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AN UNFORGETTABLE DAY:  
FACUNDO MELGARES ON INDEPENDENCE

edited by DAVID J. WEBER

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-ONE years ago, on January 6, 1822, Santa Fe celebrated New Spain's independence from Spain in a gala ceremony with church services, processions, pageantry, the firing of guns and ringing of bells. Soon afterward Governor Facundo Melgares penned a vivid and detailed description of this event for the official government newspaper, the *Gaceta Imperial*, at Mexico City. Published on March 23 and March 26, 1822, and here translated in its entirety for the first time,<sup>1</sup> Melgares' report remains the most detailed account of how New Mexicans, or indeed any other residents of today's Southwest,<sup>2</sup> responded to the end of nearly two and a quarter centuries of life as Spanish subjects.

Melgares asserts that Santa Feans welcomed Independence enthusiastically, and his effusive description of events has become the basis for nearly every description of New Mexico's change of sovereignty. Yet Melgares' official correspondence suggests that he exaggerated in his report to the *Gaceta* and that the upper class in Santa Fe embraced the cause of Mexican Independence reluctantly or indifferently. Certainly there was less enthusiasm for it than most writers have implied.<sup>3</sup>

The event which prompted the celebration in Santa Fe, Melgares wrote, was the arrival of mail on December 26 containing news of General Agustín de Iturbide's triumphant entrance into Mexico City three months before. Although Mexico had been convulsed by revolution since Padre Miguel Hidalgo's abortive revolt

of 1810, not until Iturbide managed to unite disparate elements behind his Plan of Iguala did New Spain become independent. Iturbide's now-famous Plan, essentially a conservative reaction to a liberal government in Spain, provided for Three Guarantees: Independence, Religion, and Union. Mexico was to be independent, but under a monarch (hopefully European), Catholicism was to be protected, and there was to be union between European-born Spaniards and American-born Spaniards. A successful compromise which posed no threat to the security of the Mexican elite, the Plan of Iguala won widespread support after its promulgation on February 24, 1821. Although a newly arrived viceroy, Juan O'Donojú, agreed to abide by the Plan in the Treaty of Córdoba, signed on August 24, it was not until September 27, when Iturbide's forces occupied Mexico City, that Mexico's Independence was assured.

Like shock waves from an earthquake, news of these events radiated from the valley of Mexico, epicenter of the immense viceroyalty of New Spain, to the outlying provinces. The news traveled south to Yucatán, and to the captaincy-general of Guatemala which stretched southward to Costa Rica. Northward the news was carried until it reached the Interior Provinces and the Californias. With few exceptions the arrival in the provinces of reports of Iturbide's victories became the occasion for a public oath of allegiance to the new government and an immense outpouring of manifestations of public enthusiasm—processions, plays, poetry and prose. Swearing of public oaths of loyalty to Iturbide occurred in some municipalities in June 1821, and became most frequent in September, coinciding with Iturbide's entrance into Mexico City and the inauguration of a new government under a provisional junta. In a few remote areas, California among them, public oaths of allegiance took place as late as April of 1822.<sup>4</sup> In New Mexico, officials took the oath of allegiance during the most popular month, September.

When Melgares wrote that New Mexicans, "having heard the sweet voice of liberty," swore to Independence on September 11, 1821, he led historians to assume that the Plan of Iguala had not

reached Santa Fe until that date.<sup>5</sup> Yet New Mexicans had had some inkling of the new rebellion in Mexico and the Plan of Iguala as early as May 1821. That month a proclamation from Viceroy Juan de Apodaca, Conde de Venadito, arrived in Santa Fe which condemned the "ungrateful" Iturbide and his "subversive plans." It exhorted loyal subjects not to read them or listen to them. New Mexicans may not have had the opportunity, however. At least no copy of the Plan of Iguala remains in the New Mexico Archives. Governor Melgares ordered the viceroy's decree copied in Santa Fe on May 10 and circulated to local alcaldes. By June 30 this document had traveled as far north as Taos where Severino Martínez signed it, copied it, and proclaimed it in his alcaldía.<sup>6</sup> Along with the Conde de Venadito's proclamation, Melgares ordered copied and circulated a communication from the Mexico City ayuntamiento which supported the viceroy and urged citizens to renew their loyalty to the monarchy.<sup>7</sup> In circulating these documents Melgares added no comment.

What further news of Iturbide's activities reached Santa Fe between May and September of 1821 is not known. In September, however, it became clear that Iturbide had won widespread support. By September 11 the mail from Chihuahua had brought news that the Commandant General of the Provincias Internas de Occidente, Alejo García Conde, had joined Iturbide's cause. A special junta had met in Chihuahua City on August 24 and had agreed by unanimous vote to support Iturbide. Two days later, on Sunday, August 26, a public oath had been administered in Chihuahua amidst great celebrations, including a procession, a Te Deum, and a baile which lasted until two in the morning. The following day, August 27, García Conde ordered New Mexico Governor Melgares to swear loyalty to the cause of Independence. García Conde's dispatch must have been sent by express, for Melgares received it on or before September 11. That day the oath of allegiance was taken in Santa Fe and Melgares sent orders to all alcaldes to do likewise.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it was not the "sweet voice of liberty" that had motivated New Mexicans to declare Independence, but instructions from a higher authority.

Although New Mexico officials swore to Independence, they apparently did so without enthusiasm. No ceremonies like those in Chihuahua accompanied the change of allegiance. In responding to García Conde's instructions, Melgares acknowledged only that he had carried out his orders and administered the oath "with the solemnity that was possible." Melgares' laconic answer avoided expressing any personal sentiment for or against Independence. A veteran frontiersman and politician who had heard rumors of revolts since Hidalgo's failure in 1810, Melgares<sup>9</sup> seems to have followed his instructions to the letter (and no further), while adopting an attitude of watchful waiting. Several months later, in his report to the *Gaceta Imperial*, Melgares noted that on September 11 Santa Fe's leading citizens had formed an organization to celebrate Independence "at the appropriate time." For Santa Feans, "the appropriate time," apparently, would be only when it became virtually necessary.

October brought more news from the south confirming Iturbide's victories. One report from Puebla, dated August 9, had been copied in Chihuahua on September 12 and sent north. It told of the "Triumph of Mexican liberty" and contained what must have been astonishing news, that only Veracruz and Mexico City itself remained in royalist hands. Melgares had this report copied on October 8 and circulated to all alcaldes in New Mexico, instructing them to copy and announce the report in turn.<sup>10</sup>

By early December there could be no doubt that Iturbide had taken Mexico City. The mail which reached Santa Fe by November 30 brought an announcement, dated October 4, 1821, from the Provisional Junta in Mexico City naming ministers for a new government. Apparently in the same mail arrived a copy of the "Act of Independence of the Empire," issued in Mexico City on September 28, 1821. Signed not only by Iturbide, but by the Archbishop of Puebla and the Viceroy himself, it left little doubt that Mexico had indeed thrown off the yoke of the mother country.<sup>11</sup> Further decrees from the new government reached Santa Fe toward mid-December.<sup>12</sup>

By November 30, then, Melgares knew that Iturbide had taken Mexico City and that the rebels had succeeded. This news did not arrive on December 26, as Melgares and subsequent historians using him for a source have suggested.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Santa Fe seems to have greeted its newly won independence with silence. Perhaps Melgares kept the news quiet for some weeks. Or, perhaps, Santa Feans were simply indifferent to it.

The event which probably touched off the celebration of Independence in Santa Fe was the arrival of a decree of October 6 from the Provisional Governing Junta of the Mexican Empire. Announcing that a public oath and proclamation of Independence was scheduled for Mexico City on October 27, the Junta ordered that all municipalities which had not yet done so should hold a similar ceremony within a month after receiving the Junta's decree. This was the news that apparently arrived in Santa Fe on December 26 and stirred the governor and the ayuntamiento to action.

The October 6 decree spelled out in detail how the ceremony was to be performed. The day was to begin with the ayuntamiento reading the act of sovereignty of the Provisional Junta, the Plan of Iguala, and the Treaty of Córdoba. This was to be followed by a public oath of allegiance which was written out in the decree. It required that one swear to recognize the sovereignty of the provisional junta and obey its decrees, and to abide by the Plan of Iguala and the Córdoba treaty: "If thus you obey, God help you, and if you do not, may God force you to obey." In the afternoon there was to be a procession to the main plaza where the senior alcalde would proclaim Independence from a stage decorated for the occasion. There was to be a church function the following day. The decree urged ayuntamientos not to spare expense on such a magnificent occasion and ordered that they send a report of the proceedings to Mexico City to verify that the instructions had been carried out.<sup>14</sup> The grand celebration of Independence on January 6 which Melgares described did not, then, reflect patriotism or enthusiasm so much as a willingness to follow instruction, albeit with some modifications.

In retrospect it is clear that Melgares was less than candid in reporting that New Mexicans had remained ignorant of Iturbide's victory until December 26, and in suggesting that the arrival of the news brought about great rejoicing. Yet, if Melgares did choose to suppress the news on November 30, it is possible that most New Mexicans remained in the dark about events until public newspapers arrived on December 26, making it impossible to keep the secret any longer. This, of course, remains speculative for there is no evidence that Melgares withheld information, nor even any hint of it as there is in California tradition.<sup>15</sup> The most reasonable interpretation of Melgares' exaggeration is that he was trying to cover up New Mexico's earlier lack of enthusiasm for Independence.

Yet, there is no reason to suppose that Melgares exaggerated his description of the events of the January 6 celebration itself, as Hubert Howe Bancroft suggested when he wrote:

Doubtless Don Facundo, realizing the side on which his bread was buttered, saw to it that nothing was lost in telling the story; and presumably the fall of Iturbide a little later was celebrated with equal enthusiasm. There was nothing mean or one-sided in New Mexican patriotism.<sup>16</sup>

The events Melgares described resembled festivities in other municipalities of New Spain, especially in Tepic,<sup>17</sup> about which New Mexicans had read. The Santa Fe celebration followed tradition, as well, resembling in many details the city's 1748 celebration in honor of the ascension of Fernando VI to the Spanish throne. And the events of 1748 in Santa Fe, as Eleanor B. Adams has pointed out, belonged to a tradition that dates to Gothic Spain. Within this tradition was the florid rhetoric which Melgares used to describe the festivities.<sup>18</sup> Rarely resorting to economy of expression and sparing no adjectives, Melgares would have written his "flaming account," as Bancroft termed it, in the same effusive style whether he was trying to impress his new superiors or not. The Santa Fe celebration's close link with the past is further suggested

by the Provisional Junta's October 6 instructions which ordered that the proclamation of Independence be read "in the form and with the magnificence that the oaths of allegiance to the Kings have previously been read."

One other eye witness to the events in Santa Fe on January 6, 1822, Thomas James, told a story quite different from that of Melgares. It is worth quoting James at length.

On the fifth day of February [*sic*] a celebration took place of Mexican independence. A few days before this appointed time, a meeting of the Spanish officers and principal citizens was held at the house of the Alcalde to make arrangements for the celebration. They sent for me, asked what was the custom in my country on such occasions, and requested my aid in the matter. I advised them to raise a liberty pole. . . . By daylight on the morning of the fifth I was aroused to direct the raising of the flag. I arose and went to the square, where I found about a dozen men with the Governor, Don Facundo Melgaris [*sic*], all in a quandry, not knowing what to do. I informed the Governor that all was ready for raising the flag, which honor belonged to him. 'Oh, do it yourself,' said he, 'you understand such things.' So I raised the first flag in the free and independent State of New Mexico. As the flag went up, the cannon fired and men and women from all quarters of the city came running, some half dressed, to the public square, which soon filled with the population of this city. The people of the surrounding country also came in, and for five days the square was covered with Spaniards and Indians from every part of the province. During this whole time the city exhibited a scene of universal carousing and revelry. All classes abandoned themselves to the most reckless dissipation and profligacy. No Italian carnival ever exceeded this celebration in thoughtlessness, vice and licentiousness of every description. Men, women and children crowded every part of the city, and the carousal was kept up equally by night and day. There seemed to be no time for sleep. Tables for gambling surrounded the square and continually occupied the attention of crowds. Dice and faro banks were all the time in constant play. . . . Freedom without restraint or license was the order of the day; and thus did these rejoicing republicans continue the celebration of their Independence till nature was too much exhausted to support the dissipation any longer. The crowds then dispersed to their homes with all the punish-

ments of excess with which pleasure visits her votaries. I saw enough during this five days' revelry to convince me that the republicans of New Mexico were unfit to govern themselves or anybody else.<sup>19</sup>

What Melgares described as solemn and beautiful, Thomas James saw as sordid and crude. Nevertheless, James' well-known account does not detract from the veracity of Melgares' report. James wrote from memory in the mid-1840's, some twenty years after the event, on the eve of war with Mexico when anti-Mexican spirit was at zenith in the United States. Discrepancies in the two accounts illustrate how differently an episode can be perceived from two cultural perspectives. Unfortunately no other account with which we might make further comparison is known to exist.

Melgares' report, then, remains the sole first-hand description of New Mexico's reaction to Independence in 1821. Although it is frequently quoted and intrinsically interesting, it leaves many questions unanswered. From other sources, for example, it seems plain that New Mexico officials were less enthusiastic about Independence than Melgares indicates. Yet, whether they opposed Independence or were merely indifferent to it cannot be determined from the evidence at hand. The oligarchy's lack of enthusiasm seems to support Marc Simmons' thesis that the Spanish colonial system did not isolate or impoverish New Mexico as intensely as has been supposed.<sup>20</sup> Otherwise, the elite surely would have welcomed the downfall of the old regime. Yet, in the absence of private correspondence and memoirs, such an assertion cannot be proved. Nor can the reaction of lower-class New Mexicans and of Pueblo Indians be assessed. Although both groups participated in the Independence festivities, there is no way of knowing what meaning it held for them.<sup>21</sup> The only certainty seems to be that Santa Fe officials were reluctant rebels who received Independence by mail and celebrated it when told to do so.<sup>22</sup>

Although Melgares proclaimed the day that New Mexicans learned of Independence "an unforgettable day . . . that will be transmitted from father to son to the most distant posterity," and it

was suggested that the celebration be "perpetual," it was forgotten the next year. In December New Mexicans staged another celebration in honor of Iturbide, who had become Emperor in May and officially crowned in July. More lavish than the January celebration, the December festivities lasted for four days and included an evening opera in the Santa Fe plaza.<sup>23</sup> There seems to have been no further celebration of Mexican Independence in Santa Fe.

### MELGARES' REPORT

AT THE REQUEST of the City of Santa Fe, capital of New Mexico, that the patriotic declaration which describes the demonstrations made on the sixth day of January of the present year in honor of their political salvation be inserted in the *Gaceta*, the Regency of the Empire has ordered that this be done.

Those who dwell on this soil were eager to hear about the patriotic demonstrations which the inhabitants of the restored Mexican empire publicized in the press. As the date approached on which the mail was expected to arrive, December 26 last, with conflicting emotions of anxiety and rejoicing, gentlemen frequented the post office of this capital night and day, hoping for news that might be sent in public or private papers from any of the many towns in the North [of Mexico] which have shown definite love of their fatherland as well as of their adored religion. No sooner had the longed-for mail arrived when everyone became excited. Since that celebrated and memorable day of last September 11, which heard the sweet voice of liberty [apparently referring to the Plan of Iguala], the people swore to Independence, and the governor and the priests of the parish church and the military chapel of this city founded a philanthropic corporation to promote the solemnification of this event with the greatest show of rejoicing at the appropriate time. Now, receiving their private correspondence at the post office, they began to read aloud the news which each had received. Then, when the reading of the public paper ended,

which gave news of the day and hour at which the magnanimous and invincible hero, the young Iturbide, made his entrance into the Capital of the Empire, all those gathered exclaimed: "Glorious Day! Wonderful day! An unforgettable day for the New Mexicans that will be transmitted from father to son to the most distant posterity."

The governor, moved by these demonstrations which are so in keeping with our patriotism, exhibited the patriotic tract which the city of Tepic [capital of today's state of Nayarit] published for the pleasure of all the dwellers of Anahuac [i.e., Mexico].

The pen cannot express the growing pleasure and great patriotism aroused in Santa Fe on this occasion, for both the ears of the tender young as well as those of the doddering ancients devoted themselves fully to listening to the discourses that praised our Liberator [Iturbide] and the campaign. The rejoicing grew steadily, as more persons read sonnets, tercets, and other poetic works, especially the famous octave in which the eight letters of the surname of our beloved Generalísimo signify clearly the justice of our cause, the usefulness of the union between European Spaniards and Americans, and the appropriate eulogies to the loving Father of the Country. Then followed the reading of the poetic discourse which the liberal European, Pedro Negrete, expounded [in Tepic] amidst great enthusiasm and rejoicing.<sup>24</sup> If attending the function in the city of Tepic caused a sensation and extraordinary pleasure, the reading in Santa Fe exceeded it incomparably, just in hearing it said that the lips of a Negrete were gloriously occupied in extolling the untold enterprises of our exalted Liberator. Oh! How great can rejoicing be! When the incessant applause of the people interrupted the reading, the vivas and praises to Negrete began. The majority of those assembled believed that it was he himself who, with Maccabean firmness, struggled with tireless zeal for the liberty of Durango until gloriously reaching the point of victory.<sup>25</sup> Oh Virtuous European, exclaimed the people, your shining excellence demands lasting gratitude from the inhabitants of New Mexico and, especially, from the people of Durango.

The governor, viewing so much excitement, asked for silence in order to tell the crowd that the beloved European [Negrete], who had uttered the praiseworthy discourse with such enthusiasm and transcendent ardor in the City of Tepic, which had begun to be read, was a citizen of that city, and its *Síndico Procurador*. Although there was the example of many peninsulares [Spaniards born in Spain] who, through lack of enlightenment, had been victims of their own emotions, just as there are foolish Americans who dislike Independence simply because they are buried in the abominable cavern of prejudice, this was not so with Pedro Celestino Negrete, to whom many more inhabitants of the western world than those of Tepic pay their highest respects for the generosity, prudence, bravery, and judgment with which he has contributed to the formation of our marvelous social structure.

When the governor's oration concluded, the previously begun discourse continued, the reader saying: "Long live Iturbide, father of the Country; long live Negrete, wonder of history, etc." There began again the joyful noise that would not be contained in the breasts of those gathered. Quieting a little, the shouts of the crowd gave way to listening to the prose discourse which followed that which had just been read in poetry. The second and final paragraphs aroused a spirit of emulation. The crowd said unanimously that it should be loudly proclaimed: "New Mexicans, this is the occasion on which we should put into use the heroic patriotism that inflames us. We should publish our sentiments of liberty and gratitude, and make the tyrants see that although we inhabit the most northern point of North America we love the Holy Religion of our fathers, that we love and defend the longed-for union between Spaniards of both hemispheres, and that at the cost of our last drop of blood we will sustain the sacred Independence of the Mexican Empire."

At once they gave notice of the competition of the *loa*,<sup>26</sup> to be played by three persons symbolizing the Three Guarantees. That decided, and taking advantage of such a favorable opportunity, the governor said that they should arrange the presentation of this

loa for the sixth day of January, to be held with all the pomp that the majesty of the occasion demands and, if possible, to exceed the displays at Tepic. The associates of the corporation [which had been formed on September 11, to commemorate Independence] responded that of course they would cooperate happily, both personally and with their resources. They then asked that the day assigned for the performance of the Loa of the Three Guarantees be made perpetual for the residents of Santa Fe. In fact, all that was promised was carried out, and much more.

On the thirty-first of the aforesaid December, the three roles were delivered. The following gentlemen eagerly begged to play them: the *Alferez urbano y Síndico procurador*, Don Santiago Abreu, that of Independence; the priest, vicar, and ecclesiastical judge, don Juan Tomás Terrazas, that of Religion; and the worthy European and Chaplain of this Imperial Company, Fray Francisco de Hozio, that of Union. All carried out their assignments with an enthusiasm which exceeded their expectations.

The tireless perseverance with which the priest [Terrazas] made all the preparations for the great splendor of the appointed day aroused the attention even of the less enthusiastic. Still, not even his efforts could conceal the shortness of the time and the many things that remained to be done, but since the enthusiasm of this good patriot was not dampened, he was able to overcome the many obstacles which presented themselves. Thus, he personally visited the Sala Capitular of the Illustrious Ayuntamiento of this city to arouse enthusiasm and invite that political body to lend as much aid as was necessary, counting on the help of the military, for the preparation of the grand spectacle that the public expected. The efforts made by that worthy, independent [Father Terrazas] were not in vain. Just as happiness is contagious, so our Terrazas found the invaluable "Tri-guarantee" senior alcalde, don Pedro Armendaris, so disposed to do as much as was needed that, immediately, the patriotism of the other members of the cabildo shone forth. Each and every one offered to cooperate in any manner or form that was necessary. With such happy results our agent [Terrazas],

from that point, decided to do much more than had the inhabitants of Tepic. And, in fact, he did. Comparing the situation of one city with the other [the priest] immediately proceeded to arrange for the painting of a backdrop that was to cover the rear of the stage and which would present three symbols to public view: The first would allegorize Union with a lamb and lion embracing. The second, referring to the determined protection which our system possesses through arms, letters, the ecclesiastical state, and the secular state, contained a tree of Liberty which would be seen to be watered by four streams which issued forth from a cloud. And the third, the prize of virtue, symbolized in heroic Iturbide, his brows crowned with the precious laurels of Religion, Union, and Independence. This idea having been conceived, our director undertook to iron out the difficulty of finding a painter who could execute the painting as perfectly as possible for the presentation of the loa. Not finding anyone experienced, he turned to an associate, a great supporter of Independence, the postmaster, don Juan Bautista Vigil, to direct the aforementioned painting, making available to him as much help as might be necessary for a work of such difficulty. In spite of not having any more advantage than ardent diligence, Vigil accepted the commission with much pleasure. Since his good intentions nearly reached obstinacy, he succeeded to the satisfaction of all the citizenry and socios in producing the desired painting, which gave all meaning to the stage scene. The stage was adorned with the finest draperies of damask and exquisite cloth that there are in the city. It was placed in the principal plaza within the portico of the palace, as they call the house where the governors reside. Although all of the stage set was satisfactorily adorned, no part was as commendable as the three symbols found on the backdrop, on whose center was Independence raising high the beautiful Mexican standard.

In the center of the plaza, on a white flag nailed very high, the Three Guarantees were imprinted within a tricolor heart, as if resting upon pervasive peace. On the day of the fourth [of January], in the morning, the "Tri-guarantee" alcaldes went forth

to invite everyone to the main illumination which would begin to blaze forth at the beginning of the loa, a salvo of artillery serving as the signal.

The dawn of the sixth announced itself on that happy day with a widespread sound of bells ringing wildly, salvos of artillery and by the troops, and a burst of music which began as the banner of the Three Guarantees was unfurled. At once the crowd left for the principal street, serenading and showing inexpressible merriment. God grant that this praiseworthy pageantry be a legitimate reflection of a true adherence to the sanctity of our cause!

Following the completion of the Mass, the faithful senior alcalde, the great supporter of Independence don Pedro Armandaris, directed that the triumphal procession, which was already formed, should leave at ten in the morning. Congregated in the little plaza of the main parish church and composed of all the little children in sight, the procession left through the streets of the plaza, maintaining the following order and symmetry: the governor with the illustrious ayuntamiento; officials and the citizenry formed two lines; and in the center of this group went the young people bearing palms and flowers in their hands, uniformed in white clothing, sashes of sky blue, green laurel encircling their brows, and across their breasts a tricolor sash with the inscription: "Long live the Independence of the Mexican Empire," proclaiming the so glorious triumph that they were celebrating. Centered in front of the columns went a charming little child dressed as an angel, with a sword in his right hand, symbolizing the immortal [Plan of Iguala] and the prospect which, at Independence, through enlightenment and freedom of the press, the statesmen were opening with their writings. Behind him followed two richly adorned angels who had between them a beautiful little girl dressed as the Virgin and representing Independence and purity of our cause. The two angels entwined their arms with the arms of the angel of Independence, the angel on the right signifying Religion and that on the left, Union. These three persons were bound together by a single tricolor ribbon, amply embellished with beautiful diamonds and fine stones, the sight of which was as pleasant as the most de-

lightful garden. Then followed the other children whose varied costumes signified the rich and diverse provinces found on the opulent American soil. The musicians followed this, playing patriotic songs which were directed at the child who symbolized Independence. She carried in her hands the standard of the Empire of Anáhuac, whose only precursors are Humanity and Beneficence, and above all the reestablished Liberty of the noble northern people.

After the procession which ended at the parish church, the crowd, which was very large in spite of bad weather, singing sweet hymns of thanksgiving, moved to the main plaza. There they saw a splendid dance by the Indians of the Pueblo of San Diego de Tesuque, which lasted until one in the afternoon. Then the people scattered to various public games which had been placed around the plaza.

As nightfall approached, the beginning of the loa was announced with three salvos of artillery followed by a general illumination. At the same time, four squads of soldiers took positions at the four corners of the plaza and fired salvos in turn, the first shouting, "Long live Religion"; the second, "Long live Union"; the third, "Long live Independence"; and the fourth, "Long live the Liberty of the Mexican Empire."

At the conclusion of these salvos of artillery and by the troops, those who were on the stage, magnificently dressed, continued to recite the Three Guarantees. All of Santa Fe was made to see that their magnificence and majesty were venerated and sustained throughout the entire Indies [the New World]. The easy manner in which the gentlemen Abreu, Terrazas, and Hozio carried out their interesting performance showed much to recommend them and was worthy of the general applause.

Following the loa, a baile began in the same palacio attended by all persons of distinction. The fair sex attended wearing skirts of sky blue, and green laurels worn across the breast like a sash, with white letters reading "Long live the Independence of the Mexican Empire." The floor of the hall was pleasingly adorned. The refreshment was served with the lavishness required by so large an atten-

dance. And the entertainment ended at four-thirty in the morning as merrily as it had begun at eight in the evening. The occasion was so ineffable and outstanding that even the governor, the senior alcalde, and the chaplain happily presented themselves to perform an entertainment between dances. Moderation prevailed so powerfully throughout these events, at the loa as well as at the baile, that both men and women decidedly proclaimed the sanctity of our cause, their voices upholding it with vigorous support.

The inhabitants of Santa Fe, wishing that their noble sentiments in favor of the fatherland and just cause be known to all of the inhabitants of the Mexican Empire, beg that this expression of patriotism in which they have the satisfaction of manifesting their firm adherence to Religion, Union, Independence, and Liberty, be published. All shouting unceasingly "Independence or Death."

—MELGARES

## NOTES

1. Portions of the document have been translated before. Hubert Howe Bancroft summarized it in his *History of New Mexico and Arizona* (San Francisco, 1889), pp. 308-09, and Ralph E. Twitchell, in turn, quoted Bancroft's description in his *Leading Facts of New Mexico History* (Cedar Rapids, 1911), vol. 1, pp. 480-81. Lansing B. Bloom provided a lengthy summary of the document in his "New Mexico Under Mexican Administration, 1821-1846," *Old Santa Fe*, vol. 1 (1913), pp. 142-44. This summary, at times a translation and at times a paraphrase, Bloom realistically termed "a fairly close rendering" rather than a translation. Twitchell, *Old Santa Fe* (Santa Fe, 1925), pp. 179-81, and Maurice Garland Fulton and Paul Horgan, *New Mexico's Own Chronicle* (Dallas, 1937), pp. 81-82, published portions of the Melgares account based on Bloom's "rendering."

2. In Texas a simple ceremony marked the occasion. See Carlos Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519-1936* (Austin, 1950), vol. 6, pp. 172-74. No account of the reaction of the Tejanos is known: Letter from Professor David M. Vigness to Weber, Texas Tech University, Oct. 28, 1971. In California, as in New Mexico, Independence was celebrated with a day of festivities, but the description of this event, published in the

*Gaceta del Gobierno Imperial de México*, Aug. 3, 1822, is terse. The oath of allegiance to the new government was followed by "a majestic church function, continuous *vivas*, *salvos* of fusils and cannons, music, illuminations, as much as was believed conducive to the full celebration of such a happy day." The celebration probably resembled that of Santa Fe, which Melgares described more fully.

3. See, for example, Francisco de Thoma, *Historia popular de Nuevo Mexico* (New York, 1896), pp. 154-55.

4. Javier Ocampo, *Las ideas de un día. El pueblo mexicano ante la consumación de su Independencia* (México, 1969), p. 48. Ocampo studied 144 towns and found that three celebrated Independence as late as April 1822 (p. 327, n. 4).

5. See, for example, Bloom, vol. 1, p. 141.

6. Proclamation from the Viceroy Conde de Venadito, Mexico, March 3, 1821. Copy in the Spanish Archives of New Mexico, State Records Center (SANM), no. 2969. See also R. E. Twitchell, *The Spanish Archives of New Mexico* (Cedar Rapids, 1914), vol. 2.

7. Ayuntamiento of Mexico City, March 3, 1821, copied in Santa Fe, May 10, 1821, and also signed by Severino Martínez. *Ibid.*

8. Report of Francisco Velasco, Secretary, Chihuahua City, Aug. 28, 1821; García Conde to the troops, Chihuahua, Aug. 26, 1821; Melgares [to García Conde], Santa Fe, Sept. 11, 1821, copy from book of borradores. SANM, no. 2970. The original reply of Melgares may be in the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México, in *Série Guatemala*, to which I did not have access. See Ocampo, p. 327, n. 8.

9. Spanish-born Melgares who, as a young lieutenant, fruitlessly pursued Zebulon Montgomery Pike across the plains in 1806, still awaits a biography. A tentative effort based on insufficient documentation is Thomas M. Bolkan, "Facundo Melgares and the Northern Frontier of New Spain" (M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1965).

10. "Triunfo de la libertad Mexicana," Puebla, Aug. 9, 1821, SANM, nos. 2970 and 3004. A report from Durango, Sept. 18, 1821, copied in Santa Fe, Oct. 28, 1821 (SANM, no. 3029) told of that city's adherence to Iturbide's cause.

11. Announcement, Mexico, Oct. 4, 1821, signed by Melgares in Santa Fe, Nov. 30, 1821, and copied in Santa Fe on Dec. 5, 1821, by Juan Rafael Ortiz. "Acta de Independencia del Imperio," Mexico, Sept. 28, 1821, copied in Santa Fe on Dec. 4, 1821, by Juan Rafael Ortiz. SANM, no. 3066.

12. See, for example, García Conde to Melgares, Nov. 14, 1821, which reached Melgares by Dec. 13. SANM, no. 3074 and nos. 3045, 3047, copied in Chihuahua on Nov. 14, probably also reached Santa Fe by mid-December.

13. See, for example, Twitchell, *Old Santa Fe*, p. 179; Marc Simmons, *Spanish Government in New Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1968), p. 50.
14. Decree from the Soberana Junta Provisional Gobernativa, Mexico, Oct. 6, 1821. Copy in SANM, no. 3046.
15. See George Tays, *Revolutionary California: The Political History of California from 1820-1848* (Berkeley, 1934, a revised version of Tays' Ph.D. thesis of 1932), p. 96.
16. Bancroft, p. 309. Twitchell, apparently in agreement, ends his first volume of *Leading Facts*, p. 481, with this quote from Bancroft.
17. Ocampo, pp. 16, 24.
18. Eleanor B. Adams, "Viva El Rey," NMHR, vol. 35 (1960), pp. 284-92.
19. Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Mexicans and the Indians* (Chicago, 1962), pp. 140-42.
20. Simmons, pp. 214-16. The elite did take advantage of Mexican Independence, however, to foster a previously prohibited trade with the United States. On November 16, before news of Iturbide's final triumph reached New Mexico, William Becknell had entered Santa Fe and was permitted to trade. Thomas James, if his memory can be relied upon in this case, had learned of Independence before reaching Santa Fe on December 1, and was also allowed to trade. Governor Melgares himself cooperated with these two foreign merchants. See Becknell's "Journals," *Missouri Historical Review*, vol. 4 (1910), p. 77, and James, pp. 125, 128, 136.
21. Ocampo, p. 46, finds it impossible to assess the reaction of the lower class to Independence in Mexico generally.
22. From an anthropological perspective, too, Melgares' account may be disappointing. He does not provide sufficient details about the leadership or financing of the celebration to draw the kinds of conclusions that Marsha C. Kelly did in "Las fiestas como reflejo del orden social: el caso de San Xavier del Bac," *América Indígena*, vol. 31 (1971), pp. 141-61.
23. Description of the celebration in Santa Fe to commemorate the oath and proclamation of Iturbide as Emperor, Santa Fe, Dec. 20, 1822, Mexican Archives of New Mexico, State Records Center, Santa Fe, Miscellaneous, 1822, reel 1, frames 1486-1492.
24. General Pedro Celestino Negrete, a fierce and prominent royalist who, like Iturbide, changed sides to support Independence.
25. Fighting for Iturbide, Negrete took Durango after a three-week battle in which he was struck in the mouth by a bullet.
26. A *loa* (derived from *loar*, to praise or approve) was, in the sense that Melgares used it, a dramatic poem celebrating an illustrious person.