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APACHE MISRULE
A BUNGLING AGENT SETS THE
MILITARY ARM IN MOTION¹

BY JOHN P. CLUM

The official records heretofore quoted² show that the San Carlos Police Force had proved itself efficient and sufficient in the matter of the enforcement of order and discipline within their reservation from 1874 to 1880; that the great body of Apaches on that reservation were quiet and obedient during said period, and that the troops were removed from the reservation in October, 1875, and were not recalled at any time up to or during 1880.

There was, however, one serious affair that occurred during the period above referred to, the exact cause of which I have not been able to ascertain. This was the breaking away from the reservation of more than half of the 453 Indians whom I brought over from Ojo Caliente, N. M., and located in the Gila valley near the San Carlos sub-agency in May 1877.

In his annual report for 1878, Agent H. L. Hart mentions this outbreak briefly as follows:

On September 2, 1877, about 300 of the Warm Spring Indians left the reservation, taking with them a number of animals belonging to other Indians. They were followed by the police and Indian volunteers. Nearly all of the stock they had was captured; thirteen Indians killed, and 31 women and children brought back as prisoners by the different parties that went in pursuit. *The Warm Spring Indians shortly after surrendered to the military authorities at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, and have since been fed as prisoners of war at Hot Springs, New Mexico.*

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2. "The San Carlos Apache Police" in *N. M. H. Rev.*, IV, 67-92.

This record is supplemented by Brig. Gen. John Pope in his annual report dated October 4, 1878, as follows:

The Apaches, who broke away last year from the San Carlos agency, in Arizona, and were recaptured by the troops from this Department, are now in process of removal again to the San Carlos agency. *They have given no trouble since they have been recaptured, and I think will give none at the agency to which they are now en route.*

Agent Hart does not give any reason why these Indians left the reservation; neither does he intimate that the truants resisted their pursuers, nor that they committed any depredations prior to their "surrender" at Fort Wingate, New Mexico.

General Pope says these Indians were "recaptured," but he does not give any details concerning this achievement by his troops. He simply says that after the "recapture" they did not give anyone any trouble, and he did not think they would give anyone any trouble in the future — *thus recording his official declaration that these Indians were peaceable, orderly and obedient, and that he believed they would remain so.*

I have already presented an account of my removal of these Indians in 1877.³ At that time they readily agreed to go to San Carlos, and *their conduct during the progress of that removal was peaceable, orderly and obedient.* Then why did a majority of this tribe break away from the reservation on Sept. 2, 1877? It will be remembered that I discovered a severe case of small-pox the morning we left Ojo Caliente, and that other cases developed while en route to Arizona, and I recall that the disease persisted with more or less fatal effect among this band for some time after their arrival at San Carlos. Inasmuch as these Indians fled from the reservation less than four months after their

3. See *N. M. Hist. Rev.*, III. 26-39.

arrival, and only two months after my retirement as agent, it is not improbable that they grew restive because of the direful effects of the small-pox and a belief that their new location was unhealthful, and, taking advantage of the unsettled conditions incident to the change of agents, that a majority of the Warm Spring band fled from the reservation in the hope that they might thus escape from the ravages of the dreaded disease.

The fact that the Warm Spring Apaches were removed to San Carlos in the spring of 1877 without the slightest difficulty, and the further fact that "about 300" of these same Indians gave no trouble while under the surveillance of the New Mexico troops from September, 1877, to October, 1878, would seem to justify General Pope's opinion that *they would give no trouble in the future* — provided, of course, that they were given firm, intelligent, and sympathetic direction. The above facts would also seem to justify the conclusion that *the very serious trouble experienced with the Warm Spring Indians and Chiricahua Indians between 1881 and 1886 was the direct result of flagrant mis-rule.*

During the summer of 1881 Agent Tiffany committed a stupid and stupendous administrative blunder which interrupted the seven years of peace, spread consternation and unrest throughout the reservation, and precipitated an outbreak of the Chiricahuas, the penalties and sacrifices for which were suffered and endured by the pioneer citizens of Arizona and New Mexico and the mass of orderly disposed Apaches upon the reservation for more than a decade thereafter.

This miserable blundering was of a two-fold character. His first grave offence was his failure to send the San Carlos Agency Police to quell an alleged threatened uprising in the northern section of the reservation, instigated by a fanatical Apache medicine-man,⁴ and his second —

4. See *N. M. Hist. Rev.*, III. 127-130.

and much graver — offence, was the despatch of an official communication to the commanding officer at Fort Apache on August 14th, demanding that troops be sent upon the reservation for police duty in the matter of the arrest of the insubordinate hoo-hoo medicine-man.

This demand was complied with and Nock-e-da-kinny, the medicine-man, was arrested without resistance on August 30 and conveyed part way to Fort Apache, but when the troops halted for the night the camp was attacked by some of their own Indian scouts, and in the fight that ensued Captain E. C. Hentig, four soldiers, and the Indian medicine-man were killed, and three soldiers fatally wounded. It was inevitable that the news of this clash between the mutinous scouts and the troops would cause much excitement, and even alarm among the White Mountain Apaches, *but they did not indulge in any acts of insubordination.*

These exceedingly disastrous results were accomplished *the very first day the troops were invited back upon the reservation for police duty.* And although *there was no outbreak of the White Mountain Apaches, and no hostiles upon the reservation,* except the small faction of mutinous military scouts belonging to the detachment stationed at Fort Apache, *the most alarming rumors of an impending Apache war* were broadcast throughout the country. Forthwith, General Willcox, commanding the Department of Arizona, telegraphed to the east and to the west for *reinforcements,* with the result that *twenty-two companies of troops* — eleven from New Mexico and eleven from California (which included three batteries of artillery) — *were rushed into Arizona "on detached service against hostile Apaches."* I was then publishing the *Epitaph* at Tombstone, and I well remember *the military blare that the Apaches were to be expected.*

The military arm had been set in motion with a vengeance. The troops concentrated in the Gila valley at San

Carlos and Camp Thomas, and were maneuvered so effectively that they succeeded in driving Geronimo, Hoo, and Nah-chee, with their bands of Chiricahuas from the reservation on September 30 — exactly one month after the troops had been returned to the reservation for the specific purpose of arresting the medicine-man on the Cibicu, sixty or seventy miles distant from the Chiricahua camp at the sub-agency on the Gila.

The annual report submitted by Agent Tiffany for 1881 is dated "September sixth" — just one week after the fatal clash between the troops and the Indians in the Cibicu country. From that report we quote the following paragraph:

The police force of scouts have been, as usual, very efficient and useful; indeed, *this agency could not be kept in its present quiet state without them.* They fear no danger, are quick and obedient, have rendered efficient service in breaking up tiswin parties, and have destroyed at least 2000 gallons of this villainous drink. They have scouted this reservation as it never has been policed before, and the force is a terror to evil-doers and run-aways. I have too few of them. Too much praise cannot be given them.

The above enthusiastic endorsement of the agency police was penned by Agent Tiffany only a few days after the troops, at his request, had entered the reservation for duty that should have been performed by the agency police; an officer, seven soldiers, and the medicine-man had been killed upon the reservation by Apaches; twenty-two companies of troops were being rushed to Arizona as reinforcement to aid in quelling an alleged uprising among Indians belonging to the San Carlos agency; and yet the agent blithely proclaims that "the agency could not be kept *in its present quiet state* without them (the agency police)."

Particular attention is also invited to the extraordinary fact that although this annual report was of considerable length, Agent Tiffany *has not recorded therein any details of the very important and disastrous events relative to*

the alleged uprising among the White Mountain Indians inspired by Nock-e-da-kinny, or of the official action taken by him-if any-for the purpose of apprehending the vicious medicine-man and quelling the disturbance. He does not give the slightest hint as to why he did not send the agency police to arrest Nock-e-da-kinny instead of demanding that the troops at Fort Apache should be sent upon the reservation for that purpose. In fact, the very unfortunate situation thrust upon the White Mountain Apaches as a result of the monstrous blunder of their agent was referred to only twice in this report — and then only in the most indifferent and casual manner.

At the beginning he says that he must write his report "from time to time as opportunity offers, for the reason that *besides the regular business of the agency, the White Mountain disturbance engrosses much time and attention,*" and in the concluding paragraphs referring to crop returns he says, "many fields were abandoned, caused by the outbreak of the White Mountain Indians," and also that "many fields were destroyed by the military camping on them and feeding whole commands for days."

However, Agent Tiffany has inadvertently told us that *already the orderly and industrious Indians were paying the penalties for the recent invasion of the troops — at his request — through the loss of the crops they had planted and cultivated in the fields that were abandoned because of the disturbance, or that had been used as camping grounds by the military.*

I have made extensive references to the annual report of Agent Tiffany for 1881 for the purpose of impressing the fact that I have searched in vain for some statement by the agent in explanation of his action in ignoring the agency police and in calling upon the troops to arrest the insubordinate medicine-man — *an action which I have always denounced as absolutely unnecessary and most disastrous to all concerned.*

Obviously, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Price had been advised of the signs of unrest among the White Mountain Indians, and in his annual report for 1881 he says that in June of that year considerable excitement was occasioned among these Indians by the proposition of Nock-e-da-kinny to bring to life certain deceased warriors — provided the Indians made him numerous and valuable gifts in the form of horses, blankets, etc., and that *the agent remonstrated with the Indians* on the ground of the folly of the thing and the waste of their goods. The commissioner further states that both the agent and the military authorities at Fort Apache feared that the medicine-man was working on the superstitions of the Indians to bring about an outbreak.

Up there on Cibicu Creek, less than a day's journey from the San Carlos agency, an old Indian began to "make medicine" — and some trouble. To me the story is strange and weird — but exceedingly interesting, for in all my experience with the Apaches I never knew a so-called "medicine-man" who exerted any influence — except upon his unfortunate patient whom he tortured with his rattle and his moans and groans.

But it appears that Nock-e-da-kinny did create some excitement with his preposterous medicine babble — thus making himself an offender against the good order and discipline of the reservation. Albert Sterling, chief of the agency police, made an investigation of conditions on the Cibicu and reported the situation as "very serious," but no steps were taken to quell the disturbance. Every circumstance confirms the opinion that upon receipt of the first news of the disturbance on the Cibicu the San Carlos Police should have been sent to the camp of the medicine-man with positive orders to arrest him — alive, IF CONVENIENT. In any emergency the police force could have been augmented to whatever strength the undertaking seemed to demand. When I removed the Chiricahuas from Apache Pass

in 1876 I had with me a company of 54 Apache police, but these were "special" — the regular agency force numbered 25, and these remained at San Carlos for service on the reservation. Again, when I went into New Mexico in 1877 on the trail of Geronimo I had with me 100 Apache police — also "special." Likewise, in the summer of 1881 *a sufficient force* of agency police should have been despatched with positive orders to arrest this deluded medicine-man, — and if the arrest had been ordered early in this hoo-doo medicine game there would have been no serious trouble. *Eventually the arrest was made without resistance.*

But this potent agency police force was ignored in this vital affair while the agent "REMONSTRATED" with the Indian dupes. If, instead of *remonstrations*, the agent had executed a few vigorous *demonstrations* with his agency police in the immediate presence of old Nock-e-da-kinny *he would have preserved the peace on the reservation* and obviated the ugly pages of the "Cibicu war" and its distressing sequences. Unhappily, the many and severe penalties which resulted from the agent's weakness in this affair *were visited upon the Apaches and not upon himself.*

Commissioner Price (1881) also says: "*Several of the mutinous (Fort Apache) scouts had been arrested and brought in by the agency Indian police force and delivered up to the military.*" The San Carlos Police were not allowed to make the arrest of the medicine-man — *but after the military had been called in and some of their own scouts had mutinied and precipitated the shooting which resulted in the death of Captain Hentig, seven soldiers, and the medicine-man; after the seven years of peace on the reservation had been broken, and the Indians thoroughly excited, and actual trouble begun; then — then, mark you, the agency police were called upon to apprehend the mutinous military scouts — AND THEY GOT 'EM.*

It is interesting to note that Lieutenant W. H. Carter, Sixth Cavalry, U. S. A., who led the troops *away from the*

San Carlos reservation on October 27, 1875, was one of the officers who led the troops *back* upon the reservation on August 30, 1881. At that time Captain Adna R. Chaffee was also serving with the Sixth Cavalry in Arizona. Some years later we find Lieutenant Carter's name entered in the army roster as Major General Carter, and at the same time Captain Chaffee has become Lieutenant General Chaffee — in command of the United States Army.

In December, 1917, three years after the death of General Chaffee, Major General Carter published a volume entitled, "The Life of Lieutenant General Chaffee." We are fortunate, therefore, in having this unofficial military record to aid us in arriving at the truth regarding several events in the history of the Apaches which General Carter has recorded with more or less detail in his story of the life of General Chaffee.

The conditions and circumstances which led to the fatal clash in the Cibicu country between the troops and the mutinous scouts on August 30, 1881, are presented by General Carter as follows:

During the summer of 1881 there appeared among the White Mountain Apaches a medicine-man named Nock-e-daklinny, who proclaimed himself the messiah. The oracle gradually influenced the minds of the Indians and became so infatuated with his success that he appeared to believe the truth of his own weird dreams. So long as he confined himself to ordinary incantations there was no cause for anxiety. In common with more civilized charletans, however, he had gradually mulcted his faithful believers of much of their limited wealth.

It is neither expedient nor profitable to discuss an aimless policy which permitted license to run riot on the reservation until the Indians grew sullen and insubordinate.

The regimental commander was at Fort Apache. Recognizing the very serious turn of affairs, he summoned the medicine-man and several prominent chiefs and heads of families and explained to them the futility of rising against the whites. *The author was present at all the interviews.*

The advice and warnings given Nock-e-da-klinne fell on deaf ears, and he returned to his camp about forty miles back in the Indian country, where he spurned the orders of the agent to report himself at San Carlos. The deluded Indians followed him, and the excitement grew widespread.

The time for parley and remonstrance ended *when the agent made a formal demand that the military arm be set in motion* and that the recalcitrant medicine-man be brought before him dead or alive.

The story of the march, the arrest, the attempt at rescue, the hand-to-hand combat, constitutes an interesting page in the regimental history. While the medicine-man lay mortally wounded, after the rescuers had been driven off and we were preparing to bury our dead, the author examined the body and took from its receptacle the pass by authority of which Nock-e-da-klinne left the agency. The pass had expired, and the deluded messiah had repeatedly refused to return and report himself as was required of all reservation Indians.

There was a short, sharp campaign, but 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.* 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 of Ju (Hoo) and Geronimo, who were at the San Carlos agency, fled toward Mexico, leaving a trail of blood and pillage to mark their hurried flight.

General Carter well knew that ever since he led the troops away from San Carlos in 1875, the agency police had maintained order and discipline throughout the reservation, and it was *the failure of Agent Tiffany to employ that force promptly and effectively at the first signs of unrest among the Indians on the Cibicu that General Carter justly condemns* when he says: "It is neither expedient nor profitable to discuss an aimless policy which permitted license to run riot on the reservation until the Indians grew sullen and insubordinate."

Agent Tiffany's demand that "the military arm be set in motion" against the insubordinate medicine-man was dated August 14th, and it was between that date and August 30th that General Carr "summoned the medicine-man and several prominent chiefs and heads of families" for a conference, in the hope that order might be restored without recourse to force. But this proved of no avail and Nock-e-da-kinny returned to his camp "*where he spurned the orders of the agent to report himself at San Carlos.*"

And then on August 30th, after the fight and while the medicine-man lay mortally wounded, General Carter took from his body "*the pass by authority of which Nock-e-da-kinny left the agency. The pass had expired, and the deluded messiah had repeatedly refused to report himself, as was required of all reservation Indians.*"

General Carter's account of the "short, sharp campaign" which followed the fight in the Cibicu country clearly indicates that there was *no actual uprising among the White Mountain Indians*, and that when the medicine-man was killed *the disturbance died with him*, for, as the general says, "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."

The annual report of Major General Irvin McDowell dated at the Presidio, San Francisco, Cal., October 14, 1881, contains the following interesting comments:

The fact of the troops finding the medicine-man with his people *in their homes, where they had been planting corn, shows they were not then for war. I cannot concur, therefore, in denouncing their conduct as treacherous* (excepting the military scouts).

On August 17th Colonel Carr sent the following telegram to General McDowell:

I had directed Lieutenant Cruse to take the guns of his scouts after inspection on the 14th instant, and to say that he would keep them in his office out of the wet. They have been kept there much of the time heretofore. The scouts did not like it, and this time considered it a sign of distrust, *but I could not reconcile it to my duty to have them keep their arms when there was so much and so general belief in their disposition to treachery.*

General McDowell quotes this telegram in his report and then makes the following caustic comment:

The temper of his Indian scouts being such as to make it his duty to disarm them, thus causing them to feel they were distrusted; the belief in their disposition to treachery being general, and that they could only be relied on till the next pay-day; it was injudicious, as events have shown, in Colonel Carr to take them, with arms in their hands, to aid him in the arrest of one of their leaders.

Thus it is made plain that if Agent Tiffany had sent the dependable Agency police to arrest Nock-e-da-kinny, *the opportunity would not have been created for Colonel Carr to make his very grievous blunder of taking, as a part of his force, the armed scouts whom he felt were in sympathy with and under the spell of the defiant medicine-man. It is not remarkable that the combined blunders of the agent and the commanding officer should have precipitated actual trouble.*

Brig. Gen. John Pope, in his annual report dated September 22, 1881, comments on the Cibicu episode thus:

I was at the time in Santa Fe, N. M., where I had reasonably good opportunity to know quite fully the facts. Colonel Carr marched to the Indian village and arrested the medicine-man without resistance. He then marched back five or six miles in the direction of the post (Fort Apache) and encamped for the night, intending to return to the post the next day.

Shortly after he reached his camp some of the Indian scouts belonging to his command came into the camp where the medicine-man was a prisoner. Captain Hentig ordered them to leave camp, and as he did so he turned to pick up his rifle, upon which the scouts, or some of them, fired a volley upon him, killing him and four enlisted men and wounding several others.

The day after his return to the post (September 1st), Carr sent out a party to bury the men wounded the day before and who had since died, and while engaged in this service the party was fired on by Indians. Lieut. Gordon was wounded. The fire was returned by the party and the Indians driven off.

Since that time no Indians have been seen, *nor have they, so far as I can learn, committed any depredations or other acts of hostility.* The whole affair had much the appearance of a sudden and altogether unpremeditated flurry, and would probably never have occurred but for the firing of the Indian scouts on Hentig. *There was certainly no concerted action or prearranged attack.*

It became known that the whole affair had been grossly exaggerated. The Navajoes showed no sort of purpose to be troublesome, nor to join the White Mountain Apaches, *nor, indeed, did any other Indians in Arizona or New Mexico.* The last telegrams from General Willcox are to the effect that *all the supposed hostiles are surrendering without firing a shot or offering any resistance, a fact indicating very clearly that the so-called attack on Carr was the result of temporary excitement, and bore no marks whatever of premeditation or intention to begin general hostilities.*

General O. B. Willcox, commanding the Department of Arizona, dated his annual report from Tucson, Arizona, October 12, 1881, in which he said:

The immediate cause of the attack on Colonel Carr was the arrest of the medicine-man. The remote causes are unknown, *as no grievances had ever been complained of by the White Mountain Apaches.*

And yet, in the face of these facts, General Willcox tells us that *additional troops were ordered to re-inforce Fort Apache as early as August 13th; that these "troops were ordered forward from points below and west of Camp Thomas,"* and that "on August 17th Colonel Carr reported that Pedro, Santo and other Indians *were alarmed about a report that a BIG GUN and more troops were coming to Fort Apache.*"

And more troops did come to Fort Apache — ELEVEN COMPANIES from New Mexico: "Three companies of infantry and two troops of cavalry from Fort Wingate, with surplus ammunition," and these were followed by Colonel MacKenzie with six companies of the 4th Cavalry. The troops from Fort Wingate arrived at Fort Apache on September 24th, and Colonel MacKenzie and his troopers reached that post one day later — Sept. 25th. In addition to the troops from New Mexico ELEVEN COMPANIES were sent in from California.

The "military arm" had been "set in motion" and it was necessary for the Commander of the Department of Arizona *to make an official showing (at least on paper) of the necessity for and the use made of the reinforcements* which had been sent in response to his telegraphic appeal for help. This emergency was courageously met by General Willcox in his annual report above referred to from which we quote the following paragraph:

The troops were moved to the Cibicu country in such manner and time *as to drive the hostiles from their strongholds into the folds of the reservation without a fight, and the White Mountain Indians have not struck another blow.*

That reads like one of the stories in the back part of an old "Webster's Spelling Book" and is reasonably fair *press agent material* for consumption abroad, *but as military history it is (if we say it softly) at least misleading.*

The honest-to-goodness facts are that the "strongholds" of these Indians *were their corn fields*, and these were in the "Cibicu country" — *all of which is entirely and completely and almost centrally within "the folds of the reservation."* General McDowell has pointed out that the troops under Colonel Carr found "the medicine-man with his people *in their homes, where they had been planting corn* — and Colonel Carr's command represented the only troops "moved to the Cibicu country." Furthermore, in the same report General Willcox tells us that *these Indians never had complained of any grievances*, and then, unceremoniously, he designates them as "hostiles" whom he *drove* "from their strongholds." Also, we have just above quoted a telegram from General Willcox to General Pope stating that all of the "*supposed hostiles surrendered without firing a shot or offering any resistance.*" Even the statement that "the White Mountain Indians have not struck another blow" is misleading for the reason that the only "blow" struck *did not come from the mass of these Indians*, but from the *suspected scouts*—and that blow with its disastrous results would have been avoided if Colonel Carr had disarmed his distrusted scouts and forbidden them to accompany him into the Cibicu country.

But "the military arm" had been "set in motion" and some dramatic and spectacular results must be reported, even though, later, it should become known "that the whole affair had been grossly exaggerated," as General Pope has observed.

And these exaggerated spectacular reports apparently excited General Sherman, then Commander-in-chief of the Army — so much so that *he became quite savage himself*, and under date of Washington, D. C., September 29, 1881, he sent the following telegram:

It would be well for the Apaches at the San Carlos agency to realize that at any time the troops in Arizona can promptly be reinforced from the north and east. *Sooner or later some considerable number of these Apaches will have to be killed by bullets rather than by rope.*

It appears that General Willcox *brooded a whole year* over this telegram from his Commander-in-chief, with the result that in his annual report dated August 31, 1882, he enlarges upon the difficulties attending the alleged situation in and around the Cibicu country during September, 1881, — *on account of which he says:*

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.*

With the vicious mental attitude toward the Apaches as above officially expressed by the Commander-in-chief of the Army, and the Commander of the Department of Arizona, we may ask, in all seriousness, what chance had these Indians for fair play, or any progress in their general welfare, when "the military arm" had once been "set in motion" against them? However, it should be remembered that General Sherman was not fully advised as to the actual facts when he sent his savage telegram to General McDowell, while General Willcox was in command in the field of "operations" and had a whole year in which to evolve his report.

(To be concluded)