

CARRANZA HALTS BENTON INQUIRY

**Commission, About to Leave
Juarez, Prevented by Avila,
the Rebel Commander.**

"SUPREME CHIEF" PIQUED

**Holds That Negotiations with
Villa Should Not Be Recog-
nized by Him.**

NEW TANGLE FOR BRYAN

**Spends Hours In Conference with
the President and Hopes to
Placate Carranza.**

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, March 1.—The international situation growing out of the killing of William S. Benton, the British ranchman, assumed a more complicated form than ever to-day through the insistence of Gen. Carranza, the recognized head of the Mexican Constitutionalists, that the arrangements concerning the exhumation and examination of Benton's body should be conducted through him and not through Gen. Villa.

In consequence of Carranza's sensational interference Secretary Bryan sent additional instructions to the members of the commission appointed by the British and American Governments to examine Benton's body, and word was received here to-night that the commission had returned to El Paso from Juarez, where it was on the point of taking a special train for Chihuahua to go to view the body.

A report from El Paso that the Benton commission had been prevented by Col. Avila, the Constitutionalist commander at Juarez, from taking the train is explained here on the theory that Avila acted by Carranza's orders.

But the understanding here is that the commission was actually recalled from Juarez to El Paso by orders from Secretary Bryan on account of the protest by Carranza against the commission proceeding to Chihuahua until he had been properly approached by the United States Government and had given his assent to the examination of Benton's body.

Secretary Bryan said to-night that the mission of the commission had not been abandoned. He admitted, however, that no time had been fixed for the departure of the commission for Chihuahua. Afterward Mr. Bryan said that the commission would leave for Chihuahua as soon as it had had the opportunity of considering instructions which had been sent to it to-day. At the White House to-night it was declared emphatically that the visit of the commission to Chihuahua had not been abandoned.

While officials of the Government decline to furnish any information relative to the new turn of affairs in the Benton case, it was learned that Gen. Carranza had taken the ground that he, and not Gen. Villa, was the supreme head of the Constitutionalist Government, and that all negotiations of the Constitutionalists with foreign Governments must be conducted through him. In statements given out by Gen. Carranza yesterday he made it known that he objected to the action of the United States Government in conducting negotiations with the Constitutionalists concerning the death of a British subject. Carranza insisted that the Benton case did not concern the United States, and declared that he would be very glad to enter into exchanges in regard to it with the British Government.

It was known last night that Carranza had insisted that the Benton case was one for negotiation between himself and the British Government; but apparently the State Department did not regard this as meaning that the arrangement made with Gen. Villa for sending a British-American commission to Chihuahua to examine Benton's body should not be carried out. However, Carranza seems to have taken the position that the arrangement with Villa has no legal force and effect, and that he will not recognize it.

Hope That Carranza Will Yield.

There is reason to believe that the State Department has undertaken to straighten out this embarrassing situation by entering into direct negotiations with Carranza for the purpose of obtaining his permission for the commission to proceed to Chihuahua on the special train furnished by Villa, which is now waiting at Juarez. This suggests that Carranza has modified his position of yesterday to the extent of agreeing to negotiate with the United States in the Benton case.

Secretary Bryan returned to Washington this afternoon from Richmond, Va., where he kept his speaking engagement yesterday. Soon after his arrival here he went to the White House, where he spent two hours in conference with President Wilson. The length of this conference was in itself sufficient to show that the Mexican situation had assumed a new and serious turn. After leaving the White House Mr. Bryan went to the British Embassy, where he had a conversation with Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, the British Ambassador. On leaving the Embassy Mr. Bryan proceeded to the State Department, where he was engaged in conferring with Joseph W. Folk, the Solicitor of the department, and Boaz Long, Chief of the Division of Latin-American Affairs. With the assistance of Mr. Folk and Mr. Long he prepared instructions for the members of the British-American commission.

How much additional time will elapse before the commission starts for Chihuahua to examine Benton's body is problematical, but it is supposed that negotiations with Carranza to bring about a new arrangement cannot be completed until Tuesday. Benton was killed on Tuesday, Feb. 17, so at least two weeks will have elapsed before the examination of his body can be made. This means that the examination, which will be for the purpose of ascertaining the character and number of Benton's wounds and all other information as to how he met his death that can be obtained by a quick autopsy, will be hampered by the fact that the body will be in an advanced state of decomposition, making the work of the medical examiners extremely difficult and repulsive.

Officials of the Government, who had evidently been cautioned to preserve silence on the subject, would express no opinion to-night as to whether the action of Carranza in demanding that his authority in the Benton matter

Continued on Page 3.

The New York Times

Published: March 2, 1914

Copyright © The New York Times

CARRANZA HALTS BENTON INQUIRY

Continued from Page 1.

should be recognized was taken for the purpose of delaying the examination of the body. In fact, they declined to make any statement whatever, and referred all those who inquired to Secretary Bryan, who furnished very meagre information.

The course of Carranza is regarded here as particularly significant in view of the official report received in Washington last night embodying testimony tending to show conclusively that Benton died of a pistol shot wound inflicted while he was in Gen. Villa's office at Juarez, and that there was no truth in the explanation offered by Villa that Benton had been tried by court-martial and had been executed in an orderly manner.

Bryan Discredits "Official" Report.

It was apparent from a remark made by Secretary Bryan to-night that he was not disposed to accept the testimony contained in the report in question. He said that there was no conclusive evidence as to the manner of Benton's death. Nothing further is obtainable as to what was contained in this report, or as to the manner in which the evidence was obtained, or by whom. Officials of the Government are greatly annoyed over the publication of the fact that such a report had been received, and are inclined to throw doubt upon its conclusive character.

It is known, however, that the report was prepared in an authoritative way, and that the testimony obtained in it is of a very direct sort. It cannot be ascertained whether any of this testimony points conclusively to Villa as the person who fired the first shot into Benton's body; but the evidence is understood to show that Benton was in Villa's office at the time the tragedy occurred, and that, while the first wound was mortal, other shots were fired into his body as it lay on the floor.

This report is believed to be extremely embarrassing to the Government, as it affords groundwork for insistence by the British Government that Villa shall be made to suffer personally for the death of Benton. However, there is no reason to qualify the statement contained in a Washington dispatch printed in THE NEW YORK TIMES to-day that Great Britain is willing to allow the Benton case to take a usual diplomatic course and not be made an incident requiring immediate redress.

The attitude of the British Government, as it is understood here, is that the killing of Benton cannot be construed as an intentional affront to Great Britain. It was rather the result, according to what is said in regard to the British attitude, of an outburst of ungovernable temper on the part of Villa, without consideration by him as to Benton's status as a British subject. It is well understood in Washington, however, that the ultimate course of Great Britain will probably be dependent largely upon British popular opinion concerning the tragedy.

Constitutionalist Agency Explains.

The Constitutionalist agency in Washington made a statement to-night, evidently intended to meet expected criticism of the action of Gen. Carranza in insisting that the Benton case concerned the British Government and not the United States, and that exchanges on the subject should be conducted between himself as "Supreme Chief" of the Constitutionalist movement and an authorized British representative. In the statement the Constitutionalist agency says the notes addressed by Gen. Carranza to the American Consul at Nogales, Mexico, was not a defiance, but

was drawn so as to disclose Gen. Carranza's policy in the frankest possible way. There was nothing unfriendly in the note, it was said, since it indicated a purpose to meet every international obligation.

The Constitutionalist said, also, that if Great Britain had no diplomatic representative in Mexico, and British affairs were in charge of the Washington Government, the situation in regard to the Benton case would be different. But it was asserted, as there was a British Legation in Mexico City and British Consular representatives close at hand, it was not difficult to understand why Gen. Carranza should insist, with every deference to the State Department, that any complaints or representations involving British interests should be made by the British Government to him as the Supreme Chief of the Constitutionalist Government and the responsible head of the movement.

It also should be borne in mind, they maintained, that the position of Gen. Carranza did not indicate in any way a purpose to avoid any responsibility attaching to his Government. This, it was said, was shown by the action of Señor Fabela, the Constitutionalist Minister for Foreign Relations, in ordering an investigation of the Benton case by the proper local authorities.

It is also set forth by the Constitutionalist that Great Britain has dealt with revolutionary officials in the past through rebel officers, not only during the civil war in the United States, but in the revolution in Chile in 1891.

"If such was the policy of Great Britain on these occasions," it was asked, "why is such a policy not followed by Great Britain now?"

The Constitutionalist statement ended with a promise that Gen. Carranza would make every effort to right every wrong against foreigners in Constitutionalist territory.

Friends Laboring with Carranza.

Just what instructions have been sent to Consul Simpich at Nogales, who is in touch with Gen. Carranza, were not divulged, but representatives of Carranza who understand the American viewpoint were busy telegraphing the Constitutionalist commander to-night, urging a change of attitude. Carranza's friends here believe he does not understand exactly the position of the United States with reference to all foreigners in Mexico, and are seeking to impress upon him that, when dealing with the United States, he is in effect treating with the agent of Great Britain. England and other powers have practically intrusted to the Washington Government the task of looking after their subjects in Northern Mexico, particularly at points where there are no British Consular representatives, as at Juarez. That Carranza will realize this and change his attitude is the confident expectation of his friends here.