

Episode 24 (Chapter 6 – Audiobook 3) 1830-1861

Hello and welcome to another chapter of the Hidden History of Texas.

1835 Texas is turning into a powder keg and as the year ends and 1836 starts things are getting ready to explode. In this chapter, I will talk about how a Texas provisional government was appointed, and one of the more disastrous events that took place in that year, it was the Matamoros Expedition.

So who were the leaders in Texas during this time period and what were they doing. Remember that there were resolutions passed in 1832 and 1833 and nothing ever really happened. Well, there was also something they called consultation. The idea was first proposed by opponents of revolution in the early summer of 1835 in Mina Municipality. Folks were hoping to come to some sort of agreement with Mexico over how Texas was to be ruled. Eventually both moderate and radical attendees endorsed the concept to present a unified front. On August 15th, there was a meeting in Columbia where the term

consultation was first used. Why they chose this term is unclear, many historians believe they hoped to avoid the revolutionary connotations that the word convention implied in Mexican politics. Like most things that took place among the colonists, there was no complete agreement on the power of this body. Some treated it as sovereign, with the ability to create legislation and in essence have some constitutional powers.

Others insisted that the purpose of the gathering was to simply investigate, counsel, and recommend some actions to the people.

Though originally set for October 15, the Consultation was delayed until November 1 by the eruption of military hostilities earlier in the month.

So on October 16 thirty-one members assembled at San Felipe and recognized the legitimacy of a Permanent Council for a two-week period. Enough of the delegates gathered on November 1 to begin deliberations, but no actual quorum existed until the fourth. They chose Branch T. Archer to preside.

Three issues dominated Consultation deliberations, and these were to prove pivotal. The purpose of the war, the power and structure of

government, and the virtues of different leaders. William Barrett, as leader of the Austin forces, favored endorsement of the Constitution of 1824. Pragmatic arguments supported this position, since there was hope that Mexican liberals might still rally to support Texas. On the other side of the coin were the Wharton-Smith folks who held very anti-Mexican attitudes and sought an immediate declaration of independence. For a while it seemed as if the pragmatic side won because on November 7 the Consultation, by a vote of 33 to 14, endorsed establishment of "a provisional government upon the principles of the Constitution of 1824." However, this was to prove to be an illusion because at the same time the delegates declared that Antonio López de Santa Anna had already dissolved the social compact and that Texas had the right to declare its independence.

In order to implement the suggestions, a provisional government was appointed. The provisional government set up by the Consultation was the only governing body in Texas from November 15, 1835, until March 1, 1836. While it existed, it was mostly inactive. Henry Smith, a leader

of the independence or war party was made governor; James W. Robinson, also of the independence party, was lieutenant governor. At this point the government was set up to fail. The top two leaders were both from the independence or war party. Even though most of the members of the General Council, were from the peace party. That group was opposed to an immediate declaration of independence and inclined to quarrel with Smith and oppose his plans. Needless to say this made it so that personalities entered into the dispute, and after about a month the governor and the council were at bitter odds with one another.

There was no agreement as to the powers of the governor. The council wished to cooperate with Mexican liberals; Smith wished to ignore the Declaration of November 7 and proceed as though Texas were an independent state. The most important single cause of trouble was the proposed Matamoros expedition. So what was this infamous expedition. It's not one that you hear very much about in school.

An expedition to attack Matamoros, Tamaulipas, was a controversial and divisive element of the Texas strategy against Antonio López de Santa Anna.

The roots of the controversy lay in the division within the provisional government between Governor Henry Smith and the General Council over whether to remain loyal to the Constitution of 1824 and support the liberals of Mexico in the Federalist cause against Santa Anna or to declare independence from Mexico. This division within the provisional government was mirrored among the commanders in the field, compounding the situation and contributing ultimately to disaster. At the root of it was of course money and power. In the spring of 1835 the Federalist governor in Texas had illegally sold 1,500 to 1,600 leagues of public land to American speculators. This event did not go over well with the Central Mexican government, and they were determined to reclaim their land. In order to do so, Santa Ana began to move troops into Texas. The American speculators who had purchased this land were in Moncolva, which is in the Mexican state of (kow – uh –

wee – luh) . News that Santa Anna's troops were en route to Monclova forced these speculators to return to Texas, pursued by the Mexican dictator.

When the General Council was formed in October, one of its prominent members, Sam Houston, proposed that the Consultation should investigate and declare void all suspicious grants made by the Coahuila and Texas state legislature since 1833, a move designed to show Texas residents that Santa Anna's march northward was not just the result of a "speculators' war." Thus, coincident with the decision within the council to declare loyalty to the Constitution of 1824 or for Texas independence was whether to validate or annul the Monclova land grants.

So the consultation council decided it would be a good idea to attack Matamoros and perhaps induce Tampico into revolution as well. The port of Matamoros at the mouth of the Rio Grande was an important source of revenue, which if seized could be used to defray the cost of the war. The city also commanded a strategic position for possibly

paralyzing Santa Anna's movement and for launching the war into the interior of Mexico. The idea of attacking Matamoros probably originated with the Texas Hispanics of the Trans-Nueces area together with the Federalist insurrectionists of Tamaulipas and Coahuila, who were hoping to amass under General Mexía; because he Mexía had earlier led a successful expedition against the Centralists at Matamoros in 1832. For the next several months infighting among the Texas leaders lead to one mistake after another and the army never actually reached Matamoros. Instead, they fought among themselves and eventually found themselves in San Patricio; which is where it all came to an inglorious end.

From the Texas viewpoint, the Matamoros expedition of 1835–36 was one of the most disastrous components of the Texas Revolution. It brought to crisis the developing quarrel between the governor and the council and paralyzed the provisional government. It seemed to reveal the disadvantages of asserting independence for Texas instead of remaining loyal to the Constitution of 1824. It showed the lack of

realism in the thinking of Texans, who discounted reports warning of Santa Anna's approaching army while relying on rumors of great numbers of volunteers arriving from the United States and, more importantly, massive support by the Federals of the Mexican interior. Thus, the expedition proved a major factor in the events leading to the defeat of Texas forces at the battles of the Alamo, San Patricio, Agua Dulce Creek, Refugio, and Coleto-disasters that led to the Goliad Massacre.

The government failed because the men responsible for it lost sight of the welfare of Texas in their personal quarrels. The shortsighted Consultation placed the government in the hands of incompetent officials with opposing views and deprived Texas of the services of its ablest men, among them Stephen F. Austin, William H. Wharton, and Branch T. Archer, who were sent as commissioners to the United States, and Sam Houston, who was made commander in chief of a nonexistent army. The ad interim government was established after the

signing of the Declaration of Independence on March 2, 1836. In the next chapter, I'll discuss the actual Texas declaration of Independence. So until then, if you want more information on Texas History, visit the Texas State Historical Association. I also have two audiobooks on the Hidden History of Texas one which deals with the 1500s to about 1820, and the other one 1820s to 1830s. You can find the books pretty much wherever you download or listen to audiobooks. Links to all the stores are on my website <https://arctx.org>. So until next time, please tell your friends about the program, I'd appreciate it.

See y'all later, peace