

The Exile and Death of Victoriano Huerta

GEORGE J. RAUSCH, JR.*

ONE OF THE most important and controversial personalities of the Mexican Revolution was Victoriano Huerta. Huerta appeared from obscurity in 1913 and returned to obscurity in 1914. One of the most interesting and little known periods of his career was that which followed his exile in July, 1914. Although no studies of importance have appeared concerning his activities during this period, their significance could well have been world wide.

In February, 1913, President Francisco Madero of Mexico was overthrown by a coup d'état led by Félix Díaz and Victoriano Huerta. A few days later Madero was murdered by representatives of the new regime. The new president, Victoriano Huerta, long one of Mexico's most effective generals but a newcomer to politics, retained power tenaciously until July, 1914.

The Huerta government was denied recognition by the United States under President Woodrow Wilson who was convinced that Huerta was personally responsible for the murder of Madero. No real proof of Huerta's responsibility had appeared but his guilt was widely accepted and several groups rose in armed opposition to him. A deadly but indecisive period of civil war between the troops of Huerta and those of Venustiano Carranza, Francisco Villa, and Emiliano Zapata followed. In April, 1914, American opposition to Huerta culminated in the seizure of Vera Cruz by American forces. Protracted negotiations followed at Niagara Falls under the auspices of the A.B.C. powers. While negotiations continued the Constitutionalist forces under Carranza gained strength and swept toward Mexico City.

By the middle of July, 1914, Huerta's position had become impossible, and he resigned his office and fled to Puerto México. On July 20 he and his family boarded the German cruiser *Dresden* and sailed for Jamaica. Since the ex-president spoke only Spanish, he decided to make his home in Spain. He appeared exhausted as he

* The author is a member of the staff of the University of Illinois Library.

boarded the ship and he obviously looked forward to a period of rest and relaxation as a private citizen.¹ The prospects for future political activity on his part did not appear bright at that time, but they were soon to improve. In the following year he completed an agreement with the German government and came into conflict with that of the United States.

Huerta and his companions arrived in Kingston, Jamaica, on July 24, and after a short stay on the island boarded the British steamer *Patia* bound for England. On August 16 the party arrived in Bristol.² Huerta, who had made himself popular while on board the ship, expected to leave for Spain the following day.³ He decided to stay in England for a few days before continuing to Spain, possibly because of the European war. On August 17 the Huerta family slipped quietly into London and obtained lodging at an obscure hotel. For the next two days Huerta's location was unknown, but the press soon found him and began requesting statements regarding the recently begun war and the Mexican situation. Huerta, who still looked tired and ill, proved to be poor copy, for his statements were guarded.⁴

On August 24 the Huerta family returned to Bristol and sailed for Spain. Landing at Santander, they traveled to Barcelona, where they lived for the next seven months. For several weeks Huerta lived quietly while recovering his health, but at the same time he kept an anxious eye on the degenerating Mexican situation. He hoped that some turn of events would make possible his return to Mexico, and undoubtedly spent a good deal of time discussing the situation with other exiles. By the beginning of 1915 his prospects had improved considerably.⁵

The German government, which had previously favored the Huerta regime, had not entirely forgotten him. As the entry of the United States into World War I became a serious possibility, the Mexican general was considered as a source of aid to the German war effort. If he could be returned to power in Mexico, Huerta might be used to keep the United States occupied in the Western Hemisphere.

In February, 1915, a thirty-eight year old German naval officer,

¹ *New York Times*, July 24, 1914, p. 1:6; *Mexican Herald* (Mexico City), July 25, 1914, p. 1:2.

² *Times* (London), Aug. 18, 1914, p. 9:4.

³ *N. Y. Times*, Aug. 17, 1914, p. 7:1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 21, 1914, pp. 3-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1914, p. 6:3 and Dec. 23, 1914, p. 20:1; *Times* (London), Aug. 28, 1914, p. 11:4.

Captain Franz von Rintelin, visited Huerta and offered to back a military revolt in his favor. Rintelin was tall, imposing in appearance, and possessed the traits of an excellent intelligence agent. His knowledge of both the United States and Mexico was extensive.⁶ Huerta probably came to no definite agreement with Rintelin, but the prospects held out by the egotistic German were undoubtedly intriguing. On March 31 Huerta left Cádiz and sailed for New York with high hopes of regaining influence in Mexico. Rintelin had preceded him.⁷

From the time that Huerta left Cádiz warnings and protests began to pour into the hands of United States government officials, particularly from the provisional government of Mexico.⁸ When Huerta arrived in New York on April 12 accompanied by his personal secretary, José C. Delgado, and Abraham Ratner, a long-time business adviser, he was greeted by a large crowd of admiring Mexicans and a sizable group of newsmen. After assuring the newsmen that he was on a pleasure trip, he hurried away to find accommodations at the Hotel Ansonia on Broadway.⁹

On April 14 Huerta visited a large New York café and was honored by the playing of the Mexican national anthem. According to Consul Navarro of the provisional government of Mexico, Huerta told friends that he would again be willing to accept the presidency of Mexico.¹⁰ The following day he stimulated furious speculation when he met representatives of the press and talked about his plans for Mexico. He hinted darkly that a strong man would soon appear and take control of Mexico. A statement that he had no intention of leading a revolution in that country did little to silence speculation that the "strong man" he had in mind was Victoriano Huerta.¹¹

Almost from the moment that Huerta arrived in New York his every move was watched by representatives of several groups who got in each other's way in their attempts to follow him. The Carranza and Villa agents both demanded his arrest and deportation. Carranza agents shadowed Huerta constantly, and British and American agents watched the Manhattan Hotel on 42nd Street and

⁶ Barbara Tuchman, *The Zimmerman Telegram* (New York, 1958), pp. 66-67; John P. Jones and Paul M. Hollister, *The German Secret Service in America, 1914-1918* (Boston, 1918), p. 280.

⁷ *N. Y. Times*, April 1, 1915, p. 1:2; Tuchman, p. 68.

⁸ U. S. National Archives, Foreign Affairs Branch, State Dept. Decimal File 812.001 H87/12 & 13 (cited hereinafter as NAFA); Enrique Llorente to William Jennings Bryan, April 10, 1915, NAFA H87/11.

⁹ *N. Y. Times*, April 13, 1915, p. 1:3.

¹⁰ NAFA H87/13.

¹¹ *N. Y. Times*, April 16, 1915, p. 1:3.

Madison Avenue where Huerta held meetings with both German and Mexican plotters.¹²

On May 6 Huerta was ostensibly making plans to settle his family in New York on a permanent basis. By that date he had been visited by an estimated four hundred Mexican army officers, among them General Bravo, former military commander of Mexico City; Pascual Orozco, a noted plotter and former rebel against Madero; General Caus, the aging former governor of Vera Cruz; General Cortez, the former governor of Yucatán; and General Olea. Many of these officers were dissatisfied with their lives in exile and were ready to support a new revolution.¹³

The key to Huerta's plans for a return to Mexico was German financial aid. Mexicans who would be willing to aid him were plentiful, and he expected sufficient troops to join him once he reached Mexico. Ammunition and weapons, however, would be essential, and there apparently was not sufficient financial backing in Mexican circles. Throughout May Huerta had conferences with Rintelin and two members of the German Embassy staff, Naval Attaché Karl Boy-Ed and Military Attaché Franz von Papen. The greatest difficulty facing the plotters was privacy, since every hotel seemed to be watched by agents of one group or another.

Rintelin handled the early negotiations which took place in various hotels of the city, but his domineering attitude soon alienated Boy-Ed and von Papen, who were jealous of their own abilities as intriguers.¹⁴ Negotiations were interrupted briefly while Huerta made a trip to Washington, probably to confer with officials of the German Embassy. When he returned he met Rintelin and various Mexican leaders at the Manhattan Hotel, unaware that the room was wired so that men in the next room might listen.

One of the groups which was interested in Huerta was a Czech nationalist organization led by one Emanuel Voska who was cooperating with the British. The Manhattan Hotel had Czech employees and one of Voska's men actually chose the room in which the intriguers were to meet. A Czech agent posing as an electrician concealed a microphone in the drapery and ran the wires into the next room where Voska and several others were posted to listen to the proceedings. This particular hotel was also watched by Carrancista and American agents. Rintelin offered to supply Huerta with munitions purchased within the United States in order that he might

¹² Tuchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-76.

¹³ *N. Y. Times*, May 6, 1915, p. 1:6.

¹⁴ Tuchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.

lead a revolution. A form of alliance was proposed. Huerta demanded heavy financial support and asked specific details about the forms of aid he would receive. In addition he demanded personal guarantees in case of failure.¹⁵

Huerta's demands were sufficiently heavy that Rintelin felt he must wire Berlin for support before he could meet them. The superior ability of Papen gradually eliminated Rintelin from the picture and further negotiations were handled by Papen and Boy-Ed. In the following weeks 8,000,000 rounds of ammunition were purchased in St. Louis and orders for 3,000,000 more were placed in New York. A sum of \$800,000 was deposited to Huerta's account in the Deutsche Bank in Havana and another \$95,000 in a Mexican account. Arrangements were made for Félix Díaz, a close companion of Huerta, to lead a revolt in the south to coincide with Huerta's crossing the border. Von Papen was sent to the Texas-Mexico border to distribute funds for Huerta in Brownsville, El Paso, and San Antonio, and to study the terrain for military purposes. Boy-Ed continued his meetings with Huerta at the Ansonia Hotel, and promised him 10,000 rifles and a first credit of \$10,000.¹⁶ By the end of May arrangements were essentially completed.

On June 1 Huerta held a meeting with his financial agent and several prominent Mexican exiles at the Holland House. One of the members of the group was a Carrancista agent who reported that Huerta had \$10,000,000 for his scheme and twice that in reserve if needed. Arms would be accumulated along the border and envoys would be sent to incite desertion among the Carranza and Villa forces.¹⁷

The final terms of the agreement were rather vague. Certainly German funds were at the disposal of Huerta, but in order to get large scale aid a certain degree of success would have to be demonstrated. It is unlikely that Huerta had any intention of declaring war on the United States or that Germany expected him to do so. His mere presence in Mexico would be enough to keep the United States government involved in Mexican affairs. Any military activity against Mexico by the United States would diminish the amount of aid available to the allies in Europe.

The United States government was keeping a close watch on all Huertista activities and attempting to prepare for any move which

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 72-75; Emanuel Voska and Will Irwin, *Spy and Counterspy* (New York, 1940), pp. 192-195.

¹⁶ Tuchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80; Franz von Rintelin, *The Dark Invader* (New York, 1933), p. 183.

¹⁷ Jones and Hollister, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-293.

he might make. On May 13 Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren wrote to J. L. Camp, the District Attorney at San Antonio, saying that he feared Villa's troops would flock to Huerta's standard if given the opportunity. He instructed Camp to make every effort to find evidence of Huerta's intention to violate United States neutrality and to prosecute him for the same if he should appear in San Antonio.¹⁸ Camp replied:

Should Huerta come to this district he will be closely watched, and I will resort to every means known to the law to prevent him from setting on foot another revolution in Mexico, and if evidence can not be obtained against him sufficient to institute prosecution for violation of neutrality laws of the United States, in all probability we can hold him for investigation for deportation.

Should he enter Mexico, in my judgment Villa's chief general Angeles will combine with Huerta and perhaps greatly prolong the disturbances that now exist in that republic. I believe deportation proceedings the most effective remedy. . . .¹⁹

Huerta in the meantime kept up the pretense of interest in New York as a permanent home. On June 11 newsmen reported that Huerta had declared himself interested in opening an office as a civil engineer. On Friday, June 24, Huerta, after attending a baseball game and buying tickets to the policemen's ball, hurriedly boarded a westbound train saying that he was going to San Francisco.²⁰ The following day he stopped over in Kansas City. He told reporters of that city that he did not know whether he would ever see Mexico again.

Huerta's departure from New York alarmed the numerous groups which had been interested in his movements. On June 26 Villa's confidential agent notified the State Department that a number of former Huertista generals and politicians were en route to El Paso, Texas. Among them were said to be generals Ignacio Bravo, Eduardo Caus, Vicente Calero, José Alessio Robles and a civilian, Enrique Gorostieta. The defection of the noted Villista general, Felipe Angeles, was also considered likely, as he was then in Boston.²¹

On the afternoon of June 26 Collector of Customs Z. L. Cobb wired to the Secretary of State that Huerta had left Kansas City the previous night and was due in El Paso at 6:30 the following morning. Secretary of State Lansing replied that Cobb should co-

¹⁸ Assistant Attorney General Charles Warren to U. S. Attorney J. L. Camp, May 13, 1915, U. S. National Archives, Justice and Administration Branch, File 90755-U-2 (cited hereinafter as NAJA).

¹⁹ Camp to Atty. Gen., May 21, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-4.

²⁰ *N. Y. Times*, June 11, 1915, p. 10:5; Tuchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81.

²¹ *N. Y. Times*, June 26, 1916, p. 5:1.

operate with the El Paso representatives of the Department of Justice.²² Late that night Cobb learned from railway officials that Huerta intended to leave the train at Newman, New Mexico, some twenty miles north of El Paso. Since there was no time to ask the State Department for further instructions, Cobb joined Justice Department agent Beckham, two deputy marshals, and Colonel George H. Morgan with twenty-five soldiers and left for Newman to intercept Huerta. When they arrived at the station they found Pascual Orozco, who was deeply involved in the plot, awaiting the train with Huerta's son-in-law. Orozco had arrived in an automobile, the motor of which he kept running, as if to spirit Huerta to the border.

The train arrived at Newman at 6:40, and when Huerta stepped from his coach he was embraced by Orozco. At that moment Deputy Marshal Edward Bryant stepped from behind a pumphouse and informed the two generals that he wished them to accompany him. He preferred that the soldiers not be called upon for aid. Huerta, his eyes hidden by a pair of dark glasses, listened to the Marshal's explanation and graciously agreed to accompany him. "I am now at your orders, gentlemen," he said as he stepped into a waiting car. Orozco was considerably agitated but made no resistance.²³

After being detained by the authorities Huerta and Orozco were taken to the Federal Building in El Paso, after a brief stop at the home of Huerta's daughter. Clifford Beckham of the Department of Justice received orders to hold the prisoners. Huerta remained suave and calmly indifferent, although Orozco was considerably less so. The prisoners were held at the Federal Building until crowds outside the structure grew so great that Mayor Thomas Lea ordered them taken to Fort Bliss for security reasons. As the generals left the building they were cheered vigorously by a crowd of Mexican refugees and sympathizers. Huerta thanked Cobb for the courteous treatment given him.²⁴

That evening the two generals were released, Huerta on a bond of \$15,000 and Orozco on one of \$7,500. The action was ordered by District Attorney J. L. Camp and approved by United States Commissioner G. A. Oliver. Beckham and S. L. Pinkney, representing the Department of Justice, tried to have the bonds set higher, but Mayor Lea, who acted as attorney for the defendants prevented this. Both

²² Collector of Customs Z. L. Cobb to Secy. of State, June 26, 1915, NAFA H87/20.

²³ *N. Y. Times*, June 28, 1915, p. 1:1; Cobb to Secy. of State, June 27, 1915, NAFA H87/18.

²⁴ *San Antonio Express*, June 28, 1915, p. 1:4; *N. Y. Times*, June 27, 1915, p. 1:1; Cobb to Secy. of State, June 27, 1915, NAFA H87/16.

Huerta and Orozco pledged themselves to appear at the hearing. After being freed, Huerta went to the home of his daughter in the Mexican quarter of El Paso.²⁵

The release of Huerta and Orozco started many rumors concerning plots and raids across the border. Huerta's insistence that he had no such plans in mind did not ease the tension in nearby Ciudad Juárez where an attempt to take the city by Huerta-backed rebels was expected. According to rumor, Huerta was to have crossed the Rio Grande at Zaragoza Ford in Orozco's car. The Juárez garrison was to have mutinied and joined Huerta when General Inés Salazar arrived from the vicinity of Guzmán with 2,000 Huertista troops. A warehouse full of ammunition purchased by Huertista agents was discovered at El Paso.²⁶

June 28 was a day of active correspondence between government agents in Texas and Washington. Victoriano Huerta was carefully watched by agents of the Secret Service, while various means were considered to put him under custody again. It was suggested that Huerta might be held for deportation, but he had entered the country according to regulations. In the absence of Attorney General T. W. Gregory, his assistant Charles Warren was in charge of the affair at Washington. He kept in close touch with President Wilson and sent him copies of all the correspondence with agents on the scene. A telegram over the name of Attorney General Gregory instructed United States Attorney Camp that the president desired every effort to be made to keep Huerta from entering Mexico.²⁷

Collector of Customs Cobb reported that Huerta's arrest had temporarily disrupted plans for the rebellion. He also stated that a circular had appeared on the streets of El Paso with Huerta's picture and a statement that a dictator would be necessary to restore Mexico to peace and prosperity. Cobb went on to relate:

I am sorry to report that the Mayor of El Paso was employed as attorney for Huerta. This necessarily will effect the attitude of the El Paso authorities. Business sentiment here seems strongly with Huerta. I strongly believe he can buy Juárez authorities whenever he is ready. . . . If he gets that foothold, Villa would probably collapse and his territory and forces turn to Huerta. Nothing stops Huerta now in my opinion except speculation in his mind as to the attitude of Washington.²⁸

²⁵ *N. Y. Times*, June 27, 1915, p. 1:1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, June 28, 1915, p. 1:1.

²⁷ Asst. Atty. Gen. to Pres. Woodrow Wilson, June 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-8; Special Agent Becker to the Atty. Gen., June 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-8; Atty. Gen. T. W. Gregory to Camp, June 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-5.

²⁸ Cobb to Secy. of State, June 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-.

On the night of June 28 Huerta was the guest of Colonel George H. Morgan at a dinner given in his honor by the commander of Fort Bliss. He was expected to review the troops two days later. Huerta's every move was carefully watched, but this did not prevent him from seeing hundreds of his former sympathizers. Whenever he appeared in public he was greeted with shouts of "Viva Huerta!" and "Viva la Paz en México!"²⁹

On June 29 Collector Cobb notified the State Department that the situation in El Paso was still serious. The town was full of former Huerta officers and supporters, and the business interests were reported to favor him. Cobb feared that the revolution might proceed without Huerta and stated that it was feared the Huerta group would push for an immediate hearing. Although the government charged Huerta with conspiracy to violate United States neutrality, it had no evidence that would stand up in court. Huerta's hearing was scheduled for July 1, and it was expected that he might be freed if he did not escape before then. Cobb also recommended that Huerta and Orozco be taken farther from the border so as to quiet rumors and alarms in El Paso.³⁰

In the meantime efforts of the Attorney General's office to have Huerta's bond raised were proving fruitless. United States Attorney Camp of San Antonio and Assistant United States Attorney Crawford of El Paso stated that the army was cooperating in the surveillance of Huerta and the situation seemed secure. Camp, however, filed a complaint to have Huerta moved to San Antonio.³¹

Meanwhile Mexican agents and authorities were attempting to break up the revolutionary plot. Authorities at Chihuahua City asked for the extradition of Huerta, but the United States government refused, since it had recognized no Mexican government. Caranza's confidential agent, E. Arredondo, reported that his agents at Brownsville had learned of a group of Huertista officers intriguing in that city. Reports from Galveston, Eagle Pass, and San Antonio also suggested that a plot of extensive proportions was developing with Félix Díaz among those involved. A report from New Orleans mentioned disturbing events in that city. Twenty-one Mexican officers were said to have signed a declaration in support of Díaz. The re-

²⁹ *N. Y. Times*, June 29, 1915, p. 6:4.

³⁰ Cobb to Secy. of State, June 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-.

³¹ Camp to Atty. Gen., June 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-7; Asst. U. S. Atty. Crawford to Atty. Gen., June 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-8 and 90755-U-13.

port also implicated Manuel Mondragón, one of Huerta's more unsavory associates, who was then in New York.³²

On the following day the hearing for Huerta and Orozco was postponed until July 12. When Huerta left the Federal Building at El Paso, he was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd of supporters. An unsigned communication from the El Paso area, probably from Cobb to the Secretary of State, stated that the greatest danger in the Mexican situation stemmed from the weakness of Villa. Conditions under Villa were so poor that he was said to have lost a good deal of his former popularity. The communication concluded:

Conditions are ripe for Huerta. I have studied many of the Mexican leaders. In personal contact Huerta shows greater force than any of them. He impressed me as being dangerously sober and resourceful rather than the drunkard he has been pictured. . . .³³

The United States government was exceedingly sensitive on the subject of Huerta, and when word of the cordial treatment he was receiving from Colonel Morgan reached Washington the Fort Bliss commander was reprimanded. Huerta was scheduled to review the troops at the fort in the near future, but he declined to do so when he realized that it would lead to difficulty for Morgan. Meanwhile evidence of Huerta's popularity was demonstrated by a stream of Mexican officers coming to confer with him and by the large number of telegrams which reached him every day.³⁴

Since legal action against Huerta was impossible for the moment, the United States government began taking steps to discourage other plotters in the El Paso area. On June 30 Salvador Mercado, Orozco's chief of staff, was arrested and released on bond. Two other Huerta supporters were arrested and released the same day; together with those of June 27 these arrests convinced many Mexican leaders that El Paso was an unhealthy place for intrigue. Many of them hurriedly fled. Reports from northern Mexico indicated that bands of armed men were preparing to spring to Huerta's aid. Large numbers of rifles and machine guns discovered in the Mexican quarter of El Paso did much to verify reports of intended rebellions against the existing Mexican factions.³⁵

High feeling in El Paso was causing considerable uncertainty

³² E. Arredondo to Secy. of State, June 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-30; Telegram to the Justice Dept., June 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-.

³³ Cobb to [Secy. of State], June 30, 1915, NAFA H87/25; [Cobb to Dept. of State], June 30, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-.

³⁴ *N. Y. Times*, July 1, 1915, p. 4:3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1915, p. 4:3.

among the government agents in that city. On July 1 Collector Cobb again asked that Huerta be removed from the city, and cited rumors of a clash between a deputy marshal and a reporter after Huerta's hearing as evidence of the strained relations regarding the Huerta case. On July 2 Attorney General Gregory asked Judge Camp of San Antonio to make suggestions about the possible removal of Huerta. He also stated that the Secretary of War had given orders to the army to keep Huerta from crossing the border. A short time later the Attorney General asked Camp to go personally to El Paso to aid Assistant United States Attorney Crawford.³⁶

American officials were not relieved by accounts from private sources. On July 2 Hugh H. Obear, a Washington attorney, wrote to Assistant Attorney General Warren regarding a report from Brownsville, Texas, that General Medina Barrón, Major Levya, and other former federal officers had left for Corpus Christi, where they were to receive munitions recently purchased by Félix Díaz in Havana.³⁷

The next morning saw a dramatic change in the situation. When the agents and soldiers guarding the home of Pascual Orozco went to the door of his house, they discovered Orozco had escaped. As a result of Orozco's disappearance, Huerta and five others were rearrested on a federal warrant. Huerta's bond was set at \$15,000, and he refused to meet it. Huerta was exceedingly angry and protested vigorously against his arrest. He telegraphed to his agents in New York for money and complained to Chief Justice White of the Supreme Court concerning his treatment. When Huerta appeared before Commissioner Oliver, he repeated his protests, and, when it was asked that the bond be set at \$100,000, Huerta asked to be heard:

While I respect the laws of this country . . . I must protest against the methods that have been used here since I was arrested. I gave the bond demanded. Then I was guarded like a prisoner who had not given bond.³⁸

Since Huerta did not post the required \$15,000 bond, he was taken to the county jail late on the afternoon of July 3. The five men jailed with Huerta were J. B. Ratner, his interpreter, General Ignacio Bravo, General Eduardo Caus, General José Delgado, and Enrique Gorostieta. All of the prisoners were charged with con-

³⁶ Cobb to Secy. of State, July 1, 1915, NAFA H87/27; Atty. Gen. to Camp, July 2, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-16.

³⁷ Hugh H. Obear to Asst. Atty. Gen., July 2, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-20; *N. Y. Times*, July 2, 1915, p. 4:4.

³⁸ *N. Y. Times*, July 4, 1915, p. 4:1.

spiracy to violate American neutrality laws. After being searched at the jail, Huerta was placed in a narrow cell.³⁹

Shortly after Huerta was sent to the county jail, Collector Cobb wired to the Secretary of State asking that Huerta be removed from El Paso before morning, as action by the Mexican element might lead to serious trouble and make Huerta appear to be a martyr. At the same time William B. Wilson, Secretary of Labor, contacted the Attorney General and told him that since attempts to deport Huerta would interfere with the plans of the Department of Justice, his department would stop its proceedings along those lines and merely cooperate in keeping Huerta from crossing into Mexico. The weakness of the government's case against Huerta seems to have led to the original efforts of the immigration service.⁴⁰

With the hearing for Huerta's case set for July 12, the government felt that he could not be held beyond that date. It was considered certain that Huerta would post bond for the required amount and that all legal means of detaining him would be exhausted.⁴¹ In the meantime Huerta remained in a run-down jail where he was closeted with drunks and petty criminals. He kept his name before the people by frequent interviews in which he showed a calm good humor. On July 4 he said he would wait until July 12 before posting bond.

For why should I go to the trouble of furnishing a bond only to be harassed as I was by the deputies, and to have my daughter's family frightened, only to be rearrested and subjected to more indignities?

The General spent his time studying English and thinking of ways to embarrass the United States government. Dressed only in baggy trousers and an undershirt, he told *New York Times* reporters:

It is a little close in here, so you must excuse me if I am not dressed. But I have been in closer places before, and I am enjoying the novel experience of being in jail in liberty-loving America on the very day you celebrate liberty and justice and independence. . . .

I am well treated here. Señor Buck [Elliott, the jailer] brings me ice water and cigarettes. The ice water is a little thin; and I have not had a drink for these one-two-three-four days.⁴²

By July 6 the situation was becoming exceedingly difficult for all concerned. Huerta's famed stubbornness led him to refuse bond

³⁹ *Ibid.*, July 4, 1915, p. 4:2.

⁴⁰ Cobb to Secy. of State, July 3, 1915, NAFA H87/34; Secy. W. B. Wilson to Atty. Gen., July 3, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-23.

⁴¹ Asst. Atty. Gen. [to the President], July 5, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-24.

⁴² *N. Y. Times*, July 6, 1915, p. 6:2.

unless he was allowed freedom of action. At the same time the county jail was no place for a prisoner of Huerta's political stature, and his plight gained him widespread sympathy. The strain of confinement broke his stoicism and he made highly emotional complaints against the actions of the United States government.

I, who never harmed an American . . . but only gave them protection at the risk of my own life, am being treated as a common criminal here in this hole of a jail. If there is any justice in Washington, I will be released and assured that I will not be watched by Villa agents and Deputy Marshals; otherwise I remain here.⁴³

The United States government was frantically seeking a way out of the situation. On July 6 the Attorney General ordered United States Marshal J. H. Rogers to leave Austin and proceed to El Paso to confer with Attorney Camp and United States Commissioner Oliver about the duties of himself and his men. Obviously it was feared that Huerta would have to be released. At the same time Camp questioned the Attorney General about the possibility of the military providing a guard for the border so as to catch Huerta in the act of crossing. The tense situation led to a suggestion that Huerta might waive his hearing and be bound over to the Grand Jury. He would then be turned over, with his consent, to the military authorities at Fort Bliss. Such action would have advantages for all concerned. From Huerta's standpoint it must have been obvious that unless he could be legally proven innocent, he would not be allowed to escape surveillance; from the government's point of view Huerta would be removed to a place where he had no popular support and where conditions were suitable to his former position.⁴⁴

While the question of Huerta's detention faced the government, reports continued to pour in concerning movements of a military nature by various rebel groups in Mexico and the United States. On July 7 the Attorney General wired Attorney Camp that the army would be willing to provide quarters and subsistence for Huerta and some deputy marshals on condition that the marshals and not the army would retain custody and responsibility for him. Camp soon replied that an agreement had been reached for the transfer of Huerta to Fort Bliss.⁴⁵

It had been rumored that Huerta might give his word that he

⁴³ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1915, p. 6:3.

⁴⁴ Camp to Atty. Gen., July 6, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-27 and 28; Atty. Gen. to U. S. Marshal J. H. Rogers, July 6, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-29.

⁴⁵ Atty. Gen. to Camp, July 7, 1915, and Camp to Atty. Gen., July 7, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-31.

would stay away from the border in return for a lowered bond. He soon ended any such thoughts by making a statement to the press:

I will agree to no compromise that will in any way restrict my liberty. . . .

I will leave this jail only if my departure is unconditional . . . as I consider that I have done nothing wrong and previously have given my word to fulfill the conditions of my bond. I prefer to remain in my cell rather than agree to any other terms to obtain my liberty.⁴⁶

On July 9, after six days in the El Paso county jail, Huerta agreed to waive his hearing and was taken before United States Commissioner George B. Oliver. Oliver continued Huerta's bond at \$15,000 and turned him over to Marshal J. H. Rogers, who had recently arrived in El Paso. Rogers took Huerta to Fort Bliss where he was lodged in bachelor quarters such as those used by young army officers. In waiving his hearing the prisoner said, "I admit no crime. I merely waive examination to simplify matters. I do not care to give bond if I am to remain under guard. Take me back to jail or to Fort Bliss, as you wish." Huerta's new quarters provided for a reasonable amount of comfort and some freedom of movement.

At the time Huerta was transferred, J. B. Ratner was granted a reduction of his bond to \$5,000 and released. Eighty-two year old General Ignacio Bravo was released on his own recognizance, and Enrique Gorostieta and General José Delgado were released on bond. With the transfer of Huerta a relieved Collector Cobb wrote to the Secretary of State that the El Paso episode was closed. Huerta would not come to trial until December under the plans then existing.⁴⁷

Although Huerta pretended to be indifferent to his fate, there is no doubt that conditions in the county jail contributed to his desire to be transferred to Fort Bliss. The situation of his fellow prisoners evidently touched him, for a few days after his release from the jail he wrote a letter to the prisoners and offered to help them at any time they might desire his aid. He also sent a sizable sum of money to be used for the purchase of minor luxuries for them. He was greatly relieved to be at Fort Bliss, where his situation was reasonably pleasant. On July 10 he was interviewed on the porch of his quarters, while he eagerly watched troop maneuvers. He commented:

⁴⁶ *N. Y. Times*, July 9, 1915, p. 11:3.

⁴⁷ *San Antonio Express*, July 10, 1915, pp. 1:1 and 2:2; Cobb to Secy. of State, July 9, 1915, NAFA H87/45.

To a man who has served in an army more than thirty years . . . you can realize a little of what it means to be transferred from a hot squalid jail to military quarters such as these. . . . It is cool here. An orderly brings my meals. I have the freedom of the barracks, and more than anything else, I like the glint on the guns and the tramp of feet as the troops drill and the sentries pace their beats. The guards around the building are needless. Everything is so pleasant in this military camp that I wouldn't leave if I had the chance.⁴⁸

Since it was obvious that Huerta would be detained in Texas for some weeks, his wife and family, who had recently arrived from Spain, decided to join him there. They rented a home in El Paso, and moved in to await his release. In the meantime Huerta was content to remain at Fort Bliss, where he gave occasional interviews and consistently maintained that he had no intention of going to Mexico.⁴⁹

Huerta remained at Fort Bliss for the next few weeks without causing trouble, but it was not his intention to make the task of the government easy. On July 26 his name again appeared in headlines when he sent telegrams to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Attorney General, and German Ambassador Bernstorff. Although worded differently the telegrams said essentially the same thing. That to the German Ambassador stated:

I am at Fort Bliss and my household consisting of thirty to thirty-five persons who are at the city of El Paso are not accorded guarantees of any kind. I wish to know whether the Government of his Imperial Majesty you so worthily represent in Washington can do me the favor of protecting my wife and children, as the officers of the Federal American Justice in that city do not let them sleep or eat and search my home at will.

The German Government had obviously lost hope regarding Huerta. Bernstorff quickly washed his hands of the affair by turning the information over to the American Secretary of State.⁵⁰

As a result of Huerta's complaints the Attorney General ordered Assistant United States Attorney R. E. Crawford to see Huerta and find out the cause of his complaints. Crawford soon discovered the immediate basis for Huerta's protests. On July 26 he had been allowed to make his first visit to the house in El Paso where his family was staying. Deputy Marshal J. B. DuBose had given permission for the visit provided there was no large crowd at the Huerta residence. Early on the afternoon of the 26th Clifford Beckham and

⁴⁸ *San Antonio Express*, July 13, 1915, p. 1:3; July 11, 1915, p. 1:2.

⁴⁹ *N. Y. Times*, July 14, 1915, p. 4:6; July 16, 1915, p. 4:5.

⁵⁰ Huerta to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, July 26, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-41; Huerta to Ambassador Bernstorff, July 26, 1915, NAFA H87/52.

E. B. Stone, two agents of the Department of Justice, visited the home to check on the situation. They were allowed to search the home and found no one there except members of the family. When Huerta arrived at his home, his wife informed him of the search, and he became angry, since he had not previously been notified the house would be searched. Crawford's explanation that such searches were simply routine seems to have convinced him, and the matter passed, although he felt the family had been unnecessarily frightened.⁵¹

Huerta's confinement at Fort Bliss was without incident for the next three months. He grew restless in the close confinement of his quarters, since he had long been very active. Gradually he began to drink heavily, which he had not done for a considerable length of time. Toward the end of October he fell ill with a jaundice-like condition. On November 1 his attorneys, Lea, McGrady, and Thomason, wrote to Attorney Camp at San Antonio stating that they felt Huerta should be released on bond as the close confinement had broken his health and spirit. This path had always been open, but it was feared that another agency of the government would simply arrest Huerta when he was released. The situation had changed greatly with regard to Mexico in the past weeks. President Woodrow Wilson had recognized the government of Carranza, and the Mexican situation had been stabilized to the point where Huerta would have little scope for action if he were released. Under such conditions Huerta could be assured that he would not be rearrested if he were released.⁵²

United States Attorney Camp, who seems to have been somewhat out of touch with the situation, forwarded the request of Huerta's attorneys to the Attorney General on November 3. He recommended that Huerta be kept in his present quarters. The following day Assistant Attorney Crawford sent a different interpretation to the Attorney General:

Huerta is in bad health. Has been drinking heavily. Condition may become serious. Doctor's advise to be taken hospital or home. He refuses to go to military hospital. His death under present conditions would be unfortunate. Could be safely guarded at his home in city. What do you advise?

On November 5 the Attorney General authorized Marshal Rogers to remove Huerta to his home or a hospital and asked Crawford to cooperate with him.⁵³

⁵¹ Atty. Gen. to Crawford, July 27, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-45; Crawford to Atty. Gen., July 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-45½.

⁵² Lea, McGrady and Thomason to Camp, Nov. 1, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-58; *N. Y. Times*, Nov. 2, 1915, p. 3:4.

⁵³ Camp to Atty. Gen., Nov. 3, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-58; Crawford to Atty.

The actual transfer of Huerta was to be under the supervision of Deputy Marshal DuBose and Assistant United States Attorney Crawford. It was hoped that Huerta would agree to being moved to the Hotel Dieu, but since he refused to go anywhere except his home, Marshal Rogers agreed that he should be sent there, although he felt that security would be more difficult to maintain than at the hospital. It was expected that Huerta would be left at his home until he was brought before the Grand Jury in January.⁵⁴

In the meantime, after a slow start, developments in the investigation of the Huerta plot were taking place rapidly. On November 5 Attorney Camp wired to the Attorney General that he had uncovered evidence which he felt would lead to the conviction of Huerta, and requested the aid of two special agents. The break in the case resulted from the detailed confession of José Orozco, a cousin of Pascual Orozco, who became angry when his bond was not paid by his associates. Since Pascual Orozco had been killed in Mexico a few weeks earlier, José probably felt little further loyalty to the cause. He stated that there were eleven million dollars behind the Huerta movement. Most of it had been furnished by the clerical party in Mexico. He also told of large amounts of munitions, and implicated numerous officials in El Paso.⁵⁵

On December 8 Deputy Marshal J. B. DuBose moved Huerta back to Fort Bliss after becoming disturbed by reports that he was about to escape. Assistant Attorney Crawford agreed to the change and, when DuBose went to pick up Huerta at three in the afternoon, he found the atmosphere at the Huerta home funereal. The members of the family refused to speak to him. Huerta was feeling somewhat better at this time, but he was still not in good health. His new quarters at Fort Bliss were in a steamheated bungalow which was considerably more comfortable than his previous quarters.⁵⁶

Huerta's health quickly deteriorated after his return to Fort Bliss. On December 23 United States Marshal Rogers was informed that Huerta was not improving and that he remained in bed most of the time. Five days later Deputy Marshal DuBose moved Huerta to his home at the request of Assistant Attorney Crawford. His

Gen., Nov. 4, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-54; Atty. Gen. to Crawford, Nov. 5, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-54; Atty. Gen. to Rogers, Nov. 5, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-55.

⁵⁴ Rogers to Atty. Gen., Nov. 6, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-59; Rogers to U. S. Deputy Marshal DuBose, Nov. 6, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-59.

⁵⁵ Camp to Atty. Gen., Nov. 5, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-56; Crawford to Atty. Gen., Nov. 6, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-57; *San Antonio Express*, Nov. 6, 1915.

⁵⁶ Rogers to Atty. Gen., Dec. 11, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-61; *N. Y. Times*, Dec. 10, 1915, p. 16:6.

guards were moved so that they might keep Huerta under surveillance. On December 28 Huerta's attorney, E. E. Thomason, wired the Attorney General that Huerta was dangerously ill and there was slight chance for his recovery. He asked that the guards be removed from around Huerta's house. A communication from Assistant Attorney Crawford confirmed the report of Huerta's condition.⁵⁷

On December 29 Assistant Attorney Crawford wired Attorney Camp that it was unlikely Huerta would be able to go to San Antonio to face the Grand Jury in early January. Dr. H. E. Stevenson had informed Crawford that he felt Huerta would die within a short time. Two days later a similar report came from Crawford, and he recommended that Huerta be released on his own recognizance, which action was taken on January 3, 1916.⁵⁸

Huerta's condition grew rapidly worse, and on January 1, 1916, he was operated upon for gall bladder trouble. One of the physicians stated that he felt Huerta was probably suffering from cancer of the bladder. The next day Huerta's condition was still felt to be serious, and it was reported that the surgeons had found "symptoms of a more complicated disease" than gall bladder trouble. The physician who operated was Dr. M. P. Schuster, and the fact that he operated without anaesthetic gave rise to curious rumors.⁵⁹ It was later asserted and widely believed that a man claiming to be a doctor had called at the Huerta home late one night and examined the general. He then stated that Huerta needed an immediate operation. The mysterious stranger was said to have operated and then left the house without closing his incisions thereby causing Huerta's death. The above apocryphal tale was quoted by several normally reliable sources and probably grew out of the Schuster operation.

On January 3 Huerta underwent a tapping operation to remove fluid from his intestinal tract where it had accumulated since the first operation. The following day he was declared to be out of danger, and he appeared to be feeling a good deal better. After a short period of improvement Huerta began gradually to weaken, and on January 12 all hope for his recovery was given up. Late in the afternoon his family was called to his bedside and the last sacra-

⁵⁷ Rogers to Atty. Gen., Dec. 27, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-70; Camp to Atty. Gen., Dec. 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-65; Thomason to Atty. Gen., Dec. 28, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-64.

⁵⁸ Camp to Atty. Gen., Dec. 29, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-68; Crawford to Atty. Gen., Dec. 31, 1915, NAJA 90755-U-70; Camp to Judge T. S. Maxey [no date] NAJA 90755-U-72.

⁵⁹ *San Antonio Express*, Jan. 2, 1916, p. 3:3 and Jan. 3, 1916, p. 2:3; *N. Y. Times*, Jan. 3, 1916, p. 5:2.

ments were administered. A supplementary will was drawn up and signed by Huerta at 10 P.M. He was still conscious an hour later, but he was growing rapidly weaker. He lingered until the next evening when he died quietly. A post-mortem revealed that Huerta was suffering from cirrhosis of the liver, although death was caused by internal hemorrhage.⁶⁰

On January 12 the case against Huerta came before the Grand Jury, and he was indicted. His case was set for trial in May, 1916. Huerta's will provided that most of his possessions were to go to his wife. Unfortunately, he had little money and his wife was soon in financial trouble. For the next several years efforts were made by the Huerta family to recover Huerta's bond money, and at least a part of it was returned a few years later. The sad financial plight of the Huerta family is noteworthy evidence that the tales of large scale raiding of the Mexican treasury by Huerta were untrue. There is little evidence that he spent such large sums, and he certainly did not have them at his death.

Had Huerta been able to reach Mexico in June, 1915, his chances of success would have been good. The forces which had originally opposed him had divided into rival factions, and civil war between Villa and Carranza followed. Less than two months earlier the Villa forces had been decisively defeated. Although they still held northern Mexico, they were badly demoralized and large numbers of Villista troops would probably have deserted to Huerta, or to any other promising opponent of Carranza. In addition, remnants of the federal army would have undoubtedly joined his banner. Many influential Mexican military men were in exile in the United States, and a large number of them had agreed to support Huerta. Perhaps most important of all, Huerta had been offered German financial support.

Woodrow Wilson was strongly opposed to Huerta personally, and was determined that he should not be allowed to regain control of Mexico. Furthermore, involvement in Mexico would probably have absorbed the energies of the more militaristic American statesmen. Huerta's active presence in Mexico might well have kept the United States occupied with affairs in the Western Hemisphere and have prevented or delayed the entry of this country into World War I.

⁶⁰ *N. Y. Times*, Jan. 4, 1916, p. 24:2 and Jan. 13, 1916, p. 3:2; *San Antonio Express*, Jan. 5, 1916, p. 4:2, Jan. 13, 1916, p. 1:6 and Jan. 14, 1916, p. 1:1. Huerta was buried at Concordia Cemetery east of El Paso, Texas. His body was placed in a stone vault next to that of Pascual Orozco. See Edith O'Shaughnessy, *Intimate Pages of Mexican History*, New York, 1920, pp. 350-51.