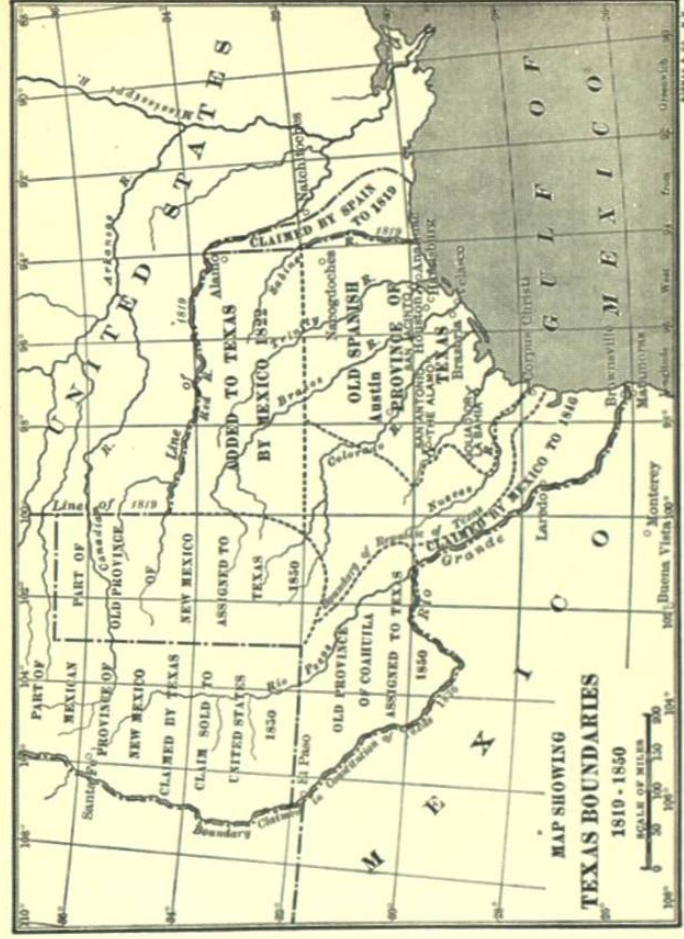


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misgovernment in ways sufficiently serious to move them to join in an attempt for independence. At the same time, the territory had been in a state of more or less ferment all the time.

CHAPTER III BEGINNINGS OF THE TEXAN REVOLUTION



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BEGINNINGS OF THE TEXAN REVOLUTION

LATE in 1829 General Bustamante, then the Vice-President of Mexico, deposed President Guerrero, and on January 1, 1830, took the reins of government. Bustamante was a strong centralizationist and determined to reduce the states of the republic to the level of provinces, ruled by military governors who were devoted to himself. Especially did he desire to curb the restive Texans. On April 6, 1830, the Mexican congress, on the initiative of Secretary of State Alaman, passed a decree, the terms of which were felt by the Texans to be unusually oppressive. It was a measure to raise revenue by import duties and to colonize Texas with Mexicans by making it a penal settlement, giving the convicts the privilege of citizenship when their terms of punishment

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had expired, thus introducing a class of citizens entirely unworthy of civic honors and utterly repugnant to the colonists. Its most drastic and irritating provisions, however, were that it stopped further colonization from the United States and forbade the introduction of slaves into Mexico. In pursuance of this design and to enforce this decree, General Teran, with a considerable body of troops, was sent to Texas for an armed occupation of the territory. Garrisons were established throughout the country and every Mexican military outpost at once became a constant source of irritation to the colonists. The decree was rigorously enforced.

The six-year limit, during which supplies for the colonists, by the terms of the original grants, might be imported free of duty, had now expired. It was determined that Texas thenceforth should make large contributions to the revenues of the necessitous general government. It usually happens that a privilege habitually enjoyed soon becomes regarded as

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a right. The Texans objected to paying duties—as modern travelers do!—but in vain. Texan ports of entry were closed with the exception of Anahuac, over which one Bradburn, a renegade Kentuckian, was made commander. This was an inconvenient port for most colonists, and by threats and appeals they succeeded in having Brazoria reopened.

Bradburn conducted himself in Anahuac with shocking brutality and unwarranted license, going at last so far as to imprison, for alleged insubordination, a number of settlers including William B. Travis, who afterward immortalized himself at the Alamo. Bradburn actually assumed, in May, 1832, to put the whole coast under martial law. To add to the irritation, the legislature of Coahuila-Texas, which was all Mexican, passed certain highly obnoxious laws, granting allotments of territories to Mexicans over the heads of Americans who already occupied the ground under previous concessions.

The situation was rapidly becoming impos-

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sible of continuance. The growing anger of the people, in May, 1832, culminated in the investment of Anahuac and an attack upon Velasco. The latter town was held by Colonel Ugartechea with one hundred and twenty-five men, and it was attacked by one hundred and twelve Texans and a small schooner, the *Brazoria*, commanded by John Austin, a Connecticut Yankee, who was not related to the great Empresario. Although Ugartechea displayed magnificent courage in defense of his charge, the place was stormed, with a loss to the Mexicans of thirty-five killed and fifteen wounded, and to the Texans of seven killed and twenty-seven wounded. Texas had been divided into three military departments, and the commander of the department of Nacogdoches, Colonel Piedras, finally took over Bradburn's command, and, at the demand of the colonists, released Travis and his fellow prisoners. Bradburn fled for his life to the United States, and the siege of Anahuac was raised.

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Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, who was destined to play so great and yet so ignoble a part in the Southwest, now enters the history of Texas. As I have said elsewhere, "this petty 'Napoleon of the West,' as he loved to style himself, was a scoundrel as black-hearted as any that ever schemed himself into power. Born at Jalapa, in Mexico, in 1795, he had been successively a lieutenant-colonel in the Spanish Army, an adherent of and traitor to Iturbide, the *diabolus ex machina* of successive revolutions with different presidents and dictators. In short, he was a sort of subtropic Warwick! He was not without some of the qualities of a soldier, and certainly knew how, again and again, to win the confidence of his countrymen, in spite of their frequent repudiations of him, in his long and eventful career."¹

Santa Anna professed to be the champion of the constitution of 1824, which Bustamante

¹ In my book *American Fights and Fighters—Border*. McClure, Phillips & Co.

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had practically abolished. When the colonists rose in arms, therefore, they seized the opportunity, and in resolutions declared themselves adherents of Santa Anna and the constitution. These resolutions were passed on June 13, 1832, at a place called Turtle Bayou, and are therefore known as the Turtle Bayou Resolutions. When Santa Anna's commissioner, Mexia, reached the country, this proclamation stood the colonists in good stead. Santa Anna was fighting for supremacy and wanted help; he was more than gratified at the position of the Texans. The struggle between him and Bustamante also affected the Texans favorably in that the troops of Teran, with the exception of Piedras' command at Nacogdoches, declared in favor of Santa Anna and withdrew from Texas to participate in the struggle in Mexico. Piedras' troops finally deposed him, handed him over to the Texans, and marched to join Santa Anna, thus leaving no Mexican troops in Texas.

The opportunity was too good to be neg-

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lected. A convention to consider local affairs was called on August 22, 1832, and met at San Felipe de Austin on the first of October following. Fifty delegates were present, and Austin was elected President. Austin represented the conservatives and those who were called the Peace Party. His principal antagonist was William H. Wharton, who represented the War Party. Austin's influence, however, was paramount, and the measures proposed by him were carried. The convention repudiated the idea that Texas was seeking independence from Mexico; petitioned for the recall of the decree of 1830, which forbade immigration; asked for free trade for three more years, and finally requested a separate state government for Texas.

The struggle between Santa Anna and Bustamante had been terminated by mutual agreement and the temporary election of General Pedraza as President of the Mexican Republic. This was substantially a victory for Santa Anna, and when the time for the

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regular election arrived he was made President of the Republic on January 19, 1833. The Texans, believing that Santa Anna represented what he professed, now called a second convention which met on the first of April, 1833, and drafted a state constitution. The chairman of the committee on the constitution was Samuel Houston.

As indicating the changed spirit of the people at this time, Wharton, representing the former War Party, was made president of the convention. Austin, who was the best bred, best educated and most influential man in the colonies, and the only one probably who could speak Spanish with fluency and facility, was appointed chairman of a committee to go to the City of Mexico and lay the constitution before Santa Anna and the Mexican congress—which the new President was expected to reestablish in its proper relation to the government—for ratification. The only one of the committee who went to the capital was Austin. He tried for six months to get

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Santa Anna or the congress to take action, but without success. In December, 1833, he wrote home that he had met with no success and advised Texans to meet and establish the constitution on their own account.

This letter, unfortunately, fell into the hands of Vice-President Farias, who was acting as President during a temporary and voluntary withdrawal of Santa Anna from the seat of government. Austin, who had started on his return to Texas, was pursued and arrested at Saltillo, and then taken back to the City of Mexico and placed in close confinement. He was actually imprisoned in a dungeon of the ex-Inquisition for three months, without being allowed to communicate with any one, and was even denied the use of books and writing materials. He was then imprisoned for nine months in the state prison, and thereafter detained for one year in Mexico under bail of three hundred thousand dollars. During these imprisonments he with difficulty survived an attack of cholera. Austin was finally

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released under a general amnesty act, and at once set out for Texas, his petition, of course, having been refused.

Austin reached the mouth of the Brazos on the first of August, 1835, in the schooner *San Felipe* from New Orleans. The Mexican armed schooner *Correo*, commanded by one Thompson, an Englishman in the service of Mexico, at that time was cruising off the mouth of the river. Thompson had already made himself thoroughly obnoxious to the colonists, and now fired on the *San Felipe*. Captain Hurd, of the American vessel, who had armed his crew and passengers with muskets, opened fire on the *Correo* and drove from the decks the crew, with the exception of Thompson, who put up his helm and ran off. Austin having landed, a little steamboat called the *Laura*, which was coming out from Quintana, was impressed and directed to tow the *San Felipe* after the *Correo*. The *Correo* having been becalmed, the *San Felipe* was hauled alongside of her and the Mexican

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schooner captured. Thompson was sent to New Orleans to be tried for piracy.

It has been affirmed¹ that during Austin's detention in Mexico Anthony Butler, the United States Minister to Mexico, who was associated with a powerful land company of Americans and English, also tried to get a territorial government established in Texas, but for purposes with which the majority of the colonists could not be in sympathy. If this had been brought about, the Mexican government would naturally have controlled all the vacant land, placing it at the disposal of congress. The company referred to had proposed to purchase this land and Butler had been instructed to offer as much as ten million dollars for it, with the understanding that no previous titles to any portion of it should be respected, except those of Austin and his colonists. This, if carried out, would arbi-

¹ Private Papers of Anthony Butler, quoted by Colonel Guy M. Bryan in *A Comprehensive History of Texas*, vol. i, p. 500. I give the story for what it is worth. It certainly seems somewhat improbable on several counts.

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trarily and unjustly have dispossessed the majority of the colonists who in good faith had settled in Texas. It was further to be understood between the contracting parties that, on the final payment of this sum of money, the Texan territory was to be ceded to the United States, and when the United States took possession all land except that of Austin and his colonists should remain in possession of the said company.

Austin opposed the creation of a territorial government on this basis. Although his own colonists were to be exempt from any ill consequences, he knew that cruel injustice would result to colonists who had been brought in by other empresarios, and he managed through his influence to defeat the bill. It is alleged that he was offered one million dollars for his interest in Texas if he would withdraw his opposition. The offer was indignantly refused.

The United States had been most anxious to acquire the territory between the Sabine and the Rio Grande. On the 15th of March

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1827, through the American Minister, Joel R. Poinsett, it had offered Mexico one million dollars for it. Mexico promptly refused the offer and insisted upon the limits of the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1819 before entering into any relation whatever with the United States. In 1829 this formal offer had been increased to five million dollars, and subsequently ten millions was proposed as a loan, with Texas as security. All this time Butler, under the explicit directions of Andrew Jackson, was openly working for the purchase.

Austin's return had been awaited with the greatest interest by the colonists. It is probable that, had they not feared to endanger his life while he was imprisoned in Mexico, they would long since have broken out in open rebellion. Indeed, in 1835, the irrepressible Travis had actually expelled by force the new garrison of Anahuac, commanded by one Tenorio. On arrival home, Austin was immediately invited to address the citizens of Texas at Brazoria. There, on September 13th, he

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reported the result of his negotiations. He described the treatment he had received; disclosed what he had been able to discern of the intentions of the Mexican government; advised the Texans, through regularly appointed deputies, to meet in consultation at some central point and decide upon a course of action; and that meanwhile a state military force be organized, equipped and placed in the field ready for action. In his impressive address at Brazoria Austin used these significant words: "War is our only recourse. There is no other. We must defend our rights, ourselves, and our country by force of arms."

It was Santa Anna's purpose, so far as anybody could discover it, to abrogate the Constitution of 1824, whose protector he had formerly posed to be; to make himself Dictator and reduce the states to the level of dependencies, which were to be held under military garrisons commanded by creatures of his own. His program differed from that of Bustamante, whom he had supplanted,

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only in being more drastic. The only local government then in Texas was that of Coahuila, which was busily engaged in selling Texan land to irresponsible parties at two cents per acre—notwithstanding the existing grants and colonists in actual possession. At the same time nothing was being done for the protection of Texas from the Indians, nor for its educational development.

There had been a bitter struggle going on for some time between Saltillo and Monclova as to which should be the capital of Coahuila-Texas. In this contest Texas had little interest and took no part, although in its final settlement she suffered greatly. Santa Anna, taking advantage of the dissension, despatched a force under General Cos, his brother-in-law, to regulate matters. The legislature of Coahuila was promptly abolished and Viesca, the governor, was imprisoned. This left Texas without even the semblance of a state government. It was the first step in Santa Anna's plan for the establishment of military

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satrapies. The colonists at once organized committees of safety and enrolled themselves into companies to withstand the Indians, who were becoming bold and troublesome. The whole state was in a condition of unrest, and even of ferment.

Santa Anna's reply to the Texans was prompt. About the middle of September General Cos landed at Corpus Christi and marched to Bexar with five hundred troops. Affairs moved rapidly. A decree had been promulgated by the Mexican Dictator, requiring the immediate disarmament of Texas. To take their rifles away from men who lived largely by hunting, and whose sole defense against the Indians lay in their weapons, was to ask them to commit suicide. The Texans refused positively to give up their guns. The Mexicans were determined. By direction of Cos, Colonel Ugartechea sent a demand to the people of the settlement of Gonzales for the immediate surrender of a six-pounder cannon, which had been given them by the authorities

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at Bexar to fight Indians with. The Texans replied to the Mexicans as Leonidas did to a similar request from the Persians. If Ugartechea wanted the cannon he must come and take it. Ugartechea thereupon sent a troop of cavalry to take it by force.

On the second of October, at four o'clock in the morning, these soldiers, numbering perhaps a hundred, were attacked by one hundred and sixty-eight Texans, under the command of John H. Moore, who had become famous for his skill in fighting the Indians. The battle was a mere skirmish. The Texans fired and charged. The Mexicans fired and fled. The Texan loss was nothing, and the Mexicans had a small number killed. The war of independence had begun. Singularly enough, it was precipitated exactly as the war of independence in the United States had been, by an effort to seize munitions of war in the possession of colonists. The skirmish at Gonzales was to Texas what the skirmish at Lexington was to the United States.

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The news of the Gonzales affair spread rapidly throughout western Texas. The first blow had been struck, and enthusiastic bodies of men at once repaired to the seat of war. The several military companies already assembled under command of Colonel Moore, and those other companies which joined them, established a sort of military council, consisting of one representative from each company, somewhat as the Greeks did before Marathon! On the 11th of October, this council elected Stephen F. Austin commander-in-chief of the Texan forces.

Before this election the fort at Goliad, sometimes called La Bahia, had been seized by a handful of Texans under Captain Chillingworth, with whom Benjamin R. Milam was associated as a volunteer. This capture was very fortunate, as it put the Texans in possession of three hundred stand of arms and valuable military supplies worth at least ten thousand dollars.

Austin, although he was a sick man, and in

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no condition to stand the fatigues of a campaign, at once assumed command, despatched parties in various directions to seize different points held by Mexicans, and with a constantly increasing army numbering now about three hundred and fifty, moved eastward toward San Antonio de Bexar, where General Cos had his headquarters. On the 27th of October, Austin despatched Colonel James Bowie and Captain J. W. Fannin with ninety-eight men to select a suitable spot for a permanent camp whence he could prosecute his operations against San Antonio.

James Bowie was a Georgian, who has become famous as the inventor of the terrible knife which bears his name. He had acquired great notoriety from a duel fought with Major Norris Wright, on a Mississippi sand-bar, where the seconds and spectators became involved in a general mêlée, in the course of which Bowie killed his antagonist with a weapon made from a large file. Bowie himself was desperately wounded, as were other

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participants in the fight, and a second man was killed. After the battle, a blacksmith, or cutler, shaped this sanguinary file into the weapon which became known as the Bowie knife. Shortly after this duel, Bowie came to Texas. Yoakum, in his *History of Texas*, thus describes him:

"He was about six feet high, of fair complexion, with small blue eyes, not fleshy, but well-proportioned; he stood quite erect, and had a rather fierce look; was not quarrelsome but mild and quiet, even at the moment of action. He was quite sociable, and somewhat disposed to intemperance, but never drunk. He had a wonderful art in winning people to him, and was extremely prodigal of his money. His muscular power was as great as his daring; his brother says he had been known to rope and ride alligators! His great speculation was in purchasing negroes from Lafitte and smuggling them into Louisiana. This is the most unpleasant feature in his history. He had married a daughter of Veramendi, and under his auspices went to Saltillo to establish a cotton and woolen manufactory. With this view, the legislature naturalized him, and granted him a charter."

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J. W. Fannin was an enthusiastic young man, and likewise came from Georgia, of which he was a native. He had gone to Texas in 1834, seeking his fortune, and at the outbreak of the war had proffered his services to assist Texas in gaining her independence.

The detachment commanded by Bowie and Fannin was attacked by a force of four hundred men at Concepcion, an old Mission station a mile and a half south of San Antonio. The fighting was close and severe. The Mexicans were overwhelmingly defeated with a loss of sixty-eight killed, including many officers, and a large number of wounded. The Texan loss was small. Austin and the main body of his army thereafter occupied Concepcion and the siege of San Antonio was prosecuted, but in a desultory fashion—such bodies of troops not being well adapted to sustained investments of fortified positions.

Austin's suggestion at Brazoria that there should be a consultation as to the future of Texas had met with a prompt response.

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Elections had been held in the several municipalities and a meeting had been appointed for the middle of October at San Felipe de Austin, which at that time was regarded as the natural capital of Texas. There were three political parties in Texas. The War Party was resolved on an appeal to arms which it was hoped would bring about independence. A second party, known as the Submission Party, was for peace at any price. The third party advocated consultation before taking any active measures, and, having right on their side in this crisis, had carried the day.

The delegates assembled on the 1st of November. A quorum not being present, the meeting was adjourned until a sufficient number of delegates appeared. On the 3rd of November the consultation organized with fifty members representing thirteen municipalities—another parallel to the thirteen original colonies of the United States!

Branch T. Archer was elected president of the consultation, which, on the 7th of Novem-

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ber, proceeded to declare the formal adherence of Texas to the Mexican Constitution of 1824. There was a bitter struggle between the War Party and the two others over this point, in which the War Party was overwhelmingly defeated. The Texans were preparing to fight; they were in fact actually engaged in warfare against the country of which they were a part and in which, like Louis XIV, Santa Anna was the state; but like their American prototypes, they were not at that time contemplating, at least officially, severance from the Mexican Republic—so called. The causes of their action are succinctly set forth in the following declaration:

“Whereas, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and other military chieftains have, by force of arms, overthrown the federal institutions of Mexico, and dissolved the social compact which existed between Texas and the other members of the Mexican Confederacy, now the good people of Texas, availing themselves of their natural rights, solemnly declare:

“1. That they have taken up arms in defense of

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their rights and liberties, which were threatened by the encroachments of military despots, and in defense of the republican principle of the Federal Constitution of Mexico of eighteen hundred and twenty-four.

" 2. That Texas is no longer, morally or civilly, bound by the Compact of Union; yet, stimulated by the generosity and sympathy common to a free people, they offer their support and assistance to such members of the Mexican Confederacy as will take up arms against military despotism.

" 3. That they do not acknowledge that the present authorities of the nominal Mexican Republic have the right to govern within the limits of Texas.

" 4. That they will not cease to carry on war against the said authorities while their troops are within the limits of Texas.

" 5. That they hold it to be their right, during the disorganization of the Federal system and the reign of despotism, to withdraw from the Union, to establish an independent government, or to adopt such measures as they may deem best calculated to protect their rights and liberties; but that they will continue faithful to the Mexican government so long as that nation is governed by the Constitution and laws, which were formed for the government of the Political Association.

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" 6. That Texas is responsible for the expenses of her armies now in the field.

" 7. That the public faith of Texas is pledged for the payment of any debts contracted by her agents.

" 8. That she will reward by donations of land all who may volunteer their services in her present struggle, and receive them as citizens.

" These declarations we solemnly avow to the world, and call God to witness their truth and sincerity; and invoke defeat and disgrace upon our heads should we prove guilty of duplicity."¹

The Texans proceeded further. On the 13th they passed a decree establishing a local state government. H. W. Smith was elected governor and Messrs. Archer, Wharton and Austin were appointed commissioners to the United States. Austin would have been elected governor, had it not been felt that he could do the state better service in the United States on account of his ability, reputation, and wide acquaintance.

¹ Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas, by Alfred M. Williams.

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Sam Houston was elected commander-in-chief of the armies. The consultation then adjourned, to meet in Washington, Texas, on the 1st of March, 1836. The consultation had accomplished much more than had been expected. It had laid the foundation of a government and had begun a revolution.

CHAPTER IV

GENERAL SAM HOUSTON