

XI/481.3/1491

“The Casa Blanca Articles of Convention”

ff.45-46

Arista to the Minister of War, No. 80, General Headquarters in Cadereyta, February 5, 1840:

“My spies have informed me that, having been exposed to the [Anglo] Colonists in Texas, our revolutionaries have done nothing less than establish for themselves a government, having appropriated to themselves the right to represent the Pueblos, and as a result have drafted the document which I have attached here.

The individuals named to form that farce of a government are the following: Governor Don Jesus Cardenas, and as directors of his council, Don. Francisco Vidaurri, Don Juan Molano, Don Policarpo Martinez, Don Juan Margain, and Don N. [V.?] Hinojosa. Soon, this ridiculous government will be sent fleeing to the woods, pursued by the law which they transgress with so much criminality, so much so that they call upon foreigners to occupy the lands of their unlucky neighbors who despise their revolution.”

ff. 41-44

Articles of Convention

“Report presented by the executive committee of the Convention and approved the 26th and finalized in Casa Blanca:

Honorable Assembly:

The commission appointed to report on the measures which should be adopted in order to ensure the security and defense of the Pueblos of the Northern frontier of the Republic has the honor to present here to the honored general body the following report which, for lack of time means to detail with complete perfection this matter of utmost importance, has instead been forced to limit itself to the briefing of the vicious origins of the current government of Mexico, the enumeration of the insufferable evil which that Government has caused on account of its illegitimacy, and a judgment on how to remedy to the extent possible the present anarchy in which the Nation finds itself.

f. 41

Public and notorious is the fact that in the ill-fated year of 1834, General Santa Anna by means of his proclamations most despotic and offensive to the sovereignty of the nation destroyed the principle of representation and savaged the principle that “the Government exists because of the Pueblos; the Pueblos don’t exist because of the Government.” From that moment on we witnessed the legislatures of the States stripped of their sacred duty to attend to and remedy the complaints of their constituents because they feared falling to a similar fate as that of the National Congress, should they incur the wrath of the omnipotent central Government. This most dishonorable act – which amounted to nothing less than the States’ total loss of freedom - wasn’t the only thing that General Santa Anna had to do to establish the Government he desired by means of force (because in those years, the army was his, and

not the Nation's). The states of Puebla and Zacatecas made great efforts to salvage their moribund liberties, but these were useless, perhaps because they decided to pursue their aims alone which only had the effect of increasing the Terror and fright permeating the entire Republic; in the end, placing the resources upon which the nation depended to defend itself in the hands of a despot through the scandalous "sale" – if not theft – of the rich mines of Fresnillo [Zacatecas].

With this act, General Santa Anna managed to disarm the nation and thereby multiply the power of his own arms, and without needing to physically coerce the many Ayuntamientos lined up in support of the change of Government. These illegitimate and reactionary deeds by a few chambers that declared themselves authorized to decree this change were the cause of the infamous decree of eternal damnation for all Mexicans which toppled the government which had been freely and naturally formed in [18]24, and were the spurious origin of the monster which now calls itself the government by deceit and which has inflicted so many ills upon this nation. Since that unlucky time, the evils have only multiplied each day and increased the state of abandonment in which the Pueblos find themselves. But what else could be expected of a Government that owes its existence to the same Pueblos whose interests it diametrically opposes? Little more than evil upon evil, violence upon violence, disgrace upon disgrace and in sum the gradual destruction of the Republic, for which proof the simple enumeration of some of the misfortunes we have endured on this frontier will serve.

An illegitimate government fears everything and focuses only on its own preservation. Similarly, the Government of Mexico began by gutting the presidial companies, the only formal defense these states had against the savage tribes which daily harass them, simply because these companies were composed of frontiersmen themselves, in whom the government never had confidence, and so the government feared that if they left these companies under arms, sooner or later they would rise up against the government's illegitimacy alongside the Pueblos. For the same reason, the government cut all funding and support for the local militias, by means of the same law which destroyed the Republic, leaving the residents of the frontier even more entirely defenseless and at the mercy of the barbarians who had in many cases even managed to occupy the central plazas of these communities. Yet this too was not enough to calm the fears of the Government and so it was the armies of the government returned to the field with the pretext of the Texas campaign and have sent and maintained an army of no less than 2,000 men in these tiny Pueblos for the purpose of keeping them subjugated and in order to live off of their labor, destroying what little remained of their fortunes, and by this means remove from them any hope of crying out for the reestablishment of a true, national government. To the same end, [the Government] dissolved the local governments [of these Pueblos] and replaced them with political chiefs appointed by a prefect or subprefect without any familiarity at all of the Pueblos or their people. And even to this appointee they denied the power to repel the continuous attacks of the savages! Instead, whenever called upon for help, these so-called Army garrisons answered mockingly, "We didn't come here to guard a bunch of ranches, we came here for the Texas campaign!"

And how did that disgraceful campaign go? The commission will deal with that in a few words. Having already denied aid to the Pueblos against the barbarians that were assaulting this region, General Filisola then published a Sultanic decree that made it a capital crime for anyone to cross the Rio Bravo [Rio Grande], and that all inhabitants should withdraw at least ten leagues from the River, effectively forcing those with lands within ten leagues of the river to abandon them. Having done this, the Army began to send out parties with orders to murder and depredate those they found in that no-man's-land with Texas, which invited all manner of evil from [Anglo] Colonists and certain bad Mexicans who lived

there only for the opportunity to come steal whatever they might find, given that everything had been abandoned and so whatever remained came to belong to the first one who took it...¹ All of these deeds placed so many of our belongings - the entire wealth of the Pueblos, in truth! - in the hands of these evil men and in the hands of the barbarians who proudly exhibited them on the other side of the Rio Bravo, and which ended with them delivering death to the honorable people of these communities, dragged by a desire to defend the property which had been taken from them by [Centralist] General Filisola and instead turned into victims of his barbarity. This is the real result of the Texas campaign.

And to what end did [the Government] undertake such evil? They did it in order to impoverish and reduce into debased misery all of the inhabitants of the frontier. As has been mentioned, the majority of the people of Mexico raised their voices against the illegitimacy of the Government of Mexico. And despite all their efforts, the [Government] has not achieved their criminal objective. Because their just petitions went unheard for so long, the Villas [del Norte] finally raised their voice in revolt on the 3rd of November 1838,² even as they were surrounded by an army of 2,000 men. This story is well known by all, and there is no point rehashing it here, but suffice it to say that this [revolution] has increased in power and expanded the limits of its jurisdiction each day since. As such, it has now become indispensable to give great proper form and structure to our actions by the establishment of a provisional Government duly empowered to provide for the security and defense of all the Pueblos who have revolted, and that such Government be pronounced in order to provide resources to the Army and in order to take the measures necessary given the exigencies of the Territory. The commission has considered this point with much deliberation and in light of the necessity of action that the current circumstances require, and in order to give the greatest respectability to the dispositions, the commission hereby submits for consideration to the Honorable Assembly the following articles:

Article 1) The Pueblos of the Northern frontier do not recognize the legitimacy of the current Government of Mexico.

Article 2) Until such time as a national convention freely elected by the Pueblos declares a form of Government that better suits the Republic, a provisional Government will be established in These States.

Article 3) This Government will name a President and five property-owning individuals with three alternates to serve as a governing council, all to be elected by the current representatives of the Pueblos.

Article 4) The following shall be the responsibilities of this Government:

1) Defend the Territory from any enemy that should invade.

2) Protect the lives and properties of all inhabitants [of the Territory] who have for so long been abandoned by the current Government of Mexico.

3) Raise and administer funds from inside and outside the Republic, guaranteeing such Public debt with the goods and incomes of the Nation.

¹ Sentence ends with "mas cuando con ellos juzgaban reintegrarse de los que el Exto les trajo cuando hizo su malhalada retirada."

² The taking of the Centralist Armory in Camargo by Canales.

Transcribed by Stan Green (2004) from the Archivo de documentos de Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional (CDMX)
Translated by Brandon Seale with comments from Stan Green and Jacqueline Pasquel.

4) Organize and maintain sea and land forces and any other force required to carry out the first and second responsibilities above.

5) Convene on May 28th of this year [1840], or before if the circumstances permit, a convention of all the States that find themselves free of the oppression in which they currently reside in order to form the Government contemplated in Article 2 above.

Article 5) In any financial negotiation and in all such other actions that are not merely administrative, the President shall preside at the pleasure of the council.

Article 6) The citizens and authorities of the Pueblos in revolt and the officers and troops of its army shall take an oath of obedience to the provisional Government in the following form: "Do you swear before God and commit to the Pueblos to obey and succor with your lives and properties the provisional Government established by this convention of these States, and any other such orders that should emanate therefrom?" If he so swears, he shall respond and answer, "So I shall do it. May God grant us to see our homeland free and if not, may God and man punish us."

Article 7) The President of this Convention shall receive the oath of the president of the Government as well as those of the individuals elected for the council, promising each to obey and see obeyed the present commitments agreed to by the Pueblos.

Article 8) He who opposes or in any way does not support the Provisional Government herein established forfeits his right to own property.

Article 9) Any declaration made going forward by the force of the Government of Mexico toward the Pueblos represented here in their full and complete liberty shall be null and void.

Article 10) Similarly, any act by this provisional Government which contravenes the principles laid out in this document shall be considered null and void.

Article 11) The Government as well as the council and their deputies shall be personally responsible before the Pueblos for the just and exact execution of their duties as imposed by this document.

Copy of the original dated 27th which the President of the Convention sent to the General in Chief of this Army and which original I currently have in my possession. Villa de Mier, January 29th, 1840 – JM Torres.

Copy of this document. Cadereyta February 5th, 1840.