

TRIUMPH OF THE VANQUISHED: PANCHO VILLA'S ARMY IN  
REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO

by

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## ABSTRACT

“Triumph of the Vanquished: Pancho Villa’s Army in Revolutionary Mexico” studies the origins and formation of Francisco “Pancho” Villa’s División del Norte in the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Coahuila during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. It demonstrates the manner by which guerilla cells based on a military hierarchy grew to brigade-size fighting units and later morphed into the División. Once fully functional, the División became a formidable force that achieved legendary status in Mexico’s history.

After tracing the *villistas*’ rise and decline, the dissertation examines the lives of Pancho Villa’s followers after 1920 when many became colonists in lands granted to them by Mexico’s government. In 1920, the *villistas* signed a formal peace agreement with the central government and received properties on four colonies, two in Chihuahua and two in Durango. To analyze *villismo* past 1920, the dissertation focuses on El Pueblito, a colony located in the northwest region of Chihuahua. It highlights the lives of those *ex-villistas* turned agriculturalists, an aspect of the Revolution studied by only a few scholars.

The general intent of this work is to reveal that *ex-villistas* -- those who were not a part of the surrender process in 1920 and had separated from the División after their defeat at the battle of Celaya in 1915 -- continued their political struggle in Chihuahua past 1920 and beyond World War II as a part of the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, an institution created in 1946 by veterans of the Revolution in the state. As influential and active members of the institution, the *ex-villistas* pressured local and

national government for veteran assistance. At the same time, the former revolutionaries succeeded, through their involvement in the Unificación, in maintaining a *villista* legacy, participating as they did in local events and in the construction of statues throughout the state dedicated to their fallen leader.

## INTRODUCTION

Francisco “Pancho” Villa ranks among the most well-known revolutionaries of the twentieth-century. During the Mexican Revolution, men and women under his command took up arms to participate in the overthrow of Porfirio Díaz’s dictatorship and, beginning in 1913, the División del Norte coalesced as a grass-roots fighting force. Led by Villa, the División became one of the most respected fighting forces in Mexico. But, in late 1915, the constitutionalist forces of Venustiano Carranza and Alvaro Obregón defeated the *villistas*. At that point, many *villistas* returned to their native regions while others remained with Pancho Villa to pursue a life of guerrilla warfare. Finally, in 1920, Villa signed a peace agreement with the federal government and the remaining *villistas* disbanded.

While much has been written on Villa and his place in the Mexican Revolution, little is known about the men and women who comprised his army. The scholarship regarding the Revolution of 1910 and its aftermath has primarily focused on prominent leaders, political figures, and important businessmen. The rank-and-file of the large military divisions have been largely ignored. This is true of even the most noted scholar of *villismo*, Friedrich Katz.<sup>1</sup> Further, the works on the Revolution in Chihuahua during

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<sup>1</sup> While Katz has carefully examined the history of *villismo* in Chihuahua, his study has, for the most part, focused on the principal leaders of the División del Norte. Moreover, his analysis does not provide information concerning the different rebel cells that later grew into the brigades that comprised the División. Others, such as Alan Knight, streamline their analysis of events in Chihuahua completely omitting the military campaign of the División as well as any analysis concerning the social composition of the *villistas*. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Juan Bautista Vargas Arreola, *A Sangre y Fuego con Pancho Villa* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, S.A. de C.V., 1988); Arturo Ramírez Langle, *El ejército villista* (México: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1961); Alberto Calzadías Barrera, *Hechos reales de la Revolución*, primer tomo (México: Editorial Patria, S.A., 1961), 99; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Pedro Salmerón, *La División del Norte: La tierra, los hombres y la*

1913 (the center of early *villista* activities) tend to treat *villistas* as unruly and opportunistic individuals lacking any direction. One historian, in particular, has even questioned the degree of revolutionary consciousness in the armies that sprang up in northern Mexico in 1913.<sup>2</sup>

This neglect of the common soldier has led to a dearth of information regarding the social composition of the revolutionary forces. Who were the men and women that made up the División del Norte? Where did they come from and what motivated them to leave their homes and join Villa in his fight against Victoriano Huerta's dictatorship? What occupations did they have prior to their involvement in the Revolution? How did the División del Norte structure itself and how did the *villista* campaign unfold in the state of Chihuahua? These questions have never been addressed in a comprehensive manner.

In his book, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution*, historian John Mason Hart dedicates less than a page to the construction of the División del Norte and the military events that transpired from 1913 to 1914 (a crucial time period that witnessed the recruitment and growth of Villa's formidable army). The rebel cells that materialized in Chihuahua's regions in 1913 as well as the ex-

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*historia de un ejercito del pueblo* (México: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., 2006); and E. Brondo Whitt, *La División del Norte, 1914 por un testigo presencial* (Mexico: Editorial Lumen, 1940); Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1910-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); Alonso Domínguez Rascón, *La política de reforma agraria en Chihuahua, 1910-1924: Sus efectos hasta 1940* (Mexico, D.F.: CONACULTA-INAH: Plaza y Valdes, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Katz contends that revolutionary armies in northern Mexico in 1913 lacked a system that provided a political agenda. "It is difficult to determine either the revolutionary consciousness or the civilian link of the northern revolutionary soldiers and officers. There was no system of political commissars or political parties to indoctrinate them, as was the case with the communist revolutionary peasant armies. Nor were there religious leaders to carry our similar labor, as in the Iranian army." See Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 305.

*maderistas* who formed them escaped Hart's attention. But he does offer a terse description concerning the amalgam of *norteños* that united against Huerta, explaining:

The División del Norte and its officers were initially peasant rural working-class, cowboys, artisans, and small-scale commercial farmers in origin and their following was a people in arms. They crisscrossed the northern steppes of Mexico on horses and, later, in trains, carrying informal and even extended family groups with them. The men, with some women and children, were the fighters. The bulk of the women, children and aged performed logistical services. The División del Norte, like the great masses of Padre Hidalgo, marched toward the center against the government and the existing social order.<sup>3</sup>

Katz takes the position that many *villistas* had little or no ties to their communities. In support of the existing scholarship, Katz asserts that many of the *villistas* were persuaded to join the ranks of the División through incentives such as land and regular pay. His argument gives little credence to the fact that Villa personally recruited many men into service and maintained control of his forces through the use of regional chieftains.<sup>4</sup> That regional chieftains exercised power at the local level and that their relationship with locals transferred into the ranks of the División del Norte is important to the task of understanding the makeup of the División and its ranks.

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<sup>3</sup> Hart's description, while skillful and to the point, describes the División in broad terms, excluding individual participation and regional intricacies. John Mason Hart, *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 263.

<sup>4</sup> I will demonstrate that many *villistas* came from extended families and returned to their native regions after their service in the División. The *villista* ties to their regions of origin were quite strong, and in those instances where numerous family members joined the División, community ties were even stronger. The notion that people were pressed into service, or persuaded to join through pay and land, disassociates many *villistas* who joined to bring about change in their regions. They were recruited by local chieftains or willingly volunteered and joined the División del Norte. Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 290.

This study examines the ways in which popular forces developed primarily in Chihuahua, the state that is credited by historians as the birthplace of the Mexican Revolution. While the majority of the brigades in the División formed within the boundaries of the state, a few surfaced in the adjacent border regions of Coahuila and Sonora. A central goal of my research is to demonstrate that *villistas* played a crucial role in the revolutionary process, and were instrumental in producing political change at both the regional and national levels. Reinserting Chihuahua and its people into Mexican historiography helps give readers a more complete picture of the Revolution.

What happened to the revolutionaries of the División del Norte after the armed phase of the Revolution came to an end in 1920? How were *villistas* incorporated into Mexican society as members of a defeated revolutionary force? How did they make the transition from revolutionaries to citizens in re-constructed Mexico? Perhaps because the *villistas* were the vanquished, history has ignored their role as central figures in the formation of the Mexican state, as well as their contribution as productive citizens in the years after 1920. My work, therefore, examines the process through which the *villistas* successfully made that transition.

I contend that the members of the División del Norte reintegrated themselves into the social and economic realms of Chihuahuan society and influenced the development of the Mexican state. The transition from combatants to active citizens in the state formation process after the Revolution took place through individual choices as well as collective actions. The *ex-villistas* submitted petitions at the local and national level. They made sure the goals of the Revolution were met. As will be demonstrated, ex-

*villistas* exercised their right as Mexican citizens and accessed government programs in the years after revolutionary struggle.

My study adds to the historiographic understanding of the revolutionary process of 1913 in the state of Chihuahua and its border regions to the south, including Durango and Coahuila, and the areas to the north with the United States, by examining the formation of rebel cells that eventually morphed into the División del Norte. Also, my study adds to the body of works on state formation as it occurred in Mexico after the combative phase of the Revolution in 1920.<sup>5</sup> It does this by pursuing a much broader question: What happens to revolutionaries once combat ceases? What steps do rebels take to carry out goals that have been suspended?

In their studies of the municipality of Namiquipa, Chihuahua, scholars Daniel Nugent and Ana María Alonso independently demonstrated the intricate history of *villismo* as it pertained to the region and its peoples.<sup>6</sup> In the case of Nugent, his analysis focused on the efforts of ex-*villistas* to negotiate their status through local agrarian commissions in the years after 1920. While I follow this model, I expand it, incorporating the histories of other *villistas* in the División del Norte neglected by Nugent and Alonso. I go beyond the extant literature by examining the lives of former *villistas*

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<sup>5</sup> See Jennie Purnell, *Popular Movements and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico: The Agraristas and Cristeros of Michoacán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); Keith Brewster, *Militarism, Ethnicity, and Politics in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, 1917-1930* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2003); Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds. *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman, *Provinces of the Revolution: Essays on Regional Mexican History 1910-1929* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990).

<sup>6</sup> See Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995); Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartidges of the Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

who had separated themselves from the División's brigades after 1915 because of sickness, a loss of morale, and the desire to return to civilian life. More important, I analyze the military colonies granted to veterans where *villistas* endeavored to become successful citizens. I also examine the lives of those who became members of the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución in Chihuahua and left an indelible imprint on the myth and lore of *villismo*.

Chapter one explicates the reaction in Chihuahua of *ex-maderistas* to the death of Francisco Madero, and recounts how this enraged political element formed the numerous brigades that eventually formed the División del Norte. Chapter 2 discusses the structure of the División and the initial military campaign that resulted in the complete defeat of Victoriano Huerta's federal army in Chihuahua. Chapter 3 dissects the diplomacy of *villistas* from 1913 to 1915 to show how they dealt with foreign bureaucrats, primarily consular officers from the United States. Chapter 4 relates the surrender of *villistas* in 1920, and then goes on to study their subsequent lives in one of the agrarian colonies, El Pueblito. Chapter 5 elaborates on the civilian careers of the *villistas*, emphasizing their participation in the Unificación Nacional de Veteranos in the state of Chihuahua.

## CHAPTER 1

*Que Viva Madero! Que Viva Abraham González! Death to Victoriano Huerta!:*  
The Rise of the División del Norte

### *Introduction*

The sun had recently set over the mountains of El Paso, Texas, when eight mounted horsemen crossed the Rio Bravo into northern Chihuahua on March 8, 1913. The river's slow current had only momentarily been interrupted by the splashing of hooves as the men on horses made their way across into the desert night. Among the men traveled Francisco "Pancho" Villa, a veteran of the Revolution of 1910 and a former revolutionary in Francisco Madero's army. He and his loyal followers were crossing into northern Chihuahua upon hearing the news of the death of their former friends and leaders, Francisco Madero and Abraham González. With only a few pesos in his pocket and in the company of loyal individuals, Villa had ridden into Mexico to unite *ex-maderistas* and launch a revolt against the government of Victoriano Huerta, the man responsible for the assassinations and now considered a traitor to the Revolution.

Arriving at Hacienda del Carmen, located south of Ciudad Juárez, the revolutionaries plotted their strategy against Victoriano Huerta.<sup>7</sup> For the next few months, Villa and his men, the majority of them *ex-maderistas*, diligently set out to recruit the men and women of Chihuahua and mold them into a fighting force. Soon, small rebel units emerged in the different regions, and before long, the División del Norte, as it came to be known, began taking shape. Among the rebel units were the

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<sup>7</sup> Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera, *Hechos reales de la Revolución*, primer tomo (México: Editorial Patria, S.A., 1961), 102.

Brigada González Ortega, formed in northeastern Chihuahua by Toribio Ortega, and the Brigada Benito Juárez, compiled in the south by Maclovio Herrera Cano. Both these leaders were veterans of the Revolution of 1910 and former officers in Madero's army.

This chapter posits that Victoriano Huerta's assassinations of Francisco I. Madero and the governor of Chihuahua, Abraham González incited participation in the División del Norte. Veterans of Madero's forces from the Revolution of 1910 fought to avenge the death of their leaders. To many Mexicans, furthermore, Huerta's assassinations of Francisco Madero and Abraham González in 1913 posed a threat to the limited progress achieved by the Revolution of 1910.<sup>8</sup> As a result, many throughout Mexico refused to recognize Victoriano Huerta as the legitimate president of the country. In the northern states, particularly Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Sonora, members of the state governments loyal to Madero gathered in capital cities and issued statements denouncing the president.

The core group of the División del Norte came to consist of *ex-maderistas* who constructed anti-*huertista* rebel cells in Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango to fight against Victoriano Huerta. *Ex-maderistas*, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, were largely responsible for the recruitment of revolutionaries into rebel cells and for their indoctrination once inducted into the ranks. The rebel cells that *ex-maderistas* formed eventually grew into the larger brigades that jelled to form the División del Norte in late 1913.

*Ex-maderistas* proved adept at recruitment strategies, and playing upon numerous motivations that propelled so many to join the anti-*huertista* movement in 1913 and 1914.

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<sup>8</sup> Francisco R. Almada, *Vida, Proceso y Muerte de Abraham González* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1967), 149.

Men and women were recruited into rebel cells for a variety of reasons including their abilities, skills and leadership qualities. Others volunteered for causes that involved, but were not limited to, an economic decline in northern Mexico in 1913, the opportunities *villismo* presented for material improvement, and the desire to obstruct the establishment of a neo-porfirian state under the direction of Victoriano Huerta.

*Maderismo, the Revolution of 1910, and the División del Norte*

An examination concerning the División del Norte as it took shape in 1913 must consider the social origins of the Revolution of 1910, as well as the background of members in Francisco Madero's army in Chihuahua. Some scholars concerned with the great upheaval of 1910 have examined the revolutionary process as a reaction against the social conditions caused by the policies of Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship and the regional elites who exercised control at the local level.<sup>9</sup> In their analysis of Chihuahua's countryside and politics prior to 1910, such scholars have provided the necessary foundation for a careful examination of the División del Norte's structure and social composition. Their works have revealed that many of the soldiers in Madero's army came from certain industries in Chihuahua such as the mining sector, and they were

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<sup>9</sup> See Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Pedro Salmerón, *La División del Norte: La Tierra, los hombres y la historia de un ejército del pueblo* (Mexico D.F.: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., 2006); Friedrich Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 54, 1 (February, 1974): 1-47; and Mark Wasserman, "The Social Origins of the 1910 Revolution in Chihuahua," *Latin American Research Review* 15, No. 1 (1980): 15-38; Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: Porfirians, Liberals and Peasants*, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

motivated to participate for a number of reasons including social conditions and grievances against local elites.<sup>10</sup>

The triumph of Madero in 1911 and his election to the presidency resulted in the return of many *maderistas* to civilian life. Many were released from their service in the army and returned to work in the industries of northern Mexico including the ranching and mining sectors while others remained as members of the government and military.<sup>11</sup> Albino Aranda Maldonado, for instance, entered Madero's army in November of 1910 and fought in several battles before returning to civilian life in 1911.<sup>12</sup> His return to civilian life as well as with many other *maderistas*, however, proved to be short lived.

In February of 1913, the people of Mexico City witnessed the development of a bloody coup against the presidency of Francisco Madero. For ten days a rebellion, known as the *decena trágica*, led by Bernardo Reyes and Félix Díaz, converted much of the city's center into a combat zone.<sup>13</sup> During the *decena trágica*, Madero's commander-

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<sup>10</sup> In his examination of the social conditions in Chihuahua prior to 1910, for example, Mark Wasserman noted that a decline in industrial output forced by a drop in international prices (caused by a financial depression in the United States) left many Chihuahuans unemployed. Companies such as ASARCO ceased operations in Chihuahua, displacing many of the people in the Santa Eulalia and Santa Bárbara regions. Wasserman astutely traced the social disruption that produced rebellion in Chihuahua and offered important information on the social background of many *maderistas*. His work, therefore, provides the basic platform for any analysis of the División del Norte's social base. See Mark Wasserman. "The Social Origins of the 1910 Revolution in Chihuahua," 23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Many *ex-maderistas* remained in the service of Madero as members of the military and rural police force. Some individuals, including Francisco Pancho Villa, fought against the forces of Pascual Orozco, Jr. during the Orozco rebellion. It should be noted, however, that Madero's army numbered no more than 2,500 people who joined the movement in Chihuahua. A careful examination of the payroll lists (located at the Archivo General de la Nación) for Madero's army in Chihuahua reveals that troop strength reached a maximum of less than 2,500 men. Ramo Gobernación, Sección: Sin Sección, Caja 865, Galería 5, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico D.F., Mexico.

<sup>12</sup> Albino Aranda Maldonado, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 2, Expediente 5.

<sup>13</sup> Berta Ulloa, "La lucha armada (1911-1920)," in *Historia general de México*, Versión 2000 (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, A.C., 2000), 777.

in-chief, Victoriano Huerta, seized power and began a series of subversive maneuvers that ultimately resulted in the downfall of Madero and his presidency. Huerta's secret dealings with Díaz and Henry Lane Wilson, United States Ambassador, finally ended the hostilities. Huerta's forces then arrested Madero and his vice-president, José María Pino Suárez, and had them assassinated. Within a few days, Huerta became president of the republic. His intrigues sent shockwaves throughout the Republic.<sup>14</sup>

Huerta quickly consolidated power by assigning men loyal to his government to key positions throughout Mexico. But in Chihuahua, he encountered problems where Governor Abraham González and many members of the ruling party had not granted Huerta formal recognition (González and Huerta had a history of dislike for each other).<sup>15</sup> In the aftermath of the Orozco rebellion in 1912, President Madero had sought to form a working relationship between González and Huerta, with no success. Instead, a situation of mistrust lingered. González believed that Huerta had political aspirations and desired the governor's position in Chihuahua. Additionally, Huerta had tried to shoot González's protégé, Francisco Villa, for the theft of a horse.<sup>16</sup>

Once General Huerta became president, González, along with the governors of Coahuila and Sonora, openly withheld recognition of his government. Shortly after, on February 22, 1913, Huerta's henchmen arrested Governor Abraham González in

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<sup>14</sup> Huerta first named himself minister of war, and after a series of resignations, became president of Mexico. Michael C. Meyer, Huerta's biographer, contends that Huerta's political assassinations in 1913 to purge the country of opponents backfired. He further adds that the assassinations prompted many former maderistas to join rebel forces throughout the entire republic of Mexico. Michael C. Meyer, *Huerta: A Political Portrait* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 85-86.

<sup>15</sup> William H. Beezley, *Insurgent Governor: Abraham González and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 155.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, 142.

Chihuahua City and tried him in a military court for conspiring against the federal army.<sup>17</sup> Convicted of a lesser charge, he was sent to Mexico City and along the way was shot to death at a location near Bachimba Pass on March 6.<sup>18</sup>

Madero's assassination coupled with the execution of Abraham González prompted many *ex-maderistas* in Chihuahua and Durango to take up arms against Huerta's government. When Francisco Villa crossed the international border into Mexico, therefore, he found numerous people at his disposal ready to join his army.<sup>19</sup> Once the men had crossed the international border, they dispersed from an old hacienda to the different regions of Chihuahua in search of supplies and men ready to join their cause. These anti-*huertistas*, and for the most part *ex-maderistas*, went about the recruitment of men for División del Norte. Within the next month they proved successful in the dissemination of information concerning the anti-Huerta movement as well as contacting former *maderistas* to join Villa's revolutionary army.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 156.

<sup>18</sup> United States Department of State. United States Consul Marion Letcher Telegram to the Secretary of State. 24 March 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 6952, RG 25.

<sup>19</sup> Alberto Calzad az Barrera, a native Chihuahuan and witness to the development of the Divisi n del Norte, provides the names of those involved with Villa. According to Barrera, Juan Dozal, Miguel Saavedra P rez, Pedro Sapi n, Dario W. Silva, Carlos J uregui, Manuel Ochoa, Pascual Alvarez Tostado, and Tom s Morales crossed into Mexico with Villa and afterwards rode to many parts of Chihuahua in search of supplies and men. Alberto Calzad az Barrera, *Hechos reales de la Revoluci n*, primer tomo, 102-103.

<sup>20</sup> Conflicting stories concerning the number of *villistas* in the Divisi n del Norte stemmed from several sources, including newspapers and reports by agents working for the United States. In a report to his superiors, Marion Letcher, United States Consul in Chihuahua, noted that the troop strength of the Divisi n amounted to nearly 12,000 men with thirty cannons and sixteen machine guns. Letcher, unlike others who did not witness the Revolution first hand, operated in a situation where he could receive reliable information from informants located throughout Chihuahua. United States Department of State. Consular Dispatches. *Dispatches from United States Consuls in Mexico*. Chihuahua 1910-1929. Film 812.00: 9741, RG 31.

Among these new recruits was Pablo Márquez Rivera (age eighteen) who in 1910 had volunteered for Madero's forces as a cavalryman in his hometown of San Andrés, Chihuahua. Rivera had joined the local unit under the command of Colonel Francisco Villa, a local bandit turned businessman who had operated in the San Andrés region prior to 1910. Villa had utilized his contacts in the region to recruit men into Madero's army. Pablo fought in five engagements, and for his actions in combat received the rank of captain before his release from the *maderista* army in May of 1911 following the overthrow of Díaz.<sup>21</sup> Such proved to be the case with numerous *maderistas*; they returned to civilian life after Madero's election to the presidency of Mexico.

Within a month of Villa's return to Mexico in March 1913, Pablo rejoined his old commander's brigade, and throughout the course of the entire year participated in eight battles before again returning to civilian life.<sup>22</sup> In much the same manner as Rivera, numerous *ex-maderistas* joined Villa's army, recruited by their former leaders and friends into rebel units. Their experiences in Madero's army had provided a collective experience that constructed friendships and formed alliances that later proved critical in forming the structure of the División del Norte. Most important, *maderista* veterans such as Toribio Ortega, Manuel Benavides, Albino Aranda, Tomás Urbina and many others who had either fought alongside or under the command of Villa acted as recruiters throughout Chihuahua's many regions.

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<sup>21</sup> Several people including the Murga Terán brothers joined Villa from the San Andrés region in 1910. Several remained in his service throughout the combative phase of the Mexican Revolution. Pablo Márquez Rivera, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 14, Expediente 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

It should be noted that the División did not come into existence until months later that same year. As the movement against Huerta developed and more people joined local cells under the direction of *ex-maderistas*, these units grew into larger brigades eventually forming the larger División. Thus, the División del Norte did not solidify its ranks until September of 1913, when leaders from all the different brigades elected Francisco Villa as their commander.<sup>23</sup>

Scattered information found in numerous primary and secondary sources permits us to construct five major categories that best describe the social composition of the División del Norte. They were: *ex-maderistas*, regional leaders (*cabecillas*), soldiers of fortune, skilled professionals/support personnel, and volunteers.<sup>24</sup> These categories, in addition to revealing the composition of the División, demonstrate the origins of the rank and file. Their varied social backgrounds provide for a broader understanding of the División's participants and the factors that motivated them to participate in the revolt of 1913.

*Ex-maderistas, cabecillas and hacendados*

A careful analysis of the *ex-maderistas* reveals that those who originated from the many different districts of Chihuahua as well as the neighboring states of Sonora and Durango had been recruited by local leaders into Madero's army. Moreover, many of

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<sup>23</sup> Leaders of the numerous brigades that formed primarily in Chihuahua (only a few formed in Durango and Coahuila) met at the Hacienda de la Loma in Durango and formed the *División del Norte*. They elected Francisco Villa as their leader. Pedro Salmerón, *La División del Norte: La tierra, los hombres y la historia de un ejército del pueblo*, (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Planeta Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., 2006): 347.

<sup>24</sup> In his analysis of northern revolutionary armies, Friedrich Katz contends that many of the División del Norte's contingents were volunteers. I have expanded Katz's analysis to incorporate the contributions of men and women whose files are located in Chihuahua's Veterans of the Revolution archive. Each veteran's file recorded rank, military occupation and place of origin among other data. I believe *ex-maderistas* made up the core group of the División del Norte and shaped its structure. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 305.

these individuals, such as Toribio Ortega, had been members of Chihuahua's Anti-Reelection Clubs prior to the Revolution of 1910. Throughout the course of 1911 they participated in numerous armed encounters in Chihuahua including the battle of Ciudad Juárez.<sup>25</sup>

As combat veterans they could be counted on to lead men and form the leadership of Villa's army. Their collective experience in 1910 and 1911 had formed a network that extended from northern Chihuahua into the southernmost regions of the state, and into the neighboring states of Sonora and Chihuahua. While loyal to Villa, these men remained faithful to their local leader. As the different brigades formally came together in September of 1913 to form the División, the local allegiance of the men remained firm, but was extended to their new leader, Francisco Villa. Thus, a dual structure existed between the members in the División: on the one hand there existed a military hierarchy, and on the other, a paternalistic relationship between the regional chieftains and their men.

The División del Norte also contained several individuals who, at one time or another, exercised leadership power locally or were members of Chihuahua's elite class. While these *cabecillas* contributed to the success of the División, their motivations for following Villa varied. One of the most recognized figures of the Revolution, Toribio Ortega exercised local power as a businessman and member of a political party for more

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<sup>25</sup> Files concerning the veterans of Francisco Madero's army located at the Archivo Chihuahuense de la Cultura in the Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución reveal the complexity of the División del Norte. The individual files of revolutionaries include birth certificates, photographs and documents pertaining to their service in the Revolution of 1910 and subsequent uprising of 1913-1914. Unfortunately, many files were incomplete. There were, however, numerous files pertaining to the *ex-maderistas* who formed the core of the División del Norte. Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

than a decade prior to 1910. Born in 1870 in Cuchillo Parado, a pueblo in the northwestern regions of Chihuahua, Ortega lived in this small village until his early teens, then moved to the state capital of Chihuahua City.<sup>26</sup> Ortega returned to Cuchillo Parado after only a few years in order to launch a small business. His luck, however, turned for the worse and he sold his concern after a short time.

Ortega, like many others, crossed the international boundary into the United States in the 1880s in search of a job, and worked as a field hand in the U.S. Southwest. He returned in a few years having made sufficient money abroad, purchased a local commercial establishment, and tried his hand as a merchant again. In 1890 he married Fermina Juárez, a resident of Cuchillo Parado, and for the next few years dedicated his life to family and work. Meanwhile, the growing discontent against a local caudillo had prompted Ortega to form a local Anti-Reelectionist Club in Cuchillo Parado.<sup>27</sup> Ortega's dedication to the dissemination of the Anti-Reelectionist Club propaganda proved to be far reaching as new clubs sprang up in neighboring towns such as Ojinaga and San Carlos. Hearing Madero's call for revolution in 1910, Ortega and many of the club's members joined the uprising. He and several other officers from Anti-Reelectionist

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<sup>26</sup> Francisco P. Ontiveros, Ortega's biographer, paints a colorful picture of the revolutionary's youth. Toribio's parents, Teodoro Ortega and Isidra Ramírez de Ortega, were long time residents of Cuchillo Parado. In his portrayal of the geographic setting, Ontiveros describes Cuchillo Parado as a town dedicated to liberal ideology and freedom. Francisco de P. Ontiveros, *Toribio Ortega y la Brigada González Ortega* (Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos del Estado, 1924), 5.

<sup>27</sup> General discontent against the Porfiriato and local elites such as the Terrazas family existed in the many regions of Chihuahua prior to the Revolution of 1910. For more information on the Terrazas family and their domination of the Chihuahua, see Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

Clubs in the northeastern region of Chihuahua from San Carlos to Cuchillo Parado then recruited men for Madero's army.<sup>28</sup>

In 1913, Toribio Ortega became one of the first individuals to heed Villa's call for a revolt against Victoriano Huerta. In much the same manner as they had done in 1910, Ortega and his followers formed a brigade of volunteers from the small towns of the region, and referred to it as the Brigada González Ortega. Ortega and his men in the Brigada González Ortega marched towards the Ciudad Juárez, and joined the *División del Norte* in July of 1913.<sup>29</sup> The Brigada González Ortega continued to form a part of the División del Norte until its defeat at the battle of Celaya in 1915. Many members of the Brigada González Ortega remained loyal to Francisco Villa until their peace agreement with the government in 1920.<sup>30</sup>

Not all brigades that joined the División del Norte originated in Chihuahua. In the neighboring state of Durango, Tomás Urbina, a former *maderista* and local leader, recruited men to fight against the Huerta government following Madero's assassination. As a native of Durango, he had operated in the region for years as a bandit and had made the transition into a revolutionary after 1910. In February of 1913, Urbina began the

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<sup>28</sup> Other regional leaders joined Ortega and assisted in the recruitment of soldiers for Madero's army. Many of these men later contributed to the formation and structure of the División del Norte. Ontiveros, *Toribio Ortega y la Brigada González Ortega*, 15.

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Department of State, Consular Service. Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929. Report from agents posted along United States-Mexico border to the Department of State. 16 July 1913. National Archives Microfilm Publications, 812.00:8060, RG 27.

<sup>30</sup> The names of several men from the Brigada González Ortega (who as villistas signed a peace agreement with the Mexican government in 1920) appear in the list printed by newspapers in Chihuahua. These men were given land for military colonies in return for laying down their weapons. Albino Aranda, a local chieftain from San Carlos headed the military colony of El Pueblito located only a few miles from Cuchillo Parado, Ortega's place of origin. "Terminó en Tlahualilo el licenciamiento de la gente de Villa, antier. Villa se prepara para salir hacia Canutillo, en donde se dedicará a las labores del campo," *El Correo del Norte*, 29 August 1920, 1.

recruitment of men in his native state. During the next couple of months, he formed the Brigada Morelos and ultimately joined the División del Norte; many of its officers were local leaders and ex-*maderistas*.<sup>31</sup>

Urbina's revolutionary activities as an anti-*huertista* rebel had caught the attention of Theodore Hamm, United States consul in Durango who noted that the rebel had disrupted the local economy by waging a local war against the elite. It seems that Urbina had forced loans from many local business owners and members of the elite class in order to assemble and equip the Brigada Morelos. In a telegram to his superiors, Hamm reported that Urbina had turned to harsh methods that included incarceration and violent threats in raising funds for the Revolution. He further noted that Urbina's coercive methods had caused internal problems among many of other *villistas* who felt that his actions were inappropriate.<sup>32</sup>

The Murga Terán brothers, *hacendados* from the San Andrés region in Chihuahua, represented a different type of local leaders joining the ranks of the División del Norte. The brothers had formed a part of Francisco Villa's unit during the Madero revolution, and returned to the revolutionary's service in 1913. The Murga Teráns owned the hacienda San Juan el Duro in central Chihuahua, an estate that had been granted to the family by Spanish authorities during the colonial era. The four brothers had joined Villa in 1910 after his call for men during the Madero revolution. Juan, Aurelio, Encarnación, and Ramón remained loyal to Villa until 1917 when two of them fled from

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<sup>31</sup> Salmerón, *La División del Norte: La tierra, los hombres y la historia de un ejército del pueblo*, 514.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of State. Report from United States Consul in Durango to Department of State concerning revolutionary activities in Durango. 27 June 1913. *Dispatches from United States Consuls in Mexico*. Chihuahua 1910-1929. Film 812.00: 8449, RG 27.

the villista ranks following the death of their brother, Aurelio. Villa had ordered Aurelio executed after a failed dangerous expedition to sequester Venustiano Carranza, then president of the country.<sup>33</sup>

The Murga Teráns, unlike Urbina, represented members of the landed society of Chihuahua who joined the Revolution to protect their interests and status. Their allegiance to Villa and personal relationship with him ensured the protection of their lands, their socio-economic status, and their family. In an interview years later, Ramón, the eldest brother, disclosed that he and his three brothers had joined the Revolution for just such reason.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps their personal relationship with Villa prevented the confiscation of their land, when, as governor, Villa in 1913 seized the properties of many of Chihuahua's other elite families.

#### *Skilled Professionals and the Borderlands*

Like many other fighting forces throughout the world, the División del Norte counted on soldiers-of-fortune to perform combat oriented tasks for a certain price. Chihuahua's proximity to the United States provided the División with access to such recruits willing to lend their service. In cities such as El Paso, for example, the Division not only had access to provisions, weapons, munitions, but also recruits willing to hire out their expertise for money.<sup>35</sup> The fluidity of the border coupled with the interest the

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<sup>33</sup> Villa's mission to kidnap Venustiano Carranza in 1917 remains largely unexplored by scholars of *villismo* and the Revolution. Villa and several men planned to kidnap Carranza during his daily horse ride through Chapultepect Forest. The villistas planned to transport the president to Morelos and try him in a court for treason against the Revolution. Ramón Murga Terán, interview by Rubén Osorio, tape recording, 1975. Collection not catalogued, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, tape 1.

<sup>35</sup> Oscar Martínez's study of the El Paso-Juárez area has revealed the interdependent relationship that emerged between both cities over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1913, control of

Revolution generated among the population of the United States converted locations such as El Paso into centers of intense activity. People from different parts of the world, including soldiers-of-fortune, came to the cities along the border to capture a glimpse of the Revolution.

The activities of *villistas* concerning the recruitment of men and procurement of supplies along the United States–Mexico border amounted to a violation of the neutrality laws between both countries, however. As a result, United States government agencies monitored the activities of revolutionaries in order to prevent the smuggling of supplies into Mexico. Efforts by judicial forces to impede the work and progress of revolutionary juntas that operated in the United States and conspired against the Mexican government escalated. The United States utilized different governmental institutions, including members of the Army and special agents of the Bureau of Investigation, in order to forestall such plots. In one particular incident, authorities arrested three individuals because they attempted to cross the border and join Toribio Ortega and his army. The men had been hired to procure arms by revolutionaries and had been caught in a conspiracy to ship well over 448,000 rounds of ammunition to Mexico.<sup>36</sup>

Soldiers-of-fortune brought valuable experience to the División. These men could count on a salary and higher rank. Though from varied backgrounds, they usually had been trained in a certain profession. They were, however, generally distrusted until

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the Ciudad Juárez proved necessary for the villistas as it granted access to supplies from the El Paso area. Additionally, the city's railroad industry permitted revolutionaries the ability to transport materials across the state of Chihuahua. See Oscar Martínez, *Border Boom Town: Ciudad Juárez since 1848* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1978).

<sup>36</sup> United States Department of State. Copy of agent reports along United States-Mexico border from Assistant Attorney General to Secretary of State. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8060, RG 25.

they had proven themselves. Once soldiers-of-fortune had established their competence, commanders gave them increased responsibilities and they generally achieved a higher standing among the men. The fact that many soldiers-of-fortune crossed into Mexico from the United States should not be misleading. The porous border dividing both countries enabled easy entry into Mexico and soldiers-of-fortune from any country could easily cross the Rio Grande and join the División in Chihuahua. In any case, such mercenaries did not immediately form close knit relationships with the other troops.

Ivor Thord-Gray, a veteran of the Cape Mounted Rifles from Great Britain, joined the División del Norte in 1913. He had served in Africa as well as other war zones, and had been in China when he decided to leave for Mexico and join Villa's revolutionary forces. In his memoirs, Thord-Gray related how Villa and his officer staff initially rejected him as a candidate for military service because they had been suspicious of his intentions. Once the command discerned that his skill as an artilleryman could prove useful to the unit, he was awarded a commission as Chief of Artillery with the rank of first captain. According to Thord-Gray, the División lacked anyone with experience in artillery and he had been given the responsibility because of his rudimentary knowledge of the craft.<sup>37</sup>

Thord-Gray proved his worthiness on several occasions including at the battle of Tierra Blanca, one of the worst defeats suffered by the federal army during 1913. But, he also served as a gun-runner for Villa. The demand for munitions and weapons had

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<sup>37</sup> Thord-Gray notes in his memoirs that he had not been the only soldier of fortune to enter the ranks of the *villista* army. On one particular occasion, he met a former sergeant of the United States Army who had fled a court-martial and joined the *villistas*. Ivor Thord Gray, *Gringo Rebel* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1960), 28.

exhausted resources in the El Paso area and revolutionaries searched elsewhere along the border to replenish their supplies. As a result, Villa sent Thord-Gray to Nogales, Arizona, where an agent provided the soldier-of-fortune with munitions. Thord-Gray again proved his abilities by successfully acquiring the supplies while at the same time evading authorities, and afterwards successfully returning to Mexico.<sup>38</sup> Grey continued to serve in the División as Chief of Artillery for some time before being transferred to Venustiano Carranza's army from Sonora.

Other soldiers-of-fortune in Villa's army had served in the federal army before joining the División del Norte. E.L. Holmdahl, a one time member of the federal army and Mexican secret service, joined the *villistas* in 1913 where he acted as an agent to the United States' Bureau of Investigation.<sup>39</sup> Holmdahl, it seems, had a dual purpose in his life: as a revolutionary and an informant for the United States (as mentioned earlier, efforts to monitor the activities of revolutionaries along the United States–Mexico border increased in 1913). In certain instances, informants were able to join rebel forces and report their activities to the United States on a regular basis.

Other recruits came from as far as Sweden. One young Swedish national who had joined Villa's troops as a demolitions expert did not prove to be of lasting help. The young man was shot by firing squad after being caught trying to blow a bridge with seven boxes of dynamite. In an effort to determine the cause of death, the Swedish Ambassador contacted Mexican authorities who in turn launched an investigation. Francisco Castro,

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-60.

<sup>39</sup> United States Department of State. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7867, RG 27.

the presiding officer who ordered the young soldier executed, claimed to have ordered the killing after capturing the rebel with the ignition device in his hand.<sup>40</sup>

Skilled professionals and auxiliary personnel constituted another element in the División del Norte. Such men and women were counted on to provide their expertise in non-combat areas such as in logistics, medical care and supply, in special duties, and on the field as machine gunners and artillery personnel. In 1913, the División del Norte included a sanitary brigade as well as a railway service. Men and women who filled positions in both departments contributed to the success of the División through transportation of combat troops and care for the sick and wounded. Because of their abilities, skilled professionals at times received an elevated rank.

It should be noted, however, that many former federal officers and enlisted men incorporated into the División del Norte did not exercise the same influence as other soldiers in the ranks. While they possessed skills to utilize machine guns and artillery pieces, their previous position in the federal military limited assimilation into the hierarchical structure of the División.<sup>41</sup> Felipe Angeles, a former federal artillery officer, was one of the few to achieve great success in the División. In addition to restructuring the artillery unit, Angeles became its leader and remained loyal to Villa until 1920. That

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<sup>40</sup> Salvador R. Mercado to Secretario de Gobernación, 13 September 1913, Ramo: Gobernación, Periodo: Revolución, Archivo General de la Nación, México, D.F., Mexico. Caja 36, Expediente 22

<sup>41</sup> Friedrich Katz posits that Villa would execute officers but many times would spare the lives of enlisted men with the understanding that they would join the División del Norte. Also, Villa exempted men who possessed a special ability, such as artillery training, so that their skills might be applied in his army. *Villistas* pressed federal military personnel into service because of their skills, but exercised little to no influence in the unit. Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 221, 445-446.

year, Angeles met his death by firing squad after having been convicted in a court of law for treasonous activities as a *villista*.<sup>42</sup>

During the initial construction phase of the División del Norte, professionals utilized their skills to structure and modify certain brigades especially the railroad service. One of the most important of these professional groups was the railroad engineers who joined Villa's army. Villa's campaign to take over the state of Chihuahua heavily depended upon the railroad system. Due to a lack of other conventional modes of rapid transportation for large military units, the railroads in Chihuahua proved to be among the most important contributors to the success of the División's military campaigns. In order to maintain and operate the trains, Villa depended on experienced railroad conductors, brakemen, flagmen, and engineers. During the latter months of 1913, the *villistas* successfully utilized the railroads to attack several garrisons in the state. Region by region, the *villistas* defeated the federal army, pushing it towards the state capital and eventually to the border town of Ojinaga.

José Bugarini Ortiz, a native of Guadalajara, Mexico, had worked in Chihuahua as a railroad engineer for the federal army before joining the Revolution in 1911. Bugarini Ortiz was incorporated into the División del Norte as a conductor in 1913 because of his area of expertise. In addition to serving in the railroad service, he fought in several battles before leaving the *villistas* in 1914. After that, Bugarini Ortiz continued to work in the railroad industry. In 1920, Bugarini obtained a job in the company

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<sup>42</sup> See Federico Cervantes, *Felipe Angeles en la Revolución; biografía, 1869-1919* (México: Talleres Gráficos, 1964).

Ferrocarriles Nacionales de México where he served as an engineer until he retired with a pension.<sup>43</sup>

*Soldaderas and the División del Norte*

Women constituted a significant portion of skilled professionals and auxiliary personnel, though limited information exists on their contributions to the success of the División del Norte. With the exception of a few newspapers and photographs depicting women camp followers, the most notable sources of information regarding women participants are the autobiographies of participants and the personnel files of veterans groups that formed after the combative phase of the Revolution. In his autobiography, *Gringo Rebel*, Ivor Thord-Gray, an officer in the artillery regiment, described the *villista* camp followers prior to the battle of Tierra Blanca in the following manner:

The women camp-followers had orders to remain behind, but hundreds of them, hanging on to the stirrups, followed their men along the road for a while. Some other women carrying carbines, bandoleers and mounted, managed to slip into the ranks and came with us. These took their places in the firing line and stood all hardships and machine-gun fire as well as the men. They were a praiseworthy lot. It was a richly picturesque sight, but the complete silence, the stoic and yet anxious faces of the women was depressing, as it gave the impression that all were going to a tremendous funeral, or their doom.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> José Bugarini Ortiz, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Box 4, File 6.

<sup>44</sup> Ivor Thord-Gray, *Gringo Rebel*, 37.

Thord's description of *soldaderas* (women camp followers) provides a partial glimpse into the contributions women made to the División. While women possessed limited power and influence, they nonetheless served functions as an unwaged domestic labor that contributed to the success of the División del Norte.

In her analysis of women in the Mexican military, historian Elizabeth Salas proposes that *soldaderas* came from the same diverse social and familial background as the men. Furthermore, she states that many women followed men for a variety of reasons that included love, food, or in some instances, and like their male counterparts, the desire for change. Of course, some of the women were abductees.<sup>45</sup> Whatever their motivations, women camp followers provided a necessary element to Villa's army that otherwise would have necessitated additional funding. They lent support during battle, but also cooked, washed and sewed clothing, gathered supplies, took care of children, and in some instances cleaned military weapons.<sup>46</sup> In essence, women camp followers formed a complimentary support network that came at no monetary cost to the División.

Women volunteers in the sanitary services further contributed to the success of the División by rendering aid to the sick and wounded. Under the command of Dr. Andrés Villareal, the sanitary services followed the *villista* army throughout the course of 1913, 1914 and 1915. When the state fell to the *villistas* following the federal army's complete defeat in early 1914, triumphant members of the División assumed different positions in the state and local governments. Members of the sanitary brigade now took

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<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military: Myth and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 69.

<sup>46</sup> Unfortunately, much of Salas' analysis pertains to federal *soldaderas* and the information on *villista soldaderas* is limited. Furthermore, her analysis regarding women's participation in 1913 stems primarily from newspaper accounts. Salas, *Soldaderas in the Mexican Military*, 76.

over the administration of Chihuahua City's hospital and the care for the sick and wounded. Officers in the sanitary brigades served as directors and administrators in the constitutionalist hospital of Ciudad Chihuahua and within the sanitary department of the municipality while support personnel maintained and operated the different departments.<sup>47</sup>

María Eusebia Levario López served in the Sanitary Brigades while part of the División del Norte and as a nurse rendered assistance to the sick and wounded. Eusebia had joined the División in 1913, and under the command of Dr. Andrés Villarreal, remained a *villista* until 1915. During her time of participation she witnessed some of the bloodiest engagements between the División and the federal army, including the battles of Ojinaga and Tierra Blanca. While she did not engage in combat, Eusebia's participation in an auxiliary role placed her at the front lines of combat. Years after the Revolution, the Veteran's Administration in Chihuahua accorded Eusebia a medal for meritorious service during the campaign against Victoriano Huerta.<sup>48</sup>

#### *Vamonos con Pancho Villa*

The Division del Norte's single largest group consisted of volunteers who had willingly enrolled, for miscellaneous reasons, in the numerous brigades since the beginning of the anti-*huertista* movements. Volunteers originated primarily from the states of Chihuahua, Durango and Sonora and served in various capacities from infantry soldiers to railroad engineers to long-range scouts. Some individuals signed up because

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<sup>47</sup> Comunicaciones oficiales: De la Secretaría de Gobierno, *Periodico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 18 January 1914, 3.

<sup>48</sup> María Eusebia Levario López, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Unnumbered Box, File 28.

they had previously been members of Madero's army and were now recruited by their former officers. Still others were brought into the fold by regional leaders rejecting Huerta's government and incorporated into the local anti-*huertista* cells. As mentioned before, such brigades later molded into the División del Norte.

Others volunteers had been members of the Anti-reelection clubs prior to 1910, and in the course of the Revolution had been persuaded by club members to join Madero's army. Pascual González Martínez, a native of Ciudad Chihuahua, for instance, had been a member of the city's Anti-reelection Club, having been recruited by Abraham González, a member of Madero's army and later governor of the state. His revolutionary activities during the Madero revolt included the procurement and transportation of arms and munitions before he returned to civilian life in 1911. During the initial recruitment phase of the División del Norte in 1913, González Martínez rejoined his fellow revolutionaries and served as a railroad engineer until 1915. In addition to performing duties as chief of military transports for the División del Norte, he worked as chief engine-man throughout the course of the unit's campaign from Chihuahua to Mexico City.<sup>49</sup>

Others joined the División del Norte in search of economic opportunity because the Revolution had displaced them in one form or another. During the Orozco rebellion of 1912, rebels had robbed and destroyed the property of many businesses in Chihuahua, including that of railroad companies. By 1913, the state's industries had suffered significantly from the Madero and Orozco campaigns, and revolutionary activities later

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<sup>49</sup> Pascual González Martínez, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua. Box 10, File 12.

that year further depleted Chihuahua's industries of material and wealth. Business owners pleaded for assistance from the Mexican government but found their requests unanswered as the military had its hands full with the rebels.

During the initial months of Villa's return, rebellious activity increased substantially and revolutionaries targeted many of the state's businesses because they contained supplies and money necessary for the formation and maintenance of their brigades. As a result, several firms, including livestock companies and mines, were forced to downsize their workforce. In one mine alone, attacks by revolutionaries threatened to halt operations and leave without jobs a workforce of over 4,000.<sup>50</sup> To make matters worse, revolutionaries pressured companies to give them loans; in exchange they permitted the company to continue operations. Those who suffered the most were usually laborers who had been employed at the local level. The general flight of foreigners from the state further depleted the ranks of laborers in these industries. Thus, many of the recruits who joined the *villistas* were unemployed workers who had been displaced by the Revolution.

The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway Company (K.C.M.&O.) serves as a good example showing how the Revolution affected industry. The company's Mexico operation was structured into three parts that included the Chihuahua Division, the Mountain Division, and the Pacific Division. This enterprise had operated in the state of Chihuahua for several years prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1913. The K.C.M.&O.

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<sup>50</sup> Several mines and livestock companies contacted United States consuls in the state of Chihuahua, and the consuls forwarded their claims to the Department of State. United States Ambassador to Mexico's Department of Asuntos Internacionales, 9 October 1913, Ramo: Gobernación, Sección: S/S, Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F., Mexico.

had constructed exactly 224.62 miles of track as well as numerous bridges, buildings, water stations and telegraph lines. The total cost of their Mexico operation amounted to more than eleven million dollars, a figure that did not include the salaries and wages of personnel.<sup>51</sup> In the state of Chihuahua alone, they had constructed exactly 86.91 miles of track, and included several bridges and depots that required maintenance and administration.<sup>52</sup>

In 1913, the company experienced heavy losses from rebellious activity that included railway and bridge destruction and several company buildings demolished by fire. As mentioned before, the railway in Chihuahua was of great importance to revolutionary forces. The federal army depended on the railway as well, and had a standing contract with the K.C. M. & O to transport its troops in the state. In order to impede the efforts of the federal army, rebels destroyed railway lines and bridges. Also, substantial rainfall during the year washed out embankments along the line further complicating the company's situation. As a result of rebellious activities and track deterioration, the company cut back its operations in Mexico and reduced the labor force substantially, administrative personnel. The company's local manager and officer in the Mexican federal army, Juan Treviño, fled to Kansas City. When other American administrators followed suit in 1913, company operations dropped to a low level.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> S. Buffington to Mr. A. DeBernardi, 27 June 1922, typed, Special Collections, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>52</sup> The Company's Chihuahua Division not only counted on numerous American employees, but hundreds were also employed to build and maintain the railway as well as its numerous depots, bridges and water stations. Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Numerous employees who had worked for the K.C. M. & O joined the ranks of villistas, most notably those who had been engineers and conductors. They joined the División and worked in the transportation

The company's cutbacks during 1913 and afterward not only affected its workforce but those of other industries in the state, among them the Chihuahua Timber Company and Cementos Hidalgo which depended on the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient's contracts. For example, in one section of the railway, the company paid \$201,613.18 for wooden ties utilized in the construction of the railway.<sup>54</sup> Presumably, the loss of revenue experienced by these companies affected their operating budgets resulting in the unemployment of general laborers. The company did not resume operations until the late 1920s.

A fourth group of volunteers, rural dwellers, was recruited by *ex-maderistas* or regional leaders who exercised local power and influence in urban centers, mining regions and elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> In rural locations such as the northernmost regions of Chihuahua, volunteers came from small villages, ranches and border towns. On numerous occasions, rebels simply took over ranches and haciendas, deprived the owners of their land and supplies, and occasionally incorporated into their ranks some of the hacienda workers. Such is what the rebels did when they occupied Dr. Baucher's [first name unknown] ranch, near the town of Aldama in July of 1913. The doctor appealed for

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brigades. Juan Treviño to E. Dickinson, 1917, typed, Special Collections, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>54</sup> S. Buffington to Mr. A. DeBernardi, 27 June 1922, typed, Special Collections, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

<sup>55</sup> Veterans files located at the Centro de Información del Estado de Chihuahua contain information concerning the places of origin for many *villistas*. In order to receive a pension many *villistas* submitted copies of their birth certificates along with several documents containing personal history information. Men and women came from places such as El Mulato, Valle de Zaragoza, San Carlos, Coyame, and the capital, Ciudad Chihuahua. Centro de Información del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, México. Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua

assistance from federal military troops in the area, but to no avail, losing valuable merchandise.<sup>56</sup>

A great number of other volunteers joined the División to participate in “*la bola*,” a term that signifies getting into the thick of things. In other words, many young men in Chihuahua joined because they did not want to pass up a chance for high adventure. For many this opportunity represented a rite of passage. In an interview during the 1970s, former *villista* José E. Parada noted the fact that his involvement in the Revolution derived from youthful illusions and a desire, as he put it, to “participate in *la bola*.”<sup>57</sup> Invited by a friend to join Madero’s army in 1910, and having nothing to do, José left his native town of Buenaventura at the age of seventeen with his friends to get into “*la bola*.” Arguably the opportunity for adventure seized the imagination of Chihuahuans such as Parada.

### *Recruitment Strategies*

In putting together a formidable fighting force comprised of the five elements just discussed, *ex-maderista* and anti-*huertista* rebels used an array of recruitment patterns, few of which scholars have studied. An examination of the different rebel units that emerged in Chihuahua, Coahuila and Durango reveals certain recruitment approaches, including: appeals to *maderismo*, regionalism, kinship, a reliance on those who exercised local influence and power, and the use of the borderlands regions for impressment

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<sup>56</sup> United States Ambassador to Mexico’s Department of Asuntos Internacionales, 19 July 1913, Ramo: Gobernación, Periodo: Revolución, Archivo General de Nación, México, D.F., Mexico.

<sup>57</sup> José E. Parada, interview by Virgilio H. Sánchez, 3-7 August 1978, interview No. 732, transcript, Oral History Collection, University of Texas at El Paso Archives, El Paso, TX.

purposes. The following paragraphs examine those key patterns, each of which contributed to the effectiveness of the brigades that formed the División del Norte.

First, *ex-maderista* leaders recruited people to join their brigades during the initial anti-*huertista* uprising. Their status as veterans of Madero's army served as an instrument to recruit other *ex-maderistas* in an expedited manner. Early in 1913, one of Villa's assistants, Juan Dozal, for instance, helped recruit former *maderistas* in the Guerrero district, west of Chihuahua City.<sup>58</sup> In another region, Colonel Manuel Baca, an emissary of Villa's, contacted numerous individuals in the Namiquipa area regarding the upcoming revolt as early as March 18, 1913.<sup>59</sup> The news spread quickly throughout the region and in the first days of April numerous individuals met at "los Cerritos" to join Villa's movement.

Local leaders from the region loyal to Villa, as well as to the slain Madero and González, also recruited men and gathered supplies for the different brigades. The following invitation had been offered to men in the countryside by Villa's recruiters:

We have taken up arms to reestablish the constitutional order that has been altered by the traitor Victoriano Huerta. We invite you to join with us to combat the usurper. Those who have arms and beasts, show up armed and mounted. Turn in those whom you know are supporters of the usurper government and are in possession of arms so that we might confiscate them.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> No title, *The New York Times*, 15 March 1913, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Calzadiaz Barrera, *Hechos Reales de la Revolución*, my translation, 103.

<sup>60</sup> Calzadiaz Barrera, *Hechos Reales de la Revolución*, my translation, 104.

Such a statement reflects still another way by which anti-*huertistas* recruited. Ex-*maderistas* and certain Chihuahuans who recruited members into their brigades played upon the collective hatred people possessed for Victoriano Huerta. Although there is no mention of González or Madero in the statement, it can be argued that in order to expand their forces, the anti-*huertistas* used the theme of “constitutional order” that both men embodied.

Rebels also attempted to recruit by encouraging soldiers to persuade family members to muster up. Indeed, the record shows that many filled the columns of the División due to kinship ties. Family members would follow the recruitment of a brother or friend. Martín López, a native of Chihuahua, joined Villa’s forces early in 1913. Having just turned 21 years of age in 1913, he was not the only member of his family to enlist in the División del Norte; Martín’s four brothers also fought alongside Villa.<sup>61</sup> Later, López became one of Villa’s most trusted men, eventually obtaining the rank of general. Other family members who swelled the ranks of the División included the brothers Cano from San Borja and the Acosta siblings from Guerrero.<sup>62</sup>

Conscription from the ranks of the federal army served as yet another method by which rebels recruited for the different brigades. On various occasions, the *villistas* enlisted certain federal troops who had defected from their units. Federal troops

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<sup>61</sup> López had originally entered the Revolution under the command of Guadalupe Gardea, a local leader from the city of Chihuahua who was a close friend of Francisco Madero and Abraham González. Among the first to unite with Villa in March of 1913, he was instrumental in recruiting men for the revolutionary throughout his region. Alberto Calzadiaz Barrera, *Anatomía de un Guerrero: El General Martín López Hijo Militar de Pancho Villa* (Mexico: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, S.A., 1968), 9.

<sup>62</sup> These are but two examples of the many families that formed part of the División del Norte. Others include the brothers of Trinidad Rodríguez, the family Pérez from San Pedro Madera, and the Reyes family from the Casas Grandes region. Calzadiaz Barrera, *Hechos Reales de la Revolución*, 102-107.

possessed special abilities such as artillery or machine gun training, useful to the División del Norte.<sup>63</sup> Their training and special skills enhanced the firepower and effectiveness of the *villistas*. Besides the attacking power of cavalry and infantry units, machine gunners and artillery units provided support for advancing troops and acted as defensive barriers against counterattacks.

A last recruitment tactic involved the search for fighting men from outside of Mexico. As mentioned earlier, the proximity of Chihuahua to the United States-Mexico border allowed for such an approach. Malías C. García, a member of the revolutionary junta in El Paso, was arrested on July 5, 1913, along with five other men in the United States, for alleged recruitment efforts. García was charged with violations of United States' neutrality laws.<sup>64</sup> Military authorities seized a letter carried by García introducing him to Toribio Ortega as a brave soldier, and implicating him for recruitment in the Big Bend area of Texas. Although the men associated with the alleged crime were not convicted, the evidence suggests that at least one of them was recruiting for the Brigada González Ortega.

### *Conclusion*

Few scholars of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 have concentrated on the crucial time period when the División del Norte led by Francisco "Pancho" Villa took form after March of 1913. In neglecting this initial phase of the División's construction many questions have largely remained unanswered concerning the rank-and-file. As a

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<sup>63</sup>This is for the most part true with the exception of Felipe Angeles, a former Federal officer who joined Villa in January of 1914. Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 221.

<sup>64</sup>U.S. Department of State, Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-29, by unknown Special Agent of the Bureau of Investigation. Report on U.S. vs. Malias C. Garcia et al. 8 July 1913 National Archives Microfilm Publications, 812.00:8060, RG 27.

result, *villistas* have largely been oversimplified as the common folk of *norteño* society who possessed little or no revolutionary consciousness and lacked any direction. Moreover, as a defeated force (*villistas* were eventually defeated at the battle of Celaya in 1915), *villistas* were often the target of Chihuahua's post-revolutionary government that sought legitimacy by denigrating the defeated. Villa and his men, who numbered no more than 300 in 1920, became the target of the new governor's campaign to end hostilities in the state, and thereby demonstrate the effectiveness of the state's new government.<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, scholars have excluded from their analysis the lesser-known officers and their role in the construction of rebel cells. Lower rank officers recruited into these rebel cells that grew into brigades, for the most part, became loyal to their local leaders and served the purpose of maintaining order and structure. These lesser-known officers could be depended on for recruitment purposes and to execute orders under conditions of duress. Moreover, they were instrumental as administrators to the new brigades that relegated the volunteers and recruits into their respective combat positions.

Also, these officers proved to be effective in assembling the División del Norte. What began as a series of small revolts led by *ex-maderistas* in the different regions of Chihuahua and Durango blossomed into one of the most formidable military divisions in course of Mexican history since the independence movement of 1810, thanks in part to

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<sup>65</sup> Few works exist on the history of *villistas* after the combative phase of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. A careful examination of primary sources, such as newspapers, reveals evidence that Chihuahua's government, headed by Governor Ignacio C. Enríquez, actively persecuted the *villistas* until their peace agreement with Mexico's central government. Their attacks on *villistas* were not only in the geographic setting of Chihuahua, but also in the mass media. "F. Villa es perseguido: Los serranos al mando del Gral. Enríquez avanzan sobre él y sus secuaces muchos de los cuales le han empezado a abandonar al saber su actitud," *El Correo del Norte*, 26 May 1920, 3.

the effectiveness of the lesser-known officers. Once the leaders of the different brigades met and formed the División del Norte, lower echelon officers served in maintaining order and discipline. Orders handed down to the rank-and-file not to loot, for instance, generally were enforced by captains and the lower-rank officers.<sup>66</sup>

Scholars have also depicted the División del Norte as a rebel force with little or no direction and limited revolutionary consciousness. But as demonstrated in this chapter, revolutionaries in the División del Norte had been recruited by *ex-maderistas* for the purpose of revolting against the administration of Victoriano Huerta. *Ex-maderistas* served as the uniting force that indoctrinated many of the volunteers and recruits and gave them a sense of purpose. While the loyalties of recruits initially lay within the structure of the local unit, ultimately the much larger goal of bringing an end to the Huerta administration fused the different units into the División del Norte led by Francisco Villa, the leader elected by his peers to lead the revolutionaries.

Scholars agree that toppling Huerta constituted a major decision for recruits joining the different brigades in Chihuahua and Durango. But as shown in this chapter, many other reasons motivated common folk to enlist in the movement. The general decline in Chihuahua's economy that forced the closure of companies including the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway Company left many people unemployed. The Revolution provided opportunity for many participants who otherwise would have limited means for acquiring life's necessities.

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<sup>66</sup> Ranks in the División del Norte followed Mexico's military system. In addition to a second and first lieutenant, there were also second and first captains. Aviso al Público, *Periodico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Chihuahua*, 15 December 1913, 3.

For other participants, involvement represented adventure or the opportunity to utilize their skills and receive a paycheck. To many, the act of serving symbolized a rite of passage and an opportunity to leave their hometown. Others, such as soldiers-of-fortune, joined the brigades in Chihuahua and Durango in return for an elevated rank, certain duties and regular paychecks. Still others joined the División because they desired to protect their interests in the state and maintain their local power and influence in society.

Also, scholars have not paid due attention to the social composition of the División del Norte, more precisely the different rebel brigades that comprised the army. As indicated in the chapter, the División's members derived from all walks of life. The majority fit into five categories, namely: *ex-maderistas*, regional leaders (*cabecillas*), soldiers of fortune, skilled professionals/support personnel, and volunteers, although some like the brothers Murga Terán fit into two or more categories. Moreover, analysis of the social composition has exposed the División's inherent regionalist structure.

Recruitment strategies and the growth of rebel cells into brigades in 1913 have remained unexamined. This study, however, shows the different brigades grew rapidly in numbers, and within months of their inauspicious beginning, they had been converted into a full-scale army of more than 12,000 members with cavalry, infantry, artillery, and a hospital train. Recruitment by local elites, *ex-maderistas* or friends constituted the main manner utilized to increase the numbers of participants in the different brigades. The recruitment of skilled professionals, whether they were machine gunners, artillery personnel or railroad engineers served to increase the efficiency of the División.

In conclusion, the División del Norte began as a series of small rebel cells constructed by *ex-maderistas* that emerged after the assassinations of Francisco Madero and Abraham González. Within a short time period, these units in Chihuahua and Durango evolved into small brigades that incorporated more men and women through numerous recruitment strategies. In the span of ten months, these brigades merged into the División del Norte and elected Francisco Villa as their leader. Until 1915, Villa and the División del Norte exercised power and rule in Chihuahua as well as much of northern Mexico.

## CHAPTER 2

“*Vamonos con Pancho Villa:*” Initial Formation and Structure of the División del Norte

### *Introduction*

On January 10, 1914, a cool evening had set on the dusty border town of Ojinaga, a village located on the United States-Mexico border across from Presidio, Texas. The Rio Grande, not too distant from the town square, wound its way through farmland occasionally reflecting the rays of the desert sun. Shadows from the surrounding mountains slowly crept towards the small village, and the occasional sound of hurried footsteps and trotting horses broke the silence. In the distance, a cloud of dust on the horizon could be seen, and federal soldiers ran from one trench line to another spreading the news: Pancho Villa and his men were about to attack.

On the ridgeline overlooking the river valleys, General Salvador Mercado, the federal commander of forces in Chihuahua, peered through his binoculars in search of activity. The open valleys, largely absent of men, had only three weeks earlier been the scene of a repulsed attack of the *villistas* by the federal army. Mercado and his army, composed of 3,000 army regulars and 2,000 *colorados*, eagerly awaited the next assault.<sup>67</sup> News had reached Ojinaga that Francisco “Pancho” Villa, the hardened revolutionary and leader of the División del Norte, would personally lead the next charge on the town. As darkness covered the valley, Mercado’s men waited, confident of another victory.

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<sup>67</sup> The term *colorados* referred to the irregular troops under the command of Pascual Orozco, Jr. See Michael C. Meyer, *Mexican Rebel: Pascual Orozco and the Mexican Revolution, 1910 – 1915* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

Around the middle of the night, the sound of rifle fire and men shouting erupted in the large river valley. Major Michael McNamee, local commander of the United States Army troops, observed with his fellow officers from the American side, witnessing Villa's army descending upon the town, fiercely attacking the enemy. Though darkness obscured the area, the flashes from numerous rifle and artillery barrages illuminated the battlefields. Within two hours, the fighting had subsided and numerous federal soldiers, including Mercado and his officers, had fled the battlefield and crossed the river into the safety of United States. American Red Cross and local doctors, who had anticipated having to care for the sick and wounded, received those in need of attention at their makeshift hospital tents.<sup>68</sup>

Francisco "Pancho" Villa and the División del Norte's victory at Ojinaga on January 10, 1914, marked the end of the División's Chihuahua campaign launched nearly 10 months before. How had the División become so efficient and powerful? Scholars devoted to the history of the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua, and more precisely to the study of the construction of revolutionary forces in northern Mexico during the anti-*huertista* revolts of 1913, have largely overlooked the initial military history of the División del Norte. Questions have remained unanswered concerning the regionalism, structure, and tactics associated with the men and women of this army division. Where did the different rebel cells form in Chihuahua and Durango? How did regionalism influence the composition of the troops? What tactics did the members of the División

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<sup>68</sup> The battle at Ojinaga, Chihuahua between the Division del Norte and the federal army has received little attention by scholars of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Reports by officers in the United States Army provide considerable detail concerning the maneuvers executed by the attacking *villistas* and the defenders of the small town. Major M. McNamee to Company Officer, Southern Department, 10 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4440, Box 1

utilize to defeat the federal army in Chihuahua? How did the División's campaign in Chihuahua and Durango develop that eventually led to the Battle of Ojinaga in 1913-14, the final clash that completely decimated the federal army in Chihuahua? What were the political maneuvers in Chihuahua that prompted the anti-*huertista* campaign of 1913? The vast literature pertaining to the División and the anti-*huertista* campaigns of 1913 remains mute on these questions. They are the focus of this chapter.

Scholarly narratives concerning the rise of the División del Norte in Chihuahua and Durango have provided sketchy information as to the historical events that transpired in both states during 1913 and early 1914. Instead, historians have largely preferred writing on the principal battles such as those at Tierra Blanca, Torreón, and Ciudad Juárez while omitting from their narratives the smaller battles fought by the anti-*huertista* rebel cells that emerged in Chihuahua and Durango.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, most scholars have overlooked the significance of the División del Norte's pivotal victory at Ojinaga. Villa's destruction of Salvador R. Mercado's forces solidified control of the state for the *villistas* as it completely eliminated from Mexican soil a federal force of over 5,000 men.

### *Rebels with a Cause*

As explained in the previous chapter, the assassinations of Francisco Madero and his vice-president, José María Pino Suárez, prompted many people in Mexico to take up arms against the government of Victoriano Huerta. Politically, numerous governors in

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<sup>69</sup> In his examination of revolutionary events in Chihuahua and Durango during 1913 and 1914, Friedrich Katz has focused on the larger battles, omitting from his analysis the lesser-known conflicts between the rebel cells and the federal army. While Katz offers information concerning the different leaders who emerged against Huerta in the states of Chihuahua and Durango, he does not provide a structural analysis of the different brigades nor where they formed. Additionally, he provides limited information concerning the leaders of these brigades. Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998): 203-228.

Mexico had originally allied themselves with Madero during the *decena trágica* only to change allegiances when Victoriano Huerta assumed the office of president of Mexico. However, within a week after the assassinations of Madero and Pino Suárez, many governors throughout Mexico formally challenged the legitimacy of Huerta's central government. Thus, pacification of the country at any cost became the first order of business for the Huerta administration.<sup>70</sup>

Governors were not the only ones to question Huerta's right to the presidency following the Madero-Suárez assassinations. In Coahuila, Sonora, and Chihuahua, state and municipal governments refused to recognize Huerta's position. In Coahuila, Venustiano Carranza prepared for war, while in Sonora, Álvaro Obregón, Plutarco Elías Calles and others denounced the central government. Ultimately, the opposition that formed in these three states coalesced into the constitutionalist forces under the direction of Venustiano Carranza.<sup>71</sup>

In Chihuahua, Governor Abraham González and other leading politicians fell in line in refusing recognition of Huerta's administration. González, a native of Chihuahua and veteran of the uprising in 1910, had supported Madero and his presidency. González had been among the first to form an anti-reelection club in Chihuahua -- known as the

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<sup>70</sup> Michael C. Meyer contends that many governors in Mexico allied themselves with Huerta even though they had pledged allegiance to Madero during the *decena trágica*. The assassinations of both men prompted many ex-maderistas to withdraw recognition of Huerta and launch a revolt against the central government. Coahuila first withdrew formal recognition followed by Sonora and Chihuahua. Faced with pacifying the countryside, Huerta and his administration took extreme measures to achieve their goal. See, Michael C. Meyer, *Huerta: A Political Portrait* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972).

<sup>71</sup> The constitutionalist faction headed by Venustiano Carranza in early 1913 included brigades from Chihuahua, Sonora and Coahuila. Regarding Carrancismo, Alan Knight contends that it represented a refined *Maderismo*. "Carrancismo was therefore the 'self criticism' of *Maderismo*, refined and tempered in the furnace of 1913-1914; it exemplified a 'new spirit and a new conception of political struggle'..." Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986): 104.

Club Central Benito Juárez -- prior to joining Madero's call to arms in 1910. González had been elected governor of Chihuahua after the Madero revolt and remained in office until the *decena trágica*.<sup>72</sup>

During the *decena trágica*, González pledged his loyalty to Madero, and that proved his downfall. General Antonio Rábago, the federal commander in Chihuahua, received orders to detain the governor, and on 22 February 1913, a platoon of soldiers arrested González in Ciudad Chihuahua. The Huerta government then tried González in a military court for conspiring against the federal army.<sup>73</sup> Convicted of a lesser charge, he was sent to Mexico City by train and along the way was shot to death on March 6 at a location near Bachimba Pass outside of the capital city.<sup>74</sup>

The assassinations of Francisco Madero, José María Pino Suárez and Abraham González unleashed in Chihuahua, Durango and Coahuila an anti-huertista movement that eventually coalesced into the División del Norte. As mentioned before, anti-huertista cells emerged in all three states that grew, over the course of 1913, into the brigades of the División del Norte. Almost immediately the División experienced success. Why did it do so? To find the answer, it is necessary to analyze its internal components, including the different brigades and the individual units that comprised them.

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<sup>72</sup>González's biographer, Francisco R. Almada, argues that González remained loyal to Madero even though the latter had proved inefficient at bringing change to Mexico. See Francisco R. Almada, *Vida, proceso y muerte de Abraham González* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1967).

<sup>73</sup> William H. Beezley, *Insurgent Governor: Abraham González and the Mexican Revolution in Chihuahua* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), 142.

<sup>74</sup> United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 24 March 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 6952, RG 24.

*The Structure of the División del Norte*

The División del Norte's primary brigades numbered nineteen as of 1913-1914, mostly from the states of Durango and Chihuahua. Table 1 provides the names of the brigades, their places of origin and their leaders.<sup>75</sup> Some of the brigades, such as the *Brigada Sanitaria* and the *Transportes Militares*, consisted of men and women from different parts of Mexico and did not originate entirely in one region under the direction of a local *cabecilla*. Instead, these units had been constructed from different people who were transferred into the *Brigada Sanitaria* and *Transportes Militares* from the División's numerous brigades. Their members often did not serve as combat troops, but instead provided auxiliary support and medical assistance.

While military authorities never composed a precise diagram of the División del Norte's military structure, primary sources reveal that the force rapidly came to resemble a modern military unit after its inception in late 1913. As the size of the brigades increased through recruitment, regiments and squadrons took shape, commanded by field grade officers (captains, majors and colonels) loyal to a *cabecilla*. Leaders of the rebel cells maintained the rank they had received during their stint in the Madero army. Such was the case of José Sosa Loya, who joined the constitutionalist forces in March 1914 as a member of the Third Regiment headed by colonel Ricardo Muñoz. Muñoz's Third

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<sup>75</sup> Data for the table concerning the different brigades that comprised the División del Norte came from several different sources including novels, monographs, autobiographies, newspapers, and several archives located in the states of Chihuahua, Durango and Mexico, D.F. The most important source of information proved to be the files of veterans from the Chihuahua Veteran's Administration in Chihuahua City. In addition to name, rank, and service record, each veteran's files contained the names of brigades, leaders and the battles he/she fought. It should also be noted that some of the revolutionaries who joined the División hailed from the state of Coahuila. Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Regiment formed a part of the Brigada Leales de Camargo commanded by General Rosalío Hernández Cabral.<sup>76</sup>

Some of the units in the División incorporated into their ranks recruits who descended from frontier regions located in the states of Chihuahua, Durango and Coahuila. These units had been formed in the border regions between all three states. The Brigada Morelos, for instance, under the direction of Tomás Urbina, incorporated volunteers from both Durango and southern Chihuahua, primarily in the area of Hidalgo del Parral. Urbina, a native of the region, utilized his knowledge of the territory as well as his pre-Revolution contacts to successfully recruit men into his unit.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The military structure of the División resembled that of the federal military's, but the alliances among the men were not necessarily of military order. As mentioned before, most men were loyal to their local leader and only extended loyalty to Francisco Villa after the creation of the División del Norte in September of 1913. Moreover, rank in the different anti-huertista rebel cells stemmed from the volunteers' experiences in Madero's army. After the construction of the División del Norte in September of 1913, ex-maderistas received new ranks. It should also be noted that a few of the División's officers had at one time served in the Mexican federal military, including Francisco Villa and Felipe Ángeles. José Sosa Loya, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 11, File 1.

<sup>77</sup> Urbina's activities were closely followed during 1913 by the American Consular Agent in the state of Durango. The consul's reports to the Department of State include troop movements, numbers and the activities of their leaders including those of Tomás Urbina, Orestes Pereyra and Domingo Arrieta. United States Department of State. Consular Dispatches from Durango. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8073, RG 27.

Table 1  
División del Norte's Military Structure

<i>Name of Brigade</i>	<i>Place of Origin</i>	<i>Name of Leader(s)</i>
Brigada de Artillería	Several	Felipe Ángeles
Brigada Benito Juárez	Chihuahua	Maclovio Herrera Cano
Brigada Carranza	Durango	José Carrillo
Brigada Ceniceros	Durango	Severino Ceniceros Bocanegra
Brigada Cuauhtémoc	Chihuahua/Durango	Trinidad Rodríguez
Brigada Chao	Chihuahua	Manuel Chao Rovira
Dorados	Several	Jesús M. Ríos
Brigada González Ortega	Chihuahua	Toribio Ortega Ramírez
Brigada Guadalupe Victoria	Chihuahua/Durango	Miguel González
Brigada Juárez de Durango	Durango	Calixto Contreras Espinosa
Brigada Leales de Camargo	Chihuahua	Rosalío Hernández Cabral
Brigada Madero	Durango/Coahuila	Juan E. García
Brigada Morelos	Durango/Chihuahua	Tomás Urbina Reyes
Brigada Primera de Durango	Durango	Orestes Pereyra
Brigada Robles	Durango/Coahuila	José Isabel Robles
Brigada Sanitaria	Several	Dr. Andrés Villareal
Brigada Villa	Chihuahua	Francisco Villa
Brigada Zaragoza	Coahuila/Durango	Eugenio Aguirre Benavides
Transportes Militares	Several	Pascual González Martínez

Source: See footnote 75

The majority of the brigades consisted of mounted troops that resembled cavalry units and armed troops on foot that qualified as infantry regiments. Many of the volunteers who joined the División del Norte arrived on horseback and came carrying arms. Their roots were in a frontier culture forged by the presidio/mission complex of colonial northern Mexico. As such, they were products of a militant society and had long defended themselves against the native Indian population. In Chihuahua, soldiers in many of the brigades descended from the early colonialists responsible for creating a culture of horsemanship.<sup>78</sup>

During 1913, cavalry units gave the rebel brigades an advantage over the federal army, which was largely tied to the railroads for its mobility. At the time, the railroad did not extend into many locations in northern Mexico. In Chihuahua, the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway, for instance, did not connect to the United States-Mexico border via the northwestern corner of the state until after 1920.<sup>79</sup> In Chihuahua, isolated areas existed where the terrain made vehicular travel (an instrument of war still in its experimental stage in 1913) near impossible. Therefore, horses proved indispensable for the rapid deployment of rebel forces able to wage a guerrilla war against federal troops dependant upon the railway.

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<sup>78</sup>Several scholars of northern Mexico have alluded to the construction of a frontier culture in locations such as Chihuahua during the colonial era. Few, however, have reconstructed the history of *villistas* as the descendants of colonial subjects. Alonso and Nugent examine the Namiquipa area and unfortunately do not extend their analysis beyond that geographic setting into other regions of Chihuahua. Their anthropological analysis provides a necessary model for the studies of other regions. See Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: University of Arizona's Press, 1995); Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of the Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>79</sup>S. Buffington to Mr. A. DeBernardi, 27 June 1922, typed, Special Collections, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

The majority of revolutionaries who joined the brigades had little or no military training, and only a few, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had prior military service in the Mexican army. Men with formal military training, in addition to the *ex-maderistas* in the different brigades, made up the bulk of the military leadership of the División. For example, Felipe Ángeles, a former federal artillery officer, joined the División del Norte in 1914 and rose to commander of all artillery units. Ángeles certainly counted on his military past as he went about the task of reconstructing the *villista* artillery.

Discipline within the different units rested on the patriarchal relationship that existed between the men and their leaders. The authority of the *cabecilla* over his men extended from the field officers to the common soldiers. While the *villistas* have often been characterized as greenhorn villagers lacking discipline, their comportment changed after the construction of the División del Norte. The discipline meted out by the officers in the División served to solidify the military hierarchical structure of the army. It should be noted, however, that Villa and his officers also exercised control through violent means, and sometimes punished non-conformists as a form of maintaining discipline in the ranks.<sup>80</sup>

During the initial phase of the 1913 Villa uprising, anti-huertista rebels relied on raiding in order to accumulate supplies and acquire horses and weapons. This practice, however, changed that fall when the División del Norte took form. The officer corps

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<sup>80</sup> Numerous accounts exist concerning *villistas* and their discipline tactics. Most tend to be associated with General Villa. Throughout the course of time, however, some have been embellished and even fantasized. During the takeover of Chihuahua City in 1913-1914, warnings were printed in local newspapers that forbade soldiers in the *villista* army from exercising rule over the local population. Those caught stood to be punished by their officers. "Aviso al Público," *Periodico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 15 December 1913, 4.

now enforced authority using harsh measures, including imprisonment and even execution by firing squad. In many instances, the *villista* leaders forbade their men to pillage towns the División occupied. After Villa's army had taken Chihuahua City in 1913, for instance, the *villista* government published orders in newspapers prohibiting the rebels from looting houses and stealing horses.<sup>81</sup>

No particular uniformity existed in the size of the brigades. The number of participants within brigades might range from 500 to 2,000. In the more isolated regions of Chihuahua and Durango, brigades inclined to be smaller, while those around dense population centers such as mining towns and state capitals tended to be larger. The reports of United States consular agents in the states of Chihuahua and Durango serve as the best sources of information revealing the troop size of the brigades. In addition to providing information on the activities of revolutionaries, these reports contain information as to the numbers of people who augmented the *ex-maderista* ranks.

In one report, consular agent Theodore Cushing Hamm from Durango detailed the political activities surrounding Calixto Contreras' rebels, and offered information on the numbers of individuals who joined the Brigada Juárez de Durango. According to Hamm, Contreras' brigade numbered around 1,000. He estimated the total number of rebels in the state to be around 4,000, led by men such as Tomás Urbina, Orestes Pereyra, Domingo Arrieta, Calixto Contreras and Gabriel Pereyra.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> "Aviso al Público," *Periodico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 18 January 1914, 8.

<sup>82</sup> United States Department of State. Thomas Hamm to Secretary of State. 19 April 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7720, RG 25.

In Chihuahua, consular agent Marion Letcher similarly reported detailed information on different rebel brigades. In order to obtain information, Letcher relied on numerous operatives under his employment. He thus provided data as to rebel movements, the troop size of brigades and the manner that numerous rebels operating in the state acquired supplies. In one report, Letcher noted that the size of Francisco Villa's unit in the Madera region totaled around between 1,200 and 2,000 men.<sup>83</sup>

The División del Norte counted on a general staff that came into existence as a result of the agreement in September 1913 to construct the División and elect Francisco Villa as its leader. According to one historian, the majority of the members in the general staff came from the Brigada Zaragoza. Members of the staff included generals like Juan N. Medina, Enrique Santos Coy, Carlos Cervantes, Darío Silva and others.<sup>84</sup>

Certain brigades contained specialized units dedicated to a single task. The *Cuerpo de Guías*, for instance, served as an advanced scout unit for the División del Norte. Under the direction of General Martín López, one of Villa's most trusted generals, the highly mobile unit consisted of light cavalry that could easily traverse the difficult Chihuahuan terrain. In addition to serving as advance observers for the División, the *Cuerpo de Guías* was also utilized for reconnaissance purposes.<sup>85</sup>

The *Transportes Militares* proved to be one of the most important units in the División. After 1913, the unit successfully began operations by incorporating components

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<sup>83</sup>United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 1 September 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8640, RG 26.

<sup>84</sup>Salmerón, *La División del Norte: La tierra, los hombres y la historia de un ejército del pueblo*, 518.

<sup>85</sup>Other notable units within the División include the famous *dorados*, "the golden ones," that served as Villa's personal force. The group generally consisted of men recruited from other units. Rafael Anchondo González, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

from railroad companies that operated in Chihuahua prior to the Revolution. The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway, for instance, had conducted business in Chihuahua as early as 1905. By 1913, however, the company as well as its hardware, including railway lines, engines and depots had fallen into the hands of the *villistas*.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, many engineers and conductors who at one time served the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway as well as other companies in the region, had gone over to the División del Norte.<sup>87</sup>

The *Transportes Militares* depended heavily on the railroad to deploy troops to different destination points in Chihuahua and Durango. In addition to transporting many of the División's brigades, the unit delivered critical supplies and munitions. The unit also transported members of the *Brigada Sanitaria* and utilized several cars to care for the sick and wounded.<sup>88</sup>

#### *Colonial Roots of Citizen Military Traditions in Northwestern Chihuahua*

As demonstrated earlier in these pages, the many brigades that comprised the División del Norte had historical roots that blended regional and cultural characteristics and traditions. Each individual brigade came to the División already shaped by a past

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<sup>86</sup> United States Department of State. United States Army reports to the Department of State concerning activities in the Big Bend District. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8809, RG 28.

<sup>87</sup> Several men who worked in the railroad industry prior to the Revolution lent their services to the División. The files of veterans from the División del Norte located in the state of Chihuahua indicate that these men were not only native to Chihuahua but other states in Mexico, including Zacatecas and Jalisco. Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

<sup>88</sup> To date, a comprehensive examination of the *villista* trains remains to be done. Friedrich Katz contends that the sanitary brigades constituted one of the most modern hospital trains in Mexico. He cites as his source of information the descriptions offered by John Reed, an American journalist in northern Mexico and witness to the División's 40 boxcar hospital train. Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 292.

and historical agenda traceable to the decades before to the existence of *villismo* and the División as well as the Revolution of 1910. Any study concerning the División's brigades, therefore, must take into consideration the forces that influenced the organization and the functioning of these forces, including the geography of the region, the region's inhabitants, and the larger sociological processes that affected those regions.

To illustrate these points, this chapter will single out the Brigada González Ortega that emerged in the northeastern corner of Chihuahua in the region of *La Junta de los Ríos*. While the Brigada González Ortega officially came into existence in October 1913, immediately after the formation of the División in September of the same year, the history of its participants went back to the colonial era to the establishment of frontier presidios and missions that were constructed to settle and defend northern Nueva Vizcaya.

The region under examination roughly forms a triangle that incorporates the three communities of Cuchillo Parado, Ojinaga, and San Carlos as well as the numerous settlements they surround. The geography of the region includes several valleys, gravel terraces and flood plains surrounded by massive mountain ranges. In the La Junta area where the present day city of Ojinaga is situated, the United States – Mexico international boundary divides the river valley. The region's two major rivers, the Río Conchos and Río Bravo (Rio Grande) converge in this valley and thus the name of *La Junta de los Ríos*. This area of confluence existed as a center of Indian activity that changed, over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the introduction of Spanish colonial institutions and the subsequent wars between the new colonizers and the

indigenous inhabitants. A colonial military tradition, in essence, had been established in the region with the introduction of the presidio-mission complex that established a new culture and society.

At *La Junta*, the *Presidio de La Junta de los Rios Conchos y Norte* had been reconstructed in 1777 at the request of Hugo O'Connor, commandant of the armies in Nueva Vizcaya. The settlement counted on over fifty colonists for warfare. This number included a few military men, but also civilian families and single persons including widowers. Close to 85 per cent of the *pobladores* at the *Presidio de la Junta* were married and had anywhere from two to six children. Six of these married men served as militia personnel; one was a *Teniente de Justicia Mayor*, two were *sargentos*, three *cabos* and one an *álferes*. Each family as well as single people possessed weapons necessary for their defense against Indian attacks.<sup>89</sup>

The colonial military traditions of the era in Northern Nueva Vizcaya, and to a lesser extent the Ojinaga, Cuchillo Parado, and San Carlos region, did not cease after the independence movement of 1810. Such traditions continued, although important changes occurred as a result of events such as the Mexican independence movement, increased Apache attacks during the early to mid-nineteenth-century, the United States-Mexico War of 1846 - 1848, and the Ley Lerdo of 1856. These major watersheds not only

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<sup>89</sup> Documents located at the Archives of the Big Bend concerning the reconstructed presidio at *La Junta* reveal many interesting characteristics about the area, such as the geographic setting of the colony, the social composition of its inhabitants, their personal belongings of most importance, and the supply of food they counted on to survive until the following harvest. A previous attempt to build the garrison in 1760 had failed due to constant Indian attacks. O'Connor's reorganization of the frontier system called for the reconstruction of the Presidios at *La Junta* and San Carlos. Report to Spanish Crown on population at *Presidio de la Junta de los Rios Conchos y Norte* by Joachim Muñoz, *La Junta Presidio Collection*, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, Box 1, File 20.

disrupted the social order in Chihuahua but also spurred the demise of the presidio system as one of the principal institutions along the northern frontier. As the presidio system decayed, Chihuahuans in many regions became increasingly vulnerable to attacks, primarily by the Apache Indians who roamed the countryside and lived in the difficult terrain of the state's mountains. By the 1850s, constant Indian attacks had forced many people to flee from their haciendas and to vacate small settlements.<sup>90</sup>

The suspension of military assignments in Chihuahua did not permanently produce an end to the cult of militarism, however. Changes at the national level coupled with the astute maneuvers of local caudillos in Chihuahua during the late nineteenth-century resulted in a resurrection of the tradition. During the 1860s, several military colonies were once again established in Chihuahua to fight the Indian population. In northern Chihuahua, a military colony was established in the Cuchillo Parado region that served the purpose of fighting Indians in the area and establishing control of the area.<sup>91</sup>

In 1876, Mexico witnessed the beginning of a new political era when Porfirio Díaz seized power through his *Revolución de Tuxtepec*. In an attempt to adhere to the principles of nineteenth-century liberalism, Díaz seldom during the initial years of his

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<sup>90</sup> Wasserman contends that Chihuahua's economic decline in the nineteenth-century had far reaching effects. "The devastation at mid-century virtually wiped the slate clean. The state's mines were filled with water and caved in; its pasture land was empty. Those haciendas not abandoned by their owners were fortified with thick walls. The once-flourishing commerce of the northern trade routes was ruined. State government barely functioned. Factionalism tore apart its politics. Chihuahuans lived under siege in constant fear." Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854 – 1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 25.

<sup>91</sup> Several scholars have briefly touched upon the new military colonies established in Chihuahua during the 1860s. Their analysis, however, provides limited information. See Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*; Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of the Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Ana María Alonso, *Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997).

administration challenged the authority of state governments. As a result, local caudillos gained considerable power at the regional level.<sup>92</sup> Increased control fell into the hands of a few wealthy elites in Mexico's different states, including Chihuahua.<sup>93</sup>

Those who went on to join the Brigada González Ortega and the División del Norte in 1913, then, came from an environment created by a military culture. The presidio complex in places such as *La Junta* had served the purpose of populating the region and defending its inhabitants from hostile Indians who viewed the Spaniards as intruders. The presidios had been utilized to carry out major campaigns against the Apaches suspected of decimating many of the haciendas and pueblos in the region. The people who settled in the Presidio de la Junta and San Carlos thus hailed from a warrior past and their equestrian skills and their abilities to utilize weapons readily equipped them for duty in the División del Norte.

The community origins of members of the División del Norte also handily prepared them for warfare as they shared a common interest in their region's well-being. The División, as already explained, consisted primarily of brigades that had formed from anti-*huertista* rebel cells in 1913. In the Cuchillo Parado, Ojinaga, and San Carlos region, the Brigada González Ortega itself began as a grouping of anti-*huertista* cells that were formed by local leaders who had been *maderistas* in 1910. The cells formed in the

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<sup>92</sup> Considerable scholarship has identified the *porfiriato* from 1876 – 1910 as responsible for destabilizing the northern villages. Garner notes that Díaz's efforts to subordinate the countryside in his later years intensified, resulting in increased tensions between local state governments and the central state. See Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz: Profiles in Power* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2001).

<sup>93</sup> In Chihuahua, the Terrazas family emerged as the most powerful in the state. The Terrazas family came to dominate Chihuahua's economy and politics through shrewd political maneuvers. "Luis Terrazas and his family overcame the opposition of Conservatives and rival Liberal factions through adept political maneuver, the astute choice of allies, a measure of good luck, and the shrewd use of the economic resources." See Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

different settlements spread throughout the region, including La Mula, Ojinaga, El Mulato, San Carlos, and Cuchillo Parado. Still other cells originated in ranches and small farming communities such as Hacienda Casa de Piedra, San Juan and Rancho San Francisco. Eventually, these numerous cells united to form a local regiment that combated federal troops stationed locally. Subsequently, the regiment grew into a brigade that formed a part of the División, and was named after their leader, Toribio Ortega and the deceased Abraham González.<sup>94</sup>

Leandro García Hernández joined such a rebel cell in 1913. García had fought under the command of Ortega as a *maderista* in 1911 and returned to service in 1913. In the División, he received the rank of private and over the course of the next year and a half climbed through the ranks before achieving officer status as a lieutenant in the Brigada González Ortega. Throughout the course of his career, García fought in ten engagements in the states of Durango, Chihuahua and Coahuila. Sickness eventually forced him to leave the División del Norte.<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps the single most important leader that emerged in northwestern Chihuahua during 1913 proved to be Toribio Ortega of Cuchillo Parado. Ortega had been a *maderista* in 1910 and took up arms against the Huerta government as early as March of 1913. Because Ortega had been a leading figure in the anti-reelectionist clubs in the

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<sup>94</sup>Files pertaining to veterans of the Brigada González Ortega demonstrate that those men originated in several small settlements and towns in the San Carlos, Cuchillo Parado, and Ojinaga region. Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

<sup>95</sup> Leandro García Hernández, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 9, Expediente 24.

region and achieved the rank of colonel in the Madero army, he quickly emerged as the leader of all anti-*huertista* rebel cells.

Toribio Ortega's position as the leader of anti-*huertista* forces had been solidified following the death of the region's other ex-*maderista* leader, Manuel Benavídez, who might have superceded Ortega as commander of the cells that merged to form the Brigada González Ortega. Benavídez's death at the battle of Rancherías in Chihuahua left the anti-*huertista* cells from the region absent of a high-ranking leader who commanded the respect of his peers and who could rally the rebel cells into one single unit.<sup>96</sup>

Albino Aranda Maldonado emerged as still another leader from San Carlos. Aranda had served in Madero's army in 1910 and had been among the first to take up arms against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz in November of that same year. He fought in six combats before the fall of Díaz's dictatorship in 1911. Aranda achieved the rank of *Capitán Segundo* in the *maderista* army before returning to civilian life. In 1913, he came out of civilian life and recruited men to form a rebel cell in the San Carlos region. He received the rank of *Capitán Primero* once the units had formed the Brigada González Ortega and became part of the División del Norte.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Manuel Benavídez died in combat during a battle with federal troops that took place in Rancherías, Chihuahua on 8 August 1913. He was 21 years of age at the time of his death. The death of Benavídez, a native of San Carlos, forever turned him into a martyr of the Revolution of 1910. In the aftermath of the armed phase of the Revolution, San Carlos was renamed to Manuel Benavídez. Genaro Benavidez Montoya, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 3, Expediente 31.

<sup>97</sup> Albino Aranda Maldonado served as one of Villa's most trusted officers throughout the course of the armed phase of the Revolution and after. Aranda stayed in the service of Villa until 1920 when the *villistas* signed a peace agreement with the government of Mexico. His life after the armed phase of the Revolution will be discussed in Chapter 4. Raquel Rodríguez Viuda de Aranda, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 2, Expediente 5.

The Brigada González Ortega consisted primarily of individuals from settlements in the territory and from the small agricultural communities and ranches. The region's largely rural population depended heavily on horses and mules as public transportation systems did not exist. Several ranches and haciendas employed vaqueros to work the large herds of cattle.<sup>98</sup> The Brigada González Ortega consequently included many mounted troops well familiar with the surrounding mountains and valleys.

The age of recruits in the Brigada González Ortega ranged anywhere from 17 years of age to 56. The older men in the rebel cells tended to be *ex-maderistas* recruited by their former officers. These older recruits usually possessed higher ranks and could be counted on to indoctrinate the younger soldiers brought on board by a parent, sibling, or distant cousin. Also, the elders could be counted on to maintain hierarchical authority and discipline in the units.

Such older volunteers included Felipe Valdez García, who returned to serve under Toribio Ortega in 1913 at the age of fifty-six. In addition to his work as a recruiter, he fought in seventeen engagements including some of the bloodiest battles, among them those at Tierra Blanca and Ojinaga. García not only fought in the state of Chihuahua, but also served the División in its campaigns in Coahuila, Durango, and Zacatecas. He returned to civilian life after two years of service, having achieved the rank of *Capitán Primero*.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Files pertaining to veterans of the Brigada González Ortega reveal that the brigade consisted primarily of cavalry units in the División del Norte. Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

<sup>99</sup> Files in the veteran's archive in Chihuahua City list García as among the oldest who joined the revolutionary forces whose. His death certificate notes that García died in 1950 at the age of 93. There may have been revolutionaries of older age, but their files have yet to appear. Felipe Valdez García,

In addition to serving as a combat unit, the Brigada González Ortega doubled as a unit assigned to procure weapons and merchandise for other brigades in the División del Norte. The region's geographic location next to the United States-Mexico allowed representatives of the Brigada to purchase arms and supplies illegally from Americans in the small towns that dotted the Rio Grande. Merchants in locations such as Presidio and Lajitas, Texas, willingly sold provisions to revolutionaries. The scarcity of Mexican federal military units in the region, with the exception of a small force at Ojinaga, contributed to the ease by which the revolutionaries obtained supplies.<sup>100</sup>

The first military action taken by the rebel cells under the command of Toribio Ortega in April 1913 resulted in a successful rout of the small federal military garrison in Ojinaga. The small town lay on a plateau and could not easily be defended by a small force. The small federal detachment of 200 men in the town, under the command of Artillery Captain Alberto Ortiz, was no match for Colonel Ortega's units. Upon hearing the news of an imminent attack, Captain Ortiz fled to Presidio, Texas, and then to Marfa, where the Huerta government had consulate offices.

José de la Cruz Sánchez, an old *maderista* from 1910, replaced Captain Ortiz as commander of the federal troops, and according to one source, gave his men the opportunity to return to civilian life or join Ortega's men. The entire group joined

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Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Caja 2, Expediente 5.

<sup>100</sup> This was also true during the Madero revolt of 1910. Toribio Ortega and others served the maderistas not only as combatants, but also as gunrunners. The region's extreme isolation and location next to the United States-Mexico border made the acquisition of supplies an easy operation. Máximo Castillo, a maderista obtained weapons in the region during the campaign of 1911. A payment stub notes he paid Olmado Molinar to purchase weapons in Presidio and bring them into Ojinaga in July of 1911. Payment stub signed by Máximo Castillo, Ramo Gobernación, Periodo Revolución, Sección: Sin Sección, Archivo General de la Nación, México, D.F., México, Caja 865, Expediente 4.

Ortega's forces with the exception of De la Cruz Sánchez, who resigned his commission from the army. He then gathered the troops rifles and turned them over to the Mexican consulate located in Marfa, Texas.<sup>101</sup> Ortega's seizure of Ojinaga left the region largely absent of federal forces with the exception of militia units loyal to Huerta, but these were too small in numbers and posed no threat.

Ortega's position as the sole military force in the region allowed him to accumulate weapons more readily through purchases in the United States. It also facilitated his recruitment of additional troops into the units. Well situated in Ojinaga by mid-April 1913, he worked diligently for the next two months to purchase supplies in the United States. His unit soon swelled to 500 well-armed men with another 300 who had volunteered but possessed no weapons. During the next two months an additional 300 men joined Ortega from the small settlements and towns in the region, such as El Mulato, San Antonio, Barrancas and San Carlos.<sup>102</sup>

Ortega's efforts to purchase weapons and supplies in the United States, however, suddenly halted when the Mexican Consulate in Marfa, Texas, persuaded United States authorities to investigate reports of revolutionaries purchasing weapons and supplies. As a result, the United States issued an arrest warrant for Ortega, charging him with violation of neutrality laws. Seemingly, his purchase of weapons and supplies in the United States

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<sup>101</sup> While De la Cruz Sánchez's actions to deplete the forces of their rifles seems unlikely, the old *maderista* did not join Ortega's men. His motivations remain unclear. Ontiveros, the author of Ortega's biography, claims that Captain Ortiz days before the attack had called on Ortega to obtain his loyalty to Huerta. Ortega refused to join Huerta's government, according to Ontiveros, and instead withdrew to Cuchillo Parado where he began the recruitment of men for his rebel cell. Francisco de P. Ontiveros, *Toribio Ortega y la Brigada González Ortega* (Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos del Estado, 1924), 62 – 65.

<sup>102</sup> United States Department of State. Reports of Special Agents to Bureau of Investigation concerning activities in the Big Bend District. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7713, RG 26.

violated the arms embargo issued by the United States government. Arrested in Presidio, Ortega was taken to Marfa where he remained in jail before his release on a bond. But the old soldier returned to Ojinaga after having been released on bond and resumed his revolutionary activities.<sup>103</sup>

In early June, Francisco Villa ordered Colonel Ortega to move his command up the Rio Bravo (Rio Grande) where he and his men would assist in an attack by constitutionalist forces upon Ciudad Juárez. Before his departure for his Juárez assignment, Ortega dutifully organized an occupation force of 175 men and entrusted them to maintain order in the region and prevent the formation of loyal *huertista* militias. Ortega left a force of seventy-five mounted men in Ojinaga and sent another hundred to San Carlos.<sup>104</sup>

Ortega and his men, now organized as a regiment and totaling about 350, left Ojinaga and headed upriver until they reached the small settlement of Guadalupe, located forty miles from Ciudad Juárez. Arriving at his destination in early July, Ortega prepared his troops for an attack on Ciudad Juárez. Meanwhile, he made purchases of supplies in the United States through middlemen, and continued recruitment for his unit on both sides of the river. His force grew to over 700 men during the month.<sup>105</sup> But Villa changed his plans suddenly, and postponed the attack on Ciudad Juárez. He ordered

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<sup>103</sup> United States Department of State. Reports of Special Agents to Bureau of Investigation concerning activities in the Big Bend District. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7867, RG 26.

<sup>104</sup> United States Department of State. Reports of Special Agents to Bureau of Investigation concerning activities in the Big Bend District. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8809, RG 28.

<sup>105</sup> United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State. 11 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8022, RG 28.

Ortega and his men to join the other *villistas* south of the city for a campaign in southern Chihuahua.

*Francisco Villa and the Military Campaign Against Huerta*

Prior to the planned attack on Ciudad Juárez in July of 1913, Villa had been operating in the region south of the city recruiting men and forming his own rebel units. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Villa had crossed into Mexico from El Paso, but then parts of his small band dispersed into different parts of Chihuahua to construct their own anti-*huertista* rebel cells. Villa then began the process of recruitment for his own cell, and quickly brought together men in the region under his command. In April of 1913, Villa's forces stopped a train that was destined for Ciudad Chihuahua from Batopilas, and robbed it of 122 silver bars. His booty enabled him to purchase ammunition.<sup>106</sup> Henceforth, Villa and his soldiers succeeded in capturing the lightly defended towns of Temósachic, Matachic, Santo Tomás, and Galeana in western Chihuahua.

Villa's early success prompted President Huerta to restructure the federal leadership of the state. General Salvador R. Mercado, who commanded the barracks at Hidalgo del Parral, was ordered to Ciudad Chihuahua where he assumed command of the Second Military Zone and took over the position of Military Governor of the state as well.<sup>107</sup> Mercado's departure from Hidalgo del Parral resulted in the city's immediate

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<sup>106</sup> Almada, *La Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua, 1913-1921*, 25.

<sup>107</sup> In his memoirs, Mercado bitterly attacked his predecessor, General Rábago, for having left little for him to command. I have translated the following passage. "The 29th of May, General Rábago, due to orders of transfer from México [Federal District] and to my energetic attitude, had no other recourse to follow other than to turn over to me the command of the División del Norte [Federal] while the state legislature issued a decree through which I assumed the position of provisional governor. And it should be known that to this

capture by General Manuel Chao, an anti-*huertista* rebel from the state of Durango and friend of Villa's.

In August of 1913, General Villa and his brigade occupied the town of Ascención and established temporary headquarters from which he planned future attacks on different parts of Chihuahua. Located south about three days march from Ciudad Juárez, Ascención granted Villa convenient access to the United States-Mexico border and allowed him the opportunity recruit men and purchase supplies through his contacts along the border. In the interim, Villa organized his men and prepared them for an ensuing campaign against the well armed forces of General Salvador Mercado. By the end of their stay at Ascención, the Brigada Villa had increased in size to a force that numbered roughly 1,200 men.<sup>108</sup>

Villa's first major victory occurred in August of 1913 at San Andrés, a small village just south of the capital city of Chihuahua. Mercado had ordered General Felix Terrazas to San Andrés to encounter the rebel force. In the battle that ensued, Villa trounced Terrazas and sent him fleeing back to Ciudad Chihuahua. Left among the captured provisions and supplies were two field artillery pieces, machine guns, and several hundred rifles.<sup>109</sup> Now, for the first time Villa had machine guns and artillery.

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date the majority of the state has been subtracted from federal control and what was left were Ciudad Juárez, the capital [Chihuahua City] and small towns nearby such as Aldama and Santa Eulalia.

Subsequently, what I received was almost a cadaver. This, I made it a point to show the Supreme Command." Salvador R. Mercado, *Revelaciones Históricas* (Las Cruces: Private Publication, 1916), 18.

<sup>108</sup>United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State. 11 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8022, RG 27.

<sup>109</sup>United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 28 August 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8623, RG 28.

Then in September of 1913, the principal revolutionary leaders from Chihuahua and Durango met in Jiménez to select one among them to lead all of their forces. On September 26, 1913, they selected Francisco Villa as commander of the División del Norte.<sup>110</sup> In early October, Villa moved to take the critical railroad junction at Torreón, Coahuila which formed the heart of *La Comarca Lagunera*, a prosperous agricultural area. In a joint operation, the División took the city of Torreón after a few days, capturing additional supplies that included rifles, ammunition, and numerous artillery pieces. One important captured armament was “*El Niño*,” a railroad car mounted gun that could fire shells at a range of two kilometers.<sup>111</sup>

Fresh from his major victory at Torreón, Villa and the División moved toward Ciudad Chihuahua, which was defended by General Salvador Mercado, Huerta’s personal appointment there. Villa attacked Mercado’s forces and, in a brilliant maneuver during the several day assault, feigned retreat to the south, and instead headed towards Ciudad Juárez, the next target for the *villistas*. During the night, Villa and a few men commandeered a federal train, then entered Ciudad Juárez, taking the city by surprise with hardly a shot fired. The victory rendered Villa valuable military supplies and the revenue-generating customs house, whose proceeds allowed him to purchase supplies directly from merchants in El Paso.<sup>112</sup>

Villa’s victory in Ciudad Juárez prompted General Mercado to send a force with orders to recapture the city. Fearing that shells could possibly land in El Paso, Villa

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<sup>110</sup> Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 215.

<sup>111</sup> United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 15 November 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 9859, RG 31.

<sup>112</sup> Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 225.

decided to confront the federal force south of Ciudad Juárez at Tierra Blanca. There the División scored another major victory after nearly two days. Included in the spoils were four locomotives, 400,000 rounds of ammunition, several artillery pieces, rifles, and three hundred and fifty horses.<sup>113</sup>

Villa's string of victories sent shockwaves through Chihuahua. Rebels units, which had emerged in the state in late March and early April and had grown into brigades that constructed the División del Norte, were now in control of the entire state of Chihuahua with the exception of the capital, Ciudad Chihuahua. However, General Salvador Mercado and his force of over 3,000 men were not readying for a showdown in the capital city. They were planning their escape.

#### *The Flight from Chihuahua City to Ojinaga*

Mercado faced a major decision in December of 1913. The Constitutionalists controlled Torreón to the southeast, Hidalgo del Parral to the south, guerrillas infested the mountains to the west and, worst of all, Villa was heading towards Ciudad Chihuahua from the north. After some disagreement among himself, Pascual Orozco, and José Inés Salazar, Mercado opted not to fight his way south, but instead to abandon the capital and transport his troops to the northeast and occupy the garrison in the city Ojinaga. Perhaps Mercado understood the importance of situating his force next to the international border. If need be, he and his forces could seek sanctuary in the United States.

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<sup>113</sup> The battle at Tierra Blanca between the *División del Norte* and the federal army has received much attention by scholars of the Revolution. The battle certainly proved to General Mercado and Huerta the effectiveness and dedication of the *villistas*. Ivor Thord-Gray, *Gringo Rebel* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1960), 48.

Mercado's decision to abandon Ciudad Chihuahua had far reaching consequences. Villa's approach and the rumored departure of the federal army set off a wave of panic locally because of widespread fears and rumors that Villa's troops would sack the city. Many of the wealthy families began to gather as much of their fortunes as possible and made plans to follow the army to Ojinaga. Although the city was well defended, a battle in the streets meant the possible death of many civilians.<sup>114</sup>

The first column to leave Chihuahua City and reach Ojinaga was led by H. B. Freeman, the superintendent of the Alvarado Mining Company of Hidalgo del Parral. The entourage consisted of sixteen wagons carrying an estimated \$750,000 worth of silver bars from the Alvarado and Inde mines. The caravan proceeded towards Ojinaga carefully guarded by a detachment of *colorados* (irregulars loyal to Huerta) led by Pascual Orozco and accompanied by Generals José Inés Salazar and Caraveo (first name unknown). Once the column had reached Presidio, the silver shipment changed hands and was directly transported to Marfa by a United States cavalry escort. From there, the mining companies shipped the silver bars by rail to New York City.<sup>115</sup>

The second group to evacuate Ciudad Chihuahua and head north towards Ojinaga consisted of the city's civilian population. Here went a substantial portion of the wealthiest families in Chihuahua, including General Luis Terrazas, Sr., as well as

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<sup>114</sup> Oscar Lesser Norwald contends that Villa paid Mercado to abandon the city. Moreover, Norwald stated that he and another man in the company of 200 soldiers left by Mercado formally handed the city over to Villa. Oscar Lesser Norwald, interview by Rubén Osorio, tape recording, 1975. Collection not catalogued, Archives of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, TX.

<sup>115</sup> Earl Elam, "Revolution on the Border: The U.S. Army in the Big Bend and the Battle of Ojinaga, 1913-1914." *West Texas Historical Association Yearbook* 46 (1990): 5-25; Gerald G. Raun, "Refugees or Prisoners of War: The Internment of a Mexican Federal Army after the Battle of Ojinaga, December 1913-January 1914." *The Journal of Big Bend Studies* 12 (2000): 133-165.

members of the Creel, Escobar, Quilty, and other well-to-do families. The families utilized the trains from the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway line to make the trip from Ciudad Chihuahua to Falomir. From there they proceeded on horseback and used whatever means of transportation available.<sup>116</sup>

The final group to leave the capital city was Mercado and the main body of his army that included 400 officers with their families, 2,500 soldiers, their wives and camp followers (*soldaderas*), and an uncounted number of children. In addition to the troops, nearly 200 miscellaneous refugees trailed the long column. This last contingent also rode the train to Falomir, then continued on horseback or by foot until they reached Ojinaga on December 13 after an exceedingly difficult trip.<sup>117</sup> Food and water were scarce and the weather had begun to turn cold. Many animals and some people died along the difficult desert trek. In his memoirs, Mercado referred to the trip as “*la caravana de la muerte*” (the caravan of death).<sup>118</sup>

The refugees did not remain in Ojinaga, but rather crossed the Rio Bravo into the United States where immigration authorities and officers of the United States Army registered them for entry into the country. The refugees were briefly interrogated, asked to provide proof of identity, and released on the Texas side after having stated they had no desire to return immediately to Mexico. In addition to the refugees, many townspeople from Ojinaga crossed the border in search of safety. Mercado and his

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<sup>116</sup> Lona Teresa O’Neal Whittington, “The Road of Sorrow: Mexican Refugees who Fled Pancho Villa through Presidio, Texas, 1913-1914” (Masters of Arts Thesis, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 1976):12.

<sup>117</sup> R.A. Brown to Commanding General, Southern Department, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4439, Box 4, 3172; Report from Supervising Inspector at El Paso, Texas to Commissioner General of Immigration, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53018/711.

<sup>118</sup> Mercado, *Revelaciones Históricas*, 58-59.

forces, however, did not seek refuge in the United States, but instead remained in the border town to defend against the impending attack by *villistas*.<sup>119</sup>

Presidio was not the only point at which refugees from Ojinaga crossed the river seeking temporary safety. On December 18, Supervising Inspector J. W. Berkshire of the United States Immigration Service informed Washington that there were some 200 refugees, mostly farmers and their families from nearby villages at Lajitas, ready to cross into Texas. Inspector Robb (first name unknown), temporarily assigned to the port at Lajitas, had reported to Berkshire that, "...the aliens are of a superior class and have plenty of funds, and have no desire to proceed beyond La Jitas [*sic.*], but only intend to remain on the Mexican side until such time as they become satisfied they can return to their homes in safety." Robb additionally reported that many were living without shelter but were acting as if "...on a protracted picnic..." having ample food and drink and engaging in music and dance each night. Robb also located about 250-300 refugees near the mouth of Santa Elena Canyon with sufficient food and a herd of 1,500 goats. Some were sleeping in tents, huts, wagons, or in the open. One entrepreneur from San Carlos thought it safe enough to sell men's wear and bolts of cloth to the refugees. Robb also reported finding a sewing machine, a typewriter, and a phonograph in one of the camps.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> It seems the immigration agents stationed at Presidio wanted to prevent the purchase of weapons in the United States and therefore asked if the refugees planned to return to Mexico. The agent noted in his report that a board of inquiry had not been formed to further interrogate any of the refugees as they entered the United States. Evidently, they were not seen as a threat. It must be noted that the agents described the refugees as the better classes of Chihuahuans. John F. Carraway to Supervising Inspector, El Paso Texas, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/711.

<sup>120</sup> Inspector Robb's report to the Supervising Inspector at El Paso, Texas, illustrates the desperate measures taken by many refugees to escape the horrors of the Revolution. Their make-shift cities in the

The flow of refugees and troops to Ojinaga shifted the scene of battle from the state capital to a dusty, isolated border region hardly noticed by both countries. In the span of nearly two weeks, the small town received a population of nearly 8,000 refugees. In addition to the federal troops, irregulars, and *soldaderas*, the wives of soldiers and numerous children had descended on this northern Chihuahuan village. General Salvador Mercado had fled the *villistas*, but now had to defend the plaza at Ojinaga. Thus, the small village became the last defensive position for Huerta's federal army in northern Mexico.

*The defense of Ojinaga and the Fall of Mercado's army*

The defensive measures taken at Ojinaga against the *villistas* began when the first elements of Mercado's army entered the town on December 8, five days before the main column arrived. As mentioned before, the town lay on a small plateau surrounded by several valleys and was thus defensively situated. In addition to the valleys, the Río Bravo further limited the points from which the *villistas* could attack. Moreover, the federal troops had sufficient ammunition and weapons at their disposal, including eighteen artillery pieces and several machine guns, to properly defend their position. As a defensive measure, the federals had dispatched reconnaissance patrols to different

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United States provided temporary relief. Immigration agents at Presidio persuaded refugees to return to Ojinaga assuring them they [refugees] could return once the city was attacked. United States authorities were temporarily successful, but many of the refugees returned once the *villistas* began an offensive on the city. J.W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General, 26 December 1913. National Archives, Washington, D.C., RG85, 53108/71I; J.W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 29 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/71J.

destination points along the river and as far as La Mula pass, the only passage-way through the mountains that permitted the entry of large artillery pieces.<sup>121</sup>

The situation for Mercado's forces at Ojinaga, however, proved dire as the army lacked the proper amount of supplies to feed the soldiers and refugees. The flight from Ciudad Chihuahua had left the troops unprepared for a prolonged fight. To survive, they were forced to acquire materials, first in Presidio and then in Marfa, Texas. Once supplies in Presidio had been exhausted, large wagons carrying nearly 5,000 pounds of merchandise each left from Marfa destined for the border town. A team of soldiers sent out into the river valley brought fodder for the animals on a daily basis.<sup>122</sup>

Over 200 miles away from Ojinaga, Villa had entered Ciudad Chihuahua on December 1 greeted there by Oscar Lesser Norwald and Federico Moye, who surrendered the city without a fight. Villa proclaimed the 200 federal soldiers who had remained behind to be brave men and allowed them free passage to Ciudad Juárez where they might seek asylum in the United States. Contrary to the fears of the populace, the occupation was orderly. Villa accepted the position of governor of the state and immediately set about to run the government, leaving military affairs to his subordinates.<sup>123</sup> Aware that there was an army of roughly 5,000 soldiers and a cluster of

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<sup>121</sup> The United States Army present at Presidio, Texas, also patrolled the river in search of refugees and soldiers. The soldiers were also responsible for assisting immigration inspectors during the flow of refugees that resulted from the attacks on Ojinaga. R.A. Brown to Commanding General, Southern Department, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, 18 December 1913, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4439, Box 4, 3172.

<sup>122</sup> The situation at Ojinaga looked bleak. Because of his abandonment of Parral and the Chihuahua City, General Mercado has been labeled the "Great Evacuator" by his detractors, while General Huerta accused Mercado of cowardice and threatened to court-martial him. Inspectors at Presidio noted that many of the officers in Mercado's army had inquired about the possibility of entering the United States to escape the *villistas*. Inspectors also noted the majority of the soldiers seemed to have no desire to fight. *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 231-236.

generals in Ojinaga, he ordered Generals Pánfilo Natera and Toribio Ortega to attack the border town and destroy the federal army.<sup>124</sup>

Natera and Ortega's first actions against the defenses at Ojinaga involved attacks against forward positions assigned to the small settlements of El Mulato, Candelaria and San Juan, all of these located on the outskirts of the town. It seems that Natera and Ortega's forces, numbering some 3,000, planned to encircle the city and attack from various positions instead of mounting a frontal assault from one direction. At El Mulato, the *villistas* defeated a small force of federal soldiers who then retreated across the international border into Texas. Shortly afterwards however, a United States army scouting party captured the fleeing soldiers trying to reenter Mexico at a location upstream.<sup>125</sup>

Once the outlying settlements had fallen, Natera and Ortega deployed their forces and launched a multi-thronged attack on Ojinaga on December 31. Major M. McNamee, the officer in charge of the United States military detachment at Presidio, watched as the battle unfolded. According to McNamee, the *villistas* bombarded the city with artillery and small arms fire throughout the night, yet could not penetrate the town's defenses. During the course of the fight, several shells landed on United States soil, and McNamee quickly dispatched a note to Ortega warning him of consequences should American lives

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<sup>124</sup> Ontiveros contends that Ortega had been made a general prior to the assault on Ojinaga. Ontiveros, *Toribio Ortega y la Brigada González Ortega*, 105.

<sup>125</sup> Sergeant Ludwig Feldman reported that exactly forty-one rifles, fifteen sabers and several thousand rounds of ammunition were confiscated from the federal soldiers apprehended in the United States. None was taken prisoner and all were allowed to reenter Mexico without their weapons. Major M. McNamee to Company Officer, South Department, 3 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4440, Box 1; J.W. Berkshire to Commissioner-General of Immigration, 5 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/711.

be lost. According to McNamee, Ortega reassessed his strategies and no shells fell on the United States side again.<sup>126</sup>

Intermittent gunfire continued for the next few days before the *villistas* made another serious attempt to breach Ojinaga's protective barriers. At 2:00 pm the afternoon of January 4, 1914, Natera and Ortega rallied their troops and once again attacked. For several hours both sides exchanged artillery bombardments and small weapons fire. When darkness set into the valley, Mercado deployed a detachment of cavalry along the exposed southern flank of the rebel forces then executing an attack on Ojinaga from the west and northwest. In a brilliant maneuver, the federal cavalry detachment crashed the exposed flank of the *villista* forces, inflicting on them heavy losses. Forced to flee, the rebels retreated to the nearby settlement of San Juan.<sup>127</sup>

Upon reaching San Juan, Natera and Ortega and their battered soldiers made camp at a local ranch and sent word to Villa that the battle had been lost and that Ojinaga remained in the hands of Mercado. Aside from smarting from the loss, the *villistas* grew to hate Mercado and his men for they had committed many atrocities against the rebels, including shooting the wounded and dragging them by horseback. Several rebels had been executed, and their bodies burned and buried in a common grave. For the next six days, the *villistas* regrouped, recuperated and waited for further instructions from Villa.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Major M. McNamee to Company Officer, South Department, 3 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4440, Box 1.

<sup>127</sup> Reports from American officers at Presidio, Texas, note that the federal soldiers committed several acts of atrocity against the rebel forces at Ojinaga including the multiple shooting of wounded rebels who were willing to surrender. Lindley M. Garrison to Secretary of State concerning situation at Ojinaga, 5 January 1914, National Archives, RG 85, 53108/711.

<sup>128</sup> Ontiveros' and McNamee's descriptions of the events that transpired at Ojinaga contain the same information. McNamee's reports provide better descriptions of the battles as they unfolded, while

In Chihuahua, Villa gladly terminated his month-long stint as governor (Villa formally resigned his position) and directed his attention to the quagmire in Ojinaga. He gathered together the commands of Generals Hernández and Herrera (about 1500 men) and began a march to the dusty border town. He arrived at San Juan on January 9 when the weather had turned bitterly cold, and called a meeting with Natera and Ortega. He heavily criticized both men for their earlier blunder, but discussed with them a next maneuver. The following day Villa's artillery and cavalry deployed to different strategic positions at Ojinaga and readied for the attack scheduled for that night.<sup>129</sup>

Despite their initial victory, the federal army's situation had deteriorated and they expected Villa, whom they knew had arrived, to attack imminently. According to General Mercado, ammunition and morale were low and a number of federal officers were making plans to escape to the United States. Many of the horses in the federal camp had died, and officers who needed funds were selling many of their mounts in Presidio. Nevertheless, during the lull in the battle the federal army regrouped and the wait began.<sup>130</sup>

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Ontiveros' provides the personal perspectives of the men in combat. Major M. McNamee to Company Officer, Southern Department, 10 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4440, Box 1; Ontiveros, *Toribio Ortega y la Brigada González Ortega*, 108.

<sup>129</sup> American military units constantly patrolled the border in search of refugees and fleeing soldiers. In addition to immigration inspectors and military personnel, the United States government sent the American Red Cross to the border in anticipation of treating the wounded at Ojinaga. Authorities were alarmed at the possibility that thousand of refugees, wounded and sick, would enter at Presidio, Texas. In some instances, people suspected of being small pox cases had been quarantined by the United States Army. At least 2000 refugees and 5000 federal soldiers were expected to enter the United States. J.W. Berkshire to Commissioner General of Immigration, 5 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/71J; Secretary of War, Lindley M. Garrison to Secretary of State, 9 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/71I.

<sup>130</sup> Salvador R. Mercado, *Revelaciones Históricas*, 67-68.

The final attack at Ojinaga commenced on January 10. At dusk the more than 3,500 *villistas* descended on the small town from all sides with deadly artillery and small weapons fire. During the confusion, the first line of Mercado's defenses pulled back to replenish their supply of ammunition, in the act creating the specter of a called retreat. Within a matter of thirty minutes the entire federal army poured across the Rio Bravo in a mad frenzy. American patrols scuttled about the area trying to corral the federal soldiers and maneuver them to a makeshift camp. The victorious *villistas* had successfully routed a larger but demoralized federal force in less than two hours.<sup>131</sup>

Villa's takeover of Ojinaga marked one of the most impressive victories for the *villistas* during their campaign of 1913-1914. They had now completely eliminated the federal army from Chihuahua and taken control of the state government. In addition, they had gained access to supplies from a secure location adjacent to United States-Mexico border.<sup>132</sup> Villa and the División del Norte had removed any doubts as to their success against the government of Huerta.

### *Conclusion*

Scholarship regarding Francisco Villa and *villismo* has contributed little to an understanding of the División del Norte, the command Francisco Villa led to prominence

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<sup>131</sup> George Harris to Supervising Inspector, 24 February 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 85, 53108/71J; Major M. McNamee to Commanding General, Southern Department, 17 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4440, Box 1.

<sup>132</sup> The refugees arriving at Presidio were eventually marched overland to the town of Marfa where they were sent to Fort Bliss in El Paso to be interned for an unspecified amount of time. The group sent to Fort Bliss included 509 officers, 3212 men, 1081 women and 533 children. Nearly 100 federal soldiers were treated for rifle wounds at Presidio. Among the animals allowed to enter the United States were 983 horses, 383 mules and 414 burros. Captain Lear noted that few of the soldiers possessed money as they had not been paid since the tenth of December. He also noted that General Mercado did not have funds to pay his men. Captain Ben Lear, jr. to Major M. McNamee, 15 January 1914, National Archives, Washington D.C., RG 393, E4439, Box 4, Doc. 3172.

during the Mexican Revolution of 1910. The División began as a series of anti-*huertista* rebel cells in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango. In different regions local leaders who in many cases had been members of Francisco Madero's army of 1910 constructed rebel cells that eventually merged into much larger brigades. Beginning in March of 1913, these cells grew and, by September, formed the División del Norte.

Nineteen different brigades from Coahuila, Chihuahua, and Durango served as the core of the División. The brigades primarily consisted of mounted horsemen and infantry troops, with non-combatants dedicated to support and administrative duties. The Brigada González Ortega, for instance, consisted primarily of mounted troops from the northeastern corner of Chihuahua. Some of the units in the División, such as the sanitary brigade, or the *Cuerpo de Guías*, were dedicated to one single task.

While some scholars have reconstructed the history of *villismo* through the lens of the revolutionary upheaval of 1910, few have examined the lengthy regional history that shaped the experience of the *villistas* who came from the different sections of Chihuahua, Coahuila and Durango. As indicated in the preceding discussion, the Brigada González Ortega emerged in a distinct northern region of Chihuahua with its own unique history shaped by an Indian past, colonialism, and nineteenth-century Mexican nation building. Each of the nineteen brigades, with the exception of the sanitary brigade and the *Transportes Militares*, had its own exclusive history. Each brigade was shaped by the course of events particular to its native region.

The military colonies founded along the frontier during the colonial era had engendered a militaristic society. A tradition of self-reliance and military hierarchy took

shape that first prepared the colonists for conflict against the Indian population, and later against attacks from outside forces. The Brigada González Ortega, for instance, contained volunteers whose experience had been molded by interaction with Indians living along the banks of the Rio Bravo and Rio Conchos, and subsequently by the outside intrusion of Spanish culture and society, and by major events in the political and military history of nineteenth-century Mexico. The members of the Brigada joined the Revolution, in part, to regain territories lost to the elites of Chihuahua. When the combative phase of the Revolution ended, they pushed for the establishment of *villista* military colonies in their native region.

Scholars have also overlooked the importance of the early military maneuvers by the different brigades. Attacks on local garrisons and the defeats inflicted upon the federal army in Chihuahua by the different rebel cells were crucial to the development, growth, and maturity of the brigades. Their guerrilla tactics paid dividends, for example, when they forced General Mercado to splinter his federal army into several smaller forces, which permitted the *villistas* to deal with less effective and smaller units. Once *villistas* seized certain territories and expelled federal forces and pro-*huertista* personnel, they then had the opportunity to acquire more supplies and expand into much larger brigades. The Brigada González Ortega, for instance, came to dominate a region largely absent of railway tracks and adjacent to the United States-Mexico border. By controlling this territory the rebels could purchase supplies across the border, increase the number of troops, and prepare for a campaign against Mercado's army.

Historians have emphasized the battles of Tierra Blanca, Torreón and (much later), Zacatecas as the most significant encounters in the north, unfairly minimizing the significance of the *villista* defeat of over 5,000 federal troops and irregulars at Ojinaga.<sup>133</sup> The victory at Ojinaga demonstrated to the *villistas* the positive effect that Francisco “Pancho” Villa had on morale, and consequently, the terror he posed to his enemies. The victory at Ojinaga solidified *villista* control over the state of Chihuahua, providing the División del Norte ample time to regroup, restructure and proceed towards Mexico City against Huerta. The takeover at Ojinaga further provided a secure and isolated location for acquiring supplies and armaments for the División. For those who constituted the ranks of the Brigada González Ortega, the takeover of Ojinaga brought an end to the rule of elite families in the region, and a temporary recovery of ancestral lands.

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<sup>133</sup> Friedrich Katz contends that the battles of Torreón and Zacatecas were among the most important victories for the *villistas* from 1913 to 1914. As a matter of fact, Katz claims the battle of Zacatecas to be the greatest victory scored by the revolutionaries against Huerta’s army. The author, however, does not examine the battle of Ojinaga nor its significance in the Chihuahuan campaign of the *villistas*. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 354.

### CHAPTER 3

#### “I Have the Honor to Report:” Villismo, Foreign Diplomacy and the United States Consuls in Northern Mexico

##### *Introduction*

In August of 1913, United States Consul Marion Letcher visited federal General Salvador Mercado on a matter of international diplomacy, specifically concerning the safety of two American citizens under arrest by the General's troops. The consul requested that both Americans be immediately released and be allowed their return to the United States unharmed. Mercado denied the consul's request, arguing that the *americanos* had been arrested for their participation in Francisco Villa's constitutionalist army in Chihuahua. Letcher, following orders from the U.S. Department of State, informed Mercado that the United States would hold him personally responsible for their mistreatment under international law. A few days after the consul's visit, Mercado released the Americans and they made their way to the United States with only a few minor delays due to the train service.<sup>134</sup>

This example illustrates the role United States consuls carried out as intermediaries in northern Mexico during the struggle between *villistas* and the Huerta government from 1913 to 1915. Officially, consular agents formed part of a foreign bureaucratic administrative staff entrusted with executing American foreign policy according to the orders of the United States Department of State. But as anti-*huertista* forces emerged in the states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Coahuila, consuls were forced to extend their responsibilities and become informants as well as protectors of American

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<sup>134</sup> “Stern Warning to Mexico,” *The New York Times*, 1 August 1913, 1.

interests. Gradually they functioned as political arbiters among the rebel factions, the Mexican government, and the United States.<sup>135</sup>

Changes in local and national governments and the growing number of anti-*huertista* cells in northern Mexico engendered an environment of hostility that complicated consular official responsibilities. As this chapter demonstrates, the roles of consuls in Chihuahua during the revolutionary events of 1913 -1914 expanded with the rise in influence of the División del Norte. Although the election of Woodrow Wilson to the office of President of the United States represented a continuation of consular policies established by the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the dismissal of Ambassador to Mexico Henry Lane Wilson by the United States government placed an increased burden on consular agents.<sup>136</sup> These appointees expanded their responsibilities to perform duties as informants, protectors of American interests in northern Mexico, and as political mediators.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Numerous books and articles contain information regarding United States consuls in the state of Chihuahua, but the information offered provides a limited perspective of the agents' responsibilities and roles in Mexico. Few interpretations, if any, have concentrated their analysis on the American diplomats as informants, political intermediaries, and protectors of American interests. Moreover, these sources have failed to demonstrate the political relationship that existed between *villistas* and the American consular agents. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Louis M. Teitelbaum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1916* (New York: Exposition Press Inc., 1967); Berta Ulloa, *La Revolución intervenida: Relaciones diplomáticas entre México y Estados Unidos, 1910-1914* (México D.F.: El Colegio de México, 1971); Larry D. Hill, *Emissaries to a Revolution: Woodrow Wilson's Executive Agents in Mexico* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973); Harry Thayer Mahoney and Marjorie Locke Mahoney, *Espionage in Mexico: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (London: Austin and Winfield, 1997).

<sup>136</sup> President Woodrow Wilson recalled Henry Lane Wilson to the United States after the ambassador's questionable role in the *decena trágica*. According to Larry D. Hill, Ambassador Wilson favored the Huerta administration and despised the constitutionalists. President Wilson asked for and received Henry Lane Wilson's resignation on August 4, 1913. See Larry D. Hill, *Emissaries to a Revolution: Woodrow Wilson's Executive Agents in Mexico* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

<sup>137</sup> Numerous scholars have examined the complex foreign policy of the United States as it pertained to the Republic of Mexico and the Revolution of 1910. However, studies of Woodrow Wilson's policy towards Mexico during 1913 and 1914 have failed to notice the importance of the Foreign Service agents in

In much the same manner as the American consuls, who promoted U.S. interests, *villistas* in Chihuahua out of necessity established diplomatic relationships with foreign diplomats to advance their revolutionary movement. Once the *villistas* had taken over the state of Chihuahua and seized the Chihuahua City government by late 1913, many from within their ranks rose to fill high-ranking positions such as municipal president, chief of police, and city council members, posts that dictated diplomatic interaction with foreign nations.

This chapter posits that members of the División del Norte gained significant experience in diplomacy as they established relationships with consular agents in northern Mexico; such ties ultimately favored the rebel cause in the eyes of the United States government. Members of the División understood that their movement's success extended beyond the battlefield and into the arenas of public interest and foreign affairs.

Responding to scrutiny by foreign governments, the rebels pursued good public relations with American consuls in Chihuahua, hoping to neutralize United States opposition to their campaign. *Villistas* sought to influence consuls to sympathize with their struggle because favorable diplomatic relations with the United States signified better access to supplies across the border and in Chihuahua. Also, once *villismo*

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northern Mexico, principally those in Chihuahua, Coahuila, and Durango. While not all agents favored the *villistas*, often referring to them as bandits, several portrayed the *villistas* in a positive manner. See P. Edward Haley, *Revolution and Intervention: The Diplomacy of Taft and Wilson with Mexico, 1910 – 1917* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1970); Linda B. Hall and Don M. Coerver, *Revolution on the Border: The United States and Mexico, 1910 – 1920* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); Louis M. Teitlebaum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Mexican Revolution 1913-1916: A History of United States – Mexico Relations from the Murder of Madero Until Villa's Provocation Across the Border* (New York: Exposition Press, 1967); Mark T. Gilderhus, *U.S.-Mexican Relations Under Woodrow Wilson and Carranza* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1977).

triumphed, they would have to establish diplomatic relations with their neighbor to the north.

Starting in 1913, United States consuls indeed reported favorably on *villista* respect for the properties of Americans, actions viewed positively by the administration of Woodrow Wilson. The restraint against foreigners demonstrated by the División del Norte in 1913 and 1914 ultimately resulted in favorable diplomatic relations with the United States. As a consequence, American reservations lessened concerning the flow of arms into Mexico and the deprivations suffered by Americans in Chihuahua.

#### *Consuls in Latin America*

Prior to an examination of *villismo* and United States Foreign Service officers in Chihuahua and Coahuila, a brief history of the consular service is in order to illuminate the roles of consular agents in Latin America. Traditionally, consuls in Latin America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dedicated themselves to the protection of the American merchant marine and the collection of customs duties for merchandise destined to the United States.<sup>138</sup> Additionally, consuls promoted American commerce abroad and often reported on commercial information to be used by official and private sources. Regulations, however, prohibited consular agents from participating in local

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<sup>138</sup> According to the Department of State's publication, the duties of consular agents included "...receiving marine protests and declarations involving American interest; settling the estates of Americans dying within the consular district and leaving no legal heirs; taking measures, in the absence of the owners, for the conservation of wrecked American vessels and their cargoes; obtaining the compliance of masters of American vessels with legal requirements respecting the custody of ship's papers and the discharge of American seaman; providing the relief and repatriation, at Government's expense, of destitute American seaman; issuing passports to American citizens; and certifying invoices of goods shipped to the United States." See William Barnes and John Heath Morgan, *The Foreign Service of the United States: Origins, Development, and Functions* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970), 184.

governments and siding with any political faction.<sup>139</sup> On occasion, however, consuls utilized their intuition to resolve delicate situations. Knowledge of local events permitted these representatives of American foreign diplomacy to skillfully maneuver within the laws and policies of Latin American countries.

A law passed on April 5, 1906, reorganized the Department of State and restructured the consular service by creating a series of ranked offices, providing consular officers with salaries, and creating an inspection corps for consular positions. The new policy required that consuls receiving an annual salary of \$1,000.00 or more be American citizens. Finally, consuls on the government's payroll were no longer permitted to engage in business or legal practice.<sup>140</sup> In the following months, an executive order required examinations for entry into the service. Furthermore, only agents successfully passing the exam could be promoted within the ranks of the service.<sup>141</sup>

As members of an administrative staff, consular agents during the Taft administration worked within a sphere of competence defined by the United States Consular Service. Their selection rested on the basis of evaluations that assessed their technical qualifications. As bureaucratic officials, consuls enjoyed a career option should they receive promotions through the ranks. Consuls were not to engage in politics or affiliate with local factions. Department of State rules defined the office of the consul as primarily administrative. But, in Mexico during 1913 – 1914, *villismo* rose to such a

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>140</sup> Salaries for consular officers ranged from \$1,000.00 to \$13,000.00. Ibid., 164.

<sup>141</sup> The service was organized within a hierarchy of offices that were supervised by the Department of State. Prohibiting consuls from legal practice or engaging in business separated them from the means of production. Collected duties were to be sent to the Treasury and could no longer form a part of their salary. Ibid., 164.

level of importance that the United State Department of State assigned consular agents to report on the *villistas* specifically. Consuls during the Mexican Revolution were forced to act outside their sphere of competence as a result of a volatile economic, political and societal environment.

### *Consuls in Chihuahua*

In Chihuahua, consular offices during the Revolution were located in Ciudad Juárez and Ciudad Chihuahua, the capital city, while a vice-consul auxiliary office operated in Hidalgo del Parral, a mining town located in the southern part of the state.<sup>142</sup> The emergence of a strong export economy in Chihuahua during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had attracted United States businessmen looking to make profits in the state's mining and cattle industries.<sup>143</sup> Thus, consular officers proved to be indispensable agents for American investors in Chihuahua's expanding economy. Once *villistas* morphed into a serious revolutionary force in Chihuahua, they began affecting American diplomacy, prompting the consuls in the state to elevate Villa and his followers to major status category in consular reports.

Three officers who defined the role of consular agents during the anti-*huertista* years included Thomas Edwards, consul in Ciudad Juárez; Marion Letcher, consul in Ciudad Chihuahua; and George Carothers, special agent attached to Villa's forces in Chihuahua. All three agents served in Chihuahua during the anti-*huertista* campaigns in

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<sup>142</sup> It should be noted that the distances separating consular offices prevented the rapid transmittal of information. They often had to rely on telegraph services, and those were subject to destruction by rebel forces. "Many Consuls Left," *The New York Times*, Proquest Historical Newspapers, 11 May 1914, 3.

<sup>143</sup> For a description of Chihuahua's economy at the turn-of-the-century see Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, Caciques, and Revolution: The Native Elite and Foreign Enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854-1911* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

1913-1915, and witnessed the revolt against the central government as it unfolded in the state. As they were the primary representatives for the United States government in Chihuahua, the consuls dealt with the *villistas* on a constant basis. Some had already established relationships with *villistas* who had been *maderistas* in 1910. Consular reports to the Department of State routinely refer to the activities and responsibilities of the *villistas* throughout the course of the anti-*huertista* revolts and the campaign of the constitutionalist forces.

Consul Marion Letcher lived in Ciudad Chihuahua from 1905 to 1915. Born in Shorter, Alabama, on 4 September 1872, he was the son of Dr. Frances Marion Letcher and Claudia Cardine Howard. He graduated from the University of Alabama, wherein he received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1894.<sup>144</sup> In 1898 Letcher joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Volunteer Infantry and fought in the Spanish American War. He was commissioned a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in Company A and served for nearly nine months in Cuba while stationed at Santiago. After his tour of duty, Letcher returned to the United States assuming the presidency of Douglasville College in Georgia. While head of Douglasville College, he met and married Marilyn Ingram, a native of Tennessee, on November 7, 1901.<sup>145</sup>

In 1909, Marion Letcher changed professions and entered into the United States Foreign Service as a consular agent.<sup>146</sup> His first assignment was in Acapulco, but after two years, he received a transfer to the state of Chihuahua. During his time in Chihuahua, he witnessed the events of the Mexican Revolution and the emergence of the

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<sup>144</sup> "Ex-Maconite, Letcher, Dies," *Alabama Advertiser*, 26 June 1948.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> "Marion Letcher, 76, A Consular Official," *The New York Times*, Proquest Historical Newspapers, 25 June 1948, 23.

División del Norte. Edwards' duties placed him in close contact with many of the state's elite and political figures. His efficiency and dedication came to the attention of President William H. Taft, who awarded the consul with a commendation for the excellence of his reports.<sup>147</sup>

Letcher's memoranda reveal that one of his principal duties included relaying information on the fighting in Chihuahua. On one occasion, the consul demonstrated his vexation with the Revolution when he reported the assassination of his close friend Abraham González, an anti-*huertista* and former governor of the state. Letcher's duties quickly grew into those of an informant, a role that necessitated the use of field agents and other American citizens living in the state. Consequently, Letcher came to depend upon an extended social network to gather information. His official role in Chihuahua allowed him to come in contact with members of Chihuahua's society and form friendships with several of the states' important figures, including many former *maderistas* who became *villistas* in 1913.<sup>148</sup> On several occasions, he counted on these sources to compile reports concerning the activities of rebel anti-*huertista* units in his region. Intelligence was sent either to the American Embassy in Mexico City or directly to the Department of State in Washington, D.C. via telegram or postal service. In turn,

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>148</sup> Several of the reports from Letcher mention that his information came from sources he met through the consular offices. Presumably, the consul also obtained intelligence through Americans living in Chihuahua who dealt with locals in the state. United States Department of State. United States Consul Marion Letcher Telegram to the Secretary of State. 24 March 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 6952, RG 25.

information gathered by special agents of the Bureau of Investigation was forwarded through the Department of State to consular officers in Mexico.<sup>149</sup>

Thomas D. Edwards, the consular agent who served in Ciudad Juárez, was a native of Floyd, New York. Born on 30 April 1847, he was the son of Welsh immigrants John Edwards and Mary Evans. At the age of thirty, Edwards had moved to Lead, South Dakota, after visiting the area with “a group of friends.”<sup>150</sup> Thus, Edwards began his career in government service as the postmaster in Lead where he remained until 1905. During his stay as postmaster, he was editor of the *Lead Tribune*, the town newspaper, until it merged with another local newspaper, the *Lead Daily Call*.<sup>151</sup>

In 1905, the Consular Service appointed Edwards to the position of consul in Ciudad Juárez. As a member of class number eight, he was among the first candidates selected to form part of the reorganized consular service.<sup>152</sup> Edwards’ appointment to the post at Ciudad Juárez placed him in a privileged position whereby he witnessed the unfolding of the Revolution and the events that eventually led to the anti-*huertista* rebellions of 1913-1915. His reports reflected the difficult position that many foreigners faced as the constitutionalist forces in Chihuahua seized power over of the course of a

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<sup>149</sup> Records from the United States Department of State reveal that information gathered from consular officers in Mexico tended to be shared with other government entities. In addition to consular reports, the State Department also counted on reports from the United States Military as well as the Bureau of Investigation. United States Department of State. Assistant Attorney General Ernest Kuachel to the Secretary of State. 31 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. 812.00: 8217, RG 27.

<sup>150</sup> “Thomas D. Edwards,” *Lead Daily Call*, 3 August 1935.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> Edwin S. Costrell, Washington D.C., to William H. Beezley, Plattsburg, 26 June 1975, typed, William H. Beezley Personal Collection.

few months. Edwards returned to the United States in 1917 because of a deterioration in health.<sup>153</sup>

Much like Letcher's memoranda, Edwards' reports reflect a successful fulfillment of his consular responsibilities regarding revolutionary events. His attention to detail involving rebellious activities, changes in local government, the passage of refugees through his sector, and the flow of commerce through Ciudad Juárez provided the United States government with important information as to the status of American citizens and businesses in Chihuahua and the course of the Revolution. Most important, Edward's reports reveal his actions as a political intermediary between the United States and the Mexican authorities.

Unlike his fellow consuls, George Carothers had been a resident of Mexico since the latter part of the nineteenth-century. At the age of fourteen, Carothers had moved with his parents to Torreón, Coahuila, from San Antonio, Texas. According to one historian, Carothers began work for the consular service at an early age, and supplemented his income by engaging in other pursuits such as real estate speculation and managing a local grocery store. Perhaps his early acceptance into the consular service was due, in part, to the fact that his father had been United States consul in the state of Coahuila during the nineteenth-century. The service had dismissed young George Carothers, however, after it had been learned that his gambling activities had posed serious personal problems.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Edwards' position in Ciudad Juárez enabled him to witness some of the most important developments of the constitutionalist cause in 1913, including the battle for the city, and the subsequent takeover by *villistas*. Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Hill, *Emissaries to a Revolution*, 133.

While a civilian, Carothers regained the respect of the consular service during the Orozco rebellion of 1912 when his efforts to protect American lives and their property succeeded. Awarded the position as consular agent again, he returned to performing specific tasks for the Department of State. In 1913, while on a visit to the United States, Carothers learned that he had been appointed as a special agent to Francisco Villa, the leader of the División del Norte. His new assignment grew from the United States' need to gather more information about the constitutionalist revolt. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan called on Carothers to follow Pancho Villa for a period of two years and report on the activities of the revolutionary figure.<sup>155</sup> Carothers would thus spend several months in the company of Francisco Villa and his forces.

Carother's special assignment to the División provides a unique insight into the expanded role of consular agents gathering intelligence for the United States through interaction with revolutionary forces, mainly the División del Norte. As will later be explained, his reports on Villa provided the United States government with information of the sort that resulted in an amicable relationship between the United States government and the *villistas*. Carother's messages influenced United States policy towards the Revolution and helped to bring about the lifting of an arms embargo that had made it difficult for constitutionalists to purchase weapons and supplies in the United States.

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<sup>155</sup> Carothers orders were to assume the duties of a special agent in Chihuahua where his primary duty was to monitor *villista* movements. "George Carothers, U.S. Agent to Villa," *The New York Times*, Proquest Historical Newspapers, 5 August 1913, 19; Harry Thayer Mahoney and Marjorie Locke Mahoney, *Espionage in Mexico*, 53.

*Consuls as Informants*

Consular activities in the state of Chihuahua involved an intricate web of interaction among the consuls, the Department of State, the War Department, the Mexican government, and the various rebellious factions that comprised the constitutionalist forces of northern Mexico. Consular exchanges from Chihuahua reveal agents navigating their way amidst changes in local, state, and national governments while drawing upon their knowledge and experience to accomplish the tasks before them. On many occasions, familiarity with local culture and politics facilitated their efforts to collect information, protect Americans and their property, and mediate between the numerous factions involved in the Revolution.

From March to December of 1913, both Edwards and Letcher transmitted information to the Department of State apropos to the growth and movements of rebel cells throughout the state. The imminent threat these factions posed to the local government loyal to Huerta, coupled with their rebellious activities against the elite in Chihuahua, raised tensions among the foreign population. Perceived threats to American citizens and their properties necessitated the collecting of information for a United States government carefully monitoring the events as they unfolded in Chihuahua.

In order to accomplish the task of mustering intelligence, consuls depended upon the services of special field agents, American citizens, and refugees. Americans working in the state -- such as managers of large mining corporations -- routinely passed on information to the consular agents. For example, consul Edwards relied on interviews

with Americans fleeing the Revolution to gather data on the steady increase in numbers of the revolutionary forces.<sup>156</sup>

As acting consular agent in Parral, Edward A. Powers similarly depended on informants to pass along particulars to Consul Letcher regarding the political conditions in the southern part of Chihuahua, the military movements of rebels, and the *villista* stockpiling of war supplies. In one report, Powers noted that the rebels under Villa had accumulated numerous pieces of artillery, several machine guns and a number of railway cars full of rifle ammunition.<sup>157</sup>

In addition to providing news regarding rebel activities, consuls also reported the movements and number of federal forces in the state. Given the revolutionary developments in Chihuahua against the central government, a fear existed in the United States that the Mexican federal military would launch an invasion into American towns along the border. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a large federal army under the command of Salvador Mercado operated in the state, and this further heightened the suspicion of American authorities who feared Mexican forces crossing the international line and attacking the United States. It must be noted, however, that such a fear was unsubstantiated due to the federal military's preoccupation with rebel units in Chihuahua, and the disastrous outcome of such a move by Mexico's federal military. Moreover, the

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<sup>156</sup> United States Department of State. United States Consul Thomas D. Edwards telegram to the Secretary of State. 11 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/8022, RG 27.

<sup>157</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, rebel cells emerged in Chihuahua's different regions. For information concerning the rebel forces and their leaders that operated in the south of Chihuahua see Table 1 from the previous chapter. United States Department of State. United States Acting Consul Edward A. Powers telegram to Marion D. Letcher. 11 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/9859, RG 31.

reports of such an invasion do not contain the sensitive information gathered by field agents.

Because of such a volatile mix in Chihuahua and other Mexican states along the border, the United States considered a course of action necessary to prevent an attack against its southwestern regions. In a report to Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, Acting Secretary of War Lindley M. Garrison detailed a plan for a counterattack upon Mexico City in case the federal army crossed into the United States and took control of El Paso, Laredo, Eagle Pass, and Brownsville. He further commented that the communications from consuls in Chihuahua had provided sufficient evidence that the possibility of an invasion existed.<sup>158</sup>

While such an incursion seemed plausible to American government agents, the federal army's struggle against the rebellious factions in Chihuahua eliminated any possibility by anyone of deploying forces for a major campaign against the United States. Instead, the prospect of such a perceived invasion tended to impede the efforts of anti-*huertistas* to purchase materials for war in the United States. The deployment of American forces along the border signified an increased presence along the international boundary that could delay the flow of materials for the revolutionary cause.

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<sup>158</sup> The Acting Secretary of War reported the possibility of an invasion of American border towns such as El Paso by Mexican federal troops. Fear of an invasion stemmed from evidence obtained through informants. Acting Secretary of War reported that the commanding general in the Southern Department, the governor of Texas, as well as numerous citizens were apprehensive in view of information obtained concerning possible invasion. The validity of an invasion by Mexican forces is uncertain as the documents do not provide the sensitive data gathered by the field agents. As such, it can only be speculated that fears of an invasion were provoked by attacks that had been carried out by marauding rebels who led incursions into the United States. In the Big Bend, for instance, attacks during the Revolution were executed at places such as Glenn Springs where a group from Mexico attacked a troop of soldiers. In lieu of such a threat, President Wilson subsequently called for increase in numbers of military stationed along the border. U.S. Department of State. Woodrow Wilson to Secretary of State. 20 August 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/8679, RG 28.

In northern Chihuahua, Thomas D. Edwards focused his energies on providing news relevant to the military presence in Ciudad Juárez and its neighboring regions. Edwards eyed the forces of Toribio Ortega and his men from Cuchillo Parado who were bivouacked on the eastern side of Ciudad Juárez in the town of Guadalupe. To the south, Edwards collected information about Francisco Villa and his troops at Ascención. In addition to relying on informers for details, he frequently met with federal army officers in Ciudad Juárez and later with constitutionalist officers after they had taken Ciudad Juárez.

Edwards' messages also illustrate the shifting social conditions in Ciudad Juárez as the military presence changed from that of the federal army to the constitutionalist forces. Edwards recorded the decline in morale among the federal troops as well as the prevailing attitudes of their officer corps. He additionally reported the diminishing presence of Americans, who took flight to the El Paso area, and the closure of their businesses.

Concerning the federal defenses in Ciudad Juárez, Edwards had reported in a telegram dated July 11, 1913 that internal dissension existed among the 1,200 federal troops in the city. The presence of rebel units to the south and west of the city had adversely affected the morale of the men, he noted. To make matters worse for the federals, rebel units had destroyed the railroad lines and the federal garrison had no

means of obtaining supplies or reinforcements. In essence, the federal army had been severed from the rest of state and nervously awaited a *villista* attack.<sup>159</sup>

In a subsequent report dated July 23, 1913, Edwards informed the Secretary of State that the constitutionalist forces in both Villa's and Ortega's camps awaited reinforcements from Sonora before attacking Ciudad Juárez. Additionally, Edwards noted that the rebels had prohibited vehicular travel south of the city as a defensive measure because Ciudad Juárez was the sole remaining position under the control of federal Mexican forces in that region of Chihuahua. Unfortunately, the quarantine prevented the consul from gathering data from individuals fleeing Chihuahua. He further mentioned that telegraph lines were in operations for only a few hours, indicating perhaps that *villistas* cut the wires as a means to prevent the federal army from communicating with the interior of Mexico. Despite these numerous obstacles, the consul nonetheless managed to send his report through El Paso, Texas.<sup>160</sup>

Once the *villistas* had taken Ciudad Juárez in November of 1913, Edwards reported on the surprise attack executed by the rebels. Villa's forces, according to Edwards, had successfully overpowered the city by capturing a federal train while in route to Chihuahua City. The *villistas* had utilized the locomotive to surreptitiously enter the city at one o'clock in the morning and attack the surprised defenders. Within a

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<sup>159</sup> United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State. 11 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812/8022, RG 27.

<sup>160</sup> United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State. 23 July 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/8122, RG 27.

matter of hours, *villista* troops had control of Ciudad Juárez and went about the task of maintaining order. The consul further noted the absence of looting.<sup>161</sup>

Letcher's dispatches from Ciudad Chihuahua during the same months offer a similar description of revolutionary events. His reports indicated a growing optimism within the constitutionalist forces in the central part of the state and an increasing unrest among the federal army's commanders. Letcher identified many problems created by the revolutionaries, including theft against certain businesses. He noted that the federal army, in response to the growing numbers of anti-*huertistas*, had grown uneasy as rebel forces had defeated the federals a number of times. Increasing worries and concerns within the foreign community further complicated matters for Letcher.

In a telegram dated August 28, 1913, Letcher informed his superiors of the federal army's defeat at San Andrés at the hands of Villa and his troops. Letcher carefully detailed the supplies, munitions, and field pieces captured by the constitutionalists. He also noted a marked depletion of federal forces in the southern part of the state. His briefs revealed that little by little the anti-*huertista* rebels were pushing the federal military out of southern Chihuahua's and towards the capital city and Ciudad Juárez. Such a state of events exacerbated the anxieties of Chihuahua's elites and members of the foreign community.<sup>162</sup> They also added to Letcher's already stretched responsibilities.

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<sup>161</sup> United States Department of State. Thomas Edwards to Secretary of State. 15 November 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/9749, RG 31.

<sup>162</sup> As explained in the previous chapter, many ex-maderistas took up arms against the government of Huerta after the assassinations of Francisco Madero and Abraham González. Many of the ex-maderistas had either served under these leaders or were in the same anti-reelection clubs of Chihuahua prior to 1910. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 28 August 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 8623, RG 28.

Letcher further provided information that caused the Department of State to assume an unsympathetic attitude towards Huerta's government. The consul disclosed that officers loyal to Huerta committed murders against Madero's followers. Such violence resulted from Huerta's move to solidify control of the state by making his own appointment of loyal men to key positions in Chihuahua, including Military Commander and governor of the state. But Huerta's schemes and the atrocities committed merely accelerated the revolutionary movement against his administration, for those slain had many friends.

In a lengthy report, Letcher reconstructed rumors of the possible murder of former governor of Chihuahua, Abraham González. Prior to his assassination, González had been in contact with the consul and the two had formed a close relationship. Suspicious of the intentions of the new military governor of Chihuahua, Letcher reported that a crew member from the railroad yards had confided that Don Abraham had been taken by train to a location south of the city. The train had returned without the governor and the consul surmised that he probably had been murdered.<sup>163</sup>

#### *Consuls as Protectors of American Interests*

The Department of State not only directed the consuls to provide information regarding troop movements, battle casualties and the political maneuvers of Huerta's new government, but also to protect the lives and property of American and other foreign citizens in the state of Chihuahua. The dismissal of Henry Lane Wilson as Ambassador to Mexico had left the United States with one less individual to convey grievances

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<sup>163</sup> U.S. Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State. 28 November 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 6952, RG 25.

Americans had against the government of Huerta. Because of the on-going civil war, complaints filed against Mexico tended to be either overlooked or resolved in a less than expeditious manner that could take as long as one-and-one-half months to resolve.<sup>164</sup>

During the evacuation of Chihuahua City by federal forces, Letcher and other foreign consuls requested that federal general Salvador Mercado leave a force of 200 men in the city to preserve social order and make certain the security of foreign citizens and their property.<sup>165</sup> In this instance, Letcher and the other consuls successfully maintained peace and serenity in the city by diligently pursuing the matter with Mercado. Letcher continued his involvement in domestic affairs once the city had been evacuated, working to protect the lives of foreigners. At Letcher's request, the Department of State forwarded instructions to be communicated to constitutionalist leaders requesting that the lives of the 200 federal soldiers Mercado had ordered to guard Ciudad Chihuahua be spared. Additional orders repeated to the consuls their duty to protect all foreigners and non-combatants within their jurisdiction.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Records at the Archivo General de La Nación reveal that grievances filed with the Departamento de Asuntos Internacionales could take anywhere from 60 to 90 days to resolve. In one case, the Parral and Durango Railway Company sought protection by the Mexican government against rebels in their region through the United States Department of State. The matter took nearly a month and a half to resolve through proper channels. Salvador R. Mercado to C. Secretario de Gobernación, 30 September 1913, Ramo Gobernación, Periodo Revolucionario, Caja 11, Expediente 9, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, D.F. Mexico.

<sup>165</sup> Rebel forces in Chihuahua had by this time defeated the federal army in several crucial engagements. Fear among the citizens of Chihuahua prompted the evacuation of the city by many of the elite families. Mercado, realizing the futile situation he confronted, had ordered a mass withdrawal from the city towards the United States – Mexico border to the town of Ojinaga where his forces could properly defend their position, or flee to the United States in case of a defeat. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 30 November 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00/10054, RG 32.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

Consuls acted as diligently to prevent harm to business interests. American companies operating in Chihuahua had been hit hard by the events of the Revolution since March 1913. On several occasions, rebels attacked foreign companies in order to obtain supplies, and often the work of these companies dwindled as laborers left to join rebel ranks. Many times the United States consular office directly assisted company managers to resolve problems created by revolutionary turmoil, a situation that placed the consuls in direct contact with revolutionary leaders. In several instances, consuls successfully mediated on behalf of foreign companies and prevented the destruction or confiscation of property.

As President of the Alvarado Mining and Milling Company in Hidalgo de Parral, A.J. McQuatters faced numerous obstacles to the safe shipment of silver bullion by railway to the United States. Revolutionary events had blocked some shipments, and the destruction of rail lines had become a consistent obstruction. In order to impede the efforts of the federal army, which utilized the railway for transportation, rebels often destroyed railway lines. To assist McQuatters, Letcher issued the businessman an open letter affirming the full support of the consular office.<sup>167</sup> The letter helped the Alvarado Mining and Milling Company negotiate the safe transit of silver through territory held by federal or rebel forces.

At other times, consular agents petitioned Huerta's government for the protection of American companies when pleas for assistance to the local government went

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<sup>167</sup> While it is doubtful that such a letter stood to be entirely respected by both rebel and federal forces, it can be argued that Letcher's name on the document would be recognized and the shipment allowed to proceed. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 3 May 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7427, RG 25.

unheeded. The complaints of American citizens and American company managers were relayed to the United States Ambassador or charge d'affairs who then contacted the appropriate authorities in Huerta's administration. The Santo Domingo Silver Mining Company, for instance, petitioned the ambassador for protection of its mines in the Batopilas region because federal soldiers had supposedly stolen materials from the company in July 1913. Their plea for assistance, however, resulted in no action taken.<sup>168</sup>

As the size of revolutionary forces in the state of Chihuahua enlarged and the federal army's strength in the state diminished, consuls increasingly interacted with constitutionalist leaders and their men. To impress the consuls, constitutionalist forces tried to respect American properties, and apparently only in the case of absolute necessity did the revolutionaries confiscate foreign companies' resources. On one occasion, for example, the constitutionalist forces were compelled to appropriate 400 tons of coal from the American Smelting and Refining Company and another load from the Chihuahua Mining Company.<sup>169</sup> The seizure was necessary for the *Transportes Militares* of the División del Norte, which often hauled the bulk of the fighting forces and auxiliary units, including medical personnel. For the rebels, the need to fuel constitutionalist trains far

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<sup>168</sup> The Santo Domingo Silver Mining Company was not the only company to seek protection during this period. Several other companies petitioned the United States Ambassador for protection against theft including The Babicora Development Company and the Mines at Santa Eulalia. In the case of the Santo Domingo Silver Mining Company, General Mercado reported that bandits were to blame, as the federal army did not operate in the mining company's region. Henry Lane Wilson to Departamento de Asuntos Internacionales, 16 July 1913, *Archivo General de la Nación*, Caja 67, Expediente 30, Mexico D.F., Mexico.

<sup>169</sup> The División del Norte depended on the railway service to reach destination points located throughout the state. The service was operated by individuals who had at one time or another worked for the railroad industry in Chihuahua or were employed by companies such as the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway Company. U.S. Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State. 25 December 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 10301, RG 32.

outweighed the ramifications of seizing American property, which the consuls wanted left undisturbed.

Consuls not only directed their attention toward the safety of Americans but extended their efforts to protecting the lives of other foreigners. When Villa took Ciudad Chihuahua in December 1913, the new *villista* state government confiscated the property of Spanish citizens and ordered that the Spaniards immediately leave the state. A few of the more prominent Spanish nationals owned factories while the majority operated mercantile establishments in the city. A total of 478 Spanish citizens had to flee Ciudad Chihuahua and travel to Ciudad Juárez where they quickly crossed into the United States in search of safety.<sup>170</sup> During the course of their expedited exit from Chihuahua, news of their treatment at the hands of Villa reached Department of State offices. Immediately, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan dispatched a memo to consuls in northern Mexico instructing them to extend protection to nationals of foreign countries.<sup>171</sup>

John Reed later wrote that Letcher directly consulted Villa regarding the safety of Spanish citizens. In his book, *Insurgent Mexico*, Reed claimed that Letcher advised Villa in the following manner, “General, I don’t question your motives, but I think you are making a grave political mistake in expelling the Spaniards. The government at Washington will hesitate a long time before becoming friendly to a party which makes

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<sup>170</sup> Refugees entering the El Paso area reported their mistreatment at the hands of *villistas*. Complainants included several members of the clergy who reported that *villistas* had demanded money from them and had also looted the churches. Documentary evidence to substantiate those claims are sparse. “Villa’s Acts Alarm Leader,” *New York Times*, 14 December 1913, 2.

<sup>171</sup> United States Department of State. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan to United States Embassy in Mexico. 20 October 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 9575, RG 30.

use of such barbarous measures.”<sup>172</sup> Apparently, pressure from United States consuls coupled with Villa’s intuitive desire to maintain a working relationship with the United States compelled the rebel leader to lessen the harsh treatment of Spanish citizens in Chihuahua.

#### *Consuls as Political Intermediaries*

Perhaps the most important role the consuls performed involved their operations as political intermediaries among the United States government, the Mexican government, and the rebellious factions. Prior to 1913, the consuls had acted as liaisons between Americans in Chihuahua and the state government there. But then, as the rebellion against Huerta unfolded in 1913, the consuls’ importance grew. In reaction to the anti-*huertista* uprising, Secretary of State Bryan instructed the consuls to become political intermediaries or negotiators in the states where they worked.<sup>173</sup>

In an effort to gauge the situation in Mexico, the Wilson administration called upon consuls in Chihuahua to prepare several comprehensive reports that described the history of political events in the state. These reports disclose the opinions of consuls regarding the Revolution, the leading political figures or government officials in Chihuahua, and the rebel forces. Moreover, their dispatches reveal their suggestions to the Department of State regarding a decisive course of action.

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<sup>172</sup> The validity of the information in Reed’s book has been a topic debated by historians of the Mexican Revolution. Most historians agree that Reed embellished information and often added erroneous data to his assessment of the Revolution. John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1914; Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1969), 123.

<sup>173</sup> Teitelbaum contends that influential individuals in the Wilson administration such as John Lind supported the constitutionalist forces and made every effort to influence the President to support their cause. Louis M. Teitelbaum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Mexican Revolution 1913-1916: A History of United States-Mexico Relations from the Murder of Madero Until Villa’s Provocation Across the Border* (New York: Exposition Press, 1967), 33.

After the fall of Ciudad Juárez, consul Edwards submitted a four-page memorandum in which he detailed his opinion of Francisco Villa's policy towards the restructuring of Chihuahua's government as well as the industrial reorganization of the state. Edwards described the *villista* rank-and-file as individualists who required little motivation by their officers. Edward's juxtaposed *villistas* against the federal army whose soldiers were often reluctant to follow orders. His report served to further enhance the standing of the rebel forces while at the same time denigrating and demonizing the federal army.<sup>174</sup>

In Edwards' opinion, Villa's political and agrarian policies for the restructuring of Chihuahua were necessary in the state as it would bring to an end the commercial dominance of the state's elite -- who incidentally supported Victoriano Huerta -- and that would bring the Revolution to a close. He added that Villa was a man who respected foreigners and only seized the properties of his enemies. In order to stay well equipped, Edwards observed, the *villistas* had to acquire supplies from the enemy. Edwards concluded that reorganization of general industries by the new government had commenced after the *villista* takeover, and noticeable improvements had been achieved.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Edward's report consists of eight sections dedicated to illuminating the events in Chihuahua. His positive portrayal of the *villistas* further leads this author to believe that such a report had far reaching implications in the United States for the villista cause. United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 23 December 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 10336, RG 32.

<sup>175</sup> In addition to seizing the lands of the state's elite, the *villistas* substituted many of Chihuahua's political figures in local and state governments. This included those in charge of state agencies pertaining to industry and commerce. Municipal government officials in Ciudad Chihuahua, for instance, were replaced once the rebel forces took control of the city. In his report, Edwards alluded to industries such as transportation, communications networks, and postal services among others. *Ibid.*; Silvestre Terrazas to C.

Edwards' considered opinions reflected a practical attitude towards Francisco Villa and the constitutionalist forces. In general, Edwards constructed a positive image of the rebels and alluded to the potential for future peace at their hands. By contrasting the character of the men from the División with the state's elite, Edwards endorsed the struggle of Chihuahua's popular classes against the dominance of the wealthy elite. He carefully assessed the oppression of Spanish citizens at the hands of the constitutionalist forces as a promising solution for restoring peace.<sup>176</sup> While Edwards did not directly state his support for the constitutionalists, his carefully worded evaluation contained a hidden belief that their efforts would culminate in peace and stability.

Perhaps Edwards' negative attitude toward the Huerta government stemmed from developments in Chihuahua at the hands of the dictator's generals. In a report filed only two months after the *decéna trágica*, Edwards had voiced distrust and an instinctive animosity toward Huerta and his allies. Besides providing a denigrating description of José Inez Salazar, a *huertista* General, Edwards noted the reservations "old maderistas" held toward the new order.<sup>177</sup> Regardless of the mysteries that surrounded his motivations, Edwards' subsequent reports tended to give the constitutionalist forces a complimentary evaluation.

Much like Edwards' assessments, Marion Letcher's reports demonstrate a dislike for the Huerta administration. While Letcher did not compliment the constitutionalists, it

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Presidente Municipal, 10 December 1913, Archivo Histórico de Chihuahua, Fondo: Contemporaneo, Sección: Presidencia, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Caja 1, Expediente 13.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Edwards also called for the Department of State to punish those American citizens who profited from the illegal sale of weapons and supplies in Mexico. United States Department of State. Thomas D. Edwards to Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 5 April 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 7069, RG 25.

can be argued that his negative portrayal of the Huerta government served to benefit them. As mentioned earlier, the death of his friend Abraham González provoked the consul to submit a report critical of the military authorities in Chihuahua. A meeting with General Rábago, the military governor of Chihuahua under Huerta, convinced Letcher that morality was beyond the grasp of the government, and that more blood would be shed in the future.<sup>178</sup> His negative portrayal of General Rábago, Huerta's friend and ally, served to further influence the United States government's favorable opinion of the constitutionalists.

On October 17, 1913, Letcher submitted to the Department of State a twenty-nine page account that described in detail the course of Mexican history since the conquest, and the events that ultimately led to the Revolution of 1910 in Chihuahua. Letcher described the Spanish colonization of Mexico, and in particular, noted the history of the Church and its effects on the people of New Spain, and on the Republic of Mexico. Letcher continued with an analysis of Mexican nation building in the nineteenth-century, including a critical review of the Díaz dictatorship since its beginning in 1876. Díaz, he argued, had skillfully seized power in Mexico, and maintained control in the countryside by placing loyal followers in key positions.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>178</sup>Letcher noted in his report the substantial advances made by Mexico while under the dictatorship of Díaz. He did, however, add that Mexico's Revolution of 1910 was instigated by popular dissatisfaction among the masses. According to the consul, members of the Terrazas family were to blame for they had accumulated substantial wealth in Chihuahua at the expense of the state's working classes. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 24 March 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 6952, RG 24.

<sup>179</sup>The consul pointed out that Díaz, in his opinion, proved to be more of an administrator who ruled with absolute authority than a dreamer. Letcher's report argued that Díaz was a man of action whose policies over the course of thirty years angered many. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to

In addition to demonstrating Letcher's commendable knowledge of Mexican history, the report contained the consul's observations concerning the reasons for revolt in Mexico and in Chihuahua. In his opinion, the existing socio-political structure in that state had ultimately led the popular classes to revolt in 1910. The elite sector of Chihuahua had alienated much of the population through corrupt practices. The current dilemma in Chihuahua, he added, sprang from the attempt by the elite to recover their power and influence by siding with the administration of Huerta. He concluded with the following passage:

The Huerta government cannot succeed. The policy of wholesale blood-letting to which it has committed itself will not succeed, though the millions which it has been so diligently seeking in the money markets of the world were secured. The middle classes of Mexico are trying to find themselves. Revolution is a most unfortunate necessity of peoples under certain conditions, and it seems to be the only method at times by which the right of mankind may be won and held.<sup>180</sup>

Letcher's opinions were based on years of experience and observation. While he did not characterize the constitutionalist forces in the same positive manner as Edwards, he concluded that revolution was a plausible avenue for achieving change in the state and bringing an end to the corrupt practices of the elites. To Letcher, Villa represented one force that could bring about such an end.

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Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 17 October 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 9484, RG 30.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

*George C. Carothers, Special Agent*

Few consuls illustrated the role of political intermediary better than George C. Carothers, consul in Torreón, Coahuila. As previously mentioned, the consul had been assigned to follow the División del Norte and report on its actions. Although he spent only a few months in Chihuahua (the actual time is difficult to gauge because the agent frequently traveled to the United States and Coahuila), Carothers was instrumental in negotiating arrangements among Francisco Villa, the Department of State, and foreign nationals in Mexico. One historian in particular has credited Carothers with being instrumental in portraying Francisco Villa positively to the Wilson administration, a move the scholar claims, led in part to the lifting of the arms embargo along the United States-Mexico border.<sup>181</sup>

Carothers had earlier met Villa during the revolutionary's takeover of Torreón in September of 1913. The consul had successfully arranged the safe treatment of foreigners (mainly Spanish) during the División's ransacking of the city, and upon meeting with Villa, got the rebel leader to issue a general order that all looting cease. According to a memorandum by Boaz Long, Chief of Latin-American Affairs in the Department of State, Carothers had further persuaded Villa to retract an order to have many of the Spaniards in the city face a firing squad; as a result of Carothers' efforts,

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<sup>181</sup> Larry D. Hill argues that Carothers reports were responsible for influencing Woodrow Wilson's opinion of the constitutionalist forces. Wilson, according to Hill, was not completely convinced that the constitutionalist forces under Villa were the solution to the problem in Mexico. Hill declares that Carothers' presence in Chihuahua also created problems between the special agent and Letcher. The latter viewed Carothers as a threat and believed that the Secretary of State did not have full confidence in his abilities. See Hill, *Emissaries to a Revolution: Woodrow Wilson's Executive Agents in Mexico*, 125-290.

Villa only executed seven Spaniards implicated in assisting the Huerta government.<sup>182</sup> It seems as if Carothers' ability to sway Villa later led to his assignment to cover the rebel leader when the ill treatment of Spaniards in Chihuahua commenced. When Villa left Torreón, a working relationship between both men had been established that later served the Department of State to an advantage when the *villistas* took control of Chihuahua and threatened the interests of foreigners in the state.

During the course of his brief stay in Chihuahua, Carothers was called upon several times to impress upon Villa the importance of respecting foreign lives and property. In his role as middleman, Carothers ably persuaded General Villa to reconsider his treatment of Luis Terrazas, Junior, a member of Chihuahua's oligarchy and son of a former governor. During General Salvador Mercado's evacuation of Ciudad Chihuahua, several of the city's elite families had accompanied the troops to the United States-Mexico border. Luis Terrazas Junior, however, had opted to remain in Ciudad Chihuahua, a decision that eventually led to his arrest by the constitutionalist forces.<sup>183</sup> In the ensuing days, several prominent individuals, among them the El Paso Collector of Customs, Zach Lamar Cobb, and the President of the Panhandle Plains Cattlemen's Association, W.B. Slaughter, conveyed their concern to the Department of State as to the

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<sup>182</sup> According to Long, Villa also shot a young man in his army who had been caught looting in the city after the order had been issued to cease all looting. Long wrote that, "Villa made an investigation and when he had finished asking questions and receiving the answers of both sides, he calmly stepped into the office of the hotel, took his rifle, returned to the scene and shot the looter." United States Department of State. Boaz Long to Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 29 October 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929.* Film 812.00: 9836, RG 31.

<sup>183</sup> The constitutionalist forces charged him with opposition to the new government. United States Department of State. Marion Letcher to Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan. 21 December 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929.* Film 812.00: 10301, RG 32.

safe treatment Luis Terrazas, Senior and his family.<sup>184</sup> Because of their actions, the Department of State directed consuls to impress upon Villa the importance of protecting the Luis Terrazas family. While Carothers was not able to convince Villa to release Luis Terrazas Junior, he did manage to prevent the general from shooting the young man.<sup>185</sup>

On another occasion Carothers persuaded Villa to return a load of coal that the División del Norte had seized from the American Smelting and Refining Company. Villa offered to exchange the load for \$50,000. Carothers advised Villa that to maintain good public relations with American companies he must respect their holdings. Eventually, Villa assured the safety of the American Smelting and Refining Company's shipments and in return received coal from the company at no cost.<sup>186</sup> Carothers' stay in Chihuahua came to an end when the División del Norte initiated its campaign to take Mexico City. During the course of his stay with the *villistas* his role as a middleman had successfully constructed a working relationship between the United States and Francisco Villa.

### *El Periódico Oficial*

Further evidence attesting to the interaction between consular agents and the *villistas* is found in *El Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, the official newspaper of the Constitutionalist Government in Chihuahua. The *villista* takeover of Chihuahua's government necessitated making contact with the

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<sup>184</sup> United States Department of State, Zach Lamar Cobb to Boaz Long. 9 December 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 10097, RG 32; W.B. Slaughter to Secretary of State. 16 December 1913. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. Film 812.00: 10225, RG 32.

<sup>185</sup> Friedrich Katz argues that Terrazas was of value to Villa because he could use the young man to acquire ransom money. However, Katz oversimplifies the situation by overlooking the fact that several of the Terrazas family members had remained in Chihuahua. Villa probably would have shot Luis Terrazas Jr. as a means of revenge against the Terrazas family. See Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*, 245-248.

<sup>186</sup> Hill, *Emissaries to a Revolution, Woodrow Wilson's Agents in Mexico*, 146.

population, and *El Periódico Oficial* served as a venue for the dissemination of information concerning changes in local government, for identifying the new administrators named by the *villista* government, and for announcing the implementation of new laws. The *Periódico Oficial* became one of the *villista* government's instruments for propaganda and change.

As previously mentioned, the *villista* victory in Chihuahua resulted in numerous political changes including the substitution of various local and state government officials. These actions immediately opened communication lines between United States consuls and new government officials who came from the ranks of the División del Norte. In its first issue under *villista* administrators, *El Periódico Oficial* published the names of the Governor, Treasurer and other high-ranking officials for the state of Chihuahua. The newspaper indicated that the leaders of the División's numerous brigades had met at the National Palace and unanimously elected General Francisco Villa as Governor, and that they had appointed several other *villistas* to positions in the state hierarchy. the *Periódico Oficial* also published the names of the new city administration including council members, the municipal president, and judicial authorities such as judges and prosecutors.<sup>187</sup>

Once lines of communication had been established with the consuls, the *villistas* immediately utilized the newspaper to their advantage. In order to gain the trust of the general public, both foreign and domestic, the newspaper frequently published the

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<sup>187</sup> The *villistas* named many to administrative positions from within their ranks. Some, such as Silvestre Terrazas and Toribio Ortega, had prior experience in the field of politics. "Nombramiento de Gobernador del Estado de Chihuahua, en favor del Gral. Francisco Villa," *Periódico Oficial de Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 15 December 1913, 2-4.

memoranda acquired from the United States consular office in the city concerning the treatment of Americans and their properties, as well as that of Chihuahuans. In an effort to publicize the negotiations being conducted between the *villistas* and the consular agents representing the United States, *El Periódico Oficial* printed the *villista* response to the memoranda on the same page. The newspaper thus disclosed the fact that the consuls worked diligently on behalf of the foreign presence in the state.

*El Periódico Oficial* revealed that Consul Letcher had delivered a letter to Villa's headquarters in Ciudad Chihuahua seeking the favorable treatment of the people in the state, including members of the Terrazas clan. The consul assured General Villa that the United States government desired that he and his forces respect the citizenry. Letcher further added that his government would look favorably upon such a gesture. In response, General Villa guaranteed that all proceedings concerning certain individuals, especially those who acted against the government of Madero and González, would be carried out in a legal manner. Villa wondered, however, why the United States government had not followed the same procedure during the assassinations of Francisco Madero, José María Pino Suárez and Abraham González.<sup>188</sup>

On another occasion, *El Periódico Oficial* revealed that Consul Letcher called upon the *villistas* to permit the safe departure of certain families from Chihuahua to the United States. It had come to the attention of the United States that the wives and children of men who had fled the state or did not pledge allegiance to the new

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<sup>188</sup> Villa's response heavily criticized the United States for its supposed role in the assassination of Francisco Madero, and its reluctance to protect his life as well as the life of Abraham González. "Interesantes notas cambiadas entre el Gobierno Constitucionalista del Gral. Francisco Villa en el Estado de Chihuahua y el Departamento de Estado del Gobierno de los Estados Unidos," *El Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 15 December, 1913, 4.

constitutionalist government had not received consent to seek exile abroad. According to the newspaper, Letcher's superiors had asked him to intercede in this matter and impress upon the *villista* government that the maltreatment of those families stood to turn public opinion against the *villista* revolutionary cause. Villa's response, also included in *El Periódico Oficial's* columns, pointed to certain inaccuracies regarding the consul's allegations. According to Villa, no order existed preventing the departure of people from Chihuahua. Moreover, only certain individuals had been detained; they had to respond against allegations they had contributed to the demise of Abraham González.<sup>189</sup>

### *Conclusion*

Changes in Mexico's national government brought on by the assassinations of Francisco Madero and his vice-president at the hands of Victoriano Huerta in 1913 resulted in a backlash against the central government by many of the Madero's supporters. At the local level in Chihuahua, the assassination of Abraham González intensified anti-*huertista* sentiment, giving rise to many rebellious factions that waged a guerrilla war against the federal military. United States consuls operating in Chihuahua expanded the responsibilities of their positions beyond those of earlier consuls in order to meet the demands expected by the Department of State and investors in the United States during a period of multiple changes in the state government. They restructured their roles as diplomats, acting as political intermediaries to resolve issues with the different rebel factions that surfaced during the Revolution.

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<sup>189</sup> Villa further claimed that many families could obtain a free passage on a train to Juárez once the line had been reconstructed. His letter also made note of the fact that officials loyal to Huerta did not extend the same kind treatment to the families of *villistas*, a fact Villa wished the consul to relay to his superiors. "Carta del Cónsul Americano en esta Ciudad," *El Periódico Oficial del Gobierno Constitucionalista del Estado de Chihuahua*, 15 December, 1913, 5.

Beginning in 1913, consuls took on the role of informers and relayed critical information to the Department of State regarding the movement of the anti-*huertistas*, government takeovers, and the welfare of American citizens living in Chihuahua. In the absence of a United States ambassador to Mexico (assigning an ambassador to Mexico during this time meant de facto recognition of Huerta's government), consular dispatches provided the United States with the particulars necessary to gauge the situation in Mexico and the borderlands. Moreover, consular agents' responsibility as guardians of American interests during a period of antifoigner sentiment increased so as to ensure against acts of retaliation toward non-Mexicans and their businesses.

Perhaps the most significant consular intervention was presenting a sympathetic image of rebel forces that resulted in favorable diplomatic relations between the United States and leaders such as Francisco Villa and Toribio Ortega. Consular dispatches provided the United States government with information that cast the *villistas* in a positive manner during a turbulent time that witnessed a seizure of power by a porfirian era general, Victoriano Huerta. Consuls, then, portrayed *villistas* as a force that could possibly bring an end to hostilities in Chihuahua and provide socio-political stability in the state.

On the other hand, *villistas* wielded a three front war: one, of course, on the battlefield, the second in the political arena, and the last on the diplomatic front. The *villista* takeover of urban centers in the state of Chihuahua placed members of the rebellious forces in direct contact with consular agents. Once cities such as Ciudad Juárez and Ciudad Chihuahua had fallen, it became the absolute responsibility of the

constitutionalist forces to oversee the administrative machinery in these locations. The rebels not only had to replace members of local government, but they also had to administer the city's judicial system, hospitals and schools among others. A lack of government and control in these locations could have resulted in further losses for foreigners, a situation that stood to complicate matters for the *villistas*.

*Villistas* also incorporated a diplomatic strategy as part of their campaign to win the hearts and minds of individuals in Mexico and the United States. In their turn to diplomacy, the *villistas* sought through their news organ, *El Periodico Oficial*, to curry the favor of consuls, publishing material that demonstrated to the public at large a willingness on behalf of the new Chihuahuan government to establish a diplomatic relationship with the United States. By the same token, the *villistas* also utilized *El Periódico Oficial* to spin directives from the consuls to their advantage: the newspaper became an instrument for rebutting accusations made by the Department of State through their consuls. In essence, the revolutionaries used the organ to cultivate public opinion in their favor, a necessary tactic to guarantee control in the state.

*Villistas* astutely navigated the turbulent waters of political change in Chihuahua in order to achieve the destruction of Victoriano Huerta's government and military. Diplomatically, they not only courted the approval of Chihuahuans (they had recruited many from Chihuahua's social classes) but also foreign nations. *Villistas* worked with, and to a certain extent, contrived against foreign consuls, more especially those from the United States, in order to maintain a favorable relationship with the foreign community in the state. In doing so, they were able to seize foreign properties and goods with limited

backlash from foreign governments. Their experience in 1913-1914 prepared *villistas* for their peace negotiations with the central government after 1920, and for their deserved place in Mexico society after the combative phase of the Revolution came to an end.

## CHAPTER 4

### “*Nos Retiramos Desde Hoy a la Vida Privada:*” Francisco Villa’s Surrender and the Construction of *Villista* Agricultural Colonies

#### *Introduction*

Night had fallen on the small town of El Pueblito and only the faint chatter emanating from the small adobe homes filtered throughout the community. Quiet shadows formed along the dusty streets and the trees in the town square rustled with the occasional wind. Around 10:00 pm a shot rang out, but few bothered to investigate for fear of becoming the next victim. Within minutes, the large hacienda next to the town square had come to life as the news had reached them: Albino Aranda, a former *villista* general and current leader of the former revolutionaries at the agricultural colony, had been shot dead.

Early the next morning, Miguel Ballesteros, the civil judge of El Pueblito, received a member of Aranda’s family and two witnesses who presented the official with the general’s death certificate. The judge declared Aranda dead the fifth of August, 1939, and the group exited the makeshift office. Moments later a second group arrived bearing the death certificate of Manuel Montes, the murderer of Aranda, and a resident of El Pueblito. Throughout the course of the night an angry group of men had broken into the jail at 4:00 in the morning and lynched Montes. Montes had slain Aranda after the general confronted him with a legal matter that needed attention. To exact revenge, the mob pummeled Montes unconscious and drove a steel rod through his forehead.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> A visit to the town of El Pueblito placed me in contact with *villista* descendants. According to several individuals, the *villistas* castrated Montes after pummeling him unconscious, let the murderer suffer a few

Aranda's death in August of 1939 illuminates, in part, the complexities of El Pueblito's history as a *villista* agrarian colony in northern Chihuahua where local justice prevailed and resistance to outside intrusion proved to be the norm for many years. *Villista* agrarian colonies were the direct result of a peace agreement between the *villistas* and the post-revolutionary government that emerged in Mexico from the chaos of the armed phase of the Revolution of 1910. Although Montes lived in El Pueblito, he had not been among the many *villistas* who had signed a peace agreement with the Mexican government in 1920.

While many scholars have analyzed the social underpinnings of the Revolution of 1910 and the subsequent decade of turmoil, few have closely examined the lives of *villista* revolutionaries as citizens under Mexico's post-1920 government. After Álvaro Obregón defeated Francisco Villa and the División del Norte in 1915 at the Battle of Celaya, only in short periods after that date did *villistas* wield power in Chihuahua. By 1920, their numbers had diminished considerably, and they resembled more a guerrilla force than a modern military unit. Once they signed the peace agreement with the Mexican government and constructed several agrarian colonies, they for the most part faded from scholarly analysis.<sup>191</sup>

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hours, and then killed him. Defunción del Señor Albino Aranda, 5 August 1939, Archivo Municipal de El Pueblito, El Pueblito, Chihuahua, Number 31; Defunción del Señor Manuel Montes, 5 August 1939, Archivo Municipal de El Pueblito, El Pueblito, Chihuahua, Number 32.

<sup>191</sup> Two notable exceptions include Ana María Alonso and Daniel Nugent. Alonso and Nugent's anthropological analysis, however, narrowly focused on the Namiquipa region, and tended to exclude the greater numbers of *villistas* living in Chihuahua from Hidalgo del Parral in the south to Ciudad Juárez in the north. Additionally, their analysis lacks information concerning *villista* military colonies in Chihuahua and Durango. See Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender in Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995); and Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of the Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Only Canutillo, the hacienda in Durango owned and administered by Francisco Villa, has received any examination. Unfortunately, studies focused only on Villa fail to provide sufficient information to gain an understanding of *villismo* after 1920. Questions remain regarding the structure of the agrarian colonies beyond Canutillo, their administration, and the social and economic activities of their residents.<sup>192</sup>

This chapter examines the colony established at El Pueblito, Chihuahua, a nineteenth-century hacienda granted to the *villistas* in compensation for their military service against the dictatorship of Victoriano Huerta. The political institutions created by the Chihuahua state and federal governments for El Pueblito served the purpose of both pacifying the *villistas* and introducing them into the post-revolutionary government of the 1920s. Astutely, the *villistas* appropriated institutions such as the municipal government and utilized them as pressure mechanisms for gaining social mobility and territorial space. The lessons learned by the *villistas* in negotiations with American diplomats and others from 1913 to 1915 later enabled the *villistas* to seek advantageous peace terms for

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<sup>192</sup> In his assessment of Post-1920 Chihuahua, historian Mark Wasserman does not include information regarding *villista* military colonies. His assessment concentrates on the elite of Chihuahua and their political maneuvers after the combative phase of the Revolution came to an end. Friedrich Katz offers an insight into one of the military colonies, that of Canutillo under the direction of Francisco Villa. He does not, however, advance further analysis regarding the other military colonies in Chihuahua and Durango and only briefly mentions their existence. Moreover, Katz claims that the majority of workers on the Canutillo hacienda were not Villa's former soldiers, but rather laborers who had worked on the property prior to the revolutionary's takeover. He contends that most *ex-villistas* settled in two other colonies. José de la O Holguín, a non-academic historian, provides a limited glimpse into *villista* life at Canutillo. His study does not, however, present any information concerning the structure, society and geography of the military colony, nor does it mention any information concerning the other colonies in both states. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); José de la O Holguín, *Pancho Villa en Canutillo: Entre pasiones y flaquezas* (Durango: Honorable Ayuntamiento de Durango, 2005); Mark Wasserman, *Persistent Oligarchs: Elites and Politics in Chihuahua, Mexico 1910 – 1920* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

themselves and maintain a pragmatic working relationship with the federal and state governments.

*The Villistas after Celaya*

A few salient points about *villismo* merit mention in order to understand the reality *villistas* confronted in 1920 after nearly seven years of revolutionary struggle. In 1915, *villistas* suffered their worst defeat at the battle of Celaya. This reversal, after Francisco Villa's split with Venustiano Carranza, changed the course of *villismo*. For the next five years, the *villistas* experienced alternating successes and crushing failures.<sup>193</sup>

In 1916, *villistas* attacked Columbus, New Mexico, a move that not only resulted in a loss of many men at the hands of the United States Army, but also led to the Pershing Punitive Expedition whose failed intent was to capture Francisco Villa. Once members of the Punitive Expedition had returned to the United States, the *villistas* resumed revolutionary activities against Venustiano Carranza, triumphing over elements of Carranza's army in Chihuahua after 1916. Their victorious campaign against Carranza proved to be short-lived, however, and the tide quickly turned against them, sending Villa and his army into yet another stage of prolonged guerrilla warfare. For the next three

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<sup>193</sup> Alan Knight contends that many *villistas* left Francisco Villa's service after their defeat at Celaya in 1915. Many defectors crossed the border into the United States in search of jobs, while others retired to civilian life. The majority of *villistas* who remained in Villa's service after 1915, Knight contends, were *cabecillas* of second rank. This is incorrect. Albino Aranda, for example, joined the *villistas* in 1913 as a procurer of arms and horses, a job he successfully carried out for many years. Moreover, he quickly rose through the ranks of the *villistas* eventually reaching the grade of general. Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution: Counter-revolution and Reconstruction*, volume 2 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986): 339.

years, Villa and his men were forced into fighting as a quasi-military force in order to survive and evade capture.<sup>194</sup>

### *Villa Surrenders*

Nearly five years after their defeat at the battle of Celaya in 1915, the *villistas* still continued to operate in the state of Chihuahua as a splintered band of rebels. By then Francisco Villa and his men had suffered numerous losses at the hands of federal forces and had lost much of their support in the Chihuahua countryside. In order to properly defend themselves in 1920 against the federal army in Chihuahua as well as the *defensas sociales* (community defense groups), the *villistas* needed weapons and munitions.<sup>195</sup> *Villistas* had depended on numerous individuals, including Francisco Villa's brother, Hipólito Villa, who sought to obtain arms and munitions for the *villistas* through gun runners active in the Big Bend country of Texas, particularly in Ojinaga, the scene of the great victory by the División del Norte in 1914. Hipólito's efforts failed, however, and neither munitions or weapons were ever purchased.<sup>196</sup>

Simultaneously, the government of Chihuahua concentrated its efforts on pacifying the countryside. Several rebellious cells, including the *villistas*, still operated

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<sup>194</sup> Friedrich Katz notes this period to be Villa's last victorious campaign before seeking peace with the Mexican government. Villa's steady decline began at Ciudad Chihuahua when General Francisco Murguía dealt Villa's force a crushing blow on 1 April 1917. A series of defeats followed that left the *villistas* further depleted of men, and scant of resources to purchase more ammunition and weapons. Katz, *The Life and Times of Villa*, 625-649.

<sup>195</sup> The *defensas sociales* in Chihuahua emerged during the combative phase of the Revolution as armed units comprised of former revolutionaries and civilians dedicated to the defense of their communities. See Martha Rocha Islas, *Las Defensas Sociales en Chihuahua: una paradoja en la Revolución* (Mexico, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1988).

<sup>196</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapters, the railroad service did not extend into the Ojinaga, San Carlos, and Cuchillo Parado region. *Villistas*, then, could count on the scarcity of law in the region to purchase weapons and supplies across the United States-Mexico border. By this time, however, authorities had successfully curtailed the efforts by revolutionaries to obtain contraband supplies through the Big Bend region of Texas. "Un grupo de villistas va rumbo a Ojinaga," *La Patria*, 16 February 1920, 1.

in the state as of 1920 with little or no restrictions as the federal military did not have the appropriate numbers to successfully combat them. *Cabecillas* that operated in the state included one led by Jesús Valles in the Hidalgo del Parral region, and others headed by Pedro Dávila in the Río Florido region of southern Chihuahua. Most of these cells eventually surrendered to the federal government or disintegrated after being defeated.<sup>197</sup>

The Plan de Agua Prieta issued by military leaders from Sonora on April 23, 1920, against Venustiano Carranza temporarily halted Chihuahua's pacification campaign. Several generals who had close ties to Álvaro Obregón, a general from Sonora and rival of Carranza, conspired to rid the country of the president. The generals had reacted to President Carranza's attempted purge of Obregón's followers from the military and Mexico's bureaucracy. Once the movement against Carranza began in Sonora, many military leaders throughout Mexico pledged their allegiance to General Álvaro Obregón.<sup>198</sup> In Chihuahua, particularly, Generals Ignacio Enríquez and General J. Gonzalo Escobar, committed themselves to the Plan de Agua Prieta. On May 14, Carranza was shot in his sleep, leaving the presidency temporarily vacant.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Several reports indicate that the general absence of authorities in Chihuahua's regions allowed for an abundance of banditry. "Nuevos éxitos obtiene la campaña contra la rebeldía en el Edo.," *El Correo del Norte*, 26 February 1920, 1.

<sup>198</sup> According to Lieuwen, Carranza fled Mexico City with only a minimal force at his disposal that included cadets from the Colegio Militar. Edwin Lieuwen, *Mexican Militarism: The Political Rise and Fall of the Revolutionary Army, 1910 – 1940* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1968): 52-55.

<sup>199</sup> According to Lieuwen, Carranza hoped to prevent Obregón's possible candidacy in the upcoming elections by eliminating his supporters. In Chihuahua, General Enríquez's decision to support the Plan de Agua Prieta stemmed from his allegiance to Álvaro Obregón. General support for the Plan, of course, garnered him considerable support in the state of Chihuahua, as did his relentless persecution of rebel bands. Enríquez's activities certainly led, in part, to his election for Governor of Chihuahua in 1920. "Todo Chihuahua es partidario de Enríquez," *El Correo del Norte*, 1 April 1920, 1.

Once the events associated with the Plan de Agua Prieta dissipated, Adolfo de la Huerta was named provisional president of Mexico, and the Chihuahua government resumed its policy of pacifying the countryside. General Ignacio Enríquez led the mission of exterminating rebellious units in the state, a task he pursued diligently. Enríquez enjoyed considerable support from the population in Chihuahua. He also counted on the cooperation of the federal military, as he had always been a supporter of Álvaro Obregón.<sup>200</sup>

Thus, with the support of *chihuahuenses* and the assistance of General J. Gonzalo Escobar, General Enríquez launched an operation against the numerous small bands of *villistas* to restore order and tranquility.<sup>201</sup> His hopes for a short campaign, however, encountered numerous setbacks. The *villistas*, in order to outmaneuver Generals Enriquez and Escobar, had split into smaller cells led by former leaders of the defunct División. Each cell then dispersed to Chihuahua's different regions, making capture of the entire *villista* forces nearly impossible.

As indicated in Chapter 2, many of the División's high-ranking officers were local *cabecillas* who could count on the support of people in their native regions. *Cabecillas* knew their terrain intimately and felt comfortable fighting therein. Francisco Villa, for instance, tended to operate in the San Andrés region while others, such as

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<sup>200</sup> Enríquez's declarations to pacify the countryside gained him considerable favor with Chihuahuans, especially the elite to whom he catered by returning confiscated properties. See Alonso Domínguez Rascón, *La política de reforma agraria en Chihuahua, 1920 – 1924: Sus efectos hasta 1940* (México D.F.: Plaza y Valdés, S.A. de C.V., 2007).

<sup>201</sup> The United States Consul in Chihuahua reported that Francisco Villa remained hopeful of negotiating peace with the Mexican government. United States Department of State. James Stewart to Secretary of State. 18 May 1920. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. 812.00: 24012, RG 151.

Albino Aranda, operated in the Ojinaga area. Aranda, a native of the nearby town of San Carlos, successfully evaded capture, while at the same time purchasing supplies in the United States.<sup>202</sup>

On several occasions during 1920 Villa approached Mexico's de facto government under de la Huerta in search of peace, but never received a firm answer.<sup>203</sup> On one occasion, when Villa met with General Enríquez to seek a rapprochement, Villa and nearly 100 of his followers found themselves surrounded by 5,000 of the general's men. Arguably, Enríquez meant to deal Villa a final blow instead of allowing the revolutionary an opportunity to lay down his weapons. But, according the United States Consul in Coahuila, Villa managed to escape and retreat toward the mountains where he and his forces could evade Enríquez.<sup>204</sup>

In order to acquire supplies and funds, the *villista* cells executed several attacks in 1920 upon garrisons, towns, commercial establishments, and railroad trains in Chihuahua. They also demanded substantial sums of money from large mining companies in the Hidalgo del Parral and Ciudad Chihuahua districts. On one occasion,

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<sup>202</sup> It is uncertain how many bands of *villistas* operated in the state during 1920. Francisco Villa headed one group of men while Nicolás Fernández led another. Villa's brother was also reported to have been in charge of another group, and Albino Aranda returned with his men to the Ojinaga region. Newspaper reports provide limited information concerning the numbers of revolutionaries, but they tend to reveal the regions where *villistas* sought refuge. "La pacificación del estado de Chihuahua se cosumará dentro de un corto tiempo," *La Patria*, 10 June 1920, 1; "80 Villistas se han rendido," *El Correo del Norte*, 14 January 1920, 2; "Villa en Sta. Gertrudis; Fernández va al Sur y Aranda al Norte," *El Correo del Norte*, 20 June 1920, 1.

<sup>203</sup> According to Friedrich Katz, Villa approached the government while still in Chihuahua with a plan proposing that his men be granted military colonies, a tradition in northern Mexico since the colonial era. Spanish subjects during that period had been normally granted lands in return for service to the crown.

<sup>204</sup> In his report, Consul Blocker of Agua Prieta reconstructed the story of the *villistas* during their negotiations with the Mexican government after having interviewed Villa and several of his men. United States Department of State. William P. Blocker to Secretary of State. 2 August 1920. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. 812.00: 24442, RG 151.

the *villistas* demanded 50,000 dollars from the superintendent of El Potosí Mining Company. The reluctant superintendent, however, did not surrender the requested funds.<sup>205</sup>

General Enríquez's intense pacification campaign prompted the *villistas* to wage their struggle outside Chihuahua. In late July, 1920, Francisco Villa and his men fled to neighboring Coahuila. Once there, they attacked the military garrison at Sabinas, Coahuila, killing nearly twenty-five federal soldiers and gaining complete control of the town. They then replenished their supplies and entered into peace negotiations with President De la Huerta through an intermediary, a local commander of federal troops in the state.<sup>206</sup>

Francisco Villa and his men officially capitulated to the Mexican government on July 28, 1920, while at Sabinas. Once the official surrender had been consummated, the *villistas* received instructions to go to the Hacienda de Tlahualilo in Coahuila where they underwent a demobilization process. During their stay at Tlahualilo, each *villista* received the equivalent of a federal soldier's salary depending on his rank in the revolutionary forces. General Eugenio Martínez served as the official liaison for the

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<sup>205</sup> It appears the superintendent waited until reinforcements arrived in the region to force the *villistas* to retreat. Unfortunately, the consul's report does not furnish reveal any information. United States Department of State. James Stewart to Secretary of State. 18 May 1920. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. 812.00: 24012, RG 151.

<sup>206</sup> According to the United States consul in Coahuila, William P. Blocker, Villa seized the town of Sabinas because it lay within the district commanded by federal General Eugenio Martínez, a one-time *villista* whom Villa could trust during peace negotiations. United States Department of State. William P. Blocker to Secretary of State. 2 August 1920. *Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Mexico, 1910-1929*. 812.00: 24442, RG 151.

Mexican government. For more than a month, Francisco Villa and over 900 of his men went through the disarmament process without serious problems.<sup>207</sup>

By late August, 1920, the *villistas* had successfully completed being phased out of military duty. They were officially disbanded and, as part of the peace agreement, allowed to occupy certain haciendas granted to them by the national government. In Durango, Villa and an escort of fifty men occupied the Hacienda at Canutillo while General Lorenzo Avalos and 300 *villistas* took residence at the hacienda at San Salvador, directly adjacent to the Nazas River. In Chihuahua, General Nicolás Fernández, with an additional 300 men, occupied an hacienda near San Isidro while General Albino Aranda with 105 men returned to northern Chihuahua and settled in the hacienda of El Pueblito.<sup>208</sup>

In addition to receiving properties, each *villista* soldier received an enlisted man's salary of one and one half pesos a day for a maximum of one year. Officers received twice the amount, and were allowed the privilege of keeping their weapons and horses. In sum, more than 700 *villistas* surrendered and returned to civilian life as farmers on the newly established *villista* agricultural colonies in Durango and Chihuahua. However,

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<sup>207</sup> Villa received many visitors while at Tlahualilo including local politicians and dignitaries. He remained in contact with the central government. Presumably, the *villistas* demobilization process at Tlahualilo included the gathering of personal information by the federal government agents in order for the revolutionaries to receive property. "El licenciamiento de sus fuerzas se continuo el día de ayer absolutamente sin dificultad," *El Correo del Norte*, 25 August 1920, 1.

<sup>208</sup> Officially, the Mexican government paid the hacienda owners for the *villistas* to receive these properties. Official newspaper accounts claim that 300 *villistas* occupied the hacienda of El Pueblito. However, the list of names on the deed indicates that a total of 106 were granted properties. "Salio ya de Bermejillo hacia Canutillo, en donde se radicará; N. Fernández lo hará en S. Isidro, L. Avalos en S. Salvador y Aranda en Ojinaga," *El Correo del Norte*, 5 September 1920, 1.

fifty men belonging to Villa's personal escort remained at Canutillo (it is uncertain whether they were members of his *dorados* unit) as his bodyguard to ensure his safety.<sup>209</sup>

Thus did the *villistas* who served under Villa's service throughout the course of the armed phase of the Revolution return to civilian life. The lands granted to them as a part of the peace agreement provided the former soldiers with a means to make the transition from revolutionaries to civilians. As such, their occupation of the lands granted by the government produced yet another phase in the life of *villistas*. What came to be the experience of *villistas* in these military colonies?

#### *La Colonia Agrícola El Pueblito*

The agricultural colony at El Pueblito may be used as a model to illuminate the society and institutions that developed among the surrendered *villistas*. The hacienda of El Pueblito, situated in the northwestern region of Chihuahua, belonged to a member of Chihuahua's elite class. With the exception of the railroad depot a few miles away, the hacienda's connection to the outside world had been via a solitary dirt road that linked the site to other settlements in the region. Little change had taken place at the ranchstead since the nineteenth-century. The lone hacienda house stood surrounded by workers huts and a couple of warehouses. The Río Conchos, the hacienda's sole source of water for irrigation and consumption, wound its way through the fields adjacent to the *casa grande*.

The physical setting of El Pueblito featured several large agricultural fields between the hacienda and the Río Conchos. The hacienda had been built in the nineteenth century at the base of one of the small hills in the valley. Additional small

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<sup>209</sup> Villa had incurred many enemies throughout the armed phase of the Revolution. Indeed some of his strongest opponents were the elites from Chihuahua and Durango. Ibid.

basins surrounded the hacienda and through them small dry creeks made their way to the river. The land contained mesquite, ocotillo, natural grasses, candelilla and lechugilla, among others. Dirt canals diverted water from the Río Conchos as rain was scarce in this northern desert country. Winters were harsh and cold, while summers proved to be hot with little precipitation.<sup>210</sup>

El Pueblito appears to have been quite isolated. In 1905, the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway constructed a line to a point twenty-five kilometers from the hacienda to a place known as Falomir Depot. The isolated settlements in the region beyond El Pueblito could be reached by foot or on horseback. The nearest town of Aldama was at a distance of 150 kilometers.<sup>211</sup>

Don Ignacio Irigoyen, a Porfirian-era engineer and federal representative from Chihuahua who became a member of Chihuahua's elite class during the nineteenth-century, had originally owned the hacienda of El Pueblito. Irigoyen, an ally of Benito Juárez and a veteran of the war against the French Intervention, had accumulated substantial wealth during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Ignacio Irigoyen's son, Doctor Fructuoso Irigoyen, had by 1920 taken over as administrator of the hacienda.

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<sup>210</sup> Censo General y Agrario, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 72-73.

<sup>211</sup> The engineer's construction book for the Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway contains exact sketches and pertinent details concerning the construction of all structures within the boundaries of their division in Chihuahua. In addition to containing diagrams of depots and all other buildings, the book contains information concerning the cost of materials, bridges and culverts as well as rail line construction. Engineer's Construction Book, Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway Collection, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas, 5.

While the estate had been productive during the porfirian era, the Revolution had taken a toll on its livestock and crops.<sup>212</sup>

The process of awarding the land grant to General Albino Aranda and the *villistas* under his command in 1920 did not occur in a vacuum. As previously mentioned, Aranda, a native of the small northern town of San Carlos and a veteran of Madero's Revolution, had operated in the region with his men since 1910. He and many others like him in Chihuahua had been displaced by porfirian land policies in the nineteenth-century and had joined Francisco Madero's revolt of 1910 as a result of the widespread depressed social conditions in the state. In 1913, Aranda and similarly discontented *serranos* in the region joined the División del Norte as members of the Brigada González Ortega under Toribio Ortega. The *serranos* remained steadfast in their loyalty to Villa until 1920.

In addition to serving as revolutionaries in the Brigada González Ortega of the División del Norte, Albino Aranda and his forces proved indispensable in providing Villa with arms and supplies. The porous border that existed between the United States and Mexico in the Big Bend region allowed Aranda and Ortega the opportunity to purchase materials and smuggle them into Mexico. During troubled times Villa could also count on both officers to provide a corridor of safety that extended from Cuchillo Parado to Ojinaga and on to San Carlos, a region adjacent to El Pueblito. The desire of Aranda and his men for a return to the area emanated from their past experiences as folk from the Ojinaga, Cuchillo Parado, and San Carlos region.

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<sup>212</sup> The Irigoyens formed a part of the elite in Chihuahua and possessed considerable land holdings in the state. Población El Pueblito, Departamento de Asunto Agrarios y Colonización, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 23/15767.721.1, 38.

It should be noted, however, that not all *villistas* at El Pueblito had been members of the Brigada González Ortega. Many of the former revolutionaries at the agricultural colony derived from the División del Norte's numerous brigades, which had splintered after the División's defeat at the Battle of Celaya. Once they surrendered, many of the *villistas* settled in one of the military colonies closest to their native regions.<sup>213</sup>

Additionally, some of those who settled at the hacienda at El Pueblito had not been members of the División del Norte. Instead, they had joined Francisco Villa during the late 1910s when *villismo* diminished to its guerrilla phase. They had received properties from the government even though their service record did not include time spent in the División during the revolt against Victoriano Huerta. Technically, they had not rendered services to the nation as stipulated by the government in order to receive properties. It is uncertain how these individuals qualified for land in the Colonia Agrícola. Perhaps this was due to the government's desire to pacify all *villistas* and bring them under control.<sup>214</sup>

Florencio Ornelas Najar typified some of those who came to live at El Pueblito. Ornelas had been a private in a cavalry regiment of the Brigada González Ortega. He had joined the División del Norte in April 1913 and remained loyal to Villa until 1920. As a

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<sup>213</sup> Further evidence of this is found in the files of *villista* veterans who belonged to Chihuahua's Veterans Association. The files for those at El Pueblito reveal that many were from the Brigada González Ortega but also from numerous other brigades within the División. Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua.

<sup>214</sup> Copia Certificada, 25 August 1923, Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonizacion, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 23/15767.721.1, 44-46.

native of San Carlos, he returned to the region with his fellow *villistas*. Due to his rank, Ornelas received one strip of territory at the agricultural colony.<sup>215</sup>

Unlike private Ornelas Najar, second lieutenant Febronio Sánchez García hailed from the state of Durango. As a cavalryman in the División, he had served under the command of General José Rodríguez, leader of the Brigada Villa. Sánchez García had joined the movement against Huerta in April, 1913, while living in the state of Durango. He had remained loyal to Villa for some seven years, and was subsequently rewarded with land at El Pueblito.<sup>216</sup>

Although the *villistas* under Aranda occupied the hacienda in late 1920, the legal sale of the property did not occur until 1923. Dr. Fructoso Irigoyen, then a resident of Ciudad Chihuahua, sold the hacienda to the federal government through the office of Don Francisco Trejo, director of the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, for 300,000 pesos. The federal government arranged for payments to Irigoyen to be made in installments over a two-year period with a substantial sum at the time of transaction. According to the legal documents, the entire size of the hacienda at the time measured out at 20, 783 hectares, or 51,354.8 acres.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Florencio Ornelas Najar, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Box 16, File 32.

<sup>216</sup> Febronio Sánchez García, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Box 21, File 26.

<sup>217</sup> In order for the transaction to be completed, all descendants with inheritance entitlement to the property were included as persons having rights to receive money from the transaction. This included the daughters and sons of Ignacio Irigoyen. The government agreed to pay 15,000 pesos during the transaction and to make monthly payments thereafter. The reasons for the two-year lapse in the sale of the property are uncertain, but can best be attributed to the lengthy negotiations between the Irigoyens and the government concerning the amount to be paid for the property. El Pueblito, Departamento Agrario, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 15767, 39.

Once the sale of the hacienda by Doctor Fructuoso Irigoyen had been consummated, the federal government formally awarded the property to the *villistas* occupying El Pueblito. The government's representative, Licenciado Arcadio Padilla, met with Albino Aranda and his men in Ciudad Chihuahua to formalize the grant and presented the *villistas* with the deed to their properties. In order for them to acquire the possession, however, the government stipulated that the *villistas* adhere to certain guidelines as printed on the deed of sale.

First, the *villistas* were obligated to own the real estate for a period of twenty-years without the possibility of sale. Second, the fields were to be maintained in the efficient manner they had been in the past. Proper maintenance included appropriate irrigation, cultivation and scientific harvesting. Last, the *villistas* were to subject themselves to the jurisdiction of the Tribunal Courts in Mexico City. Failure by the revolutionaries to meet any of the conditions meant revocation of the grant. At the time of donation, the arable property on the hacienda had a value estimated to be 123,421 pesos.<sup>218</sup>

The Mexican government's insistence upon an installment plan to Irigoyen can best be attributed to the effects of a devastating ten-year war in the country and the need to pacify other rebellious groups throughout the republic. Unfortunately, the government did not complete payments to Irigoyen in a timely manner as evidenced by a letter from Francisco Villa to the *hacendado* in June of 1923. It seems Dr. Irigoyen had contacted

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<sup>218</sup> Several of the *villistas* present at the formal donation could not sign the deed as they did not possess the skill to write, and instead one individual signed for them. Also, several veterans were not present due to sickness and had others sign for them. A total of 106 *villistas* received title to properties at El Pueblito. Copia Certificada, Departamento Agrario, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 15767, 47.

Villa soliciting the general's advice as the government had yet to make full compensation. Villa, who had over the course of the previous three years maintained an open dialogue with federal and state authorities, assured the doctor that the authorities would resume payments.<sup>219</sup>

#### *Government and Society at El Pueblito*

The occupation of the hacienda El Pueblito under the management of Albino Aranda created the need for an organizational structure that would allow the *villistas* to operate within Mexico's state apparatus. The government felt it necessary to closely monitor a force that remained a possible threat to its state building plans. While the *villistas* had been demobilized, their transition into Mexican society and conversion into productive citizens required some method of governmental supervision. Their agricultural colony at El Pueblito thus came under the direction of a federal agency, the Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento, and a state agency, the municipality of Aldama.

Though the *villistas* occupied the hacienda by late 1920, their formal organization under the federal governmental system was not finalized until 1923 when the federal government designated El Pueblito as an agricultural colony under the direction of Mexico's Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento. But the colony was to be administered locally by a *sociedad de colónos*, or a society of colonists. The *colónos*' hierarchical structure included a president, an administrative board consisting of several members (*vocales*), a secretary and a treasurer. The *colónos* met once a month in the Salón de la

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<sup>219</sup> The letter serves as evidence of the fact that Villa was still considered by many Chihuahuans to have influence over the *villistas* in the military colonies and to an extent, the federal government. Francisco Villa to Doctor Fructuoso Irigoyen, 15 June 1923, Private Collection of Rubén Osorio, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Comunidad, a long rectangular one room building desinged for the purpose of holding meetings for the colony's administration.<sup>220</sup>

The president of the *colónos* presided over meetings and also served as the local representative when it came to social or political matters outside of the community. The board's responsibilities included such tasks as overseeing new construction projects, land development, and the mobilization of labor for crop seeding and harvest. Aside from their administrative board duties, the *colónos* assumed other tasks such as building housing facilities for all members as well as the management of the colony's agricultural and pastoral lands.

As El Pueblito lay within the boundaries of the municipality of Aldama, the settlement was assembled as a *sección municipal*, a legally designated section separate from the *sociedad de colónos* and thus under the jurisdiction of the state government. A municipal president and several additional administrators such as a secretary and treasurer headed the *sección municipal*. The establishment of a *sección municipal* at El Pueblito both formalized the relationship between the state of Chihuahua and the *villistas* and served as a means to re-integrate the former revolutionaries into mainstream society.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> The Salón de la Comunidad was constructed adjacent to the large hacienda house in the community, and only a few yards from the public square. The society of *colónos* met twice a month to conduct business. Frequently large projects were agreed upon, such as the construction of a large canal in 1929 to increase irrigation in the fields. Today the Salón remains and is utilized by the descendants of the *villistas* for the administration of the colony. Poblado El Pueblito, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, 22 April 1943, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 74.

<sup>221</sup> The public servants of the *seccion municipal* changed through elections, as did those in the state government of Chihuahua. Proyecto de Reglamento, 1 January 1929, Archivo de la Sociedad de Colónos de El Pueblito, El Pueblito, Chihuahua, Mexico, uncatalogued, 1.

A third administrative tier at El Pueblito existed in the form of a quasi-military hierarchy. The military structure constructed in 1913 by the former revolutionaries and members of the División del Norte within the different brigades continued into civilian life to form part of the *colóno's* society. The *villista* transition from revolutionaries to civilian agriculturalists did not erase the military order and loyalty to *cabecillas* created in the individual brigades. Military rank unofficially persisted at El Pueblito based on respect for the leaders of the División. As such, the old military hierarchy became the model for the civilian arrangement. Albino Aranda, for example, served as the leader of the colony for many years.<sup>222</sup>

Thus, the administrative structures created at El Pueblito by the federal and state governments recognized and reinforced the old military order, especially in the *sociedad de colónos* where rank defined an individual's status. The size of the land parcel each *villista* received depended upon the person's rank in the División del Norte. Generals, colonels, majors and captains got the largest parcels of land while lower ranking officers and enlisted men received the smaller plots. Still, each *villista* could count on a portion of land to farm for local consumption and to sell in external markets.

Because Albino Aranda was the top-ranking officer of all the *villistas* at El Pueblito, the government granted him three parcels of land substantially bigger than plots allotted to the rest of the colony's members. Aranda's lots also lay directly adjacent to

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<sup>222</sup> According to several *colónos* at El Pueblito, Albino Aranda served as the leader of the colony until his death in 1939. Aranda was often called upon to settle disputes among the colonists. Evidence of *villistas* and their informal military hierarchy is reflected in the documents found at the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución archive. These papers reveal that former officers from the División filled leadership roles and administered projects in the colony. Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

the waters of the Río Conchos where they could thrive from the greatest amount of irrigation. Aranda's largest plot amounted to 82.5 acres while the second measured twelve acres. A third plot, distant from the other two, was nearly twenty acres in size. Furthermore, Aranda benefited from the luxury of occupying the large hacienda house in the colony with all of its living space, as well as a room for his horses in the adjoining stables. As the highest-ranking officer, Aranda not only enjoyed the larger crop harvest from his three parcels of land, but also the greatest living comfort as the hacienda's principal occupant.<sup>223</sup> The higher-ranking individuals who possessed larger strips of property had the potential to accumulate greater wealth.

The *villistas* who occupied the hacienda moved in with their wives and offspring once the necessary accommodations had been constructed. While the exact number of children at El Pueblito in 1920 is not known, figures regarding married members of the *villistas* are to be found in the deeds of sale. Of the 106 men who settled at the hacienda, fifty were listed as married, while the remainder (fifty-six) were apparently single. Married *villistas* were not given extra land as rank far outweighed other considerations.<sup>224</sup>

#### *Individual Plots and Labor*

For the purposes of irrigation and crop production, a three-member commission from the national Secretaría de Hacienda, which arrived in 1922 at El Pueblito, divided

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<sup>223</sup> Aranda's properties were more than six times larger than those of his subordinates. Plano de fraccionamiento de la tierras de labor de la Hacienda El Pueblito, 22 February 1922, Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente: 23/15767, 52.

<sup>224</sup> While the deed of sale specified the marital status of the pacified revolutionaries, the federal government did not allocate additional properties to those whose needs outweighed the needs of others. Copia Certificada, Departamento Agrario, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 23/15767.721.1, 44-46.

the hacienda's arable properties into two types: *labores* and *temporales*. Lands with the most fertile soil received the title *labor*. Those designated as *temporales* were less desirable lands and the settlers relied on them to produce pasture for their herds. At El Pueblito, a total of 2 *labores* and 3 *temporales* were surveyed and allocated for distribution among the *villistas*.

The largest plot of land at El Pueblito was the *labor principal*. It contained the most arable terrain on the hacienda, and served as the primary location for crop production, both for consumption and sale. A smaller *labor* with equally fertile soil but situated in a different part of the hacienda went by the name of San Isidro. Both *labores* were close to each other and on the same side of the Río Conchos, and could easily be irrigated.

The remaining sections of arable land were the three *temporales*, La Salada, Los Cerritos and Los Galeanos; they stood opposite the Río Conchos on a ridge overlooking the river. They did not yield the same amount of crops, and because the lands did not have access to the waters of the Río Conchos, they depended heavily upon rainwater.<sup>225</sup> Often the colonists used these sections to pasture their herds.<sup>226</sup>

At El Pueblito, *colónos* focused their energies on agricultural production and small-scale ranching. Each individual *colóno* worked a parcel of land for pasture and

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<sup>225</sup> Plano del Fraccionamiento de las Tierras de Labor de la Hacienda "El Pueblito:" Labor San Isidro y Temporal 'Los Galeanos,' 22 February 1922, Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Expediente: 5767, no number; Plano de Fraccionamiento de la Tierras de Labor de la Hacienda "El Pueblito:" Labor Principal y Temporales 'La Salada' y 'Los Cerritos,' 22 February 1922, Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente: 23/15767, 52.

<sup>226</sup> The system of land distribution at El Pueblito granted each *colóno* access to the waters of the Río Conchos. Each long strip of property was laid out in such a manner that all plots abutted the river. *Ibid.*

crops. The major cash crop for several years after 1923 proved to be cotton, while beans and corn constituted the principal staples produced for the townspeople. The *colónos* utilized machinery to plant and harvest the cotton crop, but still planted and tended beans and corn by hand. Often the lands failed to yield a bountiful crop for the *colónos*, and on several occasions fields situated a distance from the Río Conchos and dependent on rain waters had to be abandoned due to drought.

The colony also included small-scale ranchers dedicated to raising livestock. The Río Conchos provided a sufficient source of water for livestock, and the arable lands supplied pasture. Cattle and goats could be sold to markets in the capital city, and these animals also provided the residents with meat and milk. Animals raised at El Pueblito were not mass butchered for the lack of a local meatpacking plant. Instead, they were driven to railway points and shipped to locations where they could be slaughtered.<sup>227</sup>

Farm and ranch products from El Pueblito went to markets in the United States and the interior of Mexico via the Kansas City, Mexico City and Orient Railway Company. Cargoes were sent through San Sóstenes, located a few kilometers to the east of the hacienda. This railroad station had been constructed in 1905 to receive materials from local producers. At the time, plans had been drawn up to extend the railway from San Sóstenes to the United States–Mexico border, but the armed phase of the Revolution had brought the project to a halt. Rebels destroyed the station at San Sóstenes and the Falomir Depot in 1917. But by the 1920s both had been rebuilt when the K.C., M. & O

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<sup>227</sup> Ingeniero Octavio Martínez to C. Delegado Agrario, 25 December 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 73.

company finished construction of the railway to Ojinaga on the international border. The *colónos* then had the opportunity to send their products to markets in the United States.<sup>228</sup>

### *Growth and Re-Structure*

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the *colónos* at El Pueblito made the best of their new circumstances. They undertook numerous construction projects to ensure the growth of their settlement, and to guarantee that the members of the community, especially their offspring, would have the chance for social mobility. Although the *colónos* existed as an agricultural colony within the confines of a state municipality, they sought formal working relationships and harmony with neighboring agricultural communities. The *colónos* undertook cooperative projects, for example, to ensure availability of resources such as running water, a necessary element for any agricultural community.

One project initiated by the *colónos* dealt with the administration of the Río Conchos' waters upon which both El Pueblito and the *ejidatarios* of the nearby ejido, Maclovio Herrera, depended. As the two communities straddled the same stretch of the river and were dedicated to agricultural activities, problems emerged concerning the distribution of water from a side canal to both properties. In order to properly irrigate the parcels of land in each community, settlers had built the canal in the mid-1920s that diverted waters from the Río Conchos. As El Pueblito lay upriver from Maclovio Herrera, El Pueblito's inhabitants had first access to the canal's water, much to the dissatisfaction of Maclovio Herrera's residents.

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<sup>228</sup> The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway had operated in Chihuahua since the end of the nineteenth-century. The railway reached to the town of Maclovio Herrera, then Falomir Depot, during the Revolution until it was extended to Ojinaga in the 1920s. S. Buffington to Mr. A. DeBernardi, 27 June 1922, typed, Special Collections, West Texas Collection, Angelo State University, San Angelo, Texas.

In an effort to avoid serious problems, the *colónos* and *ejidatarios* of both settlements met and agreed to petition the Comisión Nacional Agraria for assistance. The Comisión dispatched Engineer Juan Valenzuela to the location and after careful analysis, he suggested an accord that members of both communities accepted as to the administration of the river's waters. According to the provisions of the agreement, a five-member commission assumed the responsibility of properly assuring the management of the dams and irrigation systems that permitted the flow of water into both communities. Three members of the administration came from El Pueblito while the remaining two represented Maclovio Herrera.<sup>229</sup>

The agreement stipulated that the president of the *sociedad de colónos* at El Pueblito would always function as president of the five-member board. The document also delegated the board with administering the dam system as well as reviewing the construction of any new irrigation canals. Members of the commission were also given the task of selecting individuals from both communities whose responsibilities would be to guard the dams along the canal and ensure that water regulations proposed by the agreement were followed. Also, each community was to select *ejidatarios* and *colónos* for the maintenance and cleansing of the canal.<sup>230</sup>

Through cooperative spirit involving the administration of canal waters, and the dedication of the *colónos* to their agriculture pursuits, the colony at El Pueblito increased in population over the course of the next two decades. Growth occurred at such a pace

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<sup>229</sup> Proyecto de Reglamento, 1 January 1929, Archivo de la Sociedad de Colónos de El Pueblito, El Pueblito, Chihuahua, Mexico, uncatalogued, 1.

<sup>230</sup> Those who did not adhere to the agreement in either community were subject to penalties and a loss of watering rights. Violators were subject to a hearing before a jury composed of members from both communities. *Ibid.*, 4.

that by the early 1940s, members of the colony had outgrown the number of parcels necessary for sustenance. As mentioned earlier, nearly half of the 106 individuals who settled at El Pueblito were married. By 1943, therefore, the colony had multiplied six times its original size. A census taken at the colony placed the population at 730, of which 135 of these were male heads of household. Presumably, some of the children of the *villistas* had married and remained at the colony. There is little evidence to suggest that other *villistas* entered the colony after 1923 and received titles to properties.

Additionally, the ranching efforts at the hacienda had been so successful that by 1943, the colony counted a total of 1,480 farm animals, including 875 head of cattle and 695 goats. The colonists depended on these animals for meat, dairy products, and hides. Within a generation, El Pueblito's herds had outstripped available grazing lands.<sup>231</sup> Faced with a growing human population and the multiplication of their herds in 1943, the members of the colony at El Pueblito submitted a formal application to Chihuahua's Comisión Agraria Mixta for ejidal lands. The actual process began with a petition to the Governor's office, which in turn notified the Comisión Agraria Mixta of El Pueblito's plan.

At the request of the Comisión Agraria Mixta, the colony formed a three-member commission to speak for El Pueblito during the petitioning stage. Members of the committee were responsible for taking the application step by step, as well as executing any other necessary procedures. El Pueblito had been formed as a sección municipal, and

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<sup>231</sup> Censo General y Agrario, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 72-73.

as such it constituted a part of Chihuahua's state system and possessed the legal right to petition for ejidal lands.<sup>232</sup>

The colony underwent a thorough inspection by the Comisión Agraria Mixta, which sent an agent to execute a census of the population and to gather information concerning the colony's geography, history, economic standing and present conditions. The report, expected from the agent, would provide the commission with the essential information needed to decide whether to grant the colony's request or deny it.<sup>233</sup>

During the initial phase, the *colónos* encountered several bureaucratic obstacles. As an agricultural colony under the federal Secretaría de Fomento y Agricultura, El Pueblito's territorial boundaries could not be extended onto adjacent lands as this expansion constituted a violation of the original contract. Moreover, the colony's lands had been a donation from the federal government and as such did not fall under the auspices or direction of Chihuahua's state government. The *colónos* then had to devise an alternate method for legally acquiring additional lands through the Chihuahua state administration.

The *colónos'* first attempt to navigate the system occurred immediately after they submitted their formal application. Through a carefully crafted letter sent to the Comisión Agraria Mixta with a copy routed to the governor's office, the three-member

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<sup>232</sup> A third petition was also sent to the Liga de Comunidades Agrarias. Formal notice of the petition was also published in the official newspaper of Chihuahua. Solicitud de dotación de tierras, 14 May 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 3; Martin H. Barrios Álvarez to Comisión Agraria Mixta, 3 May 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 5.

<sup>233</sup> Arturo Aguirre to Octavio Núñez, 15 June 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 46.

commission formally requested a retraction, or at least a correction to their application. They did so as the commission requested that the name of El Pueblito be stricken from the original papers, and instead be replaced with the name of Acebuches y Anexas. By following this unusual step, the *colónos* would disassociate themselves from the federal colony, and having done that they could then acquire ejidal lands as citizens under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Aldama. While they did not live in the tiny settlement of Acebuches, the outlying areas of the settlement bordered El Pueblito.

The *colónos*, however, withdrew their request after some time. A change in name on the application signified a renewal of the entire process. Retracing their steps meant additional time taken to acquire the desired properties. In the agrarian community, this meant a lost opportunity to plant and harvest a crop. Further, the engineer from the Comisión Agraria Mixta had already been deployed to El Pueblito to collect the necessary information for a comprehensive report. But in the event of an application recall, he had to vacate the premises and return to Ciudad Chihuahua; this meant more time squandered. To expedite matters, the *colónos* opted to proceed under the current application with the name of El Pueblito, and instead fight for the land through the legal system and through the use of intermediaries.<sup>234</sup>

Further complicating matters for the *colónos* were objections raised by the descendants of Rafael Márquez, the property owner of Acebuches. Acebuches had

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<sup>234</sup> The letter certainly serves as evidence that the *villistas* understood, to a degree, Mexico's system for land acquisition. Luis Armendariz to Gobernador Constitucional del Estado, 8 June 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 48; Arturo Aguirre to Presidente del Comité Ejecutivo Agrario, 13 July 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 50.

originally been owned by Don José Valenzuela, and upon his death, titles to the properties had passed to his wife. In 1905, Señora Agustina, Don José's widow, had sold a piece of the large estate containing the Acebuches settlement to Márquez. As such, Rafael's daughters, Anita and Francisca Márquez, now had legal claim to the property.<sup>235</sup>

In an attempt to prevent the donation of ejidal lands to El Pueblito, Márquez family members filed a motion to dismiss the *colónos'* application based on the Márquez's rights to the property. Alberto Terrazas, an attorney and partial owner of the Márquez property, filed a motion against the donation, basing his argument on several points. First, Terrazas cited the fact that Ana Márquez stood as the inheritor of the property through her father. Second, the attorney disputed the legality of El Pueblito to receive ejidal lands, given that it was a federally constructed agricultural colony, and not a state of Chihuahua institution. Last, he stressed that El Pueblito did not border the Márquez property. In fact, more than nine and one half kilometers separated El Pueblito and the Márquez property.<sup>236</sup>

Undeterred, the *colónos* proceeded with their objective, assisting the engineer throughout the entire examination of the agricultural colony. Also, the *colónos* petitioned several institutions for assistance in the colony's quest to receive ejidal lands from the Chihuahua government. These solicitations served not only to accelerate the donation process, but also to prevent the loss of one-year's crop harvest. A letter sent to the Comisión Agraria Mixta in October of 1943, for instance, asked for an immediate

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<sup>235</sup> Registro número cuatrocientos setenta y seis, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 63.

<sup>236</sup> Alberto Terrazas Valdez to Comisión Agraria Mixta, 15 August 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 60.

donation of lands given the approaching planting cycle. Any new lands acquired needed immediate organization prior the planting of any crops. Canals had to be dug and small dams built in order to properly irrigate the fields.<sup>237</sup>

The people of El Pueblito also petitioned the Confederación Nacional Campesina, making the strategic decision to invoke a *campesino* identity in order to successfully maneuver their request through the system. In an effort to assist the *colónos*, the Confederación sent support letters to the Liga de Comunidades Agrarias y Sindicatos Campesinos del Estado de Chihuahua and the Comisión Agraria Mixta. The Confederación urged both institutions to expedite the process and resolve the matter in favor of the *colónos* at El Pueblito.<sup>238</sup>

Despite the attempts to accelerate the donation of lands, the state of Chihuahua did not complete its bureaucratic work until the following year. The office of the governor formally issued a final resolution on 9 January 1945 in favor of the *colonós*, nearly one-and-a-half years after El Pueblito had submitted its application. The colony was granted a total of 9,884 acres of land directly adjacent to its existing properties. Of those 9,884 acres, 192 were designated as arable land; these were divided into 16 parcels, which in turn were subdivided into plots of twenty-nine acres to be split among the 165 petitioners. The remaining acres were to be utilized cooperatively for livestock.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Luis Armendariz to Delegado del Departamento Agrario, 11 October 1943, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 60.

<sup>238</sup> Gabriel Leyva to Presidente de la Comisión Agraria Mixta, 2 October 1944, Confederación Nacional Campesina, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 120.

<sup>239</sup> Acuerdo del C. Gobernador, 9 January 1945, Comisión Agraria Mixta del Estado de Chihuahua, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 142.

The amount of acreage given to the *colónos*, however, proved to be inadequate, and they immediately petitioned the state government for more properties bordering the colony. In a letter to Chihuahua's Department of Ranching and Agriculture, the members of the colony lamented that the donated properties were of poor quality and too inadequate for agricultural and ranching purposes. Moreover, the 9,884 acres did not, they argued, suffice the necessities of those who petitioned. Colony members made the case that additional properties could provide substantial relief.<sup>240</sup>

Once again the *colónos* invoked the assistance of state and federal agencies. The *colónos* asked that the Comisión Agraria Mixta administer another study of the properties adjacent to El Pueblito. They hoped that additional sections from those properties belonging to the national government and private owners would be granted to the colony. The *colónos* understood that such a request involved retracing the steps taken in their earlier petition, and that this application called for more time because of the numerous private and public entities involved in the study. Reviews concerning the properties owned by Chihuahuans and those deemed as national territory required at least two more years than the previous effort. In the end, it took seven years to resolve the matter.

In 1952, President Miguel Alemán signed a new agreement amending the application of 1943 that donated additional properties to the people of El Pueblito. Another 4,942 acres were donated to the colony, bringing the total to 14,826 acres of ranching land and plots for agricultural pursuits within the settlement's perimeters. Unlike the first instance in which property from one individual was taken to donate to the

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<sup>240</sup> Francisco S. Ortega to H. Comisión Agraria Mixta, 16 February 1945, Archivo del Registro Agrario Nacional, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Expediente 1035, 151.

*colónos*, the 1952 agreement affected several individuals. The new lands were taken from properties adjacent to the colony belonging to wealthy families in Chihuahua including the Falomirs, Márquez de Terrazas and Legarreta clans. The size of the colony now reached a total of 26,000 hectares or 64,247 acres. Thus, the colony's desire to expand beyond the lands granted to it in 1920 came to an end after a long bureaucratic struggle.

### *Conclusion*

The journalist and first-hand observer of the Revolution, John Reed, wrote in his book *Insurgent Mexico* that Francisco Villa had a dream for the future of his country. Villa envisioned a Republic that no longer needed a military for defense purposes, and instead on emergencies could count on the assistance of former revolutionaries who lived in military colonies. According to Reed, Villa remarked:

We will put the army to work. In all parts of the Republic we will establish military colonies composed of the veterans of the Revolution. The State will give them grants of agricultural lands and establish big industrial enterprises to give them work. Three days a week they will work and work hard, because their honest work is more important than fighting, and only honest work makes good citizens. And the other three days they will receive military instruction and go out and teach all the people how to fight. Then, when the patria is invaded we will just have to telephone from the palace at Mexico City, and in half a day all

the Mexican people will rise from their fields and factories, fully armed and organized to defend their children and their homes.<sup>241</sup>

Francisco Villa's peace agreement with the central government in 1920 fulfilled Villa's vision while bringing to an end the combative phase of *villismo* that began in September of 1913 when Villa was elected leader of the División del Norte.<sup>242</sup> The *villistas* who had remained under Villa's command (many had separated from the División after their defeat in 1915) laid down their weapons and accepted demobilization. For a month in 1920, they underwent a phasing out of the military, and began their reintroduction to civilian life. In return, the *villistas* were rewarded for their service and received titles to properties where they could farm and live a peaceful life. Thus, a new era of *villismo* began wherein the national government mainstreamed the former revolutionaries and transformed them into productive citizens as *colónos* in agricultural colonies. The change, however, did not signify an end to the history of *villismo*, but rather the beginning of a new chapter.

For their efforts during the Madero Revolution and the anti-Huerta struggle that began in 1913, the *villistas* received four colonies in the states of Chihuahua and Coahuila. One group occupied the haciendas of El Pueblito and San Isidro in Chihuahua while the remaining revolutionaries lived in the haciendas at San Salvador and Canutillo

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<sup>241</sup> According to Reed, Villa expressed a desire to live in one of those military colonies. John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico*, Introduction by Albert L. Michaels and James Wilkie (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969): 133 -134.

<sup>242</sup> Some former *villistas* continued to fight against the federal government even after 1920. Manuel Chao, for instance, joined the De la Huerta revolt in 1923. He was later executed near the city of Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua for his participation. Acta de Defunción de Manuel Chao Rovira, 27 June 1924, Libro de Defunciones, Archivo de Hidalgo del Parral, Hidalgo del Parral, Chihuahua, Mexico, Libro 23.

in Durango. Under the direction of Mexico's Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento, the haciendas were reconstructed as agricultural colonies administered by a *sociedad de colónos*.

In the case of El Pueblito, the sociedad de colónos administered the settlement, although two additional structures existed, a municipal system and a social hierarchy rooted in the *villista* experiences within the División del Norte. El Pueblito's society can best be described as hierarchical and quasi-military in nature. *Villistas* possessed a common revolutionary past that bound them together and allowed them to negotiate their status with the Mexican government as a group. Their collective experience had been constructed, in part, by the armed phase of the Revolution and by the traditional northern Mexico borderlands culture that was a legacy of the colonial era. Once the colony had been settled, the *villistas* continued to rely on the military order and discipline that had been established from 1910 to 1920.

Albino Aranda, like many other former generals in Mexico, represented a new breed of individuals who made the successful transition from revolutionary to *cacique* (local boss). *Caciques*, or local bosses, were a necessary cog in the political system established after 1920.<sup>243</sup> Not only did Aranda exercise local power as leader of the colony, but he maintained influence in the region, and proved to be a necessary middleman between the government and the *colónos*.

The inhabitants of El Pueblito experienced growth and prosperity throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Through a collective effort, the colony prospered and grew to a point

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<sup>243</sup> For an analysis of *caciques* in Mexico after 1920 see *Caciquismo in Twentieth-Century Mexico*, eds. Alan Knight and Wil Pansters (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, 2005).

that required additional lands to maintain its population and large herds of animals. The *colónos* navigated Mexico's bureaucratic system by calling upon the assistance of both state and federal institutions. Over a seven-year period during the 1940s and 1950s, they successfully maneuvered within the system and obtained additional properties from territory that belonged to the national government and to elite families whose lands surrounded the colony.

The official instrument of surrender signed by the *villistas* in 1920 began with the words, "*Nos retiramos desde hoy a la vida privada*" ("We retire to a private life from this day onward"). Following that proclamation, a new era took root in the history of *villismo*. Most of the ex-*villistas* turned to the agricultural colonies for a successful transition from revolutionaries to productive citizens. Relying on the *sociedad de colónos*, the *sección municipal*, and on the military hierarchy, the former revolutionaries came to exercise a degree of self-determination by using government institutions as instruments to successfully re-incorporate themselves into mainstream Mexican society.

## CHAPTER 5

“*Derramaron su sangre por la Revolución Mexicana:*” *Villismo*, State Politics, and the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución.

### *Introduction*

In the many envelopes addressed to retired army General Aarón Valderrábano, President of Chihuahua’s Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, was a letter from members of the local chapter in Cuchillo Parado. The veterans, men who had been *villistas* during the combative phase of the Revolution of 1910, petitioned the General in February of 1963 for assistance in resolving a political dispute. During the preceding month’s local elections, a candidate from the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (P.R.I.) had been elected as municipal president. But his time as mayor had proved to be short lived as local maneuvering by influential politicians resulted in his dismissal from office.

According to the letter from the disgruntled veterans, Miguel Franco Ramírez, the Municipal President of the nearby town of Coyame, illegally supplanted the elected *presidente seccional* (section president), Isabel Reynoso, with a candidate of his own choosing. Isabel Reynoso, the candidate for the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (P.R.I.), had been legally elected section president, only to be immediately substituted by another candidate, Ramón Baeza.<sup>244</sup> Baeza belonged to the opposing Partido Acción Nacional (P.A.N.), and he was a loyal friend of the local *cacique*, the father of Miguel Franco Ramírez, Jesús Franco García. Evidently, Jesús Franco García had contacted his

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<sup>244</sup> A *presidente seccional* administers a smaller unit within a municipality, the *sección*.

son to institute changes after the latest election. Ramón Baeza's designation to the position had mobilized the local veterans against Franco García and Franco Ramírez.<sup>245</sup>

The petition for assistance by the veterans of El Pueblito partially illuminates the activities of former *villistas* as civic-minded residents of Mexico long after the combative phase of the Revolution of 1910. As a group, they constituted a significant percentage of the membership in the state of Chihuahua's Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, an institution they developed and utilized as an instrument of pressure in Mexican society. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the institution doubled as an extended social network where ex-*villistas* organized to pursue a collective agenda that included the betterment of veterans throughout the state.

Few scholars have examined the lives of *villistas* as productive citizens after their surrender in 1920. Those few who have written about *villismo* after 1920 note that once the *villistas* signed a peace agreement with the government of Mexico, the ex-revolutionaries lived on politically inactive agricultural colonies granted to them by the federal government.<sup>246</sup> But what of those *villistas* who broke with the División del Norte after their defeat at the battle of Celaya and did not remain under the command of Villa

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<sup>245</sup> As municipal president of Coyame, Miguel Franco García legally terminated the elected *presidente seccional* based on supposed complaints by citizens from Cuchillo Parado. Franco García claimed to have a petition with over 250 signatures that called for the official's substitution. The veterans of Coyame and Cuchillo Parado, members of the Unificación Nacional de Veteranos de la Revolución, challenged the legitimacy of the supposed complaints and petition by claiming Franco García had falsified the facts in both instances. Profesor Manuel Villalobos Ortega to General Aaron Valderrábano, 2 February 1963, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 50, File 5.

<sup>246</sup> Friedrich Katz, in particular, contends that while at the hacienda of Canutillo, Francisco Villa demonstrated no interest in politics during the first two years after 1920. According to Katz, Villa was dedicated to the administration of the colony. Additionally, Katz does not mention any political activity among the ex-*villistas*, including participation in local government. See Friedrich Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 732-740; José de la O Holguín, *Pancho Villa en Canutillo: Entre pasiones y flaquezas* (Durango: H. Ayuntamiento de Durango, 2006).

until the surrender of 1920? They remain obscure to scholars. The Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución provides a glimpse into the life of those ex-*villistas* who had separated from the División and did not live in the military colonies of Chihuahua and Durango.<sup>247</sup>

With the exception of a few scholars who discuss the emergence of post-1920 political parties with an agenda composed primarily of veterans of the Revolution of 1910, the history of the Unificación has remained unexplored.<sup>248</sup> One individual has even reduced the role of the Unificación to that of a social organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of veterans from the Revolution of 1910.<sup>249</sup> Such limited scholarship leaves several questions unanswered. What are the origins of the

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<sup>247</sup> Scholarly analysis concerning the lives of *villistas* after 1920 has tended to focus on either certain regions of Chihuahua and Durango or the agricultural colony at Canutillo under the direction of Francisco Villa. Ana María Alonso and Daniel Nugent, for instance, have examined the lives of ex-*villistas* in the Namiquipa region. Their works cover a single region and do not extend into the life of ex-*villistas* as a group in the state of Chihuahua. José de la O Holguín has focused his efforts on reconstructing the history of Canutillo. Unfortunately, De la O Holguín focuses on the life of Villa at Canutillo while the ex-*villistas* who worked and lived at the hacienda receive little attention. See Ana María Alonso, *Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender in Mexico's Northern Frontier* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1995); and Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of the Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); De la O Holguín, *Pancho Villa en Canutillo: Entre pasiones y flaquezas*; Katz, *The Life and Times of Pancho Villa*.

<sup>248</sup> In his examination of the political atmosphere during the administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s, Javier Garciadiego contends that several anti-Cárdenas organizations emerged. The Unión Nacional de Veteranos de la Revolución, Corona argues, was largely composed of veterans of the Revolution who had been displaced from power by leaders within the Cárdenas administration. He adds that veterans were opposed to the administration's socialist education and the creation of irregular military forces in the countryside. Alfredo Corona contends that the Unión Nacional de Veteranos de la Revolución joined with other political groups in the late 1930s to form the Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Nacional in opposition to Manuel Ávila Camacho and the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana. See Alfredo Corona, "Crisis política de 1938 y nuevo rumbo de la Revolución," *Contribuciones desde Coatepec* (Toluca: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2002); Javier Garciadiego, "La oposición conservadora y de las clases medias al cardenismo," *Istor* (México, D.F.: División de Historia del Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económica, 2006).

<sup>249</sup> In his article concerning the life of General Cadena Riojas from Coahuila, Ramón Zorrilla Palacios notes that the Unificación Nacional de Veteranos de la Revolución in Coahuila was among the many institutions to celebrate the life of former revolutionary and ex-member of the constitutionalist forces. Unfortunately, the article does not provide an analysis of the Unificación nor its members. See Ramón Zorrilla Palacios, "Las deudas impagadas de la revolución," *El Quijote* (Monclova: Ildefonso Fuentes #110, 2008).

organization in Chihuahua? Who were the administrators and who comprised the membership? How was the organization structured? What political and social goals did the Unificación pursue? What did it accomplish?

This chapter argues that *ex-villistas* in Chihuahua once removed from the combative phase of the Revolution of 1910 functioned as constructive citizens within Mexico's political system. They transformed the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución into an instrument of pressure that allowed members to negotiate their status with local and state governments. On many occasions, members utilized the Unificación to obtain land and services from the Mexican government.

Unificación records reveal that many *ex-villistas* who returned to their native regions after 1915 resurrected within the organization the old hierarchal structure they had built within the División del Norte. Once incorporated as members of the Unificación, the *ex-villistas* retained their earlier rank from the División and used the Unificación to improve their position in Mexican society. As such, the Unificación served as an extended hierarchical social network that operated politically at a local, state and national level. Ex-revolutionaries could count on the assistance of their fellow members within their immediate surroundings or from one state to another in the pursuit of individual objectives.

### *La Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolucion*

To provide a fuller account of the *ex-villistas* and their work through the Unificación, a review of the organization's history in Chihuahua is imperative. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the lives of many *villistas* after their surrender in 1920

revolved around several agricultural colonies in Chihuahua and Durango where they had been granted lands to form settlements. There, the former revolutionaries gained control over the *sociedad de colónos* as well as the *sección municipal*, both governmental institutions. With the exception of those *ex-villistas* in agricultural colonies, others across the state lacked an organization such as the *sociedad de colónos* to negotiate with state and federal governments. In Chihuahua, *ex-villistas* lacked a single national apolitical organization such as a veterans administration that specifically provided social benefits to the veterans of the Revolution.

In 1939, veterans of the Revolution petitioned the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas for social and welfare assistance. Due to the hardships of a worldwide depression, many veterans had turned to the government in desperation. They pled for jobs within the state apparatus based on their service during the Revolution. As a result of their supplications, the Mexican government established the *Comisión Pro-Veteranos de la Revolución*, a body that in turn created the *Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución*.<sup>250</sup>

The Chihuahua state branch of the *Unificación* officially came into existence in 1946, one year after the conclusion of World War II. At the home of Lieutenant Colonel José Cruz Villalva in Ciudad Chihuahua, veterans from across Chihuahua gathered for an organizational meeting. Lieutenant Colonel Reynaldo Mata Mendoza, a former *villista*, took charge of the proceedings. The attendees elected interim officers, and an advisory

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<sup>250</sup> Frente Nacional Pro Defensa y Justicia de los Veteranos de la Revolución, 8 July 1963, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3.

board then briefly met to synchronize efforts towards establishing an organization in the state. The membership also selected a coordinating board to oversee elections for the Unificación's state advisory board.<sup>251</sup>

Several days later, on February 10, 1946, the veterans met once again to organize the state branch and elect officers for the organization's central advisory board. A total of 60 veterans who had been members of the constitutionalist forces in Chihuahua attended the convocation. Over half had been *villistas* and members of the División del Norte. With the exception of five veterans, most had been officers ranging in rank from colonels to second lieutenants. The membership elected Lieutenant Colonel Mata Mendoza as president of the advisory board. In addition to president, the advisory board consisted of five other officials including vice-president, treasurer and secretary. An eight-member council rounded out the advisory group.<sup>252</sup>

Once the advisory board had been formed, the members directed their attention to formulating the statutes of the Unificación in Chihuahua. In an eighteen-page charter, the members outlined the structure of the state organization, its mission, the responsibilities of the officers, and membership qualifications among other things. The official name of the organization was the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución. The Unificación operated as a branch of the national office located in Mexico City and was an apolitical

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<sup>251</sup> The temporary advisory board consisted of seven officials. Minutes from State Meeting for Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, 27 January 1946, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3.

<sup>252</sup> Of the sixty veterans present at the inaugural meeting, thirty two had been *villistas* in the División. Acta Constitutiva del Consejo Estatal de Veteranos de la Revolución Establecida en la Ciudad de Chihuahua, 10 February 1946, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3.

institution dedicated to improving the lives, morally and materially, of veterans of the Revolution. Its official motto became Social Justice, Political Liberty, and National Unity. State offices would be located in Ciudad Chihuahua, while several smaller branches would be dispersed in municipalities throughout the state. Each branch was responsible for the election of its officers who would administer the local group. The charter further called upon all members to meet once a month, on a Friday, in their respective towns or villages throughout the state.<sup>253</sup>

To acquire operating funds, the Unificación depended upon dues paid by the membership. In 1946, fees stood at one peso a month. The organization asked for donations when it needed funding for a special project, such as sending delegates to a national conference. All revenue went for operating expenses with extra monies designated to assist destitute members. The advisory council in Ciudad Chihuahua had absolute power over the organization's account.

The Unificación's charter also called for the creation of several committees to assist the state office in its various functions. The review committee, for instance, examined all documents submitted by individuals applying for admission. The committee on honor and justice reviewed and rendered decisions on all accusations made by members against others, while the Finance Committee administered the organization's

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<sup>253</sup> The charter contained the specific duties of all officers. The document also noted that all new branches in the state should contact local military and civilian authorities as to their operations in the community. Estatutos de la Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua, no date, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3, 1-5.

finances. Three additional committees included the Press and Propaganda Committee, Benefits and Emergency Assistance Committee, and an Advisory Committee.<sup>254</sup>

To deter applicants from falsifying their background, the charter called for carefully scrutinizing new members. The guidelines dictated that any person who desired membership must have participated in the Revolution as combatants from 1910 to 1917. Those who engaged in activities from 1906 to 1910 that led to the Revolution could also gain entry into the organization. Civilians qualified for enrollment if they had been politically active against the government, if they had been associated with the transportation industries in support of the Revolution, rendered assistance to local insurrectionary forces, or participated in the military medical service.<sup>255</sup>

Any person found to have fought against revolutionaries or abetted the enemies of the revolutionaries could not join the organization. Those already granted membership mistakenly were to be stripped of their status and released from the organization. “Major” Triunfo González Moya, for example, lost his standing in 1961 due to false information in his application. Investigations revealed he had never been a major in the constitutionalist forces nor a member of the División del Norte. To the contrary, González Moya reportedly had been a member of General Francisco Murguía’s forces

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<sup>254</sup> The charter specifies the exact duties of the first three committees, but does not offer any for the remaining three. *Ibid.*, 20-22.

<sup>255</sup> Those who had lent military service to the Revolution had to give the names of those officers they served under as well as to provide documents confirming their participation. Transportation included the railroad and maritime services. *Ibid.*, 9.

that arrived in Chihuahua in 1916 to fight against the *villistas*. As punishment, he was expelled from the Unificación and deprived of his standing as a veteran in Mexico.<sup>256</sup>

As to social benefits, the organization's charter outlined the institution's responsibilities to construct co-operatives and form agrarian colonies for the good of its members. The organization was to work with local and state authorities to help found, for example, military colonies much like those the *villistas* organized in 1920.<sup>257</sup> In later years, the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución proved successful in assisting veterans construct several agricultural colonies in Chihuahua through careful cooperation with state government institutions.

While membership in the Unificación signified having access to financial assistance and, arguably, to social mobility, becoming a member proved to be difficult. As mentioned, prospective members underwent a lengthy examination routine before being granted veterans status. Once the Unificación grew in importance due to increased membership and the rise of more sub-stations in Chihuahua, steps for acceptance became more complicated. This was especially true after the state of Chihuahua began to grant pensions to all veterans recognized by Mexico's federal Department of National Defense.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Relacion que manifiesta a los CC. Veteranos de la Revolución, 14 September 1961, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 54, File 6.

<sup>257</sup> Estatutos de la Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución en el Estado de Chihuahua, no date, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3, 11.

<sup>258</sup> Ley en Favor de los Veteranos de la Revolución como Sevidores del Estado, 7 January 1950, *Diario Oficial de la Federación*, 3.

Individuals first submitted a preliminary application to the review committee at the state level. If accepted, the person then filled out two applications for membership. One went to the Unificación's central office in Mexico City while the other was delivered to the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional. At this latter station, the Comisión Pro-Veteranos de la Revolución determined if the applicant received recognition as a veteran of the Revolution and if the aspirant's record contained any inaccuracies or false details. Those acquiring the designation of veteran of the Revolution were then entitled to the benefits of the Unificación. The examination process could take anywhere from six months to five years.<sup>259</sup>

Each application had to include personal information such as date of birth, place of origin, marital status, current address, and rank within the constitutionalist forces. Also, the Unificación required candidates to provide the names of their military leaders during the Revolution, as well as their unit specialization. Individuals were also required to provide certified copies of their combat record, signed by a veteran officially recognized by the Department of National Defense. In order to substantiate age, solicitants had to provide a copy of their birth certificate.

The need for a thorough background check stemmed from the fact that many documents, including local archives in Chihuahua, had been destroyed during the Revolution. Moreover, the different rebel cells originating in the states of Chihuahua,

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<sup>259</sup> A charge of ten pesos accompanied the application procedure that helped pay for the background examination conducted at the national headquarters of the Unificación. Data concerning the application process was compiled from the numerous personnel files at the Archivo de la Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución in Chihuahua. Each member underwent a similar process that began at the local sub-station. Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Coahuila, and Durango left scarce records regarding individuals. With the exception of a few sources such as newspapers and photographs, primary sources containing the service records of *villistas* and other members of the Constitutionalist forces were limited. Thus, government committees faced difficult tasks confirming the information submitted by applicants.<sup>260</sup>

Many veterans, however, possessed valid documents that verified their status as members of the constitutionalist forces of 1913. Juan Carrasco Galindo's wife, for example, submitted proof of her husband's *villista's* military record in the form of a membership card for the Unión Nacional de Veteranos of the Revolución. In her attempt to receive benefits extended to veterans' wives, she submitted as proof the card issued to Carrasco in 1937, twenty-five years before the date on the application to the Unificación. In conjunction with letters confirming his service record, the membership card served to validate Carrasco's revolutionary career and accelerate the process of recognition. Eventually, the Unificación acknowledged him as a veteran of the Revolution.<sup>261</sup>

The organization's membership also consisted of women who had filled the ranks of the revolutionary forces, including the División del Norte. As mentioned in Chapter 1, certain brigades within the División's counted on the assistance of women. Eusebia Levario López, for instance, had served as a nurse in the sanitary brigades of the

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<sup>260</sup> Muster rolls and other records concerning the División del Norte and its participants have yet to be discovered. However, as mentioned in the first chapter, many of the División's officers had been members of Madero's army. Payment slips for soldiers in Madero's army are located at the Archivo General de la Nación.

<sup>261</sup> The Unificación including provided pensions and life insurance to the wives of veterans. File of Juan Galindo Carrasco, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 4, File 33.

División. The Unificación officially recognized her as a veteran of the Revolution on November 29, 1969.<sup>262</sup>

While the steps required to become a member of the Unificación proved to be complicated, it did not stall the organization's rapid growth. Within a few years after 1946, numerous chapters sprang up across Chihuahua in both large urban centers such as Ciudad Juárez and small rural settlements similar to El Pueblito. Local communities built new meeting halls across the state facilitating the recognition of veterans on a yearly basis. As will be explained in the next few pages, the Unificación's expansion created a local and national social network able to extend numerous benefits to its members.

#### *The Unificación as an Extended Social Network*

In 1951, five years after the inauguration of the Unificación, the organization counted on a central office in the capital city and a total of twenty-five chapters throughout Chihuahua state. A total of 1,045 individuals comprised the entire membership, with almost one-third belonging to chapters in the Ciudad Chihuahua and Ciudad Juárez areas. Some chapters, such as the one at Naica, had as few as eleven members. Other prosperous chapters, such as the one in Ciudad Chihuahua, had a membership of 106. The single largest chapter operated at the veteran's colony of Lázaro Cárdenas and had 121 members.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> File of María Eusebia López. Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 10, File 28.

<sup>263</sup> Facts concerning Chihuahua's Unificación are from a report filed by Lieutenant Colonel Reynaldo Mendoza, president of the veteran's organization. Lieutenant Colonel Reynaldo Mata Mendoza to C. Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortinez, 16 October 1951, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de

In a report dispatched in October of 1951 to presidential candidate Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortínez, Unificación President Reynaldo Mata Mendoza outlined the plight of *villista* veterans in the state of Chihuahua. Mendoza noted that many veterans had not received assistance from the government after numerous pleas. He further commented that many lived in dire straits and did not have even a modest house to inhabit. Most revealing of the account were the facts and figures it contained concerning the makeup of chapters and membership in the Unificación. According to Mendoza, each chapter in the state of Chihuahua, including the central office in the capital, contained an overwhelming percentage of ex-members of the División del Norte. Out of the 106 names at the central office in the capital, the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional had officially recognized forty-six men and women as veterans, while the remaining sixty had their paperwork under consideration.<sup>264</sup>

Records disclose that many of the former *villistas* who joined the Unificación served in chapters situated in the same regions that had given rise to their brigades back in 1913. The chapter at El Pueblito, for example, shows that veterans from the División del Norte reunited in the same region as members of the local Unificación unit. A review of the twenty-eight members at El Pueblito shows that several had fought under Toribio Ortega in the Brigada González Ortega. Florencio Ornelas Najjar, for instance, fought in

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Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 22, Page 2.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid., 1.

a cavalry unit under the command of Ortega since April of 1913. As a resident of the agrarian colony at El Pueblito, he qualified for membership in the Unificación in 1961.<sup>265</sup>

As former *villistas*, members of the different Unificación chapters could now count on the political and material assistance of their brethren throughout the state. Member files for the Unificación reveal that many of the constituents worked in different capacities throughout the state, such as members of the political circuit (municipal presidents, city council members, etc.), judicial system employees, ranchers, agriculturalists, and federal employees, among others. These individuals could be counted upon to assist other veterans in times of need.

General Aaron Valderrábano, president of the Unificación in Chihuahua during the 1950s and 1960s also acted as a liaison between the members and numerous governmental institutions in the state. In fact, General Valderrábano served as state representative for the Unificación, a position officially recognized by Chihuahua's government. In essence, he became the spokesperson for the Unificación, contacting heads of state departments with matters concerning the membership.

Valderrábano also became president of the Federación de Colónos Agrícolas Ganaderos E Industriales del Estado de Chihuahua (Association of Ranching and Agricultural Colonists and Industrialists for the State of Chihuahua), a position that directly placed him in charge of colonization projects for the state. As previously

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<sup>265</sup> With the exception of a few, such as the chapter president Máximo Carbajal Ortega, who served in the Brigada Cuahémoc, the remaining members of the Unificación at El Pueblito had served in the Brigada González Ortega. List of members at El Pueblito, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 32, Page 5; File of Máximo Carbajal Ortega, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 4, File 44-H-60.

mentioned, the Unificación's charter expressly called for the construction of military colonies to assist veterans. Valderrábano's role as president of the Federación placed him in the unique position to guarantee that colonies were constructed specifically for veterans in the state of Chihuahua. His responsibilities also permitted him direct contact with other administrations in the state that might help Unificación members.<sup>266</sup>

Records reveal that the Unificación in Chihuahua worked with other chapters throughout Mexico. In 1960, a total of 171 chapters of the Unificación functioned across the country. From the state of Veracruz, for example, veteran Maximiliano Alfonso Pérez solicited the assistance of the Unificación in Chihuahua. Although a resident of Veracruz, Alfonso Pérez had fought in the constitutionalist forces in Chihuahua during the campaign against Victoriano Huerta in 1913 and 1914. He belonged to the Unificación chapter in Villa Azueta, Veracruz, the town where he worked as a judge in the local judicial system.

In a letter to General Valderrábano, Alfonso Pérez petitioned the Unificación in Chihuahua for help in a matter surrounding his employment. According to Alfonso Pérez, five local *caciques* had evidently visited the President of the Supreme Tribunal in the state capital to have him relieved of his duties as a local judge. The *caciques* sought to consolidate their power in the region. Alfonso Pérez noted sadly that at age seventy-two the judgeship was his only job and he could no longer find work in any other capacity. In the name of the Revolution, he pleaded for assistance not only for himself,

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<sup>266</sup> Juan Herrera Urquizo to Aarón Valderrábano Luna, 22 August 1960, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 25, 1-16.

but also to prevent the creation of the same corrupt system that had existed during the days of Porfirio Díaz.<sup>267</sup>

Within a matter of days, the Unificación in Chihuahua contacted its national office informing it of Alfonso Pérez's dilemma. In turn, the national center dispatched a letter to the governor of Veracruz urging him to investigate the issue and to reinstate Pérez. Ultimately, the human resources department for the state judicial system in Veracruz investigated the situation, though its resolution cannot be determined. Pérez's case not only reveals the Unificación's dedication to assisting veterans, but it also illuminates the extended social network that operated at the national level.<sup>268</sup>

#### *The Unificación as a Pressure Group*

The Unificación in Chihuahua also functioned as a pressure group, permitting former revolutionaries to collectively lobby Chihuahua's government and the national government in pursuit of specific goals or things of more immediate interests. At the local level, veterans could petition the state government for land, social services, and in some instances, for justice to be served in their favor. At the national level, veterans could participate in reunions to organize large-scale projects for the benefit of veterans across the nation.

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<sup>267</sup> Maximiliano Alfonso Pérez also asked to be sent the addresses of other Unificación chapters that could provide assistance. Maximiliano Alfonso Pérez to General Aarón Valderrábano, 25 December 1961, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 30, Oficio 67.

<sup>268</sup> Unfortunately, the file for Pérez's case is incomplete. The action taken by the Unificación, however, demonstrates the intricacies of the extended network the Chihuahua office operated within. Marciano González to Delegación de Veteranos de la Revolución in Chihuahua, 24 January 1962, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 30, Oficio 470.

In 1954, for example, veterans in the city of Camargo pressured state authorities to press charges against a man who had killed a fellow veteran, Jesús María Holguín Montes. Holguín Montes had been working his tract of land when struck suddenly by a motor vehicle traveling at a rate of speed greater than 100 kilometers per hour. The driver, a wealthy man named Domingo Gallegos Medina, had apparently lost control of his vehicle as it sped down the dirt road. Within moments of the impact, Holguín Montes lay dead next to his mule-drawn wagon.

In an effort to seek justice for their companion, the veterans of Camargo sent a letter to their central office in the state capital; the letter then went to the governor's office and Procuraduría General de Justicia (District Attorney's Office). According to the veterans, local authorities had refused to jail Gallegos Medina given his status in the community and his supposed knowledge of laws. After a protracted bureaucratic struggle between the Procuraduría and the District Attorney of Camargo, Gallegos Medina faced a formal indictment for homicide.<sup>269</sup>

During difficult economic times the Unificación could be counted upon to pressure organizations to assist veterans facing financial predicaments. In the early 1950s, for instance, the Unificación stepped in to assist veterans suffering through economic hardships due to an extended drought that stifled agricultural endeavors. A rise

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<sup>269</sup> The veterans also claimed that local authorities had intentionally changed the facts of the case in an attempt to prevent the prosecution of Gallegos Medina. Eventually, Gallegos Medina was charged for the crime of homicide. Nearly a year later, however, the case remained open. Veteranos de la Revolución in Camargo to Ciudadano Procurador de Justicia, 4 October 1954, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 28, 107; Licenciado Manuel O'Reilly to Ciudadano Agente del Ministerio Público, 3 September 1955, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 28, 99.

in the cost of food prices further complicated the lives of veterans residing in agricultural colonies. Frijol, for instance, had risen in price by more than 1000 per cent from 1945 to 1954.<sup>270</sup> In an effort to find relief, many veterans turned to the Unificación as an intermediary between them and governmental institutions such as the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público.

The veterans at El Pueblito directly petitioned the president of Mexico, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, for succor in 1954. In a telegram invoking their history as combatants of the Revolution of 1910 who had willingly lent their service in the División del Norte, the veterans complained that the state of Chihuahua had unfairly elevated their taxes per individual from twenty-four pesos to 166, a fee that burdened many families unable to pay. In response, the president's office forwarded a letter to the governor of Chihuahua asking him to act on behalf of the veterans seeking relief.<sup>271</sup>

The case of Rosalio Solis Saucedo, one of the former *villistas* living at El Pueblito, is indicative of the role the Unificación played on behalf of its membership. Solis Saucedo had fought in the División del Norte beginning in 1913 when he joined as a cavalryman. Throughout the course of his revolutionary activity, he had risen in rank to

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<sup>270</sup> Índice Comparativo de Variaciones Anuales de Precios en Porcentaje de Artículos de Primera Necesidad, no date, Ramo: Dirección General de Gobierno, Sección: Impuestos Alcabalatorios, Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F., Mexico, Caja 1, Expediente 2.

<sup>271</sup> The President's office asked that the Governor examine the situation at El Pueblito and report the findings. The *colónos* at El Pueblito were not the only veterans to request relief. Members of the colony, División del Norte, also petitioned the president's office for tax relief. Correograma: Asunto El Pueblito, 23 April 1954, Ramo: Dirección General de Gobierno, Sección: Impuestos Alcabalatorios, Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F., Mexico, Caja 1, Expediente 2; Asunto Rogándole Intervenir en el Caso que se Menciona, 5 October 1954, Ramo: Dirección General de Gobierno, Sección: Impuestos Alcabalatorios, Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F., Mexico, Caja 1, Expediente 2; Veterans of Agricultural Colony División del Norte to Don Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, 22 August 1957, Ramo: Dirección General de Gobierno, Sección: Impuestos Alcabalatorios, Archivo General de la Nación, México D.F., Mexico, Caja 1, Expediente 2.

Second Captain. Solis Saucedo had also been among the many *villistas* who laid down their weapons in 1920 and who took up the life of agriculturalists at El Pueblito.

In 1962, Rosalío Solís Saucedo still lived at El Pueblito, occupying one of the small houses in the colony. He worked a small parcel of land, and to supplement his income, managed a small liquor business. That same year, Solis Saucedo came under investigation for tax evasion by the Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público, which claimed that he owned several houses and made over 70,000 pesos a year in salary. Unable to pay the taxes levied on his supposed wealth, Solis Saucedo utilized the Unificación to challenge the legitimacy of the Secretaría, which threatened to seize his property. The Unificación worked through bureaucratic channels to resolve his dilemma and the *ex-villista* kept his possessions.<sup>272</sup>

In another instance, the Unificación successfully compelled the Seguro Social of Chihuahua to abide by the Veterans' Law of 1960 (discussed below). This law, whose contents had been published in the state's official newspaper, the *Diario Oficial*, called on the state government to extend free medical services to all veterans of the Revolution. When the Seguro Social balked at doing so, the organization established a commission to confront the state pension office and investigate the matter. After a meeting with

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<sup>272</sup> The Secretaría de Hacienda y Crédito Público claimed that Solis Saucedo also owned other properties located outside of El Pueblito and that he was among the wealthier inhabitants at the colony. Solis Saucedo provided the Unificación evidence to the contrary, including documents from local officials claiming he did not own several residences and never sold cotton to the local gin. File of Rosalio Solís Saucedo, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 21, File 9.

officials at the pension office, the government of Chihuahua extended medical services to veterans of the Revolution gratis.<sup>273</sup>

Perhaps the best example of the Unificación's success in the role of a pressure group was getting a state pension law passed for veterans in 1960. The campaign to assist veterans of the Revolution, however, stemmed from a series of attempts to provide ex-revolutionaries with social benefits. By order of President Miguel Alemán, a decree in February 8, 1949, had constructed the Legión de Honor Mexicana (The Mexican League of Honor). In addition to creating the league, which ultimately did not prove effective, the decree provided benefits to members, and recognized those who had fought to construct Mexican nationalism or defended the Republic against foreign aggressors. Article 34 of this decree specifically stated that participants of the Revolution officially recognized by the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional as veterans could be reincorporated into Mexico's military as retired personnel. As such, they stood to receive the same benefits extended to retired individuals from Mexico's armed forces. This plan to reincorporate numerous veterans into the military, however, encountered many problems, principally opposition from established military personnel and from bureaucrats in charge of the recognition process for veterans.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Ramiro Cota Martínez's letter to General Valderrábano cites the decree published by the state of Chihuahua granting veterans free medical service and medications. Lic. Ramiro Cota Martínez to Aarón Valderrábano, 23 March 1971, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 32, File 9892.

<sup>274</sup> The decree contained a total of thirty-five articles that extended certain benefits to veterans. Many professional military personnel balked at the reincorporation of elderly veterans from the Revolution into the military. "Decreto que Crea la Legión de Honor Mexicana," *Diario Oficial*, 8 February 1949, 5 – 8.

Through a collective effort carried out in conjunction with other chapters of the Unificación across Mexico, the organization in Chihuahua ultimately helped enact the Veterans' State Law of 1960, which provided veterans numerous services, including a pension and life insurance.<sup>275</sup> The proposal for such a state law, however, did not begin at the local level, but rather with General Pascual Ortiz Rubio, ex-president of Mexico, and Colonel Narciso Hernández Soto, who in 1957 proposed that the government extend benefits including a pension to all veterans across the Republic. The federal government had earlier provided benefits for veterans via the Veterans Law of 1950; but this legislation did not provide them with pensions or free medical service. Instead, the *Ley en Favor de los Veteranos de la Revolución como Servidores del Estado*, as it was known, gave veterans the right to organize veterans groups and the right to receive preference for civil service jobs.<sup>276</sup>

Ortíz Rubio and Hernández Soto's plan of 1957 (like President Miguel Alemán's 1949 decree) defined veterans as those who had participated in the Revolution from November 19, 1910, to February 5, 1917. Individuals had to be legitimized as veterans by the Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional before being eligible for benefits. Recognized veterans could work and receive a salary without any impact on their pension. It also

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<sup>275</sup> It should be noted that other states in Mexico had by this time passed legislation providing veterans of the Revolution with benefits, among them a pension and free medical service. The state of Nuevo León, for instance, passed Decree 71 into law on December 19, 1950. According to the decree, veterans received numerous benefits including, free medical service, a pension, and life insurance. Copy of law sent by Unificación to Teófilo Borunda, 23 April 1957, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 40, Expediente 26-27.

<sup>276</sup> The law also extended certain benefits to veterans' children under the age of eighteen as well as veterans' wives. Concubines who had a relationship with a veteran for more than five years also received certain benefits. "Ley en Favor de los Veteranos de la Revolución como Servidores del Estado," *Diario Oficial*, 7 January 1950, 2-4.

proposed a monthly pension of 500 pesos and loans not to exceed 1000 pesos a year. The plan also included other benefits such as life insurance, free medical service and medication, and a reduction in taxes by 50 per cent for those owning houses. Veterans were to receive preference over others when petitioning for land from the state or municipalities, or when asking for the right to establish agricultural communities. State governments were obligated to offer veterans civil service positions when these became available.<sup>277</sup>

Ortiz Rubio and Hernández Soto's 1957 plan, named the Law of Pensions, Life Insurance and Other Benefits for Veterans of the Revolution, was circulated throughout the country to different veterans' chapters, which then delivered a copy to the Governor's office in their respective states. In Chihuahua, this process culminated in February of 1957 when veterans of the Colonia Lázaro Cárdenas Chapter forwarded their copy to the Governor's office and the state Pension's Office for consideration. In another official action, General Aaron Valderrábano submitted a copy of the proposal to the Governor's office on April 3, 1957, on behalf of the state office of the Unificación.<sup>278</sup>

Nearly two years later, Chihuahua's government had yet to implement the project. General Valderrábano, as president of the Unificación, then carefully used his position to

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<sup>277</sup> The plan also called for veterans to receive a 5000 peso burial assistance. Veterans' wives and children would also receive services. Proyecto de Ley Estatal en Favor de los Veteranos de la Revolución, 26 December 1959, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 40, Expediente 17 - 29.

<sup>278</sup> Valderrábano's letter of 1959 carefully outlines the history of Chihuahua veterans' struggle to pressure the government to consider their proposed project. In his letter, Valderrábano cites the numerous letters already sent to the governor's office on behalf of veterans and the Unificación, including the letter of April 3, 1957. Arrón Valderrábano Luna to Teófilo R. Borunda, 26 December 1959, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 40, Expediente 197.

pressure the governor's office. In one instance, Valderrábano utilized his relationship with the local commander of the Fifth Military Zone to ensure the governor received the chapter's copy of the plan. "[If] it is not inconvenient," Valderrábano wrote the general, "could you please deliver a copy of the such documents (proposed law) to the Governor (of Chihuahua) with the hope that such a project will be elevated to the status of a law that will benefit our brethren veterans of the Revolution?"<sup>279</sup>

Valderrábano simultaneously sent copies of the proposed law to higher officials. In a dispatch delivered to the governor's office on December 26, 1959, the President of the Unificación played upon the revolutionary sentiment of the governor. "[The veterans of the Colonia Lázaro Cárdenas]...have sent you a copy of the project to be considered for a law in favor of veterans, urging that after a careful study, such project be elevated to the category of a law, as has been done by many governors from different states, who are true revolutionaries such as you..."<sup>280</sup>

A year later, on November 19, 1960, the state of Chihuahua enacted Decree Number 204, known officially as the Ley de Pensiones, Seguros de Vida y Otros Beneficios a los Veteranos de la Revolución Mexicana (the Law of Pensions, Life Insurance and Other Benefits for the Veterans of the Mexican Revolution). The law gave preference to veterans seeking state and municipal jobs (pensions would not be affected by outside employment) and established for them a life insurance policy in the amount of 5000 pesos. Instead of the proposed 500 peso pension the drafts had proposed, however,

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<sup>279</sup> Valderrábano to C. General de División, 4 January 1960, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 40, Expediente 203.

<sup>280</sup> In addition to the proposal, Valderrábano also enclosed a copy of the law passed by the state of Nuevo León nearly ten years earlier. *Ibid.*, 1.

veterans now would receive 300 pesos on a monthly basis. Veterans were also granted free medical service at official health institutions and free medication.<sup>281</sup>

With the passage of the 1960 law, the Unificación and its membership increased their visibility in the state of Chihuahua. Their influence grew further after the national office decided in favor of transforming the group into an increasingly politicized body. In a letter distributed to all chapters, the national office under the guidance of General Marciano González called for amending the charter so that the institution could act as the revolutionary arm of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. The decisions by the Supreme Advisory Council resulted from an effort to assist its members desiring to pursue political office, or put another way, to grant members access to the political apparatus created by the P.R.I.<sup>282</sup>

The inclusion of the Unificación into the ruling party guaranteed for the P.R.I. an expanded voter base among the many members in Chihuahua. They could be counted on to deliver votes for the party when needed. In the elections of 1968, for example, the central office sent to all chapters in the state confidential notices directing the membership on how to vote in the municipal and state elections. The candidate supported by the Unificación, Oscar Flores, won the governor's seat, as did candidates in municipal elections across Chihuahua.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Additionally, veterans also received preferential status to obtain plots of land for agricultural purposes or plots in urban centers to construct a house. "Decreto No. 204," *Periódico Oficial del Estado Libre y Soberano de Chihuahua*, 19 November 1960, 1 – 2.

<sup>282</sup> Marciano González to Chapters of the Unificación in Mexico, 24 June 1961, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 30, Oficio Número 397.

<sup>283</sup> The number of candidates supported by the Unificación who won elections in municipalities across Chihuahua remains unclear. Several chapters replied to Valderrábano verifying the central offices

*The Unificación and a Villista Legacy*

While the Unificación functioned as an extended social network and as a pressure group dedicated to the assistance of veteran membership, its activities extended into other realms of society. While much has been written in the preceding pages covering the Unificación's outward involvement, attention is now directed to its participation in local events. This section will focus on parades, commemorations, and the construction of statues honoring Francisco Villa.

Unificación members routinely participated during the 1950s and 1960s in public events and observed historic events such as Independence Day (September 16) and Revolution Day (November 20). In 1962, for instance, they marched alongside public officials in Ciudad Chihuahua in a parade to commemorate the anniversary of the Battle of Puebla. At the head of the line marched the governor of Chihuahua and his assistants followed by the members of several institutions, including the Unificación, the P.R.I., the Grand Masonic Lodge of Chihuahua, and the League of Agrarian Communities and Peasant Syndicates. In total, more than 100 different entities participated in the mass march, including representatives from government, public schools, and workers unions.<sup>284</sup>

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directions for voting among membership. Aarón Valderrábano Luna to Delegación Estatal Casa del Veterano, 13 March 1968, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 27, Circular Número 2;

<sup>284</sup> Orden General de Personalidades, Instituciones y Contingentes del Gran Desfile Obrero, Campesino y Popular y del Mitín de Masas del Primero de Mayo de 1962, en la Ciudad de Chihuahua, Chihuahua, 1 May 1962, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 24, File 10.

In 1965, Unificación members helped coordinate an extensive festival in Ciudad Chihuahua with the assistance of public schools, the state government, the Chihuahuan Society for Historic Studies, and the Regional Federation of Laborers and Peasants of Chihuahua, among others. The six-day event, which commemorated the 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Revolution, not only included a parade, but also theatrical renditions of historic events, a bicycle race, and a day of conferences featuring scholars of the Revolution.

On November 20, the date officially recognized as marking the anniversary of the beginning of the Revolution, the grandest activities took place. Tributes began with the raising of the Mexican flag at six in the morning followed by the placement of Honor Guards at several historic locations, including the site of the statue of Abraham González and of the monument commemorating the División Del Norte. The day continued with demonstrations from a drum and bugle corps stationed at the local garrison and a tribute to local and federal authorities, including the police and military. A parade, a marathon, and a soccer game followed. The day concluded with an automobile race and a festival of dance and gymnastics.<sup>285</sup>

On July 20, 1966, the Unificación helped organize still another public ceremony to honor the death of Francisco Villa. The event took place in front of the monument to venerate the División del Norte. Local and federal authorities, including the military, the governor's office, the Supreme Tribunal of Justice for the state of Chihuahua, and the

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<sup>285</sup> Programa General de los Actos Conmemorativos del 20 de Noviembre de 1965, LV Aniversario de la Revolución de 1910, 20 November 1910, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 24, no file number.

Legión de Honor de Veteranos de la División del Norte, among others, joined the Unificación to memorialize the fallen leader.

The program also included an overture provided by the state band. A local scholar delivered a lengthy lecture on the life of Villa, and numerous local governmental institutions followed with an offering of flowers in Villa's name. A platoon from the 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division offered a gun salute, and Dr. Leonardo Heiras read his poem, "El Centauro." The commemoration concluded with a singing of the national anthem.<sup>286</sup>

In 1969, in Hidalgo del Parral, the local chapter of the Unificación held a ceremony to commemorate the forty-sixth anniversary of Villa's death (in 1923, Villa had been assassinated in that city). People gathered at the corner of Gabino Barrera Street and Juárez Avenue where Villa had met his death; a municipal band then struck up an oratorio. The state governor, Licenciado Oscar Flores, next placed a floral wreath at the doors of the building that temporarily housed Villa's corpse in 1923. Years later, the building was turned into the Museum General Francisco Villa.

The second phase of the day's events began with a procession originating at the museum and maneuvering through the narrow colonial city streets. The column, led by veteran Lorenzo García Oaxaca and active duty General Miguel Rivera Encinas, came to an end at the municipal cemetery, at the exact location of Villa's grave. The color guard then saluted the Mexican flag, after which an overture by the Municipal Band filled the air. Several officials, including a representative of the P.R.I. and a member of the

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<sup>286</sup> XLIII Aniversario de la Muerte del Gral Francisco Villa, Jefe de la Famosa División del Norte y Brazo Derecho de la Revolución, 20 July 1966, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 24, no file number.

Unificación, subsequently delivered lectures. The events came to an end with another salute to the flag and taps.<sup>287</sup>

To increase their visibility among the general population, veterans also attended other festivities in great numbers. They did so as a demonstration of support for other organizations. In 1961, for instance, veterans joined military personnel during National Flag Day in Ciudad Chihuahua at the request of the Department of National Defense. The event, which took place in the stadium of the sports complex in the capital city on February 21, featured much pomp and circumstance. It began with a salute of honor to the Mexican flag and was followed by several displays of military drill, including infantry marches and equestrian jumps by a cavalry regiment. The festival concluded with the national anthem.<sup>288</sup>

Contributions to insuring a *villista* legacy by Unificación members also involved the construction of memorials throughout the state commemorating Villa. In Parral, for example, The Comité Pro-Monumento al General Francisco Villa, composed of veterans from the local chapter, in 1963 organized a committee to raise funds for a statue of Villa. The committee called upon the central office in Ciudad Chihuahua for assistance and the support of chapters in the state for money, especially during anniversaries that

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<sup>287</sup> Invitation to the XLVI Anniversary of Villa's Death in Hidalgo del Parral, 20 July 1969, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 24, no file number.

<sup>288</sup> Manuel Mendoza Domínguez to Aarón Valderrábano Luna, 21 February 1961, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 30, Expediente A/093/1.

commemorated Villa's death. The statue of Villa was erected on the outskirts of the city, and unveiled to the public on July 20, 1982, after nineteen years of fundraising.<sup>289</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In the first meeting of veterans of the Revolution of 1910 held in 1946, Lieutenant Colonel Reynaldo Mata Mendoza delivered a heart-felt patriotic lecture as he stood before his audience gathered at the house of Lieutenant Colonel José Cruz Villalva. Mata Mendoza thanked his fellow veterans for their presence, then quickly moved to the main purpose of the meeting: to construct the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución in the state of Chihuahua. Hopefully, he stated, the Unificación would consist of numerous chapters scattered throughout the different municipalities where ex-revolutionaries could gather. "The object of the organization," Mata Mendoza informed his listeners, "is to incorporate into one single group of amorous fraternity all paladins of liberty who in one form or another spilled their precious blood and lent their services to the Revolution from 1906 to 1917..." "The time had arrived," he exhorted, "when all veterans separated from the Revolution for whatever reason should reincorporate into the legally constituted government [of Mexico] and return to its bosom where they [veterans] could collaborate to achieve their ideals [of the Revolution]." "[Let] us grasp the flag of honor," he concluded, "and continue with the faith of our principles united to the Revolution as the

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<sup>289</sup> The statue, which depicts general Villa on horseback, portrays the revolutionary leader's equestrian attributes, and his clothing depicts traditional *norteño* dress. In the year 2000, the statue was moved from within the city to the outskirts. Vicente Martínez to Aarón Valderrábano, 14 October 1963, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 27, uncatalogued; Vicente Martínez to Aarón Valderrábano, 27 May 1969, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Roll 27, Expediente 26-61/69; Jesús Vargas Valdéz to John Klingemann, 3 September 2008, Author's Personal Collection, San Angelo, Texas, uncatalogued.

sons of our Mexican country. Only in that manner will we achieve an end to what we seek.”<sup>290</sup>

Once the organization had been launched in Chihuahua, chapters sprouted throughout the state. Candidates for inclusion in the Unificación emerged from near obscurity, not minding the lengthy process required for induction. Within a few years, the organization had many members and many more hopefuls had their applications pending. As was later revealed by the documents they completed, an overwhelming number had been *villistas*.

In time, the organization grew with the founding of numerous chapters located throughout the state, and the Unificación came to resemble an extended social network. Chapters located in the different municipalities could count on the assistance of companion councils across the state and throughout the country. The central office, located in the capital city, served then as an intermediary with the state and federal government.

Over time, the Unificación operated as a fraternal organization dedicated to bettering the physical welfare of veterans. Through its collective effort, the state of Chihuahua passed the Veterans’ Law of 1960 extending to all veterans free medical service as well as a pension benefits. When these old soldiers temporarily lost their medical benefits in the 1960s due to a new hospital administration unfamiliar with

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<sup>290</sup> Acta Constitutiva del Consejo Estatal de Veteranos de la Revolución Establecida en la Ciudad de Chihuahua, 10 February 1946, Subdirección de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Archivo de Veteranos de la Revolución, Centro de Investigaciones del Estado de Chihuahua, Ciudad Chihuahua, Chihuahua, Mexico, Box 52, File 3, pp. 2-5.

veteran's benefits, the Unificación acted quickly to resolve the matter in favor of its membership.

The Unificación also functioned as a pressure group that empowered veterans to negotiate with the state and national governments. As membership in the Unificación grew in Chihuahua, the institution acquired preferential status through political maneuvering. Ultimately, the Unificación became the revolutionary arm of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional in Chihuahua. This reciprocal relationship with the P.R.I. guaranteed access to the ruling party in return for the veterans' vote.

The Unificación through the activities of its members also contributed to the formation of a *villista* legacy and history. Through regular participation in public events such as parades and dedications, former *villistas* carved their space in Mexico's history of the Revolution as patriotic combatants and agents of change. Their commitment to constructing monuments of Francisco Villa and other *villista* leaders throughout the state served not only to preserve the history of the famous general, but also their own.

During the era between 1946 and 1960, when, according to one scholar, ex-*villistas* were falsely linked to criminality, many ex-*villistas* maintained a low profile. But at the same time, other ex-Villa followers skillfully utilized the Unificación to achieve public support and preserve their history.<sup>291</sup> In essence, Unificación members competently transferred their struggle from the battlefields to the bureaucratic arena, except that in the latter case *villistas* emerged triumphant. They successfully maneuvered

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<sup>291</sup> See José Socorro Salcido Gómez, *Luz y sombras en la muerte del General Francisco Villa: un crimen de Estado* (Chihuahua: Talleres Gráficos del CEDIC, 1998).

for equal standing with other Mexicans by cementing a reciprocal relationship with the state and national governments.

## CONCLUSION

The *villistas* and the División del Norte achieved a lofty place in the history of Mexico for various reasons. Most important, the División possessed charismatic leaders that included strong figures such as Francisco Villa, regional *caudillos*, local politicians and members from Chihuahua's different social classes. The men and women of the División, regardless of rank, believed strongly in the cause of the Revolution. They had a personal stake in supporting an army that had been organized to protect their homes, businesses and lands.

División participants feared in Victoriano Huerta another dictatorship as had existed under the rule of Porfirio Diaz. The *ex-maderistas* who gathered men in early 1913 to form the cells that eventually grew into the brigades of the División understood the possible repetition of history, and thus acted as agents to indoctrinate new recruits and shape them into becoming effective revolutionaries.

The División del Norte also solidified its place in history once it became a model of battlefield efficiency. Many recruits who filled the ranks came from a military tradition traceable to the colonial era and the nineteenth century. The men and women from the Ojinaga – San Carlos region, for instance, possessed a strong military heritage that originated in Spain's defense system against Indians in Nueva Vizcaya. Recruits excelled in guerrilla tactics because of their equestrian culture and knowledge of the terrain.

The División's effectiveness also stemmed from its structure and flexibility. The force was divided into specialized units designed to execute a specific purpose. Some

units filled military roles, while others like the *cuervo de guías* operated as advanced scouts. The *transportes militares*, on the other hand, ensured the rapid deployment of fighters throughout northern Mexico via the railways. Still other units performed non-military duties essential for the División's success. Toribio Ortega, one of the leaders, successfully purchased weapons and munitions in the United States through the Big Bend region of Texas and smuggled them into northern Chihuahua. He mastered the difficult task of moving arms across an international boundary, risking violation of neutrality laws.

The División *espíritu d'corps* earned *villismo* a place in Mexican revolutionary lore. In essence, the different units within the force believed in their potential to defeat the enemy, including the federal army and the large numbers of *orozquistas* allied with Victoriano Huerta. Evidence of their *espíritu d'corps* can be found in the short campaign that ultimately defeated General Salvador Mercado and his troops at Ojinaga in January of 1914, as well as the annihilation of Huerta's federal army in Chihuahua, a victory that left the entire state in the hands of the *villistas*.

Once the *villistas* had defeated the federal army and taken control of Chihuahua, they demonstrated to the nation their capability to develop diplomatic contacts with foreign governments, especially those of the United States. When *villismo* came under the vigilance of United States consular agents, *villistas* shaped a positive image for the División and created favorable public relations with the *americanos*. As many of the División's core members had been *maderistas* in 1910, their previous relationships with consular agents proved to be helpful in achieving the goals of their struggle. *Villista*

dealings with consular agents allowed División soldiers to carry out certain missions necessary for victory, such as the purchasing of arms in the United States. The *villistas* utilized newspapers such as *El Periodico Oficial* to publicize their skills to work with foreign governments. By multi-tasking, they won respect for their ability to protect American properties in Chihuahua.

The valuable diplomatic experience that *villistas* gained proved fruitful in later years when they built bureaucratic relations with the national government of Mexico and the state government of Chihuahua. Once the combative phase of the Revolution had ended, *villistas* skillfully obtained a suitable peace agreement with the central government, underwent a disarmament phase, and made the successful transition to civilians as they took up life as agriculturalists in colonies granted to them by the federal government.

In peacetime, the *villistas* built up a reputation as successful agriculturalists and political actors, effectively using the political framework that undergirded the agricultural colonies to promote their interests. At El Pueblito, they elected administrators from within their own ranks to form the *sección municipal*. They then succeeded in obtaining the assistance of state and national governments to improve conditions in their community. They also astutely maneuvered the government to legally increase the size of their properties so that their children could dedicate themselves to agricultural pursuits.

The *colónos* proved themselves capable administrators in the agrarian colonies not solely by managing civic institutions, but also by negotiating accords with neighboring communities. These formal relationships not only worked to promote

harmony among neighboring communities, they also placed the colony in an advantageous position in certain instances. At El Pueblito, for example, residents worked with the nearby settlement of Maclovio Herrera to found joint projects that would benefit both communities. The maintenance and construction of irrigation canals by El Pueblito and Maclovio Herrera operated under the watchful eye of the *colónos*, and tended to favor El Pueblito.

The transition to productive citizens did not lead to a loss of place in Mexican history for the *villistas*. Their memory lived on through their participation in the Unificación de Veteranos de la Revolución, a national institution with numerous branches throughout Mexico, including some in Chihuahua wherein *ex-villistas* became an influential force. *Ex-villistas* skillfully converted the Unificación into a pressure group and an extended paternalistic network, and they used the organization to seek justice for their members at the local as well as national level. Members from different chapters could count on the assistance of their companion veterans throughout the state for support in moments of legal need. After the death of a fellow *ex-villista*, for instance, veterans from a local chapter of the Unificación pressured local authorities until the man responsible for the crime faced indictment for homicide.

*Ex-villistas* also used the Unificación to assert themselves politically. While the original state branch had been established as an apolitical institution, the national office changed its status to that of a political instrument in the revolutionary family of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional. Because the association's membership constituted a substantial voting bloc for the P.R.I, *ex-villistas* then had the opportunity to maneuver

in politics and could count on fellow voting members throughout the state for help in furthering their agenda. Their greatest triumph was the passage of the state law that granted veterans of the Revolution social benefits that included free medical service, hiring preference in civil service jobs, and a monthly pension.

Through participation in the Unificación, the *ex-villistas* insured that a *villista* legacy would not perish. Regularly, veterans took part in public displays of nationalism by marching in parades and participating in patriotic holidays such as Independence Day (September 16) and Revolution Day (November 20). Most important, they preserved the history of *villismo* by constructing numerous statues throughout the state of Chihuahua. In Hidalgo del Parral, for instance, the Comité Pro-Monumento de Francisco Villa started by veterans from the Unificación worked diligently to raise funds for the construction of a statue of Francisco Villa.

My findings fill an important gap in the scholarship of post-war societies by providing an answer to a difficult question: What happens to defeated revolutionaries? By examining the lives of *villistas* who separated themselves from the División del Norte in 1915 after their defeat at the Battle of Celaya, as well as that of *villistas* who remained loyal to Villa and surrendered in 1920, we find that insurgents can capably make a successful transition to productive citizens. Those once loyal to Francisco Villa transferred their commitment to state formation and new nation building. They eased their way into the civilian population and body politic, and made a lasting contribution to civic affairs in Chihuahua. By their insistence on sustaining the memory of Pancho Villa, the old revolutionaries did not drop out of history's pages.

The División del Norte and *villismo* emerged from that September day in 1913 when Francisco Villa was elected leader of numerous anti-*huertista* brigades from the states of Coahuila, Durango, and Chihuahua to leave an indelible stamp on the history of Mexico. Though defeated in 1915, *villismo* lived on in the spirit of El Pueblito and its *colónos*, in the political participation of ex-*villistas* in the Unificación, and in the historical memory that they preserved for posterity. In such a way did the vanquished ultimately triumph.

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