OCCUPIED AMERICA
A HISTORY OF CHICANOS
RODOLFO ACUÑA
Third Edition
THE CONQUEST AND COLONIZATION OF THE SOUTHWEST

The modern nations of Mexico and the United States of America are both products of European expansion. Spain exploited New World resources and native labor to extend its empire throughout the world. In 1521 Spain conquered Mexico, and, for the next 300 years, it exploited Indian and Black labor to accumulate tremendous wealth. It based its control of Mexico on a division of labor that reflected race, class, and gender. Cohabitation between Spaniards and indigenous peoples and between both of those groups and Black slaves was common. During the colonial period, the mixture of races produced a mestizo (Indian and Hispanic) people who became the majority in modern Mexico.

Spanish conquest and colonialism retarded Mexico's economic development. The pre-Columbian societies had evolved to a high state and had a population approaching 30 million. The largest contemporary European nation, France, numbered 20 million—Spain had about 8 million people. Mexican cities, larger than London and Madrid, thrived. As the result of a holocaust of warfare, disease, poverty, and overwork, Mexico's indigenous population fell, by 1605, to 1.075 million; and by 1650, 90 percent of the native population had been wiped out.

By 1810, New Spain extended from Utah in the north to Central America in the south. Traces of a common language, laws, religion, and economic and political institutions linked the people in the various regions. Local agriculture supplied miners, and merchants over the years had accumulated surpluses from trade. World conditions and internal dissatisfaction with class privileges given to peninsulares (Spaniards born in Spain) agitated class struggle. Finally, in 1810 Father Miguel Hidalgo gave his famous Grito de Dolores, beginning the Mexican Revolution, and within 11 years New Spain became modern Mexico.
Mexico became a nation in 1821; without the protection of nationhood it would have been the victim of international plunder. The nation needed time to consolidate its population of some 6 million people. Internationally, the United States and England circled above her, like vultures, waiting for the stillness. Mexico's most vulnerable region lay in its northwest; distance from Mexico City and proximity to the United States were a handicap.

Conditions for Mexicans had deteriorated considerably since 1519. Spanish colonialism modified and integrated pre-Hispanic agriculture, trade, and distribution systems into a colonial, externally oriented system that produced for profit, rather than for feeding people. The hacienda and the colonial plunder also altered land use patterns. Mexico in 1821 was bankrupt, and it needed time to build an infrastructure to unify the new country. Moreover, unlike its North American neighbor, Mexico did not have a racially homogeneous society.

Comparisons between Mexico and the United States are unfair. First, North Americans were not indigenous to the continent; North Americans as British subjects colonized North America much the same as Europeans colonized Australia and South Africa. Second, British colonialism did not produce a mixed people. The official policy was to exterminate the native populations. The founding fathers had no intention of incorporating Blacks or Native Americans as equals. Third, the colonies dominated one-third of the British trade. The substitution of a North American elite for a British ruling class immediately created a powerful North American merchant class that influenced, if not dominated, national politics. In the case of the Mexican merchants, independence did not prove as lucrative, and a 50-year struggle for control of the national government followed independence.

Geography also favored the North American states. They occupied coastal lands with good harbors, encouraging the development of commerce. The new nation sat on the best farmland in the world, with plenty of water. Most of it became part of the national domain, and the sale of millions of acres to land companies and land-hungry Europeans allowed the new government to pay off debts and to consolidate politically. Speculators also accumulated large surpluses, as did cotton and tobacco growers, whose exploitation of slave labor made production highly profitable. Mexico's resources, in contrast, had been plundered and its land monopolized by a few latifundistas and the Catholic Church. The lack of political stability and poor transportation retarded the modernization of agriculture and the development of national markets.

By stealing British technology, in the 1790s, the United States got an early start in mechanizing production. Thus North Americans had an advantage over other New World and European countries, facilitating rapid accumulation of capital and the domination of New World markets.

By 1820, only 4.9 percent of North Americans lived in cities. The United States had a population of 9.6 million persons, over a million and a half of whom were slaves. (Native Americans did not count in this census.) Northern merchants had invested their profits in industry, and the first two decades of the century saw the formation of an industrial class. Along with western farm and southern plantation interests, industrialists encouraged the search for resources, markets, and land. Land remained an important source of profit. Expansion into Mexico, although not motivated by the need for Lebensraum, or living space—since the United States had millions of acres of undeveloped and unused land—proved profitable.

Part One of the text deals with U.S. expansion through conquest and its effect on the Mexican peoples. Chapter 1, "The Legacy of Hate," describes the U.S. invasions of Mexico in the mid-1830s and 1840s. The thesis is that the United States, a colonial power long before the Spanish American War of 1898, forged its present borders through expansionist wars, and, except in the movies, no such thing as the "Winning of the West" ever happened. North Americans took the land through violence, and the corruption of Mexican officials cannot be used as justification for conquest. North American troops committed atrocities that indeed left a legacy of hate. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War; however, a pattern for Mexican-North American relations had been established.

Chapter 2, "Remember the Alamo," deals with the relationship between Euroamericans and Mexicans after the War of 1836. Mexicans did not welcome North Americans with open arms, and they had no cause to consider themselves U.S. citizens. On the other hand, Anglo-Americans viewed Mexicans as aliens whom they had beaten in a "just" war. Throughout the nineteenth century, Mexicans, although most had been born in Texas, occupied an underclass. The chapter describes how Euroamericans pushed Mexicans to the south and established privileges for themselves through the manipulation of the political process. Legalized violence in the form of the Texas Rangers suppressed the Mexican population. The Civil War brought further changes: the demand for Mexican labor as a result of the emancipation of Black slaves and the expansion of cotton. The post–Civil War period is also noted for the establishment of political machines. Throughout the period, Mexicans resisted by armed conflict. The 1880s brought the railroad and the beginning of Texas's industrialization.

Chapter 3, "Freedom in a Cage," continues the themes of conquest for economic goals—the establishment of economic privileges by newcomers through the use of political and social control. The case of New Mexico differs from that of Texas because some 60,000 Mexicans lived in the territory. Also, while the vanguard of the Texas invasion was composed of slaveowners and land speculators, at the forefront of the New Mexican infiltration were North American merchants. Co-optation of Mexican elites and institutions such as the church became important elements in controlling the masses. Resistance was predictable, and, throughout the nineteenth century, conflicts, verging on class and race warfare, raged in New Mexico. The railroad integrated the territory and set the stage for the territory's modernization.

Arizona, historically linked to Sonora, Mexico, is the focus of Chapter 4, "Sonora Invaded." Sonora continued to supply the bulk of the territory's labor to the 1880s. Isolated from the United States until the 1880s, Arizona had access to the rest of the world principally through the Sonoran port of Guaymas. After the coming of the railroad, large-scale exploitation of the territory's resources was possible. Absentee investors controlled Arizona's copper industry which, by the
turn of the century, had become a capital- and labor-intensive enterprise. Mili-
tancy and trade union organization by Mexican miners opened a new chapter in
Mexican-North American relations.

Chapter 5, "California Lost," explains how the political process, supported
by the state's social institutions, brought about the changing of elites. California
and Texas became states, not territories, precisely because North Americans
made up the majority. The flood of North Americans arrived shortly after the
conquest in response to the discovery of large gold deposits in northern Califor-
nia. Soon large capitalist interests monopolized the state. The political process
encouraged encroachment on the land of the Mexican rancheros. Still, the rico,
or the rich, in California were reluctant to side with the masses and often sup-
ported the state in the oppression of the poor. The Catholic Church also upheld
the state's hegemony. Resistance raged until the 1880s, taking the form of social
banditry and repatriation movements. Life began to change in the 1880s as the
railroads linked the southern half of California to the rest of the state and nation.

Chapter 1

Legacy of Hate:
The Conquest of
Mexico's Northwest

AN OVERVIEW

The United States invaded Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century during a period
of dramatic change. Rapid technological breakthroughs transformed the North
American nation, from a farm society into an industrial competitor. The process
converted North America into a principal in the world marketplace. The wars
with Mexico, symptoms of this transformation, stemmed from the need to ac-
cumulate more land, to celebrate heroes, and to prove the nation's power by
military superiority.

This chapter examines the link between the Texas (1836) and the Mexican
(1845-1848) Wars. It analyzes North American aggression, showing how Euro-
pean peoples known as "Americans" acquired what is today the Southwest. The
words "expansion" and "invasion" are used interchangeably. The North Ameri-
can invasions of Mexico are equated with the forging of European empires in
Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The urge to expand, in the case of the United
States, was not based on the need for land—the Louisiana Purchase, central
Illinois, southern Georgia, and West Virginia lay vacant. Rather, the motive was
profit—and the wars proved profitable, with the Euroamerican nation seizing
over half of Mexico.¹

North Americans fought the Texas War—that is, U.S. dollars financed it,
U.S. arms were used on Mexican soil, and Euroamericans almost exclusively
profited from it. President Andrew Jackson approved of the war and ignored
North American neutrality laws. The so-called Republic held Texas in trusteeship
until 1844, when the United States annexed it. This act amounted to a declaration
of war on Mexico. When Mexico responded by breaking diplomatic relations, the
North Americans used this excuse to manufacture the war. Many North Americans
questioned the morality of the war but supported their government because it
was their country, right or wrong.

This chapter does not focus on the wars' battles or heroes, but on how North
Americans rationalized these invasions and have developed historical amnesia
about its causes and results. War is neither romantic nor just, and the United
States did not act benevolently toward Mexico. North Americans committed
atrocities, and, when they could, Mexicans responded. Eventually, the Treaty of
Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War, and northern Mexico
became part of the North American empire. The treaty, however, did not stop
the bitterness or the violence between the two peoples. In fact, it gave birth to a
legacy of hate.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVASION OF TEXAS

Anglo justifications for the conquest have ignored or distorted events that led up
to the initial clash in 1836. To Anglo-Americans, the Texas War was caused by a
tyrannical or, at best, an incompetent Mexican government that was antithetical
to the ideals of democracy and justice. The roots of the conflict actually extended
back to as early as 1767, when Benjamin Franklin marked Mexico and Cuba for
future expansion. Anglo-American filibusters* planned expeditions into Texas in
the 1790s. The Louisiana Purchase, in 1803, stimulated U.S. ambitions in the
Southwest, and six years later Thomas Jefferson predicted that the Spanish bor-
derslands "are ours the first moment war is forced upon us." The war with Great
Britain in 1812 intensified Anglo-American designs on the Spanish territory.

Florida set the pattern for expansionist activities in Texas. In 1818 several
posts in east Florida were seized in unauthorized, but never officially condemned,
U.S. military expeditions. Negotiations then in progress with Spain finally ter-
minated in the Adams-Onis, or Transcontinental, Treaty (1819), in which Spain
ceded Florida to the United States and the United States, in turn, renounced its
claim to Texas. Texas itself was part of Coahuila. Many North Americans still
claimed that Texas belonged to the United States, repeating Jefferson's claim that
Texas's boundary extended to the Rio Grande and that it was part of the Louisi-
ana Purchase. They condemned the Adams-Onis Treaty.

Anglo-Americans continued pretensions to Texas and made forays into
Texas similar to those they had made into Florida. In 1819 James Long led an
abortive invasion to establish the "Republic of Texas." Long, like many Anglos,
believed that Texas belonged to the United States and that "Congress had no right
or power to sell, exchange, or relinquish an 'American possession.'"

In spite of the hostility, the Mexican government opened Texas, provided
that settlers agreed to certain conditions. Moses Austin was given permission
to settle in Texas, but he died shortly afterwards, and his son continued his venture.

* A filibuster is an adventurer who engages in insurrectionist or revolutionary activity in a
foreign country.

In December 1821 Stephen Austin founded the settlement of San Felipe de
Austin. Large numbers of Anglo-Americans entered Texas in the 1820s as re-
fugees from the depression of 1819. In the 1830s entrepreneurs sought to profit
from the availability of cheap land. By 1830 there were about 20,000 settlers,
along with some 2,000 slaves.

Settlers agreed to obey the conditions set by the Mexican government—that
all immigrants be Catholics and that they take an oath of allegiance to Mexico.
However, Anglo-Americans became resentful when Mexico tried to enforce the
agreements. Mexico, in turn, became increasingly alarmed at the flood of immi-
grants from the U.S. 4

Many settlers considered the native Mexicans to be the intruders. In a
dispute with Mexicans and Indians, as well as with Anglo-American settlers,
Hayden Edwards arbitrarily attempted to evict settlers from the land before the
conflicting claims could be sorted out by the Mexican authorities. As a result
Mexican authorities nullified his settlement contract and ordered him to leave the
territory. Edwards and his followers seized the town of Nacogdoches and on
December 21, 1826, proclaimed the Republic of Fredonia. Mexican officials,
supported by some Anglo-Americans (such as Stephen Austin), suffocated the
Edwards revolt. However, many U.S. newspapers played up the rebellion as "200
Men Against a Nation!" and described Edwards and his followers as "apostles
of democracy crushed by an alien civilization." 5

In 1824 President John Quincy Adams "began putting pressure on Mexico
in the hope of persuading her to rectify the frontier. Any of the Texan rivers west
of the Sabine—the Brazos, the Colorado, the Nueces—was preferable to the
Sabine, though the Rio Grande was the one desired." 6 In 1826 Adams offered to
buy Texas for the sum of $1 million. When Mexican authorities refused the offer,
the United States launched an aggressive foreign policy, attempting to coerce
Mexico into selling Texas.

Mexico could not consolidate its control over Texas: the number of Anglo-
American settlers and the vastness of the territory made it an almost impossible
task. Anglo-Americans had already created a privileged caste, which depended
in great part on the economic advantage given to them by their slaves. When
Mexico abolished slavery, on September 15, 1829, Euroamericans circumvented
the law by "freeing" their slaves and then signing them to lifelong contracts as
indentured servants. Anglos resented the Mexican order and considered it an
infringement on their personal liberties. In 1830 Mexico prohibited further An-
gio-American immigration. Meanwhile, Andrew Jackson increased tensions by
attempting to purchase Texas for as much as $5 million.

Mexican authorities resented the Anglo-Americans' refusal to submit to
Mexican laws. Mexico moved reinforcements into Coahuila, and readied them in
case of trouble. Anglos viewed this move as an act of hostility.

Anglo colonists refused to pay customs and actively supported smuggling
activities. When the "war party" rioted at Anahuac in December 1831, it had the
popular support of Anglos. One of its leaders was Sam Houston, who "was a
known protégé of Andrew Jackson, now president of the United States. . . .
Houston's motivation was to bring Texas into the United States." 7
In the summer of 1832 a group of Anglos attacked a Mexican garrison and were routed. A state of insurrection existed, and Mexican authorities defended Texas. Matters worsened when the Anglo settlers met at San Félipe in October 1832. This convention drafted resolutions which they sent to the Mexican government and to the state of Coahuila, calling for more autonomy for Texas. A second convention was held in January 1833. Significantly, not one Mexican pueblo in Texas participated in either convention, many clearly branding the act sedition. Increasingly it became evident that the war party under Sam Houston was winning out. Houston was elected to direct the course of events and Austin was appointed to take the grievances and resolutions to Mexico City.

Austin left for Mexico City to press for lifting of restrictions on Anglo-American immigration and for separate statehood. The slave issue also burned in his mind. Austin, anything but conciliatory, wrote to a friend, "If our application is refused I shall be in favor of organizing without it. I see no other way of saving the country from total anarchy and ruin. I am totally done with conciliatory measures and, for the future, shall be uncompromising as to Texas."

On October 2, 1833, Austin wrote the San Antonio ayuntamiento encouraging it to declare Texas a separate state. He later explained that he had done so "in a moment of irritation and impatience"; nevertheless, his actions were not those of a moderate. Contents of the note fell into the hands of Mexican authorities, who questioned Austin's good faith. Subsequently, they imprisoned him, and much of what Austin had accomplished in the way of compromise was undone.

Meanwhile, the U.S. minister to Mexico, Anthony Butler, crudely attempted to bribe Mexican officials into selling Texas. He offered one official $200,000 to "play ball."10

In the autumn of 1834 Henry Smith published a pamphlet entitled Security for Texas in which he advocated open defiance of Mexican authority. Anglo land companies added to the polarization by lobbying in Washington, D.C., and within Texas for a change in governments. The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company of New York, acting to protect its investments, worked through its agent Anthony Butler, the U.S. minister to Mexico, to bring about U.S. cooperation. Butler, anything but conciliatory, wrote to a friend, "If our application is refused. . . . I shall be in favor of organizing without it. I see no other way of saving the country from total anarchy and ruin. I am totally done with conciliatory measures and, for the future, shall be uncompromising as to Texas."

On October 2, 1833, Austin wrote the San Antonio ayuntamiento encouraging it to declare Texas a separate state. He later explained that he had done so "in a moment of irritation and impatience"; nevertheless, his actions were not those of a moderate. Contents of the note fell into the hands of Mexican authorities, who questioned Austin's good faith. Subsequently, they imprisoned him, and much of what Austin had accomplished in the way of compromise was undone.

Meanwhile, the U.S. minister to Mexico, Anthony Butler, crudely attempted to bribe Mexican officials into selling Texas. He offered one official $200,000 to "play ball."10

In the autumn of 1834 Henry Smith published a pamphlet entitled Security for Texas in which he advocated open defiance of Mexican authority. Anglo land companies added to the polarization by lobbying in Washington, D.C., and within Texas for a change in governments. The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company of New York, acting to protect its investments, worked through its agent Anthony Butler, the U.S. minister to Mexico, to bring about U.S. cooperation.11

According to Dr. Carlos Castañeda:

The activities of the "Land Companies" after 1834 cannot be ignored. Their widespread advertisement and indiscriminate sale of "landscrip" sent hundreds, perhaps thousands, to Texas under the impression that they had legitimate title to lands equal to the amount of scrip bought. The Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company, which bought the contracts of David S. Burnet, Joseph Vahlein, and Lorenzo de Zavala, and the Nashville Company, which acquired the contract of Robert Leftwich, are the two best known. They first sold scrip at from one to ten cents an acre, calling for a total of seven and one-half million acres. The company was selling only its permit to acquire a given amount of land in Texas, but since an empresario contract was nontransferable, the scrip was, in fact, worthless.12

The scrip was worthless as long as Texas belonged to Mexico.

On July 13, 1835, a general amnesty released Austin from prison. While en route to Texas, he wrote a cousin from New Orleans that Texas should be Americanized, speculating that it should one day come under the American flag. Austin called for a massive immigration of Anglo-Americans, "each man with his rifle," who he hoped would come "passports or no passports, anyhow." He continued: "For fourteen years I have had a hard time of it, but nothing shall daunt my courage or abate my . . . object . . . to Americanize Texas."13

Anglo saw separation from Mexico and eventual union with the United States as the most profitable political arrangement. Texas-Mexican historian Castañeda notes:

Trade with New Orleans and other American ports had increased steadily. This development was naturally distasteful to Mexico, for the colonists fostered strong economic ties with . . . the United States rather than with Mexico. Juan H. Almonte in his 1834 report, estimated the total foreign trade of Texas—chiefly with the United States—at more than 1,000,000 pesos, of which imports constituted 650,000 and exports, 500,000. He calculated the exportation of cotton by the settlers in 1833, as approximately 2,000 bales.14

Colonel Almonte recognized the fundamental economic conflict, and his report recommended concessions to the Tejanos, but also urged that "the province be well stocked with Mexican troops."15

THE INVASION OF TEXAS

Not all the Anglo-Americans favored the conflict. Austin, at first, belonged to the peace party. Ultimately, this faction joined the "hawks." Eugene C. Barker states that the immediate cause of the war was "the overthrow of the nominal republic [by Santa Anna] and the substitution of centralized oligarchy," which allegedly would have centralized Mexican control. Barker admits that "earnest patriots like Benjamin Lundy, William Ellery Channing, and John Quincy Adams saw in the Texas revolution a disgraceful affair promoted by the sordid slaveholders and land speculators."

Barker parallels the Texas filibuster and the American Revolution, stating: "In each, the general cause of revolt was the same—a sudden effort to extend imperial authority at the expense of local privilege." According to Barker, in both instances the central governments attempted to enforce existing laws that conflicted with the illegal activities of some very articulate people. Barker further justified the Anglo-Americans' actions by observing: "At the close of summer in 1835 the Texans saw themselves in danger of becoming the alien subjects of a people to whom they deliberately believed themselves morally, intellectually, and politically superior. The racial feeling, indeed, underlay and colored Texan-Mexican relations from the establishment of the first Anglo-American colony in 1821." The conflict, according to Barker, was inevitable and, consequently, justified.

Texas history is a mixture of selected fact and generalized myth. Many
historians admit that smugglers were upset with Mexico's enforcement of her import laws, that Euroamericans were angry about emancipation laws, and that an increasing number of the new arrivals from the United States actively agitated for independence. But despite these admissions, many historians like Barker refuse to blame the United States.14

Austin gave the call to arms on September 19, 1835, stating, "War is our only recourse. There is no other remedy."15 Anglo-Americans enjoyed very real advantages in 1835. They were "defending" terrain with which they were familiar. The 5,000 Mexicans living in the territory did not join them, but the Anglo population had swelled to almost 30,000. The Mexican nation was divided, and the centers of power were thousands of miles from Texas. From the interior of Mexico, Santa Anna led an army of about 6,000 conscripts, many of whom had been forced into the army and then marched hundreds of miles over hot, arid desert land. Many were Mayan and did not speak Spanish. In February 1836 the majority arrived in Texas, sick and ill-prepared to fight.

In San Antonio the dissidents took refuge in a former mission, the Alamo. The siege began in the first week of March. In the days that followed, the defenders inflicted heavy casualties on the Mexican forces, but eventually the Mexicans won out. A score of popular books have been written about Mexican cruelty in relation to the Alamo and about the heroics of the doomed men. The result was the creation of the Alamo myth. Within the broad framework of what actually happened—187 filibusters barricading themselves in the Alamo in defiance of Santa Anna's force, which, according to Mexican sources, numbered 1,400, and the eventual triumph of the Mexicans—there has been major distortion.

Walter Lord, in an article entitled "Myths and Realities of the Alamo," sets the record straight. Texas mythology portrays the Alamo heroes as freedom-loving defenders of their homes; supposedly they were all good Texans. Actually, two-thirds of the defenders had recently arrived from the United States, and only a half dozen had been in Texas for more than six years. The men in the Alamo were adventurers. William Barret Travis had fled to Texas after killing a man, abandoning his wife and two children. James Bowie, an infamous brawler, made a fortune running slaves and had wandered into Texas searching for lost mines and more money. The fadina Davey Crockett, a legend in his own time, fought for the sake of fighting. Many in the Alamo had come to Texas for riches and glory. These defenders were hardly the sort of men who could be classified as peaceful settlers fighting for their homes.

The folklore of the Alamo goes beyond the legendary names of the defenders. According to Lord, it is riddled with dramatic half-truths that have been accepted as history. Defenders are portrayed as selfless heroes who sacrificed their lives to buy more time for their comrades-in-arms. As the story goes, William Barret Travis told his men that they were doomed; he drew a line in the sand with his sword, saying that all who crossed it would elect to remain and fight to the last. Supposedly all the men there valiantly stepped across the line, with a man in a cot begging to be carried across it. Countless Hollywood movies have dramatized the bravery of the defenders.

In reality the Alamo had little strategic value, it was the best protected fort west of the Mississippi, and the men fully expected help. The defenders had 21 cannons to the Mexicans' 8 or 10. They were expert shooters equipped with rifles with a range of 200 yards, while the Mexicans were inadequately trained and armed with smooth-bore muskets with a range of only 70 yards. The Anglos were protected by the walls and had clear shots, while the Mexicans advanced in the open and fired at concealed targets. In short, ill-prepared, ill-equipped, and ill-fed Mexicans attacked well-armed and professional soldiers. In addition, from all reliable sources, it is doubtful whether Travis ever drew a line in the sand. San Antonio survivors, females and noncombatants, did not tell the story until many years later, when the tale had gained currency and the myth was legend. Probably the most widely circulated story was that of the last stand of the aging Davey Crockett, who fell "fighting like a tiger," killing Mexicans with his bare hands. This is a myth; seven of the defenders surrendered, and Crockett was among them. They were executed. And, finally, one man, Louis Rose, did escape.16

Travis's stand delayed Santa Anna's timetable by only four days, as the Mexicans took San Antonio on March 6, 1836. At first, the stand at the Alamo did not even have propaganda value. Afterwards, Houston's army dwindled, with many volunteers rushing home to help their families flee from the advancing Mexican army. Most Anglo-Americans realized that they had been badly beaten. It did, nevertheless, result in massive aid from the United States in the form of volunteers, weapons and money. The cry of "Remember the Alamo" became a call to arms for Anglo-Americans in both Texas and the United States.17

After the Alamo and the defeat of another garrison at Goliad, southeast of San Antonio, Santa Anna was in full control. He ran Sam Houston out of the territory northwest of the San Jacinto River and then camped an army of about 1,100 men near San Jacinto. There, he skirmished with Houston on April 20, 1836, but did not follow up his advantage. Predicting that Houston would attack on April 22, Santa Anna and his troops settled down and rested for the anticipated battle. The filibusters, however, attacked during the siesta hour on April 21. Santa Anna knew that Houston had an army of 1,000, yet he was lax in his precautionary defenses. The surprise attack caught him totally off guard. Shouts of "Remember the Alamo! Remember Goliad!" filled the air. Houston's successful surprise attack ended the war. He captured Santa Anna, who signed the territory away. Although the Mexican Congress repudiated the treaty, Houston was elected president of the Republic of Texas.

Few Mexican prisoners were taken at the battle of San Jacinto. Those who surrendered "were clubbed and stabbed, some on their knees. The slaughter . . . became methodical: the Texan riflemen knelt and poured a steady fire into the packed, jostling ranks." They shot the "Meskins" down as they fled. The final count showed 630 Mexicans dead versus 2 Texans.

Even Santa Anna was not let off lightly; according to Dr. Castañeda, Santa Anna "was mercilessly dragged from the ship he had boarded, subjected to more than six months' mental torture and indignities in Texas prison camps.18

The Euroamerican victory paved the way for the Mexican-American War. Officially the United States had not taken sides, but men, money, and supplies
poured in to aid fellow Anglo-Americans. U.S. citizens participated in the invasion of Texas with the open support of their government. Mexico's minister to the United States, Manuel Eduardo Gorostiza, protested the "arming and shipment of troops and supplies to territory which was part of Mexico, and the dispatch of United States troops into territory clearly defined by treaty as Mexican territory." General Edmund P. Gaines, Southwest commander, was sent to the Nueces River on January 23, 1836; shortly thereafter, he crossed into Texas in an action that was interpreted to be in support of the Anglo-American filibusters in Texas: "The Jackson Administration made it plain to the Mexican minister that it mattered little whether Mexico approved, that the important thing was to protect the border against Indians and Mexicans." U.S. citizens in and out of Texas loudly applauded Jackson's actions. The Mexican minister resigned his post in protest. "The success of the Texas Revolution thrust the Anglo-American frontier up against the Far Southwest, and the region came at once into the scope of Anglo ambition."23

THE INVASION OF MEXICO

In the mid-1840s, Mexico was again the target. Expansion and capitalist development moved together. The two Mexican wars gave U.S. commerce, industry, mining, agriculture, and stock raising a tremendous stimulus. "The truth is that [by the 1840s] the Pacific Coast belonged to the commercial empire that the United States was already building in that ocean."24

The U.S. population of 17 million people of European extraction and 3 million slaves was considerably larger than Mexico's 7 million, of which 4 million were Indian and 3 million mestizo and European. The United States acted arrogantly in foreign affairs, partly because its citizens believed in their own cultural and racial superiority. Mexico was plagued with financial problems, internal ethnic conflicts, and poor leadership. General anarchy within the nation conspired against its cohesive development.25

By 1844 war with Mexico over Texas and the Southwest was only a matter of time. James K. Polk, who strongly advocated the annexation of Texas and expansionism in general, won the presidency by only a small margin, but his election was interpreted as a mandate for national expansion. Outgoing President Tyler acted by calling upon Congress to annex Texas by joint resolution; the measure was passed a few days before the inauguration of Polk, who accepted the arrangement. In December 1845, Texas became a state.26

Mexico promptly broke off diplomatic relations with the United States, and Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor into Texas to "protect" the border. The location of the border was in doubt. The North Americans claimed it was at the Nueces River, but based on historical precedent, Mexico insisted it was 150 miles farther north, at the Nueces River.27 Taylor marched his forces across the Nueces into the disputed territory, wanting to provoke an attack.

In November 1845, Polk sent John Slidell on a secret mission to Mexico to negotiate for the disputed area. The presence of Anglo-American troops between the Nueces and the Rio Grande and the annexation of Texas made negotiations an absurdity. They refused to accept Polk's minister's credentials, although they did offer to give him an ad hoc status.28 Slidell declined anything less than full recognition and returned to Washington in March 1846, convinced that Mexico would have to be "chastised" before it would negotiate. By March 28, Taylor had advanced to the Rio Grande with an army of 4,000.

Polk, incensed at Mexico's refusal to meet with Slidell on his terms and at General Mairano Paredes's reaffirmation of his country's claims to all of Texas, began to draft his declaration of war when he learned of the Mexican attack on U.S. troops in the disputed territory. Polk immediately declared that the United States had been provoked into war, that Mexico had "shed American blood upon the American soil." On May 13, 1846, Congress declared war and authorized the recruitment and supplying of 50,000 troops.29

Years later, Ulysses S. Grant wrote that he believed that Polk provoked the war and that the annexation of Texas was, in fact, an act of aggression. He added: "I had a horror of the Mexican War . . . only I had not moral courage enough to resign . . . I considered my supreme duty was to my flag."30

The poorly equipped and poorly led Mexican army stood little chance against the expansion-minded Anglos. Even before the war Polk planned the campaign in stages: (1) Mexicans would be cleared out of Texas; (2) Anglos would occupy California and New Mexico; and (3) U.S. forces would march to Mexico City to force the beaten government to make peace on Polk's terms. And that was the way the campaign basically went. In the end, at a relatively small cost in men and money, the war netted the United States huge territorial gains. In all, the United States took over 1 million square miles from Mexico.31

THE RATIONALE FOR CONQUEST

In his Origins of the War with Mexico: The Polk-Stockton Intrigue, Glenn W. Price states: "Americans have found it rather more difficult than other peoples to deal rationally with their wars. We have thought of ourselves as unique, and of this society as specially planned and created to avoid the errors of all other nations."32 Many Anglo-American historians have attempted to dismiss it simply as a "bad war," which took place during the era of Manifest Destiny.

Manifest Destiny had its roots in Puritan ideas, which continue to influence Anglo-American thought to this day. According to the Puritan ethic, salvation is determined by God. The establishment of the City of God on earth is not only the duty of those chosen people destined for salvation but is also the proof of their state of grace. Anglo-Americans believed that God had made them custodians of democracy and that they had a mission—that is, that they were predestined to spread its principles. As the young nation survived its infancy, established its power in the defeat of the British in the War of 1812, expanded westward, and enjoyed both commercial and industrial success, its sense of mission heightened. Many citizens believed that God had destined them to own and occupy all of the land from ocean to ocean and pole to pole. Their mission, their destiny made manifest, was to spread the principles of democracy and Christianity to the unfortunates of the hemisphere. By dismissing the war simply as part of the era of Manifest Destiny the apologists for the war ignore the consequences of the doctrine.
The Monroe Doctrine of the 1820s told the world that the Americas were no longer open for colonization or conquest; however, it did not say anything about that limitation applying to the United States. Uppermost in the minds of the U.S. government, the military, and much of the public was the acquisition of territory. No one ever intended to leave Mexico without extracting territory. Land was the main motive for the war.

This aggression was justified by a rhetoric of peace. Consider, for example, Polk's war message of May 11, 1846, in which he gave his reasons for going to war:

The strong desire to establish peace with Mexico on liberal and honorable terms, and the readiness of this Government to regulate and adjust our boundary and other causes of difference with that power on such fair and equitable principles as would lead to permanent relations of the most friendly nature, induced me in September last to seek reopening of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

The United States, he continued, had made every effort not to provoke Mexico, but the Mexican government had refused to receive an Anglo-American minister. Polk reviewed the events leading to the war and concluded:

As war exists, and notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country.

Historical distance from the war has not lessened the need to justify U.S. aggression. In 1920 Justin H. Smith received a Pulitzer prize in history for a work that blamed the war on Mexico. What is amazing is that Smith allegedly examined over 100,000 manuscripts, 120,000 books and pamphlets, and 700 or more periodicals to come to this conclusion. He was rewarded for relieving the Anglo-Americans' guilt over 1846.

Justin Smith was a patron of the American Historical Association. In 1920 he published his two-volume study, entitled The War with Mexico, which was praised by historians toward U.S. aggressions spills over to the relationships between the majority society and minority groups. Anglo-Americans believe that the war was advantageous to the Southwest and to the Mexicans who remained or later migrated there. They now had the benefits of democracy and were liberated from their tyrannical past. In other words, Mexicans should be grateful to the Anglo-Americans. If Mexicans and the Anglo-Americans clash, the rationale runs, naturally it is because Mexicans cannot understand or appreciate the merits of a free society, which must be defended against ingrates. Therefore, domestic war, or repression, is justified by the same kind of rhetoric that justifies international aggression.

Professor Gene M. Brack questions historians who base their research on Justin Smith's outdated work: "American historians have consistently praised Justin Smith's influential and outrageously ethnocentric account."37

THE MYTH OF A NONVIOLENT NATION

Most studies on the Mexican-American War dwell on the causes and results of the war, sometimes dealing with war strategy. One must go beyond this point, since the war left bitterness, and since Anglo-American actions in Mexico are vividly remembered. Mexicans' attitude toward Anglo-Americans has been influenced by the war just as the easy victory of the United States conditioned Anglo-American behavior toward Mexicans. Fortunately, some Anglo-Americans condemned this aggression and flatly accused their leaders of being insolent and land-hungry, and of having manufactured the war. Abiel Abbott Livermore, in The War with Mexico Reviewed, accused his country, writing:

Again, the pride of race has swollen to still greater insolence the pride of country, always quite active enough for the due observance of the claims of universal brotherhood. The Anglo-Saxons have been apparently persuaded to drive out the heathen, and plant their religion and institutions in every Canaan they could subjugate. . . . Our treatment both of the red man and the black man has habituated us to feel our power and forget right. . . . The passion for land, also, is a leading characteristic of the American people. . . . The god Terminus is an unknown deity in America. Like the hunger of the pauper boy of fiction, the cry had been, 'more, more, give us more.'39

Livermore's work, published in 1850, was awarded the American Peace Society prize for "the best review of the Mexican War and the principles of Christianity, and an enlightened statesmanship."

In truth, the United States conducted a violent and brutal war. Zachary Taylor's artillery leveled the Mexican city of Matamoros, killing hundreds of innocent civilians with la bomba (the bomb). Many Mexicans jumped into the Rio Grande, relieved of their pain by a watery grave. The occupation that followed was even more terrorizing. Taylor was unable to control his volunteers:

The regulars regarded the volunteers, of whom about two thousand had reached Matamoros by the end of May, with impatience and contempt. . . .
robbed Mexicans of their cattle and corn, stole their fences for firewood, got drunk, and killed several innocent inhabitants of the town in the streets.  

Numerous eyewitness accounts to these incidents exist. For example, on July 25, 1846, Grant wrote to Julia Dent:

Since we have been in Matamoros a great many murders have been committed, and what is strange there seems [sic] to be very week [sic] means made use of to prevent frequent repetitions. Some of the volunteers and about all the Texans seem to think it perfectly right to impose on the people of a conquered City to any extent, and even to murder them where the act can be covered by dark. And how much they seem to enjoy acts of violence too! I would not pretend to guess the number of murders that have been committed upon the persons of poor Mexicans and our soldiers, since we have been here, but the number would startle you.  

On July 9, 1846, George Gordon Meade, who, like Grant, later became a general during the U.S. Civil War, wrote:

They [the volunteers] have killed five or six innocent people walking in the street, for no other object than their own amusement. . . . They rob and steal the cattle and corn of the poor farmers, and in fact act more like a body of hostile Indians than civilized Whites. Their officers have no command or control over them.  

Taylor knew about the atrocities, but Grant observed that Taylor did not restrain his men. In a letter to his superiors, Taylor admitted that "there is scarcely a form of crime that has not been reported to me as committed by them." Taylor requested that they send no further troops from the state of Texas to him. These violent acts were not limited to Taylor's men. The cannons from U.S. naval ships destroyed much of the civilian sector of Vera Cruz, leveling a hospital, churches, and homes. The bomb did not discriminate as to age or sex. Anglo-American troops destroyed almost every city they invaded; first the locality was put to the test of fire and then plundered.

Military executions were common. Captured soldiers and civilians were hanged for cooperating with the guerrillas. Many Irish immigrants, as well as some other Anglos, deserted to the Mexican side, forming the San Patricio Corps. Many of the Irish were Catholics, and they resented treatment of Catholic priests and nuns by the invading Protestants. As many as 260 Anglo-Americans fought with the Mexicans at Churubusco in 1847:

Some eighty appear to have been captured. . . . A number were found not guilty of deserting and were released. About fifteen, who had deserted before the declaration of war, were merely branded with a "D," and fifty of those taken at Churubusco were executed.  

Others received 200 lashes and were forced to dig graves for their executed comrades.  

These acts were similar to those in Monterey, as George Meade wrote on December 2, 1846:

They plunder the poor inhabitants of everything they can lay their hands on, and shoot them when they remonstrate; and if one of their number happens to get into a drunken brawl and is killed, they run over the country, killing all the poor innocent people they find in their way to avenge, as they say, the murder of their brother.  

As General Winfield Scott's army left Monterey, they shot Mexican prisoners of war. Memoirs, diaries, and news articles written by Anglo-Americans document the reign of terror. Samuel E. Chamberlain's *My Confessions* is a record of Anglo racism and destruction. He was only 17 when he enlisted in the army to fight the "greasers." At the Mexican city of Parras, he wrote:

We found the patrol had been guilty of many outrages. . . . They had ridden into the church of San José during Mass, the place crowded with kneeling women and children, and with oaths and ribald jest had arrested soldiers who had permission to be present.  

On another occasion, he described a massacre by volunteers, mostly from Yell's Cavalry, at a cave:

On reaching the place we found a "greaser" shot and scalped, but still breathing; the poor fellow held in his hands a Rosary and a medal of the "Virgin of Guadalupe," only his feeble motions kept the fierce harpies from falling on him while yet alive. A Sabre thrust was given him in mercy, and on we went at a run. Soon shouts and curses, cries of women and children reached our ears, coming apparently from a cave at the end of the ravine. Climbing over the rocks we reached the entrance, and as soon as we could see in the comparative darkness a horrid sight was before us. The cave was full of our volunteers yelling like fiends, while on the rocky floor lay over twenty Mexicans, dead and dying in pools of blood. Women and children were clinging to the knees of the murderers shrieking for mercy. . . . Most of the butchered Mexicans had been scalped; only three men were found unharmed. A rough crucifix was fastened to a rock, and some irreverent wretch had crowned the image with a bloody scalp. A sickening smell filled the place. The surviving women and children sent up loud screams on seeing us, thinking we had returned to finish the work! . . . No one was punished for this outrage.  

Near Satillo, Chamberlain reported the actions of Texas Rangers. His descriptions were graphic:

[A drunken Anglo] entered the church and tore down a large wooden figure of our Saviour, and making his lariat fast around its neck, he mounted his horse and galloped up and down the plazuela, dragging the statue behind. The venerable white-haired Priest, in attempting to rescue it, was thrown down and trampled under the feet of the Ranger's horse.
Mexicans were enraged and attacked the Texan. Meanwhile, the Rangers returned:

As they charged into the square, they saw their miserable comrade hanging to the cross, his skin hanging in strips, surrounded by crowds of Mexicans. With yells of horror, the Rangers charged on the mass with Bowie Knife and revolver, sparing neither age or sex in their terrible fury.59

Chamberlain blamed General Taylor not only for collecting over $1 million (from the Mexican people) by force of arms, but also for letting “loose on the country packs of human bloodhounds called Texas Rangers.” He goes on to describe the Rangers’ brutality at the Rancho de San Francisco on the Camargo road near Agua Fria:

The place was surrounded, the doors forced in, and all the males capable of bearing arms were dragged out, tied to a post and shot ... Thirty-six Mexicans were shot at this place, a half hour given for the horrified survivors, women and children, to remove their little household goods, then the torch was applied to the houses, and by the light of the conflagration the ferocious Tejanos rode off to fresh scenes of blood.60

These wanton acts of cruelty, witnessed by one man and augmented by the reports of other chroniclers, add to the evidence that the United States, through the violence of its soldiers, left a legacy of hate in Mexico.61

THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO

By late August 1847 the war was almost at an end. Scott’s defeat of Santa Anna in a hard-fought battle at Churubusco put Anglo-Americans at the gates of Mexico City. Santa Anna made overtures for an armistice that broke down after two weeks, and the treaty was resumed. On September 13, 1847, Scott drove into the city. Although Mexicans fought valiantly, the battle left 4,000 dead, with another 3,000 prisoners. On September 13, before the occupation of Mexico City began, Los Niños Héroes (The Boy Heroes), leapt to their deaths rather than surrender.

These teenage cadets were Francisco Márquez, Agustín Melgar, Juan Escutia, Fernando Montes de Oca, Vicente Suárez, and Juan de la Barrera. They became “a symbol and image of this unrighteous war.”62

The Mexicans continued fighting. The presiding justice of the Supreme Court, Manuel de la Peña, assumed the presidency. He knew that Mexico had lost and that he had to salvage as much as possible. Pressure increased, with U.S. troops in control of much of Mexico.

Nicholas Trist, sent to Mexico to act as peace commissioner, had arrived in Vera Cruz on May 6, 1847, but controversy with Scott over Trist’s authority and illness delayed an armistice, and hostilities continued. After the fall of Mexico City, Secretary of State James Buchanan wanted to revise Trist’s instructions. He ordered Trist to break off negotiations and return home.63 Polk wanted more land from Mexico. Trist, however, with the support of Winfield Scott, decided to ignore Polk’s order, and began negotiations on January 2, 1848, on the original terms. Mexico, badly beaten, her government in a state of turmoil, had no choice but to agree to the Anglo-Americans’ proposals.

On February 2, 1848, the Mexicans ratified the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, with Mexico accepting the Rio Grande as the Texas border and ceding the Southwest (which incorporated the present-day states of California, New Mexico, Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Arizona, and Utah) to the United States in return for $15 million.

Polk, furious about the treaty, considered Trist “contemptibly base” for having ignored his orders. Yet he had no choice but to submit the treaty to the Senate. With the exception of Article X, which concerned the rights of Mexicans in the ceded territory, the Senate ratified the treaty on March 10, 1848, by a vote of 28 to 14. To insist on more territory would have meant more fighting, and both Polk and the Senate realized that the war was already unpopular in many circles. The treaty was sent to the Mexican Congress for ratification; although the Congress had difficulty forming a quorum, the treaty was ratified on May 19 by a 52 to 35 vote.64 Hostilities between the two nations officially ended. Trist, however, was branded as a “scoundrel,” because Polk was disappointed in the settlement. There was considerable support in the United States for acquisition of all Mexico.65

During the treaty talks Mexican negotiators, concerned about Mexicans left behind, expressed great reservations about these people being forced to “merge or blend” into Anglo-American culture. They protested the exclusion of provisions that protected Mexican citizens’ rights, land titles, and religion.66 They wanted to protect their rights by treaty.

Articles VIII, IX, and X specifically referred to the rights of Mexicans. Under the treaty, Mexicans left behind had one year to choose whether to return to Mexico or remain in “occupied Mexico.” About 2,000 elected to leave; most remained in what they considered their land.

Article IX of the treaty guaranteed Mexicans “the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution; and in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction.” Lynn I. Perrigo, in The American Southwest, summarizes the guarantees of Articles VIII and IX: “In other words, besides the rights and duties of American citizenship, they [the Mexicans] would have some special privileges derived from their previous customs in language, law, and religion.”67

The omitted Article X had comprehensive guarantees protecting “all prior and pending titles to property of every description.”68 When article X was deleted by the U.S. Senate, Mexican officials protested. Anglo-American emissaries reassured them by drafting a Statement of Protocol on May 26, 1848.

The American government by suppressing the 9th article of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo did not in any way intend to annul the grants of lands made by Mexico in the ceded territories. These grants ... preserve the legal value
which they may possess, and the grantees may cause their legitimate (titles) to be acknowledged before the American tribunals.

Conformable to the law of the United States, legitimate titles to every description of property, personal and real, existing in the ceded territories, are those which were legitimate titles under the Mexican law of California and New Mexico up to the 13th of May, 1846, and in Texas up to the 2nd of March, 1836.\

Considering the Mexican opposition to the treaty, it is doubtful whether the Mexican Congress would have ratified the treaty without this clarification. The vote was close.

The Statement of Protocol was strengthened by Articles VIII and IX, which guaranteed Mexicans rights of property and protection under the law. In addition, court decisions have generally interpreted the treaty as protecting land titles and water rights. In practice, however, the treaty was ignored and during the nineteenth century most Mexicans in the United States were considered as a class apart from the dominant race. Nearly every one of the obligations discussed above was violated, confirming the prophecy of Mexican diplomat Manuel Crescencio Rejón, who, at the time the treaty was signed, commented:

Our race, our unfortunate people will have to wander in search of hospitality in a strange land, only to be ejected later. Descendants of the Indians that we are, the North Americans hate us, their spokesmen depreciate us, even if they recognize the justice of our cause, and they consider us unworthy to form with them one nation and one society, they clearly manifest that their future expansion begins with the territory that they take from us and pushing [sic] aside our citizens who inhabit the land.\

As a result of the Texas War and the Anglo-American aggressions of 1845–1848, the occupation of conquered territory began. In material terms, in exchange for 12,000 lives and more than $100 million, the United States acquired a colony two and a half times as large as France, containing rich farmlands and natural resources such as gold, silver, zinc, copper, oil, and uranium, which would make possible its unprecedented industrial boom. It acquired ports on the Pacific that generated further economic expansion across that ocean. Mexico was left with its shrunken resources to face the continued advances of the United States.

SUMMARY

The colonial experience of the United States differs from that of Third World nations. Its history resembles that of Australia and/or South Africa, where colonizers relegated indigenous populations to fourth-class citizenship or noncitizenship. North American independence came at the right time, slightly predating the industrialization of nineteenth-century Europe. Its merchants took over a lucrative trade network from the British; the new Republic established a government that supported trade, industry, and commercial agriculture. A North American ideology which presumed that Latin Americans had stolen the name "America" and that God, the realtor, had given them the land, encouraged colonial expansion.

Mexico, like most Third World nations after independence, needed a period of stability. North American penetration into Texas in the 1820s and 1830s threatened Mexico. The U.S. economic system encouraged expansion, and many of the first wave of migrants to Texas had lost their farms due to the depression of 1819. Land in Texas, generously cheap, provided room for the spread of slavery. Although many North Americans in all probability intended to obey Mexican laws and meet conditions for obtaining land grants, North American ethnocentricism and self-interest soon eroded those intentions. Clearly land values would zoom if Texas were part of the United States.

North American historians have frequently portrayed the Texas invasion as a second encounter in the "American War of Independence." Myths such as that of a tyrannical Mexican government have justified the war. In truth, the cause of the war was profit. Mexico did not invade Texas; it belonged to Mexico. Few if any of the North Americans in Texas had been born there or had lived in Texas for more than five years. Most had just recently arrived. Some rich Mexicans supported the North Americans for obvious reasons—it was in their economic self-interest. A stalemate resulted, with Euro-Americans establishing the Texas Republic. In 1844, the United States broke the standoff and annexed Texas.

President James K. Polk manufactured the war with Mexico. Some North Americans opposed the war—not on grounds that it violated Mexico's territorial integrity, but because of the probability of the extension of slavery. Many North American military leaders admitted that the war was unjust, and that the United States had committed an act of aggression. However, patriotism and support for the war overwhelmed reason in the march "To the Halls of the Montezumas [sic]." North Americans, buoyant in their prosperity, wanted to prove that the United States was a world-class power.

The war became a Protestant Crusade. Texans made emotional pleas to avenge the Alamo. Both appeals were instrumental in arousing North Americans to the call to arms, to prove their valor and power of the young "American" democracy. North American soldiers committed atrocities against Mexican civilians; few were punished.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the war, and the United States grabbed over half of Mexico's soil. The war proved costly to Mexico and to Mexicans left behind. According to the treaty, Mexicans who elected to stay in the conquered territory would become U.S. citizens with all the rights of citizenship. However, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, like those signed with the indigenous people of North America, depended on the good faith of the United States and its ability to keep its word.

NOTES

can popular support for the war. Also see Norman E. Totorow, Texas Annexation and the Mexican War (Palo Alto, Calif.: Chadwick House, 1978).


5. Fehrenbach, pp. 163–164.


13. Fehrenbach, p. 188. Hutchinson, p. 6, quotes a letter from Austin to Mrs. Mary Austin Holly: "The fact is, we must and ought to become a part of the United States. Money should be no consideration. . . . The more the American population is increased the more readily will the Mexican government give it up. . . . For fourteen years I have had a hard time of it, but nothing shall daunt my courage or abate my exertions to complete the main object of my labors, to Americanize Texas."


16. Barker, pp. 146, 147, 148–149, 162.

17. Fehrenbach, p. 189.


22. Brack, pp. 74–75.


24. Van Alstyne, p. 106.


26. On March 1, 1845, Congress passed the joint resolution, but it was not until July 1845 that a convention in Texas voted to accept annexation to the United States. The political maneuverings behind annexation in the U.S. Congress document the economic motive underlying it. Van Alstyne, p. 104, writes: "The pro-annexationists, some of whom like Senator Robert J. Walker of Mississippi had speculated heavily in Texas real estate, managed to influence public opinion in both North and South to the point where, on March 1, 1845, sufficient votes were mustered in Congress to authorize admission to the Union. There was a small margin of votes in each house in favor of annexation: in the House of Representatives, 22; in the Senate, only two."


29. J. D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 10 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1905), 4:428–448, quoted in Arvin Rappaport, ed., The War with Mexico: Why Did It Happen? (Skokie, Ill: Rand McNally, 1964), p. 16. Mexican authorities had been requested by Taylor to leave the area; most impartial sources consider his refusal a hostile act, especially since he accompanied it by a naval blockade of Mexican supply ships shipping Matamoros. Troops clashed initially on April 26, 1846, but the first major confrontation did not take place until May 8, 1846, 12 miles north of Matamoros (Berge, pp. 196–297). In short, the movement of U.S. troops forced the war on Mexico (Brack, p. 146).


33. Rappaport, p. 16.

34. Rappaport, p. 16.


36. More recently it has become fashionable for political theorists to oversimplify the war by reducing it to the victory of one system of production and land tenure over a less progressive one. This kind of extreme economic determinism results in the same conclusions that Justin Smith arrived at. See Radia A. F. Fernández, The United States–Mexico Border: A Politico-Economic Profile (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 7; Seymour V. Connor and Odie B. Faulk, North America Divided: The Mexican War, 1846–1848 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

37. Brack, p. 185.

38. Brack, p. 10, states that the general view has been that Mexico erred because it chose to fight rather than "negotiate."


44. Quoted in Livermore, pp. 148–149.


47. Livermore, p. 160.


51. Chamberlain, pp. 87, 88.
Remember the Alamo: The Colonization of Texas

AN OVERVIEW

The Texas War was profitable. The Lone Star state had rich soil and an abundance of natural resources that helped the North American nation develop into a world industrial power. Texas's resources and easy access to Mexican labor accelerated capital accumulation throughout the nineteenth century. White Texans pushed Mexicans into South Texas, concentrating them and holding them in colonial bondage.

Blacks throughout most of the nineteenth century comprised Texas's largest nonwhite minority, generally living in slavery in the northeast and center of the state until the Civil War. Meanwhile, North Americans waged continual war against Native Americans. Violence spilled over into everyday relations among whites, and shootings became an everyday occurrence. The acceptance of violence encouraged depredations toward Mexicans and other minorities.

This chapter, on Texas, as well as the three that follow, on New Mexico, Arizona, and California, describes the process of colonial domination and Mexican resistance to colonialism. The conquest, as mentioned, set a pattern for racial antagonism and violence, justified by slogans such as "Remember the Alamo!" and myths about the Mexicans' treachery. North Americans had not fought their so-called war of independence to give Mexicans political or economic equality. From the beginning, laws and traditions limited Mexican access. The political system favored the rights of North Americans, and even Texas Mexicans who had fought for so-called independence like Juan Seguin were driven off their lands. The system favored the merchants and land speculators, and supported them with special police such as the Texas Rangers.
Colonial domination in Texas did not rely solely on the use of violence; the support of the majority was essential. The state maintained social control through the formation of an ideology that upheld the values and goals of the new society. It rationalized the privilege of commercial, agrarian, and other special interests. The state institutionalized racism and justified discrimination toward Mexicans. Institutions such as the schools and churches and myth makers such as historians reinforced and legitimated a multiracial society based on class and race.1

During the nineteenth century, in all probability, only a minority of the Texas Mexicans accepted North American hegemony. And many Mexicans resisted their underclass status. Their rebellion took the form of social banditry, mob revolts, and, often, as in the case of Juan Cortina, revolutionary action. Mexican nationalism, which flourished well into the twentieth century, was nurtured by their almost total exclusion from North American cultural and social institutions.

In the decades of the nineteenth century, Texas passed through its precapitalist stage. The frontier areas where Mexicans were concentrated had limited access to state or national markets. The role of Mexicans changed after the Civil War, when the freeing of Black labor and the spread of cotton increased demand for Mexican labor. The coming of the railroad in the late 1870s and 1880s accelerated the commercialization of agriculture and again increased the demand for Mexican labor.

BACKGROUND

Anglo-Mexican hostilities did not end after 1836. Mexico refused to recognize the Republic of Texas. The issue of the prisoners of war continued. Anglo-Texans kept Mexican soldiers in cages, where many died of starvation and where they suffered untold indignities.2

The boundary question also remained unanswered, with all the territory between the Rio Grande and the Nueces River in dispute. Anglo-American immigration into the Republic of Texas increased, reaching 100,000 by the 1840s.

To escape violence, Mexicans moved farther South. Substantial numbers settled in the disputed territory. When hostilities erupted into war, South Texas became the gateway for Zachary Taylor's invasion of northern Mexico, and the Mexicans there suffered greatly from Anglo-American violence.

In the years before annexation to the United States, the neo-Texans actively warred on the Indians and stepped up their diplomatic front against Mexico. President Mirabeau B. Lamar dreamed of expanding the republic and, in 1839 and 1840, taking advantage of Mexico's problems with France, pressed for a settlement of the boundary question, offering Mexico $5 million if it would accept the Rio Grande as the territorial border. In 1841 Lamar signed a treaty with Yucatán, a southeastern Mexican state, which was attempting to secede from Mexico. That same year Lamar sent the ill-fated Santa Fe Expedition into New Mexico in a scheme to add that area to the republic (see Chapter 3).

During the late 1830s tension increased along the border. Black Texan slaves crossed into Mexico to freedom, aggravating the situation. By 1855 some 4,000 fugitive slaves had run away to northern Mexico. Texas authorities valued the loss at $3.2 million and blamed Mexican authorities for encouraging slaves to escape. When owners demanded their return, the Mexican authorities refused. Anglo-Texans led several expeditions to recover runaways, greatly adding to border tensions. Their anger at authorities soon was generalized to include all Mexicans; they were all suspected of aiding the Blacks. Tensions grew so strong in 1853 that the federal government stationed 2,176 soldiers in the state of Texas out of a standing national army of 10,417. Moreover, the Texas Constitution excluded from citizenship or ownership of property anyone who had refused to participate in the so-called revolution. Naturally all Mexicans were presumed guilty of supporting the Mexican government which the North Americans had overthrown. In this environment, North Americans drove Mexicans out of eastern and central Texas, concentrating them in San Antonio and south Texas.

THE CREATION OF A DOMINANT CLASS

Before 1848, the valley of the Rio Grande supported many thousands of cattle. Towns, such as Laredo, Guerrero, Mier, Camargo, and Reynosa, had been founded before 1755. Self-reliant communities raised corn, beans, melons, and vegetables and also tended sheep and goats. Commerce between the people on both sides of the river bound them together. Life for Mexicans in the other sections of Texas, while not exactly the same, closely resembled the life style of the Rio Grande people. It was not the highly organized and profit-yielding structure Anglos were accustomed to and considered productive. Compared to the technological standards of the United States, the economy of the valley was underdeveloped.

As technological changes took place in the region's economy, class divisions became more marked within the Mexican community; the upper class more often aligned themselves with the new elite, either to maintain their privilege or to move vertically within the new system. In many cases rich Mexicans became brokers for the ruling elite and helped control the Mexican masses. In Brownsville men like Francisco Yturía, Jeremiah Galván, and the Spaniard José San Román amassed fortunes by alloying themselves with Charles Stillman.3

Charles Stillman arrived in the valley in 1846, establishing a trading center in a cotton field across the river from Matamoros. Within four years trade with Mexico developed the town of Brownsville. This boom drove land prices up and attracted more Anglo-Americans.

Many newcomers were war veterans who still looked upon Mexicans as the losers. They felt that Mexicans benefited from the Anglo-American occupation. These men felt few qualms about taking property from them. Racial and nativist arguments justified their chicanery. At first, Stillman and others feared that the state of Texas would protect Mexican land claims, so they attempted to create their own state. They played on the Mexicans' regional feelings and many Mexicans supported the separatist movement.4 The group enlisted powerful congressional allies such as Henry Clay and William Seward. Separatists were led by Richard King, James O'Donnell, Stillman, Captain Mifflin Kenedy, and Sam
The conquest and colonization of the Southwest

Belden—all prominent members of the privileged elite. Their plans for secession proved unnecessary because it was soon evident that the state of Texas supported the Anglos' encroachments.

Stillman employed unscrupulous means to build up his annual earnings to $50,000. His trading post stood on land that did not belong to him; the land around Brownsville belonged to the descendants of Francisco Cavazos. After 1848 the Cavazos's title to the land was known as the Espiritu Santo Grant. Stillman wanted the land, so he devised a scheme to create confusion about ownership. Squatters moved onto the Cavazos's land and claimed veterans' as well as squatters' rights. Ignoring the fact that these actions violated the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and its Statement of Protocol, Stillman purchased the squatters' claims, as well as other questionable titles, refusing to deal with the Cavazos family and knowing he had the support of the troops at Fort Brown.

The Cavazos family fought Stillman in the courts. Judge Waltrous, the presiding magistrate, was a friend of Stillman. Moreover, many Anglos believed that the “whole Espiritu Santo Grant should be thrown out on the grounds that the owners were Mexicans.” Stillman, however, had made many enemies who pressured the judge to decide against Stillman. On January 15, 1852, Judge Waltrous ruled in favor of the Cavazos family, validating their title to the land. Stillman had his lawyers, the firm of Basse and Horde, offer $33,000 for the grant, which in 1850 was evaluated at $214,000. Stillman also made it known that he would appeal the decision, so the Cavazos family accepted the offer; the legal costs to defend the grant would have been prohibitive. Moreover, the Cavazos family knew that Stillman had influence in the political and judicial hierarchy of the state. After the sale the law firm transferred title to Stillman, yet he did not pay the $33,000; neither did the law firm, since it went bankrupt.

In the 1850s, the border became a battleground, with U.S. merchants waging an economic war against Mexico. Ranger “Rip” Ford estimates that as much as $10 to $14 million passed by way of the Rio Grande annually. Fierce competition existed between U.S. and Mexican merchants; violence increased. In 1855, along the Nueces River, 11 Mexicans were lynched. In 1857, in San Antonio, the Texas city with the largest Mexican population, remained a frontier outpost, limited in its potential capital growth by its remoteness from markets and lack of access to good transportation. Tensions between North Americans and Mexicans stymied San Antonio's economic development. Houston and Galveston, more strategically located than the Alamo city, had better transportation and more access to goods and supplies. During the Civil War, merchants amassed large fortunes running cotton through Mexico, making possible the expansion of the cotton industry as well as the city's commercial houses.

In spite of the violence, border towns grew. Matamoros increased from 18,000 to 50,000 by the end of 1862 and became an international marketplace, with an estimated weekly volume of $2 million in trade during the 1850s. The potential in profits from this growth attracted North American merchants, who formed associations to control trade and who openly engaged in smuggling, cattle rustling, and other crimes. In 1858 Governor Ramón Guerra of Tamaulipas created La Zona Libre, the Free Zone, within which Mexican merchants were exempt from federal tariffs (paying only small municipal taxes and an administra-
roughly in balance, while the 2 Mexicans' personal worth was far below their real wealth. In spite of this, however, some affluent Mexicans continued to own medium-sized ranches and commercial houses.

The new political order promoted capital accumulation. Stillman's associate, Richard King, was the arch-robber baron of South Texas. His career is difficult to assess since his descendants control his records and have carefully censored them. Richard King amassed over 600,000 acres of land during his lifetime, and his widow increased the family holdings to over 1,000,000 acres.

The King Ranch Corporation commissioned a professional author and artist, Tom Lea, to eulogize Richard King in a two-volume work entitled The King Ranch. Lea portrays King as a tough-minded, two-fisted Horatio Alger who brought prosperity to South Texas. In the process Richard King, according to Lea, never harmed anyone, except in self-defense. Lea denies charges against King and ignores the allegations that he unscrupulously drove out small Mexican ranchers to steal their land and was brutal to those who opposed him. When referring to Mexican resentment toward Anglos like King, Lea writes it off as jealousy.

Richard King was born in 1824 in New York City of poor Irish immigrant parents. As a youth he ran away to sea, eventually becoming a pilot on a steamboat, mastered by Mifflin Kenedy. The two men became fast friends. The Mexican-American War took them to the Rio Grande, and after the war they stayed and cashed in on the boom. King ran a flourhouse at Boca del Río and later bought a vessel from the U.S. government and went into the freighting business. Much of his work consisted of smuggling goods to the Mexican ranchers and miners in northern Mexico.

Although Charles Stillman was at first the principal competitor of King and Kenedy, in 1850 they joined him. The association prospered, soon monopolizing the waterborne trade into northern Mexico. In 1852 King purchased the Santa Gertrudis Grant. Title to 15,500 acres cost him less than 24 an acre. King also entered into a land-purchasing partnership with Gideon K. Lewis, later buying Lewis's shares.

During the Civil War King was pro-South and profited from the war trade by selling cattle, horses, and mules to the troops. He continued his freighting operations, running Union blockades by flying the Mexican flag. In 1866 Stillman left the border area, and King and Kenedy took over many of his operations.

In the 1870s, the Mexican Border Commission reported that much of the border friction was caused by Texas thieves. The report claimed that Mexicans raided the Nueces area to retrieve their stolen cattle and that Richard King branded calves "that belonged to his neighbors' cows." The report indicted King, charging that he did not respect the law and that he employed known cattle rustlers such as Tomás Vásquez and Fernando López to steal cattle and horses from Mexicans. Other prominent Texans such as Thadeus Rhodes, a justice of the peace in Hidalgo County, were also accused of making huge profits from cattle rustling.

During this period King became president of the Stock Raisers Association of Western Texas, formed by Texas ranchers to protect their "interests." They organized a private militia, called minute companies, to fight so-called Mexican bandits. When the minute companies disbanded, Ranger Captain Leander McNeely took over the fight for them. In 1875, McNeely violated a federal injunction prohibiting him to enter Mexican territory, and, with his Rangers, he crossed the border, torturing and murdering four innocent Mexicans. King rewarded McNeely's men, paying them $500 in appreciation for their services.

King made his money as a smuggler; he associated with a band of cutthroats and, in fact, played a leading role in their operations. He was accused of cattle rustling and of murdering small landowners to get their property. Lastly, King paid bonuses to the Rangers in appreciation for their services.

During the 1860s the size of the Mexican population declined in relation to Anglos. In 1860 about 12,000 Mexicans versus just over 600,000 Anglos and 182,000 Blacks lived in Texas. Slave labor lessened dependence on Mexican workers. After the Civil War, a number of economic developments took place. The emancipation of the slave changed the economy of Texas and destabilized its captive labor force. Cattle raising boomed during the 1860s and 1870s, spurred by transportation improvements and demand for beef on the domestic and world markets. Demand for sheep increased and by the 1880s cotton production reached an all-time high.

The lack of a stable workforce caused a restructuring of Texas agriculture and, by 1870, sharecropping became common (in sharecropping, an owner lends land to tenants, who usually gave the landlord back one-half to two-thirds of the crop). The expansion of the railroads facilitated the rush of Anglos to Texas; soon even some border counties had equal Mexican and Anglo populations. Finally, by 1890 the open range for cattle declined as mechanization and irrigation expanded agriculture. The changed production methods increased the demand for Mexican labor, and Mexicans returned to Texas in large numbers.

The abolition of slavery changed the attitude of many planters toward Mexicans. Mexican workers, now more valuable, were used as surplus labor to depress wages of the Black pickers, who were now wage earners. Planters on the Colorado River, near Bastrop in San Marcos and Navidad, Lavaca County, where Mexican labor had been threatened and expelled before the Civil War, were now desperate for Mexican labor. By the 1880s Mexican migration to Texas from Mexico accelerated and internally it began to fan out.

**Politics of Gender**

Social relations between Mexicans and the dominant society became more rigid with the passage of time. Contact often depended upon class or gender. Intermarriage between the native aristocracy and the white ruling elite was not uncommon, both because of the lack of white women and for control of the native population. The colonial situation also led to sexual subjugation through prostitution.

Intermarriage between Anglos and Mexicans offers an interesting paradox. Although Mexicans were considered a mongrel and inferior race, the whites were not above marrying them. Captain Mifflin Kenedy, for instance, married the wealthy widow Petra Vela de Vidal, who reportedly helped him gain the support of a large number of Mexicans whose vote was essential to establish his power.
During the nineteenth century, it became popular to speak about the “dark-eyed señoritas.” Dr. Arnoldo De León, in his superb work “White Racial Attitudes Toward Mexicanos in Texas, 1821-1920,” writes: “There existed at least some indication that Mexican women could have been accepted by whites in Texas under certain circumstances without reservation.” In some instances Mexican women were compared favorably to the ideal southern belle, and especialmente Las Grieras (the blonds) were praised. These light-skinned Mexicans were described as of pure Spanish descent from northern Spain with “faultlessly white” flesh and blue eyes. As more Anglos moved into the area, intermarriage declined and racially mixed couples became subject to social disapproval and eventually persecution.

As in the case of the Black in the South, the dominant society fabricated sexual myths about Mexicans. According to De León, “Texas history is replete with accounts (by white men) suggesting that, if Mexican women easily lapsed from propriety, they especially coveted company (and intimacy) of white men.” This attitude is natural to privileged classes, who may use the sexual act not only to assert dominance but also to seek reassurance of their self-concept of superiority.

Only a few serious studies have been made of the role of the Mexican woman on the frontier. Jane Dysart, in “Mexican Women in San Antonio, 1830-1860: The Assimilation Process,” deals with the question of intermarriage, and her conclusions reinforce De León’s. She describes the woman as active participants in society. For instance, she states that during the colonial period Mexican women played a much greater role in government than generally portrayed by historians. On the frontier, women had much more freedom than in established areas, where traditions and social constraints demanded a less visible profile. According to Professor Dysart, Josefa Becerra Seguin “drilled the troops stationed in San Antonio during her husband’s frequent absences.” In spite of the “liberating influences of the frontier, the role of the Mexican woman,” was largely that of a pawn.

Distinctions were made between the light-skinned Mexican women and those of the poorer classes, and skin color often determined social status. In a letter to his cousin John Donelepn Coffee, Jr., dated January 20, 1855, R. W. Brahan, Jr., referred to contacts with women of Castilian blood whose “parents avowed their determination to have them wed to genuine Americans.” Brahan dwelt on Mexican women’s color. Of some he said, “Their complexion is very fair,” but he described poorer Mexican women as “styled greasers.” His conditional racism was evident: “many of these ‘greasers,’ of fine figures & good features, the color of a mulatto, are kept by votaries of sensuality.”

Dysart underscores the class nature of intermarriage in Texas and more specifically San Antonio. For instance, between 1837 and 1860, 906 Mexican women wed Mexican men, while only 88 chose to marry Anglos. But of those Anglo-Mexican unions almost half, or 42, involved women from high status families. The significance of those interracial marriages goes far beyond their numbers, since at least one daughter from every rico family in San Antonio married an Anglo.

Only five unions between Mexican males and Anglo females were verified.

Intermarriage with Anglos was based on “economic necessity” more than on any other single factor. The Mexican family received some legal protection and freedom from the stigma of disloyalty, while the Anglo got a wife and property, since, under the law, daughters inherited property on an equal basis with their brothers. Intermarriage accelerated “Americanization,” and although youngsters maintained strong Mexican influences “during their early childhood,” they strongly identified with the father’s ethnic group. For instance, the daughters of Antonio Navarro became Methodists, which is in itself an indication of assimilation, and affiliation with English-speaking Roman Catholic parishes by the mixed couples was common.

This is not to say that the ricos escaped racial discrimination through intermarriage and assimilation, for even rich Tejanos were victims of racism. The majority of San Antonio Mexicans, even if Americanized, were not treated as equals. “Only the women and children with Anglo surnames, light skins, and wealth had a reasonable chance to escape the stigma attached to their Mexican ancestry.” The chance offered by intermarriage was perhaps the only one available to Mexican women, even if that decision was made by the male head of the family based on class interests and material factors that operated in an Anglo-dominant society.

The average Mexican woman, however, did not take part in the debate as to her value as a commodity. The darker she appeared, the stronger the racism. The case of Chepita or, as sometimes called, Chipita Rodriguez of San Patricio, Texas, is an example of frontier justice. She arrived in San Patricio with her father in 1836. Shortly afterward the father was murdered and Chipita began a relationship with a cowboy who abandoned her and took their son. In 1863, an errant cowboy accompanied by a younger man arrived in San Patricio. While at Chipita’s, the two men argued. Chipita found the older man dead. Thinking that her son had murdered him, she attempted to hide the body by dumping it in the river. An all-white jury found Chipita guilty of murder, recommending leniency because of her advanced age and a doubt as to whether she had murdered the cowboy. Chipita was hanged.

CONTROLLING MEXICANS

As elsewhere in the Southwest, the railroad played a key role in the economic development of San Antonio after the Civil War. In the 1870s, San Antonio merchants and business leaders financed a line between their city and Galveston. By 1885, two more lines passed through the city, connecting north Texas and Mexico. The railroad encouraged the development of a cattle trade and brought tourists to the city. Between 1865 and 1885, San Antonio grew to 37,000, a 208 percent increase. Unfortunately for Mexicans, the majority of the newcomers were Anglos, who, in turn, ostracized them.

San Antonio, a mercantile outpost for the U.S. commercial empire, based its prosperity on beef packing, brewing, tourism, and a military installation. By the mid-1880s Bryan Callagan II organized a political machine in San Antonio.
Callagan, whose mother was from an elite Mexican family, spoke fluent Spanish, and built his power base on the Mexican wards. Mexicans supported the machine because it insured some protection, patronage, and indirect political participation.

In South Texas, machine politics also became popular after the Civil War. The machine handed out patronage—for example, city jobs, contracts, franchises, and public utilities and, in the case of poor Mexicans, gave them a primitive form of welfare. The machine won elections by turning out the Mexican vote. In the border towns, the machine also controlled the custom houses. The indiscriminate use of the Texas Rangers bolstered the machine's political hegemony.

Characteristically, the poor had few alternatives. In San Antonio the ricos rarely sided with the masses of Mexicans. They displayed attitudes and interests based on their class and even emphasized racial differences between themselves and the lower classes, stating that the poor did not belong to the white race. Many old families openly sympathized with the Ku Klux Klan. The stronghold of the Mexican elite centered in San Antonio where Alejo Ruiz, Vicente Martinez, John Barrera, Rafael Yturris, and José Antonio Navarro allied themselves with ultraconservative elements. After the Civil War they even campaigned on behalf of northern Democrats, advocating the supremacy of the white race. They seemed oblivious to persecution of their fellow Mexicans and actively supported the Anglo ruling class by brokering the Mexican vote.

The violence which had characterized earlier relations between the two groups increased in the 1870s and 1880s with the arrival of larger numbers of Anglos in Texas. During the 1880s and 1890s, lynchings continued to be commonplace. Mexicans resisted. In August 1883 Captain Juan Cardenas in San Antonio headed a protest march on San Pedro Park because Mexicans could not use the dance floor. Protestors attacked Fred Kerble, the lessee, because he had yielded to town demands excluding Mexicans. The next year Mexicans fled the Fort Davis area to escape daily lynchings; the townfolk encouraged the exodus, hoping that it would continue until the last Mexican left the district. Many Mexicans were forced to seek the protection of some of the local Anglo powers, who treated them as serfs. For instance, in Cameron County in South Texas, Colonel Stephen Powers built a powerful political machine which later his partner Jim Wells inherited. They controlled several counties from 1882 to 1920. They always helped their Mexicans to vote, transporting them to the polls and marking their ballots for them. Professor De Leon states that in the border areas whites employed Mexicans to cross into Mexico to recruit people whom the bosses paid to vote for selected candidates. Hundreds would be imported, marched to the county clerk's office, and naturalized for the modest sum of $25.

Wells based his political power on his ability to deliver the Mexican vote. Wells went to baptisms, marriages, and funerals and played godfather to the Mexican people. By the early 1920s he lost control, but the machine stayed intact, with power divided among his lieutenants. He died in 1922. Wells had shared his power with the Klebergs, who owned the King Ranch. Ed Vela from Hidalgo and the Guerra family, which controlled Starr County, were among his Chicano lieutenants.

The Guerras had one of the best organizations in the valley and with the Yzaguirre and Ramirez families owned most of Starr County. The founder of the line was José Alejandro Guerra, a surveyor for the Spanish crown in 1767. He had received porciones in the valley which his heir Manuel Guerra inherited. Manuel started a mercantile house in Roma, Texas, in 1856. He married Virginia Cox, daughter of a Kentuckian father and a Mexican mother. Guerra, a banker and rancher, became Jim Wells's right arm. For political favors he exchanged credit and teacher certificates. Guerra became the Democratic party of Starr County. The Republican party, which was nationally the more progressive of the two parties, opposed him.

The machine was ruthless in its pursuits. In 1888 W. W. Shelby, leader of the Blues (the Democrats) and boss of Duval County, lost an election to Lino Hinojosa, leader of the Reds (the Republicans), by a two to one margin; however, Hinojosa was not allowed to take office because he did not speak English. Domingo Garza ran against Shelby in 1900, but just before the election Garza was thrown into jail on suspicion of murder; charges were later dropped, but he lost the election. In 1906 Shelby resigned and the machine appointed Deodora Guerra.

The Guerras controlled the two counties into the 1940s. Politics in the valley were untouched by state authorities. It was common knowledge that, up to the 1940s, if someone raised the ire of the bosses, an assassin was employed from the interior of Mexico. Even Judge J. T. Canales of Brownsville, a maverick, often cooperated with the machine. He served in the state legislature from 1909 to 1911, in 1917, and in 1919 and served as a county judge in 1914. Along with Alonso Perales, Manuel Gonzalez, Ben Garza, Andés de Luna, and Dr. George I. Sanchez, he represented the progressive Chicano movement of the times.

At one point Canales quarreled with the Guerras in Starr County. In 1933 he organized a new party to oppose them. While he addressed a crowd in Rio Grande City, a shooting broke up the rally. Two of Guerra's men were arrested, tried in Corpus Christi, and sentenced to 25 years. They were returned to Starr pending an appeal. The Guerras allowed them to escape. Five members of Canales's new party were deputized, tracked them down, and killed the escapees. The Guerras had them arrested. They were tried in Austin, where the Guerras aided the prosecution and Canales the defense. "After an eloquent plea of self-defense, in which Canales wept in the court room, the five men were acquitted." This political opposition was, however, rare.

A recent work by Evan Anders attributes machine politics, in part, to the history of the Spanish patron-peon relationship. Anders, however, oversimplifies the phenomenon, since "boss rule" in South Texas resembled political machines in eastern U.S. cities. An important difference between bossism in South Texas and the East was that the machine had fewer constitutional restraints. Moreover, Texas-Mexicans had limited access to organizational alternatives such as trade unions.

Machine politics often involved the more affluent Mexicans, giving them a stake in the system and a measure of upward mobility and protection. Frequently, affluent Mexicans acquired power because of their influence over the Mexican
vote, while, at the same time, the brokers gained prestige with the Mexicans themselves because they had access to patronage and the ability to intervene occasionally on behalf of poor Mexicans. In a few cases, the Mexican brokers prevented North American extremes.

North American reformers, blaming Mexicans for corrupt machines, attempted to end bossism by disenfranchising them. In 1890 a constitutional amendment was passed requiring foreigners "to file for citizenship six months before the election." In 1902, reformers passed a poll tax. Both these measures failed to limit the power of the bosses. The Jim Wells machine remained intact to the 1920s and its demise in part be attributed to Wells's failure to check the extreme violence of the Texas Rangers in South Texas in 1915 and 1917.39

The political situation in Mexico added to borderland tensions. The border served as a haven for revolutionaries who actively campaigned against Mexican dictator Porfirio Diaz. One such revolutionary, Catarino Garza, a journalist, traveling salesman, and former Mexican consul at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1885 organized mutualistas (mutual aid societies) in the valley. Garza exported Mexicans to unite and fight racism.40 In Corpus Christi Garza accused a U.S. customs inspector, Victor Sebree, of assassinating Mexican prisoners who actively opposed Diaz. The two met during an election at Rio Grande City in 1888, and Sebree shot and wounded Garza. Mexicans, incensed because nothing happened to Sebree, threatened to Lynch him, but the local U.S. army post commander intervened. Garza recovered and continued his activities. Four years later he was ready to launch an invasion of Mexico.

Anglo-American authorities supported the dictatorship of Diaz and cooperated with his regime to suppress any Mexican revolutionary movement originating on the U.S. side of the border. The Garza Movement was centered in Starr and Duvall counties, 100 miles from the Rio Grande and Fort Ringgold. On three different occasions in 1891 Garza crossed into Mexico and attempted to liberate it from Díaz. Twice his small bands reached Nuevo León, where Mexican troops turned them back. Garza, who had about 1,000 followers and was reported to have widespread support, was pursued by the U.S. cavalry, sheriffs, and marshals.41

Mexican authorities denounced Garza in the spring of 1891 and they called Mexican inhabitants of the valley "ignorant" and unscrupulous." Military authorities spread hysteria by asking for an additional 10,000 troops. U.S. authorities claimed that Garza had cost them $2 million.42

Newspaper accounts inflamed residents, spreading rumors that Mexicans had armed themselves. They rekindled old fears of a Mexican revolt, and wrote that General Juan Cortina, the scourge of the valley during the 1860s and 1870s, was going to return to Texas from Mexico City to lead the revolution. (See pages 43-47.) The New York Times reported:

A great sensation has been created by the telegraphic announcement from the City of Mexico that General Juan Cortina, one of the greatest revolutionary leaders of Mexico, has been arrested and imprisoned in the San Juan Ulúa Prison by order of President Diaz for attempting to incite another revolutionary uprising against the Government. The City of Matamoras [sic] is General Cortina's old home. He was, twenty-five years ago, a desperate and greatly-fearful man in Mexico. He ruled the Rio Grande border country from Laredo to the mouth of the river. . . . His influence was so great that he could inaugurate a powerful revolutionary movement against the Mexican Government by a single pronunciamiento with his signature attached. His exploits at the time of the Civil War caused the United States Government to lose many thousands of dollars. When President Diaz's revolution ended in success, General Cortina was summoned to the City of Mexico . . . [Cortina] has been kept in constant surveillance by President Diaz ever since to prevent him from inciting further revolutions.43

The Garza revolution ended, but opposition to Diaz kept the border unsettled. Federal authorities stationed large numbers of armed troops at the border, ensuring that Mexicans would stay in their place.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

In August 1894, Blacks attacked Mexicans at Beeville, Texas. Growers encouraged antagonism between different ethnic groups. They brought Mexicans into Beeville to drive down wages of Blacks and to create a labor surplus. Blacks blamed the Mexicans, rather than the growers, for their depressed state and raided the Mexican quarter. Throughout this period considerable tension developed between Mexicans and Blacks. The federal government encouraged this antagonism by stationing Black soldiers in Mexican areas, using them to control the Mexican population. At Fort McIntosh in Laredo, the 10th Cavalry, a Black unit, participated in suppressing Mexicans.44

By the late 1880s both Populists and Republicans campaigned for the disenfranchisement of all Mexicans. The Populist, or People's, party, while fighting the growth of agribusiness and demanding reforms in government, led attacks on Mexicans, blaming them for the decline of small farms and the demise of rural America. In San Antonio A. L. Montalvo vowed to fight for civil rights and condemned the Populists for attempting to reduce the Texas-Mexicans "to the category of pack animals, who may be good enough to work, but not good enough to exercise their civil rights."45

Many of the interests of the People's party were identical to the Mexicans', but the party regarded them as its enemy. In Texas Populists had made an effort to forge an alliance with Blacks, while attacking Mexicans and threatening to deport them. They viewed Mexicans as a threat because the Democratic party had manipulated their vote. Local Anglo leaders through their political machine corralled Mexicans and through fraud, corruption, and force kept this vote in line. Instead of organizing progressive elements within the Mexican community and attempting to destroy the machines, the Populists made Mexicans their scapegoats, using class racist arguments.46

The 1880 census counted about 43,000 Mexicans in Texas. Most lived in the southern part, where they remained the overwhelming majority until large numbers of North Americans arrived in the 1890s. The Euroamerican newcomers
formed their own neighborhoods, strictly segregating Mexicans in the older parts of town. The arrival of more North Americans strengthened that race's control of the political, social and economic institutions. Generally, because Mexicans were too poor to mount independent political movements, they had to rely on their Mexican bosses for whatever influence they could achieve. An exception was Laredo, where Mexicans, known as guaraches (sandals), opposed the Anglos, known as botas (boots).

The Anglo still considered the Mexicans as aliens and made attempts through the courts to exclude them from citizenship. In 1896 Ricardo Rodríguez was denied his final naturalization papers. The authorities argued in court that Rodríguez was not white or African and “therefore not capable of becoming an American citizen.” They wanted to keep “Aztecs or aboriginal Mexicans” from naturalization. Rodríguez won his case based on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

In January 1896, authorities found the mutilated body of Aureliano Castellón. Castellón made the mistake of courting Emma Stanfield, a white girl, over the objections of her brothers. He had been shot eight times and his body burned. On June 30, 1896, the San Antonio Express published a note entitled “Slaughter the Gringo” signed by 25 Mexicans. Allegedly, the signers threatened to kill only gringos and Germans, exempting Blacks, Italians, and Cubans.

Two years later, the Spanish-American War caused general panic spread among Anglos, who believed that Mexicans would ally themselves with Spain and begin border raids. In places such as San Diego, Texas, Anglos formed minutemen companies to “protect” themselves. The uprisings never took place and Anglos soon learned that Mexicans had little empathy for Spain, but the situation gave racists an excuse to persecute all Mexicans.

The White Cap movement of South Texas in the late 1890s aggravated conditions. (Texas white caps should not be confused with the Mexican white caps of New Mexico; see Chapter 3.) Texas white caps were an Anglo-American vigilante group. They demanded that white planters refuse to rent to Blacks and Mexicans and fire Mexican field hands. White cap activity centered in Wilson, Gonzales, and DeWitt counties, where they terrorized Mexicans.

According to Dr. De León, violence without guilt raged during this period: “Astonishing numbers of Mexicans in the nineteenth century fell victim to lynching and cold-blooded deaths at the hands of whites who thought nothing of killing Mexicans.” Social attitudes reinforced by violence froze Mexicans into a caste system which facilitated exploitation of their labor in the twentieth century.

The state population increased from a million in the early 1870s to just over 3 million at the turn of the century. By 1900, Texas-Mexicans still largely concentrated in rural areas, counted about 70,000; unofficially the number was closer to 165,000. Mexicans numbered less than 5 percent of Texas. Blacks were the state's largest minority; however, Mexicans would soon challenge Blacks for that position. The railroad and the fencing of the range had “domesticated [southern Texas] into a uniform pattern in town, farm, and ranch of Anglo rule over an Hispano population.” Changes in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, along with the spread of cotton and commercial agriculture, set the stage for the next century and the modernization of the Texas economy. Organized land companies and irrigation projects put enormous tracts of land into production, increasing the demand for Mexican labor.

THE HISTORIAN AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Throughout the nineteenth century, Texas had a history of violence. The system, however, condoned more extreme forms of terror toward Mexicans, since it considered them foreigners and not entitled to equal protection under the law. Authorities favored the North American and, in an altercation between the two races, the Mexican was presumed at fault. A mindset developed that Mexicans did not count. In South Texas, while the Mexican population outnumbered the North American, the latter controlled politics and the land. This situation alarmed the Anglo minority, who often feared a Mexican rebellion much the same as the Southern plantation owner feared a slave revolt. Therefore, Mexicans knew that any form of confrontation would be harshly punished.

The state did not rely solely on violence to control Mexicans. Class divisions in the Tejano community often led to the elites’ cooperation with North American power brokers. The state's ability to manipulate information and popular forms of “common sense” spread confusion among Mexicans. From the beginning, the historian played a key role in blaming the victim and distorting the reasons for the violence. Instead of portraying them as brutal men who used Gestapo-like tactics, historians made heroes out of the Texas Rangers.

Walter Prescott Webb, until his death in March 1963, was the most respected professor on the history faculty of the University of Texas at Austin. Past president of the American Historical Association, he wielded tremendous influence among scholars and graduate students. His most important works were The Texas Rangers, The Great Plains, Divided We Stand, and The Great Frontier; in addition, he wrote countless articles.

Webb's writings impacted on the historiography of the West. Recently, however, some scholars have begun to question many of his conclusions, implying that they are racist. Among these scholars are Américo Paredes, Llerena B. Friend, and Larry McMurtry.

McMurtry writes of Webb's The Texas Rangers: “The flaw in the book is a flaw of attitude. Webb admired the Rangers inordinately, and as a consequence the book mixes homage with history in a manner one can only think sloppy. His own facts about the Rangers contradict again and again his characterization of them as 'quiet, deliberate, gentle' men.” McMurtry then underscores some of the inconsistencies. He faults Webb's description of the Rangers's role in the siege of Mexico City: “A sneak thief stole a handkerchief from them. They shot him.” One Texas Ranger was shot, and the Rangers retaliated by killing 80 Mexicans. McMurtry concludes: “[These] are hardly the actions of men who can accurately be called gentle.” McMurtry also questions Webb's description of Ranger Captain L. H. McNeely as a “flame of courage.” McMurtry states of McNeely, “He did a brilliant, brave job, and his methods were absolutely ruthless.” McNeely
tortured Mexicans and shot them down in cold blood. On November 19, 1875, he crossed the border with 31 men and attacked a ranch that he thought housed Mexican troops. He was mistaken, and he murdered a number of innocent Mexican workers. When he discovered his error, he merely rode off. Webb's apology for the Rangers is that "affairs on the border cannot be judged by standards that hold elsewhere." McMurtry responds: "Why they can't is a question apologists for the Rangers have yet to answer. Torture is torture, whether inflicted in Germany, Algiers, or along the Nueces Strip. The Rangers, of course, claimed that their end justified their means, but people who practice torture always claim that."55

Webb had become a Ranger by proxy. And, while he must have recognized the brutality of these violent men, he closed his eyes to it. McMurtry writes:

The important point to be made about The Texas Rangers is that Webb was writing not as an historian of the frontier, but as a symbolic frontiersman. The tendency to practice symbolic frontiersmanship might almost be said to characterize the twentieth century Texan, whether he be an intellectual, a cowboy, a businessman, or a politician.57

McMurtry's work explores the effect of this frontiersmanship. Although it would be unfair to suggest that Webb intentionally distorted history, his works were, nevertheless, racist.

By the end of Webb's long career, his viewpoint of the Chicano had changed. When he published an article, in True West in October 1962, "The Bandits of Las Cuevas," he received a letter from Enrique Mendiola of Alice, Texas, whose grandfather owned the ranch that the Rangers, under McNeely, mistakenly attacked. Mendiola stated:

Most historians have classified these men as cattle thieves, bandits, etc. This might be true of some of the crowd, but most of them, including General Juan Flores, were trying to recover their own cattle that had been taken away from them when they were driven out of their little ranches in South Texas. They were driven out by such men as Mifflin Kenedy, Richard King and [the] Armstrongs.58

Webb's reply to Mendiola was revealing:

To get a balanced account, one would need the records from the south side of the river, and these are simply not available. . . . The unfortunate fact is that the Mexicans were not as good at keeping records as were the people on this side. . . . I have often wished that the Mexicans, or some one who had their confidence, would have gone among them and got their stories of the raids and counter raids. I am sure that these stories would take on a different color and tone.59

Mexicans did, in fact, record their story in corridos (ballads). The Corridos glorified the deeds of men who stood up to the oppressors and are still sung in the Río Grande Valley and in other places in the Southwest. Corridos to Juan Cortina were composed when he resisted the gringo in the 1850s.60 From those early times to the present, corridos have recorded the Mexicans' struggle against racism and injustice. They present a uniform view of the Rangers; to the Mexican, on the other hand, they were assassins, who were viewed in much the same way as Jews see the Gestapo.

The Anglo-American view of the Texas Ranger was expressed by Rip Ford, a Ranger himself, who wrote: "A Texas Ranger can ride like a Mexican, trail like an Indian, shoot like a Tennessean, and fight like the very devil!"61 T. R. Fehrenbach, in 1968, wrote in his Lone Star: A History of Texas and the Texans:

To fight Indians and Mexicans, Ranger leaders had to learn to think like both, or at least, to understand what Mexicans and Indians feared. The collision between the Anglo-American and the Mexican on the southern frontier was inevitable, but some aspects of this were unfortunate. Contact did not improve either race; it seemed to strengthen and enhance the vices of both. The Ranger arrived with instinctive Teutonic directness, preferring the honest smash of the bullet to the subtlety of the knife. But against the Mexican, bluntness turned into brutality, because it was almost impossible for the Protestant Anglo-Celt to understand the Hispanic mind. Impatient with Mexican deviousness, the Ranger reacted with straight force. But the Mexican, to keep the records straight, slipped from deviousness to outright treachery; history records that Mexicans killed more Texans by the result of parleys than on all the battlefields. Each side felt themselves justified because of the incomprehensible and despised cultural attributes of the foe. The Rangers seemed barbaric Nordics, void of all gentlemanly intrigue or guile; they saw the Mexicans as treacherous, lying people, who never wanted to do the obvious, which was to call their play and fight.62

Webb, who was even less objective in his analysis of racial differences between the Rangers and the Mexicans, wrote of the Ranger:

When we see him at his daily task of maintaining law, restoring order, and promoting peace—even though his methods be vigorous—we see him in the proper setting, a man standing alone between a society and its enemies.63

Conversely, he wrote of Mexicans:

Without disparagement it may be said that there is a cruel streak in the Mexican nature, or so the history of Texas would lead one to believe. This cruelty may be a heritage from the Spanish of the Inquisition; it may, and doubtless should, be attributed partly to the Indian blood.64

This type of reasoning justified the Rangers's violence to many Anglo-Americans; the "vigorous methods" were necessary in dealing with "savage adversaries."

Américo Paredes gives another perspective of the Rangers. He described them as representatives of Anglo ranchers and merchants who controlled the valley of the Río Grande. Their commitment was to keep order for an Anglo oligarchy. Violence served the interests of Texas capitalists as a means of main-
taining a closed social structure that excluded Mexicans from all but the lowest levels. They recruited gunslingers who burned with a hatred of Mexicans, shooting first and asking questions afterward. Paredes writes: “That the Rangers stirred up more trouble than they put down is an opinion that has been expressed by less partisan sources.”

Paredes expressed how Mexicans felt. His research was based on oral traditions and documents, and his findings refuted Webb’s distortion of reality. For example, concerning the murder of the Cerdas, a prominent family near Brownsville in 1902, Paredes wrote:

The Cerdas were prosperous ranchers near Brownsville, but it was their misfortune to live next to one of the “cattle barons” who was not through expanding yet. One day three Texas Rangers came down from Austin and “executed” the elder Cerda and one of his sons as cattle rustlers. The youngest son fled across the river, and thus the Cerda ranch was vacated. Five months later the remaining son, Alfredo Cerda, crossed over to Brownsville. He died the same day, shot down by a Ranger’s gun.

Paredes’s report was based not only on official sources but on eyewitness accounts. Marcelo Garza, Sr., of Brownsville, a respected businessman, told Paredes that a Ranger shot unarmed Alfredo, stalking him “like a wild animal.”

Webb’s version was based on Ranger sources. According to Webb, Baker, a Ranger, surprised Ramón De La Cerda branding a calf that belonged to the King Ranch. De La Cerda shot at Baker and the Ranger shot back, killing Ramón in self-defense. The Ranger was cleared at an inquest, but Mexicans did not accept this verdict and disinterred De La Cerda’s body and conducted their own inquest. They found

“evidence” [quotes are Webb’s] . . . to the effect that De La Cerda had been dragged and otherwise maltreated. Public sentiment was sharply divided. . . . The findings of the secret inquest, together with wild rumors growing out of it, only served to inflame the minds of De La Cerda’s supporters.

Again, Webb’s sources were compromised, since he based his conclusion that the people were being agitated on Ranger reports. Late in his career, Webb admitted that a double standard of justice operated for Mexicans and Anglos. Therefore, it was natural that they should question findings of the inquest, especially the facts behind this particular shooting. The Cerdas were a well-known and respected family whose land the Kings coveted.

More telling is Webb’s quote as to who posted bail for Baker: “Captain Brooks reported that Baker made bail in the sum of ten thousand dollars, and that he was supported by such people as the Kings, Major John Armstrong—McNeely’s lieutenant—and the Lyman Brothers.”

Further, Webb did not question the financial support of the Kings for the Rangers. Shortly afterward Baker shot Alfredo. The Cerda affair exposed the use of violence to take over land and then legalize murder through the court system.
While Cortez and other Mexican rebels easily fit the Hobson model of the primitive rebel, Juan N. Cortina, who has been called the “Red Robber of the Rio Grande,” goes beyond the bandido model. Unlike the social bandit, he had an organization with a definite ideology that led guerrilla warfare against the gringo establishment. As with so much of the Chicano’s history, Mexican records must be examined, especially those of Tamaulipas, to understand the rise of Juan Cortina.17

As in the case of the social rebels, an attempt has been made to discredit Cortina’s motives. Many Anglo-American historians have labeled him an outlaw, portraying him as an illiterate rogue who came from a good family but “turned bad.” Lyman Woodman, a retired military officer, wrote a biography of Cortina, describing him as a “soldier, bandit, murderer, cattle thief, mail robber, civil and military governor of the State of Tamaulipas, and general in the Mexican army” who was, in short, a gringo hater.74

An analysis of Cortina is difficult. He is important because he proves that strong ties existed between Tejanos and Mexicans south of the Rio Bravo. A change of flag did not lessen these bonds.

Juan “Cheno” Cortina, a product of Mexico’s northern frontier, was born on May 16, 1822, in Camargo, located on the Mexican side of the river. His parents were from the upper class, and his mother owned a land grant in the vicinity of Brownsville where the family moved to during the War of 1846.75 Cortina, a regionalist, identified with northern Mexico and had fought to defend it from the Anglo-Americans.

In the period after the war, however, Cortina gave little indication that he was a champion of Mexican rights. He backed the filibustering expeditions led by José María Cabajal in 1851 which were financed by local Anglo merchants who wanted to separate the Rio Grande Valley from Texas to form the Republic of the Sierra Madre. The separatists, led by people like King and Kenedy, were hardly friends of Mexicans. He also rustled Mexican cattle in partnership with the nefarious German Adolphus Glavecke. Glavecke testified against Cortina in the spring of 1859, and Cortina was indicted for cattle rustling. Glavecke continued a personal vendetta against Cortina. He had political clout, serving at various times as alderman for the city of Brownsville, and played a major role in building the legend of Cortina as a notorious bandit.76

The betrayal, indictment, and prosecution embittered Cortina and changed his life. Cortina’s revolutionary career began accidentally on a hot July morning in 1859. While returning to his mother’s ranch, he saw Marshal Bob Spears pistol-whipping a Mexican who had had too much to drink. The victim had worked for Cheno’s mother. Cheno offered to take responsibility for the offender, but Spears replied, “What is it to you, you damned Mexican?” Cortina fired a warning shot, and then shot the marshal in the shoulder. He then rode off with the victim.

With no possibility of a fair trial, Cheno prepared to leave for Tampico, Mexico. Before his departure with 50 to 60 followers, he rode into Brownsville and raised the Mexican flag. Cortina’s detractors claim that he plundered the city; however, his partisans point out that, when he had the city at his mercy, he did not rob and steal, as he certainly would have done had he been a bandit. He and his men attacked only those who had blatantly persecuted Mexicans, killing the jailer and four other men, including William P. Neal and George Morris, both of whom had murdered innocent Mexicans but continued to walk the streets.77

Cortina did not plan to lead a revolution when, from his mother’s Rancho del Carmén, he published a circular justifying his actions. His “declaration of grievances” reviewed the injustice that Mexicans suffered at the hands of the occupiers. According to Cortina, he had gone to Brownsville solely to punish those guilty of terrorizing Mexicans, and he appealed to the Anglo-American government to bring the “oppressors of the Mexicans” to justice and not to protect them. Cortina, after issuing his statement, again prepared to emigrate to Mexico.

Seeking revenge, Brownsville citizens took Tomás Cabrera prisoner. Cabrera, a man of advanced age, was Cortina’s friend. When Cortina learned that his friend had been arrested, he recruited an army of about 1,200 men, demanding the old man’s release and threatening to burn Brownsville if the townspeople did not comply. The Brownsville Tigers (the local militia) and the Mexican army at Matamoros attacked him, but Cortina defeated them in battle, whereupon the gringos lynched Cabrera. Rangers were called, but he defeated them as well. The merchants protested to Mexican authorities, but the Mexicans disclaimed responsibility, since Cortina was a U.S. citizen.78

Flushed by his victories, he “envisioned raising an army powerful enough to force the Texas authorities to grant the Mexicans those rights . . . guaranteed them by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.”79 He issued a proclamation that “reviewed the crimes against Mexicans” and suggested that the colonized form a secret society to achieve justice. He called for the liberation of Mexicans and the extermination of the “tyrants.” He charged that the Mexicans’ land had been stolen from them by “flocks of vampires, in guise of men.” Cortina continued:

It would appear that justice had fled from this world, leaving you to the caprice of your oppressors . . . . The race has never humbled itself before the conqueror. . . . Mexicans! My part is taken; the voice of revelation whispers to me that to me is entrusted the work of breaking the chains of your slavery, and that the Lord will enable me, with powerful arm to fight against our enemies.80

Not all Mexicans supported Cortina; the upper class often allied itself with the ruling class.81 Cortina’s support was among the poor, a fact that is admitted by Ranger “Rip” Ford:

Sometimes Cortina would make a speech in the market place and the poor would listen intently to what he had to say. He would not harm the innocent, but would fight for the emancipation of the hungry peons along the border. . . . They must love the land for the land was all they had.82

State authorities reacted violently. Many innocent people became victims. Federal troops poured into the valley, forcing Cortina across the border. A state
mounted battalions of 75 men each roamed the region. During the spring and
places. Merchants, claiming that they were losing 5,000 cows a month, increased
the tensions as they called for more federal troops and demanded that the United
had formed a cavalry corps. Rangers had 14 companies in 1870; when they were
disbanded two years later, 27 state militia minutemen companies took their
authorities by law are more dreaded than Cortina."

The San Antonio Light played up the Cortina threat, headlining, "Browns-
Cortina. Rumors circulated in the national press that Cortina had
captured Corpus Christi. Coincidentally, this came at a time when the U.S.
government was removing troops from Brownsville, Laredo, and Eagle Pass.45

In February 1860 Washington sent Robert E. Lee to Texas to lead the
expeditions against Cortina. Mexican authorities cooperated with Lee. However,
throughout March Lee could not catch the elusive Cortina and began referring
to "that myth Cortina."

Rumors circulated that Cortina threatened all strategic points, but by May
Lee believed that Cortina had left Texas. Cortina had not abandoned his war with
the gringo; he had merely shifted his base of operations. He went to Tamaulipas,
where from 1861 to 1867 he defended the state against the French. He became
for a time its military governor as well as a general in the Mexican army. After
the war with France, he allegedly controlled the politics of Tamaulipas, making
and unmaking governors. He cleaned up banditry in Tamaulipas. Anglo-America-
cans claimed that he "told thieves in Mexico that he would hang them for stealing
in that country, but that there was plenty for them to take in Texas." From his
Mexican base he supposedly led rustling operations against the Anglo-Americans
and had a flourishing trade with Cuba, thus hitting at the heart of Anglo-
American concerns—its economy.44

On the U.S. side, a network of supporters, who acted as spies, aided Cortina.
It was reported that King and Kenedy lost 200,000 head of cattle and 5,300 horses
from 1869 to 1872. Rip Ford wrote: "Cortina hates Americans, particularly Texans. . . . He has an old and deep-seated grudge against Brownsville."47

A reign of terror followed that is difficult to assess because of the sensation-
alism and outright lies of the press. Cortina was used as a pretext for violence.
Robert Taylor, a commissioner sent by Houston to investigate conditions on the
border, filed a confidential report: "I am sorry to say a good many of the latter
[Anglos] . . . who have been Burning and Hanging and shooting Mexicans without
authority by law are more dreaded than Cortina."48

The 1870s saw an intensification of hostilities between North Americans
and Mexicans. Vigilantes took the law into their hands spreading more terror.
They effectively used Cortina as an excuse, stating in October 1871 that Cortina
had formed a cavalry corps. Rangers had 14 companies in 1870; when they were
disbanded two years later, 27 state militia minutemen companies took their places.
Merchants, claiming that they were losing 5,000 cows a month, increased
the tensions as they called for more federal troops and demanded that the United
States take over northern Mexico to the Sierra Madres.49

The Frontier Protection Act of 1874 reestablished the Rangers, and six
mounted battalions of 75 men each roamed the region. During the spring and
summer of that year a virtual race war raged. Anglo ranchers had more than
adequate support in these wars: "After a group attacked Woakes' Store some
fifteen miles from Corpus Christi in 1875, Anglos began general warfare against
Mexicans in the region, killing wantonly many peaceful Mexican residents who
had no connection with any bandit activity."96 Naturally, they blamed Cortina
for the invasion.97

The Anglo forces had no success against Cortina, but during the 1870s, as
U.S. political influence with the Mexican government increased, pressure was
brought to eliminate him. In 1875 he was taken to Mexico City and jailed on
charges of cattle rustling. When Porfirio Díaz seized power, Cortina was exiled
to Mexico City. He did not return to the border until the spring of 1890, when
he visited the area for a brief time, receiving a hero's welcome.

**THE PEOPLE'S REVOLT**

The El Paso Salt War of 1877 is an example of a people's revolt. Mexicans in the
country banded together along lines of race and class, taking direct action in
response to the political chicanery of foreigners. The mob's action was not based
on an abstract political ideology, but was an emotional response to the oppression.
It was a class struggle against the rich, powerful gringo establishment. It became
a people's revolt against the foreign occupier's domination.

Mexicans settled in the El Paso area in the early 1600s, and until the 1840s
most of the population lived south of the Rio Grande. After the Mexican-American
War, settlements sprang up north of the river, capitalizing on the Chihuahua-
Texas-New Mexico trade. Soon a handful of Anglo-Americans joined the over-
whelmingly Mexican population in El Paso County. The Anglos took immediate
control of the county's politics, managing the Mexican vote through agents whom
the bosses rewarded by patronage. The Mexican population, dispersed in small
hamlets around the presenta-day city of El Paso, was not familiar with the way
Anglo politics worked. By 1870 El Paso, like Brownsville and San Antonio, was
"dominated by a handful of leading merchants or financial men." Anglo-America-
cans held the majority of elected offices as well as the wealth of the county.91

In 1862, Mexicans lived marginally. Their existence was lightened by the
discovery of salt at a location about 100 miles from El Paso. People rode to the
salt beds to collect salt for their personal use as well as for sale to Mexicans south
of the river. It did not occur to them to claim the salt beds, for the pits were
community property. Sam Maverick, from San Antonio, staked out a large por-
tion of the beds. Still Mexicans used the remaining portion, content to extract
what they could use.

A group of North American politicians, who became known as the Salt
Ring, conspired to gain control of the beds used by the Mexicans. In the election
of 1870 A. J. Fountain, leader of the anti-Ring forces, ran against Salt Ring
leader, W. W. Mills, for state senator. Fr. Antonio Borajo, a local parish priest
of Italian descent, supported Fountain, who promised to make the pits public.

When Fountain attempted to keep his campaign promise, Borajo demanded
that he stake out the beds and share the profits with him. The state senator
refused, ending his political career. Borajo then struck an alliance with Louis Cardis, another Italian; they supported Charles Howard in 1875 for county judge. Cardis, it was agreed, would run for state senator. Both candidates were elected. Borajo and Cardis both spoke Spanish and were able to manipulate the Mexican majority. Once elected, however, Howard backed out of the alliance and staked out the beds in his father-in-law's name.9 In 1877, Howard lost his bid for reelection, having earned the enmity of the Italians, but he kept control of the beds.

Howard attempted to charge Mexicans for the salt they removed, and in June 1877 he warned them not to remove any salt.44 When Borajo incited the people from the pulpit, the bishop ousted him for meddling in politics. The friction continued, and two Mexicans were arrested when local authorities learned that they intended to remove salt. Several hundred nortenos (countrymen) of one of the arrested men forcibly freed him and called mass meetings to demand their rights to the salt.

Soon afterward, they captured Howard and held him prisoner until he promised to leave El Paso and to post a bond to guarantee that he would not return. Although Howard left El Paso, he intended to return, knowing that the authorities would support him. Upon his return he shot Cardis down in cold blood; local officials refused to prosecute him or forfeit his bond.45

Texas governor Richard B. Hubbard had ordered Major John B. Jones of the Texas Rangers into the area. When he arrived, the Mexican people approached him. They produced the U.S. Constitution and showed him the amendments which gave them the right to assemble and bear arms. Jones guaranteed them that Howard would be arrested and charged with murder.46 Howard was arrested, but Jones had a change of mind, and he actively cooperated with Howard. Howard wrote a friend that he "did not wish to see general punishment visited on the rioters, who were ignorant as mules and misled, but thought that the leaders should be punished and made to respect the law," concluding that, "if the governor don't [sic] help us, I am going to bushwhacking."47

Local authorities released Howard and supported his claim. Rangers set out with him to see to it that Mexicans did not take the salt. Francisco "Chico" Barela, an Ysleta farmer, organized a group of 18 Chicanos to oppose the Rangers. At first they hesitated to take direct action, but when word arrived from Borajo, "Shoot the gringo and I will absolve you," they shot Howard on December 17, 1877.48

The Salt War had begun. Moves to punish the Mexicans touched off several days of rioting, which were finally suppressed by Rangers, posses, and other gringos. Governor Hubbard sent to Silver City for 30 hired gunmen, who were put under the command of Sheriff Charles Kerner. Among them was John Kinney, the self-styled King of Cattle Rustlers. The revolt was put down brutally "with rapes, homicides, and other crimes."49 Many Mexicans fled to Texas, where during the winter they perished from exposure and starvation. The gang from New Mexico was finally dispersed. Since it was claimed that they were acting to suppress a revolt, no one was ever punished. In fact, the Texas Rangers even demanded that Mexico pay $31,000 in reparations.100

According to Professor Seymour Connor, "The denouement of the affair included a congressional investigation, a diplomatic exchange between the United States and Mexico, and reestablishment of Fort Bliss in El Paso. Thereafter, no open attempt was made to subvert private ownership of the salt deposits."101 Denial of community ownership of the salt pits represented the removal of a remnant of rights to which Mexicans were entitled before the conquest. The fact that Mexicans were in the majority might have afforded them some protection had they had access to the political power of the new system imposed on them. However, even the potential advantage of their numbers was soon lost as the commercial and industrial boom of the 1880s brought a flood of Anglos to the area.

SUMMARY

The Texas War set the pattern for North American–Mexican relations. "Remember the Alamo!" justified the Anglo-American invasion and fanned racial hatred and violence toward Mexicans. The 1830s and 1840s saw a period of Anglo-American nationalism and patriotism; North Americans seemed intent on driving every Mexican out of Texas. The political system legitimized police repression and gave the Texas Rangers a license to murder Mexicans. By the 1850s, Mexicans had virtually abandoned central and eastern Texas.

The 1850s saw the makings of vast ranching empires. These operations required Mexican labor. Newcomers made fortunes along the border by smuggling and cattle rustling. Mexicans themselves became pawns. Poor Mexicans generally retained their Mexican nationalism and culture. Their isolation and Anglo racism prevented the assimilation into Euroamerican society. In southern Texas, North American merchants and ranchers, with the support of local government officials and the Texas Rangers, expanded at the expense of the small Mexican rancher. Finally, clashes between the races frequently led to lynchings and other forms of terror. Mexicans resisted these outrages. In the case of Juan Cortina, rebellion reached revolutionary proportions.

The structure of the labor market changed after the Civil War. Black emancipation led to labor shortages, creating a demand for more Mexican workers. The expansion of cotton, an end to the plantation, and the shortage of labor made sharecropping common by the 1870s. After the arrival of the railroads, large numbers of North Americans migrated into the Lone Star state as a result of heavy real estate promotion by land companies.

This second North American invasion further stratified Tejanos, and their proportional decrease made them more vulnerable. The railroad ended the frontier and accelerated the fencing of the open range. Commercial outposts such as San Antonio became transportation centers, encouraging a thriving cattle industry. In the 1880s, South Texas underwent a transition from a ranch to a farm economy. This change required more capital and more Mexican labor.

The poor Mexicans had limited options. Machine politics became popular in San Antonio and South Texas after the Civil War, following the pattern of eastern bossism. Patronage and an informal relief system made machines palata-
NOTES


16. Tom Lea, * The King Ranch*. 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1957). The facts of King’s life presented in the following discussion are based on Lea’s work. (See vol. 1, p. 457.)


20. de León, p. 140.


23. de León, p. 126.


35. Shelton, pp. 39, 76–79.


37. Shelton, pp. 98, 123, 90.


44. * New York Times*, November 18, 1893.


52. de León, *The Tejano Community*, p. 22.


55. McMurtry, p. 40. Anglo-Americans in Texas generally applauded McNelly. According to Webster, pp. 149, 152, rancher Richard King gave the Rangers a $500 bonus in appreciation for services rendered. In Las Cuevas, however, McNelly encountered a superior force of Mexicans, and it took U.S. troops to bail him out.

56. McMurtry, p. 41.

57. McMurtry, p. 43. The renowned historian W. E. Hollon, in a letter to the author in October 1972, wrote that a few weeks before Webb was killed, he said “that he did not feel like writing any more, but that he regretted that he probably would not have time to re-write his Texas Rangers and
correct his comments and prejudices about the Mexicans as reflected in that book. All of us who
grew up in Texas on Texas history two generations ago, did not know any better in our attitudes
toward the Negroes and Mexicans. It takes a long time to grow out of one's environment. So,
don't be too harsh on Webb. He grew into the most tolerant, intellectual giant that Texas ever
produced."

64. Webb, p. xv.
65. Paredes, p. 31.
66. Paredes, p. 29.
73. The best work on the Cortinas years is Webster. See also Pedro Castillo and Albert Camarillo, eds., Furia y Muerte: Los Bandidos Chicanos (Los Angeles: Aztlán, 1973).
76. Evans, pp. 107, 118; Report of the Mexican Commission, pp. 28-29.
77. Webb, p. 178; Goldfinch, p. 44; Webster, p. 18; Evans, pp. 107, 121.
81. Evans, p. 111.
82. Ford, Rip Ford's Texar pp. 308-309.
83. Woodman, p. 53.
84. Woodman, p. 55.
85. Evans, pp. 105, 113.
88. Evans, p. 127.
90. Evans, p. 132.