Letters and Documents

Dr. John Sibley and the Louisiana–Texas Frontier, 1803–1814

JULIA KATHRYN GARRETT

[continued]

Letter 20

Natchitoches Febry, 9th 1811

Sir

In a letter I wrote you dated Jany.——I mentioned Something of what was understood here to have taken place relative to a general Revolution in the Kingdome of Mexico.—On the 5 Inst. a Mr Edward Quick arrived here from Nacogdoches and gave me at my own house the following information. that on the 31st of Jany. last Arrived at Nacogdoches an Officer Called Captain Syce [Sáenz] with about Eighty Cavalry or mounted Infantry from Monterey on this Side of Mexico. On his Arrival at Nacogdoches he immediately Arrested & Confined in Irons the late Commedant of that place, took possession of the public Archives, the Treasury & proclaimed the Government of the Spanish Monarchy at an end. & that he was Come to take possession of that place in the Name of the free Independent Gov ernment of the people, he Opened the Prison & released all

83Jiménez, sent to revolutionize the northern provinces, had succeeded in Nuevo Santander, Coahuila, and Nuevo León. In December, 1810, he made Saltillo his headquarters, whence by means of propaganda and agents, he promptly revolutionized the settlements of the Rio Grande and Texas. On January 21, 1811, Juan Bautista Casas, a retired captain in Béxar, having been converted by Jiménez's propaganda, rebelled, imprisoned Governor Salcedo, Herrera, commander of the military forces, and twelve officers, seized Spanish property, and declared that Texas was free from the rule of European Spaniards. "The trial of Father Juan Salazar," Historia Independiente, MS., vol. 412, A.G.N.

84Sibley refers to Antonio Sáenz, a lieutenant sent by the rebels of Nuevo Santander to San Antonio with plans to revolutionize Texas. He was imprisoned by Governor Salcedo; but, when the royal authority was overturned by the rebel Casas and Salcedo imprisoned, Sáenz was freed, and sent to establish the revolutionary régime in Nacogdoches. Alta Traición Contra Don Juan Baptista Casas Capitán retirado por haber alzado la voz de la insurrección en esta San Fernando de Béxar a 22 de Enero—. MS., Nacogdoches Archives, Texas State Library.
the Prisoners, & Sayed his Orders were to imprison all European Spaniards & Sequester all their property, & it was understood he had done the Same at every Post as he Came along. Governor Salcedo was in Irons in St. Antonio, with General Herrera & his younger Brother," the Major & Several Others, Governor Salcedo's Secretary was shott by an officer of Captain Syce [Saenz] for hesitating to deliver up the Keys of the Public Office. This day a Mr Chirino a respectable old Spanish Gentleman Arrived here from Nacogdoches with whom I have had a Conversation at my Own House, he Confirms Substantially the foregoing Account of Mr. Quick, & is the Bearer of letters Confirming likewise the Same, he understood from Captain Syce [Saenz] that all was tranquil at & about Mexico Under the New Order of things, that all the European Officers and Priests were deposed, many of them had lost their lives, & all their property had been Confiscated and that in the General Provinces all opposition to the Government of the people had Ceased, that they were as much Averse to European Frenchmen as to European Spaniards, & were extremely jealous of the emmissaries of Buoneparte that they did not allow themselves to be Called Spaniards; but Americans. Capt. Syce [Saenz] had Nominated Some Magistrates for a Temporary government of the place & was to leave Nacogdoches with Nearly all the people that Came with him on the 7th Inst. & return Back to whence they Came, a free Commerce was not to be Interrupted between Nacogdoches & this place & there was a general rejoicing Amongst the people on the Occasion. It is said a General Congress of delegates from the Provinces was Soon to meet at Mexico to provide for the General Welfare. It is Said that the ex Bishop of Monterey with a large Number of Priests & followers, Sat off for the United States in Order to Save themselves from the Incenced Multitude; but Captain Syce [Saenz]

82In February, 1811, Salcedo and Herrera, with their twelve officers, were sent in chains to Coahuila, where they were imprisoned on the hacienda of Don Ignacio Elizondo, near Monclova. Ibid.

83The colonial policy of Spain forbade trade between Spanish colonies and foreign powers. Upon the purchase of Louisiana by the United States the commandant-general of the Interior Provinces instituted a rigid guard of the frontier, prohibited the entrance of Anglo-Americans into Texas, and permitted vassals of Spain living in Louisiana to enter Texas only under severe regulations. In 1806 he forbade even communication between Louisiana and Texas, and fixed death as a penalty for the violation of this order. Only fugitive slaves from Louisiana were permitted to pass over the border. Therefore, the traders of Natchitoches, desirous for trade with Texas and Mexico, rejoiced at the abolition of Spanish rule in Texas. Hatcher, The Opening of Texas, 95-104, 124-125, Appendix, Doc. 11.

84The people of Baltimore read in the Gazette of March an account of the revolution in Texas. It stated that the profitable result of the revolution to the citizens of the United States was the establishment of free commerce between Texas and Natchitoches. Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser, March 21, 1811.
by another Road Arrived at St. Antonio before them and it is
Sposed they are all arrested.

Three Million of a hardy Warlike people, Our Neighbours,
having Changed their government, between us & them, there
are no fixed Boundaries. Commercial nor any other regulations,
through whose Country our Revenue & Laws—prohibiting the
Introduction of Slaves & May be infringed—will no
doubt be Subject of Consideration of Our Government.88

That Belt of Country between this Town & the River Sabine
Called Neutral Ground, has become a Harbour for Thieves,
Robbers & Murderers to an alarming degree. I was yesterday
out with a Coroners Inquest on the Body of a Man a Citizen
of the U. S. who was found Dead, who had been Robbed &
Murdered by them, a few Miles from this Town——

That this would be the case was foreseen Since that honest
Industrious Settlement of people at the Adaize [Los Adaes]
was broken up by Order of Our own & the Spanish Government
last Summer.

I am with great respect & Esteem
Your Obt. Hble. Servant
John Sibley

Honble. William Eustis
Secretary of War

88This paragraph is significant; Sibley was advocating an active policy
on the Louisiana-Texas frontier by the United States. This desire was
also reflected in the National Intelligencer of April by the statement that
"the revolution may change men and things," and that it would soon
become a question whether that frontier was sufficiently guarded. National
Intelligencer, Washington, D.C., October 8, 1811.