

The pronunciamiento in independent Mexico, 1821-1876

A research project at the University of St Andrews

Declaration of the General Council of Provisional Government of Texas to the Mexican People

11 December 1835

San Felipe de Austin, Texas

Content:

Declaration of the General Council of Provisional Government of Texas to the Mexican People, 11 December 1835

1. The people of Texas have taken up arms in defence of their rights and liberties, menaced by attacks of military despotism, and to attain the republican principles of the constitution of 1824. The Mexican nation ought to be fully informed on this subject in order to correct the falsehoods of the centralists who have attempted to calumniate the Texans by giving to the revolution here, a character very different to the true one, and painting it in the blackest colours.
2. Texas has solemnly declared her principles in the declaration of 7th November last, made by its representatives and has God called to witness the sincerity and purity of her intentions. The people of Texas could not have acted in any other manner, and every freeman would have done the same who appreciates his own dignity and who is able to resist slavery.
3. Texas was left without any government, owing to the imprisonment and dispersion of the executive and legislative authorities of the state and by the military centralists, and everything was rapidly falling into anarchy and ruin. It certainly was not the fault of the Texans that this state of things existed. They were living in peace when the revolutionary flame reached their homes; their situation may be compared to a peaceful village that is suddenly assailed by a furious hurricane, which menaces ruin and death, from which the inhabitants seek safety by any means in their power without being in any manner censurable for their impending danger, nor for trying to shield themselves from its effects. The truth is, that a storm which originated elsewhere threatened to involve them in its desolating ravages. They wish to save themselves as they have a right to do, by the law of nature.
4. Faithful to their oaths, they wished to defend the Constitution, and for this, their enemies have declared a war of extermination against them, and are trying to deceive the liberal Mexicans with false reports that their objects are different from those expressed in the before-mentioned declaration. God knows this to be a malicious calumny, circulated for the purpose of consolidating centralism, by trying to unite the federalists in its ranks against their friends, the Texans.
5. Very dearly indeed have the Texans acquired their homes in this country, which but a short time ago was a wilderness infested by hostile Indians. It is just and natural that they should wish to preserve them in conformity with the guarantees of the federal compact under which they were acquired. It is equally so, that they should obey the first law which God has stamped upon the hearts of men, civilised or savage, which is, self-preservation.
6. The Texans have therefore taken up arms in the defence of their constitutional rights, in fulfilment of their duties to the Mexican Confederation, and the most sacred obligations to themselves.

7. They have organised a provisional, local government to provide for their security as a part of the Mexican Confederation, should it again be re-established. Can it be possible that the whole nation will declare war against us because we wish to defend the rights which God has given to man, and which the Mexican Nation has solemnly guaranteed to us? No, it cannot be believed. The free Mexicans are not unjust, and they will take part in our favour.

8. To arms then patriotic Mexicans! The Texans, although a young people, invite and call you to the contest which it is the duty of all to sustain, against the perjured centralists; separate as we have done, from the central government and declare eternal war against it; let us sustain the federal compact, restore the federal system and firmly establish the liberties and happiness of our country. In this great work you will receive assistance from the Texans, so far as their limited resources will permit, as they have offered in the second article of the "Declaration."

The forgoing address, having been read, it was resolved that it be signed by the officers to the council, and that all the members present, and that 500 copies be printed in Spanish and 200 copies in English. When it was signed as follows:

James W. Robinson, Lieut. Gov. and "ex-officio" president to the general council; D.C. Barnett; Claiborne West; Wyatt Hanks; Daniel Parker; James Kerr; L. Ayres; William Menifee; J.D. Clements; Henry Millard; William M. Harris; James Power; Ira Westover; R.R. Royall; E.M. Pease, secretary.

Council Hall of San Felipe de Austin, December 11, 1835.

Extract from the Journal of Proceedings of the General Council, pp141-143.

Memorials of George Fisher, telegraph Office, 1840.

Context:

Following Mexico's independence from Spain, the central government's relation with what became, in 1824, the state of Coahuila-Texas, was nothing short of problematic. An extremely liberal law of colonization dating from 1822, paired with the fact that distance prevented the government from controlling the influx of Anglo-American settlers who came to occupy Texas, resulted in there being nine Americans for every Mexican in the region by 1828. These settlers were not inclined to integrate into Mexican society. The realization that this could result in the loss of Texas to the United States led General Anastasio Bustamante's administration (1830-32) to issue the law of 6 April 1830, which forbade U.S. citizens from emigrating to Texas. It was a law that was impossible to enforce considering the state of communications at the time. In a similar vein, Santa Anna's government declared void a decree passed on 14 March 1835 by the State of Texas and Coahuila, legalizing the colonisation of uncultivated land in the province. The aversion towards the Mexican government felt by most American Texans (who objected to learning Spanish, abiding by Mexican law, becoming Roman Catholics, etc) was further exacerbated by the 1829 abolition of slavery. As long as the 1824 Federal Constitution was in place slavery was allowed to continue under Texan law. However, by June of 1835, it had become evident by the waves of pronunciamientos of support the centralist plans of Orizaba (19 May) and Toluca (29 May) had received, that the move to abolish the 1824 Constitution was gathering momentum. Many Texans started to become restless, aware that a centralist state would tighten the Mexicans' grip over the distant and increasingly U.S.-populated secessionist province with uniform laws and taxes. The fact that the imposition of a centralist state would result in the abolition of slavery in Texas was also a major source of concern, albeit often downplayed in the relevant historiography. Events in the spring of 1835 had also created significant discontent in the region. In tandem with Santa Anna's repression of the federalist factions in Zacatecas, General Martín Perfecto de Cos crushed a federalist rebellion in Monclova, and towards the end of April disbanded Agustín Viesca's state legislature for opposing the Plan of Cuernavaca of 25 May 1834. Before closure, it granted Governor Viesca the authority to relocate the capital, and he did so, moving to San Antonio Béxar. Although his hope was that by doing so, he would have a little more time to defend his federalist state government against the centralist authorities in the ascent, he was captured on 8 June and imprisoned in

Monterrey. With Cos in charge of Coahuila and Texas, a crackdown of federalists and troublemakers such as Lorenzo de Zavala and William B. Travis ensued. On 22 June a pronunciamiento was launched in Austin marking the beginning of what would become the Texan Revolution of independence. As the summer progressed the conflict escalated with Cos intent on quelling the rebellion. On 2 October the Texan forces won the battle of Gonzales and advanced towards San Antonio B́exar which they stormed on 5-9 December. Goliad was captured on 9 October. In the meantime in Mexico City, the 1824 Constitution was formally abolished on 23 October 1835. In the Texan pronunciamiento of 7 November 1835, the Texan rebels made clear that they supported the 1824 charter and would cease to recognize the national government until the federal constitution was restored. In this Declaration of 11 December they reiterated these views, with the significant difference that they did so now in English.

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