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THE MEXICAN CONNECTION: CONFEDERATE AND UNION
DIPLOMACY ON THE RIO GRANDE, 1861-1865

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This study examines the efforts of the Union and Confederate diplomatic agents to influence the events along the Rio Grande during the Civil War.

The paper compares the successful accomplishments of Confederate agent José Quintero to the hindered maneuverings of the Union representatives, Leonard Pierce and M. M. Kimmey. Utilizing microfilmed sources from State Department records and Confederate despatches, the paper relates the steps Quintero took to secure the Confederate-Mexico border trade, obtain favorable responses from the various ruling parties in northern Mexico, and hamper the Union agents' attempts to quell the border trade.

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CHAPTER I

1861: THE OPENING INITIATIVES

With the beginning of the Civil War in April 1861, the Confederate States of America set about the task of sending representatives to foreign countries. The Confederate commissioners' main objectives were to explain the Confederate position concerning secession, to relate the history of the Union's oppression of the South, and to seek foreign recognition.

The preliminaries of Confederate relations with Mexico began on 17 May 1861 when Confederate Secretary of State Robert Toombs wrote to John T. Pickett, informing him of his selection as the Confederate Minister to Mexico. Pickett was instructed to convey the Confederacy's wish for peaceful relations with Mexico and, if talk of alliance came up, to make it known that the Confederacy was ready to negotiate a "treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation." Concerning relations between the United States and Mexico, Pickett was to state that a strict observance of neutrality in all areas was desired by the Confederacy. Any breach of

a strict neutrality by Mexico in favor of the Union would be viewed by the South as evidence of an "unfriendly disposition." Pickett was not to ask for formal recognition of the Confederacy by Mexico, but if the Mexican government expressed a desire to do so, the Confederacy would be willing to exchange diplomats.¹

Thus began attempts by the South to use Mexico as a port of entry for European goods and also as a means of obtaining European recognition.² Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederacy, felt that after the Civil War began some European power would probably intervene in Mexico's troubled political scene. If any European power did step into Mexico, Davis believed the North would oppose the intervention, and the European country would seek the Confederacy as an ally and grant recognition.³

¹The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 31 vols. (Washington, 1885-1927), series 2, 3, 203-204. Hereafter cited as ORN.

²Frank Lawrence Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America, 2d ed., rev. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 87.

³Kathryn Abbey Hanna, "The Roles of the South in the French Intervention in Mexico," Journal of Southern History 20 (February 1954): 5-7; Burton J. Hendrick, Statesman of the Lost Cause: Jefferson Davis and His Cabinet (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1939), pp. 109-116.

Davis felt relatively certain of European intervention in Mexico because of recent political events in that country. In December of 1860, Pablo Benito Juárez, the constitutional president and leader of the liberal party, defeated the armies of General Miguel Miramon, leader of the conservative party that controlled Mexico City. Juárez, in coming to power, inherited the problem of paying off Mexico's debts to France, England, Spain, and the United States. The Monroe Doctrine, backed by the strength of the United States, had prevented the European countries from forcing payment, but with the coming Civil War, the powers of Europe could begin to devise a plan of intervention in Mexico.⁴

This view of Mexico as a pawn in the game of recognition was consistent with the Confederacy's foreign policy, which came to be called "King Cotton" Diplomacy. It was believed that recognition of the Confederacy rested on the South's cotton supply and the textile industry throughout the world, but particularly in England and France. If the South withheld its vast cotton crop from European factories for one or two years, the crippled economies of Europe would force England and France into granting recognition to the Confederacy. When the North began its blockade of southern ports,

⁴Owsley, p. 88.

the southern planters aided the weak Union tactic by enacting their own cotton embargo.⁵

This cotton embargo lasted throughout most of 1861-1862 even though the Confederate Congress did not enact any legislation making the embargo statutory law. This self-imposed embargo did not extend to Mexico. With the Union blockade getting underway, Mexico's coast offered the only legally safe route whereby goods and supplies could enter the Confederacy. Accordingly, to honor the spirit of the embargo but also to make sure a supply of goods could be maintained, the Confederate Congress passed an act on 21 May 1861 that prohibited the exportation of cotton except through southern seaports, with Mexico excluded from this prohibition.⁶

Upon his arrival at Mexico City in July 1861, Pickett found public opinion favoring the North. This situation had been brought about by Thomas Corwin, the United States Minister to the Juárez government. Corwin had arrived at Mexico City in May 1861 with instructions to thwart any plan that would aid the Confederacy. He had also begun informal negotiations to lend Mexico ten to twelve million dollars, and

⁵Ibid, pp. xvi, 23-24.

⁶Ibid., p. 39; Sherrill Dickeson, "The Texas Cotton Trade During the Civil War" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1967), p. 2.

he had received Mexican permission to allow Union troops from California to cross northern Mexican territory and enter Arizona.⁷ He also had drawn up a treaty that proposed the United States assume Mexico's payments of debt, using northern Mexican territory as collateral. This treaty did not receive Senate ratification, but Corwin did succeed in removing any chances Pickett may have had in gaining favor for the Confederacy.⁸

Pickett responded to this pro-Union atmosphere by treating the Mexicans with disdain. He also spoke insultingly to those around him. When asked if he was trying to gain recognition, Pickett responded, "to the contrary. My business is to recognize Mexico--provided I can find a government that will stand still long enough."⁹

⁷Seward to Corwin, 6 April 1861, U.S., Department of State, "Diplomatic Instructions of the Department of State to Ministers at Mexico" Record Group 59, and Corwin to Seward 29 June 1861, U.S., Department of State, "Diplomatic Despatches from U.S. Ministers to Mexico" Record Group 59, both on microfilm, North Texas State University Library, Denton, Texas. These two sources are hereafter cited respectively as U.S., "Diplomatic Instructions, Mexico" and U.S., "Diplomatic Despatches, Mexico."

⁸Seward to Corwin, 2 September 1861 and 24 January 1862, U.S., "Diplomatic Instructions, Mexico."

⁹Pickett to Toombs, 11 July 1861, "Records of the Confederate States of America," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., on microfilm, North Texas State University Library, Denton, Texas. These records are commonly known as and hereafter cited as the Pickett Papers.

Near the end of July 1861, Pickett was granted an interview with Manuel Zamacona, Mexico's Minister of Foreign Relations, who assured him of Mexico's friendship and neutrality. Juárez, Pickett was told, did not want any hostility between the Confederacy and Mexico over the latter's granting permission to let Union troops cross northern Mexico. Zamacona admitted this allowance had been given, but Mexico was unaware of Confederate claims to Arizona.¹⁰

With the Juárez government still under Corwin's influence, Pickett tried to sway Zamacona by declaring that the Confederacy did not want any Mexican territory, as Corwin had asserted. In a letter to Zamacona, he disclosed that he would transmit to his government proposals stating Mexico's desire for retrocession of former lands acquired by the United States. Of course, Pickett had no intention of actually carrying out this statement, for he wrote Toombs that this was only a political move to counter Corwin's propaganda.¹¹

The Mexican government did not act on Pickett's proposal, however, and he began to sense a growing hostility toward the Confederacy. Pickett thus began to advise Toombs

¹⁰Pickett to Toombs, 29 August 1861, *ibid.*

¹¹Pickett to Toombs, 28 September 1861, enclosing Pickett's letter to Zamacona, *ibid.*

that relations with the Juárez regime should cease. Corwin had outmaneuvered Pickett so well that he began to suggest that the Confederacy attack and keep Monterrey, a city in northern Mexico that would soon have great importance to the Confederacy.¹²

Pickett's usefulness to the Confederacy ended in November 1861 when he initiated a brawl with a Union sympathizer and was arrested, despite his diplomatic status. After thirty days in jail, Pickett bribed a judge and was released. He then left Mexico City and traveled to Vera Cruz, where he stayed with Mexican friends. He remained in Vera Cruz until he received his letter of recall in January 1862.

Pickett was ordered back to Richmond not because of his behavior, but because many of his dispatches had not been received. The Confederate situation in Mexico City was unknown to President Davis and his government.¹³ Pickett's dispatches had not arrived at Richmond because they had been intercepted by the commandant of Tamaulipas, a northern Mexican state. This commandant was working for Corwin and had

¹²Pickett to Toombs, 29 October 1861 and 29 November 1861, *ibid.*

¹³Pickett to Toombs, 29 November 1861 and 31 December 1861, *ibid.* Browne to Pickett, 28 January 1862, ORN, series 2, 3, 322.

sent all of Pickett's dispatches back to Corwin, who then sent them to Juárez. It was not surprising, then, that Pickett failed; all of his derogatory remarks about the Juárez government were read by Juárez.¹⁴ Upon his arrival in Richmond on 6 May 1862, Pickett informed Davis of the Mexican situation by submitting duplicates of his dispatches.¹⁵

The failure of Pickett's mission was not the only event that caused the Confederacy to shift its emphasis from Mexico City to northern Mexico. In July 1861, President Juárez suspended the payment of Mexico's foreign debts for a period of two years. On 31 October 1861, France, England, and Spain concluded an agreement on a joint expedition to collect forcibly their respective claims from Mexico. The United States was asked to join the expedition; Secretary of State William H. Seward declined, but only after obtaining from the three countries a disclaimer of any intention to acquire territory or political control in Mexico.

By January 1862, the three nations had sent ten thousand troops to Mexico, negotiated with Juárez, and had sent Juárez a message disavowing any plans to interfere in Mexico's

¹⁴Browne to Pickett, 30 November 1861, ORN, series 2, 3, 302.

¹⁵Owsley, pp. 99-100.

internal disputes. England and Spain, claiming France had intentions of violating the non-intervention clause, pulled out of the agreement and left Mexico in April 1862. The French troops remained to force their demands upon Juárez.¹⁶

With Juárez thus occupied by the French, and the inability of Pickett to control affairs in Mexico City, it was fortunate that Confederate Secretary of State Toombs saw fit to send an emissary to the northern Mexican states of Coahuila, Nuevo León, and Tamaulipas. These three Mexican states were pro-Southern for a strong economic reason: any European-Confederate trade could be easily conducted via the coastal town of Matamoros in Tamaulipas. This meant there would be an easy access of supplies for the South and huge profits for the merchants and traders along the Rio Grande.¹⁷ Another good reason for pro-Confederate sentiments was the ever-present threat of the Confederate Army; to anger the South meant possible military retaliation.

The man chosen by Toombs to represent the Confederacy

¹⁶Lynn M. Case, French Opinion on the United States and Mexico 1860-1867, Extracts from the Reports of the Procureurs Généraux (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1936), pp. 309-310; David Donald and J. G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2d ed., rev. (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), p. 511.

¹⁷Owsley, p. 113.

in northern Mexico was José Agustín Quintero.¹⁸ Born in Havana, Cuba, in 1829, Quintero was an ardent southerner. After receiving a law degree in Cuba, Quintero entered the field of journalism. He enlisted in the Confederate army while he was in Texas and then went to Virginia before joining the diplomatic corps.¹⁹

Toombs wrote to Quintero on 22 May 1861 instructing him that he was to travel to Monterrey, Mexico. There, Quintero was to inform Santiago Vidaurri, the governor of Nuevo León, that the Confederacy desired friendly relations along the Rio Grande. The Confederacy also wanted Vidaurri to do all he could to prevent border raids along the Rio Grande. Quintero was also sent a draft for three hundred dollars as six weeks' salary.²⁰ Quintero received his instructions and the draft for funds on 1 June 1861, whereupon he wrote back to William M. Browne, the assistant Secretary of State, that he would accept the job. He added that his

¹⁸Quintero's first name is José, not Juan. This error had been made by several historians because the indexers of the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion mistakenly listed him as "Juan". This error is corrected by Ronnie C. Tyler, Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p. 36.

¹⁹Tyler, pp. 45-46.

²⁰Toombs to Quintero, 22 May 1861, ORN, series 2, 3, 217.

chances for positive results were good because he had met Vidaurri in Austin two years previously when the governor was exiled from Mexico.²¹

Governor Vidaurri was the most influential man in northern Mexico during the Civil War. He came to power in 1854 when he seized the governorship of Nuevo León and Coahuila from General Geronimo Cardona. Vidaurri paid lip service to Juárez, but he actually believed in state rights and a federalist government. By mid-1861, Vidaurri not only governed Nuevo León and Coahuila, he had great influence in the state of Tamaulipas.²²

Quintero arrived in Monterrey on 17 June 1861 and saw Vidaurri in an official status on the twentieth and twenty-third of that month. In these meetings, Vidaurri expressed friendship toward the South and a desire to maintain peace along the border. As proof of his sincerity, Vidaurri gave Quintero a copy of a decree he had issued in April that called for the arrest of Mexicans raiding in Texas. Vidaurri also stated that he would never agree to allowing Union troops to cross northern Mexico. Believing he had accomp-

²¹Quintero to Browne, 1 June 1861, Pickett Papers.

²²Tyler, pp. 13-16.

lished his mission, Quintero returned to Richmond in August.²³

There was more news to report; news of such a confidential nature that Quintero waited until his return to Richmond to inform the new Secretary of State, Robert M. T. Hunter. On 26 June, Quintero and Vidaurri had met in a private interview. Vidaurri told Quintero that he had wanted for years to form a "Republic of Sierra Madre" comprised of northern Mexican states. The formation of the Confederacy now led him to seek annexation of the Mexican border states into the Confederacy. Vidaurri disclosed that if President Davis would appoint an agent, such negotiations could begin immediately. Vidaurri believed that only one thousand Texans and some artillery would be required to accomplish this annexation.

The two men had met again on 1 July and discussed the same plan. Vidaurri declared that he felt the northern Mexican states would be Americanized in time anyway, and that it may as well be done now instead of later. The border states contained great mineral wealth, he stated, but the Mexicans had neither the inclination nor the ability to utilize fully the land and minerals. Vidaurri also asserted

²³Quintero to Browne, 14 July 1861, and Quintero to Hunter, 16 August 1861, Pickett Papers.

that if Coahuila and Nuevo León were annexed to the Confederacy, the majority of Mexico's frontier states would soon follow. To hold Quintero's interest, he revealed in another meeting that he could furnish the South with any quantities of lead, copper, and gunpowder. Vidaurri could not supply any arms, however, because all of the weapons he commanded belonged to the Mexican government.²⁴

After receiving such surprising news, the Confederate State Department congratulated Quintero for his results and appointed him as confidential agent to Governor Vidaurri. He was instructed to advise Vidaurri that President Davis reciprocated Vidaurri's expression of friendship and goodwill. Davis also stated that while commercial and social ties would be maintained "it would be imprudent and impolitic in the interest of both parties" to annex the states in northern Mexico. Quintero was also instructed to persuade Vidaurri to block any conveyance of Union troops across northern Mexico, to determine the chances of purchasing war supplies, and to find the best route to ship supplies from Mexico to the Confederacy. Quintero was also to keep his status a secret.²⁵

²⁴Quintero to Hunter, 19 August 1861, *ibid.*

²⁵Browne to Quintero, 3 September 1861, ORN, series 2, 3, 253-255.

Davis was wise to refuse Vidaurri's offer. Acceptance could have caused war between Juárez and the South; also, the land was no longer needed for a balance between the North and South in the United States Congress. Annexation could have also angered the European countries who, Davis believed, were close to intervening into Mexico.²⁶

Upon his return to Brownsville, Texas, in October, Quintero found the state of Tamaulipas in a turmoil. In the recent election for a new governor, the winner, Jesús de la Serna, was declared ineligible to serve by the current governor, even though Juárez had recognized Serna as the new authority. The two factions raised armies; Serna's forces were led by José M. Carvajal, an old friend and Masonic brother of Colonel John S. Ford, the commander of Fort Brown in Brownsville. Quintero met with Carvajal and persuaded him to agree that he would not interfere with the growing border trade. Ford told Quintero that he had already dispersed a band of Mexicans who were organizing in Texas to join the gubernatorial dispute. Ford said he would continue to observe such neutrality measures. He also informed Quintero that, in regard to the border trade, the British consul at Matamoros would register any vessel under the British

²⁶Owsley, p. 116.

flag that sailed from that port. There was also a large supply of steamers at Matamoros that could be used as lighters, Ford said. These small boats could be registered under Mexican papers for protection from the Union block-aders.²⁷

After easing the situation somewhat in Matamoros, Quintero returned to Monterrey, arriving on 24 October. There he succeeded in persuading Vidaurri to write Mexico City and state his opposition to letting Union troops cross northern Mexico. Vidaurri also wrote the governors of the neighboring states to oppose Corwin's move.²⁸

Quintero then turned his attention to the border trade. He talked with the firms of Oliver and Brothers and told the company to send an agent to Richmond to sign a contract for delivery of supplies. The firm had informed Quintero that it could furnish large quantities of lead, sulfur, saltpeter, blankets, shoes, and small arms from Britain or Cuba. Quintero was assured that the goods would be safely imported to Matamoros or Tampico and consigned to the firm's houses in either of those ports. Vidaurri promised to furnish all

²⁷Quintero to Hunter, 18 October 1861, Pickett Papers; Tyler, p. 63.

²⁸Quintero to Hunter, 4 November 1861, Pickett Papers.

the papers needed to protect the ships from Union seizures. The company would take cash or cotton for payment upon delivery.²⁹

With Quintero's successes and the rapidly increasing border trade between Mexico and the Confederacy, there was little the Union representatives in northern Mexico could do to improve their position. The Union blockade could only extend along the South's coastline--not Mexico's. This allowed the small boats of the blockade runners to operate in relative safety in the shallow waters between Texas and Mexico. Union blockaders could only maintain a range of four miles from the Rio Grande's mouth because of legalities and strategically placed Confederate batteries.³⁰ British consuls in Mexico helped to propagate the border trade by allowing Confederate and Union shipowners to register their vessels under British license.³¹ This aspect of international law led Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to inform Seward that an effective blockade of the Rio Grande was "impracticable."³² Seward concurred with Welles's

³⁰ORN, series 1, 17, 81-84, 107-108, 166-167.

³¹L. Tuffly Ellis, "Maritime Commerce on the Far Western Gulf, 1861-1865," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 77 (October 1973): 175-179.

³²Robert W. Delaney, "Matamoros, Port for Texas during

analysis on 13 March 1862 when, concerning the seizure of some British ships near the Rio Grande, he wrote that the blockade at the Rio Grande's mouth was "questionable."³³

Seward and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase acted in Washington to harass those shippers in the North who wanted to trade with Mexico. Señor Don Matias Romero, the Mexican Minister to Washington, wrote to Seward in July 1861 protesting the actions of the custom officer in Boston who had refused clearance for a Union vessel bound for Matamoros. Seward promptly replied that Chase had ordered custom officers to use their own discretion in clearing ships for Matamoros; If they thought the ship's cargo was actually bound for Texas, the custom officers could refuse clearance.³⁴ This refusal of clearance occurred again later in July and also in September. Romero objected more strenuously each time. On 13 September 1861, Seward wrote to Romero

the Civil War." Southwestern Historical Quarterly 58 (April 1955): 483.

³³Delaney, p. 484.

³⁴Romero to Seward, 11 July 1861 and Seward to Romero, 17 July 1861, U.S. Congress, Senate, Papers relative to Mexican affairs, S. Ex. Doc. 11, 38th Cong., 1st sess., 1864, pt. 15.

giving him his final stance:

There is unquestionable room for doubt as to the bona fide character of the traffic carried on between Matamoros and the frontier of the insurgent State of Texas, and this government would be derelict to the first principle of national existence if it failed to make the consideration of its own safety and integrity one of paramount importance.³⁵

To represent the United States in Matamoros, Seward appointed Leonard Pierce, Jr., to the consulate post. Born in Maine in 1828, Pierce had lived four years in Texas and one year in Chihuahua, Mexico, where he had learned to speak Spanish.³⁶ Pierce arrived in Matamoros on 14 November 1861 just before Serna and his army attacked the town in an effort to secure Serna's claim to the governorship. The following months saw Matamoros in a state of seige, and Pierce kept a low profile during the fighting.³⁷

For the consulate in Monterrey, Seward chose Caleb B. H. Blood. Also born in Maine, Blood had acquired a know-

³⁵Romero to Seward, 23 July 1861, Romero to Seward, 2 September 1861, Seward to Romero, 13 September 1861, *ibid.*

³⁶Pierce to Seward, 30 August 1861, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Matamoros" Record Group 59, 1 January 1858-31 December 1864, on microfilm, DeGolyer Collection, Southern Methodist University Library, Dallas, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros."

³⁷Pierce to Seward, 18 November 1861, *ibid.* Communication was so disrupted by the fighting in Matamoros that this despatch did not reach Seward until 23 May 1862.

ledge of the Spanish people from frequent trips to Mexico and other Spanish countries. Blood did not receive his commission until March 1862, and he did not arrive at Monterrey until June 1862.³⁸

Thus 1861 was a most promising year for the Confederacy. While Corwin had blocked Pickett in Mexico City, the South had gained the momentum in northern Mexico. Supplies were what the South required, and Vidaurri had surpassed the Confederacy's hopes in that respect. The Union strategy in northern Mexico had been severely hampered by the late arrival of its consuls and the ineffectiveness of the blockade to halt the border trade.

³⁸Blood to Seward, 28 March 1862 and 9 June 1862, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Monterrey" Record Group 59, 15 November 1849-9 December 1869, on microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso Library, El Paso, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

CHAPTER II

1862: CONFEDERATE PROBLEMS AND SUCCESSES

As 1862 began, Quintero faced the first of many obstacles he had to surmount in trying to maintain peaceful border relations. The warring in Matamoros for the governorship of Tamaulipas had severed the trade lines between the coastal town and Monterrey. Vidaurri, his government funds dwindling because of the disrupted trade, raised a forced loan from the merchants in Monterrey.¹ In an effort to end the fighting, President Juárez declared Tamaulipas under martial law and put Vidaurri in command with full administrative powers.²

Juárez may not have wanted to put Vidaurri in control of so profitable an area, for he knew Vidaurri opposed his desire for a strong central government. However, with the impending landing of the English, French, and Spanish forces, Juárez needed Vidaurri's state troops. Vidaurri had earlier

¹Quintero to Hunter, 14 November 1861, "Records of the Confederate States of America," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., on microfilm, North Texas State University Library, Denton, Texas. Hereafter cited as the Pickett Papers.

²Quintero to Hunter, 1 February 1862, *ibid.*

agreed to forget past differences and had sent Juárez one thousand infantrymen and two thousand cavalry troops.³ Thus, to secure Vidaurri's aid, Juárez felt compelled to make him commander-in-chief of Tamaulipas. This act aided the Confederacy, even though Juárez favored the North, for now Vidaurri was in control of every major point along the Rio Grande where the border trade was growing.

When José Carvajal, the leader of Serna's forces in Matamoros, refused to acknowledge Vidaurri's authority, Vidaurri ordered Colonel Julian Quiroga and six hundred riflemen to Matamoros in February.⁴ By the fourth of March, these forces had taken Matamoros from Carvajal, who retreated into Texas. Vidaurri wrote the Confederate commander at Brownsville, Colonel Philip N. Lockett, and asked him to prevent Carvajal and Serna from regrouping in Texas. Quintero traveled to Brownsville, and Lockett informed him that some artillery and small arms had been removed from Carvajal's men as they crossed the river. Quintero reported to Richmond that while the Confederate military was neutral, citizens of Texas were aiding either Carvajal or Vidaurri. Quintero

³Quintero to Hunter, 14 November 1861, *ibid.*

⁴Quintero to Hunter, 1 February 1862, *ibid.*

naturally favored Vidaurri.⁵

The problem of Carvajal's opposition to Vidaurri was further aggravated later in March by the return of Colonel Ford as commander in Brownsville. Quintero met with Ford and briefed him on the situation. Quintero emphasized Vidaurri's helpfulness to the Confederacy and stressed the importance that Ford display no favoritism toward his friend, Carvajal.⁶ Convinced that Ford would observe strict neutrality, Quintero reported to his government that the affair was under control.⁷

Quintero returned to Monterrey on the twelfth of March and conferred with Vidaurri the following day. Vidaurri stated that he wanted the weapons confiscated from Carvajal's men; Quintero presented a note from Ford that said the matter had been referred to General Paul O. Hébert, the commander of Confederate forces in Texas. Ford reported that he felt the arms would be sent to Colonel Quiroga in Matamoros. Ford's message also declared that he had issued orders to disperse any group that might be organizing in Texas for the purpose of raiding Matamoros.⁸ Quintero, in his report of this meeting,

⁵Quintero to Browne, 4 March 1862, *ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Quintero to Browne, 8 March 1862, *ibid.*

⁸Quintero to Browne, 22 March 1862, *ibid.*

advised Assistant Secretary of State Browne of Vidaurri's importance to the Confederacy. Now that Vidaurri controlled Matamoros, Quintero wrote, the Confederacy could bring in more goods than ever before. Vidaurri now also commanded the ports of Tampico and Soto la Marina, thus giving the South easy access to supplies from Cuba and Europe. Quintero told Browne that such advantages must not be jeopardized by Carvajal and urged that while Carvajal might make offers through Colonel Ford, they were not to be heeded. Quintero also asserted that the defenses around Brownsville were meager and needed to be reinforced.⁹

Just a few days after Quintero's conference with Vidaurri, the Carvajal affair flared up again. Carvajal and five hundred men crossed the border and entered Mexico near Reynosa in Tamaulipas. His men then opened fire against some of Colonel Quiroga's troops stationed at Matamoros. In relating this news to Quintero, Vidaurri alleged that Carvajal had obtained his weapons and supplies from Texas border firms. Quintero believed Vidaurri's assertions to be true, and he complained to Browne that although he had repeatedly told Ford to arrest Carvajal, Ford had not done so. Ford's presence further eroded the friendly atmosphere in that he

⁹Ibid.

and Quiroga had sent threatening messages to each other. Unless something were done immediately, Quintero stated, Vidaurri's friendship could soon change to enmity, thus disrupting the border trade. In closing his message, Quintero added that if Ford would not listen to him, the Confederate State Department could appoint someone "who may have more influence . . . with the military at Brownsville and avoid the serious difficulties" that were developing.¹⁰

Quintero's warnings concerning possible retaliation by Vidaurri soon became fact. In mid-April of 1862, Quintero reported that Vidaurri had removed Matamoros' status as a free port; a tariff of two cents per pound would be levied on all cotton. Vidaurri informed Quintero that the tax was necessary to support the seven thousand troops he had in the field. Quintero did not believe this, feeling instead that the tax would not have come about if Carvajal had been seized by Ford. To make matters worse, Carvajal had crossed into Nuevo León and attacked a small village. Vidaurri threatened to cease all border trade and enter into Texas to capture Carvajal. Quintero wrote that he felt he could prevent such an action and find a solution.¹¹

¹⁰Quintero to Browne, 24 March and 28 March 1862, *ibid.*

¹¹Quintero to Browne, 17 April 1862, *ibid.*

Quintero needed to find an answer regarding Carvajal quickly because, along with pressure from Vidaurri, the United States consul at Matamoros, Leonard Pierce, was exploiting the growing distrust between the Confederates and Mexico. In March, Pierce reported to Seward on his meetings with Colonel Quiroga. Quiroga, as a result of the Carvajal affair, began to advise Pierce that a force of Mexicans was being formed in Texas to capture Matamoros. Quiroga also added that many Texans were joining the raiding party in order to capture any Union sympathizers in Matamoros. He offered his protection to Pierce and any Union men who desired it. Whether or not Quiroga was serious in his offer, these talks led Pierce to believe that Quiroga was pro-Union.¹²

Pierce's other efforts centered around encouraging and aiding men to desert from Fort Brown. Quintero also claimed that Pierce had spoken to Juan Cortinas, the Mexican firebrand who had raided the Texas border in 1859-1860, about invading Texas. In addition, Pierce had endeavored to start an English newspaper for political purposes, but the Mexican

¹²Pierce to Seward, 24 March 1862, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Matamoros" Record Group 59, 1 January 1858-31 December 1864, on microfilm, DeGolyer Collection, Southern Methodist University Library, Dallas, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros."

commander at Matamoros refused him permission.¹³

Quintero's first problem was securing the removal of Vidaurri's tax on cotton. The Confederate agent wrote Vidaurri on 4 April 1862 and informed him that his tax was a "misuse of power". Vidaurri was already collecting large amounts of money from the ships paying tonnage, harbor, and customs duties, Quintero expounded. Any further increase in taxes could cause numerous vessels to leave without unloading their cargoes, thus avoiding possible losses. Quintero also indicated that several trade agents in Brownsville had written cotton planters and told them to keep their crops at home. If added to the high transportation costs, the new tax would prohibit investment. Quintero gave notice that unless this tax were removed or cut to one cent a pound, the trade would end, and the growers would again try to run the Union blockade. Vidaurri saw that Quintero had a sound argument and reduced the tax to one cent per pound.¹⁴

Quintero then turned his full attention to the arrest and removal of Carvajal. Along with his continued letters

¹³Quintero to Browne, 17 April 1862, Pickett Papers.

¹⁴Quintero to Vidaurri, 4 April 1862, and Vidaurri to Quintero, 5 April 1862, both enclosed with Quintero to Browne, 17 April 1862, *ibid*.

to Ford, Quintero wrote Texas governor F. R. Lubbock, and General H. E. McCulloch, Confederate commander of the Western Department in Texas. In each letter, Quintero emphasized the strength of Vidaurri and the aid he could render to the Confederacy.¹⁵ Quintero also wrote to Colonel Capistran, the Mexican commander at Matamoros. Capistran was instructed to take an affidavit to Commissioner John Tabor at Brownsville if he learned of another Carvajal raid. Tabor would see that Carvajal was arrested and bound over to Mexican authorities.¹⁶

The Carvajal situation came to a conclusion in mid-April. General McCulloch gave Ford orders to arrest the Mexican agitator and deliver him to Mexico if Carvajal had plans for any more raids into Tamaulipas. Ford and Carvajal may have been old acquaintances, but Ford knew he must obey orders. Carvajal's activities ceased.¹⁷

With Carvajal in check and Vidaurri's cotton tax reduced, Quintero was free to oversee the growing border trade. While

¹⁵Quintero to Browne, 28 March 1862, *ibid*; Quintero to Lubbock, 24 March 1862, *Governors's Letters*, Texas Archives, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas, cited by Ronnie C. Tyler, *Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p. 70.

¹⁶Quintero to Browne, 17 April 1862, *Pickett Papers*.

¹⁷Quintero to Browne, 28 April 1862, *ibid*.

some trading had begun before Quintero's arrival, his appearance on the Rio Grande sparked a trade boom. Many merchants and firms sought his signature on trade agreements. Attrill and Lacoste, Droege, Oetling and Company, Marks and Company, and Milmo and Company were just a few of the groups eager to do business. Many of the firms kept trade houses on both sides of the river in order to buy and sell more quickly. The firm of Milmo and Company was the largest and most influential business in the trade. Patricio Milmo, the head of the firm, was Vidaurri's son-in-law and thus received most of the trade contracts.¹⁸

The cotton bales began their journey to Mexico from various points within Texas' interior. The bales would be transported either overland to the border or to the Texas coast and then shipped aboard shallow-bottom vessels to the Rio Grande. The trade grew so rapidly that by the fall of

¹⁸Frank Lawrence Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America, 2d ed., rev. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 118; Sherrill Dickeson, "The Texas Cotton Trade During the Civil War" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1967), pp. 10-11. During 1862-1864, Vidaurri collected over one million dollars from the customs house at Piedras Negras; revenue from other sites amounted to \$125,000 a month. These estimates are from Samuel Bernard Thompson's Confederate Purchasing Operations Abroad (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1935), pp. 125-126.

1862 approximately two thousand bales a month were arriving at Monterrey.¹⁹ The United States vice-consul at Monterrey, M. M. Kimmey, described the ineffectiveness of the Union blockade to Seward when he wrote: "More goods go into Texas from Mexico than could possibly go in were the ports on the whole coast of Texas thrown open to them."²⁰

The magnitude of the border trade naturally brought some changes to the small Mexican border towns. At one point in the commerce, there were twenty thousand speculators swarming along the Rio Grande. Space for business or living was at a premium. Wages ranged from five to seven dollars in silver a day; living expenses were one to three dollars a day. Brothels, gambling houses, saloons and even an English newspaper sprang up almost overnight. There were no sidewalks, gas works, or paved streets; avenues were usually eighteen inches of mud. Because no water system existed, water was hauled in from the Rio Grande at a cost of two dollars for a forty gallon barrel.²¹ The trade became so lucrative

¹⁹Dickeson, p. 5.

²⁰Kimmey to Seward, 29 October 1862, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Monterrey" Record Group 59, 15 November 1849-9 December 1869, on microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso Library, El Paso, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

²¹Robert W. Delaney, "Matamoros, Port for Texas during

that in 1863 a steamship service was established between Matamoros and London.²² In 1864, even with the trade declining, two additional steamships were added to the New Orleans-Matamoros run.²³

Throughout the trade's existence, the agents of the various firms and the Confederacy dealt not only with foreign suppliers but with suppliers in New York. Before 1861 there was only one arrival a year of a United States ship in Matamoros. During January to March 1864, there were thirty-two dockings by Union traders.²⁴ The New York Herald reported of one company making more money from its only ship that traded in Matamoros than from all of its other shipping routes combined.²⁵ There was no secrecy among the Confederates concerning trade with the Union. Indeed, a Texas newspaper

the Civil War," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 58 (April 1955): 473-474, citing New Orleans Times, 3 March 1865 and 1 June 1865 and New York Herald, 9 January 1965.

²²Alfred J. Hanna and Kathryn A. Hanna, "The Immigration Movement of the Intervention and Empire as Seen Through the Mexican Press," Hispanic American Historical Review 27 (February 1948): 233.

²³Delaney, pp. 478-479, citing New Orleans Era, 29 September 1864.

²⁴Ibid., p. 479.

²⁵Ibid., p. 480, citing New York Herald, 17 September 1863.

proclaimed, "come to Brownsville, and we will sell it [cotton] to you for gold and silver."²⁶

Early in 1863, the trade had grown to such proportions that there were nearly two hundred ships anchored off the Rio Grande's mouth to unload. The Union ships which had been sent to the border to stem the trade could do nothing.²⁷ To avoid scrutiny by the Union vessels, ships would anchor and unload their non-contraband goods by day and then unload their contraband goods by night. On some ships tarpaulins would be rigged facing the Union blockaders, hiding the loading and unloading. Other trading ships would disguise their cargo. The British vessel Will-o'-the Wisp, according to its manifest, was supposed to be carrying flour. When searched by a Northern blockader, it was found to be carrying gunpowder, percussion caps, shoes, and clothing.²⁸

Cotton drew high prices along the Rio Grande; in August

²⁶Dickeson, p. 130, citing Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 22 May 1863.

²⁷The War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 31 vols. (Washington, 1895-1927), series 1, 17, 403. Hereafter cited as ORN. During the war, the Union sent the ships Portsmouth, Albatros, Montgomery, Princess Royal, Bienville, and Monongahela to try to block the trade, but they all failed. See Dickeson, pp. 15-17.

²⁸Delaney, p. 485; Dickeson, p. 18; ORN, series 18, 525-526.

1862 cotton was priced at sixteen cents per pound, and October 1862 saw it at twenty-six cents. In late 1863, as a result of the Federal occupation of Brownsville,²⁹ cotton was between eighty and ninety cents a pound. The final months of the war found the price to be from thirty-two to thirty-four cents.³⁰ The value of cotton at its interior sources was considerably lower throughout the war. Ranging from ten cents a pound in 1862 to about twenty-five cents a pound in 1864-1865, the rates differed from border prices as a result of transportation costs and heavy speculation.³¹

With all circumstances favoring the South, Quintero could afford to write a glowing report to his new secretary of state, Judah P. Benjamin, appointed to that office in March 1862. From Matamoros Quintero wrote acknowledging the

²⁹See Chapter III, below.

³⁰Dickeson, pp. 121-122, citing San Roman to Messrs. Servi and Schwarts, 7 October 1862, Joseph San Roman Collection, Archives Division, The University of Texas Library, Austin, Texas; Nannie M. Tilley, ed., Federals on the Frontier, the Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre 1862-1864 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), p. 247.

³¹Dickeson, p. 122, citing Texas State Military Board to M. K. Ryan, 26 February 1862, Texas State Military Board Record Book 101, pp. 34-36, Archives Division, Texas State Library, Austin, Texas, and Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph, 16 February 1863; The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 130 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), series 1, 26, pt. 2, 577-578. Hereafter cited as OR.

arrival of Benjamin's initial dispatch and the receipt of a check for the amount of six hundred dollars. Quintero informed Benjamin that Vidaurri had repealed all duties on "national articles" exported from Mexico. This meant that gunpowder, lead, copper, saltpeter, sulfur, shoes, cloth, and corn entered Texas free of duties. "In fact," Quintero asserted, "the state of affairs along the whole frontier is at present very flattering." There was even more proof that relations with Governor Vidaurri could not have been more advantageous, Quintero proclaimed. On 19 June 1862, Juárez had ordered Vidaurri to cease all "intercourse" with the Confederacy. Juárez had stated that the friendly relationship with the Union was all that was required for an international policy. Quintero reported that Vidaurri answered Juárez by claiming that since his states bordered the Confederacy, an atmosphere of friendship was necessary. The trade had created this friendship, and Vidaurri refused to end it because it would be "impolite" and would also "ruin the frontier commerce." Probably as a result of his disobedience, Juárez replaced Vidaurri as military commandant of Tamaulipas with General Ygnacio Comonfort. Quintero saw no problem with this change, as he knew Comonfort and felt the new commandant favored the South.³²

³²Quintero to Benjamin, 5 July 1862, Pickett Papers.

Up to this point, the United States' consuls in northern Mexico had succeeded in doing very little to harass the Confederate-Mexican relations. C. B. H. Blood, the consul at Monterrey, arrived at his post in late May 1862. Upon his arrival, Blood had immediately complained to Seward that his salary was too meager to cover even half of his living expenses. He then recommended to Seward that M. M. Kimmey be appointed vice-consul, and he also asked Seward for a raise in salary of one thousand dollars. Blood wrote that if the raise could not be granted, he would tender his resignation. Before he resigned in August 1862, Blood did meet with Vidaurri. Of this interview, Blood wrote Seward that while Vidaurri spoke of friendship toward the Union, the governor's true feelings were demonstrated by his trade speculations.

Upon his return to New York in September, Blood loaded a schooner with goods and consigned the shipment to Pierce at Matamoros. While not wanting a consularship, Blood did want to trade in Matamoros. When the New York customs collector was reluctant to clear Blood's vessel, he wrote to Seward for clearance to trade in Matamoros for non-contraband goods. Blood felt he should be allowed to recoup his lost time and expenses by trading.³³

³³Blood to Seward, 23 May, 9 June, 27 August, and 18 September 1862, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

In the opening months of 1862, Pierce was occupied with opening a new consul office, as the old building had been destroyed during the battle for Tamaulipas' governorship. Pierce reported that he had had much difficulty getting recognized and established because of the considerable Confederate influence.³⁴

By the end of April, after Carvajal had ended his raids, Pierce was working on his most incessant problem--aiding refugees from Texas who had appealed for Union aid. In one instance, Confederate sympathizers in Matamoros began to seize any Union men they could find in order to return them to Texas. Pierce immediately wrote the Mexican commander and told him to have these seizures halted. Pierce also wrote to the U.S.S. Montgomery, which was positioned near the mouth of the Rio Grande, for aid. The ship's commander responded that he would stand by. The Mexican police soon secured the men's release and gave them an escort aboard the U.S.S. Montgomery, which then sailed for the United States.³⁵

Aiding refugees proved to be Pierce's main task through-

³⁴Pierce to Seward, 1 March 1862, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros."

³⁵Pierce to Seward, 30 April 1862, with Lieutenant Hunter's letter to Pierce, 23 April 1862, enclosed, *ibid.*

out the war. He would give them food, clothing, shelter in his own office, and what little funds he could spare. A large number of these refugees were sent by Pierce either to the United States or to New Orleans after that city fell to the Union army.³⁶ Pierce was so persistent in this function that Major General Benjamin Butler, the Union commander at New Orleans, complained to Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War, about Pierce's clearing of ships during a yellow fever epidemic in Matamoros. Pierce defended himself by declaring that when the ships left, the men were healthy. If the men became ill at sea, Pierce argued, he could not be blamed.³⁷

Of course, Quintero saw Pierce's actions from a different viewpoint. In July 1862, Quintero reported to Benjamin that Pierce had raised a force of two hundred men to hinder the Confederate's success along the border. Quintero thwarted this move by persuading the Mexican authorities to issue orders in all border towns calling for the arrest of anyone organizing groups of men. Vidaurri even warned Pierce not to disturb the border situation, or the consul would be put

³⁶Nearly every message sent by Pierce to Seward relates news of more incoming refugees and Pierce's attempts to aid them, *ibid.*

³⁷Stanton to Seward, 22 November 1862, and Pierce to Seward, 30 December 1862, *ibid.*

out of the country.

Quintero had also insured that Edmund J. Davis, a former judge of the Texas Rio Grande district and an ardent Union man, failed in his attempt to stir up the Mexican population against the South. Davis left Matamoros, but Quintero knew he would soon return to try again.³⁸ In August, Quintero informed Benjamin of the arrival of another Union organizer, A. J. Hamilton, a former Texas congressman. Hamilton and seventeen men were disarmed by Mexican authorities upon their arrival in Matamoros. Since Hamilton conferred with Pierce constantly, Quintero had the two men watched until Hamilton's departure for New York.³⁹

The increasing numbers of Union refugees in Matamoros gave Quintero cause for concern. Insults were exchanged between Yanks and Rebels almost daily. Hamilton, while in Matamoros, had openly denounced the South and had threatened to unite the refugees with the first Union force that invaded Texas. Quintero learned that Davis, supplied with money and arms, was indeed headed for Matamoros to organize raiding

³⁸Quintero to Benjamin, 5 July 1862, Pickett Papers. Davis was to become Texas' first non-provisional governor in 1870.

³⁹Quintero to Benjamin, 14 August 1862, *ibid*; Pierce to Seward, 26 August 1862, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros."

parties.⁴⁰ Quintero realized that trouble between the refugees and Confederates would arise, but he could do little until the volatile situation erupted.

The Confederate-Mexican border trade was not the only factor that increased in significance during 1862. The French presence became more pressing upon Juárez with each passing day. In April, Quintero wrote that Juárez had asked Vidaurri to send two thousand men to Mexico City. It was reported that hostilities between Mexico and France had commenced and that twelve thousand French troops had landed at Vera Cruz.⁴¹ Later the same month, Juárez published an order to Vidaurri demanding four thousand soldiers. Vidaurri refused to comply, saying he was out of funds and could not raise additional troops. In an effort to punish Vidaurri for not sending reinforcements, the Juárez cabinet set about trying to remove the insubordinate governor. But the plan was dropped because it was feared Vidaurri would withdraw all of his forces then present in Mexico City and rebel.⁴² Juárez was also challenged by General Juan N. Almonte, the

⁴⁰Quintero to Benjamin, 30 August 1862, Pickett Papers.

⁴¹Quintero to Browne, 3 April 1862, *ibid.*

⁴²Quintero to Benjamin, 20 November 1862, *ibid.*

former President of Mexico, when Almonte announced he would join the French in trying to remove Juárez.⁴³

In August 1862 the French began to maneuver into position by blockading the Mexican ports of Tampico, Mazatlán, and Guaymas. The correct number of French troops at Vera Cruz was now reported to be just above eight thousand including thirty pieces of artillery.⁴⁴ Quintero informed Benjamin that it appeared Almonte was gaining strength. The masses did not worry about the consequences of the French succeeding. Perhaps, Quintero said, this was because the Juárez government was financially destitute, and his army lacked leadership and discipline.⁴⁵ By October 1862, Quintero felt that Juárez had turned cool toward the Lincoln administration. Quintero believed Juárez's position had changed as a result of Corwin's failure to secure a loan.⁴⁶ Before the year was out, the French had taken Tampico.⁴⁷

The end of 1862 found the Confederates still in control of the border situation. Quintero had successfully removed

⁴³Quintero to Browne, 28 April 1862, *ibid.*

⁴⁴Quintero to Benjamin, 14 August 1862, *ibid.*

⁴⁵Quintero to Benjamin, 7 September 1862, *ibid.*

⁴⁶Quintero to Benjamin, 12 October 1862, *ibid.*

⁴⁷Quintero to Benjamin, 1 December 1862, *ibid.*

Carjaval as an obstacle, and the trade grew stronger daily. The effectiveness of Pierce's and Blood's efforts to damage Mexican-Confederate relations was reduced to almost nil. However, Quintero did have some possible areas of conflict to watch. The ever-increasing number of Union refugees in Mexico could lead to an explosive clash if men such as E. J. Davis or A. J. Hamilton were not kept in check. The French question loomed just ahead and with it came the possibility of a confrontation between Juárez and Vidaurri.

CHAPTER III

1863: TURMOIL ALONG THE BORDER

As 1863 began, Quintero and the Confederates still maintained their superiority along the Rio Grande. The border trade was prosperous for everyone concerned. The French plans to establish a monarchy in Mexico only peripherally affected northern Mexico. Another factor favoring the South was the appointment of Brigadier General Hamilton P. Bee as commander of the Rio Grande military district. Upon assuming command in April 1862, Bee, who spoke Spanish fluently and understood the Mexican society, proved to be instrumental in aiding the Southern cause.¹

Leonard Pierce's efforts to organize raids upon the Confederate trade in 1862 had been closely watched and checked by Quintero. Quintero had received a letter from Bee in October 1862 that mentioned rumors of men organizing at Eagle

¹Fred J. Rippy, The United States and Mexico (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), p. 238.

Pass to demonstrate against the South.² In December 1862, Bee informed Quintero that one Octaviano Zapata had been organizing men in Tamaulipas to raid Texas. As Zapata was formerly one of Juan Cortinas' men, Bee believed that Zapata was being supplied by Pierce. Quintero could only write to the new governor of Tamaulipas and express his concern, as Vidaurri no longer controlled that state. Governor Lopez assured Quintero that Zapata and his men would be arrested.³

Pierce, however, did not cease such activities in 1863. On the twentieth of January, Quintero received a message from Bee that told of two raids into Texas. On 18 December 1862, a group of Mexicans bearing a United States flag crossed the Rio Grande at Las Cuevas and attacked a wagon train. Three teamsters were killed and the wagons, loaded with supplies for trade, were taken back into Mexico by the bandits. Another party of Mexicans had crossed into Texas the same day near El Clareno and murdered the chief judge of Zapata County. In retaliation, a small group of Confed-

²Quintero to Benjamin, 19 October 1862, "Records of the Confederate States of America," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., on microfilm, North Texas State University Library, Denton, Texas. Hereafter cited as the Pickett Papers.

³Quintero to Benjamin, 1 December and 11 December 1862, *ibid.*

erate cavalry entered Mexico on Christmas Day and attacked the robbers near Camargo. Eighteen bandits were slain and fourteen were wounded. Papers were found on the bandits that supposedly linked Pierce to the raiders. Bee told Quintero that he and five thousand men were on their way to the border from San Antonio to maintain peace on both sides.

Quintero notified Vidaurri of the fighting, but Vidaurri said he could do nothing in Tamaulipas without compromising Governor Lopez's authority. Vidaurri did agree to write Juárez's foreign minister and inform him of the affair. Quintero then headed for Brownsville to meet with Bee but before arriving at Brownsville, he met with Lopez in Matamoros. Lopez explained that he had been unable to prevent the raids because most of his states' soldiers were in Mexico City. Lopez then told Quintero that he was willing to allow the Confederates to pursue the remaining outlaws in Tamaulipas. Lopez also declared that if any of the documents found on the bandits did implicate Pierce, the consul would be ordered to leave Mexico.⁴

The matter was resolved in February. The documents that were to have implicated Pierce proved to be inconclusive as to whether or not he had aided the robbers. Lopez spoke to

⁴Quintero to Benjamin, 30 January 1863, *ibid.*

Pierce about the raids. Pierce denied the charges and said the raiders had used his name to gain support among their men. Issuing Pierce a stern warning, Lopez said that if the consul was ever caught at organizing raids, he would be forced out of Mexico. Quintero felt Lopez was not anxious to remove Pierce because it could have caused trouble with the Union.⁵

The hostile feelings between the Confederates and Texas refugees finally erupted in March 1863. Unionist E. J. Davis had returned to Matamoros in December 1862. Davis' presence, and his work in organizing a group he called the "First Texas Cavalry," had deeply angered the Southern troops in Brownsville. In the early morning hours of 15 March 1863, one hundred Confederate troops from Brownsville crossed the river and entered Matamoros. The Confederates, led by a Colonel Chilton, then surrounded the customs house where Davis was waiting to embark aboard a Union steamer. After seizing Davis, the soldiers split up and captured other Unionists. The Confederates finally withdrew into Texas about six in the morning. Governor Lopez demanded the immediate release and return of the kidnapped victims.⁶

⁵Quintero to Benjamin, 26 February 1863, *ibid.*

⁶Pierce to Seward, 26 March 1863, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Matamoros" Record

General Bee, in a letter to the assistant adjutant-general in Houston, explained that he had had no part in the incident. While he had known about Davis' plans to leave for New Orleans, Bee reported that he had ordered no raids into Matamoros. No violation of Mexican sovereignty would be condoned, Bee wrote. Bee then stated that he did not learn of the raid until the next morning, and even then the report was unofficial. Bee expressed regret that such an incident had occurred but, he added, the dignity of Texas had finally been avenged.⁷

Quintero informed Benjamin that the kidnapping had resulted in crowds parading throughout Matamoros shouting "vivas" to Lincoln and death to the South. When Vidaurri heard about the raid, he was not surprised; he said the raid was a result of the favor shown by Lopez toward Pierce.⁸ Davis and three others were found on March eighteenth and returned to Matamoros. One of the men, William Montgomery,

Group 59, 1 January 1858-31 December 1864, on microfilm, DeGolyer Collection, Southern Methodist University Library, Dallas, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros". Lopez to Bee, 17 March 1863, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, 130 vols. (Washington, 1880-1901), series 1, 15, 1130-1131. Hereafter cited as OR.

⁷Bee to Major A. G. Dickinson, 15 March 1863, OR, series 1, 15, 1016-1017.

⁸Quintero to Benjamin, 21 March 1863, Pickett Papers.

had been hanged the night of the raid.⁹

The kidnapping of Davis could have caused ill feeling between the Confederates in Brownsville and the Mexicans in Matamoros. General Bee, however, had realized that Davis and the others were not worth jeopardizing all that the South had accomplished. These accomplishments included an agreement signed between Bee and Lopez in February 1863. The agreement called for the extradition of people that committed major crimes, i.e., murder, arson, theft; mutual aid between the Mexicans and Confederates in pursuing persons from one river bank to the other; the issuance of passports signed by the proper respective authorities; the branding of livestock and a required permit to move livestock across the border.¹⁰

The cotton trade in 1863 was still going at a brisk pace, but Quintero felt there was one problem, that being the large number of speculators. He had first written to Benjamin about this in 1862. Quintero noted that the Confederacy needed to authorize one person to represent the South in trading cotton for supplies. The multitude of speculators, Quintero argued, was creating too much competition and

⁹Quintero to Benjamin, 6 April 1863, *ibid.*; Bee to Lopez, 18 March 1863, OR, series 1, 15, 1132.

¹⁰Bee to Major A. G. Dickinson, 25 February 1863, agreement enclosed, OR, series 1, 15, 997-998.

resulted in higher prices for needed supplies.¹¹ To further complicate matters, the state of Texas had created the Texas State Military Board in 1862 for the primary purpose of buying and trading cotton.¹² Quintero again complained to Benjamin about over-speculation in January 1863. Quintero stated that the multiplicity of agents could only result in "competition and confusion" that would be "detrimental to the interests of the Government."¹³

Thus, Quintero was pleased when he met Major Simeon Hart in Brownsville. Hart had been appointed by the War Department to purchase cotton to trade for supplies. Quintero felt that the army would get better prices and materials as a result of Hart's appointment.¹⁴ Another development that Quintero approved of was the creation of the Cotton Bureau in August 1863. General E. Kirby Smith, the commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, formed the bureau so that the Confederate traders would have one central control agency. Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. Broadwell was named to head the agency

¹¹Quintero to Benjamin, 19 October 1862, Pickett Papers.

¹²Sherrill Dickeson, "The Texas Cotton Trade During the Civil War" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1967), p. 74.

¹³Quintero to Benjamin, 30 January 1863, Pickett Papers.

¹⁴Ibid.

which was headquartered at Shreveport, Louisiana. Additional offices were in Houston, Texas, and Monticello, Arkansas. The office in Houston soon became the most important because of the volume of trade between Mexico and Texas. The Houston agency thus became the purchasing bureau of all the supplies for Texas.¹⁵

While the Cotton Bureau gave the Trans-Mississippi Department a unified system for buying and trading cotton, it did not immediately eliminate the competition between the Confederate agents and Texas' state agents. Texas' governor, Pendleton Murrah, set up a plan that allowed agents of the State Military Board to buy cotton with state bonds. General Smith wrote Murrah on 5 April 1864 and told the governor to cease the state's cotton operations. If an agreement was not obtained, Smith warned, he would impress the state's entire cotton crop. Six days later Murrah decreed that Texas would not purchase any more cotton, except to fill the existing contracts.¹⁶

Smith also published procedures that established specific regulations for shipping cotton to Mexico. Under Smith's

¹⁵Florence Elizabeth Holladay, "The Powers of the Commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department, 1863-1865," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 21 (January 1918): 348-349.

¹⁶Dickeson, pp. 60-62.

orders, cotton would be transported only if the owner had registered the bales with a Confederate customs collector, paid the export duty, and obtained a permit from an authorized officer of the bureau. Smith learned later in 1864 that the Confederate Congress had passed legislation which gave different regulations concerning the cotton trade. When Smith received the Congressional regulations, he said they were too complex, and he kept his procedures in effect.¹⁷

In August 1864, the War Department informed Smith that all cotton would be secured by the Trans-Mississippi Treasury Department. Smith, however, kept the Cotton Bureau active until February 1865 because the new cotton office did not function smoothly until that time.¹⁸ Some records indicate that, during its existence, the Texas office of the Cotton Bureau had contracted for some forty-seven thousand bales. One report stated that only fifteen thousand bales were actually acquired by the Texas office.¹⁹

In November 1863, the situation in Matamoros and Monterrey underwent a drastic change. Eight thousand Federal troops, under the command of Major General Nathaniel P. Banks,

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 65-66; Holladay, p. 350.

¹⁸Dickeson, pp. 67-69; Holladay, p. 343.

¹⁹Dickeson, p. 69.

occupied Brownsville on 5 November. The Union soldiers had landed at Brazos Santiago, a small island near Brownsville, on November third. In crossing from the island to Brownsville, Banks reportedly lost over two hundred men by drowning. The Union troops did not fire a shot in taking the city, because Bee had ordered an evacuation as soon as the Union soldiers arrived. In their escape, the Confederates burned six hundred bales of cotton and some government buildings.²⁰ The Union attack did not surprise the Confederates, as they had expected some Union effort to stop the border trade. As early as December 1862, Quintero had heard rumors about a possible Northern expedition that would attack Brownsville.²¹

The United States consuls in Matamoros and Monterrey had been supplying Seward with estimates of Confederate strength for many months. In June 1863, Kimmey had informed Seward that Banks' successful campaign in Louisiana had caused the majority of Southern troops stationed in Brownsville to be called into eastern Texas. Kimmey wrote Seward again in August and notified him that only six hundred rebel troops were guarding the border trade. He had also written General

²⁰Quintero to Benjamin, 9 November and 26 November 1863, Pickett Papers.

²¹Quintero to Benjamin, 19 December 1862, *ibid.*

Banks at New Orleans and had given him estimates of the Confederate troop strength.²² Pierce likewise had kept Seward informed about the Southern troops, and Seward had sent extracts of these despatches to the War and Navy departments.²³

The Federal occupation of Brownsville caused much confusion in Matamoros. As the Union troops entered Brownsville, a Mexican named Cobos captured the Tamaulipan governor, Ruiz, and declared himself governor. Juan Cortinas aided Cobos in the coup. The following day Cortinas learned Cobos had planned to aid the French. Cortinas had him arrested and shot. Cortinas then declared Serna governor and had Ruiz freed.

Ruiz left the town but returned in January 1864, with troops to retake his post. After ten days of negotiations, it was agreed that Ruiz would reassume the governorship,

²²Kimme to Seward, 4 June and 15 August 1863, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Monterrey" Record Group 59, 15 November 1849-9 December 1869, on microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso Library, El Paso, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey." New Orleans had fallen to the Union in April 1862 and Banks had commanded the Union forces there since 17 December 1862; See David Donald and J. G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2d ed., rev. (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), pp. 445, 515.

²³For examples, see Pierce to Seward, 26 May 1862, 1 October 1862, and 25 April 1863, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros;" letters to Seward from Welles and P. H. Watson, the Assistant Secretary of War, follow Pierce's messages and acknowledge Seward's extracts.

Cortinas and Serna would join Juárez's troops and fight the French. However, on 12 January one of Cortinas' men rode into Ruiz's camp and insulted the governor. The man was summarily seized and executed. Large scale fighting broke out between the two groups that night and continued until the thirteenth. Cortinas retook the governor's palace and Ruiz fled to Brownsville.²⁴ To reward Cortinas for his loyal actions, Juárez named him military commander and later governor of Tamaulipas.²⁵

The presence of Banks' army in Brownsville did not stop the cotton trade--it only caused the trade to move farther north up the Rio Grande. General Bee directed all future cotton shipments through Eagle Pass, Texas, into Piedras Negras, Vidaurri's main customs office. From Piedras Negras, the cotton would then be transported to Matamoros.²⁶ Kimmey informed Seward that because of the new trade route, the cotton trade was still going strong. As proof, Kimmey reported that before the Union soldiers took Brownsville, nearly forty thousand bales went through Eagle Pass between January and November 1863. This was an average of only thirty-six hund-

²⁴Pierce to Seward, 16 January 1864, *ibid.*

²⁵Quintero to Benjamin, 25 January 1864, Pickett Papers.

²⁶Quintero to Benjamin, 26 November 1863, *ibid.*

red bales per month. Yet, as a result of the Union troops in Brownsville, Kimmey wrote that seven thousand bales would go through Eagle Pass during December.²⁷

The Union invasion was not Quintero's only problem that fall of 1863. Many of the Mexican merchants were demanding their overdue cotton. It seemed that while Major Hart was honest in his dealings, Major Charles Russell, the Confederate quartermaster in Brownsville, was not. Whenever Hart secured a supply of cotton to pay for supplies, he would send the bales through Russell's office. Russell had been dealing in the trade on his own and had agreed to contracts that Hart did not know about. One example was the deal Russell had with Droege, Oetling and Company, in which he had promised to ship them all the cotton he received during a certain period. These and other claims arranged by Russell were so numerous that Hart said it would require all of the present cotton he had, plus all that could be obtained for six months to honor the claims.²⁸ One Confederate commercial agent asserted that the bales of cotton and buildings were

²⁷Kimmey to Seward, 25 December 1863, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

²⁸Frank Lawrence Owsley, King Cotton Diplomacy: Foreign Relations of the Confederate States of America, 2d ed., rev. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 126-127.

burned in Brownsville to hide Russell's dealings.²⁹

While there were several companies involved in these claims, the firm of Milmo and Company had either bought up the claims or were representing the other merchants. General Smith had ordered an inquiry into the various claims, but the fall of Brownsville had interrupted the investigation. Milmo and the other creditors were upset and began looking for a way to recover their losses.³⁰

Into this turmoil arrived Clarence Thayer, an agent of the Confederate Treasury Department. Thayer had reached Matamoros after the Union troops had taken Brownsville. His mission was to deliver sixteen million dollars to General Bee in order to ease the money shortage in the Trans-Mississippi Department. Naturally nervous about holding that sum of money, Thayer sought out the highest ranking Confederate officer and ran upon Major Russell. Thayer explained his problem to the major, and Russell advised him to send the cases of money to Eagle Pass via Monterrey. Russell then directed Thayer to Milmo's office in Matamoros where the agent, without revealing the cases' contents, shipped them

²⁹Richard Fitzpatrick to Benjamin, 8 March 1864, Pickett Papers.

³⁰Fitzpatrick to Benjamin, 22 October 1864, *ibid.*, Owsley, p. 127.

to Monterrey. Thayer believed all was well until 17 December, when he received a letter from Milmo indicating the funds had been seized as payment for Confederate debts. Thayer immediately sought Quintero's help.

Quintero and Thayer met with Milmo who refused to release the money. Quintero then wrote Vidaurri and demanded the money's release. Quintero argued that Milmo had no right to confiscate the money as it was not obligated to his firm. Quintero also pointed out that Hart was working to pay off all debts and that there were seven hundred bales of cotton on the way to Milmo's firm. Vidaurri said that while he did not approve of Milmo's tactics, his son-in-law would not release the funds. Vidaurri suggested that Quintero sue Milmo for the money, but Quintero did not want the affair publicized. In a subsequent letter to Hart, Quintero stated that he believed Russell had planned this event in Matamoros. Russell and Milmo had met for one week after Thayer's arrival, and while there was no proof, Quintero felt that Russell had told Milmo about the money.³¹

This situation threatened the cotton trade even more than the Union troops. Contractors began seizing cotton from merchants, declaring the cotton was Mexican property. Quintero

³¹Quintero to Benjamin, 23 December 1863, with letters to Vidaurri and Hart enclosed, Pickett Papers.

was unable to resolve the affair because he was ignorant of Russell's transactions. Quintero did absolve Hart from any wrongdoing when he wrote that Hart had been "sadly abused" and "interfered with" since his appointment.³²

In January 1864, Quintero advised the Confederate State Department that Vidaurri might come to an agreement if the trade through Piedras Negras was halted. Piedras Negras was Vidaurri's main source of income, Quintero stated, and such a decline in income would have a crippling effect on the governor. Quintero suggested that the trade could be diverted to Laredo.

Quintero threatened Vidaurri with a trade embargo on 21 January. The agent accused Vidaurri of ordering the seizure of merchants' cotton and declared that similar acts would lead to a "severance" of the trade. Quintero then informed him that the whole affair had been referred to President Davis and General Smith.³³

Smith had thought of a trade embargo before Quintero. On 12 January 1864, Smith issued "Special Order No. 8," which prohibited the exportation of cotton through Mexico and called for the seizure of all Mexican government property

³²Quintero to Benjamin, 30 December 1863, *ibid.*

³³Quintero to Benjamin, 25 January 1864, with letter to Vidaurri enclosed, *ibid.*

in Texas. Smith appointed a three man commission to travel to Monterrey and settle the affair. Quintero heartily endorsed Smith's plan.³⁴

At the end of February, Quintero reported the conflict resolved. Milmo was to receive five hundred bales at Eagle Pass and two hundred bales in San Antonio. Fifteen hundred bales would be delivered to another firm that had delinquent claims. Milmo dropped all past claims and released the funds. Quintero then urged that any ill feelings toward Vidaurri be put aside, as the trade was vital to the South. Rumors of closing Eagle Pass should also be quelled, Quintero wrote, because the Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras route was the most secure point of entry.³⁵

The French intervention became a more immediate question in northern Mexico in 1863. In June, Quintero informed Benjamin that Puebla had fallen to the French on 17 May. Juárez had announced that he would defend Mexico City, but he withdrew and led his forces to San Luis Potosi. The French then moved into Mexico City. In July, the pro-French assembly elected Archduke Maximilian of Austria Emperor of Mexico.³⁶

³⁴Quintero to Benjamin, 1 February 1864, *ibid.*

³⁵Quintero to Benjamin, 28 February 1864, *ibid.*

³⁶Quintero to Benjamin, 1 June, 10 June, 16 June, and 24 July 1863, *ibid.*

In November, Quintero notified the State Department that Juárez might set up his government at Monterrey.³⁷ Vidaurri was opposed to this because Juárez might try to remove him from power. The French were sure to pursue Juárez, and this meant Vidaurri would be forced to choose between supporting Juárez or the French.³⁸

The South was in favor of the French intervention into Mexico because it could have led to recognition of the Confederacy by France. John Slidell, the Confederate minister to France, had voiced approval of the French scheme in 1862 in hope of gaining French recognition. Napoleon III never committed himself on the question of Confederate recognition, but he always kept Slidell believing he would grant it.³⁹

In January 1863, General Bee sent A. Supervièle to Tampico in an effort to persuade the French naval commanders to take Matamoros. Upon his arrival, Supervièle found the naval commanders absent. He then went to Vera Cruz and finally to Puebla, where he put his request before Generals Woll and Almonte. Both of these men favored the idea, but General Forey, commander of the French land forces, wanted

³⁷Quintero to Benjamin, 26 November 1863, *ibid.*

³⁸Ronnie C. Tyler, Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), p. 1.

³⁹Owsley, pp. 336-337, 527.

to capture Mexico City before venturing into Matamoros. In June 1863, the mail from France contained an order from Napoleon III that stated all important Mexican ports were to be taken. Thus, when Supervièle left to return, he believed Matamoros would soon belong to the French.

When the French did not appear, General Smith wrote Slidell in September 1863 and told him that France should quickly take Matamoros because a Union attack was expected along the Rio Grande. Smith declared that the trade could only be kept alive by a French presence along the border. Supervièle was sent to France bearing Smith's communique, but he did not arrive in Paris until December 1863. By then, Brownsville had been taken and the South had been defeated at Vicksburg and Gettysburg. With the tide of battle going against the South and Union troops occupying Brownsville, France was reluctant to initiate any action along the Rio Grande.⁴⁰

Quintero expected the French to take Matamoros and Monterrey by October. He favored such an event because he felt that the French would remove all duties from the goods imported and exported.⁴¹ In December Quintero received a

⁴⁰Rippy, pp. 240-243.

⁴¹Quintero to Benjamin, 24 July and 16 September 1863, Pickett Papers.

message from General Almonte that explained why the French had not yet appeared in northern Mexico. Almonte told Quintero that Napoleon III did not want to risk a war with the Union soldiers in Brownsville. Quintero conceded that recognition would not be forthcoming, but he still believed Maximilian's arrival would help the South.⁴²

As 1863 ended, the Confederates in Mexico could claim a success in that the trade still continued. The Union presence in Brownsville had caused a delay in the border trade but did not halt the supply of goods. The Milmo affair had threatened to harm the trade more than the Union soldiers, but General Smith's commission smoothly resolved the conflict. Yet, for the Confederates, the question of whether or not the French could be used to their advantage in obtaining recognition remained unanswered. Quintero was also concerned about how the South would fare as a result of Juárez's plans to set up government in Monterrey.

⁴²Quintero to Benjamin, 30 December 1863, *ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

1864-1865: THE CLOSING YEARS

As 1864 began, Quintero's main concern was the seizure of Confederate funds by Patricio Milmo. That affair was concluded early in 1864 thus allowing Quintero to focus on other issues.¹ Mexico's President Juárez, forced to retreat by the French into northern Mexico, was near Monterrey in February 1864. Quintero began to seek out Juárez's stance toward the Confederacy in the event that the Milmo affair led to a disagreement between Vidaurri and the Confederates. Quintero's advances were warmly received by Juárez. Quintero reported that, if Vidaurri broke off relations, he was on the verge of arranging an agreement with Juárez that would continue the border trade through Laredo and Camargo into Tamaulipas. Juárez needed the large amount of money generated by the trade to obtain more troops and equipment. Quintero also wrote that Juárez's friendship for the United States

¹See Chapter III above.

had "turned into cold indifference."²

Juárez arrived in Monterrey on the twelfth of February and met with Vidaurri the next day. The important meeting was brief. Vidaurri was forced to choose between the man who disapproved of his states' rights philosophy or the French. Vidaurri cast his lot with the French. He told Juárez that he would continue to collect the trade revenues from Piedras Negras. Juárez was also told that he could not set up headquarters in Monterrey.³

Juárez returned to his camp at Saltillo and began his campaign to remove Vidaurri. On 26 February Juárez issued a decree that separated Vidaurri's domain, Nuevo León and Coahuila, into two individual states. A second order removed Vidaurri from the governor's seat and declared Nuevo León to be in open hostility toward Juárez's administration. These two decrees gave Juárez legal control over the custom house at Piedras Negras which was bringing in about forty

²Quintero to Benjamin, 1 February 1864, "Records of the Confederate States of America," Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., on microfilm, North Texas State University Library, Denton, Texas. Hereafter cited as the Pickett Papers.

³Quintero to Benjamin, 28 February 1864, *ibid.* Kimmey to Seward, 23 February 1864, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Monterrey" Record Group 59, 15 November 1849-9 December 1869, on microfilm, University of Texas at El Paso Library, El Paso, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

thousand dollars a month.⁴

Vidaurri, also being pressured by the French during this time, received in early March a message from French General Bazaine that offered him the choice of joining the French or opposing them. Trying to postpone the inevitable, Vidaurri replied that he must give his people a chance to vote on the matter.⁵

Vidaurri solved his problem by seizing the state archives and funds and then fleeing to Texas. Juárez's troops entered Monterrey on 28 March and pursued Vidaurri but found only his remaining soldiers, who surrendered peacefully and offered their services to Juárez. Juárez's men also arrested Milmo and charged him with being Vidaurri's business partner.⁶

Juárez arrived in Monterrey on 2 April. Quintero dined with him four days later. During their meeting Juárez said that he approved of the border trade and assured Quintero that no one from either the North or South would be arrested for political reasons. This was good news to Quintero because on 27 March Vidaurri's secretary of state had been

⁴Kimmeý to Seward, 23 February and 4 March 1864, *ibid.*

⁵Kimmeý to Seward, 4 March 1864, *ibid.*

⁶Kimmeý to Seward, 29 March and 4 April 1864, *ibid.*; Quintero to Benjamin, 3 April 1864, Pickett Papers.

arrested in Brownsville by order of General Herron, the Union commander. The ex-secretary was then delivered to Matamoros where he was shot. General Herron then demanded the arrest and delivery of Quintero.⁷ After a short stay in Monterrey, Juárez returned to Saltillo and made that site his headquarters.⁸

Even though Quintero had succeeded in obtaining Juárez's favor, he did not forget the French. Quintero believed that a French presence in northern Mexico would not only help the border trade, it could lead to Southern recognition. Thus, Quintero kept in touch with French representatives throughout 1864. In March, Quintero reported that General Almonte, whom the French had named Regent of Mexico, had contacted him by messenger. Almonte had made it clear that large quantities of weapons and ammunition would go to the South when the French took Monterrey. Quintero expected such an act as there were rumors about that the Union army would soon evacuate Brownsville to reinforce troops near Mobile.⁹

The Union army in Brownsville gradually came to the conclusion that it had failed to halt the Confederate border

⁷Quintero to Benjamin, 3 April and 7 April 1864, Pickett Papers.

⁸Kimmeý to Seward, 26 April 1864, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

⁹Quintero to Benjamin, 8 March 1864, Pickett Papers.

trade. With the trade moved farther up the Rio Grande, Kimmey notified Seward that Union occupation of Brownsville did not close the Confederate's Mexican supply line. Kimmey also stated that all of the western Confederacy was being supplied with lead from Mexico. A well maintained blockade of the Texas frontier would do more good, Kimmey felt, than "an army of ten thousand men sent into the state."¹⁰ In July 1864 the Union forces withdrew from Brownsville, allowing the Confederates, led by Colonel Ford, to reclaim their old headquarters.¹¹

As soon as the Union troops were cleared from the Texas-Mexico border, the French began their campaign into northern Mexico. In August, Kimmey reported that the entire French army from San Luis Potosi was marching toward Monterrey. Juárez set up fortifications at Buena Vista and made ready to fight. On 19 August, Kimmey informed Seward that Juárez had been defeated and had left for Chihuahua. Colonel Quir-oga, on Vidaurri's orders, immediately moved into Monterrey. Vidaurri was reportedly on his way there from Texas.¹² The

¹⁰Kimmey to Seward, 21 May 1864, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Monterrey."

¹¹T. R. Fehrenbach, Lone Star A History of Texas and the Texans (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1968), p. 385.

¹²Kimmey to Seward, 15 August and 19 August 1864, U.S.,

French moved into Monterrey unopposed on 26 August. Colonel Quiroga had fled the day before. Kimmey's last message to Seward in 1864 made it clear that the French would favor the South in that they had "put no check on the trade with the rebels"13

By September 1864 the French had landed a force near Matamoros but had not entered the city because Cortinas still held the coastal port.¹⁴ Pierce, the Union consul in Matamoros, had reported none of the recent events to his government. Tired of his unsuccessful attempts to damage the South and not able to make his salary meet expenses, he resigned in August 1864.¹⁵ Seward replaced Pierce with E. Dorsey

"Consular Despatches, Monterrey." Vidaurri did return to Monterrey in September 1864. He offered his services to Maximilian and became a high ranking advisor to the former archduke. After Maximilian's execution in June 1867, Vidaurri was arrested and executed on 8 July 1867. See Ronnie C. Tyler, Santiago Vidaurri and the Southern Confederacy (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1973), pp. 153-155.

¹³Kimmey to Seward, 27 August 1864, *ibid.* Kimmey's next despatch was not sent until 8 April 1865.

¹⁴Quintero to Benjamin, 5 September 1864, Pickett Papers.

¹⁵Pierce to Seward, 1 August 1864, U.S., Department of State, "U.S. Consular Despatches from Matamoros" Record Group 59, 1 January 1858-31 December 1864, on microfilm, DeGolyer Collection, Southern Methodist University Library, Dallas, Texas. Hereafter cited as U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros."

Etchison, who arrived in Matamoros on 24 November 1864.¹⁶

Etchison, however, proved to be incompetent and was drunk more than once. He was ordered out of the city by the military commandant, and the consulate was closed in February 1865.¹⁷

Throughout the remainder of 1864, Quintero and the French maintained warm relations. He conceded that the French would not favor the Confederacy any more than Vidaurri did, so as not to anger the North. He did get the French to repeal Vidaurri's tax on cotton. Quintero also informed his government that he was on "the most intimate terms" with the French and that any number of arms and ammunition could be obtained. Border relations were so good that Quintero suggested that any effort to secure favors with the French be initiated along the Rio Grande.¹⁸

Quintero's final despatch, 7 December 1864, stated that all was well between the Confederates and the French. He

¹⁶Etchison to Seward, 1 December 1864, *ibid.*

¹⁷See the correspondence between Captain George S. Emmons to Seward, 8 March 1865, and H. W. Halleck to Seward, 22 March 1865, following Etchison to Seward, 15 January 1865, U.S., "Consular Despatches, Matamoros," 8 January 1865-31 December 1866, *ibid.*

¹⁸Quintero to Benjamin, 5 September 1864 and 5 November 1864 with enclosed letter to General Smith, 24 October 1864, Pickett Papers.

told Benjamin that the trade at Matamoros and Camargo was brisk, and that he was travelling to the Texas border to introduce the new military commander of Nuevo León and Coahuila to the military officials in Texas.¹⁹ The border trade continued until the end of the Civil War.²⁰

¹⁹Quintero to Benjamin, 7 December 1864, *ibid.* After the war, Quintero worked for the Galveston News. He then moved to New Orleans where he practiced law, wrote for the New Orleans Daily Picayune, and served as New Orleans' consul for Belgium and Costa Rica. He died in 1885. See Tyler, p. 46.

²⁰Sherrill Dickeson, "The Texas Cotton Trade During the Civil War" (M.A. thesis, North Texas State University, 1967), p. 32. E. Kirby Smith, commander of the Confederate Trans-Mississippi Department, did not surrender until May 1865, as stated in David Donald and J. G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2d ed., rev. (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), p. 453.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

As this study has shown, the Confederates were highly successful in keeping the Texas-Mexico border trade going throughout the Civil War. There were several reasons for this accomplishment, but perhaps the primary motive was that the Confederacy saw the trade as a means of maintaining peaceful relations with Mexico and hopefully obtaining foreign recognition. By preserving friendly relations with Mexico, particularly Governor Vidaurri in northern Mexico, the Confederates would be able to take advantage of any European plans to intervene in Mexico. Jefferson Davis believed foreign intervention in Mexico was inevitable and thus did not instruct John Pickett to actively seek recognition from Mexico. Davis knew that any European country that attempted to intervene in Mexico would seek the aid of the Confederacy in opposing any Union objections or threats of war. Davis sought to use Mexico as a pawn in the hopes of obtaining foreign recognition.

When France began its move to establish a monarchy in Mexico, Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin instructed John Slidell, the Confederacy's representative in France, to offer support of Napoleon's plan in return for recognition.¹ The Confederate scheme did not succeed because the French did not want to bring about war with the Union. Thus, the French troops did not venture into northern Mexico until the Union troops evacuated Brownsville in 1864. Napoleon, while always seeming to sympathize with the Confederacy, always withheld recognition.

The failure of Pickett made it imperative that the Confederacy have a responsible representative in northern Mexico. José Quintero proved to be most capable in not only overseeing the border trade, but also in maintaining friendly relations with the various factions ruling in northern Mexico. Had it not been for Quintero, the many obstacles and interruptions along the border during the Civil War might have resulted in open warfare between northern Mexico and Confederates in Texas.

The Confederate government also sought to use the border trade as a means of obtaining supplies. The South

¹David Donald and J. G. Randall, The Civil War and Reconstruction, 2d ed., rev. (Lexington: D. C. Heath and Company, 1969), p. 512.

did not, however, use the trade to its full potential in securing foreign goods. There was no central control agency for Confederate agents until the establishment of the Cotton Bureau in 1863, and this agency was created too late for the entire Confederacy to benefit from the trade. New Orleans had fallen to the Union in 1862, and as the Union army strengthened its position along the Mississippi River and in Louisiana and Arkansas, the only Confederates to profit from the trade were those in Texas, western Louisiana, and southwest Arkansas. The Cotton Bureau did increase the trade's efficiency to a degree, but it did not eliminate such problems of the trade as poor transportation and over speculation.

Another reason the border trade was kept open was money. The trade was very lucrative to all involved, be they Confederates, Mexicans, Frenchmen, or Union shippers. Money was made by nearly everyone with the possible exception of the planters. Yet, even they fared well because, without the trade route, they would have had to risk running the Union blockade, thus driving up their costs and possibly losing their entire shipment.

Every faction in northern Mexico had money as a reason to maintain the border trade and peaceful relations with the South. Vidaurri needed the profits to fill his coffers

in hopes of opposing Juárez. Upon his arrival in northern Mexico, Juárez saw the trade as a means to replace his dwindling funds. Even though he had ordered Vidaurri to break off all relations with the South, Juárez forced Vidaurri from northern Mexico and made his government recipient of the trade profits. When the French entered Matamoros and Monterrey, they saw no reason to cease the trade, as they needed the money to supply their troops in Mexico.

Lincoln's government could do little along the Texas-Mexico border during the Civil War. While the Union consuls did aid Union refugees from Texas, they did not successfully hinder the border trade or Confederate-Mexican relations. Quintero, of course, did much to thwart any plans Leonard Pierce or M. M. Kimmey formed, but the Union failure to disrupt the border trade was also a result of geography and international law. As a neutral, Mexico could maintain relations with both the Union and the Confederacy. The South was simply in a better position to take advantage of Mexico's neutrality. Vidaurri did not even speculate about supporting the Union because it would mean war with Confederate Texas. The Union blockade could not readily interfere with the Mexican border trade without causing much argument concerning international trade. Even the Union invasion of Brownsville

did not interrupt the trade; it only moved the trade farther north along the Rio Grande. Thus, while the Confederacy failed in winning the Civil War, it did succeed in defeating the Union in northern Mexico.

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