

In 1835, the Military Commandant of Coahuila and Texas was Domingo de Ugartechea, a Mexican officer who had served alongside Santa Anna under the command of Joaquín de Arrendondo during the 1813 Battle of Medina. Ugartechea had also commanded the troops in the port of Velasco during the 1832 Anahuac disturbances. It was on Ugartechea's orders, that Mexican soldiers had marched to Gonzales to seize the cannon there. In this letter dated October 4, 1835 Ugartechea relates his understanding of the incident and in essences states that if the cannon is not returned to the military, it will be viewed as a declaration of war. Ugartechea appeals to Steven F. Austin as a good Mexican to use his influence to help keep the peace in Texas.

Letter from Domingo de Ugartechea to Stephen F. Austin

Bexar 4 Oct. 1835

Stephen F. Austin, Esq.
My Worthy Friend,

I have just received your letter of the 15 ult. and am glad to learn your happy arrival at S Felipe; the more so, as I believe that your presence, and the direct influence, which as a good Mexican you should exercise in the affairs of Texas, will cause them to be managed with the skill and circumspection required by the present delicate circumstances, which have been rendered important by the excitements of the enemies of order, whose proceedings with which I believe you are well acquainted, have induced the supreme Government, who abounds in resources, to adopt measures fit to procure a permanent and firm peace in that interesting part of the Republic, without leaving unfinished -- crimes and abominations. in the understanding therefore that you are well acquainted with the events that have happened previous to your arrival. I shall only give a sketch of the principal ones, that you may be convinced of the necessity and justice of the measures which have caused so much alarm and given rise to sinister interpretations.

You cannot be ignorant of the outrage committed at Anahuac against the detachment placed there under the orders of Cap Antonio Tenorio, of which the force was so small as the be barely sufficient to fulfil [*sic*] its object of preventing the smuggling, which to the notorious prejudice of the national revenue and with such frequency was carrying on at Galveston measures which ought not to have caused the Colonist to entertain apprehensions of another nature. Neither can you be ignorant that when the State Legislature was dissolved, those who are discontented with the present Government, or rather, the parties interested in the Decree for alienating 400 leagues of Texas, proceeded to the interior (Texas) there propagating alarming

reports for the purpose of kindling the torch of discord and in a direct manner bringing about in San Felipe [rebellion] against public faith and all right, the intercepting opening and publishing of the official and very confidential correspondence addressed to said Cap Tenorio, after having arrested, molested outraging the soldiers who were the bearers. If such proceeding were to remain unpunished, it would be believed that the Mexican nation is unjust, or perhaps that she wanted force and energy sufficient to make herself respected. She therefore considered herself in the necessity of proving the contrary and of adopting with regard to the delinquents and only with regard to them, measures, which by no means made connexion [*sic*] with the good and peaceable inhabitants of Texas. This has been repeatedly manifested to them by myself and the Commandant General to the political Chiefs of Nacogdoches and Brazos although unhappily without effect, on the contrary it appears that such manifestations have been viewed with contempt, without viewing the Mexicans as patient of suffering, but valiant [*sic*], full of honor and capable of making their Government be respected then the Commandant General suspended the march of troops in order to do away with apprehension and show that he had no distrust of the good sentiments of the Colonists provided the delinquents were delivered up for trials by the competent authority, fresh motive occurs for supposing that there exists strong intention of provoking a disastrous war, which it is important in time to prevent. When the authorities of Gonzales were repulsed by the Political Chief to deliver thy piece of artillery lying there, as it had been lent to the "empresario" of that Colony by my predecessor and it belongs to this military jurisdiction, those authorities not only refuse to deliver it up but say they will give it up to force only. Such conduct placed me under the necessity of sending a party of 100 men to exact their delivery and I gave orders to the Commander to send a new communication to the Alcalde of Gonzales, manifesting to him the injustice of wishing to detain an article which does not belong to that municipality, and that if against expectation he did not deliver up the gun, the said commandant was then to employ force. Either from fear or malice, the Alcalde of Gonzales aware that it was an outrage to arrest the corporal and soldiers who were the first bearers of the communication from the political Chief, caused the inhabitants residing on this side of the river to leave their houses, alarmed [*sic*] the Citizens and in order to impede the passage of the troops withdrew to the other side the ferry in canoes, so that when the commander of the party arrived on the banks of the river he was met by that obstacal [*sic*]. notwithstanding which, he solicited an interview -- with the Alcalde but in vain altho [*sic*] he was informed that within three hours he would come, nto [*sic*] being in town, when that time expired the next Regidor made his appearance and made known that he had to consult with the Political Chief of the Brazos and without his sanction he could not, nor would not deliver up the cannon, I was informed of this occurrence and then ordered the commandant of the party to withdraw, in the belief that on the Political Chiefs answer the gun would be delivered up, so far from that however, the inhabitants of the town acting on the wrong belief that the troops retired thro [*sic*] fear came out, pass the river and committing the outrage of attacking the party and intimating surrender to the Commandant. A report was made to me of that event and that besides the Citizens of Gonzales 300 men from San Felipe had collected and as I did not wish to see that small force

compromitted [*sic*], I ordered it to withdraw and shall march tomorrow with the knowledge of the Commandant General with a force of every discription [*sic*] of arms, sufficient to prove that the Mexicans can never suffer themselves to be insulted.

There are in the Colony some individuals, who, like yourself know me to be frank in my proceedings, and also that I possess the character and energy characteristic of my country. I may therefore assure you that if you make use of your influence with the Political Chief to have the gun delivered up to me, wherever it may meet me, from that spot I will return immediately, if not I will act militarily and the consequence will be a war declared by the Colonists, which shall be maintained by the Government of the nation with corresponding dignity.

I know you are right to complain of Thompsons proceedings, which I do not approve much less as they are arbitrary, and having no authority for acting in such a manner but some sacrifice is requisite in favor of peace, which, if it disappear from Texas, will be caused only by the oposition[*sic*] of the colonists to what is just, and I am convinced of your good sentiments in favor of your adopted Country, notwithstanding your sufferings and have not [*sic*] doubt that in favor of this country you will continue to make fresh sacrifices and cooperate effectually in removing the evils which threaten, for which important purpose you may reckon upon me for the use of my influence with the Supreme Government and with the Commandant General, and I can assure you if peace should be sincerely established and unalterably so, the introduction of troops into those departments will be dispensed with.

I am your friend likewise a friend to the Colonists, if I have been sometimes obliged to fight with them, it was an absolute fulfilment [*sic*] of my duty, but in personalities I have always treated them like a Gentleman, both before and after fighting with them, I have observed the same conduct with as many as have entered into this city, where they still remain, notwithstanding they have not behaved well in Gonzales towards the Mexicans.

In a P.S. to your letter which I now answer you say you enclose a paper, which I have not received, I know that the said paper is in circulation in your department, and that in it you strongly recommend peace and due gratitude to the Supreme Government avail yourself of some opportunity for forwarding it to me and in the mean while I remain your attached Friend etc.

Domingo de Ugartechea