

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 119

“The Minister without Portfolio”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

In Mexico, the revolutionaries who deposed the dictator Victoriano Huerta have fallen into civil war among themselves over the future government of the nation. In the United States, the Wilson Administration is trying to maintain a hands-off policy toward Mexico and strict neutrality in the war in Europe.

But the US is selling munitions to the Allies in Europe. German agents are in the US, and they hope to disrupt those munitions shipments by any means available, including restoring Huerta to power and inciting a war between Mexico and the United States.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 119. The Minister without Portfolio.

You'll recall that when we last looked in on developments in the Mexican Revolution, episode 115, Victoriano Huerta had returned from Spain to New York City, and on June 25, he boarded a train for San Francisco, ostensibly to visit the Panama-Pacific International Exposition then underway, but unexpectedly changed trains in Kansas City on Saturday night the 26th and was now on a train southbound headed for El Paso, Texas. The State Department sent someone to El Paso to meet Huerta when he got off the train, scheduled to arrive early Sunday morning, but what then? We left off just as that question had been put to the newly installed Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, at his home Saturday night.

This situation was a dicey one. Lansing and his boss, Woodrow Wilson, were in the middle of delicate negotiations with the Germans, pressing them to back off from their policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in the wake of the sinking of *Lusitania* in May, and the last thing the Administration needs right now is another foreign policy crisis. The President himself had left Washington and was en route to New Hampshire, looking forward to a quiet vacation that would include some quality time with his new girlfriend, Edith Galt. He was therefore unavailable, but Lansing learned that the Justice Department had dispatched a couple of US Marshals to meet the train in El Paso, so he ordered the State Department guy to coordinate with them.

For Huerta to head to El Paso was a provocative move for a variety of reasons. The city lies almost at the point where Mexico, Texas, and New Mexico meet. Just across the border is Ciudad Juárez, the main point of entry for American imports to Mexico, and therefore an important source of tariff revenues to whoever controls the customs house there. During the struggle to overthrow Porfirio Díaz in 1911, Pancho Villa had captured Ciudad Juárez and had opened the way for Francisco Madero to make his triumphant return. Two years later, in 1913, Villa had taken the city again, and that had spelled the beginning of the end for Victoriano Huerta. Now Huerta seemed poised to follow Madero's path, using Ciudad Juárez as the first stepping stone on his own road back to glory.

And El Paso itself was a revolutionary hotbed at this time. The population of El Paso had been about 40,000 when the Mexican Revolution began in 1910, and a majority of these were white Americans of European ancestry. The outbreak of the Revolution saw the rise and fall of different political groups in Mexico as rule of the nation passed from Díaz to Madero to Huerta to Carranza to—whoever is in charge now. This led to a steady flow of refugees from whatever faction was on the outs with Mexico City at the moment into El Paso. Mexican immigration caused a sharp rise in the population of El Paso and led to the opening of shops that catered to Mexican customers and Spanish-language newspapers, and even Spanish-language nickelodeons.

As members of mutually hostile factions of the Revolution became neighbors in El Paso, violence inevitably followed. The Revolution was spilling over onto American soil. The business community in El Paso did a lot of trade in Mexico and they found the Revolution bad for business. This includes Daniel Guggenheim and his American Smelting and Refining Company, a major employer in El Paso. So among white El Pasoans, there was a desire to see an end to the Revolution already and a return to the stability associated with the Porfiriato. If Huerta held himself up as the guy who could bring order back to Mexico, he might find a lot of support in white El Paso. As for the immigrant community in El Paso, well, some of them were also Huerta supporters.

How many? No one knew for sure, but rumors were flying. Some of these rumors claimed that thousands of Huerta sympathizers were in El Paso, waiting for the arrival of their leader to take up arms and join with thousands more fighters on the other side of the border, all ready to march with the general on his triumphant return to Mexico City.

So it was a very nervous meeting between the State Department guy and the two US Marshals when they discussed how to proceed. Lansing had ordered the State Department guy—um, his last name was apparently Cobb, but I haven't been able to find his first name— but anyway, Lansing had ordered him to coordinate with Justice. But the two US Marshals hadn't been given any instructions, either. Cobb took this to mean *he* was in command of the operation. And his command skills would soon be put to the test when the word came that Huerta wasn't planning to ride that train all the way to El Paso anyway. He was planning to get off at Newman, New Mexico, a tiny station stop just before the rail line crosses the state line into Texas, about twenty

miles from El Paso. Pascual Orozco, a one-time enemy and now a Huerta loyalist, was in Newman with some armed men, and planned to meet Huerta when he got off the train. They would then leave from the station and cross into Mexico by automobile.

Cobb managed to summon 25 soldiers from the nearby US Army post at Fort Bliss and hustled over to Newman to meet the train. When Huerta climbed down from his car, he found Mr. Cobb, two US Marshals, and 25 soldiers, who took him and Orozco into custody.

Lansing sent Cobb a telegram congratulating him on his quick thinking, but Cobb wired back to tell the Secretary that the situation was far from settled. It seemed no one on either side of the border was happy to see the former President of Mexico in a US Army jail. No one in Mexico was, regardless of which faction they belonged to. And there were plenty of Americans in El Paso who thought that detaining Huerta was a terrible idea, up to and including the town's mayor, who offered his services as Huerta's defense attorney.

Huerta and Orozco were released on bail, although kept under surveillance, and the commander of Fort Bliss was ordered to make sure Huerta didn't cross the border, but it doesn't sound like the post commander viewed Huerta as much of a threat. He invited Huerta to dinner at his home the following evening.

On July 2, Orozco managed to escape across the border. Washington ordered Huerta re-arrested, triggering more unrest. More rumors flew. Orozco was said to be recruiting an army in the mountains and Huerta supporters were preparing to bust him out of the jail. Huerta was offered his freedom if he would agree to return to New York City, but he stubbornly refused to accept release as long as it came with conditions. He remained in his cell, studying English. The only complaint the hard-drinking Huerta made about his accommodations was that his jailer would not supply anything to drink other than ice water.

And speaking of New York, while all this was going on in El Paso, our friend Franz von Rintelen, the German spy in New York, received a coded telegram on July 6, warning him that the Americans were on to him and ordering him to high tail it back to Germany before he was arrested. Rintelen assumed again the identity of Emil Gasche and traveled back to Europe on his phony Swiss passport aboard the Holland-America liner *Noordam*, which departed New York for Rotterdam on August 3.

Whether that coded telegram actually came from the German Admiralty is not clear. It might well have originated with British Naval Intelligence, which had cracked the code the Germans were using and were monitoring Rintelen's communications, because when *Noordam* docked at Southampton on its way home, she was boarded by an armed search party who plucked Emil Gasche off the ship and escorted him to Scotland Yard.

As an amusing side note, Rintelen played the role of innocent Swiss gentleman outraged by his discourteous treatment at the hands of the English so skillfully that he convinced the inspectors

at Scotland Yard that they must have arrested the wrong man. Gasche demanded to see the Swiss ambassador, who was equally convinced by his passport and his act and vouched for him. Finally, Admiral Sir William Reginald “Blinker” Hall, the Director of Naval Intelligence, was brought in. It was Hall’s office, the famous Room 40 at the British Admiralty, which had cracked Rintelen’s codes and tipped off Scotland Yard that he was coming. Blinker Hall confronted Rintelen personally, and Rintelen soon confessed and was held in Britain as a prisoner of war for almost two years, until the United States entered the war, at which time he was extradited back to New York, where he was tried for espionage, convicted, and served three years in an American prison.

Meanwhile, on July 24 in New York City, a Secret Service agent named Frank Burke was trailing George Sylvester Viereck. Viereck was the son of an American mother and a German father, who, by the way, was reputedly the illegitimate son of Kaiser Wilhelm I. The younger Viereck and his parents lived in Germany for the first twelve years of his life, until they moved to New York City in 1897. George Viereck grew up, graduated from the City College of New York in 1906, and quickly made a name for himself as a poet. He retained an affection for Germany, and in August 1914, the month the Great War began, the now 29-year old launched a weekly magazine called *The Fatherland*, dedicated to, in the magazine’s own words, “fair play for Germany and Austria-Hungary.” *The Fatherland* published articles attacking the Allies, defending Germany, and arguing in favor of American neutrality.

When the Secret Service began taking an interest in German activities on American soil, they took an interest in Viereck, whose advocacy for Germany was and is widely suspected to have been secretly subsidized by the German government. On this particular day, Agent Burke was following Viereck as he walked up Broadway in Lower Manhattan in the company of a man Burke did not recognize, but took to be some sort of German diplomat. This man was carrying a heavy briefcase. The two men boarded the Sixth Avenue El at the Rector Street station, with Burke still tailing them. Viereck got off at the 23rd Street station, but Burke remained on the train, his eye now on Viereck’s companion. This man got off the el at 50th Street, but he forgot his briefcase. Burke saw his opportunity and pounced, grabbing the briefcase and moving quickly to the opposite end of the car just as the man on the platform realized his mistake and stepped back aboard the train to collect his property. All he got was the sight of Burke exiting the car at the opposite end, briefcase in hand. The man gave chase, but Burke hopped onto a trolley and eluded him.

The man turned out to be Dr. Heinrich Albert, a German civil servant and currently commerce attaché at the German Embassy in Washington. By that evening, the briefcase and a Secret Service agent were on a train to Maine, where Treasury Secretary McAdoo was on vacation. The contents of the briefcase exposed German operations in the US, operations that were sleazy, perhaps, but not necessarily criminal, and McAdoo, perhaps inspired by Louis Brandeis’ comment that sunlight is the best disinfectant, decided the most appropriate thing to do with Dr. Albert’s papers was to hand them over to the *New York World*. The *World* was the sensationalist

newspaper managed by the Hungarian-born American Joseph Pulitzer until his death in 1911. His sons were now running the paper, and they happily took the documents and printed every word on every single piece of paper in the newspaper over a period of weeks in August and September 1915. The revelations created a sensation in the American press. They taunted the hapless Dr. Albert in the newspapers, referring to him as Germany's "minister without portfolio."

The Pulitzer estate, by the way, will soon create the Pulitzer Prizes, the journalism award named for Joseph Pulitzer. The first Pulitzer Prizes will be awarded in 1917.

And speaking of portfolios, the British government was also monitoring German diplomatic communications. The Germans knew that the British could spy on their cables and their radio messages, so they sent their most sensitive communications via ocean liners, carried by couriers, couriers who were usually citizens of neutral countries, including Americans, so as not to attract attention. But the Bohemian Alliance was on the case, and they IDed a particular courier, an American, sailing to Europe in late August aboard the Dutch liner *Rotterdam* and carrying sensitive documents for the Austrian Embassy. British intelligence grabbed him at Southampton and picked up some juicy evidence of German and Austrian diplomats involved in promoting strikes and sabotage in munitions plants in the US as well as meddling in Mexican affairs. The British shared this intelligence with the American government, forcing Woodrow Wilson to expel the the Austrian ambassador.

Meanwhile, back in Mexico, you'll recall that the conventionalist army, commanded by Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata, was in control of Mexico City by last December. Venustiano Carranza had been forced out of the city and withdrew to Veracruz, which might lead you to expect that the civil war in Mexico is about to wind down into a conventionalist victory.

But don't count Carranza out just yet. His position may look shaky, but he's got a few cards still to play. He controls the tariff income from Mexico's most important ports, for one thing. For another, he still has the support of Álvaro Obregón, who was proving to be a military leader equal in skill to Villa or Zapata. And Carranza was shrewd enough to understand that his milquetoast liberal constitutionalism wasn't a strong enough dish to satisfy the Mexican public's appetite for change, so he went to his spice cabinet and added in the *serranos* of land reform.

Yeah, okay, I'm pushing this metaphor too far. But the point is still valid. By early 1915, Carranza was adding in some more radical reforms to his program. He and Obregón reached out to Mexico's labor and socialist organizations and with their help recruited landless urban workers. This did the trick; the *carrancistas* were able to raise new troops in the cities, the so-called Red Batallions, because of their socialist and communist leanings. These were able to wrest control of the capital from the conventionalists, forcing Villa and Zapata to withdraw.

Emiliano Zapata was not enthusiastic about getting mixed up in this widening civil war, so he and his forces headed south to his home state of Morelos and Zapata set to work implementing

his reform program in his home state. Villa, on the other hand, was just itching to put down the *carrancistas* once and for all. And the feeling was mutual.

In Mexico City, Carranza declared himself chief of what he was now calling the “preconstitutional regime” and pledged to call a constitutional convention to write Mexico a new constitution, just as soon as the fighting ended. Carranza appointed Álvaro Obregón his Minister of War.

Obregón understood that the flamboyant Villa was the kind of guy who acted on impulse. So Obregón laid a trap for him in the lowlands of central Mexico, known as the Bajío. Obregón knew that Villa was fond of cavalry charges, and the Bajío was great country for cavalry. But Obregón fortified his position with trenches and barbed wire and machine guns—all the most up-to-date techniques of modern warfare, and Villa took the bait. He had perhaps twice as many soldiers as Obregón’s 15,000 and they were more experienced. Pancho Villa had never lost a battle, morale was high, and he went into this conflict no doubt thinking that he was about to defeat the constitutionalists once and for all and end the civil war.

The result was a series of engagements collectively referred to as the Battle of Celaya, or sometimes as “Pancho Villa’s Waterloo,” which I guess tells you everything you need to know about the outcome. Villa and his army were completely unprepared for the traps Obregón had laid, resulting in most of Villa’s army dead, wounded, or captured. Obregón’s forces suffered only about 1,500 casualties, including Obregón himself. His right arm was blown off by an artillery shell in the course of the fighting and he was almost killed, but he did survive the injury.

Over the summer, Villa’s army withdrew to the north, with Obregón’s in pursuit. Villa suffered further losses. By October, he was down to a small cadre of a few thousand revolutionary guerrillas in the mountains of the north, which was exactly where he had been two years ago.

[music: *Ochos valsés poéticos*]

I mentioned before that the Wilson administration was sympathetic to Carranza at first. The Americans liked the sound of this “constitutionalism” that Carranza kept going on about. American intervention had helped drive the obstinate and uncooperative Huerta out of power, but Washington then found Carranza no easier to deal with. Carranza well understood that the surest way of killing his shot at winning the civil war was to be seen by the Mexican public as an American puppet. So while Carranza was happy to accept American aid, he wasn’t willing to do America any favors in return, and indeed was outspoken about American meddling in Mexico.

After Carranza was driven out of Mexico City, the US government began warming to the idea of supporting Pancho Villa and the conventionalists, even though the mercurial Pancho Villa was never going to be the sort of stable, pro-business protector of foreign investment that the Americans wanted to see in the National Palace. Villa, for his part, was flattered by this

attention. The Americans had helped him oust Huerta; perhaps they would now help him tie up the loose ends.

Of course, it was just as the Americans were warming to Villa that he started losing battles, not to mention his revolutionary mystique. But even as he was losing on the battlefield, the American government still viewed him as a useful counterweight to the uncooperative Carranza. The threat of US aid to Villa might be just the leverage the Americans needed to adjust Carranza's attitude.

But over the summer and fall of 1915, the full extent of German machinations in the US and Mexico was becoming apparent, and in particular how eager the Germans were to see the US get tangled up in the Mexican Revolution. As Secretary of State Lansing would put it, Germany wanted to see America intervene in Mexico. Therefore, America must not intervene in Mexico. Germany wanted to keep Mexico in turmoil by ensuring no one faction became dominant. Therefore, America must support a quick end to the fighting by helping one faction become dominant.

By the time Washington came to this realization, Obregón was already on the move and Villa on the run. By October, he had been forced back into his home base in the state of Chihuahua. Short of funds to pay his soldiers, Villa took to seizing money and property from Mexican landowners and businesses, including North American businesses, which cost him support in the US.

But Villa wasn't ready to give in just yet. His next move was to attack west from his political base in Chihuahua into the state of Sonora, which, as I'm sure you remember, was Carranza's political base. To lose Sonora would be an embarrassment to Carranza, as well as eloquently making the point that Pancho Villa was still out there, still had soldiers, and was still a force to be reckoned with. Both of these states border the US, and it may be that Villa was trying just as much to impress the North Americans as he was his fellow Mexicans.

Meanwhile, the Wilson Administration at last decided to set aside its reservations about Venustiano Carranza and recognize him and his preconstitutional regime as the legitimate government of Mexico. At the time this decision was made, Pancho Villa and his army, which still numbered some 15,000 at this point, were making the difficult crossing through the Sierra Madre Occidental into Sonora. Villa's first intended target was the town of Agua Prieta, which sits just on the border with the United States. Villa believed that the *carrancista* garrison in the town numbered no more than a thousand or so, and he intended to surprise them with one of his trademark cavalry charges. Swoop in, catch them off guard, and the town would be his.

On October 30, Villa and his soldiers reached Agua Prieta. He gave them a day to rest and planned his attack for early in the morning of November 1. It was here that he received the news that Washington had recognized Carranza. What he did not know was that the US government had gone beyond mere diplomatic recognition and was allowing some of Obregón's troops to use US rail lines to move reinforcements into Agua Prieta through US territory. The garrison in Agua

Prieta now numbered over six thousand, many of whom were veterans of earlier clashes with Villa's army. They knew exactly what to do, and set to work laying land mines, digging trenches, laying barbed wire, you know, the sort of defensive works that would foil exactly the kind of cavalry charge Villa was preparing.

Villa attacked before sunrise on November 1, and the result was yet another disaster. Once again, old-style cavalry charges were no match for barbed wire, machine guns, and infantry in entrenched positions armed with modern weapons. And speaking of modern weapons, here were a couple of new ones the *villistas* hadn't come across yet: the barbed wire was electrified, and the defenders had searchlights, which they used to pick out Villa's cavalry, who were supposed to be charging in the dark of night.

The electricity to charge the barbed wire and power the spotlights was coming into Agua Prieta via cables laid across the border, from the neighboring Arizona town of Douglas, where also stood units of the United States Army. They were there in case the fighting spilled over the border, but you can understand how Pancho Villa took one look at them, remembered the spotlights, and quickly became convinced that the United States had joined forces with his enemies.

[music: *Ochos vales poéticos*]

Carrancista casualties at the Battle of Agua Prieta were minimal. No one has exact numbers of *villista* losses, but thousands were killed, wounded, or captured, and thousands more defected afterward, because Obregón was offering Villa's soldiers generous terms in exchange for laying down their arms, while all Villa could offer his battered and bloody army was a long march back through the mountains of the Sierra Madre Occidental without enough food or supplies and with winter setting in.

The Battle of Agua Prieta marked the end of Pancho Villa's army as a conventional fighting force. But he was still not ready to lay down his arms. Indeed, Villa and his remaining loyal soldiers disappeared into the mountains of Chihuahua, mountains Villa knew very well, and continued their guerilla campaign against the *carrancistas*. Villa also felt betrayed by the United States, a nation that a few months ago had seemed on the verge of recognizing him and the conventionalists, and now had not only turned to Carranza instead but had all but intervened militarily against him.

But now the Germans saw an opportunity. With the US committed to Carranza, and Villa still in command of the strongest anti-Carranza fighting force in Mexico, the German government could send Villa the money and arms it had originally intended for the Huerta counter-revolution. Villa was short on both money and arms and gladly accepted the offer.

But hold on a minute, I hear you cry. What happened to Victoriano Huerta and Pascual Orozco? When we left them, back in July, Huerta was in prison in Fort Bliss, Texas, while Orozco had

escaped across the border into Chihuahua himself and reportedly had his own guerilla band in the mountains. So what happened? Well, I'll tell you.

About eight weeks after he escaped custody, Pascual Orozco and a band of his men crossed into southern Texas in Hudspeth County, east of El Paso. The story goes that they rode up to a private ranch, forced the servants there to cook them a meal, then stole some horses and rode away. The ranch owner assembled a civilian posse and chased them down, not knowing them to be anything more than a gang of bandits. It was only after they caught the bandits and killed them in a shootout that the posse realized that Pascual Orozco was among the dead. A Texas grand jury was convened, but declined to indict anyone in the posse, although there are some who claim that the posse members knew perfectly well whom they were pursuing, and killed Orozco and his men deliberately.

As for General Huerta, he remained in US custody at Fort Bliss, but his health deteriorated and he died on January 13, 1916, at the age of 65. He became jaundiced at the end of his life, and given his decades of hard drinking, it seems probable that liver disease is what killed him, although some accuse the US Army of poisoning him.

Two days earlier, as Huerta lay upon his deathbed, a unit of Pancho Villa's army stopped a train in Chihuahua and robbed the passengers. Eighteen of the passengers, the ones who were citizens of the United States, were shot and killed, except for one man, Thomas Holmes, who survived the shootings and escaped to Chihuahua City to tell his story. Most of the victims were employees of the American Smelting and Refining Company.

There was a great outcry in the United States, along with demands that either the Carranza government bring the perpetrators to justice, or that the US Army intervene and do it for them. Republicans in general, and Theodore Roosevelt in particular, had already been critical of Wilson's Mexico policy as too passive. Now those criticisms were renewed. It was said of Wilson that the only murder in Mexico he ever cared about was Francisco Madero's.

Theodore Roosevelt had been pushing for a more aggressive US response to the instability in Mexico since the early days of the Revolution, so his vocal opposition now comes as no surprise, but it was partly motivated by a petition signed by some of the leading citizens of El Paso calling for US retaliation. But as it turns out, that petition was organized by two German businessmen in El Paso, possibly at the instigation of the German government. Roosevelt hadn't known this, of course. The only thing Roosevelt hated more than Woodrow Wilson and his reluctance to go to war was Germany. How ironic then, that Theodore Roosevelt, of all people, would become an unwitting implement of German foreign policy.

The killings in Chihuahua did put a strain on US relations with the Carranza government, which was fully Villa's intention. He was deliberately trying to provoke US military intervention in Mexico. His thinking was that Carranza's inability to control the border regions would drive a wedge between him and the US government, and that US intervention would put Carranza in the

impossible position of having to choose between the support of the US government and the support of the Mexican people. In Villa's view, which perhaps overestimated the value of Washington's support, Carranza would have no choice but to side with the US and accept intervention, which would outrage patriotic Mexicans, who in turn would flock to the banner of the one Mexican military leader with the *cojones* to resist the American invaders. That military leader being Pancho Villa.

But Woodrow Wilson's stubborn refusal to intervene was throwing a monkey wrench into Villa's plan. Something more drastic was called for. And so, at midnight on March 9, 1916, Pancho Villa and a force of about 1,500 fighters crossed the border into the United States in southern New Mexico. At 4:15 AM about 500 of them attacked the unsuspecting town of Columbus, which lay about three miles north of the border. They rode through the town shouting and firing their weapons. They looted and burned homes and killed about fifteen civilians.

The US Army's 13th Cavalry regiment was encamped next to the town. Like the civilians in Columbus, the 13th was caught by surprise, but they quickly roused themselves and rode off after the *villistas*. Villa ordered a retreat and his troops withdrew back to Mexico with the US cavalry in hot pursuit. Although it was technically illegal, the cavalry crossed the border in pursuit of Villa and his men and chased them some fifteen miles into Mexican territory before breaking off and returning home. Eight US Army soldiers were killed, as were a hundred or so of Villa's men. Six *villistas* were captured; five of them would ultimately be executed for murder.

But the Battle of Columbus suddenly made Pancho Villa famous as the first foreign military commander in over a century to launch an attack on US territory. He had made his point. This was something not even Woodrow Wilson could overlook.

We'll have to stop there for today. Thanks to all of you for listening, and a special thanks to Erin for making a donation, and also to Charles, for becoming a patron of the podcast. If you'd like to become a patron, or make a one-time contribution, visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on "Help the Podcast."

And I hope you'll join me next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we return to the subject of the Great War. The year 1916 is going to be pivotal, and I have a series of five episodes already queued up on military and political developments of that year, as well as more about Pancho Villa, Woodrow Wilson, and the US Presidential election of that year, and, spoiler alert, the Easter Rising in Dublin, which is going to catch everyone off guard, except you, because I just warned you about it. But before we take on all that, we need to set the table, as it were, by getting caught up on events on the lesser fronts of the Great War: the Alps, the Caucasus, and Mesopotamia. We'll also examine how victory is still a long, long way away, but the British and the French are already divvying up the spoils in the Middle East. A Line in the Sand, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. In late 1914, the Royal Navy was pursuing German commerce raiders in the Pacific, episode 94. The Japanese had contributed a couple of ships to assist in this effort, including the battleship *Hizen*, which had been the Russian battleship *Retvizan* before she was captured during the Russo-Japanese War, episode 33, and also the Japanese cruiser *Asama*. In early 1915, these two Japanese warships were patrolling along the Pacific coast of Mexico, on the lookout for raiders. On January 28, *Asama* apparently struck a rock and suffered damage.

The Imperial Japanese Navy dispatched a number of ships and repair crews to the scene, but it took them almost seven months to get *Asama* seaworthy again. In August she finally limped off to British Columbia for further repair work, finally returning to Japan in December.

This lengthy period of time that *Asama* and her small flotilla of repair ships spent on the Mexican coast at the same time Mexico was in the throes of a civil war made some in the US suspicious: Was it really taking this long to get *Asama* afloat once again? Or was the repair operation a cover for Japanese meddling in the Mexican Revolution? Isn't Japan supposed to be one of the Allies? Whose side is she on, anyway? American fears about Japanese meddling in Mexico will only become more pointed as German meddling in Mexico becomes more apparent.

[music: Closing Theme]