

APACHE MISRULE

A Bungling Indian Agent Sets the Military Arm in Motion

(Continued)

By JOHN P. CLUM

WE are indebted to General Pope for the very important information that Col. Carr arrested the medicine man at the Indian village without resistance, and conveyed his prisoner five or six miles in the direction of Fort Apache without difficulty of any sort. It was not until he had encamped for the night that the mutinous scouts came in and fired upon Capt. Hentig and some soldiers. All other reports have given the impression that the shooting occurred at the Indian village, thus implying that a considerable number of the White Mountain Apaches were involved in the attack.

The details of the plan adopted for quieting the Indians and apprehending and punishing the mutinous scouts is sufficiently outlined by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Price in his annual report for 1881, as follows:

"Six days' notice was given throughout the reserve that a 'peace line' would be declared on the reserve on September 21st—outside of whose limits all Indians found would be considered hostile. The White Mountain Indians came in to the agency and sub-agency in small parties, where they were required to surrender to the military officers unconditionally, except that they asked and were promised a fair trial for their individual crimes."

"On September 20th five chiefs who had been leaders surrendered, and during the ensuing weeks sixty principal men followed their example. *Several of the mutinous scouts had been arrested and brought in by the agency Indian police force and delivered up to the military*, and by the close of the month all were in or accounted for, and little remained to be done but to proceed with the trials."

In the same report Commissioner Price makes the following important statement:

"I desire to call attention to the loyalty shown by five-sixths of the Indians on the San Carlos reserve. They have rendered invaluable and hazardous service as police and scouts."

Commissioner Price says the Indians "asked and were promised a fair trial for their individual *crimes*." The Commissioner has chosen a *harsh and unwarranted phrase*—what the Indians sought was a *fair trial* based upon their individual *conduct*—not individual *crimes*. They had not committed any *crimes*, and they declared their innocence in a most emphatic manner when they came in *voluntarily and surrendered to the military arm knowing that they must stand trial before that stern tribunal*.

There was no uprising among the White Mountain Apaches. They had not committed any depredations and were not insubordinate. Doubtless they were much excited because of conditions created by those who should have been their best friends. Tiffany and Carr had blundered; the troops were making rapid marches through all the "exposed districts" (whatever that may mean), and there were rumors of more troops and big guns being rushed toward their homes and cornfields (their "Stronghold") on the Cibicu.

Spectacular maneuvers had been employed to create this excitement, and now equally spectacular maneuvers must be invoked to *quiet* these much disturbed Apaches. The law presumes a man innocent until the contrary is proven. But the military arm was in motion and chose to presume that the *Indians they had excited* were guilty and must be brought to trial.

Upwards of one hundred of these Indian prisoners were escorted to Fort Grant for trial. Among these were the five mutinous scouts who "had been arrested and brought in by the agency Indian police force and delivered up to the military," and *these five mutinous scouts*

were the only Indians found guilty before the military tribunal at Fort Grant.

The mass of the White Mountain Indians had not committed any crimes. They had not been hostile, or even insubordinate. But they had been *excited* and must be *quieted*. So they were *humiliated* by the order demanding their *unconditional surrender to the military arm*. Then they were marched under military guard eighty miles to Fort Grant. How long they remained at Fort Grant, and just how they were treated during the time they were held as prisoners at that post I do not know. But, eventually, after much annoyance and *inconvenience these Indians were declared innocent and quieted* and were permitted to trek back to their homes and cornfields on the Cibicu. Due publicity was given to this bluster of the military arm, *but the humiliated and depressed Apaches had no friend ready and willing to tell the story of their misfortune and helplessness.*

Of the five mutinous scouts convicted, two were imprisoned at Alcatraz, and the remaining three, "Dandy Jim," "Dead Shot" and "Skippy," were hanged at Fort Grant, Arizona, on March 3, 1882.

The vaulting ambition of the military arm *to exterminate the Apache* met an inglorious and overwhelming defeat before they were able "to strike the savages, such a blow in actual battle" as the General of the army had demanded. *The White Mountain Apaches refused to be either hostile or disobedient.* They surrendered to the military arm promptly, voluntarily and unconditionally (merely begging for a fair trial) notwithstanding they knew they were submitting their fate to a stern tribunal which preferred that "these Apaches *be killed by bullets rather than by rope,*" or, in plain English, *that they be executed without trial.*

Meanwhile it became obvious "that the whole affair had been grossly exaggerated" and that twenty-two companies of reinforcement had been rushed into Arizona on

a fool's errand. The three batteries of artillery sent to Arizona in September were back to their California stations in October. Troop G, 1st Cavalry, returned in November. Troop I, 1st Cavalry, and the five companies of the 8th Infantry were back in California in December, General Willcox having secured permission to detain these troops in Arizona for "work on the Rocky Canyon road." Troop C, 1st Cavalry, the last of the reinforcements from California, left Arizona in March, 1882. The troops from New Mexico *were ordered back to their home stations a day or two after their arrival at Fort Apache*, but this order was rescinded when a considerable part of the Chiricahuas *fled in fear* from the sub-agency on September 30, 1881.

"The Military arm" has never admitted the actual causes that led to this flight of the "wild Chiricahuas." General Willcox says: "The causes of their sudden change are unknown." General Carter's statement is well worth thoughtful consideration—"Troops of the regiment *made rapid marches through all the exposed districts, gradually concentrating at and near the agency, where, for some unexplained reason, the wild Chiricahuas under Ju (Hoo) and Geronimo, who were at the San Carlos agency (sub-agency), fled toward Mexico, leaving a trail of blood and pillage to mark their hurried flight.*"

It is exceedingly interesting to note that General Carter has, *himself, concisely recorded the "unexplained reason why the wild Chiricahuas fled toward Mexico, leaving a trail of blood and pillage to mark their hurried flight."* The "Military arm" had been "set in action." *The troops were making "rapid marches," and gradually concentrating at and near the agency.* "Boots, boots, boots, boots, moving up and down again." This rapid marching and counter-marching of the pale-faced cohorts, *fully equipped for mortal combat, was continued for weeks, and the greater part of these "operations in the field against hostile Apaches" were concentrated in the Gila*

valley, *sixty or seventy miles from "the Cibicu country."* The final and fatal "*motion*" of "*the military arm*" occurred on the afternoon of September 20, when *Major Biddle came blustering and blundering* down the Gila Valley from Camp Thomas *at the head of three troops of cavalry and halted menacingly* in the midst of the Apache camps which were located in the vicinity of the sub-agency.

The reader should understand that Fort Apache and the Cibicu country were both situated entirely within the boundaries of the San Carlos reservation and about sixty miles north of the Gila valley; that Camp Thomas, the San Carlos agency and the sub-agency were all situated in the Gila valley; that Camp Thomas was several miles east of the eastern boundary of the reservation and about thirty-five miles east from the San Carlos agency, *and that the sub-agency was about midway between these two post.*

Although the formal request from Agent Tiffany for military assistance upon the reservation was dated August 14th, it is apparent that such action had been decided upon prior to that date as General Willcox tells us that on August 13th "*troops were ordered forward from points below and west of Camp Thomas.*" The points below Camp Thomas were Fort Grant, Fort Bowie and Fort Lowell. It is probable that a majority of the eleven companies brought in from California, were ordered to report at some one of these three posts. All troops would be brought to Camp Thomas or down from Fort Apache in the "*rapid marches*" necessary to accomplish the gradual concentration "*at and near the agency,*"—*and all troops moving between Camp Thomas and San Carlos would pass the sub-agency where "the wild Chiricahuas" were located.*

It is very important to note here that the "*wild Chiricahuas*" camped near the sub-agency included a small band under Chief Hoo, and that *within the past year* these

Indians had been induced to abandon their stronghold in the fastnesses of the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico and to locate on the San Carlos reservation. And it will be helpful if we remember that the Chiricahuas, the Southern Chiricahuas, and the Warm Spring Apaches had been friends and allies for many years, and that the last of the troublesome hostiles were recruited from these three bands. Also that in some records Hoo's name is spelled "Ju" or "Juh," an alleged Spanish name, in the pronunciation of which the "j" is given the "h" sound.

On page 18 of the Review for January, 1928, is recorded the details of my meeting with Geronimo, Hoo and Nolgee, chiefs of the band of so-called "Southern Chiricahuas," who had elected to include themselves in the treaty made by General Howard with Cochise in 1872. This meeting occurred at Apache Pass on the afternoon of June 8, 1876. During that night this band of Southern Chiricahuas fled into Mexico. The main band of the Chiricahuas under the sons of Cochise—Tah-zay and Nah-chee—were removed to the San Carlos reservation at that time and located near the sub-agency. But Hoo and his followers maintained their stronghold in the Sierra Madra mountains of Mexico for more than four years thereafter, and it was *not until January, 1881*, that this band of Apaches were induced to abandon their nomadic life and locate with their friends at the San Carlos sub-agency.

The general situation of the Chiricahua camp at the sub-agency in August, 1881, was, substantially, as follows: Nah-chee and his band had been living there a *little more than five years*. They had been orderly and contented and their loyalty was not questioned. Geronimo was brought to San Carlos *in irons* in May, 1877. After his release from the guardhouse he had strayed away for a visit with Hoo and his band in the Sierra Madres, but after his return to the reservation in 1879, he appeared to have settled down to the routine of camp life at the sub-agency. Hoo and his band had been on the reservation

only a few months, but they insisted that they were sincere in their promise to remain at peace—and their general conduct sustained this declaration.

With the arrival of Hoo and his band at the sub-agency in January, 1881, practically all of the Apaches west of the Rio Grande had been assembled on the San Carlos reservation. This plan of concentration had been progressing since 1875, and now that it had actually been accomplished, the utmost wisdom and discretion should have been employed in the direction and management of these Indians in order that they might remain at peace upon the reservation. Especial care should have been taken not to alarm the bands under Geronimo, and Hoo, as these had only recently abandoned their unrestrained nomadic habits to which they had been accustomed all of their lives.

Another matter that should have been given particular consideration was the very important fact that there had been no troops upon the reservation since the Chiricahuas were removed from Apache Pass and located at the sub-agency in June, 1876. And it may not be doubted that Geronimo had finally settled down at the sub-agency, and that Hoo and his followers had been persuaded to join the Chiricahuas there chiefly because of the fact that there were no troops at San Carlos, and that the Apaches, themselves, were enforcing order and discipline through the medium of the agency police, with the result that a condition of peace and security prevailed throughout the reservation.

Soon after the outbreak of September 30 Agent Tiffany submitted a special report to Washington which is included in the annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1881, as follows:

"These bands (the Chiricahuas) have been perfectly quiet during the whole White Mountain trouble. They have been reported out on the war-path in New Mexico and committing depredations

all over the country, but every time inquiry has been made the chiefs and men have always been found in their camps.

"Ten days, or thereabouts, before the present outbreak they came to me to hear what was going on, and what so many troops meant about the agencies. I explained it to them and told them to have no fear, that none of the Indians who had been peaceable would be molested in any way. They said they had been out on the war-path (those under Hoo) and had come in in good faith and were contented, that they did not want war or to fight. They inquired if the movements of troops had anything to do with what they had done in Mexico. I assured them it had not. THEY SHOOK HANDS, MUCH DELIGHTED AND WENT BACK.

"Then the military move was made on the sub-agency to arrest Chiefs George and Bonito of the White Mountain Indians, and Issue Clerk Hoag at the sub-agency, who has been very efficient and judicious in all this trouble, tells me that they were LITERALLY SCARED AWAY BY THIS MOVEMENT OF THE TROOPS."

It should also be remembered that in the meantime the companies of infantry and three troops of cavalry had arrived at Fort Apache on September 24th followed by six troops of cavalry on September 25th—all reinforcements from New Mexico. An Indian could travel from Fort Apache to the sub-agency in a single day, and, therefore, we need not doubt that the "wild Chiricabuas" were fully informed as to the arrival of reinforcements at Fort Apache two or three days prior to the outbreak. They also knew that the group of Indians held as prisoners of war by the military at San Carlos had been increasing daily, until between fifty and seventy-five were in custody. The most alarming feature of the situation was the fact that no troops had been on the reservation since October, 1875, but now heavily armed battalions were making "rapid marches" to and about the agency and heavy reinforcements were arriving from the east and from the west.

It was inevitable that these menacing movements of the "military arm" should spread alarm and unrest among the Indians upon the reservation. In fact the military could not have improved much upon their maneuvers if

they had deliberately planned to force an outbreak, and the only explanation of these maneuvers is that they were in harmony with the policy outlined by the Secretary of War in his annual report for 1878, and which we have heretofore quoted as follows: "I remain of the opinion that permanent peace in the Indian country can only be maintained by the exhibition of force sufficient to overawe and keep in subjection the more warlike and dangerous of the savages. We should confront them with such military force as will teach them the futility of an attempt to resist the power of the United States."

The maneuvers were also in harmony with General Sherman's telegram of September 29, 1881, which we have heretofore quoted as follows: "*Sooner or later some considerable number of these Apaches will have to be killed by bullets rather than by rope.*"

The maneuvers were also in harmony with *the blood-thirsty sentiment* expressed by General Willcox in his annual report, dated August 31, 1882, and which we have heretofore quoted as follows: "*We were unable to strike the savages such a blow in actual battle as the General of the army demanded, and as the country ardently looked for—no more than I did myself.*"

And these maneuvers were absolutely unnecessary and unwarranted. The Apaches on the reservation were not hostile and had no desire to go on the war-path. Even after the mutinous military scouts had attacked Colonel Carr's command General McDowell said, "The fact of the troops finding the medicine-man and his people in their homes, where they had been planting corn, *shows that they were not then for war.*" And General Pope said: "There was certainly no concerted action or prearranged attack. It became known that the whole affair had been grossly exaggerated. All *supposed hostiles* were surrendering without firing a shot or offering any resistance, and there were no indications whatever of premeditation or intention to begin general hostilities."

General Carter was with Colonel Carr's command at the time of the attack and was on the reservation all of the time during the maneuvers above referred to, and he tells us that, "the failure of the messiah to come back to life, as he had promised to do if killed, cooled the ardor of the White Mountain Apaches, and they rapidly drifted back to their reservation camps."

Apparently the "wild Chiricahuas" had been regarded as *positively friendly*, for the reason that General Willcox, in referring to the outbreak of September 30, says: "*The causes of their sudden change are unknown.*" *We must not forget that Agent Tiffany was primarily responsible for all of these disastrous maneuvers because on August 14th he made a formal demand that the "military arm be set in motion."* Immediately after the outbreak Agent Tiffany reported to Washington that the Chiricahuas had been "*perfectly quiet during the whole of the White Mountain trouble.*"

But the Chiricahuas *were alarmed*, and that alarm took them to the San Carlos agency *several times*. On two occasions they were talking to the agent when telegrams arrived inquiring as to their whereabouts. And then, *about ten days before the outbreak*, they visited the agent again to learn "*what was going on, and what so many troops meant about the agencies.*"

In that inquiry General Willcox could have found a startling explanation of "the causes of their sudden change." Agent Tiffany says, "*I explained it to them.*" It is most unfortunate that the agent did not include that *explanation* in his report to Washington. *It would be mighty interesting to know just how he explained to the untutored Indians all that "was going on, and what so many troops meant about the agencies."* Ish-chee and his band had been at the sub-agency *five years*. *These had fully demonstrated their loyalty.* The little band under Hoo had been on the reservation, *only about eight months*, but they declared they had come in from the war-path "*in*

good faith and were contented, that they did not want war or to fight." The agent says he told them "to have no fear, that none of the Indians who had been peaceable would be molested in any way." But they still evinced their alarm when they asked the agent specifically "if the movements of the troops had anything to do with what they had done in Mexico?" The agent says he "assured them it had not." Thereupon "they shook hands much delighted and went back" to their camp at the sub-agency.

"Then the military move was made on the sub-agency." That little sentence expresses volumes. It explains the sorry jumble and bungling of the whole situation. There were two administrations operative upon the reservation, but the assurances of the one and the movements of the other did not coordinate. Agent Tiffany was no longer in a position to "assure" the Indians of anything. He had stupidly, but voluntarily, relinquished that vital feature of authority—so necessary to the success of his administration—when he made formal demand that "the military arm be set in motion" upon the reservation. He assured the Chiricahuas that they would not "be molested in any way," and the Indians returned to their camps "delighted" with this promise of continued peace. Then, suddenly, about a week later, without apparent necessity or cause,—and without the slightest warning—three troops of cavalry came galloping down from Camp Thomas and halted in battle array at the very threshold of their rude camps.

Under date of Tucson, Arizona, October 12, 1881—just two weeks after the outbreak—General Willcox states that "the causes of their sudden change are unknown," and in his book published in December, 1917, General Carter says the Indians fled "for some unexplained reason." After a lapse of thirty-six years the "military arm" still pleads ignorance as to the actual cause of the outbreak of the "wild Chiricahuas," and yet, as a matter of fact, it

is, by far, an easier task to discover the causes *why the Indians fled, than it is to explain the reason why the troops came.*

The bands of White Mountain Apaches under the leaders "George" and "Bonito" had their camps near the sub-agency and received their rations at that point. An edict had been promulgated commanding that all Indians suspected of aiding or abetting the disturbance on the Cibicu must report at the agency and surrender to the military authorities as prisoners of war. When George and Bonito were informed that they were among the suspects they came in to the sub-agency *voluntarily* on September 25 and reported to Ezra Hoag, the employe in charge. Without delay, accompanied by Mr. Hoag, they proceeded to Camp Thomas and *surrendered to General Willcox*, the Department Commander, who, without hesitation, *released them on parole.*

Five days later, "*for some unexplained reason,*" General Willcox decided that the parole he had granted these leaders should be terminated and that they should be taken into custody. Doubtless General Willcox was acting within his official rights in arriving at this decision, although he has not favored us with the slightest hint as to the causes that led to this *sudden change* in his attitude toward these two suspects, but when he ordered three troops of cavalry, fully equipped for war, to proceed, forthwith, upon the reservation for the purpose of arresting George and Bonito and bringing them and their bands, to Camp Thomas, *he blundered unnecessarily, stupidly and fatally.*

Agent Tiffany was still *in charge of the reservation.* It is true that, six weeks before, he had asked that troops be sent to arrest the medicine-man on the Cibicu, *but he had not asked the troops to arrest anyone at the sub-agency.* There were no hostiles there, nor any disturbance of any sort. George and Bonito had surrendered voluntarily on September 25, and there is no reason to doubt that they would surrender again promptly on September 30,

if told to do so. The San Carlos agency police were faithfully and efficiently executing every duty assigned to them, *regardless of kinships or hazards.*

If there had been any need for a display of force, and the San Carlos Apache police had been put on the job, they would have performed the service promptly without causing any excitement. There would have been no alarming threat. There would have been no fuss and feathers and blustering. There would have been no outbreak.

But there was not the slightest need for a display of force. The agent was not consulted in the matter. *He was not even notified that troops were about to be sent upon the reservation for the purpose of making arrests. The agent and the agency police were absolutely ignored.* "The military arm had been set in motion." Twenty-two companies of reinforcements had just arrived in Arizona *and some blustering was imperative* in order to show that these reinforcements were not only needed, *but were actually making "rapid marches" and "gradually concentrating at and near the agency."* The blustering might have been tolerated, *but not the blundering.*

(To be continued.)

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