

In particular, he stood alone in opposing the policy of annexing Texas. However, he and President Tyler parted with mutual and evidently sincere expressions of confidence and good-will.

## CHAPTER XXI

### EFFORTS AT MEDIATION

GENERAL HOUSTON, as we have seen, had begun his second term as President of Texas in December, 1841, and had immediately reversed the policy of his predecessor in regard to finance. He had also adopted a foreign policy which was in many respects different, for Houston was a man who believed in the gods of things as they are, and he clearly perceived the utter inability of Texas to maintain itself permanently in its detached condition. Indeed, he went so far as habitually to exaggerate the possibility of Mexican invasion. His first desire had been for annexation to the United States; but he was quite prepared, when that seemed to be impracticable, to adopt any other measure which might put Texas in a position to exist and prosper. The only other measure which could give Texas the security she so sorely needed was peace with Mexico. The policy of President Lamar, as has been seen, was strongly against annexation, and it had also been generally aggressive; but some ineffectual efforts had been made to bring about peace, both by means of direct negotiation with Mexico and through the good offices of the United States and other foreign nations. And in order to get a clear apprehension of the problems with which Texas was faced at the end of the year 1841 it is necessary to go back for a period of nearly three years and examine into what had been attempted in that regard.

The first serious effort to open negotiations, after the repudiation of the agreements made with Santa Anna while he remained a prisoner in Texas, was in the spring of 1839. About that time President Lamar received a curiously distorted report that Santa Anna had placed himself at the



head of the Federal party, and was likely to succeed in carrying out their plans. The fact, of course, was exactly the reverse; but the erroneous rumor led the Texan government to think that this might be an opportune moment for trying to get Santa Anna to carry out the promises he had made in Texas some three years before. Accordingly, Colonel Barnard E. Bee was sent to Vera Cruz, where he arrived on the eighth of May, 1839. He was there notified that if he had no other object in coming to Mexico than that of soliciting the recognition of the independence of Texas he must depart at once, which he did, after publishing a sort of manifesto, in which he reviewed Santa Anna's promises and treaties, and asserted that Santa Anna had *not* acted in Texas under duress. The official newspaper in Mexico printed this statement of Bee's as a conclusive proof of the patriotism of the hero of Tampico and Vera Cruz!<sup>1</sup>

The British government, at about the same time, was quite independently expressing its willingness to mediate between Mexico and Texas, although the independence of the latter had not yet been fully recognized. In the same month of May, 1839, Pakenham, the British minister in Mexico (who had just returned from a visit to England on leave), had an interview with Gorostiza—at that time Minister of Foreign Relations—which was fully reported to the British Foreign Office. In pursuance of verbal instructions from Lord Palmerston, Pakenham had urged upon Gorostiza the importance of a prompt negotiation for Texan independence, laying stress upon the advantages to Mexico of a buffer state between it and the United States, and, according to Pakenham, Gorostiza said frankly that although he agreed perfectly as to the importance of such an arrangement the Mexican government dared not risk so unpopular an act, but hinted that a suggestion from England for a suspension of hostilities might prove advisable. He also said that Mexico would never consent to the Rio Grande as the boundary, and that if a boundary were ever fixed "it would

<sup>1</sup> *México á través de los Siglos*, IV, 442. Bee's own account of his mission will be found in *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 432-456.

be desirable to have it guaranteed by some powerful European government"; but Pakenham assured him that no European power would be willing to undertake that responsibility. And Pakenham summed up the result of his interview with Gorostiza by the statement that "reconquest is admitted to be impossible, and yet a feeling of mistaken pride, foolishly called regard for the National honour, deters the [Mexican] Government from putting an end to a state of things highly prejudicial to the interests of Texas and attended with no sort of an advantage to this Country."<sup>1</sup>

Pakenham's efforts were approved by Palmerston, who wrote to him at length, nearly a year later, arguing the impossibility of a reconquest of Texas and expressing the opinion that Mexico would do better to exert her energy in rendering productive other portions of her vast and undeveloped territory. Palmerston also argued that Texas ought to be recognized by Mexico at once, since otherwise the Texan people "might throw themselves upon the United States for assistance, and their final incorporation with the Union might be a consequence of temporary co-operation."<sup>2</sup>

Long before these instructions reached Mexico Gorostiza had been succeeded in the Mexican Foreign Office by Cañedo, who, as Pakenham reported, acknowledged the strength of the British arguments, and expressed himself as ready to take the risk of accepting the British offer of mediation if his colleagues would support him; but he asked Pakenham not to press the matter until the new ministry had become more firmly established.<sup>3</sup>

While these conversations were going on in Mexico, Bee,

<sup>1</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, June 3, 1839; E. D. Adams, *British Interests and Activities in Texas*, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Palmerston to Pakenham, April 25, 1840; *ibid.*, 30.

<sup>3</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, Sept. 12, 1839; *ibid.*, 32. Between April, 1837, and March, 1839, there were twelve changes in the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Relations. The entire cabinet was renewed on July 27, 1839.—(Bancroft, *History of Mexico*, V, 217, note.) Cañedo was always personally of the opinion that it would be far better for Mexico to give up the idea of conquering Texas. He wrote a long article to this effect, which was published in Mexico on January 15, 1844, in the *Revista Económica*, etc. A copy of this article was sent to the State Department in Washington, shortly after its publication, by the American minister in Mexico, and is filed with the despatches.



the Texan agent sent to Vera Cruz, had returned to New Orleans, and had got into communication with a certain Juan Vitalba, who represented himself to be a secret agent of the Mexican government. Bee seems to have been very much such a person as James Hamilton, and he wrote to Texas that, no matter who was at the head of the Mexican government, it could only be approached in one way.

"The truth is," he said, "the officers of Gov't are only waiting for their *fee* to commence operations. I was aware of this at Vera Cruz but I was solicitous of breaking ground without it—fully sensible however that as I progressed the way would have to be paved with gold. The Presidents best plan is to make up his mind to this at once. . . . My impression is that he will have to spend from Five Hundred thous'd to a million in this way."<sup>1</sup>

A few days later he wrote that what was needed was to assure the Mexican agents that "we will not be wanting in making them ample compensation." "I wish," he added, "to give the Individual here a *doceur*, and I am desirous of sending an officer of their Gov't a handsome carriage from this place."<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime James Hamilton, who had just then been appointed financial agent to place the Texan bonds, was taking a hand in the business. On May 20, 1839, he had an interview with Fox, the British minister in Washington, and later sent him a statement "in relation to the advantages which might result to Great Britain from the mediatorial offices of Her Britanic Majesty's Minister Mr. Pakenham at Mexico." Fox promised to write, in due course, to Pakenham and Lord Palmerston.<sup>3</sup> At the same time Hamilton was in communication with Poinsett, then Secretary of War, and induced him to talk with

<sup>1</sup> Bee to Webb, July 9, 1839; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 460.

<sup>2</sup> Same to same, July 9, 1839; *ibid.*, 463. That Lamar was not at all averse to bribery appears from a letter in which he authorized the expenditure of not more than fifty thousand dollars "as secret service Money in procuring the recognition of Texas."—(Burnet to Hamilton, Aug. 19, 1839; *ibid.*, 873.)

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton to Fox, May 20, 1839; Fox to Hamilton, May 22, 1839; *ibid.*, 867-871.

Martinez, the Mexican minister in Washington.<sup>1</sup> Late in the year Hamilton went to Texas, and on his way, at New Orleans, he wrote direct to Pakenham, who replied that he had not heard from Fox, but had received instructions from Lord Palmerston to tender the good offices of her Majesty's government toward effecting an arrangement between Mexico and Texas. He regretted to say that all his exertions to induce the Mexican government to entertain the question of recognition had proved unavailing.

"Not," he wrote, "but that the more enlightened Members of the present Administration appear to understand that to continue the contest with Texas would be worse than useless, but there is no man among them bold enough to confront the popular opinion, or, I should rather say the popular prejudice upon this point, which is strongly pronounced against any accommodation with Texas. Besides which they fear, and not without reason, that, for the sake of Party objects, an attempt would dishonestly be made to crush by the unpopularity which would, very certainly, attend such a measure, any Government which should be bold enough to advocate the policy of alienating what is still talked of as a part of the National Territory. . . . You are, I dare say, sufficiently acquainted with the Spanish character to understand how untractable they, and their descendants likewise, are in matters affecting their pride and what they are pleased to call their National honor."<sup>2</sup>

Before this letter was written the indefatigable Hamilton had informed the Texan administration that there was a gentleman in New York named Treat, a cordial friend of Texas, who had been many years in Mexico, and was intimately acquainted with Santa Anna, and who corresponded with a close friend of the Mexican President. Treat, said Hamilton, had received several letters in which this friend represented that he was amply empowered by Santa Anna to conclude the secret articles of a pacification; and Hamilton hoped that Treat might be induced to go to New Orleans to see what could be done.<sup>3</sup> Treat's correspondent seems to

<sup>1</sup> Poinsett to Hamilton, May 31, 1839; *ibid.*, 452.

<sup>2</sup> Pakenham to Hamilton, Dec. 12, 1839; *ibid.*, 879.

<sup>3</sup> Hamilton to Lamar, June 22, 1839; *ibid.*, 450.



have been the same Vitalba who was trying to get money out of Bee in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup>

Treat went to New Orleans, and from there to Texas, and on August 9, 1839, was appointed "a Private and Confidential Agent for the Government of Texas for the purpose of ascertaining the disposition of the Government of Mexico in regard to a negotiation of a peace between the two Nations, and if practicable to prepare the initiatory arrangements for such a negotiation." Recognition of Texas and the Rio Grande as the boundary were to be indispensable conditions, but Texas was willing to pay Mexico a sum not exceeding five million dollars as a compensation for her relinquishment for all claims, public and private, to the territory within these limits.<sup>2</sup>

The Texan agent arrived in the city of Mexico December 11, 1839, and, after some unsuccessful efforts to reach the Mexican authorities directly, he put himself in relations with Pakenham, who wrote home that he was impressed by Treat's intelligence, good sense, and knowledge of the language and customs of Mexico; that he had induced Cañedo to receive Treat unofficially; and that Cañedo had expressed himself as being personally much inclined to favor the concession of Texan independence.<sup>3</sup> But it was evident to Pakenham and everybody else that the political difficulties in Cañedo's way were very serious, inasmuch as Bustamante's government was now existing simply at the sufferance of Santa Anna, and was therefore much too weak to undertake an unpopular foreign policy. Nevertheless, after a good deal of discussion, the matter was laid before the council of state with the hope of inducing them to advise Congress to grant authority to the government to make

<sup>1</sup> Same to same, June 28, 1839; *ibid.*, 453. Hamilton also wrote that he had received "an intimation from a respectable Quarter that if he would see the Mexican Minister in the United States or write to him privately he would receive a pretty unequivocal assurance that Mexico was prepared to accept the mediation of the United States." "The respectable Quarter" was probably Poinsett, but it is incredible that he should have made such a statement as Hamilton said he had made.

<sup>2</sup> Burnet to Treat, Aug. 9, 1839; *ibid.*, 470.

<sup>3</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, Feb. 9, 1840; E. D. Adams, 41.

some sort of arrangement with Texas.<sup>1</sup> But Gorostiza was an influential member of the council, and in spite of his former assurances to Pakenham he strongly opposed the proposal, and disapproved "of any accommodation with Texas as an independent country," so that in the end the council referred the whole matter to Congress without a recommendation.<sup>2</sup>

The result, which might easily have been foreseen, was that members of Congress loudly proclaimed the greatest indignation at any suggestion of a settlement, and the government quietly dropped the matter, although Cañedo assured Treat that a committee of Congress was occupied with a report on the subject, and that the government would "accelerate all it could."<sup>3</sup>

Subsequently Treat endeavored to effect an arrangement under which a truce for one, two, or three years should be agreed upon, terminable on six months' notice by either party; but to this proposal the Mexican government replied by a simple refusal to enter into any negotiation whatever that was not based upon a recognition of Mexican sovereignty over Texas; although Pakenham urged them to adopt the Texan proposal, and indeed expressed himself as thinking that it ought to be considered by the Mexican government "as quite a Godsend."<sup>4</sup> In reporting to the British government the failure of these efforts Pakenham dwelt upon "the obstinacy and infatuation" of the Mexicans and "the pusillanimous fear of responsibility which has influenced the conduct of the Mexican Government throughout the whole affair."<sup>5</sup> Shortly afterward Treat left Mexico, and died on board ship on his return journey.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Treat to Lamar, May 7, 1840; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 634. Pakenham to Palmerston, May 18, 1840; E. D. Adams, 43.

<sup>2</sup> Treat to Lamar, May 28 and June 6, 1840; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 636-641. Pakenham to Palmerston, July 5, 1840; E. D. Adams, 44.

<sup>3</sup> Treat to Lipscomb, Sept. 7, 1840; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 697.

<sup>4</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, Oct. 7, 1840; E. D. Adams, 46. Cañedo to Pakenham, Sept. 26, 1840; Pakenham to Treat, Sept. 29, 1840; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 723-725.

<sup>5</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, Oct. 26, 1840; E. D. Adams, 48.

<sup>6</sup> Pakenham wrote to Treat on October 14, 1840, regretting "the failure of our joint labours to bring about a friendly understanding between Texas and



In the spring of 1841 Lamar's administration very unadvisedly renewed their efforts by sending to Mexico Judge Webb, at one time Secretary of State of Texas, but again without result. Webb was even refused permission to land at Vera Cruz, although Pakenham did his best to get the Mexican Foreign Office to consider the subject.<sup>1</sup> The refusal was, of course, due to the continued existence of the same causes that had formerly influenced the foreign policy of the Mexican government. Bustamante's administration was still in power, but the time was evidently close at hand when they would have serious difficulty in sustaining themselves, and they could not afford to take any added chances of public dissatisfaction.

When Webb's failure became public Hamilton and Bee saw their opportunity to meddle again in the affair, although by the time they resumed their activities Lamar was out of office and Houston had become President of Texas. They both wrote to Santa Anna on the subject, Hamilton proposing that "if a treaty of peace and limitations could be made Texas would pay five million dollars which I can place in London for this object, within three weeks after receipt of the agreement, together with two hundred thousand dollars which will be secretly placed at the disposal of the Agents of the Mexican Government."<sup>2</sup> Santa Anna replied to Bee with an angry reference to the Santa Fe expedition, and to Hamilton with a virtuous outburst, declaring that his offer of a bribe was "an insult and an infamy unworthy of a gentleman."<sup>3</sup>

Mexico," and expressing the opinion that "every thing that zeal and ability could suggest as likely to lead to a favourable issue has been done by you," and that he had failed only because success, under the existing circumstances, was impossible. Nothing, Pakenham believed, would be gained, under these circumstances, by further overtures to the Mexican government.—(*Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 726, 727.) This estimate of Treat's conduct does not seem at all excessive.

<sup>1</sup> Pakenham to Palmerston, June 10, 1841; E. D. Adams, 64. Mayfield to Webb, March 22, 1841; Webb to Mayfield, June 29, 1841, etc.; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, II, 732, 751-766.

<sup>2</sup> Bee to Santa Anna, Dec. 27, 1841; Hamilton to Santa Anna, Jan. 13, 1842; Niles's *Reg.*, LXII, 49-50.

<sup>3</sup> Santa Anna to Bee, Feb. 6, 1842; Santa Anna to Hamilton, Feb. 18, 1842; *ibid.*, 50.

Santa Anna was so pleased with this correspondence that he caused it to be published, and it was replied to in a fiery letter from Houston, in which he disavowed entirely the actions of Bee and Hamilton, asserted that Texas would make war against Mexico, and wound up with a high-flown paragraph declaring that "ere the banner of Mexico shall triumphantly float on the banks of the Sabine the Texan standard of the Single Star, borne by the Anglo-Saxon race, shall display its bright folds in Liberty's triumph on the Isthmus of Darien."<sup>1</sup> With this exchange of compliments the efforts at direct negotiation between Texas and Mexico came to an end.

Mediation by the United States had also been tried, but, as might have been foreseen, had not been accepted. In May, 1839, Forsyth, at the request of the Texan government, verbally offered mediation to the Mexican minister in Washington, an offer which the latter promised to transmit to his government, but from which nothing ever came.<sup>2</sup>

When, therefore, Houston began his second term as President, the foreign affairs of the country were in serious confusion. Mexico had repeatedly declined to receive any Texan representatives; attempts at mediation, both by the United States and Great Britain, had failed, and the formal recognition of Texas by Great Britain was incomplete, because the ratification of the three treaties signed more than a year before was still delayed by the non-action of the Texan Senate. Forsyth, as Van Buren's Secretary of State, had very definitely refused to consider the Texan proposals for annexation, and there seemed to be no prospect under Webster of any change in the attitude of the American government. Mexico, on her part, still continued to threaten invasion, and if she ever could carry out her threats and make a real effort to conquer Texas, the latter country was without money or credit or supplies with which to meet the invaders. It was therefore natural and indeed inevitable that Texas should do its best to strengthen its position with

<sup>1</sup> Houston to Santa Anna, March 21, 1842; Yoakum, II, 544-558.

<sup>2</sup> Dunlap to Lamar, May 16, 1839; *Tex. Dip. Corr.*, I, 383.



the European courts, and especially with Great Britain, whose influence with Mexico seemed greater than that of any other power.

Houston was subsequently credited with profound calculation in his conduct of the foreign policy of Texas, and he was very ready to admit his own astuteness in this regard; but the reasons for the erratic course he pursued seem to lie on the surface. His rather rough and primitive nature was no better adapted to conspiracy and intrigue than that of Andrew Jackson, and the simplest explanation of his conduct is also the most probable. He seems to have believed at the time that the best thing that could happen to Texas would be annexation to the United States; but as that appeared to be out of the question, and as he was convinced that peace with Mexico was essential to the prosperity, if not the very existence, of Texas, he was ready to promise almost anything in order to attain that end. But he could not always carry his constituents with him, for the people of Texas never seriously wavered in their hope and desire for annexation. The dream of a separate existence was never popular with the voters.

Houston evidently did not consider that in appealing to European powers for help to secure peace he was giving up his hopes of ultimate annexation. He considered, rather, that he was merely trying to find out what were the best terms he could get; but he was quite prepared to accept even onerous conditions if they were essential to the accomplishment of the great purpose he always had in view, namely, a secure peace. Peace at almost any price was in truth the key-note to Houston's policy; but he pursued his object without any well-defined plan of action, and without any clear understanding of the difficulties in the way. He was constantly dominated by a nervous dread of invasion, and he was forever being spurred by the rumors from the border into a desire to raise some new barrier against the Mexican peril. The result was a perpetual vacillation. This vacillation served to perplex observers; but in reality it was not at all mysterious, for it was precisely of a piece

with his uncertainties and changes of plan in the San Jacinto campaign, where all his movements were the results of sudden impulses acting upon a strong but emotional and undisciplined mind, and which ended in his becoming the follower, rather than the leader, of a loudly expressed public opinion.

The foreign situation was never free from uncertainties, but at the moment of his accession to office the most promising line of effort seemed to Houston to be an appeal to both Great Britain and France. In the United States, President Tyler was in the very height of his quarrel with his own party, and it was quite apparent that whatever foreign policy he might propose was little likely to be accepted by the Senate. There was, moreover, an apparent probability of war between Great Britain and the United States, so that the latter country would certainly be cautious about adding to its foreign complications.

Political conditions in Great Britain had recently undergone very material changes. When the three treaties with Texas were signed in November, 1840, the Whig administration of Lord Melbourne was still dragging out a precarious existence, and Lord Palmerston, as Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was still managing, unchecked, the external policy of the British Empire. Neither the young Queen, nor the easy-going Prime Minister, nor his other colleagues in the cabinet, were able to control the masterful disposition of the Foreign Secretary. He believed in pressing British demands with a high hand and a rude manner, and in never giving way or making concessions. In particular, he was opposed to any appearance of weakness in dealing with France or the United States, and he favored everything that seemed calculated to diminish the strength or prestige of either. Had he continued in power, he might very well have brought about a renewal of the American and French war of 1778—a possibility he of course disclaimed, but which he seems to have looked forward to without dismay.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "He said we might hold any language we pleased to France and America, and insist on what we thought necessary without any apprehension that either



However, Palmerston was obliged to leave his office not long before Lamar laid down his, for Melbourne, after repeated defeats in the House of Commons, found himself compelled to dissolve Parliament; the Conservative party carried the elections, and at the end of the summer of 1841 Sir Robert Peel was placed at the head of the government, with a majority of nearly a hundred in the House of Commons and a safe and steady majority in the Lords.<sup>1</sup> With this strong support in Parliament the new administration could afford to dispense with bluster in its foreign affairs, and could venture to make such concessions as it thought reasonable to secure peace and promote British interests. Having such a policy in view, Peel intrusted the Foreign Office to the moderate and conciliatory Lord Aberdeen, whose first and most difficult task was to undo much of Palmerston's work, and to endeavor to create friendly relations with France and America. The history of his complicated, vexatious, but successful negotiations with the French government fall outside the scope of this history, and it has been already seen that under his guidance the most threatening questions between the United States and Great Britain were settled by the compromises of the Webster-Ashburton treaty. In a later chapter it will be seen how the northwestern boundary question was also disposed of by mutual concession.

Lord Aberdeen at first gave himself little concern about the affairs of Texas. The affairs of Texas were indeed a very minor matter in the widely extended and complicated foreign interests of the British Empire; but so far as British policy concerned itself with them at all it rested on a few clear and definite principles. Peel's government was unquestionably averse to anything which would increase either the territory or the power of the United States, but at the

of them would go to war, as both knew how vulnerable they were, France with her colonies and America with her slaves."—(Greville, *Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria*, II, 6.)

<sup>1</sup> The majorities against the Whig government were 72 in the House of Lords and 91 in the House of Commons on the amendment of the address, which was the decisive blow to Melbourne's administration.

same time it was most anxious to avoid an American war. The government was also desirous of opening new markets for British manufactures, and it would have seen with great satisfaction the growth and prosperity of an independent Texas, especially if that country could have been induced to adopt permanently a policy of free trade, or at least of low tariffs. The fact that Texas was potentially a great cotton-producing country was an obvious element in the possibilities of an extended commercial intercourse. Nor was it ever forgotten that Mexican bonds to a large amount were held in England, and that the greater part of Mexican foreign trade was in British hands.

But what gave the subject a peculiar interest was the fact of the existence of slavery in Texas. The British public was extremely susceptible to any opportunity of preventing the extension of slavery or of abolishing it where it already existed. Unofficial agencies in England were numerous and active in helping abolitionists within the United States, but had met with little apparent success, and a more hopeful field for their efforts seemed to present itself in Texas, for the slave population was small and it was thought that it might be possible to induce the Texan government, in return for other favors, to consent to abolition. The British public, no doubt, did not fully appreciate the views of the Texans in regard to this matter, nor did the Texan government probably understand accurately the strong feeling which prevailed throughout Great Britain in regard to slavery.<sup>1</sup>

Aberdeen, himself a Scotch Presbyterian Tory, was at first quite as ill-informed as any of his countrymen, and, though he later acquired information, he lacked the imagination, insight, and sympathy which would have been essential to enable him to enter into the feelings of the people of either the United States or Texas, or of the ruling classes of Mexico. He knew Europe well, but he never fully comprehended America, so that he was continually being surprised

<sup>1</sup> The British attitude toward slavery in Texas prior to 1843 is stated in J. H. Smith's *Annexation of Texas*, 79-88.



by some turn of events which seemed to him to be wholly unexpected. His conduct of American affairs, therefore, during his five years' tenure of office, was never steady or consistent. He tried hard to shape the future of Texas and to keep Mexico at peace, but, as will be seen, he abandoned one position after another, and he had neither the abilities nor the strength of character to carry through any policy which seemed to be opposed by a majority of the people of the United States.

As for France, the course which she might choose to pursue in reference to Texan affairs was obviously a matter of great importance in determining the action of Great Britain. The British position was delicate. If any foreign country were to interpose vigorously between the United States and Texas, it was apparent that such an act would be very likely to give offence to the people of the United States, and possibly to the people of Texas, so that it was of the first consequence to British diplomacy to be sure of the backing of other European powers. But no such support could be looked for from any of the powers except France, for no other country then seriously counted. Spain was helpless. Italy and Germany were mere geographical expressions, without navies and without national interest in world politics. Austria and Russia were too far off to care. And it was thus of extreme importance to the future of Texas that the sympathies of both France and Britain should be enlisted, and that whatever action they might take should be harmonious as well as vigorous.

Touching the attitude of France, the Texan authorities had some ground for encouragement in the fact that since the autumn of 1840 the government had been in the hands of a ministry of which Guizot—a Protestant and professed liberal—was the head. But Guizot in office found himself faced by insistent popular demands for electoral and other reforms which neither he nor the King were at all inclined to grant; and thus the policy of the government at home and abroad developed into one of timid conservatism. They were utterly averse to adventures, of which they believed

the country had had enough.<sup>1</sup> Peace and prosperity were what they offered France.

So far, then, as mediation in favor of Texas was concerned France was not disposed to go beyond expressions of friendly interest. Moreover, she still remained on bad terms with Mexico, who had not yet forgotten the bombardment of San Juan de Ulúa, and she therefore had little or no influence with the Mexican government. Nor had France any serious interests in Texas. On the other hand, her relations with England from early in 1840 to at least 1846 were in a constant state of tension. The popular sentiment in France, even after Palmerston retired from office, remained extremely hostile, and a recurring series of minor but irritating controversies taxed the best efforts of the leaders on both sides of the Channel to avoid war. Guizot and the King, who were all for peace, were consequently very ready to please the British government by following its lead in Texan affairs, which were matters nobody in France cared about; and the French agents in Texas and Mexico, as it ultimately turned out, never did anything except to second their British colleagues.

In Mexico the time seemed favorable for a permanent settlement of all difficulties. Santa Anna, who had come into office at about the same time as Sir Robert Peel in England, appeared to be at the very height of his power. He had triumphed over all opposition; he was supported by the army and the church; he had repeatedly expressed himself during his captivity in Texas as convinced that a reunion of the two countries was impossible;<sup>2</sup> and it might be hoped that he was now strong enough at home to carry out a reasonable foreign policy. Such a policy would, of course, have involved a recognition of the independence of Texas, for there was no impartial foreign observer who doubted for a moment that the pretence of a war with Texas was a constant source of expense and weakness to the

<sup>1</sup> Time proved them mistaken. France still longed for adventure—"la France s'ennuie," in Lamartine's famous phrase.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, his letter to Houston of Nov. 5, 1836; Niles's *Reg.*, LXII, 115.