

= Torreón massacre =

The Torreón massacre was a racially motivated massacre that took place on 13 - 15 May 1911 in the Mexican city of Torreón , Coahuila . Over 300 Chinese residents were killed by the revolutionary forces of Francisco I. Madero . A large number of Chinese homes and establishments were looted and destroyed .

Torreón was the last major city to be taken by the Maderistas during the Mexican Revolution . When the government forces withdrew , the rebels entered the city in the early morning and began a ten @-@ hour massacre of the Chinese community . The event touched off a diplomatic crisis between China and Mexico , with the former demanding 30 million pesos in reparation . At one point it was rumored that China had even dispatched a warship to Mexican waters (the cruiser Hai Chi , which was anchored in Cuba at the time) . An investigation into the massacre concluded that it was an unprovoked act of racial hatred .

= = Background = =

Chinese immigration to Mexico began as early as the 17th century , with a number settling in Mexico City . Immigration increased when Mexican president Porfirio Díaz attempted to encourage foreign investment and tourism to boost the country 's economy . The two countries signed a Treaty of Amity and Commerce in 1899 ; over time , the Chinese expatriates began to establish profitable businesses such as wholesale and retail groceries . By 1910 , there were 13 @, @ 200 Chinese immigrants in the country , many living in Baja California , Chihuahua , Coahuila , Sinaloa , Sonora , and Yucatán .

Torreón was an attractive destination for immigrants at the turn of the nineteenth century . It was located at the intersection of two major railroads (the Mexican Central Railway and the Mexican International Railroad) and was proximate to the Nazas River , which irrigated the surrounding area , making it a suitable location for growing cotton . Chinese probably began to arrive in Torreón during the 1880s or 1890s , at the same time that other immigrants were first recorded as coming to the city . By about 1900 , 500 of the city 's 14 @, @ 000 residents were Chinese . The Chinese community was easily the largest and most notable group of immigrants in the city . By 1903 , it had formed the largest branch of the Baohuanghui (Protect the Emperor Society) in Mexico .

Mexico was one of the countries visited by Kang Youwei after his exile from China . He had recently founded the China Reform Association to restore the Guangxu Emperor to power , and was visiting Chinese colonies worldwide to fund the Association . He arrived in 1906 , and purchased a few blocks of real estate in Torreón for 1 @, @ 700 pesos , later reselling it to Chinese immigrants for a profit of 3 @, @ 400 pesos . This investment spurred Kang to have the Association establish a bank in Torreón , which began selling stock and real estate to Chinese businessmen . The bank also built the city 's first tram line . Kang visited Torreón again in 1907 . It has been suggested that the city served as a test case for Chinese immigration to Mexico and Brazil , which Kang believed might solve overpopulation problems in the Chinese Pearl River Delta . Soon there were 600 Chinese living in the city .

In 1907 , a number of Mexican businessmen gathered to form a chamber of commerce to protect their businesses from the foreigners . Instead of targeting Chinese specifically , they wrote :

We cannot compete against the foreigners in commercial ventures . The sad and lamentable fact is that the prostration of our national commerce has created a situation in which Mexicans are replaced by foreign individuals and companies , which monopolize our commerce and behave in the manner of conquerors in a conquered land .

Tensions and resentment of the Chinese ran high among the Mexican populace of Torreón , stemming from the immigrants ' prosperity and monopoly over the grocery trade . Nationwide resentment of the Chinese has also , conversely , been attributed to the fact that the Chinese represented a source of cheap @-@ labor which was central to the Porfirian economic program . Therefore , opposing the Chinese was an indirect way to oppose the dictatorship .

Anti @-@ Chinese sentiments were apparent in the Independence Day speeches and

demonstrations of 16 September 1910 . Over the next several weeks a number of Chinese establishments were vandalized .

= = Events = =

= = = Events leading to the massacre = = =

On 5 May 1911 (Cinco de Mayo) , a revolutionary leader , a bricklayer or stonemason named Jesús C. Flores , made a public speech in nearby Gómez Palacio , Durango , in which he claimed that the Chinese were putting Mexican women out of jobs , had monopolized the gardening and grocery businesses , were accumulating vast amounts of money to send back to China , and were " vying for the affection and companionship of local women . " He concluded by demanding that all people of Chinese origin be expelled from Mexico . One witness recalled him stating " that , therefore , it was necessary ... even a patriotic duty , to finish with them . "

The branch of the reform association in Torreón heard of Flores speech , and on 12 May the society 's secretary , Woo Lam Po (also the manager of the bank) circulated a letter in Chinese among the leaders of the community warning that there could be violence :

Brothers , attention ! Attention ! This is serious . Many unjust acts have happened during the revolution . Notice have [sic] been received that before 10 o 'clock today the revolutionists will unite their forces and attack the city . It is very probable that during the battle a mob will spring up and sack the stores . For this reason , we advise all our people , when the crowds assemble , to close your door and hide yourself and under no circumstances open your places for business or go outside to see the fighting . And if any of your stores are broken into , offer no resistance but allow them to take what they please , since otherwise you might endanger your lives . THIS IS IMPORTANT . After the trouble is over we will try to arrange a settlement .

= = = Siege of Torreón = = =

On the morning of Saturday , 13 May , the forces of the Mexican Revolution led by Francisco I. Madero 's brother Emilio Madero attacked the city . Its railroads made it a key strategic point necessary to seizing complete control of the surrounding region : it was also the last major city to be targeted by the rebels . Madero and 4 @, @ 500 Maderistas surrounded the city , hemming in General Emiliano Lojero and his 670 Federales . They overran the Chinese gardens surrounding the city , killing 112 of the people working there . Chinese houses were used as fortifications for the advancing rebels , and the people living there were forced to prepare them food . The fighting continued until the Federales began to run low on munitions on Sunday evening . Lojero ordered a retreat , and his forces abandoned the city under cover of darkness between two and four in the morning on Monday , 15 May , during a heavy rainstorm . The retreat was so sudden that some troops were left behind during the evacuation . Before the rebels entered the city , witnesses reported that xenophobic speeches had been made to incense the accompanying mob against foreigners . Jesús Flores was present , and made a speech calling the Chinese " dangerous competitors " and concluded " that it would be best to exterminate them . "

= = = Massacre = = =

The rebel forces entered the city at six o 'clock , accompanied by a mob of over 4 @, @ 000 men , women , and children from Gómez Palacio Municipality , Viesca Municipality , San Pedro Municipality , Lerdo Municipality , and Matamoros Municipality . They were joined by citizens of Torreón and began the sacking of the business district . The mob released prisoners from jail , looted stores , and attacked people on the street . They soon moved to the Chinese district . Men on horses drove Chinese from the gardens back into town , dragging them by their queues and shooting or trampling those who fell . Men , women , and children were killed indiscriminately when

they fell in the way of the mob , and their bodies were robbed and mutilated . It was reported that " [i] n one instance the head of a Chinaman was severed from his body and thrown from the window into the street . In another instance a soldier took a little boy by the heels and battered his brains out against a lamp post . In many instances ropes were tied to the bodies of the Chinamen and they were dragged through the streets by men on horseback . In another instance a Chinaman was pulled to pieces in the street by horses hitched to his arms and legs . " The mob finally reached the bank , where they killed the employees and hurled their severed body parts into the streets . A contemporary newspaper reported that " heads of the murdered Chinese were rolled along the streets , and their bodies were tied to the tails of horses . "

A number of residents made attempts to save the Chinese from the mob . Seventy immigrants were saved by a tailor who stood atop the roof of a building where they were hiding and misdirected the mob that was hunting for them . Eleven were saved by Hermina Almaráz , the daughter of a Maderista leader , who told soldiers who wanted to take them from her home " that they could only enter the house over her dead body . " Another eight were saved by a second tailor , who stood in the rain in front of the laundry they worked at and lied to the rebels about their presence .

Ten hours after the massacre had begun , at around four o 'clock , Emilio Madero arrived in Torreón on horseback and issued a proclamation decreeing the death penalty for anyone who killed a Chinese . This ended the massacre .

= = = After the massacre = = =

Madero collected the surviving Chinese in a building and posted a hand @-@ picked group of soldiers to protect them . Dead Mexicans were buried in the city 's cemetery , but the bodies of the slain Chinese were stripped naked and buried together in a trench .

The same day as the massacre , Madero convened a military tribunal to hear testimony about the killings . The tribunal came to the conclusion that the Maderistas had " committed atrocities " , but the soldiers defended themselves by asserting that the Chinese had been armed and the massacre was an act of self @-@ defense .

Both the United States Consulate and the local Relief Committee began collecting donations from locals to support the Chinese . Between 17 May and 1 June , Dr. J. Lim and the Relief Committee collected over \$ 6 @,@ 000 dollars which they distributed at a rate of \$ 30 per day to provide food and shelter for the survivors .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Events following the massacre = = =

After the massacre , large numbers of Chinese fled Torreón , with El Imparcial , a daily newspaper in Mexico City , reporting that over 1 @,@ 000 people were on the move . Chinese began to arrive in Guadalajara seeking passage back to China .

Property stolen from Torreón continued to appear on the black market in San Pedro for several months following the massacre and looting .

= = = Casualties = = =

308 Asians were killed in the massacre ; 303 Chinese and 5 Japanese . According to the British Vice Consul in Gómez Palacio , the Japanese were killed " owing to the similarity of features " with the Chinese . It is estimated that the dead made up nearly one @-@ half of the Chinese population .

Among the dead were 50 employees of Sam Wah , both from his estate and his restaurant ; Wong Foon @-@ chuck lost 45 employees : 32 from his estate , nine from a railroad hotel that he operated , and four from his laundry ; and Ma Due lost 38 out of the 40 workers from his gardens . 25

employees of the bank were also killed .

Rebels , Federales , and bystanders were also killed ; according to contemporary reports , these included 25 Federales , 34 bystanders (including 12 Spaniards and a German) , and 26 Maderistas . Among the dead was Jesús Flores , apparently killed while attempting to free a machine gun abandoned by the government forces .

= = = Property damage = = =

One estimate put the total damage at around US \$ 1 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 (equivalent to \$ 25 @, @ 396 @, @ 429 in 2015) . Chinese properties were dealt US \$ 849 @, @ 928 @. @ 69 (\$ 21 @, @ 585 @, @ 153) in damage . Among the businesses destroyed were the bank , the Chinese Club , 40 groceries , five restaurants , four laundries , 10 vegetable stands and 23 other food stands . Almost 100 Chinese homes and businesses were destroyed in total . Also destroyed were a number of the Chinese @- @ owned gardens outside of town . In addition to businesses and commercial establishments , an unknown number of residential buildings were robbed and destroyed . An American consular agent named G. C. Carothers described the destruction in a June 7 report on the massacre :

Next we went to the Chinese Laundry where four had been killed , and the laundry practically demolished . Bombs had been thrown on the roof , the windows and doors either destroyed or stolen , the machinery broken to pieces and everything that could be carted away , stolen The Puerto de Shanghai building was next visited . All of the doors and windows of the building were destroyed . The Chinese Bank , which had been moved into this building a few months before , was demolished , safes blown open and contents taken , furniture destroyed , all papers and valuables stolen .

American , Arabian , German , Spanish , and Turkish establishments were also damaged and destroyed , but in contrast to the Chinese , U.S. properties were only dealt US \$ 22 @, @ 000 (\$ 558 @, @ 721 today) in damage .

Other properties destroyed included a casino , the city courthouse , the jail , the police headquarters , the Inferior Court , the Court of Letters , and the Municipal Treasury .

= = = Response = = =

A month afterward , the Chinese government hired American attorney Lebbeus Wilfley to conduct an investigation into the massacre . Wilfley owned a law firm in Mexico City , and had previously served as the United States Attorney General to the Philippines and as Judge of the United States Court in China . In June he dispatched his partner , Arthur Bassett , to carry out the investigation .

The same month , China demanded reparation from Mexico , seeking a payment 100 @, @ 000 pesos (in 1911 money) for each Chinese killed during the massacre , a total of over thirty million . The country also demanded an official apology from the Mexican government .

This was followed by a diplomatic crisis , when a rumor began to circulate that China had dispatched a gunboat carrying investigators to Mexican waters . The U.S. Ambassador to Mexico , Henry Lane Wilson , sent a telegram to Philander C. Knox , the Secretary of State , claiming that the Chinese gunboat Korea was en route for Mexico . Yuan Kwai , a Chinese diplomat in Washington , D.C. , sought the support of the United States Department of State . He was told that the U.S. would not approve the act , but would not make an attempt to halt it , either . Failing to get support from the U.S. , China announced that the rumor was false . Yuan Kwai stated that the cruiser Hai Chi might dock in Mexico after attending the coronation of George V in London . In the event , the Hai Chi docked in Cuba after visiting the United States and halted there while the diplomatic crisis played out , and did not go on to Mexico .

In July , U.S. consul George Carothers reported that a number of foreigners in Torreón had received letters telling them to leave the city .

Madero had ordered that the soldiers culpable for the killings be arrested and put on trial , and by 9 July 20 of the 35 under suspicion of connection with the massacre had been captured .

Arthur Bassett made his report to Chang Yin Tang , the Chinese Minister to Mexico , on 13 July , after conducting interviews with a number of Chinese and Mexican witnesses to the massacre . He concluded that the Maderistas ' claims (that they had been fired on by the Chinese) were false , citing the 12 May circular by the reform society . He also dismissed the claim that the immigrants had been armed by General Lojero and his retreating Federales , pointing out that the reason for the evacuation was a dearth of ammunition . Furthermore , no witnesses reported any form of resistance by the Chinese . In his report , he called the incident " an unprovoked massacre ... conceived in malice and race hatred " and concluded that it was a clear violation of the 1899 treaty between the two countries .

Bassett , in collaboration with Owang King (a representative for China) and Antonio Ramos Pedrueza (representing Mexican President Francisco León de la Barra) , tendered a second report to Chang on 28 August , once again attempting to assess whether the Chinese themselves had prompted the massacre by resisting the Madistera troops . The editor of Diogenes , a local paper , stated that Lojero had " authorized him to deny all allegations " that he may have armed the Chinese . Upon further inquiry , the owners of local stores testified that they had not sold weapons to Chinese patrons before the massacre . The report concluded :

The contention that the Chinese offered resistance is pure fabrication , invented by the officers of the revolutionary army for the sole purpose of escaping the punishment which the commission of such a heinous crime would naturally entail upon them .

After failing to gain support from the United States , China reduced the demanded indemnity from thirty million to six million . However , it continued to demand an official apology , a guarantee of the safety of Chinese citizens in Mexico , and the punishment of the soldiers responsible for the massacre .

As the 1911 Mexican Independence Day approached , the foreign community in Torreón became restless , remembering the violence that had broken out at that time the previous year . To prevent another outbreak of violence , Francisco Madero sent 1 @, @ 000 troops to the city .

China and Mexico came to an agreement in November 1912 , and a treaty was signed wherein Mexico granted 3 @, @ 100 @, @ 000 pesos in damages to China and extended an official apology . The deadline for payment was later extended to 15 February 1913 . However , after the February 1913 assassination of Francisco Madero , Mexico entered a period of economic collapse . They proposed to pay China in bonds . The Dutch ambassador warned against it , believing that Mexico would be unable to obtain the foreign loans necessary for payment .

The Mexican Senate debated a number of ways to pay the indemnity through 1912 and 1913 , including considering payment in silver . However , the bonds were never approved , and reparation was never made .

= = = Further unrest = = =

The massacre in Torreón was not the only instance of race violence against the Chinese during the revolution . In the first year alone , rebels and other Mexican citizens contributed to the deaths of some 324 Chinese . By 1919 , another 129 had been killed in Mexico City , and 373 in Piedras Negras . The persecution and violence against the Chinese in Mexico finally culminated in 1931 , with the expulsion of the remaining Chinese from Sonora .