

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 94

“The Puritan of the North”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

On the face of it, the coup that ousted and killed Francisco Madero, the young, idealistic mystic who had somehow overthrown Porfirio Díaz and become President of Mexico felt like the re-establishment of the Porfiriato, and the fifteen months of the Madero presidency just a brief glimmer of light between one dictatorship and the next.

But the forces Madero had set in motion survived his death, and with tensions rising around the world, other Great Powers would feel tempted to intervene. The United States of course, but not only the United States.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 94. The Puritan of the North.

We talked about Mexico, and the opening moves of the Mexican Revolution back in episode 55, which was a long time ago in podcast time, but not in real time. Mexico is still simmering, but first let's briefly recap what we already know.

After the long presidency of Porfirio Díaz, known to many Mexicans as the Porfiriato, Díaz was forced to resign and leave the country by an unlikely challenger: the then 38-year old Francisco Madero, the scion of a wealthy family, educated liberal constitutionalist, mystic, and novice politician who had come out of nowhere to end Díaz's reign. But Madero's legalistic liberalism left him caught in between the peasant armies of Emiliano Zapata in the south and Pancho Villa in the north, who wanted to change everything, and the die-hard conservative elite Porfirians who didn't want to change anything.

The thing is, Zapata and Villa both had armies still in the field. These soldiers were poor peasants who had gone to war for the sake of land reform and better lives for themselves and their families. Legal niceties about the constitution and term limits were never as important to them as they were to the elites in Mexico City. These revolutionary armies had put Madero into the presidency, but they weren't prepared simply to disband and trust that Madero and the

constitution to get around to eventually addressing the wrongs being done to their communities. But when commanders like Villa and Zapata stopped taking orders from Madero, he sicced the federal army on them.

The army commander who *did* take orders from Madero and do what he was told was the taciturn 63-year old Victoriano Huerta. Huerta was a full-blooded Native American of humble origins who had been accepted at the Mexican National Military Academy and became a career soldier back in the Benito Juárez days. He had retired from the army in 1907, but had come out of retirement when the Revolution broke out. He pledged his support to Madero and became a trusted military commander. Which put him in an ideal position to betray Madero and cut a deal with right-wing elites, through the good offices of the US Ambassador to Mexico, Henry Lane Wilson. Madero was ousted and killed, and Huerta took his place as President of Mexico.

All this might have been acceptable to President William Howard Taft, maybe, but this coup took place just two weeks before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, who by the way is no relation to Henry Lane Wilson, the US ambassador in Mexico City. Wilson and his Secretary of State, the pious William Jennings Bryan, were appalled at the overthrow and murder of Madero, especially with the connivance of the US ambassador. Their opinion of Huerta only fell further when his administration of Mexico began by expanding the military, putting it in charge of pretty much everything in Mexican government, and basically ruling with an iron fist. The fact that Huerta had a reputation as a vulgar drunkard surely didn't help any with the abstemious Woodrow Wilson or the teetotaling William Jennings Bryan. Wilson was wont to refer to Huerta as "that scoundrel who calls himself President of Mexico," while Huerta began referring to Wilson as "the Puritan of the North."

Unlike Porfirio Díaz, who had tried to keep his government broad-based and recruit or co-opt his opponents whenever possible, Huerta's leadership style ran more toward having his harshest critics taken out back and shot. And as the revolutionary armies fought on, Huerta kept enlarging the Federal Army, resorting to unpopular conscription. It was generally the poorest and the least powerful who got conscripted, of course—isn't it always?—but soldiers who are poor and disenfranchised tend to follow orders without enthusiasm and proved prone to defecting to the rebels. At this early stage of his regime, Huerta would claim that he was no more than a caretaker President, until elections could be held and a new government chosen, which was going to happen...any day now...

Which brings us to Venustiano Carranza, the third important figure in the revolt against Huerta, along with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, whom we have already met. Venustiano Carranza was born in 1859 in the state of Coahuila. Like the younger Francisco Madero, he too was a son of a wealthy landowning family in northern Mexico, and like Madero he tended to be a liberal constitutionalist with little patience for talking about land reform. It's funny how often those two things line up.

Carranza's father, Jesús, had been a mule driver who had joined the military and was a colonel during the fight against the French. Jesús Carranza became close to Juárez during the years of the government in exile in the north, and after Juárez was restored to the presidency, he rewarded the elder Carranza with a substantial land grant, which became the basis of the family fortune. Venustiano was the eleventh of Jesús' fifteen children, and grew up on tales of the heroic struggles of Benito Juárez. Young Venustiano was a promising student and was sent off to Mexico City to be educated, then returned to the family hacienda. He married Virginia Salinas and they had two daughters.

Venustiano developed political ambitions, which the family encouraged, as that would be good for the family business. By this time, the Porfirate was firmly in place and no one in Mexico rose to political prominence without playing ball with Porfirio Díaz. Now, Venustiano and the rest of the Carranza clan had no strong objections to playing ball with Porfirio Díaz, and so Venustiano became mayor of their home town in 1887, when he was still just 28 years old. By 1908, Venustiano Carranza held a seat in the Mexican Senate and was widely seen as the logical choice for the next governor of his home state of Coahuila.

But something happened between Díaz and Carranza, some kind of falling out. It's not clear exactly what it was, but the result was clear enough when Carranza lost the 1908 gubernatorial election in Coahuila and soon after became a supporter of Francisco Madero. When Madero made his return to Mexico at Ciudad Juárez, Carranza was among those who joined him there, and Madero appointed him interim war minister. After the ouster of Díaz, Carranza returned to Coahuila and finally achieved his ambition of becoming governor, with Madero's blessing.

But Carranza gradually lost faith in Madero. He was among those who thought Madero's rule was too kindly and that he should crack down harder on his opponents. Madero dismissed Carranza's criticisms, but after Madero was overthrown and murdered, well, Carranza was the guy who had seen it coming and had tried to warn the boss, which left him looking pretty smart after his predictions came true.

So that brings us back to March 1913 and the early days of the Huerta regime. Carranza, perhaps remembering his father's tales about Benito Juárez, decided to set up a Liberal government-in-exile in his home base at Coahuila, raise an army, and join in the resistance to Huerta's rule. As he believed that one of Madero's mistakes was playing footsie with the more radical revolutionaries like Zapata and Villa, Carranza issued what came to be known as the Plan of Guadalupe, a statement of goals.

The stated aims of Carranza and his followers, who called themselves "Constitutionalists," included restoration of the Constitution but they also embraced some moderate reforms aimed at addressing the grievances of poor Mexicans, reforms such as universal male suffrage, lower taxes on the poor, restoration of land seized illegally during the Porfirate and aid programs to assist impoverished peasant farmers and industrial workers.

And while I am at this, I should also mention Álvaro Obregón, a combat veteran from Sonora who also took up arms against Huerta. Now, the states of Sonora, Chihuahua and Coahuila are among the northern tier of Mexican states, right along the US border, and these were the home bases of Obregón, Villa, and Carranza respectively. So geography pretty much dictates that these three leaders must form a common front against the Federal Army coming at them from Mexico City, whether or not they share a common vision for post-Huerta Mexico. So we have these three in the north and don't forget Zapata in the south, together the four most important figures in the next phase of the revolution.

Okay. Now we've circled back to March 1913 and set up the players for the next phase of the story. But I'm not ready to move forward yet, because I still want to talk about Japan.

Japan? What does Japan have to do with the Mexican Revolution? Well, sit back and I will tell you. But first, we have to turn the clock back once again, this time to 1906.

Ah, yes. Remember the simpler days of 1906? The United States is building the Panama Canal, episode 21, The Russo-Japanese War has recently ended, episode 35, and tensions are rising between the United States and Japan over the treatment of ethnic Japanese in California, episode 43.

The Japanese government didn't like to see ethnic Japanese in the United States subjected to US-style segregation. In particular, the schools in San Francisco wanted to pull the ethnic Japanese students out of white schools and send them to the school reserved for ethnic Chinese students. There was a bit of a war scare over this in 1906 and 1907. Many European observers figured that with the Russians beaten, the next Western opponent likely to cross swords with the rising power of the Japanese Empire would be the United States.

One of the observers coming to this conclusion was none other than Kaiser Wilhelm himself, that lovely man who coined the phrase "Yellow Peril." You'll recall from the days of the Russo-Japanese War, episodes 31-35, that the Kaiser backed Russia and pushed the idea that Russia was a bulwark protecting Europe from the Asiatic hordes. After Russia lost that war, the Kaiser began thinking of the United States as the country now tasked with keeping Europe white, or whatever. In line with the Kaiser's new thinking, in 1907, as relations between the US and Japan were becoming strained, Wilhelm discovered that there were something like ten to twenty thousand Japanese soldiers who had infiltrated into Mexico and were gathering in the south of that country in preparation for a surprise attack on the Panama Canal, then still under construction.

Where he got this information must remain an historical mystery, since no one else seems to know anything about it. But the Kaiser felt it was a big break for German diplomacy. Wilhelm was convinced that once the American President, Theodore Roosevelt, got wind of what the Japanese were up to, he'd take drastic measures, probably including a war with Japan. And I'm quite sure Roosevelt would have, if the Kaiser's claims had had any, you know, truth in them. In

fact, during that period of tension with Japan, the Roosevelt Administration was actually doing everything it could to smooth things over and stay on good terms with Tokyo.

In the Kaiser's view, a war between Japan and the United States would consume the energies of the world's two up-and-coming non-European nations before they had a chance to pre-empt European hegemony. In Wilhelm's view, it would also put the British in a bind, since they would have to choose between their official ally, Japan, and their unofficial ally, the United States. With the Americans preoccupied with Japan, Latin America would be ripe for European exploitation. Recall that Wilhelm has occasionally fantasized about German naval bases in the Caribbean or in South America.

But at the same time, and this is characteristic of Wilhelm's all-over-the-place approach to international diplomacy, he was floating the idea of a globe-spanning alliance of Germany, the United States, and China, aimed at containing the Japanese. By 1908, Wilhelm was talking about this fantasy alliance as if it was all but a done deal, just waiting for the lawyers to finish drawing up the paperwork, as it were. Wilhelm actually told an American newspaper reporter all about this alliance of his. The reporter ran the interview past the German Foreign Office, who freaked out and disavowed Wilhelm's claims, and the reporter spiked the story. This was about the same time that the Kaiser gave his disastrous interview to the British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, so I think we can say that if Wilhelm didn't exactly lose his marbles in this 1907-08 period, he certainly misplaced them for a while.

But while Kaiser Wilhelm may have been a little delusional, it seems clear that there was at least some effort by the Japanese government during this period to cozy up to Mexico, and it may well have been connected to Japan's deteriorating relationship with the United States. Both Mexico and Japan are on the rim of the Pacific Ocean, of course, and have many common interests. They've had full diplomatic relations since 1888, established back in the days when Japan was first coming out of her shell.

In 1911, in the final days of the Porfiriato, the Grand Admiral of the Japanese Navy paid a state visit to Mexico and got a warm reception. There was talk about how "the same blood" flows through Japanese and Mexican veins, as well as references to the need of both countries to increase the size of their militaries in response to the efforts of certain unnamed third nations to push them around. That was a big applause line in Mexico City, where there was little doubt who that unnamed third nation was.

Rumors began to fly that the Japanese and Mexican governments had signed a secret treaty that included granting Japan rights to build a naval base at Magdalena Bay in Baja California. These rumors sent both the US State Department and the German Foreign Office into tizzies, for different reasons. The New York newspaper *The Evening Sun* broke this story, then discovered they had been duped by the German government.

During this time, the British were poking around in Mexico as well. There was substantial British investment in Mexican oil fields, and the Royal Navy was at this time getting most of the oil to fuel its newer oil-powered ships from Mexico. So the British favored Huerta as the guy most likely to keep Mexico stable and keep that oil flowing. The British were also in the midst of a dispute with the US, over tolls on the Panama Canal. The two countries had a treaty agreement that included a provision that the toll rates charged to ships using the canal would not be based on the nationality of the ship. But in 1912, when Congress passed the first Tolls Act, the system of tolls did indeed favor US shipping. Now, the canal isn't going to open until 1914, but the British government wants this resolved, and it wants it resolved before the first toll is collected. So the UK Foreign Office objected, and the US and UK governments went into negotiations. But the British want this settled quickly, so when the negotiations weren't moving fast enough to satisfy the Foreign Office, the British signaled their impatience by recognizing the Huerta government in defiance of the US policy, which was to discourage other countries from doing exactly that thing. This annoyed Woodrow Wilson no end, but it succeeded in getting his attention.

So that brings us back to 1913 for I guess, the third time in twenty minutes? But I wanted to mention all this before moving forward with the story of the Mexican Revolution because there were American fears that the Germans or the Japanese or perhaps even the British might try to take advantage of the instability in Mexico to gain military bases or other influence in the region, and while these fears may seem exaggerated to us today, with the benefit of hindsight, they weren't totally crazy at the time, unlike, say, Kaiser Wilhelm.

So the situation in Mexico is this: We have the Huerta government in Mexico City, and four loosely allied revolutionary movements led by Zapata, Villa, Carranza, and Obregón. Huerta is building up the Federal Army massively to put down the rebels, so he needs to buy arms. The revolutionaries in general and Carranza in particular are also in the market for arms. So there are plenty of opportunities here for Great Power mischief. So although Wilson himself was not disposed to getting the US involved in the revolution in Mexico, there were those in Washington, and even in his Administration, who pressed for US involvement—or even military intervention—and they had a powerful argument on their side. If the US stands aloof, other Great Powers might take advantage of the turmoil. It's the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine all over again. We have to intervene so that no one else does.

Wilson resisted this argument for several months. In the summer of 1913, he told Congress his policy toward Mexico was “watchful waiting.” The US government embargoed the shipment of arms to Mexico from the United States. Huerta, meanwhile, was promising a presidential election to be held soon. The US government proposed an agreement under which there would be an armistice now and the long-promised Presidential election would finally take place in October, with the additional requirement that Huerta himself would not be a candidate. The Huerta government rejected these conditions, with Huerta stoking anti-Americanism by declaring he would rather have a war than allow the Americans to dictate terms to Mexico. When

the US government inquired how else it might be helpful, the Huerta government suggested the US government might grant the Huerta government diplomatic recognition, without conditions.

[music:

Now we have to talk about Japan again. Recall that the state of California had antagonized the Japanese government once again in 1912 by passing a law that effectively banned persons of Japanese ancestry from owning real estate in California, a bill that Wilson felt obligated to endorse during the tight election campaign of that year. Tensions rose between Japan and the United States over this law. It was like 1907 all over again, and the Japanese, like the British, judged that the best way to signal their displeasure to the Americans was by supporting Victoriano Huerta. In the summer of 1913, the Japanese made a substantial arms sale to the Mexican government and raised the stakes further by inviting Huerta's foreign minister on a state visit to Japan, a visit with full honors, including a personal meeting with the Emperor.

The American arms embargo was having the perverse effect of shoring up Huerta, who could get arms from overseas by ship, while making it harder on the revolutionary forces, most of whom were squished up along the border with the United States and had nowhere else to go to buy weapons and ammunition. But the rebels enjoyed military successes in the north in spite of this handicap, and the fighting went on into the fall of 1913. Pancho Villa's forces had taken control of so much of the state of Chihuahua that the revolutionaries appointed him provisional governor of the state. Only the major cities were still in government hands. Then, in early October, Villa's forces took the city of Torreón, in southern Coahuila, and the Constitutionalist were on the move.

Huerta's response to his deteriorating position was to drop any pretense that he was just a caretaker President keeping things running until elections could be held. And this earned him pushback from the Mexican Congress, which was composed of representatives elected during the Madero presidency. As Huerta asserted himself more firmly, Congress became increasingly a thorn in his side. One prominent Senator, Belisario Domínguez accused Huerta of responsibility for the ongoing civil war, of being willing to cover the land with corpses to maintain power, and called for Huerta's impeachment. The police arrested Domínguez, and the Senator was killed in police custody, "shot while trying to escape," it was said, although a lot of people felt that story didn't really explain why his tongue was missing.

That was too much for the Congress, which initiated an investigation of the murder of the Senator and passed a resolution warning Huerta that if additional members of the Congress were arrested, Congress would have no choice but to withdraw from Mexico City and reconvene someplace where their safety could be assured. They didn't say so explicitly, but the clear implication was, someplace up north, someplace like Chihuahua, behind rebel lines and under the protection of General Villa or someone like him.

The threat was obvious. Congress was actually contemplating defecting to the rebels. That would shred whatever was left of Huerta's legitimacy. Huerta was now boxed in. 'Cause, what's he going to do, arrest the entire Congress?

Okay, so he didn't arrest the *entire* Congress. He did send in the Army to shut Congress down, but he only arrested about 110 of his staunchest opponents. They were charged with treason and sentenced to heavy labor. It's not for nothing that they used to call this guy "The Iron Hand." Huerta took full control of the government, with dictatorial powers, a move that was ratified in the Presidential election two weeks later, which Huerta won. Of course, he won the election because everybody in the army was ordered to vote for him while everybody else boycotted the election in protest of Huerta's flagrant violations of the constitution and laws of Mexico. Still, *Huerta* says the public ratified his power grab, and you'd better go along with that if you don't want to end up like Congress.

By now, it had become clear to everyone, even Woodrow Wilson up in Washington, that there is no electoral solution to the Huerta problem, and that this guy is only going to leave office at the point of a gun.

And speaking of pointing guns, a lot of Huerta's opponents in Mexico were coming to exactly this same conclusion, resulting in a surge of new recruits for the revolutionary movements. Morale was high in revolutionary armies, and they continued to make gains. Pancho Villa captured the border city of Ciudad Juárez in November 1913, just as he had back in 1911, which, you'll recall, had been the first step toward the deposition of Porfirio Díaz. It's also a major port of entry for goods coming into Mexico from the US, and remember that this is in an era when import tariffs are the main source of government revenue. Revenue from the customs house in Ciudad Juárez is now going to fund the revolution.

Now might be a good time for me to mention the Spanish-language folk song "La Cucaracha," which means "the cockroach." The origins of this folk song are lost in the mists of time. It may date back as far as the *Reconquista*, and it may be from Andalucía, the southern Spanish region that was the last portion of the Iberian peninsula to be reclaimed from the Moors and noted for its exotic and flamboyant music. It has had many different lyrics at different times and places over the centuries. This is how I learned it in Spanish class in high school, and maybe you did, too:

[music: "La Cucaracha"]

That recording you just heard was created for high school Spanish classes in the United States. The lyric says, approximately, that the poor cockroach can't get around because he's missing a front leg. When Mexican revolutionaries sang the song around the campfires in 1913, everyone understood that the cockroach was General Huerta. Just to make sure there was no miscommunication though, the revolutionaries sang the lyric in which the poor cockroach can't get around because he has no marijuana to smoke. Besides the heavy drinking, Huerta also had a reputation for indulging heavily in the demon weed, and there was no mistaking that reference.

The Mexican Revolutionary version of “La Cucaracha” is the one most commonly sung today. Strangely enough, though, they never teach that marijuana lyric in high school. Still, the next time you hear the song, be sure to think back on its revolutionary heritage.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the front lines, in Mexico City, it’s clear by now that the only thing that will keep the cockroach in office is raw military power. As a career military man, Huerta understood this perfectly and kept on expanding the army. The Mexican Federal Army had about 50,000 members when Huerta took power in February 1913. By February 1914, it had five times that number.

That was because Huerta and his supporters were desperate to get soldiers into the field, because the revolutionaries kept winning. Recruitment was hard, and by early 1914, the Huerta regime was grabbing men wherever it could and drafting them into the army. The draftees were a pitiable mix of prisoners, impoverished Native Americans from rural regions, captured rebel sympathizers, and homeless men and unemployed workers snatched off the streets of Mexico City and Veracruz. Needless to say, Federal morale wasn’t very good. Huerta’s government played up the fact that the *gringos* up north opposed him to make it sound like the Revolution was an American plot. That helped some with the recruitment and the morale, but imagine how these new recruits felt when they discovered they were *not* being sent to fight the *gringos*, but rather to fight fellow Mexicans. Fellow Mexicans who themselves had taken up arms to oust this very guy who had, you know, deceived them into service in the Federal Army. The desertion rate was high, and sometimes whole Federal units defected *en masse* to join the revolutionaries.

In February 1914, the British and the Americans settled their dispute over the Panama Canal tolls, and afterward, the British government suddenly decided that keeping Huerta in power in Mexico maybe wasn’t such a vital British national interest after all, and maybe it was time to go back to the older British policy of deferring to the Americans on issues related to Mexico.

The Americans, meanwhile, had responded to Huerta’s October power grab by sending an envoy to open talks with Carranza and the Constitutionals. That’ll teach him. Only, the talks didn’t go very well. The Americans offered to sell weapons to the Constitutionals, which would be a piece of cake now that they controlled Ciudad Juárez. Carranza, for his part, welcomed American arms but demanded that US arms sales come with no strings attached, and especially, particularly, specifically, no US military intervention in the Revolution. The Wilson Administration found Carranza too stiff-necked to deal with in November, but by February, once the British had bowed out of the picture, decided to go ahead and supply the rebels anyway, while maintaining the arms embargo against the Huerta government.

Huerta’s position was crumbling rapidly now, but then the German ambassador stepped up with his own proposal on how Germany might make hay out of the US and the UK turning their backs on him. He proposed that Germany would sell arms to the Federal Army, on the condition that if and when *Der Tag* comes, and Germany finds herself at war with Britain, the Mexican

government would pledge to cut off oil shipments to the Royal Navy. Remember that this is less than five months before the Great War began, although of course no one knew that at the time.

Huerta's response was, "Where do I sign?" and in a trice, the Hamburg-America cargo ship *Ypiranga* was loaded up with arms and ammunition and began its journey from Hamburg to Veracruz, with more to follow.

As the Constitutionalists' position grew stronger, now they began to fight among themselves. Villa was angling to replace Carranza as the leader of the northern Revolutionary forces. After all, wasn't he, good old reliable Pancho Villa, the guy who had been in it from the beginning? Wasn't it Villa who had brought Madero back from the US, and then took up the fight again after Madero was murdered? Wasn't it Villa who was winning all these battles? Who was this Carranza guy, anyway?

Then came the fateful day of April 9, 1914, in the Mexican port town of Tampico. Tampico was the center of the Mexican oil industry at this time, and was Mexico's number one port for oil exports. By April, the Constitutionalist rebels were within ten miles of Tampico and maneuvering to lay siege to the city. Huerta can't afford to lose Tampico, so it appears serious fighting is in the offing, and the town was put under martial law.

There were US citizens working in the oil industry in Tampico and substantial US investment, so the US Navy dispatched a squadron of ships to the area in the name of protecting US interests, as was standard procedure at the time. But on April 9, the commander of the gunboat USS *Dolphin* sent a party ashore to purchase a supply of gasoline. A low-ranking Mexican Army officer saw this group of American sailors collecting the gasoline, thought the whole thing looked pretty suspicious, and brought some soldiers over to confront them. They questioned the Americans, who were unable to give an account of themselves. That's probably because none of them spoke Spanish, and none of the Mexican soldiers spoke English. So the Mexican Army officer ordered his men to escort the Americans at gunpoint to the office of his commander. That officer saw the American sailors led into his office at gunpoint and instantly had visions of an international incident flashing before his eyes. He promptly ordered the Americans released and apologized for the mix-up.

That wasn't good enough for Admiral Henry T. Mayo, the commander of the US naval squadron at Tampico. When he heard about the detention of eight of his sailors, he demanded that the officer who ordered the arrest be punished, and that the Mexicans raise the Stars and Stripes over Tampico and offer it a 21-gun salute, because this is 1914 and in 1914, that's how we roll.

The Mexicans refused to comply with the flag thing. Admiral Mayo reported back to Washington on the situation. Wilson was delighted. He finally had an excuse to apply US pressure to help get rid of Huerta. The Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan was less enthusiastic, but the Wilson Administration chose to play up the Tampico incident, treating it as a national insult, sending more ships to Mexico and renewing the demands on Huerta. The

Huerta government pointed out there was a certain incongruity in the US government demanding a salute from a government it refuses to recognize. The final US ultimatum, direct from Wilson to Huerta personally, threatened the occupation of Veracruz, Mexico's most important port city, unless Huerta gave in by April 19. The ever-stubborn Huerta did not give in.

On April 20, Wilson asked the US Congress for authorization to take military action against Mexico. Congress took up this request with a noticeable lack of enthusiasm, since the *casus belli* was pretty thin. Early on the 21st, though, the US Consul at Veracruz reported to the State Department that *Ypiranga* was going to arrive the next day with a shipment of German arms, and that three trains were already waiting at the port to carry the shipment on to Mexico City and Huerta's army. Secretary Bryan, Navy Secretary Daniels, and President Wilson held a conference call before dawn in their pajamas, and decided that the Navy must take Veracruz and prevent the arms shipment from reaching the Mexican Federal Army.

Admiral Fletcher, commander of the US naval forces now at Veracruz, received his orders at 8:00 that morning. By 8:30, *Ypiranga* had been intercepted and forced away from the port. At 11:00 AM, a landing party of 800 marines and sailors landed at Veracruz. The commander of the Mexican Army garrison at Veracruz received orders from Mexico City not to resist, but to withdraw from the city. The Americans took control of the port, the customs house, the post office, the telegraph office, and the railroad terminal without opposition.

At this point, things were going pretty smoothly. The Americans sat back and waited for a grateful Mexican populace to flood the streets, hand out flowers to the American soldiers, give their thanks, and maybe pull down a statue or two of General Huerta. This proved to be a touch optimistic. Luckily for the world, the US government will never make this mistake again. Am I right?

In fact, the Mexicans were not grateful at all. They remembered that the last time American soldiers occupied Veracruz, it was the first step on the road that led to "Bye-bye, California." What were the Americans going to steal this time?

Mexican resistance began with the midshipmen of the Mexican naval academy in Veracruz, who barricaded themselves in their school and began shooting at any Americans who approached their position. Angry civilians joined in, forcing the Americans to retreat and hunker down at key points in the city. The US consul in Veracruz tried to contact Mexican authorities and negotiate a ceasefire, but there were no Mexican authorities to negotiate with. The resistance was spontaneous. Fletcher was forced to send in additional troops and Navy ships began bombarding the city. Fighting continued until the 24th. By the 30th, a US Army brigade had occupied the whole of Veracruz and declared martial law. 400 Mexicans were killed or wounded, along with 91 Americans.

Mexico seethed with anti-American resentment. Even Carranza felt obligated to issue a condemnation of the American intervention. US Navy units were forced to evacuate US citizens

from Mexico. In Ensenada, in Baja California, 250 Americans were forced to take refuge in the US consulate there until the Navy could rescue them. In Mexico City, protesters burned US flags and looted buildings owned by US businesses.

On April 25, the nations of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the so-called ABC powers, jointly offered to mediate between Mexico and the US. Both countries eagerly accepted the offer, and talks were held on the neutral ground of Niagara Falls, Ontario.

The German government, meanwhile, protested to the US government that it was illegal for the Navy to prevent *Ypiranga* from docking at Veracruz, given that the US had not declared a war zone or a blockade or given the vessel or the German government any kind of prior warning. The State Department was forced to agree, and a formal apology was made to the German government. *Ypiranga* was eventually permitted to dock at Puerto Mexico, and the arms were delivered anyway.

But the occupation of Veracruz went on, and the Huerta government was now deprived of the revenue from the most important customs house in Mexico. The revolutionaries continued their advance while the Niagara Falls Conference dragged on. On June 23, Pancho Villa led his Division of the North to a decisive victory over the Federal Army at Zacatecas. Villa was poised now to enter Mexico City, although his falling out with Carranza had gotten bad enough that Carranza's provisional government denied the Division of the North the coal and other supplies it needed to continue its advance, and it would be Álvaro Obregón who got the honor of marching into the capital.

In Niagara Falls, a deal was reached that would end the US occupation in November, contingent upon Huerta's resignation. Even a man as stubborn as Huerta could see the writing on the wall. He resigned the Presidency on July 15, and was carried into exile aboard the German cruiser SMS *Dresden*. Remember that name; we'll be hearing about the next phase of *Dresden's* career next week.

A German envoy traveled to Britain in July 1914, to discuss the possibility of a German-British alliance to prevent what the Germans believed was the inevitable US invasion and conquest of all of Mexico. Once the Americans were driven off, the envoy argued, it would be a simple matter afterward for Germany and Britain to divide Mexico into their own respective spheres of influence. But then of course the Austrians delivered an ultimatum to Serbia, and the German proposal was quickly forgotten.

The departure of Victoriano Huerta, who got to go off into exile, unlike poor Francisco Madero, ends Porfiriate-style strongman rule in Mexico. Happily, it will not be that Madero's presidency was just a brief liberal glimmer between two periods of dictatorship. Rather, Madero's presidency was the first glimmer of something better, and Huerta's rule turned out to be just a temporary setback.

Still, there are now multiple revolutionary factions in Mexico who were fully in agreement on the need to oust Huerta, but now that Huerta is gone, will find that they agree on very little else. The Mexican Revolution is about to enter its next phase. But that's a story for another episode.

Dresden only took Huerta as far as Jamaica. Next he went to Britain, and then arrived in neutral Spain just in time to miss the outbreak of the Great War. But he had not retired from politics. He remained in contact with German military intelligence and together they plotted his return. But that, too, is a story for another episode.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks for listening. I'd also like to thank John for his contribution and thank you to Michael for becoming a patron of the podcast. If you'd like to become a patron of the podcast, go to historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the Patreon button. Or click on the PayPal button to make a one-time contribution. Or join the community on Facebook or Twitter or at the website, and if you haven't given us a review yet, head on over to the iTunes store and leave the podcast a rating and review. That will help new listeners find the podcast.

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we revisit the German cruiser *Dresden*, as well as all the other German cruisers scattered all over the globe and review their adventures once the Great War begins. The Far Seas, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. The violence and death that accompanied the American intervention at Veracruz appears to have led Woodrow Wilson to a change of heart. He still believed the US had a role to play in encouraging democratic reform in Mexico, but despite what the Germans were saying, he was ready to swear off further military intervention. By August, as the Great War was igniting in Europe, Wilson was comparing the Mexican Revolution to the French Revolution. The French Revolution may have had its excesses, he said, but it was still a tragic mistake for the other nations of Europe to attempt to intervene militarily and undo it. And so it was with Mexico.

[music: Closing Theme]