# *Explanation to the Public Concerning the Affairs of Texas, by Citizen Stephen F. Austin*

translated by
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# EXPLANATION TO THE PUBLIC CONCERNING THE AFFAIRS OF TEXAS, BY CITIZEN STEPHEN F. AUSTIN.

## Translation.

ETHEL ZIVLEY RATHER.

Political disturbances always offer pretexts for absurd and false rumors. Thus, during the past year the newspapers have given us the most alarming impressions, founded only upon hearsay or upon the false or imperfect understanding of facts in whose interpretation *appearances* only have been considered, without a previous examination of their true character and significance.

Such are the rumors spread abroad during the course of two years to the effect that the people of Texas have attempted and desire separation from the Mexican republic, that they have disobeyed the government, that they do not wish to be law-abiding, and other imputations with whose falsity the supreme government of the na-

[1]This article is a translation of a pamphlet issued from the press of Cornelio C. Sebring in Mexico in 1835. It was dated by Austin, January 18, 1835, and consists of thirty-two octavo pages. It is chiefly valuable for the light that it throws upon the attitude of Texas toward the Mexican republic, on the one hand, and, on the other, toward the question of separation from Coahuila; for we may assume that Austin understood the prevailing sentiment in Texas and represented it honestly.

In translating the document the aim has been to render it into as good English as possible without departing too far from the literal expression of the original. This expression, however, is elliptical and involved, and hence many difficulties have arisen in the translation. In cases of doubt effort has been made to preserve the thought rather than the form. The punctuation and capitalization of the document have in some instances been departed from, in order to comply with modern English standards. The paragraphing, except in the concluding parts of the letters given as appendices, and the italicising of English words, however, are the same as in the original.

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tion and that of the state of Coahuila and Texas are well acquainted. But the public, which has not had the requisite information, can not understand the origin of these calumnies or the appearances from which they have emanated; consequently, it is an act of justice, demanded by the circumstances, that it should be explained to the people, as well for their own satisfaction—since the Mexican populace has the right to be correctly informed concerning everything that bears relation to the common interest—as for the vindication of the worthy people of Texas, who, perhaps, on account of such rumors, have suffered unjustly in the good opinion of their fellow-citizens, which they deserve and ought to enjoy, as Mexicans who have never deviated in the slightest from their obligations.

For the proper understanding of the affairs of Texas a glance is necessary at the geographical and political situation of the country, at the character and occupations of its inhabitants, and at its productions, in order, in view of these premises, to answer the fundamental question, *What are the true interests of Texas?*

That district was a distinct and separate province under the Spanish government, and, as such, it was a participant in the war for independence, was represented in the constituent congress, and was provisionally united to Coahuila by the law of May 7, 1824, to form the state of Coahuila and Texas. It is exclusively agricultural, its inhabitants are tillers of the soil, and possess the virtues of industry, strength of character, regular habits, and ardent love of liberty and of prompt and wholesome administration of justice, which usually animate this important class in all enlightened countries. With their arms they have conquered those lands, warring incessantly against the savage Indians; with their plows they have made the desert disappear; and they are habitually enterprising.

The chief products of Texas are cotton, corn, beans, indigo, tobacco, garden vegetables, lard, cheese, butter, and all kinds of stock known in the republic. Its rivers and creeks afford abundant facilities for the establishment of mills and factories. The climate is hot in summer and cold in winter; it is unhealthful on the rivers and along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, which borders Texas from the Sabine river to the Nueces. There are ports adequate to accommodate, and abundant timber for the construction of, medium sized vessels.

Every one who has any knowledge in regard to the commerce of Texas must know that the Mexican markets are the best in the world for the products of Texas. Ginned cotton is worth seven or eight *pesos*[1] an *arroba*[2] in Mexico, Puebla, San Luis, etc., while in the United States of America and in Europe it is worth from two to four *pesos*. Corn in the ports of Matamoros, Tampico, Vera Cruz, and Campeche is worth from four to six *pesos* a *fanego*,[3] and in Texas it is worth from six *reales*[4] to one *peso*, and almost the same in New Orleans; in the Mexican ports lard is worth from one to two *reales* a pound, while in New Orleans and other parts of the North [North America] it is worth a half *real* at best, and the same proportion holds true with reference to all the products of Texas.

In regard to exportation to foreign countries, it is very evident that it can be carried on under the Mexican flag as easily as under that of any other nation whatever. The Texans would receive from foreigners merchandize in exchange for their products, while from their Mexican fellow-citizens they receive gold and silver.

The farmers of Texas believe that in agricultural products they can compete with the landowners and agriculturists of the southern part of the republic on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, because the habits of the Texans and their practical experience in the different branches of agriculture ought, for many years at least, to offset the advantage that the others have in the natural fertility of lands, the mildness of climate, and the nearness to market. Consequently they think that they can, in general, sell their products in the ports of the Gulf at a lower price than those of the same grade from the *haciendas*[5] of other districts are sold.

From this competition will always result a national benefit, since it will greatly hasten the advancement and the true aggrandizement

[1]That is, Mexican dollars. By an act of Congress, approved June 25, 1834, the Mexican dollar was made legal tender at its face value in the United States (Dunbar, *Laws of the United States Relating to Currency, Finance, and Banking from 1789 to 1896*).

[2]The *arroba* is a measure of weight equivalent to twenty-five pounds.

[3]The *fanega* is a measure of capacity equivalent to about fifty-five liters.

[4]The *real* is one-eighth of a *peso*.

[5]This might be freely translated, *country estates*.

and independence of the republic, for it will increase industry and agriculture in all sections, particularly as to those products adapted for export.

At the present time the exports of the republic are reduced to little more than gold and silver, whence it follows that the Mexicans are the miners for other nations. Let such a state of affairs change; let the imports be paid for with agricultural products such as sugar, cotton, indigo, cocoa, etc.; let mining unite with flourishing agriculture, and in a few years Mexico will present an interesting picture of wealth and prosperity hitherto unknown to the world.

Commerce by land from the ports of Texas to the interior of the republic presents advantages almost equal to the coast trade, since that country is level and very well adapted for highways to Monclova and the other towns of Coahuila, to El Paso del Norte in the state of Chihuahua, and to New Mexico. It is worthy of note that every year about two million *pesos'* worth of merchandise enters New Mexico and Chihuahua from Missouri across more than four hundred leagues of desert. This commerce from Missouri is entirely outside the course which the geopraphical situation of the country and nature itself has marked out; the ports of Texas were evidently designed for it. There is no difficulty in opening highways from Texas to the state of Chihuahua and to New Mexico, whose length would not be half the actual distance over which merchandize from Missouri is now transported, and they would pass throughout their whole extent within Mexican territory by the way of the interior of Texas, which can be settled and would afford abundant means for facilitating the transportation. The work of opening these roads is certainly of the greatest importance, since it would change the course of the commerce that now comes from Misouri from that foreign country to the Mexican ports of Texas, and consequently all the advantages from the payments for freight and transportation would pass from the freighters of Missouri to Mexican citizens; it would increase the income of the maritime customhouses; it would distribute merchandize to the inhabitants of the interior at less cost than [if brought by the other route] from Missouri, on account of the reduction of the distance and of the expenses of transportation; it would attract settlers to the vast uninhabited districts of the interior, because of the advantage of establishing