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The Texas Revolution and Mexican-American War

INTRODUCTION

The Mexican-American War is not a famous war. Compared to the Civil War, the Revolutionary War, or either of the World Wars, it is unknown and unimportant to many Americans. And yet, the Mexican-American war was the first war the U.S. ever fought on foreign soil, and the first war after the Revolution where America was the aggressor. It won more land for America than any other war before or after it, pushing America towards the Pacific for the first time. It was a prequel to the more widely known Civil War, where many military veterans from the war with Mexico would go on to command both sides. Perhaps most importantly of all, it further divided the country in a time where differences over slavery were already tearing the nation apart. In several ways, it shaped the future of America, and by extension, the world. This war, fought against a newly born Mexican state, was ostensibly over a border dispute, but in reality, was reflective of a deeper political theme in American history: Manifest Destiny. This war gave the U.S. a training ground, allowing them to work out kinks in their military against a manageable opponent. This war cost Mexico a third of its land and left a deep mental scar upon the people's national consciousness, at the same time exposing their debilitating infighting and lack of unity. This war was, to say the least, an extremely important war and, contrary to popular representation, was not an effortless victory for the Americans. By virtue of its firstness, the land it won America, and the role it served for the forthcoming Civil War, the Mexican-American War was a momentous fight in American history.

To understand a war, one must understand why it was fought. The primary, driving cause for the Americans in the Mexican-American war was Manifest Destiny, the idea that the United

States was divinely destined to expand itself. Usually, proponents of this kind of foreign policy set reaching the Pacific ocean as a goal, espousing the benefits of a continental America spanning two oceans. The term itself was coined by John O'Sullivan, a Democratic columnist, in 1845, though the ideal itself goes back much further in American history. It starts with the Louisiana Purchase, organized by Founding Father Thomas Jefferson in 1803, where hundreds of thousands of square miles of Midwestern land was bought for the U.S. from France. In Jefferson's words, the "future destinies of the republic" depended on this western territory. Manifest Destiny rears its head again in the Monroe Doctrine two decades later, where James Monroe warns Europe not to interfere with American westward expansion in North American. Monroe was attempting to secure a niche, where, just like the European powers, America could conquer and colonize in line with the principles of Manifest Destiny. He believed that the U.S. could come to dominate the Western Hemisphere, both politically and territorially. Men like these set a precedent for American leaders in later eras, that American interests were decidedly westward. It was not a new concept for the American public, either. To them, the West conjured up an image of paradise and Eden-like luxury; it excited the masses and made politicians promoting expansionist policies very popular. Additionally, writers like Jesse Frémont, with accounts of the natural beauty of Californian lands, helped to popularize moving westwards. Indeed, Manifest Destiny was deeply ingrained in the American political environment of the mid nineteenth century. Yet, despite this popularity, the cause of Manifest Destiny did face some challenging opposition from within the U.S. government. In Congress, members of the Whig Party vehemently argued against expansionist policies, claiming that they existed soley to propogate slavery through the Union (the Whigs, as a sort of prequel to the Republican party,

opposed slavery and thus didnt want southern, slave approving states to be admitted into the Union). Several religoius figures and authors, like Mark Twain and David Thoereu, also opposed slavery, and thus Manifest Destiny as well. Regardless, Manifest Destiny was a powerful force that made Americans eye the Mexican's vast expanses of land in the West hungrily.

Mexico, on the other hand, was too busy coming to terms with its newly found states-hood to consider expansion. Since the country's independence from Spain in 1821, Mexico had been existing in a state of continuous civil strife. Quickly after the war of independence, Agustín Iturbide was named Emperor by conservative military groups. His rule was not to last, however, as the people revolted again after he tried to abolish the civilian congress that had been elected immediately after the war. Iturbide was forced into exile in Europe, and in his stead rose an internally divided republican government left to remedy the horrible finances of the nation. With its economy in shambles after the expulsion of the skilled, capital-holding Spainards and a lack of sector diversity, Mexico sunk deeper and deeper into debt. Military officers would frequently take the capital to try to negotiate foreign loans to stimulate the ailing economy. Amidst this backdrop of bankruptcy, two competing political factions emerged that further handicapped the nation: the Centralists and the Federalists. The conservative former favored a strong national government with authority over the states, with a national standing army to enforce it. The Federalists, on the other hand, wanted to decentralize the government and give significant autonomy to the states. They also advocated for a secular national government, in stark contrast to the Centralists' aims to make Roman Catholicism the official religion of Mexico. These two groups furiously contested seats of power: from 1824 to 1836 there were no less than 6 transfers of the presidency. Neither side was opposed to violent rebellion as a means to

displace the other. Weakened by partisan division and the dying economy, Mexico struggled within itself.

TEXAS REVOLUTION

A particular thorn in Mexico's side was its northern territory. Previously, in Spanish occupied Mexico, Americans had been allowed to settle in the northernmost provinces of Coahuila and Texas. Soon after, Spain was overthrown in the Mexican war for independence, but the policy persisted. The Southwest was largely empty, dry desert, inhabited by the native Comenche, Apache, and Navajo tribes. Settlers were frequently attacked, and with little natural resources, most Mexicans were hesitant to settle there. Mexico figured that by allowing "Anglos" (the term for the American immigrants) to settle there, a buffer zone between the dangerous Indians and Mexicans would be created, encouraging people to move there and protecting them from the frequent border raids conducted by the Indians. Their plan backfired. The Americans, instead of taking the harsh Indian land in western Texas, settled in the eastern parts, where the land was more fertile and safe, and failed to create any sort of buffer. Furthermore, the Anglos frequently didn't become citizens or Catholics, as they were theoretically required to do. With these problems in mind, and with an alarmingly large population of Anglos in Texas growing due to the extreme efforts of Texans like Stephen Austin (who had originally been granted huge spans of land by Mexico for American colonization), Mexico repealed their American immigration policy in 1830. Regardless, Anglos continued to immigrate to Texas illegally, and both they and many Tejanos (Spanish Texans) grew increasingly unhappy with Mexican tariffs, anti-smuggling laws, and the legal system. These grievances eventually increasingly caused unrest, and led to a series of altercations known as the

Anahuac disturbances. They led to the Battle of Velasco in 1832, where Texans successfully took a Mexican fort after authorities arrested civilians for suspicions of crimes. This, however, was not the start of the revolution, but a testament to the Anglo Texans' dissatisfaction with the Mexican government. Tensions were high, and any spark could ignite a flame.

That spark was Antonio López de Santa Anna. A skilled and ambitious military officer who had fought for independence and against both Spanish invasion and Emperor Iturbide, he was loved by the public and, as a federalist politician, promised greater autonomy to the states, making him popular with anti-centralist Texans. He, however, was two faced. Upon being elected president, he proclaimed himself the *cudillo* (dictator) of Mexico in 1834, replacing the constitution with his own and creating property requirements to vote to keep power in the hands of the aristocracy. His attitude toward provincial autonomy reversed, and Mexico became much less lenient with Texas. When he heard of some Texans' ambitions to become a U.S. state and the great unrest developing in the territory, he ordered troops to go to Texas and enforce Mexican law and order. The surge of troops into their territory did not sit well with the already angry Texans. A small dispute over a loaned Mexican cannon in the town of Gonzalez broke out, Texans fired on Mexican troops, and the Texas Revolution began on October 2, 1835. Stalling the Mexican demands for the return of their cannon long enough to get reinforcements, the Texan forces had surrounded Mexican General Perfecto de Cos in the night and, outmanned and outgunned, he surrendered. Victorious in this first "Battle of Gonzales" and the subsequent Grass Fight, the Texans united under the elected military leadership of Stephen Austin. They laid siege to San Antonio where General Cos had retreated. Taking houses one by one and digging trenches

to connect them, the Anglos eventually took the city, and by extension, had control of most of Texas.

Santa Anna was furious. The treacherous Americans, little more than pirates in his eyes, in Texas had defied him. He used his power as cudillo to raise an army of seven thousand men, and marched into San Antonio determined to get revenge and to squash the Revolution. Rather than retreat, the Texans stationed in San Antonio decided to stay and fight, to slow the army down and give Northern Texas a chance to prepare. Bunkering down in the Alamo mission, 150 men with 20 cannons between them were determined to hold off the Mexicans for as long as possible. This is by far the most famous battle of the Texas Revolution, featuring such famous names as Davy Crockett and James Bowie fighting to their deaths. In total, the defenders managed to keep the Mexicans at bay, under heavy bombardment and vastly outnumbered, for 12 days, falling on March 6, 1836. During the siege, on March 2, the Texans officially declared their independence from Mexico. The document, heavily based on the American declaration, espouses that “the Mexican people have acquiesced in the destruction of their liberty...they are unfit to be free, and incapable of self government”. It lists the Texans’ cause for grievance: the “military despotism” of Santa Anna, there being no right to a trial by jury, the lack of a public education system, the dissolution of provincial legislatures, and their forced conversion to Roman Catholicism. At the same convention, the Texan provisional government chose Sam Houston to head the army.

Meanwhile, the Mexican general José de Urrea was pursuing a series of successful military advances in southern Texas, winning the battles of San Patricio and Agua Dulce Creek. Emboldened, Urrea next set his sights on Goliad, where many Texans were stationed under the

command of James Fannin. Houston, upon hearing of the planned attack and wary of Urrea's might, ordered Fannin to retreat and fall back to the nearby city of Victoria. Fannin, for unknown reasons, delayed the retreat and stayed in Goliad for five days. In those five days, Urrea's men caught up and his scouts had spotted Fannin. Only hours behind, Urrea began the chase to hunt down Fannin's men. Luckily for the Mexican general, Fannin failed to grasp the urgency of his situation. In his march to Victoria, the colonel stopped for a full hour to let the army's oxen graze, forced his men not to leave any item or carriage behind, and chose to move through open plains rather than sheltering woods. The afternoon of that same day, the Mexicans caught up to and surrounded the Texans in open country, with reinforcements on the way. Low on supplies and outnumbered, Fannin and the army agreed to surrender, expecting to be taken as prisoners of war, with the usual military clemency offered to defeated armies. Santa Anna had a different plan for them. Santa Anna, enraged at the "perfidious foreigners" and a megalomaniac, with grandeur visions of what he could make Mexico into, offered no mercy. He ordered Urrea to kill everyone he had captured. Urrea protested, urging him to reconsider and allow the men to be prisoners of war. In response, Santa Anna ordered another commander, Jose Nicolas de la Portilla, to kill the 400 surrendered Texans. Portilla, torn between Urrea and Anna, chose to obey his superior. The majority were executed by firing squad on March 27. Those who survived the initial shots and tried to escape were hunted down and murdered with bayonets. Only a couple of skilled professionals were spared to work in the Mexican army, and approximately 10 managed to escape. James Fannin himself was the last to die. His final requests were to be shot in the chest, given a Christian burial, and have his watch sent to his family. The commander shot him in the face, buried him with the rest, and kept his watch.

After suffering a long string of losses in southern Texas, the new Texan general Sam Houston ordered a strategic retreat of all troops into the northeast. The Mexican forces, led by president Santa Anna himself, pursued. Moving northward, the general took every city and seaport he came across. A decisive battle was sure to come. With his forces together and roughly equal to the approaching Mexican Army, Houston knew that this was perhaps his only chance to strike first, fast, and be rid of *el presidente*. In his preparations, Houston received intelligence that Anna had crossed the San Jacinto river by a bridge at Lynch's Ferry - a bridge he would have to cross again to make any progress northward. After a small skirmish that had almost provoked the rest of the Texans into attacking, Houston encamped in a forest a mile from the bridge and waited for the Mexicans to come to him. After learning that the Santa Anna had crossed and was receiving reinforcements from General Cos across it, Houston dispatched a team to go and burn it, ensuring the enemy did not get stronger and that neither side could retreat in the soon-to-come battle. After a discussion with his military officers, Houston decided to surprise attack Santa Anna and his army. This was a risky move - all together the Texans had 900 soldiers, while Santa Anna had approximately 1,200. Nevertheless, Houston proceeded, scheduling for the afternoon of that same day - a traditional time for a Mexican *siesta*. Due to the nature of the sloped terrain, the Texan army was able to sneak right up to the resting Mexican force without detection. The battle commenced. Amidst cries of "Remember the Alamo!" and "Remember Goliad!", the full force of Texan revolutionaries charged, catching Santa Anna and his army completely off guard. The battle barely lasted 20 minutes: The Texans won.

The next morning, Houston sent out a search party to try to find Santa Anna. He was found shivering cold, hidden in the dirt and mud, dressed as a common soldier (they had been

able to identify him because Mexican soldiers insisted on calling him *el presidente*). The general captured, Texas forced him to sign the Treaties of Velasco on May 14, 1836, which consisted of two parts: public and private. To the public, Anna promised to end the war with Texas once and for all, that all Mexican troops would withdraw south of the Rio Grande, and all stolen property and prisoners of war would be returned. Texas agreed to let Santa Anna return to Mexico with all Texan troops at least 17 miles away at all times. In private, the Texans forced Santa Anna to agree to recognize Texan independence back in Mexico City, to order Mexican troops to leave from Texas, to welcome a Texan diplomatic mission in Mexico City, and to sign a later treaty of commerce that would set the border somewhere north or at the Rio Grande. There were some practical complications to the implementation of this second treaty, however. In his extended leave of absence, Santa Anna had been overthrown in Mexico City and the new government refused to accept the terms of the secret treaty he had signed - and thus continued to claim that Texas was just a wayward province. Even though there would be small skirmishes between the two sides in the years to come, the Treaties of Velasco had effectively just made Texas into a sovereign state. The Texan Revolution had been won.

INTERMISSION

The next step for the fledgling Republic of Texas was to be annexed into the Union. Texas, predominantly white Americans, who had based their Declaration of Independence off of the United States', were almost unanimous in their desire to join the Union. Unfortunately, the U.S. was not ready to admit them. The debate over slavery was still raging on, and Whigs claimed that the annexation of the new state was unconstitutional and would provoke a war with Mexico. On the second point, at least, they were right - the prevailing Mexican sentiment was

that annexation justified a war. Nevertheless, the primary issue was slavery - northern Whigs didn't want to upset the Congressional balance of power between free and slave states. Handicapped by Congress, the president in 1837, Martin Van Bueren, was not able to annex Texas. Throughout his presidency, Texas suffered border raids from the Mexicans and fear that Mexico would try to retake their "province" in another war continued to fester, strengthening the desire for protection from a much higher power. The next American president, William Harrison, was a Whig, and was opposed to the notion of Texan statehood. He, however, only lasted a month in office before he died of pneumonia, allowing the first transfer of power to the Vice President in American history: John Tyler. John Tyler, though a Whig, was an unusual one: a born-and-raised Virginian like his predecessor, but an ardent supporter of state's rights. He had, controversially, vetoed Whig legislation to create a federal National Bank, which had led to a failed movement to impeach him. It was under Tyler's presidency that, in 1843, nearly a decade after the Texan Revolution, the U.S. finally started to seriously consider annexation. This change in attitude was brought about by an alarming British conviction that the U.S. should not take Texas. Wary of the young nation's breakneck-pace expansion and of their institution of slavery, Great Britain had actively been increasing their prescence in Texan trade to counteract American influence. Though the relationship never caught on (Britain, a friend of Mexico, had aided them in the revolution, and refused to formally recognize Texan independence), Tyler and much of Congress was greatly alarmed at the prospect of such a nearby country becoming a satellite of such a world power. Tyler was nearing the end of his term, but nevertheless became an outspoken proponent of annexation. After some debate, Congress issued a joint resolution allowing Texas admission into the Union under some basic conditions. Britain, alarmed and

desperate, advised Mexico to make a deal to Teas: keep your sovereignty, and we will recognize your independence. The Texans didn't take it. Though hardened and skeptical from a decade of being overlooked and neglected by the U.S., they were still eager to join the United States of America. Texas signed the joint resolution, and were admitted into the U.S. as the twenty-eighth state on December 29, 1845, under the presidential administration of Democrat James K. Polk. In the words of the last Texan President Anson Jones, "The final act in this great drama is now performed; the Republic of Texas is no more."

James K. Polk, a fifty year old lawyer from North Carolina, had had no experience in federal government before. Mocked by Whigs for being an outsider, he labelled himself as the protégé of Andrew Jackson, the expansion candidate, a disciple of Manifest Destiny who would serve only one term and in it, "re-annex" Texas and "re-occupy" the disputed Oregon territory. He entered his presidency wholly determined to make good on those promises. In 1846, after much pressure and the threat of a third war between Britain and the U.S., Polk managed to bring about the Oregon Treaty, extending U.S. land in the Oregon territory up to the 49th parallel. Somewhat successful, Polk turned his attention to California, the acquisition of which would be the crowning jewel of his administration. Unlike Texas, mostly desert and cactus. California was lush, fertile, with a beautiful window on the Pacific ocean. And so, eager to take it, Polk sent New Orleans diplomat John Sidell to Mexico City to try and purchase California and anything else Mexico could offer for the price of $40 million dollars. Of course, this was not a deal any Mexican leader could actually make - selling half of your country would not be a good move for those who like their heads on their shoulders- and so Sidell was not allowed to negotiate. Polk, determined, ordered General Zachary Taylor to move an army between the Nueces River and the

River Grande (a region American and Mexico disputed), for Captain Robert Stockton to take a naval fleet to the coast of California, and for a blockade to be positioned at the mouth of the Rio Grande (an act of war under international law). This act of aggression prompted Mexican general Mariano Paredes to overthrow the president and assert that the territory was theirs. Further attempts at diplomacy from Sidell were rebuffed. The tension was high, tempers were rising, and again, after just a decade, the Southwest was dry tinder. A spark would be all it would take for war to erupt.

Once again, part of that spark was Antonio López de Santa Anna. Though exiled to Cuba and far removed from any semblance of power, he had a plan. Through a friend, he contacted Washington to let them know that Paredes was willing to sell parts of California and recognize the Rio Grande border. All they had to do, he said, was apply more pressure so Paredes would have a reason to contact them. This was a lie. In no way shape or form would the United States ever get either of those things from Paredes without a war. But by provoking Mexico and America to go to war, Santa Anna stood to gain - in the chaos he could make his return to Mexico City and proclaim himself *cudillo* once more. Truth be told, however, the war would have most likely started even without this provocation. On April 25, 1846, a couple days after the ten year anniversary of the end of the Texas Revolution, a group of Mexican cavalry attacked and killed a dozen Americans at Matamoros, just off the shore of the Rio Grande. President Polk made a speech to Congress, exclaiming that “Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil.” Two days later, after fierce and heated debate and dealmaking in Congress, the United States declared war on Mexico.

THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

Even before he heard of the declaration of war from Congress, General Taylor fought three battles with the Mexicans along the Rio Grande. Outnumbered, and hearing of Mexican general Mariano Arista's approach, Taylor took most of the troops from Fort Texas, where he was stationed, and left with them for Point Isabel for reinforcements and to protect the supplies he already had. After failing to take the fort, Arista pursued Taylor, meeting him on the plains of Palo Alto on May 8, 1846, just north of where the war had begun. The Battle of Palo Alto was anticlimactic. Mexico, broke and stressed, had artillery of the lowest caliber, with damp gunpowder and ineffectual cannonery. The grass battlefield had erupted in flames, and though both sides were uncertain at first, it quickly became clear that the Americans had won a sweeping victory. For every two dead Americans, there were ten dead Mexicans. Barely a bayonet had been dirtied. The next day, they fought again, and though the Mexicans put up a valiant effort, once again they could not overcome the superior technology of the Anglos. The Mexican army was forced to flee, and with their retreat marked the last battle in the war that was to be fought on "American soil"; the rest of them were to be fought below the Rio Grande. Both of these battles came before Polk would sign the actual War Bill on May 13. Polk, meanwhile, was left to devise a path for victory. He came up with a three pronged approach, consisting of Armies of the Center, the West, and Occupation. General John Wool's Army of the Center was to fight in Northern Mexico to keep the region under control, General Stephen Kearny's Army of the West was to campaign in New Mexico and California, and Taylor's Army of Occupation was to siege Mexico City and secure a peace treaty favorable to America.

After his defeat at Palo Alto, Arista and his men had slogged, starved and dehydrated, through the desert to the town of Linares in northwestern Mexico, a strategic position that would have opened up many courses of action for them. In Maramotos, Taylor and his men prepped for the coming campaign, trying to figure out its logistics. There was no shortage of men - fresh volunteers enlisted en masse, excited by the war effort. The problem was there was a lack of supplies for them. After all, the last major war the U.S. had fought was back in 1812, almost 30 years prior, and since then there had been only minor skirmishes with Indians. There simply had been no need to keep a standing army ready and supplied in that period when the money could be used for something else. The government was out of practice, so to say, in having a military. Even relatively simple things, like the logistics of ammunition and weapon distribution proved to be a huge challenge. Over the course of the war, the U.S. would get more and more practiced and efficient at these things - but in the beginning, it was quite a hurdle. Luckily for America, their opponent was not in state to capitalize on their shortcomings. The citizenry of Mexico, enraged at their embarrassment at Palo Alto, frequently rebelled against President Paredes and what they saw as an incapable government. A timid response from Mexico City only worsened the domestic situation in Mexico. Polk, seeing this unrest, thought it an opportune time to play his ace in the hole: Santa Anna. Remembering his promises to be friendly to the U.S. while in office, and his lust for power, Polk thought that the “Napolean of the West”, as Anna had taken to calling himself, would be so desperate to remain in power that he would not risk another loss at the hands of Americans, and so in June of 1846 Polk offered to let him go peacefully through his naval blockade. Santa Anna, however, was not quite ready to return just yet. With Mexico City in such a state of unrest as it was, it seemed unsafe to return at the moment. He did anticipate,

though, that a few more American victories would topple the government and make way for his welcome return to the Mexican Presidency.

Anna would not return to his country until the end of the summer. In the meantime, the Army of the West would meet with great success in California. The land was of particular interest to the public. The word California rang in the ears of Americans as Eden did - a land of heaven on Earth, a promised land. Jessie Frémont, writing about her and her husband's experiences exploring the region in 1842, played a large, contemporary role in fueling excitement over the territory. She and her husband both wrote the sequel, a book which depicted California as a virgin of sorts, a pristine land where Mexicans had little authority, ever uninhabited by man. In 1846, after the Mexican-American war had begun, James Frémont, who had been enlisted in the army, resigned his position to start a civilian rebellion in California. His militia of emboldened Anglos managed to expel the Mexican government from the Northern town of Sonoma on June 14, and, raising the Bear Flag, went on to establish a base of operation at San Francisco. His initial rebellion would be joined with official U.S. involvement in the form of Commodore John Stoat, who had been heading the naval fleet off the coast of California that Polk had ordered to pressure Mexico. Upon hearing the war had commenced, he sailed into Monterrey on July 7, and with little resistance landed on the mainland and proclaimed that California was a U.S. territory. Stoat fell ill shortly after, however, and his command shifted to Robert Stockton, a much harsher and ambitious man. Claiming that he would be the one to once and for all seize California for the U.S. He and Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie marched on Los Angeles with virtually no resistance. Had more sensible men been in charge of the city, that would have been that. But the two men were hotheaded and tyrannical, with no thought as to the

wellbeing of their governed. A rebellion began in Los Angeles, and the city was lost. It would be several months before General Stephen Kearny, commander of the Army of the West, would reclaim it.

Kearny had set out with his army on June 3. The plan was to take New Mexico and march onwards to California, where the navy would be there to help him. By the time August had rolled around, he had reached and taken Las Vegas after a small skirmish. The next stop was Santa Fe, where the General anticipated there would be resistance. The Mexican force, however, was extremely intimidated by the marching army and their general disbanded the men to let Kearny take the city peacefully. Kearny, triumphant, took the city without any shots fired, and drafted its constitution (much of which heavily influences the city even today). It was in Santa Fe that Kearny would remain and prepare for the next couple of weeks.

Taylor and the Army of Occupation, on the other hand, did not have it so easy. The army, from their initial position after the Battle of Palo Alto in Matamoros, had marched southwest. They eventually drew near the city of Monterrey, a strategic position near Mexican General Arista's recouping forces at Linares. On August 10 Taylor sent the first scouts to evaluate the fort and report back to him. 40 days later, he moved the Army of Occupation into view of the fort, preparing for a seige. The next morning, Taylor split the troops into western and eastern theatres, and attacked from both sides simultaneously. The fortifications were unusually strong for the Mexicans, with over 5,000 troops stationed in the city. Those troops, frustrated with Mexico's losses and seemingly constant retreating, were willing to fight to the death. Even then, the siege only lasted for a day before the western flank broke and Americans streamed into the city. Fighting hand-to-hand in the streets, Anglos slowly pushed the Mexicans further inward, until

they surrendered on September 24. The battle had been a bloody one. 800 Americans had been fatally injured or wounded, and though at least twice that many Mexicans had perished, it was a bittersweet victory. Between the Battle of Palo Alto and the subsequent Battle of Resaca de la Palma to the capture of Monterrey, five months had elapsed. What had been labeled a quick war against a weak and uncivilized opponent was taking much longer than anyone had anticipated.

Shortly before Monterrey was captured, a dark horse rode into Mexico City. Strapped into the saddle was the son of a small time, no-name, middle class army officer, who despite his heritage had risen through the ranks of the Mexican army through his military prowess and his determined perseverance. Strapped into that saddle was a man who had fought for his country's independence, fought against imperialism, fought against colonization, fought for the unity of Mexico against all odds. Strapped in that saddle was a man with great political aspirations, ambitions that lead his psyche through the deepest and most cruel parts of human nature, ambitions that lead him to declare himself dictator and to order the massacre of 400 innocents by firing squad. Strapped into that saddle was the proudest Mexican patriot, the "Napolean of the West", the father of a nation. On the dark horse rode Antonio López de Santa Anna into Mexico City.

President Paredes had been overthrown. Public anger over the state of the war had driven him out, and the citzentry clamored for their old hero to come back and save Mexico. Promising President Polk that he would use his power to sue for peace and sell the land to America, Santa Anna had been let through the U.S. naval blockade. Once in the city, he swiftly broke his promise. Espousing that a force twenty five thousand men strong was coming to drive the barbaric Americans out, he made preparations for a renewed war effort with him as head General

of the Mexican army. Polk was, needless to say, furious. But there was nothing he could do - Santa Anna was safely in his quarters thousands of miles away from the expansionist President. As soon as he could, Santa Anna began gathering the twenty five thousand he had bragged he had had, ready to fight the Americans and to win.

Meanwhile, on September 25, Colonel Alexander Doniphan, commander of the Army of the Center, was sent to northern Mexico to secure the area until Mexico had been defeated. His first act was to sign a peace treaty with the Indians and subdued Mexicans to ensure the area already conquered around Sante Fe remained safe. His next move was to squash all rebellion in the northern province of Chihuahua, a tall order, considering he would be outmanned in almost every battle there. But the pioneer-like, burly and strong Doniphan disciplined his men so thoroughly that they won with ease against vastly superior numbers. His feats were things of legends at the time. At El Paso, the Army of the Center, which had been marching for three days without water or tents, starving and dehydrated, routed the larger Mexican force and took the area. Months later, they would do it again: February of 1847 saw Doniphan's men conquer almost three thousand Mexican soldiers and armed ranchers in Chihuahua itself. As in Palo Alto, the main reason was firepower - Mexican artillery was vastly inferior to America's. But there is no doubt that Doniphan himself, and his discipline, is largely to credit for the stunning victories he won. By April, his campaign was finished, and General Taylor dismissed his men back to Missouri, successful and with honors.

The Californian campaign carried on. On October 6, 1846, Kearny on his way to California, encountered a friend of John Frémont who informed him of the great strides that had been made in the northern part of the state. Commandeering the friend to guide him and cockily

sending back to Taylor the majority of his artillery, Kearny continued to progress into the province until he ran straight into a large Mexican force being led by Andres Pico at Agua Caliente on December 2. The skirmish ended neutrality. Without the majority of their cannons, the U.S. had no advantage and performed unusually poorly, losing 22 soldiers to Mexico's two. Weak and wounded, Kearny floundered around the state for a few days before being saved by a squadron of 180 marines from Robert Stockton. Strength restored, Kearny marched on Los Angeles and faced little to no resistance in this anticlimactic final battle. After a brief controversy over who would govern the newly acquired territory - James Frémont, appointed by Stockton illegally, refused to step down - the Southwestern and Californian campaigns ended. America had won them with relative ease, much easier than the final battles of the war would be.

On the Mexican front, significant controversy had broken out between Taylor and Washington over an armistice the former had signed after the Siege of Monterrey. Wanting to rest and to gather his strength, Taylor had promised the Mexicans he would not move forward for eight weeks. Polk and Congress were upset, to say the least. They had promised the public a short war, and dreaded the prospect of Mexicans regaining their strength when, in their view, they could be speedily taken out now. So, independent of General Taylor, Washington drafted a new strategy. America would invade the coastal city of Tampico on the Gulf Coast, and from there go southwards to Veracruz, close to Mexico City. Unfortunately, the letter to Taylor informing them of their new plan was intercepted by Mexican authorities, who immediately sent all valuable supplies stationed in the area up to the nearby town of San Luis Potosí. A delay in communications would go on to make matters worse. Taylor's orders to take Tampico took until October 10 to reach him, making it appear to Washington that he was disobeying orders when his

message that he had signed an armistice came a day late. Furious, he ordered Taylor to stay in Monterrey, which Taylor did not do. He left on November 13 to the nearby city of Saltillo, in order to force the Mexicans to go on an offensive and weaken themselves. Tampico was taken peacefully the next day, as all troops and supplies had been moved to Potosí. Choosing someone who would be more loyal to orders, Polk appointed General Winfield Scott to oversee the important Siege of Veracruz that was coming up.

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