impelled most of the reservation Indians to go on the warpath. The poor quality and the paucity of the annuity goods they received from the government, whose niggardly behavior thus negated its policy of purchasing their peace, was one of their basic grievances. Certainly, the indecisive, contempt-breeding actions of the Indian agents and military officers who staffed the reservations were further encouragements to resistance. New Mexicans may have been a minor factor; at least, the Comanche agent in early June complained that a large number of Mexican traders were selling his charges whiskey, hard bread and sugar.¹³ The immediate and most important catalyst for the outbreak of 1874, however, was the inundation of the Texas Panhandle by Anglo buffalo hunters, avariciously following the decimated Kansas herd on its blind southward flight. The previous October, Captain Young had been amazed to discover that the country near Palo Duro Creek in the upper Panhandle was "full of

¹³J. W. Haworth to Enoch Hoag, June 3, 1873, H/789, Kiowa Agency, OIA, LR, RG 75, National Archives.

buffalo parties," killing the animals simply for their hides.¹⁴ With more hunters moving into the region every week, the Southern Plains Indians had to clear them from their last hunting grounds or starve.

A mixed group of about 250 Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes, inflamed by the exhortations of a mystical young medicine man named Ishatai, on June 27 struck a supply camp for the hunters at Adobe Walls. Although repulsed by the twenty-eight occupants of the post, the Indians continued their raids and were joined by hundreds of their fellow tribesmen who poured off the reservations to ravage the frontier along a six-hundred mile arc from the Arkansas to the Pecos. The isolated ranchers in eastern New Mexico, unprepared for a determined onslaught from the plains, suffered heavily. Before the raids let up in late July, scores of settlers had been killed in the Cimarron valley and nine at Fort Bascom. Even John Chisum, headquartered far down on the Pecos, had three hundred horses stolen.¹⁵

The ranchers responded to the outburst in various ways. Chisum equipped a "strong party of citizens, well armed" and went in pursuit of his stolen stock. The cattlemen on the upper Pecos and Canadian, on the other hand,

¹⁴Young to Willard, November 1, 1873, Y/27, Dist. of N. Mex., LR, Army Commands, RG 98, National Archives.

¹⁵Daily New Mexican, July 23, 1874; August 3, 1874.

held a meeting in Santa Fe on July 26 and petitioned Colonel Gregg for protection.¹⁶ Although neither ranchers nor military officers realized it, they had undergone their last crisis. The raids were the last convulsive gasp of a beaten people.

The army commanders were already moving rapidly to end for all time the Indian menace. On July 19 Secretary of War W. W. Belknap issued orders authorizing the troops to follow the hostiles onto the reservations in order to punish them. With the Quaker Peace Policy thus discarded, Lieutenant Colonel John W. Davidson, commander at Fort Sill, ordered all Indians to register at their agencies by August 3. Those who did not would be considered hostile and punished. Five separate columns, operating out of bases in Texas, New Mexico, Kansas, and the Indian Territory, then converged on the headstreams of the Red River, the favorite haunts of the holdouts. The troops completely outmarched, outfought, and demoralized the erstwhile masters of the plains and forced band after band to surrender dejectedly at their agencies.

Few Comancheros were detected during the campaigns, for those who unwittingly ventured into the maelstrom hastily retreated to New Mexico. On August 28, 1874,

¹⁶Ibid., July 27, 1874; August 3, 1874.

Major William R. Price with four companies of the Eighth Cavalry left Fort Bascom and followed the Fort Smith road towards the Antelope Hills. Discovering "the fresh trail of Mexican Comanche traders" about 150 miles below the fort, Price traced it for eight miles before it merged with an Indian trail and veered away in a southeasterly direction. Although the three former Comancheros serving Price as guides assured him that by following the trail he could strike a large Indian village on the headwaters of the Red River, he adhered to his orders and continued towards the Antelope Hills.¹⁷ He found no further signs of Comancheros.

Colonel Mackenzie, operating out of Fort Concho, also utilized Mexican guides, one of whom allegedly was Jose' Fieda Tafoya.¹⁸ According to one of the favorite stories of the plains, Mackenzie encountered Tafoya venturing across the Plains "in pursuit of trade," questioned him about the campsite of the Indians, and (when the Mexican

¹⁷Price to the Asst. Adjt. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, September 23, 1874, in Joe F. Taylor (compiler), "The Indian Campaign on the Staked Plains, 1874-1875, Military Correspondence from the War Department, Adjutant General's Office, File 2815-1874," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, XXXIV (1961), 47.

¹⁸In 1893 Tafoya stated that he had served as a guide for Mackenzie. Deposition of Jose' Tafoya, June 26, 1893, Depredation Case 9133, Records of the Court of Claims, RG 123, National Archives.

refused to talk) "propped up the tongue of a wagon and hanged Tafoya to the end." The terrified trader then supposedly led Mackenzie and his command to the Comanche village in Palo Duro Canyon.¹⁹ In reality, however, a half-breed Mexican scout named Johnson located the camp and set the stage for the most decisive victory of the campaign. In a dawn attack on September 28 Mackenzie's force routed the Indians, captured 1424 of their best horses, and killed 1048 of them to insure that they would never again be used for hunting or fighting.²⁰

After a four-day rest, Mackenzie resumed his search for the Indian escapees. Circling the head of Palo Duro Canyon, he encountered near the head of Mulberry Creek fifteen ciboleros, three of whom he allowed to join his

¹⁹ Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 175. Nothing in contemporary records corroborates this story. A possible basis for this tale was related by Henry Strong, who also served as a scout on the expedition. Mackenzie captured four Mexicans who claimed to be buffalo hunters, held them for two days, and released them. After they were turned loose, Strong tried to intimidate one, a seventeen-year-old boy, into talking by suspending him from a rope over the edge of a precipice. The youth, however, refused to talk and Strong "gave it up as a bad job." In the course of fifty years, the story of this near-lynching and the well-known name of Tafoya could have become fused together in the folklore of the plains. Strong, My Frontier Days and Indian Fights on the Plains of Texas, p. 63.

²⁰ Mackenzie, "Itinerary of the march of the 1st Southern Column," September 29-November 8, 1874, File 4262, Department of Texas, 1874, Army Commands, RG 98 National Archives (microfilm copy in possession of Ernest Wallace, Lubbock, Texas.)

command as guides. The following day, October 8, he captured five Comancheros who had carried a load of supplies to the hostiles. After breaking up their wagon for fuel wood and slaughtering their oxen to feed his troops, Mackenzie placed the unlucky Mexicans under arrest.²¹ Although he scouted the Staked Plains and the breaks beneath their eastern escarpment until Christmas, no more traders were apprehended.

Not even the men closely associated with the Red River War foresaw the deleterious effect it would have on the Comanchero trade. As late as February, 1875, two American guides, "Wing and Steele" by name, believed they could locate the two missing Germain sisters, who had been taken prisoner by the Cheyennes during the previous summer, by going to New Mexico and "getting in" with a band of traders.²² Although their request was refused because of the five thousand-dollar reward they demanded, the project could never have succeeded. Before they could possibly have reached the Indian villages, the two girls would have been surrendered by their captors. With the final capitulation of the Kwahadis in June, 1875, the confiscation of

²¹Wallace, Ranald S. Mackenzie on the Texas Frontier, p. 151.

²²Col. Nelson Miles to Asst. Adjt. General, Dept. of the Missouri, February 11, 1875, in Taylor, "The Indian Campaign on the Staked Plains," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, XXXIV, 138.

thousands of the Indians' best horses, and the imprisonment of the leaders of the hostiles in distant Florida, the end of the Comanchero trade was in sight.

For the ciboleros, too, the sudden ascendancy of the Anglos was disastrous. Those who continued to make trips to the plains encountered a far different situation than their forerunners. Rather than hunting in an awe-inspiring solitude that liberated them for a few days from their usual drudgery, they now had to compete with Anglo hunters. The clashing styles of hunting employed by the two races led inevitably to conflict. The cibolero still mounted his favorite horse and made his kill while riding full speed, an arm's length from death and surrounded by a hundred fear-crazed beasts. The American, on the other hand, killed by stealth. Once he got a "stand" on a herd, he systematically and monotonously decimated its ranks while the dim-witted survivors continued to graze uneasily amidst the carnage. Where the cibolero dashed, no Anglo could obtain a stand; where the Anglos waited, no cibolero dared venture.

Few of the clashes that occurred between the two peoples have been recorded, but those that have illustrate the sad plight of the New Mexicans. W. S. Glenn, an unusually articulate Anglo hunter, recalled that an American had tediously worked his way to a crest overlooking a small valley in which a herd of buffalo awaited execution when

a group of Mexicans, lances high, dashed from the opposite ridge towards the herd and stampeded it. Enraged at being deprived of his kill, the American in short order shot the horses of four of the ciboleros. The saddened Mexicans, their chances for a successful hunt destroyed, withdrew.²³ A similar incident involved an Anglo hunter named George Causey. When a band of ciboleros ruined his stand, Causey first killed several of their horses and then condescendingly offered to allow them to skin the animals he killed in return for the meat.²⁴ Painfully aware of the hungry niños awaiting their return, the hapless Mexicans accepted the offer.

The New Mexican hunters were never secure from Anglo aggressions. In 1877 twenty-seven Texans who had followed the trail of some stolen horses into Blanco Canyon encountered a band of ciboleros who possessed thirty horses, only one of which was recognized by the Texans. Although the Mexicans stated that they had recently received this animal in trade and offered to return it, the Texans took all their horses at gun point and divided them among themselves, "believing that they were stolen property." before

²³Rex W. Strickland (ed.), "The Recollections of W. S. Glenn, Buffalo Hunter," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, XXXII (1949), 37.

²⁴Frank Collinson, "George Causey, Buffalo Hunter and Cowman," MS, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum Library, Canyon, Texas.

allowing their victims to proceed, they warned them that if they were ever "caught down there again they would be killed."²⁵

Despite such humiliations, the ciboleros doggedly contested for the remnants of the herds. The tradition of the last Taos buffalo hunt, occurring in 1884, was recorded by Blanch Grant:

Right after the San Geronimo fiesta . . . forty or fifty left for the east. . . . Guns for the most part had displaced the bows and arrows but there were still some who trusted more to a good bow than any white man's shooting stick They found the buffalo . . . grazing peacefully among the cattle. Fifty-four were soon killed and the meat jerked. . . . A grand powwow, described as "mostly noise," was held at the pueblo. The buffalo hunt was over--over forever.²⁶

Memories of the hunts, however, lingered on. A privileged visitor in a Taos apartment many years later was proudly shown a seven-foot lance suspended on a wall. "This spear," the host related, "was used by my grandfather in hunting the buffalo. He was good at it. . . . Many Indians used to join in the hunt. Taos always had buffalo meat for the fiestas and holidays."²⁷ Other remembrances

²⁵Notes of a Conversation with F. W. Reynolds: F. W. Reynolds to J. E. Webb, October 22, 1944," Typescript copy in "Frontier Life and Experiences," Rister Papers, The Southwest Collection, Texas Technological College, Lubbock.

²⁶Blanch C. Grant, The Taos Indians (Taos: n. p., 1925), p. 84.

²⁷Fernando Solaz, "The Ageless Village," New Mexico

were highly acrimonious. One aged cibolero reflected: "had not the Americanos come in with their guns, we might still be enjoying the sport, but it did not take them long with their rifles to clear the Llano of buffaloes."²⁸

For the Comancheros, the last years of their operations on the plains were even more hectic. Texans who were content with depriving the buffalo hunters of their horses were likely to kill the Indian traders. In August, 1874, the New Mexican reported in cryptic fashion that seven Comancheros returning from the Indian country with a "large drove of horses bartered from the Indians" had been waylaid by a party of Texans who professed to recognize some of their animals. Six of the traders were killed outright; the seventh, grievously wounded, succeeded in reaching home but, according to the news account, "it is not supposed he will recover."²⁹ In an incident even more vaguely reported, about thirty Anglo buffalo hunters, in hot pursuit of a band of Indian thieves in the late 1870's, encountered twelve Comancheros on the "Las Lenguas" (Pease River), and, presuming that they were in league with the Indians, "killed the Comancheros to a man."³⁰

Magazine, XXVII (March, 1942), 37.

²⁸Cabeza de Baca, We Fed Them Cactus, p. 42.

²⁹Daily New Mexican, August 13, 1874.

³⁰John McCarty, Maverick Town, The Story of Old Texas (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), p. 15.

Although the elaborate patrols along the eastern border of New Mexico were discontinued after the close of the Red River War, the military occasionally apprehended Comancheros. In August, 1875, a scout under Lieutenant Theodore Baldwin found nine armed Mexicans leading a string of pack mules across the central Panhandle. Baldwin "took them" back to Camp Supply on the supposition that they had been trading with the Indians, but they would tell nothing and were eventually released.³¹

The greatest threat to the Comanchero trade, however, was the destruction of the buffalo. With the end of the cattle trade, the New Mexicans were limited to bartering for buffalo robes, and these were fast becoming unobtainable. The decline in value of the robes sold by the Comanches and Kiowas to their official traders between 1876 and 1879 graphically illustrates the progressive annihilation of the southern buffalo herd: in 1876, \$70,400; in 1877, \$64,500; in 1878, \$26,375; and in 1879, only \$5,068.³² The number traded to the Comancheros possibly declined at an even greater rate.

³¹L. F. Sheffy (ed.), "Letters and Reminiscences of Gen. Theodore L. Baldwin: Scouting after Indians on the Plains of West Texas," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, XI (1938), 11.

³²"Report of P. H. Hunt, August 30, 1879," in Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), p. 171.

The last of the great buffalo hunts, in January, 1879, was a tragic failure. A large party of Comanches, driven by habit and hunger, secured permission from their agent to hunt. For the first time, however, the plains failed them. According to their agent, they found almost no buffalo on the frigid plains and soon they were

in a suffering condition. When I learned of this, I sent out . . . the interpreter, with some supplies for their relief, and with instructions to bring them in as soon as it was possible for them to move. The ground being covered with snow, so that their ponies, already poor, could not graze, some time elapsed before they reached the agency.³³

To compound the Indians' humiliation, a company of the Texas Frontier Battalion under the command of Captain George W. Arrington shot one, scalped him, and possibly would have massacred the others had it not been for the timely appearance of a detachment of Negro cavalry.³⁴

The Pueblos, nevertheless, were most reluctant to give up the ancient commerce and for some time made trading trips to the reservations in Oklahoma. With the approach of the traditional trading season in September, 1880, the Santo Domingans and their kinsmen from Sandia and Santa Ana optimistically prepared for such an excursion. By chance,

³³Ibid., p. 170.

³⁴Ibid.; G. W. Arrington to J. B. Jones, January 20, 1879, in Day and Winfrey, Texas Indian Papers, IV, 409-410.

the youthful Adolpf F. Bandelier, making his first anthropological tour of New Mexico, was invited to the organizational meeting. Asked to keep a record of those selected to go on the trip, Bandelier listed sixty-four names-- forty-six from Santo Domingo, fourteen from Santa Ana, and six from Sandia. Although he termed the meeting "one of the most interesting" he ever saw,³⁵ his description unfortunately was quite vague. After watching the traders depart on what seemed to be the apex of high adventure, Bandelier wrote to a friend: "How I should like to have gone along on the trip, but the journey alone, both ways, will take two months."³⁶

The expedition was anything but a success. The Pueblos were received hospitably by the Comanches and Kiowas, but to their dismay their hosts lacked buffalo robes or other desirable trade goods. Seemingly realizing that this was the end of an era, the Pueblos leisurely visited in camp after camp before making their last long trek homeward.³⁷ The buffalo was dead; the Pueblos and Comanches

³⁵Bandelier, Journal of 1880, entry of September 26, as cited.

³⁶George P. Hammond and Edgar F. Good (eds.), A Scientist on the Trail; Travel Letters of A. F. Bandelier, 1880-1881 (Berkeley: The Quivira Society, 1949), p. 33.

³⁷Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowas," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, p. 347.

were separated by a quarter of a continent; and the Anglos reigned supreme over the plains.

It is quite evident that the Plains Indians and the New Mexicans made a deep and lasting impact on each other. As the two regions where they resided constituted a natural economic unit, it was inevitable that trade would develop between them. So important was this commerce before the arrival of the Spaniards that Pecos, easternmost of the pueblos, became the largest and strongest settlement in New Mexico. Following the Spanish occupation under Don Juan de Oñate in 1598 New Mexico's relations with the Plains Indians, despite the disturbing effects of slave raids, were remarkably tranquil for a full century because of the close commercial ties. Indeed, in the case of the Cuartelejo, Jicarilla, and Faraon Apaches, contact with the Pueblos and Spaniards led Plains Indians to adopt to an astonishing degree the more advanced culture. They not only began to engage in farming under Pueblo tutelage but they also began to build pueblo-like dwellings and to manufacture pottery. By the end of the seventeenth century, moreover, some were also expressing a rudimentary interest in the New Mexicans' religion.

The Comanches' adaptation to the horse and their rapid conquest of the Southern Plains inaugurated a new era in the history of New Mexico-Plains Indian relations. But

even though the Comanches had the power to devastate New Mexico, their desire for trade goods kept them peaceful until French and Taovaya traders began to supply their trade needs. When the Comanches, under the leadership of Cuerno Verde, resorted to all-out war in the 1770's, the collapse of the province was averted only by the timely arrival of a military and diplomatic genius named Don Juan de Anza, who succeeded in slaying Cuerno Verde. In a conference with Ecueraacapa, an Indian statesman of the first rank who had become the most significant figure among the Comanches, Anza negotiated a never-to-be-broken peace treaty in 1786, a pivotal event in the histories of both New Mexico and the Comanches. Without it, New Mexico, if its previous devastation and the later agony of Chihuahua and Durango mean anything, could not have endured; with it, the New Mexicans enjoyed until 1820 unprecedented prosperity. The Comanches, for their part, obtained an abundant source of supplies for their wars with Texas and Old Mexico.

For a time it also seemed likely that the Comanches' way of life would be modified considerably by their close contacts with the New Mexicans. Towards the close of the eighteenth century their chiefs were being confirmed by the New Mexican governors, some of their children were being educated at Santa Fe, and one of their leaders, Parunarimuco, had even expressed a momentary interest in building a

pueblo for his people. In addition, significant numbers of Comanches were apparently settling permanently in the frontier villages of New Mexico. All of these promising developments came to naught, however, and the Comanches adopted few of the cultural ways of the New Mexicans. With their acquisition of larger and larger herds of horses and their rapid perfection of hunting and raiding techniques, they were no longer attracted by the sedentary life of the Spaniards and Pueblos. They did, however, remain friendly towards the New Mexicans in order to obtain trade goods and later evolved a loose, informal alliance with them against the Anglo intruders, an alliance that made the American conquest and occupation of the plains exceedingly costly.

Relations with the Comanches, the only Plains tribe to leave an easily traceable impact on the New Mexicans, made a significant modification in the culture of Spaniards and Pueblos alike. The fortress-like character of the New Mexican houses, for example, undoubtedly was due largely to the danger of Indian raids. Wesley Hurt, a young anthropologist who made a detailed study of the isolated village of Manzano in the 1930's, found that the inhabitants had not only borrowed material items such as bows, arrows, lances, moccasins, and buckskin clothing from the Indians, but that they had also adopted some of their ceremonies, such as the scalp dance. Timio Luna, an old farmer,

recalled that once a party of hunters returned from the plains with "the scalps of many Indians" tied to their saddles. That night the scalps, lofted atop a long pole, were jubilantly paraded through the town, and afterwards a scalp dance was held to celebrate the victory.³⁸

The Pueblos were probably effected more profoundly by the long contact with the Comanches than were the Mexicans. In 1846 Lieutenant W. H. Emory, while visiting Santo Domingo, was greeted by the Pueblos with a dazzling display of horsemanship that could scarcely have been surpassed by the Comanches themselves:

When within a few miles of the town we saw a cloud of dust rapidly advancing, and soon the air was rent with a terrible yell, . . . The first object that caught my eye through the column of dust was a fierce pair of buffalo horns, overlapped with long shaggy hair. As they approached, the sturdy form of a naked Indian revealed itself beneath the horns, with shield and lance, dashing at full speed, on a white horse, which, like his own body, was painted all the colors of the rainbow; and then, one by one, his followers came on, painted to the eyes, their own heads and their horses covered with . . . horns, skulls, tails, feathers, and claws.³⁹

After allowing their horses to rest, the Santo Domingans put on a brisk mock-battle for their visitors: "the

³⁸Wesley Hurt, "Indian Influence at Manzano," El Palacio, XLVI (November, 1939), 246-247.

³⁹Ross Calvin (ed.), Lieutenant Emory Reports: A Reprint of Lieutenant W. H. Emory's Notes of a Military Reconnaissance (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1951), p. 64.

opposite files met . . . and kept up a running fight, with muskets, lances, and bows and arrows. Sometimes a fellow would stoop almost to the earth to shoot under his horse's belly, at full speed, or to shield himself from an impending blow." These traits obviously were borrowed from the Comanches.

Pueblo dances likewise reveal Plains Indian characteristics. The buffalo dance at many of the pueblos was quite similar to that of either the Comanches or the Kiowas, and the war dance was styled simply the "Comanche dance."⁴⁰ At San Ildefonso in 1921 an Anglo observed an age-old Comanche dance that re-enacted by means of "chanting, movements, and pantomime" a mythical victory over the denizens of the plains. The first act concerned the news of the approach of the Comanches and the invocation of the "Sky-Father's" aid; the second, the preparations of the Pueblo warriors for battle and their departure; and the third, the return of the victors, the mockery of the prisoners, and the thanksgiving to the "Sky-Father."⁴¹

Of all the pueblos, Taos had the closest ties with the Plains Indians. There is even a puzzling linguistic

⁴⁰Charles H. Lange, "A Reappraisal of Evidence of Plains Influences among the Rio Grande Pueblos," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, IX (July, 1953), 220.

⁴¹"Comanche Dance at San Ildefonso, January 23, 1921," El Palacio, X (February, 1921), 6.

similarity between Tanoan and Kiowan that defies explanation. Anthropologist John P. Harrington first studied and described this phenomenon, and Alice Marriott noted that "some Kiowas recognize a resemblance between their language and that of Taos."⁴² In a slightly different vein another anthropologist, Alfred M. Kroeber, found that Taos in "material culture and dress is half Plains."⁴³ Typical of the pervasive Plains influence is its music: "Plains music is as common as any other" there, observed Helen Roberts, the foremost authority on Amerindian music, and during the "famous song contests of moonlit summer nights, . . . quantities of beautiful songs of typical Plains character are heard."⁴⁴ Taos continued to be influenced by the Comanches and Kiowas after the close of the frontier, contracting from them early in the twentieth century the Peyote Cult.⁴⁵

The influence left by the long years of close contact with the Plains Indians is nowhere more conspicuous than

⁴²Marriott, The Ten Grandmothers, p. viii.

⁴³Lange, "A Reappraisal of Evidence of Plains Influences among the Rio Grande Pueblos," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, IX, 221.

⁴⁴Helen H. Roberts, "Musical Areas in Aboriginal North America," Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 12 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), pp. 110-111.

⁴⁵Weston LeBarre, "The Peyote Cult," Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 19 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), pp. 110-111.

in New Mexican folk drama. In many isolated villages, even the traditional nativity play revolved (and conceivably still does) around a Comanche abduction of the Christ Child and ended with the Comanche chief recognizing the sovereignty of his Divine hostage and offering Him blankets, bows, and arrows. The action of the play was advanced entirely by sinuous dancing to chants which, according to folklorist A. L. Campa, were "simply Comanche songs learned directly from the members of this tribe and handed down by oral tradition."⁴⁶ A typical stanza (translated by Campa) goes:

At the stroke of twelve this evening
We have come to look for Him
We the Comanche Indians
Have come here to dance for Him.⁴⁷

A more famous folk drama recounted in epic form a victory over the mighty Comanche chief Cuerno Verde, whom the New Mexicans, as if somehow in awe of the sheer ferocity of his blood-thirsty forays, had enshrined as a character of Arthurian proportions:

I am that mighty captain
At whose name men shake with fear
I am the brave, the bold, the terrible,

⁴⁶Arthur L. Campa, "Los Comanches; a New Mexican Folk Drama," University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series, No. 7 (1933), p. 13.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 14.

This horn which you can see
 Green and golden, see it glisten
 All its fame it takes from me.⁴⁸

Seldom did a ravisher live so heroically in the folklore of his victims.

In performing the epic, characterized by Professor Campa as seldom equalled in "realism, color, and thrills anywhere in the world," Taos Indians riding bareback and scions of pioneer Spanish families played the roles respectively of Comanches and New Mexicans. After the orations and counter-orations had been vigorously exchanged in the open-air arena, the two sides clashed in a mock-battle. Campa described in almost blow-by-blow fashion one of the last performances near Taos in the early 1930's:

The battle is enacted with all the realism of a primitive encounter. Indians ride sideways letting arrows fly over the backs of their ponies. Many a rider is thrown as the horses become unmanageable in the constant discharge of firearms. . . . The battle begins to subside. The Indian ranks are thinning down with the effectiveness of the Spanish charge, and ponies head for the hills nearby at a full gallop. Except for those who remain behind lying in the dust, the Comanches beat a hasty retreat and disappear. Riderless mounts run in all directions, frightened by the uproar, and the Spanish army proceeds to gather the stock as the battle ends.⁴⁹

Attesting to the popularity of the drama, Aurelio M.

⁴⁸Gilberto Espinosa (trans.), "Los Comanches," New Mexico Quarterly, VII (May, 1931), 137.

⁴⁹Campa, "Los Comanches; a New Mexican Folk Drama," University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series, No. 7, pp. 19-22.

Espinosa, writing in 1907, stated that "up to some twenty years ago" it was performed in many parts of New Mexico at important feast days. So dear was it to the people, he reported, that "very few New Mexicans over fifty years of age are not able to recite large portions of 'Los Comanches' from memory."⁵⁰ To have permeated so completely both New Mexican religious and heroic folk drama, the extent of the Comanche impact must have had few parallels in the history of America.

Significant as were the cultural consequences of New Mexico's relations with the Plains Indians, other results were equally important. Economically, the Indian trade, although its precise value is not subject to calculation, was a great boon to the impoverished Rio Grandians. Diplomatically, the peace maintained by the two peoples after 1786 insured the survival of the province at its most critical moment. Politically, the strange alliance between the savage and the peon gave the Anglo conquerors of the southwest some of their most perplexing problems. Thus, it is little wonder that the mention of the Comanches, which in Texas calls forth visions of unspeakable horror, in New Mexico brings back nostalgic memories of an exciting and colorful past.

⁵⁰Aurelio M. Espinosa, "Los Comanches," University of New Mexico Bulletin, Language Series, No. 1 (1907), p. 19.

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