

THE PLAN OF CASA MATA

Generals Antonio López de Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria signed at Vera Cruz, on December 6, 1822, what was to become known in Mexican history as the Plan of Vera Cruz. Almost two months later, on February 1, 1823, at Casa Mata, another plan was issued by the officers of the forces opposing Santa Anna. As will be shown later, these two political programs are distinct; nonetheless historians have frequently treated them both as the work of Santa Anna and as being practically synonymous.¹ It is the purpose of

¹ For example, Herbert I. Priestley in *The Mexican Nation, a History* (New York, 1923, p. 255) says: "Then he [Santa Anna] returned to Veracruz, and pronounced in December against the Emperor. He was joined in January, 1823, by a number of old republicans including Guadalupe Victoria, who on February 1 enunciated their program under the Plan de Casa Mata." Also, William Spence Robertson in the *History of the Latin-American Nations* (New York, 1943, p. 451), states: "In December, 1822, a discontented military commander named Antonio Santa Anna started an insurrection. On February 1, 1823, with other military leaders, he signed at Casa Mata a proclamation which denounced imperial rule and declared that sovereignty resided in the people."

The most remarkable example of this misconception and what is also the probable source of subsequent confusion is to be found in José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente* (2 vols., Mexico, 1892), I, 183. In the introduction to Document 14, he says: "In the city of Veracruz and the headquarters of Casa Mata the brigadiers Don Antonio López de Santa Anna and Don Guadalupe Victoria on February 1, 1823, rose in insurrection, renouncing Iturbide as emperor and calling for a meeting of a constituent congress." But a reading of Bocanegra's Document 14 (*ibid.*, I, p. 191) reveals it to be the Plan of Veracruz of December 6, 1822, for the document ends as follows: "Veracruz, 6 de diciembre de 1822, segundo de la independencia y primero de la libertad.—Antonio López de Santa Anna.—Guadalupe Victoria.—Es copia.—Mariano Barbabosa, secretario."

Undoubtedly Bocanegra was under the impression that the two political programs were identical, for in his text, in discussing what he calls the Plan de Casa Mata, he refers, for its provisions, to this Document 14 (*ibid.*, I, p. 114).

Priestley has contributed further to this confusion. The Plan of Casa Mata did not demand the fall of the empire, did not mention a constitution, and did not say anything about the establishment of a republic. Yet one reads (Priestley, *op. cit.*, p. 255): "The Plan de Casa Mata enunciated a political program which demanded the fall of the empire, the establishment of a republic, and the convocation of a constituent Congress, and the framing of a Constitution."

Other historians have given this matter similar treatment: Tom B. Jones, *An Introduction to Hispanic American History* (New York, 1929), p. 370; Les-

this paper to show the difference in origin and content between the political programs enunciated in the plans of Vera Cruz and Casa Mata and to give the significance of the last-mentioned one.

The Plan of Vera Cruz was a product of the revolt of Santa Anna against his emperor, Agustín de Iturbide. In connection with his rebellion, Santa Anna, on December 2, 1822, proclaimed a republic. Realizing the need of a political program to gain adherents to his cause, he called upon Miguel Santa María² to draw up such a document.³

Four days later, on December 6, 1822, Santa María produced such a plan which contained seventeen main articles, to which were appended twenty-two additional ones in the form of explanations. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Plan of Vera Cruz is a lengthy, verbose, poorly organized document, which borrowed most of its clauses from the earlier Plan de Iguala.⁴ Besides the borrowed provisions,

ley Byrd Simpson, *Many Mexicos* (New York, 1941), pp. 219-220; Eugene C. Barker, *Mexico and Texas, 1821-1835* (Dallas, 1928), p. 27; Alcée Fortier and John Rose Ficklin, *Central America and Mexico* (Philadelphia, 1907), p. 304; Arthur Howard Noll, *From Empire to Republic* (Chicago, 1903), p. 95; Manuel Payón, *Compendio de la historia de México* (Mexico, 1880), p. 147; Ohland Morton, *The Life of General Manuel de Mier y Terán as It Affected Texas-Mexican Relations, 1821-1832* (Ph.D. thesis, University of Texas, Austin, 1939), p. 94.

² Miguel Santa María was a native of Veracruz, but in 1808, he went to Spain, where he remained until 1814, when he went to the United States. From there he joined Bolívar in Jamaica. He was elected to the constituent Congress of Cúcuta. In 1821, he was sent to Mexico as minister plenipotentiary of Colombia. He came into ill-favor with Iturbide, however, because of meetings being held in his house with the alleged purpose of overthrowing the empire and establishing a republic. Iturbide, therefore, had given Santa María his passport and ordered him to leave the country. Upon reaching Veracruz, he had delayed his departure.

³ Wilfrid Hardy Callcott, *Santa Anna the Story of an Enigma Who Once Was Mexico* (Norman, Oklahoma, 1936), p. 42; Carlos María Bustamante, *Historia del emperador D. Agustín Iturbide* (Mexico, 1846), p. 71; Ignacio Álvarez, *Estudio sobre la historia general de México* (6 vols., Zacatecas, 1869-1877), V, 81; Francisco Sosa, *Biografías de mexicanos distinguidos* (Mexico, 1884), p. 967; Vicente Riva Palacio, ed., *México a través de los siglos* (5 vols., Mexico, 1887-1889), IV, 86; Francisco Paula de Arrangoiz, *México desde 1808 hasta 1867* (4 vols., Madrid, 1871-1872), II, 134-135.

⁴ The Plan of Iguala, the result of conferences between Iturbide and Vicente

other clauses declared void all acts of Iturbide, stated that he should have to account to the nation for his misdeeds, and called for the restoration of the dissolved congress, which was to name a council to be recognized provisionally as the executive power and which was to draw up a constitution for the nation. The twenty-first of the explanatory articles declared that the conditions proclaimed by Santa Anna on December 2, after consultation with the provincial deputation of Vera Cruz, should be observed. These were that the three guarantees of the Plan of Iguala—independence, religion, and equality—should be sustained by the troops, that an armistice should be arranged with the Spanish general at San Juan de Ulúa, and that maritime trade with the Peninsula should be reestablished immediately.⁵

There was no mention of the establishment of the republic that Santa Anna had proclaimed four days earlier. Provision was made, however, that the restored congress, after having carefully examined the wishes of the provinces and the opinions of the wise men of the country and of writers, was

Guerrero in February, 1821, was proclaimed by Iturbide on February 24, 1821. Its twenty-four articles said that New Spain was independent of any other country and that her government should be a limited constitutional monarchy with Ferdinand VII as emperor. In case he refused the throne, one of his heirs should be the emperor. The Roman Catholic Church was to retain its privileges, including the *fueros* of the secular and regular clergy. A governing council was to be set up to govern until the emperor was crowned and to convoke a constituent congress, which should decide whether the governing council should continue or be replaced by a regency. The congress was to proceed at once to frame a constitution. In criminal matters the Spanish constitution was to remain in force until the new one could be made. There was to be racial equality and persons and property were to be respected and protected. Office holders were to retain their positions if they supported this program. An army called the Army of the Three Guarantees was to be created to uphold these provisions.

⁵ A copy of the Plan of Veracruz was attached to a letter from D. José Mariano Garduño to Iturbide, dated in Cuernavaca, February 2, 1823. This document is in the Hernández y Dávalos Collection, Expediente 15-1, Document 3,136, at the University of Texas. Also in the same collection, Expediente 15-7, Document 2,002, is another copy, "Plan del pronunciamiento en Veracruz y reformas que se le hicieron. Copia con letra de Hernández Dávalos. 2-6 de diciembre, 1822." The document is to be found printed in Bustamante, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-71; Riva Palacio, *op. cit.*, IV, 86-87; Emilio del Castillo Negrete, *México en el siglo XIX* (7 vols., Mexico, 1875-1882), XV, 334-343; José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente*, I, 183-191.

to declare the form of the government of the nation and to draw up a permanent constitution.⁶ Signed by Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria on December 6, 1822, this program won the support of both Guerrero and Nicolás Bravo, who escaped from Mexico City in January, 1823, and fled to the South, where they collected some followers. The revolt, although successful at first, was soon brought under control. Santa Anna was decisively defeated at Jalapa and fled precipitately back to Vera Cruz. The imperialist forces under Epitacio Sánchez defeated the forces of Bravo and Guerrero. By the latter part of January, the revolt had been restricted to the Vera Cruz region, where Guadalupe Victoria and Santa Anna were being closely besieged by General José Antonio de Echávarri and other leaders of the imperialist forces.

While Iturbide was hourly expecting word of the complete subjugation of Guadalupe Victoria and Santa Anna, an event occurred which completely changed the military and political situation. The groundwork for this was laid in the Masonic lodges of the country by such men as Miguel Ramos Arizpe and Mariano Michelena.⁷ These two men, and many others, had never been in favor of a Spanish monarch for Mexico and, as members of the Spanish Cortes where the idea was first proposed, had opposed it. On the same grounds, they had also opposed the monarchical provisions of the Plan of Iguala. The Masonic lodges of the time had become the center of republicanism and consequently of opposition to Iturbide.⁸

These republicans had been waiting quietly for the opportune moment to launch their campaign. While they had waited, they had been busy spreading their ideas through the

⁶ Articles 6 and 17 of the Plan of Veracruz.

⁷ Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico* (5 vols., Mexico, 1849-1852), V, 659; Luis Pérez Verdía, *Historia particular del estado de Jalisco* (3 vols., Guadalajara, 1910-1911), II, 204; Niceto de Zamacois, *Historia de Méjico desde sus tiempos mas remotos hasta nuestros días* . . . (18 vols., Barcelona and Mexico, 1877-1882), XI, 455.

⁸ Lorenzo de Zavala, *Ensayo histórico de las revoluciones de Méjico* . . . (2 vols., Paris, 1831-1832), I, 139, 215; Bustamante, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Alamán, *op. cit.*, V, 659, 653; Álvarez, *op. cit.*, V, 84-85.

press and through the lodges. By January of 1823 they felt that the moment for action had arrived. A carefully worded program would accomplish their aims without betraying their real purpose. The Plan of Casa Mata was such a program. It was so well phrased that it deceived even Iturbide, yet it contained all that was necessary to assure its creators of the fulfillment of their dreams—a republican form of government and even more, a federal republic. But the brief, simple words of the plan did not give a hint of such dreams.

Thirty-four officers and men of Iturbide's troops besieging the rebellious forces of Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria in Vera Cruz signed and issued the new document at Casa Mata on February 1, 1823. Among the signatures were those of the commanding officer, General José Antonio de Echávarri, and of the generals Luis de Cortázar and José M. Lobato.⁹ It was issued by the besieging forces, not by the besieged; hence it did not bear the signatures of Guadalupe Victoria, Santa Anna, Nicolás Bravo and Vicente Guerrero, as is generally believed.¹⁰

Unlike the long, repetitious Plan of Vera Cruz, that of Casa Mata consisted of eleven brief articles. They were:

Art. 1. It being indisputable that sovereignty resides exclusively in the nation, Congress shall be installed at the earliest possible moment.

Art. 2. The convocation shall be made on the basis prescribed for the first ones.

Art. 3. In view of the fact that among the deputies who formed the disbanded Congress, there were some who because of their liberal ideas and firmness of character won public appreciation, while others did not fulfill properly the confidence placed in them, the provinces shall be free to reëlect the former, and to replace the latter with individuals more capable of the performance of their arduous obligations.

⁹ A copy of the Plan of Casa Mata with the names of the signers is to be found in Miguel M. Lerdo de Tejada, *Apuntes de la heroica ciudad de Vera Cruz* (3 vols., Mexico, 1850-1858), II, 262; Zamacois, *op. cit.*, XI, 450-451, in a footnote cites the names of the signers also.

¹⁰ Bocanegra, *op. cit.*, I, 114; Priestley, *op. cit.*, p. 255; Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 478; Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 219; Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 370; Noll, *op. cit.*, p. 95; Paynó, *op. cit.*, p. 147; Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Art. 4. As soon as the representatives of the nation shall be united, they shall fix their residence in the city or town that they think best in order to begin their sessions.

Art. 5. The bodies that compose this army, and those that may adhere to this plan in the future, shall swear to sustain at all costs the national representation and all its fundamental decisions.

Art. 6. The leaders, officers, and troops who are not willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the country shall be allowed to go where they wish.

Art. 7. A committee shall be named to take copies of the plan to the capital of the Empire to place them in the hands of His Majesty the Emperor.

Art. 8. Another committee with a copy [shall go] to Vera Cruz to propose to the governor and official bodies there what has been agreed by the army, to see if they will adhere to it or not.

Art. 9. Another [shall be sent] to the chiefs of the bodies of this army which are besieging El Puente and are in the cities.

Art. 10. Until an answer is received from the Supreme Government concerning the agreement by the army, the provincial deputation of this province shall be the one to deliberate on administrative affairs, if the former resolution should meet with its approval.

Art. 11. The army shall never harm the person of the Emperor, since it considers that his position shall be decided by the national representation. The former shall station itself in the cities, or wherever circumstances demand, and shall not be broken up on any pretext until the Sovereign Congress so disposes, since the latter shall be sustained by the army in its deliberations.¹¹

Not a hint of a republic is to be found in the eleven articles. Nor is there any demand that Iturbide pay for his misdeeds as in that of Vera Cruz. On the contrary the Casa Mata program specifically states that "the Army shall never harm the person of the Emperor. . . ." His fate was to be left to the decision of the National Congress.

The real significance of the Plan of Casa Mata is not to

¹¹ This plan is printed in Lerdo de Tejada, *op. cit.*, II, 262-263; Zavala, *op. cit.* (Mexico, 1845), I, 164-165; Zamacois, *op. cit.*, XI, 449-450. It is also printed in Bustamante, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-88 and Riva Palacio, *op. cit.*, IV, 88; but in each of these two works Article 7 as given above is omitted and Article 11 is divided into two articles. Since a copy was placed in the hands of Iturbide, this writer is inclined to believe that Article 7 as included above was in the original plan.

be found, however, in the omission of the word republic nor in its leniency toward Iturbide. It contained two other far more important provisions. First, it did not call for the restoration of the dissolved Congress as did the Plan of Vera Cruz, but it called for the convocation of a new Congress. This provision had doubtless a double purpose. The old Congress had not coöperated with Iturbide, nor had it pleased those who were opposed to Iturbide. Therefore both the enemies of Iturbide and the friends of Iturbide would welcome the calling of a new Congress, for each group would hope to place in the Congress its own candidates. This provision was all the more subtle in its appeal to Iturbide's supporters in that it even provided that the new Congress should be elected on the same basis as Iturbide himself had prescribed for the first one. Surely Iturbide's followers could find nothing wrong with the calling of a new Congress under such conditions! With such an argument the real authors of the plan no doubt won the approval of Iturbide's loyal officers, such as Echávarri, Lobato, Cortázar, and even Luis Quintanar. So deceptive was it that Iturbide himself did not at once recognize its real significance, but instead sent commissioners to meet with the signers to find out how their differences might be satisfied.

The creators of the plan had hoped for just such a reaction. All they needed was a little time to arouse the country by appealing to the provinces. Such time they gained while Iturbide's commissioners conferred with the signers of Casa Mata.

Articles 8 to 10 contain the other significant point—one that generally has been overlooked. They provided that a copy of the program should be sent to the chiefs of the army and that the provincial deputation should assume administrative control of the province. Accordingly a copy was sent on February 1 to the provincial deputation in each of thirteen provinces and to every military leader in the nation, and each was urged to adopt the plan. Quite significantly each did adopt it almost at once!

The immediate adherence of the provinces to it is not surprising, for it was a provincial plan, which appealed to the long-suppressed desire of the provinces for greater participation in their own affairs. If, according to Article 1, the provincial deputation of Vera Cruz was to assume administrative control of the province of Vera Cruz, naturally each province that adopted the Plan of Casa Mata felt that its provincial deputation would assume administrative control of its respective province. And, as each one did adopt the program, the provincial deputation announced that it was taking charge of the political and economic affairs until a new central government could be established for the nation.

The deputation as a political and economic institution had its inception in the provincial juntas that sprang up in Spain in 1808 to withstand Napoleon. It was legalized by the Spanish constitution of 1812, at which time Mexico was allowed six deputations. The return of Ferdinand VII to the throne in 1814 and his subsequent annulment of the constitution did away with these corporations. They were restored in 1820, however, when Ferdinand was forced to re-proclaim the Constitution of 1812. At this time Miguel Ramos Arizpe and Mariano Michelena, who were members of the Spanish Cortes, succeeded in winning approval for the establishment of a provincial deputation in each of the twelve intendancies of Mexico and one in the Eastern Interior Provinces; and these bodies were promptly established.

This institution was recognized also by the regency of the empire in a decree of November 17, 1821, Article 14 of which stated:

The provincial deputations now established shall be continued and besides they shall be established immediately in the intendancies that do not have them; and when Congress divides the territory of the empire, it shall establish others that may be necessary to the happiness of the people.¹²

By 1822, the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, Guadalajara, Guanajuato, Michoacán, México,

¹² *Colección de órdenes y decretos de la soberana junta provisional gubernativa, y soberanos congresos generales de la nación mexicana* (Mexico, 1829), I, 35.

Puebla, Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, Yucatán, Sonora and Sinaloa, and the Eastern Interior Provinces each had its respective provincial deputation.

These bodies were composed of a president, who was the political chief of the province, the intendant, and seven individuals elected by the people of the province.¹³ While this organization was created primarily as an economic body, a mere reading of its duties causes one to realize the inherent possibilities for the development of a feeling of provincial independence as an outgrowth of this institution. It was to see that municipal governments were established as the constitution provided; that suitable measures were taken for the preservation of public health; that the necessary public works were built—including public buildings, hospitals, schools, roads, etc.; that the people of the provinces coöperated in supplying men and equipment for the military protection of the province; that taxes were fairly distributed in the province and were properly collected and used;¹⁴ and that primary schools were established in all places with a population of over a hundred people.¹⁵ Furthermore, it was to take measures to encourage and develop agriculture and commerce in its province.

Such was the character of these provincial bodies that took charge of the government of the provinces upon the proclamation of the Plan of Casa Mata. The deputation of Puebla proclaimed the plan on February 14, and assumed control of its province.¹⁶ Guadalajara took similar action on February 26-27.¹⁷ Querétaro, on the same day pronounced adherence,

¹³ *Constitución política de la monarquía española* (Cádiz, 1812), Article 326, p. 41.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Article 335, pp. 42-43.

¹⁵ *Colección de los decretos y órdenes generales expedidos por las córtes ordinarias de los años de 1820 y 1821 en el segundo período de su diputación, que comprende desde 25 de febrero hasta 30 de junio del último año* (Madrid, 1821), VII, 364.

¹⁶ Alamán, *op. cit.*, V, 664; Bancroft, *op. cit.*, IV, 795; Antonio Carrión, *Historia de la ciudad de la Puebla de los Angeles* (2 vols., Puebla, 1897), II, 324-325.

¹⁷ *Disolución del congreso mexicano por el voto de los pueblos, y manifiesto de la junta provincial de Nueva Galicia* (Impreso en Guadalajara y reimpressa en

and its provincial deputation took charge of the province. At once it repealed the special taxes and forced loan that had been levied on the province and abolished the use of paper money. It also reorganized completely the financial administration of the province.¹⁸ During the first days of March, San Luis Potosí adhered to the plan and its provincial deputation, besides assuming control of the province, removed two men from office because they did not approve the program.¹⁹ Guanajuato and Michoacán had taken similar steps by March 8. The provincial deputation of each assumed control of its respective province and immediately repealed the decrees concerning paper money, special taxes, forced loans, and the militia.²⁰ Yucatán and Campeche proclaimed adherence on March 4, and the provincial deputation became the supreme authority in that province.²¹

In several of the provinces a provisional governing junta was set up. Such was the case in Oaxaca and in the Eastern Interior Provinces. Oaxaca adopted this form of government with the approval of its provincial deputation. The political chief and commandant of the Eastern Interior Provinces, however, was loyal to Iturbide; and rather than adopt

México en la oficina liberal a cargo del ciudadano Juan Cabrera año de 1823), in Hernández y Dávalos Collection, Expediente 16-4, Document 3,301; *Manifiesto de los gefes que dieron el fausto grito de libertad en Guadalajara* (Guadalajara, 1823) in Spanish Archives ("Béjar Archives"), printed documents, not decrees, March, 1823, the University of Texas; Luis Pérez Verdía, *Historia de Jalisco* (Guadalajara, 1910), II, 202-203; Bustamante, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

¹⁸ *Manifiesto que al supremo poder ejecutivo, hace de sus operaciones la diputación provincial de querétaro por el tiempo que tuvo el gobierno administrativo de su provincia* (1823) in Spanish Archives, the University of Texas.

¹⁹ Manuel Muro, *Historia de San Luis Potosí* (3 vols., San Luis Potosí, 1910), I, 340, 343.

²⁰ Domingo Chico, secretary of the provincial deputation of Guanajuato, to the provincial deputation of Querétaro, March 10, 1823, manuscript No. 3211, Expediente 16-2, in Hernández y Dávalos Collection at the University of Texas; *Sin leyes no hay libertad ni hay leyes si no se observan o sea manifiesto que hace la diputación provincial gubernativa de Michoacán a sus habitantes sobre los acontecimientos de estos últimos días* (Mexico, 1825).

²¹ *Gaceta del gobierno supremo de México*, I, No. 49, April 12, 1823, pp. 184-185; and *ibid.*, I, No. 50, April 15, 1823, p. 189, reproduce the official acts of the provincial deputation. Also see Eligio Ancona, *Historia de Yucatán desde la época más remota hasta nuestros días* (4 vols., Barcelona, 1889), III, 262-263.

the Plan of Casa Mata, he asked that he be allowed to leave the province. A provisional governing junta was set up at Monterrey until the provincial deputation could be called together to assume control of the province, which it did in April, 1823.

By the middle of March, 1823, Mexico, instead of being a united country, was broken up into virtually autonomous provinces. Each had announced its complete separation from the central government at Mexico City, and each had set up an independent provincial government. Thus Iturbide was helpless. His empire had been reduced to Mexico City, and even the provincial deputation of Mexico had adopted the Plan of Casa Mata.²² With all the provinces against him and virtually all the army against him, there was nothing that he could do to subdue the provinces.

Significantly enough, there was nothing that the Congress which Iturbide restored could do. The Plan of Casa Mata had let down the bars to the provinces, and in marched federalism, which had been nurtured in the provincial deputations. Once the provinces had had a taste of freedom, they refused to consider any other form of government but the federalist.

The restored first Congress recognized this fact. It made a desperate attempt to hold back the on-rushing tide of federalism by decreeing on May 21, 1823, that the proposed scheme for a federal constitution²³ should be published and circulated.²⁴ The restored Congress hoped that the provinces would be satisfied with the form of government suggested in this document and thereby a truly federal government for Mexico would be forestalled. This scheme, though saying

²² *Terremoto de la libertad*, a printed sheet, No. 3182, Expediente 16-1 of Hernández y Dávalos Collection at the University of Texas.

²³ This scheme was drawn up by a congressional committee composed of José del Valle, Juan de Dios Mayorga, Dr. Mier, Lic. José Mariano Marín, Lorenzo de Zavala, José María Jiménez, José María de Bocanegra, and Francisco María Lombardo. It was presented to the Congress on May 16, 1823, and was later published with the title *Plan de la constitución política de la Nación Mexicana* (1823).

²⁴ *Águila mexicana*, Núm. 41, May 25, 1823, pp. 156-157.

that it was providing for a federal republican form of government, provided instead for a highly centralized one. The provinces were not deceived, and their protests were strong enough to force the Congress to accede to their wishes and to call a new Congress as the Plan of Casa Mata had provided. When the new Congress met in November, 1823, it promptly set about establishing the federal government that the Plan of Casa Mata had made inevitable.

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