

ous farming communities, received title to their lands, protection from encroaching settlers, and access to the courts in disputes with their Spanish neighbors. The laws did not always shield them as intended, and they suffered religious persecution at the hands of overzealous friars. But the fact remains, their legal status was clearly defined within the Spanish system. At the end of the colonial period, Pueblo Indians still possessed their ancestral lands, and their native culture survived almost intact. Even the old religion continued to serve behind a façade provided by superficial acceptance of Hispanic Catholicism. When the United States scooped up the Southwest in the Mexican War, it agreed to adhere to most of the old protective policies. As a result, the Pueblos were saved from disintegration and extinction, the lot of so many other native Americans.

If one looks for a predominant theme running like a thread through all New Mexico's history, it can readily be found in the collision and mingling of cultures. Even before arrival of the white man, Pueblos alternately fought and traded with nomadic Apaches, setting the basic pattern. The Spaniards had their days of Indian fighting, often brought on by inept governors and missionaries, but they also indulged in much borrowing of native ways. Beginning in the eighteenth century, they had to contend with European interlopers who discovered trails to the Rio Grande—first a sprinkling of French traders, and then later a tidal wave of frontiersmen out of English America.

The entire history of New Mexico from 1850 to the present is interwoven with attempts by the Indian and Hispano populations to come to terms with an alien Anglo society. Through principles supplied by the Declaration of Independence, they have tried to win equality while remaining different and have sought liberty to pursue a time-honored way of life. That history also includes the long story of the Anglo-American's adjustment to things that are uniquely and engagingly New Mexican.

1

The Spaniards

THE high, dry country of New Mexico is the birthplace of America's tall tale. The land's heady mixture of winelike air, sparkling sunlight, and bare-earth colors dazzles the senses and stimulates the imagination, so that the separation of fantasy from fact becomes a difficult, sometimes impossible, chore. Here, where space stretches far and often resembles the moon-scape, golden mirages and extravagant yarns of lost treasure have found a compatible breeding ground. The past is pock-marked with stories of men gone a little crazy, running pell-mell after nonexistent riches. Many among the gullible came to pointless and tragic endings, but a few, in their mad scramble to chase fantastic myths, changed the course of history. Among the latter were sixteenth-century Spaniards beguiled by a now almost forgotten fable of seven golden cities. The pursuit of this wonder sent them on tremendous journeys that ultimately led to the discovery, exploration, and naming of New Mexico.

The legend of seven cities was an old one, variant of a tale long popular in medieval Spain. According to tradition, seven bishops fled their country ahead of the Moorish invasion in the eighth century. Sailing westward, they reached the island of Antilia (a name echoed today in the Antilles Islands), where they each built an opulent city brimming with treasure. Gracious Benincasa, on his map of 1482, placed Antilia west of the Madeiras, and on it he inscribed names of the seven mythi-

cal cities. After Columbus made his discovery, men wondered if these metropolises might lie somewhere on the northern continent.

The earliest Spanish captains, looking at the New World through medieval lenses, fully expected to find the fabulous places described in their ancient literature. They were particularly attentive to any reference to the magical number seven. Persistent rumor told of seven Indian towns in the jungles of western Mexico. And the Maya of Yucatan, as well as the Aztecs of central Mexico, spoke of seven caves from which their ancestors had sprung. Then, in 1539, something of real substance surfaced: a Franciscan friar, traveling hundreds of leagues north of Mexico City to a land called Cibola, claimed actually to have seen, from a distance, the first of the seven wondrous cities. His announcement set off a chain of events destined to form the initial chapter in the history of Spanish New Mexico.

The willingness of colonial Spaniards to put faith in romantic and imaginative tales owed much to the extraordinary experience of Fernando Cortez, the man who discovered and conquered the land we now know as Mexico. With a fleet of ships, Cortez sailed from Cuba in 1519, intending to explore the then unknown mainland to the west. Entering Mexican waters from the Caribbean, he was deeply impressed by the natural beauty of the coastline. The country so reminded him of his Spanish homeland that he decided to call it New Spain, Nueva España, and that title remained to the end of the colonial period. It also established a precedent for other European powers that later named their American possessions New England, New France, New Netherlands, and New Sweden.

Landing on the Gulf Coast, Cortez and his daredevil soldiers heard of a stupendous kingdom nestling in a high valley beyond a wall of mountains and presided over by an emperor named Montezuma. An epic march took the Spaniards inland to the edge of the Valley of Mexico and to their first glimpse of Tenochtitlán, the treasure-laden capital of the Aztecs. What they beheld was one of the world's great cities, its inhabitants num-

bering in the hundreds of thousands, of whose existence until that moment Europeans had been wholly unaware. Awestruck, these knights of Spain gazed at magnificent palaces, temples, and towers, and at the glitter of a welcoming committee headed by Montezuma's nephew, who rode in a gold litter adorned with jewels and green plumes. The incredible picture reminded them of nothing less than the enchanted scenes described in fanciful novels of medieval chivalry. "To many of us," wrote one of the soldiers afterward, "it seemed doubtful whether we were asleep or awake . . . for never yet did man see, hear, or dream of anything to equal the spectacle which appeared to our eyes on this day."¹

Over the next two years, Cortez made himself master of the land and, in the process, destroyed both the Indian empire and Tenochtitlán. Upon the ruins of the native capital, he built a new Spanish metropolis called Mexico City, after *Mexica*, the Aztecs' name for themselves. In the vernacular of the day, the word *Mexico* became synonymous with riches beyond reckoning and served as the yardstick by which future discoveries were measured.

The stunning conquest of the Aztecs and their fabulous state placed such strains upon the imagination that, for long afterward, the Spaniards were prepared to accept every absurd tale that reached their ears. Given the improbable events that had already come to pass, it was natural that their minds should conjure up even more fantastic possibilities beyond the horizon. If one Mexico, one storehouse of treasure, could exist, why not another, perhaps tucked away in the mountain-and-desert fastness of the far north? In time, the quest for a new Mexico would draw conquistadors like a magnet toward the frontier of the Rio Grande and beyond.

In the defeat of the Aztecs, Cortez reaped a fortune and gained a title of nobility from the king. But he failed to win what he coveted most: the right to rule over lands he had seized

1. Hubert Herring, *A History of Latin America*, 3rd edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 131.

for Spain. The crown looked with wariness upon men of ambition and strength, and it moved to clip the wings of Fernando Cortez.

In 1535, the vast domain stretching from Central America to the misty unknown north was organized as the Viceroyalty of New Spain, under a royal official who bore the title of viceroy. Cortez, with his record of accomplishment, expected to be named to the post; but it went instead to a man sent out by the king, Antonio de Mendoza. The aging conquistador accepted his eclipse with grace and made plans to turn his energies to new projects of discovery in western and northern New Spain. But his main effort was finished, and, in the quest for another Mexico, he was forced to make way for younger swashbucklers.

The search was suddenly given focus in 1536, when four destitute figures, more scarecrows than men, appeared in Culiacán, the outermost settlement northwest of Mexico City. They were the only survivors of the resplendent Narváez Expedition that had set sail from Cuba in 1528 to colonize Florida. After a series of disasters that brought the enterprise to ruin, these four alone, shipwrecked on the Texas coast, had managed to make their way westward from one Indian tribe to another across the lower Rio Grande to eventual safety. It was a harrowing odyssey that carried them—the first Europeans—through the interior wilds of the North American continent.

Leader and spokesman of this party of three Spaniards and a black slave was Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, the original expedition's treasurer. What he and his companions had seen of value in the remote and sterile country sounded meager enough: some cotton shawls of the Indians, beads, coral from the South Sea (Pacific), turquoise, and five arrowheads made of "emeralds," which were probably malachite. More to the point were things of which they had heard but failed to see, notably a populous country to the north whose people possessed large houses and traded in turquoise and other desirable goods. It was a mere scrap of information, but one quickly seized upon by eager Spaniards. Could this be a clue to another Mexico?

His Excellency Don Antonio de Mendoza, Viceroy of New Spain, meant to find out. He proposed a small reconnaissance

party to go and probe the secrets of the northern mystery, for more definite information was needed to justify a full-scale expedition of conquest. Thus it was that a Franciscan friar was picked for the mission which, in a matter of months, would lead to the finding of the seven cities of Cibola.

The friar was Father Marcos de Niza, an adventuresome cleric who had been with Francisco Pizarro during the conquest of Peru and who had served afterward in Guatemala. Both his experience and his religious calling seemed to qualify Fray Marcos as a truthful reporter. Moreover, to the viceroy's way of thinking, a friar would not stir up the Indians along the way, nor would his simple wants entail unnecessary expense for the royal treasury in the event that his hunt came to nothing.

In March of 1539, Fray Marcos set out, escorted by friendly Indians and guided by one of the castaways who had accompanied Cabeza de Vaca. His guide was Estevanico, the black slave, a man considered resourceful at finding a trail or dealing with the natives.

The precise route taken and the ultimate point reached by Fray Marcos have been much debated by historians. His own account of the journey is sketchy, and, within a year after his return, what he claimed to have done and seen was brought into serious question. But existing evidence allows the following story to be pieced together with some color of certainty.

Fray Marcos, Estevanico, and their Indian retainers walked up the west side of Mexico, angled through the sun-drenched desert of southern Arizona, and approached the cluster of pueblos belonging to the Zuñi people, located just inside the modern New Mexico boundary. They had found the fabled province of Cibola, about which natives farther south had spoken with awe. Estevanico, ranging ahead in his role as scout, entered the first Zuñi town of Hawikúh. The tribesmen proved hostile in this, their initial encounter with a man from the Old World. His strange appearance may have pegged the black man as a sorcerer, for even today the Zuñi maintain a healthy regard for spellbinders and witches. Or perhaps it was the liberties Estevanico took with the women, or his appetite for turquoise. In any case, the Indians slew the fearsome scout and, for good

measure, cut his body into pieces. Several members of Estevanico's escort escaped and carried word of the deed back to Fray Marcos.

The friar had been moving ahead rapidly, but the dire news brought progress to a sudden halt. Natives in his own band threatened to kill him in reprisal for relatives and friends lost with Estevanico. Fray Marcos calmed them with kind words and distributed small trinkets. Then he hastened on again until he entered the limits of Cibola and glimpsed the pueblo of Hawikuh from afar. Fear kept him from going closer.

So it happened that the clear, rarified New Mexico air, heightening the illusionary effects of light and space, played its trick and showed the eager Franciscan what he wanted to see. Of Hawikuh, aglow with sunlight, he later informed the viceroy: "It appears to be a very beautiful city; the houses are . . . all of stone, with their stories and terraces, as it seemed to me from a hill whence I could view it."² His own Indians told him it was the least of seven cities, and that another, far larger than any in Cibola, lay beyond. Called Tontontecac, it possessed so many houses and people that there was no end to it.

A skeptical man might have lingered awhile longer on the fringes of Cibola; he might even have skirted it and gone on to seek the mystery of Tontoneac. But Fray Marcos had seen enough to confirm in his mind what he and other Spaniards had already imagined. So, with his Indian followers arguing for retreat, prudence overrode skepticism. The friar, after claiming the land for his sovereign, turned south toward the capital with all speed to tell the viceroy what he had found.

The news that Fray Marcos brought of the discovery of seven cities spread like wildfire and grew in the telling. In no time, the emboldened tale included mention of abundant gold and of civilized people who had weights and measures, wore woolen clothes, and rode on strange beasts. Some urgency existed in laying claim to the new prize, for it was known in Mexico that Hernando de Soto, governor of Cuba, had won royal approval

2. Herbert E. Bolton, *Coronado, Knight of Pueblos and Plains* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1949), pp. 35-36.

to explore the mysterious land of Florida. And, given the imperfect notions of geography that prevailed, no one knew whether Cibola lay close to Florida.

Francisco Vásquez de Coronado was the young governor of the western province of Nueva Galicia. He happened to be at home in his primitive little capital of Compostela during late June of 1539, when Fray Marcos de Niza made a stopover on his way from Cibola to Mexico City. Thus, Coronado was among the first to get word of the seven cities and to be stricken with gold fever. He went on with the friar to the viceregal capital, listened to the formal report made to Antonio de Mendoza, and shared in the excitement that followed.

Viceroy Mendoza, up to this point, had moved cautiously. Now, with the favorable disclosures of Fray Marcos, he was ready to act. Someone must go at the head of a full-blown expedition to unlock the secrets of Cibola and conquer what surely would be another Mexico. The viceroy toyed briefly with the idea of assuming leadership himself, but the demands of his office kept him chained in Mexico City. Next best was to send a close and trusted friend, one who could carry his own weight and command men. The eager governor of Nueva Galicia seemed to meet the requirements.

Mendoza invested heavily in the expedition's costs for outfitting both an overland party and a co-operating fleet of three ships to be sent up the Gulf of California. Coronado, for his part, added fifty thousand pesos, a sum that would represent now perhaps a million dollars. The two men took as an article of faith that the seven cities of legend had been found and that each was a bursting cornucopia.

Fray Marcos, of course, would go as guide. By now he was something of a celebrity, his story all the rage in New Spain. Some three hundred men enlisted as soldiers, many of them of noble blood, and a host of Indian allies and servants were added to the train. Five friars, in addition to Fray Marcos, joined the group, both to minister to the company on the march and to preach to the Cibolans and other people that they might discover. The viceroy made clear in his instructions to Coronado that Indians in the new land should be treated with fairness and

civility, so that "the conquest might be Christian and apostolic and not a butchery."³ From earlier experience, the Spaniards had learned something.

On Sunday, February 22, 1540, exactly 192 years to the day before the birth of George Washington, Viceroy Mendoza was on hand at the outpost of Compostela to conduct a grand review and muster of Coronado's company. The following morning, amid pageantry and soaring hopes, the glittering cavalcade departed. Not a man there could foresee that the hour of glory at the launching would be the high point of the expedition and that the year ahead would be overspread with bitterness and weighted with defeat.

The march north was anything but a holiday outing. As the company crossed southeastern Arizona, provisions grew short, and tempers became frayed as men and animals wore thin. After six hard months on the trail up from Mexico, Cibola began to take on new importance as a place where food and rest could be found.

Then Hawikúh, westernmost of the Zuñi towns, came into sight, and luster faded from the dream. The shock of Fray Marcos was as great as that of anyone else. Instead of a dazzling city, there, perched on a flat and sandy hill, was a rock-and-mud pueblo "all crumpled together." Eatables it might contain, but that was the extent of its treasure. In anger, the Spaniards heaped curses upon Fray Marcos, and shortly Coronado wrote to the viceroy, informing him acidly that the padre "has not told the truth in a single thing that he has said, for everything is the very opposite of what he related except the name of the cities."⁴

Worse, the people of Hawikúh proved belligerent, and the first of the seven cities had to be taken by storm. But once it was in Spanish hands, a deputation arrived from the remaining towns to make peace. A count showed that the Zuñi had only six pueblos; Fray Marcos had been mistaken even in that. In desperation, Coronado began casting glances beyond Cibola.

3. Bolton, *Coronado*, p. 75.

4. Bolton, *Coronado*, p. 128.

Perhaps something worth their trouble still lay hidden in the wide and sunlit land.

A detachment under Pedro de Tovar headed for Tusayan, the Tontontecac about which Fray Marcos had heard the year before. Upon investigation, that province, inhabited by the Hopi Indians of northern Arizona, presented an even poorer appearance than Cibola. Another wing of the army, captained by García López de Cárdenas, went farther and came upon the Grand Canyon, but even the massive grandeur of the world's greatest gorge could not offset disappointment over the paltriness of the "seven cities."

Then expectations soared again. Several Indians, led by a chief the Spaniards nicknamed "Bigotes"—"Whiskers"—reached Hawikúh from the east. They had learned of the bearded strangers from Zuñi messengers and were curious. Bigotes, a handsome and well-proportioned young man, presented Coronado with gifts of finely tanned buckskin and received beads and small bells in return. More important, Bigotes was full of information about a new province called Tiguex, where numerous pueblos lay strung along the wide rope of a river. That stream, one the Spaniards would soon call the Rio del Norte, is what we know today as the Rio Grande.

Past the eastern pueblos, Bigotes related, there stretched a limitless plain that melted into the sunrise, a country mysterious and little known. It was tenanted by immense herds of "woolly, humpbacked cattle," ferocious animals whose horns and hooves had felled many an Indian hunter. If the Spaniards wished to travel east and see for themselves, they would find a welcome, and Bigotes would serve as guide.

With the illusion of Cibola in tatters, Coronado seized upon Bigotes's recital as some small promise of better things ahead. Three hundred irritable young bloods needed action; and, if nothing else, exploration consumed surplus energies. Hernando Alvarado, one of Coronado's subordinates, went ahead with a picked body of men to sound out prospects for the main army. He paused briefly at Acoma, the pueblo that, to this day, resides 380 feet in the air atop its incredible rock; pushed on to Tiguex and other Rio Grande pueblos; continued to Bigotes's native

village of Pecos; and made a hurried excursion onto the Buffalo Plains, where he followed the Canadian River for one hundred leagues before turning back.

Coronado, biding his time in Cibola, felt some relief when a message arrived from his lieutenant, suggesting that the expedition move to Tiguex and take up winter quarters. If the land held any opportunities, clearly they lay in the east.

On the Rio Grande, the Spaniards found twelve Tiwa (or Tigua) pueblos clustered in the area north of present-day Albuquerque, and other villages lay both north and south. Like those of Cibola, the towns resembled multistoried apartments, with ladders or notched logs giving access to upper levels. Cubical rooms in each huge complex shared common roofs and walls and were piled upon one another stair-step fashion, sometimes up to seven stories. With several hundred souls crowded inside, they were not only cozy dwellings, but formidable fortresses.

The piece of river valley where Coronado stopped is still one of the most congenial spots in all New Mexico during the summer and fall. The air is bracing, and the sun is plentiful. Cottonwoods and willows shade the banks of the Rio Grande, casting a latticework of shadow on the roiling waters. Indians work with hoes to open small ditches that irrigate patches of green corn and melons. And they cast frequent glances, just as their ancestors did in Coronado's day, toward the curved hump of Sandia Mountain to the east.

The beauty of this peak, whose timbered summit rises more than ten thousand feet above sea level, dominates the river and the surrounding countryside. The Tiwa call it Oku Piñ, South World Mountain. Among its craggy battlements near cloud level dwell important deities like the Twin War Gods; like Wind Woman, who raises the spring dust storms; and like Spider Woman, whose friendship to the Pueblo people is commemorated in ancient legend.

In wintertime, when Sandia Mountain is crowned with snow and a cutting wind rattles the withered cornstalks, life in the valley is not so pleasant, as Coronado and his company found out. With considerable presumption, they obliged the Tiwa to

vacate one of their villages—Alcanfor—to provide lodging for the army. The Indians left grudgingly. Later Coronado requisitioned grain from native stores and imposed a levy of blankets, so that his men, used to the tropics, might have some protection from the severe weather. The expedition's chronicler justified such highhandedness with the age-old refrain that necessity knows no law.

Other incidents followed. The Indians rebelled. Two pueblos were laid waste, and refugees streamed toward Oku Piñ, a welcome sanctuary even in the dead of winter. It was the worst sort of diplomatic bungling, necessity aside, and for his part in it, Coronado would later be called to account.

Had it not been for an Indian named "the Turk" and his extravagant yarns, the winter of 1540-1541, with its hunger and biting cold, would have witnessed the smothering of Spanish hopes. On his trip east the previous fall, Alvarado had taken an Indian in tow at Pecos Pueblo and had dubbed him the Turk, "because he looked like one."⁵ That Indian, born of some Plains tribe, became a new prophet of glory. Through signs, he told of a distant kingdom, ruled over by an emperor who slept under a tree festooned with golden bells. In a river six miles wide floated galleons with gold ornaments at the prows, and in the water swam fish bigger than horses. Gold and silver were so plentiful, claimed the Turk, that wagons would be needed to cart it all away. How many of these fabrications were his own and how many the Spaniards invented from his telling is impossible to say. The Pueblos had a hand in it also, for it seems that they encouraged the fellow to make such talk in the hope of drawing the troublesome white men out of their country.

From the beginning, Coronado's quest for mythical cities possessed all the trappings of a medieval adventure story. His band of knights in burnished armor needed only some monumental success to transmute legend into reality, and the Turk's golden kingdom on the prairies, which they were now calling

5. George Parker Winship, *The Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542*, Fourteenth Annual Report of the United States Bureau of Ethnology, Part 1 (1896; facsimile reprint edition, Chicago: Rio Grande Press, 1964), p. 216.

Quivira, seemed to fulfill the requirements and to promise a happy conclusion to the fable. The episode was to prove again that the more preposterous a tale, the more apt it is to be believed.

The following spring, Coronado set out for Quivira in a last bid to refurbish his tarnished star. Following directions of the Turk, he steered northeast across the Staked Plains of the Texas Panhandle and was brought at last to the end of the rainbow. In central Kansas, he discovered the grass houses of the Wichita Indians, and a chief who prized a copper plate worn about the neck because that was the only metal he had ever seen. This was the much-vaunted Quivira. The deceitful Turk was executed on the spot, and the dejected Spaniards, after erecting a cross to mark their farthest advance, retraced their steps to the Rio Grande.

In his own mind, Coronado now admitted failure. Some with spirit among the expedition favored continuing the search, and they asked permission to establish a settlement. Also, several of the friars expressed a wish to remain and begin missionary work. Coronado denied their requests, and, in April 1542, turned his party toward New Spain. Two of the clergy, nevertheless, overrode his authority and, with several Indian servants, elected to stay behind. They were never seen again.

In terms of its original goals, Coronado's march was a fizzle. He and his backers suffered financial loss, and the rigors of the trail broke both his spirit and his health. A cold reception by his patron, the viceroy, awaited him in Mexico City. And more. In September 1543, charges were raised against him, alleging abuse of the Tiguex Indians and contending that he passed up an opportunity to enlarge the realm by founding a settlement on the Rio Grande. Lengthy investigation by Mexico's high court acquitted Coronado of misconduct, but the verdict did little to restore his reputation.

Time has dealt with him more charitably. Seen in the perspective of centuries, his expedition stands as the grandest ever to invade the American West. Coronado expanded enormously the geographic knowledge of North America's heartland and first gave to the world some notion of the continent's interior

vastness. His men were the first Europeans to view the Grand Canyon, the first to penetrate the interior of Pueblo land, the first to recognize the Continental Divide, the first to cross the oceanic plains. Throughout a journey marked by unparalleled hardship and disillusionment, Coronado provided courageous leadership that alone brought his army intact back to Mexico. In spite of his mishandling the Indians and his failure to find gold, his record remains a remarkable one.

The career of Coronado and that of Hernando de Soto, who explored at the same time Florida and the lower Mississippi valley, have left an indelible, if sometimes negative, impression on American history. They served as models by which people, centuries later, came to judge all Spaniards. How many American schoolboys, for instance, have had the phrase "Spaniards lusting for gold" drummed into their heads? It is simple to say that the men of Spain lost all reason with the mention of gold, that the merest hint of a new bonanza was enough to send them skittering off to the wilderness on some bootless and harebrained enterprise. But like most stock images, that one distorts the truth. The fact is that the Spaniard was no more—or no less—prone to lose his wits over the search for treasure than was any other European. For what fairness can be found in condemning Spanish adventurers with one breath and, with the next, approving the mindless stampede of the forty-niners to California or the swarming of American prospectors into the Black Hills that had been granted by treaty to the Sioux?

The Coronado expedition is practically the only New Mexico episode to find its way into American history books. While its spectacular character and perennial interest cannot be denied, for the sake of balance, we should recall that that event was scarcely more than a brief prologue in the long story of Spanish activity on the Rio Grande.

Actually, the era of the gold-seeking conquistador, with all its smoke and thunder, was brief and transitory. Before a single English colonist had set foot on the mainland, conquest almost everywhere in New Spain had given way to productive settlement. Mexico City, by the 1570s, held a population of fifteen thousand, possessed refined public and private buildings, and

supported a university that conferred degrees in law and theology. Other cities stretching toward the northern frontier flourished as important outposts of European civilization. The conquistadors, with all their foibles, were the men who made this possible.

The next chapter in New Mexico's story was added some forty years after Coronado marched home to disgrace, and it involved a flurry of four lesser expeditions. These are little known, but they are significant, for in their unfolding, more myths were dispelled. And, in their place, the notion arose that New Mexico was a country worth settling.

To reach Cibola, Fray Marcos and Coronado had leapfrogged across some five hundred leagues of forlorn and desolate wilderness. They labeled one section in Arizona the *Despoblado*, the Uninhabited Place, because even the Indians shunned it. When no rich cities appeared at the end of the northern trail, Spaniards for a time became content to push ahead the frontier line above Mexico City in a more orderly fashion.

This is not to say that the lure of the north had altogether lost its magic. Enough unknown country stretched beyond Cibola and Quivira to excite wonder and to lead the imagination to conjure up new mysteries. Most seductive was the belief in a continental passage, the Strait of Anian, giving access to the Pacific. For two hundred years, that vision charmed the Spaniards, until the true geography of North America was puzzled out and finally understood. During four decades, however, following Coronado's wayfaring, lands on the Rio Grande and beyond saw no horses or bearded knights. Interest in the Pueblo country and search for the strait had suddenly taken second place to more impelling events farther south.

In the year 1546, soldiers on an Indian campaign chanced upon a spectacular silver deposit at a place called Zacatecas, northwest of Mexico City. The strike brought a stampede of miners and prospectors to the frontier. Scouring the country in an ever-widening arc, determined men with picks made additional discoveries that allowed the creation of the new provinces of Nueva Vizcaya (modern Durango and Chihuahua), San Luis Potosí, and Nuevo León. The flow of metal created mining

barons overnight and made the Mexican peso one of the most sought-after coins in the world. And it had another result, for it sparked a new interest in the lands seen by Coronado.

Some of the soldiers who had gone on that epic journey recalled in later years that the bare, rock-ribbed mountains flanking the Rio Grande resembled the sierras in the south that were now yielding up fortunes in silver. Was it not possible, and even likely, that those lands that had appeared so sterile and had turned out so disappointing in 1540 might actually be filled with riches? The enticing prospect was one to ponder and to build new dreams upon. By the 1580s at the latest, the idea had taken hold and had fathered a revival of the old hope of another Mexico. From that time forward, Spaniards referred to the vast northern interior as New Mexico, and the name clung, even when the country continued to prove a burying ground for visions of easy wealth.

Another force was at work, drawing attention northward, and it was one more potent than any inspired by fanciful silver mines or mythical straits. Bedded deep in the conscience of all Spaniards lay the conviction that their nation was chosen to convert the heathen of the New World. The source of that missionary impulse resided far back in Spanish history. During the Middle Ages, when Christian knights had struggled to free their Iberian homeland from the African Moors of Islamic faith, Spanish Catholicism had assumed a militant quality unparalleled in Europe. Priest and soldier worked in concert for centuries to achieve a common aim: drive the infidel back across the Strait of Gibraltar. The clergy raised money for the war effort, ministered to the spiritual needs of the soldier, and furnished him a noble reason for fighting.

In Spain, the man of the sword, profiting from that co-operation, became pre-eminently a crusader. The relationship continued when another theater of conquest opened in the New World. The triumph over Islam at home and the discovery of America confirmed Spaniards in the belief that the Almighty had found their performance pleasing and that He wished them to extend their mission to the pagan Indians in the wilderness.

That conceit bred an enormous self-confidence and fueled

superhuman efforts that allowed the Spaniard to explore and claim some of the world's most forbidding deserts, mountains, and jungles in the space of a few short decades. It also contributed to the formation of the most popular image of the Spaniard handed to us by history: that of the armored conquistador moving fearlessly into some howling wasteland, with a robed and sandal-shod padre striding humbly by his side. As far as New Mexico is concerned, at least in the early years, that image is not unsound.

It was in fact a Franciscan lay brother, not a prospector after silver nor an explorer questing for the Strait of Anian, who set off the chain of events that brought about the rediscovery and ultimately the colonization of the land of the Pueblos. His name was Fray Agustín Rodríguez, and, in 1580, he was saving souls among the Conchos Indians of southern Chihuahua near the outpost town of Santa Bárbara. Hearing stray reports of an advanced agricultural people who lived to the north, Fray Agustín perceived a splendid opportunity to expand the field of the church. He knew a little of Coronado's earlier exploration, but initially, it seems, he failed to connect it with the land he was now proposing to enter.

After receiving permission from the viceroy, the friar put together his expedition, comprised of two additional Franciscans, nine soldiers, and some nineteen Indian servants. The soldiers were volunteers, animated in some measure by a desire to carry out their ancient role as protectors and supporters of the clergy. But, as several of them had experience in prospecting, it is easy to guess that they intended to keep a sharp eye peeled for promising signs of minerals.

The party got off on June 5, 1581, pushed down the Conchos River to its junction with the Rio Grande, then ascended that stream to the villages of the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico. The friars were exuberant. The potential harvest of converts exceeded all expectations. Hernando Gallegos, a member of the escort, expressed a thoroughly favorable opinion of the Pueblo people. He saw them as clean, handsome, and industrious, and he felt that if interpreters had been available, some would have quickly become Christians.

The inquisitive band of Spaniards probed the secrets of this strange country, visiting Taos in the far north, the buffalo range beyond the Pecos River, and the western homes of the Acoma and Zuñi. One of the friars, Father Juan de Santa María, was so elated with what he saw that he set off alone to carry a report to Mexico. But the Pueblos, whose docility was more apparent than real, believed he was going to fetch more soldiers; warriors therefore followed his trail for three days and killed him. The mischief done by Coronado's men two decades before bore bitter fruit.

Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado, captain of the soldier contingent, decided they had dallied in that quarter long enough. Not so Fray Rodríguez and his remaining companion, Father Francisco López: they were not about to leave when before them loomed the kind of prospect every missionary dreamed of. They would stay and build a mission at the Tiguex pueblo of Puaray; the soldiers were free to go home.

Chamuscado died of a fever just a few leagues before reaching Santa Bárbara; but his men, including Hernando Gallegos, went on with news of what had been done. Of immediate concern was the safety of the two friars left in New Mexico. Frontiersmen spoke of a rescue, and they were encouraged by a certain Fray Bernardino Beltrán who wished to go and aid his fellow Franciscans.

A colonial merchant and man of circumstance, Antonio de Espejo, agreed to finance and lead an expedition. After recruiting fourteen soldiers, he and Fray Bernardino set a course for the Rio Grande in November of 1582. They were too late. The friars at Puaray had been slain, evidently soon after their escort left. At that discovery, Espejo showed his larger motive: he was interested in a rumored lake of gold and in mines hinted at by the Indians. Brushing aside complaints from Fray Bernardino, he went pelting off into the tablelands west of the Rio Grande. The golden lake was a phantom; but, casting a wider loop than had any Spaniard before him, Espejo uncovered, near modern Prescott in central Arizona, outcroppings of copper that displayed a little silver. In his own mind and in later writings, he magnified the importance of his find enormously. Returning to

the Rio Grande, he encountered hostility among the Indians at Puaray, so he sacked the pueblo and executed sixteen captives. The people of Tiguex were learning again what it meant to oppose the reckless Spaniards.

Espejo's exaggerated recital of New Mexico's potential richness, given upon his arrival home, stirred up sleeping dogs left lying since Coronado had punctured the myths of the seven cities and Quivira. Plenty of stout souls were still willing to risk their necks for a chance at fortune. But the matter rested with the king, and his pious majesty, who saw himself as the supreme crusader, cared more for extending the dominion of the church than in listening to embellished tales of treasure. It was the large number and quality of the Pueblo Indians that titillated his interest. That consideration led him to issue a royal decree (dated Madrid, April 19, 1583) directing the viceroy of New Spain to arrange a contract with some responsible citizen to go, at his own expense, to settle and pacify the land now known as New Mexico and to see to the conversion of the native people. After much scrambling among a legion of contenders, the prize finally went to Juan de Oñate of Zacatecas.

During the years when the Spanish bureaucracy was shuffling papers and moving at a snail's pace toward the appointment of Oñate, two wholly unauthorized expeditions left for New Mexico. The first was led by Castaño de Sosa, the second by Leyva de Bonilla. While their influence on history was slight, they do illuminate the workings of a new Spanish law that governed exploration and conduct toward the Indians.

In the interval since Coronado and de Soto had marched to conquer, the entire concept of conquest had been called into question and was found wanting in morality. As a consequence, His Spanish Majesty had issued a set of Royal Ordinances in 1573, outlawing the use of violence in dealing with the Indians, except in a few specified cases, such as when they offered submission and then later rebelled. The measure set strict standards of conduct for soldiers, colonists, and friars, and bade them use gentleness and persuasion with the native people. The repugnant term *conquest*, which seemed to give license to strong-arm tactics, was now replaced by *pacification*. The juggling of words

was more than an idle formality designed to appease Spain's critics. It meant that the king firmly intended to protect his Indian subjects.

Proclaiming worthy laws in Madrid was one thing; enforcing them under the stern realities of life on a far frontier was another. And the crown knew it.

So it added a key feature to the Ordinances in hopes of insuring their observance. In the future, no Spaniard would be allowed to undertake discovery and settlement of new lands on his own responsibility. Such enterprises, vital to the affairs of empire and church, could only proceed under strictest supervision and with personal authorization of the king. The viceroy might review qualifications of those interested in leading expeditions, might make a preliminary selection and draft a contract defining privileges and restrictions under which they were to operate. But the final decision in all these matters remained that of the sovereign. If only men of proven loyalty and high quality received admission to the frontier—and they were bound by tight laws—the king reasoned that expansion of his New World realm could advance at a more serene pace and that maltreatment of the Indians would abate.

The idea was noble, if unrealistic. Certainly it left no room for bold individualists to go their own way. Pioneers in English America would have found such restrictions not only meddling but intolerable. Spaniards, on the other hand, viewed the ordinances with the same reverence they attached to all the king's commands. Outwardly, at least, most tried to conform. The few who did not paid for their folly.

A fraudulent silver assay and the first wagon train to cross a portion of what is now the United States figured in a testing of the Royal Ordinances during the years 1590–1591. Gaspar Castaño de Sosa, lieutenant-governor of Nuevo León in northeastern New Spain, was the man who stirred up the tempest, when he decided on his own initiative to settle New Mexico.

Ruling Nuevo León in the absence of a governor, this ambitious and restive Spaniard looked about for some way to carve a name for himself. The small silver-mining town of Almadén, where he maintained his headquarters, offered slim prospects.

The original strike had burned itself out in a matter of months, and the residents were left almost destitute. All goods had to be carried in on muleback over rough trails, and few could afford their exorbitant cost. Almadén was a place without a future.

Not so New Mexico. Every man of the frontier, Castaño de Sosa included, knew that there lay the next utopia whose mountains and mesas offered certain reward. Why not pack up the people of Almadén—men, women, and children, numbering some 170 souls—and break for that shining land? The plan, in its sheer audacity, was a novel one. In aim, it foreshadowed the movement of countless American pioneers who, in later centuries, would leave home to seek more fertile pastures.

Unfortunately, there was a hitch. The law of 1573 stood in the way. Could it be circumvented?

At that very moment, Oñate and other influential men were petitioning the crown for permission to invade and pacify the northland, as Castaño de Sosa was probably aware. No matter. He would ride out anyway, and as justification for his action, he settled upon a technicality. New Mexico was not a new country waiting to be discovered. Coronado, Fray Agustín, and Espejo had explored it and made effective Spain's claim. So his colony would go forth, pretending confusion, because rules in the Ordinances referred to "new discoveries."

It was a shaky point, the lieutenant-governor well understood, since prevailing law prohibited travel anywhere without official sanction. Therefore, to show conformity with the law, he would request permission of the viceroy, but only after measuring a good start on the trail. A bold push might carry the project through. If it succeeded and he colonized New Mexico, his superiors would likely accept the fact and give grudging endorsement. At least that was his hope.

Another problem arose, less formidable than the legal one, but more immediate. Some of the Almadén people, whether out of fear of the unknown or from mere inertia, failed to warm to the idea of migration. Resourceful Castaño de Sosa, with the cleverness of a magician, produced some Indians from the north who happened to be toting a load of rock threaded with gleaming metal. He made an assay, attended by much hullabaloo, and before it was finished, he slipped a silver mug into the pot,

without anyone being the wiser. The upshot of his little deceit was predictable. At the completion of the assay—when a small, rough ingot of silver passed from hand to hand—the majority raised a clamor to be off at once. For the benefit of a tiny handful who still held back, the leader announced airily that any man not joining would be executed as a traitor to the king. In the end, all tagged along. So once more the celestial vision of a treasured kingdom furnished grist for another installment in the early history of New Mexico.

The struggling colonists from Nuevo León cast themselves adrift without a map, much less a road over which to roll their ten wagons and carts. Castaño de Sosa knew vaguely of the Pecos River, and he guessed its valley might offer a convenient avenue to their destination. He directed his path across the thorny shrub and cactus flats of south Texas, where the hard and pebbly soil wore out twenty-five dozen horseshoes in a matter of days.

Plagued with thirst, the Spaniards reached the Pecos to find its waters pregnant with bitter alkaline salts, but the valley opened above them through diminutive forests of greasewood and pointed the way they wished to travel. When the terraced walls of Pecos Pueblo at last rose to view, on December 30, 1590, they had been on the trail for five months, an epic trek accomplished with nerve and daring. Scarcely known today, their journey marked the first passage of wagons upon ground destined to become part of the American nation. Though the people spoke Spanish and moved north instead of west, they deserve credit as forerunners of that tidal wave of settlers in prairie schooners who would one day pour across trails of the Far West.

For the next two and a half months, Castaño de Sosa wandered among the Pueblos along the Rio Grande. He exacted promises of obedience to God and king and conducted himself with restraint, just as the Royal Ordinances demanded. Some of his followers, who had never developed much heart for the undertaking, became disquieted and began to whisper of mutiny. Their poking about in the mountains revealed no silver mines, and nothing else in that desolate region excited their interest.

When the sword fell, however, it was not from within. Out of

the south, a troop of fifty soldiers suddenly appeared, bearing an order of arrest issued by the king and the viceroy. Flinty Castaño de Sosa accepted the document, placed it over his head in token of submission, and with supreme dignity received the iron fetters that he was to wear back to Mexico City. Like others before him, he had gambled on the reputed riches of New Mexico and lost.

A second incident offers more evidence of the Spanish government's hostility toward illegal expeditions. Not long after the Castaño de Sosa episode, a Captain Francisco Leyva de Bonilla led his troop of soldiers against renegade Indians who were attacking cattle ranches along the Nueva Vizcayan frontier. The campaign stretched into weeks and carried the men farther north than they had ever been before. Almost before they were aware of it, the lower reaches of New Mexico opened ahead of them. The pull of opportunity proved overpowering. Without any shadow of authority, Captain Leyva announced his intention to continue on to the Rio Grande. If anything worthwhile lay hidden there, he would find it.

The venture carried the small party of Spaniards and their Indian servants north to the pueblo of San Ildefonso, above the site of Santa Fe. There they remained for a year, parts of 1593 and 1594, living off the local people. When the Indians' patience wore thin, they dredged up the shopworn, but still useful, tales of populous kingdoms tucked away on the outer margin of the Buffalo Plains. Captain Leyva and his men left in a cloud of dust kicked up by their horses. And they did not return.

Years later, one of the native servants, Jusepe, found Oñate on the Rio Grande and related the terrible sequel. The little company had gone east to a great settlement, probably the same seen by Coronado in Kansas, where one of the soldiers, Antonio Gutiérrez de Humaña, quarreled with Leyva and killed him. Afterward, Indians overran the camp, and Jusepe, escaping, fled toward New Mexico, where he was picked up by roving Apaches. His information allowed the Spaniards to close the books on Captain Leyva, whose misdeed had provoked an order for his apprehension. The king remained unyielding: exploration was far too important to be left to law-breakers and soldiers-of-fortune.

Spaniards had now entered New Mexico on at least six distinct occasions. None of them stayed and settled, for the moment was not right, and all their comings and goings scarcely left a trace on the sprawling land. Then, in the bench-mark year of 1598, matters took a different turn.

Don Juan de Oñate, governor and *adelantado*, came with horsemen, livestock, and families in wagons. His caravan was attended by the rumbling, rattling, bawling, thumping medley of sounds that betray homeseekers on the wilderness roads of every new frontier. These reverberations spelled the beginning of change for New Mexico and the end of somnolent days in which the Pueblo Indians had lived and worked in perfect independence. For them, the time when centuries were allowed to drift evenly by, one almost indistinguishable from another, was definitively over.

About Juan de Oñate, founder of New Mexico, certain facts are plain. He was born in 1552, in the mining town of Zacatecas, which his father, a Basque, had helped establish six years before. Juan and his brother Cristóbal were twins, the latter named for their sire. The pair grew to manhood enjoying the advantages and prestige that came with being sons of a silver baron. But they shared in the hard knocks that were the lot of every youth weaned on the savage frontier beyond Mexico City.

Early in his teens, Juan de Oñate went as a soldier with the viceroy of New Spain to wage war against the ferocious Chichimecs of the north, who skinned Spaniards alive and left their bodies hanging along the roadways. For twenty years he fought them, becoming a seasoned campaigner; and, as head of his own expeditions, he won extensive new lands for the royal domain.

Juan married Isabel Cortez Tolosa, daughter of a mine owner and descendant, on her mother's side, of Fernando Cortez. By her, he had two children. When Isabel died prematurely, in the late 1580s, the husband was overcome with grief, and friends, in the following years, claimed that his loss caused him to begin looking toward New Mexico as a place to forget his troubles.

These spare details we have. What is missing is the essence of the man—knowledge of his thinking and mood, understanding of the full scope of his motives. Even his physical ap-

pearance eludes us; we know only that, at the time of going north, he had reached his late forties and wore a beard, threaded with gray and neatly trimmed. No portrait survives of Oñate, nor indeed for any figure prominent in the affairs of New Mexico during that period—with a single exception.

Gaspar Pérez de Villagrà, one of Oñate's lieutenants and a most vocal supporter, published in Spain, in 1610, a volume entitled *A History of New Mexico*. In epic verse, it recounts the dry and miserable march of the settlers northward, the planting of a settlement above Santa Fe at San Gabriel, and the week-by-week existence of the colony's first troubled months. As literature, it lacks distinction, but as the personal record of a crucial period in New Mexico history, the work stands unique. Furthermore, its printing came ten years before the landing of the Pilgrims and fourteen years before publication of Captain John Smith's much-quoted history of Virginia.

From a heavy-lined woodcut, which serves as a frontispiece, stares forth Pérez de Villagrà, bearded, his balding head framed by one of the outsized fluted collars of the day. The austerity, the inner toughness, the dignity, and the natural grace so often attributed to Spaniards radiate from this simple portrait. It leads us to believe that something of the same qualities must have been apparent in the features of Juan de Oñate. What is known of his career in New Mexico confirms the suspicion.

The whole venture started badly. For three years—from 1595, when he began putting the pieces together, until his departure for New Mexico early in 1598—Oñate did battle with the ponderous bureaucracy that wanted each detail spelled out in advance. And at every turn, he had to fend off envious rivals who hoped to discredit him and grab the honors that went with the founding of a new province.

In the end, his perseverance won through. The viceroy and the king approved, after some modifications, the contract he had submitted. The most telling points were these: Oñate himself was to bear practically the entire expense of the project, including recruiting and equipping two hundred soldiers and their families, the assembling of livestock, and the purchase of supplies needed to build new homes on the Rio Grande. For his part, the

king granted Oñate titles of governor, *adelantado* (purely honorific), and captain-general of New Mexico; a salary of six thousand ducats yearly; and the right to distribute land and Indian tribute to his followers. Since the main purpose of this occupation, at least in the eyes of the crown, was to pacify and Christianize the Indians, the royal treasury stood the cost of five missionaries and a lay brother.

Oñate received a set of instructions reminding him that the work of the Church had first claim on his attention. Pointed mention was made of the Ordinances of 1573, and a curious requirement was included, directing that a survey of New Mexico's coastline and harbors be made. Everyone assumed that once this new bastion of settlement was installed at the core of the continent, the elusive Strait of Anian would providentially turn up. While all these considerations weighed on Governor Oñate, they failed to keep him from considering his own profit and glory. Into his personal stock of supplies went heavy mining tools and forges, bellows, and crucibles for smelting—just in case New Mexico yielded any silver.

After six months on the long trail from the south, Oñate's cavalcade lumbered into the shelter of the Tewa pueblo of San Juan, astride the Rio Grande. Thirst and hunger and vast discouragement had worn the colonists ragged. Only constant prayer, much kneeling at open-air Masses, and the unbounded energy of the governor brought them through. But here was a fit place to build a capital.

San Juan stood in the midst of a narrow though fertile valley near the Chama River's junction with the Rio Grande. East and west, lofty peaks marched in line across the horizon; one of them, Tsicomo, served as a sacred shrine for all the Tewa people. Reports of the Castaño de Sosa expedition had mentioned the hospitality of the residents of San Juan (in contrast to the Indians of Tiguex farther south, who had learned to despise the Spaniards) and the abundant surpluses of corn their irrigated fields produced. Oñate desperately needed friendship and food to face the coming winter.

Amiable relations were established almost at once. The San Juans lived up to their reputation, even offering to share their

homes with the newcomers—at least that is Captain Villagrà's testimony. One of the friars remarked that they were the best infidel people he had ever seen.

In the short space of two weeks, the Spaniards hastily threw up a church, large enough to contain every member of the colony. Their original intention was to construct a town adjacent to the pueblo, which they had come to call San Juan de los Caballeros. Within a few months, that plan was abandoned. Oñate ordered everyone to remove to the west bank of the Rio Grande, where there was more room to expand. On a low hill some three harquebus shots above the Chama, they began work on the villa of San Gabriel, New Mexico's first capital.

The frustrations Oñate experienced in his decade as governor were all foreshadowed by a series of unnerving events during the initial months of occupation. Division in his ranks brought the first trouble.

More than he would have admitted, the governor was banking on some spectacular mineral discovery early in the game to give his men and his own hopes a needed lift. Almost at once he began visiting the shadowy corners of the province to obtain the allegiance of outlying pueblos and to search for ore-bearing rock. But his prospecting merely confirmed what others before him had already found out. New Mexico was not Zacatecas.

The small grain of enthusiasm that had survived the rigorous journey to the new country rapidly waned. Some men plotted mutiny; four others stole valuable horses and scurried south toward Santa Bárbara. Pérez de Villagrà pursued the deserters, caught two, and returned to San Juan with the gloomy tidings that he had beheaded them on the trail.

Then a greater disaster broke: massacre and retribution, the frontier's twin scourges. Though it pulled the colonists together, weeks passed when survival of the tiny Spanish enclave by the Rio Grande appeared in doubt.

It started innocently enough in the late fall of 1598. Oñate took a squad of soldiers and rode southeast to survey a group of pueblos situated near some salt lakes beyond the Manzano Mountains. From there he decided to go directly west and find the seacoast, assuming that it lay within easy march. He sent a

messenger to Juan de Zaldívar, his nephew and second-in-command, with orders to collect reinforcements and catch up with him on the trail. With luck, they would meet somewhere near Zuñi.

Young Zaldívar never made it. His party camped one evening at the foot of the great rock upon which Acoma Pueblo perched. Here dwelled some of the most independent-minded and openly hostile Indians in New Mexico. A military strategist would have judged their sky village to be the stoutest native stronghold in North America. On all sides, sheer walls rose abruptly hundreds of feet above the surrounding plain. Steep and narrow trails, at places mere toe holds pecked out of the rosy sandstone, provided the only way to the top. Above, on the flat surface, a fortified pueblo offered another perimeter of defense. Certainly the Acomas felt safe, else they would never have taken measures—which, through hindsight, appear foolhardy—to oppose the Spaniards.

Zaldívar and some of his men were lured to the summit, and a horde of painted and befeathered warriors fell upon them. One after another, the sword-swinging Spaniards went down, until the few who remained were driven to the edge of the cliff. There was no choice; they jumped. Twenty-year-old Pedro Robledo smashed against the rocky wall, his body tumbling to the base like a broken doll. Three other soldiers landed in sand dunes swept up by winds against the foot of the mesa. They were gathered up, dazed, by members of the horse guard who had remained below.

Oñate got the news as he was moving slowly over the trail west of Acoma. His nephew and ten of the men dead. Several more injured. The Acomas in revolt. Other pueblos showing hostility as word spread. The colony teetering on the brink of catastrophe.

When Pérez de Villagrà wrote later in his *History* that no men have ever yet been able to count upon good fortune and a lucky fate to order their affairs, he expressed a truism familiar to all Spaniards. For them, personal valor and a strong faith, demanding direct confrontation with problems, were the hallmarks of manhood. Trusting in chance or in the healing salve of time to

resolve matters was not their way. That course only served weakenings.

And Juan de Oñate was no weakling, although persons unaccustomed to the behavior of Spaniards might have judged him so, if they had seen him pass that first night, after receiving the tragic news from Acoma, alone in his tent weeping and praying before a cross. Yet the succeeding weeks left no doubt of the man's nerve or of his determination to hold the colonists together.

From his camp in the west, the governor beat a hasty path back to San Juan under a leaden December sky, arriving a few days before Christmas. The next weeks passed in feverish activity as war councils hummed and arms were readied with much clanking and polishing. Every Indian in New Mexico watched and waited to see what the Spaniards would do.

Oñate wanted to head the attack against Acoma himself, but on that, every soldier in the company voted against him. In the event that something went awry, he would be needed at home to take the surviving colonists out of New Mexico. Hence, leadership passed to Vicente de Zaldívar, younger brother of the slain Juan.

In mid-January, seventy men, with weapons glinting in the winter's sunlight, departed for Acoma like a medieval army bent on a crusade. Of the monumental battle that took place—Spaniards scaling the walls in brutal assault; Indians pelting them with a hail of arrows and stones; the sheer blind courage of attacker and defender locked arm in arm in combat; the firing of the pueblo and appalling slaughter of its inhabitants—of all this on that battle-scared promontory, scarcely an American today knows a single detail. The Spaniards had their victory, but it was a heartbreaking day for humankind.

Oñate rejoiced, not so much in the ruination of a people and their home but in the salvation of his colony, for the terrible fate of Acoma effectively cooled the passion for war in other pueblos. But he meant to nail down the message with one last hammer-blow. Vicente de Zaldívar had returned to the Rio Grande, triumphant, leading a pathetic string of captives. Hundreds of Acomas were dead, but the governor still intended

to hold these survivors accountable for the massacre of his nephew and his men. After a lopsided trial, conducted in mid-February 1599, Oñate handed down the sentences. Perhaps through clemency, he condemned no warrior to death. Yet the punishment was so harsh that almost four hundred years after the fact, it still strikes us with horror: men over twenty-five to have one foot cut off and to spend twenty years in personal servitude; young men between the ages of twelve and twenty-five, twenty years of personal servitude; women over twelve, twenty years of personal servitude; sixty young girls to be sent to Mexico City for service in convents, never to see their homeland again; and two Hopi taken at Acoma to have the right hand cut off and to be set free so they might convey to their people news of the retribution.

It would be pleasant to relate that, after the misfortunes of that first winter, Juan de Oñate got a firm grip on matters and was able to construct a solid foundation for the New Mexican colony. But such was not the case. In spite of his dedicated effort, the project slowly fell apart.

From the viceroy, Oñate was obliged to request military reinforcements, since, after Acoma, he dared not go on lengthy expeditions without a strong garrison to leave behind and defend San Gabriel. The plea for aid in itself alerted the crown that all was not going well on the Rio Grande. Red tape promoted the inevitable delays, so that the new contingent of soldiers, along with much-needed supplies and six additional friars, did not reach the capital until Christmas Eve, 1600. Thus strengthened, the governor was ready to resume the search for those things needed to give stability and glory to his frontier government: mines, the Strait of Anian, harbors on the South Sea.

First he looked toward Quivira as offering the greatest promise. He possessed a competent guide in Jusepe, the Indian who appeared from the plains with information on the fate of the Leyva de Bonilla party. But though the governor led eighty men down the Canadian River, across Oklahoma, and explored the gilded land of Quivira, like Coronado, he found nothing to stir the imagination or lend foundation to wispy legend.

Returning to his struggling settlement, Oñate received a

crushing blow. San Gabriel was practically deserted. The majority of colonists, soldiers, and friars, sick to death from disappointments and angered by the governor's strict rule, had taken advantage of his five-month absence and had gone back to New Spain. Many of the men had been aristocrats, living in comfortable circumstances before coming to New Mexico; and when heaven failed to drop immediate riches in their laps, they grew fussy and lost interest in the bleak little colony. Defection of the friars was the result of dissatisfaction with Oñate's oftentimes stern policies toward the Indians. Yet they themselves had displayed a lack of zeal, staying at San Gabriel and offering excuses for not going to assignments at remote mission stations. They had emerged, in fact, as the ringleaders in the movement to abandon the province.

In face of this new setback, the governor stubbornly clung to the hope that, with the few loyal people remaining to him, he could somehow put things back together. While he sent Vicente de Zaldivar to Mexico and then to Spain in an effort to raise new money and recruits, the governor attempted one last search for the Golden Fleece. In the fall of 1604, he picked up the trail westward to the South Sea, the route he had been forced to quit in mid-stride at the time of the Acoma trouble. Even some small success might disperse the cloud gathering over his name, for he knew that the deserters, upon reaching New Spain, had accused him of incompetence and mismanagement.

With thirty men, less than half his Quivira expedition, Oñate struck across the heart of Arizona by way of the Hopi villages. He encountered the Colorado River and followed it to the head of the Gulf of California. Then he scouted about in a futile attempt to find rumored pearl fisheries. He listened to Indians who beguiled him with tales of a tribe of unipeds, of giant Amazons, and of people who slept under water. And he finally reckoned that nothing existed in these parts that could possibly benefit his province of New Mexico. Even the sea was too far away to be of any use. With this final throw of the dice, his last pinch of optimism faded.

New Mexico had become a millstone around Oñate's neck. Gold and silver deposits, if he had but known it, lay within

reach—in Colorado, in Arizona, in Nevada, and even in New Mexico. But he, and every Spaniard before and after him, missed them; the vast riches kept their secret safe until American prospectors broke open the vault in the late nineteenth century.

Had the Spaniards experienced a gold rush or silver boom anywhere along the frontier, a flood of miners and settlers might have raised a permanent center of Hispanic civilization that would have changed the course of history in western America. Oñate, when that seemed a real possibility in the beginning, had entertained visions of a new northern viceroyalty, with himself at the head, which would spread over the upper continent and guard the approaches to the Strait of Anian, when that marvel should be found. But none of that was to be. That fate, in which Captain Villagrà put so little stock, blasted Oñate's dream and marked his efforts a failure.

Yet not entirely. For he fathered a province that lived long after Oñate and his heirs were dust. And if it failed to flower as a viceroyalty, at least New Mexico matured to become the main anchor of Spanish power along a fifteen-hundred-mile frontier. Could the first governor have returned two centuries later, to view the thirty thousand inhabitants distributed in towns, villages, and ranches, with their homes and fields, herds and flocks, all supported by a chain of missions, he would have seen that his years of misery and privation had not been wasted. It has always been in the nature of things that some men build so that others may reap the benefit.

In 1607, the same year that Englishmen laid the foundations of Jamestown, the Spanish crown suspended Oñate from office. The king flirited briefly with the idea of withdrawing the colonists and giving up the sickly outpost in Pueblo land. Before such a drastic step could be taken, an encouraging report came from Franciscan friars who had gone out to replace the faint-hearted deserters. The Indians were beginning to respond, and eight thousand converts could already be counted. In view of that, it was unthinkable that the king, committed to spreading the faith, should abandon New Mexico. Instead, he made provision for taking the province under royal patronage, meaning that

he, or the viceroy of New Spain, would, in the future, appoint succeeding governors, to serve a term of four years, and that all of the province's expenses—civil and religious alike—would be borne by the treasury. The period of flamboyant treasure-seekers and empire-builders ended with this announcement of New Mexico's new status.

Early in 1610, Oñate's successor as governor arrived on the upper Rio Grande. Don Pedro de Peralta carried not only his appointment to office but an order directing removal of the colonists from San Gabriel to some better location. It is probable that the viceroy had decided that Oñate's settlement lay too close to San Juan and infringed upon the croplands of the Indians. Or he may have been aware that, in the event of hostilities, its exposed and vulnerable position posed a serious danger to the Spaniards.

As near as investigation can determine, Governor Peralta inaugurated construction of the new *villa* of Santa Fe in the late spring of 1610. The name? Peralta may have called his capital after the city of Santa Fe in Spain, built on the Roman grid plan by Ferdinand and Isabella and designated as the prototype for New World municipalities. Or he may have simply got the idea from his formal instructions, which commanded him to extend the *Santa Fe*, the Holy Faith, among the Indians.

The site was a congenial one: high, above seven thousand feet, on the banks of a narrow stream that flowed from the towering Sangre de Cristos and disappeared in a southwesterly direction toward the Rio Grande. Best of all, the handsome little valley was unclaimed by any Indian pueblo, although a scattering of low dirt mounds indicated that the native people had once lived and farmed there.

Peralta and the first members of an elected town council, the *cabildo*, superintended the marking of municipal boundaries, the assignment of house and garden lots to citizens, and the selection of space for a plaza and for official government buildings. Throughout all this activity prevailed a feeling of permanence and solidity that had been lacking in the establishment of San Gabriel. The Spaniards pegged their claim to their new ground, and now, they meant to build for the future.

2

The Pueblos

IF any people belong completely to New Mexico—and New Mexico to them—it has to be the Pueblo Indians. They occupied this tawny land for a thousand years or more, and they still occupy it. Everyone else, by comparison, is a Johnny-come-lately, even the nomad Apache and Navajo who reached the Southwest not long before the Spaniards.

Archeologists, beginning with Adolph Bandelier in the 1880s, have pried open an uncountable number of ruins belonging to the Pueblos' ancestors, the Anasazi, and, in their digging, have laid bare a long and fascinating record of human activity in the Southwest. The story revealed by tumbled walls, stone tools, and fragments of pottery is, of course, a partial one. But some gaps can be filled by consulting accounts of early Spanish chroniclers, who often commented at length on Indian ways, and by reference to modern studies of anthropologists whose work describes ritual patterns and social customs little changed by the centuries.

To most New Mexicans today, the Pueblo Indian is a person who peddles his handicrafts on the old plazas at Santa Fe and Albuquerque, or one who dances with feathers and rattles at appointed times of the year. He is rarely seen in any depth as a representative of a rich and honored culture that has flourished and suffered on these same deserts and mesas since before the time European crusaders marched to Jerusalem.

Such want of knowledge sometimes produces curious incidents. One is the case of a young surgeon in an Albuquerque hospital who asked an Indian nurse to help him communicate with a patient who spoke no English.

"Sorry. I can't help you," she told him. "That man is a Navajo, and I am a Pueblo."

And the doctor's puzzled reply?

"But you both speak 'Indian,' don't you?"

His misconception—absurd in that there are better than five hundred different Indian languages in North America—is more widely held than it should be. For benighted innocence, it must rank alongside the popular belief, shared by a surprising number of Americans from the East, that a person needs a passport to enter New Mexico.

The fact is that no Pueblo Indian can communicate with a Navajo or an Apache, both of whom speak Athabaskan; nor can they understand the Ute of New Mexico's northern border, whose language is Shoshonean. There is not even a tongue common to all the Pueblo. Each village falls into one of four distinct linguistic groups: Keresan, concentrated in the area north of Bernalillo and including the western Laguna and Acoma; Zuni, an enclave south of Gallup; Shoshonean, of a dialect different from the Utes, spoken by the Hopi of northern Arizona; and Tanoan, whose speakers extend from Taos south to Isleta and include the people of Jemez. For members of one group, the speech of any other remains unintelligible.

That situation calls attention to another point of confusion. The term *Pueblo* refers not to a single tribe but to a group of people who share a common culture and follow a similar way of life in which all are tillers of the soil. To the first Spaniards, the five- and six-story, terraced dwellings of these Indians made the sharpest impression. Incredible apartments they were, unlike anything the newcomers had encountered before in America. With simple logic, they therefore lumped all the native urbanites together, even while recognizing linguistic differences, and called them *Pueblos*, meaning "Townsmen." Each village they called a *pueblo*. Today, the stepped buildings are gone, except at Taos and a few other places where remnants survive. Even

so, the Indians are still "Townsmen," though they may live in scattered, single-family units—mobile homes, for instance, or houses built by the government.

It is doubtful whether any white man has ever comprehended the full scope of Pueblo belief and thought. Such understanding rests upon knowledge of the inner workings of religion, which pervades and dominates all aspects of Pueblo life. And the Indians, through four hundred years of bitter experience, have learned to resist intrusion into that sacred area. Piecing together fragments provided by historian and anthropologist allows us to say something that is general and true, so far as it goes, about Pueblo habits and capacities of mind. It does not permit those deeper insights necessary for authentic sympathy and accurate judgment.

Sixteenth-century Spanish chroniclers were the first to draw a picture of the Pueblo mode of life. Like most men, they were quick to note the obvious, to single out the strange for special mention, and to interpret all in light of their own experience. For example, these swaggering soldiers, a scant two generations removed from the Moorish wars in Spain, first looked at the Pueblos as if they were related to the infidels defeated by their forefathers in the Old Country. Their descriptions frequently compared Pueblo practices with those of the Moors and, incredibly, *mosque* was the word that they initially attached to the Indian ceremonial chamber that we now term a *kiva*.

Since what we get from these chroniclers is all one-sided—information filtered through their own prejudices and preconceptions—it cannot be accepted as completely trustworthy. Yet because they were curious and were much given to writing in detail to the viceroy or to the king, their words provide a valuable glimpse of the externals of Pueblo life as seen by the first Europeans.

In 1540, Coronado's men found some seventy or more rock-and-mud villages scattered over northern New Mexico and extending westward in an irregular line to the outlying pueblos of the Hopi. Most of the communities were centered on one or more square plazas, with terraced apartments rising on each side. Well-built, whitewashed, and clean, they evoked wonder

and admiration in the Spaniards. Interior walls bore painted designs and murals of a religious character on their whitened surfaces. Each plaza held two ceremonial rooms, partially underground, with entry provided by a ladder through the roof. In addition to their religious function, these rooms, or *kivas*, also served as lodging for visitors. Two other features distinguished the pueblos: large turkey pens—one for each family—capable of holding a hundred birds; and dog houses, constructed below ground level, to shelter the peculiar shaggy canines of the Indians.

Scarcely less telling than the architecture were Pueblo handicrafts, which the Spaniards compared favorably to those seen among the Aztecs. Skilled potters created artistic masterpieces of painted bowls, water jars, and ladles. Jewelers produced magnificent necklaces and inlaid pendants of shell and turquoise. Weavers used native cotton, as well as fibers from wild plants, to manufacture blankets, shirts, belts, and skirts, some of which were embellished with colored embroidery. Leatherworkers turned out sturdy moccasins with hard soles of buffalo hide and uppers of finely tanned buckskin. Over and over, Spanish writers emphasized that the people wore clothes and shoes, a trait which, in their view, showed them to be superior to other Indians met in northern New Spain.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the Pueblo economy, and the Spaniards said that, for the Indians, corn was God. Corn or Indian maize was the only native grain. It formed the principal crop, supplemented by plots of beans, squashes, melons, cotton, and tobacco. In good years, pueblo roofs were weighted with drying produce. The surplus went into tightly sealed interior rooms or into storage cists under the floors, where it might lie secure up to six or seven years until needed in time of famine.

Some of the western Pueblos, and those on the eastern slope of the Manzano Mountains, managed to get by with dry farming, but the majority of villagers employed flood-farming techniques or developed extensive irrigation systems. Where ditches and small dams were used to get water from rivers and streams

into planted fields, the work became a community project, requiring the entire labor force of the pueblo.

Hunting and the gathering of wild vegetable products contributed to Pueblo foodstuffs. Seasonally, parties traveled to the plains to hunt buffalo, returning with dried or "jerked" meat and hides. At least seventy different plants growing nearby provided not only food but medicines and dyes. Saline lakes in the Estancia Valley and south of Zuni offered a ready source of salt. Through their own industry in farming and by taking advantage of nature's bounty, the Pueblo Indians managed to present a picture of prosperity at the opening of the historic period.

The large number of scattered villages, averaging no more than several hundred people in each, suggests that the Indians had mastered an important principle. They must have learned that restricting population density prevented an overtaxing of natural resources. Soil depletion was always a threat; to combat it, the Indians dispersed people and communities and rotated their crops, fertilizing them with human waste and possibly turkey dung. In those locations where flood-farming was practiced, river silt served to replenish the fields.

At the time of the Spanish conquest, each pueblo, surrounded by its farmlands, composed an autonomous political unit. No shadow of any league or confederacy existed to tie even villages of the same language together. Community independence was jealously guarded, and frequent instances arose of open conflict between towns. In spite of the enduring myth that portrays the Pueblos as meek and unwarlike, they were as quick to take up bow and club as any other people, when outraged or offended. They performed war and scalp dances and undertook devastating raids, which sixteenth-century Spanish records indicate were most often directed against their neighbors. The defensive nature of Pueblo architecture, it seems, was first developed as a protection against their own kind rather than nomad Apaches.

Religion formed the core of Pueblo life and molded its distinctive configuration. The entire fabric of social, economic, and political activity within each village was stitched together by a common religious thread. The Indians saw the cosmos as

personal and humanlike, a place where spiritual forces took an active interest in and ruled over the material world. Supernatural sanctions governed a strict moral order, providing rules for proper conduct and defining what was good in life. Elaborate ritual, filled with color and suffused with reverence for holy powers, expressed in dance and song the people's aspirations for universal harmony and life-giving rain.

Such government as the Pueblos had was strongly theocratic. The native priesthood directed all phases of village life, acting through clans, or in some cases, through medicine societies. Many of the pueblos had a head priest or chief, who governed with the aid of a council of lesser religious officers; others, notably the Tewa, possessed dual chiefs, equal in authority, who ruled alternately during the summer and winter seasons.

One of the most conspicuous phases of ceremonialism involved activities of the *Katcina* (or *Kachina*) cult. The Katcinas, ancestral spirits who brought moisture and good health, were impersonated by costumed and masked men. Upon arrival of the Spaniards, dances of the cult were openly performed in the village plaza. The use of masks, however, so repelled the newcomers, who saw them as manifestations of devil worship, that the entire cult at once became an object of persecution. In a literal sense, the Katcina rites were driven underground, where they are performed in secret to this day.

The picture of Pueblo society, as given by Coronado and the men who followed him, can never be enlarged to show what the Pueblo people were really like, how they felt, and how their small, isolated world looked to them. The Spanish chroniclers had little talent for catching the subtleties that might have provided authentic clues to the Indians' inner life. They could generalize about what they saw, then praise or condemn, but they could not grasp and record the fundamental truths that composed the matrix of Pueblo thought and belief. Their failure to reach a deeper level of understanding led, in the seventeenth century, to monumental disaster for both peoples.

All that the Spaniards discovered and observed in Pueblo land, beginning in 1540, rested upon a cultural tradition that extended backward hundreds of years. Of that past, the invaders had no

knowledge, nor did they possess the means to learn about it, had the interest existed. Only in recent decades have archeologists succeeded in unraveling some of the mysteries that surround the origin and development of Pueblo culture during the long and obscure years of prehistory in the Southwest.

Men, of unknown type, inhabited New Mexico long before the Pueblo-like people emerged. A Negro cowboy, George McKinlin, while riding up Wild Horse Gulch in 1908, discovered the first trace of them. The spot lay close to the little village of Folsom in the northeast corner of the state. Along the walls of the gulch, McKinlin spied bones, large and bleached, and mingled with them were curious flint points of superb workmanship. When the find came to the attention of scholars in 1925, the bones proved to be those of extinct giant bison, and the now famous Folsom points offered first proof that man lived and hunted in North America, during the Ice Age, eight to ten thousand years ago. Subsequent discoveries, including those at Sandia Cave near Albuquerque and at the Clovis site north of Portales, pushed back the antiquity of human occupation still further.

The Ice-Age men who flaked the fine spear or dart points and hunted big game on the grasslands of eastern New Mexico seem to have had little or no relation to the forebears of the Pueblos. For that, we must look west of the Continental Divide to an archaic desert culture which archeologists know as the *Cochise*. These people possessed an economy based upon the collecting of wild foods and the hunting of small game. When severe drought resulted in the concurrent disappearance both of big game animals and the Folsom hunters, about 5,000 B.C., the Cochise gatherers adapted to the new environmental conditions and, in so doing, furnished the base from which Puebloan farming cultures developed.

The introduction of agriculture here, just as in the Old World, represented a turning point in man's struggle to advance his material well-being. Cochise artifacts, in association with small, primitive ears of corn dating between 2,000 B.C. and 3,000 B.C., were excavated at Bat Cave in west-central New Mexico, beginning in 1949. Until that discovery, no proof existed of the

practice of agriculture in the United States before the Christian era. We suppose that that earliest corn, along with squash and the gourd, was a borrowing from Mexico, and that later diffusions brought beans, other crops, and finally, the knowledge of pottery making.

These innovations transformed the simple Cochise way of life so that, about 100 B.C., a new, more sophisticated southwestern tradition emerged. The Mogollon people, centered in the southern uplands along the present New Mexico-Arizona border, were its earliest representatives. In the first centuries after Christ, they became the cultural leaders in the Southwest, living in pit-house villages, worshipping in ceremonial lodges, farming mesa tops and stream valleys, and producing ceramics of consummate artistry.

Mogollon influence gradually seeped northward into the canyons of the Four Corners, the area where New Mexico now meets Colorado, Utah, and Arizona. Here, a desert people—gatherers known as Basketmakers, for the profusion of superbly woven baskets that they left behind in dry caves—began their own march toward a cultural summit. Advancing in a manner similar to the Mogollon, though at a later time, they evolved, by A.D. 700 to A.D. 800, into the Anasazi (a Navajo word for “the Ancient Ones”) who were the direct ancestors of the historic Pueblo.

By the close of the first millennium, the Anasazi began to surpass the achievements of the older Mogollon. They built large urban centers comprised of towering apartments, some of which contained as many as five hundred rooms. These, one day, would give Pueblo culture its name. They resorted to more intensive farming and effectively utilized irrigation devices for watering fields. Religious practices, particularly those related to weather control, assumed more elaborate form. Ceramics flowered, and potters achieved new heights of excellence with clay and paint.

In Chaco Canyon, where a massive communal dwelling sheltering twelve hundred people was raised at Pueblo Bonito, the Anasazi produced a totally unexpected marvel of engineering. They built a complex system of roads extending from the can-

yon in four directions to other towns or ceremonial centers. Some highways were twenty to forty feet in width, cleared of rubble, leveled, and lined with ditches or stone borders. Their builders coped with cliffs by installing masonry or rock-cut stairways. One road led unwaveringly due north in a straight line for forty miles to the San Juan River. Nothing else quite like that exists elsewhere in the United States. It tells us, for one thing, that the Indians of Chaco had a highly developed social organization, one that could mobilize the huge labor force such a project must have required. But the roads also present a question. Travel was by foot, since there were no wheeled vehicles or draft animals; why therefore did they bother with all that strenuous building? We can only guess that the roadways had some symbolic meaning or perhaps facilitated the running of ceremonial races.

The prodigious towns of northwestern New Mexico, contrived of expert masonry and embellished with pillars and towers, were scarcely outshone by the cliff cities of other Anasazi who dwelled at Mesa Verde, Colorado, or in the Kayenta region of Arizona. In the years from the eleventh through the twelfth centuries, all these ancient people experienced a golden age that has come to be called Classic. Then, during the 1200s, and seemingly in orderly fashion, the great Indian communities, one by one, were abandoned, and their populations migrated elsewhere. No one yet has been able to offer a clear-cut explanation. Drought, erosion, and soil exhaustion may have played a part. Invasions by enemy raiders or the ravages of epidemic disease could have contributed to the exodus. More likely, internal tensions or feuds, of the kind common among the Pueblos in historic times, dealt a deathblow to the outsized towns, causing their residents, perhaps in piecemeal fashion, to desert and move to new country. Since they left no record of their reasons for going, modern experts are reduced to speculation and to endless dispute among themselves.

Some of the Indians drifted south out of the Four Corners and founded new centers, as at Zuni and Hopi, which survive to the present day. Others, probably the majority, shifted eastward across the Continental Divide and settled alongside rustic

country cousins who already inhabited the Pajarito Plateau near Los Alamos and the valleys of the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Here the Spaniards found them, prosperous and secure, in the sixteenth century, farming as they had always done and trading with the Apaches of the plains.

"No one comes to America to plow and sow, but only to eat and loaf."¹ So wrote the viceroy of New Spain to the king in 1608. His letter dealt with affairs in New Mexico, and he was distressingly concerned with the prospects of placing that distant province on a solid economic footing. His statement bore some exaggeration, for one important class of Spanish subjects, the missionary friars, ate moderately and were little given to idleness. However, the clergymen shared one belief with the gluttons and loafers: the Indians, for their own good and for the benefit of His Majesty's realm, should be put to work. By that was meant that their energies should be rechanneled—for the Indians already worked like beavers to feed and shelter themselves—toward tasks deemed useful by those Spaniards, laity and clergy, who proposed to live off the Indians' sweat. Such a notion of enforced labor dominated the thinking of colonial New Mexicans fully for eighty years and promoted increasingly abrasive relations with the Pueblos.

Initially, in almost every case, the Indians received the Spaniards hospitably, opening homes and religious ceremonies to them and making generous gifts of hard-won food. The Rodríguez-Chamuscado party, passing through the Piro Pueblos near Socorro in 1581, had such a quantity of tortillas, cornmeal mush, squash, and beans pressed upon it that every day enough was left to feed five hundred men.

Such liberality, of course, could not continue. With permanent colonization in 1598, the Pueblos found their voluntary sharing insufficient to appease the appetites of hungry Spaniards. Oñate's settlers, the documents tell us, dug irrigation

1. George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, editors and translators, *Don Juan de Oñate, Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1953), 2:1068.

ditches and put in their crops, but we can guess they drafted San Juan Indians to do most of the physical labor. In any case, these fields failed to supply all their needs, and very soon the governor began to impose levies of corn and other products upon the scattered villages and to send squads of soldiers to enforce collection.

Later, Oñate established the *encomienda* system, by which heads of Indian households were required to pay a yearly tribute in corn and blankets to the Spaniards. That put affairs on an orderly basis, since the Pueblos now knew exactly what their obligation was, but it made the burden no more palatable. The tribute or tax, as the seventeenth century wore on, came to be fixed at one Spanish bushel of corn and a small cotton blanket. The Indians could easily meet that modest assessment in years when bountiful rainfall brought bumper crops, but, given a dry season or two, the tribute worked genuine hardship. What other effects it produced upon a people who, through incalculable ages, had never seen a tax-gatherer, we can only surmise.

Indian grain and Indian weaving, collected under the system of *encomienda*, contributed to feeding and clothing the Spaniards. Still another institution, the *repartimiento*, mobilized native labor and forced the Pueblos to till the white man's fields and tend his livestock. Any Spanish landowner could apply to the governor for a body of laborers, and the governor then made a levy of up to a hundred Indians on some nearby pueblo. These workers were to be paid a daily wage and rations, and the term of their enlistment was limited by law. It was believed, with some authority, that only by obliging the Indians to work could the tasks necessary be accomplished. The Spanish settlers, at least at the outset, looked upon themselves as gentlemen, and men of the upper class in traditional society did not soil their hands at menial work.

From the European point of view, the *repartimiento*, or forced-work levy, was an expedient both logical and just. If it violated any natural rights of the Indians, the Spaniards were unaware of it. Had the laws regulating the system been adhered to with regularity, the Pueblos might have borne this added imposition with equanimity. Yet, as in any relationship involving

subject people, the *repartimiento* cloaked a host of abuses. Many Spaniards avoided paying wages; they held out on rations; they demanded stints longer than the limits allowed; they often took the Pueblos at harvest time, when the Indians were desperately needed for work at home; and, most oppressive of all, they offended native women. Such vexations, never successfully dealt with by the viceregal government, built a hard kernel of resentment among the Indians, a resentment that grew with the passing years.

The legislation on tribute and labor did not relieve the suffering Pueblos, mainly because of the irresponsibility and inadequacy of some of the men who served as governor during those early decades. The worst among them not only failed to curb abuses of the colonists, but used their own high office to exploit the Indians for personal profit. They came from Mexico City, puffed-up with self-importance and eager to make a killing, so that, at the end of their term, they could go home rich. Unhappily, the only way they could manage that in a barren land like New Mexico was by exploiting the native people. Their methods were crude and all quite illegal: pressing gangs of Pueblos into service to weave and sew in miserable sweatshops set up in the governor's own palace; forcing them to scour the mountains collecting piñon nuts; using them as beasts of burden to carry bags of salt from the saline lakes to Santa Fe; requiring them to go onto the plains as agents of the governor and trade with the Apache; and the list goes on. Whatever goods were manufactured or gathered by the Indians went south by wagon caravan to be sold in the mining communities of northern New Spain, and never a cent of profit did the worker see.

The notorious Governor Bernardo López de Mendizábal, who was indicted in 1661 after he left office, faced an attorney for the Indians who claimed he owed more than twenty-four hundred pesos in unpaid wages. The high court of Mexico City found the former governor guilty on the general charge of illegal use of native labor and, among other penalties, fined him three thousand silver pesos. His case was not exceptional.

One could reasonably suppose that the missionary friars would have intervened to prevent mistreatment of the Pueblos

by corrupt officials and colonists. Indeed, they made a show of so doing—their damning letters to superiors in Mexico City are particularly revealing—but their motives in defending the new converts were not altogether noble. If they showed resentment when the Indians were overtaxed and overworked, it was because they wished to turn more of that wealth and labor into the mission program. In the long run, demands of the friars and their interference in native affairs weighed far more heavily upon the Pueblos than did all the irritations raised by the colonists.

The seventy years in New Mexico history following the founding of Santa Fe in 1610 has properly been called "the Great Missionary Era." Some 250 friars of the Franciscan Order worked among the Pueblos during these decades, and the crown spent upward of a million pesos on salaries, supplies, and the building of massive churches. The expenditure of so vast a sum on what was purely a humanitarian undertaking underscored the king's commitment to the spread of the True Faith. The friars, it is accurate to say, played the primary role in bringing Hispanic civilization to the upper Rio Grande, but their work returned not a single peso to the royal treasury.

The Franciscans, through their network of missions stretching from Pecos on the edge of the plains to the western villages of the Hopi, created their own private realm that operated practically independently of New Mexico's civil government. They even had their own ecclesiastical capital at Santo Domingo Pueblo, a dozen leagues south of Santa Fe. There resided the *custos*, head of the Order in New Mexico and agent for the Inquisition. The *custos* was a man of sufficient power and prestige to challenge, when he thought it necessary, the authority of the governor.

The strength of the clergy was centered in the scores of churches and smaller chapels distributed among the Pueblos. These structures often formed part of a walled compound that also contained the priests' quarters, workshops, storerooms, and stables. When the imposing ruins of these buildings are viewed today, at Pecos or Gran Quivira National Monuments, for example, it is at once obvious that the tight cluster of Spanish

buildings dominated the original Indian town. That was the effect, of course, that the friars were trying to achieve.

Each mission, the center of a *doctrina*, or native parish, was meant to indoctrinate its dependent Indians, not only in religion but in Hispanic economic and social customs. The padres were versatile men who could give instruction in catechism, music, Latin, painting, blacksmithing, carpentry, weaving, and a dozen other subjects. They taught some of their charges to play small pipe organs that had been brought with much labor in wagons from Mexico. Other Indians learned to be actors and performed in little plays that carried a religious theme.

Surrounding every Franciscan establishment there existed a perpetual hum of activity. The Pueblos had known hard work before, but the new kinds of labor imposed upon them possessed an intensity and a cheerless character wholly outside their experience. Every task the friars thought up seemed to require an army of Indians to get it done. They were assembled in huge throngs to do the original construction of church and compound, and thereafter they provided cooks, maids, servants, gardeners, stock-herders, and maintenance men. The endless round of religious services required other Indians as sacristans, bell-ringers, porters, and *fiscales*, the last appointed to enforce compulsory attendance among the villagers. The slightest lapse of duty brought swift and severe punishment—whipping, a term in the stocks, or a head-shaving. Loss of one's hair was considered by the Pueblos as a colossal indignity, and some of those who suffered such punishment became so distraught that they fled to the mountains. As a consequence, the viceroy had to order that harsh bit of discipline stopped in 1620.

Pueblo men experienced further humiliation when the padres attempted to badger them into building walls. The division of labor in native society prescribed weaving, hunting, and making war as proper male activities, and adobe work was considered to be a womanly pursuit. "If we try to oblige some man to make a wall," Father Alonso de Benavides tells us, "he runs away from it, and the women laugh."² This otherwise observant and

2. Mrs. Edward E. Ayer, translator, *The Memorial of Fray Alonso de Benavides, 1630* (Albuquerque: Horn and Wallace, 1965), p. 33.

quick-witted friar, who served as *custos* for the New Mexico missions from 1626 to 1629, was evidently amused by such behavior. Like most missionaries, he had small tolerance for Indian custom and etiquette, and little understanding of the degree to which daily violations of it pained the Pueblos.

Father Benavides wrote a famous *Memorial* to the king in 1630, painting a rosy picture of spiritual conquest on the Rio Grande and asking for more funds and priests to expand the work. Through tinted glasses, he saw the Indians so contented and pious that "they seem Christians of a hundred years' standing."³ Could the good friar have pushed aside his illusions, even momentarily, he would have been appalled at the embers of hatred and discontent smoldering beneath the surface.

Franciscan policy assumed a more militant tone in the years following 1630, after Benavides had returned to Spain. It was not that the Pueblos failed to go through the proper religious motions or to proclaim themselves faithful converts. The difficulty lay in their refusal to throw out the old gods and their persistence in dancing, singing, handling venomous snakes, wearing masks, and sprinkling sacred cornmeal. To the Spaniards, all that smacked of idolatry and devil worship. Having established so potent an institution as the Holy Office of the Inquisition to root out heretics among their own kind, there was no way the Spanish mind could accept the coexistence of Christianity and "pagan practices" among the Pueblo disciples. As they saw it, every mote of paganism must be banished.

The Indians looked at their situation in a very different light. For them, religion, above all, meant establishing harmony with the cosmos; and if that could be more effectively accomplished by joining their rites with the strange, new creed introduced by the Spaniards, so much the better. They were quite willing to accept Christianity and to integrate it into the native religious structure. They achieved that, to a degree, by incorporating several saints—St. James, St. Isidore, and St. Rafael, for example—into the assembly of *katsinas*. Christ they received as a bringer of light and a culture hero similar to their own figure Pohé-Yemo; and to the color and sound of Catholic ritual, they

3. Ayer, *The Memorial of Benavides*, p. 34.

responded with genuine enthusiasm. The Hopi, on first meeting Coronado's lieutenants, entertained the notion that a new era was dawning in which faiths of the two peoples would be united in one religion leading to a greater brotherhood. The Rio Grande Pueblos may well have harbored the same idea. If so, they suffered an ungentle awakening, for the Spanish padres would have none of it.

Ever since Father Bartolomé de las Casas set the tone in the mid-sixteenth century, the church had held that souls of the Indians must be won peacefully, by example and instruction. Many missionaries followed that rule with saintlike patience. Yet even the mildest among them lost their good humor when faced with Indians who, year after year, clung stubbornly to the ancient ceremonials of their grandfathers. By the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, New Mexican friars began to sense that the Pueblos had no intention of abandoning the old faith. Hence, they concluded that if kindly persuasion and moderate discipline could not root out "heathen practices," then strength of muscle must do the job. It was a decision fated to bring unspeakable tragedy upon the head of every person residing in the sunny province of New Mexico.

The padres, digging in with unparalleled industry, launched assault after assault upon the foundations of the Pueblo religious structure. The principal objects of persecution were the native priests, whom the missionaries condemned as sorcerers. Unable to discredit them in the eyes of the Indians, the friars took to flogging and hanging. Understandably, it was from the Pueblos' priestly class that leaders of rebellion ultimately came.

The friars took particular offense at the kivas and masked dances seen in every pueblo. With Spanish soldiers to back them, they raided the sacred chambers, defiling altars and murals, and gathering up masks, prayer plumes, fetishes, and other holy paraphernalia, which they burned in the plazas. The destruction and a strict prohibition against public dancing seemingly put an end to the *katchina* and other ceremonies. In reality, it merely drove the Pueblo religion into hiding.

One may wonder why the Indians, saddled with such an oppressive load and enjoying the advantage of numbers, simply

did not rise at once and throw the Spaniards out. But to do that they would have had to form some kind of union, and such an idea proved slow in maturing. Not only was co-operation among villages foreign to the Indian way of thinking, but social forces also worked against the emergence of leaders who might bring it about. Tightly knit Pueblo communities functioned under a strict rule of conformity, with every person bound to a common code of behavior. No room existed for a strong-willed individual who deviated from the norm or who worked to outshine others. In such an atmosphere, no one desired to lead—it was bad form and brought public censure—so no one led. Decision-making fell to the hierarchy of native priests, which formed a general consensus on every issue. When that failed, as occasionally happened, the pueblo might be torn by factional dispute, with the weaker party splitting off to found another village.

Internal feuds and social divisions were not confined to Pueblo society. The Spaniards of the seventeenth century fell prey to a factionalism so bitter that it tore the colony of New Mexico apart and contributed to the opening of a wedge that allowed the Indians at last to gain an upper hand. The struggle was joined between Church and State and the issue was one of jurisdiction over the Pueblos. That a succession of governors and a band of friars could come to physical blows and wage open war upon one another appears unimaginable to us today. It proved no less mystifying to the Indians, who became pawns in the affray.

Seeds of conflict lay in the two overlapping spheres of influence—civil and religious—that the Spaniards established in each pueblo. When Oñate discovered that the Indians possessed no single leader or chief who could speak for individual villages, he remedied that by introducing in every place the office of petty governor (*gobernadorcillo*) and the lesser positions of lieutenant-governor, sheriff (*alguacil*), irrigation boss (*mayordomo*), and church warden (*fiscal*). These men, elected for one-year terms by people of the pueblo, formed, in effect, a small municipal government handling minor political and judicial affairs. In time, a council of elders, or *principales*, was added to

serve as an advisory body, its membership composed of all former governors and lieutenant-governors.

When Onate wrote the king that he had founded many *repúblicas* in New Mexico, he was referring to these representative pueblo governments. Under the Spanish system, the *república*, or municipal domain, was the only area in which citizens were permitted direct participation in politics. Electing town officials gave them a fleeting but welcome taste of democracy. By allowing the Pueblos to set up their own *repúblicas*, the Spaniards hoped to hasten the Indians' integration into Hispanic society. The intent, however, was frustrated by the native priesthood, which remained in firm control behind the scenes. Those holy men designated the persons who were to be "elected" to the Spanish offices and governed through them. Each pueblo, to this day, has its governor, who continues, as in former times, to represent his village in dealings with outsiders. And, in that role, he remains a front man, manipulated by the religious powers who stay hidden in the wings.

The Indian *república* was designed to introduce the Pueblos to Spanish political forms, just as the *doctrina*, or native parish, was intended as an agency for the implanting of Christianity. These institutions might have worked well enough, had the governor in Santa Fe and the missionary friars been able to agree upon the part each was to play in their development. Instead, the parties fell to petty squabbling over jurisdiction and authority, causing a rift that all too soon led to fierce competition for the allegiance and services of the Indians.

The yearly voting in which the Pueblos selected their officials was a case in point. Repeatedly, the governor and the friars, contrary to law, meddled in the election process, each trying to curry favor or gain influence over the Indians chosen. The scandal reached the ears of the viceroy, who issued an order in 1620, guaranteeing the Indians in their *repúblicas* full liberty to elect their own officers on January 1 of each year. The governor's only legitimate function in these matters, the viceroy pointedly noted, was to approve and confirm the native officials after the people had expressed their will, while the friars were to provide no more than nominal supervision over the balloting. In spite of the order, interference in Pueblo elections continued.

At a dozen other points involving the Indians, the New Mexican governors and the clergy came to blows. The ascendancy of greed and overweening pride sundered the traditional partnership between Church and State. Discord often erupted in violent quarrels that, on occasion, led to bloodletting, so that the entire period from 1610 to 1680 was one of intermittent civil war. The story, pieced together some forty years ago by historian France V. Scholes from scattered documents in the archives of Spain and Mexico, is as melancholy as it is fascinating. A brief look at the career of one governor, Luís de Rosas (1637-1641), will provide a fair sampling of the travail through which Spaniards and Pueblo Indians passed in this troubled period.

By all accounts, Luís de Rosas was a blunt and uncompromising man, given to sudden furies, who ruled New Mexico with an authoritarianism that bordered on tyranny. He arrived in Santa Fe in the spring of 1637 with the regular caravan that brought supplies to the settlers and missions. The friars hoped, as they did with the appearance of each new governor, that Rosas would prove a weak and pliant tool in their hands. But, as always, they were doomed to disappointment. Within weeks, the governor discovered the means used by his predecessors to exploit the Indians; he was out for profit, and woe to those who got in his way.

Filled with arrogance, he went among pueblos neighboring the capital, demanding that their residents weave blankets and other textiles to be delivered to him. In Santa Fe, he put together a workshop and forced Christian Pueblos to sweat alongside unconverted Apache and Ute captives under abject conditions of servitude. To Pecos Pueblo on the eastern frontier, he went with boxes of knives, ordering Indians there to trade them to the Apaches for buffalo hides and meat. When that venture failed to produce the profit expected, he blamed the Pecos friars, arrested one of them, and carried him off to Santa Fe a prisoner. The governor then promised the Indians of Pecos permission to revive their traditional dances if they furnished him more blankets and hides.

Every action Rosas took caused the Franciscans additional distress. They claimed he was out to destroy all Church privi-

lege and influence. His statements and conduct seemed to bear out the charge. Once, while attending Mass, the governor listened in simmering rage while the padre delivered a sermon rebuking those who disobeyed God's law. Well aware that the remarks were intended for his ears, Rosas jumped to his feet, shouting, "Shut up, Father! What you say is a lie!"⁴ Then he stalked from the church with his soldier escort meekly following.

The Pueblos who heard of the episode were scandalized, and they asked one another how they could believe what the friars taught when the governor himself had branded one of them a liar. Rosas aggravated the issue by ordering the Indians not to obey their missionaries and by going to several villages where he scolded the resident priest in public. His highhanded ways slowly began to have effect, and the viselike grip the friars held upon the Pueblos loosened.

After more altercations with the church, Rosas expelled the clergy from Santa Fe early in 1640. In a bid to bring the cho-leric official to his senses, two friars returned to the capital with an appeal for peace. Rosas met them near San Miguel Chapel and beat both men mercilessly with a stick until they were bathed in blood. After that mad display of savagery, the Franciscans lost all desire to compose their quarrel with the governor, and they sent out a body of settlers and soldiers who had joined them to pillage his ranch. In retaliation, Rosas dispatched squads of men to rob and desecrate some of the distant mission churches that had been abandoned by the padres. The vendetta continued for months, ending only when a new governor arrived from the south to replace Rosas. When the former governor was slain shortly afterward by a jealous husband, there were few to mourn his passing.

The dreadful Church-State rivalry through the years eroded the Spaniards' ability to exert any real control over New Mexican affairs and left them practically no time to confront the calamity fast overtaking the Pueblos. Adding to their other woes, the Indians suffered periodically from epidemic diseases brought

4. France V. Scholes, "Church and State in New Mexico, 1637-1641," *New Mexico Historical Review* 11 (1936):303.

by the Europeans. Against smallpox, measles, whooping cough, and cholera, they had no natural resistance, and they died in droves. Crowded together in small, airless rooms of their pueblos, they were fearfully susceptible to contagion. In 1640, at the height of Rosas's ignominious reign, smallpox killed three thousand Indians, or something more than 10 percent of the entire Pueblo population. Other epidemics in the 1660s further thinned their ranks.

To make matters worse, the weather turned sour. During the first half of the seventeenth century, New Mexico was blessed with abundant rainfall, a fact that doubtless aided the Spaniards in establishing and maintaining their colony. After 1650, a definite falling off in moisture became noticeable, and, by the middle of the following decade, the province found itself in the throes of drought. Starvation now added to the toll of Pueblo deaths.

In the three years from 1665 to 1668, no crops were harvested. Travelers saw the bodies of Indians who had perished from hunger lying scattered about their villages and along the roads. At Humanas Pueblo (now Gran Quivira National Monument) east of the Manzano Mountains, 450 Indians starved to death, and that place, as well as neighboring villages, had to be abandoned in the 1670s.

Famine hit the Spaniards equally hard, and many were reduced to eating toasted cowhides. On the plains, the grass withered, game became scarce, and the Apaches, well-acquainted with New Mexico's weak defenses, swept through like a bloody scourge looking for something to eat. It is scarcely surprising that the Pueblos attributed much of this misfortune to the Spaniards, especially to the friars who had raised so many impediments against performance of the rain-making ceremonies.

Friction between Spanish officials and the clergy abated after 1670 in the face of common exhaustion; but, for the Pueblos, the truce only meant that their enemies had leisure again to renew the unholy crusade against native religion. The friars took up the cudgel with vehemence, completely oblivious to the fact that their new persecutions, heaped upon existing stresses, were driving the Indians to the breaking point.

In 1675, Governor Juan Francisco Treviño at Santa Fe was

persuaded that stern measures against the Pueblo priests would have a salutary effect upon the missionary program. Consequently, he dispatched soldiers throughout the villages to arrest forty-seven medicine men alleged to be sorcerers and teachers of idolatry. Three of those deemed most guilty were hanged by the Spaniards, and a fourth hanged himself. The remainder felt the lash and were imprisoned.

A dramatic confrontation followed. Tewa warriors from villages north of the capital arrived, bristling with weapons. Brazenly, they invaded the apartment of the governor in his mud palace, demanding release of the prisoners. Treviño was cowed; his soldiers had ridden off to fight Apaches, and the stern demeanor of these Pueblos left little doubt that they meant to have their way, whether he put up a defense or not. The whip-scarred medicine men were set free, among them a fierce young man named Popé, who was soon to carve his name deeply in the history of New Mexico. The Indians marched out of Santa Fe, pleased with their small victory and carrying the seed of an idea they would nourish over the next five years: facing a united army of Pueblos, the Spaniards were vulnerable.

Decades of misfortune had brought New Mexico, by the late 1670s, to a tottery state. The non-Pueblo population numbered about thirty-five hundred souls, but a large proportion of these were persons of mixed European, Indian, and Negro blood whose loyalty to the government was weak. A mere one hundred and seventy professional fighting men shouldered the burden of defense for the entire province. After almost seventy years, Santa Fe was still the only real community. Most of the people lived near the missions or in walled haciendas scattered thinly from the Socorro region northward to the Taos Valley. That pattern of settlement, with families existing in islandlike remoteness from one another, compounded the problems of administering and defending the Spanish governor's sprawling jurisdiction. He did have a lieutenant-governor residing near Isleta Pueblo, who ruled over the southern district of the Rio Abajo, and a handful of lesser officials, called *alcaldes mayores*, who governed rural subdivisions. But communication and co-operation with even these few officers was difficult.

The Franciscan *custos*, Father Francisco de Ayeta, a man of generous nature and indomitable spirit, worked tirelessly in these years to restore some order in provincial affairs. It was largely through his petition, assented to by the new governor, Antonio de Otermín, that the viceroy sent (in 1676) fifty convicts, armed, to bolster New Mexico's soldiery. Ayeta was still not satisfied, for more than anyone else, he perceived the ominous build-up of storm clouds. The following year found him in Mexico City, pleading for an additional fifty soldiers and funds to build a presidio, or fort. The viceroy demurred. New Mexico's costly needs seemed never-ending. He would refer the matter to the king.

In the meantime, Ayeta superintended the provisioning of a supply caravan for the missions; and, when it was well stocked, he started for New Mexico. Through months of toil and ankle-deep dust, he brought his jolting carts to the small mission outpost of El Paso del Norte on the Rio Grande. While he was camped there, government couriers on lathered horses rode in from the north. The unthinkable had happened. New Mexico's Pueblo people had thrown off their traces and unleashed a frenzied war. The countryside was aflame. The missions lay sacked and burned. Governor Otermín, together with all the people of Santa Fe and beyond, were presumed dead, and the lieutenant-governor, Alonso de García, was marching out from the south with the stricken remnant of colonists and friars. The Spanish realm founded by Oñate eight decades before had dissolved.

Elsewhere in the western world in that year of 1680, men went about their affairs unmindful of New Mexico's woeful spasm. France's Louis XIV, nicknamed the Sun King, was at the peak of his power, strutting and posturing for all his partisans and enemies to see. In French territory on the upper Mississippi River, the explorer La Salle was busily laying the groundwork for an expedition that two years hence would make possible the first descent of that notable waterway to its mouth. In England, the visionary Quaker, William Penn, accepted a grant of land west of New Jersey from the Duke of York, in repayment of a debt owed his father. And English Carolinians in

the same year led an army of three hundred Indians against Spanish outposts that had crept northward out of Florida.

In Spain during the month of June, the Inquisition staged one of its periodic public spectacles for the punishment of heretics. The macabre event unfolded in Madrid's Plaza Mayor, in the presence of the king and his court. Amid the pomp and glitter of the procession that carried the condemned to center stage, little evidence could be found that Spain was wracked by a plague, sunk in the depths of economic depression, and starved as a result of bad harvests. Universal misery among the common people appeared to be no excuse for deferring punishment of religious criminals.

Wearing cardboard caps upon which their crimes were written and surrounded by fifty guards garbed in black-and-white robes marched twelve men and women, ropes about their necks, torches in hand. They were followed by twenty others of both sexes, some destined to be strangled, others to be burned alive. Mingling with the file of Inquisition officials and nobles could be seen a body of charcoal merchants armed with pikes and muskets, men who had furnished the huge quantities of wood for the execution pyres. The ceremony continued interminably, sentences were read, and the guilty were mounted on donkeys to be carried to the stakes outside the city walls.

Through the lens of history, it is possible to detect a note of irony in such heavy-handed dealing with dissenters. A little better than a month after the parade of death in Madrid, the Pueblo Indians, themselves victims of two generations of religious persecution, brought their remote corner of the Spanish empire to its day of reckoning. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 not only destroyed New Mexico, but it rocked the entire northern frontier of the viceroyalty and sent shock waves rippling through Mexico City and, ultimately, the mother country. The tragedy was one of the worst to fall upon Spain's dominions in America. Not until that moment had she ever lost an entire province to the Indians.

The Pueblos rose on the feast of San Lorenzo, August 10. For once, they were together—or almost so. Popé, medicine man of San Juan and one of those sent to the whipping post in 1675,

had taken the lead in weaving the net of conspiracy that tumbled the Spaniards from their lofty seat. He was joined by Luis Tupatú of Picuris Pueblo, Catiti of Santo Domingo, and other newly emergent leaders. Their task had been herculean. Not only did they have to overcome the villagers' natural antipathy toward confederation, they had to contend with a minority of Indians who were still loyal to the Spaniards and might betray the plot at any time. Popé, according to later testimony, killed his own son-in-law, the *gobernadorcillo* of San Juan, who opposed the revolt; and Catiti, for his part, threatened to behead anyone who did not join. Reasoned argument combined with threats finally brought all the pueblos in line, except those of the Piros in the far south, who could not be reached. Knotted yucca cords, circulated by runners, served as a calendar by which each village measured time to the day appointed for taking up arms.

The gathering rumble in the countryside reached the ears of Governor Otermín at Santa Fe, but too late to head off disaster. Saturday morning of the tenth found most of the scattered settlers and missionaries unprepared and unwarned. That day and those that followed witnessed a wholesale butchery. A handful of survivors from the Santa Cruz valley to the north and from the Cerrillos Hills a few leagues south straggled into the capital with tales of horror. Bodies of men, women, and children lay strewn along the roads where they had been stopped in flight. Smoke from burning houses and missions cast a pall across the sky. In the churches, the priests had been slain at their altars and the holy furnishings torn apart and desecrated with human excrement. The Indians spent their greatest fury here, in retaliation for the destruction that their own sacred kivas had suffered.

Once the outlying districts had been thoroughly pillaged, the rebel Pueblos came together in a body and moved against Santa Fe. Not only had they found strength in union, they were now well provided with horses, harquebuses, and swords claimed from defeated Spaniards.

Under threat of siege, Otermín and his captains worked feverishly, rushing the people and what livestock had been saved into the compound of the Governors Palace. The rest of the cap-

ital was abandoned to the enemy. Rumors floated about, adding to the prevailing air of hopelessness: all the settlers in the Rio Abajo, including Lieutenant-Governor García at Isleta, had perished; the revolt had spread south to El Paso, where Father Ayeta and others in the supply caravan supposedly had suffered annihilation. Otermín, grasping at straws, tried to send messengers through the Indian lines with desperate pleas for García, should he still be alive, to come to the relief of the capital. None got through.

For nine long days, the vast army of Pueblos, investing the limits of Santa Fe, hammered away at the beleaguered Spaniards. Otermín himself led several sallies outside the walls to secure drinking water from the Santa Fe River. In these, he received two wounds and lost some soldiers; but the Indians also suffered heavy casualties.

The governor knew that the fate of his people dangled by a fragile thread. Neither of the choices open to him was an enviable one: stay fortified up in the smoking ruin of the capital and hope aid arrived before starvation set in; or try to break and run with a caravan encumbered by women, children, and the wounded. Necessity forced upon him the latter course.

Getting away was easier than anyone could have expected. The Pueblos had won their war; they were content to let the enemy ride south unmolested. Near Sandía Pueblo, Otermín captured an Indian in a deserted cornfield and from him learned that Lieutenant-Governor García was not dead. That official had gathered the Rio Abajo people, and believing that Santa Fe had been overrun, had begun a retreat out of New Mexico. Otermín sped a rider after him, with instructions to halt on the road until the governor's own brigade of refugees could catch up. The two parties finally linked on the Camino Real below Socorro, and with "the poor women and children on foot and unshod, of such a hue that they looked like dead people," as one account put it, they marched out, leaving New Mexico to the victors.⁵

5. Charles Wilson Hackett, editor, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico and Otermín's Attempted Reconquest, 1680-1682*, 2 vols. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1942), 1:213.

In the days and months that followed, the Spaniards tried to paw through the mists of the past to find the cause of their unprecedented calamity. In an early letter to the viceroy, Governor Otermín, writing under a burden of grief, attributed the revolt to his own lamentable sins. On cooler reflection at a later time, he heaped blame upon the "stupid ignorance of the Indians" and upon the devil who inspired their infamy.⁶ His blindness in perceiving the short- and long-range causes of the revolt was a symptom of the same malady that had afflicted all seventeenth-century New Mexican governors. They had gone about their self-serving ways, oblivious to the anguish of the Indians and unmindful of the fact that every people possess a limit beyond which oppression will no longer be endured.

In terms of modern wars and disasters, the number of Spanish casualties in 1680 appears moderate; twenty-one friars and some four hundred colonists were slain. But, at the time, the toll was regarded as staggering. Father Ayeta and the few surviving friars who joined him at El Paso mourned, not their lost brethren who had won the glorious crown of martyrdom, but the thousands of Christian Indians whose souls had been seized by Satan. For them, that was the most baleful aspect of the catastrophe.

Rid of the Spaniards, the Pueblos hoped to recover the past and go back to those days before Coronado had turned their world topsy-turvy. Popé put out firm orders. Every Indian should go to the river and scrub with soapweed to wash away the taint of baptism. Men must put aside wives taken in Christian ceremony and marry again according to native tradition. Whatever the Spaniards had brought from afar and had left behind was to be destroyed—clothing, tools, weapons, live-stock, carts—even fruit trees. These instructions, given in the first flush of victory, were doomed to be ignored.

Time cannot be recaptured, as Popé and his supporters learned, to their discomfort. During the years of Spanish rule, the Indians became something different from what they had been earlier. The transformation had come slowly and quietly,

6. Hackett, *Revolt of the Pueblo Indians*, 1:122.

and it was irreversible. Scarcely a Pueblo alive in 1680 could remember how affairs had stood before the Spaniards had brought them cattle and sheep, exotic vegetables and grains, iron hardware, and a new religion. In varying degrees, these things had become part of their lives. In spite of Popé's commands, many villagers retained their animals, continued to use their carts, refused to pull up their orchards, and some kept little forges in operation to work the scraps of iron and steel that were spoils of the revolt. A few who had been touched deeply by the friars squirreled away religious articles, salvaged from the churches, against the day when the Christians might return.

One thing hadn't changed and that was each pueblo's unwillingness to give up a grain of its independence. Once the Spaniards rode away, Popé's authority shriveled, and the light of union grew dim. The old and numberless feuds among villages resurfaced, and the Apaches, now handsomely a-horseback, showed by the rattling of their lances that they were still to be reckoned with. None of that meant, however, that the Spaniards could simply walk back and reclaim what they had so recently lost. Governor Otermín discovered that much when he made the attempt late in 1681.

The Spanish refugees had halted at El Paso, there to be scored by Father Ayeta's supply caravan which, after all, had not been annihilated. The area was then under the jurisdiction of Nueva Vizcaya, but the viceroy gave Otermín authority to rule as if he were still in Santa Fe, so that, with an exile government, he could hold his people together until time for a reconquest. In November, the governor led 146 soldiers and several score Indian allies—a pitifully small force—on the up-river trail to Isleta, the southernmost pueblo still occupied. The Indians, with little show of enthusiasm, rendered obedience and were welcomed back into the fold of the church. But that was the only place Otermín had any success.

As the Spaniards ascended the Rio Grande, the Pueblos fled to the mountains, many of them using the same paths followed by their great-grandfathers in escaping Coronado. Had they stayed in their villages, Otermín would have accepted a token submission and passed them by. But in anger over the leave-

taking, he sacked and burned three pueblos north of modern Albuquerque. And, at every chance, he tore apart newly built kivas and destroyed *katchina* masks, the very same acts which for so long had enraged the Indians and which ultimately precipitated the revolt. Experience had taught the governor nothing.

When several pueblos threw together an army on the river south of Santa Fe, Otermín gave up. The hostility he faced, the raw winter weather, and the shortage of forage for his horses obliged him to withdraw to El Paso, to leave the retaking of New Mexico to a more propitious day.

It is worthy of note that the governor was prepared to deal leniently with the Indians, provided only that they renounced their rebellious acts and submitted anew to the discipline of the missionaries. True, his own hardheaded sternness frustrated any peaceful redemption of the Pueblos, but to his credit, he engaged in no general slaughter. He sought restoration of the province, not extermination of its native people. In spite of their own blundering and almost total inability to grasp the Indian point of view, the Spaniards' most rapacious tendencies were usually held in check by religious strictures and the king's laws. These combined to create a dramatic sense of mission that caused the best among Spanish leaders to weigh every action on the scales of moral duty.

How different were matters in southern New England after Indians ravaged the settlements in King Philip's War, 1675-1676. Avenging colonists executed chiefs in bloody fashion, and shipped boatloads of warriors off to the West Indies to be sold into slavery. That the Indian population was practically snuffed out troubled the Puritan conscience not at all.

Several reasons lay behind the Spaniards' desire to recover New Mexico. One was the simple wish to reclaim Indian souls lost to Christendom. Another, more practical, had been stated earlier by Governor Otermín, who noted that, without New Mexico as a frontier buffer, other provinces of northern New Spain stood exposed to invasion by Apaches and similar warlike tribes. Finally, there was the matter of Spanish pride. That could be restored only by winning back sovereignty over the Pueblos and their country.

The crown appointed a soldier of noble blood, Don Diego de Vargas, to the governorship in 1691, hoping that, with the limited men and resources available, he could somehow bring about the reconquest. The undertaking was viewed emotionally as another *reconquista*, paralleling, though on a smaller scale, Spain's recapture of territory from the infidel Moors during the Middle Ages. Governor De Vargas, fired with crusading zeal, felt the weight of history on his shoulders and to the task at hand, he gave heroic dedication.

First, he had to put down rebellious tribes surrounding El Paso—Sumas, Manos, Chisos, and others—for the success of the Pueblos had inspired peoples of northern Nueva Vizcaya to seize the hatchet. With peace nominally restored at his headquarters, the governor set out for Santa Fe in late summer of 1692. Trained by two hundred soldiers and a body of chaplains, he entered the ruined capital and approached the walls of the old Governors Palace, which the Indians had remodeled and converted to a pueblo. Warriors appeared on the rooftops and peered down, dumfounded to see Spaniards once again in the streets of Santa Fe.

After a flourish of trumpets and drums, De Vargas delivered a conciliatory speech in loud tones, proclaiming that he had come, not to chastise, but to pardon and convert. And he announced that all must leave the pueblo peacefully and re-enter the fold as loyal Spanish vassals. During twelve hours, he returned time and again to repeat his soft words. The Indians were frightened and unsure whether the new governor could be trusted. Would he venture inside the courtyard as proof of his pacific intentions? De Vargas would, and both his boldness and gentleness of manner won the Indians over. In a gala ceremony, the Spaniards unfurled their banner, making New Mexico once more part of His Majesty's empire.

Diego de Vargas toured the province, repeating his speech, and received pledges of peace. Popé had died, the Apaches and Utes had grown ever more troublesome, and now each pueblo, as before, faced an army of Spaniards alone. What could they do but submit? The governor was back at El Paso in time to celebrate Christmas of 1692. His first entry had been made with

soldiers only; for his second, he planned to take back a new wave of colonists.

News of De Vargas's triumph sparked a wild celebration in Mexico City. Bells pealed joyfully, the clergy sang hymns of thanksgiving, and the viceroy ordered that an official history be written to commemorate the event. But the jubilation was premature. Upon returning to New Mexico in the fall of 1693 with soldiers, seventy families, and eighteen friars, Governor De Vargas found that many of the Pueblos had renounced their allegiance given the previous year. The vision of a peaceful reconquest evaporated like a mirage.

The Spaniards took Santa Fe by storm, after passing two weeks in a futile effort to persuade the Indians to capitulate. With his base secure, De Vargas spent much of the following year in hard campaigning that brought many of the remaining Pueblos into line. In battle, he was unrelenting, but once peace had been restored, he issued pardons and sought reconciliation. In that he was encouraged by the viceroy, who gave strict instructions that punishment was to be reserved for criminal violations of the law and was not to be meted out indiscriminantly in the heat of passion. As for the Pueblos, the governor won his best marks when he left their kivas undisturbed. Burning these sacred places, as his predecessors had always done, produced nothing but turmoil, and De Vargas recognized its folly at last.

Yet peace was elusive; much of New Mexico remained in a troubled state. Governor De Vargas observed that most of the Pueblos entertained no sincere wish to take up the Christian path, and any show of friendliness was simply a sign that they wanted to resume the trade in European goods that had been interrupted in 1680. Many villages split into pro- and anti-Spanish factions, and some Pueblos, unable to reconcile themselves to the resumption of alien rule, fled to the wilderness to live among the Apache and Navajo.

Several villages staged a minor revolt in 1696, resulting in the deaths of five missionaries and twenty-one other Spaniards. The governor put down the disturbance with a vigorous hand, showing little of the charity he had displayed earlier. But, by century's end, the reconquest was virtually complete. Only the

Hopi in the Far West remained free from Spanish authority, and they would continue so in spite of repeated attempts to woo them back in the following century.

What had happened to the Pueblos during the first one hundred years in which they were obliged to share their homeland with the Spaniards? Of greatest significance was the drastic reduction in their population. At the opening of the historic period, they may have numbered as many as forty thousand to fifty thousand. The toll taken by disease, famine, Apache attacks, and conflicts with the Spaniards left them with probably no more than fourteen thousand by the year 1700. As a corollary, the number of villages declined by more than half.

As we have seen, new crops and manufactured articles introduced by the Spaniards contributed to the Pueblo economy and eased domestic life, while superficial acceptance of religious and political forms worked some changes in the routine of village affairs. Further, the Spanish language had begun to win acceptance as a *lingua franca*, a useful second tongue by which the Indians could communicate not only with friars and government officials but also with other Pueblos speaking unrelated languages.

The lesson found in a century of upheaval was not lost on either Pueblo or Spaniard. The reconquest proved to the Indians that their independence was irretrievable, and that henceforth, some accommodation must be reached with the new lords of the land. The need for compromise dawned more slowly upon the Spaniards, but it came to them, too, in the course of the following century, as a series of fresh problems showed distinctly that royal interests in New Mexico could best be served by collaboration with the Pueblo people.

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More Spaniards . . . and a Few Frenchmen

IN the spring of 1704, New Mexico's reconquistador Don Diego de Vargas, then sixty years of age, led a force of soldiers and Pueblo scouts against Apaches who had been raiding in the middle Rio Grande Valley. From Santa Fe, the governor marched his men downriver as far as the village of Bernalillo, where he picked up the enemy's trail and followed it southeastward through the foothills of the Sandia and Manzano mountains. In the midst of the pursuit, one of the soldiers fell ill with a sudden fever and had to be sent back; then another was stricken, and another. Finally, De Vargas himself came down with the malady and had to be carried to Bernalillo by his men. There, on April 8, after drawing up a will and giving instructions for his elaborate funeral, he died.

The passing of Diego de Vargas marked the end of one phase of colonial New Mexican history and the opening of another. During the seventeenth century, Spaniards on the Rio Grande had concentrated their attention inward on provincial affairs—the missionary program, relations with the Pueblos, petty squabbles between religious and civil factions—and they scarcely ever cast a glance outward to events taking place elsewhere in America or in Europe. But in the years following the death of Governor De Vargas, a plague of problems from afar began to crowd in upon the New Mexicans and force them to reckon with