
CHAPTER XXXII

THE TULE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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THE next few days were occupied with feverish conferences in Chief Golman's big house. I knew it was too late to try to pacify the Indians. They knew as well as I did that they would have to fight for their rights. The best I could do was to persuade them to make their actions regular and deliberate, so as to make the best possible impression upon the outside world.

To this end I told the Indian "congress" about the American Declaration of Independence, which had been adopted and signed under very similar circumstances. Its purpose, I said, had been to demonstrate to the world that the American Revolution was no mere temporary revolt, but a determined attempt to gain recognition for an independence and self-sufficiency which already existed in fact. The Tule people were a genuine nation, although a small one. They were homogeneous in blood and in culture. They had kept their soil inviolate for many centuries. They were now being oppressed and encroached upon by a handful of negroid Panamanians whose chief power came from the fact that they claimed the United States was behind them.

As strongly as I could I impressed upon the chiefs how impossible it would be for them to oppose the United States. They could revolt against the Panamanians, but if the United

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States backed Panama and supplied arms and equipment, their bravery would be in vain. Their only hope was to enlist the sympathy of the American authorities. And the best way to do this was to adopt a dignified and formal Declaration of Independence, relating their very impressive grievances and presenting their demands as an independent nation.

It was amazing how readily the chiefs saw the point. They had no respect whatever for Panama, but they appreciated the overwhelming power of the United States. Immediately the Congress set about drawing up its Declaration. As each suggestion was made in the Tule language, it was translated to me. I wrote it down in English, trying to preserve as best I could the dignity and seriousness of the original. I also made suggestions myself, which the Indians discussed and incorporated into the document.

When the Declaration was finally finished, the chiefs came forward one by one to sign it. It was an impressive occasion, and the chiefs realized the seriousness of their action as well as I did. If the revolt failed, if the United States supported Panama, the negro troops would find the Declaration a very convenient blacklist of their enemies.

Then the Congress turned to planning the campaign for the coming war. With great unanimity a course of action was decided upon. First the Indians of the interior were to drive the negro rubber hunters to the coast and give them an opportunity to get away to Colon. The Indians of Cardí and the Gulf of San Blas were to capture Parvenir, the headquarters of Governor Mojica, and move eastward down the coast. The people of Portogandi, Alligandi and the eastern villages were to advance westward, cleaning up the Panamanian posts and meeting the Cardí people midway.

I took little part in these final discussions. The Indians seemed to be able to handle their military problems alone.

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I was worrying chiefly about what to do with the Harrises and Johnson. Finally I decided to send them with an escort to Matungandi, an Indian stronghold on the headwaters of the Bayano. They would be as safe there as anywhere else, and they could study the Indians of the interior to good advantage until the crisis was over. I arranged for them to leave as soon as they got back from their trip to Portogandi.

Naturally I was very much disappointed that I could not go with them. That trip to the interior had been my dearest ambition for more than a year. But I decided that the best thing for me to do was to go to Cardi, which is the nearest Indian village to the Canal Zone. I wanted to be on the spot, so that I could speak for the Indians if the American Authorities decided to intervene, as I hoped they would.

The normal way to get to Cardi would have been to get hold of some small coastal trading boat. But for my purposes this would have been dangerous. Such boats have to stop at the occupied villages for clearance papers, and I feared the Panamanian police might attempt to remove me from the scene of action. In fact, the report had come to me that Governor Mojica was threatening to shoot me on sight. He was a foolish, rattle-brained person who talked too much, but still I didn't want to take any unnecessary chances.

So I chose a stanch little sailing dugout, about twenty-five feet long with a five foot beam and a crew of six. One of them was a big white Indian who had attached himself to me as a sort of bodyguard. He explained naïvely that he intended to "eat Mojica's head" as soon as he could get hold of that morsel. Another was "Charlie-gets-his-man," so named by Harris after he had told with great directness about how he had "got" a traitor to his people. I wanted him for interpreter, for he could speak good English and had been all over the world in foreign ships.

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The other four in the crew were boatmen, and the San Blas boatman is about the most skillful and competent I have ever seen or heard of. It takes four men to operate a sailing dugout in the open ocean. One sits in the stern to manipulate the steering paddle and the main-sail. Another sits in the stern, to tend the jib and watch for the numerous rocks and coral reefs. The other two are "balancers," who stand amidships on the windward gunwale, supporting themselves by ropes from the mast.

With every wave and gust of wind these "balancers" swing out over the side to shift ballast and keep the canoe on an even keel. Sailing such a dugout is something between riding a bicycle and walking a tight-rope. It requires constant alertness and superb seamanship.

We left at 11 A.M. and took the sea route, outside the occupied islands. The wind was blowing toward the shore, and we wanted the windward position in case of emergencies. The sea was rough and choppy, as it usually is in the Caribbean. A longer boat would have pitched and rolled badly, but our little cockle-shell bobbed on the waves like a cork. These San Blas canoes are perfectly adapted to the local conditions, and when manned by a native crew they are very seaworthy. But to look at us, no one would have thought we could last a minute.

After a four-hour run we came opposite Mono, the first of the Panamanian outposts. Here we had a choice of two courses. One was a detour several miles out to sea around an area of coral reefs. The other was an inner channel which ran within a quarter of a mile of the island. We took a chance on the latter, as we still had the advantage of a position to windward.

When we got well into the inner channel, we saw skirting around the end of the island a large canoe carrying two

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Panamanian policemen in uniform and seven "tame Indians." Evidently they were trying to intercept us, and they could have done so easily if they had handled things correctly. We were following a crooked channel through the reefs which forced us near them.

But just when it seemed as if they would head us off, the "tame Indian" who was handling their main-sail lost the rope, whether on purpose or not I do not know. But this lost them their chance. Their boom fell out of place and their boat swung off her course. We passed triumphantly fifty yards ahead of their bow and could hear the policemen cursing the Indians.

As soon as they could, the Panamanians put about and started chase, the men using their paddles as well as their sails and slowly gaining. I told my men not to paddle, but to continue on their course, appearing to pay no attention to the other boat. The Panamanians yelled for us to stop, but we kept on.

Presently one of the policemen stood up and fired at us with a rifle, missing us widely. This was getting too personal, so one of my men raised his high-powered Savage and put a bullet into the police canoe. The effect was immediate. This was more than they had counted on. I was in Indian costume, and they evidently took us for inoffensive delegates returning from the conference at Alligandi. The tame Indians stopped paddling at once and started for home, while my men speeded them on their way with triumphant taunts.

So much for the first exchange of shots in the Tule War of Independence. I was much encouraged by the episode, for my men handled themselves splendidly.

Ten minutes after routing the police canoe, we passed a small island in the channel. Just as we sailed by on one side, Governor Mojica's auxiliary schooner, the *El Norte*, passed on the other, heading in the opposite direction. Apparently no

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one on board noticed us, or attached any importance to us.

We didn't know who was on board the *El Norte*, but we did know that as soon as she reached Mono, the shooting would be reported, and she would turn back after us. I calculated that we would get a three-mile start. She could not overhaul us for an hour. But there were three hours of daylight left. If we stuck to the regular channels, we would be caught before it got dark.

The only thing to do was head for the dangerous water among the coral reefs where the *El Norte* could not follow. It was an exciting experience. We picked channels hardly fifty feet wide, with the seas breaking and foaming all around us. Several times our little canoe was almost swamped. But luck was with us. After a wild ten miles through the reefs, we passed into deep water just as night fell.

On we went, now about two or three miles from shore. The wind and waves eased up a bit. It was cloudy, and there was no moon. We steered by my pocket compass and the roar of the surf.

At 1 A.M. a sudden rain-squall hit us. We could see nothing and hear nothing but the rain. Suddenly the bow-man gave a yell, and we heard a loud crunching as our little canoe smashed down on a submerged reef. Instantly a huge wave dashed over us, filling the canoe half full of water. Three times we heard the sickening crunch of the bottom on the coral.

But the Indians were ready for any emergency. Quick as a flash the stern-man let go the sail. The others began "back-paddling" while I bailed frantically. One more wave would have filled us, but just in time we wallowed off backwards. The bow swung up into the wind and the canoe rolled sluggishly. Soon we had her bailed out and were safe in the lee of the reef.

Then my irrepressible crew broke out into cheers and

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laughter. What a temperament! Every contest with nature was a personal victory for them. We had bested the Panamanian police. We had slipped by the *El Norte*. And now we had escaped the reef. We all felt as if the fates were with us.

At two the sky cleared and the moon came out. We ran for a small coral island, found a sheltered harbor, and went ashore. Soon we had a fire blazing. We all stripped and dried our clothes, while I brewed a big pot of coffee. By three the wind had shifted a few points to the east. We set off again with a moon to guide us through the reefs, and laid a straight course for Cardi.

We arrived just at daybreak, after a fine, fast run with a favorable wind. The head-chief of Cardi invited me into his house and soon I was asleep in dry clothes.

After four hours' sleep I got up, found the chief, and demanded the "news." There were two items of importance. The first was that four days ago four American submarines had appeared in the Gulf of San Blas and paid a visit to Cardi, the officers coming ashore and asking for me. When told that I was at Alligandi, they said they already knew it. Then they left for their ships. I was much cheered by this. At least it was a sign that the Americans were keeping an eye on the San Blas coast. I felt confident that if the American authorities knew enough about the situation, they would not let Mojica and his negroes murder the Indians and burn their villages as he had threatened to do.

The second piece of news concerned Mojica. An Indian spy at Parvenir had reported that the *El Norte* had sailed for Alligandi with the Governor and a strong force of police. I suspected as much when we passed her near Mono, but I had not seen who was on board. The spy reported further that Mojica intended to drive us from Alligandi. But he was too

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late. He would find that his birds had flown, and the Indians of Alligandi were ready to welcome him with more than a hundred guns and two thousand rounds of ammunition.

By the time I had caught up with the news, a great crowd of Indians was assembled in Chief Olopinginua's big house, which was furnished with benches like a Town Hall. The chief explained that many head-men from neighboring villages had come to see me, and he asked special permission to let the women also attend, as they were anxious to hear me too.

So with "Charlie-gets-his-man" as interpreter, I took my place on a chair in the center of the hall. Charlie stood beside me, with the chiefs reclining in hammocks and the crowd pressing in from all sides. Charlie was an excellent interpreter, and I think the Indians got the meaning of everything I said. My speech was much like those I had made in the other free villages. I recounted what I knew about the history of the Tule people. I outlined their perilous position in the modern world. And I urged them to make themselves into a unit, the better to contend with the encroaching Panamanians.

When I had finished, the various chiefs made replies, and I could appreciate the eloquence and sincerity of their words even through the medium of the translator.

Chief Olopinginua was the last to speak, and his words were the most moving of all. He said he had lived long as a man surrounded by a dark cloud—the threat of negro Panamanian conquest. He could not sleep peacefully at night. He tried to encourage his family and the men of his village, but always the dark cloud had chilled his heart. Now, however, the cloud had disappeared. He could see the sun in a clear sky. Peace and happiness were in sight again. He felt as if he had awakened from a bad dream, he would fight for his people's freedom to the last, and he would die rather than let the dark cloud fall over his soul again.

CHAPTER XXXIII
WE DECLARE WAR

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THEN came a dramatic incident. A messenger strode into the assembly hall with a letter for me from Chief Golman. It was written in English by his interpreter, Louis. The messenger had brought it through in a day and a night.

The morning after I left Alligandi, said the letter, the *El Norte* had dropped anchor in the harbor. On board were Governor Mojica with a large force of armed negro policemen. Golman gave orders that all the Indians stay on shore except Louis, the interpreter, who went out to talk to the Governor from a canoe.

Mojica asked where I was. Louis said I had gone to the mountains. Mojica said he had come to drive the Americans out of the San Blas Coast. If the free villages did not submit to his wishes, he would burn them, starting with Alligandi, Portogandi, and Cardi. Louis replied that the Indians had decided to fight for their freedom. Then Mojica said he would go to Puerto Obaldia and return with two hundred armed men.

Louis went back to the shore and reported all these things to Golman. At once orders were issued that no Indian men leave the island. They got out their guns and ammunition and prepared for a fight. But while they were doing so, the *El Norte* raised her anchor and sailed away for Puerto Obaldia.

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I read the message before the assembly. It was translated by Charlie. The Indians listened in complete silence. I told them that this was their fight, not mine. If they wanted to fight for their freedom, I had pledged myself to help them all I could. If they did not want to fight and were content to remain under Panamanian rule, all they had to do was tell me so, and I would go away.

Immediately there was an uproar. Men and women rushed to me, grabbing me, shaking my hands, all talking and shouting. When the tumult died down sufficiently, I was told formally that they were all ready to fight for their freedom and would not let me go. They would rather die than give up to the Panamanian negroes.

The decision had been made. I told the Indians that there was no time to waste. Mojica might arrive any moment, and we did not know what village he would attack first. They must bring all their guns, powder and shot to the big house, where we could get them ready for action.

At once the Indians scattered around the village, and soon the armory began to form. There were a few modern, high-powered rifles, many breech-loading shot-guns of various sizes, and a great collection of old-time muzzle-loaders using primer caps. Many of the guns were rusty and dirty, but the Indians began industriously to clean them up and get them into shape.

Soon it developed that we had very little ammunition. This was serious, but luck was with us. In the harbor off Cardí was one of the "store-ships" of the Colon Import and Export Company. I knew that she carried guns and ammunition, although to do so was contrary to Panamanian law.

I went out to the "store-ship" in a canoe with a few Indians. The manager was away on the *Impco*, and the ship was in charge of two Panamanian negroes. We found several shot-

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guns, a keg of Dupont powder, eight sacks of buck-shot, and plenty of empty brass shells of the sizes we needed. But we found no caps or primers, and all the shot-guns in the world would have been useless without them.

We cross-questioned the negroes and learned that all the caps and primers were in the safe. It was closed, and they did not know the combination. Only the manager could open it.

I was stumped for a time, for the safe was too solid to break open. Finally I noticed written in the wall above the safe three numbers in lead pencil—31, 49, 61. They were evidently the combination, but of course I did not know the direction or number of the turns. I set to work, however, to try all the possible combinations. In about fifteen minutes I turned 31 three times to the left, 49 twice to the right, and 61 once to the left. The door swung open. Inside I found a thousand caps and a thousand primers. We paid in full for our supplies and returned to the armory.

Most of the afternoon we spent loading shells and repairing our weapons. There were crowds of women and children in the streets, but the chiefs told me they would not be in danger in case we were attacked. At the first sight of a ship, all the non-combatants were to leave for a village on a near-by island which was so surrounded by coral reefs that no large boat could get near it. Only fighting men with guns would remain in the main village, and the chiefs assured me that every one was ready to fight to a finish.

By evening our preparations were complete, and sentries were posted on all sides of the island. I conferred with the chiefs in the big house, took a stroll around the village to inspect the guards, and finally went to bed in the assembly hall with the head chief's family.

The next morning I waked up rather late and was served an enormous breakfast by the chief's very attractive daughters.

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After eating to my full capacity, I was escorted to another house and served with another breakfast as big as the first. I could only nibble a little of each dish. After that came steaming pots of chocolate every half hour until I had to beg them not to bring any more.

Most of the morning I spent trying to sift the kernel of truth from the mass of wild rumors which were brought to me by messengers. On the whole the Panamanians along the coast seemed to be rather on the defensive. The police at Cidra had fled to the mainland after the visit of the American submarines. A Panamanian who managed a plantation near Armila had told the Indians at Pinos Island that he was giving up his job and going to Colombia. These were good signs, but I knew better than hope that all the Panamanians would leave the region as promptly. Only the unusually wise ones were getting out ahead of the trouble.

In the afternoon I gave another talk in the assembly hall, for many new Indians had arrived with guns and ammunition from the surrounding villages. They were burning with enthusiasm and martial spirit. My speech aroused them to the greatest frenzy yet. When I was finished, the chiefs came to me and announced solemnly that "they would all fight until the last dog was dead."

There was no one to fight for the moment. After my speech, one of our spies at Parvenir arrived with the news that the *El Norte* with the Governor on board had passed the island on her way to Colon. Evidently Mojica had decided that the Indians were on the war-path, and that he'd better not attack the free villages until he'd returned to Colon for reënforcements.

That evening the chiefs and I perfected our plan of campaign. We decided to wait for the *Impco*, which was expected the next morning. We wanted to hear the news from down

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the coast, and particularly I wanted to send the Declaration of Independence to Colon. I was anxious for that document to reach the Panamanian Government and the American Authorities before we started our attacks on the Panamanian posts. I was determined to abide by the rules of civilized warfare and not attack before war was declared.

After the *Impco* had come and gone, we planned to move at once on Parvenir, headquarters of Mojica. We had already sent scouts ahead to learn all possible facts about the island. New bands of fighting men were constantly arriving from other settlements. Our morale was very high, and I had no doubt but that we could capture every post before Mojica could return with any considerable force.

The next day there was nothing to do but wait for the *Impco*, which did not arrive. The Indians were anxious to be off for Parvenir, but I persuaded them to wait until war was formally declared. During the afternoon Chief Olopinguinua and I held an informal court in the big house to deal with the various problems incidental to the impending war. At 5 P.M. two prisoners were brought before us—a Greek and a negro, both Panamanian citizens.

It seemed that they had settled on Orange Key, a small island to the west. The Greek had opened a store and the Negro was working for him. The local chief had sent them to Cardi to find out if he should allow them to stay in his village.

They both had their wives and families with them and had never harmed or mistreated the Indians in any way. So the chief and I decided that they might stay on the island if they wanted to. But we warned them that there was going to be trouble all along the coast. We couldn't predict just what would happen. Finally both the Greek and the Negro decided to take their families and return to Colon.

Before the first "trial" was over, the Indians brought three

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husky Americans into the assembly hall. I let them wait until the Greek and the Negro were disposed of. Then they were brought up before the chief and me. They said they were employees of the Canal Administration. They had a small plantation on Gatun Lake, where they employed four San Blas Indians.

At the moment they were on a vacation and wanted to hunt on the headwaters of the Cardi River. I told them frankly that if their story was true, the Indians would probably not object. But if they were gold prospectors, they would have to leave.

Their story sounded pretty straight, and they offered to let us look through their baggage for shovels or gold-pans. I was convinced that they were telling the truth. So I told the chief to let them hunt all they wanted to. When they got back to the Canal Zone, they would take with them a favorable report—which was just what we wanted.

The chief saw the point and agreed to let them hunt. He told them that ordinarily the Indians did not permit strangers to enter their country. But since I had asked permission for them, it would be granted. He also offered to supply them with river canoes and two guides, but could not spare more men at this time.

The *Impco* arrived at dawn the next morning. I was told she was in sight before I got out of bed. I knew she would stop at the store-ship in the harbor, and so had left word with the Negroes to tell her to wait.

On board were the Harrises and Johnson, who all came ashore and spent several hours on the island. From them I heard the full story of the threatened attack of Mojica on Alligandi. They got started for the interior not long after I left for Cardi, but they had not gone more than ten miles when their porters refused to go farther. A runner had caught

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up with them and told the Indians that Mojica was threatening to destroy the village. So they had to abandon their trip and return to Alligandi.

When they got there, the *El Norte* was gone, leaving the threat to return in two days. Presently the *Impco* came into the harbor, and the Harrises and Johnson decided to go with her to Colon. But before she could get away, the *El Norte* appeared on the eastern horizon.

The three Americans were ashore at the time, and they watched the Indians' preparations. First, all the women and children were sent to the mainland, raising a great hubbub. One woman fainted and was later reported to have died. Then the men prepared for battle. They had many shotguns and rifles. Even the old men and boys were armed with long knives, and all were in deadly earnest. Harris thought that several hundred trained soldiers would have had difficulty in taking the village.

But the dreaded *El Norte* did not stop at Alligandi, much less attack the village. She gave the island a wide berth and sailed on toward the west. When she was gone, the Harrises and Johnson got on board the *Impco*.

That same day they reached Mono, the first of the Panamanian posts, where they spent the night. Mojica was there and came on board at once. Harris described him as a typical middle-class Panamanian with a very vicious face, but clever and shrewd and speaking good English. The first thing he asked was where I was, but he got no information. Everybody stuck to the story that I was in the mountains.

Mojica first assumed a very haughty attitude toward the Americans and ordered Harris to report to the Panamanian Minister of Justice as soon as they got back to civilization. Harris replied that that was exactly what he had planned to do. He had a great deal of his own to tell the Minister.

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This remark seemed to take Mojica down a little. He changed his manner, became extremely courteous, and invited the Americans on shore. There they found forty policemen, supplied with rifles and two sub-machine guns. Mojica arranged a demonstration of the latter, but Harris and Johnson, both of whom had seen service in the World War, were not convinced that the police knew how to operate them. They are supposed to fire two hundred shots a minute, but Johnson found that each gun was supplied with only two hundred rounds. This was good news for me. I decided that a well-planned night attack need not worry about those machine guns.

The next day they reached Playa Chica, another of the occupied posts. They found the village a starvation camp. The Indians were compelled to work six days a week, without compensation, for the Panamanian authorities on their own confiscated plantations. The seventh day they spent trying to gather enough food for themselves and their families. As a result all the Indian population looked undernourished and miserable. Mrs. Harris managed to make friends with some of the children and asked them what they wanted as presents. They all answered "biscuits." So she went to the store, bought all the biscuits or crackers they had, and distributed them free to the starving Indians. The local Panamanians appeared much annoyed at this, but they had no legitimate cause to stop her.

The next town they stopped at was Nargana, the home of "Jim Barre," "Alice Barre," and "Philip Robinson," the English-speaking Indians I had taken with me to the United States. Here they learned that both Jim and Philip had been arrested by the police and taken to prison at Parvenir. They could not learn what charges, if any, had been brought against them, except that they had been "talking nice about the Americans."

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This was the sum of the news brought by Harris and Johnson. I gave Harris all my papers and letters, including the copies of the Tule Declaration of Independence, and told him to see that one of the latter reached the American authorities and the Panamanian Government. He said no Panamanian official would get the documents away from him except over his dead body.

At two in the afternoon the *Impco* sailed for Mandinga at the head of the Gulf of San Blas. She intended to load coconuts there and then sail for Colon the next morning, expecting to arrive by nightfall. When she got past Parvenir safely, we would know that our Declaration would get to the American authorities. Then we could launch our attack without breaking the rules of war.

We waited impatiently, annoyed at this additional twenty-four hours of delay. At eight o'clock that night a fast launch came into the harbor of Cardi. In it were five heavily armed and rough-looking Americans and Canadians. They came ashore, demanding to speak to me. At first their manner was very brusque, and they attempted to cross-examine me as to what I was "preaching" among the Indians.

Before I would tell them anything, I asked them who they were and found that they were employees of an American banana company, which had a plantation at Mandinga. Then I told them that whatever I was doing was being reported to the proper authorities, and that certainly my affairs were none of their business.

Their leader, a Canadian, said he had heard that I was stirring up the Indians to fight. But the Indians were cowards and would not fight. I said nothing, and the Canadian began to talk about himself. He said he was known all along the coast as "Nigger Chepu" or "White Nigger," and he asked if I had heard of him. I said for some strange reason I had not.

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If he had known the scorn the Indians attach to the phrase "Nigger Chepu," he would never have boasted about it.

Finally, getting no information out of me, the five white men announced that they were going on to Nargana, an occupied village where there was "booze," and where they could "get" Indian girls. I warned them of the danger of the reefs at night, but the leader said he knew all the reefs in the dark.

They left at high speed. But they had not gone three hundred yards when they ran on a coral reef just off the village. We heard their engine stop. Then came cries for help. I sent out several Indian canoes to aid them, and after half an hour they were safely off the reef. But their ardor for booze and girls had cooled and they headed back for Mandinga and the banana plantation.

As soon as they left, we resumed our preparations for the coming campaign. Two canoes were sent down the coast to Alligandi, where they should arrive before noon the next day. They carried my orders to Chief Nellé. He was to attack Mono that night, while we were to fall upon Parvenir. Then our two armies would move toward one another, cleaning up the weaker Panamanian posts as we progressed along the coast. I rather suspected that the Alligandi Indians would delay their attack until they heard the news from Parvenir, but it would not matter very much.

A glance at the map will show the strategic situation. The Caribbean coast of Panama east of the Canal Zone is divided into two sections by San Blas Point, which is about seventy-five miles east of Colon. The coast to the west of the point belonged to the Panamanian negroes, but from the point eastward to the Colombian border it belonged to the Tule Indians except where the Panamanians had secured foot-holds by garrisoning villages and islands with armed police.

Parvenir, on a small island off San Blas Point, was the

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chief stronghold of the Panamanians and the headquarters of Governor Mojica. Sixty miles to the east, on the island of Mono, was the eastern limit of their conquest. Mono, like Parvenir, was garrisoned with a strong force of Panamanian troops, who were led by a certain redoubtable Captain Gordon who was supposed to be the son of an English army officer by a Jamaica negress. He had a record of great brutality and cruelty toward the Indians, but there was no doubt about his personal courage and ability. He was the one outstanding leader of the Panamanians and so had been put in charge of their most exposed outpost.

Between Parvenir and Mono were seven other fortified Panamanian posts, whose names, from west to east, were Cidra, Azucar, Nargana, Tigre, Ticantici, Playa Grande, and Playa Chica. Azucar and Playa Grande were on the mainland at the mouths of small rivers, but the rest were on coral islands. The coast, from Mono eastward to Puerto Obaldia and the Colombian border, was entirely free and unconquered, but there were also many free Indian villages scattered between the Panamanian posts all the way to Parvenir. On the southern shore of the Gulf of San Blas, only seven miles from Parvenir, lay Cardj, the westernmost Indian stronghold, where five thousand free Indians lived on a cluster of small islands. I had made it my headquarters for two reasons. It was the most exposed Indian position. And it was nearest to both Parvenir and Colon, from which I hoped would come the expected American intervention.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SAN BLAS WAR

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ON the morning of February twentieth the *Impco* passed Parvenir on her way to Colon. This was the signal. She carried Harris and the Tule Declaration of Independence. She should reach Colon by dark. We would attack Parvenir soon after midnight, and it could not be said of us that we made an attack without declaring war.

The day was spent in preparations, and we were ready long before midnight when we planned to start. But just before the zero hour one of our spies at Parvenir came into camp with the news that the Panamanians knew our plan. They had drawn heavily from the garrison at Tigre and now had forty-two trained soldiers, five machine guns, and about one hundred armed negroes.

I have no doubt now, to judge from the later exploits of the Indians, but that we could have captured Parvenir that night. There would have been a good deal of bloodshed and loss, however, and I felt our aims could be equally well accomplished with less loss of life. So I called off the attack on Parvenir, held my Indians in check at Cardi until dark the next day, and then made a quick dash for Tigre which lay thirty miles down the coast to the east.

At that time we had only four high powered rifles, no machine guns, and a nondescript armament of various gauges

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of shotguns, spears and machetes. We did not bother with bows and arrows for our quick night operations. Before starting on the attack, all of us, including myself in Indian dress, had our cheeks painted red, a red stripe put on our noses, and each was given some bitter concoction to drink, prepared by the Indian medicine men, which they said would "make us brave." It was not alcoholic and for my part I got no "kick" or other effect whatever from it.

I had three hundred picked men in about sixty small swift canoes, averaging about five men to a canoe. My own canoe was enormous, holding twenty men. Before departing from Cardi I carefully explained to the Indians the plan of attack, which was simple enough. We were to approach the shore

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single Indian was killed and there were only a few superficial wounds.

We did not disturb the small village of subdued Indians and negroes just back of the post. Many of them, including all the negroes, had fled by daybreak, and the rest, mostly Indian women and girls, prepared a native breakfast. Then I sent several canoes of local Indians, now rejoicing at their liberation, eastward to notify the Indians of the occupied posts that we were on our way to free them all. They had strict injunctions not to let the negro garrisons know of our coming, but to make sure that no Indians were with the Panamanians when we attacked. Then I stationed guards under "Charlie-gets-his-man" and slept or tried to sleep most of the day.

Late in the afternoon a whole horde of Indian canoes arrived from Playa Chica, twenty-five miles to the east. They had news of their own to tell. Our Indian messengers had reached Playa Chica by mid-morning. They had notified the conquered Indians there of the events at Tigre and advised them that we would attack the place after midnight. The local Indians were supposed merely to keep quiet, to keep out of the way, and await our arrival.

But Playa Chica was the village which had suffered most from Panamanian outrages. The leading Indian men had already been killed or driven away. All the rich plantations on the mainland had been seized by the usurpers. The remaining Indians, principally the women and children, were compelled to work six days of the week on their own confiscated plantations, without compensation, for the benefit of their Panamanian overlords. They were allowed only Sunday on which to bring in food and wood supplies for themselves and their families.

All the women and young girls had been outraged and raped by the negro Panamanians and reduced to the status of

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slaves and mistresses to their negro masters. Such women, according to Indian law, could not go back to the free Indian settlements. The Panamanians had made Playa Chica the scene of the Indians' greatest disgrace and humiliation. Fate was to make it the scene of the Indians' greatest revenge.

Playa Chica, like all the other Panamanian posts, had a small cleared plaza facing the beach on the inner side of the island. At one end of the plaza was a long structure used as a barracks for the soldiers. At the other end were several small private houses for the officers, while the sides were lined with the commissary, mess hall, and store rooms. In the center of the plaza was a tall flag-pole flying the Panamanian flag. The plaza was smooth, level, and used as a drill ground.

On this Sunday the bulk of the garrison of about twenty-four men were lolling about their barracks and dispersed through the good-sized Indian village behind the post. Quite a number of other Panamanian negroes were in town, both laborers and traders.

It was nearly noon. The Indians in the fields had been informed of the destruction of the Panamanian forces at Tigre and of our planned attack for that night. The Panamanian garrison had not yet been warned. Two negro soldiers, with rifles on their shoulders, paced guard back and forth in front of their barracks. The rest of the loaded rifles were stacked in military style under the protecting porch in front of the barracks. Most of the soldiers were lounging around waiting for the noon meal.

The Indians from the fields, augmented by the newly arrived messengers from Tigre, closed in unnoticed around the plaza. A young Indian boy, only seventeen years of age, dragging an ax, sauntered through the open plaza in front of the barracks, ostensibly taking a short cut back to the village from the water front. He timed himself so as to pass

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between the two sentries on guard just as they met in the center and continued on, back to back. The long dominant negroes were careless and ignored the bedraggled youth. Quick as a flash the Indian boy swung his ax on the neck of one of the sentries, killing him instantly. Then he seized his loaded rifle and shot the second sentry. The rest of the Indians rushed from their ambush behind the plaza, seized the stacked rifles, and fell upon the soldiers. It was sudden extermination. Then the aroused Indians scattered through the village. Not a single Panamanian escaped.

So our job at Playa Chica was accomplished by the local Indians in broad daylight without waiting for my main force.

The Indian youth who led the attack was brought to me. I will never forget him. Small, frail, weighing hardly one hundred and ten pounds, quiet and retiring, his dark eyes still blazed with the fire of his revenge. If the San Blas want a national hero to exemplify physical courage, they need search no farther than that boy.

That night after midnight we moved in force on Tican-tici, another small occupied post only five miles from Tigre. Most of the Panamanians there had fled when they heard of events at Tigre and Playa Chica, but six soldiers and their commanding lieutenant had been surrounded by the local Indians and confined to their barracks. They resisted and killed one Indian before being overpowered.

I returned to Tigre. Word came from Chief Nellé in command of our eastern forces, that Captain Gordon had concentrated at Mono a large force of soldiers and refugees. He had erected coral rock walls behind which were mounted machine-guns. A direct attack there was doubtful and certain to cause heavy loss to the Indians, therefore Nellé was passing by Mono and would occupy Playa Chica until I could join him and direct the attack on Mono. Nellé had done to Mono what I

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had done to Parvenir, passing it by for the moment to clear up the weaker posts first. I sent him word to await me at Playa Chica, and to gather all the food supplies he could.

Next night my force fell on Playa Grande, a strong post on the mainland between Tigre and Playa Chica. Here I divided my forces, half attacking from the ocean front and half from the river. The post here was located on an isolated point between the river and ocean, some distance from the village several hundred yards back up-stream. The garrison of two lieutenants and about twenty-four soldiers put up a feeble resistance and I think tried to surrender immediately. But there was no holding back my horde of now confident and victorious Indians once they were launched on the attack.

In all these attacks I deliberately hung back behind the advance forces, never took any personal part in the fighting, and resumed charge of the Indians only when the rush was over. It was their vengeance, not mine. By daybreak, however, I did calm the Indians sufficiently to get them to agree to accept the peaceful surrender of the numerous negro non-combatants living in the village near by. These negroes I sent by canoe back to Governor Mojica with the message that by the next night all the Panamanian posts except Mono and Parvenir would be in the hands of the Indians. An attack in force on Parvenir would be made early Wednesday or Thursday morning. I advised him to evacuate, as resistance could only mean the complete annihilation of the Panamanians.

Then I returned to Tigre to wait for news from Chief Nellé and his eastern forces. I was still hoping that the strong posts at Parvenir and Mono would be evacuated without fighting. I knew my Indians were invincible by now, but I knew that Captain Gordon, at least, would put up a desperate fight to the end and would inflict heavy losses on the Indians.

But Chief Nellé settled with Captain Gordon and Mono

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in his own way. Nellé was an excellent leader, with judgment and ability as well as courage. He had reconnoitered Mono by night and found it prepared for stubborn resistance. Next day, with half his force, he passed Mono, just out of rifle range, and proceeded westward to Playa Chica, which was already in the hands of the local Indians.

Captain Gordon saw Nellé's great fleet of war canoes pass his post to the westward. Later he received vague reports from some of his own subdued Indians of warfare to the west and fighting at Playa Chica. Next day, seeing no hostile forces in the vicinity of Mono, he left a small guard of about a dozen soldiers there, and with his main force of over forty men departed in canoes for Playa Chica, seven miles away.

His approach was of course observed by Chief Nellé and his followers, who promptly sent all their canoes around to the other side of the Island. Captain Gordon and his relief force found an apparently deserted village, flying, however, the new Tule flag instead of the Panamanian flag. Gordon's men hesitated at the approach, when Gordon with the courage and perhaps the stupidity of his British father, forged his canoe ahead, landed his crew and mustered his followers on the coral beach.

Then, at the head of his forces he started for the silent, apparently deserted village. Not a man got past the white coral beach. They were mowed down in their tracks!

With the extermination of Captain Gordon and the pick of his forces, Parvenir was the only important stronghold left on the San Blas Coast. Chief Nellé went back and wiped out the small garrison left at Mono that night. I sent "Charlie-gets-his-man" with about two hundred men to clean up the comparatively weak posts at Nargana and Cidra and returned with my main force to Cardí to direct the final assault on Governor Mojica's stronghold at Parvenir.

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Nargana was taken in broad daylight. A nephew of Mojica's was the lieutenant in charge there, and the Indians revenged his numerous outrages upon young Indian girls by mutilating his body. Cidra capitulated without the firing of a shot. Of the small garrison of only nine Panamanian soldiers, all were held as prisoners and hostages by the Indians.

That evening we gathered our forces for the final attack on Parvenir. I had sent scouts ahead to reconnoiter. We were only waiting for them to return. At last the first report arrived, and it caused an act of reprisal which I hate to tell about. The report was that Jim Barre, Philip Thompson, and one of our spies named Peter had been shot in cold blood by the Panamanians. Peter, to be sure, was a spy, but we had captured eight Panamanian spies, and all had been released at my direction. And the other two were held merely for "talking nice about the Americans." Their death was pure murder.

The news put the Indians in a frenzy. I could not hold them back. Against my orders, and without my knowledge, they immediately shot the policemen they had captured at Cidra. I hated this unnecessary bloodshed, but the thing was done. Certainly the Indians had plenty of provocation.

Later in the evening more news came from our scouts. They reported that Parvenir was deserted. The Governor, his soldiers, and all the inhabitants had fled to Colon. At once we set out to occupy the abandoned stronghold. We were three hundred strong in thirty big canoes. The wind was very light, and unfavorable. We took to paddles, but day broke while we were still a mile from the island.

As our scouts reported, the place was utterly deserted. The population must have fled in utter confusion. The wash still hung on the clothes lines. Important papers lay on the Governor's desk. There were twenty rifles in the gun racks. The store-houses were full of food, clothing, ammunition. In the

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living quarters were personal belongings, clocks, victrolas, sewing machines, and typewriters.

I made no attempt to keep the Indians from looting the houses and stores. They loaded everything into the canoes except the wardrobes and iron bed-steads. But I did manage to stop them from burning the buildings. The Governor had a fine house and office—with water supply, electric lights, bathrooms, etc. There was a complete saw-mill, a carpenter's shop, and a large launch in process of construction.

I persuaded the Indians to give vent to their revenge by first burning the negro shacks. Then I called them together and suggested that they spare the valuable main buildings. They cried out that they wanted to burn everything. They wanted no more of Parvenir. As a last resort I asked them to give the island to me. I had done much for them, and if I had such a place at my disposal, I could bring my friends down to stay there and visit them. Immediately they shouted approval, and the buildings were saved.

But I had no real intention of staying at Parvenir. It was too dangerous a place to defend from attack. So the Indians hauled down the Panamanian flag and ran up the new Tule flag which we had just adopted. Then we all set sail for Cardi, the canoes loaded to their gunwales with loot.

CHAPTER XXXV

INTERVENTION

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THIS ended the first phase of the Tule War of Independence. We had driven every Panamanian from the country and won every battle with very little loss. But I at least realized that only intervention by the United States would save us from a desperate and bloody campaign when the Panamanians returned. If they were allowed to recruit more troops, including American adventurers to operate machine guns, and charter large vessels with cannon, I knew it would be impossible for us to hold any of the coastal villages.

So even before the final occupation of Parvenir, I had started work on a plan of campaign to follow in case American intervention did not materialize. We would hold the villages against attack with small-arms. But as soon as vessels with big guns appeared, we would retreat to the jungle valleys of the interior, where we could maintain ourselves almost indefinitely by guerrilla warfare.

The Indians had agreed to this plan. They knew the revenge the Panamanians would take upon them if they got the chance. The chiefs of the interior had offered to cover our retreat and supply us with food. But still we all hoped for intervention.

About noon the next day two airplanes flew over Cardí and Parvenir. This I regarded as a favorable omen. Evidently

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the Americans were keeping track of the course of events. A little later the motor-yacht *San Blas* came into the harbor of Cardi, flying the American flag. She belonged to the American banana company which owned the plantation at Mandinga, and the manager sent word for me to come on board.

I did not trust his outfit of Italian-Americans and Panamanians, who had been looting the Indians with a free hand, but I told him that I would receive him on shore and guarantee his safety. After a long delay he arrived, accompanied by the Canadian, "Nigger Chepu." I had a guard of a hundred armed Indians lined up in a hollow square inside the big house. The leading chiefs and I occupied the center.

"Nigger Chepu" was no longer the scornful person of the other night, who said the Indians were too cowardly to fight. He and his boss looked much impressed. Nervously they asked our intentions toward their plantation. I said they would not be molested in any way as long as they remained within their legal rights. They looked much relieved and told me that the Panamanian Government had commandeered their steamer, the *La Isla*. She was due here the next day with two hundred and fifty soldiers. I told them to be assured that the Indians would fight to the death, and they went back to their launch.

As soon as the yacht was gone, we set about preparing for the expected battle with the new Panamanian forces. The coral-rock walls at strategic points on the island were strengthened. Guns and ammunition were got in order, and arrangements made to send the women, children, and old men away to the mainland on the approach of the enemy.

None of the warrior Indians slept in hammocks that night. They have an old superstition that it is unlucky to sleep in a hammock the night before a battle, but I finally persuaded most of them to lie down on the ground and get all the rest

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possible. There was a grim determination on the faces of the Indians which showed that they fully realized the gravity of the situation, but they waited with admirable stoicism. There were no doubts, objections or complaints; none showed any inclination to avoid meeting the issue. My admiration for them, already high, increased still more as I watched them that night. For myself, I got several hours of good sleep after midnight, knowing that the sentries would immediately report any unusual occurrence.

At daybreak, the guards woke me up, saying that a large ship was visible on the horizon. Thinking it was the expected Panamanians, I was on the beach immediately. On the horizon ten miles away were two tall masts above a still barely discernible hull. But instead of ordering the Indians to start sending the women and children to the mainland, I told them to wait.

Those tall masts did not fit the description of the coast-wise fruit steamer on which the Panamanian troops were coming. Soon my growing hopes were confirmed. The approaching vessel was a large modern warship, and such a warship in such waters could be only American.

The keen-eyed Indians had also detected the unusual features of the approaching vessel, and a gleam of hope appeared in their tired eyes. I told them to go to their houses, get their breakfasts, and not worry. The boat was an American warship, and she would not permit an armed Panamanian vessel to fire upon Indian villages.

The tension was broken. Glad shouts and laughter rang on all sides. For with American intervention once accomplished, I knew mediation and investigation was sure to result in some recognition of the Indians' right to live.

On came the warship, until we could plainly see the

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American flags. When within a mile of Cardi, she dropped anchor in the channel through the coral reef.

Then came an amusing incident. From behind Parvenir Island, seven miles away, appeared a second vessel, unmistakably the fruit steamer *La Isla*, on which were the Panamanian troops. She cleared the island, sighted the American warship at anchor off Cardi Bay. She stopped, patrolled sideways for half an hour, and then retreated to Parvenir Island, anchoring in the harbor.

Soon a motor launch from the warship arrived at Cardi, bringing an American naval officer, a newspaper man, and Mr. William Markham of the Canal Zone. The latter, a Canal official, was perhaps the one American there who really knew something about the San Blas Coast. He had visited the Indians as far east as Nargana and won their partial confidence.

The Americans were enthusiastically welcomed by the Indians. Markham told me that the American Minister to Panama, Dr. South, was on board the warship, which was the cruiser *Cleveland*. He asked me to come aboard and guaranteed me safe conduct and safe return to the Indians. So, with "Charlie-gets-his-man" and two other chiefs, we went out to the *Cleveland*.

There I was received by Dr. South who told me that several high Panamanian officials were on board, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and one or two other Cabinet Ministers. Their titles were all quite impressive, but the men were quite typical of Panama, and I knew or had met most of them in the past.

I went into a long conference with Dr. South. Panama, he said, considered me to blame for the Indian uprising, and demanded that I be seized and turned over for trial. The only word he had yet received from the State Department in

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Washington was to the effect that, if I had been guilty of fomenting insurrection in Panama, the American Government would not take steps to protect me. He had sent for me to learn my side of the matter. The future would depend upon the trend of events and further instructions from Washington.

I reviewed the whole Indian situation with Dr. South, including my own participation, and requested that he visit the Indians on shore and investigate for himself the truth of the Panamanian outrages against them. I reminded him that in the final analysis, America was responsible to the Panamanian Indians.

Finally Dr. South decided to go ashore. Soon he set out for the island with Markham, several American officers, and myself. We were received in the big house. Olopinginua and his leading chiefs were seated in a row of the newly captured cane chairs from the Governor's stronghold, while the Americans occupied another row opposite. I sat with the Indians.

This central group was surrounded by a hollow square of over two hundred Indian warriors, all now carrying captured modern high-powered rifles. Behind them were hordes of men, women and children.

The American Minister explained that he had come to San Blas in the hope of being of assistance in securing a resumption of peace between the Indians and the Panamanians. He asked the Indians to give him their version of their trouble.

Olopinginua, speaking as ranking chief, gave a very straightforward, manly statement of the Indians' wrongs, concluding by saying that they were merely fighting for the right to live in their own way in their own country. They wanted only peace and justice. They could not secure it from Panama. So they wanted America to help them and would place their fate in America's hands. It was very apparent that Dr. South and the other Americans were surprised and impressed with

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the bearing of the Indians, their dignity, straightforwardness, and high intelligence.

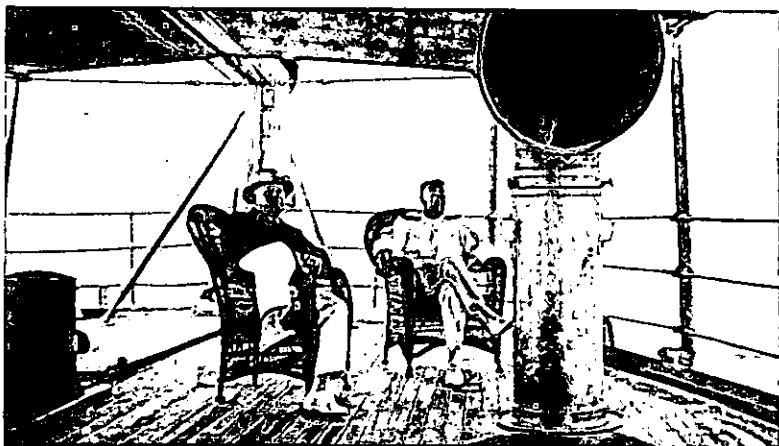
Then the Minister requested me to leave the assembly, saying he wanted to question the Indians regarding the nature of my participation in the uprising. I went outside, first publicly asking the Indians to tell him the full truth. I had not made the slightest intimation to any of the Indians, indirectly or otherwise, as to how they should answer questions about me. My own conscience was clear, although of course I realized that technically Panama could lodge very serious charges against me.

I was recalled in half an hour to find all the participants, Americans and Indians, beaming and happy. I felt a very friendly feeling in the room, but was hardly prepared to hear the result of the investigation.

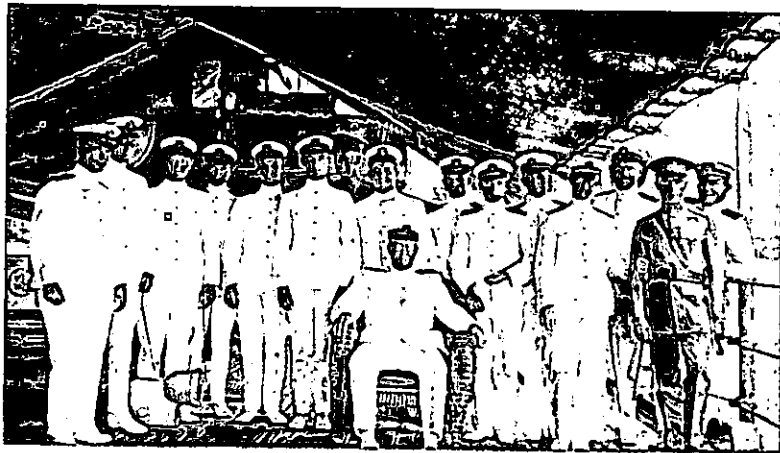
Dr. South said that the Indians to a man had absolved me of all responsibility for the uprising. They said I was merely a friend who had helped them in sickness and been good to them. All I had done was to write in English, at their request, their statements and declarations so that the American authorities could know the truth of the situation.

Apparently the Indians had quickly sensed that I was under trial. They had decided how to protect me, and had stuck to their story. In some mysterious way the agreement to follow this policy seemed to have spread all along the San Blas Coast. I was to learn later that another American naval vessel, the *Scorpion*, had questioned the Indians of the eastern coast, and they had unanimously insisted I had had no part whatever in the uprising, but had simply acted as their friend and interpreter.

Dr. South and his party then returned to the *Cleveland*, promising the Indians that there would be no attack by the



*Captain Wells of U. S. Cruiser "Cleveland"
and U. S. Minister South During the Intervention
in San Blas War*



*Captain Wells and Officers.
U. S. Cruiser "Cleveland" at Intervention
in San Blas War*

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Panamanians—at least not before the following day. I returned to the warship with the Minister.

Immediately conferences were held between the American Minister and the Panamanian officials on board. The Minister found the Panamanians entirely willing to hold their forces on the island of Parvenir and await developments. Later, I was called before the Panamanian officials, together with the leading Indians, on the understanding that our appearance was voluntary and in no way to interfere with our returning to Cardí when we wished.

This first “trial” was somewhat amusing. It was conducted by Sr. Francisco de la Ossa, Chief Justice of the Panamanian Supreme Court, who had been sent by President Chiari to conduct an investigation and if possible bring me back to Panama for trial.

So well did the Indians acquit themselves in this investigation, and so completely did they lay the blame for the uprising to Panama’s own outrages that the judge soon dropped all further investigation. But he continued to demand that I be delivered into his custody. It was quite evident that Panama was far more anxious to punish me than to get to the bottom of the uprising.

But Dr. South refused to hand me over. The Panamanian officials were quite nonplused. After long discussion which convinced the Panamanians that if they renewed the war, it would be without the aid of American troops or material, they agreed to a truce on the basis of an agreement outlined by Dr. South. The Indians were to be guaranteed their fundamental rights, and I was to be permitted to return unmolested to America. The terms of this proposed truce were wirelessly from the *Cleveland* to the Panamanian Government late that night.

CHAPTER XXXVI

PEACE

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MEANWHILE it developed that the Panamanian troops at Parvenir Island were already in trouble, and were losing the extreme ardor for battle which they had shown on their departure from Panama. Their island had no fresh water supply, and the small amount brought from Panama had been used for the officers' baths. Their food was scanty, and the post was without furniture or other equipment. They seemed more than willing to maintain the truce.

But their serenity was shattered early the next morning. A wireless came from the President of Panama to the General commanding the Panamanian forces, addressed in care of the *Cleveland*, "*Attack and capture Cardí immediately.*" (signed) *Chiari*.

The message was received by the wireless operator of the *Cleveland* and delivered to Captain Wells who finally decided to deliver it to the Panamanian officials with the warning that in future he would act as "go between" only for peaceful and not war-like messages.

The contents of the message soon percolated through the officers' mess and came to me. I informed the American Minister that if hostilities were to be renewed I preferred to return to the Indians. Accordingly I was sent ashore, accompanied by several of the Americans as neutral observers.

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I called the Indians together and told them that the Panamanians had been ordered to attack at once. America could not intervene without explicit instructions from Washington. The attack would probably come that night. At once they decided to send the women, children and non-combatants to the mainland. The men all pledged themselves to fight in the defense of Cardi until all were killed.

Soon hundreds of big canoes loaded down with Indian families and all their movable belongings, set out in a continuous line for the mainland half a mile away. All day they plied back and forth, stripping the island village. The old men ashore built temporary palm shelters along the river, while the fighting men increased the rock fortifications on the island.

I felt reasonably certain that the Indians could beat off all small-arm attacks for several days. But I knew, as the Panamanians did not, how little ammunition the Indians really had. Many of the rifles of odd caliber had only one cartridge apiece. Two of them had about one hundred fifty rounds each, and these two would have to do all the long range shooting, the others and the numerous shot-guns being reserved for close range in case the Panamanians attempted a landing.

Toward evening a message came from the *Cleveland*, saying there would be no attack from the Panamanians that night. I returned to the cruiser and learned of an amusing interchange of wireless messages between the Panamanian Government and their field forces, which had brought the operations to a standstill.

When the first message came from Chiari, ordering them to "attack and capture Cardi immediately," the Panamanians were well aware of the thorough preparedness of the Indians. After heated discussion, they wirelessly back the following message: "*Cardi strongly fortified. Can not attack without big guns.*"

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To this an answer soon came from the President: "*Attack at once with big guns.*"

As the only big guns on the San Blas Coast were those on the American warship, which were not available to the Panamanians, the field forces replied, "*Send big guns.*"

At this stage Commander Wells told the Panamanians that he would neither send nor deliver any more messages for them. Unless they wished to transmit peace-making messages, the wireless of the U. S. S. *Cleveland* was no longer at their disposal.

Chiari knew his field forces had no big guns. The field forces knew the Government had none to send them. But the exchange of messages provided both parties with sufficient alibis and paved the way toward peace negotiations.

Next day, Minister South and the Panamanian Chief Justice set out to Panama City by airplane to confer with Chiari and his cabinet. They returned the following morning and I was asked to appear before them. But as luck would have it, my old malaria broke out again in severe form, and I was confined to bed by order of the ship's doctor. For two days I was unable to leave my bed, and only then, while still quite weak, did I learn of the decision.

Panama agreed to negotiate a treaty with the Indians, but refused to exonerate me or withdraw their demand that I be delivered into its custody. A meeting had been arranged on Parvenir Island between the Panamanian officials and the leading Indian chiefs. The Indians were escorted to Parvenir in the *Cleveland's* small boats, accompanied by the American Minister and Commander Wells. The Treaty of Parvenir was drawn up and signed by the Panamanians and Indians, and witnessed by the American Minister. Its terms were as follows:

1. Hostilities shall cease on both sides.
2. The Indians shall not be held responsible for any acts during the uprising or resulting from it.

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3. The Panamanian Governor of San Blas, Sr. Mojica, is dismissed from office.
4. All surviving Panamanian Police formerly stationed on the San Blas Coast are recalled.
5. Panama in future shall occupy only the Island of Parvenir on the San Blas Coast.
6. New Panamanian Police stationed on Parvenir Island shall all be white, married men.
7. Panama shall not impose schools upon the Indians without the Indians' consent.
8. Panama shall return to the Indians the shotguns formerly taken away from them, and return their confiscated gold ornaments.
9. The Indians in future shall be permitted to have shotguns and ammunition, but no high-powered rifles.
10. The Indians shall return to Panama the rifles and machine-guns captured from the Panamanians, as well as all material taken from Parvenir.
11. The Indians shall be granted local self-government and granted equal rights with all citizens of Panama.
12. Provision shall be made in future that a suitable and sufficient area of the Indian lands shall be set aside as a permanent home and reservation for the Indians and shall be held inviolate to them, free from exploitation by others.
13. On the above considerations, the Indians recognize the sovereignty of Panama.

With this treaty signed, I felt that I had done all I could for the Indians at that time. My status was still the obstacle to complete accord. Panama refused to absolve me, demanded that I be turned over for trial. For me to have returned to the Indians, now that a satisfactory peace had been secured, would have meant continued friction.

WHITE INDIANS OF DARIEN

Nothing would have pleased me more than a full and fair trial and a true investigation of the Indian situation. But such a trial was not possible under Panamanian jurisdiction. So I decided to rest my fate with the American authorities.

Under the provisions of International Law, a foreigner in any country, charged with a crime and feeling he will not be granted a fair trial, may apply for asylum either to his country's Legation or to a war vessel of his country if one happens to be present. In such case, if the Diplomatic Representative, or Naval Commander so appealed to, thinks there are reasonable grounds to believe justice will not be granted to his countryman, he may offer asylum, and the petitioner is then not turned over to the local authorities without direct instructions to that effect from his home State Department. Otherwise, he is returned to his own country, and the prosecuting country may then inaugurate extradition proceedings against him, when the accused is first given an opportunity to defend himself in his home courts.

Accordingly, I made formal request of Commander Wells of the U. S. S. *Cleveland* for the right of asylum, which he granted me, pending instructions from Washington.

Soon I learned that the State Department approved his action. I would not be turned over to Panama except on the recommendation of the American Minister, Commander Wells, and the American Governor of the Canal Zone. These three officials were thoroughly conversant with the whole matter and I was safe in their hands. Panama would be forced to resort to extradition proceedings in the American Courts if it wished to prosecute its charges against me.

Panama, however, decided not to adopt that method. The Chief Justice made a report and President Chiari issued the following decree:—

“It is a question of public notoriety that the United

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States citizen, R. O. Marsh, who, with the permission of the Panamanian Government has been more than a year among the San Blas Indians under the pretext of carrying out scientific investigations, was the person who prepared and wrote the proclamation launched by several chieftains of that territory, in which they declared their independence from the Republic of Panama and constituted a separate entity under the name of Republic of Tule.

There are also reasons to presume that it was the same Mr. Marsh who instigated the Indians to rebel against the Panamanian authorities and to commit the barbarous acts carried out against defenseless persons and members of the colonial police stationed on the islands of the San Blas territory.

Although from the investigations carried out in the region of the rebellion, it has not been possible to legally prove that R. O. Marsh is responsible for a common crime for which the government could ask his extradition by the United States, there is ample proof that the aforementioned individual has abused the hospitality and permission granted him by the nation, through its authorities, helping, perhaps only intellectually, in the execution of acts of rebellion against the agents and representatives of the Panamanian government and in demonstrations against our national integrity.

Consequently, by virtue of the dispositions contained in Chapter II, Title IV, Book IV of the Administrative Code, and after obtaining the consent of the Cabinet Council,

BE IT RESOLVED:

To declare that the foreigner, R. O. Marsh, be expelled from the territory of the Republic of Panamá, prohibiting his future entry under penalty of arrest and

WHITE INDIANS OF DARIEN

punishment in conformity with the laws of the country if this prohibition is violated.

The national authorities are entrusted with the strict fulfillment of this Resolution.

(signed) R. CHIARI, (*President*)

(signed) CARLOS L. LOPEZ. (*The Secretary of
Government and Justice.*)”

So I returned to the Canal Zone aboard the U. S. S. *Cleveland*, and from there received passage on an American vessel to New York.

Since my return, while endeavoring to recuperate from malaria and an anemic condition of the blood, I have received several messages through friendly channels from the San Blas Indians.

Apparently Panama is not living up to the Treaty of Parvenir. The Panamanian government has purchased and equipped a small cruiser or patrol boat fitted with large guns which can lie off the coast beyond rifle shot and destroy the Indian villages with impunity. She has already violated the treaty in three respects, having occupied the Indian village on the island of Nargana, stationed a garrison of sixty armed unmarried negroes on the island, and arrested several Indians charged with participation in the recent uprising.

These negroes are indulging in the same practices and outrages against the Indians, men, women and girls, as formerly practiced. The Nargana Indians are again leaving the island, abandoning their homes and valuable plantations.

But meanwhile, I hope to impress on the American Government and American people that America, in fact and in justice, is responsible to the Darien Indians. Only active continued American supervision can ever bring any true peace or justice to San Blas.

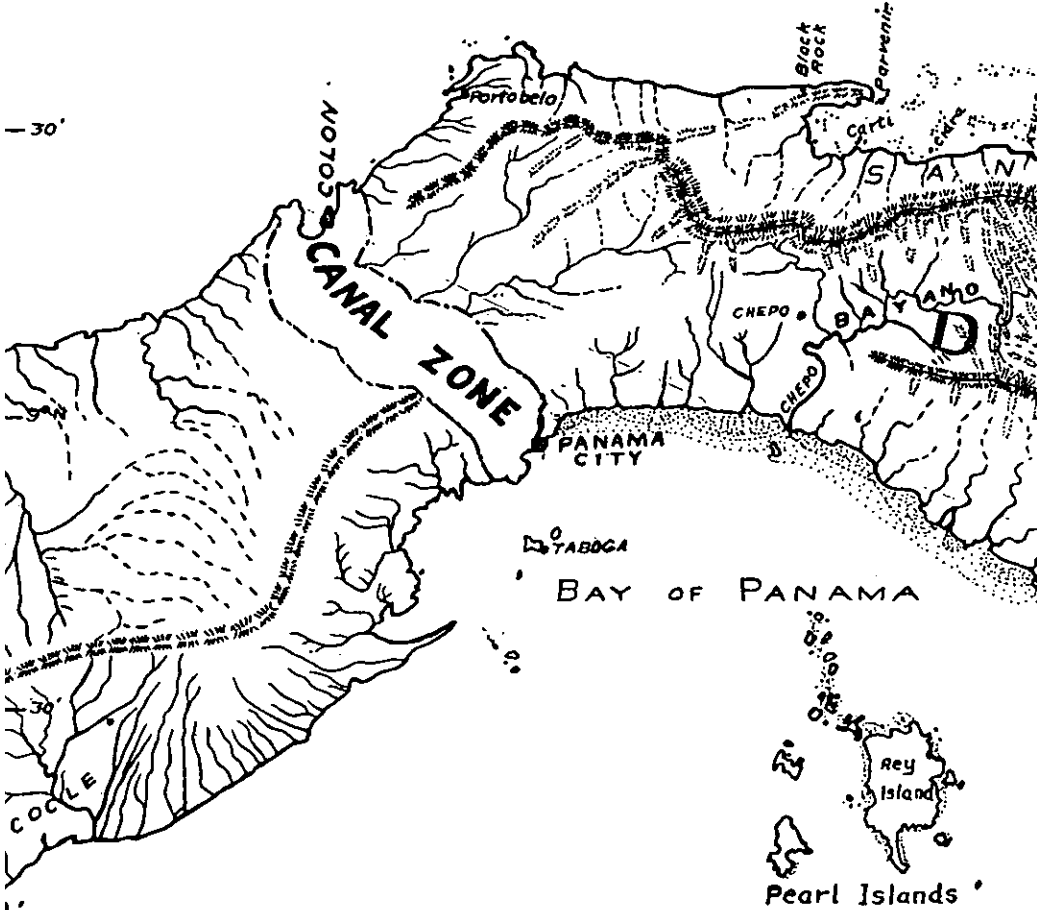
80°W

30'

79°

-30'

COLON CANAL ZONE



GULF OF PANAMA

PACIFIC OCEAN

8°N

80°W

30'

79°

78°

30'

77°W

CARIBBEAN SEA

30'

30'

30'

