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Diplomacy of intervention: The ABC Conference Niagara Falls 1914

Thomas Walter Christie

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THE DIPLOMACY OF INTERVENTION:

THE ABC CONFERENCE
NIAGARA FALLS, 1914

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B.A., University of Montana, 1984

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In 1914, after the United States armed intervention at the Mexican port of Veracruz, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (the ABC Nations) offered to mediate the dispute between American president Woodrow Wilson and Mexican leader Victoriano Huerta. The subsequent conference, held in Niagara Falls, Canada, is the subject of this thesis.

By using primary sources, the edited papers of Woodrow Wilson, edited documentary history of the Mexican Revolution, records of the Department of State and numerous contemporary articles and many secondary sources, the conclusion was reached that the conference failed.

The great irony of the Conference also reveals why it failed: during the Conference, the ABC nations also attempted to intervene in Mexican internal affairs. The Conference tried to dictate social and political reform to the Mexican people. This intent flawed the mediation and doomed any success.
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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1913, President Woodrow Wilson told British Minister Sir William Tyrrell, "I am going to teach the South American republics to elect good men!"¹ Arrogant by most standards, Wilson's phrase typified a coherent and consistent theme of the President's foreign policy. He continually believed in the power of democratic institutions--i.e. given the right training, any people could share in the fruits of democracy and freedom. These idealistic and moral beliefs sometimes clashed with reality. One clear instance of this occurred after the United States invasion of Veracruz, Mexico, in 1914. Wilson interfered there to ameliorate Mexico's problems, and force the Mexicans to accept a more democratic form of government.

Rather than clarifying the Mexican situation, Wilson's occupation only confused issues. Not only did the Huerta government denounce the invasion, but the Mexican Constitutionalist insurgents, whom Wilson ostensibly aided, also rejected the American action.

Into this milieu stepped Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (the ABC nations) offering their good offices to mediate the dispute. All the parties, Wilsonian, huertista, and Constitutionalist, accepted the offer in principle. Although the Conference (20 May – 2 July 1914) drafted protocols to solve the problems, none of the agreements were implemented; consequently the conference failed. The questions then arise: What did the Conference attempt; and why did it fail?

The mediators were also diplomatic emissaries, and responded to the Mexican situation in relation to their own national situations. To a degree, the Conference displayed some of the national prejudices of the ABC nations toward the Revolution. As well, each of the participants brought different personal perspectives to the Conferences. These viewpoints shed light on the Conference understanding or misunderstanding of the Mexican Revolution. To what degree were these national and personal views responsible for the Conference's ineffectualness?

As well, the Conference brought into play the inevitable conflicts between personalities and ideas. Each nation and faction brought its own peculiar biases and perspectives to the Conference, and these, as much as any idealized principle, ultimately affected the course that mediation would take.

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The Conference acted on the principle of international mediation and arbitration. It tried to negotiate the United States out of Veracruz. In participating, the United States placed itself on a par with the Latin American nations. Since the Conference failed in the mediation attempt, did this indicate limitations to the principle of arbitration?

Argentina, Brazil, and Chile approached the Conference from the perspective of broadening Latin American participation in the settlement of hemispheric disputes. Yet, from within each set of national objectives, emerged a real fear of mass social revolution. Gradualist reformers in each of the ABC nations feared that violent social outbursts could leave them as devastated as Mexico. Argentina, moreover, resented the domineering presence of the United States and hoped to use the Conference to neutralize the Monroe Doctrine, thereby hampering unilateral action by the United States.

While the United States had been depicted as the principal interventor in the hemisphere, the Niagara Conference clearly indicated the degree to which the ABC powers were willing to intervene in the internal affairs of a sister republic. Reform measures championed by both the United States and the ABC countries indicated that they had come together to do more than settle the Veracruz dispute between Woodrow Wilson and Victoriano Huerta. Yet none of the conferees wanted to accept the reality of social revolution
in Mexico. They tried and failed to unite a Mexico torn by contending factions.

None of the countries, including the contentious Mexican representatives, really understood what was happening in Mexico. The explosion of social issues brought forth problems that the Conference participants either ignored or tried to resolve cosmetically. In so doing, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States, knowingly or unknowingly, intervened in Mexican affairs.

In compiling the information for this thesis, I made extensive use of archival sources of the United States Department of State, both in microfilm and published form. I also used many contemporary journal articles and the *New York Times*. For a Mexican perspective I used two works by Isidoro Fabela—Venustiano Carranza's Foreign Minister—his *Documentos históricos* and *Historia diplomática*. Although somewhat colored, they provide a remedy to an overly-nationalist view. Additionally, I consulted numerous secondary sources.

Methodologically, the most difficult aspect of the thesis stemmed from the scarcity of conference records. Neither the mediators nor the participants kept minutes of the meetings. The only official documentation regarding the Conference exists in the four protocols which contain only the conclusions of the plenary sessions. Consequently the exact nature of the various diplomatic meetings and interviews had to be gleaned through the dispatches sent to the
Department of State from the United States representatives, materials sent to the Mexican Foreign Ministry, collected in Fabela's works, and contemporary analysis from newspapers and journals.
CHAPTER ONE

THE DIPLOMATIC DILEMMA

Admiral Frank F. Fletcher, commanding the battleships Utah and Florida, received an ominous message on 21 April 1914. United States Secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels, sent him orders: "Seize customshouse [at Veracruz]. Do not permit war supplies to be delivered to [the] Huerta government or any other party."¹

As part of increased pressure by the United States on Victoriano Huerta, Fletcher's ships had stationed themselves off the eastern Mexican coast. His contingent consisted of 787 officers and men, of whom 502 were Marines. Marine Colonel W. C. Neville led the occupation force, which originally planned only to take the waterfront area. Mexican civilians and resident Americans lined the sea wall to watch. All too rapidly, the Mexicans realized the significance of this landing. As United States military personnel

moved toward the customshouse, Mexican soldiers opened fire. Many of the Marines and sailors had never faced combat before and even though they followed textbook tactics, they moved carelessly. The tightly bunched men presented fine targets for the rifles of Mexican snipers and federales. Fortunately the Mexicans, like the U.S. forces, lacked experience and suffered from poor marksmanship. Lucky Mexican bullets killed four U.S. Marines and wounded another twenty. The panicked U.S. forces retaliated bitterly and viciously.

A second group of Marines with Philippine battle experience moved precisely through the city blocks, forcing their way into houses to secure the town, including the customshouse. Simultaneously the battleships New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Vermont steamed in to protect the American flank. On request from the landing force, the escort ships Prairie, Chester, and San Francisco lobbed support rounds into the city. In slightly less than twenty-four hours, U.S. forces had defeated the Mexican detachment (slightly more than 100 men), inflicting uncounted damage to civilian property.

From the U.S. perspective, ample provocation existed for the Veracruz invasion. President Woodrow Wilson cited several incidents to justify the action. The most important conflict occurred on 9 April, when seven American sailors and the payroll officer at Tampico were arrested by Mexican soldiers.
Huerta's *federales* in Tampico had faced attack by Constitutionalist forces in the surrounding area. To conserve battle supplies, the Mexican forces refused to sell any gasoline to a group of American servicemen needing to fuel their launch in order to return to their ship. Although the Mexicans refused, a German businessman offered to sell some of his extra petrol to the Americans. As the sailors walked from the launch along the wharf, Mexican police became curious about the Americans who spoke no Spanish. The Mexican military police did not understand what the American force wanted and arrested them. The Mexican military governor, realizing the mistake, apologized profusely to the Americans. The apology, however, failed to placate Rear Admiral Henry T. Mayo, commander of the United States fleet off Tampico. On his own initiative, Mayo demanded a full apology to the United States and a twenty-one gun salute. The Mexicans refused, since the United States had not recognized Huerta. The Mexican government countered with an offer to fire a simultaneous salute, but neither side could agree on the terms which would solve the diplomatic impasse. Consequently, suspicions festered on both sides.

Furthermore, Wilson also drew attention to the 11 April delay of a State Department dispatch from Mexico City, and the detention of a courier from Veracruz. Neither activity particularly surprised observers in light of
Mexico's civil war. Following the Tampico incident, these two episodes provided Wilson with minimal justification for the Veracruz landing.  

Although drastic, the occupation of Veracruz crowned the already deteriorating relations with Mexico's de facto President, Victoriano Huerta. The real root of the problem lay several years earlier, with the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

Prior to the Revolution, Porfirio Díaz had ruled Mexico. During his long dictatorship (1876-1910), Díaz tried to make Mexico into a great nation. He brought stability to the nation using the Positive Doctrine of order and progress. He created a system of rural policemen to eliminate brigandage, as well as formulating tough fiscal policies for the Mexican economy and streamlining the federal government. The early Díaz years brought positive changes to Mexico.

As Díaz' tenure continued, he brought greater economic regeneration. His plan focused on enticing foreign companies to invest in and develop Mexico. The Díaz government lowered or eliminated tariffs and shifted to the gold standard. Díaz built a good reputation for Mexico's economy, which paid handsome dividends to investors in such enterprises as mining, the railroads, and oil. To encourage

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2 For more information on the background see Quirk, Honor; Howard F. Cline, The United States and Mexico (New York: Atheneum, 1971), hereafter referred to as Cline, U.S. and Mexico, page number; James M. Callahan, American Foreign Policy in Mexican Relations (New York: MacMillan Co., 1932), hereafter referred to as Callahan, American Policy, page number.
further investment, Díaz revised tax and mining codes to benefit foreigners.

Mexican society paid a high price for these programs. Modernization often came by force. As the principally foreign-controlled railroads and extractive industries needed land, the Díaz government frequently pushed the peons out of the area, since they could rarely produce a title. Mexican laborers were paid less than foreign counterparts and foreigners held most managerial and technical positions, regardless of the qualifications of the native labor force. The inequity in industry led the Mexican workers at the Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, owned by Colonel William Greene, to strike in 1906. When the strike threatened to shut down operations completely, a detachment of Díaz' rural police arrived to reinstate order under Colonel Emilio Kosterlitzky. The military rounded up the strike leaders, escorted them outside the town, and hanged them. Although the strike occurred in 1906, it represented a growing restlessness on the part of the Mexican labor force.

While most of the older generation continued to support the Díaz regime, a new group of critics voiced their complaints in the early twentieth century. The Díaz regime generally succeeded in silencing its critics, who frequently fled to the United States. The most important of the social critics were the Flores Magón brothers who published the
anti-Díaz newspaper, *La Regeneración*. Although they settled in St. Louis, they continued publishing their newspaper.

In the summer of 1906, the Flores Magón brothers, with the support of Francisco I. Madero, published its Liberal Plan and formed the *Partido Liberal Mexicano* (the PLM or Mexican Liberal Party). This political manifesto called for the implementation of the 1857 constitution and added a section dealing with social reforms: abolition of the death penalty, educational reform favoring the poor, an eight-hour work day and a six-day work week, abolition of company stores, and child labor. Also, to aid farmers, the government would redistribute uncultivated land to the peasants and establish an agricultural credit bank.

The anti-Díaz forces had found a leader in Madero. Born in 1873 in the state of Coahuila, Madero had received the best education available. Madero's family had made a fortune in banking, cattle, mining, and land speculation. After a tour abroad and to California to finish his education, Madero took charge of some of the family's haciendas where he developed an interest in the welfare of the peons.

To improve the lot of the peasants, Madero ran against members of the Díaz regime for positions in the state government. Although Madero won some elections, the Díaz government overturned the victories, replacing him with its own candidate. Madero concluded that the fundamental difficulty in the Mexican system lay in the self-perpetua-
tion of a non-responsive and non-representative government. In 1909, Madero published his *La Sucesion presidencial de 1910*. This political tract founded the anti-reelection platform. This movement concentrated on political reform and free and honest elections. Social reform would follow in a true democracy.

After a whirlwind campaign tour, Madero found himself in a Díaz jail cell at election time. Consequently, Díaz' electoral victory came as no surprise to the Mexican populace. Madero gained his freedom and moved to the United States, where he plotted his return. Madero's Plan de San Luis Potosí, published on 5 October 1910 from San Antonio, Texas, called for the nullification of the election and overthrow of the Díaz regime. Rebel armies quickly appeared in response to Madero's call. These armies, frequently little more than guerrilla bands, harried federal troops. Only in the northern state of Chihuahua did any major battles occur. In May 1911, the rebels captured the town of Ciudad Juárez. With this success, the insurgents redoubled their efforts, fanned out from Chihuahua, and gained control of Tehuacán, Durango, Cananea, and Torreón. The press became increasingly critical and federal army troops deserted the demoralized regime.

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3 The first edition of this was published in 1908. Madero revised the 1909 version to attract Zapata and his followers, who had already rebelled against the Díaz regime.
Díaz, yielding to the situation, sent a negotiation team to Ciudad Juárez to deal with Madero. The treaty provided that Díaz and his vice-president Ramón Corral would resign before the end of the month. Díaz submitted his resignation to the Congress on 25 May 1910.

When Díaz fled Mexico for Europe, he reputedly remarked that Madero had unleashed a tiger, "now let's see if he can control it." Madero's less-than-homogeneous supporters splintered into factions. Each group asserted its view vis a vis the composition of the new government. Madero faced rebellions, potential and real, on several fronts.

To begin, Emiliano Zapata stood out as a primary antagonist. In fact he had not completely supported the Plan de San Luis de Potosí. Zapata correctly felt that Madero was more concerned with political reform than with agrarian reform. In November of 1911, the zapatistas issued their own Plan de Ayala. It condemned the social system which led to economic hardships for the peasant majority. With the Plan, Madero faced an armed rebellion, which quickly spread from Zapata's native Morelos to the neighboring states of Guerrero, Tlaxcala, Puebla, and even to the Federal District itself.

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5 Meyer and Sherman, Mexican History, p. 511-534.
In the north, General Bernardo Reyes mobilized a force against Madero. Reyes had opposed Madero's presidential candidacy. Reyes had little success in recruiting men. He surrendered to the federal army shortly afterward.\(^6\)

Pascual Orozco contributed further resistance in Chihuahua. He issued his own plan in March 1912, calling for extensive social reform, a ten-hour work day, higher wages, restrictions on child labor, and nationalization of the railroads. Orozco's movement truly threatened Madero. But the President found a good field commander in General Victoriano Huerta. Huerta was the son of an Indian mother and a Mestizo father. Born in the state of Jalisco, Huerta had little more than a rudimentary elementary education. Influential friends saw him into the national Military Academy where he graduated near the top of his class and was commissioned in 1876.

During the Porfiriato, Huerta fought against the Yaqui and Maya, enforcing Díaz' peace. Gaining success on the battlefield, Huerta rose rapidly, becoming a brigadier general. He first received national attention when he forced demobilization of the zapatistas after Madero's victory. Huerta pushed the orozquistas north, temporarily saving the regime.

Just as Madero subdued one rebellion, another took its place. Félix Díaz, the nephew of Porfirio Díaz, called upon

\(^6\) Ibid. See also Charles C. Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution: Genesis under Madero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968) for more background.
counter-revolutionaries to support him in Veracruz. Although Díaz controlled the Veracruz garrison, he had little support from other areas. Within a month, Díaz and his followers were isolated and captured by federal troops. With Félix Díaz and Bernardo Reyes imprisoned, Mexico enjoyed a lull in the turmoil, only to be disrupted by a military coup plotted by Reyes and Díaz and led by the pro-Díaz General Manuel Mondragón.  

On 9 February 1913, Mondragón arranged the release of Díaz and Reyes from Mexico City prisons. For the next ten days, the Décena Trágica turned the capital into a battle zone. To defend his section of Mexico City, Madero appointed General Huerta to command his troops. By 17 February 1913, the fighting in Mexico City reached a stalemate. The next day, Huerta betrayed President Madero. Henry Lane Wilson, the United States Ambassador, conducted meetings which brought Huerta into the rebel fold. Wilson believed himself to be the protector of U.S. business interests. Citing the damage done to foreign property, he rejected Madero and worked hard to unite Félix Díaz and Huerta. His work bore fruit when Huerta joined the insurgents in the "pact of the Embassy." Huerta imprisoned Madero, his Vice-President, José María Pino Suárez, and the cabinet. Huerta assumed power after securing the resignations of both the president and vice president. On 22 February, as Madero and Pino  

7 Ibid, p. 519.
Suárez travelled under federal escort from the National Palace to the Federal District Penitentiary, they were murdered under confusing and suspicious circumstances. The Huerta government announced the improbable tale that a group of maderistas attacked the convoy. Who killed Madero and Pino Suárez remains uncertain, but many contemporary observers, including President Woodrow Wilson, believed Huerta ordered the assassination.\(^8\)

Huerta's assumption of power did not go unchallenged. Coahuila Governor Venustiano Carranza, a maderista, refused to accept Huerta's rule. Finding support in the northern states of Sonora and Chihuahua, Carranza issued the Plan de Guadalupe. This Plan named Carranza "First Chief" of the Constitutionalist Army and declared a war to the end against Huerta and the Federales. Emiliano Zapata also pursued a separate campaign against the Huerta regime, seeking the restitution of lands for his southern peasant supporters.\(^9\)

Huerta, facing twin rebellions, needed revenue to continue the struggle. Because of widespread Mexican militarization, agricultural centers withered. This dramatically reduced logistical support for armies and reduced the federal tax base. Consequently port revenues and international loans played key roles in waging a successful campaign.

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\(^8\) Quirk, *Honor*, p. 37.

To obtain foreign loans, however, Huerta needed the diplomatic recognition of the United States. 10

Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson recommended recognition, as did much of the American business community in Mexico. Yet President Wilson decided on a "wait-and-see" attitude. Distrusting State Department competence, Wilson sent his own "special agents" to Mexico to get information on the Mexican situation. Alarmingly, most of these envoys spoke no Spanish and had little preparation for the task. Nevertheless, so long as they responded with sycophancy, the White House praised their efforts. Ambassador Wilson, outraged by such treatment, received his dismissal by summer, 1913. Charge d'Affairs Nelson O'Shaunnessy assumed control of the embassy. 11

Wilson's obsessive concern with political ethics decided the recognition issue. Wilson refused on moral grounds to recognize the Huerta government. 12 State Department experts argued that the United States had always extended de facto recognition to revolutionary governments. Yet Wilson ignored basic convention, holding to his position that mere adherence to the letter of a constitution, as Huerta had done, was insufficient. In essence, he created a test of "consti-

10 Ibid, p. 529.
11 Ibid.
tutional legitimacy." He tried to look behind the scenes to determine moral and political legitimacy. This view precluded any recognition for the Huerta regime. 13

In Wilson's view the Constitutionalists, led by Venustiano Carranza, more legitimately represented the Mexican people. Carranza was a fervent Madero supporter and served as Governor of Coahuila under him. Although personally drab, Carranza captured the attention of the northern states when he announced his rejection of Huerta and issued a circular telegram exhorting them to follow his example. To help them achieve power the United States initially aided Carranza. When the Constitutionalists encountered strong federal opposition on the battlefield, Wilson cut off Huerta's vital supply route for money and war material with intervention at Veracruz. He hoped that this would topple Huerta. 14

Wilson expected popular support for American military action and little resistance from the population of Veracruz. Accordingly their spirited resistance shocked him. Both Carranza and Huerta criticized their northern neighbor's action as blatant intervention against Mexican sovereignty. 15

14 Ibid.
Wilson's actions put the United States in an uncomfortable position. The civil war in Mexico continued while, in Washington, Congress criticized the President's Mexican policy. As one reporter noted, "The administration has a policy, but no plan. It knows what it wants but not how to get it." Others spoke less kindly: "President Wilson is proceeding without any chart or compass." Wilson, instead of clarifying matters, simply confused them.

On 24 April 1914, Wilson saw his opportunity to ameliorate the diplomatic imbroglio when the legation officers of Argentina and Chile, along with the Brazilian Ambassador (the ABC nations), offered their services to mediate between Mexico and the United States. He accepted the next day. Five days later, in a circular telegram to all diplomatic missions, the State Department noted that all three parties—Huerta, Wilson, and Carranza—accepted "the principle of mediation. This enables the mediators to deal with the entire Mexican situation."

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The nations in the American hemisphere held high regard for the ideas of arbitration and mediation. The principle of arbitration figured prominently at the First Pan-American Conference in 1889. The conference covered trade relations, customs unions, and arbitration. Consequently the idea of inter-American mediation won firm support.19

The ABC nations had undergone mediation, both as arbitrators and disputants. Moreover, they had good relations with other nations. In entering mediation, the ABC nations looked toward increasing their position regarding hemispheric relations.20

The Argentines hoped to use mediation as a platform to air their views on inter-American relations. The Monroe Doctrine especially haunted them as a definite threat to their own prosperous relationship with Europe. Argentina feared that the United States would eventually expand over

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20 Ibid.
all the Western Hemisphere. Mediation offered the Argentine Republic an opportunity to expand their influence.  

Social change also convulsed Argentina. The 1912 Sáenz Peña law, by allowing the middle and some of the lower classes a greater say in political affairs, posed a greater threat to the ruling oligarchy than did the Monroe Doctrine. As in Mexico, the middle and lower classes wanted more social and economic self-determination. To help suppress their own social problems, it was in governmental interest to resolve the Mexican situation as painlessly as possible.  

Although elitist, the ruling oligarchy noticed that stronger hemispheric relations seemed popular. Argentina's Francophilic-Anglophilic governing class eventually reconciled itself to a stronger Pan-American movement. While still distrusting the United States, Argentina accepted "the Anglo-Saxon giant," perhaps realizing that an ABC entente might offset the power of the North American nation.  

An ABC alliance offered more relative security to Chile than to Argentina. Chile still harbored resentment toward the United States because of previous clashes. United States

21 Ibid; see also Arthur P. Whitaker, The United States and The Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), hereafter referred to as Whitaker, Southern Cone, page number.

22 Whitaker, Southern Cone, p. 76.

23 Ibid, p. 78.
interference during the Chilean Civil War of 1891 almost brought the two nations to war.

The Chilean Civil War pitted President José Manuel Balmaceda and the army against the Chilean Congress and Navy. Although the United States did not directly intervene in the war, the Americans favored Balmaceda. Sea control gave the fight to the Congress, thus minimizing the Executive role.\textsuperscript{24}

In the tense atmosphere, a barroom brawl between United States sailors and Chileans exploded into a raging battle. When the smoke cleared, two American sailors were dead. The "Baltimore incident," as it was referred to, prompted an international dispute threatening war. Heavy pressure from Washington forced the dismissal of the Chilean Foreign Minister and the Chilean Minister to the United States. With the removal of the irksome protagonists, the nations avoided war. Because Washington had forced Chile to recall its diplomats, "the Chilean people were left with the feeling that they had been humiliated by an arrogant American government."

The Chilean government also faced social pressure regarding their relations with Argentina. During the last decades of the nineteenth century the Chilean economy passed from native to foreign control. Across the border, Chile

\textsuperscript{24} For background on Chile see Henry Clay Evans,  
\textit{Chile and its Relations with the United States} (Durham: Duke University Press, 1927) and Whitaker,  
\textit{Southern Cone}. 
contemplated the dismaying prospect of Argentine prosperity and growth. The Chileans foresaw a bleak economic future. This coupled with frequent border disputes threatened a social disruption as potent as the earlier civil war. Chile's self interest dictated prevention of a powerful revolution in the Americas.25

Though Chile and Argentina distrusted the United States, Brazil sought its friendship. Brazil favored the Monroe Doctrine, interpreting it to be a statement of protection for the self-determination of the Latin American nations.26

Brazil's Foreign Minister, Baron Rio Branco, focused his attention on close United States-Brazilian relations. The United States provided the single greatest market for the Brazilian economy's (and hence the government's) most important export, coffee. The Baron, realizing that the closer diplomatic relations could protect the coffee export from tariffs, sent Joaquim Nabuco, an ardent Americanist, to the United States. In 1905, his persistence in presenting Brazil attractively bore fruit, as Nabuco became the first Ambassador to the United States from any South American country.

25 Whitaker, Southern Cone, p. 135.

Rio Branco set out to make his nation a Latin American leader. He harnessed aggressive policies by using mediation and arbitration to settle border disputes. Brazil generally received favorable decisions, at the expense of Argentina, among others. Brazil set out to increase diplomatic ties with both the United States and Chile to counteract deteriorating relations with Argentina. In fact, Rio Branco first suggested an ABC entente by recommending a coordinated recognition of Panama. Through the efforts of the Baron, Brazil became increasingly important in international circles.

Although both Rio Branco and Nabuco died before the Veracruz incident, their successors, Lauro Müller and Dominico Da Gama, successfully continued similar policies. Both able diplomats, they strengthened Brazilian leadership and United States relations.

Not all observers liked the idea of ABC mediation. One journal feared that the United States might become a scapegoat for past indiscretions: "of the ABC nations Brazil is the only one which is really willing to favor the United States. Both in Argentina and Chile there is a strong anti-Yankee feeling."27 Others feared a possible pre-emptive

27 "ABC Plan as seen in Mexico", Outlook, Vol 107, 30 May 1914, p. 236.
strike against the United States because of the privileged position the Americans had in the Mexican oil industry.\textsuperscript{28}

Regardless of ill feelings, the ABC powers forged ahead. They expressed confidence in mediation as a peaceful solution to a crisis which threatened a war "whose carnage would only be comparable to the [United States] Civil War." With such a background, the arbitrators and disputants prepared for a conference that would, they hoped, resolve a sanguinary civil dispute, uphold the principle of arbitration, and restore harmony to the hemisphere.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
CHAPTER TWO

"PLAY BALL!"

With all the major participants: Carranza, Wilson, and Huerta agreeing, at least "in principle", to mediation, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile looked forward to mediating the dispute. They planned to cover internal reforms, as well as the external dispute of the United States occupation of Veracruz which had precipitated mediation. Little did they realize the difficulties involved regarding the general armistice which they had taken for granted and the discussion of plans for internal reforms. Little bickering accompanied the selection of the site and organization of the conference. On 5 May 1914, the ABC envoys, Ambassador Dominico Da Gama, Legation Officer Rómulo Naón, and Legation Officer Eduardo Suárez Mújica, made the decision for the conference site and scheduled its opening session on 20 May 1914. The mediators chose Niagara because of its proximity to the disputants and because of its neutrality, although the Constitutionalists suspected that the mediators chose it to
reflect the financial ties between the Huerta government and Great Britain.¹

Da Gama, "a man in the prime of life, with hair and mustache slightly tinged with grey," represented Brazil.² As Ambassador to the United States, he brought many years of diplomatic experience to Washington. He had first visited the United States in 1893 during arbitration over an Argentine-Brazilian border dispute. Since that early visit, Da Gama served in Europe on special missions, as Charge d'Affairs in Belgium, as Minister to Peru and Argentina, and finally, as Ambassador to the United States upon the death of Joaquim Nabuco. While Minister to Argentina, Da Gama served as vice-president of the 1908 Pan American Conference. As Brazilian Ambassador, he and his American wife "made the Brazilian Embassy a home to which invitations ...[were] highly prized." All who worked with Da Gama praised his astuteness and resourcefulness.³

¹ Fabela, Documentos, p. 41; United States Department of State, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914, Mediators to Secretary of State, 5 May 1914, File 812.00/11849, (Government printing office, Washington D.C., 1922), p. 497, hereafter referred to by author, recipient, date, file number, Foreign Relations, page number.


At thirty-nine years of age, Dr. Rómulo S. Naón, representing Argentina, was the youngest of the mediators. He attended the Second Hague Conference in 1907. Some observers maintained that Naón first suggested mediation between the United States and Mexico. Naón previously held many important posts in the Argentine government. His proudest achievement before appointment to the United States Legation was the establishment of a school system for laborers while acting as Superintendent of Public Instruction. He came to the conference as an expert on international law.4

Eduardo Suárez Mújica, the representative from Chile, at 70, was the oldest of the mediators. He was "tall, with an iron grey flowing beard and a military figure. In fact," wrote Hamilton Holt, correspondent for The Independent, "he [had] the air of a Spanish grandee."5 Suárez Mújica served Chile in a variety of posts—Assistant Minister of Foreign Relations, as a member of the national legislature, Secretary of Justice and Public Instruction, and as Minister to the United States since 1911. Before his assignment to Washing-


4 Hill, "Four Days", p. 344; Review, "Vera Cruz", p. 671.

5 Holt, "Niagara Falls", p. 518.
Suárez Mújica served as Minister to Mexico, making him the only mediator with direct experience there, though it occurred before the Revolution.  

Da Gama presided at the conference because of his senior ambassadorial rank, though shortly before, the United States and Argentina raised their legations to embassy status, making Naón an ambassador as well. Soon thereafter, Chile followed suit in exchanging ambassadors.

Emilio Rabasa, Augustín Rodriguez, and Luis Elguero represented Huerta. Rabasa and Rodriguez taught at the Free School of Law of Mexico. Rabasa specialized in international law, writing and lecturing extensively on the subject. Rodriguez practiced civil law. Elguero, a director of the National Bank and the National Railways of Mexico, represented the Mexican financial community; he also promoted the Agrarian Bank, designed "to enable thrifty peons to become owners of their own farms." Huerta's representatives

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6 Hill, "Four Days", p. 344; Review, "Vera Cruz", p. 671.


8 Hill, "Four Days", p. 344.
carried credentials which, giving them wide discretionary functions, amounted practically to plenary power.\(^9\)

Wilson sent Frederick E. Lehmann and Joseph Rucker Lamar to represent the United States. Refusal of the United States to recognize the Huerta government led to the appointment of Lamar and Lehmann as "Special Commissioners of the President of the United States near the Mediations." Consequently, although they attended the conference, they did not treat with Huerta's representatives and thus avoided implied recognition. Lehmann, a man of great abilities, served as president of the American Bar Association (1908-9) and Solicitor General of the United States (1910-12). Lamar, originally from Georgia, was a Federal Supreme Court Justice generally admired for his wide learning and culture.\(^10\)

While the Mexican delegates possessed wide discretionary ability, the United States representatives lacked such latitude. Lamar and Lehmann were to refer all information to either President Wilson or Secretary of State Bryan. To ease

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\(^9\) New York Times, 20 May 1914; Consul Canada to Secretary of State, 12 May 1914, 812.00/11914, Foreign Relations, p. 499; Roberto Esteva Ruiz to Mediators, 4 May 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 40.

communication, a special telephone connection linked the
United States representatives with the White House and the
State Department. H. Percival Dodge, Secretary to the U. S.
delegation, State Department Attache Fred M. Rose, and
translator José M. Macías accompanied Lamar and Lehmann.11

Almost as soon as the conference began, critics raised
questions about mediation. Some suggested that the ABC
envoys were poorly prepared in their knowledge of Mexico.
Only Suárez Mújica of the three mediators knew Mexico and he
dated his experience from the Díaz regime. How could the
envoys hope to solve Mexico's problems without knowing how
Mexico had changed during the years of revolution? The
American delegation—although "intelligent and having common
sense"—also lacked Mexican expertise. Critics suggested
that the presence of a consular agent with recent Mexican
experience would lend strength to the U.S. representatives.
The mediators defended themselves, arguing that their
fairness depended on being impartial to the Mexican situation
and that their decisions would rest strictly on the material
brought to them.12

11 Secretary of State Bryan to Wilson, 19 May 1914,
Link, Papers, p. 47; Wilson to Bryan, 20 May 1914, Ibid,
p. 48.

12 Gregory Mason, "Mediation without information",
Outlook, Vol. 107, 27 June 1914, p. 445, hereafter reffered
to as Mason, "Information", page numbers; New York Times, 21
May 1914.
Most of the actual work of the conference occurred at the Clifton House, sometimes referred to as the Cliff House, on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, where the mediators and Mexican delegates stayed. The Americans planned to stay at the International Hotel, but because of its closure, stayed at the Prospect House on the American side. The surroundings for the conference were pleasant. A nearby chapel, called the "Shrine of Peace", seemed a good omen. The Cliff House management set aside several rooms on the main floor for the conference, including the solarium which provided a very relaxed atmosphere. The Cliff House, as the name implied, stood very close to the Falls--so close that with the windows open the mediators could feel the spray from the Falls. 13

On 20 May 1914, at 3:00 p.m., the conference began, with George Pearly, Canadian Secretary of State in the Canadian Cabinet, serving as host to the proceedings. All involved were present for the opening address by Ambassador Da Gama, save Suárez Mújica, who had journeyed via Philadelphia, having forgotten the exact date set for the opening of the conference.

In his opening speech, Da Gama laid out procedure:

1) The plenipotentiaries of the ABC powers would preside over the conference, with the Brazilian ambassador directing mediation.

2) The minutes of the proceedings would be signed by the representatives and the mediators. The secretaries would then countersign. Copies of the minutes—drafted into Portuguese, Spanish, and English—would be distributed to all parties.

3) In general, separate meetings between mediators and each delegation would occur informally, without a stenographic report. The full, or plenary sessions, during which minutes would be taken, occurred only as occasion required.

4) A plenary conference (consisting of all representatives and mediators) would be held for the delegates to express their positions, including stipulation on rejection or acceptance of an eventual settlement.

5) The conference would be closed by a full session at which the final results would be stated. Of course, the mediators and representatives could make closing addresses.\(^\text{14}\)

The mediators' industriousness impressed many observers. The actual mechanics saw Da Gama taking charge of the diplomatic meetings, while Naón attended to the oral hear-

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Suárez Mujica took charge of the minutes and correspondence. The New York Times correspondent was especially impressed with "the absence of any spirit of 'mañana'..." The efficient manner of the envoys increased confidence in the ability of the conference to resolve the Mexican situation.  

The keynote of the conference was informality. Upon arriving at the first session of mediation, Lehmann called out "Play ball!" He, Justice Lamar, Secretary Dodge, and State Department representative Rose generally arrived from the American side, usually smoking cigars en route. By the third day of the conference, the sense of informality had even lent itself to the adaptation of the tune to "When it's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy" with different words:

When it's mediation time in Canada  
In Canada, in Canada  
By the good old falls  
We'll watch and wait and mediate.  
When it's mediation time in Canada  
We'll come here for a rest,  
And we'll pay ten cents to cross the bridge  
Whether going east or west.

To inform the news services, the mediators posted bulletins announcing the progress of the conference. Each posting heralded the formation of a small crowd "hunggrily


16 Ibid.
reading the meagre details."\textsuperscript{17} The mediators sat in conference between five and six hours daily, on occasion calling for evening sessions when warranted. The rest of the time they gave to informal chats, automobile touring, sightseeing, and luncheons. As one correspondent recalled, these off hours were sometimes taken up listening while

...Justice Lamar tells stories, Mr. Lehmann draws on his marvelous store of historical information, Señor Da Gama waxes eloquent, Señores Naón and Suárez chat continuously with all who address them. Señor Rabasa, head of the Mexican delegation, says a few words and looks unspeakably wise in so doing. Señor Elguero, one of his colleagues, looks polite, but uncomfortable, and Señor Rodriguez, the other, waves his hand toward the Falls with Spanish abandon and tells you how perfectly grand it all is up here.

On 24 May the \textit{New York Times} correspondent related that each day there were the same daily excitements, the first being the arrival of the United States envoys with Secretary Dodge, a champion "at the great game of saying nothing while talking a great deal, which has reached its zenith at the Niagara Falls Peace Conference." The second event came at the end of a meeting, signalled by the appearance of an envoy or delegate leaving the solarium. Correspondents would inundate the envoy, desperate to learn of the Mexican-American situation, yet "chances are that they remain to hear

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\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{18} \textit{New York Times}, 20 May 1914.
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[instead] about the comparative merits of the Canadian and American Falls."

The last event during the day was a bulletin posting:

At first the bulletins told little except visits to the envoys and delegates from representatives of college fraternities and invitations extended to the distinguished visitors to view the beauties of the region. But of late they have been improving; some even deal with Mexico.

The New York Times correspondent voiced an oft-heard complaint about the mediation. Neither the mediators nor the delegates freely gave news to reporters. On the trip to Niagara, when questioned about his participation, Lehmann only told the reporters about the trip he had taken several years before on the same train and the wonderful waffles and catfish he had shared with Count Johann Heinrich Von Bernstorff, the German Ambassador to the U.S. The reporters did not get much of a story, but the conductor wired ahead and at the next stop twenty pounds of catfish were placed aboard. Mr. Lehmann and the American delegation consumed a dinner of catfish and waffles. The mediators were tight-fisted with information about the conference. They wished to handle the mediation informally, in the hopes more could be accomplished. Part of this informality required privacy. As a

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19 Fred Rose to Secretary of State Bryan, 15 June 1914, file 812.00/23476, RDS, RG59, NA; Review of Reviews (American), "National—weekly journalism before and after mediation", Vol. 50, August 1914, p. 237; Mason, "Information", p. 446; New York Times, 22 May 1914.

result the mediators issued anecdotal trivia to pacify the media's need for information.\textsuperscript{21}

Although in most cases editors refrained from speculation, some, like the editor of the New York-based newspaper \textit{Mexico}, used the opportunity to print slanderous and unsubstantiated articles. Although these articles created no problems for the mediation, one journalist wondered at the misunderstandings Carranza and Villa might have in the absence of hard facts.\textsuperscript{22}

The attendance at the conference of both Huerta and Wilson indicated that each had certain objectives in mind. The goals of each delegation were so antithetical that the \textit{New York Times} published an editorial warning the mediators: "the peace envoys must keep constantly on mind that they cannot take sides...they must assume a non-partisan attitude and maintain it to the end."\textsuperscript{23} The envoys' expressed goal consisted of "serving the interests of peace."\textsuperscript{24} Although

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Woodrow Wilson to Commissioners, 24 May 1914, Link, \textit{Papers}, p. 69; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 3 June 1914, file 812.00/23455a, \textit{RDS}, RG59, NA.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Link, \textit{Progressive Era}, p. 126-127; Cline, \textit{U.S. and Mexico}, p. 161.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, Link, \textit{Papers}, p. 77.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Secretary of State to Commissioners, 27 May 1914, file 812.00/23445, \textit{RDS}, RG59, NA; Link, \textit{Progressive Era}, p. 107.
\end{itemize}
all parties espoused this view, both Wilson and Huerta had different practical ideas.\textsuperscript{25}

The United States declared no desire to control either the mediation or Mexico, yet President Wilson would not accept any solution which did not retire Huerta and place the Constitutionalists in power. Wilson judged Huerta an assassin, a throwback to the Díaz era. Because the Constitutionalists gained victory in the north, Wilson further buttressed his beliefs about Huerta by suggesting that the Constitutionalists truly represented the Mexican people. The occupation of Veracruz had been an attempt to cut off a major supply port for Huerta's arms and munitions, as well as a direct military threat to Mexico City. Wilson seemed truly surprised when Mexicans fought bloodily against the Americans. Mediation, then, offered Wilson an opportunity to force Huerta from power, an attitude which the ABC envoys clearly recognized and resented.\textsuperscript{26}

Even though he did not espouse publicly any particular plan to solve the land problems in Mexico, Wilson felt "the foremost duty of the United States...[to be] the internal

\textsuperscript{25} Rómulo Naón to Argentine Foreign Minister, 21 June 1914, Link, \textit{Papers}, p. 198.

\textsuperscript{26} Link, \textit{Progressive Era}, p. 113; Cline, \textit{U.S. and Mexico}, p. 160.
reform of this unhappy neighbor." The United States considered existing land holding patterns responsible for many social inequities. The American delegates made their position clear at the first private conference with the mediators by indicating Wilson's intention to hold land reform as one condition for American recognition of any Mexican government. The United States obviously insisted that there could be no peace in Mexico as long as the underlying economic problems continued.

The United States view confounded the mediators. As Naón reported to the Argentine Foreign Minister:

I...[emphasized] the impropriety involved in the direct and partisan intervention of the American delegation.... I reminded President Wilson...that he [had] expressed the position of his government in these words: 'A Mexican solution of the Mexican problem' in order that he might realize the contradiction implicit in the present attitude.

Others, like concerned observer Andrew Carnegie, wrote to Wilson: "the presuming Civilized Nation determined to interfere and Coerce his less advanced Nabor [sic] deserves

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27 Andrew Carnegie to Woodrow Wilson, 21 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 61; Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 77.

28 Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 77; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 27 May 1914, file 812.00/23445, RDS, RG59, NA; Link, Progressive Era, p. 107.

repulse and usually gets it." Wilson had all but stated that he expected to control the outcome of the conference. 

Huerta's removal signaled the principal objective of Wilsonian policy. Before mediation began, the State Department made it clear that a simple apology to the United States would not solve the issues leading to the Veracruz invasion. As the conference progressed and the Constitutionalists gained victory in the field, Huerta's resignation became a daily expectation, the only question being how and when. On 21 May, Da Gama received hopeful news from Cardoso de Oliveira, the Brazilian legation officer in Mexico City.

Huerta indicated he might instruct his delegates to tender his resignation if it would further the cause of peace in Mexico. Throughout the rest of the month many sources reported his resignation, notices which constantly weakened his position, and "increased danger of mob rule and anarchy." At last on 2 June 1914, the Mexican delegates issued a

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30 *New York Times*, 21, 22, 27 May 1914; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 23 May 1914, File 812.00/23439, RDS, RG59, NA.

31 *New York Times*, 3 June 1914; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 24 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 70; Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, *Ibid*, p. 79; Marvin Ferrer to Woodrow Wilson, 10 June 1914, File 812.00/23464, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 23 May 1914, File 812.00/23440, *Ibid*.

32 *Outlook*, "ABC Plan as seen in Mexico", Vol 107, 30 May 1914, p. 236.
statement that they were authorized to submit Huerta's presidential resignation.  

Huerta, of course, wanted mediation to validate his claim to power. His belief that mediation would lead only to U. S. evacuation from Veracruz prompted his acceptance of the conference. The Huerta government wanted to skirt internal reform and the president's resignation. On acceptance of mediation, the huertistas believed that mediation might even lead to a United States recognition of the regime.  

As May ended Huerta lost hope. The Administration warned Lamar and Lehmann that the Mexican delegates would make a last ditch-effort to save their elitist privileges. The United States delegation worked to foil Huertista aspirations. Even so, if mediation could not obtain his resignation, then, as the German newspaper *Kölnische Zeitung* suggested, perhaps Wilson would drag matters out until Carranza and Villa took Mexico City.  

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33 Ibid.  


35 *Kölnische Zeitung* as referred to in *The Literary Digest*, "Doubts about Mexican Mediation", Vol. 48, 30 May 1914, p. 1305; Ibid.
Military pressure weighed heavily on Huerta's government. The Constitutionalists went from one victory to another after the United States occupied Veracruz. Between 24 April and 8 July, rebel forces took Monterrey, Nuevo Laredo, Tampico, Zacatecas, Saltillo, and Guadalajara. The early summer victory of Pancho Villa over Huerta's federales at Zacatecas spelled the end to effective Huerta resistance to the Constitutionalist onslaught. In an interview with the *New York Times*, José Vasconcelos predicted that Carranza would be in Mexico City by the end of July.  

The Constitutionalist progress weakened Huerta not only in Mexico but in mediation. By the end of May Huerta sent telegrams to the Mexican delegation "urging that a protocol be completed and signed as soon as possible, because of the danger from the advancing Constitutionalists." John Lind, one of President Wilson's special envoys, recommended "negative action"—that is a "wait and see" attitude—until Carranza took Mexico City and eliminated the Huerta issue altogether.  

On the opening day, the conference turned its attention to various plans to establish a caretaker government to rule Mexico in Huerta's stead until formal elections could take

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36 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 21 May 1914, File 812.00/23436, *RDS*, RG59, NA; John Lind to Secretary of State, 10 June 1914, File 812.00/23465, *Ibid.*  

place. Secretary of State Bryan suggested a commission of three or four persons to rule Mexico on an interim basis. Bryan thought Madero's Foreign Minister Pedro Lascurain would serve along with one person selected by the Constitutionalis, and a third chosen by these two "...to get away from the apparent succession to Huerta and to set up an authority free from former cabinet influences."\(^{38}\)

The United States felt any interim Mexican authority must be acceptable to the Constitutionalists. Some Wilsonian advisors ruled out Villa and Carranza as being too pivotal for such a minor role. Ideally they favored a moderate Constitutionalist.\(^{39}\)

Another proposed plan suggested that the conference select a provisional president and cabinet to rule Mexico. This plan adhered more closely to the current Mexican constitution than Bryan's commission idea. However, the mediators modified the plan after realizing the great number of candidates.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{38}\) Woodrow Wilson to Commissioners, 21 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 57; Arthur S. Link to Secretary of State, 10 June 1914, File 812.00/23465, RDS, RG59, NA.

\(^{39}\) Commissioners to Secretary of State, 2 June 1914, File 812.00/23455, RDS, RG59, NA; The Independent, "Mexican Conference", Vol. 78, 22 June 1914, p. 511.

\(^{40}\) Secretary of State to Commissioners, 26 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 83; J.R. Lamar to Secretary of State, 20 May 1914, File 812.00/23435, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 21 May 1914, File 812.00/23435, Ibid.
The final plan called for the conference to select a provisional president, who would then be appointed by Huerta to the post of Foreign Minister. By constitutional succession, Huerta's resignation would make the Foreign Minister the new president. Once the candidate became provisional president, he would select his own cabinet, submitting his choices to the conference for approval. The provisional government could then set out to pacify Mexico and begin land reform programs. After establishing a measure of peace the provisional government could hold a fair election. 41

The provisional government, thus selected, would be recognized immediately by the United States, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. It would establish commissions for international claims and provide amnesty for all offenses committed during the Civil War. The mediators also suggested that the United States evacuate Veracruz fifteen days after the establishment of the provisional government, to be completed within a month—unless the provisional government granted an extension. 42

One of the difficulties the mediators faced concerned enforcement of any plan. If Huerta or the Constitutionalists

41 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 26 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 87; Hamilton Holt, "Mediation Deadlock and the way out", The Independent, Vol 78, 29 June 1914, p. 543.

42 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 26 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 87.
did not agree, enforcement would be left to the United States and the ABC powers. Since none of the three Latin American powers had close commercial ties with Mexico or large concentrations of nationals living there, the mediators doubted their ability to police the situation. The Brazilian legation officer, Cardoso de Oliveira, had so much difficulty protecting United States interests in the capital after severance of diplomatic relations that Secretary of State Bryan, contrary to his goal, entrusted the protection of United States citizens and property to the French and English in cities other than the capital. Obviously, the ABC powers could not force compliance to any mediation plan. The United States under Wilson did not care to enforce any solution by arms after Veracruz. Although the War Department had elaborate plans to occupy Mexico, the idea of bloodshed repelled the President, who felt recognition to be the United States' only weapon. The slim possibility existed that the mediators might hit upon a solution by which the United States could not abide, in which case, "the war would have to proceed with the sympathy of the whole of Latin America overtly on Mexico's side." 43

43 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 24 May 1914, File 812.00/23452d, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 3 June 1914, File 812.00/23455a, Ibid; New York Times, 20 May 1914; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 27 May 1914, File 812.00/23445, RDS, RG59, NA; Outlook, "ABC Plan as seen in Mexico", Vol. 107, 30 May 1914, p. 236; Woodrow Wilson to Commissioners, 24 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 69.
The Conference recognized that the use of force in any mediation plan would be counterproductive to a lasting peace. With the goal of peace firmly planted in mind, the mediators struggled toward a solution.
CHAPTER THREE

"THREE PIG-HEADED MEN"

As the Mediators increasingly realized the limitations of their actions, they worked to make the conference successful. They tried to get all of the major parties—Americans, huertistas, and Constitutionalists—to participate in the conference. The mediators, however, wanted to consider internal reform, a topic whose validity Carranza denied. They required an armistice, an issue violated frequently. The mediators' stubbornness in these conditions, along with the temperaments of Wilson, Carranza, and Huerta disrupted conference progress, and threatened to obliterate the mediation attempt altogether. One of the key problems the mediators faced concerned the Constitutionalists and their "First Chief" Venustiano Carranza. As the leader of the major anti-Huerta faction, Woodrow Wilson naturally favored him in the Mexican supremacy battle. Moreover, Wilson
believed Carranza "...to be an honest person... who can be counted upon no doubt to try to do the right thing...".\(^1\)

Carranza received an invitation to send delegates to Niagara Falls because the ABC envoys desired to mediate both internal and external Mexican conflicts. On 29 April 1914, Carranza sent his acceptance "in principle." A week later, Carranza dispatched Rafael Zubarán Capmany to represent him in a "spirit of cordiality." Carranza also inquired as to the subject matter of the conference. Instead of answering, the mediators imperiously notified him that if hostilities toward Huerta were not halted, his invitation would be recalled.\(^2\) The mediators felt that in as much as Carranza had accepted their mediation, out of necessity he would accept an armistice. Also, they believed themselves to have U.S. support.

Carranza responded, saying he found "cessation of hostilities to be inconsistent with his goal."\(^3\) Observers of

\(^{1}\) Woodrow Wilson to Walter Hines Page, 4 June 1914, Link, Papers.

\(^{2}\) Venustiano Carranza to Mediators, 2 May 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 143; Venustiano Carranza to Rafael Zubarán, 2 May 1914, Ibid, p. 26; Venustiano Carranza to Secretary of State, 4 May 1914, File 812.00/23426, RDS, RG59, NA; Rafael Zubarán to Mediators, 4 May 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 41; Rafael Zubarán to Mediators, 28 May 1914, File 812.00/12130, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 519; Venustiano Carranza to Mediators, 29 April 1914, File 812.00/12130, Ibid, p. 517.

\(^{3}\) José Lopez Portillo to Mediators, 30 April 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 22; Mediators to Roberto Esteva Ruiz, 5 May 1914, Ibid, p. 47; Roberto Esteva Ruiz to Mediators, 6 May 1914, Ibid, p. 50; "The Taking of Veracruz and what followed", Review of Reviews (American), Vol 79, June 1914,
the Mexican situation felt that even if the First Chief had declared an armistice, his followers, like Villa, would have continued fighting. Carranza reasoned that an armistice would lead to the disbandment his armies, leaving Constitutionalist areas unprotected in case mediation failed. Carranza tried to avoid further alienation of Villa. The two chieftains had already disagreed on the nature of the United States' occupation of Veracruz. While Carranza believed it an attack of Mexican sovereignty, Villa felt it to be no such threat. Further antagonism might rend the revolutionary unity, depriving Carranza of one of his best field generals.4

Once reports concerning the extent of mediation filtered in to Carranza's command center in Torreón, Durango, the First Chief sent protesting telegrams to the mediators, the State Department, and his representatives. He differentiated between the United States-Mexican conflict and the huertista-Constitutionalist Civil War. Consequently Carranza would accept mediation only on the Tampico flag incident, the

p. 670.

4 Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 78; Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 1 June 1914, Ibid, p. 133; "Mexican Conference", The Independent, Vol. 78, 22 June 1914, p. 511; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 23 May 1914, File 812.00/23439, RDS, RG59, NA.
arrest of the United States mail orderly at Veracruz, and the United States invasion and occupation of Veracruz.\(^5\)

Carranza rejected discussion of subjects that infringed on Mexican sovereignty, including the establishment of a provisional government, land reform issues, and the validity of the actions of the Huerta government and concomitant loans or debts. The mediators saw in Carranza's response a definite rejection of the Niagara Falls Conference. Further, Carranza's decision to repudiate all the actions of Huerta's government made United States delegates Lehmann and Lamar fear that this position would jeopardize any plan to turn the provisional government over to the Constitutionalists.\(^6\)

Carranza's contrariness toward the conference irritated the mediators. The envoys had undertaken the mediation of all existing conditions. The Constitutionalist response, they claimed, was "... advance notice that the constitutionalists will not feel bound by any decision that may be

\(^5\) Cumberland, *Mexican Revolution*, p. 294; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 31 May 1914, File 812.00/12130, USDS, *Foreign Relations*, p. 514; Venustiano Carranza to Rafael Zubaran, 20 June 1914, Fabela, *Documentos*, p. 138; Venustiano Carranza to Mediators, 1 May 1914, *Ibid*, p. 23; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 16 June 1914, File 812.00/23477, RDS, RG59, NA; *New York Times*, 23 May 1914; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 22 May 1914, File 812.00/23437, RDS, RG59, NA.

made."\(^7\) The mediators did not, however, reject constitutionalist participation. In fact, they welcomed it, provided that they accepted the scope of mediation. The Constitution­alists could not come to the conference except under the same armistice conditions agreed to by Huerta and the United States.\(^8\)

To remedy the absence of the Constitutionalists, the United States tried to represent them. Yet the United States felt uncomfortable speaking for Carranza. The delays involved in ascertaining Constitutionalist views prompted Secretary of State Bryan to urge delegates Lamar and Lehmann to push the mediators to accept the Constitutionalist representatives, "...even though they [the Constitution­alists] insist upon conditions which may seem unreasonable."\(^9\)

Many sides pressured the mediators to accept a Constitutionalist representative. The Paris *Temps* reported: "The mediating powers, if they wish to assure a definite peace,

\(^7\) Commissioners to Secretary of State, 31 May 1914, Link, *Papers*, 123; H. Percival Dodge to Secretary of State, 13 June 1914, File 812.00/12240, USDS, *Foreign Relations*, p. 529; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 23 May 1914, File 812.00/23439, RDS, RG59, NA.

\(^8\) H. Percival Dodge to Secretary of State, 13 June 1914, File 812.00/12240, USDS, *Foreign Relations*, p. 529; *New York Times*, 24 May 1914; Mediators to Secretary of State, 25 May 1914, File 812.00/23444, RDS, RG59, NA.

\(^9\) Secretary of State to Commissioners, 25 May 1914, Link, *Papers*, p. 75; "Mexican Conference", p. 511, Secretary of State to Commissioners, 31 May 1914, File 812.00/23451, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 1 June 1914, File 812.00/23453, *Ibid.*
must be able to induce the Mexican factions to agree on a compromise." United States news magazines reported that the mediators wanted to admit a carrancista representative "...at the eleventh hour, for they know he will have to be reckoned with sooner or later...." Carranza himself wrote to General Alvaro Obregón that the conference could not have a satisfactory result without Constitutionalist representation since the carrancistas represented the majority of Mexicans.

On 29 May 1914, Carranza notified the mediators by telegram that he would send representatives to the conference. Two weeks later, the First Chief officially designated Fernando Iglesias Calderón, Luis Cabrera, and José Vasconcelos. Before the mediators received Carranza's telegram, Zubarán, through whom it was sent, released it to the New York Times, who published it. The mediators, upon reading their letter in the paper, responded that they "considered it most improper...and if...the newspaper was correct, the letter was...a protest against the scope of the mediation."

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10 "Doubts about Mexican mediation", The Literary Digest, Vol. 48, 30 May 1914, p. 1305.


12 Venustiano Carranza to Alvaro Obregón, 29 June 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 148; Venustiano Carranza to Secretary of State, 4 May 1914, File 812.00/23426, RDS, RG59, NA.

13 New York Times, 24 May 1914; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 30 May 1914, File 812.00/23450, RDS, RG59, NA.
American delegates Lamar and Lehmann urged that the newspaper might have picked up the letter while on the telegraph wire, finally convincing the mediators to receive the Constitutionalist communication. Even so, the mediators seemed very reluctant to receive the Constitutionals. They insisted that Carranza’s willingness to enter into discussion resulted from munition shortages. His request to join the conference simply constituted a delaying tactic. After considering the "Zubarán letter," the mediators decided to request a clarification of such areas as armistice and extensions of mediation. Pending this clarification, Carranza could send his delegates.14

The Constitutionalist delegates delayed, however, because of internal dissension between Carranza and Villa. Pancho Villa had begun to disagree with the Constitutionalist First Chief. With Villa’s popularity, the split in the rebel ranks threatened ominously.15

Although Carranza sent representatives to Niagara, the armistice issue proved insurmountable. As a result, the mediators did not accept the Constitutionals. Early on, Carranza in an open letter announced that "suspension of

14 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 30 May 1914, File 812.00/23450, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 31 May 1914, File 812.00/23452, Ibid; New York Times, 30 May 1914; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 2 June 1914, File 812.00/23455, RDS, RG59, NA.

15 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 24 June 1914, File 812.00/23487, RDS, RG59, NA.
hostilities] would accrue only to the benefit of Huerta....". By sending representatives to the Niagara conference, Carranza gave the mediators responsibility for refusing Constitutionalist representation and consequently continuing hostilities in Mexico.  

Carranza felt that the war should be pressed, ignoring Wilson's envoys and representatives. The Constitutionalists doubted that the United States would use force to ensure an armistice. Furthermore, Carranza's lack of representation at the conference maintained a position independent from outside influences.

Throughout the conference the struggle over armistice played an important role. The United States delegates frequently complained that mediation was "practically impossible while active hostilities continued." The mediators and American delegates even suggested an embargo against Mexico to prevent arms from reaching either Huerta or Carranza, a policy which Wilson had unsuccessfully tried.


18 *New York Times*, 23 May 1914; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 29 May 1914, File 812.00/23452g, *RDS*, RG59, NA.

19 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 1 June 1914, File 812.00/23453, *RDS*, RG59, NA.

20 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 25 May 1914, Link, *Papers*, p. 75.
Carranza's refusal of an armistice, combined with his insistence on sending delegates to the conference, strongly rebuffed the ABC envoys. Thus, these diplomats did not wish to renew the invitation, certainly not without some assurance of acceptance. The mediators also believed the Constitutionalisists would ultimately agree with the United States and huertista delegates to accept any plan of settlement, regardless of the armistice. The New York Times supported this view. It further suggested that when Huerta fled, he would sack the national treasury. Since United States recognition could provide the stability needed for international loans, the author of the Times article claimed that the United States would prevail. 21

The American delegation introduced several issues to persuade the mediators to change their minds. They cited the 1907 Hague Conference ruling that armistice need not be a prerequisite to mediation "...unless suspension is provided for by special agreement." 22 Although the mediators recognized the rule, they claimed that it did not apply when, as the mediators had done, the terms of mediation were stated in advance. 23


22 Secretary of State to Woodrow Wilson, 19 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 47; Secretary of State to Mediators, 30 May 1914, File 812.00/23452h, RDS, RG59, NA.

23 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 31 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 124.
Regardless, the mediators refused to budge from their stated position. When it appeared that the conference might have reached a total impasse, the American delegate asked if Carranza might assent to participating in the conference with the understanding that within a certain number of days he would call a cessation of hostilities. Wilson vetoed the idea and suggested that it might be useful "to have the Mexican delegates feel that things will settle themselves if they do not promptly come to terms." 24

Besides the Constitutionalists' general refusal, the armistice issue arose three other times during the conference. The first incident occurred shortly after acceptance of mediation. Throughout early May 1914, Roberto Esteva Ruiz, Huerta's Foreign Minister, complained of United States military activity at Veracruz to Chilean legation officers. When the mediators and the Chilean representatives inquired at the State Department, they received a twofold reply: the United States occupied Veracruz prior to mediation. As a consequence naval transports there did not constitute hostile actions. Secondly, since the United States was not technically at war with Mexico there could be no armistice. 25

24 Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, 20 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 49.

25 Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Woodrow Wilson, 21 May 1914, Link, Papers, 59; Sir Cecil A. Spring Rice to Sir Edward Grey, 25 May 1914, Ibid, p. 78; Secretary of State to Spanish Ambassador Juan Riaño, 28 April 1914, File 812.00/23493A, RDS, RG59, NA; Mediators to Secretary of State, 6 May 1914, File 812.00/23427, USDS, Foreign Rela-
The second armistice issue concerned a lighthouse on the Isla de Lobos off of Veracruz. After the United States put its military government in place, some of the local inhabitants feared that cooperation with the occupation force would cause retaliatory actions after evacuation. The Mexican staff of the Isla de Lobos lighthouse consequently abandoned their post. Fearing a shipwreck without the lighthouse, the United States Army simply dispatched a contingent to occupy the facility. On 9 May 1914, the Huerta government protested the action. The United States fully explained the circumstances surrounding the occupation: the only reason they took the lighthouse was to prevent an interruption of commerce. Delegates Lamar and Lehmann informed the conference that the United States would be happy to turn the lighthouse over to any responsible Mexican authority.26

Lastly, as the military campaigns of the Constitutionalist generals spread southward, the seaport of Tampico

26 Mediators to José López Portillo, 29 April 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 22; Roberto Esteva Ruíz to Mediators, 9 May 1914, Ibid, p. 85; Mediators to Secretary of State, 9 May 1914, File 812.00/23429, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Mediators, 12 May 1914, File 812.00/23430, Ibid; Mediators to Secretary of State, 14 May 1914, File 812.00/23431, Ibid.
fell. Both Huerta and Carranza required arms. Since Huerta could not use Veracruz, Tampico's fall to the Constitutionalists put more stress on Huerta as his supplies dwindled. On 6 June 1914, Spanish Ambassador Riaño (representing Huerta in the United States during the diplomatic break) reported to the State Department that Huerta intended to blockade Tampico. The United States informed the mediators that it could not "recognize the legality of the proposed blockade." Bryan also asked the Spanish Ambassador to use his influence to dissuade Huerta of such action in order to prevent losses to large oil concerns in Mexico. Yet Bryan noted that such a blockade in Tampico would be "...helpful to Huerta and hurtful to the constitutionalists only." The combined pressure worked; Huerta abandoned the blockade attempt.

The other major issue on which the conference bogged down concerned the formation of a provisional government. The plan recommended by the mediators called for Huerta to

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27 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 7 June 1914, File 812.00/234592, RDS, RG59, NA.

28 Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State, 18 May 1914, File 812.00/23433, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 6 June 1914, File 812.00/234582, Ibid.

29 Woodrow Wilson to Commissioners, 24 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 69; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 26 May 1914, File 812.00/23444, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 6 June 1914, File 812.00/234582, Ibid; Fred Rose to Secretary of State, 7 June 1914, File 812.00/23462, Ibid; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 7 June 1914, File 812.00/23461, Ibid.
name a new foreign minister. Huerta would resign, making the foreign minister president by constitutional succession.
The mediators then foresaw a junta joining the new president. Jointly they would hold a presidential election.  
To this plan Huerta's delegation recommended some modifications:

The foreign minister would be neutral; the panel to aid the provisional president would be split—two representatives from each of the factions.

The provisional government would declare a general and absolute political amnesty and call for immediate elections.

The new government would pay special attention to agricultural issues, electoral legislation, and primary and agricultural education.

The provisional government would be recognized immediately by the United States, and United States military forces would be evacuated within fifteen days.  

The United States objected. They could not and would not recognize a neutral government. Carrancista victories convinced the President and Secretary of State of overwhelming Constitutionalist support. Since the United States


31 H. Percival Dodge to Secretary of State, 9 June 1914, File 812.00/12221½, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 525.
refused further military intervention, any plan had to be implemented by a Constitutionalist. Also, the United States wanted a Constitutionalist majority on the board of the provisional government. Apropos of the Veracruz evacuation, the American delegates suggested that the military remain indefinitely, at least until arrangements for the evacuation had been made with the elected government.32

On 12 June 1914, Huerta's delegation responded sharply to the American comments. In an interview with Justice Lamar, Huerta representative Emilio Rabasa, without consulting Huerta, absolutely refused to turn over the government to the Constitutionalists. As to the Constitutionalists' representing a Mexican majority, Rabasa pointed out that carrancista areas only contained about five million inhabitants, while more than ten million people lived in the remainder. "The numerical majority is not...in favor of the revolution."33 Further, Rabasa claimed that if Carranza did have majority support, he could be elected under a neutral government. At the same time, he claimed, "A government of revolutionaries ... would turn an election any way it

32 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 30 June 1914, File 812.00/23490, RDS, RG59, NA.

wished. The public vote ...[would be] falsified and the result would be the election of another revolutionary."\textsuperscript{34}

The United States vehemently denied that President Wilson intended to sway the Mexican election. The Secretary of State explicitly stated that success for the provisional government depended on its independence from international influences. The United States government simply did not feel it could recognize a neutral provisional government because "...there can be no such persons in Mexico among men of force and character. All men of real stuff have taken sides."\textsuperscript{35}

The whole attitude of Huerta's representatives and the mediators surprised the Americans, who had "assumed that they would assent to the establishment of a government composed exclusively of Constitutionalists."\textsuperscript{36} The United States did not believe that a neutral government could exist. Also, Carranza would not accept a non-Constitutionalist government. Considering his military position, he could well

\textsuperscript{34} "The Mexican Conference", p. 547; J.R. Lamar to Secretary of State, 12 June 1914, File 812.00/12263*, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 527; "Moving Toward Peace in Mexico", The Literary Digest, Vol. 49, 4 July 1914, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{35} Commissioners to Secretary of State, 26 May 1914, File 812.00/23445, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 12 June 1914, File 812.00/23470, Ibid; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 28 May 1914, File 812.00/23446, Ibid; Holt, "Mediation Deadlock", p. 543; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 20 May 1914, File 812.00/23435, RDS, RG59, NA; "The Mexican Conference", p. 547; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 3 June 1914, File 812.00/23455A, RDS, RG59, NA; "Moving Toward Peace in Mexico", p. 7.

\textsuperscript{36} Commissioners to Secretary of State, 25 May 1914, File 812.00/23444, RDS, RG59, NA.
afford to ignore any plan he wished. A rejection ran the slight risk of U.S. intervention. 37

Not only did Carranza reject a neutral provisional government, but he also wanted control of a military government to oust Huerta and all huertista elements. Undaunted, Bryan sent futile messages to the special agents and consuls in northern Mexico, encouraging them to procure approval of the provisional government and the possibility of a neutral as provisional president. 38

During the diplomatic conflict, several newspapers suggested alternatives. While agreeing that there were no neutrals left in Mexico, one article suggested that the solution was to find a Constitutionalist whose "...character, standing, and conduct would make him acceptable to the other party." 39 Another suggested a bipartisan election committee in which the Constitutionalists watched elections in Huerta-controlled areas while Huertistas watched the north to insure just results. 40

37 "The Mexican Conference", The Independent, Vol. 78, 29 June 1914, p. 548; "The Mexican Conference", p. 511; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 27 May 1914, File 812.00/23445, RDS, RG59, NA.

38 "Negotiation Prolonged", The Independent, Vol. 78, 29 June 1914, p. 548; "The Mexican Conference", p. 511; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 27 May 1914, File 812.00/23445, RDS, RG59, NA.

39 New York Times, 1 June 1914.

40 "The Mexican Conference", p. 547; Secretary of State to Woodrow Wilson, 30 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 113; "Moving Toward Peace in Mexico", The Literary Digest, Vol. 49, 4 July
In an attempt to reach a conclusion, the mediators decided to select a provisional president. Among the candidates considered were: Pedro Lascurain, who should have succeeded Madero; Francisco Carbajal, Madero’s Chief Justice; Adolfo de la Lama, Huerta’s Treasury Minister; General Lauro Villar, who, although he had served Madero, remained neutral in the military conflict; Doctor Eduardo Liceaga, who was a “man of no weight;” General Emiliano Lojero, a huertista general; and General José Mier, Governor of Jalisco under Huerta.¹¹

President Wilson’s choices for the provisional presidency included General Felipe Angeles and Luis Cabrera. Angeles had been Undersecretary of War under Carranza in the Constituent cabinet, while Cabrera had served the Constituent cause in diplomatic and bureaucratic functions.¹²

The news service also commented on possible candidates. A reprinted editorial, reputedly from the Constitutionalist

¹¹ Secretary of State to Commissioners, 12 June 1914, File 812.00/23488, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 21 May 1914, File 812.00/23435, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 12 June 1914, File 812.00/23472, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 13 June 1914, File 812.00/23472, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 21 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 57; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 15 June 1914, File 812.00/23476B, RDS, RG59, NA.

¹² Commissioners to Secretary of State, 20 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 56; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 12 June 1914, File 812.00/23468, RDS, RG59, NA.
daily El Bravo, of Ciudad Juárez, tried to discredit Carranza, comparing him unfavorably to Villa. The article accused Carranza of misappropriation of the Constitutionalist treasury, while applauding Villa's heroic efforts. Other articles viewed the whole selection process less kindly, suggesting that "the American delegates [were] more interested in inquiring into the personal morals of constitutionalist leaders, determining how many of them were polygamists and inebriates, than in learning what evidences of capability to govern Mexico the Constitutionalists have shown."43

Not all observers of the conference criticized the proceedings. The New York Times considered it quite an accomplishment that the mediation had progressed to the point where candidates for the provisional presidency could be considered. News releases became scantier. The mediators had requested that all names considered be kept confidential since mere consideration could be ruinous to the man and his reputation. Anyone considered would face great pressures from both sides, Constitutionalists and huertistas. He might also face personal threats. Although frustrated, the news service complied.44

44 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 28 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 98; New York Times, 23 May 1914.
The mediation plan for a provisional president created another problem for the United States. If a Huerta-appointed foreign minister became Mexican President, Bryan feared recognition of the provisional government would imply recognition of Huerta. The Secretary of State anticipated such embarrassment that he suggested having both Huerta and his foreign minister resign, allowing Madero's foreign minister, Pedro Lascurain, to return to office as if the Huerta regime had been a bad dream.45

United States concern over recognition began on the first day of the conference when, in his opening address, Da Gama referred to Huerta's delegates as "representatives of the United Mexican States." Brazil had recognized Huerta as the de facto Mexican president, while the United States had not. American delegates even refused to sign the minutes until their objections to the designation were clearly acknowledged in the protocols. In fact, Bryan's plan for a provisional commission stemmed from the recognition issue.46

Mediation slowed to a crawl over the issues of Constitutionalist representation, armistice, and the provisional government. General impressions indicated that the end of the conference had arrived. According to one Mexican

45 "The Mexican Conference", p. 511; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 29 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 99.
46 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 29 May 1914, File 812.00/23446, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 30 May 1914, Link, Papers, p. 115.
representative, the only danger to the conference would have been if Wilson, Huerta, or Carranza, "the three pig-headed men in the situation," had repudiated mediation. Wilson negated the provisional government and the armistice. Huerta refused a Constitutionalist majority in the provisional government. Carranza denied the very idea of a provisional government and the armistice. With none of the parties willing to compromise, mediation was deadlocked.

CHAPTER 4

WHEN DIPLOMACY AND REALITY DO NOT MEET

Although deadlocked over Carranza’s refusal to cease warring on Huerta and the mediators’ refusal to admit Carranza without an armistice, the diplomats continued to grapple with the complex issues. They showed great ingenuity in conserving diplomatic honor while trying to accomplish a meaningful goal: internal and external peace, and reform in Mexico. As the weeks passed, the mediators lessened their expectation. Finally they resorted to protocols pointing out goals and means to these goals leaving actual implementation to Wilson, Carranza, and Huerta. The mid-June deadlock led many observers to offer their advice. The Independent suggested that Wilson, Huerta, and Carranza allow the mediators to become binding arbitrators in the selection of a provisional president. If the United States threw its complete backing to this government, neither Carranza nor Huerta could not dislodge it. Others, including the New York
Times, counseled patience: either Villa or Carranza would reach Mexico City and solve the whole problem militarily.¹

The mediators had hoped to solve in part the question of Constitutionalist representation. Carranza's agents at Buffalo entered into discussions with the United States delegation. These talks covered the internal issues of land reform and the provisional president. The dual conference idea also bypassed the armistice required by the mediators. Since the Constitutionalisits did not actually attend the Niagara conference, the mediators took no official notice of their presence. Diplomatic protocol remained intact.²

The illusion of diplomatic success quickly faded. On 16 June 1914, after a four-hour meeting in Buffalo, the American delegates realized that Carranza absolutely refused to accept mediation on Mexican internal affairs. No matter the outcome, the Constitutionalisits "would not accept as a gift anything which the Mediators could give them."³ The Conference inspired no confidence in the carrancistas: "They felt the mediators had blundered, and that failure was certain."⁴


³ Commissioners to Secretary of State, 16 June 1914, File 812.00/23477, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 538.

Subsequent meetings only reaffirmed carrancista insistence on Mexican self-determination.\textsuperscript{5}

While the American delegates met with failure at Buffalo, the mediators took a short break following the sessions on 17 June 1914. Da Gama and Suárez Mujica occupied themselves with Conference paperwork and sightseeing. Naón journeyed to the Harvard and Yale commencement exercises, receiving honorary LL.D. degrees at each. On his return trip, Naón stopped at Washington to discuss the deadlock with Secretary of State Bryan and President Wilson. After several hours of discussion, Naón emerged triumphant. Mediation would continue, covering only external problems.\textsuperscript{6}

Upon reconvening on 20 June 1914, the mediators pressed for a Veracruz evacuation timetable. Naón proposed a United States evacuation thirty days before the election set by the provisional government. The United States disagreed, even though both Huerta and Carranza refused to hold elections while the Americans remained on Mexican soil. The American delegates reasoned that United States responsibility to protect European property precluded an early withdrawal. A Veracruz evacuation schedule seemed distant.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5} "Mediation at Niagara and After", \textit{Review of Reviews (American)}, Vol. 50, July 1914, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{6} "Negotiations Prolonged", \textit{The Independent}, Vol. 78, 29 June 1914, p. 547; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 21 June 1914, File 812.00/23483, \textit{RDS}, RG59, NA.

\textsuperscript{7} Commissioners to Secretary of State, 27 June 1914, File 812.00/23489, \textit{RDS}, RG59, NA; Quirk, Honor, p. 161.
To avoid another impasse, the United States suggested omitting from any protocol a clause referring to American withdrawal. For Conference records, the evacuation would be subject to negotiations between the United States and the provisional government. In a conciliatory gesture, the United States refused any indemnity or salute, virtually repudiating the official cause for invading Veracruz. Since the United States requested no indemnity, neither Huerta nor Carranza felt obligated to fight the American forces.8

The provisional presidency remained a problem. On 21 June 1914, Naón announced a plan which might resolve the conflict: a face-to-face meeting between huertistas and carrancistas in which a provisional government and internal reforms would top the agenda. Previously, Naón had discussed the idea with the First Chief's representatives in Washington, who assured him that the carrancistas would work with the huertistas. At Buffalo, Mexican Constitutionalist representative Luís Cabrera "felt sure that the result of the discussion between the Mexicans would be an agreement on Mexican internal affairs."9 The mediators supported the

8 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 23 June 1914, File 812.00/23486, RDS, RG59, NA; "The End at Niagara", The Independent, Vol. 79, 13 July 1914, p. 55.

9 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 22 June 1914, File 812.00/23485, RDS, RG59, NA.
plan. It also adhered to earlier statements from President Wilson.¹⁰

A conference between the two Mexican factions held the key to the solution of many potential problems for the United States. Constitutionalist military successes placed governmental power within the reach of Carranza and his followers. The impending resignation of Huerta confronted his supporters with political ruin, thus realizing most of Wilson's policy objectives.¹¹

Naón's plan shone as a panacea for the stalled Conference. The international conflict seemed resolved and the internal issues appeared solvable. The mediators were even willing to referee the meetings between the huertistas and carrancistas if the First Chief wanted to send envoys. As early as 22 June 1914, the mediators had sent Carranza a message strongly recommending a face-to-face meeting. The State Department added its endorsement of this plan.¹²

Carranza replied that he alone could not decide to negotiate with Huerta. When he began his fight against "the Usurper," he issued the Plan de Guadalupe, indicating he would fight until Huerta was driven from power. To change


the plan required the consent of his generals. Furthermore, Carranza hoped to avoid dissension within the Constitutionalists ranks. If he decided to deal with Huerta unilaterally, his own forces might mutiny.\textsuperscript{13}

The mediators had resolved the United States-Mexican dispute as far as possible. They believed Carranza would agree to a meeting with the huertistas. Only Carranza's response remained for complete success. After several days of waiting the mediators decided to formalize the agreements, erroneously believing Carranza could, or would, agree.\textsuperscript{14}

In all, four protocols resulted from the Conference. The protocols represented the minutes of each plenary session.\textsuperscript{15} The first contained the minutes of the opening session, the goals, procedures, and addresses.\textsuperscript{16} It also contained the United States' objection to Huerta's representatives being referred to as "representatives of the Mexican people." The second protocol announced Huerta's willingness to retire if that would aid the cause of peace. The third

\textsuperscript{13} Rafael Zubarán to Carranza, 27 June 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 144; H. Percival Dodge to Secretary of State, 3 July 1914, File 812.00/12411, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 554.

\textsuperscript{14} Venustiano Carranza to Generals, 29 June 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 146.

\textsuperscript{15} Since at the informal meetings between the mediators and either the American or Mexican delegates no stenographer kept notes, the protocols represent the only official record of the conference proceedings.

\textsuperscript{16} "End at Niagara", The Independent, Vol. 79, 13 July 1914, p. 55.
Conference protocol simply stated that the provisional government "shall exercise governmental powers until the inauguration of a constitutional president" and provided for immediate recognition.\(^1\) The mediators held the third plenary session in an effort to push mediation along.\(^2\)

The last protocol acknowledged the plan for a conference between huertista and carrancista representatives to select a provisional government. The United States would not claim any indemnity or any other international satisfaction that might have resulted from the Tampico and Veracruz affairs. The protocol noted that the provisional government would proclaim an absolute amnesty to foreigners for any political offenses during the civil war and negotiate an international commission to settle claims. Lastly, the mediating governments and the United States would recognize the provisional government.\(^3\)

With the international dispute seemingly resolved, all that remained was internal reforms. Huerta's delegates expressed their willingness to meet Carranza to address these problems. As soon as Carranza sent an affirmative reply all


\(^2\) Secretary of State to Commissioners, 7 June 1914, File 812.00/23444, RDS, RG59, NA.

\(^3\) H. Percival Dodge to Secretary of State, 1 July 1914, File 812.00/12395, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 550.
would be happily settled. For the Niagara conference only signing the protocols remained.

The United States delegation raised an interesting problem regarding its signatures. Affirmation of the protocols implied an agreement between the United States and Huerta's government. Justice Lamar pointed out the difficulty involved in agreeing with someone whose very existence one denied. The problem boiled down to the question of how to agree to the protocol without implying recognition. 20

The United States delegates refused to sign the protocols until they received a clarification from the State Department. Naón and the other mediators took offense at the United States' hesitancy to sign. Once the American delegates explained the difficulties, the ABC envoys seemed to understand, although they pushed for a solution. 21

At last Secretary of State Bryan informed Lamar and Lehmann that the "president directs them to sign the minutes," stipulating that "they do so with the express understanding that nothing contained therein is to be construed

20 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 30 June 1914, Link, Papers, p. 225; Lamar to Secretary of State, 30 June 1914, Link, Papers, p. 241.

21 Commissioners to Secretary of State, 29 June 1914, Link, Papers, p. 225; Secretary of State to Commissioners, 31 May 1914, File 812.0023451, RDS, RG59, NA; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 30 June 1914, File 812.00/23491, RDS, RG59, NA; J.R. Lamar to Secretary of State, 1 July 1914, Link, Papers, p. 241; Commissioners to Secretary of State, 1 July 1914, File 812.00/23492, RDS, RG59, NA.
as a recognition of the [Huerta] government." With that proviso, to the general relief of all, the United States delegates signed the protocols. The protocols signed, only Carranza's reply remained. The mediators, feeling their job to be finished, adjourned the Niagara conference on 2 July 1914.

At the farewell luncheon, Ambassador Da Gama stated that "the essential points of our program—that dealing with the international phase of the conflict—is practically settled." Unfortunately for the complete success of the conference, the international questions could be all that mediation dealt with Carranza's generals replied negatively to dealing with Huerta. They replied that they would rather continue the war. Moreover, Carranza informed Washington that the desired reforms could not come from a provisional government. Only through the strength of an informal military government could any real progress be made toward internal reforms.

22 Secretary of State to Commissioners, 1 July 1914, RDS, RG59, NA.


Although Carranza refused to meet Huerta's representatives, Huerta tried to comply with the protocols as far as possible. On 10 July 1914, Cardoso de Oliveira reported that the Mexican Congress had read and approved the protocols. Later that day, Huerta appointed Francisco Carbajal to the position of Foreign Affairs' Minister. Five days later, Huerta resigned, giving Carbajal the presidency. 26

After an interview with Carbajal, Oliveira informed the State Department that the new government was disposed to make arrangements with the Constitutionalists. Carbajal hoped to hold talks in Niagara, using the ABC mediators and the Mexican delegates already there. On communicating Carbajal's offer to the First Chief, Secretary of State Bryan found that Carranza would meet with Carbajal's representatives but suggested a conference in Saltillo, Coahuila,

Relations, p. 560; General Cándido Aquilar to Venustiano Carranza, 4 July 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 155; John R. Silliman to Secretary of State, 10 July 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 168; Venustiano Carranza to Luis Eulalio, Luis Gutiérrez, and Marrano Anieta, 13 July 1914, Fabela, Documentos, p. 175.

instead of Niagara. Carranza also offered to suspend military operations during the talks.27

On 27 July 1914, Carbajal appointed General Lauro Villar and Lic. David Gutiérrez Allende to meet with Carranza. Although Carranza dealt more flexibly with the Carbajal government, he would not stop his march on Mexico City unless Carbajal unconditionally surrendered. With federal forces in disarray, Carbajal had little choice but to capitulate. On 15 August 1914, Constitutionalist forces under Alvaro Obregón entered Mexico City.28

Even after Carranza and his Constitutionalis controlled Mexico City, Wilson experienced difficulties with the Mexican government. Wilson decided to leave United States forces at Veracruz until after an election. Wilson demanded guarantees against reprisals against the Veracruz population who had aided the American occupation forces. Carranza had previously declared that no election would be held while the United States occupied Veracruz. Again, it appeared the United States and Mexico had reached an impasse.29

27 Cardoso de Oliveira to Secretary of State, 10 July 1914, File 812.00/12464, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 561; Cardoso de Oliveira to Secretary of State, 16 July 1914, File 812.00/12516, RDS, RG59, NA; Secretary of State to Cardoso de Oliveira, 20 July 1914, File 812.00/12552, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 566, Link, Progressive Era, p. 128.

28 Quirk, Revolution, p. 50-54; Secretary of State to Silliman, 27 July 1914, File 812.00/12612, USDS, Foreign Relations, p. 572.

To resolve the diplomatic deadlock, Secretary of State Bryan suggested a meeting of the major Mexican military figures to select a provisional government. On 1 October 1914, a "Junta de Jefes" met at Aquascalientes. Bryan hoped this Convention would reconcile the various revolutionaries. After an initial showing of unity, earlier disagreements and outright conflicts broke out anew. The Conventions split over views on what course the revolution should take. At the convention, Paulino Martínez, leader of the zapatista delegation insulted Obregón and Carranza, claiming Zapata and Villa to be the real Revolutionary leaders.30

Carranza's relationship with Villa had been strained previously. The two had disagreed about the Veracruz occupation. While Carranza protested the American action, Villa felt there to be no threat to Mexican sovereignty. Later, after the Battle of Zacatecas (20-23 June 1914), the Constitutionalists were close to taking Mexico City. However, because of a squabble between Carranza and Villa, Carranza refused the coal Villa's army needed to move into the capital. This permitted Obregón to take Mexico City first and fairly ruptured relations within constitutionalist ranks.31

30 Quirk, Honor, p. 166-167.

After this, the gulf between the two groups widened over revolutionary goals. Carranza had envisioned a political revolution, focusing on universal suffrage and "no re-election," while Villa and Zapata concentrated mainly on social issues. This divergence ended any possible conciliation as the junta chose Eulalia Gutiérrez as its candidate. Carranza could not abide by the selection and withdrew with his supporters, while Villa supported Gutiérrez. Mexico again geared for war, this time between Carranza and Villa.

Carranza then faced the same situation as had Huerta. He needed Veracruz to obtain arms and munitions to fight Villa in the north and Zapata in the south. In desperation, Carranza finally acceded to the guarantees Wilson demanded for evacuation. The U.S. military authority in Veracruz had done a remarkable job of updating accounting practices there. The customs house became much more profitable. The military government had saved the revenues to be turned over to whichever Mexican government the port would go to. Carranza needed this money. Also, as 1914 progressed, Wilson turned his attention from Mexico to war-torn Europe. In the light of the First World War, Mexico's problems seemed minor. Finally on 23 November 1914, the United States evacuated Veracruz, leaving carrancista General Cándido Aquilar in charge.

Later at the two battles of Celaya, April 1915, carrancista forces under Alvaro Obregón routed Villa, giving
Carranza predominant power. Although Carranza now led Mexico, the United States refrained from recognizing the Constitutionalist regime. Wilson desired a fulfillment of promised internal reforms.

Although Mexico had not instituted all the reforms the United States desired, Wilson granted Carranza recognition in October 1915. Carranza had effective control over key areas of Mexico. While Zapata would not be assassinated by carrancista Colonel Jesús Guajardo until 1919, Villa had been reduced to the status of a regional leader. Further, even if Wilson and Carranza did not agree on Mexico's needs, they agreed on Huerta's villainy. This shared view provided a basic understanding between the two. Consequently, when the ABC powers joined by Guatemala, Bolivia, and Uruguay solicited American acknowledgement of Carranza, Wilson granted recognition.


CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

When Dominico Da Gama adjourned the Conference, the mediators left Niagara on a hopeful note. They believed that the ABC alliance had passed its trial by fire, proving itself to be a helpful, stabilizing force in spreading democracy and peace throughout the hemisphere. The foreign press, especially in Latin America, generally praised the Conference for the long-awaited cooperation between the United States and the rest of Latin America. If Huerta, Wilson, and Carranza had fulfilled their parts of the protocols, Mexico would have seen respite from the Revolution, and a provisional president would have been peacefully elected and entrusted with the task of implementing reforms and negotiating the United States out of Veracruz.

Yet none of these positive results lasted more than temporarily. The ABC powers could not enforce the protocols, and neither Carranza nor Wilson felt obligated to abide by them anyway. Internal concerns, finally, dictated the degree to which the disputants abided by any Conference protocol.
Furthermore, World War I even brought an end to the ABC entente. Although later actions validated the Conference goals—a stable Mexican government, social reform, and U.S. withdrawal all occurred—these were not in any way related to the Conference. Neither the mediators nor Wilson knew Mexican conditions well enough to see that their efforts were futile from the start. Ultimately, the Conference only attested to the contradiction inherent in dictating ideals of peace, liberty, and reform to another society.

The Conference appeared particularly popular with the Argentines. Ambassador Naón called it a "demonstration of Pan-American solidarity."¹ His superior, Foreign Minister Eduardo Muratura, considered it the best hope for the future of Inter-American policy. The United States, in accepting mediation, seemed to place itself on par with the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Another observer believed the Conference ended Latin American political tutelage. The "...great result of the ABC mediation, [was] South American assumption of her share in the responsibilities and development of the Monroe Doctrine."² Colonel Edward Mandell House, an influential Wilson foreign policy advisor, suggested to the president that a continentalization of the Doctrine would


improve relations in Latin America. The ABC conference fulfilled the requirement to achieve this end and, in the process, rejuvenated the Doctrine. A continentalization could easily evolve into a "Concert of America" or "a High Court of Public Opinion for the Western Hemisphere." The ABC protocols appeared to sponsor a closer relationship between the United States and the Latin American nations.\(^3\)

Foreign news services praised the Conference. Even the Argentine press, generally very critical of United States activities, spoke highly of the mediation. The Buenos Aires daily, La Frensa, hailed the Niagara Conference as the first occasion of the United States subordinating it interests to those of the other nations in the hemisphere. The London Times also noted the importance of the conference to inter-American relations. "President Wilson's acceptance of mediation tended to allay the alarms and misgivings in reference to imperialism."\(^4\) After the United States accepted mediation, a friendlier tone marked the comment of South American press. As one Colombian diplomat noted in an Argentine journal, "Twenty years earlier the Latin American countries would not have dreamed of offering mediation to the United States, nor the United States of accepting it." Prior to the Conference Latin America feared the United States as

\(^3\) Ibid, p. 887; "Doubts about Mexican Mediation", The Literary Digest, Vol. 48, 30 May 1914, p. 1305.

an imperialistic superior. Equal participation in the ABC Conference helped allay such perceptions.  

Of the topics covered, United States' evacuation of Veracruz proved the major external Conference objective. While in the protocols appearances led observers to believe the United States would soon evacuate, Wilson desired leverage against the Carranza government. Carranza required the port for logistical reasons since he faced Villa's internal rebellion. Also, he needed the port revenues to back Constitutionalist currency and stabilize the regime economically. Carranza had to accede to Wilson's conditions before the United States agreed to withdraw. The United States could not remain indefinitely in Veracruz, yet mediation failed to dislodge the occupational force. United States forces remained in Veracruz until 23 November 1914. Only after Carranza guaranteed the safety of the Veracruz population did Wilson permit evacuation.  

Protocol enforcement posed the other major obstacle to Conference success. The mediating nations had no political or economic clout to compel the Mexicans or the United States to accept the settlements. Hence, although the protocols presented an answer, Carranza, Wilson, and Huerta felt no obligation to heed them.

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6 Quirk, Honor, p. 161, 165.
Unfortunately, all positive estimations of the Conferences erred. Even though the mediators believed the Conference had great potential for success, in a strictly practical sense it failed. The mediators failed to reckon with Mexican passions regarding social revolution and the personalities of Wilson and Carranza.

The divergent personalities involved proved the most problematic point of the Conference. On the American side, Wilson desired to control the Conference. He gave his representatives little power; they had to refer all questions and comments to the State Department and the White House. Within the first week of the Conference, Wilson sent a confidential memorandum to the mediators indicating his intent to dictate the Conference results. His uncompromising and manipulative attitude presented several roadblocks. Rather than considering meaningful leadership qualities of potential Mexican provisional presidents, delegates Lehmann and Lamar sought information for the President on the candidates' moral rectitude. Moreover, conflicts over phraseology inhibited diplomatic understanding.\footnote{Cline, \textit{U.S. and Mexico}, p. 162.}

On the Mexican side, Carranza's suspicion of the Conference aggravated the negotiations. His refusal to treat peacefully with Huerta and his rightful negation of internal topics as appropriate mediation material hindered any real progress. The mediators could not address adequately the
entire Mexican issue without participation of the major Mexican parties. Without carrancista participation, Huerta seemed more vulnerable.\(^8\)

With the Conference's failure to provide a lasting solution to the Mexican problems, a stronger hemispheric relationship seemed the only positive result. However even the unity sponsored by the ABC mediation proved brief. For Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, the Conference provided a cement for entente. Yet in 1917, Brazil separated itself from the entente by joining the United States in declaring war on the central powers while Argentina and Chile remained neutral. Afterwards the alliance never regrouped. Nor did the heralded cooperation ever quite materialize into a "concert of America." At best the conference proved little more than a precursor of later policies like the Good Neighbor Policy and the Alliance for Progress, both of which focused on cooperation.\(^9\)

While the Conference provided answers to the matters they addressed, none of the planks in the protocols was implemented. The mediators considered many laudable ideas, but they could not force a meeting between the two Mexican factions or impose U.S. evacuation of Veracruz. Wilson and

\(^8\) Quirk, Revolution, p. 50.

the mediators desired Mexico to implement positive reforms in several areas. They considered political reconstruction very important, wanting to prevent another dictatorship like that of Porfirio Díaz. One attraction of Madero's revolutionary platform forbade presidential re-election. Wilson especially sought the establishment of democratic institutions in Mexico. He believed that if Mexico adopted these institutions, it could then follow the United States' lead in progressive self-determination. This self-determination would help solve the social problems which had fostered the Revolution. The conference, in part, concerned itself with creating a government impervious to the kind of dictatorial manipulations that Mexico had seen under the Díaz regime. 10

The Díaz dictatorship had forced progress on Mexico, particularly in extractive industries and railroad transportation. However, the lower classes and the Indians reaped few or no rewards from these advances. His program featured centralized authority and extensive industrialization of Mexican extractive sectors. Since Mexico lacked sufficient capital, Díaz offered enticements to foreign investors. These concessions included overlooking numerous infractions of working codes and allowing abuse of native labor.

Despite the hardships imposed by the Díaz regime, Mexico faced greater hardships at the time of the Conference than

before the Revolution. The initial war mobilization brought destruction of foreign properties by vengeful Mexicans. Crops went unattended and industries languished. By 1914, war had destroyed much of Mexico's economic infrastructure.

The ABC mediators recognized these problems and tried to supply meaningful answers. Agrarian reform and education to improve land productivity figured prominently in the mediators' concerns. They urged peaceful reform rather than continued bloody war. 11

Ironically, most of the internal reforms suggested by the Conference found later implementation. The Mexican Constitutional Assembly wrote the Queretaro Constitution of 1917 to reform the political system. To prevent another thirty-year dictatorship, a no-reelection clause appeared. The Constitution spoke of democratic goals and ideals to make Mexican government more representative and responsive to Mexican citizenry. The Conference, at best, only pointed out problem areas for later improvements. 12

Even prior to the 1917 Constitutional Convention, Carranza issued his additions to ease immediate social problems. These decrees focused on particular problems like the 1915 "Law of restoration and donation of Ejidos." This legislation pressed for agrarian reform, attempting to

11 Slayden, "ABC Mediation", p. 150.
12 Ibid.
restore tribal land to various Indian groups. As time passed, more legislation tried to lessen social inequities.\textsuperscript{13}

The mediators and observers believed the conference could succeed because they had honestly tried to deal with Mexico's problems. The mediators, however, simply did not understand the situation in Mexico. For the Conference, the foremost problem consisted of Carranza's armistice refusal. The mediators refused to consider any negotiation without cessation of hostilities. Carranza desired total power, something the mediators would not grant. The First Chief preferred finding answers on the battlefield, not in the conference room. The mediators could not realize that the Mexican situation demanded a strong leader, the kind of leadership which could only be provided by military strength.

Consequently, the mediators themselves set up the real obstacles for any desirable settlement. Over the protestations of Carranza, they insisted on covering internal reforms, a usurpation of Mexican sovereignty. This undercut the growing spirit of Mexicanidad, or Mexican nationalism, a by-product of the Revolution. Furthermore, the mediators had little knowledge of conditions in Mexico at the time. Only seventy-year-old Suárez Mujica had officially served there, and his memory left much to be desired. The mediators' \textsuperscript{13} Cline, \textit{U.S. and Mexico}, p. 165.
inflexibility truly hurt the Conference's chances for success.

Fundamentally, the ABC conference demonstrates many characteristics of Wilsonian policy. The President truly believed that if democratic institutions could be transplanted from the United States, the Mexicans would create a stable, fair government. Wilson did not consider the masses of illiterate Mexicans, many of whom did not even speak Spanish. Although he considered the economic gulf between rich and poor, he did not assess from consular reports the social unrest which in part gave rise to the Revolution. In 1914, no "primary and agrarian education program" could have solved the difficulties. For all of Wilson's positive goals and high ideals, he could not put them into practice.14

Equally important, the Conference underscored a diplomatic dilemma for the United States. Wilson desired Mexico to have a good government, a democracy upholding the ideals of liberty, equality, and self-determination. Yet United States ideals and actions clashed. To force Mexico to be free, Wilson tried to dictate his vision of democracy, disregarding Mexican realities. As one observer wryly commented, the conference seemed to change from the ABC nations being mediators with the United States and Huerta as disputants, to a United States mediation between Huerta and Carranza with the ABC envoys being observers. The United

14 Quirk, Revolution, p. 48.
States took this role to comply with its ideals, in the process negating the very self-determination it stood for. Throughout the Conference, the United States witnessed a conflict between actions and ideals. Wilson hoped to help Mexico and the Mexican people achieve a better government. Moreover, he wanted to help the mediators choose the best course to solve Mexican problems and evacuate the United States forces from Veracruz. However, his actions, in keeping with United States' self interest, only hindered an accord. The mediators and Wilson never realized that they had attempted to right an instance of U.S. intervention by an even greater and more direct form of intervention. Wilson and the mediators never saw the irony inherent in forcing a society to adopt foreign standards of political and social reform. The fundamental error of the whole ABC conference consisted in the blatant attempt to usurp Mexican sovereignty.  

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