Introduction

Texas's fight for independence from Mexico was an uphill battle from the very beginning. Texians were outnumbered and outmatched by the much more powerful Mexican military, and the province was plagued by quarrels within its own provisional government. Its indecisiveness and questionable military pursuits led Governor Henry W. Smith to disband the council. In response, on January 10, 1836, the council voted to impeach him and appointed an interim governor, but Smith defiantly held his post. This political turmoil occurred during what is widely considered the turning point of the revolution: the siege and fall of the Alamo Mission in present-day San Antonio.

After the Mexican army abandoned the Alamo in 1835, Texians took over the outpost, but government and military leaders could not agree on its fate. General Sam Houston ordered Col. James Bowie to strip its resources and destroy it so the fort could not be used by Santa Anna's advancing troops. Bowie, following the advice of Lt. Col. James C. Neill, disregarded this order, citing the fort's strategic importance, and instead began to fortify it. By the end of February 1836, Mexican forces had closed in on the Alamo.

Smith, a longtime supporter of Texas independence, issued this call to arms in February and, weeks after he had been suspended, signed it as "Governor": "Fellow-citizens, I call upon you as your executive officer to 'turn out;' it is your country that demands your help." Volunteers went to the Alamo, but their numbers were few. The fort ultimately fell to Santa Anna's troops on March 6, 1836.

Smith continued in politics, serving as the first treasurer of the new Texas Republic and then as a one-term congressman in the House of Representatives in Washington DC. He was struck by gold fever in 1849 and left Texas for California, where he died in 1851.

Excerpt

TEXAS EXPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF TEXAS,

The enemy are upon us! A strong force surrounds the walls of San Antonio, and threaten that Garrison with the sword. Our country imperiously demands the service of every patriotic arm, and longer to continue in a state of *apathy* will be *criminal*. Citizens of Texas, descendants of Washington, awake! arouse yourselves!! the question is now to be decided, are we to continue as freemen, or bow beneath the rod of military despotism. . . . Fellow-citizens, I call upon you as your executive officer to "turn out;" it is your country that demands your help. He who longer slumbers on the volcano, must be a madman. He who refuses to aid his country in this, her hour

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of peril and danger is a traitor. All persons able to bear arms in Texas are called on to rendezvous at the town of Gonzales, with the least possible delay armed and equipped for battle. *Our rights and liberties must be protected*; to the battle field march and save the country.

Questions for Discussion

Read the introduction and study the document. Then apply your knowledge of American history to answer the following questions:

- 1. Identify the following: Henry Smith, the Alamo, James Bowie, Sam Houston, and Santa Anna.
- 2. Did Henry Smith exceed his authority when he urged his "Fellow-Citizens of Texas" to defend the Alamo? Why or why not?
- 3. What arguments did Henry Smith employ in his attempt to persuade Texians to defend the Alamo?

Image

TEXAS

XPECTS EVERY MAN TO DO HIS DUTY.

FELLOW-CITIZENS OF TEXAS,

threaten that Garrison with the sword. Our times their numbers. Let us shew ourselves worthy to be free, and battles is on our side, and victory awaits us. we shall be free. Our brethren of the Uni- Confidently believing that your energies votion to liberty, unparalleled in the annals your efforts will be ultimately successful. of men, offered us every assistance. We have arms, ammunition, clothing and provisions; all we have to do, is to sustain ourselves for the present. Rest assured that

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT SUCCORS will reach us, and that the people of TEXAS. of the United States will not permit the chains of slavery to be rivetted on us.

The enemy are upon us! A strong force Fellow Citizens, your garrison at San Ansurrounds the walls of San Antonio, and tonio is surrounded by more than twenty Will you see them country imperiously demands the service of perish by the hands of a mercenary solevery patriotic arm, and longer to continue diery, without an effort for their relief? They in a state of apathy will be criminal. Citi- cannot sustain the seige more than thirty zens of Texas, descendants of Washington, days; for the sake of humanity, before that awake! arouse yourselves!! The question is time give them succor. Citizens of the east, now to be decided, are we to continue as your brethren of the Brazos and Coforado, freemen, or bow beneath the rod of military expect your assistance, afford it, and cheek despotism. Shall we, without a struggle, the march of the enemy and suffer not your sacrifice our fortunes, our lives and our lib- own land to become the seat of war; without erties, or shall we imitate the example of our your immediate aid we cannot sustain the forefathers, and hurl destruction upon the war. Fellow-citizens, I call upon you as heads of our oppressors? The eyes of the your executive officer to "turn out;" it is world are upon us! All friends of liberty your country that demands your help. He and of the rights of men, are anxious specta- who longer slumbers on the volcano, must tors of our conflict; or deeply enlisted in our be a madman. He who refuses to aid his cause. Shull we disappoint their hopes and country in this, her honr of peril and danger expectations? No; let us at once fly to our is a traitor. All persons able to bear arms arms, march to the battle field, meet the in Texas are called on to rendezvous at the foe, and give renewed evidence to the world, town of Gonzales, with the least possible that the arms of freemen, uplifted in defence delay armed and equipped for battle. Our of their rights and liberties, are irresistible. rights and liberties must be protected; to the "Now is the day and now is the hour," that battle field march and save the country. An Texas expects every man to do his duty. approving world smiles upon us, the God of

ted States have, with a generosity and a de- will be sufficient for the occasion, and that

I subscribe myself your fellow-citizen, HENRY SMITH, Governor.

Henry W. Smith, "Texas Expects Every Man to Do His Duty," February [28], 1836 (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC03230.01)