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THE PIMA OUTBREAK IN NOVEMBER, 1751

By RUSSELL C. EWING

LATE IN THE year 1751 the attention of the authorities of Sinaloa and Sonora was suddenly drawn to Pimería Alta by native disturbances. Since 1695, with the exception of minor uprisings in 1732 and 1748,¹ Pimería Alta had been free from internal Indian troubles.

The uprising was well planned. On Saturday, November 20, Luis Oacpicagua, native governor and captain-general of the Pimas, held a talk with his people in one of the small *barrancas* near Saric, a settlement lying close to the source of the Altar River.² There plans were made for a general uprising against Spanish rule. Missionary, rancher, soldier, *gente de razon*, and all Spanish sympathizers were to be driven from Pimería Alta. Neither life nor property was to be spared; and the Pimas had reason to feel certain of success, since there were only a few hundred persons in all the Upper Pima country who were considered to be loyal to the Spanish crown.³ Of this number less than one hundred could offer armed resistance.⁴ Santa Ana, largest of all the settlements, had less than one hundred Spanish and *mestizo*

1. Jacome, *Declaración*, Horcasitas, Nov. 23, 1753, in *Testimonio de . . . los Pimas Altas en La Provincia de Sonora* (A. G. L., 104-3-5).

2. Peña to Carta, Cucurpe, Nov. 29, 1751, in *Testimonio de los Auttos . . . sobre . . . tres Yndios . . . y . . . varias muertes . . . de sus misioneros* (A. G. I., 67-3-31); Baitioct, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Jan. 22, 1752, in *Terzera Quaderno de Auttos de . . . Diego Ortiz Parrilla . . . Gobernador . . . de . . . Nueva Andalucia . . . por su Magestad* (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Lizasoain, "Informe," in *Documentos para la historia de Mexico*, series iii, 556, 635.

3. Peña to Carta, *loc. cit.*

4. *Ibid.*

inhabitants,⁵ and the nearest presidios, Terrenate and Fronteras, were unprepared for hostilities. The handful of presidials attached to the garrison at Terrenate was at that moment scattered, and most of the soldiers at Fronteras were ill.⁶ The Pimas could hardly have found a more propitious time for the success of their plans.

The uprising once decided upon, the next step was to inform the other Indians of the region of the scheme. Runners were immediately sent off in all directions from Saric bearing orders from Luis to the effect that all Pimas rebel at once against their Spanish masters, and that after spreading death and destruction throughout Pimería Alta they were all to retire to the Baboquivari Mountains with their families and live-stock.⁷

The native messengers were prompt in executing their several tasks. Towards sundown that same Saturday the aborigines of Tubutama learned of Luis's plans.⁸ But there, due to the act of a faithful mission Indian, Ignacio Matovit, the designs of the natives were somewhat frustrated. Matovit, upon learning that the Pimas of Tubutama were going to follow Luis's instructions, hastened to inform the *vecinos* of their impending danger.⁹

Father Visitor Jacobo Sedelmayr, resident missionary at Tubutama, immediately took measures for the protection of the few *gente de razon* and Spaniards who resided in the mission district. He let it be known that the Pimas were about to strike, and within a short time fourteen *gente de razon* and two soldiers took refuge with him in the mission

5. Altamira to Revilla Gigedo, Mexico, Jan. 16, 1752, in *Testimonio de . . . la sublevación de los Yndios de la Pimeria Alta* (A. G. I., 57-3-31).

6. Sánchez, "Informe," Terrenate, Dec. 8, 1751, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano de Autos . . . sobre sublevación . . . y providencias, que . . . expendio . . . Parrilla . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Parrilla, instructions to subalterns, Nov. 23, 1751, in *ibid.*

7. Baitioct, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*; Matovit, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Jan. 8, 1752, in *Terzéro Quaderno de Auttos de . . . Diego Ortiz Parrilla . . . Governador . . . de . . . Nueva Andalucia . . . por su Magestad* (A. G. I., 104-3-5).

8. Baitioct, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*

9. Bustamante, *Declaración*, San Pedro Nolasco, Dec. 16, 1753, in *Testimonio de Los Autos . . . sobre . . . el Alzamiento . . . en Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-4).

buildings.¹⁰ Then Sedelmayr's thoughts turned to the safety of Father Juan Nentvig, who was in charge of the *visita* of Saric.¹¹ Although the plot was being laid at Saric, there was the possibility that Luis had been more successful in keeping his secret at the *visita*. Sedelmayr therefore addressed a short letter to Nentvig warning him of the designs of the Pimas and advising him to come with all possible speed to Tubutama.¹²

Late that same evening Nentvig received Sedelmayr's note from the hands of the faithful Matovit. The Father Visitor had acted wisely, for Nentvig was apparently unaware of danger. A horse was instantly procured, and the Jesuit rode off down the valley to Tubutama, where he arrived at about midnight.¹³

Nentvig made his exit none too soon. Shortly after his flight, Luis, under the ruse that the Apaches were about to attack Saric,¹⁴ offered his house as a refuge to some twenty persons, among whom were three children and several male servants of Nentvig. Armed guards were then stationed around the house, and ere the occupants were aware of their predicament, the torch had been applied to their abode.

10. Baitioct, *Declaración, loc. cit.*; Bustamante, *Declaración, loc. cit.*; Bustamante, *Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiarachi, Aug. 31, 1754, in forty *declaraciones* taken by Utrera (A. G. I., 104-3-5).

11. Nentvig to Utrera, Tecoripa, Dec. 3, 1754, in *Testimonio de los Autos formados en orden de Rl. cédula de 4 de Octre. de 1752, sobre . . . el Alzamiento de los Pimos Altos en la Provincia de Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-4).

12. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, Santa Ana, Nov. 27, 1751, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano. de Autos . . . sobre sublevacion . . . y providencias, que . . . expendio . . . Parrilla . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Matovit, *Declaración, loc. cit.*

13. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*; Stiger to Segesser, San Ignacio, Nov. 27, 1751, in *Testimonio de los Aulttos . . . sobre . . . tres mil Yndios . . . y . . . varias muertes . . . de sus misioneros* (A. G. I., 67-3-31). Ortega (*Apostólicos Afanes*, 488) states that Nentvig went by foot to Tubutama.

14. Rivera, *Declaración*, Horcasitas, Dec. 5, 1753, in *Testimonio de los Autos . . . sobre el Alzamiento . . . en . . . Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-4); Bustamante, *Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiarachi, Aug. 31, 1754, in *loc. cit.* . . . According to Alegre (*Historia de la compañía de Jesus en Nueva España*, III, 291-292), the sudden appearance of great numbers of Pimas at Saric had led several Spaniards to go to Luis's house on the night of November 20 to ask the reason for the presence of so many natives.

Some attempted to escape this flaming inferno, only to meet death at the hands of the armed guards.¹⁵

The captain-general and his confederates now turned in search of Father Nentvig. The Jesuit, had he not anticipated their plans, would undoubtedly have been martyred. The infuriated natives, learning that Nentvig had sought safety in flight, gave chase, desisting in their pursuit only when they were certain that the father was beyond their immediate reach.¹⁶

The rebels' murderous lust, temporarily frustrated by Nentvig's escape, soon found satisfaction at the home of Laureano, *mayordomo* of Saric. Laureano succeeded in eluding his persecutors, but he left his family to the mercy of the Pimas. His wife and children were promptly killed. This deed brought to a close a night in which about twenty-five persons lost their lives.¹⁷

Meanwhile at Tubutama Sedelmayr and his companions, behind the barricaded walls of the father's house, were nervously awaiting an attack.¹⁸ The early morning hours of Sunday were passed in this tense atmosphere, when, just at break of day, the settlement was startled by the din of piercing war-cries and the pealing of the church bell, which, said Sedelmayr, was "a most notable circumstance."¹⁹ The besieged found themselves about to be attacked by nearly a thousand natives from the region of Santa Teresa and the *ranchería* of Jonamota.²⁰ Acting under the leadership of Sebastián, Indian governor of Santa Teresa, the rebels set fire to the church and the house in which Sedelmayr and his

15. Luis, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Mar. 25, 1752, in *Testimonio de los Autos formados separadamente . . . con lo demas . . . de Sinaloa* (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Rivera, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*

16. Luis, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*

17. Peña to Carta, *loc. cit.*; Lizasoín, ("Informe," *loc. cit.*, 583) states that approximately sixteen lives were lost. Stiger lists twenty-two as having been murdered (Stiger's entry for Nov. 21, 1751, in *Libros de entierros deste Pueblo de Sn. Ygn . . . en que tambien seponen las de . . . Himuri*).

18. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*

19. *Ibid.*; Bustamante, *Declaración*, Real de San Pedro Nolasco, Dec. 16, 1753, in *Testimonio de los Autos, . . . sobre . . . el Alzamiento . . . en . . . Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-4).

20. Baitioct, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*

companions had taken refuge.²¹ In spite of their dangerous retreat, the handful of Spaniards and *gente de razon* chose to defend themselves in the flaming building rather than to flee and expose themselves to the Indians' arrows.

The attack continued throughout the day, although somewhat less furiously than had been expected.²² As night closed in the rebels withdrew, leaving Sedelmayr and his fellow-defenders to formulate plans for relief. There had been no casualties among them, but there was no assurance that another day's encounter would end so successfully. The father's house was nearly destroyed, which rendered it practically useless as an abode of defense. Armed assistance was their only hope. News of their plight must therefore be gotten at once to one of the Spanish settlements which could furnish the desired aid. It was for this purpose that one of the soldiers was sent to Santa Ana and a loyal Indian dispatched to San Ignacio.²³ The remaining few now settled down to what must have been a most disquieting night.

At dawn on Monday the rebels returned to their attack. Their numbers were now somewhat more than on the preceding day, and they threw themselves at the Spaniards with a great deal more determination and effect than on the first day. The besieged put up a courageous defense. Fighting from behind the walls of their almost completely demolished retreat, which was now hardly more than a smoldering mass of cinders, they managed to hold the Indians at bay.²⁴

21. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*

22. *Ibid.*; Bustamante, *Declaración, loc. cit.*; González, *Declaración loc. cit.*

23. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*; Toral to Parrilla, Guepaca, Nov. 27, 1751, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano. de Autos . . . sobre sublevazion . . . y providencias, que . . . expendió . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-5).

24. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.* . Ortega (*op. cit.*, 448) inaccurately states that Sedelmayr and his companions defended themselves in the churchyard at Tubutama. Ortega's account of the revolt is unreliable. He completed his *Apostólicos Afanes* early in 1752. The first official account of the uprising reached Mexico City late in January, 1752 (*Testimonio de los Auttos . . . sobre hauerse levantado tres mil Yndios . . . y destrozado las Yglesias de sus misioneros'* (A. G. I., 67-3-31). Ortega could therefore have had relatively little information about the uprising.

That afternoon the natives suddenly withdrew from Tubutama. During the lull which followed, Domingo Castillo, a soldier from the garrison at Fronteras, went from the house for the purpose of rounding up several horses in the neighborhood, hoping thereby to provide a means of escape for his associates.²⁵ But Castillo's plans went awry. He had gone but a short distance when he fell into an ambush. Sensing his predicament, he made a desperate attempt to return to his companions; but he was overwhelmed by the Pimas, and fell a victim to the Indians' war-clubs.²⁶

The rebels now turned in their fury upon those fortified in the father's house. The Jesuit and his companions found themselves attacked from all sides. Arrows, sticks, and stones were directed at the Spaniards with devastating effect. Most of the defenders were wounded, two of whom, Barrientos and Nuñez, died shortly afterwards from their injuries. Sedelmayr received two ugly gashes in the head and a flint in one of his arms.²⁷ What the casualties were on the side of the Indians can only be a matter for speculation, for the authorities have failed to leave any specific records on this score.²⁸

The natives continued their attack until after sundown.²⁹ They then withdrew, leaving the defenders to take an inventory of the munitions and food supplies and to review the results of the day's encounter.³⁰ It was found that the powder and shot were nearly exhausted, and that the condition of the men was such that it would be impossible to expect anything but complete annihilation in another engagement with the Pimas. Moreover, they had received no news from the pleas they had sent for relief.

25. Bustamante, *Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiarachi, Aug. 31, 1754, *loc. cit.*

26. Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. Bustamante (*Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiarachi, Aug. 31, 1754, *loc. cit.*) states that great numbers of the Indians were killed.

29. González (*Declaración*, *loc. cit.*) says until late at night. Sedelmayr (Sedelmayr to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*) is authority for the statement that the attack lasted until shortly after sundown.

30. *Ibid.*

They were therefore of the belief that their only hope of safety lay in flight.

At nine o'clock that night, November 22, they made arrangements for their departure. It was decided that Barrientos and Nuñez be left behind, since they would retard the flight of the group. Furthermore both would doubtless be dead before the return of the Pimas. Sedelmayr and Nentvig accordingly received the confessions of the dying men, and then in company with the remaining twelve persons hastened off into the dark intent upon making their way to Santa Ana. They chose unfrequented and circuitous trails, hoping thereby to diminish the chances of meeting hostile natives. This dangerous game of hide-and-seek, as it were, lasted until Wednesday, nearly two full days after their sudden abandonment of Tubutama. On that day they arrived exhausted at Santa Ana.³¹

Meanwhile, the Indians had wrought havoc at other pueblos lying on the banks of the Altar and at San Miguel de Sonóita, the lone mission in the Papagueria. On November 20 Father Tomás Tello was murdered at Caborca by a band of Pimas under the leadership of the native governor of Pitic, who also bore the name of Luis.³² Not content with the death of the missionary, the Pimas directed their murderous designs against the *gente de razon* of the pueblo, where eleven persons were stricken down in cold blood.³³

31. Stiger to Segesser, San Ignacio, Nov. 27, 1751, in *Testimonio de los Autos . . . sobre hauerse levantado tres mil Yndios . . . y destrozado las Yglesias de sus misioneros* (A. G. I., 67-3-31); Bustamante, *Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiarachi, Aug. 31, 1754, *loc. cit.* . . . Bancroft (*History North Mexican States*, I, 544) mistakenly says that the fourteen retreated to San Ignacio. Ortega (*op. cit.*, 449) writes that Sedelmayr, after leaving Tubutama, met an Indian who furnished him with a horse which he rode to San Ignacio. The same author (*op. cit.*, 449) also states, inaccurately, that Father Nentvig wandered about the countryside for five days before he finally arrived at San Ignacio.

32. According to Baitioct (*Declaración, loc. cit.*), an Indian of Tubutama, the Jesuit was killed on the 19th. González (*Declaración, loc. cit.*), states that the date was the 20th, as does Matovit (*Declaración loc. cit.*). Oapicagigua, leader of the revolt is reported to have said that the revolt broke out at Caborca on the very day that it did at Saric (Oacoi, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Dec. 14, 1751, in *Testimonio de los Autos formados . . . con lo demas que coronl. de los Rs. exercitos Govor. y Capn. Gral . . . de Sinaloa* (A. G. I., 104-3-5). Father Toral to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*) is authority for the statement that Tello was murdered on Sunday the 21st.

33. Stiger's entry in *Libro de entierros, loc. cit.*

On the following morning the governor of Pitic and his men made their way to Uquitoa, where, in company with the Pimas of the latter place, they proceeded to kill the *gente de razon*.³⁴ They then plundered their victims' property, and that which they could not carry away was burned.³⁵ By nightfall some twenty persons lay dead at Uquitoa.³⁶

The events of the first few days of the uprising in other parts of western Pimería Alta are imperfectly known. In the remaining settlements of the Altar Valley approximately twenty-five persons are said to have perished at the hands of the Pimas.³⁷ At Sonóita, the Pápago mission, Father Enrique Rhuén and two others were killed. On Sunday the 21st a band of Indians, intent upon taking Rhuén's life, proceeded to the father's house. The Jesuit, seeing their approach, stepped forth to greet them. The details of what then took place are meager. It appears that the father was instantly clubbed to death along with his *mayordomo* Juan Orosio and his servant Antonio Marcial.³⁸ The church was then stripped of its sacred ornaments and set on fire.³⁹

Meanwhile the Spaniards and *gente de razon* inhabiting the region between Saric and San Xavier del Bac were experiencing similar treatment. On the night of the 20th the Pimas attacked the *gente de razon* at Arivaca.⁴⁰ During the course of that night and the next day three families and the *mayordomo* of Father José Garrucho, resi-

34. Salazar to Urrea, Santa Ana, Nov. 21, 1751, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano. de Autos . . . sobre sublevacion . . . y providencia, que . . . expendio . . . Parrilla . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora*, (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Xavier, *Declaración*, San Ignacio de Cuquiariachi, Sept. 2, 1754, in *Testimonio de los Autos . . . sobre . . . el Alzamiento . . . en . . . Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-4).

35. Matovit, *Declaración*, loc. cit.; Joachin, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Jan. 8, 1752, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano. de Autos . . . sobre sublevacion . . . y providencias, que . . . expendio . . . Parrilla . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-5).

36. Cf. Stiger's entry in *Libro de entierros*, loc. cit.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*; Oycatitonic, *Declaración*, Horcasitas, Nov. 23, 1752, in *Testimonio de los Autos formados separadamente . . . con lo demas . . . de Sinaloa* (A. G. I., 104-3-5).

39. *Ibid.*

40. Luis, *Declaración*, loc. cit.

dent missionary at Guevavi, were ruthlessly slaughtered.⁴¹ Several hours later a group of settlers in the valley of San Luis learned of the massacre. They at once proceeded to Arivaca to inter the dead. But their plans met with little success. At Arivaca they were confronted by such a formidable band of Pimas that they were forced to make a hasty retreat in the direction whence they came. Followed for some time by the rebels, they were finally forced to fight, and in the ensuing skirmish two settlers were wounded and four Pimas killed. It was with some difficulty that the remaining settlers managed to fight clear and make good their retreat to the valley of San Luis.⁴²

The outbreak was relatively slow in spreading to Soanca and San Xavier.⁴³ Several days after the initial uprising at Saric the Indians of the north began to show signs of restlessness. On November 23 and again on the 24th Father Ignacio Keller, missionary at Soanca, fearing an outbreak among his native charges, appealed to Isidoro Sánchez de Tagle, lieutenant of the presidio of Terrenate, for protection.⁴⁴ Keller asked for six soldiers; but six soldiers, replied Sánchez, were more than the presidio could safely spare, for most of the men of Terrenate were away on special duties.⁴⁵ Eighteen were stationed at Bacanuchi; four were at San Xavier; two were escorting a pack-train from the pueblo of Imuris to Terrenate; three were out rounding up horses; and most of the others were in the valley of San Luis engaged in branding cattle. But despite this scarcity of men Sánchez managed to send five soldiers to Keller.⁴⁶

41. Juan, *Declaración*, San Ignacio, Dec. 9, 1751, in *ibid.*; Keller to Stiger, Soanca, Nov. 22, 1751, in *Testimonio de lo primer Quano de Autos . . . sobre sublevación . . . y providencia, que . . . expendio . . . Parrilla . . . Govor . . . de Sinaloa, y Sonora* (A. G. I., 104-3-5); Sedelmayr, Nentvig, and Stiger to Parrilla, San Ignacio, Nov. 30, 1751, in *ibid.*; Romero to Parrilla, Soanca, Dec. 3, 1751, in *ibid.*

42. Baitioct, *Declaración*, *loc. cit.*; Romero to Parrilla, *loc. cit.*

43. Keller, "Consulta," in *Doc. hit. Mex.*, series iii, 26-32.

44. Sánchez, "Informe," *loc. cit.*

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Ibid.*

A few days later Father Francisco Paver, in charge at San Xavier, also sensed danger.⁴⁷ Believing that the Indians of the mission were about to rebel, Paver hurriedly made his way to Guevavi with three soldiers and his *mayordomo*. There they found Garrucho somewhat perturbed at recent events, and in a short while the entire group, augmented by a considerable number of *vecinos* from the surrounding country, hastened off in the direction of Terrenate. At Soanca they were joined by Keller, and it appears that all reached the garrison with the exception of Garrucho, who for some unknown reason turned back.⁴⁸

Thus within about a week's time the Pimas had laid the larger settlements in western Pimería Alta in waste. More than a hundred persons had perished at the hands of the rebels, and the property of the victims had either been burned or carried away. The church at Tubutama had been looted and burned, and similar treatment had been meted out to the other religious establishments in the hostilized area. The Indians' plans had succeeded, at least in part.

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47. Rivera, *Declaración*, loc. cit.; Romero to Parrilla, loc. cit.

48. *Ibid.*