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Interview between  
Alexander Siddell Mackenzie and Santa Anna,  
two letters dated, Havana, June 7, 1846,  
and U. S. Brig. Truxton, July 11, 1846.

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From a typewritten copy of Letters of  
James A. Polk, 1816-1849, Vol. 4, pages  
385-398, and 400-407, in  
The New York Public Library  
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Compared by  
A. B. & M. L. G.

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[page 385.] Alex. Siddell Mackenzie to James Buchanan.  
[This copy is much fuller than Mackenzie's other  
letter of the same date of which we have  
also a copy.]

Duplicate

Havana 7 June 1846

Sir,

I have the honour to state that I  
arrived here on the evening of the 5. July,  
and early on the 6. saw the U. S. Consul,  
and delivered to him your letter. Mr. Camp-  
bell readily and cordially complied with  
your request to assist me in the business  
with which I was charged. He immediately  
conducted me for the purpose of introduction  
to General Santa Ana's house. General  
Santa<sup>na</sup> had given orders not to be disturb-  
ed. I left my card, writing on it that  
I bore a message from the President of  
the United States and would return at 8  
P. M. I did so, and was courteously re-  
ceived, I had only read to him your  
letter to the Consul, stating that I possess-  
ed the confidence of the President, and the  
copy of the order which had been given  
by Commodore Boscawen to allow him to pass,  
and added a few words of the President's

message, when he told me that he had visitors in the [page 386] adjoining room, but would be glad to see me at [the following morning, when he would talk with more freedom.

I waited upon him accordingly this morning and remained with him three hours. I began by reading to him a paper which I prepared on the evening of the day on which I received the President's instructions, and subsequently submitted to Mr. Slidell who was present, to be verified by his recollections. The following is a copy of the paper thus translated to him:

"The United States having taken up arms to resist the attack of the intrusive Military Government of General Paedee in Mexico, are determined to prosecute the war with vigour, until full redress is obtained for the wrongs which their citizens have received from Mexico through a long series of years.

But the President of the United States is desirous, as he stated in his message to Congress, recommending the

recognition of the existence of the war thus begun by Mexico 'not only to terminate hostilities speedily, but to bring all matters in dispute between his <sup>ex maj 38737</sup> government and Mexico, to an early and amicable adjustment.'

To attain this object the President would hail with pleasure the overthrow of the existing military despotism of General Paredes, which has sprung into power by cherishing hostility among his countrymen against the United States, and which has no hope for support but in the prolongation of the war; to be replaced by a government more in harmony with the wishes and true interests of the Mexican people, which can not be allowed by a prolongation of the war; a government sufficiently enlightened and sufficiently strong to do justice to foreign nations and to Mexico herself.

Believing that General Santa Ana best unites the high qualifications necessary to establish such a government, and that as a well-wisher of his country he cannot desire the prolongation of a disastrous war, the President of the

United States would see with pleasure his restoration to power in Mexico. In order to promote as far as he is able such a result, he has already given orders to the squadrons blockading the Mexican ports, [page 388.] to allow General Santa<sup>na</sup> freely to return to his country.

The President of the United States will agree to no armistice with General Paedez, until he himself proposes to treat of peace, and gives satisfactory guarantees of his sincerity. With General Santa Ana, should he return to power in Mexico, the President would consent to the suspension of active hostilities by land, still maintaining the blockade of the Mexican coasts, on either ocean, provided General Santa Ana announces his readiness to treat. In that event an American Minister clothed with full powers, will be at hand to proceed at once to Mexico, and offer General Santa Ana terms for the settlement of every existing difficulty between the two countries.

These terms will be liberal; measured less by the power of the United States, by the comparative weakness of

Mexico in existing circumstances, by the rights which conquest and the usage of nations might justify, than by a sense of their own magnanimity. As at present advised the President might demand no indemnification for the expence of the war. Having obtained full [page 389] recognition of the claims due for spoliation on his aggrieved countrymen—, he would be prompted to pay liberally for the establishment of such a permanent geographical boundary between the two countries as would effectually tend to the consolidation of both.

Portions of the northern territory of Mexico consist of unappropriated lands or of tracts thinly peopled; partly already by natives of the United States. These portions of her territory, probably at this moment in the military possession of the United States, Mexico in the adjustment of such a treaty will be invited to cede for an ample consideration in ready money, which will serve to restore her finances, consolidate her government and institutions, and building up her power and prosperity, tend to protect her against

further encroachments, and secure her that station among the republics of the new world, which the President of the United States desires to see her occupy; and which he believes will alike contribute to the greatness and happiness of Mexico, and of the United States.

Such objects being happily obtained the animosities [page 290.] between the two countries being buried with the conflict in which they have been engaged, the President would hope to see a beneficial intercourse of friendship and commerce grow up between them, to be perpetually augmented with the lapse of years; and with no other rivalry between them, - than that of a noble competition in the cause of civilization, and in doing honor to their common name of Republics.

General Santa Ana received the message of the President with evident satisfaction, and expressed his thanks for the order that had been given with regard to the Gulf Squadron, - permitting him to return to Mexico. He spoke with deep interest

his interview with General Jackson in Washington, and of the manner in which that venerable man had himself raised in the bed of sickness on which he was extended, to greet with cordiality a brother soldier in distress; and seemed duly to estimate the high and noble qualities, which distinguished him. He spoke also of the kindness he had received from Mr. Forsyth and of the favourable impression that gentleman [page 391] had made on him. He remarked that if he was disappointed in his hopes of returning to his country; if monarchy should be established there, or if it should remain a prey to anarchy, he intended to settle permanently in Texas, and becoming a citizen of the United States, share with his children the destinies of our country. He dwelt with apparent frankness on his regrets for the errors of his past administration of the affairs of his country, and on his intentions should he be again restored to power to govern in the interests of the masses, instead of parties, and classes. Among the measures of reform which he contemplated



was reducing the wealth and power of the clergy, and the establishment of free trade. He showed me a letter which he had just received from an influential friend in the City of Mexico, urging his speedy return, and giving a lamentable picture of the conflict of parties in his unhappy country. In the course of our conversation as to the nature of the boundary we would require, he spoke of the Nueces, as having always been the boundary of Texas, and enumerated the various states, portions of which lay to the north [page 392] of the Rio Bravo. I told him that neither the President nor the people of the United States would ever consent to any line north of the Rio Bravo, which was a large river, indicated by nature as a suitable boundary between two great states; that I was unacquainted with the precise views of the President, further than they might be in conformity with the general sentiment of the country, as to the extent of the cession Mexico would be required to make. That the popular sentiment would look for a line, which, starting from

a given point on the Rio Bravo, would run due west to the Pacific along a parallel of latitude, so as at least to take in the port of San Francisco in California. That in general terms we should retain what would be deemed sufficient to give us a permanent boundary, from what we had already conquered; but that in doing so we would not avail ourselves, like other great nations, of the rights of conquest, but from a sense of magnanimity, and for our own satisfaction, as well as to conciliate the friendship of Mexico, we would pay liberally for whatever we might retain. In reply to an enquiry I made of him, he informed me [page 393] that no commissions for privateers had been issued by the Mexican Government, of whose movements his correspondence kept him fully informed. Such a measure of annoyance had been considered by the existing government, but it had been deemed impracticable.

Subsequently to, or during the continuance of this conversation in part, he drew up the following note of what he desired to communi-

late in reply to the President. This I copied at his request and read over to him to see that it corresponded word for word with the original, which he then destroyed.

"Señor Santa Ana says: that he deplors the situation of his country; that being in power, he would not hesitate to make concessions rather than to see Mexico ruled by a foreign prince, which the monarchists are endeavoring to introduce ("Elevate", rather "raise up"); that being restored his country, he would enter into negotiations to arrange a peace by means of a treaty of limits; that he especially prefers a friendly arrangement to the ravages of war which must be calamitous for his country; that although the republicans of Mexico labour [page 394.] to recall him and place him at the head of the government, they are opposed by the monarchists, headed by Paredes and Bravo: that he desires that republican principles should triumph in Mexico, and that an entirely liberal constitution should be established there; and this is now his programme: that if the government of the United States shall demand his patriotic services, he offers

to respond with such a peace as has been described. He desires that the mediation of England and France may not be accepted; and that every effort should be directed towards promoting his return to power in Mexico, by protecting the Republican party. To attain this object he considers it necessary that General Taylor's army should advance to the city of Saltillo, which is a good military position \* compelling General Paredes to fight, as he considers his overthrow easy; † and this being [page 345] effected General Taylor may

\* On asking him at this point if Monterrey was a good Military position he said it was not.

† He remarked to me at this point: "Que Taylor le festeja bien!" literally, "let Taylor feast or entertain him well" -- meaning "follow him up" "keep him going". He added that Paredes was not brave. I told him that the opinion concerning Paredes in the U.S. was that he was weak minded and wrong headed, but impetuous and brave. (continued on next page)

advance to San Louis Potosi, which movement will compell Mexicans of all parties to recall Santa Ana.

General Santa Ana also desires that the greatest secrecy be observed concerning these communications, and that they be only communicated by the bearer so far as may be necessary; since his countrymen not appreciating his benevolent intentions to free them from war and other evils might form a doubtful opinion of his patriotism. That all the American cruisers should be directed under the strictest injunctions of secrecy not to impede his return to Mexico. He likewise enjoins that the people of the towns occupied by the American army should not

He said that in a battle which he named, but which I have forgotten, Sureda being his aid-de-camp him himself in a thicket, from which he had drawn him with reproaches I know not how far allowance should be made for personal hatred in receiving this statement, though the words were given, and the scene described with particularity.

be maltreated, but their hatred should  
 [page 376] be excited.<sup>x</sup> He considers it important  
 to attack Ulloa, and judges that it  
 would be best first to take the city,  
 whose walls are not strong: the disembarkation  
 of three or four thousand men  
 would effect it easily.<sup>z</sup> He considers  
 important the occupation of Tampico, and  
 wonders that it has not been effected,  
 since it might be so easily done. The  
 climate is healthy in October and con-  
 tinues so until March. Finally he de-  
 sires that his good name may be  
 protected by the newspapers of the United  
 States, and that they represent him as

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<sup>x</sup> I told him that it might be in harmony  
 with our political sentiments to protect the  
 republican party, but opposed to our national charac-  
 ter to oppress any one. I told him what had  
 been, and would continue to be, the conduct  
 of our army.

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<sup>z</sup> At my request he named October as the  
 proper month for this service, and the  
 beach, without cannon-shot, as the proper  
 place of disembarkation.

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the Mexican who best understands the interests of his country, and as the republican who will never compromise with the monarchists, nor ever be in favor of foreign and European intervention. He says that it will be well not [page 397.] to blockade the ports of Yucatan, as he counts upon that state, being in communication with its authorities; and perhaps he will transfer himself to that point, if circumstances prove favourable."

The military suggestions contained in General Santa Anna's note seemed to me of so much importance that in order to save time, so valuable in war, I suggested to him the propriety of their being at once communicated to General Taylor, to be used by him, if he should deem them important, within the limits of his orders and discretionary powers. He asked if General Taylor was reserved and incommunicative. I replied that all I knew of him was in common with the public, from his recent acts, and the written reports in which he had made them known to the government, which proved him not only to possess the highest

qualities of a commander, but to be a man of prudence, moderation and reserve. He admitted that his reports strongly conveyed this impression, and thought favourably of my proposition to proceed at once to the head quarters of our army. This though not contemplated by my instructions I have determined to do. [page 398.]

If I have made a mistake and exaggerated the importance of this information, I hope that an excuse may be found in my motive, which was by every means in my power to render service to my country.

I have the honor to be very respectfully,

Your most obedient

Alex. Siddell Mackenzie.

Hon. James Buchanan  
Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Rec'd Aug. 3.



Compared by  
G. B. + M. L. G.

17.

Page 400. Alexander Sidell Mackenzie to James Buchanan.  
U. S. Brig Truxton. At sea, 11 July, 1846.

Sir

I had the honor to address you from Havana on the 7 instant, but unavoidably wrote in so hurried a manner as to omit some parts of the conversation with General Santa Ana which may have interest for the government. This deficiency I have now the honor to supply, by giving a more extended form to my letter in the accompanying copy, and also to transcribe the message from the President, which, to avoid omission or mistake, I read over to General Santa Ana in my second interview with him; and which may have value, as embodying the instructions I received from the President, and what I said in his behalf. I offered that he should make notes of the main points proposed to him by the President; but he said he understood the communication perfectly, and declined doing so.

To avoid the embarrassment of saying anything to Mr. [page 401,] Campbell of my interview with General Santa Ana, I veiled myself in the recent affliction in

his family to take leave of him by letter, and to thank him for his good offices. He came to see me on the morning of the 9, as I was about embarking. He said the British Consul had called to see him the day before, and stated that he had seen General Santa Ana, after I left him, who had told him what had passed in our interview. I abstained from enquiring the purport of what the British Consul had gleaned, to avoid rendering my own incommunicativeness more ungracious. You can judge whether General Santa Ana was likely to have informed the British Consul what he had written to be submitted to the President. If the State Department desires information on this subject it can obtain it from Mr. Campbell. From obvious reasons it seems proper that General Santa Ana should not be unnecessarily approached on the part of our government, lest he should be discredited among his countrymen, or subjected to odious suspicion. He remarked to me that he had accounted for my visit to the friends who were with him on the evening of the 6 by

[Page 402] saying that he had known me in the United States. He spoke also of the difficulty of communicating with Mr. Campbell, who had spoken to him, through the medium of an interpreter, and in the presence of General Almonte.

That General Santa Ana should maintain friendly relations with England through the Consul is obviously politic, England being so powerful by sea. Her busy and interfering disposition would prompt her to place him under obligations, by affording him the use of a British vessel of war, to carry him to his country, if it could be done without offence to the United States, which for a weightier object than this England would be unwilling to risk. He visited the British Brig Daring on the afternoon of the 8. and was received with a salute. ~~So also he may be willing to conciliate the friendship of France. He is unquestionably on good terms with the Captain General of Cuba. It was even rumored that he was about to return, in this vessel to Mexico, as he has for some time been believed to be preparing to de-~~

part, from the circumstance of his having given away his game cocks. In like manner he may attempt to conciliate [page 403] the friendship of France. He is also unquestionably on good terms with the Captain General of Cuba, who on a recent occasion, when a messenger of Santa Ana for Vera Cruz, was sent back from the British steam packet, when without the Moro, because he had no passport from the Mexican Consul, immediately dispatched a Spanish brig of war to carry the messenger to his destination. It should be remarked that the Captain General, who is absolute in Cuba, has the power to prevent Santa Ana's return to Mexico. With the Captain General therefore, as with the British and French Consuls, he doubtless pretends to favor the project of introducing a crowned head into Mexico; a project worthy of crowned heads, but most unworthy, from its impracticability, to be entertained by enlightened ministers; but which yet appears to be not wholly abandoned.

Of Don Antonio de Luna he, as he is represented, subtle, intriguing, and faithless;

and is such disposed to keep terms with, and make use of all parties, the question occurs, when and with whom if ever, is he in earnest? This may perhaps be best answered by another question: [page 404.] What country has the most power to forward or thwart his views for his own aggrandizement by holding a predominant control over the destinies of his country? Undoubtedly the United States, by their proximity, by their power, and by the war, commenced by Mexico, which they are successfully waging against her. He may be an honest, though not wholly disinterested, republican, from a belief that only a republic is possible in Mexico. He may well be a Mexican loving his country, as the subtlest and most interested doubtless do, be honestly opposed to a war with the United States, because he has the wisdom and experience to know that a war with the United States will be the more calamitous, the more it is prolonged. He may have discernment to foresee that these views will ere long become those of other Mexicans, and that a peace party will develop itself among them, and blend itself with

the republican party to oppose the monarchists and those who are for war with the United States. Whatever therefore may be his personal sentiments towards us, the very subtlety ascribed to him must enable him to comprehend that it is the part of wisdom in his present [page 405] position rather to endeavor to guide the irresistible progress of events for his country's good and his own advancement, than to be overwhelmed in the attempt to oppose them.

For these reasons even more than the evidence of earnestness which his manner strongly conveyed, I believe in the entire sincerity of his views and intentions as imparted in his note for the President. By that note he has placed himself in the President's power; and if restored to power, with our aid, as far as it has been asked and can be given, his own interests and those of his country will prompt him to keep his promise, and conclude a peace with the United States, on the terms to which he has thus agreed.

With a view to facilitate the

gratification of his wish that he might be favourably spoken of in our papers, as the Mexican best acquainted with the interests of his country and as an uncompromising republican, who opposed to intervention in her affairs, I asked him if he had a copy of any history of his life, from which I might prepare a sketch, to 1. page 406, be forwarded to the government, should it think proper to use it. He said he had not, but sent to a countryman living near him for a proclamation, from which information concerning him might be obtained. Whilst I was writing for this document at his request, a visitor arrived at the door, and he suggested the propriety of my withdrawing, as he was much observed by his countrymen. This object could easily be effected, if desired by the government, by seeking favourable information concerning him in the various works on Mexico, of which the following occur to me: Ward's 'Madame Calderone', 'Linsletts', Brantz Meyer's, Thompson's, and one able summary of Mexican politics since the revolution by

George Folsom, published some years ago by Bartlett and Welford in New York. A sketch reduced from these to the required brevity, published at a distance from the capital, might subsequently be extensively copied.

It may be not wholly without interest for the government to know that General Santa Ana appeared in excellent health and condition, strong and active, notwithstanding his mutilation, and capable of enduring [page 407] great fatigue. He had the air of a man of forty well preserved: though the length of time that he has been prominent in Mexican affairs, makes it probable he is much older.

I have the honor to be very respectfully  
Your most obedient

Alex. Sidell Mackenzie.

Mr. James Buchanan

Secretary of State

Washington.

(Endorsed:) Received August 3.