

## Accounts of the U.S.-Mexico War

### **Document A**

U.S. historians refer to this event as "The Mexican War," while [Mexicans] prefer to use the term "The U.S. Invasion"...

...Mexico asserted from 1836 to 1845, perhaps a bit inflexibly that the secession of Texas was illegitimate, and it reaffirmed its right to reincorporate this part of its territory by any means necessary, including the use of force... Let it be said in passing that Mexico's position was very similar to that adopted by the U.S. government when it faced the problem of the succession of its southern states years later.

...the U.S. proposal included in the instructions given to envoy John Slidell did not have much to offer in terms of negotiations. Those instructions not only included the demand that the Río Grande serve as the Texas border when, in fact, the Nueces River had always been defined as such, but also a demand for the cession of the territories of New Mexico and California...The Slidell mission was...used to force the Mexican government into tacitly recognizing the annexation of Texas and the cession of the disputed territory.

... Scarcely a week after Slidell received his credentials and began his trip back to the United States, the troops commanded by General Zachary Taylor arrived at the Río Grande, across from the city of Matamoros, thus occupying the territory in dispute and increasing the possibilities of a confrontation.

...Mexico defended its territory and if at any time its position was belligerent [contributing to war], it was belligerent in the defense of national security and for the preservation of international legal order....the armed conflict between Mexico and the United States from 1846 to 1848 was the product of deliberate aggression and should therefore be referred to as "The U.S. War Against Mexico."

### **Document B**

Many Americans in Mexico had lost their property or had been injured because the Mexican government could not keep order. Mexico had paid some of the claims of these Americans but stopped such payments when Texas was admitted to the Union. That event brought the two nations to the verge of war. The people of Texas declared that their territory extended as far south and west as the Río Grande. The region which they had actually settled, however, was not so large. As soon as Texas entered the Union, the United States sent an army under General Zachary Taylor to take up a position on the north bank of the Río Grande with orders to hold the country for the United States.

Meanwhile, President Polk developed a plan he thought would solve the whole matter to the satisfaction of both Mexico and the United States. Polk knew that the vast region which now includes California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and part of Colorado contained very few Mexicans...Polk offered to buy that broad and almost empty country for a good price and also to relieve Mexico from paying any more of old claims of Americans

against the [Mexican] government. The government of Mexico, though poor, was too proud to sell.

### **Document C**

In 1845, Congress admitted Texas as a slave state, in spite of Northern objections to the spread of slavery. However, Mexico still claimed Texas as its own. Mexico angrily viewed this annexation as an act of war. To make matters worse, Texas and Mexico could not agree on the official border between them. Texas claimed the Rio Grande, a river south of San Antonio, as its southern boundary. Mexico insisted on the Nueces River as the border of Texas...Many thousands of miles of territory were at stake. Mexico said it would fight to defend its claim. Hoping to settle the dispute peacefully, Polk sent John Slidell, a Spanish-speaking ambassador, to offer Mexico \$25 million for Texas, California, and New Mexico. But Slidell's diplomacy failed.

Believing that the American people supported his expansion plans, Polk wanted to force the issue with Mexico. He purposely ordered General Zachary Taylor to station troops on the northern bank of the Rio Grande. This river bank was part of the disputed territory. Viewing this as an act of war, Mexico moved an army into place on the southern bank. On April 25, 1846, a Mexican cavalry unit crossed the Rio Grande. They ambushed an American patrol and killed or wounded 16 American soldiers.

### **Document D**

In 1845, with the almost unanimous consent of its citizens, the Republic of Texas was annexed by the United States. This was the underlying cause of the war. The problem was that Mexico objected to annexation, holding that Texas was still part of that country, even though Texans had fought and won their independence nearly ten years earlier and had been formally recognized as a sovereign nation by the United States, Great Britain, France, and other countries.

Some historians seek to blame the United States for the war but it was clearly the fault of Mexican leaders such as Mariano Paredes, whose unwillingness to concede the loss of Texas and whose refusal to negotiate with the United States in respect to the independence of Texas and its border pushed the two nations to the brink of war.

### **Document E**

[The U.S.-Mexico War] was an instance of a republic following the bad example of European monarchies, in not considering justice in their desire to acquire additional territory.

...[American] colonists paid very little attention to the supreme government, and introduced slavery into the state almost from the start, though the constitution of Mexico did not...sanction that institution. Soon they set up an independent government of their own, and war existed...The occupation, separation and annexation were, from the inception of

the movement to its final consummation, a conspiracy to acquire territory out of which slave states might be formed for the American Union.

## **Document F**

The prosperous development of the American Union further encouraged the... acquisition of larger territory...the rich, fertile and extensive province of Texas excited their greediness. The government made itself the agency of these desires and first proposed to Spain and then to Mexico to purchase that territory.

These offers having been rejected, the American government resorted to a more perfidious [deceitful] policy. It defended the insurrection of the settlers [of Texas] against the Mexican government.... Texas, having made itself free... the United States annexed it in such an outrageous manner that our minister in Washington, Don Manuel E. Gorostiza, asked for his passport and left the United States.