

VILLA RETAKES GOMEZ PALACIO; SAYS HE'LL WIN

**Wires to Gen. Chao at Juarez
That He Will Assault Tor-
reon Immediately.**

WILL ATTACK SALTILLO

**He Sends Herrera Against That
Town to Head Off Fed-
eral Reinforcements.**

RAILWAY HAS BEEN CUT

**Villa Admits This and the Par-
tial Interruption of Tele-
graphic Communication.**

HUERTA CLAIMS VICTORY

**War Office Receives a Dispatch
Telling of Heavy Losses In-
flicted Upon Fleeing Rebels.**

BENAVIDES REPORTED DEAD

**El Paso Hears That the Rebel Gen-
eral Fell Fighting in Out-
skirts of Torreon.**

Special to The New York Times.

EL PASO, March 26.—Villa has re-taken Gomez Palacio, and is now sending his main column against Torreon, in the hope of taking it for the revolution before sunrise.

This message was received late this evening by Gen. Manuel Chao, the rebel commander at Juarez, and is accepted by the large Villa following on both sides of the river.

In his message, which was a personal one to Chao, Villa said that he had succeeded in reoccupying Gomez Palacio as a base, and had sent Gen. Herrera around to the southeast to attack Saltillo to prevent reinforcements being sent from there.

Villa said in his message that the Federals had attempted to leave Torreon by the southern pass, but had been driven back and forced to resume the battle. Villa announced that he would retain his base at El Vergel until the railroad line, which was cut by the Federals when he was temporarily driven back, had been rebuilt, and the telegraphic communication restored.

He closed his message with the statement that Velasco could not withstand the fierce bombardment much longer, and that he expected to have the town in his possession by sunrise.

Vague and conflicting reports, some of them minimizing Villa's reverses, and others asserting that he had suffered a signal defeat, were in circulation in Juarez and El Paso earlier in the day. They took their color, of course, from the sources—Federal and Constitutionalist—from which they were received.

Gen. Chao Is Reticent.

Gen. Manuel Chao, Military Governor of Chihuahua and Villa's only fighting man who is not on the firing line, paced the floor at headquarters and pulled at the few hairs of his little mustache with the impatience which comes from two days of suspense. Half Chinese, Gen. Chao showed none of the emotion which he might be assumed to feel. To all inquiries he answered in the same words: "No hay nuevos." (There is no news.)

The day was spent in denying the reports which were received from Torreon via Mexico City and Eagle Pass. Gen. Chao explained Villa's presence at El Vergel by saying that he had withdrawn there to send and receive dispatches and to ascertain the movements of his troops, which had been ordered from the Chihuahua base.

The Juarez officials even asserted that Villa was in possession of Gomez Palacio at the time of his return to El Vergel, although this statement was in direct conflict with the Federal reports which were received in El Paso by Consul General Diebold of the Mexican Federal Government. They explained Villa's absence from Gomez Palacio by saying that he withdrew after he had been successful in retaking the town. With Toribio Ortega, his favorite General, and Monclovia Herrea, they said, he drove the Federals back into Torreon by way of the Nazas River Bridge. The rebels said that a hot fight took place between the rebel artillery and the Federal field pieces stationed on Cerro de la Pila; and in Torreon proper. Another story to the effect that Villa had caught the Federals in a V-shaped position between Gomez Palacio and Lerdo and raked them between two fires was also given out, but was not generally believed.

While this fighting was in progress, the rebel officials said, Benavides, with his brigade, continued to hammer away at Torreon itself from the northeast and east, and had a fair prospect of gaining a foothold in the town itself. This conflicted with the report that Benavides had been killed at the head of his troops, and that Trinidad Rodriguez had assumed command.

Diebold Hears Villa is Defeated.

Consul General Diebold said he had received messages from Torreon by way of Mexico City telling of the defeat of Villa at Gomez Palacio. These messages said that the rebels were drawn into a trap at Gomez Palacio late Wednesday night and that they were decoyed over 127 mines, which had been planted. As the Federals retreated the mines were exploded and killed a number

of the pursuing rebel cavalry. While the confusion incident to the exploding of these mines was at its height, Gen. O. Carranza with his cavalry, made a sweeping detour from Torreon and succeeded in cutting off 500 of the rebels, who were presently executed in Torreon.

Diebold also said that Gen. Joaquin Maass telegraphed from Saltillo that the Federals were flanking the rebels and were driving them back.

It is reported here that at a council of war held at Villa's headquarters at El Vergel this afternoon it was decided to abandon the efforts of the Zaragoza Brigade to penetrate Torreon and to risk everything on a frontal attack tonight and a house-to-house battle with the Federals in Torreon.

Villa's losses have been heavy since the fighting started, and will be heavier before it is decided one way or the other. His reverses at Gomez Palacio have only spurred him to renewed efforts, for neither he nor his officers expected to take Torreon in a single assault, and they profess themselves not surprised at the stubborn resistance which has been shown, although they expected it from another quarter than Gomez Palacio.

The railroad line is out of commission between El Vergel and Gomez Palacio, and Villa will maintain his base at the former place, using field telephones until the line can be repaired.

It is estimated that 2,000 have been killed on both sides, although this is only a guess of one of Villa's staff. The fighting has been in progress all day along the river front. Benavides, although there is no direct communication with him, is believed to be fighting his way out of the eastern suburbs of Torreon as hard as he fought to get in. He has been directed to retire for the frontal attack and to lead his seasoned veterans against the enemy from the north.

An urgent message from the front was received at Juarez this afternoon to send the aeroplane which has been here being repaired, repair materials for the railroad telegraph, a field telephone, and wireless outfit. All the ammunition that could be obtained was also ordered to the front, including as many hand grenades as could be bought or made. A shipment of dynamite, which was made for one of the mining companies, was seized, and will be sent to Villa to be made into hand grenades by wrapping it in cowhide and attaching short fuses. Gen. Chao's force has also been ordered to hold itself in readiness to proceed to the front, and it is possible that Carranza's bodyguard will be rushed south on special trains to assist Villa. This will leave the border town open to attack from the large number of Federal filibusters who are now in El Paso and have been organized to take the field.