Background Information

The Córdova Rebellion

Beginning in late 1835, Vicente Córdova, a wealthy community official of Nacogdoches, had begun to plan and organize local resistance against Texian (non-Hispanic white residents of Mexican Texas and, later, the Republic of Texas) influence in anticipation of Texas declaring independence from Mexico. Similar to the Cherokee, who resented Texian settlement on their land claims, many Tejanos were also upset by the Republic of Texas government's unwillingness to protect the property and political rights of the Tejano population. Additionally, many Tejanos remained loyal to Mexico and were not happy that Texas was independent.

In the late summer of 1838, word arrived from several sources that Mexico was seeking an arrangement with the Cherokee which would give them title to their land in exchange for assistance in joining a war against the Texians.

With Mexico's help, a wealthy Tejano official from Nacogdoches named Vicente Córdova secretly raised a Tejano force to rebel against the Republic of Texas. He convinced some Cherokee and other East Texas Native American groups to join his revolt.

On August 4, 1838, a group from Nacogdoches searching for stolen horses was fired upon by a party of Tejanos. After finding evidence of a large Tejano force, the group returned to Nacogdoches to report the attack. Thomas J. Rusk, who was at this time Nacogdoches County's Representative in the Texas Congress, sent a call to nearby settlements for reinforcements. President Houston attempted to keep the peace by outlawing unlawful assemblies and the carrying of firearms.

The Tejano leaders of the rebellion replied with their own proclamation, signed by Córdova and eighteen others. Stating that they could no longer bear injuries and usurpations of their rights, they were ready to fight in defense of those rights. After learning that the rebels were moving toward the Cherokee nation, Rusk defied Houston's orders that he should not cross the Angelina River to interfere, and ordered troops to march directly toward the Cherokee village of Chief Bowles. Along the way, Rusk learned that the Tejano force had been overtaken near Seguin and defeated. After communicating with local Native Americans, who disavowed any knowledge of the uprising, Rusk and his volunteer army returned to Nacogdoches. After being questioned, Cherokee leaders said they had not taken part in the rebellion, and President Houston took no action against them.

But this was not the end of the story. Mexican agent Julián Pedro Miracle was killed near the Red River after the uprising. On his body were found a diary and papers that indicated the existence of an official project of the Mexican government to incite East Texas tribes against the Republic of Texas. The diary recorded that Miracle had visited Chief Bowles and that the Cherokee had agreed to make war against the Texans.

In May 1839, after the election of President Mirabeau Lamar, a group of Texas Rangers defeated a party of Mexicans and Native Americans, including some Cherokees from Bowles' village. On the body of the leader Manuel Flores, documents encouraging Native Tribes to make war against the Texans was discovered. Included were letters from Mexican officials addressed to Córdova and Bowles. Despite the objection of Chief Bowles, who firmly denied that the Cherokee intended to ally with Mexico against the Republic, and Houston's belief in their innocence, President Lamar sent a force to occupy the Neches River at the edge of Cherokee lands.