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"PRINCIPLES AND MEASURES, AND MEN BY THEIR PRINCIPLES."

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE U STATES

In compliance with a resolution of the House of Representatives of the 13th instant, respecting an Annexation of Texas to the United States.

—o—

OCTOBER 3, 1837.

Read, and laid upon the table.

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To the House of Reps. of the U. States:

In compliance with the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 13th instant, respecting an annexation of Texas to the U. States, I transmit a report from the Secretary of State, and the documents by which it was accompanied. M. VAN BUREN.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30, 1837.

To the President of the U. States:

The Secretary of State, to whom was referred a resolution of the House of Representatives, dated the 13th instant, requesting "the President of the United States to communicate to that House, if in his opinion it should be compatible with the public interest, whether any proposition has been made on the part of the republic of Texas to the Government of the United States, for the annexation of the said republic of Texas to the Union; and, if such proposition has been made, what answer has been returned, and all correspondence which has taken place relating thereto," has the honor to lay before the President copies of all the correspondence which has taken place between this Government and that of Texas, on the subject of the resolution referred, and to represent that the inquiry made in that resolution is answered by the documents now respectfully submitted.

JOHN FORSYTH.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, Sept. 30. 1837.

General Hunt to Mr. Forsyth.

TEXIAN LEGATION,
Washington city, Aug. 4, 1887.

Sir: The undersigned, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the republic of Texas, in conformity with instructions from his Government, asks the consideration of the honorable John Forsyth, Secretary of State of the United States, on the subject of a proposition for the annexation of Texas to the United States, and which proposition he has now the honor most respectfully to submit.

In presenting the question through the honorable the Secretary of State of the United States to this Government, the undersigned solicits, in advance, the greatest indulgence for the latitude which it will be necessary to take in opening this negotiation. The subject is one of so much magnitude that it is impossible, in a single paper, to exhibit even its general outlines, and the undersigned will perhaps have sufficiently trespassed upon the attention of the honorable the Secretary of State, when he shall have, in the first place, briefly set forth a comparative history of Texas and Mexico, which has been so much misrepresented by the recent envoy of Mexico to this Government, and when, in the second place, he shall have stated the main ground upon which the union of the two republics is proposed by Texas, and shall have concluded by suggesting some few of the great advantages, both national and social, which would result to the two contracting parties from the proposed amalgamation of their respective sovereignties.

With the exception of the first presidency under the federal constitution, that of Victoria, Mexico has exhibited a series of revolutions, attended with the most disastrous civil wars. Iturbide, who was chosen and proclaimed by a licentious soldiery, was dethroned and put to death, after a short reign, too turbulent to be regarded, even during that brief period, as a government. The rights of property were not respected, and foreign merchants as well as native were exposed to his rapacity. Witness the seizure of money at Perote.

After the downfall of Iturbide, and the adoption of the constitution of 1824, which is a transcript of that of the United States, affairs were, for some time, conducted peaceably, and were only interrupted by the episode of the revolt of General Bravo, the Vice President. Yet, during that period, the laws of nations were repeatedly violated, and the property of foreign merchants preyed upon by the corrupt and venal agents of the Government. (See the history of the claims of American citizens.)

The termination of Victoria's presidency was disgraced by the quarrel between the rival candidates for the succession, which, after a bloody contest, terminated by elevating to the presidency the successful candidate, General Guerrero, and the banishment of Pedrazo, his competitor. A short year, marked with disorder and misrule, terminated the career of this revolutionary hero. The struggle cost him his power and his life, and the whole country was convulsed by this civil strife. The Vice President, Bustamente, succeeded Guerrero, but the war continued in different parts of Mexico, rendering life and property insecure. After a short period of convulsions, Bustamente was banished and Santa Anna succeeded to power. He was elevated by the joint efforts of the aristocracy and the priesthood, who made use of the successful soldier of fortune to overthrow the free institutions of the country. His reign of misrule and career of blood will be presently noticed. He is now at Mango de Clavo, the tiger in his lair, ready to go forth seeking whom he may devour. It is true Bustamente is again in power, but it is notorious that the people have been juggled out of their liberties, and are dissatisfied. The Government which was their choice has been overthrown, and centralism forced upon them by the sword; this change sanctioned by mock acts of a spurious legislature, and the States reduced to submission by force.

With this brief view of the factious struggles of Mexico, the undersigned approaches the exposition of the history of Texas, which he conceives to be an important preliminary to the due consideration of the subject of annexation.

Until the settlement of Austin's first colony in 1821, Texas, for the most part, was an unexplored wilderness. The Spaniards had endeavored, in vain, to rescue it from the wild tribes of the forest. So early as the year 1698 the old Spanish town of Bexar was founded; in 1716 La Bahia, afterwards Goliad; Nacogdoches in 1732; Victoria at a later period. But these old Spanish settlements continued to be surrounded by prowling parties of savage Indians, and, up to the year 1821, Texian civilization was only to be found within the narrow precincts of their respective jurisdictions.

On the 17th of January, 1821, Moses Austin obtained permission from the Supreme Government of the eastern internal provinces of New Spain, at Monterey, to settle a colony of emigrants in Texas, and in the month of December following, his son, Stephen F. Austin, who had undertaken the enterprise in obedience to the testamentary request of his father, appeared upon the river Brazos with the first Anglo-American settlers. From that period may be dated the Anglo-American history of a country which has grown into notice with unexampled rapidity, and already presents itself as another monument of the indomitable energy of the extraordinary race by which it was populated.

In the mean time Mexico had shaken off the Spanish yoke, and established herself as a sovereign and independent Government.—Anxious, however, to increase her political influence and resources by every means in her power, and prompted by a desire to repress the Indians on her northern frontiers, observing, too, the beneficial effects resulting from the liberal system of naturalization adopted in the United States, she determined to pursue a similar course of policy in relation to aliens.

Accordingly, on the 4th of January, 1823, a national colonization law was adopted by the Mexican Congress, and approved by the Emperor, Don Augustin Iturbide, and on the 18th of February a decree was issued, authorizing Austin to proceed with his colony: which decree, after the abdication of Iturbide, and the change of Government consequent thereon, was confirmed by the first Executive Council, in accordance with a special order of the Mexican Congress.

On the 2d of February, 1824, the Federal constitution of Mexico, based upon that of the United States, was proclaimed as the established polity of the land; and, by a decree of the 7th of May, of the same year, the provinces of Texas and Coahuila were provisionally united, to form one of the constituent and sovereign States of the Mexican confederacy.

On the 18th of August another general colonization law was passed and ratified, by the Supreme Government at the city of Mexico, and foreigners emigrating to the country, and complying with the terms of the said law, were guarantied in the protection of their persons and property, and all the rights, liberties, and immunities of Mexican citizens.—Moreover, by the State colonization law of Coahuila and Texas, of the 24th of March, 1825, they were specifically invited to come and settle within the limits of that especial state jurisdiction.

Under these various enactments, but particularly after the adoption of the federal constitution, the current of emigration continued to flow in and spread itself with accelerated rapidity over the fertile domain of the then province of Texas. The forest gave way to the axe of the pioneer; the wild prairie to the ploughshare of the husbandman. Plantations were opened. Villages sprung up on the hunting-ground of the savage. New colonies were introduced, planted, fostered, and matured; and in the brief period of nine years from the first settlement under Austin, the enterprise of the Anglo-American settler had explored the whole southern moiety of the province, redeemed it from the wilderness of the wild beast and the savage, covered it with a hardy and industrious population, and intermixed his labor with its most valuable soils.

True, in emigrating to Texas the enterprising colonist had expatriated himself, and foregone the well-tried institutions of his mother-land, but the institutions he now lived under were modelled upon those he had reluctantly abandoned. His spirit, and his habits, and his inbred and uncompromising republicanism continued the same, and he was as ready to resist the invasion of his chartered rights under the Mexican constitution of '24, as he would have been to have thrown himself into the breach in behalf of that sacred instrument under which he had been born and educated

Up to the year 1830, the people of Texas had taken but little concern in the series of political convulsions which had so closely followed one another in the interior of Mexico. So long as they were left unmolested in the enjoyment of their own rights, their natural disposition for peace restrained them from participating in the internal commotions of the other States. But their rapidly growing strength, and steady adherence to republican principles, began now to attract the notice and excite the jealousy of the Supreme Government. This was plainly evinced by the passage of the arbitrary law of the 6th of April, 1830, by which the further introduction or immigration of American settlers into Texas was expressly and totally prohibited for the future. Military posts were established over the province; the civil authorities were trampled under foot, and the people of Texas, for a time, were subjected to the capricious tyranny of unrestrained military misrule.

In 1832, Bustamente had established himself upon the ruins of the federal constitution. The colonists now flew to arms. On the 26th of June, with greatly inferior numbers, they besieged and took the fort at Velasco. They then attacked the garrison at Anahuac, and reduced that also. This achievement was shortly followed by the reduction of the garrison at Nacogdoches, and, in December of the same year, upon the suspension of hostilities between Generals Santa Anna and Bustamente, the colonists found themselves once more in the quiet enjoyment of the rights guarantied to them by the constitution and the laws under which they consented to become Mexican citizens.

1833. Texas, now conscious of her integral strength, and anxious to be erected into a seperate State, in conformity with the decree of the 7th of May, 1824, which had promised and secured to her a seperate constitution, so soon as she was in possession of the necessary elements of self-government, assembled a general convention at San Felipe, for the purpose of drafting an instrument suited to the wants and peculiar character and habits of her people. Accordingly, in the spring of the same year, Stephen F. Auston was commissioned to present the constitution agreed upon, with a petition for the fulfilment of the said decree of the 7th of May. The respectful petition of the people of Texas was treated with disdain, and their commissioner incarcerated in a dungeon.

1835. Affairs were now verging to an important crisis. General Antonia Lopez de Santa Anna had openly declared in favor of centralism, which, however specious in its pretences was realy based upon the downfall of the State Governments, and the consolidation of all power, civil and military, in the hands of a single individual. Many of the States had recourse to arms, in support of their sovereignty, and Santa Anna took the field against them. The blood-stained march of the usurper was invariably attended with the most triumphant success. One by one, the States toppled and fell. The Legislature of Coahuila and Texas was dissolved at the point of the bayonet. The noble State of Zacatecas, battling to the last for her liberties and weltering in the life-blood of her butchered citizens, was forced to yield to the relentless terms of the dictator. Mexican liberty fled, and found her only place of refuge among the Anglo Americans of Texas.

Corresponding committees of safety and vigilance were now formed in all the municipalities of the province. With a single voice, they declared for the support of the constitution, and an immediate appeal to arms. There was no alternative left them, and the people of Texas plunged into the contest for the protection of their liberties. On the 28th of September, 1835, they defeated a detachment of Mexicans at Gonzales. On the 9th of October, they stormed and took the strong fortress of Goliad. In the same month, they investigated the city of San Antonia de Bexar. On the 28th, they fought the battle of Conception, and with ninety-two men obtained a signal victory over four hundred Mexican regulars. On the 3d of November, they captured the garrison at Sepantillan. Shortly after, they defeated the enemy at San Patricio. On the 8th, the Mexicans were again discomfited, in the vicinity of San Antonia. On the 26th they were once more routed, with very considerable loss. On the 5th of December, the town of San Antonio was stormed by three hundred Americans, under the gallant Milam, and, after five days' incessant fighting, General Cos was forced to capitulate, and thirteen hundred Mexicans were set at liberty, on their parole of honor "that they would not, in any way, (thereafter,) oppose the re establishment of the federal constitution of 1824." Thus ended the first campaign, and the tri-colored flag of the constitution still continued to wave in Texas—but of all Mexico in Texas alone.

November 3, 1835. In the mean time, the delegates of the people had assembled in "general consultation" at San Felipe de Austin. Their deliberations resulted in a solemn declaration that they had taken up arms in defence of the republican principles of the federal constitution of 1824; that they would continue faithful to the Mexican confederacy, so long as it should be governed by the constitution and laws that were framed for the protection of their political rights; that they were no longer morally or civilly bound by the compact of union, but that, stimulated by the generosiiy and sympathy common to a free people, they offered their support and assistance to such of the members of the confederacy as would take up arms against military despotism. This declaration met with no responce from the interior, and Texas was left alone and single-handed to carry on the war against the forces of the dictator.

Before the dissolution of the "consultation," a provisional government was organized, and the 1st of March, 1836, appointed for the meeting of a new convention.

In the month of Febuary, 1836, General Santa Anna appeared on the river San Antonia, in Texas, at the head of a well-appointed army of eight thousand men. On the 21st he entered the town of San Antonia de Bexar, and the Texan garrison, one hundred and fifty in number, retired within the walls of the Alamo. On the 6th of March, after an incessant bombardment of several days, the Alamo was taken by assault, and Travis, Bowie, and Crockett, with their little band of heroes, were all put to the sword. The Mexican loss before this fort, in killed and wounded, amounted to near fifteen hundred. On the 18th of March, near Goliad, the Texians under Fannin were surrounded and attacked by a much superior force of Mexicans under Urrea, in the middle of an open prairie. The enemy were at first beaten off, but the next morning receiving a strong reinforcement with artillery from Goliad, the Texian troops, being completely hemmed in, and cut off entirely from water, surrendered on condition of being released on parole, and transported to the United states. The terms of the capitulation were shamefully violated, and Fannin and his comrades were treacherously massacred in cold blood.

Notwithstanding the near approach of the Mexican forces, reeking as they were from their recent victories in the interior, and headed by a leader whom they believed to be invincible, the newly elected convention met at Washington at the appointed time, and, in conformity with their instructions, on the 2d day of March, 1836, made a formal and absolute declaration of independence. They then proceeded to frame a constitution, to be submitted to the people of independent Texas for adoption; and, after organizing a Government ad interim, composed of a President, Vice President, and Cabinet, they adjourned in time for many of their number to join the patriot army under General Houston before his meeting with the enemy. On the 21st of April Texian independence was sealed and consecrated by the blood of its enemies on the field of San Jacinto. The Mexican General and President was there met by General Houston, the division he commanded in person totally annihilated, he himself was made prisoner, and became a suppliant for the poor boon of his forfeited life, at the hands of a magnanimous victor. On the 24th of April the shattered remnant of the Mexican army, amounting in all to only four thousand wornout and dispirited wretches, commenced their retreat in the most miserable condition, and were permitted to leave the country with all possible celerity, in accordance with the terms of the armistice agreed upon with their captive leader and his next in command.

It is thus that Texian independence has been achieved; The justice of this Government has proclaimed to the world its acknowledgment of that independence, and its recognition of Texas as one of the sovereignties of the earth. The undersigned feels emboldened by these high reflections, and approaches, with an anxious solicitude, but a just confidence, the proposition to unite the two people under one and the same Government.

Numerous examples of the amalgamation of sovereignties may be found in the history of nations, but force, and not a mutual affection and interest, has been the general inducement to the formation of such bonds, and it is, perhaps, impossible to find in the annals of any age a complete precedent of the one now under discussion. Texas seeks to be annexed, first and foremost, because she is a nation of the same blood with the people of the United States. The history of this country is her history. She claims annexation by the kindred ties of blood, language, institutions; by a common origin, by a common history, and by a common freedom. Her gallant sons were born upon your soil, and they exult in the conviction that the Goliad, San Antonio, Conception, and San Jacinto, they attested the legitimacy of their Anglo-American blood; and, appealing to victories in the cause of liberty, they ask if the single star of Texas is not worthy to be added to the brilliant cluster on their mother flag.

In the short period of two years Texas has revolted, formed a provisional Government, declared her independence, achieved it by the sword, formed and adopted a civil constitution, established a permanent Government, and obtained at the hands of one of the most powerful Governments in the world an acknowledgment of her independence. She has a territory estimated at near two hundred thousand square miles; a population of one hundred thousand, capable of promptly throwing into the field an army of eight thousand strong; & such is the fertility of her soil, and the industry necessary for the support of her population, her exports of cotton will probably this year amount to fifty thousand bales. Her revenue, arising from imposts and taxes under a law of the late Congress, without reference to the income accruing from the sales of the public domain, has been estimated at half a million of dollars. The great extent of her public domain, capable of sustaining a population of ten millions, embracing every variety of soil, and blessed with a climate most propitious for agricultural pursuits, justifies the assertion that Texas is, for her population, a nation of equal resources with any other on the globe. The undersigned, therefore, feels confident that the honorable the Secretary of State will at once perceive that the people of Texas, in assigning their affection for the people of the United States as their principal reason for desiring annexation, are amply provided with all the resources to become of themselves a powerful nation.

Thus, then, it is that Texas, in seeking to place herself among the States of the Union, is prompted mainly by a filial reverence for the constitution and the people of the United States. She has no expectation of an invasion, much less of a reconquest, at the hands of Mexico. The humiliating defeat and capture of General Santa Anna at San Jacinto is too fresh upon the memories of her soldiery to justify the indulgence of any such apprehensions. Nor does she seek annexation as a shield of protection against the interference of European monarchies. Since the recognition of her independence by the Government of this country, she has too much reliance upon the wisdom and the justice of England and France to suppose that either of the crowned heads of those two nations will occupy any other than positions of the most decided neutrality with reference to the difficulties between Mexico and herself; and, should this proposition of annexation not be acceded to by this Government, she confidently expects at the hands of every civilized nation of Europe the honors of a recognition as a preliminary step to the formation of treaties of amity and commerce.

In reviewing the interests of the two republics, involved in this question of annexation, the undersigned cannot concede that the United States encounters an equal sacrifice with the people of Texas. Texas brings to this negotiation not only the resources already recapitulated, but her sovereignty. She brings too, that which in the eyes of the naval Powers of Europe, will constitute the material ground for the formation of the most liberal commercial treaties, viz: her immense forests of live oak, comprising, according to the estimate of President Houston, in his message of the 5th of May, 1837, "four fifths of all that species of Timber now in the world." She brings too, a market for all the various manufactures and for all the agricultural products of the United States, excepting those of cotten and sugar, and these she will contribute from her own soil to swell the already colossal amount of the exports of this nation. The territory, and with it the enterprise of the country will be extended; her political power will be increased, and the undersigned trusts that he will not be considered intrusive in expressing his deep conviction that the Union of these State will be strengthened by the annexation of a people whose proudest impulse are for its continuance and glory.

What advantage the United States brings to this negotiation, the undersigned will not presume to suggest. Her immense resources, her splendid fleets, her power to raise armies, her magnificent government, her unexampled career of prosperity, her incomparable administration of justice; and finally, all her attributes of greatness, are sources of as much congratulation to the people of Texas as they can possibly be to herself. What Texas wishes at the hands of the Government of this Union is simply annexation, an amalgamation of flags; and the undersigned assures the honorable the Secretary of State that this is the solitary advantage which he seeks to gain in this negotiation, but which, he begs leave to say, he hopes to accomplish upon the high principle of a strict adherence to the just rights and dignity of the sovereignty of the Texian nation.

The undersigned will not conceal from the honorable the Secretary of State, his apprehensions that any delay in the conclusion of the treaty of annexation may be fatal to its ultimate accomplishment. Diplomatic relations with foreign Powers are now in the progress of being established, and the result of these interchanges will be commercial treaties, involving difficulties which may be insurmountable in any subsequent arrangement of the question, and, therefore, the undersigned is especially instructed to urge, with as little delay as possible, the immediate discussion and negotiation of a treaty of annexation; Texas is not disposed to yield to any foreign nation the privileges of her coast, involving the command of the Gulf of Mexico, nor can in a treaty of Union. As an independent Power, her interests would conflict with those of the United States, and without annexation, her struggle in the formation of commercial treaties would most naturally be directed to the establishment of the principle of a preference of her cotton and other products in foreign markets over those of the United States, and such relations, when once established, would, it will be at once perceived, very much embarrass if not render totally impracticable, a treaty of annexation.

It is a matter not to be disguised, that Texas must chiefly people her extensive domain from the United States. With a soil better adapted to the cultivation of cotton and sugar than that of this country, and with all the benefits of commercial treaties concentrated upon the advancement of these two interests, she would present herself as a powerful rival to the agriculture of this Union. With the same political institutions, a cheaper soil, and superior advantages to the cotton and sugar planter, she would drain this country of much of its most valuable labor and population, but whether to such an extent as seriously to affect the interest of the United States, the undersigned will not presume to suggest. Texas, too, as an independent nation, must, in the regulation of her land system, present, in the cheapness of her prices, the highest inducements to emigration; and will, no doubt, soon claim the attention of that trans-Atlantic enterprise and capital which now flow into the United States.

The undersigned begs leave most respectfully to suggest to the honorable the Secretary of State, that in the event of Texas remaining in the attitude of an independent Power, there will arise, from the very strict resemblance of the people and the institutions of the two countries, many questions of conflicting interest, the adjustment of which will be most difficult and painful. It would be impossible for the people of Texas to regard those of the United States in the character of foreigners and separated from one another by only an imaginary line. It may fairly be predicted that the local authorities of the two Powers would come into frequent and violent collision. The administration of the law would be interrupted or its penalties evaded; and, in the general entanglement of jurisdictions upon the frontier, it is feared that public justice would not be well sustained. It would be impracticable for either Power to enforce its revenue system, and should the tariffs off the two countries differ essentially, as must be the case, nothing but the enforcement of the most cruel and unpopular laws could possibly secure the just collection of custom-house duties.

The undersigned, in discussing this question, begs to call the attention of the honorable the Secretary of State to the fact, that