

The Alamo

William B. Travis



OVERVIEW

On March 2, 1836, Texans declared independence from Mexico and created the Republic of Texas. General Antonio López de Santa Anna, the head of the Mexican government, did not intend to let Texas go without a fight, though. Santa Anna had already moved against the rebellious Texans on February 23, surrounding San Antonio's Alamo Mission, which was held by the Texans under Lt. Col. William B. Travis. The siege of the Alamo ended in the massacre of the Texans on March 6. During the siege, Travis sent out these dispatches.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following questions:

- How would you describe Travis' attitude?
- Why does Travis think it is so important to fight this battle to the end?

TO THE PEOPLE IN TEXAS, AND ALL AMERICANS IN THE WORLD:
COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO, BEJAR, Feb. 24, 1836.

Fellow-citizens and compatriots:

I am besieged by a thousand or more of the Mexicans, under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment and cannonade for twenty-four hours, and have not lost a man. The enemy have demanded a surrender at discretion, otherwise the garrison is to be put to the sword, if the fort is taken. I have answered the summons with a cannonshot, and our flag still waves proudly from the walls. *I shall never surrender or retreat:* then I call on you, in the name of Liberty, of Patriotism, and of every thing dear to the American character, to come to our aid with all despatch. The enemy are receiving reinforcements daily, and will no doubt increase to three or four thousand in four or five days. Though this call may be neglected, I am determined to sustain myself as long as possible, and die like a soldier, who never forgets what is due to his own honour and that of his country. *Victory or Death!*

W. BARRET TRAVIS,

Lieutenant-Colonel, Commanding.

P.S. The Lord is on our side. When the enemy appeared in sight, we had not three bushels of corn. We have since found, in deserted houses, eighty or ninety bushels, and got into the walls twenty or thirty head of beeves. T.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONVENTION
COMMANDANCY OF THE ALAMO, BEJAR, March 3, 1836.

Sir:

. . . From the 25th to the present date, the enemy have kept up a bombardment from two howitzers (one a five and a half inch, and the other an eight inch), and a heavy cannonade from two long nine-pounders, mounted on a battery on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of four hundred yards from our walls. During this period, the enemy have been busily employed in encircling us with intrenched encampments on all sides. . . . Notwithstanding all this, a company of thirty-two men from Gonzales, made their way into us on the morning of the 1st inst. at three o'clock, and Col. J. B. Bonham (a courier from Gonzales) got in this morning at eleven o'clock, without molestation. I have so fortified this place, that the walls are generally proof against cannon-balls; and I still continue to intrench on the inside, and strengthen the walls by throwing up the dirt. At least two hundred shells have fallen inside of our works without having injured a single man; indeed, we have been so fortunate as not to lose a man from any cause, and we have killed many of the enemy. The spirits of my men are still high, although they have had much to depress them. We have contended for ten days against an enemy whose numbers are variously estimated at from fifteen hundred to six thousand men, with Gen. Ramirez Sezma and Col. Bartres, the aid-de-camp of Santa Anna, at their head. A report was circulated that Santa Anna himself was with the enemy, but I think it was false. A reinforcement of about one thousand men is now entering Bexar from the west, and I think it more than probable that Santa Anna is now in town, from the rejoicing we hear. . . .

I look to the *colonies alone* for aid; unless it arrives soon, I shall have to fight the enemy on his own terms. I will, however, do the best I can under the circumstances, and I feel confident that the determined valour and desperate courage, heretofore evinced by my men, will not fail them in the last struggle. . . .

The power of Santa Anna is to be met here or in the colonies; we had better meet them here, than to suffer a war of desolation to rage in our settlements. A blood-red banner waves from the church of Bexar, and in the camp above us, in token that the war is one of vengeance against rebels; they have declared us as such, and demanded that we should surrender at discretion, or that this garrison should be put to the sword. Their threats have had no influence on me or my men, but to make all fight with desperation, and that high-souled courage which characterizes the patriot, who is willing to die in defence of his country's liberty and his own honour. . . .

The bearer of this will give your honourable body, a statement more in detail, should he escape through the enemy's lines. *God and Texas!—Victory or Death!!*

Your obedient ser't.
W. BARRET TRAVIS
Lieut. Col. Comm.