

Mexico and southern Colorado in increasing numbers. Many displaced villagers headed to California, but the majority made their way to the cities nearby, notably Albuquerque. This disintegration of village life caused deep alienation. Moreover, poverty continued to be a monumental problem for both rural and urban residents. The war also witnessed the continued immigration of Anglos into the state. Now a minority within the population—by 1960, only 28.3 percent of the state population was Spanish-speaking—Hispanos saw their political clout dissipate rapidly. The rise of Tijerina, an outsider, has to be seen in the context of these desperate and deteriorating conditions.

Disillusionment was most severe in northern New Mexico, where angry villagers blamed their problems on the loss of land.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it was here that seemingly irresponsible policies established by the National Forest Service threatened the grazing and water rights of the rural Hispano populace. It was in this northern peripheral area, centering on Río Arriba County, where half the residents were on public relief, that Tijerina built a power base. Ultimately, Alianza membership reached twenty thousand.

Tijerina believed that all the problems of "Indo-Hispanos" in the Southwest stemmed from the loss of their patrimony. He charged that this land was taken illegally. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, he argued, guaranteed Mexicanos in the United States citizenship rights, including those relating to property. Even land alienated through sale had been taken illegally. Mexicanos, he concluded, needed to organize to win redress through the American court system. The repossession of lost grants was to be a prelude to an even more ambitious and utopian scheme: the creation of a free city-state, the independent Republic of Chama, which would be established in northern New Mexico. Vague and backward looking, the Alianza, as Nancie L. González insightfully notes, represented a "nativistic cult movement."<sup>24</sup>

During the first years, from his headquarters in Albuquerque, Tijerina pursued a moderate path in his efforts to achieve victory. For the most part, he placed his faith on legal avenues; he hoped to regain lost lands through litigation. His research into land grants took him to the archives of Spain and Mexico, where he gathered materials to sustain his claims. He got nowhere; US courts refused to hear the case.

In desperation, Tijerina sought to bring national attention to the plight of Hispanos and to force the government to hear him out through extralegal means. Increasingly, the Alianza resorted to fence cutting and arson. In 1966, Tijerina occupied Echo Amphitheater, formerly an old land grant, now part of Kit Carson National Forest, arresting forest rangers for trespassing. On June 5, 1967, he and his supporters invaded the courthouse at Tierra Amarilla, county seat of Río Arriba, in an attempt to free jailed Alianza members and make a citizen's arrest of the local district attorney. A shoot-out ensued, with *aliancistas* making a getaway by taking two hostages. The largest manhunt in New Mexico history resulted in the arrest of