

LUCAS ALAMÁN

Lucas Alamán (1792–1853), born in the state of Guanajuato, was a leading politician and a historian during the first half of the nineteenth century. His best-known work is his five-volume *Historia de México* (1849–52), published toward the end of his life. Until the 1840s Alamán shared with Mora and other liberals many of their ideas. Alamán was a deputy to the Cádiz Cortes before independence in 1821. During his life he served three times as minister in the cabinet. Alamán was minister of internal and external relations in the administration of General Anastasio Bustamante (1830–32). During his tenure in office he endeavored to check the military revolts in the country. A military coup staged by Santa Anna deposed Bustamante, however, and Alamán and other members of the government were charged with various crimes by the new government. Falsely accused of hiring the murderer of former independence hero Vicente Guerrero, Alamán went into hiding to avoid arrest.

While he remained underground he wrote a legal brief as his defense as well as an essay, a critical examination of the Bustamante administration, which we present here. In this text Alamán discusses the institutional flaws of the 1824 charter. After the 1847 Mexican-American War of Independence Alamán became more reactionary, and in 1849 he founded the Conservative party.

Impartial Examination of the Administration of General Vice President Don Anastasio Bustamante

I have little to recommend my opinions but long observation and much impartiality. They come from one who has been no tool of power, no flatterer of greatness; and who in his last acts does not wish to belie the tenor of his life. They come from one almost the whole of whose public exertion has been a struggle for the liberty of others; from one in whose breast no anger, durable or vehement, has ever been kindled by what he considers as tyranny; they come from one who desires honors, distinctions, and emoluments but little, and who expects them not at all; who has no contempt for fame, and no fear of obloquy; who shuns contention, though he will hazard an opinion; from one who wishes to preserve consistency, but who would preserve consistency by varying his means to secure the unity of his end, and, when the equipoise of the vessel in which he sails may be endangered by overloading upon one side, is desirous of carrying the small weight of his reasons to that which may preserve its equipoise.

— Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution*

If, in all things, past experience is the surest guide for what is to come, in political matters it is almost the only rule that can be adopted with confidence, because the science of government, being a practical science by its nature and destined for practical ends accord-

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ing to one of the primary experts in public law in our era,¹ cannot be learned a priori, being not only a subject that requires experience, but even more experience than a person can acquire in the entire course of his life; for this, the profound study of history will always be indispensable, not only for those who take upon themselves the difficult business of governing people, but for the people themselves who, in the lessons history teaches them, learn to recognize what suits them and what harms them and to judge with impartiality those who have directed them. This study is even more beneficial when it devolves upon events closest to us and that interest us more from being close by, whether because they are about our own country and our days, or because they belong to peoples and nations that have greater similarity to our present circumstances. From all these points of view, an impartial examination of an administration that has existed in the Republic for two and one-half years must seem very important; an administration that gave luster and splendor to the nation, rendering it esteemed and respected in foreign countries; that affirmed and increased its credit in those countries; that mended internal finances in a way that had not been seen since independence; that developed industry and created hope for a lasting prosperity, which nonetheless disappeared with the very administration that produced it, like those luminous meteors that shine in the obscurity of night for a few moments and then return to the same darkness from which they emerged. This administration, atrociously calumniated and cruelly persecuted by its adversaries, has been defended many times with anger and sometimes with skill by various writers, but never has it been judged with the calm of reason and the impartial seriousness of justice, considering the totality of all its operations and the basic foundations of its conduct. Neither could this impartial judgment truly develop in the midst of the fervor of the passions and the tumultuous cry of persecution, nor for this reason have I previously undertaken the writing of this paper, waiting to enter into this examination not that of the revolutionary spirit, which unfortunately has put down such profound roots among us, might have been calmed, but rather that it might have changed course, which happens with sufficient frequency, for, similar to the vapid rich of Rome, who, as Horace describes with such elegance

1. Burke.

(*diruit aedificat; repetit quod imper omisit*), today destroys the edifice that it raised up yesterday and tomorrow praises publicly the same individual who, a short time before, was the object of a terrible persecution. Now that it is already clear that the administration of General Bustamante has been only the pretext and not the cause of the revolution, that the men who prepared it have for the most part been forgotten, his conduct can be judged with neither hatred nor love, completely setting aside his people in the examination we are going to make of his political administration, in order to keep in view only his actions and to determine from these what the principles have been that drove them, to what point these can be justified, what the consequence of the success, of the error, of the circumstances, or of the crime might be.²

To judge impartially the conduct not only of a government but also of an individual, whether he be in the sphere of a public committee or in the more limited sphere of a private post, it is necessary to focus on these essential points: what was the nature of the assignment entrusted to him, in what circumstances, what means were given him to carry it out, and, given these, to what point did he learn to make use of them to fulfill the objectives of his committee. Without giving its true weight to each one of these points, any judgment that might be formed would be precipitate or arbitrary, and therefore I will be excused for entering at some length into the examination of each of them, combining them at times when their contact might be so intimate that it might not be possible to deal with them separately without confusion.

The Republic, after a series of almost uninterrupted disturbances since the year 1826, found itself weary of this continuous motion in which the factions had kept it: its forces had been drained, its treasury was not only exhausted but also overloaded with obligations, its foreign credit destroyed, and commerce and industry weakened, inevitable outcomes as much from these very disturbances as from the legislative mea-

2. On December 4, 1829, the reserve army of the city of Jalapa, commanded by the vice president, General Anastasio Bustamante, revolted against the government of Vicente Guerrero. In a little less than a month, Bustamante ousted Guerrero and seized power. Lucas Alamán was then appointed minister of internal and external relations in the new administration. The role played by Alamán was so central in the government that people came to call it the "Alamán administration." (Editor's note)

tures the general Congress felt compelled to dictate because of them. Of the old parties that had divided the Republic, the one had remained entirely disorganized and destroyed by the events of Tulancingo,³ the other had been internally divided on the occasion of the election of the president; one part of it, united to the remnants of the crushed party, had formed a new party that, supported by a very pronounced but inactive general opinion and because of the very effective strength of the army, gathered in Jalapa, produced a revolution that was generally desired; the other part of that same party, tarnished by the blemish of the triumph that it obtained in the Acordada,⁴ found itself detested in public opinion and judgment but had in its support the Chamber of Deputies, composed largely of individuals from that party and various congresses of the states. Others of these congresses and the Senate were loyal to the plan promulgated in Jalapa and very quickly generalized to the entire Republic. The general discontent had begun to show itself before the proclamation of this plan, and, seeking the remedy for public woes in an essential change in the Constitution, some individuals in Jalisco had proclaimed the centralized form of government; in Yucatán a more important movement had taken place with the same objective.

Such was the state of things when General Bustamante took the reins of government in his hands on January 1, 1830; a few days later he named his cabinet, and the appointments were generally well received. Public confidence was reestablished almost immediately just with the reputation of the individuals who made up the new administration, and for the nation a new epoch of prosperity seemed to begin from that moment.

As the revolution had not changed the Constitution and established

3. The “old parties” were the Scottish (considered aristocratic) and the Yorkist (considered more popular), both with origins in the Masonic lodges. On January 6, 1828, the leader of the Scottish party, General Nicolás Bravo, who rebelled against the government of President Guadalupe Victoria, was defeated in the town of Tulancingo by troops loyal to the government commanded by the Yorkist Vicente Guerrero. (Editor’s note)

4. The Scottish candidate, Manuel Gómez Pedraza, won the 1828 presidential elections and defeated the Yorkist candidate, Vicente Guerrero, whose supporters refused to acknowledge the results and revolted in several cities. In Mexico City a pro-Guerrero mob stormed the Acordada prison, a colonial building. The popular riots forced Gómez Pedraza to flee the country, and Guerrero became president. (Editor’s note)

laws in any way, the observance of and compliance with the one and the others had to be the objective of the new government, and the means it had to fulfill their duties were solely those that this Constitution and these laws in current force provided. The desire and most urgent necessity of the nation was the preservation of peace, and any fundamental innovation whatsoever could produce nothing other than new and more disastrous convulsions; therefore duty, suitability, and public opinion equally compelled the government to submit to conserving and consolidating what existed.

If it has been possible to state briefly what the objective was of the office entrusted to the new administration and to present at a glance what the state of the nation was in the epoch of its installation, it is not equally possible to explain briefly the means that were placed in its hands for this, because those involve very extensive considerations on the exercise of constitutional powers and require a more specific examination of the moral, political, and physical state in which the Republic found itself than what is presented by the picture that I have only outlined with a few light strokes. If the length that might be necessary to give to these considerations seems excessive, thinking men capable of understanding fully the importance of this subject matter will readily pardon what will seem prolix to the less reflective person, and in order not to depend solely on my own opinion, I will be permitted also to support myself with the opinion of the man who has been able to comprehend better the tendency and outcomes of political movements in our era. This man, Edmund Burke, in his profound reflections on the revolution in France, has announced, with a spirit that might be called prophetic, the entire series of events that we have seen in our country and in foreign countries, and, as his observations are so relevant to our circumstances, what I take from his brilliant pen will enrich and support this paper.

The entire force of government, all the means that are in its hands to conserve public order, suppress and contain unsettled and seditious persons, prevent the misappropriation of national wealth, and, in short, carry out the necessary functions of an authority that must be active, vigilant, and foresightful are derived from the division of powers that the Constitution established and from the powers that in this division are settled on the executive. The model that was in mind for the writing

of our federal Constitution was the Constitution of the United States of the North, but it is a mistake to believe that the executive of our Republic is constituted in the same way as that of the United States, and another still greater mistake to think that that Constitution, even were it copied exactly, would produce the same results operating over dissimilar elements.

The United States of the North were independently formed in the beginning because of the different migrations of English colonists who, for different reasons—some political, some religious—felt they had to abandon their country and settled on the coasts of America, giving to each colony a particular constitution, modeled generally on the principles adopted in England. These colonies not only did not mix and blend with the natives of the country, but rather they expelled them from their settlements to the point of wiping them out. They all depended on the English government, and the authority constituted by it was the bond that united them to each other and to the metropolis. When independence came to break this bond, all the legislators had to do was substitute a national union for this common bond of foreign rule, and this is what was done with the federal Constitution. This did not alter in any way the particular existence of the states, it did not change their individual constitutions, and these constitutions to which the English colonists were habituated from their *patria* were, rather than written codes, the habitual customs, the ordinary way of life of all individuals; and as they were derived from that of England, they had established on the experience of England the division and balance of powers with neither shock nor collision among them. Independence, then, did not change anything in that Republic except a nonessential property, but it left existing everything that constituted the essence of the original constitution. From this it follows that, since the era of its independence, the United States have moved forward every day without impediment on the path of their prosperity. They did not have more than one single difficulty to overcome to constitute themselves as a nation, and this difficulty is the most minor for a people, which is to shake off the rule of a distant nation, no matter how powerful it might be.

Our fate in this regard has been different: independence came by means very different from that of the United States, and while the United States were constituted from the very moment they found themselves free, we, destroying everything that existed before, found ourselves in-

dependent and in anarchy. We congratulated ourselves for the liberty we had acquired, much more when the Plan of Casa Mata⁵ opened the field for the establishment of institutions absolutely different, or rather entirely opposite to everything that was known and had existed until then. We began to count the epoch of liberty from that event, but we should not have congratulated ourselves on it “until [we were] informed how it had been combined with government, with public force, with the discipline and obedience of armies, with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue, with morality and religion, with the solidity of property, with peace and order, with civil and social manners. All these (in their way) are good things, too, and without them liberty is not a benefit whilst it lasts, and is not likely to continue long.”⁶ All these delicate but necessary combinations had to be the objective of the Constitution, and the results we continually see prove clearly that these important objectives have not been fulfilled with the Constitution.

The model that was taken to constitute the nation, as I have said above, was the United States, but one hardly had any slight knowledge of this model, and what one had seen practiced in some way was the Spanish Constitution, which in itself was nothing other than an imitation of the Constituent Assembly of France, and this latter the result of all the metaphysical errors of the speculative philosophers of the last century. Thus it is that, without noticing it, the entire spirit of the Spanish Constitution was transmitted into our federal Constitution, which had the structure of the Constitution of the United States, and this influence was yet more characterized in the constitutions of some states. The constitution that the Constituent Assembly gave to France and that the Cortes of Cádiz servilely copied not only did not properly distinguish the powers, not only did not establish a suitable balance between them, but rather weakened the executive excessively, transferred all authority to the legislature, creating, in place of the absolute power of the monarch, a power as absolute as the monarch but entirely arbitrary, without any of the brakes to contain it that could in some way restrain

5. On February 1, 1823, Santa Anna issued the Plan of Casa Mata, which called for the reinstatement of the constituent congress disbanded by Emperor Iturbide. The rebellion extended throughout the country and was the beginning of the end for the short-lived first Mexican empire. (Editor’s note)

6. Burke.

the arbitrariness of the monarchs. France and Spain, through similar constitutions, did nothing more than pass from the tyranny of one to the infinitely more unbearable tyranny of many, and among us we have seen the same results. To this principle and not to any other must be attributed the excesses that we have recently seen in Zacatecas: a Congress that declares war on the general government, that enters into relations with the congresses of other states, that condemns to exile its deputies in the general Congress because they have not supported these errors, is an institution most opposite to the idea that all the theories have us form of a representative body, and, on the contrary, an institution most similar to those oligarchic corporations which, in the Italian republics of the sixteenth century, exercised the most horrible tyranny alternately with the despots who from time to time dismissed them to concentrate authority in themselves. This imperfect division of powers, or rather this monstrous accumulation of power in bodies called legislative, is that much more prejudicial when these bodies in some state, like the already cited Zacatecas, are composed of only one chamber made up of a small number of individuals and do not even have a time limitation in the exercise of their omnipotence, so their sessions last the entire year. Thus, we have seen the Zacatecan oligarchy dominated by two active intriguers followed blindly by nine simple men who, with the sincerest intention in the world, have let those two evil spirits precipitate their state into all the misfortunes of war and stir up those misfortunes of anarchy in the rest of the Republic.

There is a very serious circumstance that increases even more disproportionately the power of the general Congress and, in its proper proportion, that power of the state legislatures, and it reduces the executive to the greatest nullity, and it is the following that I see has never been given proper attention. The Constituent Congress believed it had finished its work with dividing the Republic into states and establishing two chambers and a president, and it said pompously on taking its leave: *I have given you a Constitution*; but it did not reflect that this Constitution it had written, infusing the form of the United States Constitution with the complete spirit of the Constitution of the Cortes of Cádiz, destroying at their roots everything that existed, did nothing more than put the form of government in contradiction with all the sound legislation of the nation, and because this sound legislation was coherent with the nation's habits and customs, the application of that very Constitution

came to present great difficulties. The constituents without doubt believed this work would be carried out by their successors, but they did not consider that it was absolutely impossible for an ordinary Congress, overloaded with the duties that the Constitution imposes on it, to dedicate itself to the giant work of revising all the old legislation to adapt it to the new form that had been given to the nation. Thus it is that such a work has not been undertaken, and a few other isolated measures have done nothing more than make the state of things worse, and the nation remains with a legislation totally contrary to its institutions, which not only causes supreme difficulty in the administration of justice and in public finance, but also subjugates the exercise of executive power even more to legislative authority.

In effect this contradiction between the laws and the Constitution encountered at every step in the political and judicial administration necessitates frequent consultations to Congress, even regarding those points that according to the Constitution pertain to the executive. Procrastination in attending to these questions infinitely delays tending to matters, and, at times, resolutions suffer from legislative omnipotence. Thus, for example, in the noisy matter of General Inclán,⁷ as it was very clear that there was no existing law for such a case inasmuch as the law established by the Cortes of Spain could not be applied among us, Congress declared, at the very time it made a new law, that this law had always been in force and was made a crime of the government because, lacking prophetic spirit, the administration had not executed the law before it existed.

In the Constitution, certain powers and many duties are in fact assigned to the government, but this demarcation of obligations has been made without calculating at all whether, in order to carry them out, the powers with which it was vested were sufficient, and this is another very essential point of difference between the organization of our executive and that of the United States, in spite of the claim that ours has

7. General Ignacio Inclán, commander of the Guadalajara garrison, abused his powers as military commander and was dismissed from his command by Bustamante in December 1831 but was not prosecuted. The government claimed that there was no law under which to charge and convict Inclán. He was considered a centralist and a loyal supporter of the administration by the Yorkist opposition. The opposition accused the government of unduly protecting him. (Editor's note)

been modeled on that one. One power alone, with which the president of the United States of the North is vested and which the president of the United States of Mexico lacks, is sufficient to constitute an authority of so different a kind that a comparison of one with the other is not possible. The president of the United States of the North can dismiss by his will alone, without cause or even having to state the reason, all military, political, and financial employees of the federation, with the sole exception of the judges, without granting them any pension or retirement; and he can use this power however and whenever it seems best to him. Imagine for a moment an executive power armed with this important authority. What would its influence not be? From the moment this authority is conceded to it, all employees depend exclusively on the president. They become as many supports as he can have to sustain his authority; but this authority, being exercised with the discretion with which it has been used in the United States—only the present president, General Andrew Jackson, has been accused of any arbitrariness—is enough to avoid the disloyalty or extravagance of the employee in finance, to impose respect and fear in the military, and to instill in everyone a sense of regard toward that person on whose will they absolutely depend; while among us, the president wonders who the official of the ministry is, who is selling government secrets to the intriguers and rebellious persons. He knows positively, although without proofs that can be presented judicially, who the employee of the customs office is who allows contraband, without being able to do anything other than take the ridiculous and useless measure of suspending that employee for up to three months, leaving him with half his salary. Thus it is that the government can do nothing to correct the woes it sees as self-evident and, instead of being an object of regard and respect, is nothing more than an object of derision and scorn, even to its most immediate subordinates.

If, then, the president of the United States of the North is considered vested with this power and, moreover, exercising his authority by virtue of a Constitution incorporating all the habits and customs of the country, which could be described as innate in the country, entirely in accord with the civil and criminal legislation, which therefore presents almost no impediment to the fulfillment of the Constitution, one will see how different his power is from that with which the first magistrate of our Republic is vested; but there are still other differences no less im-

portant. The president of the United States of the North has the power to commute or pardon completely penalties imposed by tribunals except in the case of high treason against the nation. How much confusion, how many difficulties would be avoided among us if our Constitution had given this power to the president! And, in fact, there is no part of our political organization more defective. The constituent congress, blindly following the theoretical principles of the speculative philosophers, believed that only the one who makes the law can reform it, even in cases when the law could establish the manner of granting individual pardons, and under this principle it reserved to Congress the power to grant this kind of pardon. It did not keep in mind that, in this way, those condemned to death during the recess had to suffer this punishment irremediably whatever the merits that their cases might show to commute the sentences, and that, on the contrary, none of those sentenced during the sessions, no matter how atrocious their crimes might be, would have to suffer the punishment because of the excessive ease with which the collegial and unaccountable bodies grant this type of pardon; for although, through a law, the restriction was set by which only the requests that the government informs and supports could be taken into consideration, this law has been eluded completely by means of a subtle distinction based in the unlimited right of initiative and the omnipotence of the legislative body. The consequences have been what might have been expected and no less unfortunate in what is moral than in what is political: there is not a criminal who does not hope for pardon up to the very moment of execution when he has seen that it is enough that the porter in the Chamber of Deputies can scribble a motion for pardon, collecting signatures that, for this and other things, are given with blameworthy ease; and so if the execution takes place, the criminal who suffers it has not been sufficiently prepared and presents himself before the Tribunal of the Eternal Judge where things do not go as lightly as in our congresses, not carrying in his heart the penitence that must save him, but rather, perhaps, the despair that causes him to presume that he has suffered for lack of sufficient resources. This is how the most solemn and fitting act for the exercise of national power has come to be a kind of legerdemain, and the life or death of men depends on mere chance. On the great occasions in which a reprieve or general amnesty can save a nation from the horrors of civil war with an opportune and well-arranged stroke, the harm in this way of proceeding is even

greater. Sometimes a member of either chamber, ignorant of the state of things or because it suits the faction to which he belongs, inopportunistly grants a general pardon and occasionally, when the government puts it forward, the Congress lets pass the opportunity of granting it to its advantage with useless or awkward discussions that lessen the value of the pardon when it has been agreed to and that, when it is granted, influence crimes to multiply with the probability of obtaining the pardon.

If the Constitution of our neighbors differs so essentially from ours in the two great powers it grants to the government to suspend positions and grant pardons, it differs even more in the methods it provides for the success of its workings. Our Constitution leaves the government entirely isolated, with no one to advise its decisions or inform it on the points of fact and law in the serious pieces of business that must apply to it frequently for its decision. In the United States, just as in England, there is a type of adviser with the title of attorneys of the nation or of the crown, with whom ministers discuss their measures, and these can be issued not based on the rough report of the officer of a board, but rather based on the considered opinion of a lawyer, to whom theoretical and practical knowledge must lead correctly. In this part, the constitution of these states moved away absolutely from its two models, that of the United States of the North and the Spanish, and produced its own creation, the *Council of the government*, and in truth this original invention does not do the greatest honor to the creative genius of its authors. This Council is composed of one-half of the Senate; it exists in the interval between the ordinary sessions and, by an erroneous interpretation of the Constitution, also ceases during the extraordinary sessions, and among its duties are advising the government in whatever the government discusses with it. It will be noticed very quickly that this Council is entirely inadequate to fulfill the objectives of a consultative body. The act of consulting a person or corporation supposes necessarily, on the part of the one who consults, confidence in the knowledge and sincerity of the one consulted. In order to have this, it is necessary that the one who consults have had at least some part in the selection of the consultant; this is how, even in the Spanish Constitution, which is the one that has set forth the greatest restrictions on the selection of the consultative body of government, the Cortes presented on a short list the advisers of the state, but the king could freely select among these short-listed persons. Here, the government finds itself in the situation of consulting

persons who are perfect strangers to it, who many times will be indifferent to its successes, and when the majority of that Council consists of individuals from what is called the opposition, their consultants will be positively interested in ruining it with their counsel, for among us opposition and sedition are entirely synonymous. Must, then, the government seek counsel from someone who will either give advice with indifference or might give it with malice? And this last case is so far from being hypothetical that, inasmuch as following the opinion of the Council does not in any way preclude the responsibility of the minister, the Council, governed by self-interest in holding the government accountable, will not let the opportunity pass to lay a trap. But, supposing that nothing of this happens and the government can count on the integrity and learning of its counselors, will the need it has of its counselors be limited only to some months of the year and not continue in the time in which the most important business of the nation must be debated in the chambers? One must agree that this part of the Council of the government and its operation in the meeting of extraordinary sessions is what was least thought out in the Constitution.

We maintain, then, through the examination and comparison we have made of the executive of the United States of the North with ours in the Constitution, that the latter is infinitely weaker than the former in its vested powers and, moreover, is deprived of that kind of counsel that among our neighbors contributes to the success and prestige of their operations, and so, accumulating weakness upon weakness, our government has all the weaknesses inherent in the nature of an elective government and all the weaknesses that come from the restrictions and ties with which the somber and distrustful legislators of Cádiz bound and restrained the phantom of the king they created in their Constitution. Is it, then, a wonder that a government so weakly organized cannot fulfill the objective of its creation, suppressing the wicked, protecting the good and peaceful, ensuring order, strengthening military discipline, and enabling the nation to enjoy the benefits of society, primordial objective of all human institutions? And is it a wonder that the government of Sr. Esteva⁸ should have endeavored to place itself at the head of a faction to

8. The government is called “the government of Mr. Esteva” and not “the government of General Victoria” because it is known how small a role Victoria played in what was done in his name and that everything was the doing of that minister.

be, in this way, what it could not be by means of the laws because, among us, the government can do nothing and the factions can do everything? Is it a wonder that the minister of war, Gómez Pedraza, should want all the leaders of the army to be provisional and as if on assignment, so they might thus remain necessarily dependent on the government?⁹ When the hands of the government are so tied that it cannot move them in any direction, it should not seem strange that it seeks some means to make these ties somehow looser.

This habitual weakness of the government, although always harmful to the interests of the nation, would be less so if it existed only in ordinary and tranquil times, giving way in times of danger and revolution to greater energy. This is why in England, despite the fact that the authority of the government is in all times greater than among us, as much because of its form as for its powers, it is still not judged sufficient in times of public unrest, during which those laws protective of personal security known by the name of “law of habeas corpus” are suspended. This is also why in modern France, constituted according to all the enlightenment of the century, it has been necessary very quickly to have recourse to empowering its government with a dreadful military law, which it puts into use when the frequent unrest of its not very peaceful subjects requires it. But the Constitution not only did not foresee anything of this, but it also would be very doubtful or, better said, very clear to a person of rigorous principle that, in accord with the Constitution, it might not have had recourse to the expedient of which it has made use already on more than one occasion, of vesting the government with extraordinary powers in urgent cases. These powers, because they carry this mark of extraordinary, already have the stamp of odiousness in addition to the impediment of the untimeliness with which they are usually granted, in accord with the general order of our political upheavals, which is the following: any ambitious person whatsoever, as soon as he can become the leader of some faction or take possession of some stronghold, raises the banner of rebellion under whatever pretext, but always proclaiming something very different from what constitutes the true aim of his movement; of course, conferences between the government and its rebellious subject are entered into, and mean-

9. Alamán is referring to cabinet politics during the administration of General Guadalupe Victoria (1824–28). (Editor’s note)

while, more precious time to act is lost; in the meantime, the revolution grows, the forces of the government weaken, in Congress various laws of circumstance are discussed, each more inadequate than the others; and, finally, extraordinary powers are resorted to when the opportunity has passed for granting them and when they are already becoming useless. If, on the contrary, it were established by a general rule in the Constitution or by subsequent laws what must be done in the not rare instances of public disturbances, the government could make use, at the appropriate occasion, of an amplitude of powers that would come to be ordinary, although applicable only in determinate times and circumstances, and revolutions would cease to be so frequent and dangerous, having a strong hand, ready and always armed with a power sufficient to curb them. Because of this large and notable void in our legislation, each revolution requires a series of partial and ineffective provisions, and conspiring has come to be a true joke inasmuch as all the advantages and no risk are on the side of those who conspire. We see them calmly taking walks and putting all their plans to work in the middle of the population centers where, although everybody knows them, the hand of the weak authority can never get to them.

In modern institutions, it has almost always passed from one extreme to the other: the abuses of the absolute power made people believe that restraining the powers of those who until then had been depositaries of that power was enough to ensure liberty, but these restraints have been carried so far that all power has been reduced to the inability to do any good and many times to the need to do evil by indirect means, while, because of one of those contradictions so frequent in the administrators of systems, at the same time that accumulation of power that constituted absolutism in the hands of one individual was destroyed, this same absolutism was transferred to the collegial bodies, in which its exercise came to be much more dangerous. Liberty came, then, to be lost by the same road by which it tried to become secure, and with it has also been lost public order, security of property, personal security, and all the goods that society should produce and that had been enjoyed in the old order of things.

In the United States of the North, this power of the Congress is far from being absolute. It has necessary limitations not only in the text of the Constitution, which are always illusory when the same one who is subject to them has the liberty of interpreting them, but principally

in the short duration of its sessions, there being not more than one single instance since the epoch of independence in which extraordinary powers have been given to it; in the greater power of the executive; and, above all, in the organization and functions of the Supreme Court of Justice. The members of this court, unlike the one that has been established among us, are named by the president as are all other employees of the federation, and in all matters of right, one appeals to this court the acts of the general Congress, which, acting simply as a party, appoints its lawyers and agents and, in an opposing action, is going to defend its resolutions against whoever has filed a lawsuit against it; and in almost all the cases that have occurred until now, Congress has been rebuffed. Among us it was believed better to leave the selection of the individuals who should make up this supreme tribunal to the congresses of the states, being based also in the principle that, because those individuals would have to judge the ministers, these ministers should not have any part in their appointment. In the United States of the North, they have believed that this last objection was overcome more than enough by the removability of ministers¹⁰ and the perpetuity of judges, and they did not fear entrusting to magistrates named by the president the power of judging the president himself who, in that Republic, is personally responsible in many more matters than in ours, although in order to make effective that responsibility, the complete unanimity of the House of Representatives is needed. But it is not only in matters of responsibility that the Supreme Court of Justice has to judge the government, but just as one appeals to it the decisions of Congress in matters of right, the same is done in cases involving decisions of the executive; and with this executive having to act as a party, that tribunal has had frequent occasion to show its integrity, pronouncing judgment on the very one to whom some of its members owe their appointment. In this way it has been confirmed by experience that the partiality of judges in favor of the government that named them was not to be feared, and the wisdom of the appointment has been proven, just as appointments have always fallen to the men most respectable for their knowledge and virtues, and I find that more is always to be expected from this method of selection than from the one adopted among us, according to which the congresses of the states have to be guided by rudimentary knowledge gathered about

10. By Congress. (Editor's note)

persons whom they do not know and by recommendations sent to them from the capital.

How different must then be the power of a congress that in some matters, and unfortunately among us and in the rather frequent times of disturbances, has to submit many of its actions to the judgment of an immovable tribunal and, for this very reason, one less sensitive to the shocks of the moment! If this practice existed among us, would we have seen those decrees of expatriation of individuals and families without their being heard or judged, those measures of sequestration, those resolutions of confiscation, one more shameful than the other? The law, as impartial toward corporations, whatever might be their title, as toward individuals, would have sheltered those individuals from the fire of the passions of the corporations, and an impartial verdict would have honored the Mexican magistrates as it has made the reputation so many times of the magistrates of the States, our neighbors. I have said if this practice existed among us because, in substance in the text of the Constitution, not only is there nothing that conflicts with it but rather quite a bit that supports it; but this idea that the Congress is sovereign and that nothing but the weak obstacle of the very limited veto of the president can provide resistance to their absolute wills, would cause an outcry to rise to the clouds if a judicial body tried to put shackles, although working very much in the sphere of its powers, on their resolutions of whatever type. The new sovereigns have taken from the old even the habit of adulation, and thus we see that they accept without embarrassment, and are given without reserve, the treatment of sovereignty, which belongs to them only to the degree that it belongs to any other constituted authority who exercises by virtue of the Constitution a part of the national sovereignty that resides only in the total body of the nation and whose sole sovereign act has been to issue a Constitution. Because of these same bizarre and fawning ideas of sovereignty, it will not be surprising that they take these observations badly, although in the depths of his heart, each one finds them justified, and it might be considered a crime the way some parts of the Constitution have been critiqued, because, through another of the strange contradictions of the human spirit, in the very epoch in which the infallibility of the pope is most ridiculed, the principle of the infallibility of congresses has been consecrated, and when the greatest scope is given to liberty of the press, permitting the exercise of a purulent criticism on everything that existed and produced the wis-

dom of the past centuries, any doubt shown about what the learning of our century has produced is least tolerated. Inevitable result of the pride of self-love that, sustained by ignorance and presumption, it cannot bear any contradiction at all nor criticism, no matter how restrained it might be, regarding what it believes to be a masterpiece of its knowledge and profound understandings.

Everything that has been expressed until now shows not only what kind of authority was placed in the hands of General Bustamante and what the means were by which the Constitution equipped him to provide for the happiness of the people, but also that it is extensive and equally applicable to the governments that preceded it and to the one that has followed it. For this reason I have expanded somewhat on this matter, and I will also do so in some of the considerations that will follow, for it seems important to me that those who read this understand fully the true situation of their government, and that, knowing the very narrow limitation of its powers and the dependence for all its actions on the legislative power, they might demand less of those who can do little and be more disposed to look with compassion than to incriminate those who, vested with an authority almost null, find themselves charged with an immense responsibility. Moreover, those who are inclined to believe that a change of system would be the good fortune of the Republic, understanding by this change replacing the one that presently rules¹¹ for central government, might become convinced that evil does not exactly consist in what they believe it to consist, but rather in a much more effective and profound cause, which works as much in the general government as in the governments of the individual states, and that as long as one does not attend to this cause, any other change would be useless. This cause is nothing other than the impotence of the executive to fulfill the obligations necessary for all government and, if at some time Mexicans, tired of the misfortunes of anarchy which necessarily increase every day, might think seriously of remedying them, the first step they should take is to invigorate the government, give energy and strength where now there is nothing but languor and weakness, in sum that there be a government, because they now have nothing more than a shadow or illusory appearance of it.

Inasmuch as, following the error committed by the Spanish legisla-

11. Federalism. (Editor's note)

tors who created the Constitution of Cádiz, absolute power was transferred from individuals to corporations, it seems that the most foresighted measures should have been taken so that the composition of these corporations would be such that they would provide the greatest assurances for success and so that the method of exercising this terrible power might guard against the abuse that could be made of it. When a power is very extensive, the good or bad use made of it can depend only on the personal qualities of the men in whom it is deposited, for, especially when these men are gathered in a numerous corporation, nothing on earth can contain their misconduct: "Besides, they are less under responsibility to one of the greatest controlling powers on the earth, the sense of fame and estimation. The share of infamy that is like to fall to the lot of each individual in public acts is small indeed, the operation of opinion being in the reverse ratio to the number of those who abuse power. Their own approbation of their own acts has to them the appearance of a public judgment in their favor. A perfect democracy is, therefore, the most shameless thing in the world. As it is the most shameless, it also the most fearless. No man apprehends in his person that he can be made subject to punishment. *Quidquid multis peccatur inultum est*.¹² It is therefore of infinite importance that they should not be suffered to imagine that their will, any more than that of kings is the standard of right and wrong."

The only positive quality that can exist in a democracy and that can most ensure the restrained exercise of such a gigantic power is property, yet certainly nothing is less in accord with modern theories, for if political society is nothing more than a conventional company, each individual must represent in this association whatever the capital is that he might have brought into it. Against the soundness of this principle is frequently opposed the claimed ignorance of the propertied class, which presents them as unsuited to carry out a charge that also requires learning, and we have recently seen these arguments expressed in a very bitter manner in the tribunal of the Senate in a discussion over jurors. But these arguments are very far from being established to the fullest extent that one has wanted them to be given, and, in truth, if we relinquish for one moment the intolerable presumption that has us continually calling ourselves a very learned nation, perhaps because in our saying it,

12. "The sin of thousands always goes unpunished," Lucan, *Civil War*.

the rest, who are far from giving us that praise, might believe it of us, and if we examine with impartiality who makes up the small number of men who possess general understandings and the even smaller number who have demonstrated the necessary aptitude for business, whether in the court, whether in the office, we will see that the propertied class is not inferior to the rest because “let those large proprietors be what they will—and they have their chance of being amongst the best—they are, at the very worst, the ballast in the vessel in the commonwealth.” On the contrary, if we have seen men of property distinguish themselves by their talents and aptitude in the management of businesses, we have, unfortunately, seen by the hundreds those who, filled with pretensions of knowing and scorn toward that class, have committed the most horrendous blunders and, with them, have submerged us in an abyss of misfortunes. If errors and ignorance were definitely the lot of the propertied class, the law that regulates relations between masters and servants in the state of Tamaulipas and some other laws of that state would be sufficient to persuade one that that legislature is made up of millionaires, and this same could be justly thought of some other legislatures when what in fact happened was that everything that sounded like property was persistently excluded from them.

It should not be understood by this that one is trying here to close the door of legislative bodies to all who are not property owners. Nothing less than that.

There is no qualification for government but virtue and wisdom, actual or presumptive. Wherever they are actually found, they have, in whatever state, condition, profession, or trade, the passport of heaven to human place and honor. Woe to the country which would madly and impiously reject the service of the talents and virtues, civil, military, or religious, that are given to grace and to serve it, and would condemn to obscurity everything formed to diffuse luster and glory around a state. Woe to that country, too, that, passing into the opposite extreme, considers a low education, a mean contracted view of things, a sordid, mercenary occupation as a preferable title to command.

Nothing is a due and adequate representation of a state that does not represent its ability as well as its property. But as ability is a vigorous and active principle, and as property is sluggish, inert, and

timid, it never can be safe from the invasion of ability unless it be, out of all proportion, predominant in the representation. [It must be represented, too, in great masses of accumulation, or it is not rightly protected.]¹³ The characteristic essence of property, formed out of the combined principles of its acquisition and conservation, is to be unequal. The great masses, therefore, which excite envy and tempt rapacity, must be put out of the possibility of danger. Then they form a natural rampart that naturally protects the lesser properties in all their gradations.¹⁴

I have expanded on these principles not only to demonstrate how insufficient are the scant restrictions that the Constitution establishes for the composition of our legislative bodies, but also to show the need to give property, above all landed, which is the most stable and the most closely related to the prosperity of the nation, a direct influence on legislation, which has not seemed to me a superfluous concern in circumstances where, because of very prejudicial concerns, in some states above all, a war to the death has been declared on property. It will be said perhaps, and it is an objection I must foresee, that Burke wrote according to the principles of a monarchy and that these cannot be adaptable to a republic, but the form of the executive is nothing more than an accident in a constitution, and the bases on which the stability of society is supported is the same in all countries and in all systems, for it is based on the inclinations, emotions, and interests of men that arise from their hearts, which are not moved by systems of convention established for their government. These principles are those of all centuries, and in them alone can be established the stability, peace, calm, order, and prosperity of political societies; but as we will be seeing in the course of this paper, these principles are not the benefits to which the instigators of public unrest aspire, but rather to the privation and lack of them all.

These precautions against the abuse of a power as extensive as the one our legislative bodies have, that can come only from the individual qualities of their members, the Constitution has claimed to establish through

13. The bracketed passage is found in Burke's original text but was omitted by Alamán. (Translators' note)

14. From Edmund Burke's "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," November 3, 1774. We have used the original English text for this passage. (Editor's note)

the division of the general Congress into two chambers, but this division can never fulfill this objective as long as those two chambers differ only in the method of their selection and by some accident in the length of their term but do not represent essentially distinct interests whose combination must produce the general utility of the laws. Thus it is that two chambers can at most represent only two different opinions, and as opinions, unlike the positive interests of society, they soon move to become political parties or factions with all their ardor and acrimony, and from this we have seen our two chambers almost constantly transformed into two enemy fortresses occupied by opposing belligerents and taking shots that are that much more constant the more the dependence of the two chambers on each other is no longer essential, as we will see further on. By the order in which these ideas have been expounded, one will be able to see clearly, of course, the supreme preponderance of legislative power over the other powers, the consequent incapacity or impotence of the executive, and the insufficiency of the restrictions that the Constitution establishes for the composition of this legislative power itself, so that in the final outcome everything depends on the judgment of the electors who concur with their votes on its makeup, and on the will of the individuals to whom this election falls. This gives greatest importance to the functions of the electors, and therefore we must look attentively at how these functions are carried out.

Nothing requires such generally broad learning and such a well-formed public spirit as exercising the right of election, and these two qualities should work with that much more effectiveness the fewer the restrictions the Constitution sets out regarding the persons to whom the election can fall. It is necessary that the elector be in a position to formulate an exact idea of the political state of his country and that, knowing the opinions, integrity, and education of the individual or individuals to whom he is going to give his vote, he would give the first impetus to the decisions of Congress through the men for whom he opens the door of this Sanctuary of the Laws. From this, the inevitable preventive measures originate that various nations have set out limiting the right of suffrage to property holders according to the sum they verify having paid in full as direct taxes. These or other restrictions never seem to be more necessary than when, passing from one system in which there is not the least idea regarding popular elections to another in which everything depends on them, such an important right is going to be given to a

people who have not formed any concept whatsoever of the purpose of elections, of their consequences, or of the very importance of that power. In the civil order more than in the natural, everything is graduated, because the civil order is nothing other than the natural order modified by movements of yet slower effect such as religion, morality, and enlightenment. Never do we see nature work by sudden movements; the only things in it that are momentary are earthquakes and storms, and those are not means of creation but rather of destruction. To avoid this problem and continue to save the metaphysical fiction of the general will, the artifice has been appealed to that elections are not to be direct, but instead, through diverse graduations and reelections, the appointment of the deputies comes to be the work of few persons; but as no conditions have been established regarding these persons, the problem remains at its feet and is made much greater by the intrigue that is easily exercised among few persons, but that perhaps would not have the opportunity among many persons. This right of suffrage, then, is exercised in the first place by a mass of people who give their vote to certain individuals without knowing who they are nor for what it designates them and, then, for other individuals who many times have no knowledge of the persons whom they elect, toward whom all resources of intrigue are put into play, stimulated by interest in the salaries that provide an easy and relaxed way of living for many who do not have any other. Solely to this principle of the electors' ignorance, whether it be of the personal character and opinions of the elected ones or whether it be of the importance of the functions they are going to perform, can be attributed the singular discord that is found in the behavior of deputies from the same state appointed by the same electoral council; or if the electors know the personal character and opinions and are informed about the importance of the functions, one would have to say they are betraying their consciences, casting into the heart of Congress all the elements of discord to make a plaything of the contrary opinions of their deputies and amuse themselves with the disputes of the Jansenist and the Jesuit, the exalted philosopher and the man of judgment, the impious one and the moral and religious man to whom they have indiscriminately given a vote. If I were permitted to designate the persons by name in this writing, with the lists of deputies of some states in hand, it would be very easy for me to prove the truth of what has been said so far. What opinion, then, should we have of electors who behave in this way? The kind-

est, certainly, is that they frequently appoint without knowing whom, or, not having any idea about the workings of a Congress, they do not try to give, as they should, the first impetus to opinion through the elections. Among the people, it is no surprise that they do not view elections with commitment, not knowing their importance, and thus we see the indifference they have toward taking part in them, this being noted most obviously in all places where, in some way, elections have been regularized in a way that ensures individual casting of the vote, for when this was not the case and a considerable number of votes appeared, it was not because there really was that number of votes, but rather because the factions, making the cruelest mockery of this solemn act, had thousands of lists presented for some few persons and had many entire infantry and cavalry regiments vote as a body.

Chosen in this entirely casual manner, the workings of the congresses finally depend solely on the disposition of their members because of the breadth of power the Constitution gives them. Even the fetter that the division into two chambers and the sanction of the executive establishes for the general Congress comes to be illusory, for as has been said before, this dependency of the two on each other and on the president is not absolute. It is sufficient that in one chamber two-thirds of the individuals are united even if they are not in the other, because those two-thirds can constitute the legislative body, and if the president, because of weakness or some other motive, joins with them, they exercise the most despotic power that has ever been known on earth. They, without the agreement of the other chamber, can make anything they want pass as law. If the president does not accede to their wills, they can deprive him of the service of his ministers by an arbitrary declaration of responsibility; they can subject members of the Supreme Court of Justice and even members of the other chamber to the same action of responsibility, and, in sum, they can shatter society to its foundations, without there being a human power that can prevent it. If, to this terrible power that the majority of one chamber can exercise without any dependence at all on the other chamber or on the president, one adds the not-insignificant power that each chamber can exercise individually with the name of economic powers and to which an unlimited breadth has been given without any dependence on anyone, there will result a body, in its totality or in its parts, vested with an authority such as the most despotic institutions have never constituted. If, moreover, there are two-thirds in

the other chamber in accord with those in the first, the very person of the president can be removed by an arbitrary declaration of ineptitude or of whatever physical or moral impediment. The Constitution seemed to have required the concurrence of three elements for the creation of laws and created these three elements, but immediately it destroyed its own work, reducing the practice of legislation to the cooperation of only two of these elements, and in order to give greater range to arbitrariness, these two elements can concur by chance, whether it be the president with two-thirds of one chamber alone against the other chamber, or whether two-thirds of the two chambers against the president, who is in this case compelled to execute what is contrary to his opinion or conscience and to which he has made formal opposition, negating his approval.

In the United States of the North, one does not see this very powerful and independent influence of one Chamber over the other in any possible event, and this circumstance, together with the other differences we have been noting between that Constitution and ours, is sufficient to make them so different, the one from the other, that there does not remain in their most essential parts even a shadow of similarity. The Constitution of the Constituent Assembly of France was the first that established the independence of operations of the legislative power from the veto of the executive; the legislators of Cádiz followed this model with certain restrictions and, as implemented, having been the tacit but very effective model of ours, it received even greater breadth, establishing the independence not only of the legislative power with respect to the executive, but also of the two branches of the legislative from each other, with fewer restrictions than those that in their case the Spanish constitutors made necessary. This is how everything the Constitution puts in place to safeguard persons, properties, and everything dear to man and society, everything that constitutes the harmony and even the existence of this society, can disappear at the voice of a factious majority of one single chamber, very easily formed through an election in which, because it is almost accidental, the factions have such room; this is how that complexity of institutions intended to protect the rights of man in society falls in a moment as a result of the abuse of the theories that contributed to forming the institutions; and this is how, fleeing from despotism, society will fall directly into it. A sententious verse of Horace might literally be relevant to this case, although without intending to

offend the learning and persons of the authors of the Constitution, *Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt*. Wishing foolishly to avoid one extreme, one comes to fall directly into the opposite one.

For this reason, the advantage that the chamber in which a *law or decree* is initiated (two things that it seems should be different but that the Constitution has nonetheless not distinguished) has over the reviewing chamber as well as the function attached to the right of initiative that both chambers have equally and of which all their members have unrestricted benefit, gives way to competition among both in which that spirit of schoolboy prank is fully exercised that, unfortunately, is preserved among us even in the most serious functions. Those who carry the banner of the party which dominates in one or the other chamber are spying on one another to take advantage of an opportune time, a carelessness of the opposition, to launch a proposal which, adopted quickly by a sufficient majority, could put the other chamber in a bind, for which, if there is no other recourse, it appeals to the same miserable tricks to prevent them from having a quorum, by separating on whatever pretext such or such individual from the committee, by speeding up or delaying discussion depending on the hopes or fears of the moment and by it win the selection of president at the time of renewal, all this creating a spirit of miserable and base intrigue inherited and learned from the Cortes of Cádiz in Madrid, capable of degrading I do not say an assembly of legislators, but rather a social gathering of vapid dandies. The august act of lawmaking is many times the work of these improper dealings, and the more important and transcendent the subjects of which they deal, the more they customarily are so. Is it surprising that laws created in this way are what so many times we have seen they are?

If the supreme importance of the functions of Congress and the breadth of its power require much circumspection in the use of this power, the multiplicity of those same functions demands hard work and continuous application. With the congresses transformed into efficient elements from which everything arises, thus reversing the nature of legislative bodies, which is not nor can be other than the nature of conservative masses and resistance, the entire time of ordinary sessions, even extended for the thirty working days that the Constitution permits, can barely suffice for the dispatch of even those extraordinary and nonetheless very frequent matters to which, as we have seen, what is incomplete and contradictory in the Constitution gives way every day, but

even for the dispatch of matters that constitute the periodic and ordinary operations. It was then necessary that the committees persistently work to instruct and prepare the pieces of business in such a way that, directed perfectly by the committees, the discussion might be facilitated and abbreviated; it was necessary that, in the sessions, not a moment be lost and that the members of both chambers, considering their duties as sacred, carry them out with that respect and attention that the fate of the nation or thousands of individuals who depend on their vote deserve. Unfortunately, none of this happens. The pieces of business pass to the committees, where they remain an eternity; these committees have difficulty getting together, everything is seen quickly in them during some little time that is stolen from presence at the session, and very commonly allowing only one of the members to assert his authority on the matter, and with the opinion rendered, the rest swear *in verba magistri*, or, if someone dissents from the opinion, he frequently creates the scandal of saying he was not summoned and did not agree with the committee, this sometimes being one of the miserable snares employed to delay a piece of business which is being dealt with in that moment and that does not suit the faction to which the *protester* against the committee belongs. The sessions never open at the hour that the regulations anticipate, but this is certainly observed punctually for the hour of closing the session, thus defrauding the public of very many hours of work that the same public pays for in excess. During the session, few are the men earnest about fulfilling their duty who are present at the session with reflective meditation, with the desire to inform themselves about matters in order to vote correctly. Most of them pass the entire time of the debate outside, and the greater number of members is always found in the recreation halls of both chambers, and when the hour for voting arrives, in vain the unfortunate president rings the bell with the greatest violence he can; in vain he assigns one after another of the porters and secretaries to gather some members; some answer that they are busy, as if at that hour they should have any other business than being present at the session, the others are waiting to finish smoking, and some, more bold, respond that they do not want to go in; those who do go in enter asking those who are with them what has been discussed or what is being voted. And without instruction and without background and sometimes without knowing what they are speaking of, they toss off, without remorse of conscience, a hasty vote on which perhaps depends the fate of hundreds of families

or very serious interests of the nation. If ministers, out of zeal to fulfill an obligation or from some other motive, get worked up about some matter, they have to turn themselves into brokers and go around begging as a personal favor that the committee gather and that it take under consideration this or that action; and if, on the contrary, they want to delay some piece of business, and they do not know how to dispose of it in another way, they do not have to do anything but, with whatever of the frequent motives or pretexts that lends complication to legislation, send it for consultation to Congress, secure in knowing that, but for some rare accident, it is going to be buried eternally in the committee to which it is passed. This is how the expression “it is necessary to consult Congress” has come to be, in every office, the terror of the people in those offices who have matters pending; this is how matters of business have been accumulating more and more every day with no hope whatsoever of expediting them. In this way the most serious matters are discussed and voted, and this is how this immense power that the Constitution has entrusted to the Congress is exercised, proving that classic verse, *Nec color inperii, nec frons erat ulla Senatus*.¹⁵

Do not say that this is an exaggerated harangue against the body that exercises almost absolute power in the nation. It would have been desirable not to have to show these defects, but there is not one of the many who have assembled in Congress, whether as members of it or as spectators, who does not know the truth of what has been said, and many members of both.

15. Neither the dignity of the supreme command nor some appearance of Congress was seen. [This is Alamán’s note, and his translation into Spanish of the Latin phrase. Editor’s note.]