

“Observations on the Treaty of Guadalupe”

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OBJECT OF THE FOREGOING REVIEW OF EVENTS

These are, gentlemen, the most important facts to be borne in mind concerning this grave question, facts which I have felt an urgent necessity to record, along with certain obvious commentaries, in order to make palpable the justice of our cause. From this recital we conclude that the conduct of the government of the United States, in the affairs relating to Texas, has been an uninterrupted series of aggressions against us. Having failed in obtaining the objects of its constant attacks, this government has affronted the world by presenting itself as the aggrieved one while, after having violated our territory, it has spilled the blood of our compatriots over it and at the same time has openly declared war on us for not patiently allowing ourselves to be despoiled according to its desires. With all the right on our side, I cannot see by what justification this government comes to us giving us as a condition for the reestablishment of the peace which it itself had shattered the ceding of more than eighty-one thousand square leagues of our territory, the renunciation of our northern frontier from sea to sea, and all for the measly sum of 18,250,000 pesos, when those lands should be worth at least from 450,000,000 to 500,000,000 pesos. The debt which this government claims from us, according to its annual message of '46, amounts to 6,291,604.71 pesos, of which 2,026,139 have been liquidated, which is the beginning of a settlement. That there still is an amount which remains to be paid is more the fault of the administration of the United States than ours. This sum from the 6,000,000 has been reduced to 3,250,000 pesos, which have to be discounted from the 18,250,000 pesos owed to us for half of our territory, and thus we will only see a remnant of 15,000,000, which stands for the price of the purchase they propose to make of our brothers who live in the frontier region. The purport of it all is that the difference between the indicated 18,250,000 pesos and the 500,000,000 which, at the very least, the lands are worth, should be considered applicable to the war expenses that are being charged to us, although this is not being said to us in a definitive manner.

President Polk in his message of last December caviled about the nonacquisition of territory,

because he said that if we did not accept the indemnity, we could not give satisfaction in any other way, and that this amounted to a proclamation that his republic had declared war on us unjustly. But can we not with a more powerful reason object to the injustice on his side? To agree to an indemnity on his terms would make us appear to be settling for an accounting more severe and censorious than he asks from his own nation, because we would not only be renouncing the expenses we have had and the damages we have suffered, thus implicitly accepting the figments he puts forth for a case, but we would also be paying reparations for all the damages that his country has sustained, which is infinitely worse than the former. I declare that this would degrade the national character. And to accede to the second aspect which this opprobrious treaty demands—would this not amount to covering with slime a nation such as ours, which, in the face of all kinds of provocation, has refused to be provoked into combat and finally offered resistance only in order to defend its territory, something which was not understood by the province [Texas] which was the source of this disastrous war? And so we are not only supposed to remain silent while our unjust neighbors make off with the lands which they had at first selected for themselves, but we must also pay them for coming and taking them and others as well, and finally we are expected to confess that they had a right to all of this. Oh, no! A nation which understands the extent of the sacrifice that is being demanded of it in this way prefers to perish in face of the demand. It will adopt the extremes of heroic resolve before it will consent to such disgrace and such opprobrium.

RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY WOULD BE THE POLITICAL DEATH OF THE REPUBLIC

Nevertheless, insensible to everything, our national government has entered into those negotiations which are so humiliating to us, thus committing us to grave imputations of perfidy if we should reject the treaty, which we should surely do. This government has demonstrated its misunderstanding of the nature of the institutions by which we live and has thereby brought things to the embarrassing impasse which now confronts us. The result is that we are unable to disapprove a shameful; treaty without rendering our country almost defenseless against the disasters of a war which has been so

disadvantageous to us because the government has not prepared the country to resist and to continue the war to a successful end. Ultimately, the very nationhood of the republic will be undermined. Now is our last chance to sustain it. Otherwise, it will disappear within ten or fifteen years with the loss of the rest of the national territory, without there being either the means or the sense of national glory with which to resist.

The truth is that in order to blunt the force of this last consideration, to calm the just fears of those who see in these negotiations the funeral of our political existence and a melancholy future for our people in the territory which they have inherited from their fathers, we must teach the necessity of bracing up our courage. The social advantages which would accrue to us by accepting a peace now have been exaggerated, as well as the ease with which we would be able to maintain our remaining territories. It would be necessary, in order to sustain such illusions, to underestimate the spirit of enterprise of the North American people in industrial and commercial pursuits, to misunderstand their history and their tendencies, and also to presuppose in our own spirit less resistance than we have already shown toward the sincere friends of progress. Only through such illusions might one maintain that the treaty would bring a change that would be advantageous to us—as has been claimed. With the borders of our conquerors brought closer to the heart of our nation, with the whole line of the frontier occupied by them from sea to sea, with their highly developed merchant marine, and with them so versed in the system of colonization by which they attract great numbers of the laboring classes from the old world, what can we, who are so backward in everything, do to arrest them in their rapid conquests, their latest invasions? Thousands of men will come daily to establish themselves under American auspices in the new territories with which we will have obliged them. There they will develop their commerce and stockpile large quantities of merchandise brought from the upper states. They will inundate us with all this, and our own modicum of wealth, already so miserable and depleted, will in the future sink to insignificance and nothingness. We will not accomplish anything by lowering our maritime duties, abolishing our internal customs houses, or suppressing our restrictive laws. The Anglo Americans, now situated so close to our populated provinces, will provide these areas with the marvels of the world, passing them from the frontier zones to

our southern states, and having withal the advantage over us of attracting our own merchants as well as our consumers, who will favor these foreigners because of the low prices at which they will be able to buy American goods. This will be the situation because, even if we limit ourselves to imposing only a 20 percent duty on goods brought through our ports, which might well be very difficult for us to do, we will never be able to make our markets competitive with those of the North American importers, who will be able to sell much cheaper because they will have paid very little or no duty on goods which they have slipped through the border. The drawback [reimbursement of customs duties] alone, well known in that republic, is enough to give them an advantage that will finish off our frontier and maritime customs. Meanwhile, we do not even have the resources necessary to maintain our frontier border area.

And what defense would be sufficient, given the fact that we do not have enough troops to guard such an extensive frontier, to prevent fraudulent crossings? Imagine what contentions will arise with the other side, what quarrels and disputes with the brazen smugglers of that republic, what continual claims and demands for indemnity, which will finally amount to such immense sums that they will provide a pretext for the threat of another war, and we will end by yielding, without resistance, the rest of our territory! Why have we so soon forgotten what happened to us in New Mexico, the Californias, and Chihuahua, where large armed bands, sometimes supplied with artillery pieces, continually trespassed into our territory in order to bring in merchandise without paying any duty or submitting to our laws and regulations? Do we think perhaps that the same things will not happen again in those regions because our neighbors have brought their frontiers closer? Gentlemen, what is proposed to us in this fatal treaty amounts to a sentence of death, and I wonder that there could have been Mexicans who would have negotiated it and subscribed to it, thinking all the while that it would be a boon to our unfortunate country. This circumstance alone dismays me and makes me despair of the life of the republic.

Now, as to colonizing, which is another of the most efficient expedients that we ought to pursue in order to gain some stability and strength, how will we be able to oppose the

rapid development of the United States, which, due to this type of colonization, has prodigiously expanded its population? This growth, in turn, has fueled the avidity for new lands that consumes that country and the spirit of conquest which animates it. With less than 4 million inhabitants at the time it gained its independence from Great Britain, the United States has increased its population to 20 million in the short space of seventy-four years through that system which it has so well understood and known how to apply to its special circumstances. The rate of increase of our population has been set at 1.8 percent annually, according to the calculations of our National Institute of Geography and Physics, confirmed by the reckonings of Baron von Humboldt. However, despite these projections, we have not even achieved that modest rate of growth, if the recent figures of that same institute are to be credited, because there has not been the doubling of the population over a period of forty years that had been predicted. During twenty-six years of that period, years that have been arbiters of our fate, we could have been able to and should have promoted the immigration of European families in order to establish them in the immense deserts of our northern frontier and thus assure by their presence our possession of that region against the mounting invasions of our ambitious neighbors. But, limited as we have been in our methods of development to what we learned during the colonial regime, we have not wanted to go beyond them and create wide opportunities for those who wanted to speculate in large colonizing enterprises, nor have we understood the advantages of such ventures or given the kind of assiduous and constant attention to them that such important enterprises demand. Far from having followed the example of the United States in interesting people in the large profits to be made in land development, we have turned to other, completely ruinous means to conjure up colossal fortunes, which on the one hand depleted the national store of wealth and on the other diverted capital that could have been used for colonizing. Had it not been for our squandering this money, it would have flowed into those enterprises in which the profit of the individual coincides with the vital interests of the nation. But the time will soon pass when we will be able to arrange things to our own advantage by studying North American legislative actions, the only measures in these parts that are applicable to us and that could reveal to us ways in which to exploit the immense treasures of the frontier region, and to make us feared and respected in the universe.

Once having approved the treaty, however, it will no longer be possible for us to take advantage of those important initiatives that might be indicated to us. It will be difficult enough for us to overcome the resistance, the petty and ruinous ideas that even those men who pass for the most eminent in the party—that party which calls itself the party of the intelligentsia—have placed in opposition to the friends of progress. But how much more difficult will it be for us to overcome the obstacles to our prosperity that face us in the form of the United States, in both its policy and its preponderance of resources, if that country is to take possession of our most precious lands?

The United States has a well-established reputation in the Old World for hospitality as well as a knowledge of how to deal with prospective immigrants, all of which we totally lack. In addition, it has a merchant marine which competes with that of Great Britain and has all kinds of facilities for transporting to the United States the excess population of a populous Europe. What methods can we adopt to divert to our side even a part of this immigration, to overcome the preference that is given to the United States because of the exalted idea of its civilization and wealth which obtains abroad? With the very fertile lands that the United States will be taking from us, with climates milder than any which they have possessed up until now, with brilliant port facilities for maritime commerce such as are offered by that inestimable jewel, Upper California, the United States will cause Europe to empty out, gentlemen, and the European immigrants will amalgamate with the present population of the United States and will take the lead in establishing themselves over us. Our race then, our poor people, will have to become nomadic, searching for hospitality in foreign lands, only to be ejected later to still other places. As almost all of us are descended from Indians, the North American people abominate us, their orators depreciating us even while recognizing the justice of our cause. Since they consider us unworthy of forming with them a single nation or society, they have manifested clearly that in their future conquests they will strip us of our land and thrust us aside. Has their conduct, in fact, been any other in their treatment of the Indian tribes, former owners of the land which now belongs to those same United States?