

any modification of his plan, nor listen to any suggestion of General Valencia's acting as President *ad interim*. If the garrison had been willing to support him, Valencia might have resisted; but the garrison had already sent in its adhesion to Paredes, who issued a sharp military order directing that he himself should be immediately recognized in the city of Mexico as the sole commander and legitimate authority, and that everything should be arranged for his reception in the capital on the following day, at which time he directed that a meeting be held to decide upon the definitive programme of the revolution.

Valencia, seeing that the game was up, at once left the Palace, went back to his own house, and sent Paredes an assurance of his submission, adding that if his presence was an obstacle he would leave the republic for two years. Paredes merely replied that he did not consider Valencia or anybody else an obstacle. "I am resolved," he said, "to make my ideas triumph or to perish in the attempt, and as I am determined not to prosecute anybody on account of their previous acts, so I will shoot anybody who starts out to oppose me, whether he is an archbishop, a general, a magistrate or anybody else"; and as everybody at that time believed that Paredes was quite capable of doing exactly what he said, he was at once hailed as President of the republic.¹

The revolution had thus far followed the normal course of Mexican revolutions. The small proportion of the inhabitants of Mexico who had any political influence at all, and especially the officers of the army, had become thoroughly dissatisfied with the government; whether rightly or wrongly was a matter of no consequence. Inasmuch as nobody in Mexico had ever had the slightest confidence in elections, which always resulted in the choice of the government's candidates, there was no hope of changing the government by anything short of a revolution. The men who were in office naturally wished to hold on to them, and the people of property were unwilling to take part in a revolu-

¹ *México á través de los Siglos*, IV, 553.

tion until they knew which side was likely to be successful. The revolution of 1845, like most others, was intended simply to exchange one set of rulers for another, and it began with a military mutiny. Until this military mutiny, which had originated, as all such movements usually did, outside of the city of Mexico, showed evident signs of being successful, Congress, the officers of the government, and all people of property loudly protested that they were unanimously on the side of the government. Nevertheless, secret influences were at work, and the moment the conspirators were able to win over the garrison of the city of Mexico, and the garrison proclaimed its adhesion to the revolution, all the people who had been professing themselves supporters of the government hastened to range themselves upon the side of the victorious mutineers, and the government fell like a house of cards.

On January 2, 1846, Paredes made his public entry into the city of Mexico and issued a decree prepared at a meeting of officers over which he presided, declaring that the legislative and executive powers had ceased, because the holders of them did not comply with the desires and requirements of the nation and had not sustained the dignity of its name or the integrity of its territory, and directing that representatives of the various departments should be named for the purpose of appointing a President *ad interim*. The President so appointed was to execute the laws then in existence, but he might go beyond the powers conferred by them if necessary to prepare for the defence of the national territory, and he was to summon a new Congress to meet within four months at the capital. In other words, he was made a dictator pending the meeting of Congress.¹

Paredes at the same time named the members of the commission who were to appoint the President—two from each department—and as they were all of them persons then in the city of Mexico, they met on January 3, and unanimously went through the formality of selecting Paredes as the President *ad interim*. On the following day the commission met

¹ *Dublan y Lozano*, V, 100.

again, and Paredes was sworn in, after which he "pronounced a discourse suitable to the circumstances."¹ On January 7 he appointed his cabinet, Castillo y Lanzas being Secretary of Foreign Relations, and General Almonte Secretary of War. Tornel was made president of the council.

Castillo had been secretary of legation and chargé d'affaires in Washington.

"He is," wrote Slidell, "an intelligent and well educated gentleman, and were he permitted to exercise any control, would, as I have reason to know from free conversations with him at a time when he had no idea of being appointed to his present place, be decidedly favorable to an amicable adjustment of all questions pending between the two Governments. But Almonte is the leader of the cabinet, believed, and as I think with good reason, to entertain the most violent hostility towards the United States, and I doubt whether Castillo has sufficient energy to take any very decided stand in support of his opinions."²

Slidell's departure from the city of Mexico had all this time been delayed, ostensibly by his inability to procure an escort, the roads being notoriously unsafe, but in reality, as he wrote in the letter just quoted, because the Mexican government was waiting for President Polk's annual message, to see what the chances of a war over Oregon might be. The tone of that message, when it was received, of course encouraged Mexican hopes of war between the United States and Great Britain; and, as Slidell wrote a few days later, there was little prospect of a change of attitude on the part of Mexico so long as these hopes continued. But he still had some expectation that the financial embarrassments of Mexico might lead to their consenting to a negotiation.³

Slidell reached the pleasant town of Jalapa on the twentieth of January, and there awaited the instructions from Washington for which he had applied. It was not until

¹ See *Acta de la Junta de Representantes de los Departamentos*; *ibid.*, 102.

² Slidell to Buchanan, Jan. 14, 1846; *State Dept. MSS.*; extract in H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 50. Castillo is described by a Mexican author as a man of vast learning, but with little diplomatic skill.

³ Slidell to Buchanan, Feb. 6, 1846; *State Dept. MSS.*; extract in H. R. Doc. 60, 30 Cong., 1 sess., 56.

late in the month of February that he received advices from the State Department. His conduct was in all respects approved, and he was directed to renew his application to be received as minister plenipotentiary. As to confining the negotiations to the adjustment of "the imaginary rights of Mexico over Texas," that, he was instructed, could not be tolerated. The two subjects of claims and boundary "must proceed hand in hand; they can never be separated." Should the Mexican government finally refuse to receive him, he was to demand his passports and return to the United States. "It will then," said Buchanan, "become the duty of the President to submit the whole case to Congress, and call upon the nation to assert its just rights, and avenge its injured honor."¹

In accordance with these instructions, Slidell wrote to the Minister of Foreign Relations on March 1, 1846, referring to his correspondence with Peña y Peña, and stating that his course had been approved by the President of the United States, who (in view of the change in the government of Mexico) had directed that one more effort should be made to preserve peace. He therefore again submitted the question of his being received as envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary.²

Castillo replied in a long letter, declining to receive Slidell on various grounds. In the first place, the display of force by land and sea which the United States was making would of itself be a sufficient reason. In the next place, the course which the United States had steadily pursued in respect to the annexation of Texas, a part of the territory of Mexico, which had been hers for so long without any interruption whatever, regardless of "the most unquestionable ownership and the most uninterrupted possession," would not allow Mexico to consent to such ignominy as to discuss a settlement. And finally, the reasons given to Slidell in December for refusing to receive him were repeated. The

¹ Buchanan to Slidell, Jan. 20, 1846; same to same, Jan. 28, 1846; *ibid.*, 53-55.

² Slidell to Castillo, March 1, 1846; *ibid.*, 63.

decision of the Mexican government on the point was declared to be "immutable."¹

The action of the two successive Mexican administrations in refusing to receive an American minister ended all further discussion. Their decision had plainly been dictated by the exigencies of domestic politics. The opinions of the governing class had been too clearly declared to make it possible for any government to enter at that time upon negotiations with the United States; and although the men who were actually intrusted with the responsibility of carrying on the affairs of the republic must have had some perception of the inevitable result of a conflict, they could not have remained in office for a single day if they had openly defied the public clamor for war.

There was obviously nothing for Slidell to do but to return home, and he therefore wrote to Castillo demanding his passports and defending the course which the United States had pursued with respect to Texas. Castillo replied by return of post, enclosing the passports, and saying that he thought it needless to discuss anew Slidell's arguments, as they had already been "victoriously refuted."² At the same time the whole correspondence was published in the *Diario del Gobierno*. At the earliest practicable day Slidell sailed from Vera Cruz, and on reaching the United States set out for Washington to explain to the President the failure of his mission and to offer his opinions as to the course which the American government should pursue.

¹ Castillo to Slidell, March 12, 1846; *ibid.*, 67.

² Same to same, March 21, 1846; *ibid.*, 79.

CHAPTER XXXI

MEXICO SEEKS FOREIGN AID

As the prospect of a war with the United States became more threatening, the successive Mexican administrations saw more and more clearly that they ran a very great risk of losing not only Texas but also a large part of their other territory. California in particular was evidently indefensible against a naval force, and New Mexico was too remote for succor. The only way to guard against such dangers was by securing foreign help; and, indeed, in the earlier efforts of Great Britain and France to adjust the disputes between Mexico and Texas, a foreign guarantee of the northern boundary had actually been offered. Thus in the interview between Lord Aberdeen and the Mexican minister in London, on May 29, 1844, the former had gone so far as to say that if Mexico would acknowledge the independence of Texas, England, and very likely France, would oppose annexation to the United States, and that he would endeavor that France and England should jointly guarantee the independence of Texas and the integrity of Mexican territory.¹ At the same time he had proposed to the French government "a joint operation on the part of Great Britain and France in order to acknowledge the independence of Texas, on a guarantee being jointly given by us that that independence shall be respected by other nations, and that the Mexico-Texian boundary shall be secured from further encroachments." And a few days later, in an interview with Ashbel Smith, of Texas, he had proposed a "diplomatic act" by which England and France, acting with Texas and

¹ *Memorandum of Conversation*, in E. D. Adams, 168.