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Brief and True Account
of the Exploration
of New Mexico, 1583

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Report of the Viceroy
to the King, 1583

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REPORT OF THE VICEROY TO THE KING, 1583¹

His Very Catholic and Royal Majesty:

In November of last year, 1580, a friar named Fray Agustín Rodríguez, of the Order of San Francisco, came to me and told me that he desired to go to the interior to preach the Holy Gospel beyond the mines of Santa Bárbara, which are in Nueva Vizcaya; and seeing his great zeal, and that it was reported that along the Conchas River were people where this good purpose might be effected, I granted him permission to do so, and to take with him other religious, and as many as twenty men who might voluntarily wish to go with him, to protect them and as company; and that they might take some things for barter; and that the one whom the friar should name should go as leader,² whom the others should obey, that they might not cause disorder. I did not give permission for more men to go, because your Majesty had issued instructions that no entries or new discoveries should be made without express permission from your Majesty.

They entered with as many as eight men,³ who desired to go with them; and it appears that they went along discovering some pueblos in a good country, fertile, and having a food supply, the people having better dress and appearance than those of the Conchas River. Fray Agustín Rodríguez decided to remain in one of them with a companion, and that the eight men should come to report what until then had been seen and discovered. I have had their depositions taken and am sending⁴ them herewith, attested, so that your Majesty may see them. And Rodrigo del Río de Losa, lieutenant-captain-general in the province of Nueva Galicia, a man well informed and of much experience in expeditions,

¹ Pacheco and Cárdenas, *Col. Doc. Inéd.*, XV. 97-100.

² This is evidence that the purpose of the expedition was primarily religious.

³ See p. 142, note 4.

⁴ The text says *envió*, which is clearly a misprint for *envío*.

because he was in Florida with Don Tristan de Arellano¹ and in Nueva Vizcaya with Francisco de Ibarra, being here at the time, I consulted with him as to what he thought was necessary in order to send men to learn about the friars and to endeavor to obtain information about all the country, and, particularly, that they might report of it here; and he gave me the statement which I send² herewith, signed by himself.³

While this was taking place there arrived a soldier with one of the Indians who had remained with the friars, who said that they had killed one of them in his presence, and that as he was fleeing hither that they might not kill him he heard cries and shouts in the pueblo, by which he understood that they must be killing the other friar. And I having consulted with the said Rodrigo del Rio, concerning this event also, and concerning what would be necessary to make a military expedition, both as to the number of men and the supplies, if your Majesty should deign so to order it, he made a full report, which is the one accompanying this, signed by himself, so that your Majesty may order it examined.

From what can be gathered from the account given by these men, that country is densely populated and fertile; although they say they saw signs of mines, among the Indians no signs of gold or silver are found, or evidence that any metal has been taken out. Your Majesty will command the whole matter to be investigated, and will order what best suits your royal service, for in the meantime nothing more will be done in the affair. May God preserve the Very Catholic Royal person of your Majesty and increase your kingdoms and domains, as we the servants of your Majesty desire.

Mexico, November 1, 1582. His very Catholic Royal Majesty. Your Majesty's servant kisses your Majesty's royal hands. The Count of CORUÑA. Rubric.

[*Endorsement.*] On the cover is the following: "New Spain. To his Majesty, 1582. The viceroy, the Count of Coruña, November 1. Examined. Give this, with the papers

¹ See Lowery, *Spanish Settlements within the Present Limits of the United States*, 1513-1561, pp. 357-374.

² *Envió*, clearly a misprint for *envío*.

³ Del Río's statements are printed in Pacheco and Cárdenas, *Col. Doc. Inéd.*, XV. 137-146.

referred to, to a relator. There are two rubrics. Issue a cédula addressed to the viceroy of New Spain, or to the person who in his place may be governing, so that, with respect to the exploration concerned in this letter and in the declaration and reports which he sends with it, he may make there a contract¹ with the person whom he may think best fitted for it, in conformity with the ordinances relative to the matter, so that the expedition may be made without any expenditure whatsoever from the treasury of his Majesty; and when the contract is made, before any of the conditions therein agreed upon are put into effect, let it be forwarded to the Council, so that, it having been examined, what is best may be provided for. Madrid, March 29, 1583. Licentiate BAÑOS. Two rubrics. Before me, FRANCISCO DE LEDESMA. Rubric."

¹ The contract was finally made with Juan de Oñate. See *post*, p. 201.