

# Joseph Welsh: A British *Santanista* (Mexico, 1832)\*

WILL FOWLER

*Abstract.* Joseph Welsh was the British Vice Consul in the port of Veracruz at the time of the uprising of 1832 by General Antonio López de Santa Anna against the government of Anastasio Bustamante. Contravening the orders of his superiors, who reiterated the view that it was his obligation to observe the strictest neutrality in the conflict and not interfere in Mexican politics, Welsh found himself supporting Santa Anna and the rebels. As a result, at the end of March, Bustamante's administration demanded that he be removed from office. The British Minister Plenipotentiary, Richard Pakenham, acquiesced. This article provides a narrative of the events that led to Welsh's forced resignation and explores what they tell us about British diplomacy in Mexico during the early national period. It also analyses Welsh's understanding of the revolt and his views on Santa Anna, providing some insights, from a generally ignored British perspective,<sup>1</sup> into Santa Anna's notorious appeal and politico-military measures.

## *British foreign policy in nineteenth-century Latin America*

According to D. C. M. Platt, in the context of Latin America during the greater part of the nineteenth century and before 1885, 'non-intervention in the internal affairs of foreign states was one of the most respected principles of British diplomacy; and force, while often called for in the protection of British subjects injured by government action abroad, was rarely and only exceptionally employed for the promotion of British trade and

Will Fowler is Reader in the Department of Spanish at the University of St Andrews.

\* The research for this study was made possible thanks to a research grant from the British Academy, a grant from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland and a travel grant from the University of St Andrews. It has been written with fond memories of the six months I spent with my family, on research leave (July–Dec. 1999), in a house built on the Camino Antiguo a Coatepec, in a part of Xalapa that was once the very Rancho Buena Vista that belonged to Joseph Welsh. It was the realisation, whilst researching Santa Anna's activities in Xalapa, in the Archivo Histórico Municipal del Honorable Ayuntamiento de Xalapa, that there had been another British *santanista* living in Buena Vista, that inspired me to keep a track of his actions. A preliminary version of this study was presented as a paper at the Manchester Latin American Seminar Series, University of Manchester in April 2001.

<sup>1</sup> Although no studies have been written specifically about British supporters of Santa Anna, one study does exist about Prussian *santanistas*; see Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, 'Soldados alemanes en las huestes santanistas,' *Jahrbuch für Geschichte von Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Lateinamerikas*, vol. 25 (1988), pp. 415–36.

investments'.<sup>2</sup> For Platt, the view that British foreign policy in the nineteenth century was determined by the formula 'trade with informal control if possible, trade with rule when necessary,' did not stand up to examination.<sup>3</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi supports Platt's view when he states that British colonialism in Latin America was almost imperceptible since it was founded 'on an indirect hegemony that eschewed confrontation and operated through economic pressure'.<sup>4</sup> Like Halperín Donghi, most of the general histories of Latin America in the last ten years present British influence in the region, during the early national period, in terms of economic and mercantile rather than military or political dominance.<sup>5</sup> Yet Rory Miller notes that, although 'there has been no overall reappraisal since 1968, the cumulative effect of detailed case studies is to raise doubts about Platt's interpretation'.<sup>6</sup> The main problems with Platt's view lie in the fact that it relied mainly on diplomats' writings and paid too much attention to Foreign Office policy formulation, rather than its implementation, in Latin America. It ignored a reality in which the ambiguities of Foreign Office policy could excuse the use of gunboat diplomacy.<sup>7</sup> It did not take into account that the threat of

<sup>2</sup> D. C. M. Platt, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade: Some Reservations,' *The Economic History Review*, vol. XXI, no. 2 (1968), p. 297. See also by D. C. M. Platt, *Finance, Trade, and Politics in British Foreign Policy, 1815–1914* (Oxford, 1968), *The Cinderella Service: British Consuls Since 1825* (London, 1971) and *Latin America and British Trade 1806–1914* (London, 1972). Platt persuasively argues that there is little evidence that the British government sought to establish political hegemony over new regions for the purposes of trade. Also see James Dunkerley, *Americana. The Americas in the World, around 1850* (London, 2000), pp. 305–13, for a lively discussion of British 'restraint' in Latin America.

<sup>3</sup> J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade,' *Economic History Review*, vol. 6 (1953), pp. 1–15.

<sup>4</sup> Tulio Halperín Donghi, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*. Edited and translated by John Charles Chasteen (Basingstoke, 1993), p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (Harmondsworth, 1992); Peter Bakewell, *A History of Latin America* (Malden and Oxford, 1997); Lawrence A. Clayton and Michael L. Conniff, *A History of Modern Latin America* (Fort Worth, 1999); Benjamin Keen and Keith Haynes, *A History of Latin America* (Boston and New York, 2000); John Charles Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire. A Concise History of Latin America* (New York and London, 2001); and Will Fowler, *Latin America 1800–2000* (London, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Rory Miller, *Britain and Latin America in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London & New York, 1993), p. 48. Also see Zara Steiner, 'Review Article: Finance, Trade, and Politics in British Foreign Policy, 1815–1914,' *The Historical Journal*, vol. 13, no. 3 (1970), pp. 545–52, in which she questions Platt's interpretation noting that 'often action favouring trade in general involved some degree of political intervention and control which the Foreign Office accepted. Did the Victorian diplomat stationed in a remote post really make a clear distinction between 'official' and 'unofficial' action and between 'commercial' and 'political' concessions? [...] There was a large intermediate area which fell between what local agents could do and what the foreign office would veto,' p. 547.

<sup>7</sup> The policy of 'non-intervention' was accompanied by another that defended the right to 'protect British subjects and properties' abroad. In the midst of a civil conflict, determining whether the British warships anchored in the region had to stick to the 'non-intervention' ideal or act on the basis that British subjects and properties were at risk, was not always easy.

intervention was enough, in many cases, to force Latin American governments to agree to British demands. It played down the real extent of Britain's interference in the domestic politics of Argentina, Brazil, Central America, Chile and Uruguay.

It is, in fact, difficult to ignore the extent to which British diplomats did meddle in the politics of the River Plate region.<sup>8</sup> According to James Scobie, it was not until the unification of Argentina in 1862 that British diplomats became 'observers of rather than mediators in the political scene'.<sup>9</sup> The same can be said for Brazil and Uruguay, where Britain's use of gunboat diplomacy was a regular feature before 1885.<sup>10</sup> According to Miller, regarding Argentina and Brazil in the 1840s: 'diplomats, consuls and naval officers became deeply involved in internal politics, in the Plate due to the chronic political instability of Uruguay and Buenos Aires' claims to control shipping on the river, and in Brazil because of the slave trade'.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, John Mayo's study of Anglo-Chilean commercial relations (1851–86) suggests that the same could be said for British involvement in Chile. Stephen Henry Sullivan, British chargé d'affaires and consul general in Chile (1850–53), 'endeavored both to be neutral, and to keep Britons neutral'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless he 'followed a hard-line policy that in the name of protecting British interests in practice gave maximum support to the government, short of outright intervention'.<sup>13</sup> Confirmation of the view that gunboat diplomacy, political meddling and economic pressure were far more common than is suggested by Platt<sup>14</sup> may be seen in Lord Palmerston's openly expressed belief in teaching non-compliant regimes a lesson. As he stated in 1850, when referring to China, Portugal and South America, 'these half civilised governments [...] all

<sup>8</sup> The British invasions of Montevideo and Buenos Aires (1806–1807); British diplomatic intervention during the Argentine-Brazilian War (1825–28); the use of British warships off the coast of Argentina, with the seizure of Las Malvinas in 1833; British military intervention in the River Plate (1843–46), serve as examples of British involvement in the region. In terms of the behaviour of the British diplomatic corps in Buenos Aires, John Henry Mandeville who served as Minister Plenipotentiary in the Argentine Federation (1836–45), was a notorious supporter of *El Restaurador*. The servility with which he treated Juan Manuel de Rosas would be bitinglly captured in José Mármol's classic romantic-cum-political-thriller *Amalia* (1851).

<sup>9</sup> James Scobie, 'Los representantes británicos y norteamericanos en la Argentina, 1852–1862,' *Historia* (Buenos Aires) 6: 23, p. 166.

<sup>10</sup> See Peter Winn, *Inglaterra y la Tierra Purpúrea. A la búsqueda del imperio económico (1806–1880)* (Montevideo, 1998), p. 42.

<sup>11</sup> Miller, *Britain and Latin America*, p. 54.  
<sup>12</sup> John Mayo, *British Merchants and Chilean Development 1851–1886* (Boulder & London, 1987), p. 69. Mayo gives several examples of how Sullivan warned Britons in Chile to remain neutral and that if they did not listen to his advice they would be responsible for their own safety and would forfeit any claims upon their own government. See pp. 69–70.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> According to Platt, 'For the first half of the nineteenth century, the British impact on, and influence in, Latin America is easily exaggerated,' *Latin America and British Trade*, p. 39.

require a dressing down every eight to ten years to keep them in order. Their minds are too shallow to receive any impression that will last longer than some such period and warning is of little use. They care little for words and they must not only see the stick but actually feel it on their shoulders'.<sup>15</sup> Although, the British Foreign Office did not support one government or another *openly*,<sup>16</sup> or finance rebellions or send its troops to the region in the same fashion as did the USA,<sup>17</sup> Miller reminds us that, 'to a Latin American minister, with a knowledge of his own country's history and events elsewhere, the consuls' power to summon cannons appeared a reality'.<sup>18</sup> As was expressed in an 1820 Spanish foreign policy survey, British foreign policy was viewed with great mistrust, since 'all that it lacks in good faith, it more than makes up for in its mercantile spirit'.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the doubts that have been raised about Platt's interpretation, the case of Mexico (c. 1821–c. 1855) would appear to substantiate the main tenets of his standpoint. Miller's view that 'the examples of [Richard] Pakenham in Mexico, [Frederick] Chatfield in Guatemala, or successive ministers in the Plate [...] suggest that officials participated in domestic decision-making to a much greater extent than their despatches to London imply', is inaccurate regarding British political involvement in Mexico.<sup>20</sup> The belief in non-intervention, at least during the first four national decades (1820–1860), was strictly adhered to in the case of Mexico.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, in the 1820s and

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Miller, *Britain and Latin America*, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> I am referring here to US interventionism in the region, which was far more forceful: Mexican–American War (1846–48), William Walker's intervention in Nicaragua (1855–56), Hispano-Cuban-American War (1898), US occupation of Cuba (1898–1902), US intervention in Panama (1903), US occupation of Puerto Rico (1898–), Nicaragua (1912–33), Haiti (1915–34), Dominican Republic (1916–24).

<sup>17</sup> The most striking exception is that of Frederick Chatfield, whose activities as British Consul in Central America (1837–52) led to the frequent use of gunboat diplomacy off the Mosquito coast of Nicaragua. Chatfield's actions were atypical in the way that he openly endeavoured to support Guatemala's conservative caudillo Rafael Carrera. All dates of years of service in the British diplomatic corps are taken from S. T. Bindoff, E. F. Malcolm Smith and C. K. Webster, *British Diplomatic Representatives 1789–1852* (London, 1934).

<sup>18</sup> Miller, *Britain and Latin America*, p. 59. As noted in Winn, *Inglaterra y la Tierra Purpúrea*, p. 43, 'la mayoría de las advertencias preventivas pretendían alertar a Montevideo que Londres la responsabilizaría por cualquier daño de los intereses británicos y exigiría su compensación'.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Michael P. Costeloe, 'Spain and the Latin American Wars of Independence: The Free Trade Controversy, 1810–1821,' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 2 (1981), p. 233.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, *Britain and Latin America*, p. 59.

<sup>21</sup> As can be seen in Michael P. Costeloe, 'The Extraordinary Case of Mr. Falconnet and 2,500,000 Silver Dollars: London and Mexico, 1850–1853,' *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 261–89. Until the 1862 Tripartite Intervention, the Foreign Office refused to back the claims of British bondholders and rejected proposals for the use of force. See also Michael P. Costeloe, *Bonds and Bondholders. British Investors and Mexico's Foreign Debt, 1824–1888* (Westport and London, 2003).

1830s many British businessmen who had established themselves in Mexico after independence shared the British diplomats' view, that it was imperative to observe the strictest neutrality in all internal affairs.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the British-owned Real del Monte mining company, the enterprise's executives 'admonished members of the English staff to conduct themselves properly, to refrain from meddling in local or national politics, and to respect the religion of the Mexicans'. On two occasions in the late 1820s and once in 1834, when *pronunciamientos* were launched from the vicinity of Real del Monte, 'the firm instructed staff to remain politically neutral,' and to 'remain quietly in their respective quarters' while the revolts took place.<sup>23</sup> Discussing the activities of the British consuls/merchants on Mexico's West Coast between 1821 and 1855, John Mayo concludes that the most successful were those who despite their 'conscious Britishness and occasional aggressive use of [their] nationality, [...] depended more on accommodation to prevailing circumstances than on changing them'.<sup>24</sup>

The story of Joseph Welsh certainly serves to confirm Platt's view. The British chargé d'affaires and minister plenipotentiary in Mexico, Richard Pakenham (1827–43), and his consul general, J. O'Gorman, wasted no time in removing him from his role as vice consul in Veracruz the moment he started to support Santa Anna's revolt in January 1832. However, his story is also worthy of study for the light it casts on Santa Anna. As I will show, Welsh's readiness to assist Santa Anna, the admiration he professed toward the caudillo and his subsequently gained benefits and status as one of Xalapa's more respected citizens offer insights that help us understand Santa Anna's success as a politician, particularly in his home province of Veracruz.

### *Antonio López de Santa Anna*

The early national period was first and foremost an 'age of proposals'. An extensive range of ideological proposals was conjured up in a quest for a legitimate constitutional framework that could both guarantee stability and ensure an improvement in basic living conditions. The intensity that characterised the political debate meant that this was as much an age of political

<sup>22</sup> This is important since most diplomats were merchants/businessmen as well as consular officials. See Platt, *The Cinderella Service*, p. 19. As noted by Mayo, with regard to Chile, 'The first consul general was appointed in 1823, together with two vice-consuls, and consulates were opened at Coquimbo in 1824 and Concepción in 1827. The appointment of such essentially commercial officials as consuls indicated the British understanding of the relations between the two countries,' *British Merchants and Chilean Development*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Robert W. Randall, 'British Company and Mexican Community: The English at Real del Monte, 1824–1849,' *Business History Review*, vol. 59 (Winter 1985), pp. 632–33; Robert W. Randall, *Real del Monte: A British Mining Venture in Mexico* (Austin, 1972).

<sup>24</sup> John Mayo, 'Consuls and Silver Contraband on Mexico's West Coast in the Era of Santa Anna,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 19 (1987), p. 409.

inquiry and experimentation.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the end of the colonial tie to traditional monarchical authority opened up a vacuum that was occupied by the military/regional strongmen/chieftains of the newly formed republics.<sup>26</sup> Juan Manuel de Rosas, Andrés de Santa Cruz, Francisco de Paula Santander, Rafael Carrera, Dr Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, Ramón Castilla, Fructuoso Rivera and José Antonio Paez were all caudillos who came to power during these years, sharing with Santa Anna a number of noteworthy qualities. With the notable exception of Dr Francia, they were famous before they rose to power because of their military prowess. Unlike the civilian politicians who might have been more suitable for the presidency, they were national heroes even before they moved into the national palace. Personality cults, perpetuated in *fiestas* and ceremonies, further enhanced their popular status.

Max Weber's concept of 'charismatic rule' or 'charismatic domination' is worth recalling when considering caudillos like Santa Anna. The young Spanish American republics underwent, to a greater or lesser extent, the kind of turmoil and instability that resulted in a willingness on the part of the community to trust inspired and inspiring individual leaders, rather than the impersonal bureaucracy of legal (constitutional) authority:

The 'natural' leaders in times of spiritual, physical, economic, ethical, religious or political emergency were neither appointed officials nor trained and salaried specialist 'professionals' [...], but those who possessed specific physical and spiritual gifts which were regarded as supernatural, in the sense of not being available to everyone.<sup>27</sup>

Given that, 'Charismatic domination in the "pure" sense [...] is always the offspring of unusual circumstances – either external, especially political or economic, or internal and spiritual, especially religious or both together. [And that] it arises from the excitement felt by all members of a human group in an extraordinary situation and from devotion to heroic qualities of whatever kind,'<sup>28</sup> it may be helpful to view the caudillos' appeal in Weberian terms. They were 'natural' leaders in a time of unusual circumstances and critical emergencies. However, Weber also pointed out that once the emergency or conflictive context that had given rise to the emergence of 'charismatic rule' was overcome, the unstable and destabilising nature of 'charismatic domination' led to its own demise. In other words, once the extraordinary situation that produced the need for the 'natural' leader ceased to exist, devotion to

<sup>25</sup> Will Fowler, *Mexico in the Age of Proposals, 1821–1853* (Westport, 1998) and *Latin America 1800–2000*, pp. 33–40.

<sup>26</sup> John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America* (Oxford, 1992); François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas* (Mexico City, 1993), pp. 150–162.

<sup>27</sup> W. G. Runciman (ed.), *Weber: Selections in Translation* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 226.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235–36.

heroic qualities ended. Only if war or instability became chronic, for instance, did the charismatic leader rise to become ruler on a more permanent basis.<sup>29</sup> With most caudillos, the context in which they rose to power conforms to the Weberian model, and once their appeal had faded few were able to rise again. It is for this reason that Santa Anna remains one of the more enigmatic caudillos of nineteenth-century Spanish America.

What continues to intrigue historians is Santa Anna's unique ability to return repeatedly to power, having suffered the kind of humiliating defeats and political fiascos that would have ended the career of the most gifted politicians. For Mark Wasserman, 'The general was probably a political genius. Otherwise, how can we account for his longevity and for his remarkable comebacks?'<sup>30</sup> Born in Xalapa (21 February 1794),<sup>31</sup> in the province of Veracruz, Santa Anna joined the royalist army as a cadet in 1810. Like so many creole officers, he embraced the cause of independence following the proclamation of the Plan of Iguala in 1821, and was mainly responsible for liberating his home province. Once independence was achieved, he led four revolts (1822, 1823, 1828 and 1832) before being elected president of the republic. Thereafter he was president on six different occasions (1833–35, 1839, 1841–43, 1843–44, 1846–47 and 1853–55),<sup>32</sup> although he preferred to retire to his haciendas in Veracruz whenever he had the chance.<sup>33</sup> His military victories included repulsing a Spanish and a French invasion (1829 and 1838 respectively) and slaughtering the Texan rebels at the Alamo (1836). His defeats included the battle of San Jacinto (1836), which led to the independence of Texas, and the Mexican-American War (1846–48), whereby Mexico lost half of its national territory. Often branded a traitor and a cynical turncoat, Santa Anna's political views evolved from upholding a liberal agenda to supporting a conservative one as the different constitutions failed to give Mexico a stable political system. Exiled following his 1853–55 dictatorship, Santa Anna tried to return to Mexico on two occasions before he was allowed back in 1874. Having been one of the most influential caudillos

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Wasserman, *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico. Men, Women, and War* (Albuquerque, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Archivo Eclesiástico de la Parroquia del Sagrario. Iglesia del Sagrado Corazón. Xalapa: Caja [Bautizos] Num. 7, Vol. 21 [1792–1818], p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Those who count each time he returned to the capital to serve as president, come up with the figure of eleven times president: 1. 16 May–3 June 1833; 2. 18 June–5 July 1833; 3. 27 October–15 December 1833; 4. 24 April 1834–27 January 1835; 5. 20 March–10 July 1839; 6. 10 October 1841–26 October 1842; 7. 4 March–4 October 1843; 8. 4 June–12 September 1844; 9. 21 March–2 April 1847; 10. 20 May–16 September 1847; 11. 20 April 1853–12 August 1855.

<sup>33</sup> For a study on Santa Anna's numerous properties in Veracruz see Will Fowler, 'Las propiedades veracruzanas de Santa Anna,' *Memorias de la Academia Mexicana de la Historia* XLIII (2000), pp. 63–92.

in Mexico at the height of his career, he died impoverished and forgotten in Mexico City on 21 June 1876.<sup>34</sup>

Over the last twenty years, the historiography of independent Mexico has made significant progress towards providing a clearer understanding of the period and, by default, of Santa Anna's political success.<sup>35</sup> As was noted recently by Christon Archer, 'In some respects, it is quite remarkable that the Mexican post-independence decades have taken so long to emerge. Although we are still some distance from synthesis, [...] scholars [...] have posed the right questions and created a solid foundation for future research'.<sup>36</sup> Josefina Vázquez, albeit with reservations, agrees when she notes that, 'It is possible that in a not too distant future we may have a more complete understanding of these forgotten years'.<sup>37</sup> As regards Santa Anna, we can synthesise the reasons for his political comebacks, resilience and longevity by highlighting the following points. His personal corruption, notorious duplicity and alleged lack of principle differed little from that of many other successful generals

<sup>34</sup> Although numerous biographies have been written about Santa Anna, the following continue to be the most commonly read to this day: W. H. Callcott, *Santa Anna: The Story of an Enigma Who Once Was Mexico* (Norman, 1936); Fernando Díaz Díaz, *Caudillos y caciques. Antonio López de Santa Anna y Juan Álvarez* (Mexico City, 1972); José Fuentes Mares, *Santa Anna: aurora y ocaso de un comediante* (Mexico City, 1956); Enrique González Pedrero, *País de un solo hombre: el México de Santa Anna*. Vol. 1 (Mexico City, 1993); Oakah L. Jones, Jr., *Santa Anna* (New York, 1968); Rafael F. Muñoz, *Santa Anna. El dictador resplandeciente* (Mexico City, 1983); Manuel Rivera Cambas, *Antonio López de Santa Anna* (Mexico City, 1958); Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, *Don Antonio López de Santa Anna. Mito y enigma* (Mexico City, 1987); and Agustín Yáñez, *Santa Anna. Espectro de una sociedad* (Mexico City, 1982).

<sup>35</sup> Worthy of mention are the following recent studies: Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821–1835* (Lincoln, NE, and London, 1998); Linda Arnold, *Política y justicia. La suprema corte mexicana (1824–1855)* (Mexico City, 1996); Margaret Chowning, *Wealth and Power in Provincial Mexico. Michoacán from the Late Colony to the Revolution* (Stanford, 1999); Michael P. Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico, 1835–1846*. Hombres de Bien in the Age of Santa Anna (Cambridge, 1993); Torcuato S. Di Tella, *National Popular Politics in Early Independent Mexico, 1820–1847* (Albuquerque, 1996); Peter F. Guardino, *Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico's National State. Guerrero, 1800–1857* (Stanford, 1996); Elías José Palti (ed.), *La política del disenso. La 'polémica en torno al monarquismo' (México, 1848–1850) ... y las aporías del liberalismo* (Mexico City, 1998); Humberto Morales and Will Fowler (eds.), *El conservadurismo mexicano en el siglo XIX (1810–1910)* (Puebla, 1999); Pedro Santoni, *Mexicans at Arms. Para Federalists and the Politics of War, 1845–1848* (Fort Worth, 1996); Laura Solares Robles, *Una Revolución Pacífica. Biografía política de Manuel Gómez Pedraza, 1789–1851* (Mexico City, 1996); Reynaldo Sordo Cedeño, *El congreso en la primera república centralista* (Mexico City, 1993); Donald F. Stevens, *Origins of Instability in Early Republican Mexico* (Durham, NC, 1991); Josefina Zoraida Vázquez (ed.), *México al tiempo de su guerra con Estados Unidos (1846–1848)* (Mexico City, 1997); Richard A. Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens. Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Christon I. Archer, 'Discord, Disjunction, and Reveries of Past and Future Glories: Mexico's First Decades of Independence, 1810–1853,' *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos* 16: 1 (Winter 2000), p. 210.

<sup>37</sup> Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, 'Un viejo tema: el federalismo y el centralismo,' *Historia Mexicana* XLII: 3 (1993), p. 628.



and politicians. According to Fanny Calderón de la Barca, the Spanish Ambassador's Scottish wife, Santa Anna was 'an acute general, active and aspiring, whose name has a *prestige*, whether for good or for evil, that no other possesses'.<sup>38</sup> The publicity given to his military victories certainly served to keep him in the public mind as a warrior of Napoleonic stature.<sup>39</sup> He successfully created a personality cult which, particularly in the army, greatly increased his popularity. His fame as Liberator of Veracruz and Hero of Tampico would appear to have struck a deeper chord in the collective psyche of his contemporaries than the defeats he also participated in. Certainly, his personal dynamism sharply contrasted with the inertia of figures such as Anastasio Bustamante. In this sense, Santa Anna came across as a man of action, always ready to abandon the National Palace or the pleasures of his retirement to lead the troops into battle, whether it was against domestic rebels or foreign aggressors. It was because of this dynamism that he also represented autocratic power and a promise of stability, a halt to what the *bombres de bien* feared most – social dissolution.

However, of greater importance was the fact that he was a supreme manipulator, negotiator, and fixer of deals behind the scenes. He always generously rewarded those who supported him in the military, which was the most important clientele he possessed.<sup>40</sup> Likewise the merchant community and the cotton lobby benefited from his largesse and supported his rise to power financially. He was consistent in fulfilling pledges to those who backed him.<sup>41</sup> The support he received from the *jarochos*, his Veracruzans

<sup>38</sup> Fanny Calderón de la Barca, *Life in Mexico* (London, 1987), p. 345.

<sup>39</sup> See Will Fowler, 'Fiestas santanistas: la celebración de Santa Anna en la villa de Xalapa, 1821–1855,' *Historia Mexicana*, vol. LII, no. 2 (Oct.–Dec. 2002), pp. 391–447; and both Will Fowler, 'Antonio López de Santa Anna: "el hombre visible por excelencia" (México, 1821–1855),' and Verónica Zárate Toscano, 'Héroes y fiestas en el México decimonónico: la insistencia de Santa Anna,' in Manuel Chust and Víctor Mínguez et al. (eds.), *La construcción del héroe en España y México, 1789–1847* (Castellón, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Carmen Vázquez Mantecón, *Santa Anna y la encrucijada del estado: la dictadura (1853–1855)* (Mexico City, 1986), pp. 25–6; Fernando Díaz Díaz, *Caudillos y caciques: Antonio López de Santa Anna y Juan Álvarez* (Mexico City, 1972), p. 151; Will Fowler, *Military Political Identity and Reformism in Independent Mexico. An analysis of the Memorias de Guerra (1821–1855)* (London, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> See Michael P. Costeloe, *The Central Republic in Mexico*, pp. 185–92. For Santa Anna's relations with the merchant community and the cotton lobby, although more research remains to be done, the following studies offer some very valuable insights: Carmen Blázquez Domínguez, *Políticos y comerciantes en Veracruz y Xalapa 1827–1829* (Xalapa, 1992); Michael P. Costeloe, 'The Triangular Revolt in Mexico and the Fall of Anastasio Bustamante, August–October 1841,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 20 (1988), pp. 337–60; Guadalupe Jiménez Codinach, 'Veracruz, almacén de plata en el Atlántico: La casa Gordon y Murphy, 1805–1824,' *Historia Mexicana*, 38: 2 (1988), pp. 325–53; Barbara A. Tenenbaum, 'Merchants, Money and Mischief,' *The Americas*, 25 (1979), pp. 317–39, and also *México en la época de los agiotistas, 1821–1857* (Mexico City, 1985); Guy P. C. Thompson, *Puebla de los Angeles. Industry and Society in a Mexican City, 1700–1850* (Boulder, 1989).

followers, was also a key asset when he needed political and, especially, military backing. He targeted his patronage carefully and consolidated a group of identifiable *santanistas*.<sup>42</sup> He relied on the upper classes, the *hombres de bien*<sup>43</sup> and the *gente de orden*, but was also capable of projecting himself as a man of the people to the masses.<sup>44</sup>

Santa Anna had his ears open to public opinion and knew when it was time to take advantage of his enemies' political difficulties. He succeeded in creating the notion that Mexico's troubles were to be blamed on political parties that divided the nation and created a need for reconciliation. He also succeeded in appearing to the eyes of many as the great arbitrator of the nation who intervened to protect the people against misgovernment, whether it was under a radical, moderate or traditionalist administration. In this sense, Santa Anna used and was used by the constitutional politicians of the 'age of proposals'. The fact that he did not subscribe to any party-based ideology, believing himself superior to all, meant that he came to be 'the temptation of all parties'. Most factions and parties believed that they could use him to rise to power.<sup>45</sup> His charisma and the cult of his persona made him an indispensable player. His absenteeism and his detachment from the party politics of the capital also meant that he could return time and again, posing as the great arbitrator of Mexico's divisions. This, in turn, made most parties believe that Santa Anna could be used for their own cause, as long as he was kept happy, and so his support was sought by most of the factions at one point or another during the period.<sup>46</sup>

Recent research has also shown that Santa Anna's loyal friend José María Tornel y Mendivil played a key role in orchestrating the caudillo's repeated rise to power. Tornel was Santa Anna's informer in the capital, his leading propagandist and his master intriguer. Without him Santa Anna would not have been as well informed as he was about events in the capital on those occasions he retired to his hacienda or was away in exile. Likewise, Santa

<sup>42</sup> Díaz Díaz, *Caudillos y caciques*, pp. 151–53; Will Fowler, 'El pensamiento político de los santanistas, 1821–1855,' in Luis Jáuregui and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (eds.), *Historia y nación II. Política y diplomacia en el siglo XIX mexicano* (Mexico City, 1998), pp. 183–226; Will Fowler, *Mexico in the Age of Proposals, 1821–1853* (Westport, 1998), pp. 219–63.

<sup>43</sup> For a definition/typology of the *hombre de bien* see Michael P. Costeloe, 'Hombres de bien in the Age of Santa Anna,' in Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (ed.), *Mexico in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750–1850* (Boulder & London, 1994), pp. 243–57.

<sup>44</sup> The importance of the popular classes and the need most politicians had to engage with them, one way or another, is amply demonstrated in: Richard A. Warren, *Vagrants and Citizens. Politics and the Masses in Mexico City from Colony to Republic* (Wilmington, 2001) and Torcuato S. Di Tella, *National Popular Politics in Early Independent Mexico, 1820–1847* (Albuquerque, 1996). <sup>45</sup> John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800–1850*, pp. 316–64.

<sup>46</sup> Will Fowler, 'The Repeated Rise of General Antonio López de Santa Anna in the So-Called Age of Chaos (Mexico, 1821–55),' in Will Fowler (ed.), *Authoritarianism in Latin America Since Independence* (Westport, 1996), pp. 1–30.

Anna would not have acquired such notoriety and prestige, recovering in the process from such major disasters as the 1836 Texan campaign and the 1847 debacle, had it not been for Tornel's eulogies to the caudillo. And it would have been very difficult for Santa Anna, from Veracruz, to organise the concerted *pronunciamientos* of 1834, 1841, and 1842, without the invaluable help of Tornel, who provided the *santanistas* with their anti-party, antipolitics, nationalist ideology. It was Tornel, as Santa Anna's minister of war, who ensured that the regular army became a predominantly *santanista* institution and he was equally instrumental in giving *santanismo* a strong populist slant through his exertions in the field of education. While Santa Anna appeared to be mainly preoccupied with ensuring that he was in control of his home province of Veracruz, it was Tornel who gave the caudillo a voice in national politics by consistently representing *his* interests in the capital (with the exception of their years of estrangement, 1844–47).<sup>47</sup>

Most British diplomats in Mexico viewed Santa Anna as the most capable ruler in Mexico at the time. Richard Pakenham, although weary of Santa Anna, was convinced that no other general or politician could manage the country as well: 'General Santa Anna's activity and energy always impart a degree of vigour to the Government unknown under other circumstances.'<sup>48</sup> In 1853, Percy Doyle stated in no uncertain terms that it was to 'be hoped that General Santa Anna will come shortly' back from exile, for he knew 'of no men of sufficient weight' capable of restoring order in the country.<sup>49</sup> The only British plenipotentiary who was consistently critical of Santa Anna was Charles Bankhead, who accused him of 'a total disregard of public opinion and interests – and a systematic determination to feed on the resources of the country for his own benefit'.<sup>50</sup> Even then, Bankhead was prepared to state that, 'If General Santa Anna had shown in latter times some compunction for the real wants and interests of his country [...] he might have been one of the most powerful men that any of these Republics have produced. His knowledge of his countrymen was unbounded, and he might have ruled them for his own and their advantage'.<sup>51</sup> The case of Joseph Welsh is interesting since he took his admiration of the caudillo one step further than his contemporaries in the diplomatic corps. He was to be the only British

<sup>47</sup> Will Fowler, *Tornel and Santa Anna. The Writer and the Caudillo, Mexico 1795–1853* (Westport, 2000). For Tornel also see, María del Carmen Vázquez Mantecón, *La palabra del poder. Vida pública de José María Tornel (1795–1853)* (Mexico City, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> Public Record Office (henceforth referred to as PRO), Foreign Office Papers (henceforth referred to as FO) 50/161, f. 80, Richard Pakenham to Lord Aberdeen, Mexico City, 22 March 1843.

<sup>49</sup> PRO: FO 50/259, ff. 48–51: Percy Doyle to Lord John Russell, Mexico City, 4 March 1853.

<sup>50</sup> PRO: FO 50/177, ff. 147–58: Charles Bankhead to Lord Aberdeen, Mexico City, 31 Dec. 1844.

<sup>51</sup> PRO: FO 50/184, ff. 1–7: Charles Bankhead to Lord Aberdeen, Mexico City, 29 Jan. 1845.

diplomat to support Santa Anna openly during these years and the only one to lose his job for interfering in Mexican national politics.

### *Joseph Welsh's story*

Joseph Welsh was an Irish Protestant born in 1805.<sup>52</sup> He arrived in Veracruz in the mid-1820s with his elder brother John, who was named vice consul at Veracruz following the resignation of his predecessor in October 1826.<sup>53</sup> When John had to return to England 'on urgent private business' in the summer of 1827, Charles Dashwood, the consul in Veracruz, based in Xalapa, decided to appoint Joseph to act as vice consul during his brother's absence. At the time, as Dashwood was prepared to note, Joseph Welsh 'is fully competent to conduct the duties of the office having been with his brother ever since he has held the situation of Vice Consul'.<sup>54</sup> Although the reasons behind John Welsh's failure to return are unknown, his permanent departure led to Joseph retaining the post of vice consul until he was formally forced to vacate his post in the diplomatic corps in 1832.

Welsh was not a *santanista* to begin with. The first time he wrote about the incipient caudillo was in a report on the revolt Santa Anna led against the election of General Manuel Gómez Pedraza to the presidency in September 1828. Mirroring the views of many Mexicans and particularly *veracruzanos* at the time, who remained, uncertain about Santa Anna's intentions,<sup>55</sup> Welsh expressed the hope that the government forces would win and that 'this rebellion will very soon be at an end'.<sup>56</sup> Welsh was, however, already aware that Santa Anna's influence among the popular classes could not be ignored. Speaking about the situation in the port of Veracruz, Welsh feared that although 'every confidence is placed in Colonel [Manuel] Rincón', he was 'not sufficiently supported'.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, Welsh did not interfere in the political situation, and earned the praise of the Foreign Office, which noted

<sup>52</sup> Archivo Notarial Biblioteca Central Universidad Veracruzana, Xalapa (henceforth referred to as ANBUV): 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

<sup>53</sup> PRO: FO 50/28, ff. 33–36: John Bidwell to Charles Dashwood, Veracruz, 31 Oct. 1826.

<sup>54</sup> PRO: FO 50/39, ff. 114–15: Charles Dashwood to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 30 July 1827.

<sup>55</sup> This in part was due to the fact that there was a greater degree of ambiguity about Santa Anna's political stance at the time than usual. In essence, whilst Santa Anna supported Vicente Guerrero and the *yorkinos* at a national level, his sympathies lay with Miguel Barragán and the *escoceses* at the regional level. See Carmen Blázquez Domínguez, *Políticos y comerciantes en Veracruz y Xalapa 1827–1829* (Xalapa, 1992) and Will Fowler, *Tornel and Santa Anna. The Writer and the Caudillo, Mexico 1795–1853* (Westport, 2000), pp. 70–1. Santa Anna was not yet, in the late 1820s, the powerful *hacendado* he was to become in subsequent years, controlling a vast area of the province, thus consolidating through patronage the undying support the *jarocho*s would grant him for the remainder of his political career.

<sup>56</sup> PRO: FO 50/50, ff. 191–92: Joseph Welsh to John Backhouse, Veracruz, 4 Oct. 1828.

<sup>57</sup> PRO: FO 203/30, ff. 194–95: Joseph Welsh to J. O'Gorman, Veracruz, 20 Sept. 1828.

in one document that, 'his Lordship approves of Vice Consul Welsh's conduct'.<sup>58</sup>

Of course, the revolt Santa Anna instigated in September 1828 was ultimately successful. Whilst Santa Anna was pursued by government forces from Perote to Oaxaca during the autumn of 1828, the revolt of the La Acordada barracks in Mexico City (30 November 1828) forced Gómez Pedraza into exile and placed Vicente Guerrero in the presidential seat. Despite the fact that the radical *yorkinos'* 1828 victory cannot be attributed to Santa Anna's actions alone, there existed the perception that it had been he who had set the ball rolling. Until 1832, Santa Anna's *pronunciamientos* were perceived as having initiated major shifts and changes that the majority appeared to want to embrace. A closer analysis of the events themselves demonstrates that such a perception does not stand up to examination. Nevertheless, as can be evidenced in the writings of influential *santanistas* such as José María Tornel, José María Bocanegra or Juan Suárez y Navarro, this influential view existed and was shared by other onlookers, some of whom were not necessarily close to him.<sup>59</sup> Representative of the perception is Lucas Alamán's assertion that, 'the History of Mexico [from 1821 onwards] [...] could be rightly called the History of Santa Anna's revolutions'.<sup>60</sup> The US minister, Waddy Thompson, similarly believed that, 'No history of his country for that period can be written without the constant mention of his name; indeed, I regard him, as more than any other man, the author and finisher of the last and successful struggle of Mexico for independence and a Republican form of government'.<sup>61</sup> For many, Santa Anna was not an opportunistic turncoat, but the man who had sparked off the most significant transformations Mexico's political system had experienced during the first national decade. The fall of Agustín de Iturbide and the subsequent republican proposal had come about in the aftermath of his Plan of Veracruz (2 December 1822).<sup>62</sup> The adoption of a federal constitution in 1824 had likewise succeeded his Plan of San Luis Potosí (5 June 1823). And it was Santa Anna who first rebelled in Perote (12 September 1828) against those electoral results that the majority had deemed to be an inaccurate interpretation of the will of the people. Thereafter, and prior to his major revolt of

<sup>58</sup> PRO: FO 50/50: Unsigned draft of letter dated 3 Nov. 1828.

<sup>59</sup> See José María Tornel, *Breve reseña histórica de los acontecimientos más notables de la nación mexicana desde el año de 1821 hasta nuestros días* (Mexico City, 1985); José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente, 1822–1846*. 3 vols. (Mexico City, 1987); and Juan Suárez y Navarro, *Historia de México y del general Antonio López de Santa Anna: comprende los acontecimientos políticos que han tenido lugar en la nación, desde el año de 1821 hasta 1848*. 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1850–51). <sup>60</sup> Lucas Alamán, *Historia de Méjico*. Vol. V (Mexico City, 1986), p. 396.

<sup>61</sup> Waddy Thompson, *Recollections of Mexico* (New York and London, 1847), pp. 54–5.

<sup>62</sup> See Will Fowler y Juan Ortiz Escamilla, 'La revuelta del 2 de diciembre de 1822: una perspectiva regional,' *Historias*, 47 (2000), pp. 19–37.

1832, his prestige had grown even further. It can safely be said that after the glorious victory of Tampico (11 September 1829) over a Spanish expedition that arrived from Cuba with the intention of re-conquering Mexico, he had become the most highly praised general of the period. In the meantime, Welsh had married the *veracruzana* María del Carmen Barón, in Veracruz, in 1829, at the age of 24.<sup>63</sup> It would appear that they married for love since neither he nor she contributed any capital to the alliance.<sup>64</sup> Whilst there is no evidence that María del Carmen played a major role in inspiring Welsh to become a *santanista*, the fact that he had been married to a *veracruzana* for three years by the time of the 1832 Revolt cannot be entirely overlooked.<sup>65</sup> Likewise, it is tempting to attribute his actions to the impetuosity of youth, since Welsh was only 26 when he became involved in the conflict. Nevertheless, the 1832 revolt was indeed popular, especially from the perspective of Veracruz.

Although this is not the place to discuss the origins of the 1832 revolt<sup>66</sup> or why it was to become, in a sense, the bloodiest civil war to erupt in Mexico between 1821 and 1854,<sup>67</sup> some points are worth highlighting to provide

<sup>63</sup> ANBUV: 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

<sup>64</sup> ANBUV: 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

<sup>65</sup> A paper, to be published in Will Fowler (ed.), *Presidentes mexicanos* (Mexico City, forthcoming), highlights the subtle yet influential role played by women in nineteenth-century Mexico: Anne Staples, 'Las mujeres detrás de los presidentes,' Paper given in the Symposium on 'Mexican Presidents,' Annual Conference of the Society for Latin American Studies, University of Birmingham, 6–8 April 2001.

<sup>66</sup> See Michael P. Costeloe, *La primera república federal de México (1824–1835)* (Mexico City, 1983), pp. 327–49; Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821–1835* (Lincoln, NE, 1998), pp. 246–68; Will Fowler, *Mexico in the Age of Proposals, 1821–1835* (Westport, 1998), pp. 21–2, 229–31; Frank Samponaro, 'La alianza de Santa Anna y los federalistas, 1832–1834. Su formación y desintegración,' *Historia Mexicana* 30: 3 (1981), pp. 359–80; Jaime E. Rodríguez O., 'The Origins of the 1832 Rebellion,' and Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, 'Los pronunciamientos de 1832: aspirantismo político e ideología,' both in Jaime E. Rodríguez O. (ed.), *Patterns of Contention in Mexican History* (Wilmington, 1992), pp. 145–62, 163–86 respectively.

<sup>67</sup> See Will Fowler, 'Civil Conflict in Independent Mexico, 1821–57: An Overview,' in Rebecca Earle (ed.), *Rumours of Wars: Civil Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (London, 2000), pp. 49–86. Whilst there were literally thousands of *pronunciamientos* between 1821 and 1854, and some regional revolts were indeed bloody, with social and ethnic tensions running high (e.g., Vicente Guerrero's 1831 revolt [see Peter F. Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State. Guerrero, 1800–1857* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 130–36], or the caste war in Yucatán (1847–52) [see Nelson Reed, *La guerra de castas de Yucatán* (Mexico City, 1987)]; the only *national* civil war to have erupted between the War of Independence (1810–21) and the Revolution of Ayutla (1854–55), with full-scale pitched battles (in Veracruz, San Luis Potosí and Puebla) and a particularly high death-toll, was the 1832 Federalist Civil War. The intensity and scope of the violence is amply documented in the Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional [henceforth referred to as AHSDN]: Expedientes XI/481.3/775–821, XI/481.3/834–835, XI/481.3/839, XI/481.3/843, XI/481.3/885, XI/481.3/912–915, XI/481.3/936, XI/481.3/944–946, XI/481.3/960–1004.

a background for Joseph Welsh's actions. From 1830 to 1832, what became known as the party of order (*el partido del orden*) had taken over the reins of government. Under the guidance of Lucas Alamán, General Anastasio Bustamante's government began to implement constitutional reforms that curtailed the power of the federal states and limited the universality of male suffrage to more clearly defined property-owning citizens. Several attempts were made to inject new life into the Mexican economy through the creation of a bank, the Banco de Avío (16 October 1830),<sup>68</sup> and promises of assisting Mexico's dormant industry with protectionist policies.<sup>69</sup> The economic success of the administration's policies was actually fairly impressive. According to Michael Costeloe, 'Peace and order, honest and effective public accounts, power in the hands of the *hombres de bien*; had all combined to produce the prosperity and economic progress the [1829] rebels of Xalapa had hoped to achieve'.<sup>70</sup> Confidence in the Mexican economy was restored, and the British bondholders who had contributed to the loans of the mid-1820s were prepared to renegotiate the terms of repayment.<sup>71</sup> Although Alamán's protectionist inclinations may have given rise to concern within the British merchant community with their reliance on free trade, the improved economic outlook was more important. The re-negotiation of the British loan in itself indicates that British interests were being well-served by the Bustamante administration, and that the merchant community, including the enlarged British merchant community in Veracruz, did not have strong grounds to consider overthrowing the regime a necessarily desirable objective.<sup>72</sup> The rescheduling of the foreign debt in 1831 resulted in the resumption of the payment of dividends for the first time since the default in 1827. London bondholders, consequently, for the first time for several years, received their

<sup>68</sup> See Robert A. Potash, *Mexican Government and Industrial Development in the Early Republic: The Banco de Avío* (Amherst, 1983). Also see Barbara A. Tenenbaum, *México en la época de los agiotistas, 1821-1837* (Mexico City, 1985), pp. 57-62.

<sup>69</sup> Alamán's concern with industrialising Mexico found expression under the Bustamante government with the encouragement and emergence of a silk factory in Guanajuato, an iron smelting factory in Cuautla, textile factories in Puebla and Tlalpan, and a wool factory in Querétaro. See Catherine Andrews, 'The military and political career of General Anastasio Bustamante, 1780-1833,' unpubl. PhD diss., University of St Andrews, 2001, p. 154.

<sup>70</sup> Costeloe, *La primera república federal*, pp. 304-5.

<sup>71</sup> Andrews, 'The political and military career of General Anastasio Bustamante,' p. 152. The debt increased, as a result, from \$26,407,000 to \$36,329,100. See Costeloe, *Bonds and Bondholders*, pp. 27-32.

<sup>72</sup> The British merchant community in Veracruz replaced the Spanish one in economic importance following the impact the expulsion laws of 1827 had in the region. See Jackie R. Booker, *Veracruz Merchants, 1770-1829. A Mercantile Elite in Late Bourbon and Early Independent Mexico* (Boulder, 1993); Michael P. Costeloe, 'Barcelona Merchants and the Latin American Wars of Independence,' *The Americas* 38: 2 (October 1982), pp. 431-48; Harold Dana Sims, *The Expulsion of Mexico's Spaniards, 1821-1836* (Pittsburgh, 1990); and Carmen Blázquez Domínguez, *Políticos y comerciantes en Veracruz y Xalapa 1827-1829*.

dividends throughout 1832.<sup>73</sup> However, Bustamante's government soon became characterised by its autocratic nature, as evidenced both by the forced closure of any critical newspapers and the repression of the deposed Vicente Guerrero's rebellion in the south (1830–31).<sup>74</sup> The tide of opinion turned against Bustamante's government when it authorised the execution of Guerrero (14 February 1831), and after the treacherous way he was taken prisoner became public knowledge.<sup>75</sup> The execution of a high-ranking officer who was also an ex-president turned the majority of those moderates who had previously supported the party of order against Bustamante's government.

From as early as 1829 it was clear that Santa Anna did not sympathise with the party of order. When the Plan of Xalapa (4 December 1829) that led to Guerrero's overthrow was launched, Santa Anna stood by Guerrero. Thereafter, although he was approached on several occasions by Bustamante's administration, he maintained a significant distance from the government, retreating to his hacienda Manga de Clavo. It was only after José María Tornel returned from the United States in late 1831, that Santa Anna, making the most of the government's increasing unpopularity, finally came out into the open and led the 2 January *pronunciamiento* of Veracruz. As was the case with most of the plans led by Santa Anna, the Plan of Veracruz was drafted and written by other high-ranking officers who invited him to come to their aid. As was recorded by Welsh, 'Yesterday several officers of the garrison waited upon General Santa Anna at Manga de Clavo to persuade him to put himself at the head of a party to declare against the present ministry, they laid their plans before him, of which he approved and consented to head the *pronunciamiento*'.<sup>76</sup>

The Plan of Veracruz stated that (1) it was the rebels' intention to support the federal constitution; (2) it was imperative that Bustamante renew his cabinet, since it was dominated by centralists and responsible for tolerating unforgivable crimes against the country's civil rights and liberties; (3) Santa Anna would be offered the leadership of the revolt; and (4) the authors of the plan would cease to be responsible for the rebels' actions the moment

<sup>73</sup> It is for all of this that Welsh's conduct is more perplexing given that he was the Veracruz commissioner for the London bondholders. As such – he was appointed in late 1830 as part of the rescheduling agreement – he was paid a commission on the dividend money remitted to London in 1832. Therefore, the fact that he was prepared to support Santa Anna, as will be discussed further on, cannot be explained in purely economic terms. Michael P. Costeloe, private communication, 8 Nov. 2002. See as well Costeloe, *Bonds and Bondholders*, p. 117.

<sup>74</sup> For a discussion of the censorship the press was subjected to under the Bustamante administration (1830–32), see Jaime E. Rodríguez O., *El nacimiento de Hispanoamérica. Vicente Rocafuerte y el hispanoamericanismo, 1808–1832* (Mexico City, 1980), pp. 275–97.

<sup>75</sup> For Vicente Guerrero avoid reading Theodore G. Vincent, *The Legacy of Vicente Guerrero, Mexico's First Black Indian President* (Gainesville, 2001).

<sup>76</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 17: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 3 Jan. 1832.



Santa Anna took over the revolt (which he did the following day).<sup>77</sup> As Welsh noted on 4 January: 'General Santa Anna entered this city yesterday at 6 pm in a chaise and six accompanied by the Colonel of the 2nd and 9th Regiment and escorted by a captain guard of Dragoons amid the universal acclamations of the People!'<sup>78</sup>

Welsh's letter of 4 January testifies to the popularity Santa Anna enjoyed in Veracruz: 'He drove to the Palace where he was received by a detachment of the 2nd Regiment, Military and Civilian authorities with Bands of Music and co.; so great was the enthusiasm manifested in favour of the cause which he has been called to espouse that it was late before he could attend his official duties'. It highlights the characteristic care Santa Anna would take to ensure his troops were well-behaved and that no harm came to the commercial establishments in the port: 'before he retired to rest he took the necessary precaution to ensure tranquillity and to inform my colleagues and self of the object he and his companions have in view; in which it is believed they are most sincere'. It shows how Santa Anna made a point of keeping key players in the business community informed of his movements and intentions and how he persuaded them that he was less concerned with power than the aspirations of the people: 'privately he has informed that as soon as the agitation experienced by the States is quieted and a confidential ministry installed to the satisfaction of his countrymen he shall lose no time in returning to his farm'. The letter also shows that he ensured his troops' loyalty through the regular payment of their salaries: 'the troops, 1000 men, have been reviewed and paid to date, the fortifications of the city and castle are being put in order to resist any attack, Puente is taken possession of and will be fortified and expresses are being dispatched in every quarter'.

Welsh was confident that the revolt would triumph and that its cause had widespread support in the mainland: 'I have good reasons to believe that the whole coast will fly to arms so that with the co-operation already arranged with other States and consequent desertions of troops, the Government cannot resist the now almost general outcry against the present administration.'<sup>79</sup> It is worth noting here that Timothy Anna's view that Santa Anna 'favored a moderate approach' initially, and that he was hoping a change of cabinet would pacify the growing unrest,<sup>80</sup> preventing the conflict from

<sup>77</sup> The Plan of Veracruz is reprinted in José María Bocanegra, *Memorias para la historia de México independiente, 1822-1846*, vol. 2 (Mexico City, 1987), pp. 265-68.

<sup>78</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 18, Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832.

<sup>79</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 18, Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832.

<sup>80</sup> Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico*, p. 247. Also see the correspondence between Santa Anna and Anastasio Bustamante which confirms this in Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin, Mariano Riva Palacio Archive: No. 202: Santa Anna to Anastasio Bustamante, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832; No. 203: Santa Anna to Anastasio Bustamante, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832; No. 204: Santa Anna to Anastasio Bustamante,

escalating, is confirmed in Welsh's letter: 'notwithstanding this hostile appearance on the part of Santa Anna he writes officially and privately in such a manner to the Ministers as he flatters himself will induce them to retire quietly and prevent the effusion of blood!' The letter ended with a warning which, although ironic, was more probably written as a means to protect himself from allegations he anticipated, given that his sympathies were already strongly with Santa Anna's camp: 'I shall continue to search for and communicate to you the most correct information which I can possibly obtain, taking care at the same time *to abstain from any interference in the political agitations of the country which I know to be inconsistent with my situation*; I make this observation lest the steps which I take to obtain information should be reported to you in an incorrect manner'.<sup>81</sup>

Welsh's support of the revolt was made clearer in his letter of the following day, in which he stated that Bustamante's administration was attempting to overthrow the Federal Constitution:<sup>82</sup> 'the present political agitations in this quarter, [...] will, in my humble opinion, spread throughout the country as there is little doubt that the present administration has been working to overturn the federal system!!' The fact that Santa Anna had ensured that, 'In this city perfect tranquillity continues to reign and I fully expect will continue',<sup>83</sup> made supporting the revolt all the easier from his perspective as British Vice Consul.

Welsh's partisan view of the conflict became even more obvious both in his celebration of the revolt's popular appeal in the region, and in his assertion that Bustamante's ministers had to resign in order to solve Mexico's increasing problems:

The news was received in Jalapa with universal acclamations and 250 men who had marched to Encero were obliged to return to keep the city quiet, so great was the enthusiasm of the people! Part of the troops have deserted from Colonel [Manuel]

Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832; No. 205: Anastasio Bustamante to Santa Anna, Mexico City, 12 Jan. 1832; No. 206: Santa Anna to Bustamante, Veracruz, 25 Jan. 1832.

<sup>81</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 18, Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832. My emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> The accusation employed by the rebels to overthrow Bustamante's administration, was nonetheless inaccurate. As several studies have shown, Bustamante's administration did not attempt to impose a centralist system. This was simply a very powerful and effective piece of propaganda the federalist, ex-*yorkino* factions employed. See Josefina Zoraida Vázquez, 'Iglesia, ejército y centralismo,' *Historia Mexicana* 39: 1 (1989), pp. 205–34; Will Fowler, *Mexico in the Age of Proposals*, pp. 56–7; Catherine Andrews, 'The military and political career of General Anastasio Bustamante'. Having said this, Peter Guardino believes that although 'Vázquez is undoubtedly correct [...] [t]he regime was never able to leave behind the image it presented in early 1830 as it dissolved state governments and replaced them with its supporters': see Guardino, *Peasants, Politics, and the Formation of Mexico's National State*, p. 135.

<sup>83</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 15: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 5 Jan. 1832.

Gamboa and arrived here; they state that others will follow. The Plan has been seconded in Alvarado and other parts of the coast [...] Since the 4th upwards of 400 old soldiers have volunteered their services here to Santa Anna and at Puente Colonel [Mariano] Cenobio and all the country people are rising!!! It is sincerely to be hoped that the present ministry will see the necessity of resigning otherwise serious disturbances are to be dreaded throughout the country!<sup>84</sup>

His letter of 11 January developed this view further. His enthusiastic celebration of the support for Santa Anna would be presented alongside a somewhat scornful description of the state the government forces found themselves in:

on the 8th instant, 50 Infantry came in from Alvarado; about 70 cavalry and a further party of infantry are hourly expected from the same place, the militia have remained subject to Santa Anna's order. A Circular has been issued by Santa Anna ordering the country militia to be put under arms; there appears to be a great readiness to comply with this order. In Huatepeque 200 infantry and 100 cavalry are promised by the authorities [...] Yesterday 30 Infantry came by sea from Tuxpan and 60 to 70 cavalry are expected every hour. At Puente Colonel Cenobio has now 250 infantry and 150 cavalry, besides as many more which he can raise in a day. [...] The news of General [José María] Calderón's march from Orizaba to Jalapa arrived yesterday, it appears that only about 300 men of the cantonment followed him [...] There are further desertions from Jalapa, last night several officers arrived, the troops of Tres Villas they say will not fight against Santa Anna [...] Since the 8th instant this garrison has been declared to be in a state of campaign, the batteries are all manned and sentries placed in every direction [...] Tomorrow and next day the troops will be publicly reviewed by Santa Anna in person.<sup>85</sup>

Moreover, Welsh was pleased that Santa Anna was openly prepared to safeguard British interests; 'I have much pleasure in informing you that my commercial establishment has this day received \$139,160 on this account to be shipped. [...] Perfect tranquillity reigns here and trade is going on as usual'.<sup>86</sup> Santa Anna was 'promising not to take any step to the discredit of his country!'<sup>87</sup>

Whilst Welsh's enthusiasm for Santa Anna's cause must have already started to trouble Pakenham, it was his letter of 31 January 1832 that demonstrated that he was willing to take up arms and join the rebels. It remains unclear if Welsh's justification for entering the fray was based on the truth. Richard Pakenham certainly refused to believe that the government forces had received the direct order to bombard and pillage Veracruz.<sup>88</sup> Yet, whether it was simply a pretext for Welsh to support Santa Anna or whether the news of General Antonio Gaona's intentions finally pushed Welsh into

<sup>84</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 25–6: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 7 Jan. 1832.

<sup>85</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 27–9: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 11 Jan. 1832.

<sup>86</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 27–9: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 11 Jan. 1832.

<sup>87</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 29–30: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 11 Jan. 1832.

<sup>88</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 57–8: Richard Pakenham to Joseph Welsh, Mexico City, 6 Feb. 1832.

adopting a combative stance, by the end of January, Welsh was prepared to fight for the *santanistas*. The letter is worth quoting extensively for what it tells us about Welsh's perception of the events and the *veracruzano* perspective of the conflict:

on the 29th instant General Santa Anna discovered, through the medium of several officers whom the present Minister of War has endeavoured to seduce, a plan for the taking of the city, by which the lives of His Majesty's subjects would have been placed in imminent danger and their property exposed to fire and plunder [...]. I am convinced that the blood of every honest man must chill within his veins on hearing such a proceeding not surpassed by the most cruel and barbarous of enemies and in direct opposition to the principles of warfare among People who have the least title of civilisation!! And yet this plan has been laid by the Minister of War of Mexico, with whose government Great Britain holds a treaty, by which guarantees have been given to her subjects!! I should not have lost a moment in communicating to you this horrible plan [...], but I deferred [...] until [...] I had seen the original documents [...] No doubt was left on my mind of the danger from which we have so narrowly escaped; danger plotted not by the dissident chief or his party, but by the Government who should have been the last to take such a step!! [...] *If therefore an attempt should be made, the Mexican government must not be surprised to find those who should otherwise have observed perfect neutrality, take up arms in defence of their lives and property!* [...] It now only remains for me to solicit the interference of my superiors who, I trust, will adopt every means in their power to bring the Mexican government to a proper sense of that duty which it owes to His Majesty's subjects and their property in this country.<sup>89</sup>

In his letter of 14 February 1832 Welsh appears to relish the perceived weakness of General Calderón's government forces, whilst his confidence in Santa Anna's strong position is expressed with further bursts of enthusiasm. He was clearly confident that Santa Anna would win because of his superior military strength and widespread support throughout the country. We should also note the way Santa Anna gained the support of individuals like Welsh by ensuring trade was unaffected by the crisis, and law and order prevailed and that, on this occasion, British interests were protected:<sup>90</sup>

Government troops, which arrived at Puente on the 2nd instant, since when they have remained stationary! As yet, they cannot bring more than 2,000 men against the city, the desertion of officers and men is daily, sickness also has broken out among them [...]. General Santa Anna has within the walls of the city and castle 1500 infantry and outside 200 regulars, cavalry exclusive of about 600 *jarochos* [...]

<sup>89</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 49–51: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 31 Jan. 1832. My emphasis.

<sup>90</sup> Santa Anna was not consistent in protecting British interests. Although he clearly did so in 1832, it should be noted that within weeks of his victory in early 1833, he directly attacked British interests by reducing the percentage of customs dues assigned to paying dividends on the foreign debt, owed largely to British investors, from one sixth to 6 per cent. To add insult to injury, he paid no further dividend on the debt during his time in power. Michael P. Costeloe, private communication, 8 Nov. 2002.

and 400 bushmen in ambuscades; of the government forces 600 are cavalry and consequently of little or no use in attacking infantry within fortified walls! [...] I have reason to believe that the commencement of hostilities in this quarter will be the signal for a rise in several parts of the country against the present administration!! The conduct of General Santa Anna towards the inhabitants of this city continues most exemplary; the merchants have not been in the least molested, nor have they even been called [...] [to] pay their duties long overdue, a measure which they feared would have been enforced! The General has exclusive of future receipts, resources sufficient for 7 months! [...] I am particularly requested by General Santa Anna to assure His Majesty's Government that, so long as he commands, British interests shall meet from him constant protection, in preference even to those of his own countrymen!<sup>91</sup>

Pakenham was quick to respond. In his letter to Welsh of 6 February 1832 he instructed in unequivocal terms that Welsh should not interfere in the political situation:

Should the extreme measure of an assault be unfortunately resorted to, there could be no means so certain to bring down upon British subjects the evils which it is to be hoped would otherwise be avoided, *than their departing from the strict neutrality which it is so necessary for them to observe*; and I have no hesitation in assuring you that, if any violence were to be committed towards British property in the course of the present hostilities, of a nature to induce His Majesty's Government to demand indemnification to the sufferers, *no claim whatever for redress would be sanctioned by our Government in favour of any persons, who might have been so imprudent as to compromise themselves by acts such as those to which, in your letter of the 31st ultimo, you intimate the possibility of your having recourse.*<sup>92</sup>

Pakenham's letter certainly made Joseph Welsh reconsider his position. His attempts to imply that Pakenham had misunderstood him, in his letter of 11 February, suggest that he had realised that he risked losing his job. He asserted that he was pleased to hear that his fears had been groundless, but noted that, 'I sincerely trust your opinion may be verified'. Welsh, however, was unable to deny his convictions completely: 'I have not suggested that British subjects would take up arms in defence of their lives and property in case of the Government troops attacking the place, [which he had], but in case of an attempt being made to plunder their property, in which latter case I think every British subject will consider it his duty to defend it to the last!'<sup>93</sup> The somewhat feeble pretence that he was advocating fighting only if his property was plundered, but was prepared to remain neutral, if his life was threatened, does not make for a persuasive argument.

On 19 February Welsh noted that 'General Santa Anna's troops are in high spirits, and little doubt can, I believe, be entertained of the result being

<sup>91</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 53–5: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 14 Feb. 1832.

<sup>92</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 57–8: Richard Pakenham to Joseph Welsh, Mexico City, 6 Feb. 1832. My emphasis.

<sup>93</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 59–60: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 11 Feb. 1832.

favourable to them'.<sup>94</sup> He repeatedly celebrated Santa Anna's strong position, military skills, decency and gentlemanly conduct whilst denigrating the movements and intentions of the government forces. 'The government troops arrived on the 21st on the plains of Santa Fe where they halted. [...] Up to the present date [they] have not moved except one mile to burn the house of a poor farmer which they did on the 25th'. This contrasted with General Santa Anna's activities, who 'in a most daring manner' had 'taken 8 officers, near 300 men at two and a half leagues in the rear of their camp, having besides marched 22 leagues of bad road in the short space of 36 hours!!'<sup>95</sup> In a letter dated 25 February, Welsh stated that 'contrasted with the generous conduct of Santa Anna', Calderón's intentions 'would strike horror into the hardest heart'.<sup>96</sup>

What is most remarkable is that Welsh's support of Santa Anna continued unabated even after the severe defeat Santa Anna suffered at the battle of Tolome (3 March 1832). This was the first of four major pitched battles that took place during the 1832 Civil War (Gallinero [18 September], San Agustín del Palmar [29 September] and Rancho de Posadas [6 November]).<sup>97</sup> Santa Anna's regiment of 800 infantry and 600 cavalry suffered a death toll of 80 and a further 528 of his men were taken prisoner.<sup>98</sup> According to Welsh's account of the battle, on 1 March, Santa Anna received 'information that the government troops had raised their camp and were retiring towards Puente, having suffered much from sickness and desertion!' Making the most of the situation, 'the same night, Santa Anna marched out with 500 cavalry and about 600 infantry with the intention of pursuing them to Puente'. By the afternoon of 2 March, Santa Anna had caught up with them in Manantial. That night he 'passed them, cutting off their supplies, water and retreat to Puente' and called on them to surrender. On 3 March, having 'taken up a strong position at Loma Alta near Tolome, where he has raised parapets and placed his artillery', Calderón was able to resist Santa Anna's attack, forcing his withdrawal back to the port.<sup>99</sup>

From Welsh's perspective, however, the defeat had not been as significant as it was later made out to be:

During the night numerous officers and troops of cavalry came in from the field of Tolome and at daylight General Santa Anna, slightly wounded, accompanied by a few officers arrived, to the great satisfaction of the garrison. About the same time it

<sup>94</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 61: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 19 Feb. 1832.

<sup>95</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 63–4: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 27 Feb. 1832.

<sup>96</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 66–9: Joseph Welsh to J. O'Gorman, Veracruz, 25 Feb. 1832.

<sup>97</sup> Were we to believe that Welsh's *santanismo* stemmed from opportunism, from him seeking to back the winning horse, we find that we cannot argue this point convincingly in the light of Welsh's unwavering support of Santa Anna even after the battle of Tolome.

<sup>98</sup> Costeloe, *La primera república federal*, p. 333.

<sup>99</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 77–8: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 3 March 1832.

was ascertained that the cavalry had sustained but a trivial loss and that more than one third of the infantry escaped [...] the number of those returned and able to do duty is near 200 [...] General Santa Anna has taken every precaution for the defence of the city, for which purpose he can yet count on 1500 men.<sup>100</sup>

Only weeks after the defeat, Welsh was relishing the fact that, 'the government troops have already commenced deserting again', and that he had 'never seen Veracruz in such a state of defence as it is at present, and the enthusiasm of the troops and inhabitants in general is very great'.<sup>101</sup> He noted that, 'there are at present upwards of 2000 under arms in the city and more are coming up from the coast [...] added to which, on an alarm being given, Santa Anna can count on full 300 more civilians!!'.<sup>102</sup> Despite the drawback of Tolome, he was convinced that should General Calderón attack the port, 'his troops must inevitably be cut to pieces as I have never seen Veracruz in such a state of defence as it is at present and the enthusiasm of the troops and inhabitants in general very great'.<sup>103</sup>

In spite of Welsh's attempts to disguise to Pakenham his willingness to fight, by the end of March Bustamante's government requested that he be replaced by a more 'impartial' diplomat. At the meeting held on 30 March 1832 the members of the Ayuntamiento of Xalapa noted, for the first time, receipt of a letter from the government in Mexico City informing them of Joseph Welsh's removal from his post as Vice Consul in Veracruz. As requested by Pakenham, following a formal complaint from the Mexican government, he was to be replaced by another individual 'because of his conduct in the *pronunciamiento*'.<sup>104</sup> However, several months passed before this order was executed. Ciriaco Vázquez refused point blank to accept Hugh Dick as the new Vice Consul since the order for Welsh's replacement had been 'issued by a usurping and entirely illegal authority', and he felt he was 'in the sensible case of refusing to recognise and consider it'.<sup>105</sup> Santa Anna emphasised that he could not accept an appointment made by a government he did not recognise.<sup>106</sup> One tactic to counter arguments that Welsh had interfered in Mexican politics was to argue that Dick had been guilty of political activity against the 'liberating army' and in favour of Bustamante's

<sup>100</sup> PRO: FO50/77, ff. 79–80: Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 6 March 1832.

<sup>101</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, ff. 74–5: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 18 March 1832.

<sup>102</sup> PRO: FO 203/47, ff. 412–13: Joseph Welsh to O'Gorman, Veracruz, 20 March 1832.

<sup>103</sup> PRO: FO 203/47, ff. 415–16: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 18 March 1832.

<sup>104</sup> Archivo Histórico Municipal del Honorable Ayuntamiento de Xalapa (henceforth referred to as AHMX): 'Libro de acuerdos del ilustre ayuntamiento constitucional de la ciudad de Jalapa para el año de 1832,' vol. 43, ff. 27–9: Minutes for the meeting of 30 March 1832.

<sup>105</sup> PRO: FO 203/55, f. 9: Ciriaco Vázquez to Hugh Dick, Veracruz, 13 June 1832.

<sup>106</sup> PRO: FO203/55, f. 26: Antonio López de Santa Anna to Hugh Dick, Veracruz, 27 June 1832.

‘illegal’ government.<sup>107</sup> This was done in a number of editorials of the Veracruz newspaper *El Censor* that campaigned against the appointment of Dick towards the end of September 1832.

Welsh was disgusted by his enforced resignation.

Sir,

I had the honour to receive on the 5th instant your official under date of the 24th ultimo notifying to me the resolution of the present administration no longer to recognise me as British Vice Consul for this port. In conformity with your requisition I ceased from that day to act in the capacity of His Majesty’s Vice Consul (although the authorities here will continue to acknowledge me as such). I write to His Majesty’s chargé d’affaires on this subject and have no doubt he will see the justice of solely suspending me, pro tempore, as, in due course of time, I hope to receive full satisfaction from the Mexican Government on this score! In attention to your instructions I shall retain the archives of this office in my possession until the presentation of proper authority [...]. During my suspension, and the duration of the present state of affairs in this quarter, I shall continue to exert my influence as hitherto in favour of British interests of which I beg you will acquaint the merchants in the capital. I am happy to say that General Santa Anna continues to observe the same line of conduct, and no British subject can say that he has been in the least molested.<sup>108</sup>

He also implied that Pakenham did not have the courage to resist his removal: ‘I am no longer British Vice Consul, so that, after five years of faithful services to His Majesty’s Government and subjects I am sacrificed to the intrigues of the Mexican Government!!’<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, backed as he was by Santa Anna, whose revolt would eventually triumph in December 1832, his forced resignation did not diminish significantly the influence he had succeeded in gaining in Veracruz.

After the better part of a year had passed and the *veracruzanos* were still refusing to deal with Welsh’s replacement, Pakenham was forced to write to Bernardo González in January 1833, to ask him to ensure Dick was accepted as the legitimate British vice consul in Veracruz.<sup>110</sup> However, attempts to guarantee the return to normality in the vice consulate in Veracruz did not succeed immediately. Santa Anna himself prevented O’Gorman from going to Veracruz, and a complaint was also drawn up against O’Gorman for having interfered in the nation’s politics by going to Veracruz to remove Welsh.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>107</sup> PRO: FO 203/55, ff. 65–6: Hugh Dick to Ciriaco Vázquez, Veracruz, 14 Oct. 1832. *El Censor*, 13, 19 and 20 Sept. 1832.

<sup>108</sup> PRO: FO203/47, ff. 422–23: Joseph Welsh to O’Gorman, Veracruz, 13 April 1832.

<sup>109</sup> PRO: FO203/47, ff. 428–29: Joseph Welsh to O’Gorman, Veracruz, 25 June 1832.

<sup>110</sup> PRO: FO 50/79, ff. 13–4: Copy of letter, Richard Pakenham to Bernardo González, Mexico City, 30 Jan. 1833.

<sup>111</sup> PRO: FO 50/79, ff. 39–41: Richard Pakenham to Viscount Palmerston, Mexico City, 12 Feb. 1833.



Although Welsh was removed from office in June 1832, the reverberations of the event continued to be felt for over a year. A characteristic trait of Santa Anna's was that he remembered those who had proven useful to him.<sup>112</sup> In December 1833, with Santa Anna now serving as president, the caudillo asked Pakenham whether it was possible to have Welsh re-appointed to the post of vice consul in Veracruz. As Pakenham recorded in a letter to Viscount Palmerston, Santa Anna,

a short time ago [...] expressed his desire to see Mr Welsh re-appointed to that situation [...]. I told him that painful as it was to me to decline complying with his wishes, I had felt it quite out of my power to accede to them on this point. I have to add that General Santa Anna signified his intention of causing a note to be addressed to me [...] declaring the falsity of the charges brought forward by the late government against Mr Welsh, and also bearing testimony to the zeal which he had always observed in Mr Welsh for the interest of His Majesty's subjects while in charge of the Vice-consulate at Veracruz.<sup>113</sup>

Following his removal from office, Joseph Welsh decided to remain in Mexico rather than return to Ireland. With his wife Carmen he moved to Xalapa and bought the Rancho Buena Vista, in the outskirts of the provincial capital, on the road to Coatepec.<sup>114</sup> In partnership with another Briton, Maurice Jones,<sup>115</sup> Welsh founded in 1840 and ran what was, at least initially, the very successful textile factory Industrial Xalapeña.<sup>116</sup> Welsh also had a house in the main square of Veracruz, which he rented to one Francisco de Borja Garay.<sup>117</sup> Like so many other *xalapeño* entrepreneurs whose support of

<sup>112</sup> An anecdote that exemplifies this aspect of Santa Anna's character can be found in Guillermo Prieto, *Memorias de mis tiempos* (Mexico City, 1996), pp. 37–9, where he narrates how Santa Anna had no trouble in remembering that Guillermo Valle, as a boy, helped him during the 1828 siege of Oaxaca, and that on meeting him again, several years later, 'lo levantó en sus brazos con emoción, tocó después la campana, escribió en un papel y a poco, he ahí, a Vallecito instalado con su beca en el colegio de San Ildefonso [...] con las mismas consideraciones que si fuera el hijo del Presidente de la República'.

<sup>113</sup> PRO: FO 50/80A, ff. 284–87: Richard Pakenham to Viscount Palmerston, Mexico City, 23 Dec. 1833.

<sup>114</sup> AHMX: 'Libro de acuerdos del ilustre ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Jalapa, correspondiente al año de 1836,' vol. 47, ff. 72–3: Minutes for the meeting of 13 Sept. 1836.

<sup>115</sup> Joseph Welsh's friendship with Maurice Jones and his brother J. H. Jones dated from as early as 1830, perhaps earlier. On one occasion in which Welsh had to 'ausentarse por poco tiempo de Veracruz,' in 1831, he entrusted the consulate to J. H. Jones. Archivo Histórico Municipal de Veracruz: Caja 162. Vol. 217, ff. 63–6: 'Documento notificando la ausencia del Vice-consul británico D. José Welsh,' Veracruz, 19 Feb. 1831.

<sup>116</sup> Nelly Josefa León Fuentes, 'Los antagonismos empresariales de Xalapa en el Siglo XIX,' *Anuario IX. Instituto de Investigaciones Histórico-Sociales Universidad Veracruzana* (Xalapa, 1994), p. 81.

<sup>117</sup> Archivo General de Notarías del Estado de Veracruz (Xalapa): Notario. Lic. Eduardo Fernández de Castro, 'Protocolo de Instrumentos Públicos que se han otorgado por ante mi en este presente año de 1837,' ff. 133–34: Contrato de arrendamiento, Veracruz, 21 Oct. 1837.

the caudillo was rewarded by his largesse, Welsh benefited from the boom of the textile industry that developed in Xalapa during these years.

By 1841 Welsh was very much a respected member of *xalapeño* society. With his textile factory thriving, he was in a position to grant some of his land to the Ayuntamiento and started to play a relatively active role in the community, helping with the organisation of the local police force, an institution he would show concern for throughout his life.<sup>118</sup> He built the *Dique* (dike) that stands to this day by the Lagos that spread along the south-west of the city centre<sup>119</sup> and in 1843, together with Juan Francisco de Bárcena, he took it upon himself to restore and look after the Paseo Nuevo, cultivating trees on its pavements.<sup>120</sup> Yet, Welsh retained certain characteristics that could arguably be depicted as typically British. He forbade the fishing of *mojarra* in the river alongside his factory, showed the utmost disgust at people's willingness to shoot down ducks he wanted to protect, and strove hard to have the ayuntamiento forbid the disposal of rubbish in the proximity of the bridge.<sup>121</sup>

Although he earned 'many riches' between the mid-1830s and the mid-1840s, by 1845 Welsh was near bankruptcy; 'because of unexpected accidents that led to the decline of [his] assets up to the point of having to give them all to his creditors'.<sup>122</sup> His personal circumstances became equally stressful following his separation from his wife who walked out on him, one day 'of her own will [...], taking with her some very splendid [*lucido*] belongings and valuable jewels, the produce of which will guarantee a monthly salary that allows her to live comfortably in Veracruz'.<sup>123</sup> Welsh established a long-lasting relationship with Asunción Zayas with whom he had two children.<sup>124</sup> As far as I know, he lived in Xalapa until he died.

<sup>118</sup> AHMX: 'Libro de acuerdos del muy ilustre ayuntamiento de esta ciudad de Jalapa del año de 1854,' vol. 66, ff. 70–2: Minutes for the meeting of 22 May 1854. The Ayuntamiento, on this occasion, had to deal with José Welsh's complaint about 'la falta de policía que se observa tanto en la calle en que vive como en las inmediaciones del puente del camino de Coatepec'.

<sup>119</sup> AHMX: 'Libro de acuerdos del ilustre ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Jalapa correspondiente al año de 1843,' vol. 55, ff. 73–4: Minutes for the meeting of 22 April 1843.

<sup>120</sup> AHMX: 'Libro de acuerdos del ilustre ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Jalapa correspondiente al año de 1843,' vol. 55, ff. 62–8: Minutes for the meeting of 5 April 1843.

<sup>121</sup> AHMX: 'Libro de acuerdos del ilustre ayuntamiento de la ciudad de Jalapa correspondiente al año de 1843,' vol. 55, ff. 84–8: Minutes for the meeting of 12 May 1843.

<sup>122</sup> ANBUV: 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

<sup>123</sup> ANBUV: 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

<sup>124</sup> ANBUV: 'Registro alfabético de instrumentos públicos de este oficio en el año de 1848,' ff. 383–84: Testamento de José Welsh, Xalapa, 16 Nov. 1848.

### Conclusion

A study of the events that led to the removal of Joseph Welsh from his post as vice consul in the port of Veracruz illustrates a number of pertinent points concerning nineteenth-century British diplomacy in Mexico and Santa Anna's activities during this period. In terms of the ethics of the Foreign Office and its representatives abroad, Welsh's story exemplifies the extent to which, even as early as the 1830s, the idea of intervening in the politics of another country was perceived to be a crime. Welsh himself recognised that he had to 'abstain from any interference in the political agitations of the country', since this was 'inconsistent' with his 'situation'.<sup>125</sup> His superior, Richard Pakenham, also displayed a strong commitment to this ideal for the way in which he strongly warned Welsh against fighting in the conflict the moment the suggestion was made and for the way he immediately agreed to the Mexican government's request to have the Vice Consul removed. Pakenham's refusal to have Welsh re-instated as Vice Consul, even when Santa Anna asked him to do so, also shows that for a high-ranking British diplomat like himself, the fact that Welsh had displayed a predisposition to interfere in the Mexican political scene was enough to bar him from returning to office thereafter. In other words, Pakenham did not have Welsh removed in 1832 because the Bustamante government asked him to do so, but because he believed Welsh's conduct went against the ideal of neutrality the Foreign Office aimed to uphold. It was for the same reason that Pakenham refused to acquiesce to Santa Anna's request for his re-appointment. Had Pakenham been the weak ambassador Welsh made him out to be, he would have obeyed Santa Anna just as he had obeyed Bustamante before.

Welsh's letters also confirm a number of highly important issues concerning Santa Anna's conduct and subsequent political success. They show how popular he was in his home province by 1832, something which would prove decisive in this particular civil war given that the regular army stood firm behind the government for the greater part of the conflict. Let us not forget that Santa Anna defeated Bustamante, on this occasion, with the almost exclusive help of armed civilians (the civic militias). In this sense, it is important to stress how Santa Anna comes across as the natural leader of the *veracruzanos*, consistently admired, supported and celebrated by the *jarochada*, even following the debacle of Tolome. It is worth noting here, in the light of Welsh's account of Santa Anna's extraordinary popularity, Timothy Anna's provocative Weberian view that, 'the *caudillos*, whether we like it or not and whether the leaders of the central governments of the day liked it or not,

<sup>125</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, f. 18, Joseph Welsh to Richard Pakenham, Veracruz, 4 Jan. 1832.

were the legitimate and perhaps even natural leaders – the voices – of their home provinces'.<sup>126</sup> Welsh's letters illustrate, moreover, how he guaranteed his troops' allegiance.

Welsh's story also allows us to appreciate the ways in which Santa Anna obtained the support of the businessmen in the area, whether they were Mexican or British, by ensuring that law and order prevailed and that commerce proceeded unharmed and protected. We can thus verify the extent to which Santa Anna fulfilled that key function, common to most early nineteenth-century caudillos as outlined in John Lynch's typology, of acting, on behalf of the elites, 'as guardians of order and guarantors of the existing social structure'.<sup>127</sup>

We can also appreciate Santa Anna's energetic disposition, the way he came across as a man of action. For Welsh, and all those Mexicans who supported Santa Anna at one stage or another during the early national period, the caudillo was admirable precisely for the manner in which he appeared to be tireless, always on the go, bounding with energy and courage. We find Welsh celebrating and praising the way Santa Anna rallied the troops, inspected them personally, behaved in a 'daring manner', capable of marching '22 leagues of bad road in the short space of 36 hours!!'<sup>128</sup>

The most illustrious citizen, the one who has tirelessly fought against Mexico's aggressors [...], the one [who] single-handed, without killing, has preserved the public peace, because with the circumstances being the same for all Mexicans, *be alone*, despite the hatred of his enemies, their lies and calumnies, has been the one to stand out even in the most unfavourable of times, irrefutable proof that he is worth much more than all those who envy and abhor him and *who have not been able to outshine this illustrious general*.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Anna, *Forging Mexico*, p. 22.

<sup>127</sup> John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America, 1800–1850*, p. 183.

<sup>128</sup> PRO: FO 50/77, pp. 63–4: Joseph Welsh to John Bidwell, Veracruz, 27 Feb. 1832.

<sup>129</sup> *La Palanca*, 19 June 1849.