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The Investigation of Donato R. Cárdenas

[In the margin: Toluca, Mexico. Oaxaca, Oaxaca. Pachuca, Hgo. Morelia, Mich. San Juan Bautista, Tabasco. Veracruz, Veracruz. Puebla, Puebla. Guadalajara, Jalisco. Colima, Col. It is requested that it be returned.]

Citizen Donato R. Cárdenas, District Judge of the State of Coahuila de Zaragoza,

To you, District Judges of the Republic listed in the margin, whom I have the honor of addressing, I hereby inform you that in the case being brought against those responsible for the massacre of Chinese citizens and the plundering of their interests, which occurred in the City of Torreón in the month of May, nineteen hundred and eleven, the Court under my jurisdiction issued an order, with the relevant inserts, as follows:

Torreón, Coahuila. August 12, nineteen hundred and twelve.

Let this summons, with the necessary insertions, be issued to the District Judges of the Republic, so that they may order the arrest of Jesús and Trinidad Casiano, Crescencio and Manuel Soto, Lázaro Sifuentes, Benjamín Argumedo, and Plácido Orduña, who appear as alleged perpetrators of the crimes of homicide and robbery being investigated in this case, having been proven by the means established in Articles 116 and 123, Section II of the Federal Code of Criminal Procedure, also ordering that they be brought before this Court as soon as their capture is achieved. Notify. Ordered and signed by Mr. Donato R. Cárdenas, District Judge of Coahuila. Signatures.

Insert:

On the twenty-sixth of September, nineteen hundred eleven, there appeared before this Court Mr. Jacinto Mirazo, and he was examined in accordance with the facts under investigation in this case, under legal oath; and, giving his general particulars as being married, fifty years of age, a merchant, and a resident of this locality, he stated: That on the fifteenth day of last May he was the Administrator of this City's Cemetery, and for this reason he took note of the dead who were brought in by the Red Cross service, from that same day until the following sixteenth, during which time a pit was dug on the south side of the cemetery, on the outside; and that on the seventeenth, which was when this work was completed and when all the bodies were already there, quite decomposed, they were buried, according to the record he keeps in a provisional registry book, one hundred and thirty-one Chinese; that in addition to these Chinese, seventy-two more were buried at the Civil Hospital, according to the report the declarant received from the ladies of the Red Cross who were at said hospital, thus making a total of two hundred and three Chinese deceased, and nothing more; that during those days the confusion and disorder were such that no one took any kind of precaution to gather data of the sort in question, but the declarant believed it his

duty to count the dead as they were being buried, and he did so in the following manner: that he noted the number of yellow soldiers or auxiliaries from Nuevo León, the federals and civilians, women, Maderistas, and one municipal gendarme; and the one hundred and thirty-one Chinese, marking or noting them with a small line in each category, as may still be seen in his book, which he produced and which the Court certified; and that he cannot determine who the persons were who brought the bodies, because they indiscriminately used whatever improvised conveyance for moving the bodies that was available,¹ which was carried by various people.

This proceeding having been concluded and ratified by the declarant, I so certify. Cárdenas.- Jacinto Mirazo, J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

In the margin: J. Mirazo expands his statement.

On October 3, 1911, when he appeared before the Court, Mr. J. Mirazo expanded the statement he had made in these proceedings and stated: that along with the Chinese bodies buried outside the Cemetery, there were two women, two Maderistas, one gendarme, seven federal officers, and seven private individuals; that in the Civil Hospital, along with the Chinese, there were two auxiliaries, two women, three private individuals, two federal officers, and two rural officers; that all of these, along with four auxiliaries, twenty-four Maderistas, eighteen civilians, and one woman, make a total of two hundred seventy-eight victims; that he cannot give the names of any of the people who carried the bodies to the Cemetery because they were carried indiscriminately by those who wanted to do so, and that he also does not know the names of those who dug the pits in the Cemetery where the Chinese were buried because they were laborers or workers recruited by order of the Sandstone Brick Factory; that they began to carry the bodies on the fifteenth and were buried on the seventeenth, and by then they were already decomposing, because there was already a lot of corruption, and that is why the bodies were thrown into the pit from where they were piled or boxed, without any separation, but that he took the precaution of doing what he has stated, although without taking the names of any of the victims or knowing who they were. This proceeding was concluded; the declarant ratified it, restated his general particulars, and signed. I attest. Cárdenas. Jacinto Mirazo. J. García Villarreal, Secretary. Signatures

In the Margin: Witness Dolores Ramírez testifies.

On the seventeenth of November, nineteen hundred eleven, there appeared before this Court Miss Dolores Ramírez, who, having first been placed under oath, stated: that her name is as written, and that she is a native of Fresnillo, Zacatecas. Examined as required, she stated: that she is the Chief of Nurses of the Hospital of this town, a position she has held

¹ As opposed to using some type of coach or carriage with a business name or logo painted on it that would have allowed him to identify the persons for inquiry later. The image described here is just people bringing dead bodies on simple carts or whatever kind of simple conveyance they can find, which matches some of the [photographs](#) that H. H. Miller took of the event.

since the month of February of the current year, and that for this reason, and while assisting the Red Cross, she was involved in the events that took place on the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of last May; that on the thirteenth day the Maderistas arrived at the Hospital and took possession of it, remaining there until Monday at about nine-thirty, when they departed for the center of the town, leaving a small guard there; that the declarant, in order to see whether her family—of whom she had heard nothing—had come, went to the town center, and on the street by the cantina known as “El Cristal” they encountered the corpse of a Mexican, and she was then asked to pick it up, since the Administrator of the Hospital, Francisco de la Torre, was with her; and later, as they had sufficient people at their disposal, they began to collect the corpses; that the first Chinese corpses were collected at about ten o’clock in the morning at the Oriental Laundry, and that, in view of the large number of Chinese dead, she became curious to count all those collected under her direction, a list of which she presents and which is added to these proceedings; that all the corpses that were collected were taken to the Cemetery, and that they numbered one hundred and thirty; that she did not see those who were buried in some water wells in the vicinity of the Hospital, which, according to information given to her by those who carried out the burial, numbered seventy-two; that apart from these, four others were buried next to the Hospital, making among all of them a total of two hundred and six Chinese dead; that she only witnessed the death of two Chinese, who were killed by what appeared to be Maderista soldiers, who wounded them from behind while they were walking ahead of them; that the Chinese corpses collected showed various kinds of wounds, some from firearms, and in others machete blows were evident, with some found to have fractured or even completely split skulls; but the majority had a gunshot wound to the heart or to the forehead; that she did not know the individuals who killed the twelve Chinese of whom she has spoken, this being the only matter of which she has personal knowledge; and she added that Mr. Lino Sáenz Polo, of Spanish nationality, was during those days serving as interim administrator of the Hospital.

Cárdenas.

Dolores Ramírez.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

In the margin: Witness Aurelio Olivares testifies.

On the same date, the twenty-sixth of December, nineteen hundred eleven, there appeared Mr. Aurelio Olivares, having first been placed under legal oath.

Upon examination of Mr. Olivares, arising from the summons issued to him in the present investigation, he answered: that he was in this town at his home, which is the same one he has indicated, during the events that took place in the month of last May; that on the thirteenth and fourteenth he witnessed no disorder, except for the combat that was taking place; that on the fifteenth day, upon leaving his house at about nine o’clock in the morning, he saw only two Chinese lying at the corner of Ramón Corona Street and Avenida Juárez, as

he was heading toward the town center; that he continued along all of Avenida Juárez and everywhere saw many people carrying various objects; that upon passing the Parián,² he saw the pawnshop and the business known as “La Prueba” completely looted, as nothing remained there, not even boards; and upon passing the Banco de la Laguna at about nine-ten in the morning, he saw that there was nothing there; at the house of Juan Maa, he saw that the houses located there were full of people who were looting, and among the people he saw he did not recognize anyone, even though they were all locals; that at the corner of Valdés Carrillo Street and Avenida Juárez he saw the man known as Dr. Grageda mounted on horseback, with a pistol in his hand, shouting for them to form fifty on one side and fifty on the other, but no one paid him any attention; that he heard him say to an individual that if he did not obey he would remove him from his position as assistant; that this then drew his attention to who the assistant was, and he saw that it was Benito Bradley, Jr., who had been his pupil, and to whom he spoke, saying: “But Benito, what are you doing?” yet the latter paid him no attention and the declarant continued on his way, reaching halfway down the block; but before that he heard some gunshots in the direction of La Suiza, and all the people crowded together and withdrew from the place where it was said the shots were being fired; that while this was happening he only heard people saying, “Let those with carbines pass, those with carbines,” referring to Grageda or Bradley, the latter approaching him and being the only one who paid him any attention; that in that area he did not see any Chinese being killed, and that through his son Jesús he learned that at approximately the same time the declarant had been there was when Juan Maa was killed; that when he returned to his house and along Avenida Ocampo he saw some mounted men on the land located in front of his house near the home of Don Adolfo Rodríguez, who were bringing Chinese from the orchards, and that there they fired upon them; that after shooting them they went eastward, and he then approached and counted seventeen Chinese who bore wounds in various parts, some to the head, the chest, the back, etc.; that there must have been about twenty men who were bringing the Chinese, and he did not recognize any of those who were there; that after killing these Chinese, the horsemen divided into two groups, of which one went toward the house of Dr. Lim and the other toward the orchards of Fun Chuc; and that the declarant only heard gunfire among the houses but saw absolutely nothing; that about an hour and a half later the group that went to the house of Dr. Lim returned past his house bringing about fourteen Chinese, whom they forced, with blows from their horses and with insults, to pass over the corpses of those they had shot earlier, and they headed toward the town center; that the individuals to whom he has referred were Maderistas and common riffraff, wearing hats and chests full of religious medals; that he did not recognize any of them, nor could he recognize them if he were to see them, as he did not see them up close; that of the people who live in that area and who might be able to testify, he only knows one Ricardo N., a pianist, and a Mr. Pablo Sifuentes; and that of the former he is certain that he was there, since he told him not to get involved because they were shooting Chinese and he might be hit by a stray bullet; that after the events, and through a Maderista soldier named Lucas Marrufo, he has learned that those who most viciously took part in killing Chinese were Benjamín Argumedo, Crescencio Soto, and Lázaro Sifuentes.

² The town’s central market area.

He ratified the foregoing upon it being read to him and signed.

I so certify.

Cárdenas.

Aurelio Olivares.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

Félix Gómez Valdés testifies:

On the same date, Mr. Félix Gómez Valdés appeared to expand his statement... and stated: that this individual (the accused Atanasio Rosales or Sánchez³) acted as the leader of a group of twenty or twenty-five individuals and rode a dark mare; that they were carrying nineteen or more Chinese, and along Avenida Porfirio Díaz, by the house of Don Adolfo Rodríguez, he saw that some of the Chinese being carried were forced to kneel and were fired upon, and then the same was done to the others as they advanced; and that, according to what was said, this was because the Chinese had fired upon them from the laundry, the Chinese Bank, and other places, causing some casualties, which was the reason they were very enraged; that the declarant did not see exactly which persons fired the shots, but that they came from the group led by Atanasio.

He ratified the foregoing upon it being read to him and signed.

I so certify. Cárdenas.

Félix Gómez Valdés.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

On the Margin: Confrontation between Indalecio Vázquez and Atanasio Sánchez.

On the twenty-seventh of December, nineteen hundred eleven, the witness Indalecio Vázquez and the accused Atanasio Rosales or Sánchez appeared... and, on his part, Sánchez or Rosales stated that it is true, as his accuser says, that he was in the group in which some Chinese were killed, but that he was not the one who killed them, nor the one who gave the orders; that since he was drunk, he does not know how many Chinese were killed, nor who killed them, and that he only saw that they were Maderista soldiers who were bringing those Chinese from the orchards; and that the declarant joined them upon seeing them arrive, and it was still early, without recalling the hour; that the Chinese were killed where they had been gathered together; and perhaps some were forced to kneel, but he does

³ It appears that they were not sure which last name he used. From later testimony it would seem to have been Sánchez.

not remember, because he was drunk; that he also agrees that he may have fought with his accuser when searching for Don Rafael Garza, but as he has said, he does not recall those details.

This proceeding was suspended.

Cárdenas.

Indalecio Vázquez.

José García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

Margin: Witness Brígida Cumpián de García testifies.

On the sixth of January, nineteen hundred twelve, Mrs. Brígida Cumpián de García appeared before this court and provided her general information.

Examined according to the citation issued to her, and under legal oath, she said: that on the fifteenth of May last, while she was at her home on Guadalupe Street and Av. Victoria in “El Paso del Águila,” she began to see people passing by who were Maderista soldiers entering the town, but she did not realize what was happening; that around nine in the morning she saw coming from the direction of the orchards two young men who, she has learned from people in the neighborhood, are the sons of Mr. Eusebio Casiano, owner of a corn mill near El Palomar and behind the business “El Pilón de Oro,” leading fourteen Chinese, whom they were herding like sheep; that upon reaching the front of the declarant’s house, some of the Chinese, trembling, entered her doorway, while the young men who were driving them tried to get them out; that at that moment Atanasio Sánchez, who lives across from the house she speaks of, came out of his house and went to where the others were, asking “What’s the matter, Mrs. García?” to which she replied that these young men were bringing the Chinese, that she did not know what they intended to do with them, and that if they were going to do anything to them, they should take them somewhere else and not in front of her house; that she did not hear what Sánchez said, but that he and those accompanying him gathered up the Chinese and took them further into town; that about two minutes later she heard gunshots and immediately imagined that the Chinese had been killed, but at first she did not leave her house, which she did shortly afterward, seeing that at a short distance from her house—about thirty steps away—were the corpses; that only the two young men and Sánchez were the ones driving the Chinese, all three being armed; that near the place where they fell lives Mr. Pablo Sifuentes and other persons whose names the declarant does not know.

That is all she stated, and she did not sign because she said she did not know how. I certify.

Cárdenas.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

Marginal note: Confrontation between Mrs. Brígida Cumpián de G. and A. Sánchez.

On the same date, the sixth of January, nineteen hundred twelve, Mrs. Brígida Cumpián de García and the accused Atanasio Sánchez appeared in order to conduct the confrontation...

The witness repeated her previous statement, and on his part the accused Atanasio Sánchez agreed with what was stated by his counterpart, declaring that it is true that when he left his house he saw that there was a crowd at Mrs. García's house because some individuals were bringing Chinese from the direction of the orchards, and that they⁴ had entered the house of his counterpart, from where they intended to remove them; and that indeed he intervened, helping to remove them from the house and leading them, in the company of the others, toward the center of the town; and that a short distance from the house he mentioned, those who were leading the Chinese shot them, since he himself was unarmed.

No further details were pursued in this proceeding. The parties in the confrontation ratified their statements, not signing as they expressed that they did not know how. I certify.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.
Signatures.

Marginal note: The witness Eugenia Rodríguez testifies.

On the same date, the ninth of January, nineteen hundred twelve, Mrs. Eugenia Rodríguez appeared, and after taking the legal oath, stated: that on the fifteenth of May last, she was at her house and only witnessed some Maderistas on horseback bringing some Chinese from the direction of the orchards, and saw that at the house "El Paso del Águila" they were being crowded together, and she heard a gunshot; that, fearing a bullet might hit her, she closed her house and saw no more; that she did not recognize any of the Maderistas because she saw them from a considerable distance; that a Maderista came to her house—a young man, tall, without a mustache, of whom she cannot give more details—asking if there were more Chinese to remove, and that when they could open the door, in the unobstructed, level open area in front of her house there were many Chinese scattered, and one was on the sidewalk of "El Paso del Águila"; that she did not recognize Atanasio Sánchez nor the Casiano family, and that is all she knows.

I certify.
Cárdenas.
J. García Villarreal, Secretary.
Signatures.

Marginal note: Brígida Cumpián expands her testimony.

⁴ That is, the Chinese.

On the twelfth of April, nineteen hundred twelve, Mrs. Brígida Cumpián de García appeared, having been duly summoned, in order to expand her prior statement in this case, under legal oath; she stated that when Atanasio Sánchez left his house, he was mounted and armed, because he carried a carbine which she saw, although she does not know, as Sánchez says, whether he was without ammunition, since she did not notice if he, like the others, carried it at his waist; that she now remembers that, in addition to Sánchez and Jesús and Trinidad, the two young Casianos, there were other individuals nearby who also seemed to be revolutionaries, but she did not recognize them; nevertheless, she is certain that the first ones were the ones bringing the Chinese she mentioned in her prior statement, and that they were the ones who killed them, because, as she stated before, as soon as they had moved a little away from her house, gunshots were heard, and there appeared the fourteen Chinese she referred to; that she has not been able—or rather, has not inquired—about the names of some other people who were her neighbors.

This proceeding was concluded.

I certify.

Cárdenas.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

Marginal note: The witness Victoriana González testifies.

On the twenty-ninth of May, nineteen hundred twelve, Victoriana González appeared before the Court, having been summoned...She stated that in the past month of May she was in this city, working as a maid in the house of the owners of the business called “El Paso del Águila,” and had the opportunity to witness when the revolutionaries entered the city and saw some of them go in the direction where she was; that she saw some soldiers or Maderistas bringing Chinese in front of them, whom she believes were killed very close to her house, because after the noise of gunfire ceased, she saw several Chinese corpses there, but she does not know who killed them; when examined to say whether she knows Atanasio Sánchez and Jesús and Trinidad Casiano, and if these were the ones who were carrying the Chinese people she has referred to, she stated: that she knows the first and not the second, and it seems to her that she saw Sánchez arrive and join the others, moments before they killed the referred Chinese; warned how she could deny that she knows the Casianos when it is known that she had been a maid in their house, she said that the truth is that she does know them, and that they and Sánchez and some others, as she recalls, were the ones who were leading the Chinese she saw at Paso del Águila, and without a doubt also that they killed them because the shots were heard immediately and there the bodies appeared; that she did not go anywhere else, it is all that she witnessed, which out of fear she did not want to report to the Court.

This proceeding was concluded.

I certify.
Cárdenas.
J. García Villarreal, Secretary.
Signature.

Francisco Caballero Interview

On the twenty-second of June, nineteen hundred twelve, Francisco Caballero appeared before the Court, and under legal oath stated:

That in the past month of May, on the days when this plaza was taken by the Maderista forces, he was in this town and walked through some streets among the crowd of people that invaded them, thereby witnessing the looting of some commercial houses belonging to Chinese subjects, and also saw many of them dead in different parts of the city, and many people carrying away items from the shops; among the crowd were many women and boys who were taking whatever they found, always moving toward the east of the city; but he cannot name any of these people, because all were unknown to him, and he also does not know who were the perpetrators of the homicides. At this proceeding, he was informed that he incurs responsibility if he continues to deny knowledge of some of those who committed these crimes, and that he must speak the truth. He responded that he has only heard it said that Crescencio Soto, Manuel Soto, Lázaro Sifuentes, Benjamín Argumedo, and Plácido Orduña, who were Maderista soldiers, killed some Chinese, but that he has no personal knowledge [of this] that he could testify about.

He did not sign, owing to his lack of knowledge.

I certify.
Cárdenas.
J. García Villarreal, Secretary.
Signatures.

Marginal note: Confrontation between Lucas Marrufo and Aurelio Olivares.

On the thirtieth of July, nineteen hundred twelve, the witnesses Aurelio Olivares and Lucas Marrufo appeared to state whether they recognize Argumedo, Crescencio Soto, and Lázaro Sifuentes. They said that they only know the first two, providing the description and partial details of Argumedo – dark-skinned, light-colored eyes, tall, has a mustache, medium build, about forty years old; sparse beard, sharp face; he was Chief of the Maderista Forces in 1910; no distinguishing marks.

Marginal note: Description of Crescencio Soto.

Crescencio Soto – an individual about fifty years old, has a mustache, patchy beard, round face, medium build, tall; no distinguishing marks known; he was also Chief of the Maderista Forces in 1910. The witness confirmed his prior statements.

I certify.

Cárdenas.

Lucas Marrufo, Aurelio Olivares.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

Marginal note: Testimony of the witness Francisco Gómez.

On the same date, June 10, 1912, when the witness Francisco Gómez finally appeared, he was examined in accordance with the citation relevant to these proceedings and under legal oath: He stated that it is true that in May 1911 he lived near the orchards in this city to the east and worked wherever he was employed, without being a permanent laborer anywhere; He also confirmed that when the Plaza was taken by the revolutionary or anti-government forces, he happened to be there and witnessed them moving through the orchards from a distance, hearing some gunfire, and people saying it was because they were killing Chinese; He likewise confirmed that he saw some of the corpses, including those near El Paso del Águila (which is also true), because he expressly went to look out of curiosity like others, when he learned that some bodies were there; But this was after everything had already happened, because before that he stayed locked in his house and tried not to be seen by the perpetrators of these attacks, and only as a rumor did people say that the Casiano brothers were there; He does not know them personally, nor can he confirm anything. When admonished to tell the truth about whether he indeed knows that the Casiano brothers and Sánchez executed the Chinese at El Paso del Águila or any others, and if he knew of other responsible parties, he insisted on his denial.

This proceeding was concluded...

I certify.

Cárdenas.

J. García Villarreal, Secretary.

Signatures.

For what I order through this Court in the order inserted at the beginning, let it be duly carried out. I exhort and request you, in the name of the Supreme Powers of the Union and on my own behalf, to kindly see that it is executed as soon as it comes into your possession, confident of my reciprocity in similar cases.

Given in the City of Torreón, Coahuila, on the twentieth day of the month of August, nineteen hundred twelve.

Signed: D. R. Cárdenas.
J. García Villarreal.