

Sam Houston's Inaugural Address as President of the Republic of Texas (1836)

Deeply impressed with a sense of responsibility devolving on me, I can not, in justice to myself, repress the emotion of my heart, or restrain the feelings which my sense of obligation to my fellow-citizens has inspired....

We are only in the outset of the campaign of liberty. Futurity has locked up the destiny which awaits our people....

If, then, in the discharge of my duty, my competency should fail in the attainment of the great objects in view, it would become your sacred duty to correct my errors and sustain me by your superior wisdom. This much I anticipate—this much I demand. I am perfectly aware of the difficulties that surround me, and the convulsive throes through which our country must pass.... A country situated like ours is environed with difficulties, its administration is fraught with perplexities.... Nothing but zeal, stimulated by the holy spirit of patriotism, and guided by philosophy and wisdom, can give that impetus to our energies necessary to surmount the difficulties with which our political path is obstructed.

By the aid of your intelligence, I trust all impediments in our advancement will be removed; that all wounds in the body politic will be healed, and the Constitution of the Republic will derive strength and vigor equal to all opposing energies....

A subject of no small importance is the situation of an extensive frontier, bordered by Indians, and open to their depredations. Treaties of peace and amity, and the maintenance of good faith with the Indians, present themselves to my mind as the most rational grounds on which to obtain their friendship. Let us abstain on our part from aggressions, establish commerce with the different tribes, supply their useful and necessary wants, maintain even-handed justice with them, and natural reason will teach them the utility of our friendship....

Admonished by the past, we can not, in justice, disregard our national enemies; vigilance will apprise us of their approach, a disciplined and valiant army will insure their discomfiture.... We must keep all our energies alive, our army organized, disciplined, and increased agreeably to our present necessities. With these preparations we can meet and vanquish despotic thousands. This is the attitude we at present must regard as our own....

The course our enemies have pursued has been opposed to every principle of civilized warfare—bad faith, inhumanity, and devastation marked their path of invasion. We were a little band, contending for liberty; they were thousands, well appointed, munitioned, and provisioned, seeking to rivet chains upon us, or extirpate us from the earth. Their cruelties have incurred the universal denunciation of Christendom. They will not pass from their nation during the present generation....

At this moment I discern numbers around me who battled in the field of San Jacinto, and whose chivalry and valor have identified them with the glory of the country, its name, its soil, and its liberty.... It now, Sir, becomes my duty to make a presentation of this sword—this emblem of my past office!...

I have worn it with some humble pretensions in defence of my country; and should the danger of my country again call for my services, I expect to resume it, and respond to that call, if needful, with my blood and life.

Questions

1. What year was this speech given?
2. Who is giving the speech and what was his position?
3. Does he seem to believe that his country's fate is sealed? How does he indicate this in the second and third paragraphs?
4. Describe the first problem facing the republic he outlines in the fifth paragraph.
5. In the same paragraph (fifth) he outlines a solution to above problem, paraphrase in your own words.
6. How does he feel the new nation will succeed over their national enemies?
7. Does he seem hopeful for the future? Why or why not?

Answers

1. 1836
2. President Sam Houston
3. No, he says they are in the outset, which means the beginning of their struggle for independence. He also indicates there are many struggles ahead.
4. The border of the country is frontier land, unclaimed territory, bordered by Indians.
5. He feels that peaceful relations ought to occur with Indians, including treaties and trade, in order to foster friendship.
6. With an army that is prepared with weapons and trained for combat.
7. Answers will vary, but probably will indicate that he seems worried about what is to come although he is firm in his resolve to take up arms if needed to secure the republic.