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THE STORY OF MEXICO

By

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge

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The Story of Mexico

By Senator Henry Cabot Lodge.

The great war in Europe has obscured the Mexican question, as it did many others, in people's minds. The Mexican situation has been largely pushed aside and forgotten. Although one of the most important transactions in which this country has been engaged in the last two or three years, it seemed so unimportant to the President that he did not even allude to it in his annual message. I think that in itself it is extremely serious and especially so to the United States, whose territory adjoins that of Mexico.

In the autumn of 1910 the Madero revolution, directed against the long-established government of President Diaz, began. President Diaz left Mexico City on May 25, 1911, and Francisco Madero, the leader of the successful revolution, arrived there on June 7 of the same year. He took the oath of office as President November 6, 1911.

When the revolution broke out, as everyone will recall, President Taft sent an army of 20,000 men to the border to maintain peace in that region. After Madero had taken the oath as President and become President de facto of Mexico, the disturbances still continuing, President Taft issued a proclamation of neutrality March 2, 1912.

On March 14, 1912, Congress passed a reso-

lution giving the President power, when he found that in an American country conditions of domestic violence existed which were promoted by the use of arms or munitions of war procured in the United States, to forbid the export of such arms or munitions of war, and on the same day President Taft exercised this power and laid an embargo on the export of arms to Mexico.

President Taft imposed an embargo on the export of munitions of war and arms, and it was a direct aid to the Madero government, which was then facing an insurrection. Then President Wilson, at a later period, lifted the embargo and that was a direct aid to the insurgents who were opposing the government of Gen. Huerta.

The Madero government was recognized by President Taft. On January 23, 1913, a little less than a year later, Felix Diaz headed a revolution against the Madero government in Mexico City and attacked the palace. Gen. Huerta, who was in command of the Madero forces, went over to Diaz and the Madero government was overthrown. Madero and the vice-president, Suarez, were arrested by Huerta February 18 and were forced to resign. On February 20 Lascurain was sworn in as Provisional President, and about forty-eight hours later Madero and Suarez were killed. The manner of their death has never been made perfectly clear, but that they were unlawfully killed is, I think, beyond doubt.

Gen. Huerta then took over the government, and in accordance with constitutional forms became Provisional President. This was so near the 4th of March that President Taft took no action in regard to the Huerta government, feeling that he had not the right to commit his successor on so important a point.

President Wilson came in on the 4th of March, and on the 26th of that month the revolution headed by Carranza broke out in northern Mexico. Nothing, practically, was done in regard to Mexican affairs until the following summer, when the President sent Mr. Lind as his personal agent to Vera Cruz and subsequently delivered a message to Congress upon the Mexican situation. The instructions to Mr. Lind involved a demand in the nature of an ultimatum upon Gen. Huerta that he should abdicate. It is not usual, in entering into negotiations, no matter how informal or through a personal emissary, no matter how informal the emissary's position may be, to demand of the head of the government, with whom that emissary is to communicate, that he should abdicate. Such a demand crudely stated laid us open to a telling retort, and that is the reason why the then secretary of foreign affairs in Mexico was so successful in his reply. Gen. Huerta refused to abdicate and the correspondence to which I have referred ensued.

I was not one of those who was disposed to find fault with the refusal to recognize Gen. Huerta, although there was much to be said in

favor of that course. There were broad international grounds and sound international grounds upon which that refusal could have been based. It was entirely possible to say that Gen. Huerta's government was unable to maintain international relations, for over a large area of Mexico it exercised no authority. It was possible and proper to say that the recognition might entail the validification of the loans which the Huerta government was then attempting in Europe, and which would have pledged certain revenues of Mexico, and thus deprived the United States of the opportunity of securing indemnity for injuries to its citizens.

But those grounds were not put forward. The ground on which recognition of Huerta was refused was what was called a moral ground; that he was a man of bad character, who had reached the highest position in Mexico by treacherous and murderous methods. I think it highly probable that such were his methods. That is the way supreme power has generally been acquired in Mexico. It has been attained by force and accompanied by acts of violence, which are repellant to every man who believes in the reign of law and in ordered freedom.

But when we put our refusal of recognition on the personal ground that the character of the head of the Mexican government at that time was unsatisfactory to us, to that extent we intervened. We had an absolute right on

international grounds to refuse recognition, but when we say to another nation we object to the man who is at the head of your government or at the head of the only government you have got because he is a person of obnoxious character, we intervene in the affairs of that nation.

However, the refusal to recognize Gen. Huerta was based upon that ground, and while it undoubtedly embarrassed the Huerta government, it did not overthrow it. He proved himself contumacious. The President, who disapproved of his methods, as we all disapproved of them, now had added to his feelings a personal resentment because Gen. Huerta had not obeyed the President's demand for his abdication. The President is a man accustomed to obedience, and I can quite understand that he should feel a natural resentment at Gen. Huerta's seeming indifference to his request.

But an animosity is not a policy. The policy of the United States in regard to Mexico, speaking from the international point of view, was to secure as soon as possible the pacification of the country, the re-establishment of order, the removal of all our many causes of complaint, the security of the lives and property of our own citizens and also of the citizens or subjects of other nations, because other nations, in view of our attitude and of the Monroe doctrine, declined to intervene and made no suggestion of intervening themselves, and that threw a moral, if not a legal, responsibility upon us. This

would have been a worthy national policy, but the business of driving Huerta from power and putting somebody else in his place was not a policy at all. Nevertheless, that was the object to which our government addressed itself.

Still Huerta continued to hold on. Rumors reached us in the spring of 1914 that he had effected a loan through the Mexican banks of sixty millions and that a large cargo of arms was on its way to him from Germany.

At that time, while the indications that the Huerta government might be established and held in power for at least a year longer were before us, here came what was known as the Tampico incident. I need not recall it in detail. All are familiar with what happened. A boat's crew from one of our warships, flying the American flag, landed perfectly properly for peaceful purposes and were arrested. They were taken to the town hall and released. An apology was offered by the commander and Admiral Mayo demanded a salute to the flag. Our government took the question from the locality where it had occurred and carried it to the City of Mexico, thus extending its scope and giving it a national character.

The Huerta government declined to give the salute unless they were assured that it would be returned. In those cases which have happened in our own history, where a salute has been given it sometimes has been returned and sometimes not. It was on that precise point we came to blows with the Huerta government. The Presi-

dent appeared before Congress and delivered his message, and there was submitted from the White House a resolution for Congress to pass which declared that we should give the President power to take proper steps against Victoriano Huerta, naming him, which shows, as I have said, that the whole purpose was the removal of Huerta.

That resolution was passed by a genial and compliant House, but the Senate was unwilling to put the United States in the attitude of taking a step, which might very well mean a general war with Mexico, by declaring against an individual by name. The United States in war with Victoriano Huerta did not commend itself to the Senate as a title for our action. So the name of Gen. Huerta disappeared from the resolution. The Senate Republicans thought that if we were to take this very serious step, it was proper to put it on the broad international ground of protection to American citizens, to their rights, to their lives, to their property, rather than on the narrow grounds of the actions of one man who happened to be at the moment President de facto of Mexico. Our proposition of amendment in this sense was voted down. All efforts to get any recognition of the wrongs to American citizens were voted down. An amendment offered pledging this government against the acquisition of Mexican territory was voted down, and the resolution which in fact, though not actually by name, put the United States into war with Victoriano Huerta was passed.

While it was passing our forces had gone to Vera Cruz, where there was no American property in danger, where nothing had occurred, in order to secure reparation for something that had happened at Tampico. The resolution passed to the sound of the guns. We lost 19 men killed, and I think, altogether there were 120 killed and wounded. Several hundred Mexicans were also killed and wounded.

There apparently was an idea in the President's mind that there would be no resistance to our taking Vera Cruz. He had been told that there would be no resistance and that we would peacefully take Vera Cruz. That is only a sample of the manner in which his agents subtracted from the sum of human information when they reported to him. But after the bloodshed in the taking of Vera Cruz it seemed to the onlooker that the administration leaders were very much disturbed. They did not seem to have much stomach for the unexpected fight which had arisen, and took shelter under the Niagara conference, a conference which never could have had any result, because, although the United States and Huerta sent representatives to it, the other party in Mexico sent none, and were not compelled by our government to send any. However, the conference enabled us to escape further fighting, and for that we may be duly grateful.

The object for which we sent those ships and troops to Vera Cruz was to get reparation for the insult to the flag, and the reason for the

great celerity demanded in dealing with the resolution was to stop the landing of a cargo of arms. I do not know what has become of the reparation for the insult to the flag; if it has been made, I have never heard of it. My own impression is that it has been forgotten. The ship that brought the cargo of arms from Germany, which was then selling arms to belligerents, was named the "Ypiranga." She arrived, I think, the day after our occupation of Vera Cruz. We could not exclude her by a peaceful blockade; if we had made a general blockade, it would have been an act of war; and we were not to be at war. Therefore, the "Ypiranga" having come there, the only way she could land her cargo was by getting permission from us as the possessors of the port to do so. That permission, naturally, we did not give. Admiral Badger—I think he was in command at the time—telegraphed to Washington to ask if he should give clearance—the vessel was obliged to get clearance from us—to the "Ypiranga." The clearance was given. She went to some American port—Mobile, I think, though I am not perfectly certain; but it does not matter—stayed there a few days, sailed again, and landed her entire cargo of arms at Puerto Mexico, which was in control of the Huerta forces. The arms were taken up on the Tehuantepec railroad to the City of Mexico and delivered. So we did not stop the landing of that cargo by our expedition to Vera Cruz. We neither got reparation to the flag, nor did we stop the delivery of

arms to Huerta. In its avowed purposes the Vera Cruz adventure was not very successful. But President Wilson, just about that time, took off the embargo on arms. That, of course, was a real help to the insurgents, with whom we were more or less involved as allies. The insurgents had no port; they could not import arms; but they could bring them over the border when the embargo was raised, because at that time we were selling arms to belligerents without objection from anybody. The Secretary of War, Mr. Garrison, however, with a wisdom and a courage which cannot be too highly commended, insisted, for military reasons, that no arms should be carried across the border. That left Villa and Carranza in an awkward position, without a port, and it became of very great importance to the administration that they should have a port.

Then ensued the second Tampico incident. Our ships were withdrawn and placed nine miles away, on the ground that if they were there it might cause trouble. My own impression is that they would have saved us from trouble. We have freely caused trouble and bloodshed at Vera Cruz, but we seemed strangely unwilling even to run the risk of trouble at Tampico. So the ships were withdrawn. At Tampico there were American citizens in the immediate neighborhood to be protected, and also American property, especially in the oil fields. The people employed in the oil fields after the withdrawal of our ships, alarmed by the advance of the insurgents, hur-

ried to Tampico, to find themselves without any protection and in danger of a massacre from the Huerta troops and the population still in the city. That massacre and assault were prevented was due to the action of the commanders of the German and British ships, which were lying there. Those refugees, to the number of 2,100 as I recall, 1,300 of whom were Americans, and 800 the citizens or subjects of other powers, were taken on board the British and German cruisers. Our ships were lying nine miles away. That method of saving American lives did not, I think, gratify the feelings of the American people. The admiral in command, when he received the order to withdraw, was so astounded by it that he declined to act unless the order was repeated; and the order of withdrawal was thereupon repeated. Our action at Tampico in withdrawing our ships was due to the fact that unless the insurgents secured Tampico they could not get arms, and lifting the embargo would have been of no advantage to them. It was, therefore, of great importance to the movement against Huerta that the insurgents should be able to procure arms and munitions of war. They took Tampico, and they did it to secure the arms.

Having got thus far, although we had failed in our alleged objects at Vera Cruz, the interposition at that point and our help to the insurgents in securing Tampico were sufficient to bring about the fall of the Huerta government. The object of the President had been

accomplished, but the policy of the United States had not been advanced one step.

It seemed impossible to induce anyone connected with the administration to consider what was to happen after Huerta had been driven from power. When he was driven from power it became painfully obvious that no consideration whatever had been given to that point. The whole course of the administration was owing to the fact that they absolutely declined from the beginning to recognize the character of the Mexican population. It was not our business, however, desirable it might be, to undertake to give Mexico new land laws or to choose a President for her. We had no protectorate over Mexico, and to regulate her internal affairs would have been intervening in the affairs of another country; but it was of the utmost importance that in our policy toward that country we should not forget of what the population consisted—50 per cent. and more pure-blooded Indians, some of them in a wild state; 30 per cent. of half-breeds, and perhaps 20 per cent. of pure Spanish blood, the descendants of the old Spanish conquerors. To suppose, with a population like that, with the history of Mexico, which apparently nobody in the administration took the trouble to read, that you could build up a government there at a moment's notice, such as we have, let us say, in the State of Nebraska, that with those foundations you could erect an American government on American principles, was a dream.

When Huerta fell from power the result of this refusal to face facts was seen.

What has been the condition of Mexico since? As everybody who has taken the trouble to study Mexican history and to inform himself knew, the first thing was that our two allies, Villa and Carranza, fell to fighting each other. It required no great intelligence to predict that such would have been the case. We did not hear so much of Carranza when we were his ally, but we can all remember how popular Villa was in certain quarters. When I ventured to have read into the Congressional Record a sketch of that eminent person's life it was resented, and a defense, said to have been prepared in the State Department, was made of Villa's character. It was currently rumored that it was felt in the highest quarters that he must be a good man because he neither drank nor smoked. It is not apparent that these premises were correct, for I am told by other persons competent to know, such as the Senator from New Mexico, Mr. Fall, that he is guilty of both, drinking and smoking; but even assuming that he does not indulge in those particular vices, was it not a hasty inference that he was therefore a good man in the international sense and devoid of murderous tendencies? A mad dog neither drinks nor smokes, but it would be rash to conclude that he was therefore a safe and pleasant companion. At all events it may be admitted that Villa seems to have been the one man in Mexico who has distinct military capacity.

As I have said, after we got Huerta out Villa and Carranza fell to fighting with each other, and look at Mexico today. It is a chaos of fighting factions, the prey of banditti, with predatory bands riding through the country. The social organization has collapsed and anarchy is a polite word to apply to the condition of things.

I fear that it is now too late to adopt any policy which would be effective there except a complete military occupation of the country at great cost, which all of us wish to avoid, but it is certain that when the Mexican question was first presented to us there were but two possible policies. I am speaking now of policies, and not of personal animosities. One policy was to begin by exerting all the power and influence we had under international law and under treaties and in accordance with the comity of nations to prevent outrages, to prevent wrongs, and to try to bring about pacification. This was never effectively attempted, but that is the way we should have begun, and then, in line with the policy of avoiding war at all hazards, we should have refrained from any intervention beyond the efforts warranted by international law.

The other course was to enter Mexico in sufficient force to take possession of and pacify the country and try to bring back a government there which would have the capacity of fulfilling its international obligations and at least establish order. To that course the

United States was opposed, and quite naturally and rightly; but the course we did pursue was neither one or the other. It combined with singular dexterity the evils of both and the advantages of neither. We did not stay out and we did not go in effectively. I should be sorry to shed the blood of a single American soldier or sailor for the sake of restoring order in Mexico, but nothing, it seems to me, can possibly justify shedding the blood of a single American soldier or sailor for the sake of putting one blood-stained Mexican in the place occupied by another. We have our reward for what we have done in the condition of Mexico today.

There was American property in Mexico to an enormous amount. I am told there was a billion dollars of American money and capital invested in Mexico—certainly many hundreds of millions. It is practically all gone. More capital, which is nothing but the savings of the American people, has been lost in Mexico in the last few years, many times over, than has been lost by unfortunate interferences with our foreign trade which have occurred in the last few months. I was informed by gentlemen with property interests in Mexico, who came here representing many Americans employed and large American capital invested, that they were told substantially at the State Department, "We are not concerned about American property in Mexico; Americans who invest in property in foreign countries must not look to

this government to protect them." That was a new doctrine in international law to me, and I think it is a novel one to everybody. I am glad to see that the indifference to American property in Mexico has not extended to American property on the high seas. I cling to the old notion that American property on the high seas and in foreign countries, when the owners of that property live in accordance with the laws of the countries in which the property is placed, is entitled to our regard and to the active protection of this government. That protection has not been given in Mexico, and, what is far worse, hundreds of American lives have been lost in Mexico. If there has been any redress secured, or even demanded, I do not know it, for a veil of secrecy has been drawn over our Mexican proceedings, and the inquiries of the Senate in regard to it have thus far been in vain.

Americans have been killed there within a short time. I understand that 52 people have been killed and wounded by Mexican bullets across the line at Naco. It is said that Gen. Bliss announced that if there was any more shooting across the line he would stop it. There was more shooting, and I am sorry to say that he did not stop it. Knowing of him as I do, I think that he may have been prevented from stopping it. There before us is that dismal record of American lives lost, and now, with irresponsible bands roaming over the country, with no government, look at

the City of Mexico. One of the presidents set up a guillotine there, and executed the supporters of Huerta, reminding one of the scenes of the French Revolution, but unfortunately without that which was behind the French Revolution, a strong population, with traditions and institutions which were certain to reassert their power, as they did. Those securities for the future have perished in Mexico, and bloodshed goes on unchecked in the capital of the country.

It has gone further than that. These bandits have been turned loose and have thrown themselves upon the most helpless class—upon the women, upon the priests, and upon the nuns. It is a revolting story, unfortunately only too well authenticated. Father Tierney, of New York City, one of the best known and most distinguished of his order, when he went to the State Department to ask for our good offices to prevent these outrages upon his coreligionists, has stated publicly that it was said to him, in the presence of two friends, that the followers of Huerta had committed similar outrages on two American women from Iowa.

What a reply to make! Certainly every dictate of humanity would lead us to do what we could to save those unfortunate men and women who have been the helpless victims of these half-wild Indian soldiers; and the reply is that Huerta's troops were guilty of two cases of similar outrages on American women! What has been done about that? There was an affront, indeed. In the reasons for the excursion to Vera Cruz it did not appear.

The result of the overthrow of President Huerta by President Wilson, through the expedition to Vera Cruz and by raising the embargo so that the opponents of Gen. Huerta could be supplied with arms from this country, was the destruction of all that remained of efficient or responsible government in Mexico. The man picked out by Mr. Wilson to be the saviour of society was Francisco Villa, a man of undoubted military capacity, but of the lowest type; a criminal in his early years and, after he became a leader of insurgents, a murderer and robber, stained with every possible brutality and crime. President Wilson, although he had an agent with Villa, never had an opportunity to recognize him as the redeemer of Mexico because he and Carranza soon fell to fighting with each other. In addition there were other bodies of bandits, led by more or less bloodstained chiefs, and Mexico was soon brought to a condition, of complete anarchy, owing to Mr. Wilson's action in regard to the Huerta government. Finally Carranza so far got the better of Villa that the President recognized him on the 19th of October, 1915. There was not the slightest indication that he could keep order anywhere or fulfil any international obligations. At that time he did not dare to go to Mexico City; he had no capital, no organized government, and his only title to power was that given to him by a gathering of his own generals. Nevertheless he was recognized.

During all this period, after the overthrow of Huerta as well as before, American property, if it had escaped destruction, was confiscated or ruined; the murder of American citizens, lawfully in Mexico, continued and our citizens and soldiers were killed on our side of the border by Mexicans firing across the boundary line. Not one step has ever been taken to secure reparation for these murders and outrages or to protect American citizens, lawfully in Mexico, in their rights. Our indifference to these outrages and murders inflicted upon our own citizens bred in the Mexican mind, which is semi-barbarous, a complete contempt for the United States and for the American government. Nothing else was to be expected. Finally, this contempt, so fostered by the course of President Wilson, found expression, as it was sure to do sooner or later, in an invasion of our territory and a murderous raid, by bands under the control of Villa, upon the city of Columbus in New Mexico on the morning of March 8 last. There were other similar raids upon border towns and ranchmen and farmers living on the American side of the line have been murdered by Mexican bandits. Thereupon United States troops were sent across the border to pursue the Villa forces. They have not succeeded as yet in capturing Villa or dispersing his forces. In the course of these operations a troop of United States cavalry was ambushed at Carrizal by a very large superior force of Mexicans in the Carranza service, and a number of our troopers were killed and others made

prisoners. The prisoners have been returned, and also the bodies of the dead troopers, which appears to satisfy the administration entirely and which is called a "diplomatic victory."

Since the taking of Vera Cruz we have been at intervals at war with Mexico. We have been fighting Mexican soldiers and American soldiers and citizens have been killed by Mexicans. Declared war could do no more. Mexico itself is bankrupt; industry is at a standstill; the people are starving. Carranza has overthrown every state government and put military chiefs of his own selection in command of each one of them. Some of them have openly overthrown religion in the states and they all have tyrannized over and robbed the people. The outrages upon harmless women, because they were nuns, and upon harmless men, because they were priests, have shocked the civilized world outside the immediate circle of the administration at Washington. Mr. Wilson ought either to have let Mexico entirely alone, insisting upon the protection of American rights both to life and property, or he should have intervened effectively. He has done neither. He overthrew Huerta because he said he was an immoral person, not on international grounds. He seized a Mexican city, after fighting which involved a considerable loss of life both American and Mexican. He undertook to say what reforms in the ownership of land should be adopted in Mexico and what constitutional government was in that country, and he has now recognized a military chieftain

with no constitutional power whatever, and he has had for some months a war of outposts upon his hands along the northern border. By lifting the embargo, as he did, for the benefit of Villa, he has enabled the Mexicans to kill American citizens and soldiers with American munitions and American guns.

This is the situation which the present administration has largely created in Mexico. The responsibility for the Mexican conditions rests chiefly upon our government and the deaths of American citizens and soldiers all lie at the doors of this administration.



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